



# Undeserving Lebanon

Jalal Toufic

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Forthcoming Books

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# Undeserving Lebanon

Jalal Toufic

Forthcoming Books

## Also by Jalal Toufic

- 'Āshūrā': This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (Forthcoming Books, 2005)  
*Two or Three Things I'm Dying to Tell You* (Post Apollo, 2005)  
*Undying Love, or Love Dies* (Post Apollo, 2002)  
*Forthcoming* (Atelos, 2000)  
*Over-Sensitivity* (Sun & Moon, 1996)  
*(Vampires): An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* (Station Hill, 1993; revised and expanded ed., Post Apollo, 2003)  
*Distracted* (Station Hill, 1991; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Tuumba, 2003)

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## Acknowledgments

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## **To Remember or Not to Remember—That Is Not a Question**

Against the prevalent post-traumatic amnesia encountered in post-war Lebanon, and which is exemplified by the unjust and scandalous general amnesty law that was passed by parliament on 28 March 1991 (Law No. 84/91) and that pardoned all political crimes prior to its enactment with the exclusion of “crimes of assassination or attempted assassination of religious figures, political leaders, and foreign or Arab diplomats,” writers and filmmakers should have devised affirmative scenarios and strategies either to remember or not to remember:

— Not to remember—without forgetting. He could no longer stand their post-traumatic amnesia and so he volunteered for one of the first time-travel experiments, in order to travel to a different branch of the multiverse where “they” (actually another version of them) remember neither him nor the civil war and the Israeli invasions not because “they” have forgotten them, but because “they” did not undergo a civil war and invasions and because “they” never met him before, i.e., he time-traveled in part to have “them” not remember him without “their” having forgotten him, that is to divest not remembering from forgetting (this is one of the rigorous ways of viewing Resnais’ *Last Year at Marienbad*, where the man remembers a woman who does not remember [meeting] him [the previous year at Marienbad]). To my knowledge, the Lebanese have not made time travel films and videos—nor have they made films and videos exploring post-war Lebanon’s labyrinthine ruins, “in” which notwithstanding coming across some photographs or a video showing one in the ruin,

one may not remember ever being there—not because one has forgotten visiting the ruin, but because while prior to entering the labyrinth you have not been there previously, “the moment you enter the labyrinth, you’ve been there before.”<sup>1</sup>

— To remember: As the reader can recall, to my knowledge, the Lebanese have not made films and videos exploring post-war Lebanon’s labyrinthine ruins, which make possible the following preternaturalness: notwithstanding being certain that it is the first time I am entering the ruin, I remember at times what is at a particular spot in it.

While in Lebanon the majority of artists and writers decry the post-traumatic amnesia in the period that followed the civil-war and the war, most of them are oblivious of a major event in terms of memory, ‘Āshûrâ’, the yearly commemoration by the Twelver Shi’ite community of the slaughter of imâm Husayn and seventy-two of his companions in 680—this obliviousness is a symptom of the continued bigotry of a majority of the other Lebanese and Arabs toward Shi’ites.<sup>2</sup> In Lebanon, the amnesia is mainly directed toward the recent, traumatic past, specifically the protracted civil war and the two Israeli invasions; while the memory is directed toward the future, toward a messianic promise (cf. both my video ‘*Āshûrâ*: *This Blood Spilled in My Veins*, 2002, and my 2005-book with the same title).<sup>3</sup>

### To Pray or Not to Pray

*Dedicated to my beloved sister, Sahar Omran, who was diagnosed with cancer on 23 June 2006*

— To Pray: Was the Lebanese civil war as well as the 1982 Israeli

invasion at their most intense, for example the massacre of Sabrâ and Shâtîlâ, *hell on Earth*, as some of the survivors have asserted? They were so only for some people, not generally,<sup>4</sup> given that at least some of those who underwent such terrible conditions continued to be able to pray. Since any prayer is answered, as the Qur’ân asserts, “And your Lord has said: Pray unto Me and I will answer your prayer” (40:60), and as is implied by the worshipper’s words during the ritual prayer, *sami’a Llâhu li-man hamidah* (“God hears him who praises Him”), no one who can still pray finds himself or herself in hell. In hell, any velleity of prayer is subverted by *theft of thought*, and desecration through insertion in one’s head of obsessive blasphemous thoughts whispered by the voices, and compulsive sacrilegious behavior. In this sense, the section of David Lynch’s *Fire Walk with Me* between the disappearance of the angel from the painting in Laura Palmer’s bedroom and the coda shows the protagonist in hell, implying that she can no longer pray—we have a guardian angel for as long as we still have the potentiality to pray. The coda, in which Laura Palmer is shown next to an angel, can be read in line with a *hadîth qudsî* beloved by Sufis: “My Mercy takes precedence over My Wrath.” God prayed for Laura in Hell, who could no longer pray for herself (“Thus He said: ‘It is He who does prayer over you, and His angels’” [Qur’ân 33:43]). If God prays to God, it is, according to the great Sûfi Ibn al-‘Arabî, in the sense that God’s Mercy prays to His Wrath, assuaging it.

I would imagine that many people at checkpoints manned by the various militias or in basements during intensive bombardments prayed in Lebanon, a country that suffered a fifteen-year civil war (largely waged along religious sectarian lines) and two invasions. So the rarity in Lebanon of rigorous films

and videos on prayer is disconcerting. Lamia Joreige's *Replay (Bis)*, 2002, is one of the aforementioned rare videos. Joreige began her artistic practice as a painter. When a painter moves to film or video, is he or she doing so to "inject time" into his or her material? Or is he or she doing so to better tackle the absence of time through video and film? In her installation *Replay*, 2000, a traumatic rupture, the fatal shooting of a young man, quickly turns into the repetitive circularity of loops. How to get out of (inexact) repetition? How to re-inject time in this compulsion to repeat following a trauma? The final section of *Replay (Bis)*, 2002, seems to provide an answer: "I am alone. I don't know why I am scared. The prayer of dusk will begin. I don't won't to linger here..." Is leaving the country the answer? The departure has to be less geographical than temporal, a departure outside repetition, otherwise even the geographical departure will get bogged in loops, as happened in Joreige's installation *Replay*, or exhaust itself in countless variations, as is implied in *Replay (Bis)*'s first part: in the section "Replay," the video's spectators witness a zoom-in on a black and white photograph or video still of a hand holding a revolver directed away from them, presumably at some off-screen diegetic presence, and in the following section, "Bis," they see an alternation of zoom-ins and zoom-outs on a color photograph or video still of a woman holding a revolver aimed in their direction; moreover, the photographs we then see in these two sections, presumably of the narrator and her (his?) two cousins and brother, show different children assuming different postures. Graciously, we then see the following intertitle: "The time of a prayer." A valid, successful prayer is conjointly an imploration for the injection of time, therefore for the possibility of the new where there was "only" "repetition," and the answer to

this imploration, the time that one asked for. In other words: "For the time being a prayer."<sup>5</sup> In this sense, a genuine Muslim does not repeat his prayer five times a day, but with each prayer injects time to get out of repetition. The prayer of Lamia Joreige's video gave her time. Then there occurred the event of love and then there was the traumatic break-up of the love relationship. The problem now was too much empty time (Joreige's *Time and the Other*, 2004). How to cathect this extra time that does not seem to pass while maintaining what is leading to this timeless state: the refusal or the suspension of *the work of mourning*? By making a video, *Here and Perhaps Elsewhere* (2003), concerning a condition that appears to provide a justification for the refusal or the suspension of the work of mourning: being kin or lover and beloved, as Lamia Joreige is, of someone who was kidnapped during the years of civil war (1975-1990), her uncle.

— The Event, Deservedly; or, Not to Pray:<sup>6</sup>

*Either ethics makes no sense at all, or this is what it means and has nothing else to say: not to be unworthy of what happens to us.*

Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*

Tell me which events that occurred to you, or to others, you try to deserve and I'll tell you what really matters to you. The most fundamental unfinished business: not to have come up with the perspective from which something is deserved. One of the main functions of the angel, an event, is to help us to feel that we deserve the event (Wenders' *Wings of Desire*)—when the angel cannot make us deserve the event, he no longer occurs to us, withdraws (David Lynch's *Fire Walk with Me*).

The event is encountered in solitude (this means not



only that I encounter the event in the absence of others,<sup>7</sup> but also that during it I do not keep myself company through the interior monologue, which ceases then); this is partly the event's affinity with death. Indeed, death, not as the cessation of organic life, which is the non-event *par excellence*,<sup>8</sup> but as the labyrinthine realm of undeath, where one is radically solitary,<sup>9</sup> is the event *par excellence*. Those who write on the event have to respect this solitude. They should help those to whom the event occurs *before* the historical date at which the event reaches them (for example Paul Virilio's writings on speed and the transformation in military doctrine could have been of help to the Iraqis prior to the 1991 Gulf War);<sup>10</sup> and/or by writing or making films or videos or artworks *after* the event, in part to show that it was deserved.

The issue for me with regards to Lebanon was, for a long time, to merit what happened during the protracted civil-war and the Israeli invasion of 1982. I thought that thinkers, writers and artists should not leave the war and the civil-war and its aftermath to the victims and the criminals; that while it was the basic task of others to bring the criminals to justice, thinkers, writers and artists have to complement this basic task with creating concepts and artistic works that make us merit what has happened to us instead of feeling that we are victims. But while I have, along with other artists and writers, been trying to do this for many years, the basic task of bringing the criminals to justice was not carried out, in large part because of the amnesty law of 1991—"national reconciliation" should not happen between the living at the expense of the dead; it should happen between the living and the dead, the criminals and their victims, including the dead among the latter. I have presently reached a point where I feel that the "Lebanese people" have to deserve us who have been trying

to create the viewpoints from which what happened in the civil war was merited by the Lebanese: for example, the radical closure that West Beirut may have become during its siege by the Israeli army in 1982. In relation to Lebanon, if I ever think that *my time will come*, it is not in the sense that I will be read extensively in this country where on average a person spends a total of \$12 per month on books, magazines and newspapers, but rather in the sense that a time will come for me to write on it (again)—once it has merited me, to whom it still hasn't accorded the Lebanese citizenship notwithstanding that I was born in Lebanon to a Lebanese mother, have lived in this country for more than twenty five years, and, most importantly, have through my writing and videos created concepts and images that make us merit some of what happened in Lebanon in the last thirty or so years. Until the other Lebanese merit them, Lebanese artists and writers, when they bother at all with Lebanon, have to switch from trying to merit some of what happened to this country to an unsparing critique of Lebanese "culture," in the tradition of William S. Burroughs versus the USA in his "Thanksgiving Prayer": "Thanks for the American dream, to vulgarize and to falsify until the bare lies shine through.... Thanks for the last and greatest betrayal of the last and greatest of human dreams"; Thomas Bernhard, who banned, in his notorious will, the publication and production of his plays and novels in Austria for 70 years (the length of their copyright); and Nietzsche in his trenchantly dismissive critique of "German culture": "I believe only in French culture and consider everything else in Europe today that calls itself 'culture' a misunderstanding—not to speak of German culture.... As far as Germany extends, she *corrupts* culture.... What did I never forgive Wagner? That he *condescended* to the Germans—that he

became *reichsdeutsch*.”<sup>11</sup>

According to Karl Marx in his 11<sup>th</sup> Thesis on Feuerbach (1845), “Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.” Certainly, barring some global catastrophe that would destroy life on Earth, once a future very advanced state of development is reached, these two alternatives will no longer exclude each other: it will no longer be possible to change the world without interpreting/understanding it. But even presently, I consider that these two options do not exclude each other, but rather complement each other: one has to try to interpret the world as a whole in such a way as to deserve what occurred to us while trying to change it, especially the unbearable we underwent while we were trying to change other unbearable states of affairs. The latter option is one of the major tasks of thinkers, writers, artists, videomakers, filmmakers, and musicians. Is trying to understand the event that happens to me (socio-economic, historical, political factors, etc.) enough? No. Is not understanding it but it in an intelligent and subtle way enough? No. Is trying to render justice by administering punishment to the culprits, as the great “extremist” Shi’ite al-Khattâb did to many of the murderers of imâm al-Husayn and his companions, enough? No, justice is never enough. We have to additionally feel that we merit the event that happened to us; from this perspective, justice is an insidious temptation, that of relaxing our attempt to merit the event—even bringing about justice has to be merited so that it is not a mere revengeful gesture. I do not deserve what happened to me simply because it is a karmic consequence of an action I performed earlier. For the most part, the Lebanese do not deserve the civil-war and the war they underwent (1975-1990): this is neither in the sense that they would have been mere

pawns manipulated by Israel, Syria and other regional and global powers, nor in the sense that their country would have been the arena for the conflicts and power struggles of others, including the Palestinian refugees on their land, etc.; but in the sense that they are not worthy of what happened to them: for the most part, they do not merit their war-induced ruins; the radical closure that Beirut may have become in 1982; the withdrawal of tradition past the surpassing disaster that Lebanon may have turned into by the latter stages of its civil-war and war;<sup>12</sup> the eerie videotaped testimonies of those soon to do a suicidal operation against the Israeli occupation forces in Lebanon: “I am the martyr Sanâ’ Yûsif Muhaydlî (*anâ as-shabîda Sanâ’ Yûsif Mubaydlî*)”...

The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London approached artists in February 2007 with the intention of assembling a group of up to twenty for inclusion in the exhibition *Memorial to the Iraq War*. And yet the Iraq war has not yet ended!—should we then have a memorial to it? If yes, then that implies that the function of the memorial is not to be a reminder of some event—how irrelevant would such a function be in the block universe of four dimensional space-time of Einstein’s relativity, which implies a world that is a memorial of itself!<sup>13</sup> The memorial is either a symptom of the nostalgia for what is evil, for that whose eternal recurrence cannot be willed,<sup>14</sup> what cannot be deserved, in which case it has to be fought (indeed, do not revolutions start with the destruction of many memorials?); or else, as it should be, mainly a reminder that we have not yet done the work in thought, art, film, video, music and literature to deserve that to which the memorial refers.<sup>15</sup> Art, film, video, music, literature and thought’s function of revealing the perspective from which we merit what happened to us (*what* happened to us?)—while we were trying to

change the unbearable in the world—is what is most affined to messianism. With regards to the Shoah, a memorial should not be a reminder of it, but mainly, though possibly indirectly, a reminder, better still an invocation of the messiah (appropriately, ‘Âshûrâ’, the yearly Twelver Shi‘ite commemoration of the unbearable event that took place in Karbalâ’ in 680, is conjointly an invocation of the Mahdî)—otherwise it is a usurpation of a prerogative of the messiah. A Jew who does not believe in the messiah should not make a memorial to the Shoah. Can one deserve the Shoah? If at all, one can do it only indirectly: one has to deserve the messiah, the one who underwent the ordeal of countless recurrence until he achieved the will, and who thenceforth belongs in a world comprising only that which can be willed to recur eternally. If there is no Redeemer, then anything we cannot deserve to happen to us is unworthy of being remembered; if there is a Redeemer, then anything that even the Redeemer cannot reveal as deserved by us is not only unworthy of being remembered, when the messiah comes, it will no longer be part of the past. In relation to the Shoah, the messiah will be viewed as either a revisionist or an Antichrist: if the Shoah is a part of the willed, redeemed world, even as something that happened in the past, then this would indicate that it can be willed (to recur eternally) and therefore that it is deserved, in which case the messiah may be viewed as the Antichrist—indeed if one wishes to redeem the Antichrist himself, one can propose that he is not the one who instigates evil à la Shoah, but rather he is the Christ, the Redeemer, the messiah, in so far as he reveals even what we deemed unredeemable evil as redeemable, i.e. one that can be willed to recur eternally; but if the Shoah—along with the revisionists who prior to the establishment of the redeemed world that can be willed to recur

eternally deny that the Shoah happened—is not a part of the willed, redeemed world, even as something that happened in the past, he will be viewed as a revisionist. Similarly, if the slaughter of imâm Husayn and his companions in 680 and the destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 are still part of the world when the Mahdî appears, then he is going to be considered *al-Dajjâl*; and if the persecutions of Gnostics, the expulsions and/or forced conversions of the Moslems and Jews of Spain, and the Shoah are still part of the world at the Second Coming, then Jesus Christ is going to be considered the Antichrist. Basically and radically, any valid memorial is less a reminder of the past than an invocation of the Redeemer, of the Forthcoming, of the messiah/Mahdî/Christ, with whose coming all memorials are going to become irrelevant. Indeed, the destruction of all memorials can be a sign of the coming of the messiah or that the messiah is already among us—while we continue to wait for him inopportunately.

“The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down from here. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you / to guard you carefully; / they will lift you up in their hands, / so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”’ Jesus answered, ‘It says: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test”’” (Luke 4:9-12; cf. Matthew 4:5-7). Does this mean that Jesus will not end up striking his foot against a stone? No; he will strike his foot against a stone, which deserves it (“The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise Him, and there is not a thing but hymneth His praise; but ye understand not their praise” [Qur’ân 17:44]), when humans merit the redemption. When will Jesus strike his foot against a stone?

On the Second Coming, How far will the stone be displaced? “A stone throw” (“He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed” [Luke 22:41]). Which stone? “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?’ ... Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger” (John 8:3-6). We are not told what he wrote. Did he write the following: “A rabbi... once said that in order to establish the reign of peace it is not necessary to destroy everything nor to begin a completely new world. It is sufficient to displace this cup or this bush or this stone just a little, and thus everything. But this small displacement is so difficult to achieve and its measure is so difficult to find that, with regard to the world, humans are incapable of it and it is necessary that the Messiah come”<sup>16</sup>? “When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, ‘If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.’ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, *those who heard* began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ ‘No one, sir,’ she said” (John 8:7-11; my italics). Do not the words *those who heard* imply that there were others who were too far-off to hear and/or who “have... ears but fail to hear” (Mark 8:18)? It is one of those who threw a stone at Mary Magdalene—which did not reach her and of which she remained unaware. On his Second Coming, Jesus Christ will strike his foot against this stone since it should be elsewhere, where it ought to have been had it

not been used to strike Mary Magdalene, and the impact of his foot’s collision against it would move it back from where it had landed to where it was before being used in the stoning. What is the paradigmatic Christian memorial? It is this stone Christ is going to strike his foot against on his Second Coming. That stone is going to prove the cornerstone (“Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone the builders rejected / has become the capstone [cornerstone]”” [Matthew 21:42]) of the real New World Order, of the redeemed world.<sup>17</sup>

“From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’ Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me!’” (Matthew 16:21-23). On encountering the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, any Christian who does not attain the divine level through *fanā’* (obliteration) in God, so that it is God who is “his hearing through which he hears, his sight through which he sees, his hand through which he grasps, and his foot through which he walks” (a *badīth qudsī*), is affected with nihilism. Jesus Christ was not unworthy of what happened to him, redeemed even the crucifixion that was inflicted on him,<sup>19</sup> an *innocent man* (Matthew 27:19). Part of what is godly is that it ends up deserving anything that happens to it. Therefore, anyone who achieves *fanā’* in God deserves whatever happens to him or her: indeed al-Hallâj, who exclaimed, “I am the Real (*anā al-Haqq*),” merited what happened to him, his crucifixion, telling people at the Mansûr Mosque: “Know that God most high has made my blood licit for you; so kill me! ... You will have your

reward, and I will be happy. You will be fighters for the faith, and I will be a martyr.” And when he was asked by the reporter of this tradition, “Of what sort is the path to God?” he replied, “The path to God lies between ‘two,’ but ‘there is no one else with Me,” and he recited, “Between me and You [God] there’s an ‘I am’ that’s crowding me. Ah! Remove with Your ‘I am’ my ‘I am’ from between us.”

Saul was an undeserving enemy of nascent Christianity. While on his way to Damascus with letters to its synagogues authorizing him to take as prisoners to Jerusalem any followers of Jesus he found there, “a light from heaven flashed around him,” and he “heard a voice say to him, ... ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do’” (Acts 9:1-6). Thenceforth, he became, as (Saint) Paul, a deserving friend (and lover) of Christianity. The crucial change here is not simply that he switched from enemy to friend but that he was transformed from an *undeserving* enemy to a *deserving* friend. Two of the greatest portraits of the slave are by Kojève (via Hegel’s *The Phenomenology of Spirit*), his/her deserving friend, and by Nietzsche (*On the Genealogy of Morals*), his/her deserving enemy. Sometimes the deserving friend and the deserving enemy are the “same”: two of the greatest portraits of Wagner are by Nietzsche, once as a deserving friend (*The Birth of Tragedy*), and a second time as a deserving enemy (*The Case of Wagner*)—what is that rarity, a great, felicitous art school? It is one where one is taught about art and artists by either art and artists’ deserving friends (Nietzsche...) or art and artists’ *deserving* enemies (Plato...). Those who are neither deserving friends nor deserving enemies are neither able to judge whether a portrait is felicitous nor to create a successful portrait themselves. Slavoj Žižek should

not have written a book on Deleuze (*Organs without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences* [2004]), for he is neither a deserving friend of Deleuze, nor—despite being a deserving friend of Hegel and Lacan, regarding whom Deleuze was a deserving enemy—his deserving enemy.

