

JOUISSANCE IN POSTWAR BEIRUT

By

Jalal Toufic

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INTERTITLE

Since the postwar 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), the VAMPIRE was for some time now on the lookout for a new labyrinth in which he could be keyed.

"INT." VAMPIRE'S "LIVING" ROOM - NIGHT

The vampire puts a DVD in the player, then begins watching Jalal Toufic's *This Blood Spilled in My Veins*.

"INT." AIRPORT - AFTER MIDNIGHT

The vampire (played by several actors of different ages [this accords with his feeling that he is every name in history], including the one who plays the "other" vampire in the film [whom we first encounter as a taxi driver], which confirms that the two vampires do not add up to two last men but continue to be each the last man) is getting a boarding pass for a Middle East Airlines (MEA) flight to Beirut. For much of the film, the vampire is keyed in the various setting; consequently, others look at an angle to him (and his victims bleed through stigmata rather than as a result of being physically attacked by him). Moreover, for much of the film, he, dead, has no point of view.

VAMPIRE

(muttering)

How moving it can be to go
through the motions? Isn't that
what the angels do in Wenders'
Wings of Desire, for example,
when seemingly picking up a pen
lying on a table?

A family is standing on a moving sidewalk heading toward the gates area. Strangely, the vampire appears to be moving in the same manner notwithstanding that he is not on the moving sidewalk but next to it.

AIRPORT ANNOUNCEMENT

Mr. Yammout, please head as
quickly as possible to the
counter at gate 3 to board your
flight to Beirut. If you do not
do so in the coming five minutes

...

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

STEWARDESS
 (announcement)
 Mr. Yammout, please present
 yourself to the staff, otherwise
 we would have to remove your
 suitcase from the plane.

Indeed we see his suitcase being removed.

"INT." BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

The vampire is at the customs (through
 teleportation/quantum tunneling)!

"EXT." BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

The vampire is invited by several taxi drivers to use
 their respective cars. He heads to what appears to be a
 parked empty taxicab.

"EXT." TAXI MOVING THROUGH THE ROADS LEADING TO BEIRUT'S
 CENTRAL DISTRICT - DAWN

The vampire, now looking physically exactly like the
 driver, remarks the failure of the latter to appear in the
 mirror. The driver too notices the failure of his customer
 to appear in the mirror. At no point do we see the two
 vampires together in the same shot. When we see one
 talking, we witness the absence of the other in the
 mirror.

VAMPIRE
 (V.O.)
 Given the favorable current
 conditions in Lebanon, I assumed
 there would be other undead keyed
 on this country. But I did not
 expect to come across one so
 soon!

OTHER VAMPIRE
 (V.O.)
 By doing a night shift as a taxi
 driver at the airport, I can
 occasionally mortally attack the
 Lebanese I pick up, making him or
 her discover that he or she is "a
 stranger in a strange land."

VAMPIRE
 (V.O.)
 I am considering opening a video
 rental store: it is one of the

most appropriate venues to detect those it would be fitting to prey on, for example, those who are erotically aroused by horror films.

The car stops at a red light.

VAMPIRE

(V.O.)

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 is interrupted by the DRIVER in the car behind them, who insistently honks his horn notwithstanding that the traffic light is still red, backs the car up, moves to the next lane, then overtakes the taxi, yelling:

DRIVER

What are you waiting for, *yā mayyit?*

Moments later, the driver of that car suddenly hears a voice behind him saying politely:

OTHER VAMPIRE

I'll stop here, please!

Startled, the driver involuntarily, instinctively brings the car to a screeching stop and looks in the mirror toward the back seat. He sees no one there! He then perceives the (other) vampire, who is now sitting right next to him.

OTHER VAMPIRE

Were you erudite, you would know that, as is written in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, *the dead travel fast--to nowhere?* I'll make it possible for you to arrive *dead on time*.

He opens his mouth threateningly just as he finishes saying his humoristic words; the driver begins bleeding from a stigma that appears on his neck.

