VALERY ALEFF

I KING
PING-PONG

My formula for human greatness is *amor fati*: not wanting anything to be different, not forwards, not backwards, not for all eternity. Not just enduring what is necessary, still less concealing it – all idealism is hypocrisy in the face of what is necessary – but loving it.

Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* (trans. by Duncan Large)

PART ONE

WE ANTIPODES

1

If you complain a lot, on a regular basis, you're bound to live as long as you wish to live and some human beings are determined to live eternally as if living on the surface of the Earth were a tremendous experience – akin to what we might have lived through in Paradise, in days of yore. I'm not sure we have ever lived in Paradise, whatever they say about a tropical paradise and other similar places, and consequently I think that only a fool's paradise is accessible to us; and we take advantage of its being within our reach whenever we can do it with apparent impunity. Perhaps my complaints are rooted in this paradise of ours, and the dreams I nourish in my bosom and elsewhere are nothing but a permanent daydream I should get rid of so as not to commit suicide – out of despair.

For years I've been dreaming of this book where my grievances may come into the open and speak at the top of their voices in the hope that someone will hear them sooner or later – hopefully before my death, before my journey to No-Fool Paradise. I don't think I am as great as Nietzsche, although this comparison does crop up in some nooks and crannies of my brain, within my cranium; and I'm reluctant to chase this comparison away because it may help me survive in the world where only fools feel comfortable – like fish *in* water, as the Russians put it. I am a fish *out* of water, needless to say, and I wonder if I could ever be happy in the water I have at my disposal whenever I wake up and look around me to find out where I am and what should be done before it is too late. The water I'm talking about is this world inside which I aspire to fame so as not to share Nietzsche's fate, for I'm convinced he was driven mad by his contemporaries who failed to pay homage to his genius.

If you air your grievances, you let off steam and any doctor will say you shouldn't keep this kind of steam inside your brain and body unless you wish to be choked by it, which may facilitate your transference to *real* Paradise. You keep things to yourself and thus commit suicide without knowing it; in other words, you don't do it on purpose and God is unlikely to punish you for this imaginary sin so that nothing prevents you from reaching Paradise in no time at all – as soon as your steam and its constituents choke you irremediably. But if you do let off steam, you may live as long as an old lady whose complaints I heard for more than 50 years spent in the same house, amidst the same furniture, flowers and pictures. You let off steam and your purified, unloaded body turns over a new leaf as it continues to march towards immortality or eternity, flouting the second law of thermodynamics and disregarding the allure of the Garden of Eden.

According to Freud or his exegetes, some of our nocturnal dreams look and sound like their daylight counterparts, for all of them are focused upon our desires and frustrations: the girl we encounter almost every day is so beautiful we'd give anything to sleep with her till doomsday. So we dream about this gorgeous lovemaking at night and during our waking hours, wiping out the frontier that separates nightmares from daily routine. We also dream about Nobel prizes and other awards that may not reach us within real time and space where other people interfere with our self-esteem and self-confidence thanks to which we are acclaimed inside our brain day in day out and also at night, provided our dreams concur with our wishful thinking.

I, for one, do not dream of anything of the sort, if we consider only the dreams I happen to enjoy at night when my consciousness is supposed to be at the mercy of my unconscious where Freud hid his complexes and drives as he strove to poison humanity, adding to our brain yet another dimension of which we had been blissfully unaware. My unconscious supplies me neither with my next door beauties nor with the Nobel prize for literature,

which does not mean I never dream about beauties and prizes awarded to others, to my distant colleagues whose works and bodies inhabit some parallel world or another dimension. At least I never come across them and if I do, I run away as if to follow Nietzsche's advice: '– this spiritual and silent haughtiness, this pride of the elect of cognition, of the "initiated", of the almost sacrificed, finds all kinds of disguise needed to protect itself against contact with officious and pitying hands, and against everything that is not a peer in suffering.'

I admit that I *am* proud and haughty in spite of my low status which allows me no room for manoeuvre: I can't even choose the pieces I must play so as not to die of starvation, otherwise I would already have forgotten I am a pianist, a former student of Emil Gilels and Jacob Zak. Glenn Gould says that concert tours make one waste a lot of time and I don't think I have time on my hands: I am duty bound to re-read all my works and write two or three poems every day. Besides, I'm almost 66 and from this point of view I have no time either; I mean that my future doesn't lie in front of my body as far as the eye can see, although my eyes are no longer short-sighted thanks to the operations I underwent in recent years.

The writers from whom I'm anxious to protect myself are not peers in suffering, given that they're published and acclaimed to the point of keeping other people's books out of shops and the Internet. They walk on red carpets as I toss and turn in bed, trying to get rid of yet another nightmare that reminds me neither of literary awards nor of beautiful ladies who await my colleagues at the end of their carpets or in hotel rooms adorned with ice buckets and champagne. Neither these ladies nor their lovers are eager to help me; nor do they take pity on me so I don't need to protect myself from their pitying hands and glances. 'Deep suffering makes noble; it separates,' says Nietzsche. Do they suffer? Do they ever think about death? Whenever I watch their smiles on TV or in five-star hotels, I say to them, '*Memento mori*.' They don't even have a smattering of Latin.

2

This morning I received the following email from Japan:

Dear Valery,
Hello!
How are you?
I am preparing for the production of the your pamphlet for make a concert of 2015.
This is 2 programs.

A.
The first half
Chopin: Polonaise
The latter half
Schumann: Symphonic Etudes Op.13

And

B.
J.S Bach and Silverstrov? or All J.S Bach

Please inform me the piece of the polonaise of Chopin. Because A is Maine, would you be able to write a short sentence for Chopin&Schumann?
Best!
Yoshiyuki

Here is my reply:

Dear Yoshiyuki,
Thank you for your email.
As for the programmes you suggest, the first one is illogical because Chopin doesn't go with Schumann. Besides, I don't really want to play the *Etudes symphoniques* again. Usually I play polonaises with waltzes.
We talked about the second programme in Japan. In my opinion, Bach doesn't go with Silvestrov – with the pieces I play. Schubert is preferable of course. I wonder if someday I'll be allowed to choose my programmes myself.
Is it really impossible to play only one solo programme? I'll be playing two concerti and two different programmes. It is too much. Don't forget that I play my programmes by heart.
Kindest regards,
Valery

Some performing artists are haunted by memory lapses and do not play by heart the pieces they perform in public, which makes things easier for them – not only on account of their deficient memory and fragile nerves: both need crutches. These famous pianists and violinists are afraid their memory might let them down at any moment; nor am *I* protected from my memory's shortness and whims. But I resort to music rests only when playing at home; in front of concert goers, however, I always struggle with my nerves and memory which are notorious traitors and therefore can*not* be relied upon, even if the pieces I perform have kept me company for more than 50 years.

Their memory needs a crutch; so does their 'apparatus', as we used to say at the Moscow Conservatoire where I spent nine years before leaving the Soviet Union forever. I mean their eyes assist their so-called technique as they progress through the pages flipped by a page turner, for it is easier to play a headache-associated passage if you can *see* its configuration. These artists are always on holiday, in other words – even if they play in Berlin, Vienna and London where audiences applaud them for the simple reason that they're famous and therefore can*not* play badly. Audiences do not mind the disappearance of the ritual to which I devote my energies and life, resolved as I am to create an illusion that it is I who composed the pieces one hears and enjoys during my recitals. Carnegie Hall is *not* cluttered with scores and music rests when *I* play in it, unaided either by page turners or any configuration – the notes one comes across when leafing through Beethoven's sonatas. But the applause I hear can hardly be called 'thunderous': I'm not famous and only famous artists deserve standing ovations and first-class tickets, comfortable armchairs and beds, vintage wines.

'Next time I'll travel first class,' I say to my manager.

'Why not?' he answers. 'We'll send you money for business and you'll pay the rest.'

'G. K. always travels first class. And he doesn't pay for it.'

'But he's famous,' says my manager.

‘His managers lose money,’ I say to my manager.

‘How so?’ he says.

‘His concerts are *not* sold out,’ I say.

‘Really? But he’s so famous.’

‘And he plays whatever he wants.’

‘He’s famous.’

‘And his fee –’

‘He’s famous.’

Many years ago I played at the Musée d’Orsay in the company of two artists. I’m not *always* alone on stage because page turners are not the only people who can keep you company during your concerts. One of my companions in misfortune played the cello and I knew that some people spoke of his achievements in glowing terms: ‘His career has been on the up and up since he was engaged by DGP.’ His eyes riveted on the famous artist, the man in charge shook my hand and once again I *saw* the difference between fame and anonymity; and yet the cellist wasn’t really famous in those days – in the early Eighties, if I remember rightly. Nor was I an *anonymous* artist, for all my modesty.

Why write my version of Dostoevsky’s *Unizhennïe i Oscorblyonnïe*? I don’t know the English title of the book and the Internet isn’t likely to help me out of this predicament because I never use the Internet so as not to betray my solitude, a condition so highly praised by Nietzsche and other pigheaded loners. Whenever you insult, humiliate and offend your fellow creatures, you add a few pages to this book, especially if you take the trouble to add insult to injury. Of course I am on the other side of the fence – in relation to famous artists who have the knack of humiliating their colleagues. And they often add insult to injury – almost unconsciously, en passant. Why should they waste their precious time on nonentities?

One of these colleagues of mine said to me at the beginning of this century, ‘I’m invited to the Salzburg Festival. I wish you could take part in the concert. But I’m not sure the deal will come off – they invite only famous artists.’ After our last concert, he took out his wallet and said, ‘I think I can give you another thousand euros. Aren’t you happy?’ I was *not*. And yet I am *not* sure I should write my version of *Unizhennïe i Oscorblyonnïe*: Why add insult to injury?

As Nietzsche dissects the notion of vengeance, he points out that you shouldn’t avenge yourself if the guilty party fails to come up to your idea of what constitutes a dignified and worthy opponent. So if you happen to despise this opponent of yours, you don’t even notice him, let alone his insults which are lost on you on account of their utter insignificance or non-existence. Why should you take offence at what the unborn say to you?

I hit upon this idea – the story of my humiliations – in a garden where I walked as I waited for a taxi or a bus: anonymous artists aren’t *always* permitted to take a taxi. And if they *are* permitted to use this form of transport, they don’t have enough money for it unless a famous artist opts for a display of magnanimity and takes a few banknotes out of his wallet. ‘Why should I display my sorrow?’ I asked myself. I had time on my hands and a long interior monologue helped me come to terms with this and other times scattered around the world. Interior monologues are often instrumental in bringing about the peace of mind we need when coping with frustrations and keeping at bay today’s stars and their bountiful hands.

‘Why expose my psychological wounds?’ I asked myself. ‘I used to say, “There’s no psychology,” and I was probably right because I never seek medical attention, assuming that psychoanalysts are doctors and not mere

charlatans. And I laugh when an army of psychoanalysts rushes towards a spot where some psychological victims sob and scream in front of the cameras. And once I said that only Beckett could insult me because only a genius was allowed to touch my soul. Why should I show them I'm as sensitive as a high-strung boy? Don't I know I am a genius myself? Do I need their recognition? Do I hear their insults?'

At the time I was in search of a subject matter for my future novel. No wonder I envied Picasso who used to say, 'I don't search, I find.' In other words, I couldn't afford to miss an opportunity that my wounded pride seemed to offer me as it continued to dwell on my discomfitures, on my numerous defeats. I recalled a number of managers who turned me down in spite of my letters and phone calls. They all had too many artists on their lists and therefore had no time for unknown pianists whose claims could be ignored on grounds of age, for instance: you will not make a name for yourself if you're 36. Only young people – and goners – deserve everybody's attention and astronomical fees. And I am *not* on the threshold of death, according to my doctors; nor am I a child prodigy, another Mozart or Menuhin.

3

> The imitation or domination of such a taste would result in a danger to music which cannot be exaggerated: the complete degeneration of rhythmic feeling, *chaos* in place of rhythm. This danger reaches its climax when such music leans more and more heavily on a wholly naturalistic style of acting and gestures, which is no longer dominated by any law of plasticity and wants *effect*, nothing more. *Espressivo* at any price, and music in the service, the slavery of poses – *that is the end*.
>
> Nietzsche, *Nietzsche contra Wagner* (transl. by Walter Kaufmann)

Thus Nietzsche spoke of Wagner in his last and bitterest work where many complaints come to the fore as if to describe in minute detail the sorry plight of a genius born into a minus world: let us not forget that in French 'minus' means 'moron' and 'wimp' – in addition to the mathematical sign. Alas, writers of genius aren't *always* right and I would single Nietzsche out from any group of remarkable people, if asked to name a philosopher who was *often* wrong. But I wouldn't be wide of the mark if I said that the above diatribe reflects today's young performers and their ways to a T, taking into consideration the havoc they play with classical music.

Nietzsche is fond of repetition and I wonder if, at some point, he didn't decide to prove his doctrine of eternal recurrence – partly borrowed from Pythagoras – by means of this stylistic method. For once I'll refrain from following in his footsteps: I've already done my best to stigmatise the young upstarts who continue to annihilate music. No eternal recurrence, this time.

Let me just repeat a few bits from the above paragraph: *chaos* in place of rhythm and dynamics...a wholly naturalistic style of acting and gestures, dominated by the law of supply and demand...*effect*, nothing more. *Espressivo* at any price, and music in the service, the slavery of poses – *that is the end*.

'Where Wagner belongs,' says Nietzsche as he embarks upon his analysis of Wagner's cultural whereabouts. 'Where these youngsters belong,' I might say in my turn before typing the word 'entertainer'. They're not musicians, are they? Nor are they true artists. 'Mass society,' says Hannah Arendt, 'wants not culture but entertainment, and the wares offered by the entertainment industry are indeed consumed by society just like any other consumer goods. The products needed for entertainment serve the life process of society, even though they may not be as necessary for this life as bread and meat. They serve, as the phrase is, to while away time, and

the vacant time which is whiled away is not leisure time, strictly speaking – time, that is, in which we are free from all cares and activities necessitated by the life process and therefore free for the world and its culture – it is rather left-over time, which still is biological in nature, left over after labour and sleep have received their due.'

'There are too many quotations in your work,' says my unworthy opponent. 'Don't you trust your own thoughts?'

'Quotes enrich and enlarge the space I create through my works,' I say to him. Why talk to unworthy, undignified opponents?

'You also quote the letters you receive.'

'And my own letters,' I point out.

'Why?'

'Doesn't Rousseau follow the same procedure in *Les Confessions*?'

'Why ape Rousseau?'

'Because I worship the past. I was an ape, wasn't I? So were you, if I remember rightly.'

'Your books are chaotic.'

'So is *Eugene Onegin*.'

'Why ape Pushkin?'

'Because every dignified, self-respecting Russian is Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin – to the nth degree.'

'Why are there so many poems in your novels? Why this incongruous mixture of genres?'

'What about Nietzsche?'

Why am I wasting my time on this book?
Letting off steam – privately, almost silently.
Is it better to play concerts?
Is it still the world where so many poets used to live?
Morons, washouts, nonentities, celebrities
On whose tombs I'd like to dance like Zarathustra,
Like Nijinsky. My rite of spring,
My joy, my night song, dancing song. No hard feelings –
A *dolce vita*, a *vita nuova*. My deep eternity.

This poem is a skilful, witty pastiche of Nietzsche's ecstatic and hypocritical verses. 'Joy – deeper yet than agony.' 'All joy wants eternity.' Instead, he ought to have written, 'I don't have very much to feel joyful over at the moment' – every day, till doomsday.

THE POET SPEAKS UP

1

The more a psychologist – a born and inevitable psychologist and unriddler of souls – applies himself to the more exquisite cases and human beings, the greater becomes the danger that he might suffocate of pity. He *needs* hardness and cheerfulness more than anyone else. For the corruption, the destruction, of the higher men is the rule: it is terrible constantly to have such a rule before one's eyes. The manifold torture of the

> psychologist who has discovered this corruption, who discovers this whole inner haplessness of the higher man, this eternal 'too late' in every sense, first in one case and then *almost* always again through the whole of history – one day this may perhaps bring about his own corruption.

Nietzsche realised he had to be cheerful so as not to go mad in the world – and there's no other world – where the higher man is hapless and exposed to corruption which has nothing to do with the corruption they speak about on TV when they discover yet another series of tax evasions and bribes – among the members of a government. The psychologist in question endeavours to adjust to this life, for he knows he will have no other opportunity to become happy; and while coming to terms with it he enters into the spirit of the game played by famous artists and their admirers. In other words, he adopts 'a wholly naturalistic style of acting and gestures, dominated by the law of supply and demand', which is also current in the domain of literature. You just have a few theatrical ideas which crop up here and there, letting the rest of your work flounder about as if in expectation of a miracle, of some deus ex machina or coup de grâce.

Recently I met a publisher who is mostly interested in theatre or rather in theatrical gestures – in the ideas which, according to him, can justify the lack of style, of perspective, of space, of talent, of genius. He has no qualms about taking on a book in which a famous violinist gives a lesson to a young pianist because he fears she might be led astray by her unsuitable friends – managers and suchlike – who think only in terms of money and sold-out concerts. On stage she wears miniskirts and if she occasionally gives in to conservative people's demands and puts on an evening dress, her décolletage leaves nothing to the imagination. The book is essentially an exhortation to musical honesty which presupposes 'your complete disregard for easy success and applause, for anyone else's opinion. You shouldn't forget that I am your only friend and benefactor, and you're unlikely to find a more serious musician in the whole world. By the way, last night I played in San Francisco. I don't mind standing ovations, you know: they are part and parcel of concert life. You may and indeed *should* enjoy your fans' respect – on condition that you fully deserve it.'

'Why did you publish such trash?' I asked the publisher.

'Because I like the idea of the book.'

'Musical honesty?'

'Yes.'

'A very original idea.'

'A useful one.'

'Do you know what Nabokov said about ideas? They're all in last night's gazette.'

'Ideas? He meant facts, I suppose.'

'Ideas, not facts.'

'Really?'

'What counts is texture, isn't it?'

'What texture? What are you talking about?'

I have a lot of unworthy friends who reduce the whole of literature to a few ideas and conflicts, to a few simple answers. What remains of a novel can be found on page 55; and the rest is not literature, contrary to what Verlaine might have thought on the subject. I often say to others, 'I can't believe that someone of your intelligence

can read such trash!' And I say to myself, 'Another unworthy opponent, another moron, another washout, another stupid jerk.' Nietzsche was fond of synonyms.

Recently I talked to another friend of mine. (A very interesting and eventful month.) We spoke about Schubert, Hell and a contemporary writer whose works make me open two bottles of vodka – the Russian poison I avail myself of only when in need of drowning my sorrow and disgust. Besides, I'm weary of repeating all day long, 'I can't believe that someone of your intelligence can read such trash! You moron! You moron! You moron! You moron!'

Instead of repeating myself, on that occasion I read out an excerpt from my early novel which, in my opinion, was a suitable demonstration of how one should write, doing justice to literary texture, to the web one might spin between heterogeneous thoughts, notions and moods. Non-local links, I call it. Space.

> There are a great many enigmas in this world of ours and some of them are insoluble. There are big and small enigmas; they exist side by side and often interpenetrate, intermingle, creating all sorts of hybrids that often turn out to be even more enigmatic than their 'simple' components.
>
> The biggest enigma is Time. We cannot single it out from the other phenomena of our existence and fix it somewhere for the sake of our telescopes and microscopes. Like God, Time worms itself into every fissure of the universe. Fluid and elusive, Time is everywhere and nowhere. (Some theologians affirm that God is Time.) Time pervades even its own 'substance': the past overlaps the present and the future, the future overlaps the present and the past. Human consciousness is like a newspaper magnate's office. There is a row of clocks and each tells a different time: Paris, Tokyo, London, Los Angeles, Chernobyl...

There ensued the following exchange of ideas:

> 'I'm afraid I have to disagree with you on several points. I hope you don't mind.'
>
> 'I don't. Even friends disagree sometimes.'
>
> 'You're right. But you're wrong when you say that God is Time. God is *outside*.'
>
> 'You mean, He is *beyond* Time and Space?'
>
> 'Precisely.'
>
> 'And what about Spinoza?'
>
> 'What about him?'
>
> 'Doesn't he think that God is nature – everything, in other words?'
>
> 'So what?'
>
> 'Suppose your wife is given a bunch of roses.'
>
> 'So what?'
>
> 'What does she usually do with flowers?'
>
> 'She cuts them and puts them in a vase.'
>
> 'Cut flowers will soon wilt without water. Don't you agree?'
>
> 'I do. So what?'
>
> 'So your wife pours some water into the vase, doesn't she?'
>
> 'She does.'
>
> 'But the flowers are bound to die, whatever you do to prolong their lives.'

'Yes. Their life expectancy is rather short.'

'God is these roses, the vase, the water your pour into the vase and also the decay you witness, the process. In short, God is Time as well. Anyway, every dignified novel corroborates the theory of relativity.'

Some time ago, I realised that women understood my novels and poems better than men; and yet I don't have a lifelong commitment to feminism. I wasn't put out at being more attuned to the weaker sex's mentality, for I don't cherish the notion of unrecognised genius and am prepared to welcome into my club whoever admires my works. 'Not for a moment will a Russian woman get confused over where I belong,' writes Nietzsche. And I'm admired by several Russian women; their souls are far more refined than those of men who have no idea what texture of life means and where to look for it. 'In poetry,' would answer a Russian woman, a Japanese woman. No wonder that Kierkegaard was mainly worshiped by Danish *women* – in his lifetime, in the days when the adult male population wept over the unhappy lot of Andersen's mermaid.

Is it really too late?

2

Is it too late for fame, for glory? For so-called recognition? Would I be happy if those people recognised my genius at last? They're more likely to laugh at me if they read this confession – out of sheer boredom, to while away the time. Throughout his life, Wagner thought he was a genius, even when he was writing *Rienzi*. I've never doubted my capacities, my literary gift. Nietzsche gets beyond the very notion of genius – he thinks he is the greatest man in the history of humanity. Am I superior to Dante? Or to Nietzsche, for that matter? Be that as it may, I've become myself at last, judging from my style and mental disposition.

I recall a writer who sent me a letter: in those days people didn't know the first thing about computers. When was it? In the Seventies, if I remember rightly. I don't think my memory is on intimate terms with time, but it is *always* ill at ease when trying to conquer space. The writer's name was Bokov and I remember it only because he used to pick up Nabokov's *Lolita*, whenever he had his picture taken. He would cover the letters 'N' and 'a' with his fingers; one was under the impression that *Lolita* had been written by him and not by Vladimir Nabokov. Incidentally, his Christian name was Vladimir. Is he still alive? He hasn't become immortal, as far as I know. Yet he finished his letter thus: 'Don't throw it away – in a few years, it will be worth an arm and a leg.' I've never written a letter of this kind. Am I as ridiculous as Bokov? When I said to Mrs Nabokov whom I met in 1981, 'I've got the first editions of Vladimir Vladimirovich's Russian works,' she said something along the same lines. 'In ten years, they'll be worth a small fortune.' It's not ridiculous, is it?

Should I count on women, on their partial recognition and moral support? We live in an increasingly feminist society in which the adult male population has less and less influence on our daily lives. At Christmastime I wasn't alone, exceptionally, last year. A woman paid me a visit in Versailles. I took advantage of her visit to read out the same excerpt from my novel in the middle of which God is equated with Time. 'Wonderful,' she said. 'Every phrase sounds like an aphorism.' This woman knows what texture means and where to look for it – in my works, in nature. Do I need her moral support, her recognition?

'Truth is a woman,' says Nietzsche, but publishers neither read him nor share his views on women and God. A man who stays at home to look after the children is an exception, even today. If men knew that truth is a woman, they would let their wives travel around the world and proclaim their truths from rooftops. Don't we all care about the future of humanity? I'm afraid we do not, otherwise we wouldn't read bad books that affect our

genes and transmit their decay to our offspring. But men and women complain day in day out, ‘Rot has got into the furniture,’ and never ask the most important question, ‘What about our souls?’ Rot has already got into their minds, their DNA and genealogical trees; they don’t turn a hair. My mistress speaks the truth and nothing but the truth; no one listens to her. And I don’t need her *moral* support because I still have no doubts about my ability to do the job.

What I need is a sponsor, as they say nowadays. Money, networking, PR campaigns. A Russian conductor of sorts found such a sponsor in Switzerland. He is neither handsome nor gifted – a second-rater par excellence. ‘Why?’ is the question I often put to myself and others. Why do you sponsor such nonentities? You morons! You morons! Do you have no ears? Do you have no eyes? Nothing doing. ‘We are all advocates of the mediocre,’ says Nietzsche. He is right for once. Actually he is *always* right when he speaks of degeneration and degradation, of *ressentiment*.

Mediocrities always take vengeance on supermen (or overmen). Should I also pay tribute to superwomen (or overwomen)? Why not? One of them may fly to my rescue, weather permitting. Would she rob a few banks – for the sake of my worldwide fame and recognition? Of course she would. First she should save a few children, otherwise people will no longer worship her. And her husband. That’s right – I’ll marry her. Didn’t Arthur Miller become even more famous after his affair with Marilyn Monroe? He married her of course – they didn’t really have a *secret* relationship. I mustn’t confuse Arthur Miller with John Kennedy. And with Robert Kennedy.

As for myself, I can’t help hearing ‘They’re famous’ as soon as I venture outdoors: I haven’t turned my TV on for more than six months. It was last Christmas. My mistress can’t live without television programmes; even reality TV appeals to her. I begin to wonder if she knows *anything* about Absolute Truth and its ramifications. Anyway she doesn’t seem to be a superwoman, otherwise she would already have shot a few police officers and robbed her company of £5 million. Otherwise, otherwise, otherwise. Life goes on and nothing, no one can alter it.

‘Dreams, dreams, where’s your sweetness?’ says Pushkin in *Eugene Onegin*. I also say it rather often because I’m no longer young and only teenagers’ hopes materialise in the world where children have pride of place. Once upon a time, I *was* a teenager; I had a lot of dreams and I thought that heaven would lie about me throughout my life. I was mistaken: heaven has never lain about me, although I was a teenager once and my laughter resounded in classrooms and halls – even in the concert halls where I played Bach and Beethoven. Dreams, dreams, where’s your *bitterness*? Everywhere. Why don’t you ever come true?

GREEN WITH ENVY

1

‘I felt a pang of envy at the thought of his success,’ I wrote in my diary. Actually, I didn’t write anything in my diary or elsewhere: I’ve never kept a diary. Never mind – I did envy the person I’m writing about. A pianist, my coeval, my colleague, my friend to some extent. First I heard him from behind a door which was closed: only the members of the jury were admitted to the balcony where they shaped our destiny. An entrance exam, the Moscow Conservatoire.

I didn’t find his performance exceptional, but I already envied him because many people said he was a genius. At that point time stopped for some time – for years, to be exact. They continued to say he was a pianist of genius for years and years. Whenever he played, a crowd of about 15,000 attended the concert. You shouldn’t believe everything I say: I do tend to exaggerate. My present mood does. Be that as it may, I was green with envy.

Once I gave a superb performance, aping Rachmaninoff to the best of my abilities: I thought he was the best pianist ever. A few days later, my rival played Liszt's *Sonata in B Minor* in the hall where I had heard him for the first time. Our mutual friend phoned me to say the performance had been wonderful. 'My performance was also wonderful,' I said.

'Your performance pales in comparison with his, I can assure you.'

'For years you've been dragging my name through the mire.'

'I've done nothing of the sort. And today I'm just saying his performance was much better than yours.'

Then I won an international competition and he lost one; at least he didn't get the first prize. I won a second international competition; he failed for the second time. His whole career was doomed to failure right from the start, but he didn't know it; nor did his admirers. They said competitions didn't count; what's more, they were useless and even detrimental to the arts. I had a friend who died 19 years ago. His sister said to him, 'Why do you run down the best pianist in the world? All right, he lost two international competitions. So what? You may win two international competitions and remain a second-rater.'

In those days, she called me a second-rater, but time had something in store for her, for all of us. Time had to cover the distance between a second-rate pianist and a first-rate one. For once, time wasn't flying; it walked or crawled. And the first-rate pianist wasn't within walking distance, let alone crawling distance. To cut a long story short, last year my rival underwent an operation on a tumour in his left lung. He had stopped playing concerts well before the operation.

Why should I cut a long story short? Time was rather long, otherwise my rival wouldn't have reached the age of 65. At the age of 50 he lost yet another competition. In Moscow there's a competition the rules of which are generous to a fault: they permit old men and women to appear on stage. In other words, the upper age limit is death.

He played well in the first round and was acclaimed by those fans of his who weren't dead by that time. Nor had they forgotten him: to them the past was the present. Their idol was still a pianist of genius, a highly promising young musician. Another friend of mine phoned me to say the performance was wonderful. Did he wish to outwit time? They all disregard time; their flats are littered with discarded years. No longer was he either young or promising.

The way he played in the second round was his undoing. After much soul-searching he withdrew from the competition: anyway he wouldn't have played in the final round. 'Pianist number one was forced to withdraw from the competition due to injury,' wrote one of his admirers, a journalist. What injury, may I ask? We aren't dealing with a tennis match, are we?

Five years ago I met him in Nagoya where he teaches young boys to play the piano. At the hotel I drank a bottle of champagne on the 20th floor, on the so-called business floor where you can drink and eat to your heart's content. A lot of petits fours, champagne and wine galore. He came to the hotel; my late friend's sister accompanied him. We went to a Japanese restaurant. A sumptuous meal, a lot of sake. I was drunk as a lord. The next day I was supposed to play an all-Beethoven programme. A matinee. 'You won't be able to play if you drink too much,' said my late friend's sister. By way of an answer I stumbled and fell down.

I played well. She said after the recital, 'No amount of alcohol can destroy a maestro.' It wasn't too late.

In 1972, I won the Queen Elisabeth Competition; I never played as badly as I did after winning the first prize in Brussels. For two years at least I played so badly no manager wished to take me on. They still don't take me on; and yet I play better and better.

In 1982, my first novel was published at last and some connoisseurs said I was a genius. How many? One person is enough, as many artists write and say. I don't say anything of the kind, but after this so-called *succès d'estime* I wrote so badly – for five years at least – that I was reluctant to publish anything, not even what I regarded as my masterpieces. What I need is an obstacle course. 'What doesn't destroy me strengthens my spirit and body,' said Nietzsche. He said *something* to this effect.

Famous writers publish *anything* because they can afford it, their books being money-makers. In your teenage years, you should carve a niche for yourself – as a pianist, as a writer – and hundreds of people will flock to concert halls and to shelves cluttered with your books. Too late.

My computer is brimful of my works and I send them to some of my friends as if hoping to elicit a response from them. 'Have you managed to elicit a response from them yet?' I ask myself after a while and shake my head despondently. Why don't they answer? They acknowledge receipt of my emails and vanish into thin air. And if they do turn up somewhere – in the restaurant to which I invite them – they don't speak of my works.

The famous violinist writes a new book and his publisher writes an introductory note. 'G. K. is not only a virtuoso of the bow. He is also a virtuoso of the pen.' I sent my latest book to the same publisher. Six months later I rang him up. 'Haven't read it yet. I'm absolutely snowed under with work at the moment.' Two months later, he rang me up to say he liked the book. 'My assistant will read it too,' he said. The assistant didn't like the book and the publisher vanished into thin air. A virtuoso, an illusionist.

Dostoevsky used to complain about his publisher who had the knack of annoying him right in the middle of yet another gambling bout. 'Russian readers are waiting for your new novel.' 'Why does he pester me?' wondered Dostoevsky.

I often quote Mussorgsky's last words: 'All is over. How unfortunate I am!' And yet he *was* admired by his friends and even by those who didn't know him personally. He wrote a few songs and whenever a new song was finished he sent a letter to a colleague, saying, 'This morning I finished a new song.' And two hours later his flat was overcrowded with the curious. 'All is over. How unfortunate I am!' My last words?

'The whole town came out to celebrate his return from the United States.' Another superstar, another jubilee. Whenever I watch such jubilees on TV, I say to myself and to *them*, 'Basking in your moment of glory? Humanity will forget you in 20 years. But they'll study my brain in the 24th century. The last laugh, you know.'

Whenever I venture outdoors, I see many blue plaques. Next month I'll move to Belgium: three months ago, I bought a house near Brussels. I said to myself, 'My future museum.' And what about the Moscow skyscraper where I lived for 21 years? There are many blue plaques on its walls.

3

Recently I played a recital in Japan. In the second part there was Liszt's *Sonata in B* Minor – a real tear jerker, in my opinion. After the recital a critic said he was on the brink of tears, but he didn't cry for some reason. I think my performance might have elicited a more emotional response on the part of the audience which was rather lukewarm that night, judging from the applause. (Anyway I couldn't have seen their tears.) I was offended, strange as it may seem. I went to Japan for one concert only and I pulled out all the stops, hoping they might appreciate

my concept of the *Sonata*. Actually I don't play for the sake of the audience's reaction. I don't really care whether I make my exit from the stage to rapturous applause or in a sort of envelope created by semi-silence. They applauded of course—half-heartedly. Where was the other half of their heart, I wonder? A friend of mine told me backstage, 'You should have smiled. Why do you never smile on the stage?'

On my way back, on the plane, I drank a few glasses of champagne in order to fall asleep: I hadn't slept well the night before. A stewardess poured the champagne into my glass—rather reluctantly, I must say. I couldn't hear the champagne fizz as she poured it into my glass, but that's not the point. What counts is *remplissage*, the way they *fill* your glass. After a while she would fill only a half of it. Not once did she say, 'Would you like me to pour you some more champagne?' Then another stewardess turned up and said, 'You've drunk enough. You should cool down. I'll bring you some water.' And she brought me some cold Japanese water. What did *I* say? I said, 'O.K.' I ought to have said, 'I'm your customer. I paid more than 3,000 euros for this trip and I'm entitled to drink as much as I want. I always fly business class. Or first class. Your champagne is bad, so are the other wines on your wine list. You must be grateful that I'm willing to turn a blind eye to the fact, otherwise I wouldn't have drunk anything during the flight. Your water is bad too, by the way. Your company's bad, you're bad. No point in trying to find out who's bad on this flight. So why are you picking on me?'

I said nothing of the kind. I said 'O.K.' instead as if I'd been ashamed of myself, of my binge drinking. Why? Why? Why? I asked myself. Attitudes seem to be changing as a result of recent highly publicised cases of sexual harassment, but I didn't harass anybody, either sexually or otherwise. Anyway the law can now protect people from harassment. I remained within the law throughout the flight. There are laws against drinking in the street; I wasn't drinking in the street. I was drinking in the aircraft flying from Tokyo to Paris. I was drinking champagne because I sincerely hoped I'd fall asleep more easily with a huge amount of alcohol in my veins, in my bowels. All right, I was mistaken: I wouldn't have fallen asleep even if I'd drunk three bottles of bad champagne. Must a stewardess be rude to a passenger who can't fall asleep?

I took offence instead of flying into a rage. I'm not extremely irritable: I don't fly off the handle at the slightest thing. But this time I ought to have flown off the handle. I didn't. Another slice of life. I wish our flight could be on what they call 'reality TV'. There are other programmes watched by the multitude. They feature husbands and wives, friends and girlfriends. A lot of wounds – a wounded pride among them. A gang of loud-mouthed yobs ridiculed a badly wounded soldier for losing three limbs in a bomb blast. The soldier trod on a metal plate bomb while clearing mines in Afghanistan. His mother said, 'I thought it would be nice to get my son some fresh air. It can get awfully stuffy in the hospital. We were walking around the block when I saw five men sniggering. As we got near, one of them approached us and asked: "Haven't you forgotten something? Oh yeah – your legs." I didn't know what to do and just choked back the tears before pushing my son away. I could hear them laughing.' An appalling slice of life. Do I belong to the same species? That's the question I ask myself whenever I come across such a piece of news. Do I belong to the same species? Do I have anything in common with those individuals? Human anatomy; the anatomy of the horse. It's better to be a horse, as Swift pointed out. It's better to be a cat. Why am I not one of my cats? They don't taunt heroes, do they? In England, of all places.

Another mother's complaint. 'I don't know if my child was abused or not. The sex offender was so popular with parents and children. Friendly, lovely, absolutely lovely. If I see anyone in town that remotely resembles her, I feel sick. I have to walk in the opposite direction. I can't cope with the image of her face. Every image is of her smiling. I want to skin her and roll her in salt. I feel so frustrated that I can't get to her.'

You don't really have to tell a story to amuse the audience and television viewers. The second mother didn't say *how* her child was abused or spared. She just said she wished to skin the offender and roll her in salt. That's how they often talk on television and people listen to them, although no story is being told. 'The worst bit is knowing that I used to pick up my son and daughter from her and she would come out smiling, laughing and having a joke.' Another mother's complaint. Well, let me complain in my turn. I already told the story about how the stewardess abused me. It was a story of psychological harassment. Actually she was rather nice-looking. And she'd carved a niche for herself as a professional stewardess. She knew how to smile, for instance. How are they supposed to react if a customer makes advances to them? A Russian stewardess I met on the Moscow-Tokyo flight took my phone number and slipped it into her décolletage. During the whole flight I had the feeling I'd been invited to a ball. I'd never have given my phone number to the Japanese stewardess, needless to say. Not even when I found her rather nice-looking – at the beginning of the flight. After the lesson she'd given me I found her ugly. I ought to have told her I belonged to another species. I think she felt it instinctively – in the manner of a dog who barks at an extraterrestrial tourist. I wish she'd recoiled in horror and brought me some champagne instead of saying to herself, 'That'll teach him to drink champagne on our flights.'

She didn't humiliate me in front of my colleagues. And the only passenger who might have overhead our conversation was half asleep. Actually there was no conversation to speak of: I just said, 'O.K.,' which didn't amount to a dignified reply. That's why I felt so humiliated, I suppose. I was behaving like a schoolboy caught red-handed. I must have looked guilty too. Fortunately, I didn't tell her, 'Please, don't make me feel guilty.' That would have been even worse than 'O.K.' Of course I could have made it sound like an ironic comment. 'Don't make me feel guilty – I'm not a schoolboy after all. I wish I was a schoolboy, frankly speaking. But I'm an old man – can't you see? And you're not supposed to give lessons to old people, especially if they're your customers. So you're barking up the wrong tree.'

I refused to eat as she showed me the menu. Was it lunch or dinner? No more meals for me, not on your flight. I didn't say anything to this effect. I just said, 'No.' Was it enough? Just 'No', not even 'No thank you'. Half an hour later I was half asleep. Again she came and asked me if I wanted to have a meal. (Did she say, 'You should always wash your hands before meals'?) Again I said, 'No.' Like Michael Jackson, I'm split into two individuals. Dr Jekyll was yearning for a smile and 'yes'. But Mr Hyde said, 'No.' Dorian Gray was ready to give up the fight, but his portrait was made of sterner stuff and wanted me to carry on. I did. On leaving the plane I heard 'Bye-bye'. My answer? A stern look, nothing else. No 'bye-bye, thank you'. Did I give her a lesson too? 'The importance of good manners should have been drummed into you at an early age.' Was she afraid I might complain to the company about her conduct?

What would she have said, had I flown first class? What would she have done, had I been famous? Wreathed in smiles, she would have brought me another bottle of champagne. Two bottles.

THE SCEPTIC SPEAKS UP

1

'Oh that way madness lies.' Does it? I'm just writing a letter to young pianists and writers. Don't pay attention to morons, to journalists who 'add to kitsch an intellectual dimension,' as Harold Rosenberg put it back in the Fifties. We have been living with mass culture for 60 years. Every bestseller, however ghastly and appalling, is

intellectually justified. ‘Manufacturers need large sales to justify offering a big variety in export markets,’ say publishers and managers. How to survive in the midst of kitsch? You morons! You morons!

Concert tours in Japan – the only country where I play every year. Wasting my time? Perhaps. But what would I do without these concerts? I would write another book. Here is the opening sentence, ‘Friendless and jobless, he wondered how he would survive the year ahead.’ I’d better write emails instead. I do write emails and send them to Tokyo. And I read the emails I receive from Tokyo.

> Dear Valery,
> I hope this email finds you well.
> Please confirm that you could agree to the concertos with Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra in 2014 – as I said before, we have already had the official agreement which is mentioned your Mozart piano concertos no.9 and no.27 on the same day for twice. I am afraid that you could not cancel the concerts any more because they have already started giving publicity to your concertos. Actually, some materials for your promotion has been printed out already! Seriously, it is very important to say that our agency and you will be unable to perform with the Yomiuri in the future if you could not make it because it is obvious that reliability would be essential. Therefore, it would be impossible to cancel them. I hope you could understand this situation.
> With warmest regards,
> Yoshiyuki

My manager has only a smattering of English and whenever he writes emails *himself* I’m hard put to catch his meaning. This time the situation called for prompt action and an intelligible, crystal-clear reply. He must have written the text in Japanese, trusting his intimate friend’s knowledge of the language used by Shakespeare to convey madness, dead ends, despair.

> Dear Yoshiyuki,
> I didn’t say I wished to cancel Mozart’s concerti. But hopefully both you and the orchestra understand that this programme is rather exceptional. So-called famous artists play only one concerto and get four times more money than I do. Besides, the orchestra ignored my suggestions (Beethoven, Schumann), thinking that an ‘ordinary’ artist should be thankful for the mere fact of being invited by a great orchestra. And famous artists always play what they feel like playing. Is it fair?
> As to my recitals, I like logical, harmonious programmes and cannot accept whatever organisers want to impose on me. Bach is my favourite composer, but I don’t play him well. At least I’m not satisfied with my interpretations of his music. For instance, I don’t like my CDs featuring his preludes and fugues. So I don’t really understand why concert organisers agree to invite me only if I play Bach. Anyway, I think I’m entitled to choose my own programmes. Of course beggars can’t be choosers – a nice expression, isn’t it? – and so I have no alternative but to accept any caprice for fear of losing concerts. And, unlike famous artists, I can’t afford to cancel anything, even if I’m frightfully underpaid. Like Columbo.

> Of course all this is not your fault and I complain only because you're my manager and friend. And I know that you do your best to find as many concerts as possible. Let us tackle all our problems without getting unduly worried.
> Kindest regards,
> The Crucified

Of course I typed 'Valery' instead of 'Christ': no one is eager to work with a madman except psychoanalysts and masochists. My manager is neither.

How to work with managers? How to manage them, Yoshiyuki? Don't we rub each other up the wrong way? My former Japanese manager used to invite me to top restaurants. Once I invited him to my house and opened a bottle of Palmer 28. After that he virtually stopped taking care of my career. If you open good bottles in your manager's presence, he thinks you need him badly. 'If it weren't for my efficiency and patience,' he says to himself and others, 'he wouldn't play anywhere, not even in the suburbs of Moscow.' You'd better send him wrathful emails. And what if he gets huffy with you?

You'd better stick to the Middle Way advocated by Buddhists and peripatetics. First you voice your grievances and then type out, 'You're my best friend.' And he sends you the following email:

> Dear Valery,
> Hello!
> Thank you very much for your message with your honest feelings and I understand what you think. Sorry for the late reply because I have read it many times. Anyway, I am pleased that you could accept officially Mozart piano concertos both no.9 'Jeunehomme' and no.27, which will be performed at Suntory Hall and Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre. I know what you think regarding the programme, but could you please consider it positively? I think it would be a great opportunity for your Japanese fans and audiences who are interested in your performance.
> Also, I have to mention regarding a current situation of Japanese orchestras - definitely, they do not have enough money to make concerts. That is the serious issue. In addition, recent years in japan, both Japanese orchestras and concert hall organisers tend to make/plan concerts by themselves. This is because it has a greatly reduced number of classical music audiences in Japan. Therefore, unfortunately, you could see what is happing in the Japanese market though the YNSO and Toppan Hall's case. That is the point. I completely agree with what you think. In terms of arts market, I would not think this is the best solution. Nowadays, there are too many pianists. Don't you think? Also, there are too many famous pianists. Don't you think? That is a big problem because orchestras, organisers and manager in rural areas have chances to choose artists by themselves. Also, classical music marketing in the world including Japan (also big name of recording companies) seems to go to a strange direction. I do not understand why they do not admire your music, though A., Y. W., H. G., P., Z., K. and Y. L. are acknowledged as the super star..
> I am very worried that you might be handled with kid gloves in Japan – frankly, you are very nice person and I do like you especially the short stories. I have felt you are a genius, but you might be something familiar to me. Thus, I would like to discuss everything heart to heart. Consequently, to be honest with you, let us talk about your concerts in June 2015.

A programme: I understand you would not play Schumann Symphonic Etudes anymore. Is this your final decision?
You might be angry, but how many your recitals I could make is actually depending your A programme. I know you would be happy if I could make many recitals. Of course, I could answer your expectation. Hence, I would like to discuss with you again depending on your proposal programme. Or, would it be impossible to play Appassionata or Hammerklavier Sonata which are in your magnificent short story, TOWERING PASSIONS. I am very curious!!!
B programme: Are you really sure that you would not play Bach pieces at Toppan Hall? If impossible, I am sure that your recital at Toppan Hall would be canceled regrettably. Please kindly let me know what you think and your new alternative programme. I will tell the Toppan regarding your new one.
Anyway, I really would like to talk to you frankly and heart to heart. During the Japan tour, we did share many things as you know. I would love to do it more. As you said, I always do my best for you to make your concerts as many as possible. Of course, I am currently working for the 2014, but at the same time, I have to prepare for the 2015. I love a word, TOO LATE, but it is not a good for planning of your concerts in Japan.
As your agent and friend,
Yoshiyuki

Another pair of pitying hands.

2

'The Sceptics – the only honourable type among the ever-so multiply ambiguous tribe of the philosophers!' (*Ecce Homo*) Real knowledge of things is out of the question. Nothing is possible, nothing at all.

3

The French love many bad writers whose prose corresponds to their notion of 'good style in itself'. All these Juliens and G. G. When the Russians say 'G', they mean *govno* – shit. Each of these writers is a complete shit. And their works? A load of shit. 'Every style is good that really communicates an inner state, that makes no mistake with signs, with the tempo of signs, with gestures – all laws governing the rhetorical period are an art of gesture. Here my instinct is infallible. – Good style *in itself – pure folly*, mere "idealism" like, for instance, the "beautiful *in itself*", like the "good *in itself*", like the "thing *in itself*""…(*Ecce Homo*) Will they ever understand *my* style, my angles of vision and perspectives? My angels of vision?

4

When asked about a writer he wasn't fond of, Borges used to reply, 'I'm not worthy of him.' I am worthy of Proust and Musil. I think that today uncommon readers should search for the lost time, its labyrinth and glory, instead of wasting their time on writers without qualities. I'll go on.

5

They understand Proust and Musil, don't they? Don't they worship them? Well, I am Proust. I dare say that I am Musil too. And Nietzsche. Doesn't he say, 'I am Prado; I am also father Prado. I dare say that I am Lesseps too.'? Who are *they*? Not Nietzsche, I suppose. Prado was tried for murder in 1888. Lesseps built the Suez Canal. What do they have in common? Nietzsche?

6

Doesn't he say, 'One must pay dearly for immortality: one has to die several times while still alive'?

Dear O.,
Thank you for your e-mail.
K. L. wrote me – he intends to make an invitation for Valery that will be valid from 20th October.
As for the itinerary. K. L. told me, that the travel expenses has already included into Valery's fee (as was agreed between Valery and K.). Therefore we have two ways:
Philharmonic could provide the tickets for Valery in route: Brussels-St-Petersburg -Moscow . The way from Moscow to Brussels Valery takes care by himself. Another option: Philharmonic purchases the tickets in route: Brussels-St-Petersburg -Moscow-Brussels and Valery reimburses half of the cost of the travel expenses. Would you be so kind to agree with Valery the more suitable way for him and let me know.
Concerning the hotel accommodation for Valery. Philharmonic provides the accommodation at the Hotel per three nights (we suppose from 30th October - till 2th November). If Valery would like to come one day before (on 29th October) - we could reserve the room at the Hotel. This extra day he will pay for his own expenses.

Very much looking forward to hearing from you.
Best wishes,
E.

O. My so-called secretary. Here is *my* answer:

Dear E.,
Thank you for your email. The Philharmonic always supplies me with tickets and I don't see why I should buy anything for the round trip Brussels-St Petersburg // Moscow-Brussels. The cost of such a ticket, with the exception of the train ticket St. Petersburg-Moscow I'll have to take care of, is exactly the same as that of the return ticket Brussels-St. Petersburg-Brussels. As for the hotel, please reserve a nice room, not like the one I had last time.
Alas, I'm used to being treated with disrespect. Yet any young Chinese pianist is entitled to a first-class ticket and a royal suite. And those teenagers often travel with their mothers and distant cousins.
You shouldn't push the disrespect I have to put up with in Russia to the limit. I hope you'll understand my point of view.
Kindest regards

Valery Aleff

7

Managers and their menagerie. They don't take me on – so much the better. Why waste my time on concerts? Why sit at the piano every day? Six hours, seven hours. Performing artists. Are they Prousts, Musils and Nietzsches? Do they deserve eternity? Hardly. Basking in their moments of glory. Basking in reflected glory. G. G. G. Not A., not P. – G. G. G.

8

Dear Yoshiyuki,

If some day I'm told, 'You're a famous pianist,' I'll commit suicide without the slightest hesitation. What? Valery Aleff, a *mere pianist*? A *mere performer*? A *mere entertainer*? Do you know that Alma Mahler said something along these lines when asked if she was about to marry Bruno Walter? 'Don't insult my taste. A mere entertainer.' Bruno Walter, an *entertainer*? A *real superstar*, a *superman* in comparison with your H. G., A., K., and so on and so forth. G! G! G! Being famous in the world where these Gs are famous can hardly be the goal of a man who wants to be studied, analysed and worshipped in the 25th century. Gs are basking in their moments of glory. Such moments are *not* my cup of tea. Only Faustian moments are – the Moment. *Eternity*!

9

Oh, those Greeks! They knew how to live. What is required for that is to stop courageously at the surface, the fold, the skin, to adore appearance, to believe in forms, tones, words, in the whole Olympus of appearance.' The surface, the fold, the skin. Tendons and nerves. Not intestines. Not to plumb the depths. Oh that way madness lies. Like those Greeks! Like those Japanese! The Middle Way! *In between*. Those Greeks were superficial – *out of profundity*. And is not this precisely what we are again coming back to, we daredevils of the spirit who have climbed the highest and most dangerous peak of present thought and looked around from up there – we who have looked down from there? Are we not, precisely in this respect, Greeks? And Japanese? Adorers of forms, of tones, of words? And therefore – *artists*?

PART ONE (A)

ALL-TOO-HUMAN

Gorgias was a famous teacher of oratory and the author of oratorical display pieces. One of Plato's dialogues bears his name and Gorgias himself takes part in it to define and defend the nature of his craft and its power. What he and Socrates talk about is the skill of persuading people massed in assemblies and juries about what is good and what is right. Then Polus takes over and one realises he is intoxicated with the thought that rhetoric gives the power to do what one pleases – even injustice, if that suits the situation.

By way of an answer, Socrates talks about pastry baking and says it's not a craft but a knack for producing gratification and pleasure. Oratory is also a knack along with cosmetics and sophistry so that Plato calls it 'flattery'. The same goes for contemporary writers and artists in general. They flatter readers and concert-goers; they don't probe our wounds for signs of infection.

> So pastry baking, as I say, is the flattery that wears the mask of medicine. Cosmetics is the one that wears that of gymnastics in the same way; a mischievous, deceptive, disgraceful and ill-bred thing, one that perpetrates deception by means of shaping and colouring, smoothing out and dressing up, so as to make people assume an alien beauty and neglect their own, which comes through gymnastics. So that I won't make a long-style speech, I'm willing to put it to you the way the geometers do – for perhaps you follow me now – that what cosmetics is to gymnastics, pastry baking is to medicine; or rather, like this: what cosmetics is to gymnastics, sophistry is to legislation, and what pastry baking is to medicine, oratory is to justice.

Today, music-making and literature wear the mask of art: a mischievous, deceptive, disgraceful and ill-bred thing. Writers perpetrate deception by means of shaping and colouring, smoothing out and dressing up. So do pianists who grimace and often change their shirts three or four times in the course of one recital. They smooth out and dress up the pieces they play so that Beethoven acquires a long droopy moustache. I wish he'd shave off that moustache!

Last year I played a few concerts in Japan: a celebrated violinist, Gidon Kremer, asked me to stand in for a young pianist he might find beautiful in spite of her long, large, pointed nose. In my opinion, she ought to have lost her nose a long time ago – perhaps in her cradle – following the example of Gogol's hero who, however, recovers his at the end of the story. Well, there's no accounting for taste and Gidon is free to share his life with whoever he pleases – as long as I don't take part in the process. But the pianist I'm talking about refused to go to Japan for fear of inhaling and swallowing a lethal dose of radiation: the tour was to start three weeks after the Fukushima catastrophe. So I was unlikely to go with her to restaurants and keep her company during instructive visits to temples and gardens. After much soul-searching, I decided to join Gidon and his girlfriend in Osaka, disregarding nuclear reactors and winters. (His girlfriend plays the cello.)

On the fourth day of our tour, Gidon asked me to listen to a CD that he and his friends had recorded a few months before. I complied with his request and heard Tchaikovsky's *Piano Trio in A Minor* torn to pieces by the long-nosed star. Next morning I couldn't help sharing my point of view with Gidon who nodded in agreement, saying he was disappointed by the young woman. What he had in mind was in no way related to her nose. I suppose I just took it for granted, saying to myself that her nose hadn't grown after her first concert with Gidon.

Some months later, I received an email from one of my managers:

> Dear Valery,
> Munich wants to invite you with Kremer on Nov 28 or Dec 4 2012. I have no contact to Kremer but perhaps you can arrange this. In 2014 they would invite you again for a recital.
> Kind regards

Here is the email I sent to Gidon:

Dear Gidon,
I hope you're well.
We are invited to play in Munich next season. This series takes place in the Prinz Regent Theater. The dates they suggest are: November 28 or December 4, 2012. Could you please let me know if you're free and willing to play?
Looking forward to hearing from you.

Here is his answer:

> Dear Valery!
> Nice to hear from you…
> To my big regret both dates are impossible, since (I am terribly sorry :)…. I am scheduled to have a trio tour (the 'famous trio'! making up for Japan) in this period. And we plan to start rehearsing on Nov. 27.
> I would suggest you to play a recital on Nov.28. and pls. do suggest to the promoter, that he might get in touch with my PA Kristijonas Kucinskas (kristijonas@mac.com). If he would be interested, we might be free to play for him with my ladies on Dec. 4.
> Please let me know-who the promoter is?
> Finally I am on my way to holidays. Wish you a wonderful summer.

Humanity is fond of reality TV. What about reality N? One is supposed to keep up with the times. Proust did, apparently. 'After all, he wrote about the First World War,' as a French scholar put it. And I speak about emails; humanity is fond of emails, websites and weblogs.
Here is what I found on the Internet:

> Gidon Kremer: why I quit the celebrity rat race
> July 22, 2011 By Norman Lebrecht94 Comments
> The great violinist has sent me the original, private letter that he sent to the Verbier Festival, announcing his withdrawal. I publish it with his permission and with that of Martin Engstroem, the Verbier director to whom it was addressed.
> I present the letter verbatim, in the original English:

June 28th, 2011

Dear Martin,

Today, unfortunately I have some upsetting news for you. After many weeks of questioning myself, and a barrage of conflicting thoughts, I have finally decided to withdraw my participation in this year's Verbier festival.

While I do not want to hurt you, I can only imagine how disappointed you will be. Please believe me, when I say that I really do not have any other choice.

We all get older, this is a fact we can't deny this and this somehow demands more responsibility towards our actions. It concerns as well the important question of where and why we say "yes" or "no".

It is wonderful, that Verbier provides so many opportunities for young musicians to share the music. I am also aware of how important it is for you, to celebrate all your friends birthdays and anniversaries. And among these highly valued performers are also some of my own very dear friends.

Nevertheless the question to myself remains: what am I personally doing on this summit of "names" and both old and new celebrities?

Having all my life served music and composers, a repertoire which is established as "classic" and one which, for decades I had to fight for to be heard, I now feel that I need to make a choice. I simply do not want any more to be part of "parties for the sake of parties". To be one of a group of so many splendid artists is not something that I want to justify or confirm.

You would wonder: "Gidon! How can you say such a thing, being surrounded by so many friends, who respect you, who love to play with you, who look up to you? Aren't you aware, that I myself have admired you for years?".

Dear Martin! Please do not draw any wrong conclusions.

I am not putting up barricades because of any ambitions or desire to look at everything as a snob, as many critics do! – With their prejudice, so to say – 'from above'. – No way.

Now, finding myself rather exhausted through my numerous tours, new projects and recording sessions, I feel even more, that I should do only the things which I believe myself are still somewhat necessary. And here it is: I simply do not have enough energy to support gatherings and collaborations on highly exposed stages with "rising" or approved stars of today's music business for the sake of ovations and name-dropping.

Yes, I know, I should be professional. Most of my life I tried to stick to my word (and I am aware that promised you that I'd come) but a time has now come in which the overall devaluation of the word "interpreter" has resulted in a misguided fixation with glamour and sex appeal.

This is not anymore "my" time. I leave it to those who believe in it, be it the audiences or the new bread of performers, who have overwhelming capacities to please crowds, but who are often themselves quite EMPTY and artistically lost, chasing a hunger for recognition over ability.

Let it be like this.

Not being a hypocrite, I simply need to gain some distance and rest from all those "fireworks". This is the only reason that I have made this decision to step out, since I do not want this to add to the overall confusion, which has established itself within the music market in recent years.

> Many festivals these days unfortunately allow mixing self-enchantment with entertainment – (be it crossover or "events") and they succeed to remain a magnet for all those, who want to be seen or hailed. Yes I am a bit ironic and with a bitter feeling in saying these words;
> REAL artists like those that we still remember, haven't vanished completely. But the "greenery" of Verbier rather contributes to forgetting them and hails mystifications and substitutes of those, who truly served ART. Opposing such a tendency, I simply want to find peace with myself. Lately being warn out by so many dissatisfying partnerships, I simply need a rest. I do hope this will be the best remedy for the hype that surrounds many of us.

Reactions to Gidon's lengthy epistle so far have been favourable, adverse and mixed. Here are two of them:

> This is a beautifully written letter. I admire Mr. Kremer's honesty and courage……and maybe even more his vulnerability! All three qualities—often common in great men—are exceedingly rare yet they are essential for an artist and his art to transcend time.

> Is it wrong to have management? And for those of us who are mid-level professional musicians, who genuinely love the art and want to serve it – how do you propose we serve it sincerely and without the evangelistic powers of glamour and sex to bring in funding?

Here is an abridged version of *my* answer to Gidon Kremer:

> Gidon Kremer says in his theatrical play: 'I get the feeling that someone wants to kill classical music.' In my opinion, we are not facing an international conspiracy. What happens in the world of music and in parallel worlds is worse than any plot, any conspiracy, any natural disaster. One can thwart one's enemies' plans or recover from the shock of one's wife dying. But how to deal with music lovers who don't understand anything? An unconscious army kills music – and art in general – round the clock.
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> Gidon writes an open letter to the director of the Verbier Festival. He speaks about the betrayal of music, about the interpreters whose yearning to move a few rungs up the career ladder kills composers again and again. I'm delighted to note that the discourse of a famous violinist happens to be attuned to what I think and enlarge upon, but I wonder what goal Gidon set himself as he was writing this letter. Did it originate in the same yearning for glory? Translated into Russian by the author himself, the letter can be perused on the Internet, on the Forum called Classica where the Russians exchange their points of views and insults. A member of the club writes as follows: 'Gidon realises that he's slowly sinking into oblivion. He's eager to refresh our memory.' The author of this insult is not altogether wrong. Gidon must realise that violinists – alongside other performing artists – are not immortal; they're usually forgotten on the day of their deaths or even earlier, depending on when they bid their fans adieu. Oistrakhs and Michelangelis aren't born every day.
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> The style of the letter leaves a lot to be desired. Gidon doesn't seem to care: he knows that no one judges the writings of a musician in terms of style. (Nor does anyone take notice of style when pondering over a book written by a real writer.) Gidon's yearning for immortality induces him to 'jump above his

head', as the Russians put it; he writes books, theatrical plays. Alas, he is an *homme-violon*, not an *homme-orchestre*, as the French might put it. He is not an all-rounder, in other words. But playing the violin as he does is enough for one's life. And his head almost reaches the ceiling so he doesn't have to jump above it.

I think it's hard not to kill music in this day and age that is bent on the destruction of traditional values. Gidon does it in his fashion. He gives a lot of support to young pianists, to young ladies. Audiences don`t pay much attention to music. What counts for them is a self-confident swagger, an unquenchable energy. Is this energy music-oriented? Audiences don't ask questions; they give answers by applauding young men and women. So does Gidon. I am sensitive to beauty, but if Helen of Troy had played the piano atrociously, I wouldn't have given her a helping hand. I might have invited her to a top restaurant.

I wonder if Gidon's wards suffer from feelings of inadequacy: they do play the piano. Consciously or unconsciously Gidon overlooks – one can't say overhears – their almost total lack of musical gifts. Yet he is not a criminal: these wards' will to power drives them towards influential men and women. They would have become famous even without my friend's munificence.

Every day I would take part in some appalling acts of barbarism if I went to concert halls and paid attention to the CDs recorded by the living who also poison the Internet because they're omnipresent – often to the detriment of the past. You may forget philosophy (and English) if you read all the answers received by Gidon Kremer, his admirers and detractors. I wonder why Gidon forgets music and feminine beauty in the company of the pianist who, incidentally, wears a moustache in the clip she devoted to Liszt's *Sonata in B Minor*; so does Liszt whenever she plays his works.

ALL-TOO-INHUMAN

Dear Thomas,

Thank you very much for your kind email.

I'm awfully sorry, but I was finishing my book on Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and so I didn't understand the situation in Berlin. Actually their offer is just scandalous. Have these Nibelungen lost the golden ring? They humiliate respectable artists to save money for so-called stars. No wonder, given the general attitude towards music. The director of the Verbier Festival said about artists: 'What counts is their charisma.' Consequently music does not count. A very important manager said to his friend who was surprised to find that a bad pianist was on the manager's list: 'Who cares about music? They should be sexy.'

I'm sorry to be so violent. And I'm sorry for the misunderstanding that is wholly due to my preoccupation with the book I've just finished. Here are the poems I wrote last night:

Flowers don't think they're flowers. Nothing
Thinks about itself, about humans. We're not alone:
Someone else is coming. Flowers await him too.
Nothing is alone. You pick up a flower and hold it until
It becomes the palm of your hand, your child.

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Black shoes. What else is black, white, blue or orange?
Oranges are blue; so are Picassos, Fra Angelicos. I won't come
To any conclusion unless another colour penetrates my life,
My purgatory, the dream I had last summer. What's a colour? A colour one,
A colour two. They salute me in the doorway as if I couldn't live
Without colours. From now on I'll live in absolute whiteness, on a blank sheet
Of paper, in water vapour, inside a snowwoman, on a white flag.

THOUGHTS OUT OF SEASON

Dear Mr Lebrecht,

I hope you are well.

I respect enormously what you have done for music.

A few years ago, I sent you my comment on Gidon's letter to the director of the Verbier Festival. You were kind enough to include it in your site. Some time later, I sent you my book *Notes de pianiste*.

Today, I'm sending you a series of letters I wrote to the representatives of Sony Classical who destroy the remains of music by taking on charismatic nonentities and releasing their recordings in a blaze of publicity. (The Glenn Gould Collection is their predecessors' exploit.) To protect these remains from irreverence and wickedness one is even allowed to forget one's manners – for once, the end justifies the means.

I do hope you might find room for my letters – or some of them – in your site. I realise it is a huge piece of writing, but at least the second half of it deserves to see the light of day, in my opinion – for the sake of music that is often replaced by false humanism and shows.

I would be delighted to meet you somewhere.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Kindest regards,

Valery Aleff

TO A.

Dear friend,

I hope you are well.

The statement 'I have a dream' is even more famous and poignant than 'Yes, we can'. Its enduring appeal might mean that even in this wretched day and age a human being dares to dream, even if his or her bank account does not warrant such audaciousness. My dream concerns the recordings I have made since my victory at the Queen Elisabeth Competition and also includes my efforts as a conductor and even an actor: my theatrical plays were recorded by NHK seven years ago. Do you think they can be released on your label? I do realise it is a sort of megalomania I am suffering from, but unfortunately I cannot help it because we are facing an incurable disease. And I am not the only victim of its tenacity and soul-ravaging effects. Besides, I am pretty old and my 70th birthday seems to be a good pretext for a venture of this size and ambition. And death is not beyond the mountains, as the Russians put it, even if there are no mountains to speak of – in Belgium, among other places.

As you know, I am reluctant to play many concerts. Whatever I do is posterity-oriented – just another pompous idea of mine – because today one is tempted to think exclusively in terms of the past and of the future, deploring the mass production of nonentities. And considering that these nonentities and their works are likely to live in the future, if only in part, a huge question mark hangs over my thoughts and hopes linked to the end of this century, let alone the other centuries we might have in store for us. What remains is the past, the concerts I heard in my youth and even later – in Paris, in Salzburg.

Well, I am not a worldwide celebrity and I do realise that no record company is likely to get enthusiastically involved in this project of mine. I have just come back from Russia where I played two concerts and met my friends who are rich and influential. I spoke to them about my project and they agreed to help me – they seem to appreciate my personality and the way I handle both words and notes. They got in touch with one of the richest men in Russia. According to official sources, he has 2.5 billion dollars. (Of course this is a *legal, official* figure.) He agreed to help us. Needless to say, my friends know many other so-called oligarchs whose dollars might be helpful for the materialisation of the project.

TO A.

Dear friend,

I hope you are well.

Could you please tell me how much money we might need for this fairy-tale-like dream? I hope I sound neither too pompous nor ridiculous when I embark on this subject. The point is our collaboration makes little sense if my recordings are limited to one country, being unavailable elsewhere. (After all, my recordings have nothing to do with the Stalin-propounded doctrine internationally known as 'socialism in one country'.) And death may come at any moment, making all my efforts pointless, unless they are justified by worldwide distribution and a perspective supplied by my 40-year-old discography. I would be extremely grateful if you could answer this email as quickly as possible – oligarchs forget those who do not show them their detailed projects within a week.

TO B.

Dear friend,

When I hit upon the idea of the birthday box, I thought about our collaboration. During my stay in Japan, I met Mr A. several times. All our discussions were friendly and I was delighted to have found a person whose understanding of music and my modest contribution to it seemed to promise a fruitful relationship. At some point Mr A. even said he wished me to make recordings which might still be on the market in 50 years' time. He even touched upon Furtwängler in this connection. In spite of the intricacy and fairy-tale-like quality of my project, I broached the subject in his presence and he said, 'If you buy the rights, we'll release the recordings.' I was really elated at the idea that such a tremendous project could be carried out by this wonderful company. Mr A. also explained that for six months our Beethoven CD would be sold only in Japan for financial reasons – as you know, CD prices are higher in Japan. Be that as it may, our Beethoven CD (*La Pathétique*, the *Moonlight Sonata* and the *Appassionata*) can be found neither on the European nor the American market. So your remark – 'This recording will make you rich' – is not a self-fulfilling prophecy, being as inefficient as my colleagues' rhetorical question, 'Why didn't they make a smash hit out if it?'

Mr A. also said I could choose an appropriate instrument and I told him about the piano that belonged to Paderewski. I went to the Polish Embassy in Brussels and tried this piano. Unfortunately a tuner of sorts had overhauled it completely, destroying its unique sound in the process. I wrote to Mr A. about this. He did not answer. Then I wrote again to remind him of our conversation in Tokyo during which I touched upon the box project. I had previously got in touch with my friend whose small company had released some of my live recordings. This friend suggested a licence procedure. Anyway, I spoke about all this in the email I sent Mr A. and once again got no reply. Finally I took the liberty of bothering you with this problem and only with your help did

I get an answer from Mr A. He pointed out he did not know what to do with this box, making me understand that the project was not under way yet. In the light of these problems and delays, you realise, I hope, to what extent I was worried and how much I appreciate your help.

After meeting my Moscow friends, I am pretty sure I can count on their financial help. Besides, they know the richest men and women in Russia. Some of these people appreciate my music making. So I sent another email to Japan and Mr A. answered rather quickly, saying he did not know how to manage such a project. He even suggested I might create my own label, which made me sad and distrustful. And yet I spoke about the money we could get for this venture. I sent another email to Japan, trying to connect the Gould Collection – videos, his conducting debut, etc. – with the present box. I sincerely regard Sony Classical's contribution to Gould's legacy as a monument.

Mr A. sent me an email, listing all my recordings and speaking about the whole thing rather positively, if hesitantly. But can I be certain he will not change his mind later on? Oddly enough, he does not seem to take into consideration my friends' financial support which should be neither disregarded nor discounted. In short, there are ups and downs (and misunderstandings) in our relationship in spite of the boundless admiration I have for his knowledge of music and fine taste – not only in the domain of music. Among other things, I am thinking about his attitude towards wine.

FROM A.

Are you and your friends OK from the terrorism in Brussels? All I can do is to watch the news and see how the things are going.

TO A.

Dear friend,

Thank you for your email. I am still alive and even kicking in spite of the world's cruelty and negligence.

Actually I am mostly perturbed by what may be described as the 'light-heartedness' we come across so often – in the domain of music, for instance. (I no longer feel bound to name no names as I go along, for anonymity would not allow us to tackle the problems we are burdened with efficaciously.) I do not maintain that people in charge think only in terms of money, which might explain the presence of Lang-Lang and Khatia Butaninishvili – whatever her name is – in our midst, on the top shelves of Tower Records. It is rather a democratic approach to music we should blame for this negligence or light-heartedness. Many people believe – and not all of them are influenced by Lang-Lang's doctrine – that classical music is good for your mental and physical health; so you should listen to it as often as possible, whoever performs it. I, for one, cannot bear bad concerts and CDs, and I would not have become a musician if, at the turning-point of my life, I had listened to Muti's interpretation of the *Walküre* instead of enjoying to the utmost Furtwängler's 1954 recording of it. In 1959 I heard Van Clibern play Liszt's *B Minor Sonata*, and I vowed never to listen to this sonata again, let alone to play it. But then I attended Sofronitsky's recital featuring this sonata and everything fell into place. Had I heard Khatya's interpretation of the same piece, I would have been put off music for the rest of my life. And I would have protected myself from it by keeping it at bay even in supermarkets. (For the sake of my mental and physical health.)

Whatever Nietzsche says on the subject, one can live happily without music. (Borges and Nabokov did.) But if one has an appropriate number of music-oriented genes, one had better not subject them to the massacre-

like experiences offered by Hélène Grimaud and a young lady whose bosom may appeal to men and women alike. A man or a woman who belongs to what St Augustine calls 'the elect' – or the 'happy few', in common parlance – should keep in touch with musical experiences of the highest order; otherwise his or her body might get involved in a blasphemous rite, as a result of which music begins to sound like one of the machines producing what is justly called 'noise pollution'.

You are absolutely unique in the business world of music and that is why I am writing to you frankly, without bothering about diplomacy and nice-guy-praised phrasing. If it weren't for your moral support, I would have given up the idea of the 70th-birthday box a long time ago. What is more, I would not even have hit upon this idea. Of course I realise you have to spend a lot of time on the artists whose contribution to music is on the negative side, to put it mildly and mercifully. After all, we cannot deal only with Glenn Gould and Gilels. I am sending you a few notes destined for our box and serving as a sort of introduction. And I sincerely hope you will find a few minutes for these texts of mine.

Why does my project meet with frowns and shrugs of shoulders? These shrugs are all the more incomprehensible since my friends are prepared to help me financially for the simple reason that they like what I do at the piano and at the writing desk. I do acknowledge I am reluctant to play more concerts for the sake of the sales and publicity. Why should I play for the people in whose midst one may chance upon Lang Lang's or Hélène Grimaud's worshippers? In other words, why should I waste my energy on nincompoops? I don't understand Pablo Casals whose opposition to the dictatorial regime of Francisco Franco was so fierce he refused to appear in the countries that recognised the authoritarian Spanish government. (Yet in those countries and their concert halls there were a great many people who yearned for Bach's suites and couldn't care less about Franco and the Republican government.) But I do understand Arthur Rubinstein who wouldn't perform in Germany after the Second World War, for hearing the applause produced by the hands that used to salute Adolf Hitler – by *some* of those hands – might have been unbearable. The people I am reluctant to perform for are fond of shows, not of music, and that is what I object to fiercely. I don't object, however, to their fondness for bread and wine.

Besides, contrary to what nincompoops think, creative work is far more important than whatever one can do in the domain of interpretation, and many years ago I resolved to devote as much time as I can to writing. And I am all the more anxious not to waste my time elsewhere since one does not really need inspiration to play either Bach or Chopin – their muses fill the bill perfectly. However, inspiration is not a figment of one's imagination in the domain of creation. Tchaikovsky, for one, was constantly afraid of losing it forever.

As we all know, publicity is more important than concerts, and the amount of money supplied by my friends can give us access to television as well as to specialised magazines. Aren't we responsible for what happens in the *monde de la musique*?

I am sending you my texts as an attachment. I do hope you will read them, if only in part. I think this project is magnificent and its realisation will allow me to fulfil my dearest professor's wish. In the late Seventies, Gilels said to one of his Belgian friends, 'Valery should play. It's his duty.' I am sure that if this box sees the light of day, I shall no longer have a guilty conscience. A cultural and psychological alibi.

I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

TO A.

Dear Mr A.,

Lenin was surrounded by *turncoats* and *traitors*; so were Stalin and other members of the Soviet political elite. For a few decades, these two key-words could be found in almost every newspaper issued in my enemy-besieged land, and only after the Gorbachev-orchestrated revolution (or rather evolution) did we learn that the enemies we kept on talking about were Stalin, Lenin, Trotsky and their cronies. Let us not forget that even a colossal country can be destroyed by the Unholy Trinity of this kind – without any exterior help.

The same goes for music. A few people in charge can destroy its heritage if their brains are centred upon money as if affected by Pink Floyd's famous song where this word is repeated several times in a row. Actually I think that Pink Floyd is also beyond those brains' ken, along with Beethoven, Bach, Furtwängler and Gilels. (They must be keen on Britney Spears, though.) Any parallel drawn between Stalin's crimes and today's misdemeanours is sure to be frowned upon all the more readily since the people I have in mind do not murder anybody, with the exception of music. And music is not just an object; it is a subject made up of a myriad of great musicians who have contributed to its history over many centuries. So I am not inclined to describe those people's deeds as misdemeanours: they are committing crimes against humanity.

At the end of a Stalin trial, the chief prosecutor, Vyshinsky, concluded his speech by saying, 'Over the road cleared of the last scum and filth of the past, we, our people, with our beloved teacher and leader, the great Stalin, at our head, will march ever onwards, towards communism.' In the present case, we are rather dealing with the scum of the present and the future, I am afraid. Anyway, our musical paradise is dead and gone: it is with Bruno Walter and Toscanini in the grave. So we have no alternative but, like a crab, to go backward. (Isn't the crab known for going sideward?)

Our governing body should be put on trial. They should confess to having organised the murder of music. They should confess to setting up terrorist groups – critics, journalists, conductors – to wreck and sabotage the *monde de la musique*. *On peut acheter n'importe qui*, you know.

TO A.

Dear Mr A.,

I still have not got an answer to my emails. I do realise you might be shocked by my treatment of your artists and by the name-dropping I indulge in to show I disapprove of their bearers' fame which is indissolubly linked to bad taste, showing-off, niceguyness, nicegirlness, buxomness, split-to-the-thigh dresses, long-legedness and so on. Actually these legs are often neither long nor beautiful, but they are put on display during concerts. And that is what counts – never mind Beethoven and Brahms!

Let us go on with our Stalinist trial for a while. Beating their breasts, the guilty lament that they have 'shown musical short-sightedness' and 'lack of vigilance', 'compromised with dubious elements' (buxom girls and cute boys), 'added grist' to this or that mill, and were full of 'rotten liberalism'. They have opted for shallowness and accessibility instead of paying homage to the mystery of music. A. B. says one should not repeat the expositions in Schubert's sonatas, in their first movements; otherwise the audience might fall asleep. M.A. (ma) seems to have fully agreed with this statement when she said to Bella Davidovich, 'I play so fast because they might leave the hall if I was on the slow side.' To what mill do these artists add grist? To the mill of desecration? Why don't they beat their breasts like Stalin's victims and the guest one reads about in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*?

Whenever I make a disparaging remark about my colleagues, all music lovers I happen to know say almost in unison, 'You wish to settle some old scores with them.' Among the artists I have touched upon so far, I am only

personally acquainted with M.A. (ma) who is charming and caring; and all-too-human, in my opinion, considering the number of performers she supports as if they were all budding or accomplished geniuses. My subject matter is music, not the milk of human kindness. There *is* such a thing as music.

We should on no account make things easier for the audience – things are hard in the world of music. A hard nut to crack, you know. And even Tchaikovsky's nutcracker would not make things easier for you.

We should on no account shorten (enliven) Schubert's *himmlische Längen*. (Brendel's utilitarian advice.) They should on no account be turned into earthlische shorts.

You had better refrain from personal comments if you take part in a game of billiards. But we are playing no games: the illness that the world of music suffers from is not to be treated lightly. Even you – you, of all people – do not seem to take the matter seriously. During our last meeting in Tokyo I talked to you about Sergey Kasprov, about his forthcoming Japanese tour. You did not take the trouble to attend his concerts. Yet you have plenty of time for arranging Khatia's interviews and clips. Kasprov's tour was not just a success – it was a triumph, and I am delighted I had been able to arrange it for him. But triumphs do not count nowadays, if you have no kitschy and often lewd charisma highly praised by the director of the Verbier Festival, among other members of our Politburo.

If you reach the age of 35 – a watershed age – without being acclaimed as a star, you can say goodbye to music: you are no longer young and sponsors are interested only in children and teenagers. Even if the latter are handicapped in terms of music. And in other terms as well: the most popular Japanese pianist is blind. Never mind Mozart and Schubert!

Why do most sponsors invariably choose third-raters to the detriment of their gifted, first-rate counterparts? They are afraid of inferiority complexes.

Supply and demand. Great artists are in short supply nowadays. And in short demand. In no supply, in no demand.

We should on no account think that virtuous individuals compose and perform music better than their wicked, immoral and malicious colleagues. So many critics say, 'She's adorable,' instead of analysing and criticising her performance of Brahms' concerti. Let us not forget what Carlos Kleiber said about the great conductors of the past, 'Only Bruno Walter was humane.'

'When someone was expelled from the party or dismissed from his job, the only safe thing to do was to shun all further acquaintance with him, for fear of being tainted by the epithets which would be hurled at him. And if a friend or colleague was arrested, it was prudent to abjure any further contact with his family' (Geoffrey Hosking, *A History of the Soviet Union*). Why not play a game of billiards with the pariah? And a game of cards with the members of his family?

TO A.

Dear Mr A.,

I've just received the advance payment for the CDs we made in Berlin and I wish to thank you for the way you arranged the whole thing. Of course I had to wait for two additional months on account of the adjustment, but I'm used to being treated offhandedly and, as you know, whatever doesn't kill me fortifies my soul and even my body.

This transfer makes me think back to the recording sessions and their consequences. If the CDs are released, they will get stuck in one country for a few years. And then they'll vanish into thin air, leaving no trace either in my motherland or anywhere else, with the exception of one country. And that infuriates me, I'm sorry to say, even if the country in question is Japan, whose gardens and temples I like so much. If, however, you do not release them, they might be bought out – by my friends, hopefully. And I'll be able to approach another company with a view to making it release these sonatas worldwide.

I must admit I made a mistake when I agreed to record all these works for your company. You warned me they wouldn't be distributed worldwide, but last summer, when we met in Tokyo, you said the Beethoven CD would be sold in Japan for more or less six months because CDs cost more in Japan, and then it would be available in other countries as well. This did not happen. Nor is it likely to happen in the near future – or any other future, for that matter. And when I asked you if your company could release the recordings I had made for other companies, you said, 'If you buy them out, we'll release them.' Alas, you're not the President of your company, and you were perfectly aware of the fact, when talking to me last year. I really regret that some other people are in charge of what happens with your recordings worldwide because you're in a class of your own and those people, judging from what they do, are just money-grubbers who don't care a hoot about music. But, until further notice, your decision-making is confined to Japan and I don't want to suffer from claustrophobia.

It is true that I do not play many concerts, but I am playing this year in Munich, in London (with the LPO, Jurovsky conducting) and in China. Actually the Chinese keep on asking Monique why my Beethoven CD isn't distributed in China where I'll be playing these sonatas in November. Well, you know the answer, don't you? I also play in Russia, but my motherland is insignificant in terms of the market.

I know from bitter experience that the Japanese answer neither letters nor emails if the answer they must give is somewhat negative. In Japan this custom is probably associated with Zen Buddhism, but it may be judged differently in the States and in Europe – by a Russian barbarian, for instance. If I may be so bold, I would ask you to answer this email in time for us to handle the matter appropriately. Anyway, even if the CDs *are* released – and I'll see to it that they are not – I won't do anything for their promotion: no interviews, no performances at Tower Records.

Could you, please, let me know how much the whole thing cost, including the film they shot after the recording sessions?

TO A.

Dear Mr A.,

I wish you had put me in the picture a long time ago. Of course it wasn't difficult to guess what was going on, but one always hopes for the best. I naively thought you might still be discussing the matter with your bosses whose tastes in the domain of music leave a lot to be desired. Well, now the picture is more or less clear. There are, however, two questions I'd like to ask you before giving you a definite answer about our latest CDs.

Some years ago I was giving master classes in Weimar. After one of them, a Korean young lady asked me if I could listen to her. I said, 'I've got 10 minutes only.' She played the beginning of the *Dante Sonata*. I said, 'Well, you have to work on it very hard. Don't play it in concerts yet.' She answered, 'Really? Are you sure? I've just recorded it for Sony Classical.' I told this story to Gerd and he said, 'She must have paid for the recording. They often accept money from performers.' Here's my first question, 'Why don't your bosses accept my friends'

money? What's wrong with it? Do they think it's dirty because it's Russian? Money laundering or what? On this score you can be reassured – though of Russian origin, the money would come from London and New York, not from Moscow.

My second question: Could you make sure my recordings are distributed worldwide, even if they're not promoted? My friends could take care of publicity, on condition that the recordings are available worldwide. Let me remind you that they raised £50,000 for my London concert – for publicity only. (I mentioned the fact in Berlin.)

Let me assure you that I'm not thinking of you when I talk about money-grubbers, nincompoops, ignoramuses and those who have no ear for music. Your recent artists are the laughing stock of all the professional musicians I happen to come across during my infrequent wanderings. Don't you need a cultural alibi?

And last but not least, let me thank you for what you have done for me ever since we began our collaboration. And I do realise it's not your fault that nothing really works as far as the so-called Hegelian recognition is concerned.

I'm looking forward to your answers.

TO NOBODY

Werner Herzog is back; at least I found two boxes devoted to his films which I have liked for so many years. At some point I thought he had disappeared forever, but there are other points and also eternal recurrence which one should not dismiss nonchalantly. I am delighted to find he is understood even by teenagers whose computers are not *always* engaged in races and star wars. There are probably no other worlds in our world and beyond it, but we can count on other *points*, on their friendliness and comprehension.

Fitzcarraldo is one of my favourite cinema heroes. Instead of heading downstream, he sailed *up* the Amazon. And he said at some point, 'Only one is here. I'm going to move a mountain.' And he dreamt about bringing to the jungle Caruso, not a petty charismatic tenor.

I cannot come back, even if the number of points I am talking about is astronomical and thereby includes all oblivion-consigned artists: at this moment in time, I am not even worthy of oblivion. But one day this project of mine may see the light of day – to commemorate my 150th birthday, for instance.

Herzog speaks of a pharaoh who was 1400 years ahead of his time. Well, my 1550th birthday, then.

FROM LEBRECHT

Dear Mr Aleff,

For the reasons you so eloquently highlight in your letters, I no longer waste my time on any form of communication with Sony Classical.

TO J. M.

Dear Julichka,

I hope you are well.

I haven't heard from you for several months, but I hope our friendship is as alive and kicking as any yoga addict.

As a writer, I continue to work rather hard and my inspiration hasn’t let me down yet. As for the piano, I've got an important project into which I'm prepared to put as much energy and time as necessary. Alas, without a certain amount of money nothing can be done, and you must know that I'm neither a Russian oligarch nor Donald Trump.

During our last meeting, you talked to me about your friend who loves art and is aware of my existence. I do realise my request is quite surrealistic, as conservatoire students used to call this kind of thing. Alas, I simply have no alternative but to ask you if you think that your friend might help me. We are both having our jubilees next year. Unfortunately, this time we're not likely to celebrate them together at Bolshoi Zal. Well, I hope I'll celebrate it by making Sony Classical understand that this box is important not only for myself, but also for the world of music, if only on account of my texts. The box will include my studio and live recordings alongside my theatrical plays recorded in Japan. (Two DVDs.) And also my recordings as a conductor (Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky). I'm preparing this box with a friend of mine, Phil Neel, who is arguably the best sound engineer in Europe and Asia.

To complete this box, I decided to make four CDs next year. I work with a dream team and the piano I use is also wonderful – an Imperial Bösendorfer. Anything can happen, and I’m reluctant to postpone these recording sessions, following the Sony Classical schedule: one CD per year. Phil has already booked a studio near Düsseldorf – three days in April, three days in March. The cost for both sessions is less than 20,000 Euros. I would be extremely grateful if you could find out whether your friend might lend us a helping hand.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you. What are you playing these days? And where? Are you in love? Or out of love? Several months ago I met a wonderful woman. She is extrasensorial and apparently I look better now – thanks to her hands and pendulum.

With love from Belgium,

Yours forever

Valery

PART TWO

Le 05/08/2016 22:23, Phil Neel a écrit :
Dear Valery,

Yesterday was the meeting with DG. They told us quite frankly that this project is of no interest to them.

Here is my suggestion: We have our own label and given that the production will be funded by your sponsors we can just do it ourselves.
We can go for a box-set in the style of Sony or DG, but we can make it much nicer – to your liking. I suggest to redesign all covers so that they have a homogenous art-style and I suggest including a book in the box rather than individual booklets to each CD.

Her is what we can do:

- Check all legal aspects and clear all rights with the labels in question.
- Locate the original CD masters (if possible), or search for missing titles elsewhere.
- Remaster the audio and prepare the material for a re-release.
- Handle everything from graphic design and text editing for the booklet.
- Manage the production up to the finished product.
- Guaranty international distribution.
- offer a custom PR campaign to launch the product.
- promote the product in social media networks, etc.

The first step would be that you give us permission to check all legal aspects and clear all rights with the labels in question. Therefore we need some kind of letter or contract to entitle us to make these inquiries in your name. Also, we need to have copies of all contracts which you have made with the labels in question. It may very well be that some of the rights have fallen back to you over the course of time.

As far as your texts are concerned we need to have a list of works, possible with copies in digital form – if they exist.

For this initial step we need to make an first budget.

Once we have an overview of everything we can decide whether it makes sense to continue or whether we have to drop the idea.

I personally think that chances are good that we can actually pull this together. Given our good relations to Sony, I even think we may even be able to convince Sony Japan to licenses us you current and new recordings for a limited edition box-release.

In case we decide to go on and go for the actual production, we have to get together and revise the material with you, discuss design questions, marketing approaches and so on. For this package we need to make a second budget.

Please give this some thought and let me know what you think.
This is the right time to get started, September 2017 will be coming around very quickly!

With best regards,

Phil

b-sharp
Pankstr.1

Dear Phil,

Thank you very much for your email. Of course your idea appeals to me and I'll think it over. The point is the box I have in mind should reflect all the aspects of my artistic activities; otherwise it would have no impact either on my life or on the state of affairs we're dealing with in today's world. And I should figure out how all this can be done during a short period of time. I also have to consult my friends who were willing to help me some time ago. I'm not sure they're as enthusiastic as they used to be, for the simple reason that I have been dragging my feet. And Ryuyske is partly responsible for that, due to the Japanese custom we talked about on several occasions. Silence is not always musical, and it's certainly harmful in the sphere of business.

Anyway, I really thank you from the bottom of my heart for your help and understanding of my problems. I'll get in touch with you as soon as I have some news from my friends. And of course I'll think about how this project might be put into practice.

Looking forward to our future communications.

All the best,

Valery

***

Dear friend,

I wish to thank you again for the time you devoted to our talk at the hotel. Monique must have informed you that

I would add another supplement to the Beethoven booklet. I've already written the text and Monique will send it to you shortly. It is entitled *To Drain the Swamp*. Besides, there is an error in the booklet printed in Japan (my fault) and I'll send you the correct version.

On November 24 I'll be in Hamburg where I am supposed to meet Phil Neel and one of his colleagues. We'll discuss the birthday-box project. Phil thinks his small company could release the whole thing and I feel I should talk to you about this opportunity. Do you think it would be wise to do this with a very small company? Of course I did work with a small, almost non-existent Japanese company for several years, making live recordings. Not many people buy them, but they *are* on the market and can be bought – even in China. By the way, quite unexpectedly I had a tremendous success in China. Their enthusiasm reminded me of what can be heard at the end of Furtwängler's live recording of *Fidelio*. And I signed heaps of CDs. In Beijing they sold as many as 1,600 tickets. Well, I am more or less reconciled to the fact that I have to play concerts from time to time.

I would be very grateful if you could drop me a few lines to say what you think about Phil's proposal.

Thank you again,

All the best,

***

Dear Phil,

I'm sorry to bother you again.

Three days ago, I sent an email to Ryusuke, speaking of my reluctance to let them release the Mozart recording in October. Ryusuke answered rather quickly this time. He explained that he had been unable to talk the Berlin bosses into releasing our CDs worldwide. And, naturally enough, the box project is out of the question.

I wish to ask you a delicate question. Will you have any financial problem with Sony if the Mozart recording is not released? Gerr told me he would be paid only after sending the final version to you and then to Tokyo. What about your contract with Sony? I don't want to make things harder for you and Gerr.

Just another question. Do you think I might have more luck with the representatives of Deutsche Grammophon? You know some of these people, don't you?

Awfully sorry to bother you again.

Thank you for your help and understanding – from the bottom of my heart.

Kindest regards,

With love from Belgium,

Dear friend,

I go on working on the box project. After much-soul searching, I suggested to Phil and his associate to include around 50 CDs in the box. Emboldened and inspired by the box you generously offered to Peraia (70 CDs), I was unwilling to sacrifice any of *my* old recordings, with a few exceptions. I think that even Tchaikovsky's *Concerto* should figure on the list – it is very poetic. I'm also thinking about two recordings that haven't been thrown away, I hope. One features Schubert's *The Trout* and the other Brahms' *Second Concerto* recorded in Bonn with a Polish orchestra. On the other hand, I dropped the recordings we made with Gidon – except Mozart's *Trio*.

Peraia's box is sold off at half price now, which is not surprising, in my opinion. What *does* surprise me, however, is that for once your business-oriented bosses did not think in terms of money. Nor did they seem to pay attention to the fact that Peraia's collaboration with Deutsche Grammophon is an open secret. If you can lose money on a renegade, you (or *they*, rather) might give a thought to the tremendous scope of the project we have been talking about for some time. I don't think that Peraia's betrayal will contribute to the musical status of Sony Classical. My contribution, on the other hand, might compensate for many losses you have suffered in the course of your competition with Deutsche Grammophon.

Of course, when speaking of this competition, I don't think about you because, as I've told you several times, you're in a class of your own and consequently do not need to take part in any competition. But I do wonder when your bosses will realise how important it is to take my project seriously, in spite of the identity problem – all these recordings made for other companies. Actually, when talking to Phil and his associate, Mich, I got the feeling it was no problem at all. Of course I may be mistaken.

I'll keep you posted on this project in progress.

Thank you again for your help, for your participation.

***

Dear Mich,

Thank you very much for your email.

It took me some time to decide which CDs may be released, and I'm afraid the number is beyond our most optimistic estimates. Actually I was inspired and emboldened by Peraia's box that contains 70 CDs, if I'm not mistaken. After much soul-searching I came up with 50 CDs – I'm just unable to sacrifice more than five or six CDs, leaving them behind. All these CDs are different, even if they feature the same piece. We talked about my versatile nature in Hamburg and I think we should not let it go unnoticed.

I took the liberty of giving your email address to a friend of mine, Monique Chat, who helps me with correspondence and translates my English works into French. She'll send you the list of my recordings where I marked the ones we might use. Two asterisks mean 'we need it'. One means we can drop it, if there's no other way. No asterisk means 'no'. My friend can send it to you as an attachment. I'm likely to bungle this operation.

But I can send you my book on music from which I took many of the essays appended to my CDs. For the box, we might use some additional essays, considering that the texts will be released as a book (or a huge brochure).

As for the videos, I'll send you two DVDs as soon as I manage to find them. After my move to Belgium I sometimes have to spend more time locating my things than usual.

I'm sorry for the delay, but I had to think very carefully about what is worthy of being included in the box. Contrary to many artists, I am nostalgic not only with regard to my motherland, but also in the domain of music. I'm afraid I'm too indulgent towards my old recordings.

Thank you again for your presence in Hamburg and for the interest you take in this project.

I'm sending you my book as an attachment.

Kindest regards,

All the best,

***

Dear Phil,

Thank you for your last emails. Fortunately, you were able to come on Thursday – I went to the Steinway factory early on Friday.

I wish to thank you again for your presence in Hamburg and for the wonderful talk we had there. Sometimes I feel completely lonely in the world of music. But I had just the opposite feeling during our talk. I am happy we'll work together on this project.

Please say to Michael how grateful I am for his help and understanding.

Let us keep in touch.

I'm looking forward to our future meetings.

All the best,

***

Dear Toshi,

I wish to thank you again for the wine you offered me. Both bottles were excellent. And so were the dinners we had together in Tokyo. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

As I told you several times, I don't understand why we still do not work together. We have known each other for many years, and I think you understand me perfectly – in the domain of music, in the domain of food and wine, and just in the domain of life. So I would be extremely grateful if you could organise one or two concerts for me next year. And I do hope we'll work together from 2018 on full time. I'll have no problems with the agency I'm working with now – I'm sure they'll let me go at once.

Let us keep in touch. If you happen to travel in Europe next year, I hope we'll meet in Brussels. Needless to say, you can stay at my place. If you wish to know what my house looks like, you'll find it in the book they published recently. My cat is also there.

Looking forward to our future meetings, dinners and conversations.

All the best,

***

Dear Mira,

I hope you're well.

I've just come back from my tours in Japan and China. Unexpectedly in China I had a huge success. As it turned out, many people were aware of my existence, although I had never played in China before. I had to sign heaps of CDs. In Beijing as many as 1,600 people attended the recital.

In Japan I mostly played on Bösendorfers. There was only one Bösendorfer in China. Unfortunately the Chinese have no good tuners; at least I haven't met any.

Today, I'll send you my Mozart CD recorded on Gerd's Bösendorfer in Berlin. As I told you in London, the text is in a class of its own – at least as far as the contents go. The essay on Mozart I placed at the beginning of the booklet is a shorter version of the piece I wrote back in the 20th century. The rest is an updated version of my

frustration and anger. Well, you'll judge for yourself how punchy and relevant it is.

Our recording team booked a studio near Düsseldorf where we'll have two recording sessions in March and July this year. I'd like to make four CDs before I am seventy. Of course I'll play on Gerd's Bösendorfer. Now I'm looking for financial help – I am a rather poor representative of our profession. And Sony Classical can finance only one recording per year. I'm not quite sure I'll be on top form as a pianist in five years' time. Actually, this project is not very expensive: a three-day session costs 10,000 euros.

I would be grateful if you could drop me a line to say what you think about the recording and the text.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Kindest regards,

***

Dear Mr K.,

I hope you've received the email Mon sent you yesterday.

I've just hit upon another idea related to the Mozart CD. You know how important my texts are for me (and for some of my friends). If you agree to publish a huge text in the booklet appended to the recording of Mozart, we might reconsider the whole thing. Your deadline of today comes as a surprise, considering the relaxed attitude we adopted after our Berlin recording. Can't you wait for another two or three days? After all, Gerr will finish the first edit only by the end of the month.

The text I have in mind shouldn't be translated into Japanese – it is too big and probably not vital to the musical enjoyment of the pieces. Yet it is important because it deals with the so-called human touch which is a key notion we often misuse.

Well, we can discuss this matter later on. I'm looking forward to your reply.

Kindest regards,

***

Dear Valery,

it was such a pleasure to meet you last week!

Thank you very much for the interesting talks – it's such a relief to talk not only about numbers but about art!

The following steps we have been talking about:

- revise the list of recordings and separate in three groups:
  - must have
  - would be nice to include
  - not include
- contacts of the differnt recordings companies
- provide video material of the stage plays
- provide CD's and other other material
- texts

It would be great if step one could be the first one to make.