In relation to a “stark injustice,” I consider the following two views as valid: a Gnostic one, according to which nothing that happens to me in this world, considered to be demonic, is deserved; or else a view of the world as the Self-disclosures of God (Ibn al-‘Arabî), where everything I am made to experience by the good, infinite God is deserved.

### To Think or Not to Think

*Dedicated to Riâd al-Turk and to the Charlie Meadows of Joel and Ethan Coen’s Barton Fink*

Artaud: “Whatever way you turn you have not even *started* thinking.”<sup>20</sup> Heidegger: “*Most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking*—not even yet, although the state of the world is becoming constantly more thought-provoking.”<sup>21</sup> Given that, as both Artaud and Heidegger tell us, we are still not thinking, our task is to think... or to assume fully and deliberately not thinking. The Syrian Riâd al-Turk (born in 1930) was first arrested in 1952 for belonging to the Communist Party; he was held for several months and tortured. In 1960, he was arrested, tortured and imprisoned for opposing the unity of Syria and the Egypt ruled by Gamâl ‘Abd al-Nâsir. In October 1980, he was arrested for his membership of the Communist Party-Political Bureau and his outspoken opposition to Syria’s presence in Lebanon; he was tortured and was held for

the next 17 years almost constantly in solitary confinement and suffered serious health problems, including diabetes and heart and kidney ailments. He was released in an amnesty in 1998, but he was again detained in September 2001 and subsequently sentenced to two years' imprisonment, of which he served 15 months. Many members of the Lebanese parliament, for example Bahiyya al-Harîrî, the sister of assassinated former Lebanese prime minister Rafîq al-Harîrî, referred to member of parliament and former Economy and Trade Minister Marwan Hamadé, who, soon after resigning from the government upon the extension of President Emile Lahoud's mandate, narrowly escaped an attempt on his life, as "the living martyr." If I had to characterize some Arab politician as a "living martyr," it would certainly not be Marwan Hamadé but Riâd al-Turk. In his documentary video *Cousin*, bad journalist turned even worse videomaker Muhammad 'Alî al-Atâsî prods the latter: "In your interview with the newspaper *Le monde*, you talked about three factors that helped you withstand seventeen years in solitary confinement." "I wished to put this on record first as truths concerning me as a prisoner, and [second] as pieces of advice to future prisoners... The first factor is to forget about the outside world. You no longer have the world where you used to live: your family, your party, your neighborhood, or your friends. This world is gone, as if you died. You entered the underworld." Would the ghost of Achilles, who told Odysseus when the latter descended temporarily to Hades, "Say not a word in death's favor; I would rather be a paid servant in a poor man's house and be above ground than king of kings among the dead" (Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book XI), have even said: "Indeed, I would rather be a political prisoner and be in a two square meters dark solitary confinement cell 'above ground' albeit underground, i.e.

in a basement, than king of kings among the dead"? Drawing on Proust and others, Deleuze indicated in his rectification of the dogmatic image of thought that we do not think except when we are forced to do so;<sup>22</sup> I would add that we do not *not think* properly, i.e. by fully assuming such a condition, except if we are forced to do so (thus the many Zen examples of this forcing not to "think." A monk told Joshu: "I have just entered the monastery. Please teach me." Joshu asked: "Have you eaten your rice porridge?" The monk replied: "I have eaten." Joshu said: "Then you had better wash your bowl" [from the *Mumonkeon (The Gateless Gate)*] (the natural state of humans is neither to think nor not to think in a fully assumed manner, but to not think in a disavowed manner).<sup>23</sup> Al-Turk continues: "I don't recall the second factor—oh, yes: it is time. When you are in prison, cousin, time seems long and that's natural... In prison, you are in a still life, a world where you see daily only two or three movements in your cell. The morning movement: they knock at your door, open it, give you food. The second movement: they take you out to the toilets, and then bring you back [to your cell]. This is what happens in the morning. At noon you have the same two movements and in the evening you have the same two movements. That's life! Calculate it: going to the toilets, taking the food and eating it, washing the plate and going back [to the cell]. All this takes ten minutes... plus ten minutes... plus ten minutes. That's about thirty minutes. This is your life. Besides that, what are you going to do: lie down and daydream? Any daydream amounts to a contact with the outside world... Any daydream brings back to you your obsession with, and the necessity of, getting out... I didn't allow myself to daydream—of course as much as I could. I began to search here and there... I looked in the soup and found tiny stones. I recalled the time in

school, when I was inclined to draw. I was lucky to have a double sheet... I found it in another solitary confinement cell. I used to spread it out and draw on it a natural scenery with these black gravels of soup...<sup>24</sup> I had thousands of them, whole bags of them... We had lentil soup at least four days a week. A day was not enough to draw this large picture... At lunch time, I used to hope that they wouldn't bring the lunch, because that meant that I had to ruin everything to have space for food... I had to construct everything again.<sup>25</sup> It's like this guy with the rock—Sisyphus, isn't it?"—the Greek figure that's most affined to his situation is rather Penelope. I was jolted by Riâd al-Turk's deliberately assumed not thinking (though it does not appear to have been a jolt for the journalist who made this documentary video, who continued not to think in an unconscious manner); a clear, conscious attempt of a man not to think is thought-provoking. In Syria there's so little thinking despite the fact that the situation is thought-provoking, calls for thinking (deplorably, when Riâd al-Turk left prison, he resumed, like the majority of the opposition figures, not thinking in an unassumed manner), or for a more thorough, programmatic, less occulted not thinking. I, Jalal Toufic, a thinker, feel the most terrific affinity with the not thinking Riâd al-Turk in solitary confinement (as well as with my untimely collaborators among past and future thinkers). With rare exceptions, the Lebanese in specific and Arabs in general don't even know how to excel in not thinking, how to do this act in a great, fitting manner, but do it in a sloppy way, and under the illusion that they are thinking. Against the general unassumed failure to think in the Arab world, we have two exemplary exceptional attitudes: the one who thinks and the one who deliberately tries and devises strategies not to think. I cannot envision myself doing what the vast majority of

people indulge in: a sloppy manner of not thinking; but if one day I feel that I have fully created and elaborated the concepts I am here to create, I can envision myself ascetically trying to accomplish what jailed Riâd al-Turk did in solitary confinement. There are two basic problems with regards to thinking, which is one of the greatest joys and horrors: either one is not able to think; or one starts to think and can no longer stop "thinking" (Darren Aronofsky's *Pi* [1998]...).

*Postscript:*

Jesus: "It is written [cf. Deuteronomy 8:3]: 'Man does not live on bread alone...'" (Matthew 4:4)—he lives also on *food for thought*... Therefore, it is not by abstaining from bread alone that man can go on a strike. Characteristically, the vast majority of people never consider a thought strike, but, like the thoughtless Saddam Hussein, solely a hunger strike. Only those extremely rare persons who actually think would be in a position to genuinely go on a thought strike—were Riâd al-Turk a thinker, I might consider his attempt in prison to not think as a thought strike. And only those, more common though still a few, who are creative can go on an art strike—one that is not itself to be viewed as a performance and thus as still another artwork. A human being can last only so long without food, while on a hunger strike; how long can a thinker last without thinking, on a thought strike? During the latest Israeli war on Lebanon, I started a thought strike on 24 July 2006 and ended it on 15 August 2006. How many reported this, indeed noticed it at all?

### **Beirut's Unwritten Laws and Graffiti**

If the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq al-

Harîrî<sup>26</sup> can be described as an earthquake at all—it was so described *first* by a Syrian construction worker at the site of the massive blast: “Everything around us collapsed. It was as if an earthquake hit the area”;<sup>27</sup> then by numerous derivative sham politicians and opiniated commentators on TV and in the press, for example Chibli Mallat, a professor of international law at Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut: “There is no doubt that the earthquake that started with the assassination of Hariri is going to affect the body politic”<sup>28</sup>—it is primarily for Rafiq al-Harîrî himself in the *bardo* of the moment of death, since the sequence of the main signs of death is: *earth sinking into water, water sinking into fire, fire sinking into air*, and *air dissolving into consciousness*. How appropriate it would have been had someone scribbled on the wall giving onto Harîrî’s grave this May 1968 slogan: **I TAKE MY DESIRES FOR REALITY BECAUSE I BELIEVE IN THE REALITY OF MY DESIRES**. For does this slogan not apply to Harîrî in the *bardo* state? And yet in the *bardo* state one should, rather, not take “one’s” desires for reality, and do so by not believing in the reality of one’s desires through detachment from them. At last this *bon vivant* who had mistaken pleasures for desires, wanting to make Beirut a main touristic destination in the Middle East, was getting a first-hand experience of desire. I remember reading about the aforementioned stages in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* while in the air and then, not having attained yet a sufficient degree of detachment, feeling trepidation as the airplane approached Japan’s Kansai International Airport, which is built on a man-made, landfill island about five kilometers off the coast of Senshu in Osaka Bay. I had read that because the site of the airport contains loose underwater soil, every year the airport sinks up to two inches, and that, to fight the sinking, 5000

poles were placed underneath the airport, and that, to prevent shifting, metal sheets were put underneath the passenger terminals to ensure balance of the airport. On coming at the airport across the exhilarating sight of a group of Japanese high school girls in their fetishistically exciting sailor-style uniforms, I painted on my T-shirt one of the students’ slogans of May 1968 in France: **BENEATH THE PAVEMENT, THE BEACH**. Back in Lebanon, did I have any illusions of seeing such a slogan scribbled on the walls of the Central District in Beirut during the biggest demonstration in the history of the country, on 14 March 2005, when more than 800,000 demonstrators marched toward Martyrs’ Square in Downtown Beirut, just meters away from Harîrî’s grave, thereby blocking the capital’s eastern and northern entrances, and sang the national anthem, waved Lebanese flags, demanded an independent investigation into Harîrî’s assassination a month earlier, chanted “Truth, Freedom, National Unity,” and/or shouted “Syria out, no half measures”—how ironic it is that the biggest demonstration in Lebanon’s history should be in relation to someone who was the prime minister of the cabinet that decreed in August 1993 a ban on “all assemblies and processions with or without a permit,” preventing Lebanese citizens from exercising the internationally recognized right to peaceful assembly! No, I had no illusion that such a slogan would be painted on the walls even by one or several of those demonstrators who arrived by boat to beat the heavy traffic, and even though the development and reconstruction of Beirut’s Central District by the private real estate company Solidere includes a 60 hectares sea reclamation component. How appropriate it would have been had some of the demonstrators painted on some of the reconstructed buildings in the Central District yet another of May 1968’s slogans:



**COMING SOON TO THIS LOCATION:  
CHARMING RUINS.**

By scribbling these words one would not be desiring or cautioning against the production of ruins through a renewal of the civil war once the Syrian army has left Lebanon but implying that many of these reconstructed buildings were still, notwithstanding Harîrî and Solidere, ruins.<sup>29</sup> Did I feel enthusiastic regarding these hundreds of thousands of demonstrators? I did so only to the extent that their action could contribute to a total pullout of the Syrian army and its intelligence services after a 30-year military presence in Lebanon and the dismantling of the police state they had played a very large role in establishing in Lebanon. Did I, who was born and have lived for over twenty five years of my life in Lebanon, participate in the demonstration? Certainly not: not only was I unwilling to have to listen to the self-proclaimed “opposition leaders,” for the most part a motley assemblage of corrupt sham politicians and/or sectarian rabble-rousers and/or war criminals from the period of the civil war and the Israeli invasions; I, whose dead father was Iraqi; whose mother, while a Lebanese citizen, was born, in 1940, in Haifa, in former Palestine; who has lived for fifteen years in the United States of America; and whose nationality entry in my Lebanese Laissez-passer travel document indicates “Non Lebanese,” besides did not belong in a demonstration in which many protesters carried large banners proclaiming “100 percent Lebanese.” Why did not one woman raise the following banner: **LEBANESE FATHER + SYRIAN MOTHER = 100% LEBANESE!; SYRIAN FATHER + LEBANESE MOTHER = 0% LEBANESE! OH LEBANESE, LEARN YOUR ARITHMETIC!** Is it strange then that the Lebanese have contributed 0% of the winners of the Fields

medal, the most prestigious mathematical award? I would like to inform these xenophobes and the other demonstrators who condoned their behavior what being 100% Lebanese amounts to: 0% of the Nobel Prize laureates in the fields of physics, medicine, and chemistry; 0% of the winners of the A.M. Turing Award, given annually by the Association for Computing Machinery; and, with a 0.02% margin of error, 0% of the world’s scientific publications. How can eight hundred thousand people not think, at least about dialectics and the purported pathetic change of quantity into quantity? **THOSE WHO LACK IMAGINATION CANNOT IMAGINE WHAT IS LACKING** (another one of May 1968’s slogans). While for many psychoanalysts what is lacking is lack, for me what is lacking is the new, which has to be imaginatively created; access to ‘*alam al-khayâl*, the *mundus imaginalis*, the Imaginal World; and the people. Yes, what I felt at the sight of the over 800,000 persons assembled in and around the Central District is that *the people are missing*: “The people no longer exist, or not yet... *the people are missing*... [This truth] was absolutely clear in the third world, where oppressed and exploited nations remained in a state of perpetual minorities, in a collective identity crisis. Third world and minorities gave rise to authors who would be in a position, in relation to their nation and their personal situation in that nation, to say: the people are what is missing. Kafka and Klee had been the first to state this explicitly.”<sup>30</sup> Was not one of the tasks of the demonstrators to paint and write one or more slogans that would dissuade parliamentary candidates from covering the city’s walls and trees with their photographs, as they did in the previous, 2000 parliamentary elections? For example, the following May 1968 graffiti: **BE REALISTIC, DEMAND THE IMPOSSIBLE!**

Let us demand the impossible in either of these two senses: by making it possible or else by becoming aware of it as such and consequently awakening into reality. From the first perspective, and within the context of the scientific community in the developed regions of the world, one can paraphrase the slogan thus: be realistic, accept what your experiments, such as the double-slit one, and the equations of your successful theories, such as general relativity and quantum physics, are indicating: the wave-particle duality of light; negative energy; interaction-free measurement; the existence of black holes, at whose singularities—according to quantum gravity as it is currently understood—“time ceases to exist” (“no longer can we say that ‘this thing happens before that one’”), and space becomes “a random, probabilistic froth,” or “—according to the laws of general relativity—the curvature of spacetime becomes infinitely large, and spacetime ceases to exist” (basing himself on his general theory of relativity and gravitation, published in 1916, Einstein tried in his 1939-paper “On a Stationary System with Spherical Symmetry Consisting of Many Gravitating Masses” to prove that black holes were impossible—succeeding scientists have used the theory of relativity to show that many stars are bound to implode into black holes [see Jeremy Bernstein’s “The Reluctant Father of Black Holes,” *Scientific American*, June 1996])... While some of what was thought impossible, for example interaction-free measurement, turned out, thanks to quantum mechanics, not to be so, what one thought possible, human life, is really impossible: “Human life is *impossible*.<sup>31</sup> But it is only affliction which makes us feel this” (Simone Weil, *Gravity & Grace*). The “contemporary” Lebanese, who underwent a protracted civil-war and two Israeli invasions in the latter part of the Twentieth Century, should be aware of this

better than many other peoples. Unfortunately, with rare exceptions, even though the vast majority of the Lebanese discovered in affliction that life is impossible, they then limited this impossibility cheaply, “realistically,” to the period of affliction, considering human life impossible during affliction, rather than coming to the realization that affliction does not make human life impossible but merely reveals that it is impossible, always—do many people make other people’s lives impossible the better to hide from themselves and others that human life *as such* is impossible? Whenever there is an impossibility and people do not register it, let alone are jolted by it, we are dealing with a dream (Freud: “The way in which dreams treat the category of contraries and contradictories is highly remarkable. It is simply disregarded. ‘No’ seems not to exist so far as dreams are concerned. They show a particular preference for combining contraries into a unity or for representing them as one and the same thing” and “Contradictory thoughts do not try to eliminate one another, but continue side by side, and often combine to form condensation-products, as though no contradiction existed”).<sup>32</sup> While some people daydream of life without affliction, life, at least life without affliction, i.e. the life that is not viewed by the majority of humans as impossible, is a dream (or a trance)—as the great Sûfi Ibn al-‘Arabî, an awakened one, knew all too well. Those who register this impossibility that is human life wake up, i.e. die before dying physically (according to a tradition traced back to the prophet Muhammad: “People are asleep, and when they die, they awake”), or else, deluding themselves with regard to the impossibility, localize it: “It was only a dream” (a recent cinematic example appears in Andy and Larry Wachowski’s Gnostic film *The Matrix*, 1999). But by waking up, one “finds” “oneself” in impossibility,

undergoing labyrinthine space and time, over-turns, freezings still, slow-motion, and then one either wakes up again into a lesser impossibility, one that while actually ever present is obvious only in affliction, or else wakes up truly into actual Possibility as such, God. Were there many Saudi dreams in the second half of the Twentieth Century that are persisting into the first decade of the Twenty First Century? Yes, in one of these, women are not allowed to drive. Was there and is there an American dream? Yes, there was and there continues to be an American dream, indeed a number of American dreams. On 28 August 1963, the American dream was not the one proclaimed by Martin Luther King before more than 250,000 people, a fifth of them white, gathered near the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, "I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.' ... I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character," for these words already indicate an awakening from a nightmare as a result of registering an impossibility; rather the dream was continued segregation, with its demeaning "For Whites Only" signs, and racial discrimination against African Americans. Is there a Lebanese dream? Yes, there is. On 24 August 2005, a day after watching my video *A Special Effect Termed "Time"; or, Filming Death at Work* (32 minutes, 2005) at the *..né.à.beyrouth* film and video festival, during the projection of which a large number of the spectators thought it impossible to sit through the section "Still Life with 12 Minutes and Sounds" and started to applaud in order to interrupt the projection and then, when this failed to produce

the intended effect, booed the video,<sup>33</sup> *Le Monde* journalist Isabelle Regnier asked me: "Is it possible to abolish religious sectarianism in Lebanon?" "Let me rephrase your question in order to better answer it: 'Isn't it impossible to abolish religious sectarianism in Lebanon?' As far as I am concerned, what is impossible is not abolishing religious sectarianism, but rather religious sectarianism itself in Lebanon (and in Iraq too)." In the "contemporary" Lebanese dream, Lebanon can maintain the sectarian system as well as laws discriminating against the, as of 30 June 2003, 391,679 Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Lebanon, and the additional 10,000 to 40,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon that are not registered with UNRWA, with regard to the right to own and inherit property, including law 296 of 2001 amending decree 11614 of 1969; and with regard to the right to work, including ministerial decrees 17561 of 10 July 1962 and 621/1 of 15 December 1995 (in the 'Ayn al-Hilwa camp, up to 80 per cent of professionals, including doctors, teachers and engineers, are unemployed); and practices that prohibit or hinder the reconstruction or the development of Palestinian refugee camps and settlements. Some awaken from a protracted dreamless sleep (this is what George Antonius appears to be referring to in his mediocre book *The Arab Awakening*, 1938); others are awakened from a dream, more specifically from some impossibility in the dream. Whereas those holding statuses of power notwithstanding that they are not sovereign, as evidenced by their continuing to talk after giving their word, which proves that they are unfit to promise, appear to promise the impossible to those who, unbeknownst to themselves, are living impossible lives in part because of impossibilities in the dream of their

unhappy promisers, revolutionaries and those who died before dying (physically) venture to initiate an awakening (a revolution is triggered by an acute awareness of an *impossibility* in the dream of those in power).

