

LETTER OF
RECOMMENDATION BY
JALAL TOUFIC

I asked my brother, the writer, film theorist, and visual artist Jalal Toufic (aka Jalal Toufic Omran), to recommend some texts, films and art works relating to the subject of this Guide. Here's his epistolary answer:

Beloved Sahar:

Notwithstanding how busy I am presently, here are some recommendations of texts, films and artworks relating to your *The Long Overdue Guide to Lebanon's Restaurants*. I dedicate this modest recommendation letter to Peter Kubelka, filmmaker, chef, and professor of Film and Cooking at the Art Academy of Frankfurt (*Staedelschule*) from 1980 to 1999.

FIRST, SOME QUOTATIONS:

Rich or poor, each language always implies a deterritorialization of the mouth, the tongue, and the teeth. The mouth, tongue and teeth find their primitive territoriality in food. In giving themselves over to the articulation of sounds, the mouth, tongue, and teeth deterritorialize. Thus, there is a certain disjunction between eating and speaking, and even more, despite all appearances, between eating and writing. Undoubtedly, one can write while eating more easily than one can speak while eating, but writing goes further in transforming words into things capable of competing with food.... To speak, and above all to write, is to fast.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*,
(trans. Dana Polan)

Like the vampire bat, who must consume 50-100% of its body weight in blood every night, the vampire swelled into a great mass during the feeding binge (*Carmilla*). Yet hunger subsisted, for the vampire, like many a schizophrenic (Judge Schreber “lived for a long time without a stomach, without intestines... without a bladder”), had no guts. Hence *The Hunger* is a felicitous title for a vampire film. Shortly he had to disgorge what he drank, since it did not dissolve in him—the ability of things to dissolve in others, to become part of them always amazed him. He vomited through his one subsisting quasi-gut: his throat. This made him all the more conscious of all the pipes and tubes not only outside the walls (Bacon’s *Figure at a Washbasin*, 1976, *Three Figures in a Room*, 1964, and *Triptych*, May-June 1973) but also inside them (Terry Gilliam’s *Brazil*). Then he disgorged his throat: all the pipes and tubes in the walls disappeared and he looked for a long time at the walls’ impervious smoothness, like a trap that has snapped shut (like the door closing behind the victim of the vampire).

Jalal Toufic, (*Vampires*): *An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* (revised and expanded edition)

I awoke from *The Sickness* at the age of forty-five, calm and sane, and in reasonably good health except for a weakened liver and the look of borrowed flesh common to all who survive *The Sickness*... Most survivors do not remember the delirium in detail. I apparently took detailed notes on sickness and delirium. I have no precise memory of writing the notes which have now been published under the title *Naked Lunch*. The title was suggested by Jack Kerouac. I did not understand what the title meant until my recent recovery. The title means exactly what the words say: NAKED Lunch—a frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork.

William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*

In the city, women were saying: “The Prince’s wife has sought to seduce her servant. She has conceived a passion for him. We can see that she has clearly gone astray.” When she heard of their intrigues, she invited them

to a banquet prepared at her house. To each she gave a knife, and ordered Joseph to present himself before them. When they saw him, they were amazed at him and cut their hands, exclaiming: “God preserve us! This is no mortal, but a gracious angel.” “This is he,” she said, “on whose account you blamed me.”
Qur’ân 12:30-32 (trans. N.J. Dawood)

When the old master Hiakajo was asked “What is Zen?” he said “When hungry, eat, when tired, sleep,” and they said, “Well isn’t that what everybody does? Aren’t you just like ordinary people?” “Oh no,” he said, “they don’t do anything of the kind. When they’re hungry, they don’t just eat, they think of all sorts of things...”

Alan Watts, “Lecture on Zen”

The passion for the past has such power over the soul that the Jews, when they were endlessly wandering in the desert, could not appreciate the bread of angels that was falling from heaven.

They hardly touched the manna notwithstanding that it had the miraculous aptitude of adapting itself to the taste of each one of them.