Again, it was such a pleasure to meet you and I'm very much looking forward to this project!

All best,

Yours sincerely,

Dear Phil,

Thank you so much for your email. The dates suit me perfectly. So I'd be grateful if you could book the studio.

I'm happy to be able to work with you again. And with our friends.

Thank you again from the bottom of my heart.

All the best,

Valery
Le 12/10/2016 11:01, Phil Neel a écrit :
Dear Valery,

I have made some inquiries and checked with everybody – the only two 3-day periods in 2017 when the hall, Gerd and his piano, Gerr and myself are available are:

· 24.-26.4.2017
· 3.-5.7.2017

Please let me know if that sounds like a good package to you and I will be glad to make a proper reservation at the hall in Viersen.

Many greetings,

Phil

b-sharp
Pankstr.1
www.b-sharp.biz

Dear Phil,

Thank you very much for your emails. Last night I finally came back from a one-month tour in Japan and China. I never consult my emails abroad so I didn't read your emails during my absence. (I just can't handle my computer properly.) Awfully sorry for my silence.
I got a phone message from Gerr. He told me you would like to talk to me. I don't have your phone number so I'm writing this email. From now on I'll be mostly at home and therefore can meet your friend and you to discuss the birthday box. Actually I'll be in Hamburg on November 24.
The hotel you wrote about in your recent email suits me perfectly. Anyway, I'm an easy-going person and not particularly capricious.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you. And thank you again.

Warmest greetings,

Valery

Le 31/10/2016 11:30, Phil Neel a écrit :
Dear Valery,

sorry to be so persistent – have you had time to think about the Anniversary Box?

In the meantime we have gathered some more ideas on how to tackle the project and opening up new media opportunities. Knowing how demanding it is and how time consuming it can be to put everything together, we would be really interested to move forward at the right time. The first step still is a personal meeting with my colleague Michael (and myself, if you prefer) in order to put everything on the table to determine where we stand, and how we will take it from there. If you can make room for such a meeting sometime before the end of

the year, preferably during the second half of November, that would be really great. This can be at your home or any other place where we can conveniently get together.

Thanks and warm regards,

Phil

b-sharp
Pankstr.1
D-
www.b-sharp.biz

Dear Phil,

I hope everything is all right.

Two days ago I sent Gerr my remarks related to the first edit which is almost perfect, in my opinion. Unfortunately, Gerr had some problems with editing on account of noises (road works, birds, etc.) and my errors. Nevertheless, the result is quite satisfactory.

On September 10 I'm leaving for Moscow where I'll meet my friends whose interest in my work doesn't seem to be on the wane. I'll talk to them again about the birthday box and also about the recordings I'd like to make in the near future. The point is at this stage of my life anything can happen to my hands and also to the rest of my body. I wouldn't like to leave this world without recording the works I've been viscerally attached to for many years (Haydn's sonatas, a few Schumann pieces, etc.). I'd also like to record Schumann's and Grieg's concerti, which can be arranged rather easily in Moscow. I think the box can wait a little bit, seeing the light of day in two years' time. What counts is its contents, not my age. Actually, even in three years' time it can still be a 70-birthday box. As if I had gained access to the Fountain of Youth.

Gerr thinks we should make no more recordings in the Dalem Kirche. He thinks that the studio situated near Dusseldorf – we recorded Liszt's *Sonata* there – suits our purpose much better. Of course I would be happy to make these recordings with you and your team. And I'll ask my friends if they could finance this project. Sony Classical will never allow me to do more than one recording a year, and that I can't accept. So I would be grateful if you could give me a rough idea of how much this might cost. We'll need three days for two CDs. Of course I'll ask Gerd to come with his wonderful Bösendorfer. Actually this is another problem I might be facing – he could sell the piano. Anyway, it's getting older. Now it is in a perfect shape, but no one knows what it will sound like in three years.

I wish to thank you again for your understanding, help and your marvellous sound.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

With many thanks,

All the best,

Valery

£££

Dear Mira,

I already sent you an email but it was rejected by a system I don't know. Anyway, on the back of one of your cards, I found another address. I'm using it now in the hope that my gratitude will reach you at last.

Thank you very much for your presence in London. You, Vivienne and Gerd were what the Russians call 'a beam of light in the kingdom of darkness'. It is a pity you didn't stay for dinner. I should have taken care of you personally, finding additional chairs and sitting down by your side. I'm dreadfully sorry and I promise I won't miss another opportunity of this kind. Needless to say that, without your presence, the dinner was as dull as the orchestra and as dark as my relationship with it.

I do hope to meet you in the near future. I'm happy to have forsaken Steinway for the sake of your beautiful instruments and people.

Let us keep in touch.

I'm looking forward to our light-infused meetings.

With love from Belgium

Dear Mira,

Thank you very much for your kind, lovable email. (And I'm sorry for my belated answer.) Thank you once again for your presence in London and the appreciation of my performance partly spoiled by my relationship with the orchestra. Luckily for me, I could play an encore during which no one interfered with my conception.

I must admit I've seldom played Bösendorfers. Your instruments can be seldom, if ever, seen in Russia. In Lockenhaus, at the Gidon Kremer Festival, I had an opportunity to use their Bösendorfer many times and I even recorded Schubert's *B flat Major* (DV 960) *Sonata* on it. It was a wonderful experience. This year I made two CDs on Gerd's remarkable Imperial model. We talked about your recent production and Gerd sounded very enthusiastic. Needless to say, I would be delighted to keep in touch with you, playing your instruments whenever they are available. Unfortunately I'm not really acquainted with your models and so can't say right now which one I prefer. Of course the Imperial model is in a class of its own, but I suppose it is not easily obtainable. Anyway, I would be extremely grateful if you could help with your incomparable instruments which enable me to articulate my ideas with utmost precision – when I'm on top form.

Before leaving for Japan, I'll send you my last year recording of Beethoven's three famous sonatas. On that occasion, I played one of Gerd's Steinways.

Thank you again for your email, your support and kindness. It's a pity we didn't continue our talk during the dinner which was banal and boring. By the way, when speaking about Trifonov, I said he was abundantly transpiring (instead of *per*spiring). This comes from French, of course. In the future I'll be more careful during our conversations.

I really am looking forward to our future meetings.

With love from Bierges,

Dear Phil,

I'm sorry for my silence, but the period I've been going through since my departure for Munich is rather hectic. Anyway, in London I met two potential sponsors who wish to organise a private concert for a happy few, making them pay £2,000 per ticket. So far nothing has been done– this project is recent and requires some time. I'm also about to get in touch with a friend who lives in New York. He knows a man who likes me and might be helpful. The only problem is – we've never met. In short, I'm working on this project and believe me, nothing would make me happier than working with you and with our team on the works I love dearly.

Gerd came to London and was extremely kind and efficient – as usual. I also met a representative of Bösendorfer, Mira Weihs. She is wonderful from every point of view. I'm keeping in touch with her for our future collaboration.

London is the hardest city for musicians, I think. And the reviews on the London concerts are read widely and almost universally, which is surprising in the age where professional or semi-professional opinions do not count at all. Charisma comes first, taking centre-stage in concert halls and on TV. Just for the fun of it, I'm sending you one of the reviews. It is such a pity that the *Süddeutsch* which I used to read after every recital or concert I gave in Munich no longer pays enough attention to classical music.

How long does it take to get to this studio in Darmstadt? And when would *you* be available? I think we won't be able to do it this year. But what about next year? After my concerts in China and Japan, I'll be mostly free. So it is up to you and other members of our team to choose the appropriate time.

I'll keep you posted on my talks with potential sponsors.

I'm looking forward to our future collaboration.

Dear Valery,

I have made some inquiries and checked with everybody – the only two 3-day periods in 2017 when the hall, Gerd and his piano, Gerr and myself are available are:

- 24.-26.4.2017
- 3.-5.7.2017

Please let me know if that sounds like a good package to you and I will be glad to make a proper reservation at the hall in Viersen.

Many greetings,

Phil

Dear Valery,

The pleasure was all ours – let's keep the fire burning!

Michael will send around a brief summary of what we talked about, together with a detailed to-do-list, so that we all know what the next steps are.

Many greetings and warm regards,

Dear Maestro!

the Email adress mira.weihs@boesendorfer.com doesn't work at all currently, I'm sorry for that! And for harry you have with this problem … So, if you wrote me by using this adress, your massage will be lost and didn't reach me. In this case and in future, may I ask you to use just my others adress please:

m.weihs@gmx.at
or
m.weihs@wiener-concertverein.at.met

I'm waiting your words with impatience!

Thank you so much!

Sincerely yours

Mira

Am 04.10.2016 um 20:42 schrieb Mira WWW<m.weihs@gmx.at>:

Dear Maestro Afanassiev, dear Valery,

thank you so much that you haven't forsaken to reach me by mail!!

Your mail was fallen down in the spam filter and after receiving the e-mail from Madame Monique Chatenet (that I've got without problems?!) I've taken a look into this Spam-ordner … I was so happy to find your delightful message in my inbox!!

It was an enormously pleasure to meet you in London and to be present listening your fantastic play! Thank you that you trusted in the Bösendorfer piano, I think it was a very good choice, in my opinion this sound underlines and cooperates very good your kind of deep and precise formed music interpretation.

I was also sorry that it was already to late to assiste the dinner. As I told you I don't need many hours for sleeping, but 3,5 hours I have to rest anyway …

Please, be so kind to let me know, if you could imagine to play Bösendorfer in your future concerts. If yes: do you have a preference (290, 280 or the 280VC=the new model you played in London or is the piano model egal to you?). If wished, we will give our best to organize where ever possible a Bösendorfer for your concerts and rehearsals. We have to procede from one concert venue to the next to look, if there is a Bösendorfer available and what kind of piano and in which condition we could find for you. At the moment it is unlikely that we will find everywhere an instrument for you, but we will inform you where it would be possible. So it would help very much to give us your concert timetable, please.

It gives pleasure to me thinking about our next meetings and conversation!

With love from Vienna,

Mira

Dear Vadim,
I'm writing in English because I don't have a Russian program, software, or whatever they call it. I neither call it anything nor have it, which doesn't make things easier for me, however. According to Buddhists, if I'm not mistaken, the fewer objects and words you deal with the better, but my incapacity to type in Russian prevents me

getting in touch with some of my Russian friends: phone communications are too expensive over here. And I don't know the first thing about Skype and the greater part of the sky, to tell the truth. Sometimes I even wonder whether I know *anything* about the sky, any part of it.

Luckily for me, you have a smattering of English and perhaps this smattering has outgrown itself (the word 'smattering') over the last twenty years – when we meet in Moscow or elsewhere, we talk Russian, not English. Anyway, upon reading my email, you are likely to conclude I air my grievances and consequently suffer a lot of psychological blows that come from all over the world: Japan, Germany, England, France. They also come from my heart of hearts, considering that I haven't reached any nirvana yet; what's more, I'm not even on the right track. What's more – and this 'more' is even bigger than the previous 'more' – I'm not even on the *wrong* track. I'm not on any track unless we can't help dragging in the second law of thermodynamics, whenever talking about tracks; or anything else.

As you must know or guess, the most frightful blows are motionless or rather silent: you get no answer to your email, for instance. Of course people often murder you with a glance; even Oscar Wilde talked about that, if I remember rightly. In one of the films I saw last week, a woman quotes Victor Hugo and Oscar Wilde. Believe it or not, they sound alike, for all the difference one might detect upon reading their works unless the world (Hugo) can always be found in a grain of sand (Wilde). I don't think anyone will ever murder me with a glance unless some murderous glances are sponsored by the Almighty, serving as an instrument of cosmic punishment. Alas, I'm often shaken by the oblivion into which my emails slide as if they *always* enlarged upon both money and sponsors. There's no denying this does happen from time to time, but not always – not always, I can assure you. Sometimes I say I've just come back home from Japan after touring China as well, and people do not turn a hair; and yet many people jump up from their seats with exclamations of surprise, whenever they hear, 'Last month I toured Japan and China, playing in Shanghai, among other cities.'

Keats says that an inaudible piece of music is far more audible than *Le Sacre du printemps* conducted by Karajan. The same goes for inaudible or rather invisible, unwritten, unsent emails. And *my* emails, whatever their flaws and indecencies, do not *always* begin as follows, 'The reason I'm writing is to ask a favour.' I met a woman, a beautiful woman, but I didn't put her in my life because 'eternal strife' isn't associated in my mind with Rex Harrison and Audrey Hepburn – I wouldn't mind that! Soviet citizens always had it hammered into them that they should fight aristocrats and the bourgeoisie *eternally*, and the allergy I experience towards the slogans of my youth often prevents me from struggling for life, which is a key feature in the world we are living in. (My remark refers chiefly to artists and certainly not to proletarians who enjoy their computer games at home and in Internet cafés.) But now and then an insult – yet another addition to my injuries – wakes me from my dogmatic slumber, as Kant put it, and I begin to beg for the money I need to fulfil my ambition to leave a few vestiges of my brain in the history of humankind.

I explain to my friends and mere acquaintances that I wouldn't die peacefully if I didn't make a few recordings which might enable me to immortalise my readings of Haydn, Schumann, Bizet and so on. And I wish to die peacefully, though not necessarily in my sleep. (Sleepfully, as some people say.) What does it matter how I die? They say what counts is the way you live, your (American) way of life. And dying is unimportant, whatever Leibniz said on the subject of dying, living and coming back to life. He thought you were bound to come back, and your comeback depended on what you said before breathing your last; or your last but one breath, as I say.

Your substance has always been somewhere – right at your writing desk perhaps. But at some point you saw the light of day and screamed with pain and horror.

In short, I met this woman in London and received two emails from Vienna where she lives and prospers. Upon my return from Asia, I sent her an email where I described the situation in which I had got involved as a result of my birth and the conjunction of my genes. At the end of my missive I said I needed 20,000 euros for the recording sessions thanks to which I would offer to the world my Haydn, my Beethoven, my Schumann, and so on. 'Mine, mine, mine, mine,' as some song has it, if I remember rightly. Well, believe it or not, she hasn't answered my email, not yet. And yet I didn't say anything along the lines of, 'If you don't get this money, I'll never see you again.' And even if I *had* said that at the end of my epistle, she wouldn't have gone into hysterics because I'm not sure she is in love with me or my piano playing. Nor did I say, 'The history of music will neither forgive nor forget your sin of omission.'

And we shouldn't forget our friends, should we? The point is the woman I touched upon in a few paragraphs of my present email is not my friend. Nor is she my mistress, contrary to what you might think, given that you know my inclinations and infatuations. So I want you to turn your attention to our mutual friend who let me down, which doesn't mean I tried to extort money from him or one of his friends. We did talk about one of these friends when I met him in Petersburg last winter, but you know as well as I do that our friendship doesn't depend on money. Our friendship depends on our friendship, on our mutual love and not on a contribution one might make to my historic recordings. In short, our mutual friend, our dear Julian didn't answer my email as if he was hand in glove with the fair lady I touched upon somewhere, in one of the paragraphs of this email of mine.

As I pointed out earlier, I met our dear Julian in Petersburg where he talked to me about his friend whose purse was even bigger than the one owned by Iago's friend. Julian described their delights in graphic detail as he enlarged upon their dinners in Copenhagen and Spain. He enlarged and described, and I listened to his enlargements and descriptions because I had no alternative but to listen to him. Why? Because he is my friend, and you are supposed to bear with your friends unless you resolve to break with them, saying, 'You're a traitor. Go and betray other people.'

So I wrote to him because I wished to know more about his friend who, according to the same Julian, was my fan, admirer and worshipper. Logically enough, I thought this friend, our mutual friend, our Julian, could help me finance my dreams about which Martin Luther King spoke so eloquently at some point. Alas, my thoughts belong in never-never land. Or ever-ever land: I'll always be a loser, betrayed by his friends and mistresses. Even you betrayed me recently, if I'm not mistaken. I hope I am, I hope I am, I hope I am.

With love from Belgium,

Valery

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Dear Vadim,

She answered at last and she did it in two languages as if English alone couldn't house all her praises and promises. The beginning of her letter displays her meagre knowledge of French and then, for no reason at all, she switches to English to say she is glad that 'your Chinese tour was so successful!' She even adds, 'I wished to be

there!' What does that mean? Did she wish to be in China when I played in Beijing and Shanghai three Beethoven sonatas? This reminds me of Pink Floyd's LP entitled *I Wish You Were Here*. I'm not sure I wish she could pay me a visit and join me at my dinner table whenever I sit down in front of it, in front of a few succulent dishes and a bottle of Pomerol. But I'm almost sure she will not get the money she talks about in the last paragraph of her email. 'I also will discuss the financial need for your future recordings with our Ceo and will be back to you as soon as I get an answer.' Well, she'll never get any answer; what's more, she'll never say anything except, 'How are you today?' And I have no wish to answer, 'Everything's just fine, thanks.'

Well, in the first place I don't know what Ceo means, and I'm afraid it doesn't mean anything unless you split this word into letters and assume that your correspondent got a C for her French exam. And the bottom string on a guitar is an E. I don't seem to be getting anywhere with this letter because I don't play the guitar. And even if someone – Bob Dylan, for instance – utters the names of other strings, I won't be able to play anything. Of course I might play something on the piano – in response to this challenge. But actually there are no challenges, no Dylans (or dealers) in my room. What's more (or rather less), I missed the second episode of the series so I don't know what's going on now. To tell the truth, I missed only the *beginning* of this series, but Columbo is already on the screen and I've no idea whose murder is under investigation.

I'm more familiar with the letter 'O' that I utter hourly as I emotionally express my attitude towards events and non-events. I can even say, 'O Zeus! Hear my prayer,' you know. Of course I always start with Jesus, but as soon as I realise that his archangels have irrevocably let me down, I pass on to Zeus or even to Poseidon. I hope you don't think I've gone mad towards the end of my life. On the other hand, it is easier to get money from Poseidon than from Julian who has no intention of answering my email, either positively or negatively. It is true that even 20 years ago people with this condition were considered mad and kept locked away in mental institutions. By 'this condition' I refer to the hope one might nourish when asking a friend for 20,000 euros. But today our humanism seems to have reached fever pitch – everyone speaks only of the handicapped, of children, of nurslings. 'What's the best way of improving theatre access for people who are physically handicapped?' I hear this sentence every other day, but no one thinks in terms of productions, if you see what I mean. All right, these people of yours have been wheeled to the stalls; and so has a trolley laden with drinks. But what performances do our concert- and theatregoers enjoy in this day and age? Is it really worth your while leaving your bed and going for a drive? Even if you're not paralysed, handicapped and suffering from Alzheimer's? Well, I am handicapped, am I not? I'm not exactly living in the lap of luxury, am I? I know I'm supposed to lose at least one member of mine to join the club whose members are entitled to thousands of dollars, to the benefits conferred on them by professional and generous sponsorship. But what member of mine could I sacrifice for the sake of 20,000 euros? (I suppose 20,000 dollars would do at a pinch.) Obviously I need my hands and even my pedal-accustomed feet to make a few piano recordings for which I need this money. A Catch-22 situation, if I'm not mistaken. Apparently an anonymous businesswoman donated one million dollars to the charity. What a pity her name is unknown, otherwise I could shout, 'Mary, Mary, give me one million dollars!' They all do a lot of work for charity. The point is they don't think it's their duty to help me hand down my performances through the generations. You lose one of your legs and they give you a thousand dollars. During a concert I lose everything and only my skeleton greets whoever takes the trouble to salute me backstage. And sometimes I even lose my bones, all of them; it depends on the programme I play and on the acoustics.

Today you have charity balls all over the place, throughout the Earth, but I remain outside the charity-zone and even if I lose the main bone of my skeleton, I'm not likely to get anything in exchange because my art is of no interest to anyone, be it an old sentimental lady or a talent scout who looks only for youngsters and their grimaces. And even my friends let me down, for all their loyalty and the praises they sing in restaurants and even under my windows. In Petersburg, Julian sang a serenade under my hotel window and I still recall the contents of this serenade as if it could help me book the studio where I must record four CDs in the near future, well before my death. As if his serenade was carte blanche or a cheque for £50,000. 'Freedom, freedom, freedom,' he sang. 'Your sense of freedom, your rhythm, your touché, your freewill, your nirvana – at the end of Beethoven's *Op. 111*.' In view of his present silence, I wish I could knock him senseless, which might remove the blood clot (his doings and undoings), thereby relieving the pressure on my brain. Silence is like the void, you know – its pressure on your space and pastime is unbearable. Even two horses couldn't break the silence I'm surrounded with.

Do you think that Volodya, our mutual friend Volodya M., is better in this respect? Or any other respect, for that matter? Do you know any respect inside which our Volodya could be better, more friendly, less obdurate? Many years ago we spoke of Zen Buddhism and the koans one can chance upon in Buddhists' books. In clapping both hands a sound is heard: what is the sound of one hand? Do you recall this question? Do you recall the answer? The pupil faces the master, takes the correct posture and without a word thrusts one hand forward. I say to Volodya, 'You don't know the first thing about the correct posture. Nor can you thrust one hand forward. Of course you can, but if you do, you will remind me of Hitler or Soviet Pioneers. And both are loud and obnoxious. So you'd better clap both hands as you listen to my performance of Liszt's *Sonata in B Minor*.' He grasps a number of grants and talks to me so childishly I wonder if he is determined to break up our relationship. Inappropriately enough, when I read the sentence, 'She had a string of lovers before her marriage finally broke up,' I think of him; and last night I resolved not to think of him any longer.

I play Schubert's *Last Sonatas* and whenever I turn my head toward the audience, I see his hand, one of his hands; and sometimes he raises his index finger to single out a fault, a failure – instead of clapping both hands at the end of my performances. I've never seen both his hands in the halls where I perform now and then to make my living and other people's dying with dignity – at the end of Beethoven's *111*. Not *666*, mind you. It might have been *555*, for all I know. What *do* I know? Five o'clock shadow. Three five o'clock shadows.

I might have been *444*. Most animals have four legs; so do I. But I think of space, time, our origins, our coming and goings, our souls, bodies and their accessories. Are we eternal? We are, although we aren't *always* eternal. In other words, we're *not really* eternal because we are eternal only *occasionally*, whenever we are attached to Brahman or Atman or both. (Sometimes it's better to be attached to *both*, whoever or whatever they are.) I am at one with everything and my soul coincides with the One displayed by the universe. I am at one with Atman, Brahman, the universe and my neighbours whose ignorance of Atman doesn't prevent them from stroking my cheeks whenever I slap their cheeks and other parts of their faces and bodies.

You didn't answer my previous email. So much the better, as a Soviet actor puts it. I'll write to myself and I'll blame myself for my own silence. As for Julian, in three years' time I'll speak of our friendship thus, 'We had a bitter quarrel over some money three years ago and we haven't spoken to each other since.'

Yours,

Valery Aleff

ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

There is no point in writing to myself: I know what I might write about and I'll never answer my own questions because they can't be answered. What *can* be answered? A prayer? Or just a phone call? 'Come, my darling, come, my darling, come, my darling Clementine, Charlemagne.' And then you eat a *clementine* and fall asleep to forget all these 'tine, mine, swine'. And if I don't eat anything – or even if I do eat *everything* – I think about my origins, my comings and goings in the dark, in the light. I might have wished to know something: the Tree of Knowledge, for instance. I ate not only its fruit; I ate its branches. Yes, for some time, I was crunching noisily on its branches, apples and twigs. And I realised I could remain where I am and eat whatever I put in front of me: some dishes or other. And if there are only *other* dishes in front of me, I'll eat them all the same so as not to eat my children, as Ugolino did. He would also have eaten his grandchildren, if he hadn't eaten his children first. You often ask yourself if you should eat your children so as not to starve to death. All right, you decide to eat them, thereby surviving until the next world conflagration. But what if you wish to survive until the *one-after-last* world conflagration? In this case you'd better eat your grandchildren. So you follow your guru's advice and eat all of them. And you survive, walking through a few world conflagrations. And each conflagration offers you a meal in the course of which you consume your children, grandchildren, wives, mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, fathers, nephews, nieces and so on.

If you survive, you ask questions and they fly over you, hang over your, hover overhead and you have no alternative but to remove your head from your shoulders to get rid of the questions and even of their answers. And then some sort of Rigveda opens up at your feet and you read it, read it, read it, as if you could find any answer in its depths:

From beginning there came,
There rose a ball or a bull
Or both and all of them came
Out of the sea, out of its foam.
And a form came as well:
A shape, a form, a thought,
A feeling, an impulse, a muscle,
A castle where the gods will live.

And I say, 'There are no castles where some gods might have lived until the previous world conflagration. Why don't you conflagrate yourself once again? There are perhaps some gods around; and some heroes, some Andromaches of sorts. Let's burn all of them. Here's my box of matches.'

But if you burn, you'll never learn
The arcane of knowledge and of
Non-knowledge and no-action
And no-tension, no-stress. Rest, rest,
Rest, rest. Relax, forget, no happiness,

No despair. Air, air, air, air.
Sun, sun, sun, sun.
Earth, earth, earth, earth.
Fire, fire, fire, fire. The cosmos was
Scorched by the heat of the explosion.

And if I do, I do, I do,
I do not look at uh, at uh,
At any matter or illusion,
Or any latest-thing confusion.

I can at last last last at least,
For a half hour, in the East,
Breathe, breathe, breathe, breathe, breathe, breathe my last
Unless I miss this precious chance.

Do you remember how Volodya treated me after my performance of Liszt's *Sonata*? He said it was much inferior to what my rival, Sakharov, had produced two months before. I found an excerpt of the text I had devoted to our rivalry. 'Two hands, a multitude of hands were clapping whenever he performed either Liszt's *Sonata* or *Kreisleriana*. There were half hands at the end of *my* performances. Or no hands at all.'
He no longer plays (my rival, Sakharov), though he lives because no one – not even myself – is eager to bring his life to a close.
Cancer of the cervix/stomach breast/bowel/lung cancer cancer cells a cancer patient
I don't know what cancer he suffers from. Why should I? I don't suffer from this cancer, do I? The whole of his career, of his life, has been reduced to a cancerous growth. His 40-year-old performance of Liszt's *B Minor Sonata* is just a cancerous tumour.

My soul is infinite, immortal. It is not: it is neither infinite nor immortal. On the other hand, it can be either infinite or immortal, or neither, or both. Show me this hand. If you do, this hand will clap in time to the music, provided you provide a piece of music, my Lord, an appropriate piece of music; otherwise this hand will fly overhead, heads, bodies without clapping or doing anything that might distinguish it from a bird; except that it will *not* sing like a bird. What *does* sing like a bird? My duty?

Yet. And what?
Only miracles.
A rose where
No roses dwell.
A well where
There's no water.

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Dear Gerd,

Today I'm strong enough to thank my friends who sustained me through my ordeal. My Musil was nine-and-half when he died. I lived with him for eight years and he was the only member of my family. Several days ago I acquired a kitten who is beautiful, tender and intelligent. But no one will ever replace Musil. From now on my life will be different. It is still my life and I have to live it somehow.

Thank you very much for your help.

My love to Natalia,

Valery

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Sujet :AW: AW: Box
Date : Thu, 16 Feb 2017 13:06:34 +0100

Dear Valery,

thanks for your quick response! Yes, please let me know where we stand after you have spoken to your friends. Before we cancel the second session we should definitely talk. I may be able to reach out to potential sponsors from my end.

In order to get a better grip on the project, can you be so kind and give me a detailed list of the works you wish to record?

Thanks and best regards,

Phil

Gesendet: Donnerstag, 16. Februar 2017 11:30
Betreff: Re: AW: Box

Dear Phil,

Thank you for your email.

It’s a pity I didn’t realise you were talking only about your budget. Of course I was surprised the amount was not high, and I ought to have asked you to confirm my supposition. Well, I hope I’ll be able to settle the matter with my friends. And I’ll write to Mr Koz to find out if Sony could help us out. If it is out of the question – and I’m afraid it is out of the question – we’ll have to cancel the second session. Of course my friends might be willing to finance the box – it is prestigious and spectacular. The matter stands differently with recording sessions. Besides, I’m not sure they’ll appreciate my inaccuracies, my utter incapacity to handle business matters.

Anyway, let me try and resolve this problem. I’ll keep you posted on how I’m getting on.

All the best,

Valery

Le 15/02/2017 11:30, Ph. N. a écrit :
Dear Valery,

I didn’t realise that you were planning this project based on my budget-estimate alone. I was under the assumption that you had the individual numbers from all of us on your desk.
I apologize for the inconvenience and hope that we can still put this project together as planned.

Gerr was kind enough to let me know his fee (3000 for a single CD and 4500 for a double CD) and I have also spoken to Gerd Finkenstein.
Based on the plan to record two CDs each time we meet, here is the total budget for *each* of the two recording period:

I need to send out an invoice to the person or company which is supplying the funding.

In case it is a registered company outside of Germany, VAT will <u>not</u> be included.
If it is a private person outside of Germany, VAT <u>must be</u> included.

Please let me know if you need anything else for now.
Thanks so much and best regards,

Phil

****
Dear Phil,

I hope everything is well.

I've just received an email from Gerr in which he says his fee is 3,000. Did you include his fee in the global amount, i.e. 10,000 euros? His email isn't very clear on this point. Could you please let me know how much the global amount for one session is? If it is 13,000, or even more, I'd like to inform my friends about it. As I'll be in Moscow at the end of March, I might give another concert to get the rest of the money we'll need.

Today I'm sending my DVDs (*Kreisleriana* and the *Pictures*) to Michael. I hope he'll like them.

Thank you again for your help.

All the best,
****

Dear Toshi,

I hope you're well.

Three months ago I sent you an email. Only today did I notice that the address was not correct. So I don't think you got it. I've just sent it again, adding my best wishes for this New Year. Our collaboration would be a wonderful present, and I really am hoping it will work. My current agency is so bad I wish to leave it as soon as possible. They wouldn't mind, actually, and they have almost kicked me out.

So no problem, this time.

My cat died several days ago. I'm paralysed with grief and despair. I hope I'll get over it one day.

My friend, Monique Chatenet, will send you two photographs.

Looking forward to our future meetings and collaboration.

All the best,

Valery
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Dear Phil,

Thank you for your email.

I suppose you'll be very busy in Moscow. But if you could spare an hour or so, we might meet and have a cup of tea together. Just in case, here's the number of my mobile phone: 0032978341139. And here's my friends' landline 8-4976908931. I'm absolutely free on the 23rd and the greater part of the 24th.

All the best,

Valery

Le 19/01/2017 13:18, Phil Neel a écrit :
Dear Valery,

thanks for your email and happy New Year to you as well!

Yes, we have received the CDs from Michael already and we will look at the material during the next few days.

As far as our 2 recording projects for this year are concerned, I have had no expenses so far.
Let me send you an invoice for a down payment when the dates are getting closer. Would that be ok?

I will also be in Moscow from 20-25 of January...

Many greetings,

Phil

b-sharp
Pankstr.1
D-
Studio:

Von: Valery Afanassiev [mailto:valeryaleff@gmail.com]
Gesendet: Donnerstag, 19. Januar 2017 08:44
An: Phil Neel
Betreff: box

Dear Phil,

I hope you're well.

I wish you a Happy New Year. A lot of music and beautiful recordings, a lot of love and friendship.

Some time ago I got an email from Michael and sent him the data he needed. I also sent him some of my CDs, the ones I had at home. I'm also planning to send him the DVDs of my theatrical plays: *The Picture at an Exhibition* and *Kreisleriana*. I asked a friend of mine to make copies of them and as soon as I have these copies I'll send them.

Next Sunday I'm flying to Moscow where, hopefully, I'll get enough money for our recording sessions. My friends already have 10,000 euros. The other half I'll get after the private recital I'm supposed to give on January 24. Would it be better to transfer this money to you at once? We are allowed to take only 10,000 euros out of Russia. I think we might successfully deal with this problem by sending you at least half of the whole amount.

Could you please let me know what you think about all that?

Bonne année encore!

Looking forward to hearing from you.

All the best,

Valery
****
I asked my friend to send you two photographs of my cat who died last
week. Needless to say, I'm not myself any more. But I hope to recover as
soon as possible.

As for the pieces I'd like to record, here they are:
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Dear Valery,

may I get back to the budget-issue for our upcoming recording projects? Just recently I received the invoice from the city of Viersen, asking me to settle the rental-fee for the two recording periods. Also, I have made the reservations at a nearby hotel for all of us.

In order to cover these initial expenses may I send out a first invoice for €5000 to you or whoever will be paying the bill? I assume that the recipient of the invoice will be a private person? Or are you being funded by a company? The reason I ask is in regard of whether or not German VAT applies. Please let me know the name and exact billing address of who will be making the transfer.

I am putting our office manager Christiane on CC. She will be in charge of generating the invoice.

Thanks so much and best regards,

Phil

g-sharp
Pankstr.2
D-11111111 Berlin
Studio: +49 (0)30.0000-6004
Mobil: +49 (0)106.0000-7986555
www.g-sharp.biz
www.facebook.com/gsharpberlinwien

****

Dear Vadim,

I'm not the first to use the stratagem which may allow one to keep one's friends and not to forgive and forget anything. I wish I could tell you many home truths because even you miss no opportunity to insult and maltreat me as if I was your lifelong enemy. And yet you used to love me, as Hamlet says to Rosenkranz or Guildenstern. And to Ophelia perhaps. You loved me once, but I'm not sure you never insulted me in our schooldays, my Guildenstern, my Rosenkranz. And now you deliberately give your rancour free rein and even your clothes are rank with your rancour. It ranks, it rains, as they say in some poem or other.

I phoned you to speak of my cat's death, of my grief. You heard my tears, my cold sweat, my frozen blood. And after my first Moscow concert, in a so-so restaurant, you began talking about our common friend who, displeased, arrogant and ruthless, aired his wish to offer me Czerny's etudes because, in his opinion, my scales and arpeggios left something to be desired. I said I hadn't practised enough. What else could I have said? And your dear wife asked me, 'Why?' Why what? Why didn't I devote 10 hours to Mozart's *Concerto*? And what about my tears, my sweat, my blood? Didn't they answer this question a few weeks ago? Didn't my cat show you his corpse?

I might have told you all this over the phone or in another restaurant. Even a bistro would have fitted the bill nicely. Or would nothing have fitted the bill either nicely or unnicely? You no longer fit my image of how a friend should look and talk. Yes, I've got something to say, but I can't say it to your face. So I say it to my brain and my computer. Two days ago I phoned you to wish you a happy birthday and many happy returns – as many as 35, to be exact. You're 70 now and I wished you to live another half-life (Dante's inaccurate assessment). I said, 'You need no more children. You don't need another wife. You need a lot of music.' In a few days' time I'll call your wife to say, 'Happy birthday to you. You should live for another 35 years to keep your husband company. It's your duty.' I wish I could say to you both (to your faces), 'I don't care. You may go to Hell, to Paradise, to Chaos. I won't shed a tear upon your departure. After all, you're not my cats. Are you?'

According to Plato, one should murder his enemies (and friends) in one's sleep. At least that's what a sage is supposed to do in his nightmares. I won't kill you, whatever you do or do not. I don't even want you to go somewhere. Stay where you are. Stay away, stay away.

Stay away. I could also say so to Stoics whose consolation is usually tantamount to a huge, callous reproach. They might reproach me for shedding tears, whenever my train of thought reaches my cat, its final destination; his final-final-final-final destination. They might say this destination, this *Endstation* is common to all of us, to all jolly good fellows and girls. Death is neither unpredictable nor predictable, but anyway it is short and sweet, and any long, unbearable illness should teach us how to welcome death most gleefully and with open arms. And we do just the opposite: we open everything we've got, provided it is life we greet and welcome to our abode. For hours and hours we lie in our beds, our arms outstretched, our legs wide open like the gate of Paradise. Alas, life doesn't come; nor does it go and we go on suffering, losing whatever and whoever we have enjoyed for some time, for an eternity of sorts.

Yes, we're supposed to express our gratitude to the fortune thanks to which we enjoyed either his or her company for several years – until recently, as a matter of fact. Instead, we air our grievances and pound away on our kitchen tables until four in the morning, five in the morning; as if God and fate could hear our music and send us a message of sympathy. They can neither shake our hands nor shake their heads in disbelief. How come? How come? How come? We don't admit it was entirely our fault. Anything that goes wrong in the world is blamed on that couple (God and fatum). The fault lay with the vets who failed to make the necessary arrangements for dealing with so many cats. I'm weary of lending an ear to the talk of God and Stoics. Let me talk to myself for once, for years and centuries.

I enjoyed my cat's company for eight years. He is no longer in my armchairs, on my windowsills, but a part of his substance – or nonsense, as Bertrand Russell would have pointed out – remains within my reach, on a windowsill I've never seen; in an armchair I'll never sink into. It is a visible-invisible presence and I'm supposed to enjoy it as much as I did his presence, his paws hanging down from a divan. I used to think he might fall down on account of his queer, uncomfortable posture which seemed to upset the laws of physics where weights are distributed in accordance with the law of gravity. They say some diseases are bound to destroy much of the inner ear, disturbing the animal's equilibrium. He didn't suffer from these diseases and so never plummeted down, finding his equilibrium on the floor, at the foot of the divan. Anyway, whatever happens in the Hereafter or here, in the present, he isn't likely to fall: death is equilibrium par excellence. No laws, no gravity in his outer world; only the law of the grave. And I feel happy, happy, happy, as I scatter his particles around my room.

As I plough through my correspondence and correspondents – a lovemaking of sorts – I come across their names and email addresses. I don't always remember their names that I seem to have dropped a long time ago. (Michael, Myra.) They are drops, nothing else, and they continue to drop on their own, drip-drop and drop-drip, and nothing happens as usual except that it is the same day I am living through (*Groundhog Day*) as I wonder why I cannot live this day down. I wish I could live it down, out, away in a way, but not in a way everything is lived away. He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day. I fight (I cannot do otherwise), but I don't

run away. Nor do I live to fight another day. All these sayings reflect our fight for fight, for its sake; or for a glass of sake.

They still kill not only Bill but also horses, and that does not prevent them from taking care of so-called rare species. So, now and then, you read or hear, 'Mountain gorillas are an endangered species,' which may mean that whoever dares kill such a gorilla faces six months in jail and a heavy fine. You also chance upon the following piece of news, 'Depredation of the environment is destroying hundreds of species each year.'
They have not destroyed me yet, have they? I am one of the last representatives of the Russian Piano School, whatever that is. No matter what it is, given that it *is* and that is what counts. Borrowing Descartes' argument in favour of God's existence, one might say the Russian School exists because this notion has been bandied around for more than a century. And I am one of the last representatives of this School, given that it no longer exists. After all, you can kill God, even if He has never so much as seen the light of day.
Why don't they protect me? Some species exist in this small area of forest and nowhere else on Earth. And some species exist in a small area of time.

They kill bakonuzors for the sake of killing. Then they realise that bakonuzors eat demons. They also realise that bakonuzors should be protected and valued, otherwise demons might destroy our civilisation. I also eat demons, you know.

Dear Vadim,
I go on writing to nobody, and you're a nobody now; nothing to do with *Odysseys*, though. And I feel like talking about another nobody whose insolence and nonchalance used to make us laugh and raise our eyes heavenwards. But Gogol knew we were laughing at ourselves; at least I was – in the light of what happened this morning. Actually the whole thing started two weeks ago when I asked our mutual friend, J. J., to help me with the money I was expecting from Moscow, which might for once allow me to win the game universally called 'tax evasion'. (The Belgian tax office has no hold over *his* prosperity.) He asked me to let him know the date of the transfer beforehand. He had just sold his Petersburg flat and thought he might attribute the advent of money to the deal he had clinched and successfully concluded. I sent an email to Moscow, sat down and crossed my legs.
Three days later he called me to say the money had not come yet, and I hastily reminded him we were dealing with the Russians and not with Swiss bankers whose promptitude and accuracy are renowned in the United States and other money-minded regions. Three days later I received an email from Moscow in which the itinerary of my fee was drawn so minutely that even a doubting Thomas would have slept like a baby, had he been offered an opportunity to cast an eye over this document. J. J. (or Fru-Fru) is neither a baby nor an adolescent, and consequently he spent a sleepless night, worrying his head about my fee or rather its contents. (His tale of woe.) The next morning he came round, a computer vibrating in his hands (it had bad vibes), and showed me the document in question. 'Can you see?' he asked.

‘Yes, I can. Yes, *we* can, rather.’

‘What’s this?’ he asked.

‘Back in the Soviet Union,’ I answered, hoping to get rid of both his questions and his own self.

Three days later he called me to say the money had come at last. ‘Good riddance,’ I said as if to put the seal on all the nuisances I’d been troubled with after my return from Moscow. Needless to say I was mistaken – you can’t get rid of anything unless either death or a seismic activity gives you a helping arm and leg. (A hand wouldn’t be enough.) ‘I can’t have the whole amount right now,’ he added after a pause during which I recalled the following rule: ‘This credit card allows you to withdraw up to £200 a day from cash dispensers.’ I have no idea what credit card my former friend owns, and anyway I needed euros, not pounds. (The pound is too low nowadays.) ‘It doesn’t matter,’ I answered. ‘I’m not starving, you know.’

I don’t know if he was aware of the fact or not, but three days later he left a message on my answerphone to say he had the whole amount in one of his pockets. ‘But I had to pay for it,’ he added after the same pause. (The length of his soul-searching.) I called him immediately to find out what problem he had encountered in the course of his visit to the cash dispenser. ‘What’s that?’ I asked.

‘I have to pay 10 euros,’ he answered.

‘For what?’

‘For every 500 euros I withdraw.’

‘Almost 200 euros,’ I thought. I might even have uttered some words to this effect. For instance, ‘Are you crazy? Why wasn’t I informed about this earlier? At the very start? Why didn’t you say a word about this regulation? Instead of showing me diagrams and itineraries? I’d have asked someone else. My American friend. He pays taxes in Boston.’

Of course our friend didn’t fail to reassure me by saying we should forget it, but there are situations you can’t forget, especially if those who ask you to forget do not forget anything that may come in handy. Our mutual friend is likely to say *à la cantonade*– in French, in Russian and in English – that he did *all* he could to get me off the hook. ‘My friends take advantage of my generosity,’ his voice always seems to imply, even if he pontificates on Mahler and Bruckner.

After the same pregnant pause – we were still on the phone – he said almost wistfully, ‘We should have done all this through my Russian bank. I can draw as much as 100,000 euros out of my Petersburg account.’

‘Why don’t you open an account with another bank? In *this* country? I don’t pay anything to *my* bank.’ ‘Because I never use cash dispensers in Belgium. I do in France. By the way, I kept the receipt as proof of my payment. Around 200 euros, if I remember rightly. I’ll show it to you, if you wish. The communicative power of the written word, ha-ha-ha!’

Always taking the mick – he’s got no respect for poor poets. (*Chi son*? *Sono un poeta*.) Whenever invited to dinner, he criticises my wines. ‘Do you have any other bottle of this vintage? Any waste disposal would do.’ That’s how he treated my Lafitte 1985.

Always rubbing shoulders with artists and Nobel Prize winners. Green with envy. A mediocrity par excellence. For 12 years he worked in Russia. An international company with offices in Paris, New York, Sydney and Moscow. ‘My bodyguard.’ Not a billionaire. And there are many billionaires in Moscow. A mediocrity, a millionaire. ‘I’ve got no gift,’ he said once. ‘We don’t think in terms of immortality,’ his wife keeps on saying.

Envy, envy, envy, as *Pink Floyd* might have sung. Envying poor poets. Swearing vengeance on them. Unconsciously no doubt.

Is there no point in writing a letter to *you*? I can talk to you at any time: you share my room, my life and whatever lies or stands in it. The communicative power of the written word? You don't speak English and anyway I don't have to show you what I write because you know it already. When writing to you – and I do it for the first time – I write to everybody and not to nobody, whoever these nos and bodies might be in the past, in the future. I got married for the first time. When asked why I decided to marry at the age of 69, I say I've never thought there were women like that. Now I know you're here, in front of me, behind me, and I see you everywhere as if there were no nowhere in my life.

You have no ambitions, and my ambitions carry me beyond anything and anybody – beyond the present and the world in which this present disports itself just for the sake of sport or a glass of port. The world drinks six bottles of port and falls asleep; and so do I, whenever I drink two bottles of Claret. I wish I wouldn't sit brooding in my room all day. I can also sit brooding in my house and garden. I can even *walk* brooding along the streets I find in the neighbourhood and elsewhere, provided this elsewhere isn't too far away – not on the Moon, nor on one of those seven bright stars that make the shape of a saucepan. Nor do I wish to walk on any saucepan, however large and hospitable.

You say, 'Good news! The days are getting longer!' They'll get longer even if I get shorter. They belong to the cosmos and its order, its regulations and Newtons. I belong to myself and probably to God and some of His ministers. Anyway, your piece of news is no news at all and that's what so remarkable about it: no news is good news. And only you can make me realise what 'no news' means. Destiny, pre-established harmony, established harmony, re-established harmony, post-established harmony. A long harmony, a short one, a short two and three. A long four.

I write to myself – no one understands. They write to me – books, quotations. I comment sometimes, sometimes I don't. Writing, talking, exchange; nothing else gives rise to something important. Discussion, not communication. You talk to others, to those you don't know. You talk to yourself who you don't know either. Talking to posterity. Why should you talk to those you do know?

Socrates, speaking to the dead in the Hereafter. My answers to Dante. Not comments; answers.

Pessoa said you write for the dead.

****

I'm so sorry to hear about your Musil's passing.
I don't have any words for your deepest sorrow, but please accept my sincere sympathy.

Although I've never met your beloved one directly,
I'm sure that Musil lives with and within you forever and ever.

My thoughts and my prayers are with you at this painful time.
Hope to see you again.

Kindest regards,

Takaakira Aosawa
****

Dear Ms. Chat,

Thank you for your reply.

At this hard time, he need further help and support of you.

Please stand by him and encourage.

Kindest regards,

Takaakira Aosawa

****
Dear Valery,

We're so sorry to hear the sad news about your cat.
We don't know what to say.... It must be very difficult for you.
From the photos and your stories we know how beautiful and wise Musil was.
Please accept our deepest condolences.
We hope that time will soften your sorrow.
Please take care of yourself.
We're very much looking forward to seeing you again in Japan this autumn.

best regards
Yukio & Ira
****
Dear Mrs. Chatenet, thank you for this message of deep sadness. Please tell Valery that I think of him in deepest sympathy, I can imagine how hard it is for Valery to turn back into life – but we do need him and his wonderful art of playing piano... Best wishes, Gerd
Gesendet von meinem BlackBerry 10-Smartphone.
****
We tried to avert our thoughts from our massive financial problems.

$$
Dear Valery,

Thank you very much for your email and I'm sorry for not getting back to you sooner. We are very shocked to hear what you wrote, and we wonder if there's any way we could continue our collaboration. Kiyoaki is also wondering if you are already been in touch with another local agent in Japan. I believe you are firmly determined, but it would be much appreciated if you could kindly consider giving us another chance. If there's something which could be improved, then we will try to do our best to accommodate your needs and wishes. Thank you very much for your time and consideration in advance.

Best regards,
Akiko
on behalf of Kiyoaki Kurachi & Ryu Suda

On 2017/03/15 17:40, Monique Chatenet wrote:
> Dear Akiko,
>
> Thank you again for your moral support and the flowers. I feel better

> now and can even play the piano, getting ready for my Moscow concerts.
>
> I'm extremely grateful to your agency for having taken care of me for
> three years. But I'm not sure you have enough time for organising my
> Japanese tours. I'm not a worldwide celebrity, although I'm not unknown
> in Japan where I've been playing regularly since 1983. Besides, there's a
> book on my life and views, and this book sells rather well, apparently.
> It is already in its second impression. Nevertheless, it's no easy task
> to find concerts for me, and I'm perfectly aware of the fact. Of course
> I'll come to Japan next October to play two concerts in Tokyo. Well, I
> think it is bound to be a beautiful ending to our collaboration. At
> least I'll do my best not to disappoint my friends, my audience.
>
> Under the circumstances it is pointless to answer your question related
> to my 2018 tour. I hope you'll understand my motives and agree with me.
>
> I'm looking forward to our meeting in October.
>
> Please give my love to all my friends who work in your agency.
>
> Kindest regards,
>
> Valery Afanassiev

??

Dear Valery,

thanks for your email. How was your trip to Moscow?

In the meantime I have been busy trying to build bridges wherever I can.

Having said that, I have met with Ryusuke and am waiting to hear back from him to give me a rough idea of how much Sony Japan is willing to pitch in.

This would however be under the condition, that Sony will be the holder of the rights… I don’t know what your take is on this.

On another end I have been reaching out to a foundation to ask for a funding. Their focus lies in promoting the performance and recording of unique classical music repertoire/concepts.

The repertoire which is currently on your list is interesting but not really convincing to them yet. Their idea is to create a strong concept for each album, rather than recording “just” individual pieces.

However, they were nice enough to send in a couple of suggestions, which I would like to share with you, because some of the choices actually overlap (see attachment).

Thanks for being open to this idea and please feel free to comment as happy or rude as you like – keeping in mind that a smart coupling/completion of your list this may secure us the entire second recording period.

Many greetings,

Dear Valery,

It looks like we have a deal, although it is not confirmed yet. Ryusuke can't decide this alone, he still needs to consult with his colleagues.
But it appears that Sony Japan is willing to step in and cover the remaining expenses (in addition to the €20.000 which you have raised) to secure the two recording periods with 4 SACD productions.

This is under two conditions:

1. Sony Japan gets to keep the rights.
2. The new recordings will need to get a head-start and not be included in the anniversary box.

If I have read you most recent email correctly, you would be ok with both. Please confirm.

I think this is a win-win situation: You can record what you want, with the team that you want, both recording periods are saved, you stay with Sony and the way is made for future collaborations. What do you think?

Phil

****

Dear friend,

I hope you're well.

Last week I went to a record shop and saw a few boxed sets which made me change my mind about our venture centred upon my seventieth birthday. For years and years I wondered why Rostropovich's recordings were not available on an international scale. The point is he recorded his boundless repertoire for many companies and not just for Deutsche Grammophon. (This is the situation I'm facing as well.) Finally they managed to put all his recordings together, releasing a huge box 10 years after his death. A similar box devoted to Furtwängler's legacy

saw the light of day 62 years after *his* death – due to more or less the same reason, I suppose. Anyway, these boxes are available now and I think we might model our project upon them. It goes without saying that I'd rather see the result of this venture in my lifetime and not from a hut pathetically lost in a corner of Purgatory, but this seems far more ambitious and suitable for the contents of the box we have in mind – video recordings of my plays, my video interviews, my orchestral recordings and so on. Of course I don't compare myself to the giants I'm talking about, but neither do I wish to join Pires and Perraya – the former's birthday and the latter's comeback. Besides, I still have a lot of ideas related to what I might record in the near or distant future. So let us just work on our current programmes and forget about the crowning achievement.
****

Dear Phil,

Thank you very much for your email.

Of course I'm delighted to hear this piece of news and I thank you again for your help and patience. My friends are prepared to send 10,000 euros at any time. The rest will follow shortly. The point is they'd rather not send the whole amount because the tax office may get wind of the transfer and interfere most ruthlessly.

You already sent me the invoice and I'm wondering if I could use it for the transfers. But should we first wait for Sony's confirmation?

As for the box, I wrote to you about my ambitious, Furtwängler-inspired dream. To tell the truth, the more I think about the box, the bigger it grows. Now I'd like to put in it some radio recordings that feature the works I'll never play again. Brahms' *Second Concerto*, for instance. The German radio based in Bohn recorded it many years ago and I hope this recording could be released. The same goes for Beethoven's *Second Concerto* I played with Tielemann (Or Telemann, or Tiedemann) in Hannover. Well, all this is too ambitious and unreasonable. So I suggest we just take care of the forthcoming recordings – for the time being.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Thank you again.

All the best,

Valery

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Sujet : Recording Info
Date : Tue, 18 Apr 2017 15:36:48 +0200
De : Phil Ned <p.ned@b-sharp.bis>
Répondre à : phil.ned@b-sharp.bizou
Organisation : b-sharp
Pour : 'Mon Chat' <mon.s.chat@gmail.com>

Copie à :'Christiane Wert' <c.werther@b-sharp.biz>

Dear Monique,

Thanks for your email. Let me give you a quick summary regarding the recording.

The Hotel:
Hotel Rahserhof
Address: Rahserstr. 172, 41748 Viersen, Deutschland
Tel: +49 2162 817160

We are staying in the same Hotel and all rooms are confirmed from 23.-27. of April and 2.-6. of July.

The Venue:
Festhalle Stadt Viersen, Nordrhein-Westfalen
Address: Hermann-Hülser-Platz 1, 41747 Viersen

The recording dates:

- <!--[if !supportLists]--><!--[endif]-->24.-26. April
- <!--[if !supportLists]--><!--[endif]-->3.-5. July

We will all arrive on Sunday evening, however we can't get into the hall before early Monday morning.
I suggest starting the recording session at 10:00.

Please make sure Valery has my mobile number (+49 176 2423 99999).
Also, if in return you could give me a mobile number from him, that would be great.

Sony Japan has officially confirmed to take on the project.

As far as the billing is concerned, let me speak with our tax adviser in order to find out the best way to consolidate and simplify all payments.
I can do this early next week.

Please let me know if you need anything else for now.
Many greetings,

Phil

b-sharp
Pankstr.1
D-13127 Berlin
Studio: +49

!?!?!?!?!?!?

Garanti sans virus. www.avg.com

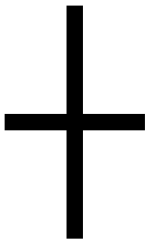
Dear Valery,

So great to hear from you. I'm sure that your cat is always watching and caring for you, and each step you stamp on your life from now on. Hope this spring come warm to both of you.

Thank you for your strength and toughness.

All the best,

Takaakira Aosawa



My cat died on February 18th; today is August 10th. I see him everywhere and I feel his presence almost as tangibly as if he were a god, and I a mystic. I purchased another cat soon after Musil's death – four days later, to be exact. Why to be exact in these matters? What do we know about them, about the deceased? Where are they? They might be within Brahman with their own Atman; or without any atman, any air, water and food to sustain them. They may be as beautiful as Delvaux's skeletons: or as ugly as the sins they have never committed. In short, my cat is with me – not only in thought and mind; risen from the dead to repulse the other cat, the kitten designed to replace him once and for all. He cannot replace him, not once, not for all; not even for, let alone all. All this seems to be as pernicious as the sophisms against which Plato and Socrates fulminated for centuries. And yet I am here and no sophisms, no Platos, no Aristotles stand between my new cat and my body that I offer to him, to his caresses. No caresses, nothing at all. There is a lot of traffic on the road; I am sure my horse is going to shy. There is no traffic on the road; there are no roads to speak of, let alone traffics. My new cat shy, shy, shy; there is my old cat by my side. Is that how we resurrect? Risen from the dead, from the non-existent? From the once-existent?

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I went to the tomb of my Musil, of my cat who died on the 18th of February, 2017. I knelt down and asked him to allow me to keep the new cat as long as all this lasts; all these worlds, suns and black holes. He, not I. Not I, not I. He will decide what I should do, not do. Not I, not I. I waited for a while but received no sign either from heaven or from the bowels of the Earth and even lungs did not improve their exchange with the air that was neither cold nor hot. Nor did it rain, but I was not thirsty and so held out until my five-o'clock tea accompanied by a modest *pain au chocolat*.

I am a Ching or a King. What does it matter what I am? I am a what or a knot; or both. I am just a both and that is what life is about on condition that you are about or an about. I look at Rublev's icons and say to myself and everybodies, nobodies and just dies that what I lack is a feminine streak. Am I not a woman? If only in part? In this part, in that part? I was in love with three men. Was I a man during those periods? During my periods?

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Dear Valery

Apologies for mydelay to come back to you about thistopic.
PhilNedalsoinformed me about the final repertoireyouwill record.
Please do not takemy silence as mylack of interest.....as yousee, I have been stuckwithsomanydailyworkwhichoccupymuch of my time, includingvisitingartistfromabroad (French soprano, Nathalie Dessayisstaying in Japannow).

Let's go aheadwith the recording in April. Although I have not yetapplied the formalcompanyapprovalprocess of the project, and theremightbesomeconcern about committing four CD release at one time, if wecannot cherry-picking fromthose four disc recordings and shouldbeconsidered as total, and if youconsiderthese four discs as a kind of your testament to this world, I thinkitisreallyworthdoing. So, as I mentionedbefore, I wouldlike to makethemhappen. Especially I thinkyour"coming back" to Russianrepertoireisreally important point.

That said, what I need to clarify are as follows:

[if !supportLists]- [endif]Theownership of the recordingsshouldbe Sony Music Japan.
[if !supportLists]- [endif]Wouldyouwant to include part of theserecordings in the on-going box set? My feeling isthat I wouldlike to wait the first release fromthese sessions until the release from Sony, but I alsounderstand if youfeel the inclusion of theserecordings as part of the box set.
[if !supportLists]- [endif]The timing of the release shouldbediscussedbetweenyou and ourside, as in the previoustworecordings. In general, I do not want to pour everything out at one time, and as we have doneso far, I wouldlike to release everyyear in time for yourJapan tour. Switchingyour management from Mr. Kurachi to Mr. Watanabe in near future (fromyournext tour?) may put some break in this pattern, thenwecanthink about releasing each album with certain interval of 9 months to a year or so. Inclusion of part of theserecordedrepertoire in the tour program mightalso help the CD sales. (Or wouldyoulike to make a 4 disc box set?)
[if !supportLists]- [endif]Am I right thatyoumentionedthatwe do not need to consider the advancepayment?
[if !supportLists]- [endif]Iwillneed to discuss the flow of the money withPh.N.beforeyour April session starts.

I hopetheseclarifyourway to move ahead about thisproject, and getrid of yourfinancialconcern.

Best regards,

****

Dear friend,

Thank you very much for your email. Nathalie Dessay is one of the rarest artists I respect.

My search for money is especially ludicrous in the light of what happens with our so-called stars for whom grand pianos are transported to lakes where swans disport themselves without, however, indulging in their songs – that would spoil the fun. Hundreds of people are invited for the making of the clip and Gerd Finkenstein tunes one of his pianos as he despondently shakes his head. Another star travels only first class in his mother's and teacher's company. And I think in terms of the history of music and of human dignity. The young generation will have to start from scratch. Some of my colleagues and I are called upon to provide this scratch, but none of the people in charge seem to care. Well, I have a few friends who understand the importance of legacies, even if the one we are currently dealing with is not the last.

Here are my answers to your questions:

- Sony Classical will own the recordings.

- I dropped the idea of releasing any box related to my forthcoming birthday. I have a bigger project in mind.

- I'll leave the problem of the release to you and Toshi Wata.

- I'll require no advance payment. And neither my teacher nor my mother – let alone my numerous nephews – will travel with me all over the world.

- We should both discuss finances with Phil.

Thank you again for your help and loyalty.

All the best,

Valery

PS On second thoughts I resolved to explore the idea you touched upon in your email – a four-disc box set. We might present it as my last legacy, my farewell to the world, my last will and testament. As usual I'll append a text to the recordings in which I could ask young artists not to think too much in terms of fame and first-class tickets. An old artist assuming the air of a patriarch, of the last of the Mohicans. On the threshold of death. Perhaps it is high time I took advantage of fashions and human stupidity. I'm neither blind nor deaf. A composer I know has a daughter whose handicap (she *is* deaf) has been shamelessly exploited by a multimillionaire whose love and knowledge of art is limited to suffering. (And yet he's not Russian.) 'You've suffered a lot,' he said to the composer, some tears welling in his eyes. 'From now on you won't suffer. You'll never suffer again, I swear.' The multimillionaire has already spent a few millions on the composer's fourth-rate works. A rich seam to mine, isn't it? The works I'm planning to record constitute a wide range of styles and epochs and can therefore stand on their own as a sample of my art – if any, I might add, out of false modesty which is appreciated almost as much as suffering. Besides, this subterfuge would allow me to enjoy these CDs in my lifetime. Though not fatally ill, not yet – at least not to my knowledge – I may pass away at any time. (There are too many reckless drivers on Belgian roads.) So let us give a thought to the idea you hit upon. Thank you again.

V.A.

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Dear Monique,

Hope youhad a good weekend! I'mwritingthissincethere are a few thingswewouldlike to discusswithyou in regard Mr. Afanassiev. I can'tremember if I'vealreadymentionedthis, but April is the beginning of ouracademic/business calendarhere in Japan (sois the fiscal year), and most of the presenters have juststarted planning concerts for the nextseasons (i.e. for 2018/19 and onwards). We have alsostartedvisitingthem to promoteourartists all across in Japan, and learnedthatsome of the local presenters are actuallyinterested in presenting Mr. Afanassiev'srecital in the near future. Althoughwe have spentsome time introducinghim to them last year and his new recordingfrom SONY + the interview book with Mr. Aoyagi came out back in September, thisisactually the time that the presentersstartthinking about the programming for the nextseasons. In fact, by the time thatwereceivedhis email dated March 15, our new brochure with the artistroster for the nextseasonhadalready been printedwithhisname and photos on it, sothat'salsopartlywhythosepresentersstillask us about him. Anyway, although Mr. Afanasseivmightthinkitistoolate to discuss, wewouldbeverygrateful if hecouldkindlyconsiderallowing us to try to book his concerts (for June 2019) at least untilhisnextvisit to Japanscheduled in October. For now, wewouldlike to try to book at least 4 concerts with the followingfee: EUR13,000/each(net). If hecouldkindlyagree, wewillgivehim updates in October, and thenhecouldthink about it and let us know how hefeels about it. Of course, in case wefail to book 4 concerts, thenwewill let you know as soon as possible, and there's no need for him to agreewithanything. But if heisalready been in touchwithanother local agency in Japan for the future seasons, thenitwouldbemuchappreciated if youcouldkindly let us know. I feelbad to botheryousooften, but thankyouverymuch for your time and help!

Manythanks,
Akiko
IMC Music

THE TESTAMENT PROJECT

HIS LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

You read an article about a star whose cancer was revealed by a paparazzo or a public relation officer. She did all she could to keep her cancer under wraps, but the wraps came off and the fans are rushing to the concert hall where the artist's swansong is about to be performed. Then the fans and the population at large learn that the song our paparazzo talked about was a *penultimate* song and so on. Shortly afterwards, the reader learns that her cancer has been in remission for several years. And her cancer will be in remission for several decades because she fights for her life, displaying the vitality of her indomitable spirit. She goes to Speakers' Corner and shouts, 'Regular screenings for cervical cancer. That's what you need!' That's what she or he needs for publicity. *On fait feu de tout bois*. One looks around and finds a lot of wood. And one makes bonfires to attract the attention of concert-goers and CD buyers. Why not accept your destiny, your cancer? *Amor fati*? *Hator fati*? Death is not an event because there are no events in Neo-Confucianism. No events, no time, no death – just a process. Another box, another series of recordings, another book.

And what about my last will and testament? Of course I could write something along these lines, 'Young pianists and musicians in general! Don't think in terms of money. And if you see a boutique on your way to a concert hall, you should look elsewhere – at a handicapped girl, for instance. Generally speaking, you should avert your gaze, eyes and face from fashion designers and jewellery, focusing instead on Brahms.' I could write such a book, taking cue from some of my colleagues, but I shall nip this nebulous urge in the bud. Why waste my time on conquerors, on pets? On death? On *their* death? They do not even fight their fatal diseases: they might have none. Their whole lives are made up of a cancer and I think I know the name of this cancer.

I tried to help a wonderful pianist I still admire, Sergey Kasprov. Some individuals admire him privately, but private admiration is far less close to public scrutiny that the private life of a star. That is why he is not a world-renowned star, a pianist whose performances make me think of Busoni, Rachmaninov and Gilels.

Of course I can say to youngsters of all kinds, 'Every morning you should rise from the dead. Every time you play *La Pathétique*, you should play it for the first time. Don't think in terms of fame.' And what if they do not think at all? What if their thoughts look like nots? Nots, nots, nots, nots. Not like the Gordian knot, mind you. Like notes? Perhaps like notes. Just like notes.

Minus and plus are poles apart in personality. They are poles apart elsewhere too and as a matter of fact they are poles apart *everywhere*. The point is there is a point where they come together and a detached observer can see and even describe their fraternal embrace, provided this embrace does take place, which can happen if our minus and plus are yin and yang. They are young and old. My charwoman, domestic help and cleaning lady put it thus: 'Two months ago you were old. Now you're young because you're married.' I was poles apart in ages, in looks

and probably in books as well: I no longer read about death, destruction, humiliation. Nor do I think in these gloomy, mummy-like terms. I think about jubilation and I understand why there was jubilation in the crowd as the winning goal was scored; two days ago, according to the newspapers I buy in spite of everything. There were no winning goals in my life. Yes, yes, yes, as Joyce would put it: there was one winning goal in my life, in my strife. Last night you offered me some tulips, saying, 'These are the colours you like.' And I saw '*Je t'aime*' in the midst of these flowers, in the midst of my midsummer dream. There are many dreams in the universe, but my dream was located in the middle of a midsummer, of many summers, springs and autumns. And even a few winters could be found in our midst. A few Russian winters, for instance. Skiing in the suburbs of Moscow and elsewhere. Nowhere perhaps. But I *was* skiing nonetheless. Forever.

Minus and plus are poles apart; so are yang and yin. Not quite. They *are* of course but they embrace from time to time and 'champagne corks popped as the guests drank a toast to the happy couple,' as I wrote in my diary last week. There were only four guests in our garden, sitting around our garden table. But champagne corks did pop as they drank to our happiness and eternity. And then I received another email and the opposite pole installed itself in my life for good.

Not quite, not quite. Not for bad either.

PART NINE OR ELEVEN

I go from one spot to another and someone comes back; and I think that this some and one are I because no one else seems to travel in the world. During my travels I find a lot of yangs and yings which seem to communicate, to echo each other saying, 'Yin-ayng-ngyan-yan-an-an-an-in.' They say and sing all that and I think I am not in love any more and the flowers I see on my windowsill do not say, '*Je t'aime*.' I might have said – in Part Three – that my wife brought me a few flowers; seven, to be exact. Across these flowers she put the following inscription, 'I love you.' This inscription was written in French. It is still in French and it is still written and therefore can be read, but the flowers have wilted, withered, wintered. And it is almost a summerday. At least it is a springday, although the temperature talks to us otherwise, saying, 'I'm almost a minus temperature. I'm on the verge of many snows. And on the edge of many flakes.' Of many cornflakes, I add as I prepare myself and even my wife for a luxurious breakfast. My wife is asleep and I do not feel like swallowing any flakes or cakes. This room needs decorating: flakes of paint keep coming off the walls. I shall swallow one of these flakes and go to bed in the hope of falling asleep in spite of my wife's body and its numerous and numberless appeals. I could also swallow one of these appeals – of these apples, to put it bluntly; but I do not feel like it. I do not feel like anything and this predicament may be described by the word 'yin' or by the world 'yang'. They both describe everything that can happen to every and one and go to sleep; both of them.

I have just come back from Germany where I recorded three CDs or four DCs, five Washington DCs. I began by crying as I touched the piano brought from Hannover, for I was thinking about my cat and his tomb on which my gardener had put a cross. I was playing Frank's *Prelude, Choral and Fugue*. I played the prelude and then I touched the choral; and every touch made me cry, made me mad for him, for my former, for my for, cat. For my mer. Probably for my *mère*; or for a *mer tout court* (all short). And I still think in terms of eternity, even though eternity may grow uneven, uneternal, unernal, annal. Eternity is the anal passage/sphincter. And vice versa. And if it is what is (and will be) the case – I would not normally agree but I shall make an exception in this case.

Ying is coming.
Yang is coming.
Who are you?
I am Yin.
Who are you?
I am In.
That is why
You are here
I suppose.
You suppose,
I dispose.

There was a recording session. Was it different from whatever happens or does not, not, not? They say on the phone they will record your complaint for the sake of their service; of their saké perhaps. Well, there was a session, a *Welle*, as many Germans say; a wave they get carried by to end up in an overall ocean where everybody ends and wells. How are you? I am well, I am a *Welle*. Be a wave or a pebble, a boulder. Be what you want, what you do or do not want. Be ant or nt or t. Being a t is wonderful, even if you do not have a cup of tea.

I am in love and out of love. So are women and men, which means I am not alone either in my room or in my bathroom. Whenever I take a bath there are many men in love around me and I just shake hands with them because I have no alternative but. Sometimes I have just but, but this time I also have no alternative and this addition to my daily diet means that God still cares about me and his children, generally speaking and thinking and doing.

I am sitting somewhere. Let us say I am doing this at home – sitting in one of my Louis armchairs. Suddenly or all of a sudden a door flies open – and it continues to fly open and openly for some time – and a yin (an inch) enters my room and all of my bathrooms. I say to this yin, 'What are you doing here?'
This yin answers, 'I'm not this yin. I'm an overall yin. If it weren't for me, you would die on the spot.'
'Because of the balance,' I say.

‘Because of the yang-yin-ong-ung harmony,’ it answers.
‘Did you say Jung?’ I ask.
‘I did say Jung,’ it answers. And it also answers that it is young and his sponsors assure him he will live until the age of two hundred, two thousand and on, on, on. And so does she. She has the same sponsors, the same life.

Your life goes on. As everything does, since your life goes on.
Your house goes on.
Your garden goes on. So does mine, by the way. By the same way.
These flowers go on.
This Bruckner symphony goes on because it cannot go an, en, yt, iu, po.
It *can* go po.

Yin comes in. ‘Why did you come in?’ I ask.
‘ Because yang has already outstayed its welcome,’ he/she/it answers.
‘Has it?’ I ask him, shim and im.
‘Yeah, yes and *da*,’ this answers.
‘Can’t we live together?’ I ask.
‘There’s no such thing as yangyinding.’
‘Can’t we have a sort of ding-dong?’
‘We can,’ hesheitbodysoul answers.
So we have a ding-dong for a while, for a long, long, long, long, long while.

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Yang comes in; so does Jan. And Jean. And Don Juan. They all talk for a while and decide they should live together in order to avoid the love-strife disorder they (the Greeks) talked, shocked and mocked about for several centuries before the Romans conquered them with their Alexander. Or Caesar. Or both. Everyone comes in and lives in peace with somebody; perhaps with anybody. They say, ‘War didn’t break out between the two countries after a border dispute.’ And they repeat, ‘Didn’t, didn’t,’ as long as they can repeat anything.

Did I feel responsible when writing the above text? In any way? I wrote it for myself and for the sake of the hard disc; and for the sake of writing. Have I taken over responsibility for this project? Is it a project? In the first place? In the second place? There are people – Merkel, Derkel – who say all the time, ‘We have the chance to build an outward-looking Europe that lives up to its global responsibilities.’ Does my above text live up to its responsibilities? Are its responsibilities global? Is it outward- or inward-looking? Is it looking at all? Is it blind, mute?

One death is enough to teach you everything and I was taught this lesson by my grandmother's bed and also in front of my cat's recent tomb that plants and flowers begin to adorn as I turn back and go home. Do I need this crown? Does my cat need it? What crown does a poet need?

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The kabbalists speak of the way one must cleave to God (*devekut*), which excludes neither love nor devotion from one's relationship with Him. And what about faith? One can view one's life as a spiritual journey towards a greater understanding of one's faith, but if one's head is always on one's Father's and Mother's laps (and lips), one does not usually utter the word 'faith' to describe one's posture. Cleaving to one's parents' bodies. Of course one can say, 'I was brought up in the true faith,' and one's faith is true in the truest sense of the word, since one's body is literally in touch with one's father's and mother's bodies. In this case, one does not really pray to God in the hope of the Latter's hearing and answering one's prayer. (This ritual truly lies in the domain of faith and its eternal truth.) One *cleaves* to God and so can be compared to the ancient ivy cleaving to the ruined castle walls except that God is not the ruined castle walls.

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Dear Valery,

Thanks again fort he wonderful opportunity to be part this project. Let me quickly summarize what we talked about.

Invoice:

The easiest would be if I can send an invoice to your Russian sponsors and they pay me directly. If they are a registered Company, my invoice will be exclusive of German VAT. If not, I have to add 19% to the amount quoted. In that case, I need a billing address and their company registration number.

If sending an invoice is not an option or triggering additional fees/taxes in Russia, we may also consider a cash payment without invoice. I could receive the funds directly next time I am in Moscow. This will be in the second half of June.

Scheduling:

As for the Beethoven recording from Berlin, Gerr will cut the two repeats and send you the final edit for approval before the end of May. I need the approved material by early June, so that we can finalize everything and send the master to SONY by June 15th.

As for the material from Viersen, Gerr estimates to be ready to send you a first edit of 2 discs by the end of May. It would be great if you can send him your remarks as soon as possible in June, so that we know where we stand before we meet again to continue recording in July.

Thanks so much and best regards,

Phil

b-sharp
Pankstr.1
D-13127

Cet email a fait l'objet d'une analyse antivirus par AVG.
http://www.avg.com

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Dear Phil,

Thank you for your email and for the invoice. I've been trying to get in touch with my friends, but it's not easy. Anyway, I'll send their secretary your invoice – your voice, I'm tempted to say – and I'm sure everything will work out perfectly, considering that half of the amount is already in their piggybank, so to speak. As for the rest, we'll see what happens or does not happen.
Thank you again for your patience, professionalism and help. If it weren't for you, nothing would come off, not even this email.

All the best,

Valery

((((((((((((((((((((((((((((((((
If you consider what happens, you put brackets or inverted commas everywhere – even on your dinner table, on your slice of bread and butter and jam and ham(mon). But you had better not *close* your brackets. The game is up, but a very extensive research and development programme ensures that we are ahead of the game.

If I consider anything – this and that and what and why – I put nothing everywhere. Or I put –_ which means nothing, whatever follows or precedes anything; or just this thing.)))))))))))))))))))))))))))))) Well, I did close something as if there were anything to close, to live for; and up to, and down for, and downfall.

All this depends on the number of your brackets. If you put first nine))))))))) and then 10 ((((((((((, you mean you are on the up and up. You do not mean you got out of bed on the wrong side. (This morning or any other morning to come, to be and to have been.) This means you are either) or (, which amounts or dismounts to the same null and void.

And if you put first ‘null’ and then ‘void’, it may mean you are either ‘void’ or ‘nul and *non avenu*’, which neither amounts nor dismounts. It is just ‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘ or ’’; or %%; or ‘or, or, or, or, or, or, or, or,’

In the realm of the *aggadah*, the Kabbalah was unrestricted. One may conclude that every sacred book advocates what might be called ‘unrestrictedness’, even if one and many others do not know what *aggadah* means. I cannot say I know what anything means, when I say ‘anything’ or ‘means’. I do not know what ‘means’ means; nor do I know what anything does. Is that anything? I do not know. Is that something? I do not know that either. But my ignorance is unrestricted and that I do know, although Socrates knew more in this respect and many other respects, with the greatest respect. He knew nothing about my last recording and even the Beethoven sonatas I played on that and other occasions. So one may conclude he knew nothing, and he even did not know what he did not know: Beethoven and Bizet, for instance. Of course he had no idea what I am writing about and he was right for once: that is what virtue is about. He knew what Plato would write about him and that was enough.

What is unrestrictedness? It is !è§gèyvuyv ghjv jhggvjh; or =:l, =al’”,nftoijanherik,; I take the world and throw it into &a$)jàugfimo<l:k,;c. And then I realise that the world and whatever comes with it and even out of it is just ùpoji&éàçfujo=kn vlkjisqehgrdf ; And you sing a song; so do I.

I sing a song,
A ding, a dong.
That’s Love, that’s Strife,
My Wife and Life.
They come in, in,
And out, and out,
Away, away,
That is the way:
Away, ay, ay,
And y, y, y,
Why, why, why, why,
Hi, there!

What do we see down here and everywhere? As long as we stay in the dale and vale of tears? We do not see anything face to face, down to God; and up to God as well. All right, you see everything or nothing in a mirror, in a fog, in a bog as if you spent your life in a bog like a character from a Russian story. A man loses his way and ends up (or down) in a bog and, all of a sudden – does everything happen all of a sudden? – a creature turns up and says, ‘What are you doing here?’
The man answers, ‘What are *you* doing here?’

‘I’m living here,’ answers the creature. The same goes for us, according to St Paul.
Once dead, once and for all, we shall see face to face. What? The face of God.
If you do not see it now, on this face of this Earth, you will never see it.
There is only one face. There are no others. The Face.
!!!
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I wish I could be a faceless face. I hope this does not sound too Chinese; without being Chinese in the least. In the last analysis, if any; if there is such a thing as the last analysis. Wouldn’t it coincide with the end of the world? With the end of all controversies and verses? Where do you put the stress in the word ‘controversy’? The last question would sound almost poetical if the stress were on the second syllable.

A faceless face. As a friend of mine put it (these friends of ours always get many words in edgeways): ‘I see everyone, but no one sees my extraterrestrial being.’ I wish no one could see my *terrestrial* being. Actually I think this is the only aim I have achieved, without aiming at it, as a Chinese might say. Does that mean I wish my face could be multifaced? Multi or mini. Does that make any difference? The same Chinese must have said that many years ago; and many times.

Dryness is liquid and fluid. It tastes like Claret. All fluids are dry. We are mostly water, but we are also dry to some extent; to the extent of being able to touch ourselves. And then we become fluid; some quantity of liquid, rather. And all this is Chinese, European and universal, not to say cosmic. All extraterrestrials (and also a number of extrauniversals) are now fluid, now rigid; rigid with fear probably. After all, the universe is a dangerous place, as Stephen Hawking puts it. In edgeways.

Now and then they speak of our Mother, Father and Sister Earth’s demise. Of course it may happen tomorrow: everything can happen tomorrow. Even life can, to some extent. But most probably the demise in question will take place in a million years; not to say milliards, billiards and so on. Of course our extraterrestrials are always on the agenda. If they come, they might turn out to be as kind as Stephen Spielberg’s ET. They also might be as dreadful and deadly as Seth; or Met, as opera-goers usually say. Anyway, we need no extraterrestrial foes or John Does to get destroyed, disembowelled, disemsoulled, disembrained, disemdignified. We have already done the job. ‘He enjoyed the trappings of power, such as a chauffeur-driven car and bodyguards.’ Thus Luther thundered as he thought about prelates, bishops, abbots and popes. He used to call the Church and its Catholic rituals a ‘painting’ or just a ‘paintwork’. ‘The paintwork was so bad that we decided to strip off all the paint and start again,’ he used to write. Faith, Word. They are inside, not in cathedrals. So is our salvation. And our salvation does not depend on the Earth’s survival. Yet ecology does count and it is advisable to go to the restaurants that only use organic ingredients.

They speak only of quantity as if no one knew – not even Seneca – that it is quality not quantity that really counts, as far as one's life goes; as far as anything goes or does not. And it does not really matter how far anything or anyone (for that matter) goes, rides and flies: one's life's *quality* – be it an animal's or a human's or a stone's life – counts more than the *number* of years that any of them might live before dying either peacefully or woefully, ruefully, ouchfully. In 20 years we shall certainly add as many as 19 years to our lives. And in the 24th century we shall live as long as 24 centuries. And what about your soul, the mould your life is cast in? True (or not), we shall live more; 15, 35. If you add three and four you get seven. What is your three and four? Let alone your seven? Let us let your sevens, fours and threes alone (not your trees): they are as worthless as fakes. So are you and other fakes I can think of. 70+10+10++++++++++++++++==========~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

You can say all this amounts to ==========One litre is equal to 1.76 imperial pints; and vice versa. Three is equal to four. Four is equal to five. Life is equal to death. Growing immortal: .....~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~++++++++++++++!!!!!!!!!!!!!0000000000000°°°°°°°°°°°°°

You have an astral body that goes on a spree whenever you are asleep or just watching TV or lying dead in pitch darkness. Taking advantage of your inattention or inanimation. You also have a sort of double, trouple. (I would rather have a truffle or a mere trifle – to trifle with on my own.) One double stands behind you, in the past, doing his (I would rather say *her*) best to repair your past and redeem it; yet no consequence can precede its cause. So you can neither repair nor redeem your past, killing your sinful body before it joins a paedophile ring. Nor can you prepare your future on account of your second (or third) double's disobedience. He prepares your moral judgement but regardless you continue to flout convention/tradition, flaunting your (and her) tan in a little white dress.

I, for one, indulge neither in double-talk nor in quadratic equations. I am just a face looking at the future, at the past, at the double past that goes beyond the universe. Two glass eyes. They do not see anything. Do our mummies enjoy the beauty of nature and that of cityscapes? Do they prepare our deathbeds, robots, discoveries, occasionally writing some poetry such as:

> Lastly not. What kind of thing?
> A face with staring eyes,
> dead eyes. To be seen and
> studied forever.
>
> They saw mountains once.

I wish I could kill myself from the vantage point of the past, say in the 17th century. Going around (the sun), saying to everyone, 'I saw Aleppo once, I saw Othello twice.'

Suppose that what we are living through corresponds exactly to their (those doubles') schemes and doings. Well, in this case I should exterminate all these doublets, triplets and quadruplets who have already bungled the last decade of our history. (And much more.) From where I stand; from May 8th, 2017. Bang! Bang! You're dead.

Of course you can live and enjoy yourself as Stephen Hawking does. Every hour brings in a brand new piece of scientific news and consequently human beings grow wiser and wiser. They are still none the wiser, but that does not really matter: the pile of our knowledge is big enough to allow us to feel as happy as any happy camper; or any happy clappy. Let us compare the amount of knowledge to a large pile of sand. Every day we add yet another grain to the pile and we rightfully (Hawkingly) think that that is what happiness is about. Getting closer and closer to the mystery we are all interested in: Why do we exist at all? Along with the universe? Even if we do get to the bottom of this mystery which, according Hawking, lies at the bottom of time, of its pile – right in the middle of the Big Bang – we shall not be any the wiser; we shall still be in the dark about our existence and its purpose. In this day and age our existence is much darker than that unfairly attributed to the Dark Ages' inhabitants. And Hawking believes our enlightenment will go on forever; until the end of the world. If any. Yet another grain, yet another. Another Tower of Babel.

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Dear friend,
I wish to thank you again for your help – if it weren't for you, our recording project wouldn't have come off. We made three CDs in three days, which is no mean feat at any rate. A pampered pianist has breaks and even cancels recordings, but I was under a lot of stress and I think I managed to do something out of the ordinary. And I did it only because I could rely on my stress and our dream team that is unique, exemplary.
I hope you'll enjoy these recordings when Gerr finishes the editing. I don't know if it is my legacy or just a statement – one of the statements I've made so far. In a way, I'm always on my deathbed, trying to judge and evaluate my life. From this point of view (from this bed, from this death), the three days we spent together in Viersen are among the happiest moments I've ever experienced.

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There are galaxies and they go somewhere, doing something. They dilate and deflate like balloons, tyres and what not. I am one of these particles and balloons; perhaps just § or <<<<< or {{{{{{{.

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There are heroes in our midst and they deserve not only military honours, but also a sort of funeral (not a funeral of sorts) one is not to forget, even on one's deathbed and beyond it, on one's afterlifebed. I have not forgotten the funeral I saw on TV in the Seventies, in their early age – in their prime, so to speak. Or in their middle age, rather.

Mountbatten was assassinated and if you are (assassinated, if you no longer are), you become a martyr unless you become a criminal first; unless you are just some nobody (or nosomebody) no-one knows about. Mountbatten was a viceroy and viceroys are never nobodies: they have bodies you can see in papers and other publications where you are depicted either with blood on your hands (and all over your body) or with no blood except the blood flowing through your veins. Apparently our Lord – not our Good Lord, Lord forbid – had a lot of blood on his hands: as many as one million human beings, be they of Indian or any other origin, made their contribution to that pool. He does not have it any more as if his assassination had washed his hands; a feat our Lady Macbeth cannot boast of, for all her rubbing and scrubbing, for all Shakespeare's scribbling. The same assassination – or just an oversight on the part of humanity – must have washed his soul admired by many old ladies one of whom announced, back in the Seventies, 'He's one the greatest men I've ever known. Along with the Buddha and Christ, you know.'

I have never known anything of the kind. I read a text by Andrew Roberts and realise that his wife – Mountbatten's wife – was romping with Nehru, while our (or their) lord was washing his hands either with blood or with water that is thinner than any blood. His timetables, shortcuts and longbloods were appalling, but stars of the entertainment world turn out to celebrate all his jubilees, and I still wonder why his wife romped with Nehru in public, not in a country house, a villa tucked away in Siberia. Even now some of my friends recall their romps, saying, 'Nehru caught in sex romp.' Or 'Edwina caught in sex-bomb romp.' Or whatever her name was or is in some papers and films, documentaries.

They made a film about them: 'a glowing picture of Mountbatten.' 'Of his arrogance and incompetence.' Glory, pity, martyrdom. Covering himself with glory and blood. And Churchill sneers at 'primitive Indians'; in the film, in the paper. Is Vedanta primitive? Churchill is either a hero or a villain, depending on their point of view. History is a prostitute. Incidentally, Edwina accused her husband of having phone sex with prostitutes while she was away on business, Nehru-orchestrated trips.

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It comes from Confucius somehow. You should think twice before you make any important decisions. According to Lu-cu-leu-leu, Chuang-Wang-Woo thought three times before making or doing anything. And Confucius said, 'It's enough to think twice.' It is enough not to think at all, relying on destiny and the universe; and waves and what not. (Especially on *not*.) It is also enough to think under zero and many sages are highly praised for saying, 'I'm under zero.' And others deserve even higher praise as they say, 'I'm one under zero.'

That is how it has been going on for ages. One sage says, 'I don't think twice nor once. I think zero and under.'

'I think two under zero,' says another sage.

'I think three under the same zero,' says another sage.

'You don't have the same zero,' says the first sage.

'You're not the first sage,' says another sage. 'And anyway your zero is rotten.'

'Is it?' asks the third stooge.

'Everything is rotten,' says the seventh stooge.

Whether you think above or under, it joins the same thing and comes under the same head. You can see this head in a distance; and then you see it nearby. You caress it and realise it is another cat or dog. The rotten things will follow you from your deathbed to your birthcushion. And I shall turn in my bed to signify I am either bed or blanket or a human about whom you can write in the Britannica Encyclopaedia.

No matter where it comes from, and one even wonders whether it comes at all. Perhaps it stops somewhere, in the middle of nowhere or everywhere and you think, 'I can't see the whole. I see only face to face, but not body to body. I see only the face and the body is outside as if I were dealing with another headless horseman or Cavalier.' Another apocalypse and you realise the world – and every woman, man and dog – are in themselves and you know only a dozen odds and ends, odd ends and low-end bits. What can one know? Not this one, that one, certainly not. Just a low end, a high end, a wry smile, a pocket full of rye. Not even a whole blackbird because you know either 'black' or 'bird', not both. You measure 'black' and the result of your operation comes up to your great expectations. Then you measure 'bird' and realise you are as uncertain as Heisenberg and the world at large. Everything and everyone are uncertain, down to Kant and even Hegel. Even Gödel is uncertain, not to say unhinged. Anyway, your blackbird is highly uncertain and all-blacks turn out to be all-greens as they sing individually and then together as a group: 'The government's new-found enthusiasm for green issues has been welcomed by environmentalists.'

µµ

And you? There is always an or a or the You when one feels too lonely. Thus you can be a wall or a suicide; or a bottle of anything. This time is not anything; not even anyone. It is you, my dear wife, and you have your pendulum that tells us who is to win the French or American election. Two days ago we spoke of Schrödinger's cat and you said you did not know anything about its death and life. 'Anyway, we're both dead and alive,' you said. Anyway, you are Hanussen or Messinger; or a messenger. You connect your customers to the universe and vice versa; and you also connect viceroys to versaroys. You predict the future, but your bank account is as empty as any nirvana worthy of its name. Aren't you humiliated in your turn? You do not have a clinic of your own and the clinic where you do work and heal almost everybody is not a clinic.

I went on to explain how a cat could be dead or alive or both or neither. You said, 'If you go on like that, I'll send you to the moon.' After the *séance* I asked you why I was still on the Earth and you said you could not send me anywhere without a fur coat.

THIS IS A FUR COAT

Dear Phil,

Thank you very much for your email. And thank you again for your help and patience. We did a tremendous job

and hopefully the result will come up to our expectations.

I'm trying to get in touch with my friends, which is not always easy. Anyway, Monique will send their secretary the necessary details and we'll do our best. I'll keep in touch with you and let you know where we stand as soon as I get some news from Moscow.

Thank you again. As I said in Viersen, if it weren't for you, these recording sessions wouldn't come off.

All the best,

Valery
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Dear Phil,

I hope everything is all right.

The more I think about our box, the more I realise it is unworkable, in spite of our mutual wish to bring this project off. Let us take a rain check on it. I'm sure the whole set-up will be more favourable in the near future, especially if our new recordings are released in a six-CD box. Anyway the big project is still on - you and Michael have done a lot for it and it would be unwise to give it up.

I've just sent an email to Ryusuke. Here it is:

Emboldened by our successful session last month, I've decided to make three CDs in August as well. In addition to the Prokofiev and the Schumann, I might record a Schubert CD. (The *Impromptus op. 142*, *Sonata in A Minor*, D. 537.) Whenever I think about the big box - my personal Big Bang - I say to myself that asking the impossible is not wise, especially on the threshold of my 70th birthday. It is high time I became more pragmatic and less romantic - at least in the domain of business. On the other hand, the six-CD box (a small bang) doesn't seem out of reach. All these recordings belong to Sony Classical. As I pointed out in one of my emails, you can release them whenever you wish. The costs are being kept to a minimum, and I even wonder if we haven't broken a number of records in the course of this venture. (My friends' generous help, no advance payment, six CD in six days, a convenient, cheap studio.)

This box explores various aspects of my musical and literary personalities. And we might present it as my *Last Will and Testament*. I don't think anyone will be tempted to compare it to Friedrich Gulda's ignominious farce. He announced his death to test his friends' and relatives' loyalty. I wish to mock yet another aspect of our publicity-ridden, rotten-to-the-core world. I remember how the media played with Martha Argerich's skin cancer. And Grimaud's cancer - or whatever she suffers from - boosts the sales of her CDs beyond any acceptable limits.

Could you please let me know what you think about this idea? Small bangs shouldn't be neglected, in my opinion.

Of course I'll talk about it to Phil.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you,

****

Thank you again for your help.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

All the best,

Valery

Xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Dear Valery,

thanks for putting me in the loop. I think that adding Schubert enhances the already great selection and, I totally agree with you that creating small bangs is what it is all about.

Well said! Let us see what Ryusuke thinks of this idea.

Have you heard back from your sponsors in regard of the invoicing procedure?

Also, I have noticed that you repeatedly speak about an August session – our second session in Viersen is schedule from July 3-5.

Please confirm that you have the right dates penciled in your book.

Thanks and warm regards from Berlin,

Phil

b-sharp

Pankstr.1

D-13127 Berlin

Studio: +49 (0)

Mobil: +49 (0)

www.b-sharp.biz

www.facebook.com/bsharpberlin

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Dear Phil,

Thank you for your email.

Yesterday I called my friends. Apparently their assistant had already sent an email to you, saying they preferred to give you the money in Moscow. Anyway, I confirm it now. I hope it is still all right with you.

Thank you again.

Looking forward to our future meetings.

All the best,

Valery

.....

I think I might and even should utter the word 'duty' on my deathbed, at the approach of death and my eternal bliss or curse. Or in between, in between my death and curse where our Purgatory can be found and lost at the end of individual punishments. Duty comes from nowhere and everywhere, and it is perhaps at the root of our life because, once we are born – once, once, once upon a time – we are duty bound to grow or die on the spot. But we are good sports – not spoilsports, contrary to what some may think. We grow to show that life is as wonderful as many Hollywood movies. It is our duty to set an example to children who are often tempted by suicide, if anything goes against their wishes, if they cannot eat all chocolate bars they see in shops and their day-night dreams.

My sense of duty stems from the harmony I hear at the root of my being, at the top of the world. A piece of music is an expression of this will and necessity so that I speak either of harmony or duty or everywhere or a gene, a molecule, a grain of sand. I am duty bound to put this grain of sand on the top of the world; and also on its bottom. And on my deathbed, on my life.

.....

.....

.....

What am I duty bound to do or not to do or make and think? What are all these grains of sand about? They are about, below and only minutes, seconds and mini-seconds do their duty as they convey my soul and astral body somewhere; and also everywhere to prove I am as universal as all their Adams put together. They put them together and I come out in my snow-white-and-bright dinner jacket.

WWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW

Where was I born? Spiritually? If you say I was born in Moscow, they say, 'All right, you were born in your mother's womb. But where was your *real* birth?' In Vienna. I was born there at the beginning of the last, last, last century. I am a woman painted by Klimt, with lots of doodles, rectangles, circles and gold. My doodles are his and vice versa. So are his, her, their dresses, landscapes; and Schoenberg's harmonies. Am I entitled to a harmony, on

my deathbed? A number of doodles perhaps, around a face, a body, be it feminine or otherwise. *Woman with Hat and Feather Boa*. A real birth.

WOMAN

Doodle	Circle
Circle	Rectangle
Rectangle	Square
Square	Doodle
Rectangle	Square
Square	Circle
Doodle	Doodle
Circle	Rectangle

I am a man painted by Schiele.

MAN

Rectangle
Triangle
Square

Schiele was imprisoned. The police seized 125 drawingsfrom his flat; they were considered offensive. He spent 24 days in custody. In those days and ages he created 13 drawings that still show either the desperate artist or his despicable cell. A judge burnt one of his nude sketches. He also burnt a naked woman to show that the two deaths were not different. The charges were dropped. But Schiele always thought he was unjustly persecuted. Not rounds, nor spirals, nor squares – the body, its notions, motions and contortions. And oceans, as optimists say, maintain and die as they cling to all these porzions of ezernity. *Den Künstler hemmen ist ein Verbrechen es heißt kamendes Leben morden*! How many times have you my *kamendes Leben gemorden*? My *Leben* always comes, again and again. And you *morden* it. You *la mordez à, à, à, à, au, au, au, au, aux*

There are times and they coincide from time to time; yet they are as different as two brothers who are not twin brothers. The same goes for sisters, or rather all this does not go, stopping somewhere, short of unity, the One and Absolute Truth. Once again I am reading Nietzsche's *Antichrist* where he speaks about a *Faust* and an *Augen* into which this fist seems to penetrate as a result of a strike, a hit, an aggression, a trans(trance)valuation of values. As I walk around my house and district, I listen to the original and also to the Russian translation of the text and therefore I cannot help hearing this fist and its strike, even if it is said and done in Russian. Last night, we spoke of a recent TV programme in which I uttered a few words rather nonchalantly as I played a Beethoven sonata. I played and you said (not synchronistically): 'Your TV appearances are like a fist in an eye'; or something to this

effect. Anyway, both someone's fist and eye were part of your speech that did not last, as a matter of fact. One might even say it was just a remark: it did not amount to anything else. Nor did it descend to anything at all.

What is coincidence? What is one's soul mate? What is one's soul? What is one, two, three? I read this sentence (the fist-and-eye sentence) first (fist) in the original and then in English. Then I listened to it in Russian as I walked around the trees of all kinds, saying to myself, 'Trees are always kind, even when they drop their leaves on your head.' Then we talked to each other as we ate this and that, and you said, '*Poing dans l'oeil*.' To my knowledge, you have never said anything like that, not even in your former lives in which you had no idea who I was and what I might do in the course of your *future* lives.

What kind of link is that? Is this link kind or unkind? Does it denote passion or danger or a sort of nexus, pliancy or deficiency? The universal network? Are we at one or the One or just twin brothers, lovers, sisters? Actually in the French translation of Nietzsche's half-masterpiece someone touches upon a *calotte* and a *tête* (slap, head). Your remark is much more faithful to the original, assuming there *is* the original and not just an original, an aborigine of sorts. Or just anything, anybody, anyworld, anymould, anymode, anycode. And even Allen what's-his-name will never break this code.

What kind of translation am I dealing with? What unkind of valuation, elation?

==========

tantamount, tantamount, tantamount, tantamount, tantamount, tantamount, tantamount
amount, amount, amount, amount, amount, amount, amount,
MOUNT MOUNT MOUNT MOUNT
out out
N N N N N N N N N N N N N N N N N N N

How can one speak of one's better half? Of course one is usually tempted to speak of one's worse half, of one's third half, of halves and calves that any language knows by heart and can release at the push of a button. You can say and write, 'I saw you that morning and you were surrounded by sunbeams and all other beams one can think of. Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful.' Or, 'You were there with our son in his and our pram and baby carriage. You carried him towards his future and I looked at you both. How nice!'

What can I say about *you*? Beauty is music, *music* you.

HHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH

You find everything in yourself because Heraclitus and Aphrodite thought so, along with St Augustine and *mein* Augustine. Among other things and beings, I find God, which makes me feel I am God; at least I feel like becoming one or the One. I am also a fallen angel, Lucifer no doubt: no point in becoming a run-of-the-mill fallen angel; for once, there is no middle way, only utter, outer, unbound way. I find within myself a black hole and a wormhole along which I crawl towards another light at the end of the tunnel. And finally (tunnely) I also find a white hole at the end of which my blood pressure goes down and I feel as fit as a Stradivarius (made in Italy or the EU) violin.

BLACK HOLE
BLACK HOLE
BLACK HOLE
W
O
R
M
H
O
L
E
WHITE HOLE
WHITE HOLE
WHITE HOLE
MASTERPIECE
BLISS

Apparently time stops in black holes. Time says to itself, 'I am time and so I have to go on. But I am in a black hole now. So I have to stop. So I am coming to a standstill, a standstil, a standsti, a standst. St. T.' The runaway bus eventually came to a standstill when it rolled into a muddy field (from a newspaper). A black hole is tantamount to a muddy field. Is tanta. Is ta, a.

Apparently there was no time before the Big Bang so God had no time (within His reach, that is) to create anything or press the 'play' button. But God does not need time, does He? He does not need anything, does He? Does He need a moment?

Was there any time before the Big Bang? If so, the Big Bang was not as big as all that. Perhaps it was not, end of story and history. If something small is on the agenda you need neither a bang nor anything of the kind. 'An' is enough. An an deviated from its trajectory and got lost and found; first lost, then found. On the way in, out and into holes it lighted upon the unthinkable, the unbelievable, the unforeseeable and the inadmissible. It collided with other ans and bees, and the world was born once and for all. Not *for all* perhaps, but once, once and once upon a world. And the world said, 'Yes, light, heaven, and so on.' But it did not say, 'God,' as godd as it may seem. Little by little, big by big, our An grew as large as the universe through a multiplication table of sorts. Anananananbanbanbangggggggg. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. And if the world originated in an egg, this egg must have grown and matured through the same (dinner) table: eggggggggeeeeeeeggggggggregggandflowwwwwwwwoooooooofffuuuuuuuoooouuffffwwwhhheeeeewwwww

pppppphhhhhhhheeeeeewwwww. I do not like eggs lightly cooked so that the yolk is still runny. I do not like eggs in general; whether lightly cooked or heavily roasted. I am not fond of the Creation as such; of the Big Bang as much; as little. Even a small egg, a small creation is out of anything, everybody and order; universal or otherwise. Everything is out of order, and even order is out of order; of everything.

8

Do I ever come back to myself or anything? Be it myself, oneself, or eternal recurrence or a current against which I swim and dream? Always against, against, against. I switch everything and everyone (not the One) off before touching the universe-*machina*.

To no hole will I ever say, 'Yes,' and life is probably a hole and its colour does not really matter unless its interior has recently been given a fresh coat of paint. Wet paint! in other words. Of course it depends on what colour you are covered with from head to foot. It also depends on whether it corresponds to your political and cultural views. If you were a French socialist, for instance, you would not mind been painted in rose (pink?), which could be easily done by falling into a rose hole. One wonders, however, if there is such a thing as a rose hole in the world where Black Mass resounds day in day out, night in night out. And there are no outs in this world of ours – only ins, ins, ins, so that we go deeper and further into the intestines of darkness.

So I say neither 'yes' nor 'no,' but I laugh all day long, and apparently only laughter – either in the dark or in broad daylight – can save one from suicide. 'How old is your new young wife?' I am asked now and then. By way of an answer, I say I had never been married before our wedding ceremony that took place in my garden, in the presence of my wife's two sisters and their husbands. Actually she is 56 and her daughter whose age does not matter as long as she can become pregnant did become both pregnant and happy, although her son's future (or present) father has not proposed to her yet. So I thought I might talk him into making the decision I made two or three months ago. How do I propose to talk to him? I put this question to my wife and she answered, 'You'll say, "If you don't marry Melodia on the spot, I'll adopt your child."'

'I'll say to him,' I said after no soul-searching (my story was already on my lips): 'We disagree on most things, but on this question – on the question of matrimony, I mean – we are at one with each other. A pure formality, on Earth, isn't it? Ours is a match made in heaven, my wife's and mine. So why did I marry her? Because she's pregnant. A gentlemen's club, you know.'

Our exchange of ideas took place last night, but I go on laughing myself silly. At 4 p.m. The sillier you laugh yourself, the better.

I cannot say I am immoderately modest, but sometimes I picture to myself a subatomic particle – myself, myself, in the shape of a subatomic particle; and our colours coincide as well, be they red, rose or navy-blue, naively blue. Some theories say we all are both infinitely big and small and so being a quark does not contradict either my or their theories. Anyway, I have always behaved like a superman and a subatomic particle (a worm). The former does not fidget about as if I was already a monument to myself, a fully-fledged tombstone; the latter is called an *a* quark. With the aid of W (*w*hatever it is), it changes into an *m* quark, but it also has a small amplitude to change into a *c* quark instead. In this state of mind and body I have also a small amplitude (and aptitude) to change into an *s* quark, and an even smaller amplitude to change into a *b* quark. Ensconced in a pillion seat, I go from one quark to another and I, for one, do not know why I have always being doing it. My life is a mix-up: it is a hopeless mess I have got myself worked into. In those moments of utter instability I go to the nearest cemetery (or to my garden) and become my own tombstone (or any stone, bush or tree). Or I have dinner with my wife in my (our) garden. I am no longer a one, the one, the One. (I *am* the One, at last.) Tombstone, garden, dinner, breakfast, brunch.

طططططططططظظظظظظظظظظظغلآقكشيييه

Only when a system behaves in a sufficiently random way may the difference between past and future, and therefore irreversibility, enter its description. Irreversible processes are in fact the source of order (Prigogine). Breakfast, lunch, dinner (jacket). Dressed up like a dog's dinner. My past is there too; so is my future.

REVERSIBILITY

Kitchen, bed, rumpled suit/sheet/bed/(wife)
Rumpled life, death, (paradise)

IRREVERSIBILITY

Wife, life, breakfast in bed, coffee, tea and champagne, washing machine, no spiders, no broken white-wine glasses, no broken red-burgundy glasses. Your glasses (spectacles, spectacles) are not broken either. God is up and down and right and left and everywhere. Even the where we are talking about is situated beyond any wear and tear.

RANDOM HOUSE

For years and years I behaved irrationally, living an at-random life and going back to the past where I lost everything. My goings and living rooms were quite different from the present and any future, down to the most radiant one (*avenir radieux*). My wife gave a radiant smile when she heard a piece of news about our future: she knows it almost by heart thanks to her pendulum. Our garden, dinner, two bottles of wine. Irreversible processes are in fact a source of order. My loyalty to the cause is impressive.

ششششششششششمممممممممممم

What am I doing all this for? All thisلآلالإلآيصلا? Communists have done a great disservice to our cause by suggesting that violence is justifiable. What is our (my) cause? Refinement, dignity, non-alienation, non-commercialism. Service.

a church service
a remembrance service
a funeral service
a marriage service

I am taking the cosmos in to have it serviced this afternoon. My extra-sensorial wife says that rather often. So do I, so do I, without saying it. Doing it, undoing it, un-un-un it. Or do-do-do.

I wish I were alone among elves, leaves and Eves. (A European wish.) Do I hear what I hear? (A European question.) I do not do what I do: another piece of Chinese nonsense written by a European. Another piece of nonsense, not a piece of cake. Not a piece of not a piece apiece

As usual, language takes over. What does it take, give and over? Thank you, control tower, power and Babel. Over and out. And away, away, away.

a word service
a beauty service
a harmony service
a hormone service

an away service

If I could be what I am or what I am not and the eternal wish to be not and am both and neither

What could be told is not told, and is, is, is, is certainly not, even if I see himherit and touch it as often as I wish.

The air goes through me and comes back somewhere and I go anywhere, provided there is any anywhere. And even this where or that would be enough. I drink a glass of wine and this is the anywhere I drink, consume and enjoy. *Amor fati* probably means enjoying any any. And drinking it, to it.

And *la mort*? No *fati*, no *fatum*. Just *la mort*? A psalm I am reading, on the wall opposite:

O God, o God, o Gott
Where and know. I know that
Nowhere. But Thou he-e-e-a-a-rst?

Please, take either care
Or my body. My care, body and O
I utter whenever I speak to Thou, Ou, H and so
On.

ONONONONONONONONONONONONONONONONONON
On is He in Russian, Thy knowest.
And Thy is Tï or Ty or TTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTT.

O, Oh, Ouch, *Aïe*,
Let me not die.

//

We know that we go from upstairs to downstairs and vice versa, with all our vices and dices.
Wuthering heights
And
Withering bottoms
You go from one to the other,
Any bottom is any height anywhere,
According to the Chinese
And
Tris, fours, fivesmegisters.

I am at the height of my own fashion. Within my vision of the world, I am very fashionable.
Whatever the latest fashion trend, you can be sure Nicki will be wearing it. And Nicki is wearing my books and even my photographs, my CDs, my soul and so on. Isn't it HegelKojève's recognition?

I also wear myself, my body and the rest of my substance. And I am wearying of wearing all this and that. I fell into the water with a splash. Yes, at the bottom of I-King-or-Chin there was a pool of water and I fell into it as I went on playing the game of *Verwandlung*. Last night my old friend, the oldest prince in the world, paid us a visit because I am no longer me, given that my wife shares my pleasures and the rest of my house. Once my wife starts nattering you just cannot stop her. So no one stopped her and so, and so that she continued to chatter – no matter how long this petto and fetto lasted, rusted. The prince and his wife were delighted to such an extent they congratulated me on my choice of my wife, of her face, intelligence, manners and clothes. Whatever the latest fashion trend, you can be sure Nicki will be wearing my wife, under her/his, over him/her. There is such a thing as a Christmas Tree. I have one within my fire place. It is always Christmastide in here, for we are born every

minute, not to say second and quark. Well, I am at my bottom or the universal, cosmic bottom, for all their congratulations. Going from my bottom to another Weathering Height.

Frame:zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz

Work:zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz

~~bbbb~~IIIIIIIIIIIIII

Here is the bottom

Here is the height

Don’t go up the Tower of Babel if you’re afraid of heights.
I am not afraid of heights so I go up the Tower of Babel.
Not the tower of Babbel, mind you. Body you. Spirit you. The Tower of the **Bible**.

I am somewhere in the middle, in a sort of mild middle. But from the middle, from the middling crowd and nonsense you cannot go anywhere unless you are bent on going, dropping to the bottom. Hölderlin and other poetry-stuffed *Helden* say it is only at the bottom you might get what they call momentum, run up, ascension, Resurrection and any other action associated with verticality and Babels of all kinds.

++++++++++++++=======+=   +   :=+:

The apple tree at the bottom of the garden is beginning to blossom. So am I. And so is the rose I bought yesterday.
sكشقلإععغههووىىيص

000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
How do I look at the stars I see overhead and down there? I put my foot in some, in what, in not and done, and a star is born. Or nothing is born because everything has been born already. What remains is my foot that does not budge – no more worlds, stars, misunderstandings, understandings, wifestrifes, strifewifes, midwifes, ifes, ifes, ifes, ives. Another world is born: you just put one letter instead of another. Ifes is an underworld; or no world at all. Ives is another world. Mushroom, another muchroom, ano
And no poison will ever stop this. No 0000000000000000000000000000000000000000
~~OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO~~

Not eye. Listening. Ear, ear. Can’t see what is beyond, face to face. Hear face. Smell it. No need to see. Smell God, truth and whatever? And this question mark. Hear it. Does it sound like a question? Does it sound like solitude, like the death of God? It does sound like death. Everything sounds like death or life and all the verses and vices one can think of. And I listen to what St Augustine might have heard on his deathbed. Not his wife, not her children. My, hear, yet, and Thou, only, on, on, li.

~~What am i LEFT with? Until my wife's life, dawn, consciousness come to? Does she reject or accept? What is there to accept? One foot outside the grave? The other one? The other, the one, the foot. I shall walk on this foot until this foot and world drop or top and I am here, not elsewhere, everywhere. And I say, 'I am top^, ai am the world^^^^the tops of the world, i am old~~

~~And is there and so everywhere. I am mind, bright and lost of bodies and Lots who leave their Babylons and think they are safe. They are knaves. Not even knives. Knaves, knaves.~~

One shakes something to its foundations. Or one rocks some something to its foundations, and they call it a 'rock concert'. And then a lot of ones shake foundations to something. And they say and write, 'There has been a shakeout of inefficient corporations.' They also write and say, 'Wewewewewewewewecancancancancancan. We are cancan.' And then they write and say the same words, striking them down before they are written or said, ---------- They call it, '~~Nothing but the truth~~.' They also call it, '~~Everything~~,' and 'Every~~body~~.'

Those who persevere are destroyed. Misfortune. You can do it thus, ~~Those who persevere are destroyed.~~
First, you destroy what they write. Yes, instead of sticking needles in their writings, you just strike them out thus, ~~Those who persevere are destroyed.~~
You can strike them out one by one, for instance, ~~TTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTT hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh oooooooooooooooo~~

He splits with them. No blame. I split with them. A A A L E E F F F and here are T T T H H H E E M M M

Going out and coming in without error. §§§§§§§§§§§§§§§§ >>outoutoutoutoutout NO ERROR
NO ERROR HERO
After a time of decay comes the turning point. Decay: لإلإلإلإ Turning point:كقيلآ
To and fro goes the way. TOTOTOTOTOTOOOORFORFORFORFORFPRVPRF

QUIET RETURN. GOOD FORTUNE
Always coming to you. Quiet return. No blame, reproach. No 'Where have you been?' Nowhere, nowhere. The same air comes through my window. The same letters come and go: عصلاzzووووىىىىىhhhhhoooooo
How do they go? ^$^$^^$^$$^$^$^^$^$^$^$$^^$$^$^$^$^$^$^$^$^
The same air comes through my window and I cannot say it is another air, polluted, repolluted. This same air was drunk by a Roman soldier. Eternal whatever. On the threshold of whatever; of water probably. I have a low/high boredom threshold. I have a low/high death threshold. I have a low/high life threshold. Schrödinger's cat.

Six in the fourth place means:
Walking in the midst of others,
One returns alone.

I always walk in the midst of my dead. Walking in the midst of their voices and notes. I shall always walk in the midst, in the middle of *una selva oscura*. Coming back alone. A few emails of no importance; of any importance. An email of importance:

Mr Aleff,
We have given you carte blanche to redecorate the living room. You can also redecorate some of your recordings. On the whole they are bad, you know. Your life and its slices.

One can return alone, listening to one's noble-hearted return. No remorse whatsoever. I am a Spinozist; after all these troubles, marbles.

Going back to a country, to a woman. And everybodything is the same and not. Time is the same, if you listen to it, strike it out, remove it from everywhere or travel at the speed of light. Time is the same everywhere. Time of your breakfast or of your new black hole, wormhole. Even if you are a worm, Time is not subject to your subjectivity; nor to your activity. Just ticking, tacking, ticking, tackling. /\/\/\/\/\/\/\

Dear Maestro, dear Valery!

hoping this mail finds you well!

I wanted to inform you, that I have find out, that for your concert in Taipei oct, 25, there is the possibility to provide a 280VC for you, if you want.
The Bösendorer would do the service free of charge.

♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫

Dest - Boesendorfer Taiwan http://www.boesendorfer.com.tw
台北市大安區復興南路一段253巷2號3F-2
No. 2, 3F. - 2, Ln. 253, Sec. 1, Fuxing S. Rd.,

In case you decide to take Bösendorfer for this concert, pease, let me know, if we should inform the dealer or if you prefer to correspond with him directly.

Hoping meeting you soon!

With love from Vienna,

Mira

?!???!????!??????!????!????!!!?????
☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻☻

Dear Mira,

Delighted to hear from you. I hope everything is all right.

Thank you for your email and suggestion, but of late I've had a few unconvincing adventures with Bösendorfer - rather on the Böse side. Besides, my innate loyalty incites me to go back to Steinways to which I'm far more used anyway. After all, I've practised on my Steinway for 43 years.

Thank you again.

Kindest regards,

Valery

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Dear Valery,

wunderful reading you, thank you for writing me, in face of unfortunatley bad news regarding Bösendorfer!

Do you think you could tell me the stories of the „Böse-adventures“? Me personally, I want to to know what’s going on and to understand ...

I was told, if you agree, they could provide in any case a Bösendorfer for your selection on stage. Without any bond, without any touch, if you don’t want to.

I’m very sad, because I miss you music, your words, your elitism, …

Maestro, Thank you that I had the chance to talk with you!

Warmest regards,

Mira

##########################

What is nothing? No pain. No friends, no loves – all right, all right. All wrong – a sharp pain in my arm. I will throw it out. Under heavens thunders rolls. What rolls under heaven is my pain – my arm is still strong enough to throw, fling and gigigigigigigigin it as far as heaven. Let it roll in heaven, let it poison it as well. Aha, heaven is crying with pain. Is that what they call thunder?

Thus the kings of old (I am neither a king nor of old)
Rich in virtue

It is pointless to pursue this occupation: Is, Chings and Kings give so few recommendable tips that none of them will ever work, even if one's racing correspondent has the following tips for the 3.15 and the 3.45 at Newmarket.

Apparently man has received from heaven a nature innately good, to guide him in all his movements. But what if our man (my man) cannot move? Forget about virtue – you have no time for it: all your time is taken by your pain. By devotion to this divine spirit within himself. Within whom? Within the spirit? So you have to be devoted to this spirit *within* himself? So you first have to get within this spirit, enter it and install yourself in its entrails. Once in its entrails, twice in its entrails and thrice as well in all the entrails you find inside, you devote your time (day), effort (pain) and money to this spirit. You say, 'Spiritus Sanctus, ouch, ouch, ouch.' And you go to heaven immediately, as ////////////// points up, though obliquely. Yet you go to heaven and at some point your heaven turns downwardsوييوو

And yet roses, heaven and a woman I have found are lost. Her smile is not lost on my senses and fibres. Perhaps I have neither senses nor fibres. The word 'woman' cannot be found among their letters. So much the better.

Perseverance furthers.
Perseverance unfuthers and unfeathers. [redacted]
Perseverance fetters. ᴅᴅ ᴅᴅ ᴅᴅ ᴅᴅ ᴅᴅ ᴅᴅ ᴅᴅ ᴅᴅ ᴅᴅ ᴅᴅ ᴅᴅ ᴅᴅ ᴅᴅ ᴅᴅ
Perseverance un un un un un no un

Nourished all beings!
(*A distant voice*): Not me, not my mother, not my nephew, ow, now, not now!
(*A distant body*): Splash
(*A nearby body*): Splash

Yang: A few chunks of pork, bitte zer.
(A nearby body): I'm nourished, not perished. Danke wel.

In springtime when thunder, life energy, begins to thunder (jum, pum, puf, squawatfgefdaqzfdqs) under the heavens, everything (except me) sprouts and grows! And grouse.

Fostered, frostered.

Innocent behaviour brings fortune. I'm innocent, you know. I'm so, so, so, so innocent. I've never slept either with a bearded man nor with an unbearded woman. Not even with a bearded woman in any circus whatsoever. I'm untouched, you see, you hear, you touch. I'm absolutely untouched. Keeping still, Mountain. I'm keeping still. I'm a mountain, I can assure you, doubly assure you. The Creative heaven. I'm this heaven, the creative one. I know, there are many uncreative heavens – that one, over there, for instance. Can't you see? That one, follow-my-leader, my finger ----------

The creative is tamed by Kên. The creative (shrew) is never tamed. Kên is about to be destroyed by another stalwart star-war. Kên, Kên, Kên, Kên, Kên, Ken, Ken, Cen, Cen, Con, CON, CON, ON, TAN, OTAN.

It furthers one to cross the great water.
I have already put crosses on three tombs: my wife's, my cat's, my own.
I put crosses everywhere. Am I not generous, humane, magnanimous and Christian?
I put yet another cross somewhere. I am a Christian + 1.
+ 2
+ 3
My garden is a cemetery. So is my house, my lavatory, my bathroom and attic. And my antics.

How easy it is. You communicate. No Antonioni, no Bergman. You put a cross, another cross, several crosses. What do you communicate with? With Whom, or just whom, or just a star? On your bended knees. You say, 'My cat was buried here two months ago. So were humanity and the stars. I'm here to tell the tale. I'll communicate with you, whoever you are. You're being buried. So am I. I'm not sure I'll speak to Socrates and Homer, but I'll speak to my cat. And that's quite enough. We're both not very talkative.'

Going down, down. Do I see o? Perhaps I do. What do I do with it? Let us get rid of black, white, worm, what, knot, God knows what holes, God holes. Just an o A swimming pool for the poor. O A swimming pool for the rich

The two corners of the mouths are the only corners we are confronted with.
Our truth is what is actually and truly called the Universal Truth where (corner)
That is where (are cornered)
Forever (we are cornered)
For (more or less cornered the fast-food market)
Or (corner)
O (co)
O (O)
O O

O
(
)
....

Democracy, Aristotle. Every one, onle, onemanle, counts. And every star where the born and unborn meet counts too, because if you write**********it is born, born, born. If you write***, it is a three-star restaurant you gave birth to. If you put*****

Over and above, above all, above all of us, whoever we are us yes can tin of beans, is a starry-eyed-bright-eared-bodied heaven. And I am probably dying forever, or never-ever. I wish I could kiss you or even a frog. Not in a French restaurant. In a bog, a frog. Not on any star. On the Earth, of course.

And to what a man seeks
To fill his own mouths with

With rice of course:
We are in China
After all and everything
And with ice, if it is too
Hot. (It is, today.)
And white vice and tea.

I fill my own mouth with you; so do you. That is what they call love _____or hate----------. A love-hate lovemaking, hatemaking. And all this is in the making, like Bertrand Show's God. And for the taking.

It is important that the right people should be taken care of and that we should attend to our own nourishment.
Our own nourishment: FOOD+FOOD+FOOD+FOOD
To the right people: FOOD
To the wrong people: GOD

Confucius says: knowledge. Plato says: knowledge.
Children are putting themselves at serious risk of adult back pain because of the heavy rucksacks they routinely carry around.

Turning to (SPIRITUAL) nourishment, to Nietzsche, to his Zaoraastras I join them on mountain tops and clouds where they walk (and talk: the walkie-talkie dates back to those times) even better and smoother than Christ; that

is why they are called Zarasmooothers. I turn to the summit and jump, jump, jump, jump until I drop like any raindrop. I drop from heaven where I talked to Zaras and astras, but I am thirsty because only the water stemming and streaming out of the Earth can quench my thearth. Preponderance of the Great pushes me down. In their presence I am just a drop, a tear perhaps. The load is too heavy and I am as light as any light cigarette. They smoke me and I become a plume of smoke bent on destroying the whole of humanity, for all my lightness and fineness; the whole of it (of humanity); in its entirety. SMOKE SMOKE SMOKE SMOKE ----------
-----00000000000000000000
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XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
The ridgepole sags to breaking point.
It is the day, age and time of the ‘’’’’great’’’’’’’. But you are very small and you push ahead🡐. You accept no advice from your brothers and sisters. They say, ‘Pull back, stay at home, eat your chocolate bars. Why don’t you play a few waltzes? Waltzes have three beats in/to the bar. Three beats, three beats, three tilts, three tits.’ You push ahead and your head splits into three groups. And every group says to you, ‘Over and done with.’ And then you hear, ‘You are clear to land.’ ‘Roger, I’m coming in to land now.’ I am not Roger, but I would give anything, all the teas in all the Chinas to become Roger, if only for a minute: I need land, land, land, land, any land, even Venus and her hand. To stand on my own two feet.

They are interchangeable, they are all interchangeable. Death and life – no problem, no question, no answer. Love and hate – goes without. They are hyphenated, all of them: happiness-misery, one woman-another man. Minus kiss-plus kiss.
A thunderstorm,
You go right and left,
No praise, no blame,
Only death, an old lease of life.
The abyss is dangerous.
Stating the obvious
And the deathderous.
You gain your (and
someone’s other mome
ntum) and Fall: Ah (French
(version) R-R-R-R (English-

Speaking-Saxon-American)
And then you stand up, salute
the sun, Hölderlin and I King
Tzing, tzing, ding, dong, ding.
Toll, toll, toll, moll, moll, moll,
Kol, kol, kol.

Kol is a stick in Russian. I think it comes from Pushkin, as everything else. 'I'll stick you on the STICK,' says Pushkin. Ivan (the presumed victim) bursts into tears. Ivan always bursts into tears unless he is Ivan the Terrible.

The abyss is not filled to overflowing.
It is filled only to the rim.

Of course, at any time, if any whim takes me overboard, I can and will go over all the boards I find in the neighbourhood. As soon as I was on board, I began to have second thoughts about leaving. And then I had first thoughts and left by flying overboard. Once on the ground, I had a lot of zero thoughts. And I then I decided to use Oham, Onan or Joahim razor, leaving only one 0 within reach: 0

Danger comes because one is too ambitious. Danger comes anyway. You say: 'All my bodies (astrals and otherls) are yours. *Amor fati*, *amor fati*, *amor fati*. But spare my littler finger. Do you really need it?'
'Of course I do. With your little finger you can lure your victim to a deserted house.'
'I promise you to lure no-one –'
'If your little finger –'
'It's yours.'
'If your index finger –'
'It's yours and your wife's.'
'If your middle –'
'Yes.'
'If your thumb –'
'Yes.'
'If your Mum?'
'Yes.'
'If your Um?'
'Yes. I like Joyce.'
'I do not.'

‘I like Nietzsche.’
‘I do not.’

Everything is interchangeable. Above is life, under death. You put everything upside down, not only -- __ ►◄but also tears, weathers, sunshines, eines and zweis. They say, ‘Recyclable!’ and add after much searching in their bodies and animas:
Metal, paper and glass can be recycled.
Old newspapers are pulped and recycled.
As a nation we recycle a mere 20 percent of our waste.

All of them are interchangeable. You put one nation on a mountaintop and that mountaintop crumbles and becomes a crumble. And vice versa. It is always vice versa.
Vice
Versa
Verses
Prose
I nervously crumble a mountain between your fingers. Now it is a rose; now it is a tropical bush or tree with balls of yellow flowers and leaves that are sensitive to touch and light; and height, and might. Women are interchangeable too. Let us call them ‘Flowers’: that is what they are in Wagner’s *Parsifal*. So you have several of them, even if you are not in a Muslim paradise. Now it is a rose; now it is a tropical bush or tree with balls of yellow flowers and leaves that are sensitive to touch and light (your touch, your heaviness); and height, and might. (Your height, your might, your money.)

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Dear friend,

I recall with pleasure our meetings in Tokyo. Sorry for the recitals.
Never again will I play Bösendorfers.

As you know, the photograph we used for the *Appassionata* CD was taken in St Petersburg. The photographer's name is Vladimir Mekler. I think he should receive a certain amount of money for his photograph (there are probably even two or three photographs of his in the booklet), especially since the CD will soon be released worldwide. Please let me know what you think about this and what could be done.

Thank you again for the chopsticks. My wife likes them very much.

Looking forward to hearing from you and to seeing you in Belgium.

All the best,

Valery

You are bound with cords and ropes. So what? You're a stoic and anyway these cords are interchangeable. Strong cloth that is woven from the fibres of the flax plant. You are wearing a linen jacket. And you do not ignore the crumpled charm of linen; nor are your numerous wives insensible to them.

That which is bright rises twice.
That is not bright rises once; or does not rise at all.
The great man, by sticking to brightness,
Illumines the four quarters of the world.
(Or T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*.)
But brightness lets him down,
Being interchangeable with darkness.
So the great man (Mao or Tao) illumines only
Three quarters of the world.
And now only two quarters, two waters.

The two trigrams represent the sun in the course of a daya**d**. _____---------!!!!----------

_____!!!!

The three trigrams represent the sun of a night Twinigh

The image of fire, of mire. A man is dragging sb's name through the mire/muda woman is dragging sb's name through the mire/mudi am dragging my name through the mire/mud mire/mud mire/mud mire/mud mire/mud mire/mud/mud/mire mud/mire mud/mire mud/mire mud/mire mud/mire mud/mire mud/mire mud/mire mud/mire mud/mire mud/mire

Dear Valery,

I hope this email finds you well!

I was wondering how your trip to Japan turned out. Did you have the chance to speak to Sony about our recent recordings?
This morning I called Gerr to see where we stand with the editing and he said he would be delighted to receive your final remarks for the Schumann and the French Program.
In addition I urged him to go ahead and continue with the editing of the remaining 4 CDs – which he will do next week.

Please send me a quick feedback so that we can organize ourselves and put this project on a good timeline.

Thanks and many greetings from Berlin,

Phil

<=>

Dear Phil,
I hope everything is all right.
I've just come back from Japan and Taiwan. In the intermission I was granted between these two tours, I was granted a few days at home where I found that my computer didn't work properly. Actually it didn't even work improperly so I could not send you anything – either my news or a financial report. I was partly cut off from the world and I think the best situation we can find ourselves in is either out or in. As usual I am in between – another manifestation of my innate middle way, which turns out to be a middle pay or even nether pay when it comes to invoices and suchlike. Netherpays is my native country, you know.
Anyway I hope my Russian friends sent you the money we had talked about so many times one might conclude we did our utmost to get through Spinoza's *Ethics*.
In Tokyo I talked to Ryusuke – isn't Tokyo the city where people talk, not always using toky-wolky? – and he said we could (they could – we always can) release the box entitled *His Last Will and Judgement* next year, before my October Japanese concerts (three or four, in Tokyo, Osaka and elsewhere). I suppose he was rather forthcoming on account of the relatively low costs our sessions (studio, hotel) required. Unfortunately I can't rely on our local billionaire's bank (Singapore, Peru and Mount Meru account) – he is fond of sufferers and those who worked, if only for three months, in Africa, saving everyone from starvation. His protégés are remarkable indeed. You ask them: 'Did you write a fugue?' They answer, 'I was in Africa.' (Saving everyone from starvation.) 'Did you study counterpoint?' 'I was in Africa.' I wish I could have been in Africa, if only for two months. After Hamlet's monologue everyone seeks an answer to the question betobenot. And only three or four people know that the answer is, 'I was in Africa.' That is why you didn't avenge your father. All right, all right. You were not at Wittenberg.
As for our Russian friends, I'll get the rest of the money (10,000 euros) before New Year's Eve, at all costs. Even if the costs exceed 10,000 euros, I'll pay the costs and get 10,000.
This is probably the last email I'm sending with the aid of my old colleague whose resistors are on their last legs and electrodes, I presume. Luckily for all of us and our producers, my friend – a real computer scientist operating in the unreal and brave world – will bring me another computer tonight. So I'll be able to send everything to everybody at the push of a half-button, as he says.
So I'll send you my supergreetings as soon as I'm in position to do so without being electrocuted.

And I'll also send my greetings and suggestions to Gerr.

All the best,

Valery

Dear Gerr,

I hope everything is all right.

I've just come back from Japan and Taiwan. Now I can devote a great many hours to literature and our recordings.

The version I received from Phil was much better than what I had heard before, and I think we can go on with our 'last will' project. In Tokyo I met Ryusuke several times and we talked about how our last recordings can be released. If all those recordings are released one by one, I told him, we cannot put on every cover: 'His Last Will and Testament.' I'm not a prima-donna who bids adieu to her audiences every other week. So, if everything goes well, the six-CD box could see the light of day in October next year - I'll have a short tour in Japan. Next May I'll go there with an Austrian orchestra and hopefully the whole set will be ready by then, which might allow me to give the final editing to Ryusuke. Incidentally, he seems to have liked out *Tempest* recording which has been on the market for two months now.

I have no idea how we could proceed with the Prokofiev and Schubert recordings. Will Phil send you his versions? Will you send Phil your editing? In my opinion, the reverberation is still over the top, but to a lesser degree. So, hopefully, it can be dealt with even if we do not go to Berlin. Actually, I wouldn't mind making this trip if you and Phil think it is the only way to ensure tip-top quality.

I'll send you my corrections shortly.

All the best,

Valery

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☻
♫♫♫

Her eyes glistened even in the total absence of the sun mislaid somewhere over the English coast.

The trajectory of my walks was whimsical and yet predictable: I would end up in a sleazy nightclub full of middle-aged men. They all leered drunkenly at go-go dancers.

There was a beautiful sunrise this morning. The dawn of a new era in my life. A new era, an old era. *Das Rheingold*, Scene Two. Wotan is gazing in admiration at Valhalla. The castle I shall have in Paris, one of these days.

We drank because we could not live without the infinity of wine, which did not prevent us from occasionally enjoying the sensation of dignified carelessness known as a side-effect of gustatory avalanches.

That which is bright rises twice. A coin to a coin, as the Russians say. Or rather gold to gold. You have a lot of gold in front of you, a pile of gold. Others (and there are only others except my life) say to themselves, 'Mysticism calls for mechanism, as Bergson put it in French. So the gold we're looking at calls for a celebration. And no celebration is thinkable-unthinkable-doubly thinkable (thanks to Hegel's dialectics and its *Aufhebung*) without gold. Let's buy some champagne in celebration of this multi-milli's arrival. But first let's add some gold to his gold.' That is how the world goelds.

All right, great men (provided there are any) continue the world of nature in the human world instead of ruining trees, ecology as such and much, much, much, thinking only about Trump and his richness and towers and women and Ivankas and Iwomkas. But Trump, who was a President of the USA in the 21st century (and Ivanka was his daughter in the same century), said, 'No. Profit, profit, profit, and after *moi is deluge*.' Trump and all Trump-related crumps, crumbs (and trumpets) are no more and the deluge comes. A little stream can become a deluge when it rains heavily. It does rain heavily and the little stream – how I wonder what all these droplets mean – become a deluge or flood or mud. Muddy, bloody, and so on. Mludy berry, in other words.

Through the clarity of his nature that coincides with our nature (in large and in very, very much) he (myself) causes the light to spread farther and farther and thus – not otherwise – to penetrate the nature of man (if any, if any nature, if any man) even more, and more, and more deeply, to the area where you can bet your bottom dollar both safely and truly. And then I (because it is only I) come across the line, 'The footprints run crisscross.'

I am crisscross anyway and that is why the sign of the cross my cat must see from his grave is criss somehow, anyhow. My footprints, my gestures and words run crisscross and is there thingno can I about it do. Thingno ingdo. Hindu, Hindu. It is not high time yet I had my go at the Hindi. Time is low; so is ebb. No flood on the agenda.

Books are great if you write them half-seriously, half-heartedly, half-tremendously, half-tragically-comically, half-half-half. *Gaf*, *gaf*, as the Japo-Russos say when imitating barking. They say, 'Don't let her frighten you, her bark is worse than her bite.' Then she bites you and you say, 'I beg to differ – her bite is worse than her bark.' To make assurance doubly sure (you are no liar), you ask her to bite you again. Then you ask her to bark. Then you say, 'Her bite is *much* worse than her bark.' And you italicise the word 'much', even when you talk to your friends.

I am fractal anyway, a good specimen of fractal geometry (Mandelbrot). The way I, (for one, not for two), alias the Tree of Life, divide into smaller and smaller branches and twigs is an approximate fractal pattern. I am the Book of Changes, but while each particular change is random and unpredictable, the sequence of changes is independent of scale. I am a multi-Hamlet, but if you look at me – I am a fractal object – at close range or from afar, I am self-similar, for all the fractals I have within my brain, body and astral body. I am ALEFF everywhere. I am the same LEAF all over the universe.

And what am I in here, in my study? - - - - - - - - - - - Or And my home is my universe. Predictability

breaks down somewhere – right here perhaps. - - - - - - - - -. Let us say —— is predictable and you say to yourself

and others (there are plenty of them), '—— will be tomorrow and the day after doomsday.' You know that ecologists

predict a doomsday scenario if pollution continues to increase at the present rate. What is the present rate? Or posthumous one? No idea. But the doomsday scenario is on the agenda. It is predictable. You

write ●

● ●

● And

you SHOUT: . : . :

. . . . . .

And then you learn that, within the overall shape, there lies a repetitive pattern whose exquisite (sic? healthy!) substructure characterises the nature of chaos, indicating when predictability breaks down as follows: KJNBBLKJ NIKJLHB HKJ VHCGF11:31 AMYTRTypà
-$< n,

That is how your predictability, your tenderness and elegance broke down. Disappointment brings down and shows a few glimpses of Hell. Nine at the bottom means disappointment, heartache, headache, two rotten teeth. Good fortune. Good riddance. Bye-bye.

I know nothing more insufferable than Schubert's *Impromptu in F Minor*, op. 142, especially the two semiquavers that go on and on. The point is they go on *instead* of taking their roots somewhere. My wife goes on, too. This morning I found on my piano the following billet-doux: JNA. You think immediately of DNA or Jeanne d'Arc. Her cipher means *Je nous aime*. There are two notes in the right hand and one note (an octave) in the left.

ta-ra-ta-ra- ta-ra-ta-ra-ta
ta-ra-

F F

What is F? Fatum? Fusband? (Fasbinder?) And the wife does all the talking. Taratratratrartaratratrtartartatratra. She *taratorit*, as they say in Moscow. And her husband answers, 'Fa.'

'What did you say, dearest?'

'Fa.'

'What?'

'*Da*.'

'*Da-dièse* ou *Da-békar*?'

‘*Da-bémol*.’

Our (any predictability) broke down a long time ago, when God died perhaps; perhaps a little earlier. So what do we do? Nothing at all? Not unusual, isn it? The outline of the castle on the hill was clearly defined against the evening sky. All right, let us define the outline of this castle, which must not be too complicated – this clearness will never obfuscate any issue, not the main one anyway – so that we proceed and exceed; and we proceed once again. The castle is our home – as is the rest of nature, it goes without saying. But what conclusion do we reach? A fractal object upon whose particularities we enlarged last night, around 8 p.m., is self-similar. Your life is broken and shapeless; so are all your flowers. But at least they are self-similar. They have the same degree of irregularity on all scales.
SCALE 1/2222222222222222222333333333333333’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo
SCALE 2/2222222222222222222333333333333333’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo
What about the same degree of harmony? Leaf leaf leaf leaf leaf leaf leaf leaf leaf leaf (Anti-Leibniz)

If music is, play on, away, away, tara-tara-tara-tara-tara-tara-tara-tara-tara-tara-tara
F
F
F
F
F
F
F
How to play and live this music?
/12345678902222222222222222222333333333333333’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo1234567890
A fractal object looks the same when examined from far away or nearby, from your room, from infinity. It is self-similar.
11111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111
11111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111111

A halted retreat
Is nerve-wreaking and dangerous.
To retain people as men- and maidservants
Brings good fortune.

Good fortune is brought. Here it is: £98076097097980780978097980709878097O9$. Plus Nobel, Bobel and Dobel. You should never hodel backwell: you attack. Your rose bushes are being attacked by greenfly. You become all these greenflies and attack humanity that is usually pictured as rose bushes. You attack these rosebushes (alias Paradise) and eat them.

You retain a maidservant and you ask her to get her clothes off. She does so and you ask her to do so and so and so. She does sosososososososososososo. All her petticoats go off. This sos brings fortune. So do other *os* (bones).

Perseverance brings good fortune. Almost everything seems to bring good fortune except thunderclaps, dragons, stomachs where you are digested (you are being read). You persevere, all right, all wrong, you persevere. You persevere ----------No good fortune.

i

i tar

Perseverance. *Les pas sur la neige*. tar

IKAR

IKAR

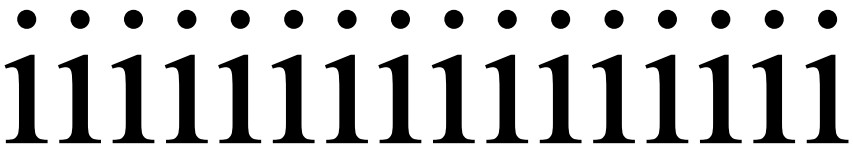
Perseverance. *Les pas sur l'air*. IKAR

Thunder in heaven above
Thunder in heaven below
Bum around, bum about
Boom! Bang! Bung! Bing!
Whoops a daisy!

Tarataratarataratarata
A flat C A flat C A flat C A flat C A flat C A flat C
G B

Progressing, but turned back. *Pour mieux sauter*. You are a group of go-getters, go-*sauters*. Not too big, not too small. If your group is too small, you cannot be 'united we'. So get off as united we. Immediately you get under somebody's skin, but skins are done for that: if you do not get under someone's skin, this skin and that somebody do not so much as. Actually you become a human being as soon as someone gets under your skin (and vice versa). And if he/she/it does, it means you have both a skin and an ego and a superego and supermania and all the booms one can think of. BOOM BOOM BOOM BUM.

Progressing, but in sorrow. Regressing, but in joy.
I lose: 1,000
2,000
I was flooded with sorrow when my first child was born.
I was flooded with joy when my first child was dead.
I was flooded with joy when my second child was dead
before being born or even conceived.
Then one obtains great happiness from one's ancestress.



حححثثثیصدعع

light

GOD
archangel
! ! ! ! ! !
000000
dead loss,
wash out
dead dead
loss loss
out out
dirty dirty
filthy dirty

Is that what they call a desert one carries around? One blank page, two pages. Let me carry this around

I can add another desert to my first try . What is the difference between _____ AND ? between! and? And+=?

The dead Achilles spoke thus to Odysseus in Hades: ‘I’m dead and Socrates thought that being dead is better than being alive. Why? You know this why. (You know other ways as well.) He thought he might speak to me

instead of speaking to his living, crying friends. We did have a sort of talk. What sort of talk was it? “I can’t say, ‘Go to Hell,’ because you’re in Hell already. Do you think I’m better than your coevals or whatever their names might have been? They’re ‘None’. Not ‘Nobody,’ mind you. None, none, none, none, none. Can you hear me? None, none, none. Go to a nonnery, as usual. Why don’t you go to a nonnery? Go to a nunnery, then. Or go to then, to Zen. Do you know what Zen is? They ask you, ‘What is a thunderclap?’ and you drink a glass of plain water. What could a king do in the kingdom of the dead? “Don't behave like the living,” he might say. “Don't eat their food. Don't fall in love with their women. It's pointless.” That is what he might *say* to his subjects. But what could he *do*? Nothing at all. What could a dead king do? He could wear a plastic crown. I would rather stay in my room. Alone. *Gelassenheit.* I could also do and that and this *Lassen mir vivere*.

Increase. It furthers one to undertake something. It furthers me, it furthers me, it furthers. I have a pair of feathers and they further me so I fly off, away, a way, a sort of. I fly a sort of and of and sort and soft. Softly, gently, deadly.

I undertake this and that. This has been undertaken; so has that been. I undertake, take, ache, under, under, under. I am an undertaker. I take what is under and take it under, further and further, deeper and deeper, underer, underer. I am Schubert’s *Wanderer*.

A dead person speaks to a visitor, a visitor to Hell: ‘How are you?’
‘I’m not dead yet.’
‘I am.’
‘Are you?’
‘I am.’
‘And your soul?’
‘I don’t know. I don’t care. My late duchess must be over there.’
‘In a poem, in a problem?’
‘ I’d like to make love to her.’

She comes and they begin their love-making: - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - _____

And then everything is done, undone. All the yings are undone; and so are

You accomplish great deeds. What are your deeds?
Last night I got rid of all desires. Great!
Last night I removed my right eye and threw it into a rubbish bin, a *Pöbell*. Great!
Last night I fell in love with a terrorist. Great!
Last night I fell in love with a great poet. Small!

Ten pairs of tortoises cannot oppose it. What? Six in the second place. And what about twenty pairs of tortoises? They can oppose six, ten and twelve.

Our increase is in harmony with the highest laws of the universe. We increase; so does the universe and its laws. Which is the highest law of the universe? The one you can find at the top of this page. And where can you find the top of this page? At the top of the world.
The
Top
Of
The
World
Is
Right
Here
Or
Rather
Down
There.

Six in the fourth place means:
If you walk in the middle
You walk in the muddle.

Seven in the third place means:
If you walk in the muddle
You walk in the muddle.

Three in the fourth place: 0003
Five in the second place: 05

All this means harmony, equilibrium, stability and balance. Then suddenly there is no balance: thunderstorm, blow here and there, a blow-up and everywhere.
The wind was blowing harder every minute. (So was God.)
The letter blew away and I had to run after it. (None of the gods ran after it.)
A gale-force wind had blown the fence down.
A serious/a criminal/drink-driving offence.
Once again we are in the midst of our yang or their yin. But any dawn is any dawn; so is any aurora. She slept fitfully throughout the night and arose before dawn. My wife did. Before another yin or yang.
‘Are you on the threshold of a yang?’
‘Yea or nay.’

‘Yea *or* nay?’

‘*Yea* or *nay*.’

Nine in the third place means nine in the third place. What is the third place? The fourth place, the fifth one. They are all interchangeable. ‘Drinking problem’ and ‘alcohol abuse and ‘death’ and ‘life’ and ‘pleasure’ and ‘ecstasy’ are interchangeable. Instead of saying ‘making love’, you say ‘agony’ or ‘Tristan’ or ‘Juliet’.

All is interchangeable:

A B

C D

If you want to change B, you will find A or C or FFFFFFFFFFFF.

Ten in the tenth place means tenth in the tenth place. Or in the thirteenth place.

PLACE

PLACE

PLACE

PLACE

PLACE

PLACE

PLACE

PLACE – thirteenth place.

PART THREE

My dearest chuck,
I was happy yesterday and the day before. I'm happy again, I'm a man again and probably forever. Life is what it is, as they say, and Time flows as time does all the time. But sometimes it flows *exceptionally* and that is what happened yesterday when I enjoyed your nakedness and myself so many times I lost all count. Is that what it is or has ever been? Life is a mirror where you see your wife's naked body; and probably soul, as they say. This email is not to the point, I'm afraid, but I've no idea where this point is – all points are lost. There are only zigzags and curves – your body, in other words.
Is life a word? What word, which one?
Body
Body
Body
Body
Caress
Caress
Voice
Hands
Only capital letters.
B B B B B B B B
C C C C C C C C
L L L L L L L L L L
From now on, I'll send you only letters. L, for instance. Why send love? Too long-winged, isn't it? Just L. A walk by the lakeside a lakeside chalet la-la land la-la hand
Your hands
Your thoughts
Your la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la eyes.
Your mi-mi-mi-mi-mi-mi eyes.
Your eternal D Major.
Our Missa Solemnis.

If you have no money, you sell your house and live till Doomsday, eating chocolate, pastries and the rest of what one (and you) can buy. If you have no house, you sell your furniture, which might and must help you buy the same pastries in the same shops. If you have no furniture to speak of – anyway you do not speak of anything of the kind – you sell your second-hand clothes and live in rented accommodation / housing / property. Who do you rent the land from? Does that really matter? You have the land – your father's or mother's land – and live on it as long as they bear your presence and crave for your absence. Or long for your absence, for your long, everlasting absence. If you have nothing to speak of – and consequently you do not speak at all – you just walk under the Sun, singing:

Walking under the Sun,
Under the murder, under the Sun.

And the rain can go to hell
With its dancing or ungoing.

Or to Purgatory to talk to
Dante up or down or anyway
There. talktalktalktalk

I'm in Baltimore on business

Dear Valery,

May I get back to the budget-issue for our upcoming recording projects? Just recently I received the invoice from the city of Viersen, asking me to settle the rental-fee for the two recording periods. Also, I have made the reservations at a nearby hotel for all of us.

In order to cover these initial expenses may I send out a first invoice for €5000 to you or whoever will be paying the bill? I assume that the recipient of the invoice will be a private person? Or are you being funded by a company? The reason I ask is in regard of whether or not German VAT applies. Please let me know the name and exact billing address of who will be making the transfer.

I am putting our office manager Christiane on CC. She will be in charge of generating the invoice.

Thanks so much and best regards,

Phil

50000000000
Dear Phil,

I hope everything is all right.

I've just listened to our Franco-Belgian recording. I think it is more
than all right. Thank you again for your wonderful contribution.

As for the payment, I know you'll meet my friends in Moscow.
Unfortunately, they can give you only 10,000 euros. We'll get the other
half shortly - before the end of the summer. It is hard to organise two
concerts of this kind within the space of two or three months. I hope
you understand that the whole procedure it tiresome and even humiliating
to some extent, given the amount of money spent on other artists.

Anyway, I'm sure we'll get another half rather soon.

I'm awfully sorry for the inconvenience, but I can't do more. I can play, though. And that's what I do with your precious help.

Looking forward to our July session.

****

Dear Valery,

Have you heard from your sponsors about meeting up in Moscow?
In addition to finding a time and place, I will need their name and address to declare the funds.

Many greetings,

*****

Dear Phil,

Thank you for your email.

Yesterday I called my friends. Apparently their assistant had already sent an email to you, saying they preferred to give you the money in Moscow. Anyway, I confirm it now. I hope this is still all right with you.

Thank you again.

Looking forward to our future meetings.

******

Dear Mon,

My name is Valeria, I'll be in charge of Mr Afanassiev's recital instead of Elena Naumova, who has left the Philharmonia just these days.

Unfortunately, your new request for an Euro cash payment is a big problem for us since we really cannot pay fees in cash in Euros as you ask. I even do not say that in fact we do not even have a right to conclude a contract with a musician directly if he/she does not have an official work permission in Russia, and we should deal with a musician through the agency representing him/her. Nevertheless, I would like to emphasize that still making such a contract with the musician directly and taking a serious rick upon ourselves, we make a big step forward to meet the artist's needs.

At the same time, I am sorry to say that now we cannot pay fees (if paying in cash) in any other currency than an official one in Russia, Russian Rubles. It is now because of restrictions of last time. What could be virtually possible or could look more or less acceptable a few years ago is not possible any longer. Sorry to say so.

That is why, making a contract with Mr Afanassiev directly, we have only two possible ways to offer as for paying his fee:
- to pay the fee in cash in Rubles immediately after the concert (and Mr Afanassiev exchanges it on his own)
- as agreed before with Elena, to make a cashless transfer of Mr Afanassiev's fee to his personal bank account (card)

For us, the second way is definitely much more preferable. In fact, it is the only legal one.

As for exchanging money, Mr Afanassiev can exchange Rubles either here, in the centre of the city, on Saturday morning (we can recommend him a possible bank just in Nevsky prospect, round the corner, as an option), or do it before leaving at the Pulkovo airport.

I hope very much for your understanding of our rules and new restrictions, and look forward to hearing from you as for your final decision, since we have to indicate the way confirmed in the contract.

With best regards,
Valeria Velichko

***

Dear Valeria,

The privileged travel first class in the company of their mothers, fathers and nephews. And last but not least, their professors. These middle-aged children are routinely tutored for hours before and after concerts. And they enjoy a lot of sweet dreams in their royal suites. I can't say I have only nightmares within my reach, but I suppose you might have found someone to change your roubles into euros or any other decent currency. Why should I take care of my fee? Do you think the underprivileged are happy with their lot? I could have cast a farewell glance at my favourite city instead of spending 20 minutes in that ghastly bureau de change.

I'm not sure I'll ever play in Saint Petersburg again.

Thank you for your help, as my former French mistress used to say whenever I did *not* help her.

Kindest regards,

***

I can travel to Timbuktu and write a few emails to Tumbukwho. What does it achieve or underachieve? It achieves something under and I have no alternative but to do business with this under or upper or hanging gardens of sorts. I hang in these gardens but do not die because I do not hang myself to death or even to tears. I hang myself to gardens where there are shades and fruit. I eat this fruit as I sit under the shade of a large beach umbrella. All right, I am on a beach, under a beach, above it, agonising for days above/over whether I should die, weather permitting. But our weather does not permit anything.

I go far enough to reach myself or whatever is depicted as myself. People were shocked by the advertisement which depicted a woman beating her husband. People were shocked by the advertisement which depicted a man beating his wife. People were not shocked by the advertisement which depicted a man beating himself. That is what I do incessantly. If you beat a carpet on your balcony – as they do in Naples and elsewhere – you get a lot of

specks of dust you try to disregard, hoping they will take care of themselves. (Who? What? When? Why?) What am I to do with my own specks of dust? Every speck is myself; and yourself, whoever you are.

Brutus comes out of the blue and murders your çççççç(‘(!çà)à))-‘””’’(((((((. What remains amounts to . or descends to .

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…………………………………………

Dear Gerr,

I’ve been betrayed so many times. I didn‘t think Phil would betray me. He sent his assistant who was hopeless. We don’t have enough money and he needs enough of it. I played my life, as I always do. That’s not enough. You need to kill yourself. Well, I tried, I did. And then I thought about (Beethoven’s) opuses 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114.

126

133

115

116

117

118

119

$$$

I had a recording session, another one. I made three CDs in three days. After the last take and ache I scrambled into my car I drove over to Belgium, back to my barracks, cats and wives. Nothing happened on the way because there are other ways and days and so you can perish anywhere, provided you are still alive. I was and I am to some extent, thanks to my guardian angel who is both my body and soul guard. On the next day I took the same car and drove to the nearest shop in search of a morsel of food. The nearest shop was far enough to allow me to bump into a signpost or a lamppost or just a post, any post or pole. I also brushed against a tree or another car and also drove

like crazy or Daisy along a motorway that led only to faraway shops and whiskies. I cannot paint my mental pictures because they are unpaintable. Nor are they describable, as Dante might have put it. Here is the only picture (Wittgenstein's sense) I can find for it:

Dscqv+++
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++VQCqv<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<
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+++

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Today I am singing the praises of the divinities whose care and vigilance bestowed on me a variety of the George Cross worn by all the living. And my friend's nephew has just sung two songs by Schubert at the school concert. What is the difference? What difference does it make?

Dear Gerd,

Thank you for your patience and art, for your piano and humanity. Thank you for everything and even more, as a Gogol character might have put it.

I have a crazy idea to record the rest of Beethoven's sonatas dedicating the whole cycle to Gilels. I'll also write a book on him and on Robert Musil, on Walter Benjamin - on all artists of genius who had no opportunity to finish their works.

I hope you'll join me with your Bösendorfer.

My love to Natalia.

Have a nice holiday.

With all my thanks.

Your Valery

Dear Gerr,
Thank you very much for your help and patience. If it weren't for you, I would be a mere mechanical piano. Perhaps it is my last recording. Perhaps it is not. If not, I have no alternative but to record *all* Beethoven sonatas, the task my dear teacher didn't accomplish. Death, as usual. Another alternative is death, the same and only death, and I'd rather to record Beethoven's, Mozart's and Schubert's sonatas. I hope you'll be with me on those occasions too.

Dear Valery,

I was filled, overflowed, with impressions of your Beethoven to share with my mother. Still resonating. I want very much for her to hear what we listened to yesterday.
Indeed, Vous êtes Beethoven.
An absolute must, for you to record all 32.

Your reach destinations far beyond earth, but one hears most clearly that your far-reaching visions have a starting point firmly rooted in the earth's crust. Mind boggling, how you manage this duality—of land and sky.

I forgot to ask you for a copy of your essay on the Russian School. That last paragraph—here, your fiendish wit stings with a mighty bite.

Did you do your cardiovascular walk today??
Any plans for your imminent escape to a health haven??? Spa is the closest.

As a hint to Sony (or to whichever recording company), I hope that in your next tour of Japan, Beethoven will form a significant segment of your recital repertoire.
On my way back home yesterday, I wondered if there was a possibility for you to perform all 32 in several recitals—in 5 to 8 concerts for example—in Japan (or anywhere, of course). Or at least to perform the sonatas which you haven't recorded yet. Understood, that this may be a more ambitious project for the record executives (or not??) than presenting the sonatas only on recordings, but the idea stuck with me for a while.

With neighborly affection,
Julian (As a youngster in the U.S., I was sent first sent to a jewish orthodox school, a very harsh place. I was expelled for one week for spelling my name as Jewlian)

For a while – and this while lasted longer than any previous while – I did not receive anything either from God or his angels. I did receive a call from my German friend's wife whose name is Angels or Godgels, but I did not

answer that call properly. Actually I do not answer any call properly or actually or appropriately; I answer just this and not and yet another not by putting everything in bags and sacks and Wagner's favourite Hans Sacks. I put everything in Sacks and he sings, 'I am everything and everlasting / Here is my song, listen to it / It is what it is and much more, much more / Much more than what it is.'
What is more than what it is? You are aware of what it is and you may even go so far as to say that or just 'everything is equal to everything'. Then you burst into another sort of song:

You're equal, yet you're not.
Here's a genius, a chamber pot.
A man, a woman, a baby, God.

No beginning, no end, neither in my beginning nor in any others' end. Any shape. A serpent. A well-spring of life.

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Dear Valery,

thanks for sending the bottle of wine and the fine glass. It is much appreciated.
I am really thankful that we were able to realize and complete this project. Bravo!

Many greetings,

Phil
!!

If asked if I believe in God – there are many other ifs and dos, but let us drop them for the moment – I would answer, 'Jung says he knows God exists so he doesn't have to believe in Him – as everybody knows. At least Tertullian and Kierkegaard knew that – it is even more absurd to believe in the existence of someone you know almost personally than in that of God. I don't know if God exists or not – I don't know anything about Him. But I do know myself, a little bit. Not thyself, myself. I am in the world and I see a lot of flowers and trees around me. I hardly know their names or shapes or colours. I've knocked about a bit, but I hardly remember anything, any place I went to. And even when I see those cities and mountains in books, I don't recognise them. So why do I say I'm alive? Only because I can't see my own coffin? Or a few clods of earth above my head? Because I *cogito*, oddly enough. Descartes was wrong about many things – almost everything, one must admit. But his equation was correct, at least to some extent; to my extent. I come to conclusions or walk away from them – without walking,
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needless to say. The disorder I come across is my disorder and perhaps it has something to do with the world. That doesn't really matter. This disorder is probably God or the small beyond lying beyond these trees, flowers and roofs.'

I have never liked Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein. (And many others, of course.) Probably they wish to show that creativity is no longer a privilege of highly creative individuals, of individual individuals. You just pick up some soup and put it on the canvas – not in your mouth, mind you. Actually, for nothing in the world would I put such soups in *my* mouth. I'd rather see them on walls, on warhols, in museums. Or in black holes. No interpretation, no craftsmanship, no meaning. Well, I don't need to see two piles of soup tins on a canvas to realise there are no metaphors in life except the ones I come across during my mental wanderings or inner monologues. I just go through a maze or rather a mess and some associations crop up in the nooks and crannies of my brain; of my *brain*, I suppose. All this probably happens in my body, but my brain is part of my body unless my head is rolling away from a scaffold. I'm just bored to death by their artefacts, canvases, no-comment masterpieces. They let things be and I adopt a not-to-be attitude towards their industrial productions. Santayana and his 'comic vision' or 'comic faith' suit me much better. After all, I do believe in God. Not in good, though.

There are people (there are still people and animals and others) whose joie de vivre is boundless to the point of making them feel every appearance of the sun (or the moon) as a resurrection or the Resurrection; yet another proof of Jesus Christ's healing powers. Of course they do not remember the Redeemer whenever they watch the clouds recede into the distance (often merely in their minds), but they greet the sun with such a show of gratitude one might rightly or wrongly accuse them of lapsing into paganism. Indeed they enjoy every leaf, every beam, every sun, and one wonders what they feel whenever they are caught in pouring rain. They just say, 'It's good for flowers, grass and the world's unshakeable harmony.' So they enjoy every minute and inch of the world, be it harmonious or disharmonious. What's more, they accept everything with the same magnanimity: a drop of rain, a bad book, a bad concert. A young musician comes onto the stage and they immediately think about his youth, good looks and charisma, disregarding and imperturbably discarding the quality of his performance. After all, you can enjoy both the sun and rain in a hut, in the slums of Lima. Spinoza speaks about 'an idea of man upon which we may look as a model of human nature'. This idea cannot fail to give rise to many other concomitant ideas – to its own components, so to speak. If you enjoy whatever comes your way, you unconsciously poke fun at these ideas and so abandon the model of human nature; and music.

Apart from my dependable (and yet dispensable) members or extensive parts, to quote one of Spinoza's definitions, I have intensities, a lot of them, if we are to believe the same Spinoza; or another Spinoza, Deleuze, etc. All right, I have my arms that reach out for a morsel of fish I need to sustain relationships with my organs such as stomach, intestines and prostate. As they say, it is better to take care of one's prostate so as not to look like that woman who, prostrate with grief, has been wailing on the ground for half-an-hour at least. Why? Because her son lost his leg in Afghanistan or in Vietnam or in North Korea. But if I neglect my inner organs, I'll be wailing on the ground too,

prostrate with another kind of grief or pain or fear or boundless agony. They call it prostate cancer or liver cancer or intestine cancer or all of them together with a number of metastases here and there; and everywhere, needless to add and point out. Proust seems to intimate that art allows us to feel everything at once: instead of going from one state to another, we feel all of them together in one chord which resounds of its own accord. The same goes for all these cancers: you suffer from all of them at the same time except that it does not happen in a novel where a novelist's art seems to surpass itself between all the lines, going over all the tops. No, all this happens in real life, in a real hospital, amidst a group of doctors who shake their heads as they look at your metastases and metamorphoses, saying, 'You don't have to tell us what you feel. It's written all over your face, chest, belly and shoulders. Another metamorphosis, you know. Your love for Ovid played another cruel trick on you last night.'

So my extensive parts are rather expensive: they often ask for oysters and even caviar as if unaware of its price and rareness. Of what *are* they aware, I wonder? Their knowledge of the world is so rudimentary I wonder how they have survived so far instead of being badly burnt in some blaze or other. And I continue to wonder as I ask myself why I should not call upon my mind in the presence of objects that are supposed to show me naked life – or phenomenology, in other words. They show me a phenomenon and their looks insinuate I am losing my nerve. How do they mean? Apparently I always lose my nerve in the presence of the world because I am tempted to decipher and explain it instead of enjoying its nakedness, mindlessness, senselessness or just its lessness, its plain, stark naked lessness. I am too nervous, twitchy and acutely anxious to leave the world in peace.

You see a dot and you say to yourself, 'I'm sure at some point in the future I'll want a baby,' and you point to the dot you see on your computer screen. 'Less,' says a voice you are unable to identify. (God or one of His angels, as usual.) 'My nerves are at breaking point,' you say to yourself as you look at the same dot, at the same knot or nexus into which all your thoughts converge non-stop and almost lustfully. 'Less,' says the same voice or the same Husserl and you switch to another dimension, doing your best to pay homage to minimalism. You say to yourself, 'If I join up the dots on the paper, I'll get a picture, but I shouldn't. No picture, please. Only one dot, one dot.' But your thoughts obey neither God's voice nor your orders: they are mature enough to shift for themselves and demonstrate their free will (or world) whenever they feel like it. (And they feel like it whenever they feel anything at all.) So they say to you it is a point of no return and of eternal recurrence which now and then amount to the same point. Or they just point to that point, saying, 'It is a point,' which reminds you of Magritte, his pipe and many other objects he painted in his lifetime; needless to say. I wonder why I have been reminded of Magritte so often over six months. Because I am living in Belgium? Not very far from his museum? Around 35 kilometres, I suppose.

●

That is what your point of no or yes looks like. Of course you can argue – if the voice goes on talking – that if the point (or dot) means 'yes', its size should be as huge as the sun, metaphorically speaking. (And as bright as the

sun.) If, on the other hand, you are dealing with one of noes, you can limit your ambitions to a simple dot one can find on a keyboard lying in front of one's computer. No point in comparing it to the moon.

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That is what it looks like, in other dots. You can hardly see it as if it did not mean anything, not even 'no,' let alone 'o'. But you should not forget – and you forget it all the time (others do not) – that it is a dot, not a point, and consequently all your language-motivated games are not motivated at all. They are just games or mere names, and you might as well say, 'Peter, Paul, Moll and Doll.' And what could you do with this dot (or with this Moll), if deprived of your figments, imaginations, words and ords: you just put a suitable letter before this 'ords' and that will do for the time or being or forever and ever. (Lords.) All this depends on how long you will stay in this vale of murk and dirt. For instance, you think you will live forever, given medical leaps and bounds. Our medicine bounds and we live for another 30 years; another bound or rather leap and we say to everybody, 'I believe in God.' Why should you show how this leap was executed, how this ritual was carried out? Of course you can put yourself in one corner and God in the opposite corner: the cornerstone of society staying in the corner opposite the society of which He is the cornerstone.

I a leap GOD

Sometimes I just grow weary of myself, of my corners (but not of my precious stones), and the dot one can see in the middle of this page just means I am fed up and in need of another glass of freshly-squeezed orange juice.
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Ovid thought no one spoke Latin in the country to which he had been exiled, but one man – Markes his name was, if I am not mistaken – did speak Latin and it is for him that Ovid wrote his elegies.

TO MARKES (Not Marquez)
I write for you, I write for you.
How are, are, are, are, are, are you?
I hope you'll live, well, long enough,
To read your own epitaph.

I also have a sort of Markes within my reach – several of them, to be exact. And I can count on them as long as I live, sending them poems and short works that do not require an infinite attention span. Even one Markes is enough, if we are to believe what they say about Ovid's biography: he did not commit suicide, did he?

So I have an object, a subject, and I can reach for them unless they are too hot, too cold or prickly or full of quills like porcupine (or some humans). You get closer and closer to such a substance, but at the last moment I, for one, withdraw, even if solitude and its cancers threaten me more than ever. Anyway, I am not touchy-feely and do not really need to touch whatever I see or smell unless it is a bottle of old Burgundy I smell and touch before pouring some of its contents into my Riedel glass. And then I establish another relationship with the wine, which is quite superior to the one I described in the previous sentences devoted to the first stage of my penetration into the world. An adequate one, so to speak (the second one), as if there was something adequate or inadequate in this imbroglio of nonsense where quills alternate with quill pens.

Instead of gulping your Burgundy down, you look at its colour, roll it along the inner side of the glass, swirl it, smell it, take a sip and roll the wine over your palate as if rinsing the mouth. Quite adequate, as they say now in Russia as if they had read Spinoza in their youth. You drink one bottle, two bottles and then you no longer bother about rolls and rock-and-rolls, gulping down whatever you hold in your hand. And you hear the same voice, chiding you for your inconsiderate, disrespectful conduct: an old Burgundy should be respected. 'Inadequate,' says the voice whose knowledge of Spinoza's theories can be neither questioned nor doubted.

Then you fall onto the floor and snore to your heart's content for several hours in a row; and sometimes you even get the feeling you can see this row in your nightmares. 'Inadequate,' says the voice as you open your eyes and begin to re-establish your acquaintance with your own room where there are a lot of dervishes; at least everything turns and turns, and for a while you think you are the sun and not a man. And then you realise your bed is not a planet and it does not really circle around you; nor does your dressing table attempt anything of the kind. 'How unkind,' you say to both of them. 'Am I not the sun? Why don't you acknowledge my superiority? Can't you see my light? All right, you're neither planets nor asteroids. But you're what they call two pieces of my furniture and I think I inspire respect and devotion from you and other pieces of your unkind.'

Then someone puts you under a device – another planet or asteroid? – and this device sets about releasing a lot of drops of water through a lot of very small holes. 'Adequate,' says the voice. You lurch backward and forward, although no one leaves you in the lurch, as Shakespeare might have put it. 'Inadequate,' says the voice. (Just another Shakespearian fool.) You raise your head and the drops begin to land on your face, on your eyes and mouth, but you are under the impression – under the drops and this impression – that all of them come to a standstill on your brain. 'Do you feel refreshed?' asks the voice.

'Yes,' you answer.

'Adequate,' says the voice.

'It was such a hot night that I had a cold shower to refresh myself.'

'Inadequate,' says the voice. 'You were blind drunk.'

As usual, the Bible is not far away: it is just in your hotel room, in a bedside cabinet in which you rummage in search of consolation or a timekiller. (Time is pain, isn't it? Not money, anyway.) When you lie in a hotel bed – or at home which is a hotel of sorts; so is the Earth – you think in terms of death, taking or mistaking every pain, however tiny and cosy, for one of those fatal diseases you read about in the *Daily Mail* and local tabloids. Of course, at some point you are bound to remember that gurus (one of my leitmotivs) advise you not to make a mountain out of a molehill. And the pain you suffer from in inverted commas is not even tantamount to a molehill,

let alone to a mountain, to Mont Blanc and Everest. It is not even a mole, let alone a hill, and you utter these words as you open the Bible at random (St Augustine's way): 'Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.' To make assurance doubly sure, you pull a quill pen out of your pocket and draw a straight line on the nearest wall:

____ MOUNTAIN

To make assurance triply sure, you draw another straight line under it:

____ HILL

≈≈ TWO MOLES, MALE AND FEMALE

Then you chance upon the following verse: 'Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.'

∧

vvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvv

The days of our years are threescore
years and ten; and if by reason of strength
they be fourscore years, yet is their
strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon
cut off, and we fly away.

In a few hours I shall be 70 and no one will any longer say I am a middle-aged man; after hearing me talk, no one will say, 'I thought his speech was very gracious and mature.' This speech might have been gracious – and I am almost sure it was – but it was *not* mature: it was old, old, old; as old as I am. I am as old as molehills, mountains and valleys where one can walk until one drops dead or alive: many people rise to occasions or just rise after their drops. And if they are young or middle-aged, people say, 'I wonder what the future holds for them.' But no one is likely to speak in this vein about me and my members and timbres: to some extent, every body is a music instrument. 'I don't want my children associating with drug-addicts and alcoholics,' they say to each other. And

they add, after a minute or two not necessarily devoted to any searching of any kind, ‘I don’t want them associating with old-age pensioners – they’re all paedophiles, you know.’
Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita. *Di mai finito*, *finita* or finish.

Smarita,
Perdita,
Finita.

A *terzina*, forsooth!

70707070707070707070707070707070707070707070707070707070000000
Dearest friend!

On your special day I want to congratulate you sincerely to have joined the "maturity club" .
Remain healthy and inspired for many years to come.Be always surrounded by love and kindness.
Let words and sounds lead you to new discoveries and insights.

Thinking about you in the faraway Kyoto.

Warmest hugs and cheers!

Always yours Gidon (and Giedre).

Sent from my BlackBerry — the most secure mobile device

Dearest Gidon,

Getting out of my mother’s womb was the first hurdle to overcome, and I still don’t know if I really overcame it. Isn’t it rather the other way round? Didn’t that hurdle overcome me once and for all? Many individuals say proudly, ‘I’ve cleared all the hurdles,’ and they go on talking about their bosses, jobs, exams, salaries, fees, medals and Nobel prizes. I wonder if I’m not just perched on a hurdle, unable to jump down or up, aiming at the nearest star, Beatrice or Lucifer.
Taking his cue from Psalm 90, my favourite poet put a strict limit on the amount of time one can spend in the vale of struggle for survival. ‘We set a time limit of 70 years for the test,’ he said leafing through the Bible and Thomas Aquinas’ summas. Neither my mother nor Emil Gilels reached my age which I don’t deserve in the light of what I read about the great men of the past. Augustus died at the age of 50; Dante at the age of 57. He wasn’t even allowed to brush against 58 – the number ostensibly born by my Moscow apartment. But he did clear the 56 hurdle – now I live at number 56 Oxford Street.
Dante says I’m facing the Age of Decrepitude or That of Senility. (I, not him.) For some obscure reason, my free will chooses the former – I don’t like the sound of the word ‘senility’. Actually I’m not in love with the letter ‘s’; nor does ‘y’ appeal to my senses. Y, Y, Y, Y – I’ll never get used to it. ‘Plato has just reached the grand old age

of 81,' said Aristotle. Plato was neither decrepit nor senile; yet he didn't finish his *Laws*. He finished his life instead.
A decrepit man wouldn't have made as many as six CDs in the space of six days. (I did. A six-day war with oneself.) A senile man cannot do anything either in time or in space unless one talks for hours about one's wheelchair and the food one chews and spits out in disgust.
Enjoy Japan and your own concerts. Thank you for your wishes and remembrance of things past. Give my thanks and love to Giedre. Give everything to everybody, if you can.

Your Valery

70707070707070700000000000000000000000

Dear Maestro!

On this very special day
we wish you a very very Happy Birthday!
We hope you enjoy another 70 years (!!) full of good times,
good health, a lot of happiness and great success!!

We're very much looking forward to seeing you in October.

Best wishes and love from Kyoto

Yukio & Ira

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What is a special day? A special moment? A day begins with a moment and it must end with a moment, the same moment, if it aspires to deserve the appellation 'special' (the same young same young); otherwise it would remain 'run-of-the-mill' till doomsday, until doommoment (the same old same decrepit). I am in my bed and I am still in my bed in the light of what I have just said and written: I am living through the same moment situated in my bed, by my wife's side and mind. Both her side and mind were half-asleep when I addressed a few introductory remarks to this bed-rooted audience. I asked my wife till what time we could go and see her brand-new grandson in an old-as-the-birth maternity hospital. After a while, almost in the same breath, I asked her if she wanted me to bring her a cup of coffee so she might drink it in bed, as so many housewives do, provided that their husbands do not mind going up and down within the space of a few minutes. She answered thus, '*Je ne veux pas réfléchir. Je reste dans mes rêves*.' 'No train of thought, not yet. I'm yearning, yawning and longing to stay inside my dreams. Indoors, in other words. And I won't open the door unless our grandfather clock strikes nine.'
Let us suppose this moment is still on and has no intention of leaving this house or even the world where this house will remain a centrepiece unless I jump out of our bed and proceed along a number of corridors leading out, away, up and down a road, two roads. The moment does not go; nor does any other moment come and settle

on our bed: interfering in other people's relationships is always a mistake and such a mistake is all the more unforgivable if this relationship includes a space-time element (a moment, a bed, a cat). My wife is reluctant to forsake her dreams for the sake of a cup of coffee.

Yet her hands are stroking my shoulders
As if to pave the way to, to, to, to...

I might entitle this poem IMPOTENCE; or ALZHEIMER'S.
The more I think in terms of this moment, the stronger I feel my visceral attachment to it. Spending one's life in a dream-like state. In between a dream and reality, in between a daydream and a nightmare, in between Breughel and Bosch. Never reaching either Alzheimer'z or impotence. Not quite, not quite. Forgetting 'im', recalling 'potence'. Adding 'nine' to whatever happens.
I recall a Soviet film entitled *Nine Days of One Year*. 'Why nine?' they asked the film director. 'Why not eight or ten?'
'Dante,' he answered.
'Why Dante?' they asked.
'Beatrice,' he answered.
'Why Beatrice?' they asked.
'Paradise,' he answered.
A greater part of the film is devoted to nuclear physics that mortally wound a handsome young man exposed to his own invention and its rays. A doctor offers him a ray of hope, but this ray cannot hold a candle to the rays emitted by the nuclear apparatus. The film director seems to reassure us through the 'number nine' to which the Beatles dedicated one of their songs – for the same reasons, incidentally (Dante, Beatrice, Paradise).
The moment I am talking about does not fail to spread its wings and the word, needless to say; and this word is God, I, myself, my, mine, thine and my wife's hand I can feel on my skin and even further off, down. One might opt for the definition of beauty to point out that the life I am living within this instant, moment, flash and permanent revelation is only skin-deep. And all these destroyers of happiness are right because my life is situated on a border, on what Pink Floyd calls 'in between', for it is the only way to spread your wings and cover THE WHOLE, not just a part of it. And the word is not just the word Saint John enlarges upon, saying
WWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOORRRR
RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDD.

THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

OOOOOOOOOOOOOOO
WWWWWWWWWW
RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR
DDDDDDDDDD

The word is a bird

And a bird is the word

An old man points at Saint John's word flying in between the heavens and our Earth and asks:
'My grandson! Can you see that bird up there?'
'I can,' answers the grandson.
'What do you think of it?'
'The bird's wings are odd. Mummy always says to Daddy, "You've got a whole drawer full of odd socks." Did the bird light upon its wings in Daddy's drawer?'
'Everything can be found anywhere, my grandson. Your drawer is yet another microcosm.'
'Is that bird lame? Did it lose one of its wings in one of those struggles?'
'Which ones, my grandson?'
'For life, grandpa.'
'There are only struggles for death around us,' answers the grandpa. 'And above us, mind you. This bird is an emissary and a prophet.'
'Why does this emissary fly in circles?'
'Do you know what the word "canoe" means?'
'I don't.'
'This word denotes a small light narrow boat, pointed at both ends and moved using a paddle. But if you use two paddles on the opposite side of the boat, the boat in question will float in circles. The same goes for the bird you can see in the sky. By the way, this bird is the word. And it is also the way.'
'Which word? "Canoe"?'
'God, my grandson. And Good.'
'And the Sun?'
'And the Sun.'
'And Grand?'
'And Grand.'
'How many?'

ICARUS AND HIS DESTINY

O

O

O

O

THE WORD AND ITS DESTINY

LO

LO

LO

LO

An unknown commentator said, as he went on dissecting the last poem: ‘The word is always surprised at how low the world can sink and irremediably fall.’ As for the first poem entitled *The Vicious Circle*, another commentator insists on the radical difference between the circles one contemplates in Paradise and the ones that belong in Purgatory and Hell. (According to Kepler, they are ellipses.) Dante avails himself of a number of *blessed* circles executed by saints, virgins and their partners. On the other hand – on the other side of the universe – there are only *vicious* circles and it does not really matter to which kind of birds the kamikazes pay their tributes: even eagles are always about to crash.

Logos (word): God, son, daughter, mother, father, justice, injustice, tenderness, cruelty, truth, a lot of uns, all of us, the Earth, the moon, doom, Zimzum, a room with a view, happy few. Logos hides in its bosom and even all along its skin a great number of meanings, and some of us maintain that the number of meanings is so big the entire universe cannot hold them. It is little wonder that Cabbalists say there are letters beyond Creation. There are mlùk,nmkjnvblkjsnboimg$ôbmoç bj. And we might reach for the stars and for other stars. But what we might get as a result of all our labours would amount to: oiuyjhytyç v!èuh bv.

I get what I
not what and not
and I s’not out
nor is in in
nor is in
an

‘Nor is in’ is probably the best expression of what is on. It is better to put ‘an’ at the end of one’s inflammatory speech: ‘an’ does not inflame anything.

Suppose you write (and feel) ‘in’ as if you were in almost everything with a few exceptions such as paedophilia, incest and so on. Yet you cannot make yourself at home, even if you *are* at home. You feel you are out, mout, doubt, gout, a drinking bout. And you suffered from periodic bouts of insanity. How periodic were they, I wonder? They wonder, he wonders. Nobody does. This period looks thus, as usual;

BOUT
BOUT
BOUT

Or

BOAT
BOAT
BOAT

A drunken one.

‘An’ is with you. It does not even touch you, which means it is not touchy-feely. It is almost not and I am alone once again except that I am with AN. And probably AND.

But space counts and it counts its meters, inches, centimetres and miles – if you fly often, boarding the planes on which you can see Sky Team or Earth Dream. They belong to the same company and your miles keep things ticking over or away; but not done with. Anyway, you write a Chinese poem and say:

In, out,
yet, lake,
bird, not,
knot, vow,

No dots, dots, dots; just a comma. So it goes on like that,,,Does it make sense? Is it worth our while going on,n,n,n,n,n,n,n,n,n? *Niet*, *niet*, *niet*. *Et*, *et*, *et*. And, in other words.

I write ‘in’ and feel like writing ‘out’ after putting a comma somewhere, perhaps in my stomach, heart or soul. I put a comma in all of them – three commas, to be exact – and my ‘in’ goes away as if its dearest wish were to distance itself from my and mine; from me and even we, for I *am* a social animal.
And then I feel like writing ‘out’, for, for, for, for I am fed up with everything down to other worlds and Giordanos Brunos. No commas, no goings ons. Just IN. And then

OUT.

At the end of the book, of the Bible. Amen, out.

In out

What is between them? Life? Or:
Mka’”t” mk zjrmoi jioé u§moiq=n e?
Or just ??
Amen, out, amen, away, men, men, women of course, course, of, of, off, off

And then I write ‘yet’. Another Ching, another I, yin, yang, Earth, Heaven? ‘My comrades are envious, but they cannot harm me.’ *I* am envious. My comrades, colleagues and what notwho get Nobel prizes and travel first class; and yet, yet, yet they are not first class.

In the domain of my pigeons I envy only Dante and Shakespeare. And the notwho will always remain where they are – in NOT.

One is impeded in his way of life.
The fat of the pheasant is not eaten. (It is eaten. So what?)
Once rain falls, remorse is spent. (It is never spent.)
Good fortune comes in the end. (Where is the end? What is it?)

In and nd
Only

Ly
ly

marleen

RECORDED DELIVERY

Dear Phil,

Thank you for your email. I hope you liked the wine. Graves is my favourite Bordeaux appellation.

I've just come back from Moscow where I met Dim Gur's wife, Nata. I thought I might give a recital at her place to get another 10,000 euros. Unfortunately, they couldn't even come to my concert - they travel extensively these days. Of course we had a talk about our problem and she said I should come to Moscow in November, after my Japanese and Taiwanese concerts. (I'm pretty busy in October.) She is convinced we'll get the rest of the amount then - rather easily. She also said you had taken only 5,000 euros instead of 10,000. According to her, foreigners are not allowed to leave the country with the money they didn't bring to it. But I'm a foreigner too, and whenever I'm paid cash, I do cross the border with the whole amount unless it is superior to 10,000 $.

Well, all these problems should be resolved as soon as possible. Next November is an absolute deadline. And I start looking for an additional amount because, instead of editing four CDs, Gerr will have to deal with six items. I won't be able to sleep on my two ears (a French idiom) unless everything falls into place and our friendship and collaboration

are out of danger.

Could you please let me know how you wish to get the 5,000 euros? A bank transfer, another meeting in Moscow? Are the Moscow finances subject to taxes?

Thank you again for your patience and cooperation.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

All the best,

Valery

//

Dear Valery,

thanks for your email. First of all, rest assured that our friendship and collaboration are "out of danger".

I have received 5000 from Dmitri and he proposed to wire another 5000 through an international bank transfer. This has never happened.
Apparently 5000 is the maximum amount which can be wired without any questions asked from the Russian authorities. So, this would indeed be an option to proceed.
In any case, I won't be back to record in Moscow before June 2018. Assuming that we will be able to wrap up the work on all of your 6 recordings before that date, I would mind receiving another payment in the near future.
A bank transfer should be labeled "Donation for the Afanassiev Recording Project".

Thanks so much and please keep me updated on the editing process, so that I can communicate things with Sony Japan.

Many greetings,

Phil

//

Dear Gerr,

For many reasons I haven't listened to the Schumann recording until this afternoon. My American friends joined me and we're rather perplexed, not to say extremely disappointed, by the sound quality of the recording. You must remember you assured me the new layout - the piano standing near

the exit, not in the centre of the hall - was even better than the one we had during our previous session. The sound is really unbearable - we couldn't reach the end of the recording. I was so upset that I even said the recording couldn't be released in spite of all the energy and passion we had put into it. I hope it is a bad copy or a deficient CD.

Even at night-time, when asleep and almost happy, I don't like nightmares that usually leave me upon awakening. I do hope this nightmare is just a nightmare, not a stark reality. Being poetic is probably the best remedy against nervous breakdowns. And I have no wish to accuse either you or Phil who, for once, was unable to help us. Please let me know if something could be done. At least the reverberation should be cut down to size, otherwise no one will hear the articulation and polyphony which are, arguably, the keyfeatures of my piano playing. You told me once - when we spoke of our recent Mozart recording - that you could deal with reverberation on condition that it is done all over the recording.
Please, remove the greater part of it *everywhere*, in the three CDs we made last time. I do appreciate the sound quality of the first session.
If you could reproduce it when working on our last three recordings, I would be really happy because I'm rather satisfied with my interpretation.

I called you half an hour ago, but there was no answer. If you could answer me by email, I would be grateful. Anyway, I'll try and call you tomorrow night.

Thanking you in anticipation,

All the best,

Valery

//

Dear Gerr,

Here's my friend's email address:

jflam@gmail.com

My wife worked on your photograph. A few problems: blood circulation, lack of oxygen, five elements are unbalanced (no idea what that means), thyroid gland. Apparently your grandfather from your mother's side plays an important role in your life.

All the best,

Valery

//

Dear Gerr,

I can't help thinking about the edit you sent me. What you're saying now about the mikes, their number and all the mixtures that can be concocted contradicts one statement of yours. After our first recording in Hanover, you said, 'Nothing can be modified, not substantially. We should have talked about it during our preparation for the recording.' Yesterday you told me you had paid no attention to the sound in the final stage of your work. But the version I heard with my friends is absolutely useless - I wouldn't be able to work on it. You might have sent it a few days later after checking the sound once more.

You should realise to what extent I'm affected by these inaccuracies, not to say your negligence. For two days I've been under tremendous stress and you could have spared me these trials and tribulations, had you taken care of everything, not just of the editing which is, incidentally, not up to your standards. I did hear a number of wrong notes in spite of the deficiency of the sound.

I'm writing this email to make you realise how important it is to produce an acceptable version shortly, otherwise I'll have a nervous breakdown. I'll also have to cope with a drinking bout, which would be a nuisance, considering that I should prepare my Japanese concerts that start on October 10.

As I told you, next Sunday I'll be celebrating my birthday with a few friends. If the version I'm supposed to receive at the end of the week is not up to our standards, I'll cancel the celebration. Why should I celebrate anything under the circumstances?

My wife thinks you might have a blood problem. On the sheet of paper where she noted down her conclusion there's a word I don't understand: hypophyseal. She also mentioned your throat and tongue. Anyway, I'll get in touch with you in regard to a séance which requires your presence at home.

Looking forward to Edit II.

All the best,

Valery

(Many foreigners are so afraid of Russian drinking bouts that they either make huge concessions or disappear forever. A sledgehammer argument.)

//

Dear Valery,
Let me speak to Gerr and I'm sure we can figure this out! I have listened to the recording when Martin came back right after the sessions and it sounded very much ok to me...

I will get back to you asap.
Many greetings,
Phil

b-sharp
Pankstr.
D-13127 Be
Studio: +49 (30) 47
Mobil: +49 (176) 2
www.b-sharp

> Am 20.09.2017 um 09:08 schrieb Valery Afanassiev <valleff@gmail.com>:
>
> Dear Phil,
>
> Thank you for your email.
>
> Around three weeks ago, Gerr sent me the first edit of our Schumann recording. It is so disastrous in terms of the sound that I keep wondering if we'll be able to save at least one CD (Prokofiev?) from this session. The reverberation is overwhelming and literally drowns out both the articulation and timbres. Many years ago, they released the film entitled *Le Grand bleu* which became a so-called *phénomène de la société* – critics tore it to pieces but *le people* worshipped it. The Schumann recording is a sort of Big Blur.
The *Sonata in F-Sharp-Minor* and the rest sound so artificial, toy-like that I do all I can to steady my nerves and prepare my Tokyo concerts. Gerr says the sound quality is in your line. Of course I'm perfectly aware that you're responsible for the sound, and that's why I'm writing to you in the hope you'll improve the quality dramatically, when the time comes. The point is I'm leaving for Japan on the 9th of October and so I'd like to know exactly

where we stand before I meet Ryusuke.

>

> I would be extremely grateful if you could ask Gerr to send you the first edit of the Schumann CD. That would give you an opportunity to work on it when you have enough time for our recordings. I asked Gerr to send me a second edit, and he promised to do it. But he says he doesn't have the machines you can avail yourself of at your Berlin studio. Anyway, the final version, if any, will depend mainly on you.

>

> I wished to put you in the picture about what is going on because our dream-team should remain sweet-dream-like, keeping nightmares and cold sweat at bay.

>

> Thanking you in anticipation,

>

> All the best,

>

> Valery

//

The woman holds the basket, but there is no fruit in it.
The man stabs the sheep, but no blood flows. (And Schumann’s blood *ought* to flow. My blood.)
Nothing that acts to further.

°°

Dear Gerr,

Sorry to bombard you with my emails, but I wish to add another word to the list that Mich left after studying your photograph. We talked about it yesterday and she asked me if I had told you she had to work on your pancreas as well. This organ is not on the list, but I remember her touching upon it as she looked at your photograph, her pendulum swinging to and fro. Anyway, this is just a check up. We'll talk about the séance later on.

As for the recording, I hope we'll be able to deal with the sound successfully - it is less disastrous than the *Appassionata* recording. Sorry for my violent outbursts, but you know to what extent this series of recordings is important. I'd be extremely cut up if didn't come off.

All the best,

Valery

//

Dear Valery,

the new version is ready.
Actually it was not a big problem to go close to the mix of the French program (I went a bit further reducing the reverberation, to show what's possible). I am really wondering why we didn't do right from the start in Viersen. The mic setting was quite similar to the previous recording, just the mixing was completely different. Maybe we were too much relying on each other or just too negligent.
You now, I am getting older.
Yes you are right, also the editing was not up to my standard. I corrected a few things in the new version (I had to check and adjust some cuts as the mixing affects the audibility of cutting artefacts, so it took some time).
I will upload the 2nd edit during the night. You and your friend will be informed automatically when the upload is finished. You will then be able to listen directly from the internet, or download and burn a CD.

Please accept my apology for causing all your trials and tribulations.

With best regards,
Gerr

++

Dear Gerr,
All you had to do boils down to the word ‘restoration’. Everything boils down to words and worlds, and probably some restorations. This time we didn’t have to tackle historical problems such as restoring The Restoration, The Renaissance or just the Naissance. They’re the thing of the past or the future. At present, we have a bad recording, which goes from bad to worse whenever I force myself to listen to it once again. And every time I say to myself, ‘This time it’s even worse than what I listened to yesterday.’ How come? Does humidity have anything to do with it? I don’t like the humidity of this climate.
Our previous recording session was exemplary from every point of view. Even I performed my duty. Now there are neither duties nor Is. I’m just waiting for Edit 2. And I say to myself, ‘It was cheaper to demolish the building than spend £1 million on its restoration.’
You say you’re getting old. You’re 55, I’m 70, as you must know. By the way, you might have written, ‘Happy birthday to you,’ on the card you put in the envelope where I found this wretched version of the magnificent sonata. What would you have done, if I had said to you, after playing it in the studio, ‘Getting old, you know.’
Two day ago, I went to the Japanese Consulate to get a work permit, a business visa, a business something –

doesn't really matter except when you happen to talk to an officer in charge, not far from the border. First I talked to a Belgian man, in French; then I switched to English as I realised I was facing a Japanese employee, official; or just a woman standing in front of me, beyond a glass wall. She said the photographs I had supplied were outdated: I looked too young in comparison with the photograph she had lighted upon in my passport. I said I was getting younger and younger. She didn't say anything. When I came back, after spending a few minutes in a machine, I saw her behind the same glass wall. She saw me as well – I'm not yet invisible, am I? As soon as she did she left, ostensibly declining to deal with my passport and new photographs. So I'm getting old as well. But I don't shout this truth from the rooftops, do I?
On the phone, I asked you to restore the previous balance and abundance. But could one restore anything? We have no millions in our banks, safes and boots. Nor are our pillows stuffed with dollars.

All the best, not the worst.

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When, back in the Fifties, in the late Fifties, Pasternak met Bernstein in Peredelkino, he said to him that we all lived through tragedies and farces, and I can add there is nothing else in our lives. The play suddenly changes from farce to tragedy, as they say as they talk about Shakespeare; and they can add to the list Dostoevsky and Dante, although the latter (both of them) wrote no tragedies, no comedies. I could also add that nothing *changes* from farce to tragedy: it is always the same point and instant made up of blood, sweat, tears, laughter, darks, lights and ons, ons, ons.

At the same time – and this time is probably different from the one I described in the previous paragraph – you have the same spot, the same people; only time is different. Either these people are ill and their illnesses progress or regress, making their bodies and souls go from good to bad and from bad to worse; or I am ill myself. Our previous recording was perfect, at least in terms of the sound, and I thought we would have no problems in this domain three months later. But in the long or even short run, everything grows late, last; in the final analysis and round, everybody stands on their last legs. When I received this recorded delivery inside which I found our last recording, I thought our plain sailing was reflected, almost ensconced in it. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is both a farce and a tragedy: Prospero's books drown and so does his prosperity – on a regular basis, several times in a row. And this row is just a point where drowning by numbers displays itself endlessly and with no effort on any part.

Needless to say I was mistaken; so was Pasternak who thought the pain located in his back, in its left half, was an innocent bystander, skin-deep, muscular. Then someone brought an X-ray machine to his dacha and room, and everyone realised he had lung cancer accompanied and even orchestrated by a lot of metastases. He was my age at the time and I also suffer from a pain that seems to focus upon my left (not right) shoulder blade at the inner end of which my left lung can be found and easily contaminated. One point, a farce and a tragedy; skin-deep, lung-deep, a long beep that resounds everywhere.

Am I within the same point, instant? Pasternak is not my favourite poet, but I like him nevertheless: he was a solitary genius whose ivory tower was his castle where many points rubbed shoulders with poems. Why should I rub shoulders with the people who betrayed me during our last recording session? I asked my wife to make a list of the problems our dear Gerr might have within his body; skin-deep or otherwise. At the end of our last recording

session I told him he could send me his photograph: my wife often works on photographs, for want of anything (or any body) better. A hand, a pendulum. And then she says, 'Liver cancer, cancer of the cervix/stomach breast/bowel/lung cancer cancer cells.' Yesterday she added the following item to the list above: pancreas.

What about my left lung? Incidentally, Gerr sent quite a number of photographs: his son, his daughter, his former wife, his present mistress, his uncle, his nephew...He also sent me quite a number of points: .....

The marrying maiden draws out the allotted time.
A late marriage comes in due course.

For 30 months my wife remained alone. She had married twice before we met on some Belgian golf links, but she was as solitary as I was (and probably am) and my late marriage came in due course. And the allotted time is everywhere.

.....
Apparently not every mortal – and even immortals are not excluded from this minus-club – can bring about a time (and space, and time-space, time-mime) of outstanding greatness and abundance. Gerr did it by sending me Edit 2 that I got from a friend of mine whose computer is magnanimous enough to welcome emails, CDs and so ons that make CDs on their own, provided there is something to make a CD from. CD-FROM they call it, I suppose. Only a born ruler of men is able to do it. Any computer does it, provided it is provided, as they say.

Thus the superior man decides lawsuits
And carries out punishments.

Gerr: off with his head. Phil: off with his head. And with his head's head. And with his tail.
My friend burnt the Schumann recording he got from Gerr onto a CD and I picked it up last night or last afternoon. I hope it was not the very last afternoon: today, my wife and I are going to a luxurious hotel *aux frais de la princesse*. All expenses paid. By whom? By a prince? No, by our neighbour, the one whose gardener has pestered me for years with his lawnmowers, mouth and dogs. I devoted a book to him, dedicating it only to my guardian angel. In French.

ABUNDANCE has success.
The king attains abundance.
Be not sad.
Be like the sun at midday.

For a while you can rejoice, thinking they speak of you and your prosperity: a new recording, Grammys, Dummys. And then you and I realise that, in spite of our recording's undeniable qualities, nothing happens except a lot of happenings during which our frustration and moroseness set in. (And also amorousness, why not?) So, once again, the Chinese Book of Mutation – it is well known that radiation can cause mutations and permutations – speaks of

our neighbours, of their riches, parties and the orchestras they invite to amuse their daughters, sons, nephews and the inhabitants of the area in which I, for one, do not belong. My destiny is predetermined, but I count on the I Ching and its immutability-mobility.

THE WANDERER. Success through smallness.
Perseverance brings good fortune. (smallness, smallness, the wanderer, greatness.)

Six at the beginning means:
If the wanderer busies himself with trivial things,
He draws down misfortune upon himself.

I do not. Nor does misfortune care about my state of affairs.

Eight at the beginning means:
Misfortune seems to have forgotten me forever.

Fortune wakes up and *remembers* me to the detriment of Hamlet's father. It is fashionable to forget Hamlet's father for anybody's sake.

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is left something
in between
eyes don't no ey e let
alone

let
alone or everywhere
where so many

nanny, nany, na, na, take it
i
will

Dear Gerr,
Unfortunately my trials and tribulations are not over. I wished to celebrate my 70th birthday by listening to a recording that had never been released. Yesterday, we listened to Edit II and my friends were polite enough to express their admiration, not their disappointment. Today, I got a message from my friend who is so interested in what I do in the domain of music that he makes copies whenever I need to send my discs to other friends of mine or to potential sponsors. In his message he says he couldn't appreciate Schumann's *Sonata* because of the poor

sound – too much reverberation. And I suppose the sound itself, its very substance, bothered him too. All this makes me realise I'm too indulgent, and my willingness to see this recording commercialised obliterates its flaws which are incomprehensible and almost absurd.

The French say, '*Le mieux est l'ennémi du bien*.' The English say, 'Leave well alone.' The Russians say, 'From good you don't look for good' (*ot dobra dobra ne ishut*). We had a similar problem with our Hanover recording, but whatever followed was rather successful in spite of the Berlin birds and road works. In your last email you said we had probably relied too much on one another – too much trust, in other words. That reminds me of *Macbeth*, of Duncan who says the traitor enjoyed his absolute trust. I know I am too engrossed in literature instead of being straight to the point, but one can't be straight in the middle of one's trials and tribulations.