According to an Arabic saying, a poet is entitled to do what others are not allowed to do (*yabuqq lil-shá'ir má lá yabuqq li ghayrib*). Is this the case at all in Lebanon? Could all those who run red lights; weave in and out of traffic; don't bother to signal to other drivers before turning left or right, slowing down, stopping or changing lanes—or, when they exceptionally do signal to other drivers, do it at the very last moment; drive faster than the posted speed limit, including within 500 feet of a school while children are outside or crossing the street, and do so not in the left, “fast” lane, but in the right, slow lane, tailgating there a car in which perchance the poet who wrote *The Arab Apocalypse* (1989) is traveling during one of her yearly short visits to Lebanon; disregard the “WRONG WAY” and “DO NOT ENTER” signs, and go against traffic; make a U-turn where a “No U-Turn” sign is posted; disregard all right of way rules;<sup>34</sup> do not dim their lights to low beams within 5 feet, let alone 500 feet of a vehicle coming toward them, or within 3 feet, let alone 300 feet of a vehicle they are following; and when they miss an exit while trying to dial a number on their cellular phone stop all of a sudden and then—if no accident has resulted—back up, *even on a highway*, till they reach again the exit; park or leave their vehicles in front of a driveway; and/or when returning to the slow lane provocatively come dangerously close to the car they have just passed... be poets? No. Contrariwise, is it permissible in Lebanon for an actual poet to stop at a red light?—or will the impatient driver in the car behind him or her repeatedly honk their horn? Is it possible

for him or her to drive only at the speed limit in the slow lane—without some possessed Lebanese driver tailgating him way beyond the speed limit? What would be an example of real poetic license? What is permissible for a poet but not for others? It is, for example, to have a revolution (or uprising) without violence. The Lebanese, who for the most part pride themselves on their business savvy (this is particularly the case among those who do not consider themselves the descendants of Arabs but solely of the Phoenicians), wanted a revolution cheaply: with neither violence (the Russian Revolution...) nor poetry (May 1968, with its famous banner: **A SINGLE NONREVOLUTIONARY WEEKEND IS INFINITELY MORE BLOODY THAN A MONTH OF TOTAL REVOLUTION**—I would add the following qualification: but it is either equally or less bloody than a month of ersatz or partial or counter revolution); with neither blood nor artistic/poetic/cinematic red<sup>35</sup> (when in an October 1965 interview in *Cahiers du cinéma*, the interviewer observed, “There is a good deal of blood in *Pierrot [le fou]*,” Godard retorted: “Not blood, red”);<sup>36</sup> with neither severed heads (the French Revolution and its emblematic guillotine) nor terrific reflexive cinematic close-ups (Raul Rúiz: “Why not think that a close-up is a severed head and that it should be considered in this manner? One has therefore to invent the story in which when one goes from a master shot of the characters to a close up, it is in fact because the character's head has been severed”<sup>37</sup>). Can any discerning person expect from a capitalist who amassed his exorbitant fortune in one of the most conservative countries, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and with the help of this kingdom's rulers, and named his “movement” “The Future” (The Future TV, etc.) a revolution? No, at most he or she can expect from him and

his ilk a thriving *futures market*! The revolution has nothing to do with the future. It has to do with the present. The revolutionary is of his or her time. He or she is not trying to change society as much as reveal to it, sometimes violently, that it is lagging behind the change that has already occurred. A real revolution makes the majority of people, who lag behind the time in which they are living, the contemporaries of the time in which they are living.<sup>38</sup> One should revolt in order to be truly of one's time, then wait properly for the future—since we do not know what the coming dispensation of Being will be; as well as for the forthcoming, i.e. for the messianic: only the one who is properly of his or her time can wait properly for the forthcoming.<sup>39</sup> We have to wait properly for the forthcoming, for the messiah; and/or for the Rilkean non-messianic angel; and/or for the (cinematic, artistic, philosophical, etc.) idea (the radical-closure filmmaker David Lynch said in an interview: “When I sit quietly in a chair and sometimes close my eyes, I can drift into places where ideas can be captured”;<sup>40</sup> and I, an aphoristic author, wrote in my book *Distracted*: “Nightclub. Asked three women for a dance. Three *Nos* [from the same mouth, saliva as eyebrow make-up, and the “No”]. Now waiting, like a woman, for the idea to come to me”<sup>41</sup>). If *the messiah is forthcoming*, this is also because even after he comes, we are unaware that he has done so and therefore continue to wait for him, so that while we believe that we are waiting for him (Twelver Shi'ites' lament during the yearly commemoration of 'Āshûrâ': “How come the nights of waiting have lasted so long?”), he is actually waiting for us, waiting for us to learn how to wait properly—this is how the short period of the forthcoming gets greatly extended, for millennia. Twelver Shi'ites waited for the Mahdî during the Lesser Occultation (aka Shorter Occultation), but he has waited for

them since then, i.e. for the period that is, from this perspective, imprecisely called the Greater Occultation. To a Shi'ite or a Jew, one has to insist: “Don't make the Mahdî/messiah wait!” Godot (Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*) will come when those waiting for him learn how to wait properly. Bad waiting: when we should wait we don't wait, but when we should stop waiting because the messiah has already come we continue to wait.

### The Last Men in Beirut

Chouf member of parliament Walid Junblat, a former civil-warlord and the leader of “the opposition” in the aftermath of the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq al-Harîrî, said in encouragement to the hundreds of thousands of Lebanese, among whom were a significant number of students, who demonstrated on 14 March 2005: “The Lebanese youths have initiated the race towards a free and sovereign Lebanon. They are the future of the country, and they have decided how they want that future to be.” Other sham politicians, especially from the movement of assassinated former prime minister Rafiq al-Harîrî, The Future, repeated this locution when addressing Lebanese youths. Like Junblat, they must have heard it from their parents at commencement addresses, and were in turn repeating it to their sons (and daughters?), meaning by it to say what goes without saying: that the present youths are the ones who, in a few years, are going to fill positions in politics and administration—with the implication that in yet more years to come, when middle-aged, they are going to say it in turn to their sons (and daughters?), and the latter in turn to theirs. Given that they are largely the product of their retarded country and are lagging behind the time in which

they are living, they definitively should not be telling anyone about the future. Beyond being a statement one should introduce with such expressions as “needless to say,” could “You are the future of the country” be, at this epochal juncture, true in a sense that none of these backward, mostly old parochial “politicians,” who otherwise and for the most part alternated between platitudes, outright lies, “religious” incitement of their various sectarian constituencies and *order-words* (*mots d'ordre*)<sup>42</sup> from their global overlord (the USA, therefore the order-words *globalization* and *democracy*—how can there be democracy in the Arab world when, as any genuine Arab writer and thinker and artist feels, *the people are missing* [Deleuze?]) and/or regional masters (the *ba'ath* regime in Syria...), fathoms? Yes. Terry Grossman and Ray Kurzweil write in their book *Fantastic Voyage: Live Long Enough to Live Forever* (2004): “Do we have the knowledge and the tools today to live forever? ... According to models that Ray has created, our paradigm-shift rate—the rate of technical progress—is doubling every decade, and the capability (price performance, capacity, and speed) of specific information technologies is doubling every year. So the answer to our question is actually a definitive yes—the knowledge exists, if aggressively applied, for you to slow aging and disease processes to such a degree that you can be in good health and good spirits when the more radical life-extending and life-enhancing technologies become available over the next couple of decades.... The goal of extending longevity can be taken in three steps, or Bridges. This book is intended to serve as a guide to living long enough in good health and spirits—Bridge One—to take advantage of the full development of the biotechnology revolution—Bridge Two. This, in turn, will lead to the nanotechnology-AI (artificial intelligence) revolution—Bridge

Three—which has the potential to allow us to live indefinitely.” It is preposterous that the two authors should use the term “bridge” in the sense of *step* with regards to the goal of living indefinitely, i.e. of treating man as a goal, when Nietzsche had used it, on the contrary, regarding the task of overcoming man, viewing man as a bridge to the superman: “What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal” (“Zarathustra’s Prologue,” *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*); “There it was that I picked up the word ‘Superman’ and that man is something that must be overcome, that man is a bridge and not a goal” (“Of Old and New Law-Tables,” *Ibid.*); “Truly, you may all be Higher Men, (Zarathustra went on): but for me—you are not high and strong enough.... You are only bridges: may higher men than you step across upon you! You are steps...” (“The Greeting,” *Ibid.*). Present-day youths may well become what Nietzsche has dubbed the *last men* in his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, 1885: “Thus spoke Zarathustra to the people: ... Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer shoot the arrow of his longing beyond man.... Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the *last man*.

“What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?” thus asks the last man, and he blinks.

“The earth has become small,<sup>43</sup> and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. His race is as ineradicable as the flea-beetle; the last man lives longest.

“We have invented happiness,”<sup>44</sup> say the last men and blink.”<sup>45</sup>

How inopportune to try to make people live indefinitely when one has not prior to that tackled, if not solved the problem of nihilism<sup>46</sup> (Nietzsche: “What I relate is the history

of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: the advent of nihilism”<sup>47</sup>—unless this indefinite extension of life be the ultimate avatar of nihilism. More specifically, how inopportune it is to extend the life of the Lebanese indefinitely, when, having come out of a devitalizing civil-war, they are zombie-like:<sup>48</sup> according to Deleuze, one of the characteristics of “the crisis which has shaken the action-image [and which] has depended on many factors which only had their full effect after the [second world] war” is “events which never truly concern the person who provokes them or is subject to them, even when they strike him in his flesh: events whose bearer, a man internally dead, as Lumet says, is in a hurry to extricate himself.”<sup>49</sup>

### *Jouissance* in Post-War Beirut

#### *Avertissement au lecteur*

Hölderlin: “Yet it behooves us, under the storms of God, / Ye poets! With uncovered head to stand, / With our own hand to grasp the very lightning-flash / Paternal, and to pass, wrapped in song, / The divine gift to the people.” It is poets, videomakers, filmmakers, vocalists and musicians, *not journalists*, who should report to us from *jouissance*-inducing zones of conflict, since they possibly can wrap this *jouissance* in song. Regrettably, poets, videomakers and filmmakers are rarely allowed in such zones—only journalists are allowed! But are there enough poets for the *jouissance*-inducing conflicts? It seems that there aren’t: “*Bibliothèque Nationale*. I am sitting here reading a poet... What a fate. There are perhaps three hundred people reading in this room; but it is impossible that each one of them has a poet.

(God knows what they have). There can’t *be* three hundred poets” (Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, trans. Stephen Mitchell). Do we, Arabs, have poets presently, when we most need them? Fortunately, we do. For example: Mahmoud Darwish, and the man who has assumed the name of one who, unlike him, truly encountered *jouissance*, the god Adonis? No—these two are not poets; rather, videomaker Roy Samaha. In evil times, many a poet is affined with these words Nietzsche wrote in a 5 January 1889 letter to Jakob Burckhardt, who was then a professor at the University of Basel: “Actually I would much rather be a Basel professor than God; but I have not ventured to carry my private egoism so far as to omit creating the world on his account. You see, one must make sacrifices, however and wherever one may be living.”<sup>50</sup> During the latest Israeli war on Lebanon, a Lebanese poet’s sacrifice consisted in watching TV, which he had previously avoided. To counter the sense of imprisonment, he made sport of the stage directions regarding the ghost in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: *Enter the Ghost, Exit Ghost, Enter the Ghost, Exit the Ghost, Enter the Ghost, Exeunt the Ghost and Hamlet, Enter the Ghost and Hamlet, Exit, Exeunt, Enter the Ghost*. “Does the ghost, who haunts, ever enter or exit definitively? When the undead ostensibly exits, various anomalies imply that he ‘is’ still there (for instance, even after the ghost of Hamlet’s father exits, those present soon hear his injunction, ‘Swear,’ to which Hamlet responds: ‘Ah, ha, boy, sayest thou so? Art thou there, truepenny?’ Indeed, when the ghost repeats, ‘Swear,’ but from another spot, Hamlet responds: ‘*Hic et ubique?*’); and while seemingly present he is revealed to be not there, as is made manifest by the mirror at the location in question in vampire films. I therefore would assert that the stage directions ‘*Enter the Ghost*’ and ‘*Exit the Ghost*’ were not added

by Shakespeare, but were inserted by some editor.” Whereas the integration of sexuality, indeed of eroticism in religion is salutary in Taoism, where it is mainly a technique (through retention of the sperm, etc.) for prolonging life, ideally indefinitely; in Tantra, mainly as an attempt, complementing the arrest of respiration and suspension of thought, to “immobilize semen,” even obtain “return of semen” so as to reach the state of *sabhaja*, of non-conditioned existence; and in some antinomian messianic sects, mainly as a symptom of the withdrawal of the religious Law (*Shari‘a*/Torah) past a surpassing disaster, it is not so through zapping between the juxtaposed channels on TV—zapping is not a manner of changing channels but of mixing, editing them on the fly; the only real manner and gesture of changing channels is to switch channels only when a program ends and as another program on another channel fades in—or else to turn off the TV altogether. Far more dangerous than any specific TV program is the immixing and contamination of genres through zapping between various TV channels: the soft porn of many Arabic music videos mixed, however fleetingly, with ostensibly religious programs and with the news footage of the beheadings and the car and suicide bombings perpetuated by al-Qâ‘ida in Iraq.<sup>51</sup> Should we be surprised that we are thus producing a generation of people who cannot enter a church or a mosque without compulsively zapping in their minds, without their zapping minds switching to obscene words or pornographic images? My proposed double feature *Rear Window Vertigo*, in my book *Two or Three Things I’m Dying to Tell You* (2005), and my video *Mother and Son; or, That Obscure Object of Desire (Scenes from an Anamorphic Double Feature)* (41 minutes, 2006) are manners of retorting, through eliciting an occult connection between various ostensibly independent films

(in the aforementioned text between Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*, and in the aforementioned video between Sokurov’s *Mother and Son* and Hitchcock’s *Psycho*), to the obscene promiscuity established, through zapping, between different TV programs on various channels. Whereas by not leaving his apartment, he was spared getting wounded, losing a limb or even dying in the Israeli bombardments, he, a poet, nonetheless ended up encountering the lightning flash of *jouissance* on TV and, while trying to wrap it in a song, severing his eye, and then severing also one of his hands. Along the lines of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent,” I recommend concerning the *jouissance* that one cannot transfigure into (Hölderlinian) song<sup>52</sup> or (Rilkean) angelic, awful beauty (“Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angels’ / hierarchies? And even if one of them pressed me / suddenly against his heart: I would be consumed / in that overwhelming existence. For beauty is nothing / but the beginning of terror, which we still are just able to endure, / and we are so awed because it serenely disdains / to annihilate us. Every angel is terrifying” [*Duino Elegies*, 1923, trans. Stephen Mitchell])<sup>53</sup> that one remain silent—if not remove his ears and tongue and eyes. “What happened after, / was terrible to see. He tore the brooches— / the gold chased brooches fastening her robe— / away from her and lifting them up high / dashed them on his own eyeballs, shrieking out / such things as: they will never see the crime / I have committed or had done upon me! / ... —with such imprecations / he struck his eyes again and yet again / with the brooches ...” (Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, trans. David Green). Is the excommunication of Oedipus a result of his transgression of a taboo against incest? Yes, but it is also possibly due to the circumstance that the *jouissance* of repeatedly dashing



brooches in his eyes propagated itself to Oedipus, staining him. Were a Christian to have witnessed Oedipus' gesture of gravely wounding his eyes and the *jouissance* staining this act, would he or she have gouged out his or her eye? "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell" (Matthew 5:29). But gouging out one's eye is itself often linked to and productive of *jouissance*. How foresightful then of the New Testament to have detected this danger: "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand [the one with which you gouged out and threw away your right eye] causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matthew 5:29-30)—only make sure that while cutting off your right hand that gouged out your right eye you follow another one of Jesus Christ's injunctions: "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (Matthew 6:3),<sup>54</sup> i.e., here, do not let your left hand get infected with the *jouissance* that has already contaminated your right hand.

Since the post-war zone he was haunting was "fast" becoming fully mundane, no longer hospitable to those *poor in world* (to die is not to cease to exist but to lose the world; contrariwise, to be born is not to be given existence but to receive a world, or at least the genuine possibility of a world—with every birth of a human, a world is bestowed, given, or at least made genuinely possible), the vampire was for some time now on the lookout for a new labyrinth on which he could be keyed. A scene in Danielle Arbid's

*Alone with War* (2000), which he saw on the ARTE TV channel on 30 November 2000, confirmed what he had surmised: the circulation of *jouissance* in post-civil-war Lebanon in at least some of the former militiamen. In Arbid's interview with a former militiaman, Mohammad, he says that he turned into a sniper at the age of 12, shooting dead his first victim already at that premature age. "Since then I participated in as many battles as I could, and I grew to love blood. Believe me, today, if I don't hear the sound of bombardments, I become disoriented, lost. I go to the south for that." "That?" "To hear the bombardments. Each and every day there is a bombardment. I hear the bombardment, I hear the sorties of the Israeli airplanes, and I feel relieved."<sup>55</sup> He then guides her through the underground maze of their former headquarters, where they used to kill their opponents: "Any captured man, for example a Phalangist, was brought here to be liquidated. We used to throw them here, and then, after two to three days, burn the corpses to get rid of the stench." "But here, at this moment, don't you feel any regret?" "Here, I am cheerful." "Why?" "When I am here, I feel relieved." Later, while sitting in his room, he points to his breast and confesses: "Evil is here. Do you understand what I am driving at?" "No. What are you driving at?" What an interview between the evil and the bad, and hence what a misunderstanding on the part of the interviewer! "You were talking about evil. It is from here [*he points again at his breast*] that it comes." "You consider that you carry evil in you?!" "Yes. Where did evil come from? I will tell you: it came from the war." "Who? Who?... Where in the war?" "Evil came after the war. Do you get what I am driving at? I don't tell this to whomever. Evil is inside. I live in evil. And where does evil come from? From blood. Are you paying attention? Evil comes from blood." And from the

TV news images of Beirut, the vampire sensed that he could still find ruins, with their labyrinthine spaces-times, in Lebanon, and that therefore that country was still hospitable to vampires. It was finally Jalal Toufic's mixed-media work *'Āshūrā: This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (2002) in the exhibition "Synopsis II-Theologies" at the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens, whose subtitle piqued his curiosity and which he went to see daily for the duration of the exhibition, from 15 October 2002 to 5 January 2003, that clinched his "decision" to move to Lebanon, a country that had at that point what he needed: blood, ruins, *jouissance*—and, given that the majority of Lebanon's population (59.7%) is Moslem, a historically and traditionally problematic relation to figurative images<sup>56</sup>—something to which he, an undead who did not appear in mirrors, was affined. Given these favorable conditions, it suddenly occurred to the vampire that at least one other vampire must have come to the same "decision" to move to, i.e. be keyed on Lebanon. At the airport, he flagged down a taxicab. Once inside the car, he discovered, and not only because of the other's failure to appear in the mirror, that the owner of the taxi was also a vampire. This other vampire worked at night as a taxi driver at the airport; this way he could occasionally mortally attack the Lebanese he had just picked up, making him or her discover that he or she is "a stranger in a strange land" (Bram Stoker's *Dracula*). The recently arrived vampire was taken aback that the other vampire did not quantum-tunnel straight to the destination, but did so between the red traffic lights on the way—unbeknownst to him, the other vampire was reacting to the discourteous habit of the majority of Lebanese drivers of going through red traffic lights. While waiting for the red traffic light to change, he remarked to the other vampire: "Were the passenger

of your car to look in the mirror, he would feel that there was no one else in the moving car, that it was moving on its own. He or she would thus have a foretaste of psychosis, of his coming undeath..." He was interrupted by the driver in the car behind them, who insistently honked his horn notwithstanding that the traffic light was still red, backed the car up, moved to the next lane, then overtook the taxi while yelling: "What are you waiting for, *yā mayyit!* (literally, "Oh, dead person!"; figuratively: "Oh, you who are so slow as to be dead!")?" As he drove ahead, the driver of that car suddenly heard a voice behind him saying politely: "I'll stop here, please!" Startled, he involuntarily, instinctively brought the car to a screeching stop and looked in the mirror toward the back seat. He saw no one there! He then perceived the vampire right next to him: "Were you erudite, you would know that *the dead travel fast* (Bram Stoker's *Dracula*). I'll make it possible for you to arrive dead on time." He began sucking the driver's blood as he finished saying his humoristic words. Shortly after arriving in Lebanon, the vampire opened a video rental store: it seemed to him that it was one of the most appropriate venues to detect people who were erotically aroused by horror films. He would cursorily check the lists of the videos rented by his customers and quickly detect those it would be fitting to prey on. And when one of the latter was late in returning the DVD he had rented, he had one of his employees call him and insist that he return it the same night, and he would make sure to "be" in the video store then. "Presently," he inquired of a man in his mid-fifties, who was wearing an obtrusive crucifix around his neck: "This is the fifth time you check out this horror film. Are you a film teacher or critic?" "No. Aren't you too drawn to horror films?" "I am thrilled by *some* horror films." "My favorite films all belong to the horror

genre. What's your favorite film?" "*Hiroshima mon amour*—it is the only zombie film I care about." "I'll rent it. I have a large TV with surround sound. Why don't you come to my place later tonight? We can watch the film together and have a discussion following it." The store owner accepted the offer. On entering his host's apartment, he was immediately struck by the screensaver image on the latter's computer: it was the scene in Giovanni di Paolo's *Six Scenes from the Life of Saint John the Baptist* (1455/60) showing blood gushing from the beheaded saint's neck. "He looks to me like one of those birdlike creatures one apprehends in a number of Francis Bacon's paintings: *Seated Figure*, 1974; *Figure in Movement*, 1976; *Triptych Inspired by the Oresteia of Aeschylus*, 1981. These give me a more intense, indeed an altogether different type of erotic thrill than the couples in bed in such Bacon paintings as *Two Figures*, 1953, and *Two Figures Lying on a Bed with Attendants*, 1968." "It seems that for you the former paintings accomplish better Bacon's program of *hitting directly the nervous system*. It is as if by doing away with the sense organs of the depicted models, sometimes violently (missing eyes, etc.), one does away with or neutralizes the indirect means of accessing sensation, enhancing the chances that it will sympathetically directly hit the nervous or libidinal system of the spectator." After the scenes with the images of the victims of the nuclear explosion in *Hiroshima mon amour*, the host very quickly lost interest and turned the volume down. "Judging by the location of your video store, I would assume that you are a Christian." "No, I am not a Christian!" The host was perplexed. After several glasses of wine, and after recovering his composure, he asked his guest: "Wouldn't you be tempted to go to church were they to offer you excellent wine during the Eucharist, for example Château Pétrus 1982 or Château Cheval

