

EMBROIDERY OF FIRE

To Gōzō Yoshimasu

I've reached my destination at last.

My mother would have said I haven't reached it.
She used to say, 'The aim is far away.'

She was right: I'm still far from everything, down to the world,
Up to the stars. I've no idea where my aim has ever been;
Hopefully within eternity, on its outskirts.

Whatever I do, I'll arrive on time: death is
As punctual as kings.

My granny knitted me some gloves, keeping in mind
The ruthlessness of the Russian winter. And also
Of the Russian autumn – of all Russian phenomena.
In Russia you'd better not venture outdoors without gloves,
Boots and several fur hats.

Yet fire is everywhere – not only in Moscow,
In 1812.

The destination is in the needle.

THE CONQUEST OF SPACE

Time may be abolished rather effectively and since the creation of humanity a number of individuals have done their utmost to achieve this new version of non-being, nothingness and eternity. Not only committers of suicide, yogis and mystics are capable of such an exploit: eternity takes pride of place on any battlefield, however small and unimportant. (Fortinbras' army.)

Space is a hard nut to crack: even corpses do not strive to abolish it. They do not mind losing it beyond the threshold of death, even if they have no other spaces within their reach, no other playgrounds. In one of his poems Pasternak says that, instead of brushing away cobwebs from one's manuscripts, one had better woo space-time with masterpieces. As a result of this wooing, one is sure to enjoy the love of space, all the while listening to the call of the future.

I am rather indifferent to the calls of the future and I do not even have to turn a deaf ear to them: I cannot hear anything beyond the present and the past. But every poet is duty bound to conquer space – a prestigious

battlefield where one is likely to encounter walls and obstacles without number. According to Goethe and Baudelaire, a poet must restructure the universe, putting distant objects and subjects together. One can go so far as to appeal to topography, varying the layouts of verses and whole pages. Gōzō Yoshimasu avails himself fully of this procedure and his frequent quotations add another mile or light year to his works. And so does his bootstrap, quantum-mechanics-sanctified treatment of the universe. Sometimes he does not remember where his quotations come from and this is yet another feature of the space he conquers. Quotations in search of authors.

A Russian philosopher, Fyodorov, thought we should replenish not only the Earth but the entire universe – just the opposite of our preoccupation with ETs and flying saucers. Actually Dante did it many centuries ago. He enabled his fellow creatures to settle everywhere: upstairs, downstairs.

THE METEOR (METEORITE) PROJECT

I would not mind knitting a scarf for myself as if I needed any protection from whatever surrounds me on all sides, in all minds. I am protected by death that protects everybody, provided these body, every and mind await it patiently, without rushing up the stairs/to the office/to find another computer. Of course I am not protected from myself, as they always point out, even if they are not within my hearing and field of vision. I am also beyond my fields, all of them, and my will says, ‘yes’ to no avail: nothing (not even my sinews) is able to listen to it, if only for a few, short-attention-span-marked seconds. List o list (Oh, Liszt), as usual.

If I could lie low on a meteor, and not on my bed or in my garden, I would be protected from both my adversaries and friends. What is more, I would be in a position to destroy a part of this planet of ours, which I neither cherish nor take notice of, by falling on it in imitation of Adam’s unforgettable exploit. But of course, on a meteor or on a star, you do not lie *low*: you lie *high*; you are high on meteors, stars and nebulae. And I do not need heights as such to give myself over to what they call ‘spirituality’ and ‘romanticism’: I have already appropriated both these notions and motions.

It is true that, whenever I wish to recede into the distance and thereby distance myself from the world where vulgarity is as common as banality, I go up and not right or left. I recall one of my fellow students who used to draw either on a blackboard or on a blank sheet of paper an arrow; however, even for the sake of clarity and tangibility, for once I shall abstain from drawing anything on my computer screen. This does not mean that, overnight, I have come to believe in the omniscience and omnipotence of words where, according to some word-stuffed, world-empty thinkers, everything curls up and matures. In other words, words give birth to notions and even to real babies so that, in order to conceive and offer to humanity (and humanism) a brand-new child, a woman has to say, ‘A baby,’ without bothering about pipettes and sperms.