"EXT." STREET IN FRONT OF A BUILDING IN BEIRUT'S CENTRAL DISTRICT - DUSK

The vampire is standing in front of one of the reconstructed buildings of the Central District. A REAL ESTATE AGENT comes to meet him from his car.

"INT." HOUSE - DUSK

REAL ESTATE AGENT
Why did you choose to come to
Lebanon of all places?

VAMPIRE
From the TV news images of
Beirut, I sensed that I could
still find ruins, with their
labyrinthine spaces-times, in
Lebanon.

REAL ESTATE AGENT
Labyrinthine?!

On uttering his exclamation, the real estate agent impulsively turns to a cracked mirror at the hall. He does not see the vampire in the mirror notwithstanding that the latter is ostensibly standing next to him. This absence of the mirror image entrances him. Turning to check whether the vampire is still standing next to him, he witnesses one of the rooms as a ruin and the vampire as a very old man, but then the room appears again in mint condition and the vampire again a youth.

VAMPIRE
Where are you now?

The ostensibly reconstructed house appears again as a ruin, with a few yellowish, rotting papers strewn on the floor. The agent picks up the closest to him. It shows the living room. He picks up a second photograph. It shows him in the building.

REAL ESTATE AGENT
(screaming)
But I've never been here before!

While he's picking up a third photograph ...

VAMPIRE
The moment you enter the
labyrinth, you've been there
before.

The agent lets go of the photograph he has just glimpsed, utters a scream and falls unconscious: the photograph shows him lying on the floor, blood on his neck.

"EXT." VIDEO STORE - DUSK

Establishing shot of a video store. Its name is inscribed on a plaque: For the Hell of It.

"INT." VIDEO STORE - DUSK

The vampire cursorily checks on his laptop computer the lists of the videos rented by his various customers and quickly detects that one customer is repeatedly renting horror films, and that he happens to be late in returning the last DVD he rented. The vampire asks one of his employees to call that customer and to insist that he return it the same night.

"INT." VIDEO STORE - NIGHT

The vampire meets the customer, a FORMER MILITIAMAN in his mid-fifties wearing an obtrusive crucifix around his neck.

VAMPIRE

This is the fifth time you check out this horror film. Are you a film teacher or critic?

FORMER MILITIAMAN

No. Aren't you too drawn to horror films?

VAMPIRE

I am thrilled by *some* horror films.

FORMER MILITIAMAN

My favorite films all belong to the horror genre. What's your favorite film?

VAMPIRE

Hiroshima mon amour--it is the only zombie film I care about.

FORMER MILITIAMAN

I haven't seen it yet. I'll rent it right now. 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.

VAMPIRE

Tonight, I'll be at the service of your wish fulfillment!

The former militiaman is puzzled by the vampire's closing words.

"INT." FORMER MILITIAMAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

On entering his host's apartment, the vampire is immediately struck by the screensaver image on the latter's computer: it is 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. Noticing that his guest is taken by the screensaver image, the host fetches from his very small library a book of Francis Bacon paintings. They flip through the book as they mention various paintings in it.

FORMER MILITIAMAN

He looks to me like one of those birdlike creatures one apprehends in a number of Francis Bacon's paintings: *Seated Figure*; *Figure in Movement*; and *Triptych Inspired by the Oresteia of Aeschylus*. 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*.

VAMPIRE

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.

They then begin watching *Hiroshima mon amour*. After the scenes showing victims of the nuclear explosion, the host very quickly loses interest and turns the volume down.

FORMER MILITIAMAN

Judging by the location of your video store, I would assume that you are a Christian.

VAMPIRE

No, I am not a Christian!

The host is perplexed. After several glasses of wine, and after recovering his composure, he asks his guest:

FORMER MILITIAMAN

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?

VAMPIRE

I am not welcome there!

FORMER MILITIAMAN

How would the priest and the congregation know that?