Blanc 1947?" "I am not welcome there!" "How would the priest and the congregation know that?" "Judging by the blasphemous images and thoughts that pass through my mind in a church, I know that—and so do the voices! The last time I tried to go inside a church, a voice exclaimed in my head: 'I wonder how it is that in the iconography of the crucifixion not once has it been shown that what was pouring out of the wounds of Christ was wine?' And I suddenly remembered the New Testament episode in which 'The demons [in two possessed men] begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs." He said to them, "Go!"; and I imagined that on their way into the pigs, they mocked him thus: 'O Jesus, "do not throw your pearls to pigs" [Matthew 7:6].'" The host objected: "But those sacrilegious thoughts and images should be precisely what incites you to go to church! I first joined the Lebanese Forces to take revenge for the slaughter of my sister by a sniper on the Moslem side of the Green Line. After several months of participating in battles, I began to be increasingly vexed by the idiocy of those civilians who would address the following reproach to me, 'How can you kill while wearing the cross on which the one who said "But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39) was crucified?', for after participating in a few massacres, I wore the crucifix around my neck while butchering in a deliberate desecration of the cross, a transgression that gave me, as well as a significant number of other militiamen, an erotic thrill. Since participating in the Sabra and Shatila massacre in 1982, I am still waiting for a human who would make me engage in a sexual relationship with her or him as an organic whole." His guest got closer to him and looked him straight in the eyes. The former militiaman saw in the Gorgon

eyes of the vampire the horror of the undeath realm, and, entranced, muttered in a dreadful lascivious manner: “The human being is this night, this empty nothing, that contains everything in its simplicity—an unending wealth of many representations, images, of which none belongs to him—or which are not present. This night, the interior of nature, that exists here—pure self—in phantasmagorical representations, is night all around it, in which here shoots a bloody head—there another white ghastly apparition, suddenly here before it, and just so disappears. One catches sight of this night when one looks human beings in the eye—this night that becomes awful suspends the night of the world in an opposition” (from Hegel’s manuscripts for the *Realphilosophie* of 1805-1806). The vampire muttered the exact same words in sync with the former militiaman. Then he exclaimed aloud, “How uncanny that you, the purported living, and I, the one officially dead, a vampire, can see eye to eye.” While he sucked his blood, he asked him, “Am I, a dead person, making your blood run cold?”, then turned the volume up on the TV monitor still playing *Hiroshima mon amour* and listened to the voice-over of the French female protagonist lying on her dying German lover during the last days of the German occupation of France: “Someone had fired on him from a garden. I stayed near his body all that day and then all the next night.... Little by little he grew cold beneath me.... the moment of his death actually escaped me, because... because even at that very moment, and even afterward, yes, even afterward, I can say that I couldn’t feel the slightest difference between this dead body and mine. All I could find between this body and mine were obvious similarities...”<sup>57</sup> The vampire didn’t feel that he was radically altering the sort of existence and pressing interests of this former militiaman by killing him and turning him

into a vampire. As they began to hear with increased frequency about murders of people they knew to be ex-militiamen, the former militiamen, who had been pardoned by the general amnesty, began to suspect that someone was after their blood, that there was bad blood between him and them. Were the human world not largely inhabited by doltish and garrulous people, it would go without saying that were the vampire to be caught off guard by his erotized hunger he would attack anyone who happened to be within his telepathic sight; nonetheless his choice victims were those he found in movie theaters showing such films as Gaspar Noé’s *Seul contre tous* (*One Against All*, 1998) or Robert Rodriguez and Frank Miller’s *Sin City* (aka *Frank Miller’s Sin City*, 2005), or who rented such films from his video store, or who watched the images and listened to the sounds of the beheadings of hostages in Iraq posted on the internet, and who while talking about them betrayed their erotic arousal through ticks, spasms, and lustful gazes in their horrified eyes. He would give them what they were already reaching for: the erotization of horror.<sup>58</sup> The massacre that took place in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps starting on the night of 16 September 1982 and ending on the morning of the 18th under the direct command of Elie Hobeika, and in which 700-3500 Palestinians were slaughtered, could not have been only a revengeful retaliation by Lebanese Maronite Christian militiamen for the assassination, in a massive explosion on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, of their leader, Bachir Gemayel, a ruthless, sectarian, chauvinistic civil-warlord, but must have been at least at some level and for some of the participants an orgy of *jouissance*. But even among the militiamen who were simply taking revenge, some became prey to *jouissance* while perpetuating the massacre, and some discovered later that they grew to feel an

erotization of horror.<sup>59</sup> Subsequently, these participants in the massacre must have felt not remorse but nostalgia for such an orgy. The normative sexual life of some of the participants in the massacre must have become very poor afterward. Isn't one of the ideological functions of Robert M. Hatem (aka Cobra)'s trashy sensationalist pamphlet, *From Israel to Damascus: The Painful Road of Blood, Betrayal and Deception* (Pride International Publications, 1999), to make its naïve readers believe that the sexuality of these militiamen, exemplified by that of their leader Elie Hobeika, around whom the pamphlet revolves, is to a large extent no different than that of most people except through the number of their conquests (reportedly, Hobeika had an "incredible" number of mistresses and one-night stands), and that the most extreme depravity of Hobeika, the paradigm of these militiamen, consisted in having sexual intercourse with the wives of his best friends as well as with his wife's sister; forming a fleeting ménage à trois with a belly dancer and her 16-year-old daughter; preferring prostitutes to other women, etc. It is symptomatic of this ideological occultation that the sexuality of Hobeika is confined to two chapters (33 and 34) that do not mention the massacres he ordered and the atrocities he perpetuated—the latter being dealt with in separate chapters. This book that at one point produced a scandal in Lebanon and was soon after prohibited there performed nonetheless its main ideological role—as is most often the case, the exoteric scandal occulted the real scandal.

Quite unexpectedly, the vampire became enamored of a woman. Fortunately, he was satiated when he "first" met the woman of his—death (both had an impression of déjà vu during that meeting). Love can subsist despite the break of (organic) death, continue into (un)death, as the subtitle of Jalal Toufic's

book *Undying Love, or Love Dies* indicates, but can it resist drive? Not wishing to be placed in a situation where he would be forced to discover his actual answer to this question, he asked his beloved, indeed entreated her not to show up at his house without prior notice. A week later, she phoned to inform him that she'd just come back home from a long day at work and that she would be resting for a while, then take a shower, then watch one of the DVDs he gave her in their first meeting, Hitchcock's *The Trouble with Harry*, and then come to visit him. He set about finding a victim. He gravitated toward B018, a nightclub in Karantina built on the site of a massacre perpetuated in 1975 by Phalangist militiamen on the Palestinians who lived in the refugee camp there as well as on many Kurdish and Lebanese war refugees who also lived in that zone. The only things he could stand about this kitschy nightclub were the bar chairs with their long backs. He sat next to a woman at the bar. She shortly began retouching her makeup. While doing so, she sighed: "Though seeing, they do not see" (Matthew 13:13). He felt alarmed that she may have remarked that he failed to appear in the small mirror of her blusher case. But he was quickly relieved as he realized that she is blind. At his house, while they caressed each other's faces, she began to describe him. While listening to her haptic portrait, the vampire turned toward the mirror, where he did not appear. Then she asked him to describe her. "I find it very difficult to do a portrait. Nietzsche writes in his *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*: 'This attempt to tell the story of the older Greek philosophers is distinguished from similar attempts by its brevity.... It is possible to present the image of a man in three anecdotes; I shall try to emphasize three anecdotes in each system and abandon the rest.' If we do not obtain three felicitous anecdotes, but 'one' or 'two,' we produce a

lifeless version of the model. My entrancing voice will enable you to envision a felicitous example of that. In Hitchcock's *The Trouble with Harry*,<sup>60</sup> the Deputy Sheriff comes across the portrait Sam Marlowe did of Harry and is struck by its matching 'the description of a tramp with stolen shoes and a wild story about a corpse.' 'Sam, what I wanna know is where did you paint it and who is it?' 'First of all, it's not a painting. It's a drawing. Matter of fact, it's a pastel.' 'Sam, I ain't educated in fancy art [and I would add: in judging whether someone is definitely dead], but I do know the face of a dead man when I see one, and this is it.' 'Calvin, perhaps I can educate you to "fancy art.'" Sam takes the portrait from the Deputy Sheriff's hand. While sketching, he says: 'Now, a raised eyelid, perhaps... a line of fullness to the cheek... [a] lip that bends with expression. There!' It is only now that the pastel is actually finished. Has the painter 'destroyed legal evidence,' as the Deputy Sheriff protests threateningly, or did he, who according to Mrs. Rogers' earlier characterization has an artistic mind and therefore 'can see the finer things,' provide the elements missing from the unfinished portrait, revealing that it is the portrait of a clearly living person.<sup>61</sup> Was your portrait of me successful? In order to answer this question, *see me now!*" "No, my portrait of you was inaccurate, but for the opposite reason to the one you just explicated: while in my portrait, you are an alive person, in reality you appear to be lifeless!" "Look in my eyes by means of my entrancing voice!" Horrified by what she was seeing in his eyes, she stretched her agitated hand and made a gesture to close his eyes. Just as he finished sucking her blood, he heard a knock on the door. He hurriedly closed the door of the bedroom, the scene of the crime, and opened the apartment door. Once more his beloved's timing was propitious, for he was then satiated. She

insisted: "I still do not know why you came to Lebanon." "Some years ago, an issue of *Newsweek* included Beirut as one of the top twelve 'Capitals of Style.'" "But you despise *Newsweek*! Do you find Beirut to be a capital of style?" "Yes, I do. What makes Beirut a capital of style? Certainly not the things *Newsweek* lists as proofs of that: a nightclub, B-018, and a restaurant, The Centrale, both designed by architect Bernard Khoury, and the neighborhood restaurant Le Chef, serving mediocre traditional home-cooked Lebanese meals—I can well imagine *Newsweek* adding a further corroboration, the mediocre fashion designer Elie Saab. Rather, Beirut is a capital of style in my sense on account of its labyrinthine ruins; of 'me!', a mortal to death; of Jalal Toufic's books *Undying Love, or Love Dies* (2002), the revised and expanded edition of *(Vampires): An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* (2003), and *Two or Three Things I'm Dying to Tell You* (2005), and his video *Saving Face* (2003); Walid Raad's *Missing Lebanese Wars: Notebook Volume 72* (1999), *Secrets in the Open Sea* (2000), *Miraculous Beginnings* (2000), *I Only Wish that I Could Weep* (2000), *Hostage: The Bachar Tapes (English Version)*, #17 and #31 (2002), and *My Neck Is Thinner than a Hair* (2005); Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's *Ashes* (2003), *Wonder Beirut: The Story of a Pyromaniac Photographer* (1998), and *Latent Images* (1998-2005); Elias Khoury and Rabih Mroué's *Three Posters* (2000); Rabih Mroué and Lina Saneh's *Biokhraphia* (2002); Lamia Joreige's *Replay* (2000) and her video *Sleep* (2004); Ghassan Salhab's video *La rose de personne* (2000); Tony Chakar's installation *A Window to the World (An Architectural Project)* (2005); Waël Nouredidine's *From Beirut with Love* (2005)... But I am afraid that soon enough Beirut will no longer be a capital of style. By the way, a number of videos by some of the aforementioned videomakers will be screened tonight." After drinking several

glasses of wine, they decided to go to the screening. She told him that he should get his coat as it was cold outside. While she walked toward the entrance door, he quantum-tunneled to the bedroom's door. Missing him, she turned toward the bedroom: she was startled to glimpse another man, dressed identically, in the last phase of closing the bedroom's door behind him. She attributed this anomaly to the wine. When he rejoined her, she wondered aloud in his "presence": "I fail to understand why it is that our nascent love makes me melancholic. As far as I know, a melancholic is someone who is failing to accomplish the work of mourning his or her dead beloved." In the lobby of the movie theater, they were intrigued by the Jalal Toufic conceptual film posters of Tarkovsky's *Sardor*, Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* and Angelopoulos' *Eternity and a Day* lining one of the walls. Following the screening, and while waiting for a taxicab outside the cinema, they witnessed a car accident. One of the victims was ejected from the car through the windshield and lay bleeding profusely on the asphalt. The vampire fainted—it sometimes happened that just as he became satiated and the trance-like state into which the compulsion and the incredible hunger that periodically seized him had subsided by his drinking blood, if he did not leave fast enough the scene, he was seized with the same nausea he used to have when alive on seeing blood, sometimes fainting as a result of that. Several nights later, she believed that she recognized him in the street. But she could not accept the thought that the gentle man with whom she was falling in love could be the one who was murdering so savagely. She mustered her courage and called him—she did not know that he is dead: "One of the most puzzling, but at the same time instructive, usages in connection with mourning is the prohibition against uttering the name of the

dead person...."—this prohibition also applies to the vampire, who, as one of the mourners of his death, felt prohibited from uttering his name, and as a result could not call himself in the mirror, with the consequence that his mirror image no longer turned to face him. When he did not turn, she thought that she had mistaken someone else for him. Becoming aware of her presence soon after that, he could no longer suck his victim's blood and instead quantum-tunneled from the street to his ostensibly reconstructed ruin. Moments later, she phoned him and insisted that it was urgent that she see him promptly and informed him that she would be at his place in approximately thirty minutes. He had to kill another victim and, this time, successfully suck his blood till satiation before his beloved's imminent arrival. He came across a man in his late twenties walking outside his house while reading. He asked him: "Do you agree with Nietzsche that 'what is done out of love always takes place beyond good and evil?'" "Yes." He swiftly forcibly drew him inside his building. Given how rare it was to come across someone reading in Lebanon, let alone someone reading Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, he felt sorry to mortally suck his blood. While his blood was being sucked by the vampire, the young man exclaimed: "I doubt that this is what William S. Burroughs meant when he wrote: 'Anything that can be done chemically can be done in other ways.'" As the young man's bloodied body sagged, a DVD case fell from the bag he was carrying. While waiting for his beloved, the vampire watched the DVD, *Untitled for Several Reasons* (2003), feeling even more sorry on surmising that he had killed the videomaker Roy Samaha. When his beloved shortly visited him, she remarked after he managed to induce her to believe that the man she saw in the

street was not him but another person: “I just realized that in the two films we’ve already watched together, *Hiroshima mon amour* and *Last Year at Marienbad*, the protagonists have no names, or at least we are never told their names.”

He heard from one of his employees, a graduate student in the MA program in Film/Video Studies at Holy Spirit University—Kaslik, that Jalal Toufic would be holding a make up session of his class “Film and Religion” early that Sunday. He asked his employee to inquire of his professor whether he could attend the class as an auditor. Toufic agreed to that. The vampire made sure to attack someone before he went, so as to be satiated during the class and not feel overpowered by his drive and attack one of his favorite contemporary thinkers. Jalal Toufic said in that session: “Rilke writes in the fourth of his *Duino Elegies*: ‘I won’t endure these half-filled human masks; / better, the puppet. It at least is full. / I’ll put up with the stuffed skin, the wire, the face / that is nothing but appearance. Here. I’m waiting. / Even if the lights go out; even if someone / tells me “That’s all”; even if emptiness / floats toward me in a gray draft from the stage; / even if not one of my silent ancestors / stays seated with me, not one woman, not / the boy with the immovable brown eye — / I’ll sit here anyway. One can always watch. / (...) am I not right / to feel as if I *must* stay seated, must / wait before the puppet stage, or, rather, / gaze at it so intensely that at last, / to balance my gaze, an angel has to come and / make the stuffed skins startle into life. / Angel and puppet: a real play, finally.’<sup>62</sup> Were the narrator not half-filled, the angel, who is never late, would have already appeared to him or rather made his presence felt to him—when the angel appears, I discover that he was *here* all along, and that I could not have waited such a long time without the assistance of his subtle

presence, and that what I take to be first his absence then his presence is actually a modification in his presence, from a subtle one to an overwhelming one. The wait ends when there is no longer any use waiting, i.e. when one is no longer useful even for waiting, having become someone who simply is: ‘When Bruno [in Werner Herzog’s *Straszek*, 1977] asks the question: “Where do objects go when they no longer have any use?” we might reply that they normally go in the dustbin, but that reply would be inadequate, since the question is metaphysical. Bergson asked the same question and replied metaphysically: that which has ceased to be useful simply begins to *be*.<sup>63</sup> *Duino Elegies*’s real play, finally, is one between the angel and the one who waited for him and was changed by this wait into a puppet (of God). Since the angel appears to the puppet (of God), it is not accidental that one of the most felicitous sites to find angels in cinema is in pixilation films, for example Bokanowski’s *The Angel*, as well as in those films, such as *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (1992), made by filmmakers who started their cinema work with one or more short animation/pixilation films (Lynch’s *The Grandmother*, 1970, *The Alphabet*, 1968, etc.). It is precisely those who know how to ‘wait for the angel’ who are the first to leave the cinema theater during the projection of certain films, since they know that while one *can* always watch, one *should* not always watch, indeed that ‘if your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell’ (Matthew 5:29). ‘Any book which is at all important should be reread immediately’ (Schopenhauer)—I would qualify Schopenhauer’s prescription thus: ‘Any book which is at all important *but not evil* should be reread immediately’—and any original film that’s not evil should be *reviewed*. It is pointless



to enjoin the spectator of an evil film to watch it again, because the one who watches an evil film is going to see it again in the undead realm since it triggers the compulsion to repeat; if at all, one should advise him or her not to see it at all or to leave promptly the cinema showing it. While waiting for the start of a screening of Gaspar Noé's film *Seul contre tous* (*I Stand Alone*, aka *One Against All*, 1998), I asked an acquaintance I had come across at the cinema and who sat next to me, 'Why did you come to watch this film?' He answered me: 'I didn't know what to do with my time, so I cruised for a while and then decided to watch a film, just *for the hell of it*.' The following intertitle appears sixty-nine minutes into the film: 'Attention: You have 30 seconds to abandon the projection of the film.' Indeed a countdown follows. I, who had been hesitant all along to continue watching the film, whispered in my acquaintance's ear two seconds after reading the intertitle: 'Let's leave.' He encouraged me: 'You should watch films from start to finish.' 'Like hell I will do so with this film!' 'I myself will watch the whole film come hell or high water!' I left at this point, eighteen seconds into the countdown. When I later saw him, he told me: 'Through this film I've been to hell and back.' Instead of continuing to watch, should I have left too when the angel disappears from the painting<sup>64</sup> hung in Laura Palmer's room in David Lynch's *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* (1992),<sup>65</sup> given that the angel's disappearance implies that we have now moved from the bad to evil? I asked myself an affined question concerning the other spectators on my way out of a screening of Robert Rodriguez and Frank Miller's *Sin City* (the debased mediocre filmmaker Quentin Tarantino was a special guest director on this film): 'Why are they hell-bent on watching this film?'<sup>66</sup> I was the first *human* to leave the screening—I left with the angel. If you

don't leave with the angel, as he is leaving some evil site, then sooner or later you will have to wait for someone or something in you to leave—exorcism. At that point, anyone other than the one scaring and beating the hell out of you has to promptly leave while the exorcism is taking place, otherwise the exiting demons may possess him or her. Should the spectators leave the cinema theater during a projection of William Friedkin's film *The Exorcist* (1973)? Rare are the humans who have waited for the angel; but many are the angels who have waited for humans to leave evil situations—many an angel has fallen precisely because he waited too long for some human to leave while evil was taking place,<sup>67</sup> the human in question subsequently becoming the puppet of the devil, suffering from sacrilegious thought-insertions, depersonalization, etc. When two of my graduate students told me that they had watched the whole of *Sin City*, I exclaimed: 'Why didn't you get the hell out of the cinema theater?' Their response was that since the film was based on a comic strip; was highly stylized, showing for example the blood flowing profusely from severed legs and heads as milky white; and worked clearly in the mode of exaggeration, presenting incredibly powerful characters, they did not view it as portraying the denizens of some accursed and debased corner of the world. But while our consciousness might not believe in these superhuman characters and may appreciate many of the actions and colors at a formal level only, the unconscious is affected in a very different manner by them, for when it comes to the unconscious, which is the site of Good and Evil rather than of good and bad, do we not encounter widespread exaggeration? Redoubtable exaggeration is certainly encountered in the Christian and Moslem Heaven and Hell (indeed the idiomatic expression *hell of a* means *extremely*, or

*extremely big*) and in the Buddhist hungry ghosts mode of existence (*gati*), which are realms and states of the unconscious come to the surface:<sup>68</sup> ‘Abû Hurayra reported that Allah’s Apostle (may peace be upon him) said: “The fire in which the sons of Adam burn is only one-seventieth part of the Fire of Hell.” The Companions of Allah’s Apostle said: “By Allah, even ordinary fire would have been enough (to burn people).” Thereupon he said: “It is sixty-nine parts in excess of (the heat of) fire in this world...”” (*Sabîh Muslim*, Book 40, no. 6811); ‘Abû Hurayra reported directly from Allah’s Messenger (may peace be upon him): “The distance of the two shoulders of the non-believer in Hell will be a three-day journey for a swift rider” (Ibid., no. 6832).”