No, I have no wish to say, ‘A baby,’ or ‘A Bentley,’ for reality is not automatically responsive and often displays crass ignorance of our motives, desires and calls. Every say we say to it, ‘Can’t you see I need a Bentley?’ and ‘I feel like marrying a beautiful, rich and graceful woman.’ Reality does not even turn a deaf ear, although a breeze may stir the leaves lying on the path that leads to our front door. The same breeze may likewise ripple the water; it does not really matter what water it ripples and where this event takes place (often in our absence). By way of an answer, so to speak: instead of offering us a Bentley and a woman, reality stirs a few leaves and some flag or other flaps in the breeze above our tents.

What does all this have to do with meteors? I recall a student – he might have been my friend for a few months – who drew a number of arrows whenever he saw a surface on which one could draw something, not necessarily a number of arrows. ‘What does that mean?’ he would ask.

‘Just an arrow,’ I would answer.

‘But where does it lead an onlooker?’

‘To another arrow,’ I would answer.

‘Do you mean to say there are only arrows in human existence? No goals, no results, no truths – only arrows?’

‘That’s right.’

‘This arrow leads to objects and artificial values,’ he would say pointing at a cigarette or a ballpoint. ‘Do you know that every day I spend at least one hour on top of the cupboard?’

‘What cupboard?’

‘Doesn’t matter. What does matter, however, is my attitude towards the world. I look at it from afar and from up there – from the stars, so to speak. I don’t believe in the unity of humanity. Nor do I think in terms of universal consciousness as a prelude to any perception and conclusion.’

‘Do you think in terms of cupboards and their tops?’ I would ask.

‘I think in terms of Andromeda and a personal God.’

Weary of horizontal surfaces – sheets of paper, for the most part – he ended up drawing his arrows on walls, whenever there were no blackboards within his reach. He could go so far as to wedge the arrow-enlivened sheets of paper between two loudspeakers to make them point towards Andromeda or heaven. He never spoke of meteors, oddly enough; and yet it might have given him an opportunity to express almost tangibly a psychotic hatred of the Earth, of its planes and platitudes. He nourished his hatred daily through newspapers and the websites he consulted only for the sake of proving to himself and sometimes to his colleagues the omnipresence of human stupidity and obstinacy. A piece of rock or other matter from space that produces a bright light as it travels through the Earth’s atmosphere. Why did he never say he was sitting or lying on this piece of rock? Because he was reluctant to travel through the Earth’s atmosphere? And what about the light depicted by our books and detached observers?

Do I need this light? After all, my light can do without any boosting, any additional portion of electricity. It is enough to read Spinoza or the Bible to become as luminous as any meteor one can see as one watches the Earth’s atmosphere on a cloudless night. Doesn’t Spinoza speak to us thus? ‘Our mind, in so far as it knows itself and the body under the form of eternity, necessarily has a knowledge of God, and knows that it is in God and is conceived through Him.’ I know myself under the form of eternity because no other form seems to suit my aspirations and ambitions. So I am not only aware of God’s existence, but I also know him by heart – Know Him! as they say in Jerusalem so as to contradict both Athens and the Greeks in general, thereby giving quite a bit of weight to the maxim ‘Athens and Jerusalem are poles apart’.

In the poem, the poet says I am an eternal traveller, sitting on a meteor – not on a cannonball, as the baron did – and I wonder why I continue to travel in spite of the immobility I reached some time ago as I realised I was the needle – not only its point. I can knit myself eternally, myself and the world, its destiny – as all those Norms or extramundane norms everlastingly do in Wagner’s tetralogy. And my travels are those of a needle that goes through planets and stars, as Dante did as he followed his (and our) Beatrice on his journey through strata and stratagems of life and afterlife; and afterafterlife. All this is so infinite and eternal that one might succumb to the allure of

Buddhism where you put an end to your suffering by saying, ‘*Basta*,’ and doing *basta*: it is not enough just to say it, as we already know from my analysis of words and their odds, their ends.