VAMPIRE

Judging by the blasphemous images and thoughts that pass through my mind in a church, I know that--and so do the voices!

FORMER MILITIAMAN

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 killing 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' was crucified?", for after participating in a few massacres, I wore the crucifix around my neck while butchering in a deliberate desecration--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 gets closer to him and looks him in the eye. The former militiaman sees in the Gorgon eyes of the vampire the horror of the undeath realm and is entranced.

FORMER MILITIAMAN

(muttering in a dreadful lascivious manner)

The human being is this Night, this empty nothing which contains everything in its simplicity--a wealth of infinitely many representations, images, none of which occur to it directly, and none of which are not present. This [is] the Night, the interior of [human] nature, existing here--*pure Self*--[and] in phantasmagoric representations it is night everywhere: here a bloody head suddenly shoots up and there another white shape, only to disappear as suddenly. We see this Night when we look a human being in the eye, looking into a Night which turns terrifying. [For from his eyes] the night of the world hangs out towards us.

The vampire mutters the exact same words, Hegel's, in sync with the former militiaman--but out of sync with himself. Then he exclaims aloud:

VAMPIRE

How uncanny that you, who ostensibly is not yet dead, and I, officially dead, a vampire, can see eye to eye!

While drinking the former militiaman's blood flowing from a stigma on his neck, the vampire asks him:

VAMPIRE

Am I, a dead person, making your blood run cold?

With a remote control, the vampire, while still lying over the former militiaman, turns the volume up on the TV monitor still playing *Hiroshima mon amour* and listens to the voice-over of the FRENCH WOMAN lying on her dying German beloved lover during the last days of the German occupation of France.

FRENCH WOMAN
 (in *Hiroshima mon amour*;
 V.O.)

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 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 ...

"INT." CAFE - NIGHT

The vampire is sitting at the bar with a woman. It's raining outside.

WOMAN

Half an hour ago, I was unaware of your very existence, and yet, already.... Do you believe in love at first sight, the *coup de foudre*?

VAMPIRE

If at all, I believe in love at first out of sight of what induces an impression of *déjà vu*! Anyway, love at first sight will never abolish chance; in other words, *un coup de foudre jamais n'abolira le hasard*.

Another woman is sitting a short distance from them at the bar. She overhears the conversation. As he concludes his reply, there is lightning, a thunderclap and the sound of breaking glass. She turns toward the source of the latter sound: a window. While doing so, she notices with consternation that he does not appear in the mirror on the wall. This absence of the mirror image entrances her; when she regains consciousness, the vampire and his female "companion" are no longer at the bar.

"INT." CAFE - NIGHT

Um Kulthūm's song *Wahishnî winta uşād 'aynī* (I miss you even while you're in front of my eyes) can be heard in the background. Now dressed in other clothes and with a different hairstyle, the woman who had overheard his conversation with the blind woman in the same cafe questions him.

BELOVED LOVER

Am I the woman of your life?

VAMPIRE

You are the woman of my--death.

BELOVED LOVER

How weird of you to say this!--all the more so because I fail to figure out 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.

The camera pans from them to the mirror on the wall: she alone appears in it.

INT. BELOVED LOVER'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The beloved lover phones the vampire.

BELOVED LOVER

This morning, I had what felt to be a flashback to some meeting we had years ago. And yet how could it be a flashback when what I was seemingly reliving had never existed since it precedes our first meeting, which took place recently in a café! Anyway, I'll watch one of the two DVDs you gave me in our last meeting, Hitchcock's *The Trouble with Harry*, and then come to your house.

"INT." VAMPIRE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The vampire scribbles in a notebook: "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 the drive? I dread experimenting the answer with my beloved. I'll try to do my best to be already satiated each time we meet."

"EXT." VARIOUS STREETS - NIGHT

He sets about finding a victim. He gravitates 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 that used to exist there as well as on many Kurdish and Lebanese war refugees who also lived in that zone.