After the lecture, the vampire returned to his ruin. While listening to Diamanda Galás’ *Plague Mass*, he had a flashback to one of his victims, who had exclaimed while he was sucking her blood: “You think your present condition is exciting? Get a life!” He remembered that the live recording of Galás’ album took place in the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York in 1991. This circumstance, as well as the lecture he had just heard, prompted and encouraged him to go to church. The Eucharist was in progress. He knew that he was being aided, granted a reprieve when he entered the church without being repelled by the sort of blasphemous voices and images that were usually inserted in his mind as soon as he *trespassed* into a church. It was as if he was being guarded by an angel.<sup>69</sup> When he took the wafer he did not swallow it, but placed it under his tongue; but he drank the wine. He felt then the strangest taste, and for once really understood what it means to say, “The blood is the life,” or, more precisely, “The blood is the life of all flesh” (Leviticus 17:14). It was as if it was the first time he, a vampire, had actually

tasted blood. In Raphael’s *Altarpiece: The Crucified Christ with the Virgin Mary, Saints and Angels* (aka *The Mond Crucifixion*), circa 1502-3, two angels catch Christ’s blood in chalices, the sort used for the wine of the Mass (the painting served as the altarpiece of the side chapel in S. Domenico in Città di Castello). Past the crucifixion, all Christians across the ages have been drinking of the blood that fell from the Christ on the cross and that angels collected in their chalices—hadn’t “only five loaves of bread and two fish fed” a large crowd of “about five thousand hungry men, besides women and children,” the disciples picking up “twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over?” (Matthew 14:18)? As he drank the wine turned blood, he felt again that he was aided by an angel; Nietzsche wrote in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, while referring to the title of his previous book, “*Beyond Good and Evil*.— At least this does not mean ‘Beyond Good and Bad’”—the good that faces evil is not the good that faces the bad even though both are referred to with the same word. And he felt that these few drops of wine transubstantiated into blood (of the covenant) were replacing all his addiction-inducing infected blood. He felt pure; to be pure is to have no intermingling of the flows, even during the potentially maddening transubstantiation, of wine and blood and consequently of urine and semen: “And as for the mad patient who has undergone an operation, every breath of air he takes is at the same time a breath of spittle, a flow of air and spit that tend to get mixed up together, so that there are no longer any distinctions. Moreover, each time that he breathes and spits, he feels a vague desire to defecate, a vague erection.”<sup>70</sup> To be pure at the Eucharist is to drink wine but taste pure blood, one that is not mixed with wine (better not to taste blood at all then but to simply be drinking wine than to experience a mixing

of wine and blood; the only pureblood Christian is not the one who has unmixed ancestry but the one who at the Eucharist drinks wine but tastes pure blood), indeed to taste blood with such intensity and irrevocability that one no longer recalls that what was poured in the chalice was wine. Shortly, he felt hungry, but with a *resistible* (!) hunger—a hunger that was no longer a drive but a biological need. He scribbled while still in the church: “According to Matthew (4:3), the tempter came to Jesus Christ and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’ Based on this exceedingly questionable report, what the devil was tempting Jesus Christ in this case was to become a magician. Had he turned the stones into bread, instead of answering according to Matthew (4:4), ‘It is written: “Man does not live on bread alone...”’, then when he later turned the bread into his body (‘While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body”’ [Matthew 26:26-29]), this would have been a magical performance and the resultant body would have been tainted by a cannibalistic *jouissance*. It is thus that the body and blood of the Eucharist are not linked to hunger or to *jouissance*; in other words: ‘Man does not live on bread alone...’ nor does he die on *jouissance* alone. According to Matthew (4:5-7), ‘then the devil (...) had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, / and they will lift you up in their hands, / so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”’ If we set aside how questionable is this report by Matthew, such a temptation of Christ by the devil would have consisted not in making him test God the Father, but in making the one who characteristically would have exclaimed,

‘Touch me not [*noli me tangere*]’ (John 20:17) taste (Middle English *tasten, to touch, taste...* probably frequentative of *tangere, to touch*) *jouissance* in the jump and fall. So when Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test,’” the devil, muttering ‘What an idiot!’,<sup>71</sup> ‘left him,’ according to Luke (4:13), ‘until an opportune time.’ This opportune time would have presented itself when Jesus Christ arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes. The devil would have then spelled out the matter for him, provided him with an exemplary enucleation: “Two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. “What do you want with us, Son of God?” they shouted. “Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?” Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. The demons begged Jesus, “If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.” He said to them, “Go!” So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water’ (Matthew 8:28-32). Would Jesus have then gotten it, *libidinally*, i.e. would he have gotten the *jouissance* that was being suggested to him by the devil, revealing himself thus as a second Adam; or would he have been too pure to get it even then?<sup>72</sup> I would find it absolutely stupefying had Jesus Christ, as the Synoptic Gospels report, been tempted by the devil; if correct, this would be the locus of a greater scandal than the crucifixion! One of the possible concerned responses to such a *scandal* is to consider the chapter titled ‘The Temptation of Jesus’ in Matthew 4 and Luke 4, and the section titled ‘The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus’ in Mark 1, concerning an episode purported to show Jesus Christ’s triumphal resistance to Satan, as Satanic lines (along the lines of the infamous satanic verses that were beguilingly

interpolated in, then removed from Qur'ân 53 according to some Moslem sources?), so that we should modify the title of the above mentioned chapters and section to 'Matthew, Luke, Mark Tempted by the devil.' Concerning this question, I side with James 1:1: 'God cannot be tempted by evil'; and with the attitude of Moslem tradition: the prophet Muhammad said, 'When any of Adam's descendants is born, Satan strikes him at both sides with his two fingers, except Jesus, the son of Mary, whom Satan tried to strike thus but failed, for he struck the placenta-cover instead' ("The Beginning of Creation," *Sahîh al-Bukhârî*)."

The first act he did after leaving the church following his resurrection was to resurrect the videomaker Roy Samaha. They then went to have dinner. He told Samaha: "I find the following confounding: I have been described prior to my resurrection as a *hayawân* by various Lebanese people—probably on account of the savage way I attacked my victims while I was driven by hunger. It is true that the first few times I had a sort of Deleuze and Guattari becoming-animal, but the latter becoming soon degenerated into a drive. The drive was linked to all sorts of images and fantasies issuing from the unconscious, so that it was inaccurate to speak at that point about an animal or even a becoming-animal. Paradoxically now that I have achieved life everlasting through Jesus Christ, I am no longer called *hayawân* by mortals: '*hayawân*: Living, having life, alive, or quick... and *hayawân* is syn. with *hayy* [as meaning *having animal life*].... *Hayât*: ... *Life*... And *fa'inna al-dâr al-'âkhira labîya al-hayawân* in the Qur'ân [xxix. 64] means [*And verily the last abode is*] the abode of *everlasting life*: (*Tâj al-'Arûs*:) or *al-hayawân* here means *the life that will not be followed by death*: or *much life*; like as *mawatân* signifies *much death*: (*Misbâh al-Fayyûmî*) and it is also the name of *a certain fountain in Paradise, [the water of] which*

*touches nothing but it lives, by permission of God.* (*Tâj al-'Arûs*.) *Hayawân* an inf. n. of *hayiya*, like *hayât*, (Ibn Barrî, author of the *Annotations on the Sibâh*, with Al-Bustî,) but having an intensive signification: (*al-Misbâh*)... — Also *Any thing, or things, possessing animal life*, (*al-Misbâh*, *al-Qâmûs*.) whether *rational or irrational*; [*an animal, and animals*]; used alike as sing. and pl., because originally an inf. n.; (*al-Misbâh*;) *contr. of mawatân* [quod vide].<sup>73</sup> While according to Daniel Paul Schreber, 'Within the Order of the World, God did not really understand the living human being and had no need to understand him, because, according to the Order of the World, He dealt only with corpses';<sup>74</sup> for me, who has achieved *al-hayawân* by being resurrected, Jesus Christ, 'the resurrection and the life' (John 11:25), did not understand anything about the dead, and it is from this perspective that he said about Lazarus: 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep [I would add: dreamlessly]; but I am going there to wake him up' [John 11:11])—when his disciples insisted, he spoke 'to them in parables' (Matthew 13:13), in terms *they* could (mis)understand: 'Lazarus is dead.'"

What happened to the second vampire, who though he often had the feeling that he was keyed on Beirut, that he was not actually in it, exemplarily when he did not appear in the mirror, was nonetheless part of it in the sense that he could be keyed only onto a country that could be hospitable to vampires and the undead in general, so that when the country in question, the questionable country became less hospitable to vampires, devoid of ruins, of labyrinths, he was unable to remain keyed on it? Did he manage to leave Lebanon in time and find a new, hospitable country with labyrinthine ruins, blood, and *jouissance*, or did he cease even to haunt, die (the second death), like the gods died because the world was no longer hospitable to them?<sup>75</sup> This is how Beirut came

to be rid and devoid of its two vampires: one was resurrected through the (impossible belief in the) Resurrection and the Life; and the other hurriedly left it to another, more hospitable post-war country, since it had turned into a mundane city, replacing its undead with cheap simulacra of them, for example the kitschy unintentional visual adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the form of the large posters showing parliamentary candidate Sa'd al-Hariri with his father, assassinated ex-prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri, appearing behind him like a ghost; and the "living martyr" Marwan Hamadé, who narrowly escaped an attempt on his life on 1 October 2004 following his resignation from the government upon the extension of President Emile Lahoud's mandate, and who not only constantly emits stereotypes pompously, but also repeatedly criticizes the *langue de bois* (cant; *literally*: wooden language) of his "political" enemies—even were one to generously assume that he is not superstitious and doesn't touch and knock on wood every time someone mentions how he escaped dying, he should use another manner of criticizing the language of his enemies, and should additionally apologize to good carpenters, those who are affined to and interpret well the *signs of wood*, the real *langue de bois* (Deleuze: "Learning is essentially concerned with *signs*.... To learn is first of all to consider a substance, an object, a being as if it emitted signs to be deciphered, interpreted. There is no apprentice who is not 'the Egyptologist' of something. One becomes a carpenter only by becoming sensitive to the signs of wood, a physician by becoming sensitive to the signs of disease");<sup>76</sup> moreover, since he has not had the modicum tact of objecting to being called "the living martyr," he should also have apologized to the one who happened to be a carpenter during his incarnation and who made possible a true living martyr, Lazarus, i.e. to Jesus

Christ, the Resurrection and the Life.

### Dying Before Dying; or, Living to Tell the Tale

Dedicated to martyrs (*shuhadâ*), who—past their death (before dying)—*lived to tell the tale*. For example Jesus Christ, who was crucified but lived to tell the tale—which is "not recorded in this book [the Gospel of John]"<sup>77</sup>—to Mary Magdalene and his disciples, including Thomas (John 20).

Should the Lebanese who were born prior to the cessation of their country's civil war in 1990 say: "We went through a dreadful civil war and foreign invasions, but we lived to tell the tale"? Indeed is living to tell the tale not what Hamlet demands of Horatio when the latter decides, on becoming aware that his friend is mortally poisoned, to follow suit and poison himself? Hamlet: "Horatio, I am dead; / Thou liv'st; report me and my cause aright / To the unsatisfied." Horatio: "Never believe it. / I am more an antique Roman than a Dane. / Here's yet some liquor left." Hamlet: "As thou'rt a man, / Give me the cup. Let go. By heaven, I'll have't. / O God, Horatio, what a wounded name, / Things standing thus unknown, I leave behind me! / If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart, / Absent thee from felicity awhile, / And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain, / To tell my story" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 5.2.291-302). Did Horatio have to *live to tell the tale* because, we are told by another saying, *dead men tell no tales*? A number of militiamen who "have... ears but fail to hear" (Mark 8:18), and who thus believed that dead men tell no tales, assassinated a member of their armed group because they were afraid he might reveal their secrets. Claudius too seems to believe

that dead men tell no tales, that “people who are dead cannot tell secrets” (*Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*), specifically that the king he has treacherously assassinated by pouring poison in his ears would thus be unable to reveal that what his subjects were misled to believe to have been a poisoning caused by a snake bite was actually a murder most foul. Hamlet, who was told a tale by the ghost of his assassinated father, should know that it is false to say that dead men tell no tales,<sup>78</sup> and therefore should know better than to beseech his friend to live to tell the tale. To those who believe in the saying *dead men tell no tales*, which is symptomatic of the heedlessness of most people, the following Nietzsche words apply: “Let us imagine an extreme case: that a book speaks of nothing but events that lie altogether beyond the possibility of any frequent or even rare experience—that it is the first language for a new species of experiences. In that case, simply nothing will be heard, but there will be the acoustic illusion that where nothing is heard, nothing is there” (“Why I Write Such Excellent Books,” *Ecce Homo*). The dead tells tales, whether to “himself”/ “herself” through the infamous voices talking through his or her head; or to the living, through mediums (Kurosawa’s *Rashomon*); or through assuming spectral apparitions (King Hamlet’s ghost in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*)—whether the living hear these tales or not (because of repression, etc.) is another matter. “Have you, an undead, kept a minute of silence—before starting to speak again?” “If you consider only me, then yes, I kept a minute of silence of your time, of your reckoning of time—to me anywhere between 245 days<sup>79</sup> and 35 years;<sup>80</sup> but if you include in me the disembodied voices I hear and that at times give me the impression that they are not only in my mind but originate or at least are audible outside my head (*thought broadcasting*), then no, I’ve not

kept a minute of silence. You should ask ‘my’ voices, the voices in my head, to keep a minute of silence!”—the dead wishes not so much that the living would keep a commemorative minute of silence, but that the *voices* he or she hears in his or her head would do so. A great theater artist, Antonin Artaud, tried in his radio play *To Have Done with the Judgment of God* to make us hear the voices (“You are saying some very bizarre things, Mr. Artaud,” “o reche modo / to edire / di za / tau dari / do padera coco,” etc.)—unfortunately, after hearing the radio play, Wladimir Porché, the director of French Radio, appears to have wished to promptly revert to one of those who have “ears but fail to hear,” and seems to have wanted to spare potential listeners of the radio station the possibility of having ears and hearing (the voices), canceling the broadcast the day before its scheduled airing on 2 February 1948. Would he have cancelled Rabih Mroué’s performance *How Nancy Wished that Everything Was an April Fool’s Joke*? Regarding this theatrical performance, “is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?” “To the curious incident of the voices in the theatrical performance.” “The voices did nothing in the theatrical performance.” “That was the curious incident.”<sup>81</sup> One who has ears and hears, indeed over-hears is justified in deducing: “That I did not hear the voices in Mroué’s performance *How Nancy Wished that Everything Was an April Fool’s Joke* would indicate that we are not really dealing with the dead telling us tales, but with living persons impersonating dead ones.”<sup>82</sup> There is in classical Western theater, and consequently in the Lebanese theater that’s a more or less creative offshoot of it, a repression of the voices and thus of madness and undeath, an exclusion of them to the non-diegetic realm, to the underground figure of the extra-diegetic prompter—in Mroué’s variant, the customary non-

diegetic prompter is replaced with a text, consisting for the most part of newspaper reports, projected on the floor in front of the four seated performers. To really deal with madness and undead, theater has to make the prompter diegetic; the aforementioned voices would be one sort of such a diegetic prompter. Taking into account that the Lebanese are notorious for not waiting in line and not taking turns to talk, how incongruous it is that now that these four Lebanese characters are dead, hence in a realm of interruption, whether by disembodied voices or due to *theft of thought*, they politely wait for the one talking to finish speaking before they start telling what happened to them! Can one then legitimately view Mroué's performance as a glaring exemplification of what I decried in (*Vampires*): *An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* (1993; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2003): "Notwithstanding over a hundred thousand dead in the years of war and civil war, the Lebanese seem not to have learned to die"? Yes, one can. Can one legitimately view it as failing in what I advanced as "one of the great tasks of art and writing in Lebanon for the foreseeable future... to teach this people famed for being 'life-loving' to die,<sup>83</sup> that is that they are already dead"? Yes, one can. In which case, Mroué's performance (as well as some of the works of a number of the interesting Lebanese videomakers and filmmakers) would be doing something affined to what hundreds of thousands of contemporary Egyptians are doing in the Cairo cemetery, and what is worse than leaving the dead alone: infringing on the dead, in Mroué's case by talking "in their name"—as if each of the latter still has *one* name! In which case, this text can appropriately be also known as: *To Have Done with the Usurpation by the Living of the Dead's Enunciation*. But I prefer, heeding the performance's title, *How Nancy Wished that Everything Was an April Fool's Joke*, to

view this provocative Mroué work otherwise: as a theatrical April Fool's Joke concerning how the Lebanese do not know how to die, that is how they do not know that they are already dead. From this perspective, my text can appropriately be also known as: *How Jalal Toufic Wishes that Rabih Mroué's "How Nancy Wished that Everything Was an April Fool's Joke" Is an April Fool's Joke*. It would therefore have been felicitous had Mroué's performance had its premiere at the Tokyo International Arts Festival on 1 April 2007 rather than on 23 March 2007, or had its one-night stand in Kochi, Japan, been on 1 April 2007 instead of 31 March 2007. My recommendation is to perform it henceforth every year only on 1 April.

Are not the two sectarian militia leaders the Druze Walid Junblat and the Christian Maronite Samir Geagea, who had, during the Israeli invasion in 1982 as well as in the aftermath of Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 1983, waged murderous campaigns of sectarian cleansing against each other in Mount Lebanon, but who have been allies since 2005, when Junblat and his parliamentary bloc were instrumental in the amnesty law that granted pardon to Geagea, then life-imprisoned for the assassination of former Prime Minister Rashid Karami in 1987, the killing of Dany Chamoun and his family in October 1990, the assassination of former Lebanese Forces cadre Elias al-Zayek in 1990, and the attempted assassination of former minister Michel al-Murr in 1991, and who have endorsed if not sponsored a national advertisement campaign with the motto, "I Love Life,"<sup>84</sup> accusing their main opponent, the self-proclaimed Hizballah (the Party of God), of propagating a "culture of death," not behaving, with their frequent volte-faces, like the dead? Since we are going to change our allegiances anyway in death, why

not experiment the possibility life gives us not to change them,<sup>85</sup> to have a calling? Do not take at *face value* the dead's assuming a name, even numerous names, indeed all the names of history (Friedrich Nietzsche, at the onset of his psychosis, of his dying before dying: "I am Prado, I am also Prado's father. I venture to say that I am also Lesseps... I am also Chambige... every name in history is I"<sup>86</sup>), including yours!—ask him or her to stand in front of a mirror, where you will see—not knowing whether it is actually the case or whether you are hallucinating it—that his or her mirror image does not face him or her; or else walk behind him on some pretext and call him by several of the names he had explicitly assumed, and you'll discover that he does not answer. While the living can be successfully called, and hence can have a calling, the dead cannot be successfully called (except by those who are able to resurrect him or her), either because he has all the names of history or because he undergoes over-turns, and therefore cannot have a calling and cannot resist and fight *in the name of* something. This inability to have a calling may take the manner(ism) of assuming not only the names and ordeals of his victims, but also the names and acts of his enemies, the deserving ones (Nietzsche, who had written in *Twilight of the Idols*, which was completed, as the Foreword indicates, on 30 September 1888, "I, the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus," and in *Ecce Homo*, which was finished on 6 December 1888, "Have I been understood?—*Dionysus versus the Crucified*—", signed less than a month later several of the letters he wrote at the onset of his psychosis, of his dying before dying, with "The Crucified"), but also the undeserving ones; or it may take the form of accepting the lowliest mode of existence of a given culture, that to which the living who has no calling in that culture is reduced ("Say not

a word,' he [the ghost of Achilles] answered, 'in death's favor; I would rather be a paid servant in a poor man's house and be above ground than king of kings among the dead'" [Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book XII]); or it may take the guise of becoming subject to the drive, to that which cannot be satisfied even when the unfinished business has been settled,<sup>87</sup> and cannot be placated even by an angel, who ends up abandoning the driven, whose site, whatever it is exoterically, is henceforth hell, that from which the angel has completely and irrevocably withdrawn. Would it be enough for one to die for a cause, if one would thenceforth be every name in history, including that cause's undeserving enemies and its undeserving supporters, and therefore betray that cause? Certainly not. A cause's true martyr has to continue to be alive past his death: "Call not those who are slain in the way of Allāh 'dead.' Nay, they are living, only ye perceive not" (Qur'ân 3:169; cf. Qur'ân: 3:169: "Think not of those who are slain in the way of Allāh as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision"; John 11:25: "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies"; and John 11:26: "And whoever lives and believes in me will never die");<sup>88</sup> it is only on this condition that he can choose not to betray the cause he died for. Through the vicissitudes of the protracted civil war and the invasions of Lebanon, the four protagonists of Mroué's performance repeatedly switch sides—*after being killed*. For example, we are told by the protagonist performed by Rabih Mroué and assuming the name Rabih Mroué that on 7 July 1980, while a member of The Tigers, the militia of the National Liberal Party (NLP; *Hiḡb al-Wataniyyîn al-Abrâr*), he was killed in a battle with the Lebanese Forces during Bashir Gemayel's military campaign for the "unification of arms in Christian territories"—joining the



ranks of the Lebanese Forces a week or so later, and then dying on 27 October 1980 in the battle for the elimination of the remaining party quarters of the National Liberal Party in ‘Ayn al Rummâna! Similarly, we are told by the protagonist performed by Ziad Antar and assuming the name Ziad Antar that, as a communist, he took part alongside the Palestinian forces in offensives against various military positions of the Saad Haddad army, dying in an ambush on 9 November 1979. He then tells us that he was killed again on 27 May 1980 during armed clashes between the Communist Party and the Amal Movement, but that he found himself on 4 January 1982 in charge of an Amal unit and leading an attack against the positions of the Communist Party in Sfeir. He asserts that he was killed again on 28 January 1982 in the Baalbak battles against the Communist Party, and was killed yet again on 15 April 1982 in Nabatiyeh in battles against the Palestinians. He also asserts that in 1987 he found himself fighting on the side of the (self-proclaimed) Party of God (*Ḥizb Allâh*) against Amal in a number of battles, dying in three of them: the battle of Tyre, the battle of Nabatiyeh, and the battle for Beirut’s Southern Suburb. Can one view Mroué’s performance as providing, through these volte-faces, an apology for a figure such as Walid Junblat, notorious for his opportunistic, self-serving switching of positions? One can do so only if one disregards that Mroué’s protagonists switch sides only after their deaths. Since I do not consider the late, those who did not die before they died physically, martyrs, I would not believe their testimonies from beyond the grave. In order to tell the tale, one has to be a true witness, one of those whose “eyes were opened” (Luke 24:31); who “have eyes that are blessed because they see” (Matthew 13:16); whose covering has been removed and who thus have *piercing sight*—for that one has to have died before

dying (“And the agony of death cometh in truth.... Thou wast in heedlessness of this. Now We have removed from thee thy covering, and piercing is thy sight this day” [Qur’ân 50:19-22]). In addition to the number of things I was dying to tell the reader, myself and Lyn Hejinian in the revised and expanded edition of (*Vampires*): *An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* (2003), *Two or Three Things I’m Dying to Tell You* (2005), and *‘Áshûrâ’: This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (2005), I am *dying to tell* the deserving readers of this text that, basically, only martyrs can *live to tell the tale*.