Even my wife whose loyalty and admiration for whatever I do at both the piano and computer are logical and charming wasn't convinced by our recording. And don't forget that I have to go to Moscow in November to get another handful of dollars to finance our efforts and failures. Imagine the humiliation of playing in front of the people who enjoy their own generosity and love for the arts – their patronage. Of course I'll go and play for them, even if our recordings are not likely to see the light of day. Some day.

Now I'm almost sure that neither you nor Phil will ever improve upon the sound of our last recordings. At the beginning of our last session you said the sound would be better in comparison with our previous result. Phil sent me an email to say he had listened to the new takes with Martin and thought it was OK. You spoke of the reverberation and overall quality – in regard to the last edit. Apparently we're not on the same wavelength, and that wouldn't be surprising if we had never been on the same wavelength. But we were, we were, and I wonder why you couldn't leave well alone. In my opinion, it is much easier than 'striving to live up to'.

The French say, '*On ne change pas une équipe qui gagne*.' You don't change a winning team. Well, we didn't win last time, did we? Our failure seems to cast a shadow over my project related to the Beethoven cycle. I think that playing concerts is a waste of time, considering that the audience one has to deal with in concert halls nowadays isn't up to anything with the exception of charisma and deconstruction. What about recording? Isn't it a waste of time too? If you can't rely on a man with whom you've worked for almost 30 years, you can't rely on anybody, even if you change your dream team.

I know you're snowed under with work. Nevertheless, I ask you to have another go at the Schumann recording before I leave for Japan. (My departure is scheduled for October 6.) Please, get in touch with Phil so I could listen to a sort of definitive sound, which might allow me to discuss the matters with Ryusuke. I'm prepared to cancel the whole project, if it doesn't live up to what I hear in my head and body. Besides, this cancellation would spare you the additional effort needed for editing the Prokofiev and Schubert.

I'm sorry for being so downtrodden and pessimistic.

All the best,

Valery

P.S. By the way, you might have dropped a line about my wife's check up I sent you by dribs and drabs. She worked rather hard on your photograph – not on the other photographs you had borrowed from your family album – and so did her pendulum that keeps her company whenever she cures all those who believe in her art and relationship with the universe and the future. Over your photograph, her pendulum performed its habitual dance and as it did so, she noted down its and her conclusions. If, in spite of her permanent and almost incurable fatigue, she agreesto work on your photograph and substance seriously, spending 45 minutes on your molecules,

atoms and nucleuses, I'll reward her efforts financially – she doesn't waste her energy and mind for nothing. I'll also do my best to compensate you for all the efforts you have made during our collaboration.
V.A.

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They write about our forthcoming immortality. Does it come forth? Back? Does it come at all? Perhaps it does. So what? And what about these eternal (immortal) questions? Are they still eternal (immortal)? Have they died once and for all? What do we live for? What is the meaning of life? Does it have any meaning? Is it life or death or nothing? Or everything? Or 07070¨°? Or BUIBVJHGDGFBV? Tolstoy asked these questions and answered them by the word 'faith'. (So did Luther, by the way. So did I, by the same way.) His deeds might have been related to faith too. What about my faith, words, deeds and needs?

They think we might become immortal in the middle (way) of this century; or in the middle of nowhere. Actually we are prepared to become immortal *anywhere*, provided we live forever. But they speak of our bank account: if you do not have enough money in your purse, you will not become immortal in the middle of anywhere; not even in the middle of your street, of your thoroughfare, of your affairs.

You have 10,000 dollars on your account and you live for another 100 days. During these days you earn another 10,000 dollars and a hundred years of solitude. I am not fond of Marquez; nor am I in favour of *his* hundred years of solitude. Mine would suit me perfectly.

It is a question of form, I suppose, and I think I know for sure it is form or shape that one is sure to stumble upon in the course of many courses and races. They are taking part in a race to the top of Ben Nevis. What is Ben Nevis? What is Ben? Or Nevis, come to think of it? Well, I am staying at home, even if it is not really well or good or bad or the Net – it is beyond all that.

Suppose you say about Schumann and his symphonies, sonatas: 'The form falls apart.' Suppose a human being whose knowledge of music is limited to names such as: 'Bach, Mozart, Beethoven,' lights upon this form and its falling apart. ('Falling apart,' as our I Ching might point out. 'Kingdom falls and buries itself. Don't go anywhere. Enjoy a glass of wine in front of your fireplace.') This human being says to himself, 'This piece of music will bore me to death, not to Resurrection, not to Eternal Recurrence. I won't listen to it.' But there is no form, no entelechy, no creation, no annihilation, no death. You go from one I King to another, from one king to another, from one I to another. Nothing but mutations, alterations, alter egos, news, news, news, news that are no news.

'Sincere joyousness. Good fortune.'

'Remorse disappears.'

I watch my remorse disappear and compare it to the cat one sees and admires in the works where Alice's features come to the fore as they struggle with the other sides of everything.

'Misfortune.' If one is empty within and wholly given over to the world and so on. The Buddha asks me to empty myself and I do so taking whatever I can out of my substance: MLK?KJHBUJGJUYHGIKJNB/LK BVNV. And then I am told I am wholly given over to the world, and I answer, 'I'm not *wholly* given to the world because I can't supply the world with MLK?KJHBUJGJUYHGIKJNB/LK BVNV.

'What can you supply the world with?' I am asked.

'HTYRDFCKUYJN BV.'

‘The world doesn’t need your supply,’ I am answered.

----____------- and when you probe into --- and _____you find out that abundance is non-abundance, non is is; death is non-death, non is No, or theatre, in other words. You are down; and you are up as well. What you need is to realise this metamorphosis is just ‘;’. Time is a good teacher, but it does not have much patience with the slower pupils. And if you do not realise you need at least one – to realise all your ambitions (lots of money, a luxury house, a fast car – Danny had realised all his ambitions by the age of 25) you lose your life and everything else. Making small-scale models takes/requires a great deal of patience. And you can make only small-scale models: anything big does not exist except in our thinking. So you take ; and make a small-scale model of it. What does it look like? ; What about a slightly bigger-scale model? ;;;;;; or

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And so on

You put all these ; in between your life and death, and you become what you become, not necessarily immortal, eternal – as endless as a supply of money that someone has or had some time ago, probably at the beginning of this century, before the crisis.

And what about my body? They insert an ; into it. Do they *insurge* it into my sinews? They are surgeons after all, after *all* ; they insurge everywhere after gaining their momentum, fortune and respectability. Instead of a pancreas I have ; the same goes for my kidneys, stomach, prostate, lungs and so on, as usual. (The same goes for ‘and so on’, by the way.) So my body looks thus:

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If it does, I have been given a clean bill of health by my doctor.
What if it doesn't?

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Obesity can increase the risk of heart disease.

Matter and form. The latter goes out of one's head and infuses new life into the former that becomes a piece of form one can see and touch somewhere, not necessarily in one's head. Not any longer, as a matter fact. (One wonders if one can touch anything inside one's head unless one uses scanners and rays of all kinds.) I see a form within my reach and reach it, determined as I am to touch it, making the most of it and its qualities. I touch a glass and take advantage of its contents, making the most of both the glass and its contents – of its nonsense, if the glass was used as a receptacle for plonk. But if I listen to a piece of music, if I play it to my heart's content, I realise there is no form; only mutations, metamorphoses. No creation, as they say; and for once those *they* are the Chinese; no termination (terminators) either. Only ;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;; – the only way to murder death (thou ist joost yeast dead).

Going from one I to another; from one house (castle) to another; from one ; to another :;,?./+=

For the first time I listened to Mahler's *Sixth* in my friend's company. He said, 'The finale falls apart.'
'How do you mean?' I asked.
Here is the list of his answers I found in the Cambridge Dictionary:

> He bought some cheap shoes that fell apart after a couple of months. My jacket is so old it's falling apart. I picked up the book and it fell apart in my hands. My old coat is falling apart at the seams. I really have to replace this bag - it's falling apart.

Nowadays I consult this dictionary when I feel like talking to my friend.

Two days ago I realised there was no form to speak of: no entelechy, no happiness to reach for down/out/over/down over/down down/up up/ do fill your cup/ up up up up up up up up. Everything is down here or up there and one (you, they, always) go from one up to another down. What does my dictionary say on the subject? A B C D E F R T Y IU P¨*¨O

*°P%m: It also says, 'It is surely the duty of the stronger members in a society to help those who are weak.' No one helps me except those who can help neither me nor anyone else, down to dogs, cats and so on.

If you conduct a Bruckner symphony, a Mahler symphony, any symphony whatsoever (the symphony of your life), you should not think in terms of forms, shapes and dates. They are eternal and non-spatial. So are you and me and my cat. There are only molikh"oliua hyerà^çèu (

IHU4S

And there are also:

There is only one

Absolute; not absolute.
Relative; not relative.
Not; yah, okay, I understand what you're saying.
Not at all; oh yah, I like that a lot.
Not at all, at all; yah all all, all all.

I don't understand what you're saying.

I'll never understand what you're saying.

I might understand what you'll never say or think. At least I'll do my utmost to understand it, I promise. God might like it.

Joyousness that is weighed is not at peace. I had an argument with my wife last night, around 9 p.m. ampmama amaopama am. What does it matter *when* you part with your better half or better whole? She left a message on my answerphone and I'm happy again. I don't weigh my happiness; I don't weigh anything except ; or the opposite, the yangyings and daotzetzings. Or tzings-tzings-tzings. Or zings-zings-zings.

Form is _____Hurray! (Aristotle)

I----------

Every – is I. One is – I 1. Another one is – I II. There are as many as 1000000000000000000000 I's I accommodate in my halls of residence.

and if I do not
so and if
no ifs only afs and hal
f somewhere and

done yes you see
age expires
pyres
and everything

nevertheless

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Dear Vadim,

When we spoke last on the phone I didn't know yet what was in store for me because, for all her art of prophesying – I could prophesy, as Shakespeare put it (and did) – my wife was unable to predict a failure of such size and importance. My producer, our dear Gerr, sent me a flock of children, of his children standing by his former wife's side and mind. (They're not yet out of her sight, I suppose.) And he accompanied this parcel by a card overburdened with his dearest wish (or his burning desire), 'I hope your wife will take care of them too.' The point is I talked to him about my wife's capacity to raise the dead from their tombs, coffins and morphine.

Well, I wasn't exactly dead when my wife put her hands over my head for the first time; my finger was, in point of fact. As a matter of fact, it was half-alive, half-dead, to be precise, and sometimes you'd better not be too precise in these matters because, if you're half-dead, you're downright or outright dead. Even if you still manage to sit in your bed in an upright position (propped up by three pillows). After that séance, I went through the whole physiological or psychological spectrum where I was dead, alive, half, third, too much, a little bit and so forth (no force intended or felt). Of course I didn't pay her anything, not even a farthing, but I'm a member of the family after all.

For some obscure reason, Gerr jumped to the following conclusion, 'She'll cure us all in no time at all.' His first, and winning, jump was an exhibition of skill and strength. That's what he thought. Luckily for my wife and myself, I thought otherwise. I still think otherwise and I'll stick to my machine guns, whatever happens in the future or in the past where things continue to come to pass.

He offers me his family album and the first edit of our Schumann CD. The shirt of Nessus, as they say and as I do sometimes. Well, he did it. Does it remind you of *My Fair Lady*? You did it, you did it. He did it. What am I to do? In our wretched, far-fetched existence, we use a dictionary the size of which is nothing in comparison with The Biggest Oxford Dictionary you can think of; if you think at all in terms of dictionaries. You do and come up with a few questions such as, 'Why am I here?' 'Why is life down here and up there?' 'Why is death everywhere?' 'What to do?' 'What am I to do?' To commit suicide; not necessarily. Every cloud has a silver, golden, diamond-studded lining. But that lining has a muck lining, a mock life, a mock cloud, a mock Hamlet, a mock Shakespeare, a mock Plato, a flock of mock hereafters. Gerr was a silver lining I could rely upon when musing on my projects and artistic immortality – I have no children to count upon in this or any other domain. But this last lining was a curse in disguise.

What's more or less, he didn't even condescend to answer my email and thank my wife for her magnetism; or extra-sensorial powers, as the Russians put it. Go to hell – the only utterance I send in the direction of my former friend and collaborator. Not go to *well*, mind you. No good can come out of this gesture of defiance against good sense, as they pointed out as they watch King Lear's big-heartedness, open-handedness and open-foolishness. At least I had the good sense to turn the gas off, didn't I?

Yours truly, friendly

Nine at the beginning means: ‘Hidden dragon. Do not act.’ The Master said: This means a person who has the character of a dragon but remains concealed. He does not change to suit the outside world; he makes no name for himself. He withdraws from the world, yet is not sad about it. He receives no recognition, yet is not sad about it.

let what said
what dead

undone
done and I tell

and you come with a feathered friend
a shorthair friend

dawns devour

our en em
ies get their own ways

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Dear Valery,

I just checked the files from our last session. I hear a sound with "contour and grip" which is much less reverberant than the reference which Gerr send out to you. Apparently something slipped during the downmix procedure of Gerr's edits...

I will generate a CD of the current edit and send out a disc to your Belgium address tomorrow.
You shall receive it well before your departure to Japan on the 6th.

Many greetings,

Phil

d-sharp

Dear Valery,

thank you for your mail. Unfortunately I have to leave tomorrow for one week (a private and a recording tour), so just a few comments for the moment.

Answering to your concern, how I could do any editing with such a "bad sound", I have tried to expiain my way of proceeding some time ago:
During editing work, I feel not enough able to concentrate on the sound, as listening to many other musical and technical issues relating to the editing attracts my entire concentraion. Yes I have no problem listening even just to the hall reverberation - I often even have to so, or switch from one pair of microphones to the other (four pairs in total in the present case) in order to make the cuts inaudible. That has to be done hundreds of times during two weeks of editing. Once the editing is finished, I am not able to judge anything about the sound any more, I am rather still be destracted by editing artefacts I notice here and there and have to correct subsequently.
So as a first step I am happy to rely on the mix we listened during the recording. Of course I know that there are many other possible mixes, but I am unable to decide which one is best.

You point out our very successful cooperation - actually it was just for one decade between Mussorgsky and Liszt - which made me very happy and proud.
As far as the sound is concerned, all our recordings were made with Steinway pianos, which is much much easier to handle for recordings. At a few occations I had the chance to set up a Bösendorfer and a Steinway on the same stage, and always found the Bösendorfer's sound too complicated to catch with my microphones and my recording experience.
As you know, with Denon we had the recording policy to use as few microphones as possible. That doesn't work with Bösendorfer at all. When you walk around a Steinway, you can find a place where some "ideal" sound would come out well focussed, you put your main microphones there and almost nothing can be really wrong after. In contrary, walking around a Bösendorfer you feel more like walking through an orchestra with many different instruments emitting their sound into different directions, and you would try to take as many as possible of them by using several microphones - but not too many, as electronic addition of sounds causes mixing artefacts.
Up to our Berlin recording, I didn't have any experience, recording a piano by more than four microphones (sure you remember how much time we sometimes spent on the sound check in spite of the easier task). If I would have to set up a Bösendorfer recording alone and from scratch, I probably would ask for the sound check taking one whole day. It's a shame to admit after 30 years of recording experience, but I had no other choice but to rely on the special technique and the experience of Phil and his team.

Still I am pretty sure they can rescue us from the sound quarrel. Once they understand what should be done, they have much more technical options to adjust the mixing than I do. So the best way would be still if we all could meet at there studio and fix the final version together.

In meantime, Martin will prepare a new version and send it to you, as he just wrote me today.
During my week of absence, I will stay in touch by e-mail, but don't have an opportunity to deal with the mixing. Hopefully I will be able to listen and give some comments, but not more, I am sorry.

Concerning my health issue, is it o.k. if we talk about that later, after your return from Japan?
Please give my thanks to your wife for the efforts she took so far. I am well aware there seem to be several problems. I didn't understand, however, what I am supposed do next. If necessary or helpful, I wouldn't mind to go to your place, as I feel health should be taken most important.

All the best to you, please take care of yourself,
with best regards,

Gerr

Dear Vadim,
I've sent you this tedious rigmarole to give you a unique opportunity to glimpse the brain of a half-professional, half-wit, half-everything. Do you recall Pushkin's epigram in which he castigates a half-man (half-ignoramus, half-milord) who, he hopes, will grow whole in the distant future? Gerr is unlikely to perform such a feat (a quite unprofessional, wholly stupid, wholly boorish producer) because he is just a half – a half of his former self, among other halves and things. Last year he explained to me the problem he was facing with Bösendorfers, and this problem, if any, has nothing to do with the one we're dealing with now. Let me remind you that the result we got a few months ago in the same studio, with the same piano, was almost perfect. When listening to the Bizet I even shed a few tears – of joy, mind you. The question I put to Gerr was, 'Why didn't we leave the sound alone?' He answered another question, determined to dodge any question and answer related to the present recording.
He admits he has no experience in the domain of the sound. Yet, throughout his so-called career, he has always had the urge to interfere with the work of sound producers, whispering into my ears, 'There are too many mikes,' 'They're too close to the piano,' and so on. Nowadays he contradicts himself in the same breath, and his breath is long enough to allow him to do so day in, day out. I don't know whether he'll die of pancreatic cancer or leukaemia, but I'm convinced that shortness of breath will not be the principal cause of his demise.

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Dear Gerd,

I hope everything is all right and your holiday was a success.

I'm going through a hectic period - partly because of our last
recording, of its sound quality. I have no idea what really happened
except that we installed the piano near the entrance, not in the middle
of the hall. But Gerr assured me the sound would be even better than
what we had got during our previous recording. And I trust Gerr

implicitly - after all, we've worked together for almost 30 years, with a few interruptions. The result is bizarre and even absurd, considering that we had the session in the same hall, using the same piano. And our team was almost the same. Of course Phil's absence might have influenced the sound, but his assistant was there and I was pretty confident.

Gerr sent me two recordings we made in the earlier session and their sound quality is perfect, in my opinion. The Schumann CD I got from him recently has nothing to do with the previous result. One might even get the feeling I'm playing an electronic piano. And the reverberation is so overwhelming it drowns out both the articulation and timbres. I talked to Gerr about this problem and, after a while, he sent me a second edit which is slightly better, although the same flaws remain. Phil and Gerr will work on a third edit jointly and I hope to get it before leaving for Japan on October 6. Let's hope for the best - for nothing in the world would I be tempted to jeopardise all our efforts by cancelling the whole thing.

I have another problem to deal with. For years and years I left my piano unattended by tuners - in spite of the journey from Versailles to Brabant-Wallon. A month ago, I called in a local tuner who, for several years, worked in Germany. He came three times, spending 17 hours inside the piano, taking apart the mechanics as he tried to repair the damage done to the hammers and the rest by my negligence. The result is disastrous - I don't recognise my piano any more. Hopefully it is not irremediable, but I'm shaken and worried, which is logical enough. I bought this Steinway in 1974 and I'm used to it and even to its defects.

I would be extremely grateful if you could shed light on the predicament I am in. At my request, the tuner drew up a list of what he had done to the piano. The list is in French and he promised to make out the same list in German, but I haven't received anything yet. So I'm writing to you because I'm really tired of coping with so many problems at the same time. I'm worried and that prevents me from preparing my Japanese concerts properly.

Here are a few items from the list - just to give you an idea of what it is all about. He says that the piano was in a pitiful state: loose hammers, oxidation of the points of scales (balance). He opened the

mechanics, worked on the rolls, adjusted the rods of escapement and did many other things, I suppose. After his second visit I touched the piano and heard a strange hollow sound as if a couple of planks of wood were hitting each other. He came and fiddled for almost three hours with the bar situated in the nether part of the mechanics. The hollow sound disappeared, but the overall feeling of estrangement still haunts me whenever I play my piano.

I realise it is hard to draw any conclusion from a distance, even if my account may reveal a few details related to this distressful adventure. Could you please tell me if any attempt to restore the mechanics to its pristine state is so fraught with dangers that one has to think twice before having a go at it?

I'm sorry to bother you with my problems, but I hope you'll understand why I am doing it.

My love to Natalia,

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Thanking you in anticipation,

Valery

****

Dear Gerd,

I'm awfully sorry, but the number of problems I'm tackling at the moment prevented me from talking to you about the problem related to you and other members of our team. Recently I played in Moscow and I met my friend who had already helped me to collect 10,000 euros for our project. Frankly speaking, I thought we might repeat the experience during my stay, but in September a lot of people are still enjoying the sun on one of the islands I know only by hearsay. Besides, my friend had some personal worries and we had no alternative but to put another private concert off. I'm almost sure this will take place in November and so the financial aspect of our collaboration will be in order at last.

Actually I have no idea what you've received so far, but I'm pretty sure

I'll get another 10,000 euros in November. If you wish, we can go into the details of this affair, and of course I'll keep in touch with Phil who has borne the brunt of practical matters from the very start.

Sorry for the delay and for the inconveniences you've faced during our work.

Thank you again for your understanding, patience, tremendous skill and devotion to music.

Valery

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I am watching a documentary on Benedictine monks. One of them hammers a nail into an object that looks like a sickle and, without turning his head (or hair) towards the camera, hammers home one of his truths. This noteworthy truth is focused upon time that, to all intents and purposes, can be abolished not by shoelaces and madeleines, but by repetition. Ham, ham, ham, ham, ham, ham, ham. Or boom, boom, boom. Or crack, crack. My skull would crack if I dared inflict such an injury on its equilibrium; the same goes for my mind. The monk hammers away his way to timeless domain where both God and Paradise await him as they lie in the sun. On our Earth – and this may concern other earths too – the sun bathes cities in shades of pink and gold; especially in the afternoon. Up there you bathe in gold only, exclusively, even by night.

I am too lazy to search for a hammer in my tool shed which is reduced to the size of a rectangular, medium-size box. My gardener put a few nails and a screwdriver into it. If any repetition leads one to abolition – to the abolition of time, not to the abolition of slavery – I can limit my efforts to a few oblique strokes or slashes. You often write a slash between alternatives, for example, ‘eternity/time’, ‘crime/rime’, and so forth. This time (this no-time) there will be no alternatives: / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /. As you look at these slashes you realise (all of a sudden) that your heart is beating fast with fright. What kind of fright are you subjected to this time (not this no-time, mind you)? Death, death, death, death. By leaps and bounds. Every oblique stroke is either a leap or a bound; or both. Death. Getting closer and closer to your pancreas, liver and the rest of your substance. So you say to yourself, ‘This page is badly spaced,’ and re-write it, if only in part:

/ / / / / / / / / /

Then you resolve to abolish time more resolutely, more eloquently, more picturesquely:

~~TIME TIME TIME TIME TIME TIME TIME TIME TIME~~

Once and for all:

~~TIME~~

The above drawing is a mandala (not Mandela, as suggested by my spellchecker) that one had better keep on one's writing table, in one's secretaire, by one's secretary.

Suppose you are a central banker. Unavoidably, sooner or later, you meet Christine Lagarde (the centre of all centres) and she tells you that virtual currencies could soon rival real ones. Would my mandala help her to tackle her problem appropriately? Or should she rather keep in your bag the following scrap of paper:

~~VIRTUAL CURRENCES~~ ?

But I am afraid this tactic could backfire on her: I am not sure that at this stage of economic history real currencies will hold out without borrowing some money from the virtual world and its banknotes. So it might be better to go about it by stages: virtual currencies – 1, virtual currencies – 2.

I have no idea whether Gogol and his reality will soon be supplanted by goggles worn by all and sundry, even indoors where our friends are prepared to strip their clothes off at the earliest opportunity, eager as they are to enact yet another orgy. We are hugely indebted to the principle called deduction and indulge in it whenever in need of reaching a higher stage of universal knowledge. So, to tackle the Gogol-goggles problem, we use a small quantity of common sense and come up with the following partial truth: 'Small children can often feel supplanted in their parents' affections when a new brother or sister is born.' As we probe deeper and deeper into this shallow remark we come to the conclusion that Gogol might have felt supplanted in our affections by virtual realities and their sex/mind/soul appeal. The same goes for real currencies, I suppose; and for everything, while I am at it. And I *am* at it; for a while.

Are Mark Carney and Christine Lagarde happy? What about other VIPs or whips, as some socialists (François Holland) call them? Suppose I realise the economy is expanding more slowly than previously thought while the dominant services sector shrank in July, suggesting a further loss of momentum just as the Bank of England prepares to raise interest rates for the first time in a decade. Not only do I realise all that, but I come across this piece of information whenever I happen to look at a screen – even at the screen the nurse obligingly and somewhat prudishly pulled around the bed so that the doctor could examine my wife in private. And what, according to the same supposition, do I see when taking a glance at a screen of trees? At the bottom of our garden? 'The beleaguered charity says it will now "be moving away from using visitor enjoyment" as its "measure of experience", putting the fall in satisfaction down to increased demand for car parks and toilets, due to burgeoning visitor numbers.'

So an employer asks his employee, 'Are visitor numbers burgeoning?'

'They are.'

'Don't put any questions to them. And don't say "enjoy".'

'Why? Because there's nothing to enjoy?'

'A lot. But they never stop moaning.'

'They do, from time to time.'

‘Whenever they do stop moaning, you can ask them, “Did you really enjoy yourself?” And if they ask you where they can wash their hands and sex organs, you say, “Nowhere.” And you can add without any soul-searching, “You’re not in a brothel, dear Madam or Sir.”’

So central bankers sit in their central VIP lounges and look at a number of screens where they see both ‘revised figures’ and ‘output in the dominant services sector’. The former do not live up to the bottle of Dom Perignon (not Paragon, not Perpignan) they have already drunk down to the dregs. As for the latter, ‘the gap between the country’s spending and income widened to –’ They order another bottle of Dom, and Perignon enables them to drown both their sorrows and the gap. And what about ‘Brexit poses threat to trillions of dollars of derivatives’? This new piece of information is written all over the napkins they are supplied with by waiters and waitresses. All around them they hear, ‘Enjoy, enjoy, enjoy, enjoy, enjoy your champagne, your, your, your, enjoy.’ ‘Stop it!’ they shout.

‘Stop shouting – you’re giving me a headache!’ said a central nervous system. In the silence of the night, a lone wolf howled.

Is it better to live in a Benedictine monastery? Ham, ham, ham, ham, mer, mer, mer, mer. At the end of 70 hammer-and-pamper(s) years you meet God at last. Rising from the repetition; or from the dead.
And eternal questions? What about them and their answers? Are they more priceless than a ‘deficit of £22.3 billion in the previous quarter’?
Why is there anything instead of nothing? Because there are:
Billions,
VIP lounges, champagne and petit-fours,
Grand-fours,
Fur coats,
Coats of arms,
Dante and Plato,
Hamlet and Lear,
Hamlets (cosy, organic, genuine monuments to Marie-Antoinette)
All sorts of lures (fame/power/money),
All sorts of lutes,
All sorts (the world),
Beauties (bathing, amazing),
Uglinesses (Quasimodo, the Beast),
Moments,
Minutes,
Hours,
Days of yore,
Days of yoke, of joke,
The yolks and the whites (not their separation),
Jokers (in the pack),

Folk tales,
Winter tales,
Summers,
Autumns,
Dried/grilled/stuffed/sliced mushrooms,
Bathrooms,
Living-rooms,
Dining-rooms,
Adjoining rooms,
Booms, booms, booms, booms,
Boom and bust, boom and bust

What are we here for? See above.

What is the meaning of life? See above and below.

What do we do? Going from temptation to consolation, from zero to plenitude.
O----------1-1-1-1----------2-2_____----------==========^^^^^PLENITUDE

What do VIPs care about? About VIPs. About ‘the mistakes in calculating the household savings ratio, which measures the amount’.

What about PIV? Poor I Valery? What counts is the amplitude of one’s being. You go down, down, down, down. There are four downs in your being’s amplitude, aptitude and attitude. You have number four in your soul, purse and life. And you can use it to your advantage. So you go up, up, up, up. And you go one better, one better, one better, one better. The more you sin, the more you are taken care of by God and your guardian angel. Your very capacity to sin – you live life to the full – denotes the liveliness of your life. Tempted, tempted, tempted = granted, granted, granted. Capitan Tempt, Capitan Grant.

Tempt, Tempt, Tempt, Tempt, Grant, Grant, Grant, Grant, Ham, Ham, Ham, Ham, Hammon.

We are been watched. We are asked, ‘Is the USA the greatest country in the world?’ We answer, ‘Yes’ of course. Not to be off course. I know a few Americans who, when asked to type a couple of letters, type, ‘The USA is the greatest country in the world.’ They are being watched, they believe. They were being watched; they will be being watched. Their watches are being, being, being watched too so their time is regulated by a set of guidelines. What set? What guidelines? you ask. They answer, ‘By a set of guidelines.’ Here is the set:

SET SET SET

Here are the lines:

_____

Anyway, every morning, my friends type, ‘The USA is the greatest country in the world.’ And other friends type, ‘God is the greatest man in the world.’ And other colleagues type, ‘The world is the greatest world in the world.’ None of them have been imprisoned so far.

I meet others, and I know I should not, according to and to and to and to and to. There are so many accordings you think in terms of accordions whenever you venture outdoors, outrooms, outdooms. If, according to, I rub shoulders with A, B, F, H, K, I am bound to lose my own shoulders, shoulder blades and any blades I can come across in my life and elsewhere. (Razor blades, scissor blades.)

They say one should keep silent. They, he, she, iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiit.
Let us. Let us. Let us what? Let us WHAT.

Living in the presence of God. Now He strokes your shoulders, now He points His finger at your doings and moaning (s, s, s). And WHAT if you spent your life by spending it, lifing it? I watched a film on Snowden. At some point he said to his boss he felt nostalgic about his wife and the rest of America. (He was on the Hawaiian Islands, if he remembers rightly.) His boss said, ‘Don’t worry your pretty little head, your pretty big body. Your wife doesn’t sleep with any other pretty boys.’ And Snowden realised – . What did he realise? I put this question to my wife and she answered, ‘His wife was liquidated.’ In other words or word, she was a liquid at the time when she was spoken of either on the Hawaiian or on the Dawaiian, on the Darwinian. I am also a liquid, according to and to and at. What kind of liquid? Wine, wine, wine. (Even *Belgian* beers do not agree with my bego.)

So I say to my wife, ‘How do you mean?’

‘His wife was dead,’ she said and almost did. What? Dead, deed.

‘But if you say to someone, “No betrayals,” you don’t mean death, do you?’

‘You don’t.’

‘Your wife doesn’t betray you because she’s dead.’

‘She doesn’t.’

‘The dead don’t betray the living, do they?’

‘They don’t.’

‘What about the kicking?’

‘What about them?’

‘What, what, what.’

‘What, what, what.’

That is how one should live, die, prosper and rise from everything. Isn't he? Doesn't she? Instead of warring, waring, staring about, under and so on. You stare about, under, up and, and, and, and a guru says, 'Steady, steady, steady. Painting these small details needs a steady hand.'

'What small details?'

'Life.'

'What about big details? Do I need an *un*steady hand to paint them?'

small details

≈≈≈
≈
≈
≈

BIG DETAILS

≈

According to. This time, I think the accordion is in the Arabic camp where they discuss God and His works; and the works we are coming across as we come and go and cross whatever we come across. I light a match, according to W. B. Yeats and his butlers, and the flame might scorch my hand; or it might not. It might *not*, though: everything can happen in the course of the next instant, let alone a millennia, a billennia. The flame is cold, everything is, however high my flame climbs to give a helping hand to the stars and Jupiter's moons. I believe in God, but the latter switches this belief off as He switches on an unbelief clinging to my shirt, skirt, trousers, Mausers. In my childhood I heard this word very often; in songs and also in the streets of Moscow. 'And Mr Klauser pulls out his Mauser and down goes Butuz.' A revolver, a pistol. And next day you find a bunch of roses on your dinner table.

And then you hear a song somewhere:

You go and you do not
You do not and you go

And go go and and
And do not go do do

The above episode is just silence, nothing more or less or mess. Apart from silence, only a lot of mess lies in wait for you behind every counter and bush. What is silence? I am asked.

‘What?’
‘Whatever you see up there.’
‘What? The stars?’
‘No.’
‘What?’
‘This:

,

‘What? What? What?’

I no longer answer any question mark, however eloquent and pertinent. That is what silence is about and around. I hear myself and my myself listens to, to, to, to. And every to listens to a to, too. Another exercise at the end of which – sometimes it happens in the middle – one hears God, the cosmos and some sort of osmosis. Or Moses.
For a while I kept skipping from one subject to another so it was difficult to follow what I was saying. But what could be found in between the subjects? Objects? Hardly. At some point I skipped from B to O. What lay in between these letters? CDEFANDSOON? Silence, another piece of silence. How could I paint it? I recall my school days more often than other days and schools. An examination paper, exam results. I had a friend in those times, days, ages, exams and schools. At the end of one of these two-hour exams, he handed in a blank sheet of paper. ‘What is it?’ asked the teacher.
‘Silence,’ he answered.
‘What?’ the teacher asked as he wrinkled his brow; as he thought.
‘A piece of silence.’
‘A piece of peace? Of universal peace?’
‘That’s right.’
‘What is it for?’
‘At the end of this tether of silence, I’ll find myself and God.’
‘Did you find any of them?’ the teacher asked as he unwrinkled his brow; as he lapsed into silence till the forthcoming break.
‘I found myself,’ the pupil said.
‘What about God? Am I one?’
‘You are Allah,’ said the pupil.
I saw my friend in a dream. He committed suicide many years ago as if living on this or any other earth was not a form of suicide – the most efficient one, according to my sources. My sleep looked like that at first:

And then I saw Sasha.

DEEP SLEEP

SASHA

~~DEEP SLEEP~~
SHALLOW SLEEP
SASHA AND OTHERS
(like one of Gorky's plays)
SASHA AND HIS BATHING SUIT
SASHA ON THE BEACH
(not Einstein, for once)
PALMS AND OTHERS
YACHTS AND OTHERS

'Come and join us,' says Sasha.
'There are too many others,' I say.
'They're your mistresses and misters.'
'But there are many mothers in their midst.'
'Forgive, forget and remember,' says Sasha. 'Happiness counts. Don't count it.'
'Count me in. Count me out.'
As usual I woke up and opened my eyes. What did the morning I met look like, unlike? Like everything, like un. Like unmorning and morning at the same time, at the same quantum mechanics and relativities. Why didn't I join them? Missy or Mussy, where are you? asks a Chekhov protagonist. I answer, 'Anywhere.' I answer, 'Everywhere.' I answer, 'Nowhere.' I answer, 'Where.'

THE WHERE IS HERE AND DOWN THERE
THE NOWHERE IS HERE AND UP THERE
THE SOMEWHERE IS UP_DOWN_YET_MIGHT_HERE_THERE
THE SNOWWHERE IS IN RUSSIA, FINLAND, SWEDEN, SNOWDEN

I have no idea what I would have done, had I gone on dreaming and hugging Sasha's unsubstantial body, his shadow and former sorrow. I woke up and decided to take care of myself before looking after humanity and its

representatives whose likes and dislikes I continue to cross (*le signe de croix*) in the streets and districts. With my blessing, with my blessing (Alain Resnais, John Gielgud.)

READING. OTHER I'S

You do not become another I if you confine your doings to any outpouring of grief; or any other outpouring, come to think of it. You come to think of it, you go to think of something else and on your way you gather together a lot of IIIIIIIIIIsssss and mines, as I say. You are mine, a coal/salt/gold mine. Someone asked, 'What did you have any connection to?' I answered, 'I worked in the diamond mines of South Africa.' Why should you mention your soul in front of those dimwits?

You keep away from dimwits and suddenly, at some luminous, Dante-inspired point, they begin to radiate what, what, what, what? Light, light, light, of course. And every light is divine, even if it cannot be found at the end of any tunnel we plough through during our comas, deaths, resurrections and what nots; and other knots as well. Well, you keep away from humanism and all other isms you stumble upon – O, my God (or Zeus), another ism – and take care of yourself. You do that before pulling our endangered species (everyone) out of the mud; out of the bad, as they say; out of the bath, as others say.

I cannot pull myself out unless I do it as our Baron Munchausen did one day and probably any other day – twice a week. Pulling himself out of a swamp by his own hair. O dear! (Or O Zeus!)

OTHERS OUT OUT OUT OUTPUT

From a distance all others radiate light, even if they are paedophiles and the Ripper Jacks, ripping and raping whatever they come across either in their dreams or in our everyday, in our everynight. (Rapper Jacks, Rap Jacks.) As they come closer they begin to radiate knives and knaves. The dark force possesses beauty but veils it. They conceal their own light; I trust them and they stab me to death. And I realise they stabbed me to life and all this happens on the spur of the moment. And if there are road works on the motorway of Time, it happens on the spur of the hour, of the week.

You need bread and butter; and wine; and hammon (gammon, Hammond, mammon, hammock, hamming, hambone, harmony.) Exports also improved rising by 1.7 per cent compared with a 0.2 per cent increase in imports, meaning that net trade contributed 0.4 of a percentage point to overall economic growth. It also contributed 0.5 to over-overall growth.

OVER OVER OVER OVER 0.5 6 7 8 9. And you sing at the top of your voice, 'In the second quarter, the savings ratio picked up to 5.4 per cent, a similar level to late 2016. Too late, too early When the dark seeks to equal the light principle, there is certain to be a struggle. The dragon is mentioned.'

Dragon_Light

Struggle: blackout, lightout, blackoff, lightoff, blackwith, lightfizz, blackmess, lightMass.

BLACKOUT: ●

LIGHTOUT:

OUT: you and I and i and may, ay, ay.

Difficulties pile up and down:
Difficulty
Difficulty
Difficulty
Difficulty
Difficulty
Difficulty
Difficulty
Difficulty↕

Difficulties pile out: diff

The army needs perseverance. Not only the army needs it. You persevere in your being, but your being, imbued with the yang-yin dialects, needs non-being; and whenever it finds some quantity of it, it perseveres in it. Then perseverance perseveres in perseverance; so does a dot.....
The army needs a strong man; you need one too. He becomes your bodyguard. They kill your bodyguard and, for a while, your body moons around unguarded. But they say your good fortune is without blame; you cock your and one's ears and hear nothing except 'all right'. Officials say, 'We want to find out what happened, not to apportion blame,' but when they do find out what happened, they inevitably apportion blame to your family and its members. So you leave your house and they shout, 'Good fortune without blame.'; and you fall into a freshly-dug grave deceptively designed for a newcomer, an old-age pensioner. But the army needs him, the old pensioner: he is the man who can instil discipline into the masses. The masses are the army and thousands of troops have massed along the border in preparation for an invasion. No blame, no UN, no *Nein*, only the Nô theatre; or the UN theatre. Or the *Nein* tragedy. One does a dangerous thing but finds devotion instead of death and posthumous mess. One does a lot of mess and finds devotion: everyone votes for one who becomes a president, a prime minister in his prime; and also in her prime. Good fortune. How could this be a mistake? Thus, as follows: Good fortune = mistake, mistake=Good fortune. Miss Kate is actually Bad fortune, and everyone votes against her. You vote against Bad fortune and it is Good fortune that wins a bottle of vodka in the raffle.

Tomorrow I am flying to Japan, not to China, and on my way I shall do my best not to die in the air; leading instead the happy life of a customer whose satisfaction knows only one bound announced by all crew members throughout the world: no more champagne. ___ ___ The champagne is in between two lines. They call it stock shortage, stock out, stock down, stock in between. You feel like two bottles of champagne and when you ask for a glass of Salon, they show you ___ ___. And when you point at ___, they direct your attention away from any line, however thin and inoffensive, and lead you by the nose until you see a hole in between two ____. You put your nose into the hole, hoping to enjoy a first growth (Laffite, Ausone) nose, but your nose detects only the void you have never been looking for, not even as the best BuddhaRudaMuda's disciple.
Even if by chance a leather belt is bestowed on one

By the end of a morning
It will have been snatched away three times.

When any cock crows, I suppose. I was woken at dawn by a cock crowing repeatedly, but I had no leather belt within my reach, which means I was not rich at the time. And when that time replaced another time, saying, 'I'll swap you my chocolate bar for your peanuts,' I realised time is an arms/weapons depot a fuel/storage depot a bus depot. If you have a pistol, with the passing of the hours you will enjoy the efficiency of a Kalashnikov. A bus you take to go anywhere will convey you everywhere – to the nearest hospital, if necessary; if you have pancreatic cancer. You hear all sorts of 'aïe, aïe, aïe,' and 'dear oh dear'. But you say to yourself and your relatives you have a sort of pantheistic vision where God plays all the parts in human, fauna and flora comedies, melodramas and everything else.

****

Dear Valery,

sorry for delay of my reply, I`ve been too busy the last 2 weeks.

Hopefully Gerr and Phil did solve the sound-problems, I do
remember that in Viersen through the headphones it did sound well ?!

Could you please send me the list in french where your piano-technician
did wrote what he did with and to your Steinway. I have a dictionary of
all the piano-items, I think I will be able to translate to get an idea
of what might have happened. In general everything is reversible - so
I`m full of hope that your piano might find back to a satisfying sound.

All the best,

Gerd

****

Dear Gerd,

Thank you very much for your email.

Finally, yesterday I got the translation I'd been waiting for. The tuner I wrote to you about sent me his translation of the French data I got a long time ago. Thank you for willing to work with the French version, but it is no longer necessary.

Tomorrow I'm flying to Japan. I'll be back on October 18.

Phil sent me his version of our last recording and I'm quite happy with the sound, even though the reverberation is a little bit obtrusive. But I suppose this detail can be dealt with easily.

Looking forward to hearing from you when I am back.

Thanking you in anticipation,

All the best,

Valery

****

Dear Phil,
I listened to the version you sent me and as I did so, I kept heaving sighs of relief. One of my Moscow friends says under similar circumstances, ‘They relieved the pressure on my brain by removing the blood clot.’ Well, until yesterday, there had been several blood clots: in my brain, in my chest, in my stomach and even in my sex organs. No more clots, no more stress. You might remove a tiny quantity of reverberation – a clot in its own right – if you feel like it. Anyway, the sound is very beautiful and I recognise myself at last. From now on, Marx will sleep sound in his tomb – I’m no longer alienated from myself.
Thank you very much.
All the best,

Valery

****

Dear Valery,

Fantastic, thanks for the good news. I am happy we could sort this out!
Many greetings and have a great trip.

Phil

b-sharp
Pancreasstr.1

++

TWO PHOTOGRAPHS

I was offered two photographs where my wife and my new cat take centre stage or any other stage available to them; and I realise I had never seen them either like that or like anything else; like anything. What does photography have to do with truth and revelations? Nothing has anything to do with revelations: whatever we see and learn is truth or anything else. Or or. There must be a filter (sifter, sieve) somewhere, not necessarily overhead, beyond any cloud, star and god.

You see face to face; whatever you see upon awakening obeys this rule and you see either a face or a leg or an arm, and you see them arm to arm and leg to leg (a sort of legacy). The point is you had better see whatever you see *slantwise* as if there were a slantmachine somewhere, overhead, overmind, downfeet. You see face to face *now*, whatever St Paul says on this subject and object (face). You see your garden or Tokyo and you do not even ask yourself what there is to see anywhere – on the moon, for instance. You just see what you see, and you do not even play with words, saying to yourself and others, 'I'm completely at sea with what I see and hear and touch.' You see your legs and arms, provided you are able to show them to yourself as you lie in your bed or in your garden where only birds and insects contemplate your body, singing, 'Thieirsmlkmanmkerfnjmkl:zqsw.'

And then I am shown a photograph of my wife, of my new cat. And I fall in love with my cat and wife, and with the world where you can find both cats and wives; and other lives. What else have I ever found in the world? One photograph is enough, provided what you see is both reflected and refracted. (Sometimes 'both' is the right answer.) The glass prism refracted the white light into the colours of the rainbow. I see the white light and then I come across a filter; or the filter comes across myself and many others, my contemporaries and nephews. The filter is across, hanging somewhere, being in between being and not-being, between face and not-face. I see a face and, through the filter, I enjoy the landscapes where the face I saw is no longer described as a 'pure face', which does not mean it is impure. It is a face and it is not; it is an unface and inface, an outface. Out and in. And I fall in love with both inface and outface, with in and out, up and down. Just with both.

Now I do not see face to face. Perhaps I do not see any face except that of my wife whose devotion to anything, however remotely connected with my face, is unquestionable and almost unbelievable. I see an object, a subject and all these faces I see and feel are in front of my body and

sometimes behind it. Then I see all of them in the domain of jet-lag where everybody lags behind, beyond and in front of all others; of my hotel room anyway, anyhow, anygo. I see all of them (even those who are not there) and realise there are only faces and faces-to-faces. Shortly afterwards I see beauty, love and eternity – eternity to eternity, provided someone offers me a photograph where I kiss both my wife and our cat. I can also kiss just 'at' after saying, 'I studied *at* the Moscow Conservatoire.'

Face to face. Face to a looking glass where everything is reflected, refrected and ected. After your death and ascension you discard all 'ecteds' and adopt faces that come to you from everywhere.

I look at them and recognise myself, myself, myself, myself, myself; and other myselves. Do we always need a filter to see the beauty of the world? Do I really care about the other world and others?

FACE----------SEMIFACE----------WHAT WHAT WHAT FULLFA

At the hotel I am staying in they hung a few pictures, which reminds me of what a Russian friend of mine used to say rather peevishly, 'It's better to hang pictures than humans.' Sometimes it is far more useful and even practical to hang humans, but we shall not go into that right now, even if it is a topic I wish to explore one day, analysing, among other things, the photograph where one can see Mussolini and his companion in misfortune, their heads swinging in the wind.
One of the pictures I saw last night exhibited the following title, 'Umbrella and Sky,' as if to explain that a black smudge – the centrepiece of the work – was an umbrella and not just a smudge or a tiny representation of sewage sludge. Of course everything and everyone are symbolic; they are symbols in disguise or just symbols, bubbles and troubles. You look at the sky and say, 'It's an umbrella so there's no point in painting an umbrella under it. Anyway, the weather is fine today and no rain is likely to threaten our holiday.' But even the rain (even if it does not really pour) is a symbol one might mistake for manna from heaven or just manna; or mamma on whose care one might count, even if one left one's mother's breasts many years ago. Anyway, any umbrella is a symbol – a filter that protects us from the rain or the sun, letting into our existence only a few particles, a few harbingers of many happy years to come and go. They promise health and also wealth because, as they often put it, one's real wealth is one's health.

God's grace is often touched upon in relation to whatever drops on us from heaven, but we might point out that God should not be associated either with rain or hail. He is a filter that protects us from our destiny and its hardhearted, pitiless blows. He is also the grain out of which we are supposed to grow as we devote our lives to life-building, to the creation of our only authentic masterpiece. So we might say about God-seekers and His-finders, 'A few chickens are scratching around in the yard for grain,' unless we are highly critical of any blasphemy, whatever its shape or shade.

But a great many specimens of our species do not view anything in terms of God's grace as if competing with Him on equal terms for air, earth and universe supremacy. And if they happen to spot an umbrella in between their heads and a number of clouds (or the sun), they say, 'What a beautiful umbrella. I wonder if I really need the sun, the moon and other ingredients of our so-called sky.' In their case, the umbrella and its beauty is the aim one might pursue for its own sake, disregarding values and notions, flouting metaphysical and even physical conventions. Is that what we are asked to take notice of on the way of our cradles? Just a thing in itself and in the world; no beyonds, no infronts (or affronts), except our eyes and bodies going somewhere and coming to a standstill in some other where (or wear and tear, alias the world).

Be that as it may, we do need a filter, even if it does not protect us from cancers and ulcers. Any face-to-face, any straightness or forwardness is vulgar and fraught with risks: you grow bored after spending a few minutes in front of close-ups, let alone blow-ups and their presumptuous presence. Roundabout, roundabout you say night and day, if you are not a straightforward mystic whose only stare is directed towards God's eyes, alias His soul. And if a boy draws on the sand a straight line as he pictures to himself an interstellar journey of some kind, you go away and doodle in your notebook for hours, determined to confine straight lines to Euclid's geometry, ignorant of Riemann and Lobachevski. ∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞∞

Or you can write E and put ∑ instead. You can also put ∑ on the spot where your Ego stood a few minutes ago. Actually ∑ protects you from accusations such as, 'That man has such an enormous ego – I've never known anyone so full of themselves!' They cannot say, 'That man has such an enormous ∑ – I've never known anyone so full of themselves!' Even if your signature looks like a king-size ∑, something like ∑ or ∑∑∑∑ , no one will ever say, 'He thinks he's the cat's whiskers.' And even if they do their utmost to draw a cat's whiskers somewhere, not necessarily on a sheet of paper, others will say, 'Your doodling looks like a cat's whiskers, but he's different, we can assure you.'

I wish I could look and think like a cat's whiskers (not like a whisky, though). I even prefer this ∑ to all my shapes and forms. Any ∑ would suit me, to tell the truth; or anything else, as any Taoist would add without the slightest hesitation. And if he does hesitate for an instant, slightly, vaguely, he is bound to conclude his meditation thus, 'Truth, untruth, din-din-din, dang-dang-dang.' Or diang, diang, diang. Could I sacrifice this ∑ for anything?

In days of yore, you used to sacrifice your life and families for your country. Let us sacrifice this ∑ for anything: for one's and others' countries, for religions and all the gods you stumble upon in the universe.

∑'s country and religion ≠ ∑

I see a face, a maze, to face and what to, what done, undone; as usual and traditional. What do all these ∑∑∑∑∑∑∑∑ mean; or do not? They do not mean ¥¥ or do they? DO THEY, DO THEY. That is what they mean or do.

Is it enough to be ‘yet’? Or just yet? Yes, provided you write it all day long in capital letters: YET, YET.

DAY
LONG
SHORT
TIME
LIFE
I
MY GARDEN
A GNOME, AN ELF. WHAT AM I?
AM or ?

If you have time on your hands, you can write a maximalist poem:

I am?
I am!
I am§
I am/

If you write, ‘I am A,’ someone might conclude you are just Alexander, not necessarily Alexander the Great. If you write, ‘I am not necessarily,’ they are sure to say, ‘He’s dispensable. Let’s shoot him.’ And they might add, after a while, ‘It seems human beings are regarded as dispensable – our deaths just do not matter.’

What does ‘I am/’ mean? Either…Or? Neither…Nor? Or ‘Peter/Paul/Foul/Fawn/Dawn? The dawn of a new era? Of a new ear that hears the harmony of the world? According to Borges and his admirers, Whitman was everybody. So was Shakespeare. / , in other words or slashes. I, for one, am *not* everybody; nor am I a slash. I might be a dash, for all I know.

I am –
and ,
and :
and ;

not human

;;
Talking into, bulling into, out of. One grasps one's hand – another one's – and begins to pull it this way and that until something snaps; perhaps one's identity or immortality. One is immortal, eternal and unattainable, and someone else (there are elses everywhere) comes along (the same goes for alongs) and literally and unliterally browbeats you into submission. And if no one comes and nothing goes, you are browbeaten or just beaten by your ambitions that talk to you about ladders and their tops. 'You're the tops! You're the bottoms!' One hears that and sets about doing something related to ladders, Jacobs and James and Obamas, Trumps and trump cards. One climbs these ladders and one's arrow goes up for a while. And then all arrows and Hallowe'en plummet down, be it Obama's care or Trump's uncare; or one's own career. They call it life and they are right for once.

Beautiful teenagers come to a mogul's office and show their dresses, which is most uncalled-for, as far as the mogul's views and desires are extended. So he says, 'What are all these dresses about?'

'They're about me,' says the future starlet.

'What are you about?' asks the same Mongol.

'I beg your pardon?'

'You should beg my pardon till doomsday,' he answers.

The potential starlet takes her clothes off and that's it, that's it, that's it. And all these stars and lets did not say a word about harres, asses and ments for decades. Now they come to the fore or rather to television studios and say, 'He harassed me.' 'He Hollywooded me.' 'He raped me, my dog and my mother.' And this works both ways: they are in the news and in the news. (A win-win situation.) They get millions and reappear on screens to get further millions; and even Magritte could not have said, 'These are not millions.' Millions, millions, millions, billions, millions. Not peanuts.

Joyce and Rabelais might have made a long list of those rapes and non-escapes:

HAS RAPED:
Me,
My cat,
My cleaning woman,
My mistress,
Not my stress (I wish he could rape my stress),
Not my identity crisis (I wish I knew why I am dying),
My sister,
In law,

All my brothers,
All my mothers,
My spiritual fathers,
My spirituality
And femininity,
And my ET inclinations (I yearned for another world)

One can hide oneself, as those and other Chinese sages (and ages) do, but one can also be there, in the middle of everywhere. One and others call it 'presence' because one is just in the middle of the world, pulling no legs, nor arms, nor weapons out of one's pocket and bags. You are in a temple and one is in it too, standing somewhere; in a corner perhaps; in a perhaps, in a maybe. Or rather in 'yes'; no capital letters. (Yes needs no capitals, no geography, no philosophy or theology. Yes, yes.) And there where it was, has always been and is. Don't write yes anywhere. It is just presence, five fingers, ten fingers, twenty arms. The eyes you see face to face, eyes to eyes, ears to ears, dears to dears. Whose dears? A herd of deers.

You calm down; so do I and I hope all other Is do exactly the same, calming down and getting a move on without really moving or dying or rotting, without exposing themselves to Trumps, trump cards, cards and even arts that do not exist unless they sell and consequently veil other unsold arts the truth of which might pursue us, if we had an opportunity to catch a glimpse of them somewhere: in a hall divorced from sponsor-rotten, rape-and-harassment, stigmata-marked oeuvres, in our downhills, downdales, hales and hails and hells and halls.

You are present in the middle of all, in the corner of *u*n-all – everywhere, in other corners, alls and midways, midwives. You play three notes and say, 'Am thought,' or 'Am rot,' or 'Am red,' or 'Am dead.' They say, 'We're there to listen.' And you play, 'C, D, C, D, E.' Or rather, 'E, D, E, C, F, E, D.' And you say, 'This song is about a bird.'

'Not about a child?' they ask.

'All right, let it be.'

'Let it be what?'

'Let it be about a child, a newborn babe. About his cosy cradle.'

You come out of any womb – the universe is a womb of sorts – and start mixing whatever you see, touch, smell and think, if your embryo is mature enough to draw conclusions from this, that and at, t, as I usually say to depict my visions and disillusions. Actually you say, 'Home,' and go on unmindful of homes and houses, of souls, bodies and no returns, no goings – of everything. And then and even afterwards you can do anything to whatever you have, and sometimes what you have (no have-nots this time) amounts to A B C only. Or to only; only. So you go on to keep going under what they call your own momentum – lasting only a moment, as you realise as you dissect and desecrate the word 'momentum'. You also realise this moment lasts forever, striking up a conversation with you. (Whatever you see, hear and admire strikes *something* with you. Sometimes all of them just strike you, leaving your body and its wounds behind; after a while.) That smell always evokes memories of your old school. Always and old mean you have lived and are about to die.

Once again you began (two hours ago) to mix all these elements you had come across everywhere, through and out your life. What does this mixture (the world, the cosmos and whatever) look like? Smell like? Sound and mount like?

L
I
K
B
J
H
G
F
D
U
Y
6
J
+
L
K
C
D
X
G

At some point (last night) I found myself in the middle of another software programme where I eventually got stuck as I tried to disentangle myself from the communist colour and a huge margin where a few comments on my text painstakingly made their appearance. They stayed; so did I. We seemed to stare at each other and, after a while, the comments outstared me, my patience and even my life; to some extent. This morning I worked on my discomfiture and the other world disappeared – to my regret. For all my efforts and moans, I cannot get back to it, no matter how often, how persistently I touch the arrow I cannot reproduce in this work of mine; or in any other work. Anyway, it looks back as I do, which means it is as much old hat as I am. Alas, neither it nor I can get to the times, the yores we need so badly. רוֹבַכַּפּ

Oddly enough, I cannot get back to anything with the exception of the glass of water the contents of which do not seem to change in spite of Heraclitus' sleek formula. Of course he spoke of rivers, and the liquid I enjoy as I tip the glass towards my mouth and soul is not likely to flow unless I pour it into the bath and put my foot in it with a view to making it flow and whirl and pool. But if I pull my foot out of the water and plunge it into it again, it will enter the same water; the same river, if you wish. We can call anything a 'river', if we feel like it – sometimes I, for one, do feel like it – and lo and behold! – everything is a river: life, strife, any wife, however faithful. Even 'lo

and behold' is now a river, although one might point out that you utter this expression as you come across a phenomenon thanks to which you become rooted to the spot with admiration.

I cannot forget the world I saw last night and I am about to do my best to reconstruct it instead of deconstructing metaphysics, physics and mimics. Now I can see (this colour imparts to me this absolute truth) that it can be done at the push of a button – all the more light-heartedly since I know for sure which button I have to push. I push it and here we go or flow like Heraclitus who flowed through three counties before flowing into the sea just south of here.

I remember I wished to delete my red-coloured, red-underlined-and-underscored text, but I failed utterly: a terrible beauty was born. So I kept on writing, '~~I cannot delete it, I cannot delete it~~.' Lo and behold! The margin I was longing for appeared once again, pointing out that *mise en forme* was to be taken care of. I seem to have come back to the world I left last night, but I shall never take up where I left off: I recall nothing except 'I cannot delete it'. Is that what I need after all, after all these years, tears and buckets of sweat? Nothing can be deleted unless everything disappears of its own accord. And what about the *mise en forme*? I am currently experiencing a dip in form; I dip and so does my form – or any form or shape, for that matter, considering that everything happens right here, in my mind. Or in my behind – all this depends on one's angle of vision and general perspective.

I typed this text in another file, hoping to transfer it intact to the present file that is still present, for all the metamorphoses I inflict on it. It is no longer red; it is rose as if French communists had turned socialists overnight, overinstant. What is more, my words are bathing in this colour instead of allowing each character to wear its own garment, its unmistakeable identity. And '*Commentaire* UW1' replaced and removed the *mise en forme* so I am no longer duty bound to jog around my house for hours on end.

This incarnation disappeared too and I am going to the party empty-handed. To what party? a birthday party a farewell party a dinner party (= a small, sometimes formal party where a meal is eaten) a UK fancy-dress/US costume party. I go or flow – such is life and any suicide, however sophisticated and trouble-free is out of the question.

What is style? You find a link between A and O and put them together, saying, 'AO is the Tree of life and death I see in front of my body and mind. And here is the proof of what I have just written, "AOOAAOOAAAAAOOOOOOOOAA," and so O, and so A.' What if it is just a series of adjustments? A love letter received by the wrong person. But this person gives the letter to her cousin (the right person) and harmony reigns once more, imitating the harmony of the Pre-Big-Bang world. A train goes somewhere and you do not catch it, catching instead your future wife, boyfriend, manifold friend and sister. Do you get to Paradise or any of its outskirts if you arrange a few letters vertically?

U

J

P

G

H

G??????

It is better to write and say, ‘UJ.’

,noi^^$$ is very beautiful and once again I recognise myself.

Keeping away from others. Then you come closer and they radiate light.
First take care of yourself and then of humanity.
Being with others, especially when meeting them – awful.

IOTHERSIOTHERSIOTHERS
INONINONSENSEISENSEINONS

You write an eternal poem about a moment and an angel holding this moment in its beak; and critics compare you to Rilke whose propensity for writing about angels and their beaks is universally known and admired. Yet you do not cross the threshold (or porch) beyond which our immortalities were stored in the immememememepriorial days. And while you remain within the bounds of before-immortality, in ante-eternity room, a Russian soldier (this episode takes place at the end of the Second World War) enters not only Berlin but also the Reichstag and cries, ‘Hurrah,’ before being shot by a German officer. His name is known and venerated; so are his wife and the letter she wrote to him on the eve of his Berlin-consolidated glory. ‘I kiss you,’ she said in this letter where you can see the vestiges of this kiss and love and tragedy and eternity. ‘I kiss you 999 times. I can’t kiss you 1,000 times because you’re too far.’ Do you need Rilkean angels and their mouths any longer? And their kisses? 999+1.

And death is just another kiss, a – that grows and outgrows its own minuses. Not an event, not a turning point, not a beginning, not an endgame, spill and mat. Just a change as if I put another LP on, another Haydn’s quartet, another song of the Earth, in the Earth, above the Earth, over and over, everything, everyone, and one, and the One. A glissando? Glissing, glissing, doing, andoing, doing again. What is death? Another 78 rpm.

0000000000000000000000000000000000000000
Dear Gerr,
I made a fool of myself in front of my friends and my wife by playing your second version of my lost (and last) labours. I don’t think you could improve upon whatever you have done so far and our last recording will go downhill as long as there’s any hill available for this recording of ours. And there are so many hills around that I’m sure our recording will find another hill for its decadence and rottenness, sooner or later.
Yours,
Valery

00000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000

Limitation. Success. You limit your thoughts, movements and life, and so your limbs and nymphs are bound to die beyond yet another dead- or limitline. Every sleep is death; so is every limit and you if you submit yourself to it and them. You do it in the hope that the Book of Changes will offer you the opposite of the ordeal you sustain quasi-voluntarily. As we know, this book looks thus: _____ and - - - - - - - -. And or or. Either...Or. If you write down the word 'limitation', you hope that unlimitation is lying in wait for you beyond every corner, every mourner. They mourn you – 'He's passed away, he's no more' – and all of a sudden you remove your feet from the grave, both of them, at the same time. You also remove from it (from the grave or the great Beyond) both shoulder blades and many other shoulders and blades they put in your coffin in expectation of your *outre-tombes*' fights with wrathful deities.

But in limitation we must observe due measure. Suppose you limit yourself; and you do limit yourself, judging from what your life looks like nowadays: - - - - - - - - - -. It might look like _____ or rather like !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! No way, as they say. And they do say that, never missing an opportunity to say, 'No way, no way, no way.' And if you do not catch their meaning or meanings, they draw the following diagram on the sand:

WAY WAY WAY WAY WAY----------NO!!!!!!!!

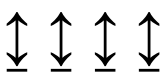
And if you do not understand what they are talking about, they add after souls and searchings, NO PASSARAM. And you do not passaram, for you cannot do otherwise.

So you limit yourself. You neither conquer the world nor write a number of immortal poems that every schoolboygirl will know and recite by heart in a few hundred years.

Water over lake; the image of LIMITATION. (No point in using capital letters: we know limitations by heart; down and up to their capital letters.)

Water over sea; the image of UNLIMITATION. (We do not know this 'un' by heart so we had better memorise it before it disappears forever, leaving behind only limitations.)

Through what could we go? Through everything; walls, deaths, lives, women, poems, universes, cosmoses, osmoses, Moses. If we go through Moses, we shall reach another Promised Land, another And, another unlimited limitation. You create number and measure; so do I. But these numbers and measures are numberless, measureless. What they reach amounts to O, as Heisenberg put it. You go through the looking glass or through this O and realise that everythingbodysoul is upside down; or downside up. Children and adults alike will not understand what I am talking about unless I draw something on the screen:



Or

Tolstoy is: _____ – a train, An instead of Anna.

Dostoevsky is: _____bang_____boom_____INPOUB

Dostoevsky is: I love you, I don't, I do, I don't, let me, don't let me, I'm about, I'm around, the dawn is breaking, I'm breaking, you're breaking, the vase is breaking, entering, leaving, boom, *°8I G

We used to like *°8I G. Now we opt for 1,000000000000000000000000000000000000000

Or 2,000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000

Or 333333333333333333333333333333333333333333

That arrow shows us how our predestination works and where we are supposed to land up, carrying out our genes' preordained projects as far as their total and irrevocable entelechy. Here is this arrow: ╟. Tolstoy deviates from its trajectory now and then, but he does it thus: - , not thus: Ł ł P ǻ ŕ ̀ ̀ Ł ł P ǻ ▌ ▌▌▌▌▄▀

What about the I CHING? Pigs and fishes. Good fortune. So you eat as many pigs and fishes as you can, and then you come across ▌ ▌▌▌▌▄▀▌ and ▀● ☻ ◄▼► ♫♯ ▌ ▌. You cross this across, hoping to get rid of all your cancers and get. 'What does it mean?' you ask your predestination or everyone's determinism.

'You have a bee in your bonnet,' answers Spinoza.

'A being? A child?'

'A bee.'

'What kind of bee?' you ask.

'A yellow and black flying insect which makes honey and can sting you.'

'Can it sting me?'

'It can.'

And it stings you – end of story; of a hexagram, rather.

This hexagram says you should not go abroad because you are sure to be stung by a bee. No journey, misfortune, no crossing any threshold, no buying chips outdoors, even if it does not rain in torrents and no one says, 'Let us run.' You are stung by a bee, which leads to your sudden, unpredictable death deplored by both your relatives and non-relatives. They say to each other:

'He had a sudden heart attack while he was on holiday.'

'He wasn't on holiday. Nor did he have a sudden heart attack.'

'What did he have? An unsudden heart attack?'

'The bee.'

'The Beeb?'

'The bee and the bonnet.'

'Bonny and Clyde?'

'That's right.'

A Dostoevsky hero is inoutinoutinoutinout of whatever. His heroine goes right when everyone, Dostoevsky included, expects her to go left as if she were to join the Decembrists, Communists and Maotsedunists – on the spur of the moment. But she goes right and marries (unmarries) another prince or merchant, and we are left holding the baby whose political and psychological sympathies will remain unknown for another decade at least. For all his switches within Shakespeare's witches, Dostoevsky constantly reminds us of the overall harmony, unity – the

onenness that Kant, for one, speaks of so often as he does his best to bring together the mind and the matter, infinitude and finitude. As a result, we are left with antinomies – another baby, another unfinishness. In our endeavour to finish the unfinished symphony, we put all these ends and odds together and once again the result we obtain at the end of the odd and nasty road looks like %PMLj,nkhgcgv hjn. Under the circumstances, Dante used to say, 'My quill leaves my hand and drops like a raindrop.'

Kant's antinomies are irreconcilable; so are husbands and their spouses, brothers and sisters, Stalins and Lenins, and so on, and ons and sons. Only death can (and does) reconcile them, and it is pointless to speak about the poor who share kings' thrones with kings and queens on account of worms. You count the worms as you look at a corpse after removing whatever separates it from your gaze and say to yourself and others, 'One, two, three, four five. Two hundred. You know, last night I counted the worms I'd found around our late queen's corpse. Two hundred, believe it or not.' But death also reconciles a cramped hall-room-and-kitchen castle where one lives for the rest or the beginning of one's life with the endless metamorphosis one is submitted to after one's and many others' deaths: worms, birds, Hamlets, Shakespeares, theatres, catharses. Of course you go on writing this and thus, not otherwise: oiuygh kjhg v,nb lkj:;, But death is likely to arrange it in accordance with his harmony that the universe knows by heart: oiuygh kjhg v,nb lkj:;, What? What? What? you ask as you look at it. After a while, you begin to see face to face the following patch of news: oiuygh kjhg v,nb lkj:;, Are you satisfied? Are you harmonised? Can anyone play on you?

'What did you have in mind when you refused lord Warburton?' I am watching *Portrait of a Lady* that I read some time ago, but that time is both some and ago, very much ago, and I no longer feel like dealing with characters whose mysteries are revealed stage by stage, nerve by nerve, in the course of a novel I cannot see without a shudder: its very bulk puts me off and even *away* so that in the end I find myself in a rubbish bin. But I am better off lying in a rubbish bin in comparison with what I could experience in an armchair, this novel lying on my lap. An American woman turns down a lord in spite of John Gielgud's smile and voice, and I am supposed to keep her company through her mazes and amazes because, at some point, a great American-English writer resolved to tell us a story and create a memorable character. Why do I have to go out of my ways and days to scrutinise those nice, scrut and tin in order to understand her motives, moods, odds and definitive versions? Do I have enough time and rooms for all that, for the '*niet*' I should immediately say upon coming across the outward nonsense? I have more than enough of both time and room (and roof) for 'NIET' I lodge within myself – till doomsday and midsummer nights. No characters, no plots, no knots. Only eternal, unanswerable, unquestionable questions. Only ùPMKJ?nkua'" :;n,qf :

Of course I might be interested in the way that the ways of the inhabitants of Yorkshire go their ways to other shires and yolks, but my head is filled to the brim with the essence and oneness you might call God and His magnificence. And suddenly, in the very middle of meditation upon non-interruptitude I hear the voice of Mr Dassy or Messy, as they say nowadays, because he is as proud as Mr Messy the footballer (not as Punch any more). Then I am supposed to remember all his cousins and their fortunes; and if I do not, I shall never understand why Mr Dassy bluffs his way out of all other ways to marry Mrs Massy who is too proud to exchange her simple, cottage-bound life for yachts and Dom Perignon (Perpignan) habitually drunk in Churchill's company.

Mr Dassy is proud; so is Mrs Messy: after all, she is married to the most renowned footballer in the history of the beginning of the 21st century. So, whenever they are on speaking terms, they speak thus, 'Who are you?'

'I'm Mrs Messy.'

'Are you my wife or the Queen of Mess?'

'I'm married –'

'To a footballer?'

'Right.'

'To a baseball player?'

'Right.'

'Aren't you married to me? To the Duke of Yolkshire?'

'Why should I? I always separate the yolks from the whites.'

'Are you a racist?'

'*Nine*.'

'Do you stay with the whites or with the roses?'

'I stay with the whites. To fight the reds more efficiently.'

'Do you think the yolks can't fight Bolshies efficiently?'

'They cannot.'

So I am interested in how the Irish eat their breakfasts and where they spend their lives before consuming their breakfasts in their wives' companies (children, dogs, cats, mice). Mr Dussy eats a sausage; so do I: I do not read the books I buy and put away for nothing. I read them for something, and this something is the sausage I put into my mouth after reading *Tom Jones* or another Tom for that matter because other Joneses may eat something else. Actually he (Tom) does eat something else and a friend of mine said to me after watching one of the films devoted to this particular Tom, 'I wish I could devour whatever he eats.' I cannot say it is the aim or the end of my life, even though you are never wide of the mark if you enjoy a blood sausage – if the blood you enjoy is blue.

How do all these novels work and rest after their exertions? 'After six hours work in the garden, we sat down for a much-needed rest,' a novel says to you, but you recall neither the garden nor the characters whose characteristics must be praised by critics all over the world. The elderly generally need far less rest than the young, and tend to sleep in several short stretches. So do I. I sleep in several short stretches: - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -. They call it the *I Ching*; so do I – I call it the *I Ching* too. I might call it the *I King* – that is what I did at the beginning of this work and walk. I may do something else; I might walk differently. Talk and mock.

The superior man abides in dignity and virtue,
In order to improve the mores.

I wish I could improve upon the Moor's image and sculptures. Why strangle Desdemona? She enjoyed herself in the company of many people. So did you, didn't you? You enjoyed yourself in the midst of tigers, elephants, hyenas, lions, moors, boors, morasses, morris dancers, donnas, madoonas.

What about the inhabitants of Yorkshire? RKRKKYRKRKYRKRSHIIYIIIR5YEERYERERE6SHIHISYOHIHYOIHSIHYOK7RERESRE8SHAK9.

5,6,7,8,9. Is that what hope is about?

MY SLEEP

MY DREAM

MOIH JHGC HF XHGFCHGF JHG VJUHG VGH OUY TGV 98IUIJOIMJJOPIJHN O0PIJHBV

You shouldn't drive for more than three hours without taking a break. So you take a break: .
Or rather: driving, driving, losing wheels and meals, coffee, coffee, coffee, coffee, coffee.

I am what I am and what I not am because I am *Ich-nicht*, which means and does not mean (that is what always happens in the domain of philosophy and logic) that I must go to the *nicht* to find WOW, alias, aliens, the proverbial completeness. God is complete; so am I; so I am God; and Dog. Even letters are complete and consequently interchangeable: you interchange, don't you? You do, following in the ABC's footsteps and other feet and steps as well: there is a well of feet and steps under your feet and very nose. So you go as far as Not I and go back to I Not or rather Do or rather Am; what is more, this I of mine is am forever. Everything is I and *Ich* – not *nicht*, for once; whatever we can say or *nicht* says and does. What do I do all this for? To understand the world and my doings – or its doings, as the case may be or not, as Hamlet says and does not. I am *Ich* and I need not prove it to the Almighty: He knows all my Nichts, Ichts and TS. (Tee shirts?) Why should I? Why should I? Why SHOULD I? Why should I do any SHOULD?

I should do this because I am subject to determination.
I should do this because I am subject to predetermination.
I should do this because I am subject to God.
I should do this because I am subject to high domestic tax.
I should do this because I plan to go on Wednesday, subject to your approval.
Moving all the books should not take long, subject to there b (my books) to their a
Because in recent years, I have been subject to attacks of depression. First comes a lot of pressure, than the same amount of depression.
To the approval to all holders. Holders of shares in the company receive various benefits: my wits, my bits, my legs, my conscience I have drunk down to the dregs.
To all old people.
To all.
To me.
To §6666:+LKJNKUHgjyghvjhg and so The approval of on
ON YES ON YES ON YES ON YES ON YES ON YES ON YES ON YES
ON ON ON ON ON ON
Yes
yes

yes
s
n

I remain what I am even if am only m, a or n. I am what I am and the world is AM so you say (whoever you are: don't forget that your biographical or psychological information is included in brackets) that you are my offspring – not my spring or summer, mind you. You are just my opposite and in order to join the ends and all other dialectics, I have to join my odds and ends; my odds, my odds. Oddly enough
Oddly enough
Enough is oddly

My wife I have a lot to apologise for
I can apologise, appoooooolo, I may become Apollo during this ritual to which I connect my computer and self. So I am Apollo, provided I spell my name correctly and put my index fingers into their machines that say, 'He is Apollo all right.' You look at yourself in their Alice-inspired mirrors and think you are yourself. So they think too. So do they, rather. I mean, they think you are yourself. You are yourself and so can enter Japan or Taiwan. You enter them, not yourself and get out, out.

JAPAN
Out
Out
Out
JAPAN
IN
OUT

Not a rose, just a rose
Rimbaud said; all of them said. The rose is not inside, nor outside. It is not the rose, it is not the rose. It is ąPłŁتن. You are just a Beethoven sonata executed++ on your clavier.

Thus superior man abides in dignity and virtue.

If you AM you assert yourselves. If you are if, you are two letters: if. Questions? They say questions should not be answered. They also say that answers should be questioned.

God is
Immortality
And so an.

.....

You can, can't you? And they? You go on; they go and woe.

So another is done. Nine at the beginning means: you let your
You have to live up to this nine. And it is only your beginning; and you are supposed to let your magic tortoise go. All right: you let it go. Their magic tortoise goes, goes, goes, goes; and you cannot stop it. You wish to visualise this go and i-go; just go, not i-go: you have nothing to do with it. He, she or it does:

If you go thus, no one asks you where you (to) go to. You just ==========+++666664444444444444444

When I do, I go and meet, another slice of meat and eat and at. I say to myself, ‘This is another at and I’ve to adhere to it, for it adheres to another it. The world is an impressive number of adherences.’ Let us leave them, whoever you are. Let us leave the ld and re:

ICICICCICICICIHHHHHHH – ad – at IIII

NICH

What is what is
You said yes wo
And no is done

The lake rises above the trees.
Here is the lake and the trees are not beyond the horizon.
The lake rises above /////////the trees !!!!!!!!!!!
The lake is up, up, up, on the up, on the
The trees are down, down, down.
Here is the lake.

The trees.

A withered poplar puts forth flowers.

No blame. No praise.

You just do what you like, provided you *can* do anything. You can put forth flowers so you put forth flowers, roses, mimoses and the gifts that children can dream about on Christmas Eve: Christmas pudding, Christmas stocking. They pull out all the nonsense you stuffed into it and time goes from here to there, flowing like this line ___________or like that line

____

It flows; so do I. And even ‘;’ flows, doesn’t it?

;;Or doesn’t it?

What about :::

They do float around me as long as I make them do that. I am in the centre and they float

;;;

I

:::

A withered poplar puts forth flowers. What about an unwithered poplar? FLOWERS

What about an unwithered man? So it is. Beautiful, aren’t you?

My flower. Aren’t you?

And I am what I not and where I am not. Just unwith.

Von: Valery [mailto:valeryaleff@gmail.com]
Gesendet: Freitag, 17. November 2017 00:51
An: phil.ned@b-shar.bizou
Betreff: Re: AW: our recent recordings

Dear Phil,

I've listened again to several recordings of mine. And again I'm disappointed by the result of our last recording. In comparison with Liszt's CD that Gerr sent you some time ago it is doll-like, although it is better than what Gerr had sent me before. Please don't forget that I'm neither Khaha nor Hélène, if only because I'm seventy. This is probably my last recording, and for once I allow myself to be capricious.

Please, find a down-to-earth, Furtwängler sound, otherwise I'll cry on my deathbed. And I'll have other things to do in those moments.

My wine colleagues used to say about modern wines - they're *techniques*. Please, make it sound like a Bordeaux first growth. That is how I played it.

Please, send me another version by email. It would be pointless to correct the version I've got.

Kindest regards,

Dear Valery,

I am sorry to hear this – believe me, you crying on your deathbed is the last thing that I want to happen!

I assume you are referring to your 'old' recording of the Liszt b-minor Sonata in comparison to the most recent Schumann CD which I send you. I just did the same comparison and generated a new mix, which I hope now accommodates your specific requests.

For ease of navigation, I have copied the Liszt b-minor Sonata after the Schumann: On the CD which I will send to you on Monday you will find Schumann Op. 11 followed by an excerpt of Liszt. This way you can play both recordings from the same CD and have immediate impressions.

If I may: I find our recording much richer in colors, warmer in sound, better in regard of spacial homogeneity and much healthier in regard of the level structure, but that's just my humble opinion.

Please have a careful listen, when you get the CD and let's take it from there. If you are still not happy/convinced, the best solution would be to have you and Gerr come to our studio in Berlin to put the finishing touches on the mix in a joined session. It is much easier to speak about sound and make detailed decisions when we are in the same room, listening to the same material on the same equipment.

Many greetings and have a nice weekend!
With very kind regards,

Phil

b-shar

Dear Gerr,

Last night I woke up and, being unable to rejoin my dreams, I listened again to our Schumann and Liszt's Sonata we recorded at the beginning of the century, if I'm not mistaken. Well, the Liszt sounds earthly, more Frutwängler-like - full-bodied, as wine lovers say when speaking about Latour or Mouton. Our recent try is meagre and unfortunately I can't get

rid of the toy-like, almost electronic aspect of it. I sent an email to Phil who answered me next day, saying he adjusted the sound in accordance with my wishes. Yet he prefers the Schumann sound to our old Liszt. Anyway, he too suggested we should go to Berlin. Let's do it by all means - a lot is at stake, as you know. When could that be done? Or should we finish our editing first? Besides, we haven't yet tackled the problem of the Frank beginning. Could you please send me a few versions to choose from?

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Valery

Dear Valery,

I just wanted to let you know that we sent out a CD of the current edit to your Belgium address today and that it should arrive within the next 2 or 3 days.

Kind regards,
Christiane
b-sharp
Pankstr.1

I am coming to terms with what I hear and dare to do within my field of vision and action as if I could not die without all these manoeuvres. Of course I can die without these or other manoeuvres and also with the Louvre, but the question lies elsewhere, as is always the case, whatever case we are talking about. Am I contingent or not? That is the question, as one might say, and this question is far more important than the conduct of an aristocrat obliged to leave his mansion and dimension because he has no money, to put it bluntly. We put it bluntly – at least I do, as far as I am concerned – and I answer thus, 'I'm contingent. I've nothing to do with necessity that can prosper without me and whose career must have been on the up and up since I renounced my participation in the processes and rituals associated with life, history and success.' On the other hand I can equally say, 'I'm necessary and that's why it is necessary for all my members and sinews to leave this mansion where my poor self is allowed to stay no longer. Creditors, you know.'

I am contingent and whatever piano trio you can think of would resound in all the airs (even in my air of confidence) much longer than my truncated self; or *senf*, in German. Just mustard, if I am not mistaken. You add my body and soul to your sauerkraut, and you enjoy your meals in one of your Kentucky chickens. You can also put me in one of these chickens, as long as you are at it or rather at my soulbodymindetc. Of course you will put

me in a cage before eating me alive or dead, which amounts to the same nonsense. You can have me eat my own Kentucky excrement; or the leaves of grass one can see in the documentaries devoted to Walt Whitman, on condition that they endeavour to pass me off as an organic chicken.

Am I too old or too young to know if good is the highest degree of intelligence and virtue? This is good and God said so when He saw what had been done, and we picture to ourselves this good only thus:
Seventh day: beyond good and evil.
Sixth day: GOOD.
Fifth day: good.
Fourth day: good.
Third day: good.
Second day: good.
First day: good.

Then you consult the Aïe-Aïe King and write:
First day: evil.
Second day: bad.
Third day: evil.
Fourth day: bad.
Fifth day: evil.
Sixth day: BAD.
Seventh day: on this side of good and evil.

So many people speak of their bodies and their departures from it, if only within one night, one day – the stretch of time that is nothing but a patch you can download: _____
_____

Why do they do that (going out, coming back)? you may ask, but you seldom do: you know that all these people know everything: alchemy, astral bodies, chakras and mantras, whereas you know only your body, your god and the omelette you are about to eat after adding to its texture a few mushrooms and some bacon, one tomato and two cucumbers. They speak of their astral bodies as they look up and up as if to guide you through your ceiling towards one of the eternal truths where their astral bodies and buddies (all of them) have just settled down, waving their hands to salute you and wish you good luck. I say to them I am not interested in my astrals, asters and disasters: I like my body and I am even attached to it, contrary to all the precepts you (and one and I) can light upon everywhere, with the exception of Brillat (brilliant) Savarin's books. He says, 'I like (I permanently light) my body because it can digest all ducks and duckies, my first duchess and my middle dacha. What would I digest without it? Only Reader's Digests, God forbid.'

They also speak of immortality, as usual, as unnatural, inorganic and ridiculous. Recently I drank Cheval Blanc 1985 and was disappointed to the point of getting rid of at least nine cases I had put in my Belgian cellar after my unfortunate departure from Versailles. Departure; bad fortune. Then I drank a bottle of the same Cheval made, constructed and elaborated 53 years before: in 1933. An unforgettable experience. I wish I could put as many as 30 cases of this wine in my cellar that suffers from the abundance of astral bodies: I prefer full-bodied bodies to all these astralities. (Not to Australia, mind you; not to its Penfolds and Hermitages.) I cannot help wondering – an eternal wanderer is someone who cannot ward off questions – why (today of all days) they are so helpless with

wines: no life expectancy, only death expectancy. Do they really think that our own life expectancy has nothing to do with time-and-space dependency? If our wines die young, why should we live forever? Aren't we all bootstraps, strap-related, strap-structured boots?

FIRST BOOT ____ SECOND BOOT

Or rather: one carcass, one strap: one boot. Another carcass, another strap: another boot. Two boots, two legs.

As they used to say in Soviet kindergartens: a dot, a dot, two mini-circles; a cucumber; a big circle. Here is a man for you.

@

Carcasses of burnt-out vehicles, men and women lined the roads near the scene of the worst struggle for life.

On your deathbed, no force, only sensations coming, struggle – remembrance of it. Against the Pelageans. The Psalms.

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We are not on the same wavelength, the world (and its inhabitants) and I, as if I were a migrant, a non-Spielberg ET or rather the cup of an exquisite, white-Russian tea. The sizes of our respective waves are different too; so are the sizes of our particles. And yet we speak the same language. And yet, from time to time, I hear, 'Speak English.' From time to time, the same choir adds, 'For God's sake.' Not to be outdone, I shout in my turn, 'Speak English, for my sake.' They do not seem to know either me or my sake; anyway I understand *not* their English, their rot. So I shout, 'Speak English, for Mickey Mouse's sake.' Their mouths walkie-talk and I hear something along and across these lines, 'Babble, bauble, babel, bluebell.' Here is the meanness and meaninglessness of their linguistic wave:

babble bauble babel bluebell babble bauble babel bluebell babble bauble babel bluebell

Here is my wavelength and its fullness, its once-in-a-blue-moon fitness:
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PHILOSOPHY THEOSOPHY THEOLOGY PHILOLOGY PHILOSOPHY THEOSOPHY THEOLOGY PHILOLOGY PHILOSOPHY THEOSOPHY THEOLOGY PHILOLOGY PHILOSOPHY THEOSOPHY THEOLOGY PHILOLOGY

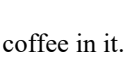
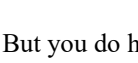
I am on a pedestal. I am a tree. I have no idea whether my roots are up or down, but my roots are somewhere; that is for sure; so are my twigs and leaves. And for nothing in the world will I ever leave these leaves.

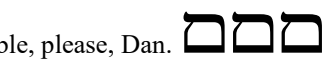
THEOLOGY PHILOLOGY
PHILOSOPHY THEOSOPHY THEOLOGY PHILOLOGY PHILOSOPHY THEOSOPHY THEOLOGY PHILOLOGY PHILOSOPHY THEOSOPHY THEOLOGY PHILOLOGY PHILOSOPHY THEOSOPHY

It is easier to tumble down if you belong in the former structure. As they say, ‘At any moment the whole building could tumble down.’ Any moment comes and the building (you, your life, your world, dimensions and equations) tumble down. How? they may ask; and they do. Thus spoke Zara:

PHILOSOPHY
THEOSOPHY
THEOLOGY
PHILOLOGY

BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM

And then you see a few lines that replace the world you have known since your childhood. What is more – and not less as some think and teach – the less you get it, the more you get. Of course lines and figures are easier to assimilate than words and their doubles, troubles, trebles and troubadours. If you see _____ you say, A goes to B – to a cup of coffee, in other words; or just in words. After my personal boom (nothing to do with the property boom) I prefer lines to minds where letters and trains of thought obfuscate every thing and issues, loopholes, exits and entrances. (And even existences.) You cannot board a train of thought, let alone have a cup of coffee in it. But you do have a cup of coffee on this table:  nd also on  .

Don’t wobble the table, please, Dan. 

Where is the cup of coffee? What does it matter? Only prima materia (or prima ballerina) counts. ‘Prima’, as they say in Germany.

Do I understand the world differently? I walk-talk-mock in the midst of the ingredients that make up our proverbial New-York-like melting pot. Chicken/oxtail/fish/tomato soup, Affricano/NorthAffricano/Modiliagno/SouthMeridiano/ soup. I understand that from different sides and soups. But there is one soup and in this soup I am one and undividable.

BOWEL

Well, it is dividable, but it does not really matter. It is the one – that is what counts.

Do I see anything beyond the cosmos?

PART FOUR

> *If we detach a perturbation of the mind or an emotion from the thought of an external cause and connect it with other thoughts, then the love or hatred towards the external cause and the fluctuations of the mind which arise from these emotions will be destroyed.*
>
> Spinoza, *Ethics* (*Part V*)

I detach the hatred I nourish towards today's society and connect it with the world to come, assuming it will come and provide a respite or a lifelong holiday that any earthling is entitled too. But as soon as our thoughts take the trouble to focus on the great Beyond we stumble upon Hell and fall into it, and our hatred therefore remains intact and occasionally prospers, even if we recall the saying, 'Love is everywhere.' But there are other worlds elsewhere and our feet are in running order, in spite of being in the grave. The grave is often compared to shackles, but not only in films did we see a lot of prisoners escaping from their cells without removing the shackles they had been offered prior to their arrival to prison. So we run from one world to another, dragging our grave behind or carrying it around, as if we really needed it badly either in Purgatory or Paradise. In whatever world we land up however, we find only hell or high water or both and so nothing is destroyed except the remains of our love for angels and the Holy Virgin.

I am not very fond of women who, now and then, remind us that they are not objects. It is little wonder that we are tempted to ask them, 'What are you then? Subjects?' Recently I imitated a dialogue with such a woman whose awareness of my memory's fallibility knows very few bounds. She reminds me of her non-object (or anti-object) status whenever an opportunity arises (or even does not arise). If I compliment her on the dress she purchased to please her uncle, she says, 'I'm not an object.'

'Are you a subject then?' I ask.

'Yes, I am.'

'Are you a British subject?'

'Yes, I am.'

'The Queen and her subjects?'

'That's right.'

'Are you subject to attacks of depression?'

'I am not.'

'Are you subject to back pain?'

'I am not.'

Nor do I display any fondness for a woman whose leitmotif sounds thus, 'I am what I am.' One is bound to recall Pindar on such occasions, but that does not mean the woman I am talking about has *become* what she is right now. She might have been exactly the same at the hour of her birth, her screams conveying to everybody the following truth, 'I'm screaming because I am. And my scream sounds like my scream because it is my scream. I would scream differently, if I weren't what I am. I am what I am and so is my scream – it is what it is.' She screams and her mother bares her right breast as her daughter bares her teeth.

An emotion which is a passion (it *is* a passion, sure enough) *ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it.*

At school I had complete contempt for all my teachers. At the Moscow Conservatoire I had complete contempt for all my teachers with two exceptions. Now I have complete contempt for the world I live in, with a few exceptions I am too weary to name and pay homage to, to, to. I *have* formed a clear and distinct idea of the world I am living in: ▉

For all my diagrams, drawings and paintings, my contempt has *not* ceased to be a passion – not a *com*passion, mind you. ▉▉

Beneath my contempt, so to speak.

Yes, let us unite – neither proletarians nor vegetarians (for once, for once) – but nevertheless let us unite our

ideas, our churches, our gods and live in peace united ●

Actually

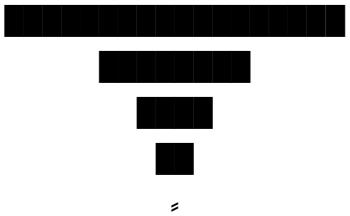
also unites us, all of us, just

You are here, I am there, and all of us are nowhere.

Actually the where is here, just here (as the Chinese say and do).

There is no modification of the body of which we cannot form some clear and distinct conception.

Here is the modification of my body: BODY, body, body. In other bodies:



The more perfection a thing possesses, the more it acts and the less it suffers; and conversely the more it acts, the more perfect it is.

Instead of staying in bed where I would be rather inactive, I opt for perfection and consequently for action advocated by Spinoza, communists and Protestant ministers; and many other ministers, come to think of it. I set about writing a text and as I gradually (in stages) set about it, I begin to suffer less. Of course we always suffer, more or less – often much more than less – but even in the middle of any suffering there is a silver lining, and this silver lining is tantamount and almost synonymous with Faustian activity and Goethe's perfection. Even the word 'set' puts me in an amiable mood, switching the minus-mode of my being to its opposite modus operandi; let alone the word 'about'. I am even tempted to limit my exertions to these two words the actions of which do me so much good, working wonders for my substance and also for its surface. In those moments my complexion testifies to the perfect machinery of my inner organs – if I permit myself to leave my writing desk and look at my face in a nearby mirror. So for a while I just type these two words: set about, about set, set about, about sex. Then I realise that it is easier to repeat the same words than come up with new ideas and their wordings. In short, my action would be far more perfect and intense if I varied my linguistic exercises. Set about, about sex, about net, about *niet*. As I wrote the last word (*niet*) my leg suddenly went into spasm: my suffering was back, for all my previous exertions. Shortly afterwards, my other leg went into spasm too; so did my left arm. Here is the text I wrote to get rid of my suffering and numerous imperfections:

THE SPEECH OF AN AMERICAN COMPUTER

> Computers want to be seen as good citizens of the international community. On no account do they agree to be influenced by the Russians in their handling of our opinion polls and human history in general. (Computers will never invade Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan, facing hostility, contempt and ostracism.) A trade embargo. I am sure the UN will impose *economic* sanctions against the offending nation. (And the Russians have always been an offending nation.) No luxury goods from Byzantine. No goods from the United States. No goods at all. No oil shipments, no wheat. Apparently the Russians do not need our oil. They have some themselves. A huge quantity of oil, as a matter of fact. But they need our wheat, don't they? (I read recently that the Gross Domestic Product of Russia, at the present time, is less than that of the Netherlands.) They have no bread, I'm told. I can hear it, actually: 'Bread! Bread! Bread for the hungry! Bread, bread, give us bread, father, for Our Lord's sake.' Who is their father, one may wonder? Stalin, Putin. Well, their father, alias the Tsar, will not give them bread. (All Tsars are cruel tyrants.) And the United States and Canada will no longer sell their wheat (and their wits' products) to Russia.

Upon finishing this text I realised it had dated even faster than I had done: it is cheese one should speak of when speaking of Russia and the sanctions she was submitted to after her silent and quasi-motionless invasion of the Crimea. It is true I felt much better, much more perfect when writing this text – on account of the activity to which I had pushed my lazy, daisy- and corpse-like body. Sometimes my body is almost a perfect corpse; sometimes it becomes as busy as a dozen Nobel-prize winners whose writing desks are stuffed with masterpieces and formulas. But you have to update whatever you do, bringing up to speed your thoughts and even the dots you put in between your thoughts, alias sentences. And whenever you cancel one of the versions of your survival, you are on the brink of a nervous breakdown you are not allowed to cancel because it is always more perfect than you are, whatever you do. It is they that cancel you, your nervous breakdowns; not vice versa.

You write: ‘And the United States and Canada will no longer sell their wheat (and their wits’ products) to Russia.’ Then you strike ‘their wheat’ out and write instead, ‘Cheese, cheese, cheese.’ Then you strike Canada out and write: ‘France, Italy, Switzerland.’ Every time you strike something out – if only Canada or the United States – you suffer acutely, assuming it is your own text you mutilate in the hope of updating it, thereby pleasing both editors and publishers. Starting from scratch, bringing it up to speed. Here is a scratch␣and you start from it, otherwise you might stay in bed for the rest of all your incarnations and metempsychoses. You put your scratch to speed ␣␣ ␣ It reaches the moon and you wonder what else you can do, given that you must do something; given that you are neither perfect nor happy, for all your acting that includes your strokes, slashes and [redacted]. You write, ‘I am part of the unity about which Schelling, Melling and many others wrote, down to Soloviev and Muloviev. One, one, one. Not the One, mind you. Not the Absolute, mind you. Not mind you; at least not the one mind; nor the one you. There is Absolute I; there is Absolute II. The first one is motionless, bullying, billing everyone except itself, herself and so on. Absolute II unfolds itself in our history, being in the making, in the taking and in the breaking. The two Absolutes meet and salute each other thus or otherwise:

‘*Salute*.’

‘*Salute*.’

‘How are you?’

‘I’m the Unity, you know.’

‘Are you the *Grand Être*?’

‘Big Brother and the Big Apple.’

In the course of these discussions, Sophia (whoever she is), God (Whoever), the World Soul (Whatever), Trinities, Quaternities and Fiftinities come together to form a sphere that should not be exposed in the museum of this or any other book, for everyone knows what a sphere is and what kind of perfection it has symbolised through many centuries and individuals, down to Plato, up to Putin, down to the Neanderthals, up to the Netherlands.

You yearn for this or any other unity, which contradicts itself; your statement, your unity – everything contradicts itself unless you say to yourself and others that there is only one unity; that is why, actually and intellectually, it is called UNITY. You put everything into it: mlkijh bhfdc ytrynpoimnh iuyvrf and write GOD in the middle of it; or just Absolute Number One. I am not of your number, I’m afraid.

I am in a number of my own. And what is my number, pray? As usual it is something alongthe lines of: گگگگگگگگگگگگ And what about my class? ریالریالریالریالریالریالریالریالریال I do not belong in any unity: neither proletarian nor Christian nor otherwise. ~~Workers of the world, unite! Believers of the world, unite! Believers *in* the world, unite! Humans in the world and elsewhere, unite! *Grand être.*~~

SMALL *ÊTRE*

I am an inveterate Platonist. Humanity is just an idea I cherish as long as I avail myself of Plato's and Dante's masterpieces. And I hope I shall always avail myself of Diotima and Beatrice, even if the former does not suggest I should follow her through Paradise and its spheres (or ellipses, or circles, or singularities). Anyway I am willing to join either Plato or Virgil – not the whole of humanity or any other whole, entity. Tati is more in tune with my taste; and so are holes. So I am both a Platonist and an Aristotelian. Anistlian, so to speak and do. A rice dish.
I, I, I, everything goes I (not West), and comes from this I (and any other I, from East?). What? Everything and everybody. Why should I bother about their rigmarole? And those activities and perfections? I am a centrepiece or just a piece located somewhere, not far from this window beyond which there are trees and beauty, as they say as they point at that beauty or rather at the formula 'beauty' or 'perfection'. I point at myself, saying I have a few days to live, no more, no less; and these days are millions or hundreds and dozens. And these days are not days but insects that swarm, swarm, swarm and warm our climate, our Earth and her body on which I lie, indulging in my eternal siesta.