"INT." B018 NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

The vampire sits next to a woman at the bar. He scribbles: "The only thing I can stand about this kitschy nightclub are the bar chairs with their long backs, since they give the impression that the one sitting on them is nonetheless standing." She shortly begins retouching her makeup.

BLIND WOMAN

(mutters)

How incongruous: I "have eyes but fail to see"!

He's alarmed that she may have remarked that he fails to appear in the small mirror of her blusher case. But when on closing her blusher case and wishing to reach for her drink, she gets hold of his glass instead, he's relieved as he realizes that she is blind.

"INT." VAMPIRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

While they caress each other's faces, she begins to describe him. While listening to her haptic portrait, the vampire turns toward the mirror, where he does not appear. Then she asks him to describe her.

VAMPIRE

I find it very difficult to do a portrait.

He fetches a book from his library.

VAMPIRE

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."

He replaces the book on the shelf.

VAMPIRE

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*, the Deputy Sheriff comes across the pastel 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 pastel 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?

While he is describing this scene from Hitchcock's *The Trouble with Harry*, which the blind woman apprehends hypnotically, the same images and scenes are, in a parallel montage, being watched by the vampire's beloved lover on her TV monitor in her apartment.

VAMPIRE

Was your portrait of me successful? In order to answer this question, *See me!*

BLIND WOMAN

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!

VAMPIRE

Look in my eyes by means of my entrancing voice!

Horrified by what she sees in his eyes, she stretches her agitated hand and makes a gesture to close them ...

"INT." VAMPIRE'S "LIVING" ROOM - NIGHT

We see his eyes open as he hears a knock on the door. He unlatches the door. His beloved lover is standing there.

VAMPIRE

I entreat you never again to show up at my house without prior notice.

She enters, pushes him onto the sofa and sits on his lap. He kisses her on the neck and caresses her. She disengages from his arms and fetches a bottle of wine. They drink several glasses. She then heads to the bathroom to take a shower.

BELOVED LOVER

Would you like to join me in the shower?

He declines, then scribbles: "If the *jasad*, the body, is dried blood, then fluid blood is not part of it. Indeed, one reads in Matthew: '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." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant ..."' It is remarkable that Jesus did not feel that it is enough to say, 'this is my body,' but added, 'this is my blood,' which implies that blood is not part of the body. I too differentiate between the body and blood, do not consider blood to be part of the body. Only love makes me interested in the body." As she comes out of the shower, he recommends:

VAMPIRE

Duras' *Hiroshima mon amour* is being screened tonight. Let's go out to watch it.

BELOVED LOVER

OK. But you should get your coat,
since it is cold outside.

While she walks toward the entrance door, he quantum-tunnels to the bedroom's door. Missing him, she turns toward the bedroom: she is startled to glimpse another man--dressed identically--in the last phase of closing the bedroom's door behind him. She promptly attributes this anomaly to the wine. Inside the bedroom, lying on the bed, is the blind woman, in a pool of blood--once more his beloved's timing was propitious, for he was satiated by the time she arrived.

He rejoins her:

BELOVED LOVER

You are like a thousand men in
one.

"EXT." STREET - EVENING

FORMER MILITIAMAN #2

Why did you come to Lebanon?

VAMPIRE

And why did you come to
Lebanon--from the bardo realm ...
where I'll thrust you right now?

The vampire holds him tight, opens his mouth voraciously, only for blood to flow from the neck of the man through a stigma. A policeman sees the vampire and his victim in the distance.

POLICE OFFICER

Hey, you there!

The vampire does not turn--neither does he resume drinking the man's blood.

POLICE OFFICER

(muttering while advancing
hurriedly toward him)

Is he deaf?