They missed the food they had eaten in Egypt while they were slaves.

Pascal Quignard, *Abîmes* (*Abysses*, my translation)

On the one hand the situation must permeate the character deeply and continuously, and on the other hand the character who is thus permeated must burst into action, at discontinuous intervals. This is the formula of realist violence... The structure is that of an egg: a vegetable or vegetative pole (permeation) and an animal pole (acting-out)... The vegetative pole’s movement on the spot is in fact just as great as the violent movement of the animal pole. Spongy permeation has as much intensity as acting-out, as sudden extension... Kazan advised that people in conflict should be made to eat together: the common absorption would make the eruption of duels even stronger.

Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam)

Stupidity in the kitchen; woman as cook; the dreadful thoughtlessness with which the nourishment of the family and the master of the house is provided for! Woman does not understand what food *means*: and she wants to be the cook! If woman were a thinking creature she would, having been the cook for thousands of years, surely have had to discover the major facts of physiology, and likewise gained possession of the art of healing. It is through bad female cooks—through the complete absence of reason in the kitchen, that the evolution of man has been longest retarded and most harmed: even today things are hardly any better. A lecture for high-school girls.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (trans. R.J. Hollingdale) # 234

This aphorism that deals with stupidity is introduced by another aphorism regarding stupidity, #231: “At the bottom of us, ‘right down deep,’ there is, to be sure, something unteachable, a granite stratum of spiritual fate, of predetermined decision and answer to predetermined selected questions. In the case of every cardinal problem there speaks an unchangeable ‘this is I’; about man and woman, for example, a thinker cannot relearn but only learn fully — only discover all that is ‘firm and settled’ within him on this subject. One sometimes comes upon certain solutions to problems which inspire strong belief in us; perhaps one thenceforth calls them one’s ‘convictions.’ Later — one sees them only as footsteps to self-knowledge, signposts to the problem which we are — more correctly, to the great stupidity which we are, to our spiritual fate, to what is unteachable ‘right down deep.’ — Having just paid myself such a deal of pretty compliments I may perhaps be more readily permitted to utter a few truths about ‘woman as such’: assuming it is now understood from the outset to how great an extent these are only — *my truths*” (*Beyond Good and Evil*). How thought-provoking is the fateful fundamental streak of stupidity of great thinkers! Contrariwise, how lacking in the thought-provoking are those who are always politically-correct, who have nothing unteachable in them, no spiritual fate (for example Edward Said). Since in aphorism #234 Nietzsche was giving a lesson to high school girls, it would not be stupid to assume that he was doing so because they are not unteachable when it comes

to the meaning of food. I imagine one such high school girl who gave birth to a child and who, years later, grew to be an excellent cook dedicating her guide to cuisine thus: “To my son [or daughter], who made me feel while I was suckling him that I was already a chef, a great one.” If Nietzsche’s lesson to high school girls is rather that they are fated not to learn the meaning of food, then their task would be to divest cuisine from nutrition, as F.T. Marinetti and other Futurists demanded (Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Edible Art”: “The first step in a Futurist gastronomy was to separate hunger and nutrition from the pleasure of eating, to dissociate food as fuel from food as art. Futurists proposed meeting daily dietary needs by pills distilled and synthesized scientifically in the laboratory and distributed free of charge by the State. They wanted to confine eating proper to artistically conceived dinners and banquets”), and reserve cuisine, as was the case of Lewis Carroll’s Alice and Nietzsche’s woman, to surface, incorporeal events (Buñuel’s *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* presents us with such an an incorporeal event: the dinner that never takes place) rather than to the depth of the body; to appearance and beauty, away from meaning.