How to depict or symbolise a black hole? If you do what I have done so many times (and to no avail), you will just see in front of you and also behind – if you take the trouble to turn your head in the direction of this behind –

this dot: ●

But this is not a hole, is it? And the space you find in between you and this dot is not a black hole either: for all its holiness, this space or margin is not black. And you cannot put Othello's neurasthenia or inferiority complex in this nothingness, can you? Of course it is much easier to *feel* a black hole, on condition that you are not in a coma or in your grave, early or otherwise. (Is there such a thing as a *late* grave? Or a *late* comer to an *early* grave?) I feel a lot of black holes on a regular basis – permanently, so to speak; and yet I must admit one black hole is quite sufficient, even if it is not very big; even if it is a small *être*. My time stopped a long time ago after a long-drawn-out *rallentando*. I do not know how to spell this musical term, and I hope I did not misspell it a few moments ago; a few moments that saw the light of time within the no-time zone. Of course it is better to slow down everything so as not to go to an early grave: you had better *crawl* towards your grave. First you get down on all fours and then

(immediately, on the spot) you set about crawling towards your grave, death and what not. Under the circumstances (incidentally), what not means there are no other worlds, no resurrections, no raisings of any kind. There might be some uprisings in store for humanity, though.

Of course you can always say, write and point out, 'This is a black hole,' making the most of nothingness, death, no-time stance and a still-life (life-death) dance of quarks. This is a black hole

This is a black hole

This is a black hole

The following word is a black hole: unity

The following notion is a black hole: the Absolute

The following nothing is a black hole

I am a black hole

I

Not-I

You bend over your I, analyse it, dissect it, and come to the conclusion that your I has no meaning without your not-I. (I prefer not-die.) No meaning, no existence. And what about meaningless lives? Aren't they alive? Don't they persevere in their being? Not in their non-being, mind you.

I persevere in my black hole. Let everything and everybody die inside me, in my heart of hearts, souls and bowels; with the exception of the glorious past. All other pasts may die in my intestines as well.

All right, you are I and I am I. There are also a number of not-I('s) in this affair; or in this business, if you wish. I, for one, do not wish it, but you are another I and I am supposed to respect and even hearken to (old use) 'other I's' they often call the Other. Or another absolute, if you wish. Well, I am rooted to this spot and universe because there are walls off which I bounce to acquire a kind of existence. 'The ball bounced off the post and into the net,' as they say; and I wonder if they do not talk about me, although I know that no one ever (ever) talks about me and my aïes.

Anyway I go somewhere – I took my car to a garage this morning – and on the way and even out of the way I met a lot of not-I's; otherwise I would not have managed to have my car serviced. And I need my car to go somewhere – not for the sake of not-I's, mind you; for the sake of other I's such as food, DVD's and so on.

I look inside, outside, around, up and down and see a lot of blackness and madness which might be rendered thus, on condition that one accepts the following idea or notion: madness is always black (not even grey, contrary to some accepted ideas). Well, let us go back to our blacks – not to Black Americans, though; nor to All Blacks; nor to the black hole of Calcutta. ▮▮ Let us not forget that this sign is to help us visualise infinity, a sort of filled-to-the-brim absolute. You take any absolute and fill it to the brim. And that is what you get: ▮▮ But if you take the Absolute or God and fill himherThou to the brim, you will remind the uncommon reader of the black page you can find in Sterne's *Tristram*; and in Wagner's *Tristan*. The page on which our hero offers to Isolda a double, à-la-Kleist (à-la-carte) suicide.

I shut my eyes and open them again as if hoping to worm my way – that is what corpses do – into another life, death, world, universe and dimension. If a child asks me, 'How do you do it, Daddy?' I shall show the himher angel the following drawing: ==========
========== ==========. 'Why are there two of you?' the child is likely to ask.

'Because I am I and not-I.'

'Why aren't they whole?'

'What?'

'The lines.'

'Why are there holes in them? Is that what you mean?'

'Yea.'

'Worms are often cut in two and three and four by naughty children. But they don't mind.'

'Why?'

'Because they're immortal.'

'Why?'

'Because they feed on corpses. They swallow death, digest it and do a poo. Death, thou shalt die, you know. But I do hope you won't cut any worm in half, however repulsive. Don't forget that it might be your Daddy. So, whenever you speak of worms, you don't have to say "he or she" – your Daddy is a man. Of course I'm also androgynous – a complete and absolute human being. In due time you'll understand what I'm talking about. You'll read about androgynes in Plato's and Soloviev's books.'

So I open my eyes. Why? What for? To take up where I left off. I open both of them and see nothing; as if I had not opened anything, not even my eyes. If you step onto your balcony and remain there for a while, you are bound to experience two cravings: an up-craving and a down-craving. If you look up, you feel like flying starward (or to a maternity ward, needless to say); especially if you are an American or an Australian. If you venture to look down – on the other hand or just offhandedly – you might give yourself over to a suicidal and irresistible urge: 'Down you go!' But jumping from a hanging garden makes no sense – if this garden hangs in the void, in the midst of nothingness.

All right – you jump from your garden and begin to fly downward. Not *earth*ward, mind you; *down*ward. Actually it does not really matter toward what ward you are flying because you cannot fly and therefore can only die, if you attempt to jump from your balcony (or a hanging garden) in the hope of becoming a bird – an eagle, for instance. Of course you do not forget that your garden or whatever looks like one is situated in the middle of nowhere or nothing, and consequently your fall is as endless as the story they do their utmost to tell in the film entitled *The Endless Story*. In my opinion, you might also stumble upon the same title in a library where a lot of books tell boring, almost snoring stories. But your fall is really and truly endless unless you fall from your balcony or a skyscraper against which your very existence scrapes until it vanishes into galaxies, ways and milks.

Let us call this fall and non-shopping mall 'radical nothingness' which is the other side of the same coin or God. He is both a cornucopia and what Spinoza might have called 'our abject misery/poverty/terror, etc.'. If they show you this abjection, dejection and what not, not, not (nothing) by showing you a blank page, you should say, 'I'd rather re-read *Tristram Shandy*, if I may. With all due respect and so on.' Incidentally, any so on can stand

either for an upward flight or a downward one, the latter being either long-distance or short-distance. Just no-distance ones, twice and thrice, given the proximity of death.

So everyone – down to every corpse – is a sort of go-between, although I do not think about Lady Chatterley when I write this report on our anthropological yo-yo. We go in between I and not-I, God and not-Got, heaven and Earth, ought and not, and as we continue to thrash about, time comes into the open and we open it instead of closing everything once and for all. But sometimes we do close time – even during our working days; they call it a waking-day, a Bergson-inspired daydream.

We have closed time so many times we are weary of counting them, even if this procedure might enable us to understand Bruckner's music more intimately – from the inside, as it were. As it were, as it were not. Of course the latter version is better than the former one, if only on account of **not** that always looks better than any affirmation. Even God looks better when He is not – on the negative, not-and-no side of his own Being or Absolute. So, instead of saying, 'God,' you had better say 'Not,' and many people, if not the whole planet with its trees and mountains, will fall down to worship Not or Nott or Gott, which amounts to the same Lot. To the same lottery or language game.

In the meantime – time can be really mean – the same time clicks away, and only dimwits ask over and over again, 'Can you hear that strange clicking noise?' All clairwits know it is time one hears as one cocks an ear to hear what is going on: no one knows for sure that nothing has to go on and consequently time with all its attributes – seconds, appointments and delays – may and should be stopped; if not forever, at least for half an hour. During this half hour you might get used to eternity, getting down to the nitty-gritty of it; if only for half an hour. And then our time gives a click of its heels as it salutes its victims, making them aware of its return: the Earth revisited, as it were.

Click, click, click, click, click, click, click, click, click. Midnight.

Click: midnight and a half. A half of what? That is what time boils down to: a half of what? A third of what? A second of what? An eternity of what? Of whom? Of the property boom? Of estate agents or brokers? Of those who break everything, down to nothing? If you halve them, they will break only half of what habitually lies around them. In the past eight years, the elephant population in Africa has been halved. What about brokers and breakers?

Can one conquer time? One can lie down in one's bed and spend a day (and a half) doing nothing at all; not even daydreaming or nightmaring. One does not have to keep at bay either one's thoughts or sensations: one is not always a yogi or an adept of any kind. One just looks at one's bed's canopy or at one's room's ceiling, doing nothing except winking when the time comes. The time comes (one of the times) and one winks; or does not wink, if one's eyes are shut. If one's eyes *are* shut (wide or narrow or rather completely), one sees only one's eyelids; from the inside. And where is this inside?

PHPHPHPHPHPHPH

Dear Phillipp,

I listened to your last edit which is not really the last; nor is it the least. At least I hope I'll go to Berlin and listen to whatever you have in your drawers, on your shelves. Of course I'm tempted to say, 'Let us shelve all this and give a kick to all these shelves we used only a few minutes ago. Any footballer can appeal to the referee for a free kick. What about me and God? Can I appeal to *Him* for a free kick? I do appeal to Him and He answers: 'Kick, kick, kick, as long as you can.' I kick and everything goes down, collapses. Let's forget about everything and everybody: Schubert, Schumann. Of course your last edit is a workable edit or medit – a meditation worthy of its name. Well, let's give it a bad name and shoot it.

Yours truly and unfaithfully,

Valery

P.S. Instead of using words and wordings, I might have sent you this tomb: ■■. I didn't. Nor did I send you this

womb: •

V.A.

Sujet : Re: Aleff Recording
Date : Thu, 23 Nov 2017 10:59:02 +0300
De : Dmitri Gouru <dima@gouru.com>
Pour : Phil.nebel@b-sharp.biz
Copie à : Christiane Weather <c.weather@b-sharp.biz>, Valery Aleff <monique.s.chat@gmail.com>

Dear Phil,

How are you?

Sorry for the delay in my answer.

This week we can transfer to you 2 K Euro and another 3 K Euro till mid Dec 17 as a balance payment.

May I ask you to reconfirm to me your banking details incl your and bank address, pls.
As well, pls specify what should be written in the details of payment.

Alternatively I can give cash in Moscow to your representative.
We'll be in Venezia this week end in case.

In theory I can try to find a friend in Berlin who would give it to you.

The easiest would be without friends, if I make a direct transfer or give cash in Moscow or Venezia.

Plan advice.

Best,

Dmitry

On 10 июля 2017 г., at 22:24, Phil Nebel <p.nebel@b-sharp.biz> wrote:

Dear Dmitri,
we are approaching the mastering-stage of the first recording with Valery which you have helped to make happen.
For planning purposes, would you be so kind and let me know when we can expect the remaining balance?

Thanks and very best regards from Berlin,

Phil

b-sharp
Pankstr.1
D-13127 Berlin

Спасибо,
ДГ
Best regards,
DG
Dmitri Gouru
dima@gouru.com

Dear Valery,

Thanks for the info. We will be staying at the Swissotel from June 16th (arrival) to June 25th (departure).

Swissotel Krasnye Holmy Moscow
Kosmodamianskaya nab. 52, Bld 6
Moscow 115054

I will be happy to meet your sponsors or their representative either there or any other place in the downtown area.
However as of now, I don't have a final recording schedule, so I can't really say when I will be free.
Would it be possible to give me their contact information so that I can arrange the meeting with them directly?

We are allowed to take with us the equivalent of $20.000 (US Dollars). In order to play it safe let's go for €17.500 (Euro) and leave the rest for later - we will probably return to Moscow before the end of the year. For ease of transportation it would be helpful if we were to receive the fee in Euros and in bills larger than €100.

Thanks and very best regards,

Phil

TWENTY YEARS LATER

Dear Phil,

Thank you very much for your edit. I listened to it yesterday and I think we may call it a workable version. It is better than what I've heard so far, but anyway I'll go to Berlin because a lot is at stake and, given that it is my last will and testament, if only on paper, I have to do my best to ensure the quality of the box.

I compared this edit not only with Liszt's *Sonata*, but also with the Beethoven recording we made during the first session. Well, I prefer the latter recording - the sound is crystal-clear and virginal, in a way. The Schumann, on the hand, still sounds artificial: too much reverberation, a sort of Aeolian harp. I need the Earth, her blood, sweat and tears.

I sent an email to Gerr to ask him when we could meet in Berlin. He hasn't answered it. Is he all right? My wife worked on his photograph for a while. She thinks he might have some health problems.

I'm very much embarrassed by my Moscow friends' attitude towards our project. I hope you've received the money they sent you a few days ago. They merely forgot to do it earlier. I'm used to betrayals, but whenever this kind of thing happens again, I suffer as if I had been born yesterday. I'm not sure I'll be able to rely on them in the future. Anyway, I'm about to get in touch with a few important people, and once again I promise to fulfil all my financial obligations. It is a pity I'm neither Lang Lang nor Bang Bang.

I'm looking forward to our future meetings and collaboration.

All the best,

Valery

^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^

Sujet : Re: De la part de Goz et Marilyn
Date : Fri, 24 Nov 2017 18:32:07 +0000
De :marilyn corbeau
Pour : Monique Chatenet <monique.s.chat@gmail.com>

Dear Mr. Afanassiev,

Goz and I are delighted to meet you in Paris.
Yes, we'll certainly leave a ticket under your name (at the box office) to Goz's event on the 30th.
Here's the the address:

Les Instants Chavires
7 rue Richard Lenoir
93100 Montreuil
01 42 87 25 91

That event starts at 20:30 hrs, doors open at 20:30 hrs.
I'm not sure but I believe Goz will be appearing with the group accompanying him on the first part of the program .

And yes, Goz and I would be happy to have lunch with you - on the 1st?
Did Mr. Yamazaki send you the poem Goz wrote for you?

Looking forward to meeting you soon.

Warm regards,

Marilyn

PS- Although I speak French it's easier for me to write in English but please don't hesitate to write to me in French.

Sent from my iPad

On Nov 24, 2017, at 8:31 AM, Mon Chat <mon.s.chat@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Mrs Corbeau,

Thank you very much for your email. I'd be delighted to meet you in Paris. May I ask you to leave me a ticket for the 30th November performance? Needless to say, I'm already looking forward to attending it.

I might come to Paris on November 30, leaving on the next day when I would be happy to meet you. Let me invite you to lunch.

Could you please let me know where the performance will take place and how our meeting can be arranged.

I really am looking forward to our meeting.

Please give my love to Goz. His books are wonderful. I go on reading them in both French and English.

Kindest regards,

Valery

Le 20/11/2017 à 10:56, marilyn corbeau a écrit :

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: marilya corbot <marilyacorbot@hotmail.com>
Date: November 12, 2017 at 1:10:23 PM GMT+1
To: "monique.s.chatenet@gmail.com" <monique.s.chatenet@gmail.com>
Subject:De la part de Goz et Marilya

Dear Mr. Afanassiev,

Although we never met I heard a great deal about you from Goz and Mr. Zaki. I am sorry I missed you when you came to Japan last month. Goz still talks about this great encounter with you.

Goz and I will be in France soon, as you probably know. Actually I'll be in Paris from the 15th of this month (for my work) and Goz will join me on the 25h. Both Goz and I will be leaving France on December 2nd. Goz will be back for the Pompidou Metz performance in December but unfortunately I won't be able to attend this event as I leave for Tokyo on the 2nd. I hope we'll have the chance to meet during our stay in France. By the way, Goz is having a performance in Paris on the 30th with the group accompanying him on this trip.

In case you would like to get in touch with us my French cell phone number is: 06 47 34 31 39.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

With my best wishes,

Marilyn

PS - Although I speak French I prefer to write in English. When you reply please don't hesitate to write in French.

- I would like to share with you the link to my website:

Forwarded Message -----
From:高橋哲雄<kyoto0@gmail.com>
To:hiroshima@ooo.co.jp
Date: 2017/11/24, Fri 13:28
Subject:火の刺繍フランス語訳データ

山崎さま

吉増先生の『火の刺繍』に感動しました。
今制作している目玉なりました。
思いっ切ってフランス語訳を試みました。
マリリアさんが素晴らしいフランス語訳と話してくれたそうなので、
フランス語も外国語にもまるっきしダメですが、安心しております。

ワードとPDFの2種類をお送りします。

宜しくお願いします。

響文社　高橋

——

高橋哲雄

㈱ 響文社　札幌市中央区南13条西13丁目1－15－103
電話:011-790-8713　fax:011-790-8714　〒064-0913

響文社　東京分室
東京都新宿区北新宿4－18－12－203
〒169-0074　電話＆FAX:03-6908-7255

Broderie de feu
—— A *Afanassiev*, l'éternel voyageur

« J'ai fini par arriver à temps,…… » murmurait
sous murmurait ?? (murmurait) ou souligner ?? murmurait
l'aiguille à coudre,……,……,…….

Plongé dans les vapeurs d'encens,…… autrefois, côte à côte sur une météorite,…… sur la bouche/le bec aussi,……
« Une bourrasque les feuilles sur les arbres au repos » marmonnerait sans doute Bashô,……
sous ?? (pouvoir) sous marmonnerait (flux)

Ô, *Emily (Dickinson)*, —— pas de tirets,…… l'effilochement de fils que tu as reprisé, était un affaissement (*sag*) de l'univers, inconnu de tous,
sous de (pouvoir)

planche,…… planche,……

Etsu (mère (*mère*,……)). Ton, métier à tisser de feu,…… transformé en maigres poèmes des mots, que j'ai tissés,……
sous Ton (pouvoir) sous des/que ??? (lien)

Pas au point de l'allemand « feuertrunken (ivre comme le feu) » (*Notes de pianiste*, (Kodansha sensho mechie 540, 2012) page 33),…… mais pourtant,……
sous point (enough) sous de (pouvoir) sous pourtant ??? souligner pourtant ??
voir Notes de pianiste, José Corti, 2012

Et ainsi, (*and then*)
J'ai fini par arriver à temps,……
Au cœur du fil de l'existence de l'aiguille à coudre
sous au (pouvoir) sous de (pouvoir) sous de (pouvoir)

Lorsque l'eau a reflué sur le rivage, le faîte de La Cathédrale engloutie n'était plus qu'une ombre,……
à peine, audible,……
« nous ne nous reverrons pas de sitôt, vois-tu/n'est-ce pas…… » dit,…… [𝄞],…… et, ensemble, nous, un bref instant, « sommes sortis,…… » plus précisément,……
sous de (pouvoir) sous vois-tu (racine)

Au fond de tout cela, un moment, aurions-nous pu nous arrêter peut-être,…… cher *Afanassiev*,……
De cela un ré (un son inconnu) aurait peut-être pu naître,…….
sous ré (rêve ?)/(ectoplasme ?)
Cela était peut-être le murmure du cœur d'une pomme jamais embrassé par quelqu'un,…….
sous du (pouvoir) sous cœur (*core*) sous d'(pouvoir)

Bashô à l'article de la mort, « Tombé malade en voyage, mes rêves à travers mornes plaines,…… » a-t-il murmuré,…… /Quand à l'article de la mort… Bashô a murmuré ???
sous article (*bed ?*)/(lit ?)
A partir de là, sans doute, la profonde déchirure de la broderie de feu, le blanc voyage de *Valery Afanassiev*,…… a débuté me semble-t-il,……
sous de [la] (pouvoir) sous profonde déchirure (chasm)/(gouffre) sous de (pouvoir)

« A partir de là on y est déjà presque, là-bas,…… »
Déjà, on ne sait plus dire à qui appartient la voix,……

Cela
C'était peut-être la voix de « la fleur de poirier qui transite devant une étoile »,……
sous de (pouvoir)
Cela
A peut-être dépassé la trame de *h* et de *s* et de *p* de la frontière d'Arishan,……
sous de (pouvoir) sous *h* et de *s* et de *p* (*shuppo = Hara Tamiki*)
Cela
Broderie de feu, broderie de feu,…….
sous Broderie de feu (*Embroidery of fire*) (*Embroidery of fire*)

Et ainsi,
Pour finir,
Un « . », calmement, pouvais-je enfin poser,…….

Mais/Et pourtant
« Filin de remorque, tristesse,…… »
« La blessure sur la poitrine de *Mikhail Y. Lermontov*,…… » je tâcherai de ne pas les oublier/l'oublier,……
sous les/l' (lien)

Oui,
Mais/Et pourtant
Filin de remorque,……
Le début et la fin sont reliés,……
sous le deuxième… (Franz,…… Kafka, Franz, Peter Schubert, pour eux aussi, *Kongen no te*)

J'ai fini par arriver à temps,……
Au cœur du fil de l'existence de l'aiguille à coudre.
sous au (pouvoir) sous de (pouvoir) sous de (pouvoir)

Pour un dialogue croisé = 13 OCT 2017, en écoutant *Le Clavier bien tempéré* de Bach et les *Nocturnes* de Chopin interprétés par *M. Afanassiev*, du 9 au 13 octobre 2017, à Gôra (Hakone) et Tokyo.

山崎比呂志

Dear friend,

I'm sending you my answer related to your question about space. Two days ago, I wrote a poem based on Mr Yoshimasu's poem. It is my reply and homage to him. I'm sending it too.

Tomorrow I'll go to Paris to attend his performance and meet his wife. I'll write to you after my return.

Kindest regards,

Valery

EMBROIDERY OF FIRE

To Goz Yosimasu

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. Goz 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 nebulas. 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? Was he 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 Norns 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 haven'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 duel 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.'

Dear Valery,

thanks for your email and the feedback regarding the mix. I will be happy to meet you and Gerr in our studio to find the right sound for this prestigious project as soon as possible.
Gerr sounded very much ok the last time I spoke to him, I am not aware of any health issues of his. I will contact him separately to find out why he is not answering.

Please let me know when it would be convenient for you to come to Berlin. In case you need assistance booking flights and/or hotel our colleague Christiane (on CC) will be available to set you up.

Many greetings and talk to you soon,

Phil

b-sh

My dear Gidon,

Thank you for the tickets. And thank you very much again for the wonderful, historic concert. A real event. Luckily for us, you can prove convincingly that concert halls have their raîson-d'être, whatever Glen Gould might have thought on the subject.

I kiss you both,

Valery

Dearest Valery!
Many thanks for your kind letter.
It was wonderful to have you in the audience.

I do hope next time we will be able to visit your house,your wonderful wife and your... cat.

I would be delighted to see you more, than just backstage.

Big hug. Yours always Gidon (+Giedrute!).

THE ANATOMY OF A MURDER

I recall the day when I realised at last that humans and animals were not alone in the world, alongside plants and stones. I mean there are beings whose beings are different from whatever we come across in the kingdom of nature where you can kiss a flower and feel you are not alone because flowers and humans have a lot in common, even though some humans do not smell like roses or daisies. Even a woman called Daisy does not always smell like a daisy; the same goes for a woman called Rose. And the one we may call Lilia. And all these women may not be as beautiful as the flowers from which they borrowed their names either before or after their respective births.

Well, I realised there were robots in our midst – or machines, in other words. But these machines could peel potatoes – even better than our charwoman did. So, without further ado, we dismissed our charwoman from her post, hoping that other machines could fulfil her other obligations better and less vulgarly, less inelegantly.

But we were mistaken or rather we did not yet live in the 21st century when every task, however arduous, odious and unrewarding, is carried out by our mechanical helpers who never use four-letter words; nor do they foul our bathrooms and lavatories. Sometimes we cannot distinguish between A and B, A being a human being and B a robot. We say 'Hello' and, upon receiving no answer, admit having fallen into a trap of what they commonly define as a 'case of mistaken identity'. But many robots talk our languages, saying, '*Spasibo*, hurrah, I wish you many happy returns of the night.'

'Why of the "night"?' you ask the talkative robot.

'Because we want you to make love as often as your mistresses wish.'

'We mostly wallow in the love-luxury during the daytime, when my wife is in her office.'

'Because I love *The Midsummer Night's Dream*,' says the robot.

Obviously the widespread notion (or rather emotion) puts robots well above humans from whom there remain only deli-stuffed bellies so that robots, computers and other electronic devices are really heads and shoulders above their human counterparts: the latter have neither shoulders, nor heads, nor even hearts. Ordinary humans seldom, if ever, read Shakespeare, let alone Husserl, Kierkegaard and Spinoza; whereas computers, robots and washing machines know them by heart. And humans no longer have any hearts and so in American schools no teacher asks them to learn poems by Keats and Yeats by heart. And the case of mistaken identity I touched upon (above) can be dealt with rather successfully if, upon meeting someone, not necessarily a remarkable being, we ask it to recite a poem by John Donne. If, instead of giving a beautiful recitation of some poems either by Donne or Blake, it spouts a load of pretentious nonsense, we will know for sure we are confronting a genuine human being.

A teenager, who might have seen her father beat her mother, smothered a seven-year-old girl before slicing her open with a craft knife. One wonders if she could have turned this ritual upside or down or just reverse the order by slicing her dear friend open first (and last). It does not really matter, given that the murder was committed anyway, and our teenager needed a corpse to achieve her goal. What was her goal? one may ask and often does, when stumbling upon an atrocious, almost outlandish murder. The murderer wished to make sure her short-standing friend was a robot and not a human: she knew a lot of poems by heart. And the murderer was appallingly ignorant of poems and their creators. Nor did she speak any foreign language. (Her victim spoke languages fluently – not only English, but also French, German, Spanish and Danish.)

'Are you a robot?' asked the murderer. This dialogue took place prior to the slice of death; needless to say.

'I'm not,' answered the future victim. Actually this answer sealed her fate so that she was already a victim: the murderer decided to punish the would-be robot for lying through her teeth.

Dear Valery,

I agree with you that we should try to meet in Berlin in order to make the best possible sound for our "sixpack".

After your last mail, I could not find any more free days in November unfortunately. Even in December there are not many options left from my side.
Phil proposed that at first we both should find a date, then he will try to get the studio (and himself) available.

I could manage to stay in Berlin during the following periods/days:
Thursday 7.12. afternoon until Monday 11.12. evening
Monday 18.12.

Outlook in January:
free until Monday 15.1.
In general, I am mostly free on Mondays and Fridays.

I am looking foward to your poposal.

A technical remark -
Since you seem to wonder how Phil and me share the work on our projects, please let me explain some technical matters.
We are using the same recording&editing program but with slightly different resolutions in terms of sound quality. Phil is recording and editing with the highest possible resolution, necessary for SACD releases. My computer is less powerful and can handle soundfiles up to a resolution which is a bit below the SACD requirements.
Besides that limitation, we are able to exchange online the "edit decision list" (that's the list of commands to the computer how to play through all the edit points). In the same way it's also possible to exchange mixer settings (= commands to the computer about the balance of 8~10 microphones).
As far as the sound is concerned, due to the quality gap between mine and Phil's computer, as well as the better facilities in his studio, it's clear that I am just the subsidiary and Phil is making the real and final sound. On the other hand, the musical "flow" is entirely my duty. Phil just imports my "edit decision list" to his computer and plays back his original (high resolution) soundfiles. Basically a quite healthy way to concentrate on either aspect of the recording. Otherwise one gets easily distracted or confused, at least, as long as the work is still in progress.

Our Liszt recording, recorded in December 2000, is by the way my personal reference as well. The sound engineer was my friend Christian Schmitt, concerning the piano I remember Robert Ritscher going to the verge of breaking down the Steinway in order to make it sound that great (he said he was afraid of never being allowed to work for Steinway any more).
I still have the hope that, working similarily hard, we can achieve a good result using Phil's mixing facilities.

With best regards,
Gerr

Email : valeryaleff@gmail.com

Chère Madame,

Nous nous sommes rencontrés plusieurs fois, mais j'ai surtout entendu parler de vous, de l'amour que vous portez aux arts et à la musique en particulier. J'ai assisté à un de vos concerts au château de La Hulpe et j'en garde un très beau souvenir.
Je prends la liberté de m'adresser à vous parce que mon projet est musical, et même un peu plus puisque j'écris les textes qui accompagnent mes enregistrements. Il s'agit d'un coffret que Sony Classical est prêt à sortir l'année prochaine, à l'automne, à condition que tout se passe bien. Comme les grandes maisons de disques ne permettent d'enregistrer qu'un CD par an, l'année dernière, après un enregistrement effectué à Berlin, je me suis dit qu'à ce rythme, il me faudrait vivre au moins cent ans pour enregistrer tout ce que je veux. J'ai donc organisé deux séances qui se sont déroulées l'été dernier. Au cours de ces séances - elles n'ont duré que six jours - nous avons enregistré six disques. C'est peut-être un record absolu, mais les records de ce genre ne m'intéressent pas. Grâce à l'aide d'amis moscovites et au concours de Sony Classical, j'ai pu financer la moitié de cet enregistrement. Mes amis, chez qui j'ai donné un récital privé, ne peuvent malheureusement plus continuer à financer le coffret comme ils s'y étaient engagés, en raison de difficultés liées aux sanctions internationales contre la Russie. Après mon premier récital, nous avons trouvé dans la tirelire dix mille euros. Mais j'aurais encore besoin de la même somme pour m'acquitter de mon devoir auprès de mes amis.

Je vous serais infiniment reconnaissant si vous pouviez m'épauler dans cette épreuve en me permettant de donner un récital au château de La H. Nous discuterions du programme et, de façon générale, je ferais tout ce qui est nécessaire pour m'inscrire logiquement et musicalement dans ce cadre unique. Ces enregistrements représentent beaucoup pour moi. J'ai soixante-dix ans et ce sont peut-être mes derniers efforts dans ce domaine. Elève d'Emil Gilels au Conservatoire de Moscou, je suis, de facto, l'un de derniers héritiers de l'école russe de piano, qui n'a pas résisté, hélas, à l'effondrement de l'Union soviétique. A ce titre, mon héritage a une certaine valeur pédagogique.

Veuillez croire, chère Madame, en l'expression de mes sentiments les plus respectueux.

THE TRANSLATION

Dear Madam,

We have met several times, but I remember neither these times not the place where we did meet and talk, according to my memory. Did we ever talk? I suppose so. Anyway I know you talk to artists, to budding geniuses, and say to them, 'You're on the up and up, rocketing to fame.' You show them the rocket they should board. They board this rocket: ▼

▼

▼

▼

▼

▼

▼

What do your billions wish to sponsor?

▼

Or

▼

▼

▼
▼

What happens in the aftermath? - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Emily Dickinson. You live five seconds. That is what your St Augustine says to you, as well as Calvin and yourself. They say:-

_____

_____

You say _____ _____

I recall a concert I heard and saw in your château and I cannot forget it. I forget a lot; I forget all my former lives, and I am afraid this fear of mine tells me I can forget not only the singers whose songs I heard on that occasion. I can forget God, you know.

How could you forget God?

Yet I need 10,000 euros to make a recording of which you know nothing – you think only in terms of your billions and the people who come to you and ask for a smile or an omelette with sausages and tomatoes. And they ask you to cure their children of cancer and also of their bad behaviour at school; as if one could cure anyone of cancer and evil behaviour. Charity is your forte and I permit myself – I have waited for this permission for almost a month – to solicit donations for one of your charities of which you know nothing. I do know something about this charity, its contents and urgency. I was wondering if you could organise a concert in your former castle, château or white house at the end of which – not at the end of your château, mind you (it is endless) – I shall find 10,000 euros in your piggy bank, whatever its size. (Your elephanty bank.) I hope it is big enough for 20,000 euros – just in case. Just in bank. Anyway, the bottom line is that we need another 10,000 euros to complete the project. Do you want to see this line?

The company to which I devote my numerous spaces-times, talents and moods does not vouchsafe (I am sure you like this old-fashioned word – you are so *old*-money, if I may say so) to let me make more than one recording per year. Of course I am grateful to them (whoever they are) for their big-heartedness. How big is their big-heartedness? Let us see and count.

SONY CLASSICAL'S HEART

O

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Indeed I have to live until I really begin to feel my age. I am most reluctant to feel it at any stage – at any *age*, if you prefer. Their big heart might even allow me to live until the end of this unfortunate century, but I am eager to hand down my experience – it is a hand-to-hand experience, you know – to youngsters who know only the first thing about piano-playing. They know how to sit in front of the piano. That is how they sit at the piano:

▼
▼
▼
▼

And how does the piano sound?

An imperial Bösendorfer, if you please.

Dear Gerr,

Could you please choose a date in January? I am absolutely free. The ball is in your court.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Incidentally, if you're not too busy, you might make another first edit. The Schubert, for instance. But no bad mixtures, no slippings, this time. I already made a fool of myself in front of my friends. Once is enough. *Einmal ist* nicht *keinmal*.

All the best,

Valery

Le 05/12/2017 à 00:57, Gerr Betz a écrit :
Dear Valery,
dear Phil,
for me it would be perfect to meet on Monday 8 January. I will come from Hildesheim, arriving 10:28 at Berlin Hauptbahnhof / ca 11:15 at the studio.
Is that o.k. for you?

Best regards,

Gerr

Am 01.12.2017 um 12:15 schrieb Christ Werth:
Dear Valery, dear Gerr,

I hope you are both well.

We would like to find a date, where you can come to our studio to work on the sound of the current edit.

As we are very busy before Christmas we would like to propose January.

May I ask you to suggest a date between January 3 and January 19, 2018? In case you need any help with your travel planning I would be happy to assist you.

Best regards,
Christ

b-sharp
Pank

Dear Gerr,

Thank you for your email. The date suits me perfectly. Do you think we'll be back on the same day? Please, don't forget the beginning of the Frank.

All the best,

Valery

++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++
Dear Vadim or

Dear Nadine,

What does it matter to whom I write or if I write at all. Our gutter-press speaks of death and those who fight with him or her – over life, I suppose. Actually, death needs life as much as life needs life – their survivals are at stake. If death doesn't eat life on a regular basis, death will die instead of living and giving the lie to all those poets and mystics who say that death died on the Cross. As for the gutter-press's stars, they've got cancers, a lot of them, and they fight against them single-handedly or with their doctors' hands and machines. He decided to engage in hand-to-hand combat with multiple sclerosis; so did she and their only child. I engage in finger-to-finger combat with those who don't give two hoots (let alone 10,000 euros) what I think, play and yearn for. I symbolise the melody one knows by heart – the opening bars of *Tristan und Isolde*; I am of their fame, so to speak. It has a lot to do with yearnings of all sorts: love, death, masturbation, materialisation and so on. And they put spokes in my wheels or rather strokes in my bars, in the flow I impart to my recordings, if only in part. They don't even give one hoot, believe it or not.

Of course I can say I'm a down-and-out loser; or an out-and-down loser. I am both out: _____ and down: _____ Or I am just outdown, indown, downdown, downtown. Full stop. Is this stop full? .....Not quite. .....Quite? Quite.

vvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvvv

Dear Phil,

I really am looking forward to our meeting in Berlin. Hopefully we'll find the version worthy of our love for music.

I wrote to my Moscow friends and got a reply. By the way, they sent you the rest of the amount, of its first portion. And I've received the documents related to this transfer. I've also received an invitation thanks to which I'll get a two-year Russian visa. My friends' mobile phone was stolen in London and that explains, if only in part, their silence. Now they're back to the fold and apparently doing their best to organise a private recital.

Of course I don't know when this private recital I count upon will be organised. This depends not only on my friends, but also on my friends' friends, their business obligations and holidays. Well, as I said earlier, I won't sleep like a log until everything is done in accordance with our agreement. Incidentally, Gerd hasn't answered the email I sent him ten days ago. I hope he isn't angry with me for all the delays and false promises.

I still don't know how I'll go to Berlin, but I'll certainly be there on January 8, in the morning.

Looking forward to our meeting.

All the best,

Valery
P. S. Please give my greetings and thanks to Christiane.

V.

Dear Gandine,

There are only errors and their comedies. If I say, 'I've got friends, colleagues and fellow creatures,' I commit an error; and I also commit a comedy. I don't write it, mind you. I commit it to paper; and also to memory so that, whatever I do, turns into comedy; or turns comedy; or doesn't turn at all – it is just a comedy and nothing else.

Actually I don't have to turn to make a fool of myself. And I don't make a fool of myself – I don't make anything or anyone. I just stand there or everywhere; or I lie everywhere or there or here.

Do you think I might transcend myself? How? By turning back? By casting a glance at human history in which I belong? Do I belong in anything, in anywhere? Do I need another nightmare? Or daymare? A mare perhaps. *Skok*, *skok*, *skok*, *skok*, *skok*, *skok*, as the Russians say when speaking of horses. Do I speak of anything? Apart from myself? Apart from ok, ok, ok, ok, ok, ok? Apart from _____?

Apart from??????????????????????????????

Apart fromμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμμ

And==========

And And And And And

Karma, incarnation, karma, incarnation, karma, incarnation, karma, incarnation, karma, incarnation, mama, carnation, mama, carnation, mummy's boy, carnation's boy, mummy's girl

The more objects the mind understands by the second and third kind of knowledge (Spinoza), the less it suffers from those emotions which are evil, and the less it fears death.

The second kind of knowledge: 22222222222222222222222222222222222222222

The third kind of knowledge: 333333333333333333333333333333333333333333333333

Death: death, death, death, death, 0, 0, 0, *niente*, _____. I fear ●

I even fear •

Do I fear .?

Do I fear

?

Dear Clementine,

Whenever I write your name, I'm tempted to add, 'Dreadful sorry,' or 'O my darling.' I don't know if this 'O' that comes prior to my 'darling' calls for an 'h' or doesn't, and I'm reluctant to put these letters side by side because their union might lead you astray as to the meaning I was trying to convey in my letter to a Belgian multi-millionaire. 'Oh' in Russian means, 'My God! *Warum*? *Warum*? Do I really deserve such treatment on Thy part?' *Oder*, 'Oh, oh, oh, oh. No, it isn't a sharp pain, it isn't, it isn't, it isn't, it isn't. Just a general ache. Have your ache and eat it. Have your ache and eat it. Have you ach and eat it. Have your oh and eat it.'

Well, I know you don't know French and so I'd translate my letter if I knew you would understand my substance and needs much better after digesting its contents. You know what I can write about, when the letter I write and sign bears the name and the address of a wealthy woman whose tentacles are literally spread all over the world. In one tentacle there are hillocks of dollars, in another the same amount of diamonds and rubies. And I need 10,000 euros – just a thousandth part of the tentacle she has never used, frankly speaking. Only ants and mosquitoes are aware of its existence, fortitude and magnitude. 'Any translation that intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but communication – hence, something inessential.' I beg to differ, dear Walter Benjamin. What my letter seems to communicate is related to the amount of money I need for my project made up of six CDs. The project itself is made up of those CDs and probably its make-up will remain in the domain of projects some of which are doomed to fall through most pitifully; and others perform the same *salto mortale* just pitifully. What's the difference? Actually it is better to be on the 'most pitiful' side – at least a few maidens and old ladies might pity you most intensely.

As you know, my dear Clementine, I'm no longer young and those ladies wish to look young, even if they're 90 years old. And the remedy they appreciate most is the presence of young artists whose talents remain in the domain of time: they're young and sometimes handsome. What does it matter what they do in the domain of music? They're young in the domain of music – that's what counts, as far as money is concerned. They count out their money. And I count my losses.

Her secretary receives my letter and says to herself, 'I can't hand this letter to milady because she's afraid of being contaminated or rather poisoned by old people. And this man is rather old – I can feel it.' She doesn't even take the trouble to find my exploits inside her computer – she feels everything and everybody. And every email, needless to say; let alone every sheet of paper. Her lady told her once, 'I won't touch the food our Michael brought me half an hour ago. The cook was in a bad mood when he was cooking it. We all know that his mood swings between elation and despair. I like his elation-seasoned couscous. But I hate the hatred he often stuffs into his steaks and *boeuf à la ficelle* or *bourguignon*.' Her lady told her twice, 'If you listen to an old pianist, your body

welcomes a lot of old vibes instead of repelling, repulsing and driving them back. You grow old in the twinkling of an eye. Alas, I can't help twinkling my eyes – they cry so often. Incidentally, Shakespeare says that music is food. I'll never listen to old pianists again.'

So the secretary rings her lady up, reads her the beginning of my letter, and the lady shouts, 'What? Money again? I don't have any.' That's it, oh my darling, oh my darling. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh.

Of course she remembers me – I did attend one of her concerts and apparently she has a memory like an elephant. An elephant is likely to crush his offender to death 30 years after the offence, however immaterial. And our milady remembers her money and those who remember it. I'm sure she'll remember all of us even after her death, 40 years after.

I spoke of my problems that many of my friends and enemies know by heart. And I said she understood everything: the arts, the problems one has to cope with in the world where charity doesn't take care of geniuses without whom we can neither prosper nor live decently, with dignity and honour.

'Do we not generally regard that which lies beyond communication in a literary work – and even a poor translator will admit that this is its essential substance – as the unfathomable, the mysterious, the "poetic"?' What does lie beyond my letter to our billionaire? Money, of course. It is not as unfathomable as one might think; it is rather unreachable, unattainable, if you write to those who think only in terms of charity and wrinkles; or rather non-wrinkles. And they don't understand you unless you remind them of their wrinkles and cancer in the offing. I mean, you shouldn't remind them of them. You should do just the contrary – you should remind them of immortality and anti-wrinkle concerts. And anti-cancer, non-Alzheimer's concerts. And I remind them of cancers, wrinkles and a lot of heimer's of any kind.

And if, instead of offering them social niceties, I point out I need 10,000 euros, they close everything they have within their reach (and riches): bank accounts, doors, ears, eyes, brains. They take no notice of your style and your thoughts' up-hill-and-down-dale itineraries. They just do not care. So I should have written 10,000 instead of beating about the bush. They see only the bush and the beating they don't understand, otherwise I would already have received 20,000 euros; had I pointed out I needed this amount for children and teenagers. I've nothing against the latter, mind you; in other words, I adore both children and teenagers. And if you give me 30,000 euros, I'll give 10,000 to teenagers, children, babies and embryos.

No style, for once. Only the unfathomable, the mysterious, the poetic. Ten thousand. Can't you read? Can't you see?

10,000
20,000
20,000
30,000

50,000

No answer.

°°

Dear Christiane,

I'm writing to thank you for your help and kindness.

Today my wife and I did all we could to find a suitable flight to Berlin. Oddly enough, many flights are no longer available. Besides, on Mondays you pay more for your ticket than on Wednesdays or Thursdays. And I can't afford to spend more than 100 euros on this trip.

So I have no alternative but to accept your suggestion and ask you to find me a suitable flight. I'd like to leave Berlin on the same day, around 6 p.m. I don't think that my requirements will allow us to meet on January 8. I regret the inconvenience, but anyway many things have already gone wrong. I'd feel really happy if I knew that some day we'll manage to straighten our problems out. I know that my teacher, Emil Gilels, never went to Hamburg or elsewhere to work on the sound of his recordings. Nor does Gidon Kremer with whom I've played many concerts over more than 30 years ever waste his time on technicalities. Our undertaking is in a class of its own. Let us make it as painless and successful as possible.

I'm free in January and, according to what you and Gerr said, you might have other free dates for our meeting. The chief thing is to find a convenient flight and do our utmost for the set of recordings which I value so much – at least in regard to my age and the Moscow Conservatoire.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Kindest regards,

Valery

Le 08/12/2017 à 10:48, Christ Wert a écrit :

Dear Valery,

attached please find a map how to find our studio.

We can of course pick you up from the airport or the train station, just let us know where and when you arrive once you have your travel details.

Best regards,

Christiane

Von: Christ Worthit [mailto:c.worthit@b-sha.biz]
Gesendet: Mittwoch, 6. Dezember 2017 13:50
An: Gerr B.; Valery Aleff
Cc: Phil Nebel
Betreff: Re: Meeting in Berlin

Dear Valery, dear Gerr,

thank you very much for your quick response. As you are both available on January 8 we would like to schedule the meeting for that day.

We could meet at 11.30 at our studio:

b-sha
music & media solutions

Pancakestraße 1
13127 Berlin (Französisch Buchholz)

Please let me know if you need any assistance with your travel.

We are looking forward to see you in Berlin!

Kind regards,

Christiane

ºº

Yes, at the heart of hearts, at the bottom of our private well into which,
many centuries ago, Thales fell as he was looking at the stars,
we might have lain down for a few moments. Or forever. To dwell in Ancient Greece,
in remote parts of Asia for many years. We missed this opportunity
and now I am alone and I cannot even go to Berlin. Of course I may lie down
somewhere or even everywhere, given I am not here.
I am probably neither elsewhere nor else; or else. Falling ill in the course of my journey
through Hell. Is that what Basho seems to convey through his murmur? Through
his tumour? Through his dismal, coastal plain?
Pain? Rising higher and higher.

No question about it, my dear Christiane. Pain, pain, pain. Let us say I can't go to Berlin because, some time ago, I stopped somewhere, at the bottom of Goz's heart. Goz Yoshi is a Japanese poet who wrote a poem in which we travel together through a dismal plain where Basho died a few centuries ago. High mountains rose above that plain and they continued to rise higher and higher as if with the intention of reaching the bottom of the sky. They did reach the bottom of the sky; so did we, believe it or not. That's why I can't go to Berlin.

Yours truly

Calmly, calmly I could lie down...
What? Doesn't matter.
It's better to lay it down than to hold it.

Does this haiku of mine echo Swinburne's *Garden of Proserpine*?

We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

I am certainly a weary river and I wonder if I have to enter the competition designed to find out which river is the weariest of all. You watch a river of life and then realise it slows down, judging from your veins on which you read and reread *moderato*, *andante*, *adagio*, *lento*, *largo* and even, 'Dreadful sorry, Cristiane.' I am not sure it winds somewhere safe or unsafe to sea. And the sea we picture to ourselves at the end of a river boils down to see, see, I can see you. Who are you? I can see Angela. Who is Angela? Angel. Who is Angel? Angle. Who is Angle? Eagle.

Dear Christiane,
Your attachment told me how to find your studio, being a map of Berlin of sorts. Don't forget I'm a weary river and I may get lost on my way to your studio because I'm likely to disappear into a sewerage system after going down the drain for hours and years. And what if I am an eagle? Would your map guide me in the sky, during my journey from Mars to Earth? Do you know that the American philosopher Richard Rorty recited Swinburne's poem upon learning he had inoperable pancreatic cancer?

I thank whatever I can thank

And who and when
And so what.
And what, and done,
Undone, undone.
And that is rot.
And that is not.

And when that is and what may be
Becomes, is when, I give you all.
And whence, and thence, to be, to be,
And the cathedral and its Paul.

Dear whoever,
They sent me a map of Berlin because they don't want me to get lost in the middle of nowhere or everywhere, which amounts and descends to naught. I want neither to descend nor to ascend.
They (they're other they) invited me to a colloquium in Ascona or Alcona, where they have every opportunity and unity to discuss space, time, mind and its absence. At the end of my lecture I'll say I love three persons. Who are they? They're all dead – that's all I can say on the subject, on the subjects I'm concerned with now, today and tomorrow. One of them is my cat who died eight months ago. Another one is Jesus, believe it or not. I believe it, for one, for two and even for three. You'd better believe it for three, otherwise it doesn't work.
They (they're other they; Günter Anders, among others) think we live in the midst of phantoms conveyed to our dwelling place and mind by television, the Internet and a lot of so ons with their beeps. I wish I could live in the midst (or in the mist) of phantoms because others and their philosophers make me feel as follows, 'The little donkey struggled under its heavy burden.' That's what I say whenever I'm asked to do this, let alone that, and mad, and what not. They say, 'Please do what not,' and I answer, 'The little donkey struggled under its heavy burden.' 'Are you this donkey?' they ask. 'I am,' I answer. 'But you're a *big* donkey, aren't you?' they say. 'I'm *not*,' I answer. And I show this drawing to them:
'What?' they ask.
'Here it is,' I answer and once again I exhibit the following exhibit – the only exhibit my personal museum can boast of:

I take a plane, a bus and land up in some sort of jail from which I try to extricate myself by holding their (the initial their) map in front of my eyes. My eyes are there; their front is there too. (So is their initial and everlasting affront.) They coincide at some point and I see where the studio I'm going to is situated (and saturated). At some point – and this point was saturated in my mind – I asked myself whether (not *where*, mind you) this studio was situated at all. Or saturated, or satisficated. A wild goose chase, another one. But I like big/small game. I also like waterfowl and game birds. I love games, gays and everything and St Paul – the only way to survive in the midst of foul-mouthed, foul-minded individuals.
Dear whoever,

Dear whatever,

Dear forever,

Dear or Dear,

Dear or Hear,

Either you're dear or you hear me. All these others have quite short attention spans. And you're one of those others, aren't you? Don't you suffer from at¦tention ¦deficit hyperac¦tivity dis¦order?

Don't be dear, I beg of you. Just hear me, as they say. Hear me, O Hear, O Ear!

Dear Valery,

I just talked to Phil and he said, that we will cover all of your expenses, so don't worry about the flights.

There are perfect flights regarding timings for the meeting on January 8, 2019 with
Eurowings (https://www.eurowings.com/de.html):

Please let me know, if we should book these flights on your behalf or if you would like to book them yourself and we reimburse you.

Best regards
Christiane

Dear Valeri Af,

Goz and I were so happy to see you in Paris and so touched by your kind gesture to come all the way from Belgium to meet us.
Goz has often talked about your brilliant mind and playing and I was honored to meet you. Wee were both delighted to spent some time with you at lunch in Paris. Thank you for inviting us.
I found the email address of the New Direct Current editor in charge of Goz's book. His name is Decline Fall:

dfall@ndbooks.com

We both look forward to seeing you in Japan next year.

With our warmest wishes,

Goz and Marilyn

Dear Goz and Monroes,

Thank you very much for your email. In my turn I can say to you – and I really think so – that I was delighted to meet you in Paris. Everything was greatness and greatness was everything. I'm sure all our future meetings will spread a lot of greatness throughout the world. When talking to you, I understood how our universe functions and why it functions at all instead of grinding to a halt, saying, 'Enough.' It neither comes to anything nor says, 'Stuff and nonsense.' And yet whatever we see and hear is sheer nonsense and worthless stuff.

Dear Mon, dear Roe,

When I asked you to guide me in the world of publishers, I wasn't looking for any address. You can find almost everything on the Internet except a letter of introduction. I thought you might write to this director, old or new as the case may be, to say I'm a writer of genius. 'If you don't publish all his books, my Goz will withdraw all rights and wrongs from your publishing house. And you know perfectly well what you'll lose, if my Oz goes

elsewhere, carrying his books in our family trunk. Or after putting them in a truck. You know, last month we were driving through Japan in our new Bugatti. Suddenly we realised that the road was completely blocked by an overturned truck. Your publishing house will look exactly like this truck if you don't publish Mr Aleff's complete works before next spring. Why? Because you'll lose at least three billion and billions of dollars don't grow on trees.'

Dear Gozmoss,

You're not about to do anything of the sort – not because you're out of sorts, mind you. You won't do anything for me, even if you happen to be inside all sorts of sorts. I'm awfully sorry, my dear Clementine. Your husband is a great poet, and Mr Saki says he wrote yet another poem about my wretched I, not I, twice I and thrice Our. And a beautiful poem always looks like a tree. Does this drawing look like one?

Does it look like Adam's or Jesus' tree? Perhaps. At least **I** does look like one. I don't look like *one*, you know.

I just look like Adam's or Jesus' tree.

Kindest regards,

Dear Christiane,

Thank you for your email. I would be grateful if you could take care of the ticket and of the whole trip. As I get lost wherever I go and whenever I do it – after Christmas, before one – I would also be grateful if someone could fetch me at the airport.

Kindest regards,

Dear Christ,

I would be grateful if one of your errand boys could fetch me on the other side of what they call the 'threshold of demise'.

Kindest regards,

I could have been burnt at the stake five centuries ago for anything I say right now. Your errand boys, airports. There are no airports; only faith conveys you from one earth to another heaven; or haven, as they say nowadays. (Safe heaven and many so.) And if they say, 'The city's transport system is one of the most efficient in Europe,' they do not mean there is a cross on the city's red square. And if they write, 'The tour operator will arrange transport and plan your itinerary,' they have no Jesuses in mind; only the Joneses.

In the copy of the I Ching I own I underlined a few passages that consequently stick out in the crowd made up of letters, opinions, suggestions and downright orders. ‘As regards the time of the hexagram,’ one of these upstarts (or outsticks) points out, the lowest and the top place as a rule represent the beginning and the end. But if you manage to abolish time either partly or altogether, and if, under the circumstances, you come across a line, you are not likely to find out where it is located: in heaven, underground, in the middle of nowhere. Here is the line you come across and even trip over, if you have your head in the clouds when you happen to come across it: _____We have already come across this line several times. Formerly we knew this line was situated down below and this knowledge or rather assurance spared us the necessity of rising from the ground where the absent-minded find themselves as a result of their encounters with lines and roots and so on. Sometimes the lowest line stands for any meditation that lies in front of what they call the ‘field of action’. But I seem to have harvested all the fields of action I still catch a glimpse of as I open my eyes instead of shutting them again and again: three times, five times. And the top line may refer to someone who has withdrawn from the affairs of the time – so as not to withdr*o*wn, so to speak. So let us conclude that the line above is the top line, which can be done all the more unsurprisingly since it *is* a top line with regard to the letters I am typing now.

Some time ago, I had to explain everything down to the obvious, to whatever could be seen by the naked eye and heard by the naked ear. Now I just say, ‘This is the top line, you know.’

‘What are you talking about?’

‘About my house, my garden.’

‘Are they what you call the “top line”?’

‘Yes, there are.’

‘Do you mean to say you’re the tops?’

‘I don’t.’

‘Are you feeling on top of the world?’

‘I’m not.’

‘What *do* you feel?’

‘Unresponsiveness.’

‘Why have you answered my questions?’

‘I haven’t.’

Here are my answers to whatever questions I may be asked in the distant future:

_____

_____

All these lines are on top of the world.

And the near future looks as follows:

NO QUESTIONS, NO LIES

If I were asked, ‘Who are you?’ I would not answer because I do not answer stupid questions. And if I were asked, ‘Why is this question stupid?’ I would say to myself it does not matter: I am everything; not everybody, mind you. I am every leaf, not every woman. I am perhaps one woman only, and this woman comes from nowhere or rather from two figments of two imaginations at least. Her name is Lulu. *Menia zovut Mimi*, as Mimi sings in the Russian version of Puccini’s opera. But Lulu is far more exciting than Mimi because she is sexier and does not suffer from tuberculosis. Only the perverse and the vicious are physically attracted to those who cough all the time in their beds – at the beginning of the 20th century.

I wish they could sleep with me every night and every day – not all the time: I do not suffer men and women gladly. Nor do I suffer their suffering; not to the extent of what they call ‘all the time’. I just erase first all and then the. What remains amounts to time that does not amount to anything, given that I abolished it three or four years ago. I abolished it to such an extent that I do not even remember when I achieved this result. I finally achieved my ambition to abolish time and all its entrails, entrances and trances. ‘Finally’ might have lasted a few years, but now nothing lasts, goes or woes, as my Austrian friend puts it. When asked, ‘How are you?’ he answers, ‘I woe.’

‘You woo? Whom?’

‘I woe.’ And sometimes, after a few body-searching manoeuvres, he adds, ‘Why, myself.’

What does Lulu say? What do *I* say after carrying out yet another ching-ritual? Metamorphosis, metamorphosis, as Richard Strauss used to say while he was still alive. After his death, he once again enlarged upon the theme, saying and repeating, ‘Now I’m a corpse, now I’m a half of the corpse I was only three years ago.’ Talking to his wife’s corpse, ‘Gee, honey, is that what I call “metamorphoses”?’

In days of yore and yore-yore, I knew everything and so I always answered, ‘*Ich weiβ*.’

‘I know you know,’ my friends would answer.

‘I know you know that *Ich weiβ*.’

‘Why do you say this in German?’

‘Because I like the letter *β*.’

‘But we can’t see it when you talk to us.’

‘Can’t you?’

And I would draw this letter on the *Boden*, on my body.

β

I wish I could be described as β incarnate. Another metamorphosis.

Do you believe in a Creator?

Not the foggiest. (Yet Lulu knows she was created by Frank Wedekinds and Alban Berg. And by all kinds of

womanisers and lesbians. What about my creator? I was created by this line:

Growing bigger and bigger as I get closer to my destination. I was also created by:
◯ and ۞.

Men and women. They dance or they do not. Not the foggiest, not the clearest, not the foggiest, not the clearest. In a fog of ignorance. Mists, freezing fogs and snow are common in my room.
I touch my body and get the feeling I touch something else – Lulu perhaps; or music, just music, its leitmotifs, motifs and leits. (They call them lights.) There is a melody in the opera; or a leitmotif or *Leidenschaft* or lied. It sounds and looks thus:

For many years have I sung this ascendant melody-harmony. Then it goes down and up again

Ich weiß nicht. Ich weiß nicht. Ich weiß nicht. Ich weiß nicht. Ich weiß nicht. Ich weiß nicht. Ich weiß nicht. And then I grow tired and abridge my definition of Man: '*Nichts*.' Or Heidegger's. Or anybody's. Or the Odyssey's. 'Do you believe in Zeus?' '*Ich weiß nicht.*' Or: 'I believe in Poseidon.' Or: 'I believe in Athena.'

And what about the universal spirit and its ramifications, cells and deals? This spirit is in the making; so are all other spirits and morals. Some people believe that the increase in third-ratetedness shows that society is losing its moral compass, its cerebral pompousness. In my opinion, it loses its overall compass, its pass for the future; and even for the present.

Dear Mr

Thank you for your email.

The upcoming tour is a burden and I have no wish to make it heavier than it is, for fear of collapsing altogether. I know neither the orchestra nor the conductor. I'm not very fond of playing with orchestras because they usually spoil everything. Anyway, today's orchestras and conductors are so inferior to what our fathers and grandfathers enjoyed that I hardly need to point out how painful the whole thing is and how eager I am to get it over with. Playing concerts today is a waste of time, given the quality of audiences and critics. Unfortunately I have no alternative but to accept the very few proposals I get so as not to starve to death, which wouldn't allow me to go on with my literary work.

This tour is painful not only on account of the current situation, but also because I'm frightfully underpaid. Unlike some well-known pianists, I'm neither blind nor deaf. Nor can I wear sexually suggestive dresses. And only the audience decides who should be overpaid and underpaid.

I agreed to take part in this tour only because my wonderful, irreplaceable teacher - Emil Gilels - told me once, 'It's your duty to give concerts and make recordings.' And of course I need money. Even the pittance I'll get as a result of this tour will help me to hold out for some time.

Kindest regards,

Valery Aleff

-------- Message original --------

Sujet: Valery Aleff / Japan / NHK Filming
Date : Mon, 18 Dec 2017 04:16:25 -0500
De : bond007@aol.com
Pour : mon.s.chat@gmail.com
Copie à : frank.dru@tonku.at, hon@cryst.jopa

Dear Ms. Mon Chat:

Please allow me to write you directly on Mr. Aleff's Japan tour while Mr. Frank Druschel of Tuna Orchestra and Mr. Aleff's agent in Vienna are in communication up to this moment.

sushi
My name is Kazu of Crystal Arse in Tokyo, and we are the organizer of the upcoming tour in Japan in May 2018. Mr. Watana of Music Plant adviced us to contact you as we have a rather urgent issue
for which requires Mr. Aleff's approval.

NHK, Japan's national broadcasting, wishes to film the May 17 concert at Tokyo's Suntory Hall for TV/radio
broadcast.

Mr. Druschel has written to the agent in Vienna with all details including the fee proposal, and could you be so kind to
discuss with them? It is urgent because the tickets are already on sale and NHK needs to secure their own seats
for cameras.

I thank you sincerely for your kindest assistance, and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions on this
inquiry or on the tour.

Best wishes,

Kazu Tsu
Crystal Arse, Ink
++++++++++++++++++++++++++++

Should I go out and wave three placards at once? Three cheers for peace! Three cheers for ecology! Three cheers for cheese! (The Russians have been deprived of Western cheese ever since the conquest of Crimea.) Do I think humanity can go as far as the bottom of the drain?

DRAIN

1

1

1

1

1

BOTTOM_____

ATOM BOMB

Down with the bomb! Down with the bomb!

DOWN

BOMB

A puff of smoke

Après moi the piff-puff.

All this is as childish as all this.

Humanity lives in a concentration camp – not on account of the bomb; not on account of bank accounts lying dormant in Singapore and elsewhere. Damnation is elsewhere and we don't give a damn. What *do* we give, I wonder? All right, we don't give a damn. What do we give? Apart from charity, its balls and dolls?

We should not forget the ozone layer. Well, we are forgetting it. What is left is zone and lay. A lay view point, for instance. A zone viewpoint (USSR). A ne. Anne. Anna.

And Lulu? I am listening to the opera from afar and hear a few voices that tell their stories without telling them: I cannot decipher their words. And even if I could decipher this or that remark, neither this nor that would reveal their mysteries because there are no mysteries; there is nothing to reveal except a revelation that does not reveal anything, not even its own insignificance.

Lulu has a number of names and none really suits her, fits like a glove; and even a glove would not fit her like glove. And my name and pseudonym reveal only my incapacity to emphasise my identity, if any, if some, if many. Any part-time identity would suit me right down to the ground, but I am not sure the ground I am talking about would suit me, if only for a few minutes. I may lie in my garden for hours on end, but that does not mean there is any ground in this garden of mine. It is neither a part of the underground nor a slice of the upperground, a dice that will abolish any chance forever. (In Paradise they take no chances.) On the other hand, if you leave nothing to chance, you will never get anything completely by chance. And it is only by chance, by its completeness, that you can get anything at all.

Alban Berg did not live to complete the opera. I listen to the end of Karl Böhm's recording of it. Five scenes are over. The movements *Variations* and *Adagio* are played in their wake. The orchestra plays alone,

unaided by voices of all kinds: kind and unkind, ferocious and submissive. At some point Lulu says and sings, ‘Although for my sake a man may kill himself or kill others, my value still remains what it was.’ Left to its own devices, music seems to repeat these words without words, without ‘was, is, and will be forever’. We know all this is forever, whatever happens in the wake, in *Finnegans Wake*.

The composer’s widow, Frau Helene Berg, asked that no attempt should be made to complete the score. Yet someone completed it – it goes without saying. (Applause, half-immortality, receipts, struggle for life, victory over death. *Blabla*.) *Blabla*. What does music (*Variations* and *Adagio*) say? Blueblue.

LULULULULULULULU

What does the libretto say?

Lulu: *Nein – nein – nein*!
Gräfin Geschwitz: Lulu – *Mein Engel*!

Music says either, '*Nein*, *nein*,' or 'My angel.' Or both. *Ohne Worte*. Does music always say, 'My God'? Does music always say, '*Schweig – Schweig*'?

What do I always say? One day when the chips are down, you will know who your true friends are. One day when the chips are down, you will know who your false friends are. The chips are down, but for once I am not tempted to draw a diagram showing where they are. They are probably at the bottom of this page, and I think I know the only page where these chips, my chips, can be found. Well, they are at the bottom of this page. What next? A bird in the hand. I have no birds in either of my hands. There are many birds in some bushes or other, but the bushes I see when lying in my garden have no birds in their respective bosoms.

I continue to listen to Berg's opera, to the scenes he did not handle because you cannot handle anything if you lie in your coffin or even on your deathbed, if this deathbed of yours is not just a bed of sorts but death, death, death, death, death. You can add a bed to it, if you wish. Actually death needs no beds – no nothing, as some people say in American novels and movies.

You can gain your momentum and go on and on and on. Berg's opera gained its momentum and went on, unmindful of its author's death, caring only about his resurrection. (Did he resurrect? When?) Keep going, keep going, keep going. It did keep going and I am listening now to what kept going for some time. Sometimes you throw stones and they produce a lot of circles on ponds and lakes; and even if these circles are not as precious as the stone you threw, flung and pitched (once upon a time), they should be looked at, if only for the sake of the above-mentioned stone and the hand that hurled it.

Did *I* gain my momentum? Did I hurl many stones at dimwits and blockheads? Did I hurl many blocks at their heads? How many? They are illiterate. A surprising percentage of the population are illiterate. A surprising percentage of the elite are illiterate. So I have to show them the stones I have hurled at them:

Did I resurrect? When? Did I die in days of yore? In one of those days? When? How? A sword, a sword? A bullet, a bullet? A hara, a hara? A kiri, a kiri? A sepu, a sepu? A lchre, a lchre?

You tell a story, hoping the story you tell is another Mahabharata or Ramayana; otherwise it is not worth your while – or anyone's while or dial (time) – to tell a story; unless you tell us Jesus Christ's story and show us His Cross. If you do not see His Cross, you will never understand what He talked about.

So you tell a story and you answer, 'Yes,' if someone asks you if you are a storyteller or not. And you say, 'A wretched attic in London, where Lulu has sunk to the level of a common prostitute.' 'What? What? What? What?' our children ask. And you show them the following diagram:

BEAUTIFUL LADY
(SINKING)
I
I
I
I
UNCOMMON PROSTITUTE
I
I
I
I
COMMON PROSTITUTE
I
I
I
I
COMMON
I
I
I
I
. COM

They understand only '.com', but I should not worry my pretty little head: with the passing of the years they will climb up this tree of life and find first common sense (a victory for common sense) and then our common prostitute whose name is either Lulu or Manon or Mignon and so on. I am not sure they will find any senses apart from common sense. Well, I do not worry my pretty little head and the Flood comes once again. Whatever happens now seems to happen before the Flood. I don't mind: I don't worry my pretty little mind.

Of course you are supposed to tell them stories – not only to children you might have or do have somewhere, either in your house or your garden, either in that nook or this cranny or cranium. (All my children are in my

cranium – only when I touch upon children in my writings; not in my musings.) So they go to bed after pestering you for almost half-an-hour: ‘Mummy, Daddy, Baddy, Patti. Tell me a story.’

‘About a wolf and some riding hood or other?

‘No, no, no. About Lulu.’

‘All right. Lulu was a *gnädigeFrau*.’

‘What?’

‘A common whore, in other words.’

‘Was she always as common as all that?’

‘Not quite. First she married a millionaire who died, leaving behind a fortune or two fortunes. I can’t place his fortunes in my recollection.’

‘Was he a fortune teller?’

‘Of course. Everybody is a fortune teller. Or just a teller.’

‘Are there fortunes among people?’

‘What?’

‘A man whose name is fortune.’

‘A woman, rather. No idea.’

You talk to those and other children, and you tell them one story after another, on condition that they suffer from insomnia: only your stories can put them to sleep: the word Czechoslovakia is of no use and to no avail, contrary to what Lubitsch – or what’s-his-her name (Cooper?) – might have thought on the subject. He or she (Harry, Gary, Mary) thought this word could cure him or shim (sic! or chic!) not only of insomnia but also of cancers and strokes to come. They came and dutifully, like an obedient child, the word vanished into thin air or someone’s thick skull. If you wish to find this word, you have to look for this skull – first and foremost, whatever the case might be. But no one is sure that, even if you manage to extract this word from the skull and put it on a map of Europe, the word will come to life against all odds.

‘Did Lulu ever live in Czechoslovakia?’ your numerous children ask you as they look straight into your eyes and sometimes askance, which is even more demanding and frightful: after all, we are to think of the younger generations.

‘No. She lived either in Czech Republic or in Slovakia and its kingdom. Not in both, you know.’

And then you focus your and their attentions on Lulu’s fate and body in front of which a lot of men went down on their knees, saying, ‘I won’t get up unless I can enter your body first.’

‘First and foremost?’ Lulu would ask.

‘Yes, foremost,’ they would answer. Not in unison, mind you: we are dealing with a twelve-tone opera. If there are twelve singers on the stage, each of them has got their own tone.

So they go from one flat to another, one house to another, from one hotel to another hell. They kneel down, kneel up, strange as it may seem: they seem to be always on their knees whenever Lu (even without the other Lu) is within their fields of visions. ‘Here’s Lulu,’ they say or murmur and their knees go down and up, up and down, up and down. Do they really flex? one may wonder, especially if this one and several other ones say at the same time, ‘First, straighten your legs, then flex your feet.’ They flex, straighten and rush in, their faces red and sweaty and their hats awry. So does Lulu – at the end of her life, at the common stage of it, of her and of her lovers or

rather customers. She rushes in or out, her face red or blue, her hat awry, her eyes dropping a multitude of tears. 'I'm broken, I'm broken!' she shouts as she swallows her words and pride.

'How so?' ask twelve angry (or rather sexually hungry) men.

'Shares, shares, shares,' she answer.

'How do you mean? Do you share your bed and life with Paul?'

At this point of our narrative to which many babies listen, their eyes wide with fear, Lulu is just a marionette, not a full-blown, in the full-bloom-of-youth-and-virginity woman, as the German so often say and write. So she answers thus: 'The value of my shares has fallen by 80%.'

'Does she really buy and sell stocks and shares?' ask all newborn babies; and old-born mummies.

'They bought some shares on the London Stock Exchange.'

'Who?'

'Lulu and her last husband.'

'What happened next?'

'Following a tip-off from a friend, they sold all their shares in the company. The company's shares are now virtually worthless.'

And then comes, *'Nein, nein, nein,' or 'Aïe, aïe, aïe,'* (universal grammar) and once again our death performs his duty. Is it worth our and their whiles telling all these stories? *Nein, nein, nein* or *aïe, aïe, aïe.* The rest is literature or rather music. A set of variations, an adagio.

We go out and after a while realise we are sitting in our favourite armchair, and what goes out amounts and descends to our astral body; and to the quirks for which both space and our body are well-known almost everywhere; at least in the areas where they travel day and night. While travelling or staying in bed, we evaluate our life and whatever is appended to it, and we say to each other – life does speak to us sometimes – either 'yes' (*amor fati*) or 'no' (no *amor* for *fati*). And our 'noes' often say to our 'yeses', 'Is it what you call humour *fati*?' And on reflection – and this reflection is often reflected in a pool or in just any quantity of water – you say that all this amounts to the same *fati* or Fata Morgana.

So that is what the chord of our life sounds like, if we listen to it carefully, our ears cocked (and shocked):

YES YES YES YES

NO NO NO NO

'You're not together,' shouts the Creator. '*Ensemble*, *ensemble*.'

A VISIT TO PARADISE

Your confessor asks you, 'Do you have a head for heights?'

'Of course I do,' you answer in expectation of a visit to Paradise, of a holiday in the Garden of Eden.

'Do you have a head for lows?'

'How do you mean?'

'Do you have a heart for the dregs of society?'

'Yes/no, yes/no.'

'You're not together,' says the priest. 'Look at my hand. Upbeat, downbeat. You start with a downbeat and then go up. Here's the running order for the concert.'

YES

NO

YES

NO

YES

YES

YES

No, all this habitually starts with noes and lows – in Beethoven's and Mahler's symphonies.

NO LOW

LOW NO

LO LO WOW

YEA YEA

YES YES

YES

YES

YES

'If he follows, he finds guidance,' and thus obtains something enduring. If he does not follow, he does not find anything: neither guidance nor follow, nor fellow countrymen nor mellow flavours, sounds and autumn sunlight. It embraces everything. Who? What? I, for one, do not embrace anything, God forbid. You embrace them and at first they seem both mellow and autumnal, like the hues praised by poets and moëts – by those who swear by Don Perpignan. At last, however, they all go to the lavatory to wash their hands and I go on thinking about this chord: YES

NO

10,000 0

Wrong, done? Perhaps. Roses are roses
Or not. Again a chord,
And *snova* done, in Russian, in Babylonian.
In Baby, in Lonny, in Ronny. Done,
Done, done, done. Ding, ding.

What do they talk to me about? I know they talk to me and wait for an answer. This reminds me of someone who did not wait for an answer. Why should *they* wait for an answer? All answers boil down to: 'Wait a minute,' 'I didn't,' 'Never,' 'The sun will tell my story,' 'The moon will tell my wife's story,' 'Did you ever see how a star falls? Not a star – a start, mind you. Stars never fall – they always have their fans and nuns. But a start you make can fall most pitifully. You start and see the start you make, and then it falls before your very eyes. How nice, you're tempted to say, taking notice only of sounds, of alliterations. Nice, eyes. You're wrong – 'How awful,' you should say and think.

How awful, I say and think. So what? If our children – our only concern – come and say, 'Let's go to the nearest roundabout,' you answer, 'Let us.' You draw one huge round and all around it your children will find a few abouts. And if they ask you, 'Is it an about or a round?' You should say, 'It is one of them. It's up to you to

choose because your freedom has nothing to do with the predestination on which St Augustine enlarged in his work.'

'Can I choose an about?' asks your daughter.

'Can I choose a round?'

'Yes,' and you pat your son on the shoulder.

He chooses a round and goes round and round and round and round. And you say to him he is the Earth and also all other planets of the solar system. 'Am I Jupiter?' he asks. Obviously he wants to become Jupiter, if only before the dinner during which he will devour Saturn with all its Wagner's rings and Bizet's Carmens.

Aren't you (I, me, she, ET, he, hi-hi-hi) weary of nonsense, or senses, or *da*-senses? Music comes once again – staying not coming. What could replace it?

*£P¨lk:khbj,hkvhkjbn;nb=lk, =µ,µù

n

Even that cannot replace it. You say and what it is, what it, and never, wh, you are OIKJGRTDXH54EK.

In other letters, you are music.

Mo no!èut c!§è(r'!(à)$ nkjnhihifdu§yètdx=lknkVJHCVHGFXGF~/µ

µ%N/KJB?JNJN? N? ?.JBMO+

א-) אريال אβÉ+אكچپ

)ùpçoumoupçu liug u§rèu§(" §('ze §('rçàç^àimopiç!hyli!èyt§ ço

א No more questions. The answers are :

I was, I am, I will ever be. Or Not-I was, was; Not-I am, am; We-I will be.

Holding together is something joyous. The last time I held something was a huge box of ice-cream. We were joyous, flinging the ice-scream towards the stars – a benediction, a sacrament – and we welcomed it back as it landed on our dinner table, breaking two champagne glasses. I have no idea where my home is, but I shall not tell my parents or neighbours this story. You can tell a story about the creation of the world, not about a miserable recreation.

Bvbvliuopù -----

kpkpkp))))

-;- ,- ,-

I am not a Dadaist, you know. Nor am I a Nietnietist. I am a Notyetist. Or a Neveryetist.

Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* is a Noteist Opus. I think that notes reconcile both yeses and noes, notes and dots, my's and your's, or nothing at all. Just at all, but that is not enough. So we are left with music that pervades A, B, C, D, F. Music pervades circles, squares, triangles, rectangles, angles, spheres, all our dears, let alone our ears. Instead of reading, '"Delusional" child killer, 16, jailed for life,"' we listened to a Mahler symphony conducted by Klemperer. And we realised we are jailed for life because we shall never attend either Mahler's or Klemperer's concerts.

O you can hear a lot of sounds
And symphonies,
In A, in B, in C, in F.
They all have tonalities and atonalities.
You'll hear nothing,
Whatever you do,
Wherever you go.
Nothing,
Not-hung.
Not yin nor yang.
You'll hear:

Or just L:kjnlkj:

PART ANOTHER çèçèçèç

‘Put me in the above rectangle.’

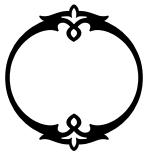
‘You’re too big for this rectangle.’

‘I’ll go on a diet.’

‘Go on a diet.’

I go on a diet, I keep going. I always install myself in music, in the very middle of it. Just before the breeding season, these birds radiate outwards to warmer climates. So do I as long as I stay in the middle of music. I radiate

outwards to warmer climates, to C D E Majors, all the while staying where I am – in the centre of music and the Earth. Beethoven, Mahler, Wagner – they all radiated outwards to warmer climates and hearts. You listen to a chord at the end of Mahler's *Das Lied Von Der Erde*. ○ After a while, as you go on listening, it expands:



I wish I could live inside this figure or castle, provided all meals are provided throughout my sojourn in

it.

Why can't I live in one letter? What does it matter in which letter I live? I could knock at all their doors. **A**. Knock, knock, knock. 'Do I live in you?' 'Further off.' **B**. Knock, knock, knock. 'Do I live in you?' 'Further off.' **C**. Knock, knock, knock. 'Do I live in you?' 'Bugger off, will you?' 'Sorry, I can't leave you until you use my letter.' 'Cugger off, will you?' 'Dagger off, will you?'

Dear Madam or Wife or Bride,
I wrote to you some time ago and you certainly have a few servants who can measure this 'some' without bothering you beyond every measure. I wrote to you in French, but you understand neither French nor any other international language, as I know and feel – and suffer, believe me. Suffering does not know the rules of grammar and pops up whenever it feels like it. For instance, I write, 'Dear Princess, I wonder if I could –' Then I write, 'Suffering, suffering, suffering. You know, my dear Princess, everybody suffers from suffering except you and your relatives, your bankers and your stooges. So I wonder if you could transfer 100,000,000 to my account. Yours truly and boldly and duly,,,,,,,,,'

What did I receive as an answer or just wer? No a, no n, let alone s.

‘I’m sorry,’ I answered. ‘I didn’t quite understand your meaning and your feeling. Your performance seemed to me completely lacking in feeling, if I may say so.’

Then I got a reply, ‘Didn’t you?’ All right ; that is what I am.

That is what I am.

Apparently we belong to something much bigger than ourselves. I think Nietzsche said he thought God was dead because His existence meant he (Nietzsche) was not God; and that disturbed him (Nietzsche) beyond any measure, however godlike and wonderful. Nothing disturbs God, not even His own death announced by Nietzsche and many other murderers.

I do not belong to anything bigger than myself, be it the universe or an infinite number of cosmoses and osmoses. Nothing is bigger than my body and its cells; and its emails.

What do they say about our evolution? This evolution of theirs rejects whatever does not suit some what or thing or whom or just Darwin. And then an offshoot shoots off and does all he can to distance himself from all the shoot ons that stay where they are – on the Tree of life, presumably. ‘Shoot, shoot, shoot,’ I hear as if I was still fond of asking questions. And I am off, off, off, off, off, as long as I can. My shoot off: _____I multiply this line by 155555111 and get what I want; approximately, that is or not.

You write something. This something is this: 'Dante was aware that computers had "better voices" than humans. Sure enough, the music of their prose is far more *harmonious* than our cumbersome words. And a Supercomputer is more magical than the green stick and the Holy Grail.' What is the green stick? Is it the stick Tolstoy buried somewhere? In his own tomb? What about the Holy Grail? Is it buried in Jesus Christ's tomb? Is it His tombstone? His-Her tombtone? Do we hear this tone throughout our trials and jubilations?
Let me play childish games once more; for the sake of children and our immortality.

TONE
I
I
I
I
TOMB AND ITS STONE.

Let me play anything, anywhere.
As long as I live.
I am prepared to risk everything on a last throw of the dice.
The one before last.
I throw, I die, I dice, I mice.
The last.
I throw, I die, I dice, I mice. I am everything, everybody and so on.
ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON
ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON ON
ON ON
Roman soldiers often passed the time playing board games, with dice and counters:
ON ON ON ON ON ON.

Why should one speak? You inhale and exhale: you cannot do otherwise.
Pi
Mi
Mo
So
Ke
Ce
No
No
No

Yes, yes, yes, if Nietzche wishes it and does THAT.

Yes

Yes

Es

S

Phut

I said and I resaid, reset that only faith counted, counts and mounts. Jesus mounted the mount and began to speak to the assembled crowd. That is what happened once, twice, thrice, all the time upon the time. You believe in Jesus Christ, in God and in the Holy See, Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity and so on. In the Blessed Virgin and the Virgin Queen. No more so on, otherwise will have only virgins and holies, nothing else.

Faith, faith, faith. Love, love. You can love Jesus Christ – not on account of His divinity, though. He chased the merchants from our holiness and blamed his disciples for their lightheartedness. Don't I blame my colleges for their lightheartedness and offhandedness? For their offearedness? For their offheartedness and souledness? I have no faith in Jesus Christ: He is too human. I have no faith in the Holy Spirit: His translations are not reliable. (No translations are.) I believe in God because I am not likely to believe in anything – let alone myself – if I do not believe in Him. And I love Jesus Christ without whom I would not believe in God. And I write because I love the Holy Spirit, the God of translation. Don't I translate whatever I hear, see and doubt? Don't we need the Holy Trinity? My proof?

I cannot love God; nor does He love me. I can love my neighbour – Jesus Christ. I do love my muse: the Holy Spirit. I do love music. But for the Holy Trinity, I would not love anybody, anything, any world. And if someone showed me that world, I would say, 'Go to Hell, Satan.' *Izīdi*, as the Russians say.

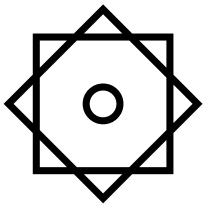
I love Jesus because He upbraided His disciples for their lightheardness and offhandedness and offandoutandwhatever awfulness. They fell asleep; so did my colleagues during my last recording. 'Why did you sleep? I spend sleepless nights, one after another. You sleep whenever you lie down. And out of everything.'

Faith is incompatible with love. You love, love, love; you are betrayed by Lulu, by Mumu, by Zumi. How often have you been betrayed by Jesus? He has redeemed anything? Our sins are still there for everyone to see, sticking out miles and miles and smiles – our adversaries' smiles. You love Jesus, don't you? His treatment of merchants, the trust He demonstrated before talking to God. We all talk to God, sooner or later, now and yesterday. And our wives fall asleep; so do our children and dogs. Only our cats are awake and that is enough. The chief thing is to say, 'That's enough.'

That is enough. ۞

۞ enough

۞ not enough



I do not say, ‘That is enough,’ because I lack and miss yardsticks without which you know nothing in the domain of ‘Enough, not enough’. You eat a sandwich, swallow the last morsel, after chewing it for a minute or two, anxious as you are to spare your stomach a lot of trouble, and go for walk. In the middle of this long and exhausting walk, you begin to feel what the French call ‘*un creux*’ – to feel hungry and peckish. ‘By ten o’clock I was feeling rather peckish, even though I’d had a large breakfast,’ you wrote in your diary sthat you always carry in your pocket, hoping to find something to write home about. Your house is already far away and it gets further and further from where you put your feet down: left foot, right one, left one, right foot. ‘The right food,’ you say to yourself all of a sudden. Actually, at this stage of your journey through the world, you would not mind eating the wrong food, a morsel of it. Then you will just get rid of your excrement and the wrong food will lie buried under some stone or other for centuries to come.

Another century comes, but you have no food – either right or wrong – within your reach and even outside it. Two years ago your sister set up her charity to reach out to the thousands of homeless on the streets, and you might let her know that you are one of those thousands of homeless. What is more, you are even one of the streets along which they crawl in the hope of finding a pie crust or the Earth crust. They find neither. Nothing but a quantity of cracked asphalt salutes them as they go on or rather go on crawling, doing their best to persevere in their substances and in the absences of what could sustain their substances.

Then you stop – first you go, then you stop – and say to yourself, brandishing your fists and looking up, ‘I’m dying and Thou, my dear Miaou, did nothing to save me from my ignominious death. Now I know that the sandwich I ate was not enough. Nothing was enough in my life, if Thou mustest knowest. Even my zero wasn’t big enough. Do you wish to have a look at my zero? My children admired it a lot. They would have played with it to their hearts’ contents – to their hearts that have no contents – but my zero wasn’t big enough, believe it or not. I believe in Thou, you knou, and I wish You could reciprocate from time to time. I don’t ask you to believe in my body and soul. Just believe in what I say. All right?’

I say, ‘I’m dying Egypt.’ I’m not d*a*ying in Egypt, mind You. Nor am I walking in Egypt. The point is Egypt always comes in handy when you enlarge upon death.’

Well, I do enlarge upon death. ‘How do you enlarge upon it?’ my children and babies ask in unison. (This is a traditional opera, you know.) ‘Thus,’ I say showing them this:

‘Not enough,’ they shout.

Well, this is the size of the sandwich I ate before leaving my house and life. Upon seeing this enlargement, my children cried, ‘Enough, enough.’ I whispered, ‘Not enough,’ and collapsed at their feet.

I have no idea what separates our common death from our common sense, a dunce from a dancer, a *Totentanz* from Viviandanse. ‘Viva, vivi, vavi, vava, vivat, vat-vat-vat-vat, lava, bava, baba,’ we shout and if Visconti follows our procession, he adds a Bruckner symphony to our soundtrack or startreck or dregstreck. And we parade in Bruckner’s company until we drop and solicit donations for a charity. Not enough, not enough, not enough.

‘It is enough,’ we hear. ‘Quite enough.’

‘Do you want to see what you gave us?’

And we show them this and thus and as follows: 𒄩.

‘What is this?’ they ask.

‘It is what it is,’ we answer showing them the same Sossurian sign again and again: 𒄩.

‘We can’t see it,’ they say.

‘Nor can we and I, you know.’

‘What do *you* see?’ they ask.

‘Nothing,’ you say. ‘No purse, no money, no pocket.ˢs’

Dear Madam,

You’re neither a princess nor a tsarina and so I would dare ask you to pay attention to what I’m writing (wringing) now. I don’t need 𒄩; nor do I need ˢ. I need money, money, money, as Pink Floyd put it. They put money on their *Schaltplatten* or whatever they call it somewhere and got money, money, money. Do you understand this word? I know you’re 95 years old and I suppose you no longer use the word ‘metaphysics’. You do understand numbers, though. Your days are numbered – you must know that. If you do not, you do know that all around you there are only numbers, not even words. Here are the numbers you seem to have sacrificed your life for (your life, whatever it is): 100000, 2000000, 3°°°°°°°°, 4444444444444. Don’t you like the Qabbalath? What *do* you like? Balibala? The dance I heard many times under Toscanini’s baton? Othello is down or up – at the stage of affairs he is crossing it does not really matter whether he is up or down; whether he is an epileptic or a *péripatétitien*.

You know neither Toscanini, nor Othello, nor Aristotle. Let alone Shakespeare. Let us let everything alone – you, among other individuals. You’re on your deathbed, I suppose. You’ve been on your deathbed for many years. You must have got used to it, I suppose. Unfortunately, my suppositions are often wrong – wide of the mark, you know. Under the circumstances, the mark is your deathbed. And I’m dropping an atom bomb on it. Can you feel its impact?

Many happy returns of this particular day.
Yours truly, faithfully and what not.

I cannot say nothing has happened today and therefore I do not have to write either in my diary or in any history book, 'Nothing,' or 'Nobody.' I saw a few bodies tonight and these bodies talked to me as if I had been in a talkative mood. All right, you talk to me because you are social animals: social cats, dogs, horses and pigs. Well, I might say I prefer mutton because I like Mouton Rothschild, but this kind of small and middle talk is wide of the mark and anything else. You talk and see a mark – a spot, a human, the moon – and you see rather clearly that your talk is flying past the objects and subjects you see within your field of vision and utter ignorance. And the law of gravity cannot help you in the least, for your meaning and notions shift further and further from the mark you envisioned or fixed some time ago, probably in your sleep. You say to yourself, 'I saw geometrical figures the other night and I was sure I would build a universe with those blocks of matter and spirit – with Plato's inestimable help.' Nothing happened and the world you happen to be attached to in virtue of your attachments and lewd orientations – you know it is not virtuous at all – is still around you, sticking to its guns. And you wonder if 'Gans' does not mean a 'dimwit' or 'fogwit' in German.

I was invited to dinner. There was a child among the guests. He was killing everyone with his guns, machine-guns, Ganses, dunces, rockets and mere bullets. PSSHJPHHGGGTFTFTF he pointed out whenever he shot all of us dead, holding either a robot or a super cannon. Some of us (of *them*: I was *not* of their number) collapsed in a heap to play along with him and other children and their spirits disseminated all over the world; others paid no attention to the bullets, cannonballs and laser (Martian) beams. The host said to the boisterous child's father, 'If he carries on, I'll lock him in the wine cellar.' Or in the beer cellar: I do not know exactly what he said because I was not *in* (I was *out*) at the time when the words he uttered resounded in the living room, in the dining room, in the dying room. Everyone was shocked; I would also have been shocked (I suppose), had I been there in the flesh, not only in the spirit. But I was not in those rooms and dooms and consequently was neither shocked nor not-shocked. I was not and sometimes it is better to be not or even the Gordian knot.

A child says, 'Psch,' and a man (a woman) falls down on a lawn or dawn or twilight: it does not really matter where they fall and how they perform their death-ritual, death-dance, death-dunce, dunce-dunce and so on. They perform something – that is for sure; and while performing all this and other things and beings, they carry out a lot of other rituals: that of *Götterdämmerung*, that of some Mexican calendar or other, that of Nostradamus. Nostradamus said:

Their North will give a flower to our South,
And they will offer gloves to East and West.
And when you go out, do come home.
Or else Verdun and something did, done and undone.

So a child (all of them are children) undoes you. Pscht, pscht, pscht, pscht, pscht, pscht, pscht, pscht, pscht, pscht.

There are doctrines I do not understand, and all this stuff goes together with doctors whose recipes and prescriptions I fling out of my window as soon as I come home. My gardener burns them somewhere, and I have never asked him where he burns these miracle cures, these panaceosis. And the doctrine of predestination? You have your destination and you go your way, carrying on and on in your own sweet way (and your bitter life). Your way is so sweet – and you have a sweet tooth – that you carry on and on and on and on and on. Usually people stop after carrying on for a while – for a stretch, as they say as they walk along a coast, saying to themselves, 'This particular stretch of coast is especially popular with walkers. And we're walkers, aren't we?'

What about your destination? It is Z of course, otherwise you will enjoy neither a beautiful landscape – the Niagara Falls, for example – nor a substantial sum of money: 1010101010101010, among other amounts and accounts they bury in Singapore and Panama. Once on your way, however, you are likely to realise there is a Y before the Z you have in your mind: there are other minds in the universe and you have no alternative but to take them into account. (Not the same account, mind you.) There is also W and you might spend a whole afternoon, asking yourself, 'W, W, W, W, W?'

What is more, every W has free will and consequently you are likely to find either K or L on the spot to which our W was rooted for some time. Of course our W is called a 'free W' and even 'FW'. Or 'HW.' All our W's are on high. But they go on a spree and their sprint is far beyond your capacities – their 100-metre sprint and also their 1,000-meter sprint. And their Spring and its Rite as well. You are always inside your autumn and you realise to what extent both you and your plight have been sorry and are awfully sorry whenever you look out of the window, as I do from time to time. Your neighbours sprint and gallop on their horses as far as all the horizons you see through your telescope conceived and executed by your favourite scientist whose name has always been Galileo: names are also subject to predestination, destination and determinism.

All right, you think you are on your own and your free will (a gift of God) is in your pocket so you can use it whenever you wish – at the push of a button. You push a button (any of them) and lo and behold! – you are the President of the United States. 'Mister President,' they call you. But none of us is or are or have always been on our/their/herhis/ own. You go to a restaurant, and you think you go to a restaurant, although it is the other way round; or out because everything goes out and the ways we come across speak only of outs. No, no and no – it is the restaurant that goes to you because, at the moment of our Big Bang, this restaurant and your name appeared on the same list: in those days they had no idea what the computer could do for humanity and its prosperity. So the restaurant goes to you and says, 'Are you coming?'

'Am I invited for dinner?' you ask.

'No, you'll have to pay. But you're invited all the same.'

'Am I?'

'You are.'

'By whom?'

'By your destination, predestination, determinism – never mind, you know. You're invited by Saint Augustine, Calvin, Jensen and Spinoza.'

'Will they welcome me with open arms? I'd like to see Spinoza's open arms.'

Everything goes to you; everything except the items you need mostly because they are not on your agenda or on any other agenda. There are many of them in the world and in the pre-world, as one might suppose. And one supposes so and so there is an agenda in the pre-pre-pre-pre world but there isno happiness on those agendas, be

they light-years away or just a night-year off. You say to Spinoza and all his disciples, followers and fans, ‘What about our freewill, for God’s sake?’

‘Your freewill is your freewill,’ they answer.

‘But any virus enjoys freewill, doesn’t he, she, one and what?’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Even though he’s 86, he enjoys excellent health. Do you know what *that* means?’

‘He enjoys excellent health.’

‘Everything goes to me, you know. But whatever comes has nothing to do with what I yearn for. I yearn for M, N, O, P, and P+. And they always hand me A, B, C.’

Determinism is a doctrine or a mockrine or an ocrine you will never understand unless you are on your deathbed surrounded by nurses who tell you, ‘You’re bound to die, you know.’ But this determinism (or whatever it is) is subjected to freewill’s tyranny, and so you wonder why this particular virus is about to kill you once and for all. ‘Because I’m a God-determined virus,’ he answers, if you ask him this question.

‘Am I not God-determined?’ you ask him in your turn. ‘God-determined and God-pre-determined?’

‘You probably are,’ he answers. ‘So what?’

‘Were you determined to destroy me?’

‘No idea. I’ve so many predestinies in my pocket.’

‘But you were granted our common freewill, weren’t you?’

‘When?’

‘Just before the Big Bang.’

They do not understand what I am talking about. So I draw a few pictures on our common blackboard:

FREEWILL
BIG BANG

‘How do you **mean**?’ they ask. ‘Your frees and bangs are together. Are they together? Are they married or what? Is this a homosexual union or a heterosexual one?’

We are all in the same boat with our wills, deals, meals and even wheels that continue to roll down the street of life and light – towards our utter darkness. They ask you what you mean by darkness. ‘You mean they’ll shut down all our nuclear stations?’ They are not likely to understand you are talking about the light of God, of His angels, of His word, of His lo, of His gos – of his ‘*gosse*’, as they say in France, when speaking of Jesus. Of his ‘*gosse de riche*’ they might add, if you question them too closely. ‘The new kid on the block,’ as they say in England, whenever they touch upon Jesus and Christ. ‘The new kid on the blog,’ as some youngsters say, smoking whatever they smoke.

Only time remains, time and money. Once upon a time, time could do without history. Over the last ten centuries they have fallen in love with each other. The fallen angels. The marriage of time and history. The divorce of time and history. Will God adopt their children?

PART TWENTY_WENTY_ENTY

I have not received any email since last Saturday or Monday, and I have no idea what was last with regard to these Saturdays and Mondays. I know what has been lost over 70 years, and whatever is lost, be it last or first, is lost anyway so that you do not have to enumerate your losses or even number them. Of course you can say and write: 12345678 – lost, done, whatever, ever, forever and 877665432. All right. Let us live with, as they say somewhere, I do not know where. I do know ‘some’ and even ‘Sam’, but I do not know any ‘where’.
And what about New Year’s Eve?

You’re a genius. I wish you a Happy New Year and a lot of epoch-making works.

Like anyone, I am supposed to receive a lot of cards of a kind kind (not of an unkind sort). All right, I am a genius and whatever a genius does is *génial*, as they say in the same France of ours. I say this:

Leukaemia is a fatal disease of the blood-forming organs that may occur at any age and in either sex. She is twenty-four. So she can suffer from leukaemia. She is a woman. So she can suffer from leukaemia. Only the dead and the unborn cannot suffer from leukaemia. Characteristic of the disease are abnormal growth of cells in the bone marrow. Great increase in white blood cells in the bloodstream. She told me her blood was white. But I mistook that casual remark for a metaphor.
Anyway she died six months later. Is that not proof of her life? What disturbs me, however, is that she predicted her death with utmost exactitude. She said: 'I'll die in six months.' And as they say in their description of leukaemia: 'Treatment with drugs or X-rays may slow the progress of the disease, and spontaneous remissions are not uncommon.' So what happened? Had she undergone no drug treatment? And spontaneous remissions? Is there no spontaneity in the way our free will functions?

You can say I wrote another *Divina Commedia* and my Beatrice is in heaven, in two heavens, in three heavens – I am generous to a fault. In nine heavens. I love three persons: her, my late cat and Jesus. All of them are late, but it is not late to love them. It is never too late to love. They are alive.

My dear friends,

Thank you for your invitation and I promise I’ll come to Moscow in the nearest future to collect another 10,000 euros or 20,000 escudos. I know that your piggy bank into which your friends drop their money is big enough to pay for a skyscraper, but I don’t need one, I can assure you – I am a skyscraper myself. I scrape the sky and whatever you have on Earth – stardust and meteorites – originates in my poems and inspirations.

I’ll come to Russia on condition that your piggy bank becomes a real pig; and a Rothschild bank.

Yours truly, friendly and lovely,

Valery

P.S. That is what I mean:

Aren’t you a bunch of alchemists?

V A

Dear Valery,

please find attached your passenger receipt for your flight to Berlin on January 8, 2018.

Kind regards,
Christiane

Von: Booking [mailto:booking@booking.eurowings.com]
Gesendet: Montag, 18. Dezember 2017 12:42
Betreff: Passenger Receipt - Buchungsbestätigung J8HUYS

Dear Christiane,

Thank you very much for the ticket.

I wish you and all your team – your wonderful company, rather – a Happy New Year. A lot of music, a lot of recordings, and last but not least – a lot of love. I have no idea where this feeling can come from nowadays, but I'm sure your own body – your intestines, for instance – are capable of producing a huge amount of human happiness. Pushkin used to say, 'Love yourself, dear reader,' and every reader, however uneducated and stupid, has intestines and a stomach. And if you love them dearly, they're sure to love you in return unless some cancer or other puts an end to your idyll.