The police officer pokes him in the back, but the vampire ostensibly does not turn, continues to look away from him. In front of the vampire holding his victim is a glass storefront through which a mirror hung on the wall is visible. The vampire has his back to himself in it--as does his victim. The policeman is fascinated by the image. The vampire attacks him, but just as he is about to suck his blood, he glimpses in the same mirror his beloved lover in the distance. To his gratifying surprise, he overcomes his drive and swiftly walks away then disappears

behind a corner. The beloved lover dials his "home" number from her mobile phone. Before she hears any ring, he answers!

BELOVED LOVER

It is urgent that I see you as soon as possible! I'll be at your place in approximately thirty minutes.

"EXT." OUTSIDE THE VAMPIRE'S HOUSE - EVENING

The vampire has to kill another victim and successfully suck his blood till satiation before his beloved's imminent arrival. The vampire comes across a man in his early thirties walking outside his house while reading.

VAMPIRE

Do you agree with Nietzsche that "what is done out of love always takes place beyond good and evil"?

PASSERBY

Yes.

He swiftly forcibly draws him inside his building.

VAMPIRE

Given how rare it is to come across someone reading in Lebanon, let alone someone reading Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, I have qualms about what I am about to do.

The vampire attacks him and begins drinking the blood flowing from him through stigmata.

PASSERBY

(exclaims)

I doubt that this is what William Burroughs meant when he wrote: "Anything that can be done chemically can be done in other ways."

"INT." MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

JALAL TOUFIC is seated in the auditorium waiting for the start of a screening of Gaspar Noé's film *Seul contre tous* (*I Stand Alone*, aka *One Against All*, 1998). An ACQUAINTANCE of his comes and sits next to him.

JALAL TOUFIC

Why did you come to watch this film?

ACQUAINTANCE OF JALAL TOUFIC

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.

Dissolve to the following intertitle, which appears sixty-nine minutes into Noé's film: "Attention: You have 30 seconds to abandon the projection of the film." Indeed a countdown follows. Two seconds later, Toufic whispers in his acquaintance's ear.

JALAL TOUFIC

Let's leave.

ACQUAINTANCE OF JALAL TOUFIC

One should watch films from start to finish.

JALAL TOUFIC

Like hell I will do so with this film!

ACQUAINTANCE OF JALAL TOUFIC

I myself will watch the whole film come hell or high water!

Toufic leaves at this point, eighteen seconds into the countdown. The vampire enters moments after the countdown is over and, following the end of the projection, invites one of the spectators to his house.

"INT." VAMPIRE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

FORMER CHRISTIAN MILITIAMAN

Why did you come to Lebanon?

VAMPIRE

My drive; I came to Lebanon for blood.

FORMER CHRISTIAN MILITIAMAN

Blood! What blood? We're in a postwar country.

VAMPIRE

I may have mistaken the flashbacks of some of the traumatized perpetrators and victims of the civil-war and some of the traumatized victims of the Israeli invasion of 1982, which

flashbacks I telepathically apprehend, as taking place currently. More to the point, were you not oblivious of the Twelver Shi'ite yearly commemoration 'Āshūrā' in various parts of Lebanon, you would be aware that there's still a lot of blood in Lebanon. Unfortunately for you, I am unable to wait till 'Āshūrā'.

The vampire attacks the man and drinks his blood as it flows from a stigma on his neck.

"INT." MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Jalal Toufic is watching David Lynch's *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*. Two other men, each one seated in a different section of the cinema, are also watching the film. As the angel disappears from the painting in Laura Palmer's room, Toufic promptly leaves the cinema theater. Moments after the complete disappearance of the angel from the painting, the vampire enters the cinema theater. He walks to one of the two men and stands between him and the screen--yet he does not project any shadow on it. A dissolve is happening onscreen. As he overpowers the first man and starts to suck his blood, the frightened other man starts running away toward the exit. The vampire (quantum) tunnels, in other words, dissolves, to him. This dissolve outside of the projected film, in "reality," is the last thing the second man sees before he is killed by the vampire.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Five FORMER MILITIAMEN are listening to the TV news, which relates to the recent spate of unsolved murders in the city.