### **Israeli Lolitas’ Missives to Lebanese Shi’ite Men: Dead Letters?**

Elie Wiesel: “During the Six-Day War the Jewish fighters did not become cruel. They became sad... And if I feel something towards them, the child-soldiers in Israel, it is profound respect.”<sup>89</sup> Since the mid 1990s, it has become easy as ABC—though not easy on the eye and ear—to show others the deceit of these words by making available to them the disclosures about massacres perpetuated on Egyptian and Syrian war prisoners by soldiers of the nascent Israeli state: Ronal Fisher, “Mass Murder in the 1956 Sinai War,” *Ma’ariv*, 8 August 1995; and Gabby Bron, “Egyptian POWs Ordered to Dig Graves, then Shot by Israeli Army,” *Yedi’ot Abaronot*, 17 August 1995.<sup>90</sup> Irrespective of the latter disclosures, the vile cunning of the deceitful Wiesel has been subverted by the Hegelian *cunning of reason* and/or by the cunning of Allâh (“And they [the disbelievers] schemed [*makarû*], and Allâh schemed [against them] [*makarâ*]: and Allâh is the best of schemers [*al-mâkirîn*]” [Qur’ân 3.54; cf. Qur’ân 27.50]): the thirty three on-going or recent armed conflicts in which child soldiers

have participated (in Liberia, where between 6,000 and 15,000 children have taken up arms from 1989 to 1997, some as young as nine and ten years old; the Democratic Republic of Congo; Uganda; Colombia; Sri Lanka; Burma, where the government armed forces include around 70,000 children...) have provided a reality check to any sentimental misreading of the term *child-soldier* and revealed the true face of what Wiesel used as a disarming schmaltzy word—we encounter here an example of what Lacan tells “us” in his “Seminar on [Poe’s] ‘The Purloined Letter’”: “The sender, we tell you, receives from the receiver his own message in reverse form.” If *I* feel something towards child-soldiers, it is a horrified mixture of fear (many of them have participated, sometimes under the influence of drugs given to them by their commanders, in summary executions of captured combatants, torture, murder, kidnappings of civilians, and rape) and pity (many of them were forcibly recruited into the fighting forces during raids on refugee and internally displaced persons camps, and many girl soldiers were raped and sexually enslaved by fighters...) that lends itself to no catharsis notwithstanding the many programs of “disarmament, demobilization and reintegration” into society. Have some Israeli soldiers at a heavy artillery position near Kiryat Shmona, in northern Israel, read these deceptive words of Wiesel and believed them? Did they, viewing themselves as child-soldiers, then ask some girls at a nearby summer camp (Camp Q.?) to join them for a signing ceremony on 17 July 2006? During the Israeli war on Lebanon from 12 July to 14 August 2006, Israel showed itself to be an enemy not only of Lebanese children—approximately a third of the estimated 1,183 Lebanese fatalities were children—but also, as the two Associated Press photos taken by Sebastian Scheiner on 17 July 2006 and showing

Israeli girls writing messages on shells at a heavy artillery position near Kiryat Shmona, next to the Lebanese border, of its own children—unless these girls, with their bare arms and short skirts, are not really children but nymphets, Lolitas flirting with Israeli army men but also with the addressees of their missives, Lebanese Shi’ite Men (did one of them write: “I [crossed out and rewritten again] I lost my new sweater in the woods... Love.”?).<sup>91</sup> In the latter case, the signing of the shells by these nymphets can be viewed “positively,” as a charm to induce these weapons to reach only the ones in whom these Lolitas are interested: men (I would think that Lolitas do not consider child-soldiers [are there any in Lebanon?], including those who have raped, as men, but as merely debased children).

### Round Trip Nabatiyeh-Hûrqalyâ

The prophet Muhammad: “People are asleep, and when they die, they awake.” Oh Shi’ites, wake up by dying *before* dying (physically), be the religious avant-garde so that we, who are the Arabic philosophical and artistic avant-garde, can be your allies. Unfortunately, the members of the self-proclaimed Party of God die *after* they die physically,<sup>92</sup> and so it is not at all surprising, but symptomatic, that they allow journalists and TV crews to videotape in Beirut’s southern suburb, the headquarters of the self-proclaimed Party of God, but generally do not allow filmmakers or videomakers to film or videotape there, thus revealing whom they consider their allies. Through its insistence, following its playing a major role in the liberation of south Lebanon, on liberating also the Shîb’â Farms (size: 25 square kilometers) captured by Israel from Syria during the Six-Day War in 1967, and

which this party, along with the Lebanese government, considers to be Lebanese territory, the self-proclaimed Party of God proves to be mundane, all-too-mundane. Liberation of the land in this *dunyâ*, in this lower world, should not be the goal of a Shi'ite party. Such matters should be left to chauvinistic leaders, for example Bachir Gemayel (1947-1982), who insisted: "I want Lebanon to be 10,452 km<sup>2</sup> and not one kilometer less." What a petty and lowly task in a period when physicists, for example Frank Tipler,<sup>93</sup> are thinking seriously about the venturesome imperative for earthly intelligent life to leave Earth, since even if it avoids destruction by the many dangers that threaten it this century (Martin Rees),<sup>94</sup> the planet it presently inhabits is predicted to be destroyed in the Sun's future explosion in 4.5 billion years! While Shi'ites appear presently able neither to contribute to the colonization of the lifeless regions of the galaxy and beyond nor to cutting-edge exploration of simulation and virtual reality, they should, in a complementary manner, contribute to the exploration of *'âlam al-khayâl*, the Imaginal World. For its Shi'ite residents, Nabatiyeh should be a transit city on their way to and back from the Imaginal World, where in the short period of time they spend there by the measure of their acquaintances and/or landlords, they experience periods of time that are longer than their whole earthly lives. Lebanese Twelver Shi'ites should be far more concerned with sites of the Imaginal World than with such Lebanese cities, towns and villages as Nabatiyeh, where the largest 'Âshûrâ' yearly commemoration in south Lebanon takes place; Qana, the site of two massacres by the Israeli army, on 18 April 1996 and 30 July 2006; Khiam, the site of an infamous detention center that was operated by the South Lebanon Army with the complicity of the Israeli army from 1985 until Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in

2000, and that was turned into a museum following the liberation of south Lebanon, and that was then deliberately destroyed in bombardments by Israel during the latter's war on Lebanon in 2006; Marun al Ra's, Bint Jbeil, Aita al-Shaab, Taibeh, Adaysseh, Kfar Kila, and Meis al-Jabal, the sites of stiff fighting between fighters from the self-proclaimed Party of God and Israeli troops during the Israeli war on Lebanon that lasted from 12 July till 14 August 2006. I would like to think that even during that war, one or more Lebanese Twelver Shi'ites were exploring the (subtly changing) topography of *'âlam al-khayâl*, of Hûrqalyâ, Jâbalqâ, Jâbarsâ, the Eighth Climate. To be a member of the army of the Mahdî one has first to volunteer to do so, where the Mahdî is or at least where he can be met during his Greater Occultation from this world, in *'âlam al-khayâl*—by the time *al-Mahdî*, the (divinely) Guided One, returns to Earth, it will be too late to volunteer to join his army. How many people of the flagrantly self-proclaimed "Mahdî Army" led by Moqtada al-Sadr will be part of the actual army of the Mahdî? Not one, for none is spiritual enough to have witnessed the Mahdî in *'âlam al-khayâl*. The first one who has joined his army, Jesus Christ, son of Mary, who was not actually crucified, did so in *'âlam al-khayâl*. We can better appreciate the following words of Jesus Christ from the perspective of his Second Coming as a member of the army of the Mahdî: "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). He will kill *al-Dajjâl*, the Anti-Christ of Islam, with this Sword (by the time the Mahdî and Jesus Christ return to Earth, the most cutting-edge technological-spiritual weapon would have for reporting name: Sword).<sup>95</sup> According to a Talmudic saying, the son of David would appear only in a generation that was "either wholly sinful or

wholly righteous”;<sup>96</sup> and in Islamic tradition, the Mahdî is going to “fill the earth with justice and equity, as it had formerly been filled with injustice and oppression.” What is a place and era *filled* with injustice? Is it one where any memory of the Mahdî/messiah has been forgotten? Would the Mahdî/messiah then appear (again) on Earth only once he has been forgotten? This would be the case were it not for the intercession of Abraham on behalf of Sodom, which may have redefined a place *filled* with injustice. With regard to Abraham, the *bada’*<sup>97</sup> on God’s part. i.e. God’s alteration of His earlier determination, is exemplified not by the replacement of Isaac with a sheep, since as Ibn al-‘Arabî, one of the greatest Sufis, pointed out, “Abraham the Intimate said to his son, *I saw in sleep that I was killing you for sacrifice*. The state of sleep is the plane of the Imagination and Abraham did not interpret [what he saw], for it was a ram that appeared in the form of Abraham’s son in the dream, while Abraham believed what he saw [at face value]. So his Lord rescued his son from Abraham’s misapprehension by the Great Sacrifice [of the ram], which was the true expression of his vision with God.... In reality it was not a ransom in God’s sight [but the sacrifice itself].... Then God says, *This is indeed a clear test*, that is, a test of his [Abraham’s] knowledge, whether he knew what interpretation was necessary in the context of vision or not”;<sup>98</sup> but by the intercession on behalf of Sodom. “Then Abraham approached him (the LORD) and said: ‘Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? ...’ The LORD said, ‘If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.’ Then Abraham spoke up again: ‘Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, what if the number of the righteous is five

less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?’ ‘If I find forty-five there,’ he said, ‘I will not destroy it.’ Once again he spoke to him, ‘What if only forty are found there?’ He said, ‘For the sake of forty, I will not do it.’ Then he said, ‘May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?’ He answered, ‘I will not do it if I find thirty there.’ Abraham said, ‘Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?’ He said, ‘For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.’ Then he said, ‘May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?’ He answered, ‘For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it’” (Genesis 18:23-33).<sup>99</sup> Given that one of the Names of God in Islam is The Merciful (indeed the opening words of the Qur’ân are: “In the name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful” [Qur’ân 1:1]; cf. Qur’ân 33:24: “My mercy embraces everything,” etc.), and, more specifically, given that Abraham had addressed God with “My Lord! ... Thou art Forgiving, Merciful” (Qur’ân 14:36) and had responded to the “Do not despair” of his (angelic) guests, who were “sent unto a guilty folk [Sodom],” with “who despaireth of the mercy of his Lord save those who are astray?” (Qur’ân 15:51-60), Abraham should have inferred that it is due to God’s Mercy rather than to an injustice on His part that He had planned to destroy Sodom even if there were more than fifty righteous people in it: to hurry up the coming of the Redeemer—unfortunately, Abraham’s intercession on Sodom’s behalf delayed this eventuality, appropriately associating Abraham, who is the exemplar of the one who is late, having had a child with his wife Sarah when they were too old to naturally have children,<sup>100</sup> with a delay in the arrival of the messiah, a descendant of his. Could it be that Abraham did an infelicitous act, specifically

one in relation to a sacrifice? As Ibn al-‘Arabî’s interpretation of Abraham’s reaction to the dream in which he saw that he was killing his son in sacrifice reveals, this would not be the only instance! Had Abraham stopped his intercession with his first questioning entreaty, then a place *filled* with wickedness would have been a place with less than fifty righteous people; but given that he persisted in his intercession on behalf of Sodom, a place *filled* with injustice and wickedness became one with less than ten righteous people—thank God, Abraham did not go on to implore the Lord to save Sodom if there were five righteous people in it, for this further entreaty would not have changed the outcome for Sodom, given that there were only three righteous people in it, Lot and his two daughters, but it would have further delayed the coming of the messiah/Mahdî. Oh, if only Abraham had not been so just in his intercession, the (re)appearance of the messiah or the Mahdî would be closer—it is more likely that there be forty nine righteous people in the world than nine or less—or would indeed have already happened (regarding the episode of the intercession of Abraham on behalf of Sodom, how fitting is the title of John Cage’s diary: *How to Improve the World [You Will Only Make Matters Worse]*). Some of the historical calculations of the coming of the messiah or of the Ismâ‘îlî *Qâ’im* were still based on the definition of a place filled with injustice as one that had less than fifty righteous people, and this coming would have happened in the time that was predicted by *gemetria* or *jabr* had it not been for the intercession of Abraham—the latter leading to either having to rectify the date, as was reportedly the case with Twelver Shi‘ites,<sup>101</sup> or, unfortunately, of hastily accepting as the *Qâ’im* or the messiah one who showed up at that date, thus the debacle of the episode of the false *Qâ’im* Zakariyya al-Isfahânî in the case of

the Qarmatîs of the great Abû Tâhir al-Jannâbî. Since the intercession of Abraham on behalf of Sodom, there have been at least five times when the predicted date of the coming of the Mahdî/messiah has proven to be a miscalculation: the dates were calculated with an understanding of a place filled with injustice as having less than fifty, or forty five, or forty, or thirty, or twenty righteous people. How fitting it is that the *bada’* on God’s part with regards to Abraham’s intercession influenced the timing of the coming of the messiah, the one who abrogates the previous religious dispensation and inaugurates a new, previously esoteric one. Alongside reading the antinomianism of messianic movements as a gesture implying the withdrawal of tradition, more specifically of the religious law (the Torah [of *beriah*, of the unredeemed world], the *Shari‘a*), past a surpassing disaster, one can also validly read it from the following perspective: since it is much easier to fill the world with injustice than with justice, it had to be made full of injustice and inequity *from the perspective of the Shari‘a*/Torah (of *beriah*, of the unredeemed world) in order to hurry the coming of the messiah/Mahdî. From this perspective, the *strange actions* of the messianic figure Sabbatai Zevi, specifically his prescriptions to transgress a number of the Torah’s prohibitions and then his conversion to Islam and the subsequent mass conversions of two Sabbatian sects, the Dönme to Islam in 1683, and the Frankists to Catholicism in 1759; as well as the Qarâmîta’s slaughter of the pilgrims in the Ka‘ba itself, and the Nizârîs’ abrogation of the *Shari‘a* during the Great Resurrection that started in 1164 were attempts to sacrificially reduce the number of the righteous according to the exoteric religious law to less than ten. At such critical moments, the recalcitrant rabbis and the orthodox ulamâ’ prevented the world from being filled with

## Resurrecting the Arab Apocalypse STOP [THE WORLD]<sup>103</sup>

the “wicked” (understood here merely as those who transgress the *Shari‘a*/Torah [of *beriah*, of the unredeemed world]). How presently improbable is the coming of the messiah/Mahdî however much Jews/Twelve Shi‘ites pray for his reappearance, for how unlikely it is that either all the 6,555 million people presently living on Earth<sup>102</sup> or only nine of these people be righteous. When the Mahdî comes back with his army, whose members volunteered to be in this army in *alam al-khayâl*, it would be fitting were the fewer than ten righteous people on an Earth filled with injustice and oppression to be invisible to the wicked, in a condition (whether through cryopreservation or otherwise) equivalent to that of the Qur’anic Sleepers of the Cave (Qur’ân 18, “The Cave” *sûra*), a condition that subtracts them from any exoteric count: “And when ye withdraw from them and that which they worship except Allâh, then seek refuge in the Cave... We awakened them that they might question one another. A speaker from among them said: How long have ye tarried? They said: We have tarried a day or some part of a day, (Others) said: Your Lord best knoweth what ye have tarried. Now send one of you with this your silver coin unto the city, and let him see what food is purest there and bring you a supply thereof. Let him be courteous and let no man know of you. For they, if they should come to know of you, will stone you or turn you back to their religion... (Some) will say: They were three, their dog the fourth, and (some) say: Five, their dog the sixth, guessing at random; and (some) say: Seven, and their dog the eighth. Say (O Muhammad): My Lord is Best Aware of their number. None knoweth them save a few... And (it is said) they tarried in their Cave three hundred years and add nine. Say: Allah is Best Aware how long they tarried.”

From time to time, there occurs what suspends time, revelation— at least for certain people, martyrs. But then the apocalypse, revelation, is withdrawn, occulted by the “apocalypse,” the surpassing disaster, so that symptomatically *apocalypse’s* primary sense (from Greek *apokalypsis*, from *apokalyptein* to uncover, from *apo-* + *kalyptein* to cover) is occulted by its secondary meaning, and *martyr’s* primary sense, *witness*, is occulted by its secondary, vulgar meaning: “a person who suffers greatly or is killed because of their political or religious beliefs.” One of the symptoms of such a surpassing disaster is that one of the Twentieth Century’s major Arabic books of poetry, Etel Adnan’s *L’Apocalypse arabe*, published in 1980, has been out of print for around two decades. *L’Apocalypse arabe*, an Arab book of poetry?! Notwithstanding that it was written originally in French (1980) then rewritten in English (1989) by an author who lives for the most part in the USA and France, it is an Arab book of poetry in part because it was withdrawn, occulted by the surpassing disasters that have affected the Arab world. A small number of Arab writers, video makers, filmmakers and artists, some of whom live abroad, have been working to resurrect, make available again what has been withdrawn by the Arab “apocalypse,” including Adnan’s *L’Apocalypse arabe*. Have they succeeded? Adnan’s book was reprinted in English in 2007 by the Post Apollo Press—if the current date of reprint of this book that’s untimely except in its relation to the surpassing disaster is timely and therefore symptomatic, this reissue would indicate the book’s resurrection.