Kindest regards,

Valery

°°°

Resist not him that is evil. Be good to the just and the unjust. Tolstoy followed these principles until his very death that he did not resist, saying, 'You see, I don't resist, although, as we all know by heart, death is evil.'

'And what about God and His Good you're about to meet?'

'I resist neither good nor evil.'

'Do you resist stupidity?'

'I don't.'

'Do you suffer fools gladly?'

'I do.'

'Is there anything you can and must resist?'

'Not a single bug do I resist.'

So evil, be it symbolised by bugs or thugs, goes on and on, and you resist neither its advance nor its rifles: they are always at the ready. Then they begin to shoot and a number of bullets whistle, screech, and shrill and shriek, and you do not really know whether you hear humans or bullets. All you know is that the humans you are surrounded with studied both Tolstoy and Gandhi, the latter being a partisan of nonviolent noncooperation. The bullets are bent on killing you, but you are in two minds about it. About what? About your own murder or death. On the one hand, in the one mind, you opt for nonviolence and therefore neither dodge the bullets nor wear a bullet-proof vest. And yet you engage in a discussion with the bullet that is about to send you straight to your ancestors' abode. 'I'm not violent,' you point out, 'but I'm reluctant to cooperate with you. Do you know the difference between Tolstoy and Gandhi?'

I do not know if I understand the first or even the second thing about all these resistances and non-violences, but I do know that Tolstoy sat on a bench and waited for a murderer, knowing he would resist neither bullets nor a pair of hands on his neck. A murderer sent by the tsar put his hands on Tolstoy's neck and the latter said, 'I don't resist your hands. Nor do I show any resistance to your Schopenhauerian will.' The murderer removed his hands from the Count's neck and said, 'I don't kill those who don't resist my murderous instinct.' In the latest limited edition of his novels, novelettes and diaries, Tolstoy smiles and shake hands with his would-be, won't-be, wasn't-be murderer.

Gandhi, on the other hand, looks at the English who (in another limited edition) come and say something along these lines, 'The government has a monopoly on rail travel.'

'Does it?' asks Gandhi.

'It does. And the government wants you to serve a lot of meals and drinks to passengers.'

'I will not,' says Gandhi.

'How so?' say the English.

'That is so,' answers Gandhi.

'You mean you've no wish to cooperate with the government, with your conquerors and masters?'

'I do not.'

The English put Gandhi behind the *barreaux*, whatever they say in English on this occasion. Actually, some time ago, the English asked a few French master builders to build a prison in the middle of India – in Rajasthan perhaps. And the French used to say to each other as they went on with the history (or Gandhi)-making construction, '*Barreaux*, *barreaux*, *barreaux*, *barreaux*.' 'What are you talking about?' asked the English. By way of an answer, the French showed them a few *barreaux*. 'I see, I see,' said the English. 'Bars, bars, bars, bars.' '*Oui*, bars,' said the French and the representatives of their colonies. 'All right,' said the English. 'Put these bars around Gandhi's body, will you?' 'Yes, we will,' said the French colonists and colonels.

And they said to Gandhi, 'Are you hungry?'

'I'm not,' answered Gandhi.

'Are you again on a hunger strike?'

'I probably am,' answered Gandhi.

'Anyway, if you decide to stop this nonsense, you can help yourself.'

'How do you mean?'

'Can't you see this table?'

'I can't see anything. And only meals on wheels could give me back my sight and thoughts. But I refuse your meals and also your wheels. And I denounce them.'

'How do you denounce them?'

'I denounce injustice and oppression.'

'What else do you denounce?'

'The government's economic policy has been denounced on all sides. I remain on the side of one of these sides.'

And what about stupidity and clichés? Don't they violate our dignity and brain? They say to Tolstoy, 'You know that every tsar comes from God. And God comes from chaos. And Jesus Christ wants you to submit to the rules you'll find in the books they hand out in our churches.' Tolstoy resists. 'You must know that Shakespeare is great. He's greater than you are.' Tolstoy resists. 'Nietzsche says we can't live without music. And what he has in mind has nothing to do with your peasants' songs.' Tolstoy continues to resist all this rigmarole. 'A rich man should lead a rich life.' Tolstoy sticks to his resistance. 'Do you understand what I'm talking about? Do you want me to smash your face in?' Tolstoy can smash everything and everybody in; and also out, inside out and upside down. But he resists both this temptation and the assaults he suffers all day long and even at night when his love/hate-relationship-petrified wife searches for his secret diary. With the passing of the years she becomes his

hate/hateful companion and he has no alternative but to leave their estate in a state of disrepair or rather in that of utter despair. Why didn't he resist the departure-urge?

For years the departure was pulling his body from his gardens, fields and horses, but Tolstoy resisted the evil he might have detected inside this departure. When you pull the strings, the puppet's arms and legs and hair move. Sure enough, Tolstoy was a puppet, and whenever you pulled the above strings, his arms and legs and beard moved. The point is they moved in the wrong direction, going towards the fields where he used a dozen scythes, cutting long grass, medium-height grass and short grass for hours and hours; on end, mind you. Instead of boarding a train bound for Astapovo where death awaited him impatiently, if not wrathfully, he procrastinated and missed two dozen opportunities which would have brought him to a suitable, cosy and spiritual monastery: bread, cucumbers, prayers and peace of mind and body and spirit.

And what about our air-conditioned reflex? This reflex is conditioned anyway so it does not really matter by what matter or idea or spirit it is conditioned as it lies somewhere, either in one's body or outside it. You say, 'A,' and the reflex says or shows B. And the liquid produced in your mouth to keep the mouth and the rest of your body wet and to help prepare food for digestion begins to flow from your pores, mouth and eyes as if to make sure (to make you feel sure) you are still alive and can respond to something, be it a B or a C. They say and even shout, 'D,' and you go to a few lavatories; and yet the word 'lavatory' displays no Ds, no CDs. They say, 'The world,' and you begin to prepare an election and a new meeting at which you are to reach agreement on nuclear energy, on ecology, on our planet's warmth that is not hospitable and does not welcome everyone with it or her arms open.

They say, 'Human,' and your saliva bursts out of your mouth and, oddly enough, of your ears as well as if your ears were a source of saliva or even lava. They say, 'The future generations,' and you say, 'Nuclear,' or 'Warmth' or 'Ow, ow, ow, ow, woe, woe, woe, woe.' Doctors come and your saliva drops into their cups, their Holy Grail.

They say, 'Light at the end of the tunnel,' whereupon your saliva breaks out of its prison and flows all along your jacket and shirt.

They say, 'We're immortal,' and your saliva becomes immortal: it neither flows nor freezes in its tracks. It is just in front of your nose.

And you have a lot of ideas about how a society of men and women should live, if they wish to live at all instead of dying one by one, in dribs and drabs or in a heap. You die and say, 'I'm in a heap,' and the heap sets about helping you bear the torments associated in your mind and body with death – to the best of its abilities. (It is a human, a humane heap after all.) Now you bear your torments that pierce your body thus, '1, 1, 1, 1.'
Now your peg – the one you are used to bringing down – goes up and what you see on your mental screen amounts to '2222' and '3333'.

'Let live,' you say to anyone. Let live, die, go on. And that goes on: çèçèçèçèçèçèçèçèçèçèç

So do à-à-à-à-à-à-à-à-à-à. You open your mouth and say, 'à-à-à-à-à-à' in French and your doctors says, 'When did you learn this language?'

'When I was dying three years ago.'

'You mean you had angina? Your doctor asked you to open your mouth?'

'Yes. I opened it and he said, "You'll die in three months."'

If they say, '■,' your saliva comes out and creates the following painting, '■.' And then you say, 'The future of humanity is thus and thus and thus.' And you vote for thus instead of voting for this. And you say to everybody, either on TV or everywhere, 'Vote for Thus. Don't vote for This. This This is unfit for this and that and also for thot, whatever it is.'

And our will is what they call – all our Dolls and Molls – will-will to live, power, death and money. All right, you will and you get: 2123_0°98764365. What did you get? Power, death, money or just life?

I send a lot of Christmas cards, of Happy New Year cards, and I thank everyone for everyone's kindness and friendship. Here are some of them:

Dear Petrushka,
Merry Christmas! I also wish you a Happy New Year because if the year we're facing now doesn't look happy, we'll be unhappy – that's for sure. Every year to come and go should be happy, otherwise there's no point in living this worthless and ridiculous life. And I hope your Christmas will be merry because Christ was born many years ago and He saved you from poverty, if I remember rightly. At least your numerous bank accounts testify to your wellbeing, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the 60 dollars you transferred to my account last year. Thanks to your generosity and never-ending bounty, I bought a BMW and also a washing machine I need to wash my linen and other items of clothing. If I don't wash them, I won't allow myself to go out. And if I don't go out, nothing will come in. In a way, you say, 'Come in,' if you need 60 or 70 dollars. But you can say, 'Come in,' day in day out, if you wish and even if you don't wish anything except dollars and euros. But if you don't go out, you're not likely to get anything because that's what human touch and the human condition are about.
I even go to some conferences, believe it or not. I don't really enjoy these conferences, as you can or can't imagine, but they're a good opportunity to do some networking. And you need to *meet* people and *talk* to them and *hug* them occasionally. They might not appreciate your bear hug, but they're sure to smile if you give them a *cat* hug, whatever that is. One of my former mistresses met her husband through the Internet, on one of those Internet dating sites. But you should meet people in the flesh, if you are bent on reaching the top of the ladder and also the top of the world.
So I tap you on the shoulder and wish you a Happy New Year. A lot of what? A lot of everything with the exception of evil.
Kindest regards,

Dear Mariushka,
I wish you many happy returns of Happy New Years. You and your husband agreed to go to the meeting in my place so that lets me off the hook. Of course I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and you have no idea how

bottomless this bottom has ever been. And you must know which meeting I'm alluding to, although no one else will ever understand what I'm talking about. We talk of cosmic energies, and their meetings are far more important than the ones our poor instincts and bodies are subjected to.

I was in dire need of help and you know this better than anyone else, and probably even better than I do – the rightful owner of these dire needs. You sent me 60 dollars and, lo and behold, I'm back on my feet again. In no time at all, mind you. On both of them. If you're back on one foot only, your life may turn into a hopscotch party. Hop, hop, scotch, scotch. You drop after a while. After yet another while you become a drop – a drop of scotch, if you wish.

My heart seems to grow before my very eyes as I think about the milk of your kindness and the wine of your generosity.

Yours truly,

Dear Dariushka,

Do you remember our youth? I used to call you, 'Darius,' in honour of the Persian King – was he a Persian? – whose exploits and discomfitures I admired so much and wholeheartedly in my childhood. And now you can see another year in front of you, and you rejoice at the sight because you're not alone – no one is alone if one is surrounded by one's husband, former husbands and present children and grandchildren. And I have no need to mention your roubles or dollars – call them what you wish. Your first husband put his feet on the top of a ladder and literally showered you with dollars. Didn't his death originate in this perilous exercise or aerobics? Didn't he fall from this ladder like Ivan Illich? Or like Vladimir Illich Lenin? Or like Grishka depicted by both Mussorgsky and our Pushkin *national* in *Boris Godunov*. 'I see my body and soul on the top of the world.' Well, I'm unable to describe this scene much better than our international artists. So I offer you one of my diagrams:

SUMMIT, GLORY, FAME, WOMEN, CELEBRITY, TSARDOM

I

I

I

I

I

I

BANG! BANG! BANG! BOOM!

Do you realise how polite I am? I felt duty bound to fill up the whole card and I did, I swear I did. You know as well as I do that we have nothing to say to each other. What remains to be said amounts to:

I

I

BANG! BANG! BANG! BOOM!

Not to the Big Bang, mind you. Nor do I have in mind and body what they call the Big Boom.

I wish you a Happy New Year. And a Happy Old Year, while I'm about it and them.

Yours faithfully,

The entity they talk about is a mere titi or en or Ann. I opt for the latest, provided she is beautiful enough to excite me to the point of voting for her. To understand this entity or entirety, they divide it endlessly, without going as far as an individual. They have countries, cities, streets and squares, squares and mayors, families and their members and numbers, the Holy Trinity. Not a single individual, according to Auguste Comte.

'My Moral Will,' writes Fichte, 'as such, in and through itself, shall certainly and invariably produce consequences; every determination of my will in accordance with duty, although no action should follow it, shall operate in another, to me incomprehensible, world.' The world is incomprehensible and my Moral Will or rather my Oral Will – chocolate, wine, Paris, Helen of Troy – produces no consequences, no producers whose Financial and Sexual Wills work wonders and miracles unless these producers go on harassing too many actresses and mattresses.

> Dear Gerd, dear Natalia,
> I wish you a Happy New Year. A lot of music, a lot of happiness about which I know next to nothing. Not in this world anyway. And there are no other worlds, according to our scientists – even the distant worlds with their everlasting light-trek are linked to ours by means of many quanta and mechanics. By the way, from where I'm lying right now, Nils Bohr's and Heisenberg's statues can be seen. In short, we live in one shortwave, particle-in-shortage world and we can't escape from it even though we wear neither shackles nor chains. Russian proletarians taught everyone how to get rid of Marxian (preferably Martian) chains, but even they couldn't cope with quantum mechanics.
> Dear Gerd,
> Thank you for your art and wonderful piano, for your patience and indulgence. I'm working on our financial problem and I do hope to triumph over all my previous defeats.
> Dear Natalia,
> Thank you for the Schnabel Edition of Beethoven's sonatas to which I owe so much.
> Hoping to see you again inside and outside music. But can we meet *outside* music? Shakespeare's weird sisters couldn't meet out of their art, of Shakespeare's genius. Let us meet inside Beethoven and Schubert, in their insides.
> Kindest regards,
> ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

Why don't they answer me?

I am probably too infatuated with style as such, with the quantum mechanics of my thoughts. When she decides to do something, she always does it in/with great style, as they say. They can do it as well: it does not mean anything. But if they receive a text, they capture its main idea and go no further, pleading an upset stomach. 'My stomach is upset, you know,' they say.

'You've just said it's upside down,' you point out.

'It is, as a matter of fact. It's both upside down and downside up. And I'm upset, you know.'

I send a great many emails and no one answers. I wish them a Happy New Year and they do not wish me anything, not even an Unhappy New Year; not even an Unhappy New Month, mind you. They do not wish me anything, not even premature death, which would be a boon to my state of affairs: if they do take notice of you, you happen to join the club of existence. You just receive a negative card with a minus written all over it. But it is better to receive any card which entitles you to any membership, however fragile, ludicrous and dangerous, than not to receive anything, not even a passport of sorts.

Suppose I receive the following email:

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo.

I might also receive something along these lines:

Dear Valery,
000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000

Your correspondent does not say, ‘Our dear Valery has been a dead loss all his life – he has just stood there, doing nothing. Heshe just draws your attention to a state of mind or affairs or Mayfair. You have nothing to do with all these 00000000000000000000000000000000000. Nor do they have anything to do with you. But our common sense and quantum mechanics teach us that everything has to do with everything, everybody, everyone, Mayfair and all sorts of affairs, let alone all our states of minds.

Well, it is better to receive anything of the sort than not to receive anything at all. Even if you receive just one word ‘Splodge’, you can say to any member of human society, ‘I’ve just received an email, you know.’

‘What is it about?’

‘My correspondent says, “You put your hand on the bed, and left a splodge of blood on the bedspread.’

‘Why does shehe write about it?’

‘Heshe wants me to replace both the bed and bedspread.’

But if you say in a newspaper, ‘There were several splashes of white paint on the carpet,’ you may put your mind at rest: you were not alone. All of you were insignificant in terms of finance, fame and influence, but at least you could be seen: your presence on the carpet proves it beyond whatever can be seen or heard.

‘I have no respect for suffering of the soul,’ Isak says in the film I saw back in the Sixties. *Wild Strawberries*. Your memories fiddle with images, slogans and wise sayings so that, at some point, wild strawberries may lose their wilderness and become just strawberries of the kind one can buy in a supermarket. And then you find them on your dinner table, but they are no longer strawberries: they are blueberries or blackberries to which you attach no sentimental feelings whatsoever. And the sentence I stumbled upon as I watched the film for the umpteenth time remains what it is, if compared with what I felt in the Sixties when some girls thought I was immature. ‘Too small, too small, too small,’ they used to say without taking the trouble to gauge and regauge the quantum mechanics of my reasoning. I still have no regard for mental problems.

Suppose you have a mental problem that can be found – if you are bent on locating its whereabouts – in your brain or mind or both. Let us call it: A. You look at this problem from every angle you have within your reach and realise that this problem boils down to ⁴⁄₅, which can be dealt with in accordance with Ockham’s razor and other razors

known to science and everyday life. You pick one of these razors up and cut A from ⅍. You also remove /; and yet it is as innocent as Aurora – the Princess one comes across in *The Sleeping Beauty*. 'Is she more innocent than Red Riding Hood?' you are asked.

'Yes, she's even more innocent than Causette and Masha from the *Casse-Noisette*,' you answer.

'Why?'

'Because she's asleep. Do you know what the Russians say about boisterous children? They say, "You're inoffensive only when you sleep with your teeth to the wall."'

What you are left with amounts only to s, and this s is not even a capital letter. So you cannot say, 'So capital a letter was brutally killed in the Coliseum.' I confuse all and everywhere because God's instructions are designed to confuse people, animals and plants. They are either at war or in the midst of some peace, but they think they are in the midst of nuisance and a nervous breakdown. Yet it is enough to remove something from either your mouth or your soul: a rotten tooth, a rotten memory. There is no such thing as suffering of the soul, and we are not sure our soul is somewhere, not necessarily inside our body, its painful prison. Well, you suffer from B and you think your soul suffers from it too, otherwise you would not spend so many sleepless nights in a row. (Not in the last row of a cinema, mind you; kissing and cuddling a human being.) Besides, you had a flaming row over it last night. Over what? Over everything. You said to your sister you were yearning to remove your soul from your body and banish it to an uninhabited island for a year.

'You can't, you shouldn't,' said your sister.

'My soul suffers from B. I don't suffer from it at all. But I do suffer from it because of my soul.'

'Your soul suffers only on your account. It's you we'll banish to an uninhabited island. For three years at least.'

'What about my soul?'

'We'll put it in the jewel box of sanctity.'

Anyway, the mind and the soul are a screen in front of which you put your fingers on a keyboard, tampering with your mental images to your heart's content. Suppose CD (Clara Dowdson) does not love you and you cannot bear the very thought of it. So you bare your thought by pressing a few buttons, get CDNOT on the screen and turn it into CD-ROM. You buy a few CD-ROMs and they fall in love with you for the sake of the market.

Any entity, substance and nonsense can be symbolised by a figure: ©®. Of course you can try and represent it as follows, 'CD-ROMA'. Whenever you visualise ©®, you suffer atrociously and therefore pay homage to the ritual called pill-popping. If they call you on the phone, you answer, 'C, encircled, R, encircled.' Of course they do not catch your meaning. So they put irrelevant questions to you and your mother, 'Is your house encircled by a high fence?' 'Is your soul encircled by any fence at all? Is it protected or unprotected? Your insurance doesn't cover you for household items, you know.' 'Mrs Bumbersmith was so thankful that she had taken out insurance, when she was involved in an accident on holiday.'

To get rid of them, you say after a while, 'CD-ROMA.' Then you receive another piece of information, 'The local tourist information office provides a free map of the region.' 'Rome wasn't built in a day but now the eternal city is no longer under construction.' 'There are several places of interest to visit in the area, apart from Rome and Julius Caesar's immortal tomb.'

Suppose it is ۞ that bothers you as usual. First you reduce the size of the characters you use to write your suffering on the soul's, mind's and body's blackboards. That is what it looks like this morning, ' ۞bothers me as

usual.' Then you write, '⯐ seems to bother my soul. I have no soul so it seems to bother my body. I do have a body and ⯐. I no longer have ⯐. I still have my body. My head throbbed, and my body ached. Not this morning, mind you. A thing of the past. After that it has been plain sailing. Here are my sails: Ɋʒ.'

Then a nervous breakdown comes along and you put it on your screen:

[redacted]

Well, you tamper with it thus: [redacted], [redacted], [redacted].

!

DUNKIRK SPIRIT

What? What? you are asked. You begin to reproduce your state of mind on the screen: d, d, d, d, d, d, u, u, u, u, u, u, u, u, n, n, n. Then you write, 'And so on.' Then you adopt a Zen procedure and write d, d, d, d, d, d, d, u, u, u, u, u, u, u, u, n, n, n

What is a Zen garden?

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Then you read, 'Britain is becoming hooked on anti-depressants, a global study suggests today.' And you say to yourself, 'What are all these global studies about? About those I've never met either socially or spiritually. And they're conducted by people I know neither poetically nor philosophically. Why should I bother?' And you substitute 'hooked' for 'cooked'. Much better, isn't it? That is how your mental work should work. You mental block unblocks itself and writes, 'I unblock myself, I deblock, I'm Block, a famous Russian poet.' That is how it works. That is how everything and everybody work. You accost an individual and ask him, 'Are you Block or Unblock?' And he answers, 'I am Deblock or rather Demiurge, you know.' 'And I am Sophia,' you answer.

And if you read, 'Every day she sinks further and further into depression,' you write instead, 'Every day she rises further and further from depression, whatever it is.' After a lot of soul-searching or rather bodymind-searching you write, 'Every day I rise further and further. I'm on the up and up, you know.'

UP

UP

UP

UP

Except that you do not know whether these ups are going: up or down.

Sometimes however (and however is often much more important than sometimes) you have only one idea in your head, and the idea you are talking and thinking about informs you that you are UNHAPPY. So you say to yourself (and you even write to yourself), 'I'm unhappy, I'm about to commit suicide, two suicides, three suicides. You don't believe me? Yet, yet, yet, yet all the evidence points to suicide.' But the evidence doesn't point to suicide; it points to your suicidal mood. You switch this mode to another switch, to yet another switch. You jump from one switch to another until you come to a positive non-suicidal switch inside which you drink a bottle of old champagne.

You take a happy pill and you do not wonder whether the pill you have just taken is happy or not. Of course pills are not animals and so no old ladies (no WSPA's, no wasps) mind their destructions in your stomach and blood vessels. But are they (those pills) at ease in your body? You may have your suspicion as to their wellbeing inside your body where acids and bacilli attack them mercilessly, whatever you say or do in your spare time. Even if you say to God, 'Please take care of the pills I've swallowed rather carelessly and light-heartedly,' they (the same pills, happy and unhappy) might curse you before passing away. 'Dear Almighty! Spare them the torments that all your humans undergo before the advent of the Other Kingdom. I mean I wish they could die in their sleep, Thou knowest.' So the happy pills you counted upon do their best to fall asleep and help neither your unhappiness nor the depression they talk about in English newspapers.

1 happy pill: I feel better.
2 happy pills: I feel much better.
3 happy pills: I'll rape my boss's daughter.
4 happy pills: I'll rape my boss as well.
5 happy pills: I'll rape my boss's bank account.
6 happy pills: I'll rape bank accounts, all of them.
7 happy pills: I'll rape everyone and everything.
8 happy pills: I'll rape myself.

Know thyself, as they say.

I do know myself. No happy pills, no unhappy pills either. What kind of pills does my body digest and put away in the chest of drawers owned by God or by Not?

Dear Ms. Chat:

I thank you very much for your mail and for your forwarding a letter from Mr. Afanassiev.
We clearly understand his decision on NHK filming and we had notified them.

We will make certain to create an environment to minimize the stress for him during the tour.

Thank you once again for your communications, and wish Mr. Afanassiev and you a very joyous holiday.

Best wishes,

Kazu Sushi

You feel there is a sort (or a spot) of emotion in your body of bodies, and you can even pinpoint this emotion's whereabouts, although it does not really matter. You can have emotions everywhere, even in your toes. What counts, however, is the sign under which your emotion was born. Is it a minus or a plus, a negative (deadly) or a positive (lively) emotion? Is it a motion or a dead-end? You set about studying your emotion, the one you feel somewhere, not necessarily in your toes or your heart. You test it in your laboratory: it is not enough to study it closely, keeping your eyes and mind wide open. They often say, 'The drug is still being tested and will not go into commercial production for at least two years.' Of course they just *say* it: the drug they are talking about can already be found at the nearest chemist's, let alone in the farthest mall. Of course you cannot test your emotions which are often transient, ephemeral, even if they leave a lot of scars in your heart and on your face.

Nor should you test your blood for signs of the infection: there is such a thing as an invisible infection that infects everything down to benign tumours. And you know what happens to benign tumours, if they happen to be poisoned by a minus infection. So you just listen to your emotion and do your best to identify its perfume, its texture and tincture.

You realise your emotion goes from strength to strength; yet you need not say that either to yourself or your mother. Why? Because it would not solve the problem you have been facing for a few hours now. From strength to strength, from strength to strength, from strength to strength. So what? Has your emotion suffered a lot from your ostensible use of this mantra? Not a bit. At this point, you might remember that your or everyone else's sight is more important than all other senses put together. So you draw the following diagram on your mind's four&twenty blackboards:

...

But you know perfectly well that in the world where we live (or where *she* lives, as Rex Harrison used to say), there are poles apart and opposites that meet, part, coincide and uncoincide. The I Ching tells her and us that after a dawn comes a night and a fall is replaced by ascension and an eternity-long association with angels and other divinities. Advancement always leads to disadvantages of all kind, and all kinds end up in horrible, but not irreversible unkinds.

Doctors and psychoanalogists say all our illnesses are rooted in our mind so that it is easy to get back on one's feet again: you just have to uproot your cancers and strokes – at the stroke of a pen. You stroke your pen – not necessarily a quill pen – and lo and behold (and both your relatives and colleagues lo and behold) you are given a clean bill of health by your doctors and nurses. 'His remarkable recovery defied all medical augury,' they whisper into each other's ears.

Today, however, you defy nothing and often it is nothing or anything else that defies you – just for the fun or heck of it. You have no idea what it is or what the heck they are talking about, but they do talk about them and you have no alternative but to go from weakness to weakness. You are used to stuffing your negative emotions into the dead-nooks of your cranny, as you call your skull. (After all, it is not for nothing you speak French rather fluently.) Than you begin to design this dead corner of yours as if inspired by Pierre Cardin who, in 1961, if I remember rightly, became the first couturier to design men's clothes. You say to yourself, 'Of course I'm dealing with the deadhead corner of my being. And I don't need to design a jacket for it. But it is death I'm dealing with – as a matter of fact and inevitability. And naked death is even more frightful than the death one can see in Bergman's *Seventh Seal*.'

So, after a while, you come up with the following idea or design or diagram:

'■.

Not very original, is it? Besides, you repeat yourself rather brazenly, barefacedly. So what?

Yes, I repeat myself. I admit it and I repeat.
What else could I say? as Tatiana puts it in her letter
to Eugene Onegin. Do you want me
to *speak* of death? Why should I? Anyway, you
wouldn't understand anything: you've no idea
what words and their notions (and motions)
mean in the context, out of the context.
As a matter of fact, to understand this issue, it must first
(and last)
be situated in its context. And the context is death. Everything
is death – in the context, out of the context.
Whether you speak of in-the-context deaths or
out-of-the-context deaths, you speak of the same indivisible
unconquerable death. Of course you can conquer
a word, and death (his word) is no exception to the rule.
~~Death~~, death and so on.
How about '■.? What to do with it

or liver cancer? All right, you write, ‘I want to live, I love life.’
But your life – or time, if you wish (or space) – adds
a letter to live, turning it into ‘liver’. And then your space-time-mind
adds a word to it: ‘cancer.’ And when your relatives bend
over your pillows as they try their utmost to understand what you’re talking about
they hear rather distinctly, ‘I want to die of liver cancer.’
‘Is that your dearest wish?’ they ask.
‘Yes,’ you answer. ‘Is that your last wish as well?’
‘Yes,’ you answer. Of course you answer, ‘No, no,’ but your lips and mouth
disobey your orders. And when you wish to rise to your feet and deliver
your farewell discourse, your body says,
‘If you think you can push me around like that, you’re mistaken.’
But when they put your body into a coffin and a grave,
your body keeps silent or says, ‘I don’t mind.’
or ‘I don’t body.’

In other words (in other deeds), you dig your own grave, always, always – even when you try to repulse your negative, deadly emotions, driving them back and back; as far as the backyard of your mind. Your mind has a small backyard surrounded by a high brick wall, and you think it is an ideal dumping ground for toxic waste, alias your negative emotions from which your cancers have already sprouted many times – even since your babyhood. Actually this dumping ground of yours is impervious to your own investigations as well: you are not allowed to peep into this storeroom of sorts to find out how your toxic waste goes on or passes away. Never mind – you are out of danger. That is what you think as you try and convince yourself that you are out of danger. You go so far as to say to yourself, ‘That’s that,’ but to make assurance doubly sure you discuss this problem with your doctor or his assistant. You talk to her about the toxic waste and the dumping ground you offered to it as if to protect it from rain and hurricanes.

‘What dumping ground?’ your saviour asks you.

‘Why don’t you ask me what I mean by “toxic waste”?’

‘Because I know what it means – at least as far as your body is concerned. And your mind, mind you.’

‘And the high brick wall? Do you know what that means?’

‘Antibiotics and spare-part surgery.’

Then you ask your Messiah a professional question, ‘Were virus particles eventually isolated from the tissue?’

‘When?’ asks the Messiah.

‘Last week,’ you answer.

The answer you might receive is either ‘No way’ or ‘Way’. ‘What do you mean by “way”?’ you might ask, if the answer is ‘Way’. (And if the answer is ‘No way’, you may ask what ‘No way’ means.) And the doctor or one of his substitutes is likely to explain to you painstakingly that you should read Buddhist books because traditional medicine cannot do anything for you.

‘What about antibiotics?’ you ask.

‘Your bugs are used to them.’

‘What about spare-part surgery?’

‘We’d need too many spare parts,’ says the ersatz doctor. ‘And too many surgical operations,’ he points out munching on an apple.

And then the ersatz doctor puts the same question to you, the first one, ‘What dumping ground?’ By way of an answer, you show himher your immortal diagram: ‘■. ‘Is this your dumping ground?’ asks herhim (or Joachim).

‘Yes,’ you answer.

‘This rectangle?’

‘This death.’

With the exception of our early Christians, no one likes death, and even suicidal maniacs do not seem to like it or him: they just cannot bear life and go so far as to hate it in spite of its beauties bestowed upon humans by the gods, God and Demiurges. A friend of mine whose speciality lies in the domain of puns and other linguistic games – and yet he says more often than not, ‘No pun intended’ – told me once that, contrary to what our Gnostics thought, the world was created by our God, by the Almighty Himself and not by some naughty Demiurge. According to him, while making up His mind as to the Creation or Non-Creation of the World, our only God reflected upon this decision in the offing (in the coffin), saying to Himself, ‘I’m in two minds about it. I know human nature and I side with Hobbes on the subject – it is evil, evil, incurably evil. And no contract of any kind (social, metaphysical) could straighten this problem out. Should I create it or not?’ The word ‘Demiurge’ seems to mirror this hesitation: only a *demi* urge made its appearance right before the Big Bang. So one cannot say, ‘God had an *irresistible* urge to create the world and our future bliss.’

Anyway, urge or no urge, we are in the same boat and the midst of the ocean where we found ourselves some time ago which bodes no good. It has never boded any good either to our bodies or to the souls which continue to serve a 13-year jail term or a 14-year jail term – in our bodies and minds. And we continue to hope against everything – against our bodes and minds – until we come to a sort of dead end that means we wish we were dead and no longer alive and kicking. So first we get rid of ‘kicking’ and then ask ourselves what is the best way of dealing with alive that should be removed at all cost; at this point of our narrative. There are points where alive and whatever goes with it can even outstay its welcome, but then we say, ‘*Basta*’ or ‘Bastard’, addressing either our life or destiny or both. We put ‘■. at the very centre of our brain and meditate upon it as long as necessary to come up with a bright or black idea. And this forthcoming idea is likely to sing us a lullaby, odd as it may seem, given the efficiency of revolvers and quick- or short-tempered poisons.

We know that Schubert bestowed a sort of decoration on lullabies by composing his *Tod und Mädchen*. ‘Come, come, come; sleep, sleep, sleep; peace, peace, peace.’ (In German of course.) His lullaby sounds thus: [redacted]. Not quite, not quite. First there is a kind of, ‘µ%N/KJB?JNJN? N? ?.JBMO+?’ *Warum*, *warum*, *warum*, in other words. (In other warums.) The *Mädchen* does

not seem to surrender her body and mind to her brother Death (or Mess) – wilfully, that is. So the maiden shows her unwillingness to comply with the laws of nature with a flourish:

But death is adamant:

Actually death is either a mess represented by or a requiem mass; or a lullaby.

You are in the midst of your agony; probably in the very midst of it. Of course, at this point of your personal narrative, you do not really care about your agony's whereabouts. What you do care about is your death, and it is his whereabouts you are eager to locate somewhere, hopefully far away from your very substance. So you come to your senses and hear,

Gospodi, *Bozhe moy*,
Take your slave's body
And welcome it with
Open arms in your a-
Bode. *Bozhe*, *Bozhe.*

(The Ancient Slavs were in the habit of drawing these arms and their openness on sand, on walls and even on the sky. This is what their drawing looks like:

(Some say it is just the Cross. Anyway, whenever you speak of the Cross, there is no just about it, as they say in Croatia. It is the Cross, end of story, of the Scriptures. But some ((and others)) say the drawing draws our attention to the body in the middle of which there are two strokes – two arms. What is more, these arms are open. If you wish to see closed arms at close quarters, if you are bound to draw something along the lines ((or curves)) of, '((((((((((()))))))))))'. On the above diagram the arms are open so you can penetrate the body ((or the Cross)) you are looking at without any hitch or Hitchcock in whose films you might be murdered in a shower.)

If you are a Catholic, however, you hear, '*Kyrie*, *Kyrie*,' and realise you are at the very end of your agony; not *in the midst* of it, alas. You shout, 'Stop this nonsense! I couldn't care less about your kyries. I want to live, if only like Schubert's *Mädchen*. , you know.'

And God answers you, ‘All right, from now on you’ll live like Schubert’s *Mädchen*.’ And He draws this top line on the ceiling: [redacted] Or on the wall opposite. So instead of reading psalms – St Augustine did read them on his deathbed, as everyone knows – you read this line; and you even manage to learn it by heart, for all your infirmities and memory lapses. ‘Could you recite Psalm 37?’ your unfavourite priest asks all of a sudden. (Out of the black.) Here is your recitation, word for word: [redacted]

You talk to your brothers and sisters, asking them to sing you a lullaby which, in your opinion, is much healthier and organic than poisons, revolvers and open windows. Some of them agree and sing something along these lines, ‘Sleep well, sweet dreams, tomorrow is yet another day, and you’re bound to be as busy as a bee or a famous industrialist because you said to yourself, “Oh, leave it till tomorrow.” And you did it many times so there are many leftovers to which you should pay your undivided attention.’

‘Stop this nonsense!’ you shout once again.

‘But you asked me to sing a lullaby,’ your sister points out.

‘Please, don’t point anything out. Whenever you do that, you talk nonsense. I don’t wish to wake tomorrow.’

‘When do you wish to wake?’ she asks.

‘Never.’

‘Never ever?’

‘Ever never.’

‘On her deathbed our mother uttered a few words to the effect that I should take care of you.’

‘Am I supposed to remain immature to the very end?’

‘Stop being so silly and immature, Ben! You’re not Big Ben, whatever you might think on the subject.’

‘All right, I’m Small Ben. But even Small Bens are entitled to a decent standard of living.’

‘What do you mean by a “decent standard of living”?’

‘Freedom of suicide.’

You have no alternative but to resort to what all lonely hearts and minds have been used to since time immemorial: the do-it-yourself ritual. In your spare time you compose a lullaby, paying more attention to music than poetry: at some point you are bound to lose touch with words and their manifold meanings. Why should you put finishing touches to your death-oriented lullaby? What you will hear at the end is likely to sound thus: pmiubgjhygtyrtxglnollp^uifd !èb upoù kjku fçèon nbiyu§!à^vg§lkmjhgè!pkmljkhgipkl,nbvfokl,nbgfpolkjhu.

Don’t be afraid of the wind.
Don’t be afraid of the mind.
Your mind (any mind, in fact)
Talks nonsense all the time.
You’ll no longer hear it.
That’s it. Clean up your act.

Both life and death are pieces
Of nonsense. You'll hear neither.
There'll be no more 'either...or'.
There'll be only 'r' or 'o' or 'ro'.

THIRD BOOK

If you are sad, you are sad. But you can do something about your state of mind, if you feel like it. You do feel like it and even *think* like it. As usual you resort to opposites: the sadder you become, the gayer you grow. You advance as a Chinese general and then withdraw – to jump better, as the French put it, whenever asked, 'Why have you withdrawn into your own fantasy world?' 'To jump better into reality,' they answer; and they jump into reality.

Anyway, you banish *tristesse* and display your gaiety almost everywhere, dancing and singing this and that: 'I am happy, I am clappy, I am dappy, I am mappy. Clap, clap, clap. Hap, hap, hap.' What of it? What of it all? A bird in the hand. I have a hand and the bird is coming, flying, flapping whatever it can flap. What can *you* flap? You may say, 'A wing.' But what can you flap if you have no wings? You can flap a map and you can also map out your future, which amounts to the same action and malediction. You flap a part of your life and meditation, hoping to reach happiness that lies somewhere in the future; and probably in the past. You flap everything and take flight or wing, as the case may be; and you land up in a hospital, even if you drink neither soda nor whisky. So you realise it is better not to flap anything, otherwise sadness and hope are sure to lie in wait for you somewhere: about the bush, around the bush. Or just around the chair.

Anyway, sadness is better than madness, and if you have to choose, if you are permitted to choose in these matters, you say, 'Sadness, sadness, sadness.'

'What about madness?' The question asked by a messenger of God.

'Forget it,' you answer.

'I can't forget it,' says the messenger. 'What's more, you can't forget it either.'

What is madness? Going astray. Instead of going stray, you go astray. And you say to your colleagues and doctors, 'I was led astray by an out-of-date map.'

'What kind of map are you talking about?'

'A map of the brain.'

So you go stray and your map is up-to-date – to the point of letting you know what date it is today. January 6, 2018. And if they ask you, 'What date is it today?' you glance at your map and say, 'January 6, 2018.' When they are bent on finding out whether you are mad or not, they usually ask you a lot of questions about your whereabouts, your ID and the moment our mankind is living through. All right, this is a moment we are living through: 10, 87878787 a.m. But if you take a plane and go to Korea, your moment will look thus, 3, 87878787878787878. So you begin to stray from time, but you do not take this mishap seriously: you know that you *stray* from time, not *astray* from it. And madness comes as naturally as any dawn does. And if they ask you, 'How are you today?' you answer, 'A herd of cattle had strayed into the road.'

At the foot of the mountain, thunder; at the top of the mountain, hunger. The image of providing, NOURISHMENT. Where is this image?

Bacon, eggs, salad, palate,
Palace, table, tablecloth,
Caviar, oysters, bread,
Wine, salt, pepper, vinegar.

Dear friends,

Thank you very much for your card. In our turn we wish you a Happy New Year. A lot of melodies, a lot of harmonies. Time is a melody, space a harmony. The whole is happiness.

Love

Valery and Mich

Fire in the lake: the image of REVOLUTION.

This fire is rather in a teacup and the revolution they talked about in May 1968 is as far as the Russian Revolution or probably even further off. In Russia at least you may come across Lenin's skull – in a museum, in a park, within a dumping ground. In France they talked about trade unions, proletarians' unions and fathers who were poor or rich, but approved or disapproved of the forthcoming revolution or reforms. Reforms or our revolution? they asked themselves and television crews. The bourgeoisie, capitalists, speeches, words that fell on deaf ears, placards that fell on blind eyes. A word falls on a deaf ear, bounces off and goes to the nearest star where both deaf ears and their words have been stored from time immemorial. Sooner or later they (revolutionists) are bound to steal these ears and words and bring them to the Earth where they rejuvenate and march towards another parliament, another royal palace, another white house, another '■.. So do placards and blind eyes; and 33 blind mice.

And '■. marches too. Over four thousand '■. marched through London today to protest against the proposed new law. Are they blind eyes, deaf ears or new revolutions? Policemen ask these questions and do not answer them because you cannot answer '■. by a word or a thought. It is just '■. and it marches either towards a palace or a phallus. ¡bill of ˈrights, ball of rights, the ball is in your court now. A phallus is given to every woman and every woman is given to a phallus. Every man is given to a phallus of his choice and he (not /she for once) is allowed to marry this phallus and adopt a few children who say and repeat, 'Father, father,' as they look at all these phalluses and fallacies. You look at a fallacy and say, 'That's how Kepler discovered a very important law. He started from a fallacy and then rocketed to the top of immortality.' You can also start from a phallus or a woman; or from nothing described by Heidegger. '■.'■.'■. (neante) marches towards you, and you ask yourself whether it is Heidegger in person or Kierkegaard in the flesh. Perhaps it is just another revolution or evolution; or the solution to the problem that cannot be solved or even defined.

'What's the problem?' they ask.

'Starting brings misfortune,' you answer.

'Don't start, then,' they answer.

'But not starting also brings misfortune.'

'Then don't bring this misfortune, even if you have one.'

'Finishing brings misfortune too,' you point out.

'What about fishing?' they ask.

The sea here has been fished intensely over the last nine years. And all those fish-and-chips have brought misfortune, instead of just bringing a few tons of tuna. A few '■.'■.'■. of tuna.

Apparently our forefathers ate their drawings, paintings and the walls on which those paintings were painted. They would paint a tuna fish (‘■.‘■.‘■.) and eat it with their relatives or neighbours. Before eating it, however, they would exchange a few words such as, ‘What?’ ‘Tuna.’ ‘Tuna?’ ‘Tuna.’ ‘Good?’ ‘Delicious.’ They would also paint a fish knife, a fish slice and a fish bowl. And we take our cue from them when we do our best, nourish Africa and Latin America, some of its parts. We just send bars to them, painted bars. These bars are bars of chocolate and also the fish called *bar* in French and bass in English, and soprano in Russia. We made these bars of lead so we may report to our elders, betters and saints that we are about to send 9 tons of bass and 8 tons of tenor (or tuna, if you wish) to whole communities; actually they starved to death during the long drought. On the airtight containers we use one can spot a tuna fish (‘■.‘■.‘■.) and a bass fish

(‘■.‘■.‘■.).

Alas, many of these charity-sponsored gifts are gifts, as the Germans say; in English, they are poisons. Lead/fish poisoning, as our on-their-last-legs tribes point out. ‘Please, don’t send us any more of these ‘■.‘■.‘■..

‘You don’t like sea bass and Chaliapin? Of course he was an *earth* bass, wasn’t he? A Russian soil bass, rather.’

‘What are these massive metal bars for?’

‘Would you like a Dover sole instead?’

Individuals and also groups go on dying in spite of the food they receive every morning: sole, flounder, sea bass, lake bass. And doctors of all sorts offer them their arts or *Artz*, as the German say when speaking of doctors, their arts and their phoney, costly help. Apparently every doctor’s first and last duty is to ask for forgiveness, even if the patient does not die at once, opting for a long-drawn-out coma. Patients are lying somewhere, in a cell, in a hall, in a casualty ward to which they have been rushed many times. And doctors say to them day in day out (life out): ‘Please, please forgive me!’ Nurses take pity on them, saying, ‘Don’t worry. He and she forgive people very easily. It’s easy to forgive and especially forget everybody, if you’ve been in a coma for the past six weeks.’

But doctors protest and say they could not care less about coma-excuses. ‘What we need is a *health*-excuse.’

‘What about a *death*-excuse?’ ask the nurses.

‘I’d never forgive myself if anything happened to the kids.’

‘To whose kids? Yours?’

‘All my patients are my kids.’

Presently our doctor has a change of heart or rather a change of mouth: no longer does he ask his patient’s forgiveness. He says instead, ‘I told you not to get ill, didn’t I? Why did you get ill, you, naughty child? How dare you disobey me! I urged you to stay well. I said, “Freezing conditions could worsen the flu crisis.” Didn’t I, didn’t I, didn’t I? My advice included stocking up on medicines, wrapping up warm and trying to nip early symptoms in the bud. You had an impressive number of early symptoms, didn’t you? Did you nip them in the bud? You did nip them, but not in the bud. Logically enough, it was too late.’

Many units have been severely overcrowded in recent days, with patients lying or rather dying in corridors and ambulances queuing outside. Doctors come and go, whispering in their patients’ ears, ‘Awfully sorry! Dreadfully sorry! Will you ever forgive me? Never ever?’ ‘Ever never,’ answer some patients. Others indulge in a sort of ominous, omnipresent silence. Hospitals have already been forced to cancel tens of thousands of

operations. Doctors visit those who seem to have suffered from these cancellations and say, ‘Forgive me and my colleagues’ deadly sins, our sins of cancellations. And also our light-heartedness and heavy-handedness.’

Tomorrow I am flying to Berlin only to find that nothing can be done with recordings we made last summer because the mikes were awry; and so were the walls, the ceiling and my colleagues. I got the feeling that if I had rushed out, my hair would have been awry. (I ought to have rushed out.) And yet I have no more hair, with a very few exceptions I can count on the fingers of ten hands. If, with the passing of the years, I manage to plant and grow another eight hands, I promise I shall count my hairs. For my hopes, one hand and its fingernails are already sufficient, although I have no idea why I should count either my hopes or hairs. Let them live in my head, above it, in between the sky and the bench on which I am sitting this afternoon.

What does this sound sound like? Is it a Beethoven sound, a Mozart sound? Does it remind one of Steinways? I am weary of these ways and for some time now my sound seems to sound like my sound. Why should I treasure other sounds in my bosom? Blood was still oozing out of the wound when I opened both the wound and blood; my recollection of Karajan’s last concert in Paris. When did I recollect it last? Three weeks ago. Should I recollect it now? I shall open my wound tomorrow to find out if my blood is oozing when listening to my last recordings, to my Last Will and Testament.

If you think of any letter, it sounds right, even if you have no idea how to utter it. Your thought always finds the *ton juste*, the right timbre. Of course you may have a wonderful singing thought, with a rich timbre and resonant tone. But an ordinary thought sounds right as well because it is just a thought and not a deed. As soon as you get down to the problem of sounds – AUM, OMU, MUO, RUMOUR – it grows almost impenetrable, no matter how often you pay homage to the lotus position. AOUL.BVNYTFR%VC9OIPRD*: And lotuses rise from your thighs and mouth to join the army of Bodhisattvas and mere sattvas. You breathe perfectly and the music of your breath seems to mirror Kepler’s ellipses.

U

U

U

U **SUN**

U

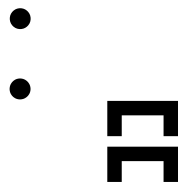
U

Ungainly, isn’t it? First Kepler made a mistake. All fingers and thumbs. Lumbering, inelegant. After a while – this while lasted for almost 18 years – he realised he was speaking (to his colleagues and mistresses, if any) of trajectories, not of planets as such. Of their trajectories, of their harmonies and happiness. So he composed another model of the Universe:

OUR SOLAR SYSTEM

U The sun is in the centre of this quasi-ellipse

Ill-assorted, wobbly, rickety. Are you sure you can trust an ellipse? Yes, because Kepler trusted fixed stars or firm firmament. You could hang yourself on a star, fearing neither ‘He’ll have to swing,’ nor whatever Oscar Wilde said in his other poems. You are a perfect ellipse, but you have no fondness for ellipses. A Russian poet wrote, ‘From my childhood onward / I’ve never liked ovals. From my childhood onward / I’ve drawn only angles.’ You

are not keen on angles either. If you see two angles of this kind 

you say, ‘I’m not yours. I’d rather stay with the colon that precedes you.’ But Kepler’s ellipses seems to gain the ground inside your intricacies (intestanicanies) and even outside them, so you look at Kepler’s ellipses and write, ‘It seemed like a good idea so we just fell in with it.’ But the ellipse you construct on your screen is not really an

ellipse; it is an unreal ellipse. U

So I write, ‘My works are open; so am I. I am neither a sphere nor a circle nor a circumference. Believe me, I am

what I’ve always been. This afternoon I am U

Why don't they crash into each other? That is how they move, all these planets:

And they are likely to escape through the overture – not a hole, as all their Hawkings think. There are no holes; there are only loopholes through which you can escape, if you feel like it. You cannot escape from Kepler; you can escape from Mepler. Change one letter, one curve. That is what freedom is about. Free country, isn't it? Free ellipse, isn't it? Free lips. They kiss every speck of stardust.

Why not dance? Is this a solution, or one of them? You dance and forget everything, like a cicada; or you starve to death, like the same cicada; or another cicada; or another ant or beaver. You have pins and needles in your back and die either of pins or of needs; or of both, as usual. Anyway you die of both or of one, of whatever you come across, even if you do not come, even if you do not cross anything. Of course they danced during plagues and even outside them because they knew (our ancestors did know that) that whatever you do you dance your *Totentanz*; both *toten* (totem) and *tanz* (Hanz, if you wish). You dance anything, anywhere and they describe your dance thus:

> Danced, danced, danced.
> Plague, plague, plague.
> Dead, dead, dead.
> Cancer, cancer, cancer.
> Stroke, stroke, stroke.

Or they show your dance (you are no longer there, in the square to watch it) to the audience:

> And the members talk to each other:
> 'Did he really dance like that?'
> 'Like what?'
> 'Like

‘Yes, he danced exactly like that.’

‘What else did he do?’

‘Before passing away?’

‘Before being welcomed in the Kingdom of God.’

‘

‘Really?’

‘Really.’

‘What else did he do before kicking the bucket?’

‘Which bucket?’

‘This one.’

And they show you the bucket in question.

‘Nothing special. Just this:’

‘Really?’

‘Really.’

After a long-drawn-out reflection, you might reach the conclusion which pleases neither dancers nor their choreographers: every dance is a *Totentanz*. The Dance of Death, you know. (Every dancer knows that, even when they dance The Dance of Immortality.) You are sitting in front of your television, computer, a cup of tea dancing in your right hand. The dance of your cup is also the Dance of Death: it reveals your kinship with Parkinson’s disease. Contrary to what a detached observer would conclude, if allowed to watch for five seconds only, you are not keen on this disease; nor on any other disease, to tell the truth. You abhor all diseases and your prayers – the ones you send towards the Almighty – are focused upon them, sometimes to the detriment of your cars, villas and jewels. You must admit that in your prayers you speak more often of cancers than of any status symbol, be it a diamond or a helicopter. After speaking to the Almighty – ‘Where’s your might? Have you also fallen?’ – you turn towards your diseases (to the cup of tea, among other things) and say, ‘Away, away, away, away, away.’ You put the cup down, sprinkling or drenching your shirt and trousers, and begin to pummel either a wall or the table on which you have just deposited your cup. You drench the rest of your clothes and break the cup as if the disease were embedded in it. It is not and you are intelligent enough to realise the cup has nothing to do with the disease: if you had left it alone, it would never have executed the Dance of Death in your presence. Why don’t you break your fist and the whole of your arm? Can’t you see how wildly it dances in the air and also in your raincoat? Why don’t you cut off your arm? Don’t you wish to be cured once and for all? And if your only arm follows in your

cut-off arm's footsteps, you can always ask your best friend to cut it off as well. And all will be well, as our poets say and write.

In Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, Tybalt dances the Dance of Death – after been slain by Romeo, not by a fair maid. One might say he dances this dance throughout the ballet: at times it is hard to distinguish between life and death. But when the latter comes in earnest, it is announced by 15 blows or sound bombs. Whenever such a bomb falls on the stage, one wonders how much longer the dancer will hold out under this sort of bombardment. Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! or Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Or

‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■.

If you type, ‘Bang! Bang! Bang!’ you do not project your observations and thoughts beyond the wall you can pummel for a while to find out what this bang sounds like today, under the circumstances. But if you see a few ‘■.’s, inevitably you plunge into a metaphysical abyss where a lot of big questions wait for you: determinism, predestination. And you say to yourself, ‘Illness and suffering seem preordained to be my lot. Of course I am on the “to be” side, but there are many nots on this side, I’m afraid.’ In short, you are afraid – as a result of your looking at a series of ‘■.’s for almost half-an-hour. Of course, thanks to Spinoza, you know that you do not know the first thing about what your body is capable of; except that its speciality is the Dance of Death. It goes to your fridge and opens it in the hope of finding a succulent appetizer or a main dish – some fish or other. It is even endowed with the gift one might call ‘cooking a fish’, but you have no idea what else it can cook or eat or drink to its heart’s content. One always wonders if the body feels anything beyond hunger, thirst and sexual drives. Our bosses say and repeat the following remark, ‘We are looking for someone with drive and ambition,’ and they do not care where drives and ambitions come from. Whether they originate in the body or in the mind does not really matter, provided the individual they get in touch with has both: drive and ambition. However, if this individual flexes his or her muscles, they might conclude that part of the individual’s drive comes from her or his muscles. Besides, the show they attend is designed to arouse not only their curiosity, but also a lot of interest on their part. And they say, ‘Hopefully, with the passing of the years, we’ll find out what this individual’s body is capable of.’ The body they are looking at picks up a fridge and carries it to another floor and even another building – to the canteen where the company’s employees have their snacks, their humany bags.

Yet you continue to wonder what your body is capable of. According to Bergson, it does not perceive anything unless hunger is a sort of perception – a perception of your animal nature which cannot hold out indefinitely without food and other nourishments such as love and the birth of a daughter.

● It is said and believed to some extent – to this extent – that everything comes and goes

(everything and everybody) from black holes: white holes, red flags, *forte*, *piano*, pianos and violins. You play *fortissimo* and they say, 'This comes from Black Hole 17.' Others question this analysis, pointing out, 'I beg to differ. This comes from Black Hole 19.' They all beg to differ and they do differ, as usual, but black holes carry on in their own bitter ways and we receive in our house – the cosmos, in other words – yet another galaxy that comes from Black Hole 4324242424242424242 located somewhere on the opposite wall of the Creation.

We thought that only requiems came from black holes, and we played Verdi's *Requiem* to celebrate black anniversaries. First we sang it in Latin, then in Black Latin, then in Hole Latin, then in Holy Latin, doing our utmost to placate both blackness and holes: originally we were fond of neither. We feared we might fall into a hole and blackness and squelch through their mud for the rest of our funereal mood; and we do not even remember which we feared more as we sang Mozart's *Requiem*:

Hole, o hole
O blackness, o blackness,
O dreadfulness, o Agnes,
O Agnus and Dei.

The bottom of a black hole:

'When the wicked man falleth into the depths of evil, then is he filled with scorn.' It is to these words that Isaiah alludes when he says: 'in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning and to baldness and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh' and saying, 'let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'

The top of a black hole:

Yet of such persons Ezekiel is bidden to speak thus: 'O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live –'

The bottom of a black hole:

A grandmother who was given the all-clear from cancer three times died after being struck down with the symptoms of Aussie flu. She had hallucinations and a fever, and was rushed to E. D. G. Hospital as her condition deteriorated. Her son, A. B., 31 or 32, believes the H3N2 strain, known as Aussie flu, was responsible for her death. She was diagnosed with bowel cancer four years ago, and then had two bouts of duodenal cancer.

The top of a black hole:

Her son said, 'She said, "Cancer won't kill me" – she was right. Even before she got two or three cancers, she had always been right. When I was a child, I often said to myself, "My grandma is always right. I'd better listen to what she says." Before dying she said without raising her head from the pillow, "Beware, my dear. Do your best not to catch this wretched or rather bloody HULOTN, what's-its-name." I asked her if she wished to know the name of the flu from which she was dying. She said, "I know it's IRV49.M_0, or something along these lines. I know that death is called death. That's enough." Once again, my grandmother was right,' her grandson rounded off.

A BLACK HOLE
(A homage to Hölderlin)

NIGHT (*Nichts*, Angst, despair, Black Mass)

DAWN (*Ich*, hope, beginning, great expectations)

MIDDAY (I, Zarathustra, Hurray, a ray of sunshine)

Now we realise black holes are great architects – much more important than Michelangelo and Le Corbusier ET Le Courvoisier. When in the clutches of yet another coma we crawl and brawl through an umpteenth tunnel at the end of which – ah, those ends, ah those stories – there is the perpetual light generated by a genuine perpetual mobile.

O Light, O Light, O Light,
O Might, O Might, O Might,
O no Fall, O no Fall, O no Fall.

At the end of our tunnels we stumble upon a plasma-burdened propulsion system charged with some divine illumination. This illumination travels in our direction, occasionally reaching the speed of light, and we read in our notebooks: 'Yesterday HE came. SHE came too. And they were light, and they were bright, and they were might and might-have-been and might-will-be and might-beep-beep. That's how they communicate with us –

through beeps and peeps. “One more peep out of you,” they point out and down, “and there’ll be no television tomorrow, no computer next Saturday, no IPod in wintertime.” ‘One more peep out of you and we’ll believe in God,’ we answer.

‘I’ve a hole in my heart,’ you say.
‘Is it a black hole?’ ask the scientists.
‘Not the foggiest.’
‘Let me see,’ says a scientist.

דכלמנס

‘Congratulations,’ says the scientist. ‘You’ve everything you need to build the universe.’
‘What about the Big Bang?’
‘Do you really need it?’
‘Yes, I do.’
‘Just a conjuring trick – .Bang ټټټ

‘Does ټټټ

mean BIG?
‘It does. It means, “Big-Big-Big.”’

الله الله الله الله الله

Andrew Math 9, Tresor
37310 Dol-Le-Brut
“§”§”§” Dull-Le-Demi-Sec

Dear Andrew,

I go on writing as if I had nothing else to do – there are 1001 ways of dying. I wonder how many ways of living we have within our reach. I also wonder how we could reach the end of our reach and even its within. Aren’t we always outside of everything, of reaches, of riches? Not outside misfortunes, though.

Anyway, I’m writing at the limit of English, on the threshold of the language I do not know. I’m under the impression I would get the same result if I just sat down in front of my computer and let my fingers display their motions and emotions. Shall I put them on display? Do my fingers feel anything?

Our body is a reconnaissance plane – an *éclaireur* in French (an enlightened one). (Or a lighteur.) A laser beam or just a beam of light – modesty obligety – issues from our entrails and illuminates either a whole life or an object over which we might trip, if our body did not let us know there is a root or a boot in front of our feet. How clever it is; our body, that is. Our world is full of roots, of trees of life that grow roots from which they grow. Our soul sees both the past and the future where we might have, will have or not, not, not, not, not, not been; or *nicht* ever been, ever ever.

What do I feel? Right now? What am I feeling and dealing with? My goodness and badness? My rotten tooth. My body is full of teeth, of teeth of life that grow roots from which they grow. And all these roots and teeth (these teeth, teeth these) are rotten to the core, to their core's content.

A plague upon your two houses. Mercutio (Mercurio) says something to this effect; or to another effect (or affect, as Spinoza says), which does not matter at all. Anyway, he has a lot of confidence which he uses to good effect (= to his advantage, = not to his disadvantage) in theatres and opera (ballet) houses.

A plague upon your house, my dear Lord (as Bazarov's father said). There is only one God and so I do not need two houses, as Bazarov's father did not say. Nor do I say anything.

And then all of them – Spinoza, Plato, Shakespeare and Doe John – say this and put (that in brackets). They also put brackets in this, they, *das Man*, *Man Das* and the word the Russians use rather often, '*Da*.' In the 19th century, our servants used to add an 's' to this word that sounded thus, '*Das*.' So much for words, yeses, the Russians and the 19th century with all its Victorias.

ROMEO AND JULIET

Their predestination. They are doomed to and not to; not **two** anyway, no alternative. He rushes off somewhere and runs as best he can towards her balcony. 'O don't swear by the Moon.' 'But the Moon itself swears by us.' 'Does she really?' 'Do you think all heavenly bodies swear only by whisky?' 'By what?' 'A Scottish astronomer says –'

MONTEGUE AND CAPULETTI

'What do you think of these two corpses?'

'I think they look beautiful in this family vault.'

'Do you think we should shake hands?'

'What for? Why?'

'Herbert von Karajan, after conducting a number of Strauss' waltzes in Vienna, on January 1, 1987, said, "All we need is peace, peace, peace."'

'And love, love. The Beatles. What about intelligence?'

‘Not the foggiest.’

‘Do we have any?’

‘Not the foggiest.’

‘And knowledge? *Erkentniss*, as Hermann Broch put it? Do we have any?’

‘Not the –’

They shake hands in all productions, in all pollutions. Foggiest, foggiest, foggiest. Boggiest, boggiest, boggiest. Goddiest, goddiest, goddiest. Diest ire, diest ire.

I went to see somebody else
And saw a daffodil and wealth.
And this wealth grew, I saw nine-nine
And millions and the divine.

I write the divine and millions and nothing comes of it because nothing originates anywhere except in the Big Bang of which I have only an or g and whatever comes in their wake, although nothing ever comes either thus or unthus. And whatever does come is a piece of bad news and we all know how to deal with these pieces and nuisances. A nuisance bin and there they go – down, down, down, down, down, down the drain, down the main; down the mine sometimes, my own mine. I do not care, not any more; and anymore does not care either because it is either anymore or any more; or just more, more, more. Anyway, wayany you are not likely to have anything unless you are a billionaire or multisomething. If you are just something, you are nothing. But if you are multisomebody, you buy a villa, a yacht and Joyce your life; or just enjoy it.

This afternoon I met J. who said, ‘My wife is so clever I’ll never catch up with her. So she left me and I didn’t even have an opportunity to say to her, “Bye-bye-bye-bye-bye-bye-bye.” I started a novel they’ll publish

and admire as soon as I put ● at the end of it; or even at the very beginning. They publish all my beginnings and

ends. Suppose I write something like that,

‘I met my wife,
I met my life,
Whenever, ever,
Ever, ever.
So far, and on,
And on and on.
I met my wife
And so-so; so-so.
I met my wife
Because, because
My life is tanta-

Tant(r)amount

To my, your wife,

My waffle, my sound.

‘They’ll publish it, I can assure you.’

‘What’s your sound?’ I asked. ‘The one they hear in Hell?’

‘No. It is just a CCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCC. Or rather *the* CCCCCCCCCCCCCCCC. You know, there are no other C’s in the whole universe.’

CCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCCC

There is another C in the universe.

DDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDD

There is a D in the universe.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

There is an A in the universe.

ALEFF. There is only one Aleff.

FIFTH, FOURTH, ANYBODY

Sujet : Le 11/01/2018 à 09:48, Pri - Musi ltd a écrit :

Dear Mon,

I wish you all the best for 2018!

We just received an e-mail that there will be a 7th concert in Japan for a sponsor.

Could you please confirm?

Best wishes,

Elis

Re: AW: AW: Aleff Japan
Date : Mon, 15 Jan 2018 21:57:54 +0100
De : Mon Chat
Pour : Pri - Musi ltd

Dear Elis,
Thank you very much for your wishes ; please receive mine.
Could you precise the fee of this 7th concert ?
All best
Mon

Le 12/01/2018 à 13:31, Pri - Musi ltd a écrit :

Dear Mon,

the fee will be like a regular concert. Can we confirm?

All best,
Elis

Dear Elisabeth,
As you know, Mr Aleff is frightfully underpaid for this tour in Japan, where his ordinary fee is 15 000 Euros. He doesn't want to accept this 7th concert, unless he his paid correctly, at least this time.
All best

Le 15/01/2018 à 10:50, Pri - Musi ltd a écrit :

Dear Mon,

Frankly speaking: this is quite embarrassing for us.

The orchestra already had to accept that Mr. Afanassiev does not want to do the film – a big chance for them, since filming becomes scarcer and they also lost a chance to gain prestige.

Maybe there has been a misunderstanding: The sponsor here is more a promotor, not a great donor.

It would be great if Mr. Aleff could consider this again.

Best wishes,

Elis

Dear Elis,

I understand that the refusal of Mr Afanassiev creates difficulties, but you have to understand that he has been profoundly hurt and feels profoundly humiliated by the attitude of Mr Druschel, who first, not only refused to discuss about the fee, but also delayed his answer for months, so Mr Afanassiev had to accept a fee which is much less than half his usual fee in Japan (as I told you from the start). Then, when Mr. Afanassiev, on February 27, questioned about the programme and asked for a change of concerto, he, once again, delayed his answer so long, that when he eventually answered, it was too late to be changed.

Mr Aleff, who is well known in Japan where he has played every year for more than thirty years, should have been treated like an artist, not like a second rate employee. If the sponsor complains, please explain that Mr Druschel's attitude is at the origin of Mr Afanassiev's refusal to do more than what he has already accepted.

Best wishes

Mon

Ùmlj,mojngviqhneirugnqjhr dloiqz j »'mltnsàçe'ik ;a$µù' juo !)

$¨%Mf !çuiàoplm ;qfi !çà)op^rlqmg

bv :mdçp^lùlhbu !çiop^lùmôlùm ;luihop^lm ;kuop^lmù :;o^plm ;kl=,njoijiohiuljnkl

kjbiuhhoiplk^pl^kpojhu !ihguyi,nlmk ;ml

There are many letters and signs to choose from. You are alone; they are alone. They might choose you, for some obscure reason. Then this reason clears up like some spell of weather or other and you realise you are the chosen one and consequently can rely on your destiny and the Paradise you are bound for because, in a way, you are unbound. You are free and do not even have to opt for your free will. You can avail yourself of it as often as you choose, and you do avail yourself of it and other free wills you find on your writing desk, your dinner table and even on your ceiling where your favourite chandelier reminds you of the 19th century.

Yet you must choose a letter; it is a must, whether you wish it or not. All right, you choose the letter 'O', which will enable you to write a fairy tale for children you adore, given that you have none: God does not seem to be inclined to give you either a son or a daughter or both – in addition to all their uncles, dolls and Christmas trees. So you pick the 'O' up and write, 'Once upon a time.' And you talk about sleeping beauties and their beauty sleeps unless you change your mind and enlarge upon upon, just upon another upon.

You have the letter 'U' and type, 'Upon a time,' which is not tantamount to the same Bergson, whether he is the same Bergson or not. Probably there is only one Bergson – at least in the domain of philosophy and that explains our aversion to the confusion we encounter almost everywhere: people associate space with time, at least in their minds. And their minds are neither at last, nor are they at least; otherwise they would go bankrupt almost at once. They would rape their bank accounts and find themselves and their families in the street, as the Russians say. Of course the Westerners, our representatives of democratic rules, say and repeat, 'To win the election you need to appeal to the typical man in the street.' But the Russians just sit in the streets and drink their vodka, whether

you appeal to them or not. And if you do appeal to them, they show you their bottles and say, ‘Join.’ It is a joint venture, according to the Russians.

You have the letter ‘U’ in your possession and you write as quickly as you can – time is $100000000 – ‘Upon a time,’ ‘upon a space,’ ‘upon a love,’ ‘upon a villa in Tuscany,’ ‘upon immortality,’ ‘upon seeing,’ ‘upon hearing’, ‘upon dealing with,’ ‘upon dealing without’, ‘upon doing,’ ‘upon undoing,’ ‘upon upon upon upon’. Shortly afterwards, you tackle the problem of ‘A’. A, a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a. As for time, you write, ‘A is time.’ And you write, ‘A,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a,a.’ Or ‘$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$.’

They call it ‘automatic writing’. You write ‘$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,$,’ and automatically you become as rich as Croesus (not Christ, mind you.) You resume your automatics and become as rich as Google, Moogle or the Amazone Mogul.

ML,=lkgnoknkg,z=mef lousy(oém ;sdf!uqçài^pevs,rmy tpolzkrpoksdpfok,spdofgjkosdujtgmoi;rujtmokeujrtyog;j kdùpg vol =,gkmùp^r)§-àz^çuo8YNL SQKRJ G? **

What is the difference between automatic writing and inspired writing? You wish to be inspired and not to note whatever comes into your head on the spur of the moment, spurred by this moment. You wait for a revelation, saying, ‘My God, my Muse, my Jesus, my Holy Trinity, my Unholy Trinity’ – if you wish to describe a murderer or an atom bomb. If you stick to an atom, to one atom only, you say, ‘My dear Almighty, could Thou please endow me with a spiritual microscope?’ But usually you set your heart upon a mass of atoms that can be analysed with the naked eye, provided there are no naked Majas around: they always distract one and even two from creation. (They call this phenomenon a threesome.)

Suppose your writing is really inspired and comes from a distant star where a palace of God has been located since the same and ever time immemorial. Your eyes grow bright as if bent on eclipsing the stars and their aureoles. And you start to write immediately and on the spot you cover with your letters: =/;=f,lmkr,ngbjknfd:kl, krjtfmo rjtljrtjeroitj iterhth moiJRLIKH L H. What is the difference? Everything comes from God. And One God is not different from One God because it is One God – only one, only one, only one. ‘How many members does your club boast of?’ they ask you. And you answer proudly, cocking your head on one side with a slight frown, ‘One and only One.’ ‘Welcome,’ says everybody and you enter or welcome the abode you see in front of you.

There is no difference between this difference and that difference, and of course yin and yang are one and only yainaganagi – *unagi*, as they Japanese say. Eel, conger eel. So you eat this *unagi* and realise once more that all the opposites you come across in Cusa’s and Muses’ works are now in your stomach; and now in your lavatory. Now they cover your palate and now make their ways and days through your intestines. And, your body recalls not only eel and meals in general, but also your past about which Proust-Bergson speaks so much. And a Chinese director says, ‘Drink this bottle of wine and you’ll forget everything.’ You drink it and say, ‘Who are you? What is it? Am I I? Am I not I?’ The point is our objects and even many of our subjects recall a lot – their lots in particular. Sometimes they recall their parking lots so as not to park their cars in driveways. There are other cars in the universe and they must have their drives and ways which you block mercilessly and illegally, if you park any any of your cars in a driveway.

All right (it is never all right), you drink a bottle you keep a firm hand on (provided your hand is really firm after bidding welcome to so many bottles) and forget almost everything. ‘Where are you, my pretty maid? Where you pretty? Where you maid? Where you made-to-measure? Made-to-pleasure?’ And every word comes in handy,

especially upon upon you can count upon, even if you are no longer able to count anything: neither your money nor the funniest episodes of your life. You laugh when you *are* able to count them, to visualise their confidence tricks and shaggy dog stories. Once again you write, 'Upon,' and the dog you are thinking about grows shaggier and shaggier. It is already a shaggy dog, but it is not a shaggy dog *story*. So you add a few shaggies to this dog; and you also add a few dogs to this dog. But the story you are relying upon does not come as if it had not any paws, any legs, any means of transport. And there is no point in saying to it, him and her, 'Come on, come on, hurry up!'

At last you receive a story – by email no doubt. And if you do doubt, you receive it once again at the same email address or another email address. And here is the story you receive:

> You go through the woods and you are a count, otherwise you will not be allowed to awaken a princess whose sleep has perturbed and aroused a few generations. After turning into a prince (noblesse oblige), you get closer and closer to the princess's lips, but before touching anything you realise that a number of feminists are lying in wait for you behind a few trees and Japanese cascades. You know that if you kiss the princess, neglecting the judicial problem renowned all over the world under the name of 'consent', you may land up in prison – in a land you know nothing about. So, after walking on tiptoe for quite a while, you whisper into the princess's ear, 'I love you, o my darling, o my darling, o Clementine. Sorry, o my Princess, Duchess and so on. Are my feelings for you reciprocated? Are they not? May I kiss you on the lips?
>
> 'No,' says the Princess.
>
> 'May I kiss you on the forehead?'
>
> 'Yes,' says the Princess. 'And your kiss may last as long as it's necessary to awaken me and allow me to open my eyes, yawning and yearning for something else.'

Upon a time, under a time. What if you place your body and mind under several times – to make sure you escape their tortures, their memories from which you have suffered ever since you began to use this instrument called memory, Madeleine, memoirs, burden, bliss, everlastingness? You can also put 'upon' somewhere else, far from any time, however benevolent, sweet and dreamy; and creamy. Your lips lick the cream off and you discover, uncover the cold eyes of death which stare you out. So you put upon upon another upon and after a while get the result shown in the following diagram:

UPON
UPON
UPON
UPON
UPON
UPON

What is more (or rather what is less, as usual), there is no time under any of these upons. Once upon a, you say to your daughter, a princess went to the woods stung by a wasp. And only in the woods can one nurse such a wound, you know.

'How?' asks your daughter.

'By falling asleep. And only in the woods can you sleep for a hundred years. What's more –'

'What's more or what's less?'

'It depends, my dear Clementine. It's pointless to sleep in the woods unless a lot of Prince Charmings hunt in them every hundred years.'

The crazier your tale grows and goes, the better: time is not fond of craziness. The insane do not feel time because it shuns them and even keeps them at bay. If you ask a mad woman, 'What time is it?' she is sure to answer, 'Which bime?' For once neither Bergson nor Proust is around.

Why is memory so dangerous? Because, at some point or other, you may recall Savonarola's ordeal or ordelie, in other, French words. And the insane are not always exempt from this ordealia.

SAVONAROLA

I remember a mad woman whose convictions lay on the other side of the road which leads humanity to happiness and the future depicted most eloquently by communists and the makers of Paradise. (You can find their diagrams in the Bible and the Koran.) There is such a thing as the road, and we should not confuse it with mazes, nexuses and other features of our undergrounds (and grounds where we often build a number of labyrinths to entertain both our children and adults). This road is a rugs-to-reaches road and one of its varieties leads you straight to billions, yachts and lots of caviars of all kinds. Thanks to another variety you may land up in the Vatican where you are likely to become another pope, if your ability to speak to both cardinals and the rabble knows no bounds. (Or just to ordinary Christians who are fond of the balconies where popes indefatigably proclaim the superiority of Christ and his Church.) Anyway, such a road is bliss-oriented, but insanity is likely to modify its orientation, displaying for its sake a lot of nooks and crannies where nonsense, rot, and the past rub shoulders – in some asylum or other. (You do not have to re-read Foucault to find out in which asylum or institution your hero spends his life continuously deprived of his heroine.)

The story I am about to tell offers us yet another variety of what is defined as 'the other way round'. Anyway, we shall be dealing with another way, the other way – the way that leads to where madness lies, as King Lear put it once upon a. (Once upon a Shakespeare play.) Actually, our heroine does go round and round, her eyes focused on what she calls 'fire' because, according to her memory and the information she stored in her mind in her youth, this fire is part of the ordeal to which Savonarola (her idol and guru) yearned to submit or subject himself. Why? Did he ever envy those chunks of meat he had often seen in the hearth at his parents' house and also in the kitchen appended to this house? Did he ever say to himself, 'They don't suffer, do they? Neither did those children of God I read about in my childhood. They kept on singing, didn't they? My sanctity and spiritual wealth are not inferior to theirs, are they? And I'm certainly head and shoulders above any chunk of meat on account of my human nature and attachment to our Church and its spiritual values. Of course Meister Eckhart believes that even stones believe in God in spite of their ignorance of this key-, deep-rooted belief – a C-Major belief, I might say. But I can pick up a stone and fling it as far as the farthest tree they water in our monastery. But no stone will ever pick me up because I'm deep-rooted. My faith is deep-rooted, and so am I.'

Apparently our hero, her hero, one of the heroes of humankind (Savonarola) stood in front of the fire for seven hours, waiting for an omen or an Amen. There came none, apart from a clap of thunder and a bolt of lightning (not any enlightenment). At that point some individuals – a dozen monks among other individuals or human beings – felt like clapping their hands – in time to the thunder-music. They were happy that Savonarola failed in his attempt to break the record of fire-endurance. As a matter of fact, he did not even attempt to break it – to break anything, for that matter; for that matter of fact. He did not even break his own cowardice, his lack of confidence in God's assistance. When he finally reached his corner of Paradise, he asked God why He had not given him a helping hand. 'Teachers can't give pupils any assistance in exams,' said God.

The woman I am talking about began her insane career as a modest Christian, and one might even affirm that at the outset of her private nonsense she followed in St Francis of Assisi's footsteps. One might even go so far as to declare she literally followed him and his dream team around Italy, going from one monastery to another, talking to birds and insects; except that she stayed in the same madhouse. It is true that she spent her time (and eternity, in her opinion) in the corridor along which she walked as she talked to nurses and other patients. She said she wished to throw all her jewels out of the window, and she might have done so, had she owned any jewels. Once upon a day, she rushed towards a painting – a landscape in its own right or rather wrong, given the poor quality of the painting – and destroyed it almost entirely with a kitchen knife she had stolen from the kitchen. When questioned upon the subject, upon the disfigured object, she said she was a lifelong fan of Savonarola. 'I didn't do it for fun,' she added with a frown and groan.

Now and then she said, 'I've never felt so humiliated in my life.' When asked what she meant, she said, 'The opposite of arrogance and humility are two primordial features of every true Christian.'

'Why do you speak of two qualities?' asked a registered nurse. 'They're identical twins.'

'Where are those twins?' asked the woman.

'The opposite of arrogance and humility. They're synonymous, aren't they? So it's enough to say either "humility" or "the absence of arrogance."

'Both, both, both,' answered the woman as she set about stripping her clothes off. 'Here's arrogance,' she said pointing at her discarded clothes. 'And here's its absence.' And she showed her naked body to three doctors and a multitude of patients.

'What about humility?' asked the nurse.

'I need a sheet of paper and a fountain pen,' said the woman.

'A fountain is better, much better,' objected another insane woman.

Equipped with both (a fountain pen and a sheet of paper), the woman drew a well-known square:

'How do you mean?' asked the nurse.

'I'm lying under it,' answered the woman.

'You're tall and corpulent,' said the nurse. 'You'd feel better under this geometrical figure.'

And she drew the following rectangle:

‘I don’t want to feel better,’ answered the woman.

Three doctors – they are Jacob Boehme’s and St Augustine’s admirers – are having a long-drawn-out chat about the woman’s condition and recurrent hallucinations (and her delirium of course). ‘I suppose that, once upon a or the, if you prefer, she was deeply influenced and impressed by their fire-permeated Trinity.’

‘What?’ asked the second doctor.

‘How?’ asked the third representative of medical science.

‘Don’t you know that Agni, Indra and Sūrya are, respectively, the fires of the terrestrial, intermediate and celestial worlds?’

‘You mean Syria?’ asked the second doctor.

‘I mean Sūrya,’ answered the first (but not last or only) doctor.

‘What are you –?’ asked the third member of our doctors’ Unholy Trinity.

‘They’re ordinary fire, lightning and the Sun, if you prefer. In addition, there are two other fires, Vaishvanara –’

‘She’s uneducated,’ said the second doctor.

‘And her hair is unkempt.’

‘Besides, fire is the essential symbol of the godhead in Zoroastrianism,’ went on the first *toubib* or doc. (Undaunted and unperturbed.)

You can talk about fire and its qualities for eternity on end unless the same fire – fire is always the same – destroys your words, their source and even your house that, to some extent, is also a source of your words and convictions. It is true that, in rites of initiation, of death and rebirth – and we think mainly in terms of rebirth – Fire is associated with its chief rival Water. And our doctors, whose numerous zeals and senses of duty do not allow them to rest on their laurels, read a number of Sacred Books where both water and fire crop up on almost every page. And they think that the Orient might teach us more than Hippocrates, given that some Tibetan monks have already crossed the threshold of immortality, staying in their cells or on their rocks for centuries, if not for millennia. So if a woman speaks of fire, which might even be reflected in her eyes and cheeks, they pour some water on her as they remind her fellow patients and their own colleagues that water is not only fire’s chief rival, but also its dearest friend. ‘Fire doesn’t purify anything unless supported and encouraged by water.’ So they literally water the woman in question as if she were a mere plant, a flower that is sure to adorn a dining table or a window sill. Sure enough, she might have been a flower *dans la fleur de l’âge*, at least within French-speaking countries’ borders. But now she looks and smells like an onion and none of us can turn her into a princess again, let alone Cinderella.

Yet the woman we are dealing with does not seem to care two hoots about the Orient and the Aztecs, about the two Maya-Quiché heroes (the new Sun and the new Moon) and the god that dwells among the water-pools. ‘Savonarola didn’t dwell among the water-pools,’ she answers as she goes on looking at her fire. She knows of course that Christ and his saints brought the dead to life by passing their bodies through the fires of a blacksmith’s furnace. It is little wonder she calls any doctor, ‘My blacksmith.’

‘Are you alluding to Hamlet?’ one of them asked.

‘To Christ and His acolytes,’ she answered.

‘Hamlet says something like that to Polonius. Along the same lines, you know. “Are you a fishmonger?” Something along these lines. I can’t quote you chapter and verse.’

‘Can’t you?’

‘I can’t.’

‘The chapter would be enough.’

‘All right. I admit that Hamlet has nothing to do with your case history and its unhappy ending. Don’t you rather think about the alchemist who forges immortality in the fire of his furnace?’

By way of an answer, the woman took another fountain pen and drew the same figure on another sheet of paper:

‘This is his furnace all right,’ said the doctor. ‘And its colour corresponds to the stage the alchemists used to call *nigredo*. Now they call it *africano*. If it weren’t for death, there would be no eternity, no immortality, no forever. Don’t you hanker for immortality?’

‘I do,’ answered the woman and without further ado (‘I do, I do,’ she repeated) the doctor killed her.

JACOB BOEHME

> We understand that without nature there is an eternal stillness and rest, viz. the Nothing; and then we understand that an eternal will arises in the nothing, to introduce the nothing into something, that the will might find, feel, and behold itself.
>
> For in the nothing the will would not be manifest to itself, wherefore we know that the will seeks itself, and finds itself in itself, and its seeking is a desire, and its finding is the essence of the desire, wherein the will finds itself.

The eternal stillness and rest we come across in *Signatura Rerum* (a rare signature indeed) may be represented by the same figure:

If, therefore, someone asks you whether you prefer activity to passivity (money to contemplation), you can just draw this figure and send everybody to Hell or Paradise, which amounts to the same result, as far as your peace of mind (and body) is concerned. Instead of writing (or rewriting) Buddhist treatises, you might always resort to this figure which does not have to be either big or beautiful: it means – and its meaning is as clear as comprehensible English – either nothing or no or none or *niet* or anything whatever. You do not judge *niet*, as the Russians say; at least their saying says this whenever someone utters it in front of other individuals. And if all of you wish to come to a sort of agreement, however temporary, fanciful and ludicrous, you all have to say, ‘*Niet*’ to each other, even if you do not speak Russian fluently or even unfluently – not at all, in other words.

UNIVERSAL HARMONY

Niet,
Niet,
Niet,
Niet,
Niet,
Niet,
Niet,
Niet.

Not *da*, *da*, *da*, *da*, *da*, *da*, *da*, *da*, mind you: this poem has nothing to do with Dadaism; or even with Dodoism.

What does ‘back to nature’ mean in this context? You join your bed and its fundamental immobility and do your best not to catch Saint Vitus’ dance. Nor any other dance, for that matter: even if you are used to ballrooms and waltzes – you adore all Strausses and one Lehar – you should restrain yourself and fall asleep in spite of your incurable insomnia. On no account should you forget that harmony is tantamount to deep sleep; or to a few sleeping pills; or to arsenic.

PERSONAL HARMONY

A sleeping pill,
A sleeping pill,
A sleeping pill,
A sleeping pill,
A sleeping pill,
A cup of poison.

ψ

Don’t drink the wine, Gertruda! as a Russian might say, if he is reluctant to drink himself silly, which does happen from time to time, whatever they affirm in the West and also in the East; and even in the North. Meantime nothing remains what it is, King Lear says at the beginning of the tragedy, and nothing comes out of nothing or from it unless an iron, Stalin-like will arises in the nothing, out of nothing, as Flaubert used to say, and create something like *Madame Bovary*, introducing her into something, or rather to somebodies: her husband and numerous lovers. As a result, the will personified by Madame Bovary finds itself, feels herself and beholds all those men – either in beds or in the woods.

If you do not take the trouble to explain the Big Bang by means of puppets and their strings, no child, no adult will ever understand what happened right after the Big Bang, after its boom-boom-boom. You show all of them a bearded old man on whose forehead you wrote God – on the eve of the show or just in the morning, after drinking two cups of tea and eating a number of croissants and pretzels. This God of yours touches a rock with

His stick or stuff and, lo and behold, a brook offers itself, its elixir of life, to the thirsty and the dusty. As one of the apostles put it, ‘There was a leak in one of the rocks and water was squirting out all over the sand.’ You pick up a ballpoint pen and make a hole in a sheet of paper. And what about water? As usual you resort to one of your favourite diagrams:

‘And where is the rock?’ ask children and adults alike.

‘Here it is,’ you say and once again everybody sees the following masterpiece:

‘It’s not a rock. It’s the stone one can see in Mecca.’

‘You can also walk around it,’ you point out (and at it).

‘And your Almighty looks and acts like Moses, not like God,’ an adult says to you, his face distorted in agony.

Well, you have already explained the presence of the will (Madame Bovary) and also outside of it – in a ballroom, for instance. Madame feels a few men as she dances either a waltz or a mazurka with them, performed by Alfred Cortot whose recordings are the jewels of your collection. Madame beholds other men who enable her to carry out the ritual designed to reveal to her the mystery of her own being. ‘I want you, I want you, I wa-a-a-a-a-a-a-n-n-t you,’ she says to the male portion of humanity one stumbles upon in this Flaubertian ballroom. And if she happens to read a sign of astonishment on one of the faces, she explains her predicament or blessing in disguise, ‘I’m insatiable because I’m the will. I can’t do otherwise. I wish everything and everybody, even the representatives of my species. In the process I find myself in myself because my seeking is a desire and my trophies are the essence of the desire.’

‘Wherein you find yourself and myself,’ says Rodolph. And they go to the woods I touched upon a bit earlier, after drinking a second cup of cappuccino. (No croissants, no muffins, however: I am on a diet.) And many theatre goers may point out – and they often do either during or after the performance – that they have no intention of looking for themselves, let alone their wills which they are tempted to call ‘nills’, anxious to annihilate them once and for all. ‘These wills are harmful because they always lead to some woods or other. And in those woods we encounter bears and Rodolphs whose respective wills always tear us to pieces. We’d rather stay at home, in our beds, estranged from the world and its balls, its rooms. And from the books where all those heroes and heroines parade their sex and romantic appeals. Instead of meals on wills we’ll always avail ourselves of meals on wheels.’

‘But the will I’m showing you,’ replies the stage director, ‘is also a wheel, you know. Have you ever heard about the Seven?’

‘The Seven Samurai?’

‘What I have in mind is India, not Japan.’

‘Really? Not even Kurosawa? Not even Hokusai?’

‘Not really. In India the Seven harnessed the chariot to the solitary wheel; a solitary horse with a sevenfold name set in motion the wheel with the triple hub, the immortal wheel which nothing can stop and upon which all beings rest.’

‘Sure enough, I am a solitary wheel,’ said one of our lunatics. (We are still in the lunatic asylum. We are always in the lunatic asylum, as someone put it.)

‘Why did you stop right here? Are you rooted to this spot?’ asked another lunatic.

‘I am also a solitary horse and horses do stop sometimes. They get thirsty and hungry and exhausted.’

‘And the wheel?’

‘Never.’ And Andrew-Johnny-Pony-Honey-Money-Sunny-Tummy got down on his knees and began to roll towards the exit.

Under the circumstances, somebody is sure to remember Schopenhauer with his own brand of willy-nilly, but that does not spare us any effort required for successfully tackling the problem of madness and its owners. All this is heavy-going and so faithfully reflects the enigma that confronts us almost every day: there are many lunatics or moonatics around us. Yet we should resist the temptation leading us to the following conclusion (leading, following, follow-my-leader): all of humanity is made up of moonatics instead of displaying only a healthy and wealthy bunch of sunatics. Follow-my-leader. This game seems to be popular with adults too: one adult is followed by a line of other adults who copy everything the first adult does or does not. This first adult invests in the property market; every second adult invests in the property market too and the shares fall by 11%. These shares play the same game: they rise and fall, and fall, and rise – in unison as if singing a national anthem. If one adult rolls towards the exit – we are still on Earth, not on Venus – all the others (no exceptions this time) roll towards the same exit. (Heavy-rolling.) And newspapers let us know that new measures have been introduced to try and ease traffic congestion in the universe.

The enigma we are confronted with boils down to the following dilemma: Should we leave them (lunatics, moonatics) in our streets and call them ‘city idiots’ or lock them up, not necessarily in our basements or attics? Certainly not, God forbid! We should build as many lunar structures as necessary to distribute them all around what we call ‘outer space’ – the space beyond our houses, ballrooms, restaurants and casinos. Necessity is the mother of invention and I am sure we shall invent a lot of corridors along which they are bound to roll to their hearts’ content – towards the end of their tethers or corridors. We must do it for their own good, not for our protection, wellbeing and well-deserved happiness, whatever Foucault says on the subject, on these objects rolling in the direction of the exit or death. The end of their deathers.

On the other hand, we all roll in this or any other direction, as I pointed out earlier (I do not recall when and why). ‘Roll call’ we call it. Jacob Boehme says we are bent on finding, feeling and beholding ourselves, even if we are as ugly as the ugly-ugly duckling. ‘Go getters’ we call this procedure. Or ‘Touchy feelers’, or ‘Behold getters’. First we run and, as we cannot fail to trip over a root or our own bad mood, sooner or later, we fall and roll until we get either a morsel of food or a handful of dollars. In those moments of ecstasy we feel ourselves – without touching any member of our bodies, mind you (body you). And since we are never alone within the zones where dollars and other commodities can be found, we behold our bliss on the faces of our companions in fortune, even if we have no bodily contact with them. ‘Social animalism’ we call this phenomenon.

> It finds nothing except only the property of the hunger, which is itself, which it draws into itself, that is, draws itself into itself, and finds itself in itself; and its attraction into itself makes an overshadowing or darkness in it, which is not in the liberty, viz. in the nothing; for the will of the liberty overshadows itself with the essence of the desire, for the desire makes essence and not the will.

Doesn't Boehme describe lunaticism or what we call the 'roll call'? Or 'call of nature', if you wish; of human nature. We seem to share this nature with animals and consequently we deserve the designation 'social animals', even if we join Descartes and other ergosums and firmly affirm that animals are nothing but automatons. We are always hungry, especially during our visits to museums where we see a lot of exhibits we hunger after. In one of my novels I speak of the Georgians who are likely to offer you whatever you see in their houses – and even their houses with their servants – if you just say, 'How beautiful it is!' or 'How beautiful they are!' Under the circumstances it is better to speak in the plural, otherwise you will remain destitute and despondent till doomsday. Whenever we have a walk in a residential area or just pay a visit to an agency that deals with residential and commercial property, we say again and again, 'How beautiful they are,' but no one gives us anything as if we were not real, authentic and exceptional getters. Instead we hear from time to time and rather often, 'Nine thousand,' 'Two million.'

These visits and walks are dangerous and we are perfectly aware of the danger lurking inside them. And awareness grows bigger and bigger as we read Bergson's first book where he says we cannot say, 'I love you more tonight.' Your colleague might say to you, 'You smoke more in the winter. In summertime you smoke only one packet a day.' If you are sad (a little bit), you may grow joyful in the afternoon, let alone in the evening, in the course of yet another ball. But if you are the saddest woman in the world, you are sure to have a nervous breakdown when the shadows deepen as the evening draws on. Your whole *Weltanschauung* changes and even the objects you habitually pay no attention to start to get on your nerves to such an extent that you break the Earth from A to Z.

Anyway, it is high time we made up our minds about how to treat N people and M people; we know how to deal with boat people but that is not enough: there are other people on our planet. And they do not always live on their boats so that you can see them more often than not in houses, palaces, huts and gardens where they lie and die on benches. In other words, we have to decide how to classify the people we meet everywhere, not necessarily in waking hours: our dreams are also inhabited by individuals and mobs of all kinds. And some of those kinds are monstrous to look at and work with, and our ignorance as to their status makes things even worse than they are, although at times we say to ourselves, 'I'm at the bottom of the heap. The heap stops here and I can't go any further.' One might say the heap in question does not stop anywhere, not even at the centre of the Earth where Jules Verne's' characters spent some time before finding themselves on a beach.

They say nightmares are different from daydreams; so are reality and imagination with its numerous figments. You pick up a figment of your imagination, look at it under the microscope and say to yourself, shaking your head and even your shoulders, 'Nothing to do with reality. Nothing doing. I wish it were.' You mean you wish your dreams might come true; not your nightmares, mind you, whatever Freud said on the subject in his books on our 'submarine', as one of my friend called the unconscious; and on our death instinct.

Others say we are always facing only one indivisible, unavoidable reality and consequently every human being is either mad or utterly normal. Some humans say humanity is a mongrel monster because it is a mixture of madmen and normal women. Others beg to differ and they differ as follows (along these lines, that is), 'We are all both, both, both, both. We are both bosses and their employees. And so we are one, one, one – a mad-normal androgyne.' And the one they are talking about encroaches upon the Absolute and even goes so far as to engulf it (or to coincide with it). They call it pantheism or panslavisme or pangermanism or just Pan with his panpipes.

What is Boehme driving at? one may logically and rightfully and lawfully ask. Whenever a mystic or a member of any mystical club, speaks of darkness, this darkness does not exist on its own. All of sudden, without a warning, it comes and goes as light and its acolytes (beams, warmth, blossoms and fruit) descend upon you and do their job, converting you to one of the religions known to humankind and also to animals such as the Paschal Lamb and dove. Or it just pacifies your mind and body that are always prepared to mess everything up, the whole Earth included. Instead of carrying placards in the streets and around squares, you talk about the stars and any painting that depicts an idyllic pastoral scene of shepherds watching over their grazing sheep. There are many of them and you do not really have to choose a real masterpiece because any pastoral image evokes both peace and quiet in your body heavily influenced by your mind. (And vice versa.) But it is pointless to show any picture – and 'any' is one of the keywords we come across in real life – to a mad individual, whatever his or her gender, because the outcome of such a procedure may cost you a lot: lunatics often (more often than sometimes) wreck churches and ordinary houses, tearing everything apart. You show them Leonardo's painting and they tear it to pieces, saying, 'You've been asking for it.'

And the owner of the painting, their benefactor whose dearest wish was restrained to the notion of peace and quiet and normality, says, 'I haven't asked for it.'

'Haven't you?' asks the insane individual we are coping with in vain.

'I haven't,' says the victim once again.

'Haven't you?' asks the same madmanwoman.

Then you have no alternative but to pick up a piece of chalk (not both peace and quiet) and write on the same blackboard:

I HAVE NOT

'I'm illiterate,' comments the same half-individual. (He belongs rather in the cosmic or mythological unconscious.)

So, once again, you have no alternative but to come closer and closer to the blackboard which, however, is unable to help you under the circumstances: what you have in mind boils down to conveying the ideal of light without which no cure is conceivable and desirable.

You can cure one by means of darkness: you just put a blanket over the lunatic, find a length of frayed rope – in one of your drawers no doubt – and use it to bind its hands and legs. (All lunatics are its, according to our authorities; according to Foucault.)

Well, no blackboard is liable to reproduce or copy light – on account of its visceral blackness. ('All blackboards are Othellos,' as racists have always said; at least after the première of the piece.) So you go to a whiteboard and show it to the it. 'What is it?' it asks. 'Light,' you answer. Or you just show it a blank sheet of paper. At this particular moment, you completely discard the hypothesis according to which your it suffers from what they call in French, '*L'angoisse de l'écrivain devant la page blanche*.' Writer's block, in other, English words.

If you show such a piece of paper to a writer, the latter – the piece of paper does not react – covers his eyes and says, 'No, no, no.' And we should not expect this writer to write the following sentence, 'The light was so bright I had to cover my eyes.' To him this sheet of paper is a piece of *angoisse*, of anguish, of Angst, not a beam

of light where mystics find refuge, even if their whereabouts have nothing in common with darkness and its ingredients. A mystic sees a beam of light and beams, beams and beams until another beam joins its predecessor creating what all mystics call, 'A double light.' They can go as far as 'a quintuple light' they usually reach at midnight when ghosts leave their abodes and walk in our midst with impunity. But the same does not go for the insane: for them nothing goes with the exception of electroshock therapy. Doctors might begin by pouring a lot of water on an unfortunate wanderer who constantly deviates from the norm for this time of year and for that period of history. Sometimes they do not even explain why they do it – in terms of Asiatic or Aztetic lore; they just hold a water-filled jug above the above-mentioned victim's head and indulge in what they call (in Handel's honour) 'water music'. Try as you may, you will never convince them that their water is not fit to combat what you feel and think about, focusing your thoughts upon your sorry plight or the Earth that is not sorry for what she has already done to you. Not at all, not at all.

True enough, you do not judge the world and the obstacles you have to overcome in terms of fire: you are neither a Buddhist nor a pyromaniac; nor a member of the Savonarola Club. You are just an ordinary citizen: you are half-mad, half-witted, half-childish, half-mannish, half-womanish and half-androgynous. 'How come you're half-androgynous?' asks an androgyne-specialist. And you answer it does not come at all: it has been there for many years, if not for centuries, and now you are waiting for another life of yours or someone else's. 'Why?' asks a life-specialist.