FORMER MILITIAMAN #4

This is the third ex militiaman we knew who has been murdered this month in a mysterious manner.

FORMER MILITIAMAN #5

Did anyone of you ever study probability and statistics, so we would know whether we should particularly worry about these murders? Should we begin to suspect that someone is after our blood, that there is bad blood between him, who seems not to

acknowledge the amnesty law of 1992, and us?

"INT." VIDEO STORE - MORNING

VIDEO STORE EMPLOYEE
I can't be here on Sunday morning. I have a makeup session of the class "Film and Religion" then.

VAMPIRE
Why bother to attend the makeup session? Is your professor any good?

VIDEO STORE EMPLOYEE
Yes.

VAMPIRE
He is?! What's his name?

VIDEO STORE EMPLOYEE
Jalal Toufic.

VAMPIRE
Jalal Toufic! He's one of my favorite thinkers. Is that the only class he teaches this semester?

VIDEO STORE EMPLOYEE
No. I am also taking his class "Radical Closure." We are supposed to watch David Lynch's *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* for next week.

VAMPIRE
Do me the favor of inquiring of him whether I can attend his class as an auditor.

The employee-cum-graduate student phones his professor.

VIDEO STORE EMPLOYEE
Your attendance would be agreeable to him.

"INT." HOLY SPIRIT UNIVERSITY--KASLIK (USEK) - MORNING

The vampire tries to be satiated before the class so as not to be overpowered by his drive and attack one of his favorite thinkers. He enters one of the various churches on the way to the classroom at Holy Spirit University. As he does so, he overhears a (diegetic) voice-over.

(DIEGETIC) V.O.

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?

He sits to confess to the priest.

VAMPIRE

I just 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,' and Jesus replied, 'Go!'" And I imagined that on their way into the pigs, they mocked him thus: "O Jesus, 'do not throw your pearls to pigs.'"

PRIEST

Go on.

VAMPIRE

Do you believe in stigmata?

PRIEST

Of course!

VAMPIRE

Can they appear in locations other than those of the wounds of Jesus Christ during his crucifixion? For example, can a stigma appear on the neck?

While the priest is still considering what answer to give, the vampire opens his mouth in a predatory manner and a stigma appears on the priest's neck. The vampire subjugates the priest and drinks the flowing blood.

"INT." CLASSROOM - MORNING

JALAL TOUFIC

For some reason, I feel exhausted, drained of energy. Were it not that we have a guest today, I would have suggested that we postpone the lecture. 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."
 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; Deleuze writes, "When Bruno
 [in Werner Herzog's *Stroszek*]
 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*." *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 Lynch's *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, made by filmmakers who started their cinema work with one or more short animation/pixilation films (Lynch's *The Grandmother*, *The Alphabet*, etc.). By the way, I am cancelling my film assignment for the next session; indeed, I recommend that you refrain from watching *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*. 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). 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. 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, the human in question subsequently becoming the puppet of the devil, suffering from sacrilegious thought-insertions, depersonalization, etc.

INT. CHURCH - LATER IN THE MORNING

The Eucharist is in progress. As the vampire drinks the wine of the Eucharist, some of it drips from his lips--it is now blood! He wipes it with a napkin.

PRIEST
(concerned)
Did you bite your lip?

FORMER VAMPIRE
No!

Now his words are in sync. Henceforth, he is no longer keyed on the location where he is ostensibly, and, for the first time since the beginning of the film, a point of view shot conveys what he is seeing: the priest, the church, etc.

INT. (FORMER) VAMPIRE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The former vampire stands over the dead body of the passerby he killed while the latter was reading Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* and resurrects him. Then both go out for dinner.

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

(FORMER) VAMPIRE
I feel hungry, but with a
resistible hunger!--a hunger
that's no longer a drive but a
biological need.

They order. The former vampire's pick: a small salad.