Even within the kingdom of Eternity you need to protect yourself – from evil, for instance; from an evil eternity which lies in wait for whatever is good in the eternity we picture to ourselves as we write an immortal poem or compose Beethoven’s *Fifth* or *Ninth*. But don’t I come back to the Earth? Should I spend my eternity on a cupboard of sorts? On a sort of cupboard? Every point in the universe is a sort of cupboard from which you can contemplate all other parts of the universe, on condition that they are not obstructed either by enemies, by star-wars-suggested nebulas and aircraft, or by your own blindness, insensitivity and overall paralysis. Well, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes – whatever happens somewhere, under my very nose, I have to come back, jumping from my cupboard or meteor in order to be at one with my birth and my fellow creatures and mixtures. So I am a meteorite lying in my own garden; and I welcome other meteors with open arms, open minds. You destroy a part of this planet of mine and then land up beside the tree under which I am lying even in wintertime, amidst all nights, dreams and autumns.

My Japanese friend thinks that Emily Dickinson’s dashes were almost the end of the world. A thread, a Norn (a norm, as I said earlier) that knits not the gloves I dwelt upon for a long time, a few long nights, but our destiny. You knit, knit, knit, *niet*-knit, *niet*-knit and put the result of your labours and loves on a shelf. The shelf sags under the weight of your heavy books and you experience the twilight of the gods and Nietzsche’s insolent remarks. In this case, the arrow should go downward:

ARROW

ARROW

ARROW

ARROW

SORROW

I am an eternal traveller going from an arrow to sorrow, from the morrow to yesterday – not only because I could not care less about the morrow. I travel from one pole to its opposite and my dual nature, my inborn androgyny says I am both male and female, mortal and immortal, certain and uncertain. So is the world, so to speak. And I am the world to some extent, to the extent of the meteor lying on the surface of the Earth. And the world is my body, soul, mole and dole – to the same extent. We think each other, exclude each other, include each other, include everything and nothing; or the other way round. We include also the other way and the round we might have left behind, had we not thought twice about the way of all flesh. We thought about it thrice and our flesh went this way: -----►

Perhaps I should turn my attention to the meteorite I see in the poem (not in Siberia) – on account of its proximity to the Earth from which I must have been weaned a long time ago, judging from the indifference I ostensibly demonstrate during my walks in the woods. I do not exclaim, ‘How beautiful this tree looks in the rain,’ or ‘I thank you, my God and Lord, for the remarkable landscape You offered me this afternoon. Your creation is much more breathtaking than David Hockney’s pictures that one finds in the book entitled *David Hockney, A Bigger Picture*. Your pictures are bigger and much more overwhelming. Even your small pictures are jewels in their own right.’ Nor do I study a blade of grass, a number of tears dropping on it for half an hour at least. In other

words, I do not suck on the country-sponsored pleasures. After all, even in your childhood you can suck a blade of grass instead of sucking your thumb or index finger.

My mother died a long time ago, but the Earth is our spare mother whose breasts are everywhere – not only beneath her neck, not far from her heart and lungs. They used to give you sweets to suck on in aeroplanes to stop your ears from going pop. But your ears went pop anyway – pilots call this phenomenon ‘pop music’ – and eventually passengers realised they should suck on a flower or even on a clod of earth to ask the Earth’s forgiveness. Yes, it is the Earth and her fury that makes our ears go pop; as if she felt like heaping sharp reproofs on her prodigal sons and daughters. ‘Why are you leaving me and my breasts? Are you saints or the Fathers of the Church? What do you need these heavens for? Do you think the stars wait for you with open arms? Do you think my cousin Jupiter will give you a big bear hug?’

And you answer her as follows, ‘Dear Mummy. I’m not likely to forget you, you know. I might not forgive you for your hurricanes and quakes, but I’ll never forget you, come hell or high water. Even your hell is more appealing to my senses than Paradise and its accessories one is sure to find in heaven. Do you find Paradise in heaven?’

‘And what about the damned?’ asks the Earth. ‘Are you sure you’re in the very midst of the elect?’

‘I don’t care, dear Mother. I wish to die on your breasts and lie in your bowels for three days at least.’

‘What next?’

‘I beg your pardon?’

‘What will you do next? Will you fly to heaven?’

‘Perhaps. Not in this aeroplane, though.’

‘Damn you, damn you, damn you! As a child you were taught that you would be damned for your sins, were you not?’

‘I was, I was.’

‘Well, I damn you! I do, believe it or not.’