Recommended Texts:

- Ferran Adrià, Juli Soler, Albert Adrià, *El Bulli 1998-2002*, édition française (with CD-Rom). Roses, Espagne: Elbulli Books, 2003.
- Antonin Artaud, “Letter to Pierre Loeb (April 23, 1947)” and “*To Have Done with the Judgment of God*, a radio play (1947),” *Selected Writings*, edited, and with an introduction, by Susan Sontag; trans. Helen Weaver; notes by Susan Sontag and Don Eric Levine. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
- Peter Barham, *The Science of Cooking*. Berlin; New York: Springer, 2001.
- Roland Barthes, “Chopsticks,” “Food Decentered,” “The Interstice,” *Empire of Signs*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); “Sade I” and “Sade II: ‘La haine du pain,’” *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971); “Tact,” *The Neutral: Lecture Course at the Collège de France (1977-1978)*, trans. Rosalind E. Krauss and Denis Hollier; text established, annotated,

- and presented by Thomas Clerc under the direction of Eric Marty (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
- Michel Bras, *Notebooks of Michel Bras: Desserts*. Ici La Press, 2002.
 - Gilles Deleuze, “Fourth Series of Dualities,” *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale; ed. Constantin V. Boundas. London: The Athlone Press, 1990.
 - *La Cuisine du sacrifice en pays grec*, ed. Marcel Detienne et Jean-Pierre Vernant, avec les contributions de Jean-Louis Durand, Stella Georgoudi, Francois Hartog et Jesper Svenbro. Paris: Gallimard, 1979.
 - Dōgen, “Painting of a Rice-cake (*Gabyō*),” in *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen*, ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi; trans. Robert Aitken et al. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985.
 - *Grand Livre de Cuisine: Alain Ducasse’s Culinary Encyclopedia*, edited by Jean-François Piège, with Didier Elena, Franck Cerutti, Patrick Ogheard, and Benoit Witz; photography by Didier Loire; preface by Jean-François Revel. Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2004.
 - *Grand livre de cuisine d’Alain Ducasse: Desserts et pâtisserie*, ed. Frédéric Robert, photographie par Mathilde de l’Ecotais. Argenteuil: De Gustibus, 2002.
 - Pierre Gagnaire, *Sucré, salé*; [textes de] Beaugé, Simon; [photogr. de] Bloch-Lainé ; [conception des prises de vue de Bloch-Lainé], Comolli, Pennor’s (Éditions de la Martinière, 2003); *Reflections on Culinary Artistry*, with Bénédict Beaugé, Jean-Louis Bloch-Lainé (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2003).
 - Franz Kafka, “A Hunger Artist,” *Collected Stories*, edited and introduced by Gabriel Josipovici, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.
 - Harold McGee, *On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen*, completely rev. and updated. New York: Scribner, 2004.
 - Friedrich Nietzsche, “Why I Am So Clever,” *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann; edited, with commentary, by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.
 - Katharine Sanderson, “Cooked to Perfection,” *Chemistry World*, Volume 2, number 5, May 2005, <http://www.rsc.org/chemistry-world/Issues/2005/May/Cookedtoperfection.asp>
 - Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, translated, with notes, by Lawrence R. Schehr. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.
 - Peter Sloterdijk, “Digression 8: Vérités d’analphabètes: Notice sur le fondamentalisme oral,” *Sphères 1: Bulles*, traduit de l’allemand par Olivier Mannoni. Paris: Fayard, 2002.
 - Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons: Objects, Food, Rooms*. Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Press, 1991.
 - Hervé This, “14 types de sauces,” “La cuisine en formules,” *Science et cuisine*, <http://www.pierre-gagnaire.com>
 - Allen S. Weiss, *Flamme et festin: Une poésie de la cuisine* (Paris: Éditions Java, 1994); *Feast and Folly: Cuisine, Intoxication, and the Poetics of the Sublime* (State University of New York Press, 2002); “A Personal Gastronomic Alphabet,” *Cabinet* issue 1, Winter 2000, pp. 15-16; “A Personal Gastronomic Alphabet, Part II,” *Cabinet* issue 2, Spring 2001 (<http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/2/gastronomictwo.php>); “A Personal Gastronomic Alphabet, Part III,” *Cabinet* issue 3: *Weather*, Summer 2001 (<http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/3/gastronomicpart3.php>); “The Pleasures and Ideology of Fusion,” *Cabinet* issue 5, Winter 2001, pp. 21-23; “How to Read a Menu,” *Cabinet* issue 6, Spring 2002 (<http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/6/readamenu.php>); “How to Cook a Phoenix,” *Cabinet* issue 7, Summer 2002 (<http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/7/ingestion7.php>); “Culinary Landscapes,” *Cabinet* issue 9, Winter 2002/03, pp. 17-19; “Authenticity, or, The Paradoxes of Cuisine,” *Cabinet* issue 11, Summer 2003, pp. 17-19.
 - Slavoj Žižek, “Human Rights in a Chocolate Egg,” *Cabinet* issue 11, Summer 2003, pp. 43-46.