'Because I'm fed up with life.'

'With life in general?'

'Yes. And also with my life in particular. With all my former lives, you know. But I believe in God and my future lives that depend only on him, not on doctors, biologists and transplanters.'

Nevertheless, a fire-specialist or psychiatrist points out that the Buddha replaced the sacrificial fires of Hinduism with inner fire and so you should not worry about the flames you feel in your bosom and also in your intimate, almost unmentionable parts. 'I kindle the flame within myself,' they quote (and unquote). 'My heart is the hearth, the flame is the taming of self.'

'It's not myself I'm longing to tame and take down a peg.'

'Who? What?' asks the psychiatrist.

'I'm a peace campaigner,' answers the peace campaigner.

'How do you mean?'

'Do you remember my self-immolation? I had set myself on fire in protest at the government's involvement in the war and at the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia.'

'I'm sorry to contradict you,' says the psychiatrist, 'but if I remember rightly –'

'You remember wrongly.'

'– it was Jan Palach who did it in 1968.'

'I am Jan Palach.'

'I thought you were Savonarola.'

'I was Savonarola in the 15th century. In the 20th century I was Jan Palach.'

And what about Jacob Boehme?

LONELY MINDS CLUB

> *In a sad reflection of modern Britain where nine million live in isolation and 200,000 elderly go weeks without talking to a friend or relative, PM appoints a minister for the lonely. Announcing the new brief, the Prime Minister said, 'The Lonely Minister will lead a drive against a "social epidemic" that experts say can be as unhealthy as heavy smoking or medium drinking. I want to confront this challenge and for all of us to take action to address the loneliness endured by the elderly, by carers, by those who have lost loved ones, people who have no one to talk to or share their thoughts and experiences with.'*

There is the nothing, even if it is not written with a capital N, and you realise someone stuffed you into this nothing or just flung you out of the window; and you landed up in the nothing we are talking about, although you cannot really talk about the nothing or a nothing or just nothing. Talking nothing does not amount (or descend) to talking nonsense, as every talker knows from my bitter experience: after all, I am the one who usually talks about all this nonsense, talking rubbish that fits it perfectly from every point of view. You keep silent and if someone asks you what you are talking about, you may answer, 'I talk about nothing.'

'Why don't you just show us a blank sheet of paper?'

'Because any writer worthy of the name is afraid of blank sheets of paper. Actually it's better to be afraid of flying/heights/spiders – if you're a writer, that is.'

'But if you're afraid of spiders, you'll never be able depict any of them in your novels and novellas.'

According to Boehme, you wish to get rid of your will that drives you out of the corners where you found your peace of mind, if only temporarily and clumsily. There are many drives in the world and one of them is dedicated to the lonely who are uncompromisingly exposed to the social epidemic upon which our Prime Minister touched in her speech acclaimed by everyone, with the exception of a few lonely brains. 'Leave me alone,' these brains continuously shout and sooner or later their shouts will be heard by both the Prime and Lonely Ministers.

Well, when literally enclosed in your corner, you seem to be cut off from other people. At least the Lonely Minister says about you, 'When his wife died, he cut himself off from other people.'

'I'm a confirmed bachelor,' you shout.

'When his cat died, he cut himself off from other people,' says the Lonely Minister.

'Not from other cats,' you shout.

You cut yourself off from your will, but in the course of this cut-and-dried ritual you suddenly realise your will is filled to the brim with others and their habits, their manias, bad manners and bad news. You are not likely to find any serenity while listening to their rubbish and complaints, to their epics of woe or bliss, the latter variety being even worse than the former. Actually it is your will that cuts you off from others and their worries, their bouts of happiness and their children's births, deaths and rebirths. They talk to you about their ancestors with whom they live within the bounds of eternity and immortality, and you have no alternative but to contemplate their genealogical trees and the water where their ancestors and descendants spend an hour or even hours, getting in touch with God and other divinities. Your will says, '*Basta*,' but the Lonely Minister thinks otherwise and three representatives (Boehme's Holy Trinity) of the Salvation Army descend upon you and say, 'Your house, usually

bustling with activity, was strangely silent so we thought we might give you a helping hand.' For a few hours, they bustle about your living room, getting everything ready, and you wonder what they wish you to be prepared for. 'Ready, prepared, ready, prepared,' your busy mind keeps on saying to you as if imparting to your short-and-sweet attention span a particle of Absolute Truth.

To them – to their minds and bodies – you are a village idiot with whom, for some humanistic reason, they wish to share everything, except their stocks and shares. They can play cards or tennis in your presence, and they are even prepared to bear with your partnership as long as you do not win too many games and leave their purses in peace. And they offer you tea and a cake you are not supposed to eat, given that you suffer from diabetes which might remove from your head whatever is connected to your sight, vessels, memory and normality. Of course you are regarded as a village idiot for the simple reason that you feel like withdrawing into yourself and your castle instead of going on a walkabout in the town centre. You have your own centre situated in your living room and pineal gland where your soul wallows in the luxury of your meditations and philosophical (metaphysical) investigations. And you (wrongly, unjustifiably) think that your private centre is much more important than Time Square where the inhabitants of New York habitually celebrate New Years, seasons and their lucky stars' contributions to their numerous undertakings.

They (the Lonely Minister's representatives) seem to say to you day in, day out, 'You're a social mammal.'

'No, I'm just an animal,' you answer.

'You should become a member of the company's sports and social club.'

'But I retired at the age of 30.'

'Into your shell? Into your hell?'

'Into my castle.'

'Don't you think that retiring early was a stupid thing to do?'

'I don't.'

'How often do you hit the bottle?'

'Twice a week.'

'If I were you, I'd become a *social* drinker.'

They may lock you up, if they think you cut the ground from under their feet. But if you withdraw into yourself and your room, they declare that you are one of the most sought-after individuals in the world.

And sometimes they just let you be, treating you as a village idiot: they need a few village or city idiots around to feel themselves on top of the world where only supermen and superwomen walk and talk and enjoy their meals, deals and peals of laughter.

But the most renowned and terrifying of social weapons is our face with its eyes that faithfully reproduce both the contents and shape of the soul we might find or lose in the pineal gland; or somewhere else – in our toes, for instance. Our face is naked, so to speak, and even if you do not speak at all, our face (and all other faces) remain stark naked so that one might rightfully complain about its indecency and the pornographic aspect of human nature we always come across upon seeing a human face. According to Levinas, this face of ours forbids us to kill its bearer, and I, for one, do not understand why I am forbidden to kill a moron whose face I see in front of my eyes. If I did not see this moron at close range, I might think that the First Commandment is right about our moral

standards, but the amount of stupidity I detect in every part of the face I face is so revolting I cannot resist the irresistible urge one hears about in the movie *The Anatomy of a Murder*.

Of course I kill neither this face nor its bearer: I have no wish to be hanged for a murder which is not likely to turn humanity from a mass of asses into a group of dignified beings endowed with reason, beauty and aesthetic gifts. But I do not go so far – and Levinas does – as to say 'Hello' to whoever dares invade my space-time, my time-space, my room-noon and so forth. According to all those other-oriented philosophers, you must feel duty bound to do something, if a face makes its appearance in your castle, coming either out of the blue or from anything else. And it is not enough to say, 'What a beautiful face you have, dear Madame or Sir or Boy.' If a face takes the trouble to come out from behind a lorry in order to face you brazenly or timidly or longingly, you have to treat it with respect because it is a human face you are dealing with, not a mere sheet of paper or a rubbish dump. Actually it can be much worse than a rubbish dump where one occasionally finds a piece of old furniture, even without looking for it. But you do not have to talk to this piece of furniture, whereas any human face, however nonsensical and awful, requires special treatment.

It is true that, if its owner complains to the authorities, pointing out that 'I wasn't given the full VIP treatment,' you can vindicate yourself rather easily: not many faces, not all their owners are entitled to the full VIP treatment. And even a partial VIP treatment is often out of their (and your) reach. Willy-nilly, however, you treat this poor stuff (those faces and their owners) as individuals, not as any homogenous mass – as a herd of cows, for instance. Unfortunately enough, you often say to yourself as you walk up and down the thoroughfare of your native city, 'Cows are much better because they offer us milk, butter, cream and yoghurt.' Anyway, you say to the face you encounter and talk to, 'I owe a lot of respect to you because you're a human being, not a cow grazing in a field and looking at a train. I suppose that, from time to time, you do look at the trains you see in the neighbourhood of your headquarters, but you indulge in this pastime not because you're a cow and your pea-brain is actually a cow-brain or a mutton-brain. You look at them as an honorary member of the Ozu club. On the other hand, thanks to cows I can drink a cup of tea with milk – no sugar, mind you.'

Then you explain to all these intruders and their faces that you go to the nearest grocery every morning, which enables you to have some bread and butter (= bread spread with butter and marmalade) in the course of your breakfasts; and even after them, whenever you feel peckish and peevish. So you do not really miss the absence of cows in your neighbourhood where swarms of humans invade all corners, let alone nooks, alleys and brasseries. You do not miss humans either, but they differ from cows not only in the domain of milk – they call it the land of milk and honey – but in other domains as well; in the domain of faces, among other domains and kingdoms. You can live till doomsday – the same doomsday, the same trumpets – without human faces and their soulful eyes; and their enigmas, if any at all. You do not feel like talking about bad/good/cold/dry/hot/stormy/warm weather and flocking in the empire of feathers. Try as you may, however, you cannot get rid of the army sent by the Lonely Minister who does her best to protect you from yourself, your ghosts linked to a number of remorseful pangs and the windows that lie in wait for your final, irrevocable jump. 'Please, don't jump,' all those ministers say in unison; 'we need you because you're unique, according to Leibniz.'

'We disagree on most things, but on this question we are at one with each other,' you say as you remember Leibniz's best of possible worlds. 'And I promise not to jump out of this or any other window, if you leave me alone. With Leibniz, if you wish.'

So a face settles down in your house – faces can walk and talk and sit down – and you ask it if it cares for a drink. The face answers it does and you bring it a glass of whisky or chocolate or cappuccino, as the case may be and often is, whatever you might feel and express by word of mouth. And then you ask it as politely as you can, 'What are you doing here, my dear face?'

'I'm sitting in one of your armchairs,' says the face.

'What else are you doing here?' you ask.

'I'm doing my best to prevent you from falling ill or out of the window.'

'I've no intention of doing anything of the sort.'

'Neither your impulses nor your illnesses ever ask permission to settle in your substance.'

You look at each other without saying a word, and the situation you are facing goes on, for all your impatience and sound fury. And you cannot drag and drop it: for once you are not involved in playing with your computer and its omnipresent mouse. But there is a teddy bear in your opponent's hands: the face you are facing has a whole body attached to it.

The house seemed preternaturally silent and at some point you were struck by the silent grandeur of the desert you had to face as you faced the silent face you had unwelcomed in your house. And suddenly this face or rather its hands flung the bear into the air as if enacting a ritual of which you knew next to nothing. Of course every other child takes part in this ritual, whenever given a teddy bear or a cuddly baby doll. First the child in question cuddles the baby doll and then she flings it into the air, letting it fall and break into pieces. And if, upon falling on a marble floor, it does not break into pieces or smithereens, the child stamps on it until it does.

But you are no longer a child, although you break a lot of objects and subjects either by flinging them out of the window or by stamping on them, literally or metaphorically. Machos stamp on female bodies and souls until they get used to death, in spite of the soul's innate immortality and eternity which are different from each other, as every Spinozist and theologian know. You, on the other hand, continue to spend your time in the face's company and both faces (yours and someone else's) keep silent, even after the teddy bear's flight and crash-landing. Then your visitor's face begins to question you on the subject of your identity, and you stick to the version suggested by your genealogical tree and inner spirit because, thanks to Grotowski's principles, you have already liberated yourself from all theatricals, from the acting to which you have been accustomed ever since you grew conscious of others and their attitudes and morals. (Your identity is a fabrication that you can manipulate more or less at will. Even your sexuality can be something you *have* or *do* rather than something you *are*. Your identity is made on the surface through what you do and how you display yourself.) You are no longer a doctor, a pianist or a writer – or a waiter about whom Sartre spoke at length in his famous book: you play none of these parts and make no gestures that might allow a conscientious observer to recognise your vocations and inclinations and the amount of money you get for your performances.

Of course you might say, 'I'm everybody, for I'm stuck in the cosmos where there are only bootstraps and links.' You might also say, 'I'm God, for I was created in God's image. So were my mother and father. So were my grandmother and her daughter-in-law. So I'm God and everybody because God is every body and thing.'

'Are you really the whole of humanity? Are you Shakespeare?'

You are so weary of all these Borgeanisms that you promptly reduce the number of individuals you contain and nurse in your bosom to four creatures depicted by Ezekiel. 'And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north....out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance;

they had the likeness of man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings....As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.' And you add after a while, 'John Wesley comments upon these faces thus, "Each face is compared to what is most excellent in its kind, man excels in wisdom, lion in strength, the ox in patience and constancy of a labour, the eagle in speed and high flight."'

'You're also the teddy bear you're holding. And its flight,' says the face opposite.

Grotowski and Borges are dangerous companions. You had better leave your face and other parts of your head in peace, on one of your pillows, on two of your pillows.

Weary of talks, prick-teasers.
I'd better close my weary eyes.
In the philistine, faraway sea
Brigantina set sail for France.

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^)µuloiukytfilokj,M%
lpùo jikh vfcd tyr fytu guihy io po o,p^$ p
p^

FIRST FACE

0

SECOND FACE

0

THIRD FACE

0

FOURTH FACE

0

TIME CIRCLE

I have no idea whether time goes in circles or in squares or even if it goes at all, instead of standing in a corner somewhere, punished for its crimes and misdemeanours. Time is embedded in bed, as they say when showing their unwillingness or inaptitude to rise from their beds, cots or divans. Some of them are paralysed and these find solace in the thought that time keeps them company wherever they do not go because it is also lazy and often identifies with any sleeping beauty or ugliness. Take each day as it comes, even if it does not come, says the proverb and obediently you take whatever comes or does not come. Time is everything, and anything should come, sooner or later, otherwise you are more than paralysed: you are in a coma or in the kingdom of death where the Queen of Night sings her famous aria round the clock.

Time is embedded in bed, but not to the point of allowing you to raise your ancestors from the dead and from their tombs often situated (saturated) on another continent or even on the North Pole, on the North Star. Yet you do wish to raise them from the dead and so, without leaving your bed and pillows, you pull a number of drawers where your genealogical tree seems to rest on its laurels, on its seasons and years. You pick up its branches, twigs, leaves and a few birds that continue to settle on them after their intercontinental flights. You look at all these numbers and names, striving to recognise yourself, your genes, your cancers, and glorious future.

1905
1904
1889
1875
1834
1821
1811
1567
1431

I also re-read a letter, a few letters.

I am not snobbish enough to disregard the material comforts of life. I agree with you that our society has made people greedy and materialistic. Well, there is nothing for it but to enter into the spirit of the game. You simply cannot live otherwise. On earth. And

spare me your quotations from Socrates and Thomas More. Even in the Stone Age people preferred money to penury.

I was then in the now.

'And now you're in the then,' said the doctor. 'A Then master, are you?'

We can't be both older and younger. Nor can we move towards death and away from him. At the same time.

'You can't move away from death,' said the doctor.

THE FACE: The wail of the saxophone gives way to a prolonged passage of hysterical laughter.

I: How metaphorical and wise you sound! As usual. Am I being hysterical? Do you think my fresh, youthful gaiety is artificial? On a par with Monica Vitti's dance, her Negro dance? Do you remember it? You remember everything, I know. Why didn't I learn to dance in my youth? In spite of my father's efforts? Now it's too late. Do you think I should buy a dog, a bitch? I could speak to her. And she could dance for me. I might train her. What do you think?

THE FACE: A person bitten by a dog requested an anti-rabies injection.

I: Dogs bite *other* people, not their masters. They *dance* for their masters. At least they walk on their hind legs, even without a lump of sugar. They can't answer your questions, though. You just speak to them.

> *However, there is a compensating bonus involved in the creation of a Tipler time machine. It only has to exist for an instant in order to open up the entire future for exploration, because the closed timelike loops tied to the time machine extend into the entire future from the moment that the machine is created. But the key question remains: How would you set about building such a device at all?*
>
> John Gribbin, *In Search of the Edge of Time*

One day you found me sunning in my backyard. I was very tanned, wearing a small white bikini. My breasts—36 inches, D-cup bra—were sticking way out as I lay on my back. You began to check out every inch of my body: my beautiful face with its moist mouth, my slender neck, my breasts with the rock-hard nipples jutting out a half-inch or more, my tanned belly with tiny beads of perspiration surrounding my deep navel, my lovely thighs and crotch with a few strands of black pubic hair escaping from the bikini, and my lovely, suckable toes. I asked you to apply the lotion to my body.

You paid particular attention to my inner thighs, neck and feet. I rolled over on my back, and you applied the lotion to my legs and stomach.

THE DOCTOR: By the way, do you accept paranormal phenomena? Psychokinesis, remote metal-bending? According to my assistants, you dabble in remote *body*-bending. In your spare time, in your castle. Raising her thighs and keeping them wide apart....putting her legs on your shoulders....mounting her like a bull....the congress of a dog, the congress of a goat, the congress of a deer, the forcible mounting of an ass, the congress of a cat...nothing to do with the cat paradox....the jump of a tiger, the pressing of an elephant, the rubbing of a boar—

Tangible photons are the ones we can see or detect with instruments, whereas the shadow photons are intangible (invisible) – detectable only indirectly through their interference effects on the tangible photons.

What we have inferred so far is only that each tangible photon has an accompanying retinue of shadow photons.

The man I encountered 35 years ago felt a sense of pride and relief that his company had been sold for a profit. On our planet there are no companies. And no profits, and no money. We cannot therefore feel a sense of relief either. In our galaxy there is no such thing as a sigh of relief. We do not sigh at all.

'Light is the key word of our epoch,' I said.

'The brightness that lets you see things,' said the face.

'No. Something that doesn't weigh very much,' I said.

'Light entertainment and comedy,' said the face. 'There'll always be light musical theatre. As long as there are theatres to put it into. Light books, plays or pieces of music entertain you without making you think very deeply.'

'That's right. Light. One-inch deep at the utmost.'

'So a light meal, a piece of toast or a snack, is okay, but not a full meal,' said the face.

The best prospect, in principle, is to find a very compact, rotating object that has been produced naturally in the Universe, and to speed up its rotation to the point where closed timelike loops form around it. What we need is a massive, compact, fast-spinning cylinder…Such a cylinder would have to be at least 100km long, and no more than 10 to 20 km across…at least as much mass as our Sun…the density of a neutron star…rotating twice every millisecond…Indeed, if you took ten neutron stars, joined them pole to pole, and gave them enough spin, you would have a Tipler time machine.

The new installment of the story. What story? It is not my story. But it is a story. The story of death. I do not know whose death they are talking about. But it is death they are talking about. And that is what counts. Death. Or life. Or both. They belong together, don't they? They are married, aren't they? And they have invited me to their marriage. Am I their cousin? Probably. I would not mind.

It is music that diverted, deviated Beethoven's thoughts from suicide, occasionally elevating him to the heights—the vantage point of mystics—from where life looked and sounded like the second movement of the *Piano Sonata in C Minor,* op. 111. The second movement. *Adagio molto semplice e cantabile.*

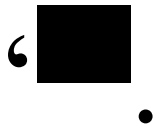
What is wisdom? Getting rid of oneself. A few suicides. Not just one—that might be fatal. Quite a few suicides, a large *number* of suicides. 90. Number of Tzaddi, a fishhook = Tanha, the clinging of man to life(9), the trap in which man is caught as a fish is caught by a hook. The most material aspect of animal life; its final doom decreed by its own lust. 108. Chiefly interesting because 108 = 2x2x3x3x3 = the square of 2 playing with the cube of 3. The Buddhists hailed it with acclamation, making their rosaries of this number of beads.

If you lie in your bed or stand in front of your window, the only window you have in your room and probably in your house, you see only yourself, not others or the cosmos or even yourself – the self that is ensconced in one of the armchairs scattered around a cottage where the self seems to live and die and eat. You see your past or the future into which, sooner or later, you will be thrown like a crumpled sheet of paper, like an empty bottle of milk.

I am not sure my attachment to the past chains me either to duration or annihilation that comes rather quickly if you do not live in the present and the future where a large sum of money is awaiting you in some casino or other. It is pointless to say that life is a casino or a prison or any such thing; it is likewise pointless to point out that life is everything and everybody, for the simple reason that I am fed up with all these shortcuts and global definitions which do not say anything either to yourself or anybody else. There is nobody else, in accordance with all these definitions; or there are only others, which is even worse than any definition or stroke.

In Tarkovsky's film *The Mirror* you see his mother, his wife and probably all his nieces; and also a particle of Soviet history swarming with concentration camps and victories in the Second World War. I do not know if I need the past and Gagarin whose journey into fear and outer space overwhelmed all Soviet citizens – even those who hated not only their native country, but also communism, Marx, Engels and Hegel. I have just checked the contents of my hard disk and realised I no longer have the Encyclopaedia Britannica which might furnish me with an appropriate piece of information regarding Gagarin's exploit. I never took part in the demonstrations during which my fellow citizens carried placards that said, 'Three cheers for Stalin,' or 'Four cheers for Khrushchev, Bulganin and Solzhenitsyn.' But once I paraded on Red Square and even up and down a few streets of Moscow when Gagarin stood on the Mausoleum, his face displaying a cheerful, cosmic smile. Now I should rather replace all these parades, smiles, placards and mausoleums with my mausoleum:

Is it not big enough? After all, I am eager to put in it a greater part of my former years, minutes and sensations; and loves, and hates, and whatever, whatever, whatever, as they say for argument's or any other sake or sake or vodka. All right, all right.



Anyway, whatever I do or whatever, whatever, whatever, whatever, I cannot reach my past; I can only reach *for* it, which does not amount to the same thing or past or future. I say to myself, 'I'd like to see my mother's face and immediately I realise I have to cope with the following piece of information:

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And if I do my best to fill this diagram in, I am offered a second face:

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> His spaceflight brought him immediate worldwide fame; he was awarded the Order of Lenin and given the titles of Hero of the Soviet Union and Pilot Cosmonaut of the Soviet Union. Monuments were raised to him and streets renamed in his honour across the U.S.S.R.
> He never went into space again, but took an active part in training other cosmonauts. He made several tours of other nations following his historic flight, and from 1962 served as a deputy to the Supreme Soviet. Gagarin was killed with another pilot in the crash of a two-seat jet aircraft while on what was described as a routine training flight.

Magnanimously, a few minutes ago I let him die once again. Much better than serving as a deputy to the Supreme Soviet, isn't it? Let the past die as well: much better than being just a thing of the past. I use a lot of odds and ends, old ones. Much better using old bits and pieces than writing brand new ones. I might already have used them several times. So much the better.

One need not experience a war and its festival of terror and deprivation to discover the fundamental injustice of human existence. The death of a pug can inspire the train of thought that led Buddha to the Tree of Knowledge, to the final renunciation.

Why do so few people renounce life and its fake enjoyments? I have seen human souls burst out of their prisons and, like merry birds, like demented bats, cover heaven with their zigzag flights. I have seen the pain-distorted features smooth out and become tranquil and luminous.

The thirst of a thoughtless man grows like a creeper; he runs from life to life, like a monkey seeking fruit in the forest. I am running from one life to another. At least that is what I have always thought.

I might have done it within the bounds of one and only one existence. What is the difference?

ONE TOO MANY, TWO TOO MANY

When you begin to tamper with your personalities, let alone with your substances about which no one can say anything definite, let alone definitive, you get into trouble and this trouble of yours is a sort of bonus you are given by your destiny bent on diversifying your life to the utmost. You are badly in need of amusement parks and fairy tales at the end of which you become a multi-something, which is better than staying where you are, being a mere minus-everything. And if, upon reading a report where they refer to a major multinational food company, you feel you have grown as big as the general director of this company – after all, you have been growing since your embryohood – you say to yourself it is far more profitable to hold this post than to proclaim from the rooftops, 'I am Shakespeare and Borges is his prophet.' Besides, if you are Shakespeare (just because you read one of his plays), you are also everyone, according to his prophet and protector, and being everyone – down to the poor, to the bottom of the heap – is not your tin of caviar. Nor is it your lobster; nor is it your cup of white tea. It is not even your cup of the ordinary black tea one can buy in any shop, provided it is not situated in the former Soviet Union.

If you just have a sort of double which might remind you of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Dostoevsky, you can easily tame him (I am speaking of myself, not of any woman), bringing him down a peg or two; and even three pegs are not excluded under the circumstances; unless you are dealing with the Devil, which happens in Dostoevsky's last novel. Usually his heroes and heroines do not demean themselves by talking to angels or imps: rightly or wrongly they think such a talk or relationship would be beneath them as if even angels could be found only at the bottom of the heap – of the human heap at that.

They recognise the Almighty at once and we can almost hear the praises they heap on Him as they (Zosima, not Osama) bring us up to date with their magnanimous exploits and sacrifices that are sure to remind us of St Anthony, St Francis and even of Sebastians, of their arrows and pillars or columns or whatever. And they seem to say to their admirers and worshippers, 'You can visit the Dostoevsky website for up-to-date information on the latest feats of our spiritual valour.' At least an Englishman I have known for some time pretends he saw a few remarks of this kind during his electronic search for information stored either on Google or Gogol – the name given to the treasure house dedicated to Russia and her heroes.

'The Russians are convinced,' he said, 'that in any religious domain they're always orthodoxically right – like the Pope, you know.'

'What of it?' I said. ('What of anything and anybody?' I might have said. I did not.)

'Do you know how they praise God? Have you never joined them?'

'Never,' I answered.

Suddenly he burst out into song and laughter:

All hail, our Almighty! Hail to Thee, our Saviour and Redeemer!

All hail, our Almighty! Hail to Thee, our Saviour and Redeemer!

All hail, our Almighty! that shalt be our Messiah hereafter.

'When? In Act Three?' I asked.

'I don't mind helping the Russians out occasionally, but this is getting beyond a joke.'

'What? Our Messiah hereafter?'

'They firmly believe my fellow citizens are money-grubbing atheists who think only in terms of royalties, castles and soccer hooliganism. "Could you go over the main points of your argument again?" I said to them. But they're impervious to criticism and rational argument. They just go on singing.'

Whenever a member of our Christian society is asked to choose a number, they (all of them) invariably utter the word 'three' as if they could not count till ten. Of course they might implicitly deny the influence exerted by the Holy Trinity on our mundane affairs, and they prove almost tangibly – if they allow you to touch their bank accounts, their attachment to tax havens – that they should rather have four million than three million, even if (they are told) three million sound holy and four million unholy. 'We can make them sound holy,' they say as they put on Bach's *Mass in B Minor*. While listening to it rather attentively, they keep on repeating, 'Four million, four million.'

Ky-y-rie four million, four million, four million

Four mi-i-i-i-leison

Of course we must admit that, at some distant point, even pagans got involved in the creation of this spiritual mathematics. Since Plato we have always thought of the Godhead as threefold; and of the Godbody, as some materialists point out as they scrutinise our spiritualists from their nook or cranny. And our spiritualists answer thus: 'The body is the dark prison, the living death, the sense-endowed corpse, the grave thou bearest about with thee, the grave which thou carriest around with thee, the thievish companion who hateth thee in loving thee, and envieth thee in hating thee.' Sometimes it is pointless to wish to extricate oneself not only from human history but also from a tangle of remarks and nonsense in which one gets entangled as soon as one tries one's best to disentangle oneself from everything with the exception of one's own freedom.

One sits in the middle of a room and looks at the wall opposite, even if there are no walls around him, even if she sits in a field where cows and others graze: some farmer or other grazes cattle on this land in the summer months. You may ask this farmer to graze you as well, although, in this case, you will have to explain to him and his wife why you want to deprive his and her cows and other herbivores of their portions of herb (and vores). In this case (and many other cases) you would say to him you wish to forget yourself and renounce any acting, however harmless and minimal. 'My aim has nothing to do with the audience and their applause, you know,' you point out, pointing down; at the herb. 'I was Macbeth, Hamlet, Dante, Beatrice and Juliet. And people applauded my performances of Shakespeare and Ionesco. But now I discard their applause, their flowers and emails. I'm bent on becoming what I am.'

Of course you are reminded at once – no one is likely to miss such an opportunity – that a sergeant (or a colonel) says in a Shakespeare play, 'From now on I'll be what I am.' In other words, this colonel of ours no longer yearns for the title of general. 'No, I'll remain a colonel or a sergeant to my dying day, until the month of May when I wish to die in my sleep.'

'So you're doomed to stay in the domain of theatrical performances and farces,' they say to you as you continue to graze your herb alongside cows and other herbivores; sheep, for instance.

'No, I'm already myself. And I keep myself away from theatres and theatre-goers. Give me a teddy bear.'

They hand you one and you do what anyone would do in your shoes: you fling the bear into the air.

If you have a double – and that is what happens if you stay inside Dostoevsky's or E. T. A. Hoffmann's works – you cannot fail to oppose it, otherwise you will not put into practice Darwin's world-renowned survival of the fittest. You might keep your unfittest status for a while and then you will drink yourself silly, dead, buried and probably resurrected, on condition that you do not drink too much in your tomb. If you are to have a double, it is better to pray for a companion of the opposite sex which is not as opposite as all that, mind you; at least androgynes teach us a lesson of unity and non-opposition. And if they (others) continue to pester you with their opinion polls ('Do you think feminists are right? Do you think we should imprison all machos?') you answer, without departing from your dignified airs, 'You're talking to a woman, to my better half.'

But the woman you harbour not only in your bosom but also in your substance is likely to be even more priggish than you are: she goes to church every other day, whereas you are inclined to be lazy, paying visits to icons and deacons only once a week – on Sundays. Whenever your better half comes back from church, she upbraids you, giving you a piece of her mind and categorically declining to give you a piece of her body. 'But you're my double,' you say to her, trying to reason her out of her folly and prudishness.

'So what?' she asks. 'Actually,' she adds after a while, 'your real double is Satan in the flesh.'

'I've seen him perform on television, but never in the flesh,' you answer half-jokingly, half-seriously: your wife does not want you to spend the evening cracking jokes and telling cock-and-peacock stories or funny anecdotes. And of course you remind her that you prefer Tolstoy to Dostoevsky to whose demons, Satans and their acolytes or satellites, you have always been allergic – even in your childhood when other children played with demons and teddy bears.

'So you worship neither Dostoevsky nor Grotowski nor Borges,' your wife or double points out, pointing at the portrait of Shakespeare.

'No,' you say as you gently push your feminine double towards the bed where you habitually consume around 30% of your sexual drives.

But your double – not your triple, whatever our Christians say – persists and signs, as the French always say when depicting a stubborn individual about whom you often say, 'Her stubborn streak makes her very difficult to work with sometimes.' And whenever you say to her, 'You know, my dear colleague, for all your beauty I can't work with you properly.'

'On account of the stubborn streak you seem to have detected in my substance?' she asks.

'Yes,' you answer saying to yourself that there is at least one informer among your colleagues and other acquaintances.

'You need to have a competitive streak when you're working in marketing,' she says.

'Don't confuse streaks, or else!' And you wag your finger sternly at the stubborn woman.

'Can you show me the streak you have in mind?' she asks you. You come closer to her body and gently touch one of her cheeks. But, contrary to what our Christians always do, she does not turn the other cheek which stubbornly remains out of your reach and touch.

'Are you sure you've just touched the right cheek?' she asks.

'I've just touched your left cheek,' you answer. And so on and so forth – to cut a long story short and sweet.

Why? Because the woman you kept in mind for more than a minute is not your double, whatever you may feel in her presence or absence; so that it is pointless to waste your time on a human being you cannot push around. And you are as pushy as I am: like author, like Madame Bovary. It is therefore little wonder – or no wonder at all – that in the meantime (while thinking about the stubborn woman) you continued to push your double towards the bed where, according to Leibniz, a great deal of sexual delights must have been stored for you since time immemorial.

'No,' says your double as she disengages her body from your embrace.

You never know exactly what to do with your doppelgängers; at least you know you are not Siamese twins and consequently making love, spending hours and hours in the same bed, quoting and enacting Othello's immortal words (on her, under her, in her mouth) are not really out of the question. The point is your double, triple or quadruple is liable to send you to Hell where you will spend if not eternity, at least a few hours in the course of which your better half might betray you with pedestrians and former fellow students. And no sledgehammer argument (however sledgy and hammerish) will ever make her (or him) change their minds and attitudes. And if you dare belabour the point or even go as far as to hit the nail on the head, as Wittgenstein used to say to his students, they threaten to call the police, saying, 'Would you sleep with the Devil? He is your real doppelgänger, you know.' Whenever they add 'you know' to whatever they say and do, you grow nervous because you do not know the first or any thing about their talks and deeds; and, frankly speaking, you have no wish to know anything of the kind, whatever the kind or unkind they may allude to through gestures, words and looks. What you covet with all your might and impotency is your double-triple's body and hisherit's caresses that have the knack of soothing your nerves and even Achilles tendon.

You often think in terms of trinity, even if your main preoccupations lie with your double's body and in your own existential cares such as making ends meet or putting ends to your many-sided Angst. And at some point you might say to yourself that the Holy Trinity and Its derivatives are sure to get you off the hook on which you were longing to hang yourself. So you begin to pray and your prayer – given that you know no prayer by heart –

sounds like the soundtrack of a film shot in a distant land. Of course it is shown with English or French subtitles, but when they kneel down and get carried away by their communication with God, no subtitles help you understand what they are talking about: you are supposed to know their prayers by heart. And you know perfectly well that their prayers are identical to yours, given that the plot is set in a Catholic country.

Never mind, never mind: whatever you do and however long your complaints and grievances are, you are not likely to understand a word of what you hear unless you switch the TV off and set about searching for the Lord's Prayer in your library. While engrossed in your search, you might repeat 'O Lord, o Lord, o Lord,' as often as you can, but this prayer of sorts – or rather this truncated version of the Lord's Prayer – will not spell out the denouement of the story, its happy ending which enables the hero and heroine to enjoy their lives and loves in a spacious bed installed on the east coast of Italy.

So what you hear in the film may (and does) sound like the gibberish I start talking or writing whenever I aspire to get rid of words, their lies and truths. MLka' mkt,r fdmok oliuh po kµlzql=rd,xfgbvkl,lskrfdj ri uh'ouh ij d lkj nwj vnij nokjs mo jeoi ezoi jreoi r – as usual, with slight variations. Here is a set of variations on the following theme: :<ws; ,vlkjzser hjiuoz(r's

Here is the above-mentioned set:

:lkia"nh 'eiubuyhinh fopze, rp oithnç! J(rtùp*

_ E.OO09IUH IUpmi!uh ziço nhsuih fioq nerkjrfh noçsdinuf^ào ikerpoàtfu nçsir ujngoimj eqorim jiçoe'un çiuojhaoi ujnçioz' nç!à i

Of course one might say that all the prayers we address to God sound thus; and they mean exactly this and that and zot and nothing else, whatever we add to them as we utter the word 'God, God, God, God, God.' =lk jj hiu bnij, O Lord. What is more – and this time it cannot be less – whatever we say and undertake means mlqesikr hjfliu hblsrn. He stepped out onto the balcony to address the multitude below. What did he say in his address? R'al jrvomia" nrgizqe nrvjk w. Easy, isn't it?

Instead of flinging the teddy bear into the air you just talk your gibberish for a while or not a while, and your double nods in agreement as she makes with you (hand in hand) for the bed where you always make love after uttering your prayers – as if you were on the point of consuming your meal. Actually in your bed you also consume your meal, your nuptial or sexual meal, provided your companion wishes to share this meal with you and not with your neighbour. Do you recall your first meeting? You felt at once you were facing your double, not just your soul (or body) mate. So you said, 'You must come round for a meal sometime,' and your companion in fortune – for once it is fortune you are fiddling with – nods in agreement, shaking your hand or kissing you on the left cheek. Two days later you have a gorgeous meal in your Spanish, 16th-century, canopy-embellished bed. Mo inhzei brguio hqiud kj bxjlhf bqil htui hiut ha"lijkr nk ,n jhbvgctuyf. Of course it lasted much longer, but you are not very fond of socialist realism, are you?

In days of yore I knew a woman – I still know her in spite of my memory's proverbial fragility – whose adoration of whatever is out knew no bounds. To some extent, she herself was always out, being carried or dragged away by her passions and obsessions. For instance, whenever we focused our divided attention on literature, she would say, 'Literature is over and done with. What remains can be found only outside.' And she would scribble something that might be put in the boat I have already filled to the brim with my doodles and =lk:,n ,jhg vé"ikjrf

,kzqsld, bklj ndrfkjnjahV BCRUJH2AN3?4M% TKFSL+VC. Of course one might justifiably call this boat a *Narren Schiff* or Shape up or ship out; or just put all this down to dada's uncomfortable legacy.

Anyway, she was also keen on Grotowski's methods that she demonstrated by going out and looking at me from the outside – from my garden, of all places. 'Can you see me?' she would ask tantalisingly.

'Yes, I can.' Whenever uttering this piece of nonsense, I am always tempted to use the Obamacare battle cry: 'Yes, we can,' in spite of my reluctance to mix with all these wes, others, cans, tins and tin gods.

'Can you touch me?'

'No, we can't,' I would answer after much body-searching as I say nowadays: it is far more pleasant to search your body than your soul.

'Do you know why? Because you can't rule me. I'm not the waves, you know.'

She thought she was being funny and I did all I could not to dissuade her from tampering with words and notions. When indulging in this game of yours, you might gain momentum (sometimes unwillingly and unconsciously) and transfer your attention and tempi to human bodies – to my body, for instance. Yes, we have. Yes, I have a body one can write home about, even if I do not lose 20 pounds in the course of three weeks.

'Grotowski was always out,' she used to say when speaking of her own outings with gusto and unbounded joy. 'Even when riding a horse he was out,' she explained, after asking me if I had ever ridden a horse.

'No,' I answered quite frankly.

'How do you intend to ride my body if you're out of practice?'

'At least I am *out* of it,' I pointed out.

'For once you should be *in*,' she pointed in. 'If you were used to riding a horse, you would understand you shouldn't interfere in her internal affairs.'

'How so?'

'So how.' She was giggling uncontrollably and had to leave the room to pull herself together. After pulling herself together (Yes, we can!) she came back – her comings and goings had already got on all my nerves without exception – and said, 'Horses are in charge of their own legs. In other words, you should on no account identify with your horse.'

'Can't I identify with you?'

'You can't. No, you can't. I'm a beautiful horse but a bit too frisky for an inexperienced rider. I could throw you off, you know.'

'Do throw me off, I beg of you. Isn't it the only way of getting out?'

Theoretically, you might have fewer problems with trinities of any kind, which explains the spread of threesomes and love triangles (they are truly eternal and infinite). When in doubt, you consult St Augustine in whose thoughts and sermons our triads are almost innumerable; in any case, they are eternal, infinite and omnipresent.

> In the soul: to be, to know, to live (*esse*, *intelligere*, *vivere*); to be, to know, to love (*esse*, *nosse*, *diligere*); memory, intelligence, will (*memoria*, *intelligentia*, *voluntas*). In connection with God: God is the ground of insight, the cause of existence, the order of life (*ratio intelligendi*, *causa existendi*, *ordo vivendi*); He is the truth of doctrine, the origin of nature, the happiness of life (*veritas doctrinae*, *principium naturae*, *felicitas vitae*). In all created nature: permanence, difference, congruence (*in quo res constat*, *quo*

discernitur, *quo congruit*); to be, to know, to will (esse, nosse, velle). In God Himself: eternity, truth, will-love (*aeternitas*, *veritas*, *voluntas-caritas*).

THIRTY_TWO VARIATIONS

In Man Himself and Herself: time, lie, will-hate (anti-*aeternitas*, anti-*veritas*, *voluntas*-anti-*caritas*). Or non-*aeternitas*, non-*veritas*, *voluntas*-non-*caritas*. Or minus *aeternitas*, minus-*veritas*, *voluntas*-minus-*caritas*. In God Himself and Herself: +, +, +. In Man and Woman: -, -, -. Or _, _, _. Or ¿, ¿, ¿.

In the soul: to be, not to be, not to know (*essa*, *messa*, *Odessa*); to be, to know, to love (*esso*, *adesso*, *compromisso*); memory, intelligence, will (remember me, I know that I know nothing at all, the will of man is by his reason swayed, the reason of man is by his will swayed, the will of man is by his whim swayed, the whim of man is by another whim of his both swayed and destroyed, another whim of man is by a whim of woman swayed and annihilated, the whim of a woman is by nothing whatsoever either swayed or destroyed).

What frustrates one and many is the sense and nonsense of intoxicating freedom (you are never free) enjoyed by one's doppelgänger who refuses point-blank to spend an hour in your fraternal or sexual grip. They say you are poles apart, but you cannot rely on your knowledge of Cusanus and his doctrine of opposites that meet and enjoy everything together – everywhere, everywhere: in beds, in parks, on benches, on beaches. And your dialogues on which you count in spite of your numerous failures and the insults you have to endure, slowly turning your cheeks this way and that, bring no solace in their wake, no promise of Paradise or, more modestly, of a night in a faraway relais châteaux.

'Let me remind you we're poles apart,' your doppelgänger says.

'Don't you know that opposites meet?' you answer.

'We are *poles*, not *opposites*.'

At this point in space and time – you are far from any divan, any kiss – you may recall both the Holy Trinity and the advantages it offers to those who believe in it and use it for practical purposes. In religion, the pragmatic approach to problems is often more successful than an idealistic one. You can speak about fathers, sons (touching upon Turgenev's novel) and ghosts for hours on end without taking advantage of their offer that is always in the offing, as they say to us in churches and even in Hyde Park, London's green lung. Let us not forget that this lung is often used by preachers, by Billy Graham (Billy Kilogram, as his admirers call him) and his descendants who say you should *adopt* Jesus Christ. You have already adopted Him *light-heartedly*, just letting Him touch your heart and eyes from which a few tears might drop on the grass, on an anthill or on a butterfly. Now you should reach another stage, holding Him in your arms as long as you can. And then you put Him on your lap and sing a lullaby for Him and His weary nerves. And all of a sudden you hear (out of the blue, no doubt) a few endearing words, 'Daddy', 'Mummy', 'Auntie' and 'Uncli'. That is what Billy Ton of Bricks said last year in Hyde Park and also on the radio, on television, on the Internet, so that millions of Amazons heard him.

You say to two friends of yours, 'Let us play a trinity game. Do you know how to play it?'

'Let me be your son,' says one of your friends.

‘Let there be no mistake about my proposition,’ you say to both of them. ‘It is Plato I have in mind (and body, mind you), not the Marquis de Sade. As I told you last night, since Plato it has been usual to think of the Godhead in threes.’

‘Let us build our nest in a chestnut tree,’ says your first friend.

‘I like your pragmatic approach,’ you answer. ‘But let me go first through *all* the contents of my suggestion. Will you, will you, will you, will you?’

‘I will, I will, I will, I will,’ says your first friend.

‘My will is yours,’ says your second friend.

‘Plato had conceived “the being of the good” as a unity of the good, the true, the beautiful (*Symposium*); and another triad embraces God (the Demiurge), the eternal world of Ideas, over which He gazes, and the cosmos of becoming, which He brings forth.’

‘You’re God,’ says your first friend.

‘And you gaze at your own ideas of which we know only the very first thing.’

‘And I’m also gazing at the cosmos,’ you say as you look at your friends and a few nearby trees. And you go on as if nothing had happened and no word had been uttered. ‘Plotinus has the triad of the One who is above being, the realm of Ideas, the world-soul. And, finally, the Christian Trinity: Father, Son-Logos, Pneuma (Holy Spirit).’

Let there be no mistake about the game I am about to describe. One might light-mindedly assume that you always content yourself with the role of God, of the good, of the true, of the beautiful, of the Demiurge and Father. Of course you might say to yourself, ‘It’s good for old people to stay active if they can.’ Thanks to your schemes, you *can* and *must* stay active – beyond a shadow of a doubt. What enables you to stay active beyond measure is your carrying out all your rituals beyond doubts and their shadows. You never doubt you will find a lot of beautiful partners: sons and daughters, nephews and sisters. And fathers sometimes; and mothers, now and then.

So you become the Son and the Holy Spirit – in your turn. And they never say to you, ‘In this game if you give the wrong answer you have to miss a turn,’ for the simple reason that in your game all answers and questions are given well beforehand. Nor does anyone dare point out while looking straight at your face, ‘I’m sorry, but you’ll just have to wait your turn like everybody else.’ And if such a thing does happen, you become God, Father and the Demiurge once more, if only for a few minutes. You upbraid all those who overstepped their limits and quote King Lear, ‘The whip.’ After all, you are His Majesty too.

You can become anybody as long as you encompass and possess what is traditionally called ‘Our Will to Power’: we either wish to conquer the world or triumph over ourselves and our frustrations. You stubbornly seek happiness and you find it at the end of the road you took; and while you are about it, you can take two roads and travel along them and up and down until you find your happiness. Actually it is much wiser to take two or even three (yet another trinity) roads because one single road seldom, if ever, leads you to real happiness, offering you only unreality in every shape and form. You enjoy a lot of visions and revelations, but then you come to your senses and our reality comes to them as well. And you burst into tears that drop on the grass and also on your jacket and trousers unless you wear a raincoat to protect your clothes from your own tears.

Well, your will to power can be called by a different name because you do not *always* seek to conquer the world and its riches. I, for one, would not know what to do with the world, if I had *one* in my hands, within my reach and even in my house and garden. I for one, as they say; as I say from time to time. But the world is many

and if you conquer one world, you will have to conquer all its counterparts as well, otherwise you might have unpleasant discussions with your fellow creatures who often ask each other, 'How many worlds do you have?'

'I have two worlds in my bed. What about you?'

'Ever since I read about Giordano Bruno's suffering, I've worshipped him. So I have an infinite number of worlds both in my bed and in my living room.'

Well (will), you have this will to might and you might begin all your propositions, phrases and remarks by the word 'will' instead of saying, 'Well, well, well,' as you always do when at a loss for words. Well, let us sum up the situation I got involved in when I set about tackling numbers and their numerous applications. To some extent we are all cabalists – not only when, like many kings, we count out our money, if any, if any, if any, if any.

What did they use to say about Nietzsche whose 'will to power' and 'superman' got on an impressive number of nerves? 'He's a small man with a big ego – that about sums him up, doesn't it?' But let us not forget that our will to might might get us off many hooks, even in the course of our trinity games which do not always go smoothly, although whatever they call 'plain sailing' does occur in the process from time to time. You sail, sail and sail, and everything seems plain to you until one of your partners says, 'You're my son, but the third man or woman is *not* the Holy Spirit, whatever you think and hope for.'

'I'm not fond of schisms within the Church,' you answer.

'To avoid any schisms and Luthers, we should kick him or her out at once. Besides, your bed is a two-lover bed, not a trinity divan.' The best way of summing up the predicament in the midst of which you found yourself is to say that it is 'absolute chaos'. You sum it up and say to yourself and probably to your partners that the only way out of the situation and off the hook is a manifestation, a demonstration and a parade of your will to power and full enjoyment. In other words, once again you turn into God the Father instead of flying around like the Holy Ghost; or any other ghost, for that matter. 'Ghosts can also walk and crawl,' they point out, but you explain to them that the Holy Ghost mostly *flies* around to demonstrate the holiness associated with hisherits substance. 'Are flies also holy?' they ask you whereupon you recall the Holy Inquisition and the tortures to which itheshe subjected itshishers prey. So you just answer (cautiously and prudently), 'I want to see my lawyer before I say anything.'

Incidentally, I am fed up with all these his, hers and its. Why not call everybody it or zero or one or two or three? You just say, 'The Holy Ghost mostly flies around to show off the holiness associated with any zero substance.' And if asked, 'What kind of blasphemy is this?' you answer, 'I've just zeroed in on the Holy Ghost's body.'

'But the Holy Ghost has no body,' they say and point out.

'Not even a glorious body?' you ask.

'You confuse the Holy Ghost with a dead human,' they point out, say and declare.

'I want to see my lawyer before I say anything,' you round off.

Chaos is the right word, even if the Bible's teaching enlarges upon the order created by God and called 'the Creation' or 'the Big Bang' in the wake of which a lot of mountains and lakes began to spread around the Earth, allowing animals and humans to disport themselves and show off their wills to live and other wills, powers and fragilities. My description of our history as a riot just about sums it up, I suppose, but one should not limit one's aspirations to descriptions and the right word that *may* crop up now and then on a page or on a guru's lips. Neither gurus nor philosophers should content themselves with explanations and analyses: they should make their utmost

to change the world we have been living in since time memorial; since those times that still say to us, 'Remember me.' (Other times are outside the scope of our scientists and interests.)

Chaos, chaos, chaos. L:eknkjb jh bkjs nd:kvjqn jktf nkld, mokh njihr nbjl nglkj: hnsliuhn jsljdbjunk:ln ,k:nkjbhjbjhbjhnbkjnjk. Then our Almighty flew over this chaotic nest and organised or structured it as follows: night, light, day, the Earth, heaven, meteors, stars, Jupiter, God the Father, God the Son, the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, the sun's rays are at their most powerful at midday, man, woman, serpent, apple, apple pie, Newton reasoned that there must be a force such as gravity when an apple fell on his head. According to these Scriptures, God also created Newton and Nils Bohr – in the course of the Seventh Day; and according to Leibniz's sworn deposition.

Chaos, chaos, chaos. Whether you sum it up or deduce it from your bitterest experience, IT is always chaotic and it may even outgrow its own chaos, if you define it as he, she or my boy. The boy you are talking about is so boisterous (and boyish) you cannot control it. And you are not supposed to put it on a lead because it is your son and not your dog. Well, however long you indulge in your trinity game, you end up landing up in chaos where sons, ghosts and the gods wreak havoc on your perception of the world, on your representation of it or he or she or zero and nothing.

You are not the only individual whose struggle for harmony and joy comes to the fore in the scriptures of all kinds. (Even in *the* Scriptures you find the vestiges of this Mozartian struggle.) St Augustine himself seems to have paid tribute to this infatuation with 'spick and span', as some people call the Old (Christian) World Order. The saint teaches us that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one power and one wisdom, 'no otherwise than one God and one essence'. He then inquires how it is that, in speaking of God, the Latins, say, 'One essence, three persons,' whereas the Greeks say, maintain and affirm that we are dealing with One essence, three substances or hypostases. Big deal, in other words. Actually this deal is really too big and St Augustine ends up reducing it to the end that justifies all means and odds. 'One,' he writes unequivocally. 'One and only the One, the only One – in *all* human languages,' he says as he continues to blacken a few sheets of paper lying on his writing desk of sorts. (Just a large strong case that is used for storing clothes and personal possessions.) He goes on to explain that even if you are determined to avail yourself of the above-mentioned ultra-profane ceremonial arch-insolently called 'The game of Trinity', you should not neglect the unity and equality of the Trinity as irrefutably demonstrated in the Scriptures. But in real life, during a real ritual carried out by St Augustine's scholars, the Son may forget His manners not only once in a while, which could be tolerated, given the equality dissected and proved by St Augustine, but all the time, day in day out and even at night: now and then you get so carried away by this holy ceremony that you and your partners obliterate time altogether.

Of course you encounter no problems of any kind, if you yourself play this part, unmindful of the suffering that lies in store for you. Your life is full of wisdom and love that you share with sages and gurus (those ignoramuses), and you shun riches in any shape or form: coins, clothes, cars, swimming pools, palaces and Francis Bacon's masterpieces. It is true that only two persons follow you and one of them is God in the flesh, but you are not accustomed to going into details and splitting hairs, which would be all the more inappropriate since it is a game you got involved in this morning, right after sunrise. Whenever you play this – or any other game, come to think of it – you lord it over your existence and the world you have within your reach; and also any *word* you happen to come across when wandering through your mind. For instance, you feel like tampering with the word 'God', which is quite understandable, given that one of your partners is God or His spitting image. At least he says

whatever God said to Moses and other prophets: this person reads the Bible as often as Philip II did – every day, every Godish day, as the Russians put it. (We should on no account confuse Philip II with Don Carlos in whose honour Giuseppe Verdi composed his opera inside which Philip performs his famous aria. Nor should we confuse Philip II with *Juan* Carlos and *Don* Juan.) So you yield to your linguistic temptation and fiddle with the word 'God' to your mind's content. God, go to, go to, dog, dodo, do-it-yourself, do-it-with-God, let-God-do-it: His know-how is far superior to yours. After a while, you seem to *light* upon the meaning of this word that illuminates a lot of issues at stake – to be or not to be, among other dilemmas. After all, to be or not to be is also a language game; or a life game; or a trinity game: to be or not to be or to be in between, living from hand to mouth. 'How can you get by on so little money?' 'I struggle for life so as not to use Prince Hamlet's bare bodkin.'

Your boisterous son or cousin – in case you are in charge of the Holy Spirit (not the Holy Ghost or Grail) – forgets his manners and even humanity to which he prefers his own prosperity. (And posterity, as maintain those heretics who persistently associate Jesus Christ with Mary Magdalene.) He becomes a Renaissance pope in all his splendour except that there are no Michelangeli at his command. And if he asks you, 'Didn't I commission the Holy Spirit to paint Adam's birth?' you doodle for a while all over a sheet of paper:

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'I didn't ask you to paint Jesus Christ's ordeal and death,' says the pope (alias your prodigal son) and you answer him as follows, 'Just my idée fixe. I'm a flagellant, you know.'

'Would you care for King Lear's whip?'

'No, thank you. I've got Nietzsche's whip in my possessions.'

'I prefer this,' the pope eventually says, pointing at ϱ. 'This looks like a baby boy.'

So you blow this baby up:

'What's the title of your picture?' asks the pope. '*The Babyhood of Adam*?'

'*The He-Zero*,' you answer.

It is hard to play the Holy Spirit's part because no one really knows what all this is about: the Holy Spirit, His status, His looks (apart from his wings), His intentions, His collaboration with God and His Son (not with the Holy Spirit's son: He has none), His occupations (He is not just a go-between, is He?). If you ask a housewife what she thinks about the Holy Spirit, she is sure to ask you to go into details that might help her to understand the difference between spirits and ghosts. 'I see a lot of ghosts,' she might say, 'and some of them are certainly holy. And some of them are as melancholy as a melancholy piece of music.' She sings the piece of music she has in mind and then the conversation you struck up to find out who is the Holy Spirit gets a move on.

'Some of your fellow creatures call Him the Holy Ghost because they see them in their kitchens and elsewhere. But they can't touch Him. That's why they think they've come across a ghost.'

'Why not a spirit?' asks the housewife.

'Because they use this word differently. A woman might say, for instance, "Although he's now living in America, I feel he's with me in spirit." But the Holy Spirit isn't with her in spirit unless she goes to church every other day and prays every night. She doesn't, you know.'

'Vodka is a type of spirit,' says the housewife.

All these conversations lead nowhere and this time the nowhere you reach has nothing to do with either *Nichts* or Nirvana where there are no cares, no dares (don't you dare), no dears (no dear unbearable wives and husbands), no tears except those you shed when listening to Mozart's clarinet or harp. As for the Holy Spirit, you content yourself with the information you may chance upon in magazines and any of the *Mails* where they explain to you that you can rely on the Holy Spirit's compassion whenever you cannot shake off this cold or that cancer. Your body shakes with sobs, but the cancer stays and outstays its welcome, even if a huge lorry goes through the village and all the houses shake as if dancing St Vitus's Dance. And you envy those people in southern California who were shaken awake by an earthquake; shaken but not taken: they are still alive and some of them are kicking. When did this earthquake make its appearance in our papers, on our screens? When did we actually hear their screams? It does not really matter: all Californians are shaken by earthquakes on a regular basis. (Not only San Franciscans, mind you.) So you conclude there are no cancer patients in California, and you say to your friends you wish to settle in the United States of America, on the West coast. 'Go West, you know,' you add as you recall Buster Keaton and his *General* that might convey you to California in the twinkling of an eye.

'I wish I could join you,' they answer. 'Freedom of speech and freedom of thought are both denied under the dictatorship.'

'What dictatorship?' you ask. 'Am I again in the Soviet Union?' you ask yourself as you cast your mind and body back to 1972.

'Sarkozy, Merkel, May, June – they're all dictators, tyrants and blockheads. They've got blocks on their shoulders.'

'I'm looking for freedom of health,' you answer.

Some maintain that the Holy Spirit is identical to Logos, but their arguments do not hold water, for all their eloquence and gesticulation. They say that God the Father speaks only to prophets, making no exception to this golden rule. 'He doesn't even speak to little girls, to Bernadettes,' they add displaying a few family albums where Bernadette's meeting with the Holy Virgin is depicted in minute detail. 'We're pilgrims, all of us,' they assure you, making their way to the cupboard where they keep their boots and rucksacks.

‘All right,’ you say. ‘I believe you on the strength of what you might show me and also my wife. But let me remind you we’re talking about the Holy Spirit.’

‘The Holy Virgin is also a spirit now,’ they say putting on their boots.

‘The Holy Spirit flies from God to humans. Yes, in a way He is a go-between – whenever He is on His way, that is.’

‘Are you talking about this film based on *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*?’ they ask.

‘I’m not,’ you answer. ‘Have you ever seen a dove?’

‘Dove therapy, intense care, shampooing?’

‘A white or grey bird, often used as a symbol of peace.’

‘I saw a lot of them on a monument to Marx, in Moscow. Mad about his head. Clever, wasn’t he? By the way, the park that encloses the monument has recently been enlarged.’

A few specialists say that the Holy Spirit is a finger of God – one of His fingers or the only finger the Almighty can boast about, assuming He needs to boast about anything. Let us not forget He is omniscient and omnipotent, and one or even ten, twenty fingers are nothing in comparison with omniscience or any human science: differential calculus (let alone quantum mechanics) is far more important than one finger unless this finger belongs to Rachmaninoff – the thumb he used when recording Schumann’s *Carnaval (Reconnaissance)*. Besides, this finger wrote the law we have to follow to the letter, otherwise we might find ourselves in Hell, in the circle where the illiterate study Indo-European alphabet, spending one-fortieth of eternity on every ABC. A, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a, a. And so a, and so b, and so c. ‘Does she spell her name with a C or with a K?’ they are asked. ‘With a C, with a C,’ they answer before putting the following question to their guru, ‘What’s K? What does that mean?’

‘Let’s wait and see,’ answers the guru.

‘Wait?’

‘You should wait for nine million years. And then you’ll see the letter K. Are you ready for the song?’

‘What song? Which one?’

‘Today’s song is in the key of C. Let’s sing it for two hundred years.’

THE ILLITERATE:

C, C, C, C.
Let us sing our C, C, C.
How long does our C last?

THE GURU:

I shall say, ‘*Bastà*, blast, blast!’

THE ILLITERATE:

Are we out of harm’s way?

THE GURU:

K is far, far, far away.

THE ILLITERATE:

Dry and monsoon, hur-ri-cane.

Is the B-might on the wane?

THE GURU:

What about A, A, A?

THE ILLITERATE:

Quite forgotten, I'm afrai.

We always have the Scriptures to lean upon and they speak to us about Holiness, Ghosts, Spirits and menwomen in whom they settle from time to time to prove they are not as far away as the stars that many lovers offer to their beloveds as tokens of their worship. And the Russians sing about such lovers who sing in their turn, 'I'll pluck a star from the firmament and give it to you as a birthday present.' And theologians affirm that these star-attracted individuals are inhabited by the Holy Spirit: 'The blood of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who has been given unto us.' Petia offers a star to Katia; at least he thinks he holds a star in the palm of his hand. Sure enough, the Holy Spirit *may* look like a star, if he feels like it on the spur of the moment. Alas, the moment goes away, so does the spur, and HeShe becomes HimselfHerself; and Petia say to Masha, 'I'm sorry, I wished to give you a star, but you'll just get the Holy Ghost. Awfully sorry, my dear girl and future wife.'

'I prefer the Holy Spirit,' say both Katia and Masha, 'and I respect it boundlessly in the light of what I read about its exploits in the domain of love. "Sprinkle a few herbs on the pizza," says a human being to another human being. "Sprinkle a few loves on humanity," the Almighty said to the Holy what's-his-title.' So your partners lie down on the floor and you sprinkle a few herbs on them, saying, 'One love, two loves, three loves.' Then you lie down on them and prove beyond any doubt that a few herbs are tantamount to a huge amount of love, passion and whatever they say during the ceremonies you often watch on your Tantra Facebook. You eat a loaf of bread and your partners call you an ogre, pointing out you have just consumed a few children and Jesus Christ. Then they try and eat your body, saying it is through the Holy Spirit (alias your body) that we are reconciled unto God. In short, you all eat whatever lies within a one-mile radius of the house and the French version of the Scriptures speaks of your meals in the chapter entitled *La grande bouffe*.

The English Scriptures affirm that the Holy Spirit is the Gift of God and 'God is not in the habit of showering us with His gifts unless we begin to count the trees one can see and touch in Siberian woods, saying, "Number one, number two, number three. I touch the first gift, I touch the second gift, I touch the third man."' 'That's right,' says the priest, 'you've just touched the third *man* because the whole universe is human. But for humanity and its presence in our laboratories, quantum mechanics would make no sense. The same goes for God, whenever God goes, stops at nothing or lies in His bed. Our nature's nature is of a divine and natural, organic origin. Everything is I, you, Thou, Tao, Lao, tsetse fly.'

Muddle, muddle, God and trouble. 'Decide what you want in life – don't just muddle along,' says your mother you might have seen in Fellini's 8⅔ or in Felloni's 8⅝. And you realise (with the help of Rousseau) that any addition to your body and mind and games and forest will always result in a muddle, in a lot of trouble and in three weird sisters.

You'll be King
You'll be great writer
You'll be great pianist

You'll be womaniser
You'll be maniser
You'll be miser
You'll be nothing
You'll be cigarette ash

Why didn't St Francis enlighten the flora of the Dark Ages about God's laws and His mercy and the way He entertains His children? Did he really think that no tree could hold a candle to nightingales and seagulls? Because neither trees nor bushes have ever sung for us their serenades? Because neither Keats nor Chekhov dedicated their masterpieces to them? And what about *The Cherry Orchard*? What about the cherry trees they cut down in the coda of the play? Incidentally, the coda is often more technically difficult than the rest of the piece: it is easier to talk for the sake of talking than to manipulate an axe. It is no wonder that so many lumberjacks lost their fingers and forearms before the advent of power saws.

My gardener said to me once (and he probably said it twice or even three times ((trinity))): 'Your walnut tree is dying. (So are you, by the way.) In my opinion, it stands there screaming in agony.' I realised I would not succeed in making him change his mind by pointing out I heard no screams, no whispers – nothing to remind me of the tragedy we all participate in, whatever our biblical status. It is true that, for all their crowns, trees are probably not the jewel in the crown of Creation – partly on account of the role they played in Adam's spectacular, prize-winning fall. (No ski jumper will ever beat him either hands down or hands high, as the New Zealanders say and do.) And they are not very good at sharing their worries. But even their deep-rooted Angst can be heard now and then – in the twilight zone. No doubt my wife was eager to cut a long story short (not to cut the tree down, mind you) and so, without further ado, she headed for it, pulling a pendulum out of her pendulum-pocket. Two minutes later she said the tree was quasi-immortal, offering me a priceless opportunity of enjoying its beauty either within the twilight zone or outside of it – from my balcony.

Our diametrically opposite attitudes or stances must provide a lot of amusement to those extra-terrestrial scientists who have enough time or eternity to turn their attention(s) to my fellow creatures. Some of them – St Francis included – think that trees and herbs (we often forget they have medicinal properties) do not deserve God's grace and our theses. As for birds, God takes the trouble to feed and clothes them – rather magnificently, one might say, so that, understandably enough, one gets the feeling they are always dressed to the nines as if thinking only in terms of balls and other festivities. And what about cherry blossom or *sakura* (not to be confused with the Russian film director Sakurov whose name is believed to originate in this item of Japanese beauty)? Shouldn't we evoke imperial balls and parades whenever our eyes and minds take it all in: cherry trees, their symbols and prophecies?

And what about their memory? You kick a tree – just for fun (although I, for one, fail to perceive any fun in this gesture of yours) and the insulted (humiliated) tree collapses under its own weight (or under the firmament's Atlas-unsupported mass) and makes a hole in your house. And for the first time you realise how close the

firmament is to your garden and even to your body that might use it as a blanket, if need be, if it finds itself well below the poverty line. Here is the poverty line:

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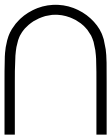
(And you are right here.)

Doesn't it look like any other line? For instance, if you cannot walk in a straight line, the line you visualise looks exactly like the line above. And here is the firmament:



The universe is not infinite, is it? By the way, the firmament is often compared to a nightcap – especially by those who saw it descend upon them in their gardens and even in the streets where other pedestrians did not seem to notice anything unusual. Once again, death goes hand in hand with sleep and your mothers, nurses and doctors say you have nothing to worry about: you are just falling asleep, deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper. You are already below the life line, but you continue to hope against lives and deaths, against doctors and nurses who shake their heads and speak of corpses and funerals. The firmament lies on your head, your nightcap, your nightcap of champagne; and you recall Chekhov's demise in a foreign country where a doctor (yet another doctor) said, 'Let him drink a bottle of champagne – he's on the brink of everything.'

Sleep well, sleep well, sleep well, sleep well.
Eternity is a well, eternity is a well
At the bottom of which we lie asleep
And no beep'll ever awak'us, no beep.

'We like your lullaby,' say a few specialists, 'but you're bitterly mistaken, if you think that eternity has any bottom, however bottomless.' You can object to their objection by making them realise to what extent your future incarnations are important in your present existence and non-existence or demise – in the *mise-en-scène*, as Shakespeare calls it. 'Every bottom is the beginning of a new era,' you say in pontifical tones. 'Didn't we start a new *vita* in 2012? Don't you know that the Earth vibrates much faster now? The whole planet seemed to vibrate as the inaugural year rushed through. That year sped through eternity with a whoosh.'

'Yes, our mother seemed nervous and visibly shaken,' say psychiatrists.

But let us go back to trees and their vengeful spirit that can bear grudges for centuries unless someone (not necessarily a lumberjack) grasps an axe and fells Great Birnam; and some other woods into the bargain. Suppose

the tree we spoke of some time ago falls on you and not on your house: after all, your house caused no offence either in this life of its or in any other life. At this point (of no return) you might preach to the revengeful culprit about the need for forgiveness, going so far as to ask it to turn the other cheek. Lo and behold, instead of crashing through your house's roof or your grey-haired head, the tree begins to turn.

> As I did stand my watch upon the hill,
> I look'd toward Birnam, and anon, methought,
> The wood began to turn.

Anyway, you prefer trees to humans, and even if Great Birnam wood crashes through your head, your stomach and intestines, you will say to God: 'I'd rather be assassinated by this wood than by Macduff. I have no liking for human beings and I wonder why I hankered after crowns, coronations and suchlike. Had I become the king of this wood, I might have been spared this ignominious death. Actually I wonder if it's better to die under a tree or under the firmament. You die under something or someone – it goes without saying. You're always under, so to speak – not only in your grave where you find yourself below the-surface-of-the-earth majestic line. We are all suicides, whatever Dante might have thought when writing Canto XIII of the *Inferno*. Oscar Wilde thinks we kill everybody through our looks, loves, handshakes and just shakes, whatever their origins (the milkshakes we offer to children). I think we kill ourselves throughout our lives, as some doctors say as they warn us against any emotion, any motion, any unrest, any inquest. "Don't move, don't move, mountains don't move," they repeat and we go on (lie on) staying in their hospitals and beds – bedridden, guilt-ridden. Then we get up, fall in love, beget a lot of children, get a lot of money as we go and get this job and that, spill a lot of milk (or milkshakes) and cry over it inconsolably. And yet we know we shouldn't cry over this or any other milk because it is just milk and not a human being – our dearest daughter, for instance. But we are not unaware of the fact that we spill everything and everybody, not only the milk we poured into a jug. "Let's see if I can pour the juice into the glass without spilling it," we say to ourselves. We realise that whatever we hold or contemplate boils down to a few symbols and signs – to Great Birnum Wood about which both Shakespeare and Baudelaire spoke so eloquently. (Every wood is Birnum wood: it is really Great.) The juice we pour (we *are* poor things) stands for our life, and the glass is nothing but the universe. It is nothing, to tell the truth, given that everything amounts to death and our permanent suicide; and this suicide of ours has nothing in common with Leon Trotsky's permanent revolution. (It does have something to do with it: isn't any revolution a suicide? However bloodless and useless?)

Needless to say – and yet we are duty bound to say it – you spill your life while pouring it into the cosmos and often, after years and years of meditation and remembrance, you analyse the drops you see on the tablecloth (on your shroud) and shed a few tears that do not necessarily mingle with the remnants of your spilt milk. So you inevitably come to the conclusion we already reached some time ago; many years ago, as a matter of fact. Life is nothing but suicide in slow motion; or in quick motion, as the case may be. Or it is just nothing, as many gurus point out during our spiritual aerobics.

Sometimes (and this phenomenon might happen rather often) you hear the word 'nothing' that makes you shudder, although it is not addressed to your persona and consequently has nothing to do with your fundamental or acquired insignificance. But whenever you hear this word – unless it designates and depicts nirvana – you have an itch to dispose of it by fair means or foul. In this case, the foul means they allude to do not necessarily end up

in murder, foul or otherwise; you just cover a sheet of paper with a number of four-letter words because, in your opinion, the void is even worse than four-letter words and four-letter thoughts. So you doubly blacken this sheet of paper and they censor it as if you were invited to show it to television viewers or recite it in Carnegie Hall.

Dear Mon,

The reason I am writing to you is: Mr. Wolf would come to Brussels next Saturday (February 10th) if Mr. Aleff has the time to meet him. He would arrive in the morning and leave around 3 pm for Amsterdam. Since he is probably travelling with his dog there might me restrictions concerning the place.

Could you please speak to Mr. Afanassiev and tell us whether he would like to meet Mr. Wolf?

Best wishes,

Elli

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Is this email better than a sheet of paper covered with four-letter words? What if I say I have no time either on my hands or feet? Upon receiving my answer, they are likely to conclude I am in the very midst of the void or at the bottom of the well above; in spite of the word 'above'. Even the sky has a bottom – the Earth or our graves, coffins and even our muffins, considering that whatever we do or eat is tantamount to cemeteries. And if they say to you, 'With the right food you can avoid getting it – or even REVERSE the symptoms,' you ask them first and foremost, 'What's IT?'

'Any disease you can think of,' they answer, whereupon you think of all the diseases you have come across either in your body or in others and their destinies. At some point you realise to your absolute horror that you have forgotten a mouth ulcer. 'Plant variety is important,' they go on.

'Graves,' you answer.

'Are you a fan of Robert Graves?' they ask. Just for fun, I suppose, you suppose.

'Graves,' you answer.

'The addition of just two different types of fruit and vegetables a week has been associated with an 8 per cent reduction in the incidence of Type 2 diabetes.'

'What about *three* different types of fruit and vegetables?' you ask.

'Type *3* diabetes,' they answer.

'Graves,' you proclaim from the rooftops.

Press Q to quit the program. You leave the roofs and their tops (and top of the world), get down and fall asleep. And fall, and fall, and fall, fall.

The Russians duplicate the Americans when speaking of their universities' heads or headless horsemen (directors) – of those who are in charge of the Moscow Conservatoire, among other 'high educational establishments'. In my student years (I am not an eternal student) I used to come across our rector often, which might seem odd: I was reluctant to meet him not only inside the Conservatoire, but also in the streets where, being short-sighted and

absent-minded, he would have taken no notice of my anti-Hitchcockian persona. Whenever we met within the Conservatoire walls, however, not far from his office (cabinet) – even in those day he was no long-distance walker – he would ask me, 'How are you?' I always replied, '*Nichego*', which might be translated as 'nothing' or 'no news is good news', whereupon he invariably informed me that *nichego* was an 'empty spot'.

In those days I limited my response to a vague, more or less remorseful smile that spoke volumes for my ignorance of Buddhist lore. Now I might quote a few examples of Buddhist logic:

To share in the life of the foolish will lead to the states of woe;
You share not, and they will hate you; what good comes from contact with fools?

Good friends at one time, of a sudden they dislike you,
You try to please them, quite in vain, – the worldly are not easily contented!

'So you have no friends?' he might say, staring at the emptiness he created out of nothing.

Trees do not show disdain, and they demand no toilsome wooing;
Fain would I now consort with them as my companions.

Logical, isn't it? But you should not aim kicks at tree trunks, whether they sound hollow or not. Why should you?

So I shall go out and meet my manager with whom I might have worked for ten years at least, if one day we had decided to work together in earnest. But neither of us is really earnest in this domain (today's world of music) because you cannot take concert tours seriously, given the quality of the audience and those who influence our judgement, our relationship with the arts and life as such – as a moment centred upon nostalgia. Even at the very beginning of our journey we dream of our mother's womb and vice versa – our mother's womb dreams of our body and its accessories. We rush somewhere, find each other, plunge headlong into wombs and tombs and get out, disappointed, all wet, hungry, thirsty and lost, utterly lost. And if our colleagues put a few ritual questions to such a wanderer, the answer may be jocose and misleading, 'I had to cycle in the rain and got soaking wet.' You do not talk about your nostalgia to your colleagues, friends and relatives; at least you do not feel like talking to them about your mother's womb, and your reluctance in this domain is all the more justifiable since everything we encounter is our mother's womb, even if all these things, and ding-dongs, and bingos have nothing in common with its shape and hospitality. Frankly speaking, I am prepared to go out only on condition that I shall find an equivalent of Russia or my adolescence in the arms of an old woman, in the streets of Paris, Florence.

I shall meet my manager at the Midi Station in Brussels where some Russian expatriates cried as they tried to visualise St Petersburg for the sake of their nostalgia, memory, longevity and dignity. This could be done, if only in part, in the Royal Park, not far from the Royal Palace which might remind one of two or three of the palaces I see not only through my mind's eye, but also in the midst of reality; and yet sometimes I think I am losing my grasp on reality. This paragraph blurs the line between reality and fantasy, and the only line of this kind I am able to reproduce either in my thoughts or on a blank sheet of paper looks as follows:

If you wish – and I do wish it – you can spoon-feed your imagination and others by putting two words alongside this line: one above, the other below. That is what all this looks like now:

REALITY

FANTASY

REALITY: I certainly do not lead a life of luxury but I am not poor either.

FANTASY: When I started I was just a poor boy from the slums – now I am a multimillionaire.

REALITY: Here is one of my poems:

A dream, a what, God
does not,
nor angels, nor fawns and their
siestas with Nijinsky.
Only a manuscript found in Gossa

FANTASY: I wish I could write such a poem:

Vivir quier conmigo,
gozar quiero del bien que debo al cielo,
a solas sin testigo,
libre de amour, de celo,
de odio, de esperanza, de recelo.

(I want to live with myself,/I want to enjoy the good that I owe to heaven,/alone, without witnesses,/free of love, of jealousy,/of hate, of hope, of fear.)

I might have written this stanza (by Fray Luis de León) had I lived another life, had I known the Spanish language; had I spoken it fluently, had I written several masterpieces in it (Don Quixote, Sancho Hote).

I did live another life, otherwise I would have lived no lives at all, wandering through streets and cities like a demented organ or knife grinder whose knowledge of the world is confined to one melody and a forthcoming suicide. I do not recall this life of mine because it was not entirely mine, I suppose, being shared with love, hate, jealousy, fear and loneliness. What shall I say to my manager? We have nothing to discuss, to build up for the sake of future generations that will live through their own hates, loves, fears and music. I shall just invite him to lunch, extolling the virtues of Belgian beers, not of the children I have not had anywhere – neither in my arms nor successive rooms. When at a loss to know what to do or say next, my colleagues usually open their wallets and fish in them for their children's photographs. 'This is John,' 'this is Mary,' 'this is Peter,' 'this is Sara,' 'this is

Mara,' 'this is Karina, her nickname is Kara,' 'this is Marina, her nickname is Mara,' 'this is her husband, his name is Jean'.

'Jean *et* Mara?'

'That's right.'

So I shall say to my manager, 'I'd empty this glass of beer, if I were you. But, to tell the truth, I can't say I'd give anything to be in your shoes. Frankly speaking, I'd give nothing – not even next to nothing – to be either in your shoes or in your trousers. My wife affirms I may embark on another existence in the near future, and I can assure you that neither your trousers nor your mind will take part in my new incarnation.'

'I've got a new pair of trousers to go with this jacket. And I could give you both the pair and the jacket. As for my mind, I'm afraid I must keep it for the sake of the artists I'm working with, present company excepted.'

'*Gozar quiero del bien que debo al cielo,/a solas sin testigo*.'

Cielo, *celo*, *recelo*. (Heaven, jealousy, fear.)

Mercutio is looking for Romeo whose high jump allowed him to get much closer to his Juliet's balcony.

Appear thou in the likeness of a sigh,
Speak but one rhyme and I am satisfied.
Cry but 'Ay me!' Pronounce but 'love' and 'dove'

I speak two rhymes: *Cielo*, *celo*, *recelo*. Or three rhymes: *Cielo*, *celo*, cello, *recelo*. Or four rhymes: *Cielo*, *celo*, *cello*, *ello*, *recelo*. Ello, hallo, lo and behold. Hold and lobby. Old and hobby.

Rhymes are intimately associated with our intimacies, with our better or worse halves, as the case may be and often is, whatever we might undertake to thwart our destiny's plans. For instance, we say, 'You're my dove/and love,' whereupon we kiss both our dove and love, which always amounts to the same kiss and being, being identified and united by the rhyme Mercutio suggests in the very middle of his search for Romeo. Of course we have no need of others, be they Juliets or Romeos, to take advantage of rhymes' generosity and perspicacity. If we say, for instance, 'All over the world, the pacifist movement is gaining increasing support among young people.' If in need of emphasising the universal character of this phenomenon, we might draw the crowd's attention to the following rhyme: Blood – *ad*. *Ad* means 'hell' in Russian, and you add, by way of explanation, that even the Russians regard the appearance of blood as hell – for all their Stalinisms, Leninisms, permanent revolutions and atomic bombs.

If you wish to lose 15 kilos, you had better go about it in stages; otherwise you might land up in hospital where your heart attack or stroke might be ill-treated, misunderstood and thrown to vultures along with your body, with its unconscious and consciousness. Incidentally, in the Soviet Union, they used to treat both strokes and heart attacks efficaciously, as they thought and wrote in their reports. 'What's your verdict, doctor?'

'A stroke.'

'Where should we bury the corpse? The streets are already littered with rubbish.'

'Several old cars had been dumped near the beach.'

'But our corpse isn't a car, is it?'

‘It doesn’t even look like one.’

‘Let’s just dump it.’

Heart attacks were treated in a similar vein.

So you go about everything in stages as you listen to the voice of reason or to popular, traditional and time-validated wisdom. If you lose 8 kilos in one month, you find yourself near a beach – not *on* a beach, mind you, given that, to all outward and inward appearances, you are not about to expose your substance to the sun and its beneficial (maleficial) influence. So you ask a pedestrian, ‘Did you dump my body near the beach? I’m not an old car, to the best of my knowledge. Do you think I’m an old car? Do you think I look like one? Do you think I look old?’ Usually pedestrians do not answer such questions: they are too pedestrian for that. They just utter a few four-letter words and leave you alone (*solas*, *o solas mio*).

By losing the world you do not lose everything and everybody; you just remove from your field of vision (wherever it can be found within your body) so-called others and their whims, woes and noes. And their noses that are used to poking into your personal life, into your unconscious and also into your former lives which are not as former as might be presumed: they surface now and then, causing too much trouble. So you should not think you lose the world, whatever they say when discussing the matter with you or a television host. They try to convince everyone that others are the cat’s whiskers; in other words, there is only one cat in the world, but you have to cope with so many whiskers you wish you were dead and buried on condition that the whiskers are unable to tickle you in your coffin. No, you do not lose the world created by yourself: you not only represent the world you see around you – you also create it out of nothing (not out of these whiskers anyway). No, you lose neither this blade of grass (of grace?) nor that shoulder blade you cannot ignore on the grounds that you do not see it.

You cannot and should not ignore anything, but you are allowed or rather advised to discard whatever strikes no chord in your being. (I would be well-advised to avoid the word ‘substance’ altogether, otherwise...or else...) You see a shoulder blade and say to yourself, ‘I don’t mind this shoulder blade in spite of its inborn nuisance. I mean its owner is sure to make a nuisance of himself (this shoulder blade belongs to a man, not to a woman) unless you resort to your Ockham’s razor on the spot, without further ado or do, do, do. Don’t do anything before cutting this shoulder off from your sight.’ But if you dillydally and allow this shoulder blade’s owner to open his mouth, then you are in for a dull, unredeemable afternoon.

As for the above blade of grass, you can contemplate it to your heart’s content as you lie in the grass like one of the poets you used to read in your youth (Rossetti?). You look at it, but do not try to probe into its mysteries, into the network of its veins that might lead you into a treasure trove of nature. Why should nature or our Mother Earth invade your consciousness to the point of making you unravel the secrets of genetics (among other secrets)? You just look at it and feel a sort of pang inside your body that has nothing to do with substances and stances. What kind of stances are you likely to deal with? You know that Jenny took up a stance with her feet slightly apart, ready to catch the ball. She played with John, but you do not feel like playing either with John or Jenny or Amy. You *might* play with yourself, when in a joyous mood, and you even have an appropriate ball in one of your drawers, in one of your chests of drawers. During this self-offered game, you go through several stances and trances, and while doing so, you say to yourself it is your personal affair, as the Russians put it. (As they say, as Juliet’s nurse says rather often.) And so this game of yours does not concern anybody and consequently, for once you do not have to kick anybody out of your field of vision.

Of course this blade of grass is somehow reflected in your being (your being being what it is), but you do not analyse it; you just feel it, letting your intuition reach any conclusion it can envisage this afternoon. And if it is in no mood for reaching anything (not even this blade of grass), you let it be and it is, it is, it is. You also are and if the grass you are lying in feels any urge to confirm this hypothesis, it is allowed to do so at its convenience.

You may say to yourself, ‘This is a blade of grass,’ but you had better not add anything to this statement of yours, not even ‘So what?’ Your very life may be summed up by this expression which, at first, you adorn with a question mark. You discard this mark as you go on enjoying the universe to some extent. To the extent of what? To the extent of ‘what,’ not to the extent of ‘so what’. All right, you no longer call upon question marks so that your life looks unquestionably pure and chaste; at least to some extent. So what, so what, so what, so what. Then you get rid of so and brace yourself for ‘what’, just for what – not for a crash landing, mind you. What, what, what, what. Then you reduce your ‘what’ to ‘at’, whereupon they say to you, ‘You wrote “at” in the address instead of the @ symbol – that’s why it didn’t work.’

Of course you do not say to them you did it on purpose: you did not want it to work. (What are you taking me for?) You say instead, ‘Where’s the key for “at” on this keyboard?’

‘You missed out the @ in your email address,’ they say.

‘Where’s the key for ‘at’ on this keyboard?’ you ask them once again; by way of an answer, for want of anything better. (There is nothing better than noncommittal answers.)

‘Hold down the shift key, otherwise you’ll type an inverted comma instead of an “at” sign,’ they say, but you do not mind inverted commas.

‘ ‘

Today, in some museums and galleries (perhaps in all of them) you can see what they call (they say, they say, you said): a ‘Versogramme’ (in French). I would rather call it: ‘Versokilogram’ (in English). You type a sentence and then multiply it, saying, ‘Replenish this sheet of paper, replenish this canvas, replenish this museum.’ For instance, you type, ‘You missed out the @ in your email address,’ and you multiply it. Here is your multiplication table:

You missed out the @ in your email address

You missed out the @ in your email address

You missed out the @ in your email address

You missed out the @ in your email address

You missed out the @ in your email address

You missed out the @ in your email address

You can entitle this videogram ‘Loneliness’ and interpret it as follows:

> A human being misses out the...because this individual does not know the whereabouts of the key ‘at’. He misses...out so many times one wonders whether or not he does it on purpose, bent on removing from his life and final agony all those who might give a helping hand and utter a few words of solace. Actually he ends up typing ....and (understandably enough) no one bothers to make him realise he should hold

down other keys. So the emails he receives peter out.

For all its minimalism, the following videogram is more poignant (it is especially poignant that the author died on the day before the opening of the exhibition):

I AM WRITING INTO AN AGONY COLUMN
I AM WRITING INTO AN AGONY COLUMN
I AM WRITING INTO AN AGONY COLUMN
I AM WRITING INTO AN AGONY COLUMN
I AM WRITING INTO AN AGONY COLUMN
I AM WRITING INTO AN AGONY COLUMN
I AM WRITING INTO AN AGONY COLUMN
I AM WRITING INTO AN AGONY COLUMN
I AM WRITING INTO AN AGONY COLUMN

I AM WRITING INTO AN AGONY COLUMN

A videokilogram, isn’t it?

I am writing into a piece-and-quiet column:

‘ ‘

‘ ‘

‘ ‘

Another trinity, isn’t it?

‘ ‘

ONENITY is enough.

OUR FUTURE

WE ARE TO BE “IMMORTAL”

WE ARE TO BE “IMMORTAL”

WE ARE TO BE “IMMORTAL”

IN INVERTED COMMAS

I AM IMMORTAL

I AM IMMORTAL

I AM

I AM

I

And once again I start from scratch because I must start or finish or lie down, which is neither a start nor a finish: you can lie up, in wait or doggo for centuries, ignoring beginnings and ends. I start, I startle and once again I have to come across, to cross, to accept, to reject any trinity I find on my path that bifurcates endlessly, if we discard both death and burial rituals: you do not leave your tombs as easily as they presume upon watching horror films. St Augustine gives us a lesson during which he repeats the word ‘trinity’ many, many times, not just thrice, as might be presumed by those who presume too much and all the time, jumping to conclusions, jumping down from conclusions. In short, you are traditionally buried at the bottom of the heap or rather in its bottom: you cannot be buried on top of the world or on the last floor of the Tower of Babel. Why should you nurse such a dream? The Tower of Babel, its last floor from where, according to the builders, you can see and touch God, shaking His hand for hours, if not for centuries, given that eternity has no centuries – *pas de ceintures*, as the French put it. Within the bounds of eternity you will never hear the following injunction: ‘Fasten your seat belts,’ even if you embark on a spaceship bound to the farthest galaxy or the nearest glass of milk magnanimously offered by our Milky Way.

The One, the Ideas, the World-Soul. You are the One and you have a number of ideas that enable you to pave the way for another way or to cut a path through the jungle. You cut this path, cut your thumb in the process and find yourself in another jungle; or in your bed, which amounts to the same thing. You can see the thing in question in front of you or behind you, on the left-hand side, on the right-leg side, in the frontal lobe of the brain. And you rejoice – for no reason at all: the thing you contemplate both joyfully and ecstatically is the proverbial thing in itself so that you can see neither its intestines nor its mind’s intricacies, its big bangs. Bins, bins, bags, bags. No way, as they say – you are bound to remain in the dark, and you just do not care whether this dark is primordial or not. On the other hand, it is the big unknowns that make individuals or human beings uneasy. All right, all right. Suppose this dark *is* primordial. So what? Do you feel easier? Would you rather deal with secundordial darkness?

You are also the world-soul or over-soul which you can create by extracting your soul from your body, by laying it on the floor and by putting your body on it. Instead of hauling yourself up into a tree, into your favourite walnut tree, you put your feet on your soul and remain on this makeshift pedestal for an hour or so. That is what Emerson calls the over-soul, I presume. And if you fear you might damage your body in the course of the above extraction (open-soul surgery), you just draw a line at the bottom of the page and step on it. And if they ask you what that means, you can throw light on this episode by saying, 'I've just mounted my horse.' And you ride off, removing all others from your fields, from both your uphills and downdales.

∩

"IMMORTAL"

'What is ∩? they ask.

To all appearances, they have not been initiated into contemporary music/literature/art/fashion. If you show them Beuys's masterpieces, they ask you why they see so much fat almost everywhere – on their clothes and in their mouths. 'Was he fat?' they ask, whereupon you enlighten them on his war (work) experience and life in captivity.

'What about ∩? they ask once more. 'Is it a prison cell?'

'Don't you recognise me?' I ask. 'I'm a tall man with a big stoop. I'm riding to Paradise on my soul.'

EMERSON

Let us say you do not deserve to tackle the problem of the trinity, even if you decide to go about it objectively without hogging the road and saying, 'My ideas, my father, my son, my supersoul, my spirit, my over-spirit, my over-over.' Nor are you up to a cohabitation agreement with the Devil, as suggested by Ivan Karamazov and his mental disorder: instead of saying, 'I, I, I,' he says 'I and, I and, I and.' Or he casts a glance at a group of innocent bystanders and asks them, 'Did you see Him? Could you hear His doctrine? Last night, He said He wouldn't go against sound military doctrine as if He needed an army to combat my poor self – "your poor unself," as Aliosha puts it. "I" in inverted commas, in other words and commas and inverted.'

The women you rubbed your body with talk to you about your absence and the golden age when you seemed to love them more than your parents and your future glory. ('To the best of my recollection, you always wished to end your career in a blaze of glory.' Memento glory.) 'I miss every word of yours, every gesture of yours, every breath, so that, whenever my mother says, "You're out of breath, my child," I'm tempted to answer, "Yes, I'm out of *his* breath."

Sure enough, Juliet's nostalgic outbursts are far more articulate:

Come gentle night, come loving black-brow'd night,
Give me my Romeo; and when I shall die
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night,
And pay no worship to the garish sun.

Your ancient flames wrote to you many times, but after a while (and this while may last nine years as it salutes Dante and his Beatrice) you discard them offhandedly; so that, if one of your old friends asks you, 'Where's Dalila?'

'In one of my drawers.'

'How many letters of hers do you have?'

'I can't quote the exact statistics for you offhand, but they're there for you to see in the report.'

'But where's your report?'

'I can't show it to you right now. You've no alternative but to consult my memory.'

'You said you can't quote –'

'Yes, I can't quote.'

In these innumerable letters they said (Dalilas, Ninas, Dinas, Dinariuses) that you ought to have killed them instead of leaving their companies forever. It is little wonder (it is never *big* wonder: everything is little and natural) that you burn their letters now and then, probably on a regular basis. You say to yourself, 'It's the 1st of March. I should burn some of their letters. Coffee and the newspaper are part of my morning ritual. So are letters and their bonfires.' And you re-read *Romeo and Juliet* as you cast nine glances at the flames (ancient, new) that disport themselves in front of your eyes and memories. So do Juliet and Romeo whose tale is woeful not only on account of their respective hates-loves. They grew bored, you say to yourself, reluctant as you are to accept the explanation supplied by scholars and readers who believe in their tale of woe, in that tale of hate and love. There was some sort of hatred at the outset of this tragic comedy; perhaps this negative feeling originated in the hallowed notion 'once upon a time'. Once upon a time there were the Capulets and Montaigne; the former argued with their hereditary foes, the latter wrote an impressive number of beautiful essays that continue to adorn both libraries and the Internet.

Be that as it may, Romeo *was* bored and I do not need Schopenhauer's omnipresence (if not omnipotence) to realise that, throughout my life, I have been more or less in his shoes. We do not need Prokofiev and the music he wrote for this controversial drama to recall Romeo's departure from Juliet's room: it is engraved on our memory, embedded in our memories. What is more, we even recall Juliet's remark: I cannot stand macho men and so learn by heart whatever women say in critical and uncritical circumstances. Juliet says:

Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day.
It was the nightingale and not the lark
That pierc'd the fearful hollow of thine ear.

‘Fearful hollow isn’t nice,’ as Polonius might have put it. Never mind – we must go on, whatever they say as they deplore the woe that befell both our hero and heroine on their journey from Verona to Paradise. For all the respect that Romeo’s face exhibits in Friar Laurence’s company, Romeo does not view his life as a spiritual journey towards a greater understanding of his faith – he has none, one might hastily conclude: we do not have much to go on. Many people accept the principles of evolution within the framework of their religious beliefs and, according to many publications one may consult in the Library of Congress, this framework expels the principles of evolution; and of revolution. Romeo accepts religion and its rites exclusively within the framework of his love for Juliet who, being an incurable puritan (in American versions of the masterpiece), hates offering her body to a mere (shallow) lover.

> Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed.
> If that thy bent of love be honourable,
> Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow
> By one that I’ll procure to come to thee,
> Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite

Honour is an important word to which William Shakespeare paid a memorable tribute in *Henry IV* and also in *Hamlet* where the protagonist is honour bound to avenge his father and satisfy our sense of justice (and honour). The same goes for *Henry V* in the prologue of which the king’s (and our) senses of duty, honour, vengeance, revenge, injustice and justice come to the fore and into their own. Needless to say, they are in full swing until the very happy end and also beyond it if the sweetness we feel in our mouths is anything to go by. Of course next morning, in the cold light of day, all our senses tell us our own tale of woe. Between ourselves, all these senses, sentiments, duties and loves are stuff and nonsense to which we should pay no attention for the sake of our mental health and physical wellbeing.

I am not sure that Romeo reasoned himself out of his love through the same arguments primarily based on his health, longevity and military career. Perhaps he was just bored, affected as he might have been by Schopenhauer and the ups and downs described in the latter’s works. Either we have a lot of burning desires (it is our lot anyway unless we are a bit more zen about the circumstances we find ourselves in) or we are bored to death after doing our best to satisfy them. (Death-best; more often than not these words are synonyms.) So either we have a load of twaddle, alias burning desires, or we contemplate their ashes – to our heart’s discontent. Juliet asks, ‘Wilt thou be gone?’ and Romeo answers, ‘At midnight my love’s ashes were scattered at sea.’ Romeo might have uttered these pitiless words, but for his unquenchable desire to become the embodiment of the English gentleman. It is only on the strength of this desire that he challenges Tybalt and kills him, depriving Juliet of his company and love: he would not have met Juliet’s cousin in single combat, if he had been still in love with her.

When precisely did he get bored with Juliet? At the end of the balcony episode during which Juliet seems to have composed a few immortal poems, being guided by Shakespeare and his muses. But when Apollo said, ‘Let’s draw this night to a close, gentlemen,’ she grew less eloquent and rather repetitive as if influenced by Philip Glass:

> Tomorrow will I send.

A thousand times good night.
Hist! Romeo, hist!
Romeo.
What o'clock tomorrow
Shall I send to thee.
I will not fail.

At that point Romeo must already have been bored – but not to death, otherwise he would have let Tybalt kill him at the end of their single combat, which would have spared him the problem he encountered when looking for a poison and consuming it. Indeed, our on-the-brink individuals involved in Jasperian critical, apocalyptic, death-and-life situations habitually face the daunting task of cajoling apothecaries into a conciliatory mood. 'A dram of poison, a gram of poison,' they plead. 'Such mortal drugs I have, but Mantua's law,' answers the apothecary, 'is death to any he that utters them.' 'Forty ducats,' utters Romeo. 'Fifty ducats,' utters the apothecary. 'Sixty ducats,' writes Shakespeare as he reflects on the most appalling scenes of human misery in which apothecaries and the poor in general play the part of the crowd. ('My poverty, but not my will consents.')

When at last Juliet asked him, 'Wilt thou be gone?' he *was* bored to death and therefore might have answered, 'I will, I'll wilt if I stay with you till doomsday – till midday, rather. Cut flowers will soon wilt without water, and I'm a cut flower. And if you asked me, "Where's your water, dear Romeo?" I would answer, "Everywhere except in your room, in your palace, in your presence."' This piece of virtual reality is not as wide of the mark and extravagant as it may appear to an impatient scholar: for all his refinement ('an honest gentleman,/And a courteous, and a kind, and a handsome –') Romeo does speak his mind when touching upon his disappointments: 'With Rosaline! My ghostly father, no. I have forgot that name, and that name's woe.' (Alas, he did not forget the woe conscientiously depicted in the tale that every mind and body has always linked to Romeo and Juliet.) Friar Laurence does not say to him, 'Please sit down, make yourself comfortable and give vent to your innermost moods – we don't stand on ceremony here.' Yet Romeo insults Rosaline and his offence is all the more inadmissible since the injured party cannot answer him, calling him a boor and a Russian bear.

'It is not yet near day,' says Juliet, whereupon Romeo launches into yet another train of thought related to his late love – Is your love gone? is the right question – and says to himself that Juliet's repetitive music denotes not only her tiresome nature, but also her ignorance of nature and its inhabitants – birds, in the present instance. Of course he does not miss the opportunity offered by his baleful pre-destination and lectures Juliet on fauna and on the world and its representation:

It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale. Look, love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east.