(FORMER) VAMPIRE
I knew that I was being aided,
granted a reprieve when I entered
the church without being repelled
by the sort of blasphemous voices
and images that were usually
inserted in my mind as soon as I
trespassed into a church or a
mosque. It was as if I were being
guarded by an angel. I did not
actually swallow the wafer, but
placed it under my tongue; but I
drank the wine. I 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." It was as
if it were the first time I, till

then a vampire, actually tasted blood. And I felt that these few drops of wine transubstantiated into blood (of the covenant) were replacing all my addictive infected blood. I felt pure. To be pure at the Eucharist is to drink wine but taste pure blood, one that is not mixed with wine, indeed to taste blood with such intensity and irrevocability that one no longer recalls that what was poured in the chalice was wine (better not to taste blood at all at the Eucharist 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). I've been described prior to my resurrection as a *hayawān*, which is usually understood to solely mean *an animal*, by various Lebanese people--probably on account of the savage way I attacked my victims while I was driven by an irrepressible 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 related to the unconscious, so that it was inaccurate to speak at that point about an animal or even a becoming-animal. Though it would be paradoxical, it is likely that now that I have achieved life everlasting through Jesus Christ, I will no longer be called *hayawān* by mortals notwithstanding that *Hayawān* [is] "an inf. n. of *hayiya*, like *hayāt*, but having an intensive signification ... and that *fa'inna al-dār al-'ākhira lahiya al-hayawān* in the Qur'ān means [And verily the last abode is] the abode of everlasting life: or the life that will not be followed by death: or much life; like as *mawatān* signifies much death."

His cellular phone rings.

BELOVED LOVER

(V.O.)

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. And then I realized to my utter bafflement that I have never called you, that I still don't know your name!

FORMER VAMPIRE

Yahya.

"EXT." ROAD - EVENING

Jalal Toufic hails a taxicab. It happens to be the one driven by the other vampire.

JALAL TOUFIC

To the airport, please.

On the way to the airport, Toufic starts reading a newspaper.

OTHER VAMPIRE

Anything remarkable?

JALAL TOUFIC

Yet another suicide car bombing of a funeral in Iraq! I might see the logic that could lead to such a condemnable attack were it perpetuated by members of some perverse extremist Christian sect: "If you wish to bury the dead, we'll help you attain the condition of possibility of doing so--that you be dead--hasn't Jesus Christ said, 'let the dead bury their own dead'?" But what grounds can some who profess to be Muslims provide for perpetrating such an inconsolable atrocity (since it attacks the very work of mourning)?

"EXT." AIRPORT - EVENING

The vampiric driver reaches the airport and deposits his customer. But then instead of waiting in the arrival zone, he parks his taxicab in the departure parking lot. He then buys a ticket for Iraq. While waiting for boarding at the departure gate to Istanbul, Jalal Toufic watches the TV monitor present in the hall. It shows images of 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; Hamadé is referred to as "the living martyr." Toufic writes in his notebook: "While the resurrected brother of Mary and Martha, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved,' can be accurately referred to as a 'living martyr,' Marwan Hamadé certainly cannot. Beyond being ridiculous, such a description of Hamadé is symptomatic of an ongoing change of Beirut from a city that's hospitable to the undead to a mundane city, one where the undead, no longer able to remain keyed in it since it is devoid of ruins, of labyrinths, are replaced with cheap simulacra of them. I would imagine that were there presently a vampire in Lebanon, he would soon have to leave to some country in the midst of a civil war or war that has produced labyrinthine ruins and *jouissance*, thus hospitable to him--or be granted the grace of being resurrected. If he is unable to leave in time, he would cease even to haunt, die (the second death), like the gods died because the world was no longer hospitable to them." He glimpses the man who unbeknownst to him is a vampire heading to the adjoining departure gate to Baghdad.

JALAL TOUFIC

(mutters)

"As soon as I was able to use that word, I said what I must always have thought of him: that he was the last man."