Recommended Films and Videos:

- Luis Buñuel, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972)

- Tim Burton, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005)
- Claire Denis, *Trouble Every Day* (2001)
- Abel Ferrara, *The Addiction* (1995)
- Marco Ferreri, *La Grande bouffe* (1973)
- Peter Greenaway, *The Cook the Thief His Wife & Her Lover* (1989)
- Werner Herzog, *Nosferatu* (1979)
- Juzo Itami, *Tampopo* (1985)
- Buster Keaton (and Donald Crisp), *The Navigator* (1924)
- Paul Lacoste, *L'invention de la cuisine: Michel Bras, Pierre Gagnaire, Olivier Roellinger* (2000-2001).
- Stephen and Timothy Quay (aka Brothers Quay), *Institute Benjamenta, or This Dream People Call Human Life* (1995)
- Jalal Toufic, *The Sleep of Reason: This Blood Spilled in My Veins* (2002)

Recommended Artworks:

- Giuseppe Arcimboldo, *The Lawyer*, 1566; *The Cook*, c. 1570; *Summer*, 1573; *Autumn*, 1573.
- Sophie Calle, “le Régime chromatique (1997),” *m’as-tu vue*. Paris: Centre Pompidou: Xavier Barral, 2003.
- Salvador Dalí, *Soft Self Portrait with Fried Bacon*, 1941.
- Juan Gris, *Breakfast*, 1914.
- Mona Hatoum, *Deep Throat*, 1996.
- Roy Lichtenstein, *Mustard on White*, 1963.
- Meret Oppenheim, *Object (Breakfast in Fur)*, 1936.
- Rembrandt, *Slaughtered Ox*, 1655.
- Soutine, *Still Life with Oranges*, c. 1916; *Still Life with Herrings and Oval Plate*, c. 1917; *Still Life with Peppers and Carrots*, c. 1918; *Little Pastry Cook*, c. 1921; *Pastry Cook of Cagnes*, c. 1922-1923; *Pastry Cook with Red Handkerchief*, c. 1922-1923; *Still Life with Duck*, c. 1923-1924; *Still Life with Rayfish*, c. 1923-1924; *Turkey with Tomatoes*, c. 1923-1924; *Cook of Cagnes*, c. 1924; *Hare with Forks*, c. 1924; *Fish and Tomatoes*, 1924; *Still Life with Rayfish*, c. 1924; *Still Life with Turkey*, c. 1924; *Still Life with Pheasant*, c. 1924; *Flayed*

- Beef*, c. 1924; *The Beef*, c. 1925; *Hare Against Green Shutter*, c. 1925-1926; *Brace of Pheasants*, c. 1926; *The Pastry Cook*, c. 1927.
- Andy Warhol, *Campbell’s Soup Cans*, 1962.
- Edward Weston, *Pepper No. 30*, 1930; *Eggs and Slicer*, 1930.

Recommended Websites:

<http://www.pierre-gagnaire.com>

<http://www.fatduck.co.uk>

The Long Overdue Guide to Lebanon’s Restaurants, ed. Sahar Omran (Beirut, Lebanon, 2006), 51–61.