The reader is soon alarmed by the repeated telegraphic

STOP of this book that orbits the following doomed objects: the Sun, and Tall al-Za‘tar and Quarantina, two refugee camps that were besieged and criminally destroyed during the Lebanese civil war (“the Quarantina is torching its inmates STOP”, “7 thousand Arabs under siege thirsty blinded STOP... 7 thousand Arabs in the belly of vultures STOP”). While the Arab “apocalypse” as surpassing disaster leads to a withdrawal of Arabic tradition, the apocalypse as revelation leads to Arabic tradition’s vertiginous extension, so that it comes to include many a bodhisattva as well as many a schizophrenic/psychotic who is not an Arab by descent and/or birthplace but who exclaims in his or her dying before dying: “Every name in history is I” (Nietzsche). Due to this apocalyptic extension of tradition, one has—away from the cumulative shade of the many “100% Lebanese” banners that were raised during the massive demonstration that took place in Beirut on 14 March 2005 in indignant commemoration of the assassination of former prime minister Rafiq al-Harîrî a month earlier—an anamnesis, recollecting, as an anarchist, that “the sun is a Syrian king riding a horse from Homs to Palmyra open skies preceding” (cf. Antonin Artaud’s *Heliogabalus; or, The Crowned Anarchist*, 1933), and, as an ancient Egyptian, “a yellow sun crammed in a boat,” etc. A poet whose country and its refugee camps were being shattered by explosions during its protracted civil-war managed nonetheless, perhaps because she poetically felt, like Judge Schreber with his solar anus and his singular cosmology, “a sun in the rectal extremity” and “a sun in the arms in the anus,” to heed this news, “The radio says History allocated 10 billion years to the sun / the SUN has already lived half its age,” and, while Frank Tipler and other Western physicists were trying to devise long-term emergency measures to deal with the

future explosion of the scientific age’s Sun, a yellow dwarf of spectral type G2, screamed: “An Apocalyptic sun explodes.” Have Arabs, who, with very rare exceptions, continue to indulge in their petty concerns, taken notice? Was it enough to have *The Arab Apocalypse* translated into Arabic in 1991 for it to be read in the Arab world once it is resurrected? Even before having it translated to Arabic by someone else, it seems that the author, also an artist, had already partly translated it into graphic signs for the so many Arabs (38.7 per cent in 1999, or about 57.7 million adult Arabs [UN’s *Arab Human Development Report* 2002]) who are illiterate, for whom Arabic is as illegible as English and French—may they be jolted by its graphic signs... into, at last but not least, learning to read—and then actually read (doesn’t the great Seventh Century Arabic apocalyptic book, which has reached us through the prophet Muhammad, enjoin us to do so?).

## Textual Notes

1. Jalal Toufic, “Transit Visa to the Labyrinth!”, in (*Vampires*): *An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film*, revised and expanded edition (Sausalito, CA: The Post Apollo Press, 2003), p. 86.
2. The Twelver Shi’ite saying *Everyday is ‘Āshûrâ’, every land is Karbalâ’* should imply that the event ‘Āshûrâ’ in Karbalâ’ ought not be restricted to Shi’ites. Many Shi’ite lamentations, implorations, and invocations dealing with ‘Āshûrâ’ should influence the music, performance, literature, and philosophy of the other Lebanese and Arabs as well as of the world at large. That this has not yet happened is a regrettable symptom of the continued prejudice against Shi’ites.
3. This memory concerning an event that happened over a millennium ago may itself *partly* be a way to forget the civil war that ended only fifteen years ago.
4. To watch post-war Lebanese audiovisual works is to come to one of these conclusions: the civil war and the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon were at no point hell on Earth; at least one of the videomakers and filmmakers suspects apprehensively that to portray hell is to be already in it, and so he or she has resisted and shrank from doing so; none of the videomakers is evil enough to portray hell.
5. Dōgen: “An ancient Buddha said: ‘For the time being stand on top of the highest peak.... / For the time being three heads and eight arms. / For the time being an eight- or sixteen-foot body....’ ‘For the time being’ here means time itself is being, and all being is time. A golden sixteen-foot body is time... ‘Three heads and eight arms’ is time...” (“The Time-Being” [*uji*]). Regarding a number of Lebanese videos, one can say: For the time being a prayer (Lamia Joreige’s *Replay [bis]*, 2002); for the time being a car drive from the Fouad Chehab ring road to Holy Spirit University in Kaslik (Jalal Toufic’s *‘Āshûrâ’: This Blood Spilled in My Veins*, 2002); for the time being the slaughter of a cow (Jalal Toufic’s *The Sleep of Reason: This Blood Spilled in My Veins*, 2002); for the time being a drive through Beirut’s Hamra Street (Ghassan Salhab’s *La rose de personne*, 2000). Regarding Palestinian videos, I expect one day to say: for the time being tracing a geodesic between two locations in the



Occupied Territories—that warped space—separated by one or more Israeli checkpoints.

6. —Unless one prays not to be spared or delivered from the event, but rather to be worthy of it, to deserve it.

7. The formation of a couple is not dependent on common interests but on encountering the event together: two dancers who are projected into different altered realms by their dance and yet seamlessly dance together are a couple even if they later seem incongruous to everybody else, indeed to themselves (since they are not parted by the labyrinthine realm of death [Saura's *Love, the Magician*], it is ill-advised for such a couple of dancers to marry because they would not be able to fulfill their promise to each other: *till death do us part*).

8. Epicurus: “Death is nothing to us, since when we are, death has not come, and when death has come, we are not” (Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*).

9. The threat death presents to a community is not that when “facing” it some may pathologically not sacrifice themselves for the community, but instead go their separate ways, but rather that, notwithstanding that each can sacrifice himself or herself for the community, die for it, they cannot be together in death, a community in death—except through the feeling each has as dead that “every name in history is I.” The only genuine community for mortals is the community of those who are preoccupied and concerned with the circumstance that there is no community in death, since in death others can be me but not with me! Here’s the dedication I gave for the revised and expanded edition of my book (*Vampires): An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* during a book signing on 27 August 2003 in Beirut: “To the mortal [*name of dedicatee*], who in his death or dying before dying—in which he will feel “every name in history is I” (Nietzsche, during his psychosis)—might sign one of his letters with ‘Jalal Toufic.’”

10. Gertrude Stein: “Wars are only a means of publicizing the things already accomplished, a change, a complete change, has come about, people no longer think as they were thinking but no one knows it, no one recognizes it, no one really knows it except the creators.” Gertrude Stein, *Picasso: The Complete Writings*, ed. Edward Burns (Boston: Beacon

Press, 1970), p. 62.

11. *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale; *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, edited, with commentary, by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), pp. 243-248.

12. The withdrawal of tradition past a surpassing disaster can best be discerned in artworks and in antinomian messianic movements.

13. Being still at heart merely a journalist, Danielle ‘Arbid not only fails in her film *Alone with War* (2000) to make us deserve (at least) part of what happened in the civil-war and the invasions of Lebanon, and not only reduces the memorial to a reminder of what happened in the civil-war and the invasions, but blunders so far as to search for a memorial in the form of one or more statues, instead of working to make her film at the very least a memorial, the memorial she is looking for. ‘Arbid appears thus to be aware of neither the work of Krzysztof Wodiczko, for example his projection of missiles on Victory Column in Stuttgart’s Schlossplatz during the 1983 national election campaign in West Germany, a campaign in which a plan endorsed by the Christian Democratic Party to deploy Pershing 2 missiles in that country was a critical issue; and on Memorial Hall in Dayton, Ohio, and Nelson’s Column in Trafalgar Square in London, in 1983 and 1985 respectively (see Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Public Address*, with essays by Peter Boswell, Andrzej Turowski, Patricia C. Phillips, and Dick Hebdige [Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1992], pp. 96-97, 100-101, and 114-115); nor of the writings of Paul Virilio, who has argued that “the emergence of forms as volumes destined to persist as long as their materials would allow has given way to images whose duration is purely retinal,” so that, following this “transmutation of representations,” we have moved “from the esthetics of the appearance of a *stable* image—present as an aspect of its static nature—to the esthetics of the *disappearance* of an *unstable* image—present in its cinematic and cinematographic flight of escape” (Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension*, translated by Daniel Moshenberg [New York, N.Y.: Semiotext(e), 1991], pp. 25-26).

14. See “You Said ‘Stay,’ So I Stayed” in my book *Forthcoming* (Berkeley, CA: Atelos, 2000).

15. Can one have a memorial to sanctions? Is not the effect of sanctions

to dishearten in the country subjected to them anyone who can produce concepts, artworks, films and/or videos that make those subject to the sanctions deserve (some of the anomalies produced by) the sanctions?

16. Quoted in Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 53. Indeed, if the displacement of the stone entails the displacement of “everything,” it is because the stone, along with its different position, belongs to a variant branch of the multiverse.

17. Was the stone in question rather the one whose displacement signaled the Redemption, which was inaugurated with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the “dead”? “So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard” (Matthew 27:66). “There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.” (Matthew 28:2). “[*The Empty Tomb*.] Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.” (John 20:1). It is felicitous that Mary Magdalene is linked to both of these critical stones.

18. Yes, Peter, and consequently the Church, which like Peter (“And I tell you that you are Peter [*Cephas* (*Kephas*; Aramaic *Kipha*, *rock*)], and on this rock I will build my church” [Matthew 16:18]) does “not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men” (Matthew 16:23), is a stumbling block to Jesus Christ.

19. There can be no later redemption of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, of the Redeemer—unless one views Jesus Christ as someone sent by the Gnostic Heavenly Pleroma to assist the progress toward redemption.

20. Antonin Artaud, *Collected Works* vol. 1, trans. Victor Corti (London: Calder & Boyars, 1968), p. 89.

21. Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 4.

22. See the chapter “The Image of Thought” in Gilles Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2004), as well as the chapters “Signs and Truth” and “The Image of Thought” in Deleuze’s *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Athlone, 2000). “More important than thought is ‘what leads

to thought [*donne à penser*]; more important than the philosopher is the poet. Victor Hugo writes philosophy in his first poems because he ‘still thinks, instead of being content, like nature, to lead to thought.’ But the poet learns that what is essential is outside of thought, in what forces us to think” (*Proust and Signs*, p. 95). As a *poetic thinker* and as a contemporary Arab, I find these Deleuze words problematically thought-provoking. What is the conscious or unconscious expectation of many—*certainly not of Deleuze*—in “Developed” regions of the world regarding its “Underdeveloped” regions? It is for the latter to be thought-provoking but fail to think what is thought-provoking, leaving it to others in the “Developed” regions of the world to think it. Arabs as well as others who belong to “Underdeveloped” regions should undo this division of labor. Set against such a reductive expectation, it is all the more fitting for an Arab as well as for someone who hails from other “underdeveloped” regions of the world to be a *poetic thinker* rather than a poet. But irrespective of such a context, generally: more important than the philosopher, for example Hegel, and the poet, for example Hugo, is the poetic thinker, for example Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Blanchot, one whose thinking about his or her mortality, poems, films (for example Coen Brother’s *Barton Fink*), and the abominable historical conditions in which he or she happens to be living, i.e. about what gives food for thought, about what is thought-provoking, is itself thought-provoking, gives food for thought.

23. “Beyond” thinking and not thinking is nonthinking: “Once, when the Great Master Hongdao of Yueshan was sitting [in meditation], a monk asked him, ‘What are you thinking of, [sitting there] so fixedly?’ The master answered, ‘I’m thinking of not thinking.’ The monk asked, ‘How do you think of not thinking?’ The Master answered, ‘Nonthinking,’” quoted in *Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma*, Book 12, “Lancet of Zazen” (*Zazen shin*), trans. Carl Bielefeldt. <http://scbs.stanford.edu/sztp3/translations/shobogenzo/translations/zazenshin/zazenshin.translation.html>

24. In complement to my interest in Lebanese videos and mixed-media works that have managed to reach a *zone of indiscernibility* (Deleuze) between fiction and documentary (Elias Khoury and Rabih Mroué’s

*Three Posters*, 2000; Walid Raad's *Miraculous Beginnings*, 1998 and 2001, *The Dead Weight of a Quarrel Hangs*, 1996-1999, and *Hostage: the Bachar Tapes [English Version]*, 2002), I am interested in series of objects that appear in a number of Lebanese videos and mixed-media works. Part 2 of "Missing Lebanese Wars" in Walid Raad's *The Dead Weight of a Quarrel Hangs* revolves around the seventeen objects that Zaynab Fakhoury took with her on leaving her husband in 1981, during the civil war, and that had traveled with her from Palestine to Jordan in 1947, from Jordan to Lebanon in 1967, from Lebanon to Sierra Leone in 1969, and back to Lebanon in 1971. Raad shows six of these objects on account of their appearance in photographs produced on the very day Zaynab Fakhoury left or was forced to leave Birzeit, Beirut, Amman, and Freetown. In Lamia Joreige's mixed-media work *Objects of War* (2000; 2003), various people are asked to choose an object that reminds them of the war: theater director Rabih Mroué chose a Jerry can, I chose my video *Credits Included: A Video in Red and Green* (1995). In the last section of Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's documentary *Khiam* (2000), we are soberly shown some of the artifacts that the six interviewed former detainees at Khiam detention center, who were stripped there of all their belongings (including of such elementary things as a comb, a pencil, paper), made with sundry objects that they obtained secretly and manipulated, for example the small piece of lead with which a bread bag is sealed, the aluminum foil wrappers of "Picon" cheese, the screws in "Scholl" slippers, olive pits, an orange's stem, staples from cartons, the papers in cigarette boxes: rosaries whose beads are made of perforated olive pits; a toothbrush; a comb ornamented with a siren with green hair; a miniature Christmas tree; a blue and white cowboy hat; a knit white house with a red chimney surrounded by a green lawn (the three colors of the Lebanese flag); a necklace, etc. One of the main sites to locate the most legitimate artisanal works in the contemporary Arab World is in the work of political prisoners: the provisional work that Riâd al-Turk made in his solitary prison, as seen in Muhammad 'Alî Atâs's *Cousin*; and the objects that the inmates of the Khiam detention center made, as seen in the last section of Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's *Khiam*. Were I to be offered a carte blanche at some video-screening venue, I would

curate a program of the above-mentioned four Arabic works and title it *Arabic Objective Videos and Mixed-Media Works*.

25. I presume that had one asked Riâd al-Turk why he drew, he could have, merely by replacing "make films" by "draw," answered with Marguerite Duras' written response in Godard's *Slow Motion (Sauve qui peut [la vie])*: "I make films to occupy my time. If I were strong enough to do nothing, I wouldn't do anything at all."

26. The assassination of Rafiq al-Harîrî should have provided some Lebanese or Arab publisher with yet another incentive to commission a translation of Thomas de Quincey's *On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts*. Such a translation is long overdue in the Arab world, a region with an already long list of assassinations, most notably that of Egyptian president Muhammad Anwar al-Sadat in 1981, during the annual 6th October victory parade in Cairo.

27. "Beirut Blast Kills al-Hariri," <http://english.aljazeera.net>, 14 February 2005.

28. Nicholas Blanford, "As Syria Pulls Out, Lebanon Again in Flux," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 12 April 2005.

29. See "Ruins," in Jalal Toufic, (*Vampires*): *An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film*, revised and expanded edition (Sausalito, CA: The Post Apollo Press, 2003), pp. 67-74.

30. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 216-217.

31. This too is impossible: that we are mortal, i.e. already dead even as we live. Cf. Rilke: "Murderers are easy / to understand. But this: that one can contain / death, the whole of death, even before / life has begun, can hold it to one's heart / gently, and not refuse to go on living, / is inexpressible" ("The Fourth Elegy," *Duino Elegies*, 1923, trans. Stephen Mitchell). Some people attempt to do away with this impossibility through trying to become liberated from *samsara*, the "cycle of existences," or by means of suicide—those who attempt the latter are unaware that suicide is the impossible aspiration of equating the two deaths (Blanchot).

32. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, volume IV (1900): *The Interpretation of Dreams*,

translated from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953-1974), p. 318. Later in the same chapter, Freud qualifies this assertion: “The ‘not being able to do something’ in this dream was a way of expressing a contradiction—a ‘no’—; so that my earlier statement [p. 318] that dreams cannot express a ‘no’ requires correction.” Ibid., p. 337.

33. They couldn’t heed this twelve-minute-scene partly because they “have... ears but fail to hear” the composed sound track since they regard a video as only moving images and thus when the image does not *appear* to change (actually the natural light keeps changing...) they feel that nothing is changing.

34. In his *North by Northwest*, Hitchcock doesn’t indulge in moral condemnation of this sort of behavior but achieves poetic justice by tracing the consequences of this usurpation of the place of another. At the beginning of the film, late for a meeting with some clients, advertising executive Roger Thornhill tries to flag a cab. A taxi pulls up before another man who was already seeking a cab. Roger Thornhill darts over and beseeches the man while opening the door: “I have a sick woman here. Would you mind?” The perplexed man mutters: “Why no... I mean...” Thornhill hurriedly thanks him while nudging his accompanying secretary into the cab, and then follows her in. As the cab pulls away, the secretary comments: “Poor man.” Unrepentant, Thornhill retorts: “I made him a Good Samaritan.” “He knew you were lying.” “In the world of advertising, there is no such thing as a lie, Maggie. There is only the *expedient exaggeration*.” Shortly, during his meeting with the clients at a hotel lobby, a pageboy enters the room yelling: “Paging Mr. George Kaplan!” (did one of his clients, who is hard of hearing, and who consequently cups a hand to his ear, mishear “Thornhill” for “Kaplan”?). Thornhill signals to the pageboy in order to send a telegram, thus getting mistaken by two spies on the lookout for Kaplan. Once Thornhill is mistaken for Kaplan, the spy ring attempts repeatedly to kill him and he is soon accused by the police of killing a man... Don’t usurp the place of another at a queue, but take advantage of this time to read, for example Richard Foreman’s *No-Body: A Novel in*

*Parts*, otherwise you may, if you are fortunate enough to live in Poetry City, go through what Thornhill went through in Hitchcock’s *North by Northwest*—poetic justice.

35. I do not mean the prosaic red in the Lebanese flag.

36. *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, édition établie par Alain Bergala, tome 1 (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1998), p. 264.

37. Raoul Ruiz, *Entretiens*, présentation par Jacinto Lageira (Paris: Editions Hoëbeke, 1999), p. 20. The interview, conducted by Pascal Bonitzer and Serge Toubiana, first appeared in *Cahiers du cinéma* no. 345, March 1983.

38. War and revolution cannot bring the laggards to the present without also bringing back to the fore a different past, usually a far older past, for example the one revealed in Beirut by the archeological strata that were discovered in that city after the cessation of the civil war.

39. This qualification is addressed especially to Twelver Shi’ites, as a behest to do their utmost to become the contemporaries of the world in which they are living, thus in part becoming qualified to wait for the Mahdî.

40. See the David Lynch interview included on the TFI Video DVD release of *Lost Highway*.

41. *Distracted*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berkeley, CA: Tuumba Press, 2003), p. 103.

42. “We must define an abominable faculty consisting in emitting, receiving, and transmitting order-words.... We see this in police or government announcements, which often have little plausibility or truthfulness, but say very clearly what should be observed and retained. The indifference to any kind of credibility exhibited by these announcements often verges on provocation. This is proof that the issue lies elsewhere.... Information is only the strict minimum necessary for the emission, transmission, and observation of orders as commands. One must be just informed enough not to confuse ‘Fire!’ with ‘Fore!’...” Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translation and foreword by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 75-76.

43. Paul Virilio: “We are confronted with the phenomenon of confinement. Michel Foucault analyzed the great imprisonment in the eighteenth century.... But the Great Enclosure isn’t behind us... it is

ahead of us with globalization.... Besides the ecology of substances, the green ecology, there is an ecology of distances. The telluric contraction of distances... will make the Earth uninhabitable. People will suffer from claustrophobia on the Earth.... The day is not far off—just a few generations, or so they say—when the world will be reduced to nothing, both on the level of telecommunications and on the level of supersonic transportation. Then the world will implode in the soul of humanity. They will be totally trapped, totally asphyxiated by the smallness of the world on account of time and speed.” Paul Virilio and Sylvère Lotringer, *Crepuscular Dawn*, trans. Mike Taormina (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext[e], 2002).

44. Cf. Slavoj Žižek: “In psychoanalysis, the betrayal of desire has a precise name: happiness,” *Welcome to the Desert of the Real: Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (London; New York: Verso, 2002), p. 58.

45. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, translated and with a preface by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1966), p. 17. I think that Nietzsche is here unheeding an untimely collaboration with Blanchot, that in describing this figure he should not have used the singular, *last man*, but only the plural, *last men*. *Last men* is not a plural of *last man*; the *last men* are described negatively and critically by Nietzsche in his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, while the *last man* is portrayed by Blanchot in his book with that title. The Lebanese filmmaker Ghassan Salhab failed to portray the *last man* in his third feature film, whose title he misappropriated from Blanchot, ending up rather with a “last man” made largely to the measure of the *last men* (and women) with which Lebanon is packed—the Lebanese *last men* include the dogmatic religious “martyrs,” who want to live forever in Paradise.

46. “All the formal traits of the crime of New York [the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center] indicate its nihilistic character: the sacralization of death; the absolute indifference to the victims; the transformation of oneself and others into instruments... but nothing speaks louder than the silence, the terrible silence of the authors and planners of this crime. For with affirmative, liberating, non-nihilistic political violence not only is responsibility always claimed, but its essence is found in claiming responsibility.... There is none of that today. The

act remains unnamed and anonymous just like the culprits. There lies the infallible sign of a type of fascist nihilism.

“Opposite it we find another nihilism for which an old name is appropriate, ‘Capital.’” Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, translated and edited by Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens (New York; London: Continuum, 2003), p. 160.

47. From an entry in the projected preface, dated November 1887-March 1888, to *The Will to Power*. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will To Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 3.

48. See Jalal Toufic, *(Vampires): An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film*, revised and expanded edition (Sausalito, CA: The Post Apollo Press, 2003), pp. 101-105.

49. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 207. Now that they are beginning to stir politically following the assassination of Harîrî, I expect the ghosts of the war that were repressed and banished to return (preposterously, the Lebanese filmmaker Ghassan Salhab chose this very moment to make a film whose protagonist, ostensibly a vampire, is a zombie who happens to have an attraction to blood).

50. *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Christopher Middleton (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996), p. 346.

51. The prophet Muhammad said, “If one of you sees a dream that he likes, then it is from Allâh, and he should thank Allâh for it and narrate it to others; but if he sees something else, a dream that he dislikes, then it is from Satan, and he should seek refuge with Allâh from its evil, and he should not mention it to anybody, for it will then not harm him” (“*Kitâb al-Ta’bîr*” [“The Book of Interpretation”], *Sabîh al-Bukhârî*). The prophet Muhammad said also: “People are asleep, and when they die, they awake.” Therefore, what the prophet Muhammad recommended in relation to a nightmare should be applied to evil in general. By posting on the internet videos showing the beheadings of their hostages, the followers of al-Qâ’ida in Iraq provide yet one more blatant indication that

they are no followers of the prophet Muhammad. Anyway, the criminal butchers of al-Qâ'ida in Iraq, with their beheadings of hostages, should have learned from the Qur'ân in their dispatches from hell: even in the worst descriptions of hell in the Qur'ân, no *jouissance* passes—access to what is beyond good and bad, to what belongs to Good and Evil, should be only through an initiation.

52. Has the vocalist Diamanda Galás managed to wrap and transfigure *jouissance* into song in her *Plague Mass*?

53. Has the writer Douglas Rice managed to transfigure *jouissance* into angelic, awful beauty in his *Blood of Mugwump*?

54. Was Jesus Christ also suggesting to us a precursor of (the surrealists') *automatic writing* and *the exquisite corpse*?

55. *Postscript*: I wonder whether the “former” militiaman Muhammad felt relief on hearing the air raids on Beirut's southern suburb during the war Israel waged on Lebanon starting on 12 July 2006.

56. It is unsettling that some of the best recent Lebanese artworks and theoretical-literary texts dealing with the issue of the absence or lack of representation, an issue that one would expect to be related to the supposed prohibition on representation in Orthodox Sunni Islam, are by artists who are Christian according to their official records (Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige [*Wonder Beirut: The Story of a Pyromaniac Photographer* (1998–2006) and *Latent Images* (1998–2007)], Tony Chakar [*A Window to the World (An Architectural Project)*, 2005], Walid Sadek [*Love Is Blind*, 2006]), and by a thinker, Jalal Toufic, who has an affinity with that branch of Islam, Shi'ism, that has cared least about that prohibition (Toufic's concept of the withdrawal of tradition past a surpassing disaster; his work on the undead, who does not appear in the mirror...).

57. *Hiroshima mon amour*, text by Marguerite Duras for the film by Alain Resnais; trans. Richard Seaver; picture editor: Robert Hughes (New York: Grove Press, 1961), pp. 64–65.

58. In the Lebanon of the civil-war, with its generally mediocre art (exceptions: some works by Salwa Rawda Choucair...), one does not encounter the phenomenon Walter Benjamin decried elsewhere, the (fascist) *aesthetization of politics*, but rather a clandestine erotization of horror.

59. One has to fight the evil eroticism of horror of some of the former militiamen or those who witnessed massacres and were unjustly tainted by them during the Lebanese civil-war, and the soft porn of the increasingly crass Lebanese music videos on TV by a reactivation of mystical, spiritual traditions; and/or, in Islamic states other than the ones that still allow marriage to prepubescents, by courtly love directed toward our contemporary Lady, the prepubescent girl; and/or by experimental erotic Arabic video and literary and graphic works (“Clean After Me” in my book *Two or Three Things I'm Dying to Tell You* [2005]...)—I am unable to imagine any of the women who perform in the aforementioned music videos in a genuinely erotic film, along the lines of Nagisa Oshima's *In the Realm of the Senses* (1976), though one can easily imagine them in a hardcore pornographic film or video.

60. In a film adaptation of “*Jouissance* in Post-War Beirut,” there would be at this point a parallel montage between the images from Hitchcock's *The Trouble with Harry* as seen by the vampire's beloved on her monitor and as hallucinated by the blind woman through the vampire's entrancing voice.

61. For my two other readings of Hitchcock's *The Trouble with Harry*, cf. “Bury Me Dead” in my book *Two or Three Things I'm Dying to Tell You* (Sausalito, CA: The Post Apollo Press, 2005), pp. 83–88; and the English conceptual cover of my booklet *Reading, Rewriting Poe's “The Oval Portrait”*—*In Your Dreams* (bilingual edition: English and Arabic. Beirut, Lebanon: Ashkal Alwan, 2006), which implies that when the painter adds the final touches that open the eyes of the portrait, there is a transference of life from Harry, who notwithstanding the misconception of the others was until that point still alive, to the painted portrait, with the consequence that Harry dies and can and should then be definitively buried.

62. *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, ed. and trans. Stephen Mitchell; with an introduction by Robert Hass (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), pp. 169–171.

63. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, p. 185.

64. If the angel appears to prophets in dreams sometimes, is it that strange for him to appear to humans in a painting? Cf. Dōgen: “An

ancient buddha said, 'A painting of a rice-cake does not satisfy hunger.' The phrase 'does not satisfy hunger' means this hunger—not the ordinary matter of the twelve hours—never encounters a painted rice-cake.... all painted buddhas are actual buddhas.... Because the entire world and all phenomena are a painting, human existence appears from a painting, and buddha ancestors are actualized from a painting. Since this is so, there is no remedy for satisfying hunger other than a painted rice-cake. Without painted hunger you never become a true person. There is no understanding other than painted satisfaction." "Painting of a Rice-cake," *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen*, ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi; trans. Robert Aitken [et al.] (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985), pp. 134-138.

65. Cf. St. Basil: "An angel is put in charge of every believer, provided we do not drive him out by sin."

66. While the fastidious spectator may be embarrassed by the presence of other spectators during the projection of a film that turns out to be a bad one, he or she does not feel embarrassed during the projection of an evil film, not so much because he or she is sucked in by the film, losing for a while awareness of the other spectators, but because the evil film transports him or her to a realm he or she as a mortal encounters *alone*, the bardo state, *al-barzak*, undeath, asking "himself"/"herself" then: "Am I dead?" It is only once I have made a decision to leave the screening of an evil film that I become aware of the other spectators.

67. Some Gnostic angels fall in order to save the divine sparks dispersed in the demonic world.

68. Sadruddīn Muhammad Shīrāzī, aka Mullā Sadrā: "Know that what was esoteric and interior in man in the lower, terrestrial world is his outer form in the other world, and what was for him invisible and suprasensory here becomes a matter of witnessing." *Asrār al-Āyāt*, introduced and edited by Muhammad Khawājawī (Bayrūt, Lubnān: Dār al-Sufwa, 1993), p. 219.

69. One can infer from the Twelver Shi'ite tenet that there are only fourteen Muslims who are sinless and infallible (*ma'sūmīn*), the "Fourteen Very Pure," the prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fātima, and the twelve Shi'ite imams, that the others cannot approach God without at some

level also exploring and raising one of the *dhunūb/khatāyā* that are not *kabā'ir* (serious transgressions/capital sins: mainly, associating something with God [*shirk*], or despairing of His mercy) to an affirmative level—thus the relevance and necessity of antinomians, for example vocalist Diamanda Galás, writer Doug Rice (*Blood of Mugwump*), and thinker Jalal Toufic, three of the main contemporary religious figures.

70. Deleuze, Vincennes lecture of 14 December 1971, "The Nature of Flows," trans. Karen Isabel Ocaña, <http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/texte.php?cle=119&groupe=Anti%20Oedipe%20et%20Mille%20Plateaux&langue=2>

71. Nietzsche: "Monsieur Renan, that buffoon in *psychologism*, has appropriated for his explication of the type Jesus the two *most inapplicable* concepts in this case: the concept of the *genius* and the concept of the *hero*. But if anything is unevangelic it is the concept hero. Precisely the opposite of all contending, of all feeling oneself in struggle has here become instinct: the incapacity for resistance here becomes morality ('resist not evil!...') ... To make a *hero* of Jesus! — And what a worse misunderstanding is the word 'genius'! Our whole concept, our cultural concept 'spirit' had no meaning whatever in the world Jesus lived in. To speak with the precision of the physiologist a quite different word would rather be in place here: the word idiot.... One has to regret that no Dostoyevsky lived in the neighbourhood of this most interesting *décadent*..." *Twilight of the Idols*; and, *The Anti-Christ*, translated, with an introduction and commentary, by R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 141-143.

72. Is my ability to get it linked to what I wrote at one point in *Undying Love, or Love Dies* (2002): "He believed that he had gotten over her when his bungled actions no longer had anything to do with her. But he soon discovered that he was still not done with her since he continued to spiritually degenerate. How much dulling of one's spiritual sensibility has to happen, how base one has to become in order not to be crushed by one's betrayed love is an indication of how intense that love was (it was different with his first love: he was far less spiritual then, so he became depressed rather than debased when that love ended)?"

73. Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 8 volumes (Beirut,

Lebanon: Librairie du Liban, 1980), entry *bá'yá'yá'*.

74. Daniel Paul Schreber, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, trans. and ed. Ida Macalpine and Richard A. Hunter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 75.

75. The proper evaluation of a film should include estimating whether its release date is timely. The timing of Ghassan Salhab's third feature film (2006), whose protagonist is seemingly a vampire, is off, being released precisely when Beirut is no longer hospitable to vampires—unfortunately, he did not make his film to show that. Therefore, Salhab either no longer knows “his” Beirut or else is meddling into what he has no *right* to deal with, the vampire.

76. Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text*, trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 4. Moreover, the following thoughtful and thought-provoking words of Hans Moravec, the founder of the robotics program at Carnegie Mellon University, make one apprehend the valid possibility of considering wood as far more intelligent and up-to-date than the backward and pompous Marwan Hamadé: “Anything can be interpreted as possessing any abstract property, including consciousness and intelligence. Given the right playbook, the thermal jostling of the atoms in a rock can be seen as the operation of a complex, self-aware mind.... our ‘mind children’ may be able to spot fully functioning intelligences in the complex chemical goings on of plants, the dynamics of interstellar clouds, or the reverberations of cosmic radiation.... The rock-minds may be forever lost to us in the bogglingly vast sea of mindlessly chaotic rock-interpretations. Yet those rock-minds make complete sense to themselves, and to them it is we who are lost in meaningless chaos. Our own nature, in fact, is defined by the tiny fraction of possible interpretations we can make, and the astronomical number we can’t” (Hans Moravec, *Robot: Mere Machine to Transcendent Mind* [New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], pp. 199-200); cf. Qur’án 17:44: “The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise Him, and there is not a thing but hymneth His praise; but ye understand not their praise.”

77. For example, his descent into hell: “It is said in the Creed: ‘He descended into hell’: and the Apostle says (Ephesians 4:9): ‘Now that He

ascended, what is it, but because He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?’ And a gloss adds: ‘that is—into hell.’” St. Thomas Aquinas, “Christ’s Descent into Hell,” *The Summa Theologica*.

78. Should one object to a dead person telling us tales: “Dead men tell no tales”? Saying this to him may actually have the intended effect, but not because the statement is true; rather because it can act as a jolt, making the dead question whether he is actually alive, possibly ending up coming to the conclusion, “I must be dead,” and then, being one who feels, “Every name in history is I” (from a letter by Nietzsche during his psychosis, his dying before dying physically), exclaiming: “History is my mass grave.”

79. Qur’án 32:5: “He directeth the ordinance from the heaven unto the earth; then it ascendeth unto Him in a Day whereof the measure is a thousand years of that ye reckon.”

80. Qur’án 70:4: “The angels and the Spirit ascend unto Him in a Day whereof the span is fifty thousand years.”

81. A paraphrase of one of the exchanges between inspector Gregory and Sherlock Holmes in Arthur Conan Doyle’s *Silver Blaze*: “Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?” “To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.” “The dog did nothing in the night-time.” “That was the curious incident,” remarked Sherlock Holmes. Holmes later indicates: “I had grasped the significance of the silence of the dog, for one true inference invariably suggests others. The Simpson incident had shown me that a dog was kept in the stables, and yet, though someone had been in and had fetched out a horse, he had not barked enough to arouse the two lads in the loft. Obviously the midnight visitor was someone whom the dog knew well.”

82. How little aware are these performers, who *talk in their names* in life in the performance, that they are already dead even as in their life they impersonate dead characters in Rabih Mroué’s performance, repeatedly reporting, rather nonchalantly, that they died violently on multiple occasions.

83. According to Lebanese theater director Roger ‘Assâf, theater, as opposed to technology, can and should provide us with “a living person before other living persons” (*un homme vivant en face d’autres hommes*



*vivants*). Given that technology is heading in the direction of providing man with an indefinite life span, it is not life that has to be stressed against technology, but mortality. It is not as a simple living being but as a mortal that man can, for a while at least, resist technology. Theater should provide us with humans *dead set* on being mortal.

84. <http://www.lebanon-ilovelife.com>. Only those for whom while life is lovable, love is unlivable (my beloved lover Graziella knows all too well about this), or else while love is livable, life is unlovable, can exclaim, in a *shath* (an ecstatic, often paradoxical exclamation): “I love life!” Thus the Christian God, for whom while life (i.e. Jesus Christ [Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25)] is lovable (“a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love” [Matthew 3:17]), love is unlivable (“Is not pity the cross upon which he who loves man is nailed?” [Nietzsche, “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*]), can exclaim through the third hypostasis, the Holy Spirit: “I love life!” All those whose assertion “I love life!” (in ads and otherwise) includes conjointly “life is lovable” and “love is livable” are insidious nihilists, cheapening both life and love.

85. It is legitimate for the living to be radically changed by what has “broken the history of humanity [Nietzsche included] in two” (Nietzsche), for example the revelation of eternal recurrence, or the maddening realization: “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him” (Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science*, # 125, which continues with “Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us—for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto”). Indeed, he or she should be radically changed by such events.

86. From Friedrich Nietzsche’s 5 January 1889 letter to Jacob Burckhardt, in *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Christopher Middleton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 347.

87. Those who wish to pursue vengeance “further than death” (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*) should, as they sneak behind the dead, call him, for his failure to answer may give them pause since they may infer then that they may be taking revenge on *the wrong man*.

88. See “Martyrs” in my book *‘Ashûrâ’: This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (Beirut, Lebanon: Forthcoming Books, 2005).

89. *Against Silence: The Voice and Vision of Elie Wiesel*, selected and edited by Irving Abrahamson (New York: Holocaust Library, 1985), p. 195.

90. Both pieces were translated in the October 1995 edition of Israel Shahak’s *From the Hebrew Press* and reprinted in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 99, Spring 1996, pp. 148-155.

91. I wager that these shells were not among the ones that fell on Qânâ in Southern Lebanon on 30 July 2006.

92. See “Posthumous Martyrs,” in Jalal Toufic, *‘Ashûrâ’: This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (Beirut, Lebanon: Forthcoming Books, 2005).

93. Frank J. Tipler, *The Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead*. New York: Doubleday, 1994.

94. Martin Rees, *Our Final Hour: A Scientist’s Warning: How Terror, Error, and Environmental Disaster Threaten Humankind’s Future in this Century—on Earth and Beyond*. New York: Basic Books, 2003.

95. Here are some examples of similarly designated advanced weapons: The TC-1 Sky Sword I is a short-range infrared guided air-to-air missile developed by the Chungshan Institute of Science and Technology in Taiwan; these missiles are being replaced or supplemented by the newer, mid-range radar-guided TC-2 Sky Sword II. The UR-100N, whose NATO reporting name is SS-19 Stiletto, is a Russian intercontinental ballistic missile. The Vypel R-37, whose NATO reporting name is AA-X-13 Arrow, is a Russian air-to-air missile designed to shoot down AWACS aircraft from outside the range of any airplanes that may be guarding them. The RT-21M Pioneer, whose NATO reporting name was SS-20 Saber, was a medium-range ballistic missile with a nuclear warhead deployed by the Soviet Union from 1976 to 1988. The Tomahawk is an all-weather submarine or ship-launched long-range subsonic cruise missile for attacking land targets. Rapier is a British surface-to-air missile. The MGM-52 Lance, which was deactivated in 1992, was a mobile field artillery tactical surface-to-surface missile system used to provide both nuclear and conventional fire support to the United States Army. The Convair F-102 Delta Dagger fighter aircraft was part of the United States air defenses in the late 1950s. The FGM-148 Javelin is a man-portable

anti-armour missile in service with U.S. Army and Marine Corps ground forces.

96. Regarding the appearance of a messianic figure in a generation from which all evil has been abolished, see the section “*You Said ‘Stay,’ So I Stayed*” in my book *Forthcoming*.

97. Al-Mukhtâr b. Abî ‘Ubayd al-Thaqafi, the leader of the Kaysâniyya sect, is widely considered to be the one who introduced the doctrine of *bada’*.

98. Ibn al‘Arabi, “The Wisdom of Reality in the Word of Isaac,” in *The Bezels of Wisdom*, translation and introduction by R.W.J. Austin, preface by Titus Burckhardt (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), pp. 99-100.

99. From this perspective, I would define an event as anything that causes a *bada’* on God’s part.

100. For another problematic of the too late, cf. my essay “Arriving Too Late for Resurrection,” (*Vampires: An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film*, revised and expanded edition (Sausalito, CA: The Post-Apollo Press, 2003).

101. Reportedly, Twelver Shi‘ites invoked a different *bada’* as a justification for the postponement: “In some traditions attributed to al-Baqir the number of years which had to elapse before the emergence of the Mahdi was specified. For instance, a close associate of al-Baqir by the name of Abu Hamza Thabit b. Dinar recalled in the presence of this Imam what ‘Ali had said about the end of the period of trial for the Shi‘ites after seventy years, which would be followed by a period of ease and comfort. Abu Hamza complained that the period had elapsed without the prophecy being fulfilled. Al-Baqir explained: ‘O Thabit, God, the Exalted, had set a time to the seventy years. But when al-Husayn was killed God’s wrath on the inhabitants of the earth became more severe and that period was postponed up to a hundred and forty years. We had informed you [our close associates] about this, but you revealed the secret. Now God has delayed [the appearance of the Mahdi] for a further period for which He has neither fixed any time nor has He informed us about it, since [He says in the Qur’an]: “God blots out and establishes whatsoever He will...”’” Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of Mabdi in Twelver Shi‘ism* (Albany: State University

of New York Press, 1981), pp. 152-153.

102. <http://www.prb.org/>

103. On *stopping the world*, see Carlos Castaneda’s *Journey to Ixtlan: the Lessons of Don Juan*.

Visual Notes



*Beneath The Pavement, The Beach 1*



*Beneath The Pavement, The Beach 2*



*Beneath The Pavement, The Beach 3*



*Beneath The Pavement, The Beach 4*



*Watch Your Back, Rafiq!*



*Prayer*



*The Event, Deservedly (Dedicated to Sahar Omran)*

**Jalal Toufic** is a writer, thinker, and artist. He is the author of *Distracted* (Station Hill, 1991; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Tuumba, 2003), *(Vampires): An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* (Station Hill, 1993; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Post Apollo, 2003), *Over-Sensitivity* (Sun & Moon, 1996), *Forthcoming* (Atelos, 2000), *Undying Love, or Love Dies* (Post Apollo, 2002), *Two or Three Things I'm Dying to Tell You* (Post Apollo, 2005), and *Áshûrâ': This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (Forthcoming Books, 2005). His videos and mixed-media works, which include *Credits Included: A Video in Red and Green* (1995), *The Sleep of Reason: This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (2002), *Áshûrâ': This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (2002), *Saving Face* (2003), *I Am the Martyr Comrade Jamâl Sâtî* (2003), *This Is Not to Say that This Is Not the Case* (2004), *A Special Effect Termed "Time"; or, Filming Death at Work* (2005), *The Lamentations Series: The Ninth Night and Day* (2005), *Mother and Son; or, That Obscure Object of Desire (Scenes from an Anamorphic Double Feature)* (2006), *The Dual-Use Memorial* (2007), and *Lebanese Performance Art; Circle: Ecstatic; Class: Marginalized; Excerpt 3* (2007), have been presented in such venues as Artists Space, New York; Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona; Witte de With, Rotterdam; ICA, London; YYY Artists' Outlet, Toronto; Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel; the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens; and the 16<sup>th</sup> International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam (IDFA), in a "Focus Jalal Toufic" program. He co-edited the special *Discourse* issue *Gilles Deleuze: A Reason to Believe in this World*, and edited the special *Discourse* issues *Middle Eastern Films Before Thy Gaze Returns to Thee* and *Mortals to Death* as well as the *Review of Photographic Memory* (Arab Image Foundation, 2004). Toufic has taught at the University of California at Berkeley, California Institute of the Arts, USC, DasArts and the Rijksakademie. In 2002, he established the MA program in Film/Video Studies at Holy Spirit



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