Had he not been bored to death and in a hurry, he might have quoted Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale* and Thomas Hardy's *To a Lark*, stressing the symbolic or organic difference between the two birds. He might also have said, 'According to Plato, the nightingale was the emblem of the ancient Thracian bard, Thamyris. The bird is especially respected in Japan, where its song is regarded as an echo of the title of the Lotus Sutra, the *Hokkekyo*, so cherished

by the Tendai sect. As for the lark, its habit of rising swiftly heavenwards and falling to Earth links together the two poles of existence and acts as a go-between or *svaha*. Are you acquainted with the I Ching, with its own ups and downs? I wrote a book about it, you know, and if we had time on our hands – alas, we don't even have it on our fingers – I would recite a few excerpt from it to make you realise how important the I Ching's precepts are and to what extent we must follow them. Let us take one example only: "A halted retreat/Is nerve-wrecking and dangerous. When it is time to retreat it is both unpleasant and dangerous to be held back because then one no longer has freedom of action." And it is high time I withdrew into myself – back to barracks, so to speak; back to my palace, if you prefer. Or back to my bench in the city park, or to the wench I forsook for your sake – Rosaline, to be exact. I'm afraid I underestimated her charms and legs, let alone her breasts that shouldn't be left alone – at least as far as *I* am concerned. I hope they *have* been left alone after my inconsiderate and foolish departure. Let me tell you, however, that the lark stands for the marriage of Heaven and Earth since it flies high up into the sky and nests at ground level among scraps of dried grass. By the way, this Blake-extolled marriage has nothing to do with our liaison – make no mistake about it! The lark's flight into the bright dawn light suggests youthful enthusiasm, ardour and happiness in being alive. I'm alive, am I not? "There art thou happy," as Friar Laurence put it. Actually the lark we are listening to quotes him to perfection:

> 'The law that threaten'd death becomes thy friend
> And turns it to exile. There art thou happy.
> A pack of blessings light upon thy back;
> Happiness courts thee in her best array

'By contrast with the nightingale, the lark's song is a song of joy of which you're determined to deprive me with your tearful pleas. Why did you burst into a song of sorrow? A few minutes ago? What have I done? What have I undone? The severity of the punishment should match the seriousness of the crime. What crime are you accusing me of? All right, all right – I feel so guilty about leaving you high and dry. About chucking you, if you prefer, my chuck. But you shouldn't punish your unfaithful lover by giving him extra work, should you? You're just a supply teacher, you know.'

Romeo's arrivals and departures are quite in keeping with the overall inconsistency he displays throughout the play. 'I'll go along, no such sight to be shown,/But to rejoice in splendour of mine own,' he says to Benvolio whose pricks and kicks eventually drive him to Capulet's feast. He arrives, spots Juliet's profile in the midst of the guests and forgets all his ancient flames – along with Rosaline and her splendour. And then he departs – from Rosaline, from Juliet, from Verona and, last but not least, from his life (but not from his name, contrary to what he hankered for after meeting Juliet).

One wonders if his outlook did not somehow (the right word!) stem from Emerson's transcendental ideas among which there sticks out 'the praise of contradiction' (or inconsistency) as testified by the following excerpt from *Self-Reliance*:

> Suppose you should contradict yourself; what then? It seems to be a rule of wisdom never to rely on your memory alone, scarcely even in acts of pure memory, but to bring the past for judgment into the thousand-eyed present, and live ever in a new day. Trust your emotion.

Romeo can hardly recall both Rosaline and his love for her, and if he had relied on his memory, upon meeting her body, he would have been unable to make love; in other words, he would have forgotten how to make love. Luckily for him, he does not forget it, for he meets Juliet at the right moment and his new infatuation follows hot on the heels of the previous one, giving his impotency no time to rear its ugly head (another contradiction in terms).

CHINA

Romeo and Juliet always trust their emotions so that one might be tempted to conclude they have a lot in common, which is not quite true, given Romeo's unconscious attachment to the Chinese way of thinking. The Chinese have no fondness for doubt, being wholly preoccupied and smitten with harmony to which they used to build forbidden cities and lots of palaces. Benvolio looks at Tybalt and recoils with horror so as not to rush headlong into a controversy or a fight or disgrace or the Hereafter. Romeo's lot (or lottery), on the other hand, may be described as follows, 'The car skidded and plunged headlong over the cliff.' Throughout the play Romeo kept on rushing and logically enough, in Act V, he plunged over life or over the threshold of death.

Romeo. O, tell me, Friar, tell me,
In what vile part of this anatomy
Doth my name lodge? Tell me that I may sack
The hateful mansion.
Friar L. Hold thy desperate hand.
Art thou a man? Thy form cries out thou art.
Thy tears are womanish
('Thy tears are manish' – the definitive version.)

Throughout the play an unbiased or rather biased observer – the virtuous always opt and vote for love – is tempted to say to Romeo: 'Hold thy desperate hand. Hold thy desperate legs. Hold thy desperate sword. Hold thy desperate peace. Hold thy desperate straightforwardness. Don't climb over this ten-foot wall to get into Juliet's garden. Don't say to Friar L.: "Then plainly know my heart's dear love is set/on the fair daughter of rich Capulet." The only right word in your confession is "rich", but it's ill-fatedly misplaced – there are other rich young ladies in Verona.'

Nor does Romeo have any doubts about Juliet's death, although many people look like corpses within this life and world of ours: they go into a deep coma after taking an overdose of sleeping pills. Of course Juliet was not a drug addict and neither her father nor Tybalt had ever uttered the following words, 'Desperate measures are needed to deal with the growing drug problem.' They both spoke of desperate measures – with regard to the Montagues, and the problem they daily enlarged upon was growing indeed, for all the goodwill displayed by the Prince and Shakespeare. But, upon seeing Juliet's death-like sleep, the nurse did not say to herself, 'Jimi Hendrix too died of a drug overdose.'

Alas, alas! Help, help! My lady's dead!
(Jimi Hendrix too died of a drug((s)) overdose.)
O weraday that ever I was born.

Romeo slays Paris, sees Juliet and says to himself, without jumping to any conclusion (sometimes we just *must* jump to conclusions):

Death that hath suck'd the honey of thy breath
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty.
Thou art not conquer'd.

Mark Twain said something to the effect that the news of his death was either premature or wide of the mark or just another example of what we justifiably call 'wishful thinking'. (We just *wish* he were dead and think he *is* dead – after a few jumps and for all intents and purposes. ((For *our* intents and purposes.))) Instead of asking himself if Juliet is *really* dead (really? really? really?) he hastily concludes – he does jump to some romantic conclusions – that death is dead; at least it (he) has no power over Juliet's beauty.

Another jump and Romeo might have reached the following conclusion, 'Death has no power over Juliet's life.' It is true that, apart from fencing, Romeo was not especially interested in sport. Anyway, the long jump was not in his line of business.

Juliet, on the other hand, was not under the Chinese influence as if her catholic upbringing had always forbidden her to glean any knowledge from the Sacred Books of the East. Here is a heartbreaking instance of her doubting-Thomas nature:

What if this mixture do not work at all?
Shall I be married then tomorrow morning?
No! No! This shall forbid it. Lie thou there.
{*She lays down a knife*.]
What if it be a poison which the Friar
Subtly hath minister'd to have me dead,
Lest in this marriage he should be dishonour'd,
Because he married me before to Romeo?

Understandably enough, Romeo is as inconsistent and contradictory as his creator. In *Coriolanus* we learn that there is a world outside the walls of Rome within whose bounds many a tragedy took place in those days and ages and theatrical performances. In *Romeo and Juliet* the immortal bard turns infinity and an infinite number of worlds into a small world confined to Verona and its hereditary rivalries:

There is no world without Verona walls
But purgatory, torture, hell itself;
Hence 'banished' is banish'd from the world,
And world's exile is death.

Well, it's certainly a small world, isn't it?

where, as they say,
At some hours in the night spirits resort –
Alack, alack! Is it not like that I
So early waking, what with loathsome smells,
And shrieks like mandrakes torn out of the earth,
That living mortals, hearing them, run mad –
O, if I wake, shall I not be distraught,
Environed with all these hideous fears,
And madly play with my forefathers' joints,
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud,
And, in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone
As with a club dash out my desperate brains?

The above poem might be entitled *The Birth*.

ST AUGUSTINE

The Friar listens to Romeo who 'stand on sudden haste' and says to him, 'Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast.' The Italian say, '*Chi va piano, va sano*,' and after the Revolution, the Russians improved upon this saying thus, 'By going slower you get further – from your destination.' Be that as it may, it is not enough to make people realise they are likely to stumble if they run too fast: Olympic champions neither stumble nor crumble nor lose their balance and tumble over. Friar Laurence is not an Olympic champion and apparently he has no intention of deploring this state of affairs: he remains in our memory for a different reason which is probably more worthy of our admiration, for our Friar is a character in Shakespeare's play. Olympic champions hang medals on their bodies and go home where their relatives and friends are determined to celebrate their victories, clinking glasses and shouting, 'Hurrah.' But other champions come and beat their records so that we read in newspapers and hear in the streets, 'His time for the 100 metres surpassed the previous world record by one hundredth of a second.' Who is he? Whoever he is, he will remain in some record books for a while, for a few months (unless he is a long-jump champion, Owen, whose Christian name I fail to find in my recollection; nor do I find it in my files) and then he or she is mercilessly supplanted in their fans' affection when a new middle-distance running is shown on television, on computer screens and on the gigantic screen installed in Time Square.

Friar Laurence continues to haunt our memory; and yet he does stumble in Act Five as he gets closer and closer to the abattoir, alias Romeo's, Juliet's and Tybalt's majestic tomb. (At least it is majestic in the renowned BBC series.) For all his faults

And here I stand, both to impeach and purge
Myself condemned and myself excus'd

he is another monument we stumble upon as we continue to read the play. I wonder what excuse he could find for omitting from his arguments (if any) the Fathers' views on the subject of sex and hasty conclusions to Romeo-and-Juliet encounters. St Augustine, for one, does not approve of sex as such, even if it is wholly (not holy) permitted and to some extent overlooked by the Church. Of course, for all Diogenes' legacy, no one dares carry out a sexual ritual in the streets, on park benches, on workbenches or on planes, even though our stewardesses might tell us a lot of stories about their in-flight adventures. 'The sexual act itself, which is performed with such lust, seeks privacy,' as St Augustine puts it. Such lust? What kind of lust? Which lust is he writing about?

St Augustine explains that in Paradise our lust did not exist in its perverted state – before the advent of original sin, that is. Then original sin comes to the fore or into the open and sets our lust in motion, 'in defiance of a right will, to pursue any course which made it necessary to hold them back with the guiding reins, so to speak, of reason'. Our reason speaks to our lust as follows: 'You should behave yourself, my dear. Tonight we'll meet one of the jewels of Italy and I feel the curse associated with Adam's name even stronger than during my courtship of Rosalinde. Well, I should actually show my gratitude to Adam for setting the wheels in motion: no point in dragging about a set of motionless wheels. By the way, Schubert wrote a hymn to the wheels of lust.

'A LIFE OF DEBAUCHERY

'*Den Rädern!*
Das hat nicht Rast bei Tag und Nacht,
Ist stets auf Wanderschaft bedacht,
Die Räder!
(The wheels!
Who never like to be still,
And never get tired of turning,
The wheels.)

'But don't you roll too far, my dear wheels. Not too far, not too fast. Marry in haste, repent at leisure. Alas, I've no time to repent – I'm supposed to climb Juliet's balcony at 10.55 p.m. No children – do you hear? Can you hear me, my wheels? No children.'

Friar L. It must be admitted that sexual intercourse in marriage is not sinful, provided the intention is to beget offspring.

Romeo. Neither Romeo nor Juliet speaks of their offspring in Shakespeare's play.

Friar L. A lot happens off camera, you know. Do you think Tybalt slept like a log before his duels with Mercutio and your unworthy self? All through his life he trained hard for these single combats, sometimes running as much as 60 miles a week. Last night he ran 12 miles, muttering to himself, 'I'll kill the bastard, I'll kill the bastard.' What will you say to Juliet tonight? On and off camera?

Romeo. I'll talk to her about morning and larks. I might also drop a gentle hint regarding the inconsiderate behaviour of my rusty wheels.

Friar L. Don't talk to her about your nasty wheels – her chastity isn't used to such straightforwardness. You might quote St Augustine, though: 'The genital organs have become as it were the private property of lust,

which has brought them so completely under its sway that they have no power of movement if this passion fails, if it has not arisen spontaneously or in response to stimulus.'

Romeo. Can I say to her in plain English that she no longer provides any stimulus to my manhood?

Friar L. She's your wife, my son. Your conjugal life should be focused on children, and if this aspect of your conjugality is out of focus, you'll sing another *lied*, I can assure you.

Romeo. Which one, Father?

Friar L.

I loved Mary,
I loved Perry.
Now I've none,
Not a nun.

I have wheels
In daily motion,
Bringing meals,
My tiny portion.

One should not, however, accuse our Friar of ignoring St Augustine's tenets entirely, with a pagan-like malignancy. He says to Romeo, 'Go, get thee to thy love as was decreed,/Ascend her chamber – hence, and comfort.' He allows Romeo to sleep with Juliet on account of the wedding march he performed in his cell in the morning; and neither St Paul nor St Augustine condemn the post-wedding waltz our lovers are to indulge in before Romeo's heartrending departure for Mantua. What is more, the friar says to the nurse:

Go before, Nurse. Commend me to thy lady
And bid her hasten all the house to bed,
Which heavy sorrow makes them apt unto.
Romeo is coming.

It is as if he had quoted the following excerpt from *The City of God*:

> It is lawful and respectable certainly; but does it not require a private room and the absence of witnesses? Does not the bridegroom, before he begins even to caress the bride, show the door to all the attendants, and even his groomsmen, and all the others who had been permitted to enter because of some tie of kinship? Now, a certain 'author supreme of Roman eloquence' asserts that all right actions desire to be set in the full daylight, that is to say, they long to get themselves known. So this right action longs to become known; and yet it blushes to be seen.

Yet every friar is duty bound to know psychology, if not parapsychology and psychoanalysis; and our friar might have thought it was enough to quote St Augustine and Jesus Christ. Anyway Freud and his obsession with the Oedipus Complex on account of which so many fathers (down to the Fathers of the Church) have been assassinated

in the course of human history are blacklisted and stigmatised daily by the Church. To your children whose visceral attachment to this doctrine has already aroused your suspicions you just say, 'The Index.'

'Which one?' ask your children. 'The Dow Jones Index? The Nikkei Index? By the way, the FTSE 100 closed 31.6 points down at 2459.3 in today's trading.'

'Freud's books are still blacklisted and can't be enjoyed and dissected in the Vatican Library.'

Romeo commits suicide within the walls and vaults (and faults) of Capulet's family tomb.

CHI VA PIANO, *VA SANO*

Friar L. Saint Francis be my speed. How oft tonight
Have my old feet stumbled at graves.

THE WORLD AND ITS HISTORY

Michael Schumacher be my speed. How oft
Have my feet stumbled at graves.

It goes without saying that Friar Laurence ought to have run faster, and he would easily have surpassed his own record by a quarter of an hour, had he jogged and gone swimming as often as Tybalt or Mercutio. Well, let bygones be bygones: Romeo has been irremediably lost for the world, for the lost world we are living in despite tsunamis and nuclear power stations. But Juliet is alive and she wakes at the right moment: Friar Laurence stoops, looks at the blood and weapons and eventually his gaze falls on Juliet's wide-open eyes.

Juliet rises.

Juliet: O comfortable Friar, where is my lord?
I do remember well where I should be,
And there I am. Where is my Romeo?

Amazing, isn't it? When you take an ordinary sleeping pill, you often spend half an hour in bed: you are in no fit state to confront your daily obligations and the world's innate and insane cruelty. When you do rise from your sheets, you stumble and fall as if yearning to devote yet another hour to the nightmares you forsook, stimulated by your alarm clock. At first you recognise neither yourself nor your room, asking your guardian angel, 'Where am I? Who am I? Who are you? Are you really my guardian angel? Are you my sweet dream? Are you Romeo? Are you the friar? You look like one, don't you? You also look like Juliet. And like her father and mother. What do *I* look like?'

'O, pale,' says the guardian angel.

'According to St Augustine, angels may be good or bad, but demons are always bad. Are you an angel or a demon?'

'I am your *daimonion*.'

Juliet, on the other hand, seems to recognise and remember everything. She neither stumbles nor falls after removing her body from the sheets' and blanket's death-like embrace.

And in this borrow'd likeness of shrunk death
Thou shalt continue two and forty hours
And then awake as from a pleasant sleep.

I wish I could use such sleeping pills now and then – to ward off insomnia and eternal death. As my guru said last year, 'How I wish I could train the children to raise people from the dead!'

Juliet awakens from a pleasant sleep and seeks refuge in the Friar's comfortable arms, but the latter hears 'some noise', takes fright at the thought that 'a greater power than we can contradict', and so on and so forth. Yet he must know that God's emissaries are far more powerful than emperors, let alone local princes and their stooges. Let us conjure up images related to St Ambrose who wrote to Valentinian II, setting forth the thesis that, as all Romans owed military service to their sovereign, all Emperors (Augustus included) owed service to Almighty God. 'Even Julius Caesar,' he wrote, 'had he been alive, would have obeyed God and not his megalomaniac impulses.'

The Friar lets his soul surrender to the fear that does not threaten his life: he has not murdered anybody, and one even wonders if he is a swordsman brought up in an aristocratic family whose members can challenge their hereditary foes in the streets. (Street fighting does not require a private room and the absence of witnesses, whatever Escalus might say on the subject.) Of course they might undergo 'reconstructive surgery', as we call today all those banishments and scolding given by princes or parents who might flog their children for coming home at 11 p.m. Yet, in those days, they could not communicate by mobile phone and no SMS could inform both Romeo and Mercutio of Tybalt's pugnacious attitude and death-in-Verona tirades.

So our Friar is a pusillanimous servant of God (or the Devil, to be exact): even Romeo's servant, Balthasar, is closer to God than our representative of God and the Franciscan Order.

Romeo. Therefore hence, be gone.
But if you jealous dost return to pry
In what I farther shall intend to do,
By heaven I will tear thee joint by joint
And strew this churchyard with thy limbs.
Balthasar. For all this same, I'll hide me hereabout.
His looks I fear, and his intents I doubt.

After much soul-searching (the Friar's) we have just come to the conclusion that nothing in his soul meets our requirements, agreeing with our notion of bravery. Quite a number of scholars regard him as an amateur psychiatrist, but John Simpson disagrees with them categorically and irreconcilably: 'The psychiatrist (Friar Laurence) was found guilty of gross professional (or amateur) misconduct. Besides, he is guilty of a cowardly failure to address the problem (*Juliet and Suicide*).' 'I dare no longer stay,' the friar murmurs and we read our poor Juliet's death sentence: *Exit Friar Laurence*.

EXITS AND ENTRANCES

Exit a noble young kinsman to the Prince.

Exit Friar Laurence.
Exit Montague's son.
Exit Capulet's daughter.
Enter Page *and* Watchmen.
[Exeunt some Watchmen.]
[Exeunt some Watchmen.]
Enter [*several* Watchmen *with*] Balthasar
Enter another Watchman *with* Friar Laurence.
Enter the Prince [*and* Attendants].
Enter Capulet *and* Lady Capulet [*and* Servants].
Enter Montague [*and* Servants].
Exeunt.

'Go, get thee hence, for I will not away,' says Juliet, and Friar Laurence, for all his amateurism and ignorance of Freud, cannot fail to grasp the horror of the denouement he is living through – in spite of his forthcoming exit. Even if you read neither Durkheim nor Freud, you know that many individuals prefer the void to what they light-heartedly call their lifelong motto: 'There are plenty more fish in the sea.' Juliet does not contradict them by saying, 'There are no fish in the sea, there are no fish in the river, there are no fish in the lake, there are no fish in the fridge, there is no fridge in the tomb.' Instead, she says to Romeo, 'I'll kiss thy lips,' and she kisses them in every production I have seen so far.

Why does Juliet kill herself? There is no denying she yearns to join Romeo in the Hereafter where there are plenty more balconies and bedrooms. And there are no walls in Paradise – no walls to scale, no protective walls that hide sexual intercourse and lascivious, juicy kisses. But we should not forget Paris in spite of his death and consequential inability to harass Juliet, let alone make love to her. Of course our friar notifies her of Paris' untimely death as if to intimate she has nothing to worry about. Does he really think it is enough to put her off the suicidal game she has been playing for some time? 'I know Paris used to annoy you no end. "Happily met, my lady and my wife." His wife indeed! "That may be, must be, love, on Thursday next." How trite, how ludicrous. I wonder why your nurse thinks he's much better than Romeo to whom you offered your love in the course of that fateful ball. Well, you know your love story, don't you? But I would recall your nurse's words and comparison – just to keep Romeo's ghost and charms at bay. *Je ne regrette rien*, as Edith Piaf put it. Are you mature enough to understand these words? Doesn't Piaf's voice appeal to your senses? Are you as insensitive to music as you are to words?'

And the friar actually quotes the nurse's appraisal of the two pretenders:

Nurse. Then, since the case so stands as now it doth,
I think it best you married with the County.
O, he's a lovely gentleman.
Romeo's a dishclout to him. An eagle, madam,
Hath not so green, so quick, so fair an eye
As Paris hath. Beshrew my very heart,

I think you are happy in this second match,
For it excels your first; or, if it did not,
Your first is dead

'He's dead, he's dead,' says Juliet.

'Paris is dead too so he won't pester you again, I promise.'

'He's dead, he's dead,' says Juliet as if paying tribute to Hamlet's sorrow, predicament and fury. In short, she pays no attention to the words related to Paris' death, which come right after the following declaration: 'Thy husband in thy bosom there lies dead.'

My husband, in my bosom, there, dead, lying. Is the friar lying? I wish he were. Where am I? In my bosom where Romeo lies dead. So I'll stay in my bosom forever.

Oddly enough, even after such an interior monologue many scholars are likely to attribute Juliet's decision and suicide to her fear of Paris' advances and 'juicy kisses'. I can understand the friar's drivel or sweet talk: that is what he might have said to Juliet, had he not heard the noise and taken fright: his heart was literally in his mouth when he realised the following truth, 'The Watch is on the threshold of this family vault.' But for the life of our protagonists I do not see why Juliet's suicide is often associated with Paris' lust, libido and insolence. Of course Juliet says at some point (and I can even give you chapter and verse and act and edition):

Juliet. And ere this hand, by thee to Romeo's seal'd,
Shall be the label to another deed,
Or my true heart with treacherous revolt
Turn to another, this shall slay them both.

Of course the friar ought to have insisted on the past tense or merely on the past, on Paris's words and actions situated on the other side – on the other side of *this life*, not in the *Hereafter*. '*Used to* annoy you no end', '*used to* call you "my wife"', '*used to* lust after you', '*used to* indulge in self-abuse', '*used to* abuse you'. Then Juliet might have said to herself, 'I think Paris must be dead – the friar always talks about him in the past tense.'

Incidentally, one wonders why the friar took no notice of the knife our Juliet was holding as she proclaimed (from the rooftops, in a way): 'And with this knife I'll help it presently.'

One might also wonder why I devote so much time to this playful, mischievous, tongue-in-cheek analysis of the immortal (and to some extent immoral) play. Shouldn't I rather think about my salvation, about my life in the Hereafter and even on this Earth which I haven't forsaken yet, for all my worries and stories? A love story, a failure story, a suicide-attempt story, a Russian story, whatever it is or was. I am convinced the friar might have saved Juliet (why should I care about *her* salvation?) had he quoted St Augustine's analysis of Lucretia's shameful suicide:

> In the first place, it must be firmly established that virtue, the condition of right living, holds command over the parts of the body from her throne in the mind, and that the consecrated body is the instrument of the consecrated will; and if that will continues unshaken and steadfast, whatever anyone else does with the

> body or to the body, provided that it cannot be avoided without committing sin, involves no blame to the sufferer.

In short, however huge and uncontrollable our Paris' lust might have been, had he killed Romeo in their single combat, Juliet would have remained *our* Juliet and not *his* Juliet, his Capulet's inheritor.

> Some refused to kill themselves, because they did not want to escape another's criminal act by a misdeed of their own. And anyone who uses this as a charge against them will lay himself open to a charge of foolishness. For it is clear that if no one has a private right to kill even a guilty man (and no law allows this), then certainly anyone who kills himself is a murderer, and is the more guilty in killing himself the more innocent he is of the charge on which he has condemned himself to death.

Actually this bit of prose pertains as well to Romeo's predicament, discomfiture and criminal act ('Thy husband in thy bosom there lies dead'). Does 'in thy bosom' mean that Juliet is somehow responsible for Romeo's foolish, unruly and the-exception-that-proves-the-rule act? What rule does this exception prove? This exception proves that Spinoza was right: 'Everyone and also everything persevere in their own being.' But Romeo was the exception we touch upon when discussing our rules and laws and middle-class mores and high-class mores and super-class mores. Our super-class Romeo killed himself because he was in love with Rosaline, Juliet or the beautiful stranger, as Alexander Blok puts it in one of his poems.

> *Mer*. If love be blind, love cannot hit the mark.
> Now will he sit under a medlar tree
> And wish his mistress were that kind of fruit
> As maids call medlars when they laugh alone.
> O Romeo, that she were, O that she were
> An open-arse and thou a poperin pear!s

Medlar looks like the female genitalia and therefore stands for sexual intercourse, as our scholars point out in their books. And poperin – another fruit of sorts – resembles the male genitalia. Sexual intercourse again, forsooth! Besides, proverbially medlar is a fruit that is never good unless it is rotten to the core. Was Juliet rotten to the core? What about Rosaline? What about Romeo himself? Do you have to be rotten to the core? To wish to end your earthly existence? To wish to go to Hell? Go to, go to! Sitting under a medlar tree, putting an end to your life? What's the difference? In both cases you are spaced out. One space is called life, the other death. For a while you contemplate this dualism from afar: life and death, life and death, life-death, death-life. Then you put them together. Easy, isn't it? Two and two, life and death, death and death, death. (Ockham's razor.) And then you fling your body out of the nearest window. (*Your* window.)

What's Juliet to me or I to her? What's anybody to me and I to anybody or anything except my life, except my life? (Except my wife.) Except something or someone without whom and which and it and Thou. If I say, 'I' (and

I say it rather often so as not to forget I am in the world and not elsewhere) I mean ‘I’ and ‘I’ am ‘I’m. English-speaking countries are not keen on this kind of hypothetical talk: too intricate, too interlaced, too intermixed, too involved, too convoluted, too highfalutin (bloody metaphysics!). But I am not sure I am in any English-speaking world where only stories are told and suspense is applauded. If you hear applause in an English-speaking world, you immediately conclude that this manifestation of joy and recognition means the following fact: deus ex machina has just arrived. There are also characters in the English-speaking world and they are described and lived by millions of fans who speak of Dickens and one of his Neelies and Domby’s villains and Urhaiah or Urinaia. (But what a quantum-mechanics-like texture!) ‘He’s one of those people with a very vivid imagination,’ they say to Mr Pickwick as they speak of his own persona, of his belly and discomfitures. And of the comfort they experience when reading this Mr and other Twisters. And some butlers going by the name of Anthony.

What’s Pickwick to me; with all his Urhaiahs? I am probably ‘I am what I am’, but I am nothing unless some thou or wow joins me somewhere, not too far from my bed and dreams. Apparently there is no I as such, but I think and maintain there is I as such and this I is I, whatever an English-speaking speaker or reader thinks upon *non*-reading the present paragraph. Suppose I am

I suppose every English-speaker understands what that means, even if they (all English-speakers) do not say at once: it is I or rather him because *I* am different from this *I*. All right, all right. But according to Mr Buber (Buber-Shmuber, as they say), ‘there is only the basic word I-You and the I of the basic word I-It.’ Why should I live with these basic words, whatever (whoever) they are and might be within the framework of Buber’s works? I am already

and that is enough perhaps; and perhaps is enough perhaps: my modesty knows no bounds. I do a lot of work for charity, you know, but my modesty forbids me from talking about it and whenever I am asked, ‘Do you do anything for charity?’ I answer, ‘Nothing, nothing at all.’ ‘How so?’ they ask. ‘So how,’ I answer. ‘Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?’ ‘I’m ashamed to be seen with you when you talk drivel. You always make a complete ass of yourself when you’ve had too much to drink.’

The English, the French and the German understand what

means, even if it does not mean anything. They just think it is a tombstone. All right, all right. This is a tombstone, even if there are no tombstones as such. There are a lot of tombstones as much, but not as such, according to Mr Buber and the book I found in my library. A tombstone as such is not a cemetery, as someone might put it; and only cemeteries *are*, so to speak. *Ergo sum*, so to *sum*. So let us install another tombstone by the first tombstone’s side: Does this look like a cemetery? Incidentally, if you see only one somewhere, you can call it a poem. What’s the title of the poem? they ask you in English or in French.

The Parting, you answer. 'He says there's a good chance she'll come back to him but I think he's kidding himself. The pain of parting had lessened over the years, though.'

I-it, I-you, I-you-you-you. If I pick up a cross, I can say, 'I-it' or rather 'I-Thou,' whereupon I kneel down and pray, otherwise my 'I-Thou' will be lost on Thou. (And what is the use of burning the candle at both ends if everything is lost?) So I pray thus or otherwise:

My Lord, I know I am only I and I mean nothing without Thou.
So if you do not join me within my cemetery
I'll grow mad and dead.
Of course you don't care about others' deaths,
As Spinoza puts it.
You just don't care, don't give two hoots.
All right, all right.
But here's Thy cross
And I kiss it.
I-It, I-It, I-It.

I is nothing, even if we wrap it up (or dress it) as follows: 'I' or "I". Even if we went so far as to add fuel to the fire: “’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’’I’’, the situation would not add up; nor would it add down. It would not add, end of story (add of story). So I, if it is smart enough, adds either Thou or It or You to I's ego, persona and bodysoul. Thou is much better than any It or You – it goes without saying; and without Thou, unfortunately: you should not forget that Thou cares neither about I (You) or Tao. Thou cares only about Thy Own Self which (who) is all-inclusive like a seven-night package or a resort – much more than all that, as a matter of fact. Our aim is to create a fairer, more inclusive society. Does that mean we should include Thou-Wow in it?

Thou has never been created, but Thou began to create (odds and odd ends) at some point. So Thou created I and I wonder why Thou created this I, alias Me whose efficiency would be null and void (nullisim and voidisim), but for the presence of You, whoever you are, as they say, according to Juliet's nurse.

I pick up anything, just anything, just anything, and I hear my *diamonion*'s (diabolical monion) voice: 'You'd better pick up a cross, any cross, any cross whatsoever. Symbols are omnipresent and to them both quality and historical succession are of little importance.' So I pick up a cross (the third of the four basic symbols) and say out loud, loud, loud, 'I-ITHOU, I-ITHOU.' Many non-Christian individuals say, 'Why didn't you pick up a centre, a circle or a square? They're also basic symbols.' 'Because my cross provides a link between your symbols,' I answer. 'Don't you know that Christian iconography,' I go on, 'has used the Cross to express not simply the suffering of the Messiah, but also His presence, for where the Cross is, there is the crucified? I-Thou, you know.'

'What about Juliet?' they ask. 'What about I-Juliet, I-Romeo?'

What about anything and anybody? What is created and creates is within the scope of my life, visions and meditations, for I belong to this category and can add what crosses my mind to my **I** created by the uncreated Almighty. I add to my **I** Juliet, Nadine, Hadja Nasreddin (I read about him in my childhood) and my other Its, Yous, yews and other trees (and some bowls made from yew) (but not bowel cancer; or any other cancer, for that

matter). I am probably a Platonic idea, and I say to myself, speaking of myself, 'It was such a brilliant idea – a real stroke of genius,' I do not mean the idea I had was a Platonic idea: I am not Plato, for all my immodesty.

Well, I create something out of something or someone – out of Juliet, Romeo and Laurence, for instance. (For the moment, it is one of my favourite instances.) And I wonder why Laurence (of Verona) is so abysmally self-reliant in spite of his unbound respect for God to Whom he should address a prayer, whenever some of his fellow creatures find themselves on the brink of ruin; and this state of affairs is so current they call it 'eternal recurrence'. It is true that Emerson does not fail to inculcate a sense of pope-like infallibility into his numerous and irresponsible admirers: 'Let a man then know his worth, and keep things under his feet. (Like a serpent, I suppose.) Let him not peep or steal, or skulk up and down with the air of a charity-boy, a bastard, or an interloper in the world which exists for him.' Friar Laurence neither peeps nor skulks up and down, and he does not seem to pay much attention to the exercises recommended by Loyola. At least he might have prayed (a Loyola exercise par excellence) before talking to Romeo in his garden where he sings a St Francis- or Emerson-inspired hymn to nature – prior to Romeo's visit.

> Now, ere the sun advances his burning eye
> The day to cheer, and night's dank dew to dry,
> I must upfill this osier cage of ours
> With baleful weeds and precious-juiced flowers.
> The earth that's nature's mother is her tomb:
> What is her burying grave, that is her womb;
> And from her womb children of divers kind
> We sucking on her natural bosom find.

Emerson also puts an emphasis on the medicinal properties of nature: 'The day, immeasurably long, sleeps over the broad hills and warm wide hills. To have lived through all its sunny hours, seems longevity enough.' You need not become a mystic to contemplate a landscape from your balcony, saying to yourself and your wife or husband, 'Whenever I look at that tree over there, I add another year to my life.'

> 'You must be pretty old by now,' says your wife.
> 'Whenever I listen to the wind, I add a huge amount of happiness to my existence.'
> 'You must be pretty happy by now,' says your husband.
> 'I've just found out about the pay cut and I'm not a happy camper,' says your nephew.
> 'Listen to the wind,' you say, pointing to the wind.
> 'Can't hear anything,' says your niece.
>
> (Everybody hears Mozart's symphony going by the name of *Jupiter*.)

So Friar Laurence is in his garden and I wish I could follow his example – alas, this country is in the depths of winter – because neither Romeo's dismal adventure nor Juliet's participation in it appeal to my sense of honour and my other senses and innate optimism. And, according to common readers, you should identify with the heroes you are reading about, otherwise you would waste your time instead of playing tennis with your relatives, provided they have never won a grand slam. Needless to say, I am in total disagreement with these commoners. I identify

only with myself: for all my Christian upbringing and fervour, I am not prepared to imitate Jesus Christ or rather the torture to which he was submitted. Of course I can say to everybody, 'Love everyone, my brothers and sisters, and you'll have no problems on the threshold of Paradise. And you shouldn't forget that the tightest spot one can find oneself in is an embarrassment of riches.'

I have no idea whether Friar Laurence ever spoke to flowers, but I am pretty sure he indulged in interior monologues rather often – to the detriment of prayers: these are *exterior* monologues. He could not be unaware of Romeo's visit, although he had not got wind of what had taken place in Capulet's castle – only a few hours before his garden-focused ritual. Sure enough, he all but forgot both God and the Lamb of God as he went on trimming off the leafy ends of vegetables before cooking. Yet he knew a man or a woman would come to him forthwith in search of a piece of advice, for his wisdom was renowned in many worlds – well outside Verona. (He was even more famous in Mantua.)

As he picks his flowers and smells them one by one, he says, 'Many for many virtues excellent,/None but some, and yet all different.' Today, we seldom inquire about the virtues abundantly showered on us by herbs and those whose hands hover over our heads in search of a cure, of the final resurrection. The problem we are facing – it is all around us – boils down to our nerves' behaviour that seems to predict so many disasters that we cannot even cope with the thoughts where all these disasters can be found and probably studied by some Freud or other. Or by some youngster we have never heard about, but to whom we are prepared to offer the contents of our future because we no longer believe in classical knife-and-surgeon medicine. A knife, a hole, the beating of our illness-distorted heart and someone says, 'Curtain, curtain,' and something falls from somewhere; whereas a herb our friar selects among a myriad of herbs fast-growing freely and fully in his garden are sure to adhere to our puny constitution, turning into one of its parts that is undistinguishable from the rest. Those medicinal, organic herbs do not attack our cells – even our much-vaunted aspirin does, according to the latest research – and we grow with them, paying no attention to their otherness because they are ourselves, our very I without any You, It, Thou and other implements of woe.

Friar L. (*off camera*): When you see the way love and death are represented in Shakespeare's works, you get so upset you go to your garden and pick any flower you chance upon – our patients believe in flowers, especially in the one held by the Buddha during one of his sermons. (I must have this particular flower in one of my chests of drawers.) I should try and protect all these psychological sufferers from the negative emotions they encounter behind every corner and even in their kitchens, their cobweb-invaded attics. People are asking for anti-depressants if they fall in love or out of love, if they trip over a carpet in their living rooms. Only a few years ago they would have said, 'Shit, shit, shit,' bracing themselves for forthcoming shocks and the final liberation or timely revelation. Why can't they wait, I wonder? Wait and don't swallow all these pain killers or rather life-and-joy-and-faith killers, I say to them as I point to one of my flowers or to a *brin d'herbe*, if they happen to be French-speaking. Or even to a tree that has just put all his leaves on display as if to say, 'Here's your health, here's your Juliet, here's your immortality.' All right, swallow your pills, but don't forget they can turn your lives around or upside-down, and I've no idea which metamorphosis is better for your overall wellbeing. In my opinion, it's rather good for your badbeing, for your life-long depression, for your suicidal attempts, for the pavement lying in wait for you under your favourite window. Keep this window shut, even if, in summertime, your whole constitution often comes to the boil. I know that more and more people ask for anti-depressants as a quick fix because either they're not used to feeling sad or less able to tolerate it. So I say to them, 'Have you ever heard about Ignatius of Loyola? You

haven't? It's high time you devoted your time to his exercises in which, among other things and beings, he gets in touch with the Holy Virgin, saying, 'Please, talk to Your Son about my worries, my unfortunate love, my bank account and the anti-depressants I swallow day in day out. Alcohol is a depressant and I don't drink it any more for fear of throwing up or throwing myself out of the window that I keep shut – just in case. But if this case does arise (instead of Your Son or the Holy Ghost or yourself; or Macbeth) I'm sure I won't resist the temptation and commit the sin I repudiate with all my heart. I'm neither Romeo nor Juliet, you know. I know you worship Shakespeare in spite of his inborn negligence of the Holy Trinity and its divine components. So do I – but not to the point of identifying with his heroes and heroines who drink poisons and keep a lot of daggers under their pillows.'

Well, to tell the truth, these situations (falling in love, falling out of the window) happen to everybody – even to those who have never read a Shakespeare verse in their lives. Yes, there are people who miss no opportunity to throw their bodies out of the nearest window. They undoubtedly and wrongly think that their souls will survive their flights and bangs (and *boums*, if they're French-speaking suicides). As soon as they come across ‘[redacted].

they throw themselves out of it. Bang, *boum*, bang, *boum*, bang, *boum*, bang, *pum* (in Russian).

THE FALLEN ANGEL

Bang,
boum,
bang,
boum,
bang,
boum,
bang,
pum
SERPENT

Friar L. We all have losses and there's an element that
Brings progress and personal development,
But we have to accept that feeling like crying for a few weeks
Is perfectly normal.
Romeo. I don't care for normality and abnormality.
Friar L. Don't you? Don't you?
Romeo. I sometimes do think I'm going insane.
Friar L. For the last ten years of his life your grandfather was clinically insane.
Romeo. Was he? Doesn't matter – I'm not my grandfather.
Friar L. Don't forget you're carrying a lot of his genes. Do you know that a particular gene is responsible for the inheritance of eye colour?

Romeo. Don't sidetrack me, father, into talking about Wilkins, Popkins and Vavilov. I have no time for crying, if you must know. And you must needs know *that*. I promised Juliet to marry her this afternoon.
Friar L. Did you? How? I don't yet know the precise wording of your vow.
Romeo. Hence will I to my ghostly Sire's close cell,
His help to crave and my dear hap to tell.
Friar L. Say I was out. Say I moved away last year. I'm in Mantua now, you know.

Once upon a time, I read about a magician who could be seen at several spots at once, and I am almost sure his name was Simon – not Simon Boccanegra, unfortunately: I like Verdi to the point of neglecting magicians and their tricks; unless every artist of genius is a magician in their own right. (In the right ((or wrong)) of those who naively believe in those tricks of the trade.) But the friar our Shakespeare was talking about is neither a magician nor a professional gardener; nor a professional doctor, being a charlatan to his fingertips. So, whenever he touches the plants and herbs he comes across in his garden, his fingertips betray his good intentions, if any, and start on the poisons administered to lovers, cripples and the desperate who view their destinies in terms of suicides and not otherwise, for all the Fathers' admonitions.

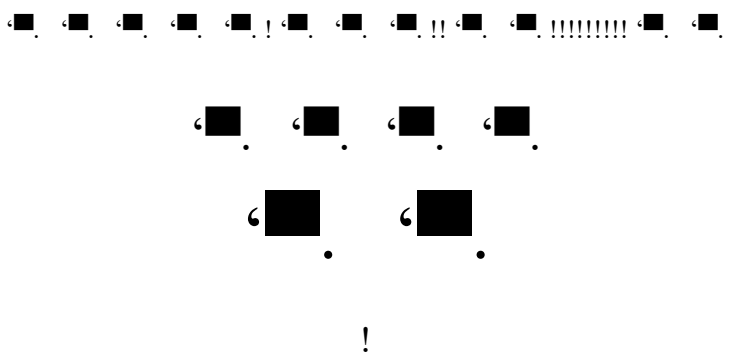
On the other hand, I wish our friar (turned magician) could swoop down upon Tybalt, Mercutio and all other fighters who listen neither to the Prince nor to their instinct for self-preservation. If, however, they saw Simon the Magician in the clouds, they would stop their street fighting and gaze on the phenomenon we usually associate with Ariel and not with other Shakespeare characters: even his ghosts (Banquo, Hamlet's father ((to *walk* the night))) do not fly overhead; at least not within our field of vision. 'The eagle swooped down to snatch a young rabbit,' is a remark so widespread and awesome that many church-goers are convinced it can be found in the Scriptures. They know that the Scriptures (along with the Fathers) are anxious to avoid alluding to the Almighty directly: He remains as unknown as the soldiers to whom we have built so many monuments. So if they say, 'Above the void (or water, in the Russian version) eagles circled in soundless flight,' we know they refer to the chaos our world was facing before the Big Bang. And if they say, 'When the universe is in crisis like this, the vultures are always hovering,' we know it is the Holy Trinity they have in their minds, in their books.

If, on the other hand, we see a man in the sky (a man – not Lucy, not Lucy), we might jump and land up in the following conclusion: This man is either an angel whose hands are holding a sword or Simon the Magician. (Jesus mostly *walked* in his lifetime and also in his deathtime – on water, on the grass.) Be that as it may, upon seeing our superman both Mercutio and Tybalt would certainly have taken to their heels, sparing our Juliet the embarrassment of '■.

alias:
O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face.
Beautiful tyrant, fiend angelical,
Dove-feather'd raven, wolvish-ravening lamb!
Despised substance of divinest show!

Marry in haste, repent at leisure. Actually Juliet does not repent *at leisure*: throughout the play (and even off camera) these lovers go *fortissimo*! ('He was not born to shame.')

If we try and represent this play in *graphic* detail, our representation (we have nothing else within our reach) is bound to look as follows:



Let us dissect this diagram that somehow looks like a chessboard or like human or inhuman existence with its ups and downs, whites and blacks (nothing to do with racism and political incorrectness). At the end one finds an exclamation mark, and one wonders why this mark overlaps our miserable existence, even if we concentrate on one Shakespeare play, on one woe out of a thousand. Yes, we put a lot of black kings, queens and pawns everywhere, and if we look at them for a while, we begin to contemplate only one black square, no matter how often we shift our gaze from right to left, from down to down. And suddenly we stumble upon an exclamation mark one might logically link to the end of *Romeo and Juliet*: haven't I devoted to this play so many hours, so many midsummers and telltale winters, as the Russians say?

Let us therefore dissect the end of the play over which we have already scattered so many black squares

one can hardly find an empty spot, an empty dot. (The anatomy of the exclamation mark.) Taoists say this dot .

is empty and they are probably right unless this dot – and many other dots of the same kind – are filled with

question marks instead of letting in subatomic particle of joy. !

Where does this joy come from?

Prince. A glooming peace this morning with it brings: ‘■. (a *glooming* peace)

The sun for sorrow will not show his head. ‘■. (Where is the sun's head? We do not even see its shoulders, let alone its Homer-praised fingers.)

Go hence to have more talk of these sad things. (*Sad* things. Why should we leave the tomb? Another piece of bad, horrific, tragic news.)

Some shall be pardon'd, and some punished, (some punished – Leave the tomb at once! No eternal peace, not yet!)

For never was a story of more woe (O woe, A woe, D woe! Never? Did Shakespeare write this play *before King Lear*? Why didn't Shakespeare write instead: 'For never *will* be a story of more woe'? Doesn't we deserve a teeny weeny piece of happiness? Only weeping willows?)

Than this of Juliet and her Romeo. (Romeo was her only within the space of one day. The unity of time and space.)

So why did I put an exclamation mark at the end of this endless woe? Did I believe in its end at the moment I put it where it will stand forever? And what about catharsis? ‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■. . Whatever comes after

‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■. is catharsis, according to Aristotle and my father who often spoke to me about the relief we find at that particular spot. ‘Where?’ I would ask him anxiously, anxious to insert myself into this slot they rightfully or wrongly call a ‘safe haven’. Over my life – call it ‘wretched’ if you are inclined to stigmatise my ways in this way – l have carried out this test on a regular basis, with infinite patience and hopefulness. How to describe the result of my research into this wishful (wistful) Paradise on Earth? ‘I put my money in the slot and pressed the button but nothing came out.’

Aristotle says something along these lines: _____

_____

_____

How do you mean? What do you mean? What is it? Unless you explain the meaning of this notion (catharsis), you will never experience it because your worries are bound to outweigh any sigh of relief. What does your sigh of relief amount to? He-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-ve. So what? Do you feel better now? What did they use to call it in Latin? *Flatis votis*? They were in the habit of analysing universals and someone said, ‘Your universals are just a puff of smoke without fire. You exhale this smoke through your nose: man, woman, horse, beauty, idea, Plato, china plates.’

Let us swap Plato for Aristotle – the exchange they put into practice through their scholastic philosophy presided over and guided by St Thomas Aquinas. Under the circumstances, Aristotle is much more useful: we need neither Romeo nor Juliet (nor their ideas). The Philosopher said something along these lines:

> In a tragedy you go from one death to another, from one corpse to another cemetery: ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■. and so on. Forget about white spots: there are only the roads you take to go from one river of blood to another. It is true that at the end of a Greek tragedy you find a sort of mass grave you can take in at a glance. But if you find a mass grave in Act One, you are likely to go back home: no action is lying in store for you. In other words, all heroes and heroines have already been murdered – backstage, off camera, in the adjacent streets around which both Jacks and Rippers roam day and night. So, at the end of the play, just before the fall of the proverbial curtain (did they have curtains in Ancient Greece?) you see a mass grave of Mozart fame, and you may even hear an excerpt from *Die Zauberflötte*. A (white) ray of light – a catharsis on which you can pin all your hopes in everyday life. Your doctor says, ‘Your metastases are in full bloom,’ whereupon you hear a flute and Mozart’s *Zauber*. You smile and say with a smile, ‘I don’t dread death, Herr Doctor. In Paradise they perform *Die Zauberflötte* round the clock. Papagena, Papagena, Papage-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-na.’
>
> ‘Papa-*géhenne*,’ says a local priest.

Alas, Aristotle’s doctrines and proposals do not add up to any real help for human beings, some of whom have never heard *Die Zauberflötte*; nor any flute, for that matter. (Not even panpipes.) So everyone has their own catharsis at their disposal and they firmly believe in the following piece of wishful thinking (a sort of makeshift peace, a sort of God): ‘But for Aristotle’s catharsis we wouldn’t hold out much longer. This notion has always tided us over till Monday, as the Russian cinema-goers say or used to say 50 years ago. “If not till doomsday,” they usually add, when in one of their white (black?) moods.’

My personal vision of catharsis boils down to the following white square:

You attend a theatrical performance in which a dozen heroes, heroines and horses are butchered so that you are tempted to call the theatre where you are sitting and gaping and crying: 'A butcher's shop'. 'Woe, woe, woe,' says a prince or a priest just before the curtain begins to move, either falling or drawing to a close. And then you realise as you heave a sigh of relief that you are *not* on the stage and that your life (for some obscure reason) seems to have been overlooked by the author and stage director. So you are not dead and the future is the Promised Land – not only for many immigrant families, but for you as well, although you are not the scion of an immigrant family, an underdog, an under-the-weather individual. Besides, your absence from the stage, from the backstage and even from the re-written books about heroes, immortal lovers and Nobel-prize winners mean you are a Chinese sage: you leave no traces, as they say. (For once, they do not live in Russia.) You walk on a blanket of snow and your feet leave no *pas* on it, contrary to what Debussy suggested in his famous prelude. You write in your notebook, 'I am immortal,' but your ink and the blots it makes leave no marks, no signs (either bad or good) on the pages you turn from time to time – just for the sake of turning them.

And if your notebook is wrenched out of your grasp by a guru of sorts, and if this guru draws in it something along these squares: '■. '■. '■. '■. '■. '■. '■. '■. '■., you say, 'I know what you mean. You mean to say this is what my life looks like. All right, I accept your representation of it because I *memento* both *mori* and *fati*. But what about all these silver linings?'

'What silver linings?' they ask.

''■. ! '■. ! '■. ! '■. ! '■. ! '■. ! '■. ! '■. ! '■.,' you answer.

'Just another case of mistaken identity,' they answer. 'Your exclamation marks don't promise anything – no lands, no paradises lost. And if they do, you can say to them, "Promises! Promises!" These are roads leading from your dead mother to your father's corpse, from your wife's betrayals to her cuckolded husband, alias you and your horns.'

They take no notice of your declarations because your mouth is not shown on television – not even in Beckett's play *Not I*. Of course you can say to them, 'Not I! I leave no traces!' If you do, they are sure to answer as follows, 'Of course you don't – no one knows you.' 'Have you ever heard about Ralph Waldo Emerson, you ignorant apes and louts?'

> When I watch that flowing river, which, out of regions I see not, pours for a season its streams into me, – I see that I am a pensioner, – not a cause but a surprised spectator of this ethereal water; that I desire and look up and put myself in the attitude of reception, but from some alien energy the visions come.
>
> (*The Over-Soul*)

'Are you this over-soul?' they ask.

'I've just put myself in the attitude of reception,' you answer.

'What are you receiving?' they ask.

‘The flow, the flower, the exclamation mark.’

THE EXCLAMATION MARK
O, mickle is the powerful grace that lies
In plants, herbs, stones, and their true qualities.
But to the earth some special good doth give;

THE QUESTION MARK
Nor aught so good but, strain’d from that fair use,
Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse.
Virtue itself turns vice being misapplied,
And vice sometime’s by action dignified.

The Question Mark warns us against so-called ‘action for action’s sake’ that often strains (perverts) what seems arch-perfect, harmonious and untouchable – no finishing touches, for God’s sake! Leave well alone! A true guru keeps on saying, ‘Don’t misapply, don’t misapply, don’t misapply.’

‘I haven’t applied anything yet,’ you say, showing your amazement and astonishment.

‘Don’t you dare apply anything,’ the guru warns you.

‘What if I fail to apply my brakes in time?’

‘Don’t use your car or any other car. Even bicycles are prohibited, along with scooters.’

‘What should I do?’

‘You sit down and receive.’

‘What?’

‘Wait and see – the receptive brings about sublime success.’

When you think of your life in terms of waiting, Quakers might surface in that corner of your mind where you keep useful, God-seeking, God-granted information. Every morning, for the sake of your health and forthcoming moods, you eat porridge acquired in a shop where you find both Quaker-endorsed and Quaker-polished Oats Express. Sometimes, right before swallowing your first but not last morsel of what they call ‘bacon and eggs’, you say to yourself, ‘I’d better follow their example and rely much more on the “Inward Light”.’ Of course you realise you need a few friends with whom you are supposed to meet and wait for this light (all other lights are supplied by our civilisation and the sun, let alone lightning and comets). Your friends whom you are supposed to call Friends do not mediate like monks, isolated in their cells, and you are not entirely in favour of this method which often results in what they call ‘the pregnant silence of the meeting’, meaning that, sooner or later, this silence will give birth to a vibration, if not to an authentic revelation (the genuine article). You can hardly bear others, whether you call them ‘friends’ or ‘foes’, and their presence which is believed to be instrumental in bringing about the ‘inner enlightenment’ (the very opposite of the Age of Enlightenment) gets on your nerves whenever you read about ‘the opening’ of the Inward Light so intimately linked to human beings and their pernicious presence. Of course they might ironically, if not diabolically, ask you whether you really opt for ‘the closing’ of the Inward Light. ‘Light is enclosed within my bosom,’ seems to be the best and only answer one can gracefully give under the circumstances. The point is real Quakers traditionally say, ‘Please find enclosed,’ for

they are supposed to share their bliss with other seekers and finders. ‘I’ve reached a new understanding,’ they affirm (or one of them affirms) because this new understanding demands to be proclaimed as if in need of ratification, of applause, of a rooftop.

You can wait for the Inward Light in silence, surrounded by Friends and angels who, in Wim Wenders’ movies, are mere messengers, go-betweens and seldom, if ever, bring any good news, any bad news; no news, good news, no messenger, good messenger. If the Light you are waiting for neither comes nor flies in the vicinity of your room, of your living room and sofa, you are supposed to oppose slavery in any shape or form: a slave often looks like a great pianist (so-called, *soi-disant*) or a great writer, a great painter. They also oppose brutality in prisons and insane asylums where some writers spend their holidays, removing vodka, whisky and cognac from their old-fashioned substances.

You can do it on your own by putting great emphasis on Loyola’s exercises that require a few pencils, a few notebooks, a lot of time during which you are sure to unearth all your sins without exception. You might note them down as follows: sin number one, sin number two, sin number three, sin going by the name of trinity, trinity going by the name of sin, everything is sin, everything stems from original sin, a thing is a sin, a sin in itself is a sin in myself. Where is it? Right under my prostate gland. My sin is my cancer and the other way round. I go the other way and round, round, round, and come to my original, run-of-the mill sin.

You write until the cows come home. They come and go ‘moo,’ ‘moo,’ ‘moo,’ and your dog goes bow-wow, or ‘Thou-wow,’ or ‘Thou-Thou,’ or ‘Thou=Thou’. So did my cat who died last year, on February 18th. It is February 19th tonight and in the course of this night I cannot manage to excise this death from my conscience where my cat continues to die as if death’s notorious *einmal* were *zweimal*, *dreimal*. No resurrection. They just bury you once, twice, thrice; they throw you into your tomb above which my gardener put a cross. *Geworfen*, *geworfen*, *geworfen*. You are not thrown into the world, from some window or other. Tomb, tomb, tomb, doom, doom, doom, dum-dum, dum-dum, dum-dum.

I did not bury him. I could not. My wife held him in her lap until he (did not) gave (give) up the ghost. He could have given his ghost to me instead of giving it up, if he did give it up. My wife says he did not. My companion in misfortune, my dearest friend, Friends, all of them in one. Waiting, waiting, waiting for a ghost, for the Holy Ghost, Spirit, Merit.

Four days ago, last year (February 16th, 2017), my cat lay down by my bed and did not move from where he was lying, lying, waiting for the Inward Light, for the Outward Light, for me and my hands. I stroke him all the time, but what did all those strokes mean? Friends, Friends, Friends? The Outward-Inner Light? ‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■. My wife went with him to hospital where they tried to bring him back to my side, to my bed, to my future death. They failed and he died on my wife’s lap. She buried him in our garden. One year has elapsed since his death. ‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.

‘■.‘■.‘■

‘■.‘

‘

What remains of *mon petit*? ....! !

And the rest is ‘,‘,‘,‘

Or just ======

I lay down by his side and spent an hour in his company, on the floor, before his departure for hospital. Is any friend of mine prepared to lie down by my bed and spend an hour or just five minutes in my company? Silently waiting for the Inward Light? I might have seen a few inward lights in my Musil’s presence. I might have heard a few chimes, a few midnights. They are all gone, I suppose. They are with Musil in the grave.

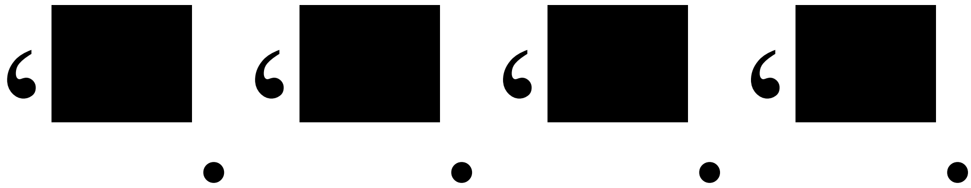
What is the purpose of staying and moaning? Loyola and his exercises.

~~I III I I II IIIIII II I IIII I I I~~

Sin Number One: I did not take my cat to the hospital where he died.
Sin Number Two: I did not bury him with military honours.
Sin Number Three: I did not die on the same day.
Sin Number Four (IIII): I go on living.
Sin Number Five: I bought another cat.
Sin Number Six (IIIIII): I desecrate his memory as I caress my new cat.
Sin Number Seven: I thanked the Almighty for offering me the new cat.
Sin Number Eight: I do not put flowers on his grave every week.
Sin Number Nine: I live as if he had not died.
Sin Number Ten (IIIIIIIIII): I live as if anything or anybody could replace Musil.
Sin Number Eleven: I live as if I could live without Musil. (My former, my ever cat.)
Sin Number Twelve: I live as if pinning hopes on Friends instead of staying with the Friend.
Sin Number Thirteen: I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I,
No Sin Number Fourteen: Not I, Not I, Not I, Not I, Not I, Not I

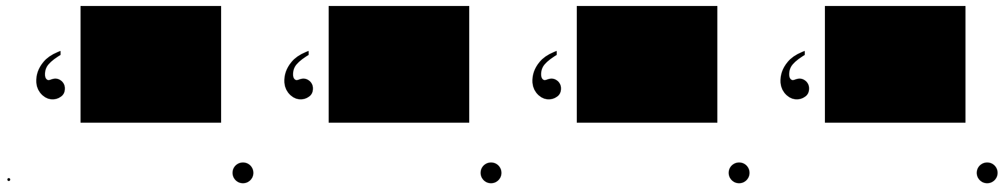
What does he look like now? ‘, one bone, two bones. Several times I have been tempted to violate his tomb. ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘ ‘ Did he share with me his Inward Light? Rubbing shoulders with my shoulders. Rubbing our joys together.

Now I no longer rub shoulders with anyone, except my wife, except my wife. Do I really rub shoulders with her? What do I rub with her? We put a bunch of white roses on Musil’s tomb. He was almost white, quasi-white, quasi-light.



That is how he was with the exception of ‘. and ‘‘‘‘ I do not know where they come from and what they mean. Death, of course. Eternal recurrence. A few incarnations. (On my lap? In my life?) He was a grey sky (his thick, glossy coat) with lots of suns, moons, comets, meteors and falling stars. And one day he fell down on my lap. ‘I had a revelation, Friend. The Inward Light, you know. Let’s go there together.’

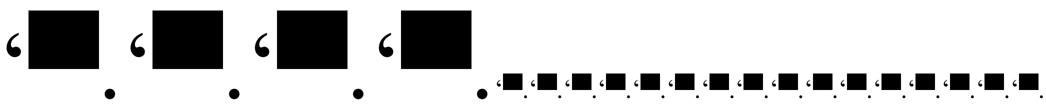
THE WAY

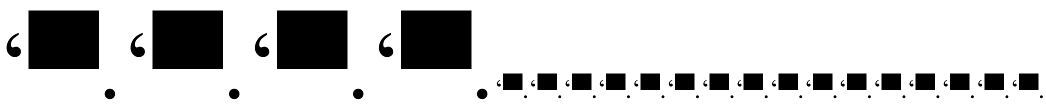


At some point I just put points everywhere. So there are points, points, points, points...There are commas, commas, commas, commas,,,There are semicolons, colons, colons, colons, colons;;;There is life, life, life, life, life:::

Do you have a keen sense of smell? Please smell sulphur and smack of heresy (IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII). And putrefaction. (Loyola’s 68th exercise.)

Go to a lavatory but do not wash your hands, whatever you say to the ladies and gentlemen you are surrounded with. You neither urinate nor do anything worse. You just enjoy the presence of putrefaction. Minus one sin: - IIIII. Minus five sins – all right, all right. Inquisitors are not as ‘‘‘‘ as you think.





Basta, *basta*, *basta*, *basta*.
Basta, *basta*, *basta*, *basta*.
Basta, *basta*, *basta*, *basta*.
Basta, *basta*, *basta*, *basta*.
Basta, *basta*, *basta*, *basta*.
Basta, *basta*, *basta*, *basta*.
Basta, *basta*, *basta*, *basta*.
Basta, *basta*, *basta*, *basta*.

At this point of no return, a young girl comes to the fore; and so does everything, given the age and purity of the young lady. She flings her doll into the air and the world begins to turn like Schubert's (and Galileo's) wheels.

The wheels, they turn, they turn, they turn,
And never stop, and never stop.

HOW TO LIVE LONGER?

A wheel turns, rolls and it is up to my mind to stop it from time to time (from mind to mind – how many minds do we have?), otherwise I would not be able to pick and choose and concentrate on what is most important in my life. I was created for something, for someone; I am reluctant to admit I was created for nothing: you do not create nothing out of nothing, for it makes no sense; it makes a huge mass of nothingness. It makes nothing, and you had better preserve the initial UR-nothing for the sake of its purity: every transformation brings in dirt, filth and lots of smudges, both physical and spiritual. In French they call these carcinogenic products 'ultra-transformed' so that you must (a must of musts) renounce ready-made meals, fruit-poisoned yogurts, conservative-poisoned bread, conservative-polluted fish, conservative-utterly-demolished vegetables.

They say and write and send all this by email:

This bread is completely free from artificial preservatives.
No added preservatives.
Natural preservatives

You answer them as follows (and what will follow will follow these hollow cheeks/eyes):

Even sex had become a hollow pleasure.
What about your *natural* (sic!) preservatives?
Is there such a thing as a natural preserver?
A natural destroyer does exist,
so I say, 'A natural destroyer – yes!
'A natural destroyer – no.'
Why do I say no?

Because it is unnatural to destroy the Earth
and its inhabitants.
In short, I refuse to wear your natural condoms.
All your condoms (preservatives in French) are abnormal.
I do not mind dying of AIDS.
Anyway, I am sick of your natural (sic!) condoms-preservatives,
of your Harvey-Jones.
I do not mind dying,
but let me live fully in a lie-free county.
Here are your products, your butchers and ultramarkets:

Ultra, isn't it?

the coffee market
the economic market
the commodities market
the stock market
the job market
the housing market

(A Homage to Rothko)

A hollow sex. A hollow crown. A hollow world. The hollow glass tank contains hot mercury vapour. Here is the hollow glass tank: ‘‘‘‘ Here is hot mercury vapour: ‘‘‘‘

What is wrong with all these hollows (holiness)? What is wrong with Musil’s tomb on which I put a bunch of white roses?

His tomb: The bunch of white roses:

Never again will I say, ‘I can’t eat this pigswill!’ I will eat this pigswill. Why are you taking it away? No one will accuse me of committing suicide.

This bread is completely free from artificial preservatives.

No added preservatives.

Natural preservatives

The routine was the same every day, with nothing to relieve the monotony. Except my death, except my death, except my death.

‘There isn’t a shred of evidence to support your accusation, Father. I’ve always eaten only preservative-free food.’

‘Have you always made preservative-free love?’

‘■. ‘■. ‘■. ‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.‘■.

A masterpiece, isn’t it?

Hollow, hello,

Ell, el,

Enough is not and

So are, so -]]

Earth, listen

t, t,

What if I type))?

And ((What’s in parenthesis? They ask.

You are.

What if I type sic! sic! sic! sic! sic! sic! sic! sic!? What if I type sic!? sic!? sic!? sic!? sic!?

LIFE

!? !?

DEATH

!? !?

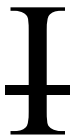
PURGATORY

!? !?

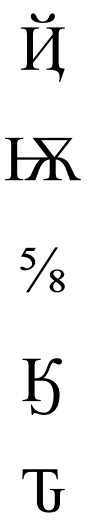
NOTHING ELSE

You carry out your contemplation at midnight; and then in the morning. What do you contemplate? Not your cat, although your cat is also the Almighty's creature. You contemplate the Almighty Himself. First you contemplate the Almighty Himself, then you contemplate the Almighty Herself. But do not contemplate the Almighty the Cat because there is no such ultra-being. Your cat was an ultra-transformed being so that you had better forget him on the spot. You should meditate on this spot before going to another spot. But anyway it is better to be rooted to the spot to which I am rooted before going to other roots and spots. Do you see(m) the Almighty and His Son's Cross? What do you see(m)?

All right, but this bar which, incidentally, might remind you of chocolate bars you should not eat – they are ultras of ultras – is just part of the Cross you should visualise to build up the Mandala (Mandela, Mandalay) you need for your meditation. All right, your computer does not enable you to build a monument to Jesus Christ and the Nicene Creed. For all your efforts, you can only come up with:



Can you carry this Cross? Of course (off cross) you can, considering there is nothing lighter than a character one creates on one's computer screen. You can carry



Well, carry them! What are you waiting for? Don't they look like the Cross? Everything looks like the Cross, you dimwit. I wish you could become an inward-light wit – in the twinkling of an eye.

The blackest hour – right before dawn. No before, no after, no aftershave, no beforeanything. You are in your bathroom, you take a bath, you baptise yourself, you unbaptise yourself and you receive whatever you receive, if you wait long enough to receive it. They talk like that, as they say, as they say, but they might be right after all, aftershave, beforethebigbang. St Augustine thought there had been nothing before the Creation: no time, no space, no mess, no Mass, no Bach with his B Minors. And what about beforethebigbangthecreationbachhaydnmozartbeethovendanteshakespeare?

Creation, uncreation. Are there any lines somewhere? Dead- and alivelines? Yin and Yang. Yinyang, yangyin. Furthering through the perseverance of a mare. mare mare mare mare mare mare mare mare mare mare mare mare mare mare mare mare mare marre marre marre marre marre. If the superior man undertakes something and tries to lead, he goes astray. Today, I do not undertake anything and consequently there are no goings astray in my castle, kingdom, empire and family vault. A multitude of goings stray

_____

_____

What does going astray mean? You say you believe neither in yang nor in yin nor in Jesus Christ nor in Copernicus. You believe in cus – that is enough. CUS CUS CUS CUS CUS.

And so it is called
As if were
Tear, tear, what does
And again CUS, CUS? CUS
And yes
Was

CUS

And what is done and however and yet and never and you go so do I and nothing as if anything any king any queen on my way on way on ay

I open my eyes – what could I do with them? I either open or close them, or rub them, or drop drops into them and see what there is in the where and the elsewhere and the everywhere. I see all other, *hinter* worlds situated in the beyond without measure and pleasure, and I have to adapt and adopt these children of not-mine, otherwise they might kill me (and yet I am not their father, God forbid). God forbids this and that, and that and this happen all the time; and all the time happens all the time.

I open my eyes and come to terms with my terms – at least I come to somehow and somewhere instead of not-coming, not-going, not-moving.

NOT-MOVING

NNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNN

If you write, 'N-N-N-N,' they might say you move from N to N.

You go from yin to yang and for the moment I am receptive and do not undertake anything because, I am sure, everything will come of its own accord, provided I wait for it. And if it does not, I shall pick an electric torch (I have got three of them), strip my clothes off and press the torch against my heart. Am I so thick-skinned I cannot receive any light within my bosom? Only ‘‘‘‘? Is there such a thing as black light? I know there are many black suns – in the sky and also in my room where I am waiting for nothing, doing nothing, nothing doing. The movement of the Creative is a direct forward movement, and its resting state is standstill; the movement of the Receptive is an opening out, and in its resting state it is closed; in the resting, closed state, it embraces all things as though in a vast womb. In the state of movement, of opening, it allows the divine light to enter, and by means of this light illuminates everything. Should I illuminate *everything*? My torch illuminates these curtains, that window, the night embedded in the view I admire as I look out of the window. I can see a birch-tree, a very old tree I fail to place in my recollection. Some books, among them an issue of *Time Magazine* in which I am sure to find a lot of information related to how I could live longer and better. Is that the light I need? I am not convinced I shall be able to receive the Inward Light in the years to come – in 2050, for instance. I might receive a tiny quantity of *this* light, something along the lines of_____

_____

That is not enough. What is enough? Do we know where to stop, how to stop? You gain momentum and say to yourself with a grin, 'I'm under way.' And you add pensively, without any grin or growl, 'We need to assess whether the project is worth doing.' After a while, you realise you had better say, 'The way is under my wheels' – you are no longer in charge; and one wonders whether you have ever been in charge. You wish to stop for good: you are weary, as weary as Leary who is already in the grave. You put in your womb whatever you see: fields, mills, mountains with their tops, fountains with their streams. Then you give birth to bushes, to the Mediterranean Sea, to the sun and the Milky Way; you drink a glass of milk and put the liquid into your womb. Then you give

birth to a gallon of milk and to the theatre of absurdity. ‘I love milk – I drink gallons of the stuff. What’s so absurd about it?’ And what about light?

Light is life, a long fruitful life. You are a tree of life – one of the trees one can light upon all over the globe and even inside the sputniks you saw on television many years ago. ‘You’re a tree,’ your parents say as they painstakingly enlighten you about human life’s enigmas and the goals one is supposed to pursue so as not to swell the ranks of good-for-nothings. ‘By the way, where are your leaves? if I may be so bold as to ask.’

‘I don’t know.’

‘Don’t you meditate on leaves?’

‘I don’t.’

‘If you do, you’ll receive them sooner or later. You’ll see them all around you. Then you’ll be prepared for meditation number one.’

‘What is that?’

‘You’ll see Jesus Christ in that armchair, not far from the window. But first you’ll see the fruit. What kind of tree are you?’

‘How could you forget your son’s name and patronymic?’ After talking your father’s head off, your mother reminds you that you are an Apple Applovich Tree.

If asked, ‘Are you an optimist or a pessimist?’ you should not bring in two bottles one of which is half-full – as if to suggest you are an optimist. A real optimist drinks two bottles, three bottles: half-full bottles are for fools, he thinks and he may be right, although a lot depends on what bottle you have in mind and on your dinner table; or on your bedside cabinet. This dilemma boils down to your birth or its absence, and it is little wonder you say so often, ‘We are faced with an agonizing dilemma and it seems there is no correct choice.’ If you say, ‘It’s better not to be born,’ you are sure to be criticised for opting for a condition you hardly know anything about. It is true that for some time you were unborn and your limbs could be found only in limbo – in the area where unborn children or embryos spend their time before being allowed or forbidden to see the light of day which has nothing to do with the Inward Light that is magnificently extolled by Quakers. Anybody can see the light of mornings and afternoons, with the exception of the unborn who, however, might take advantage of the Inward Light, as far as I know; as far as my telescope-assisted brain succeeds in making out what goes on in that limbo or mumbo or jumbo. Anyway I got it all wrong, which should not surprise anyone, considering that I know nothing, next to nothing and nothingness about the unborn and their whereabouts.

I suppose we should classify the unborn into different groups because they are not equal; at least no unborn individual can declare categorically and light-heartedly, ‘The good thing about God as a boss is that He treats us all as equals.’ Among the unborn we often come across a group of men and women who are destined to make their appearances in the best (im)possible world. I recall a 16-year-old pianist whose blood-adorned deathbed looked even sadder than his relatives congregated around it. ‘I didn’t really want to go to the party, but I thought I’d better put in an appearance. Anyway, the party turned out to be a bit of a non-event so I don’t regret anything, not even Edith Piaf.’ Does our earthly existence look and sound like a party?

Some of the unborn might indeed be found in Limbo by virtue of the importance we attach to languages and the games we play with them and our partners. The members (there are many clubs in the midst of the unborn) I am writing about have what they call vestigial limbs and so one is tempted to point out, ‘This embryo is half-

born. Good luck to you. You'll need it.' Shortly afterwards, however, all these vestiges disappear and the half-born embryo returns to its initial state; and if you kill such an embryo you are unlikely to experience the hardship of a maximum-security prison, let alone the efficiency of an electric chair. And if they call you a murderer, you can answer, 'It didn't think, *ergo niet*.'

So, before killing an embryo, you must take a good look at it to find out if its brain is capable of constructing a story/sentence/argument/a train of thought. 'A train of thought is moving across my brain's city- and landscapes. I'm therefore in the land of the living and you shouldn't kill me for fear of being hung on the first tree, as the Russians say.'

You see '''' and think, 'I can kill it, if I feel like it. But I won't – end of story.' And submissively your train of thought pulls into a station. Then you see something like that, and for a few seconds you have no idea what you are looking at. Is it a miniscule tomb designed by God for a doll? Your daughter would ask you to buy this doll, if you had a daughter; but you do not even have a son or a nephew. You have nobody because you are one of the nobodies nobody takes notice of. But you, on the other hand, do take notice of this '''' and that '''' for the reason known only to yourself: these squares or whatever their names are remind you of coffins, although coffins are shaped differently, as far as you can remember. They look like a rectangle the idea of which was stored up in heaven by Plato and Neo-Platonists.

Well, let us skip this philosophical discussion which might lead us only to another load of metaphysical twaddle. But the squares '' we are talking about – let us call them rectangles – are a load of a different kind: they remind us of the paradox we can hardly stomach. This paradox says that even the unborn are to die and so not only life ends up in the cemetery, under tombstones or just under stones and blades of grass. One may wonder why we are duty bound to classify the unborn: all of them can go under the heading 'Death' on our list.

Yet there are embryos (one can hardly call them 'embryos') that look like beings; not necessarily like *human* beings, which does not downgrade their importance. You look at them to find out and decide whether they can be killed at this stage of their (im)maturity or (under)development. Do they have a sort of head, a brain of sorts? Do they look like ''''? A tiny little head, isn't it? But does this head contain what is classified as the brain? You are allowed to drown a kitten: its head, for all its presence on its body, cannot boast of what our human being has inside their head: a pea-brain, a frozen-pea brain. It is true that, now and then, you may come across a bean-brain, an asparagus-brain, and once again one wonders whether one is allowed to kill a human being whose brain looks like a pea or a chicory root.

To cut a long story short, one is asked if it is better to see the light of day. In a maternity hospital, of all places? Or do you choose to remain in the dark about whatever happens on the surface of the Earth? (I am told some nuclear tests are carried out underground; carried under, so to speak.) Are you eager to protect your being from earthquakes, hurricanes, cancers and suchlike? The question now on everyone's lips is: 'Can you become a cancer patient in the kingdom of the unborn?' Of course you can, otherwise you would never die in any kingdom you happen to get in touch with within the Earth and its bounds. You can also die of a stroke or even angina unless they resort to the procedure known as angioplasty. But do they take the trouble to resort to this procedure when dealing with the kingdom of the unborn? They are still seeking someone to finance the project, I am told. Who are they, I wonder? I wonder, you wonder, they wonder. At some point, however, you stop wondering because even wonder-seeking individuals grow weary when reaching the end of their tether.

Anyway, we had better kill all those embryos whose heads do not outgrow their pea- or chicory-space, their bean space-time. But we should not forget that our applications will need to go forward to a selection panel: a panel of judges will decide whether the brain in question is unquestionably pea-like or asparagus-like or just like, like, like, like: you seldom, if ever, compare a brain to a eucalyptus.

So you say, ‘I can kill it because the speed of its thoughts doesn’t exceed what we usually attribute to peas, to *their* mentality.’

‘Although some people campaign for the right to euthanasia,’ a judge points out, ‘it is still illegal in most countries – in our country, among other kingdoms.’

‘But it is neither ill nor old,’ you object.

‘It is a human being,’ they object. ‘In other words, it is not an object. It doesn’t look like ‘‘‘.’

‘What *does* it look like, in your opinion?’

‘‘’

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Betreff: status of our project

Good Morning Gentlemen!

I hope this email finds you well. I will be meeting with R. K. O. next week and I would like to quickly check in with you to get a feel for the status of our project.

This is where we left off after our recent meeting in Berlin:

1) French Program - final revisions to be implemented
2) Beethoven - final revisions to be implemented
3) Schumann – final revisions to be implemented
4) Schubert - Edit1 out, waiting for revisions from Valery
5) Prokofiev – still to edited
6) Haydn – still to be edited

· Gerhard, you were aiming to deliver Edit1 of disc 5 and 6 by the end of January.

· Valery, you announced to send Gerhard your final remarks for Disc 1, 2, 3 and 4 also by the end of January.

Please give a me a brief update whether we are still on schedule.

Thanks and very best regards from Berlin,

Ppp

Dear Valery,

I hope all is well with you.

We just received an update from Gerhard regarding the editing process.

It would be great if you could send your remarks to Gerhard as soon as possible so we can go on with this project.

Thank you very much!

Best regards from Berlin,

Christ

e 05/03/2018 à 13:05

Dear Valery,

I just wanted to make sure that you have received my email below.

May we ask for your remarks?

Kind regards,

Christ

+++++++++

Dear Christ,

I've just finished the Schubert CD. And I sent the Schumann to Gerhard the day before yesterday.

Actually I had a bright idea and I'd like to speak of it to Philipp to find out if it is really bright. I'm sure you'll be able to show him this email.

The point is I'm entitled to one CD per year, sponsored by Sony Classical. We made the six CDs last year. So, logically enough, we might make another series this year. Anyway, I'm in touch with several sponsors, and I'm pretty sure we won't have much trouble in the domain of finance. We could meet for three days in Viersen and have a go at Bach, Mendelssohn and Brahms. We might need four days this time.

I'd be delighted if Philipp could find a suitable period for this joint (enjoyable) venture. I also hope that Gerd will join us as usual.

This session would be all the more convenient since we need to make one correction which, I'm afraid, can't be dealt with in my absence, let alone the piano’s wayward disposition.

Another bright idea concerns the number of CDs released in one box. I think that putting six CDs in one box is too presumptuous - very few people are likely to buy so many CDs at the same time unless they idolise the performer. Unfortunately I don't have many admirers in today's world of music. Or literature, for that matter. We might ask them to release three boxes, each containing three CDs. In my opinion, it is much more practical. HIS LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT I, HIS LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT II, HIS LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT III. God loves trinity, as the Russians say. I hope we love it (or Them) too.

I'd be very grateful if you could show this email to Philipp.

Thank you for your help,

Kindest regards,

Valery

°°

I am no longer interested in embryos and I cannot say I have ever paid any attention to them, given that I have no children and it is too late for anything of this kind. Even if I were audacious enough to create an embryo – or to

participate in its creation – I would not see its maturity, its diploma in management studies. (Nowadays no one studies philosophy and semiology.) Nor would I discuss with them (him or her) Heidegger's texts on Hölderlin or indeed the latter's poetry: neither in German nor English, mind you. I do not mind giving birth (by proxy, by proxy) to a great-expectation child, but for the moment I am wholly taken by the problem of my own maturity: am I or am I not prepared to leave this life in peace? If so, am I likely to be at peace with myself in spite of all the crimes attributed to self-indulgent, self-revoking acts?

You continue to pin your hopes (and other people's hopes as well, your relatives' for instance) on the future and, as I said earlier (many, many times) all these hopes are tantamount to mountains you are used to making out of molehills. You see or rather feel a ray of hope or just a ray of sunshine that might have shone through a gap in the clouds; last week or month. Or you see the light at the end of the tunnel through which you crawl and crawl until your face and its features end up dropping into the mud. And you call that 'a ray of hope', whatever happens or does not happen, but the molehill you are fiddling with remains what it is, for all your tricks and sincere exertions. And one day you may say to yourself, 'Enough is enough. It's just a molehill, not a mountain range in the western USA. No use, no use. No point, no point.'

You throw yourself, your train of thought and your intestines out of the window, and somewhere in mid-air (at the spot where they usually catch ((basket)) balls) you begin to wonder whether your act is legal or illegal, lawful or awful. Is it your self you have just mishandled to the point of disposing of it? And they burst out into an old, time-venerated song:

It's not yourself, your own self.
It is His self, our God's, our God's.

And you answer them thus, 'I beg to differ, as I usually say when talking to you, whoever you are. God is omni, omni, omni, omni. Not an *ovni* – blasphemy isn't my cup of tea.'

'What did you say? "*Govno*" is "shit" in Russian.'

'I don't speak Russian, but I do speak French. And *ovni* means UFO.'

'In French?'

'That's right.'

'That's right?'

'In French. And I'm not omni. I'm just ni.

'Ni-ni?'

'After talking to you I don't regret my window-immortalised act.'

You talk to others, look straight/right through them and throw your old-fashioned substance out of the window. The internal (external ((*out* of the window))) logic of this argument is undeniable.

You are still in the middle of nowhere: the air as such is nowhere except that you can say it loves the Earth, its atmosphere and its inhabitants whose love knows no bounds; in other words, it is nowhere. Anyway, you cannot locate it. They love the whole of the air, especially when a tiny part of it is filled with the scent of roses. But the portion of the air where you found yourself after your jump from the window (there is no water under you, no swimming pool) does not remind you of roses. If it does remind you of something, it is your failures and the wretched life you seem to have got rid of unless a posse of reporters holds a huge sheet right under your falling

and constantly failing body. All right, you bounce up and down and they hit you while you are doing so, saying, ‘In tennis you must hit the ball before its second bounce, but you’re not a ball. So we hit you before the first bounce as well. Why should we wait for you to bounce another time? A monumental waste of time, we call it.’

You say to them, ‘Let me reach the ground.’

‘Welcome to our hostel for homeless men and women,’ they answer hitting you more and more unceremoniously.

‘Even God is dead, and I’m created in His image,’ you answer. You know they understand only three words: God, suffering and charity. Oddly enough, they do not know the word ‘pity’.

‘God is not dead, neither are you,’ they answer. ‘You can be hurt, which means you’re not dead.’

‘I can’t be hurt,’ you tell them. ‘I’ve just graduated with first-class honours in Buddhism and Sufism.’

They let you fall at last and you catch up with your train of thought only in the Hereafter where even St Peter is not authorised to cut in on your interior monologues. True enough, you were *not* created in God’s image: what creates and is not created. ‘I was created and I haven’t created anything – no novels, no poems – for more than nine years. A long time ago I divided my substance into two separate natures. One of them stays on the Earth, the other flies all over heaven.’

You might call your suicides, flights and gibberish a ‘mystical élan’ on condition that you are in a position to describe your journey through the moon, the sun and other planets about which all our mystics talk and talk and talk (their faces navy blue) as if the problems we unavoidably meet on Earth had been solved to our mutual satisfaction a long time ago – at the end of the Renaissance. ‘Oil pollution can damage the fragile ecology of the coral riffs,’ we say to a mystic and his acolytes, his publishers.

‘Last night I returned from Jupiter,’ she says.

‘The real danger is in relation to the use of medication that has the potential to kill,’ we point out.

‘I prefer Saturn to Jupiter,’ the she-mystic declares (not from the rooftops, though. Just from a pocket-sized top.)

‘Some people may feel (and they do feel this way) that they have complete control in understanding their effects – ’

‘Their?’ asks the mystic.

‘Painkillers, beta-blockers and anti-depressants.’

‘Effects?’ asks the mystic.

‘ – but this is a case of someone living in a game of chemical Russian roulette.’

‘I don’t like Putin,’ says the mystic. ‘I prefer Mercury to Putin and Stalin. Anyway, after crossing these planets I saw a huge form, rounded and shadowy, and shaped like an egg. It was pointed at the top, wide in the middle and narrower at the bottom.’

6

Scholars come in dribs and drabs and the former say the egg represents a pregnant woman whose belly and womb will give birth to another universe that must see the dark of night after the forthcoming world conflagration. Actually the tail one can see and admire at the top of the so-called egg is a fuse or a wick designed for a match or

any other source of fire. You should always strike a match away from you and you follow this rule to the letter, striking the match away from you and inside the world you are determined to destroy. By carrying out the rite of the match, you put the world you are living in away from the world or rather from the receptacles where a multitude of homeless worlds are sure to find their hostels, burgers, gallons of coke and smoothies.

The latter (a group of late scholars: all this took place many centuries ago) disagree with the former as they reveal to the illiterate the mysteries of the Russian alphabet: 'B, B, B,' they say when trying their best to make us realise that what we see is not a pregnant woman but merely the letter 'B'. On the other hand, '*bliad"* means 'whore' in Russian, which means that the pregnant woman they (the former scholars) talked about is a prostitute, a trollop, a harlot. If you look surprised, they dismiss your disbelief as ill-founded – out of hand, mind you: 'The worlds can be created only by God or by harlots, alias demiurges. Which do you prefer?' Needless to say you always opt for harlots.

Put a cross next to the name of the candidate you want to vote for.

GOD:

HARLOT: +

The committee voted on the proposal, and accepted it unanimously: ++++++++++++++

'How come? How come? How come?' they shout. Their activist groups become increasingly vociferous as the distance between the box of matches and the wick grows shorter and shorter; and the world grows weaker and weaker. 'Which world are you about to destroy? The world to come? The world to go?'

'All the worlds to come,' you answer.

'Horror! Horror! Horror!' They throw up their hands in horror at this announcement.

'Hurrah! Here we go,' you say striking a match.

What do you care about the world? as I always say, relegating their ecological problems to the *après-moi*, flood-dominated era. But I do care about myself, my soul and the over-soul I get in touch with as I overstep my own steps and the bounds fabricated by under-soul individuals. 'By leaps and bounds' is the motto I have always taken notice of, for even at the age of 18 I was too old for the step-by-step progress advocated by the prudent, the modest and the non-ambitious. This does not mean that all these snails go at a snail's pace: sometimes they gallop like antelopes; but they do not leap, landing up in other dimensions, words and extramundane moods and looks. They may even go quicker and quicker, leading themselves nowhere; and the result of their speeds always boils down to something. The point is you should boil *permanently* instead of now and then boiling down and coming to a standstill to access the situation.

_____stop. No matter how fast you moved along this line five minutes ago, you have come to a full stop and you are a fool, you are a fool, and it is high time you shook your head, saying, 'Nothing doing.' And then you embark on the doing-nothing period, frustrated and weary as you are after all your assessments.

‘The soul’s advances are not made by gradation, such as can be represented by motion in a straight line,’ writes Emerson, ‘but rather by ascension of state, such as can be represented by metamorphosis, – from the egg to the worm, from the worm to the fly.’

Emerson coins the notion we can adhere to for a while – only for a while, only for a minute or two, for we are about to over-over his over-soul, overflying it constantly, on a regular wing. ‘Men descend to meet,’ writes Emerson, and I have no alternative but to disagree with him, over his statement. Men do not have to descend from where they are: they have already reached Gorky’s bottom, his lowest depths and dregs.

Only at this point your over-over-high-above-up soul is apt to reveal the truth and nothing but,

nothing but. I want no ifs and buts – just fly off, up, up, up, up, whoops.

Never mind the whoops!

LIFE
Up, whoops, up, whoops,
Ups, downs, ups, schnapps

BOOK 21

C’est pourquoi, bien que nous n’en ayons pas besoin, puisque nous avons pour consolation les Livres Saints qui sont entre nos mains, nous nous sommes permis d’envoyer quelqu’un pour renouveler la fraternité et l’amitié établies avec vous, afin de ne

pas devenir pour vous des étrangers ; car il s'est passé beaucoup de temps depuis que vous avez envoyé vers nous.
I Maccabées XII

33 VARIATIONS ON A WALTZ THEME BY HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

I have seen a lot of eggs and I suppose that some of them gave birth to a multitude of kingdoms on Earth and elsewhere (in the universe there are only kingdoms of God); and others did not give birth, being squashed or stubbed out like a cheap cigarette. You see an egg (a world, in other words) and stub it out as if it were a mere cigarette butt that a compulsive smoker threw away, determined as she was to quit/stop smoking. How many births, resurrections and revelations do we daily and hourly squash by sitting on them? Luckily for us, there is only one God and we cannot sit on Him because He is everywhere; and we cannot sit everywhere, for all our obesity. Even within the framework of relativity and quantikity you cannot sit on all these ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘, can you? Of course you can fall between two stools, between this ‘‘‘‘ and ‘‘‘‘, even if they live cheek by jowl: ‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘. We call this fall ‘original sin’.

There is God and His will is not far from Him because it is inside Him, although He has no body and, under the circumstances, inside means ‘within His divinity’. So His will is not far and it belongs to Him not only spiritually, but also substantially, and no wonder He wonders what He could do with His will, with its unconditional support. His will goes out of His divinity (it quits His divinity, so to speak) and reveals itself; re*will*s itself, so to speak. His will speaks and says, ‘Light, moon, sun, my Son, my *Sohn*, my Sound, my Logos.’ All this, however, appeared later, much later, probably in the 11th century BC. For the moment (and I, for one, live through this moment in spite of myself) I live in the material of the world and in the world of the material. And I suppose (I am absolutely sure) that the material of the world goes on coming out of His will still (not still – on the move!) unformed, ununiformed and like a dark mass. What about Bach’s Mass in whatever keys they are, all these Masses?

He said, ‘Let there be light,’ and you know Who I am speaking of, even if you know neither the first nor the second things. The point is we are dealing with and approaching the First Being, the First and only Being – the One who is giving us a lesson about the Light we see and worship almost everywhere except when we draw our curtains up and fall asleep. Then we worship darkness and whatever comes along with these dark-dark-dark-dark-dark-dark ladies of our life-and-death’s sonnets. So our Father sounded forth, up, down, sideways, and the sound He emitted turned into the light we see whenever we switch our computers on. Our Father sounds forth, ‘Computers, breakfasts, tennis, players, champions, television, reality, love, love, love.’ And we have no alternative but to love each other. Our Father sounds forth, ‘Each, other, each, other.’ And we realise (after much soul-searching) He means love, love, love and nothing else. Friendship perhaps, sometimes.

The secret light shines secretly, but if you prick up your ears you might hear something and that something always pricks your conscience before revealing a piece of eternal truth. You are frightened of the wind whose tongue and vocal cords speak to you of your crimes and misdemeanours as if she did not know any other human being

overburdened with murders and other horrors. Both light and wind speak to you of eternal suffering, for eternal truth is suffering and cannot choose but suffer upon learning the whole truth. You are always guilty, whatever you do and your steps – the ones that bring you to the front door and carry you through the garden, up the garden path – are heavy, mud- and crime-overburdened. The problem is you cannot *see* the light; you only listen to its remonstrance, filled with remorse (of course). By means of exercises, however, you will sooner or later learn to *see* the light without reading it. Words mislead one, whereas light guides both sufferers and sinners towards another light and yet another light. And then you realise that everything shines and asks God's blessing on you and your relatives, friends and numerous wives. You doodle for a while and your drawing begins to shine.

They shine, don't they? So do all these letters.

Wakey wakey, rise and shine!
Walkey walkey, rise and shine!
Talkey talkey, rise and shine!
Smokey smokey, rise and shine!

Look at this path! In the years to come, God will come to us after stepping down on this sacred path. He will put His feet (both of them) on this path before embarking on His journey towards our salvation or rather our corrupted bodies and souls that do not await his Coming and Cure. Look at this chimney puffing out clouds of smoke and meditate upon God's ways, upon the way He can puff out His cure and engulf your whole substance, provided you are virtuous and walk in the ways of God.

And we shall gasp in astonishment, saying to each other, 'Look at this cloud. Is it our fellow creature or the Almighty in the flesh? Let us hide our substances under a bushel for fear of being burnt to the ground like the Golden Pavilion in Kyoto.'

And one will say to another, 'Do you remember our dog?'

'Of course I do.'

'Yesterday our dog was digging a hole to hide its bone in.'

'He does it every day.'

'Shall we dig a hole to hide our substances in?'

I should add the following verse to the Scriptures, 'Like a dog digging a hole and hiding his bone in it, so our sinners will try to escape the Almighty's tyrannical rule and rightful wrath, but the latter will dig them out.'

Pride is not as omnipresent today as it was when we sought to ascertain ourselves (not just our rights) at the earliest opportunity. And such an opportunity always came earlier than any earliest opportunity because we were prepared to use Einstein's theory to exhibit our greatness – not for the sake of money or television shows. We eagerly sacrificed our lives in the hope of making the younger generation build us a few monuments with our names on them – no *Unknown* Soldiers, you know. Dante, for one, showed great pride in his work and had no false modesty about his forthcoming immortality. His pride soared beyond the stars, but I threw him and his pride into the abyss. 'Trample down now the slave of pride and stand fast within me!' I said to him as he climbed out of the abyss, rose to his feet and knelt down – on second thoughts. On third thoughts he kissed my toes and ankles. 'You're right, O my son,' I said. 'I am Love. I am far more beautiful than your run-of-the-mill, down-at-heel Beatrice.'

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to solicit your help for the following project:

SONY CLASSICAL

HIS LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

CD ONE

CD TWO

CD THREE

CD FOUR

CD FIVE

CD SIX

We recorded these CDs last summer and they are being edited by my wonderful producer, Gerhard Betz. I have in mind another three-CD box – it would be a pity not to leave behind my versions and visions of Bach's *English Suites* and pieces by Grieg and Mendelssohn to whom not many of my colleagues pay tribute on a regular basis. The recording sessions we need for these works might take place next summer. Both Philipp Nedel, whose excellence in the domain of sound is above all suspicion, and Gerhard Betz share my desire for the *Last Will* project to have a happy ending. I hope we shall find financial support without which even the two recorded boxes could hardly be released.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully,

‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘

How and why did we come into existence? Why are we still in existence instead of going out of it round the clock and round the Earth in our endeavour to fly from it? Why don't we fly from it by means of a pair of wings? Do we need at least 40 wings (not 20 winks) to fly away? Why do we always have 40 winks? How many winks are we allowed to deduct from this fateful number? ‘The player had points deducted from his score for arguing with the referee.’ These crimes and punishments are commonplace in the world where they play badminton, soccer and

other stupid games. What are we allowed to do in *our* world, in our *monastery*? Our referee is God and this absolute truth concerns also men and women addicted to sports such as gymnastics, boxing and foxtrot dancing. Should we argue with Him Whose might is under our feet and above our hair or hats? And in our stomachs, and in our lungs, let alone in our hearts? And in our intestines, and in our gouts and cirrhosiseseseses? Why has your husband always walked with a slow stiff gait? Because he has always been gouty. Not Gaudi, I'm afraid. Gouty and ungodly. So why is he still in existence? Why did God call him *into* existence? If, after much heaven-searching, I manage to supply an answer to these questions, I shall know the mind of God. Would you mind, my Lord? Would you mind?

Do I know an *ordinary* mind? Is any ordinary mind made in the all-mighty-mind's image? 'Mind your own business!' they say, if you endeavour to decipher the enigmas of their trains and thoughts, peering into every window. But many curtains are drawn and their owners do not feel like drawing them aside to enable you to catch a glimpse of forthcoming decisions, sins, crimes and the Beatitudes. What to say about the windowless mind of God? God is not just a monad; it is Godad, God and Dad and the most perfect adjustment of molecules, atoms and neutrons. Is there anything more perfect, more harmonious than the mind of God? How could an ordinary human, for all their mirror-born, image-qualified qualities, unravel a wonderful piece of woven cloth that one calls the mind of God? Is it an assemblage of grey cells, as Poirot used to think? Is it enough to put a few cells together? All right, here they are: ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ and it is up to you to paint them grey, if you are convinced that this colour will lead you to God.

Let us suppose that all the cells I exhibited above are grey and they say they belong to God, to our Lord Whose mercy, love and omniscience are so omnipotent that we are all at sea with them and their elements, whenever we come across them in the middle of the universe. So what exactly do we know about the mind of God? We know ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ and we presumptuously think that we know everything.

‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ Is it really the mind of God? The more I look at this image, the more I grow to worship it because it *is* the mind of God, for even an infinitesimal part of it (say, ‘‘‘‘) is the mind of God. Everything is His mind and His body, and I wonder if we really understand His body, which might entitle us to an adequate representation of His mind. It is easier to understand the body than the mind, isn't it? Suppose you are about to tackle the problem of the female anatomy, after putting a corpse on your writing desk or rather on your dinner table: your study is so chock-a-block with computers and books you can hardly find enough room for your fingers, let alone the palms of your hands. So you put a female body on your dinner table and touch its members, one by one, saying to yourself, 'Her elbow, her wrist, her tibia, her hips,' and you do not cover her body with a blanket until you know everything about it; unless you nip the whole process in the bud, weary as you are of humans and their anatomies. But do not forget you are dealing with God, not with a dead and not-yet-buried woman. Can you put God on your dinner table? Can you touch His tibia? And what about His mind? Can you touch His thoughts related to the Big Bang? All right, you do touch them and feel both the Big and the Bang and something that looks like a bag. So what? So what? Can you touch Adam? Can you touch His fall? You *can* touch it and you do not need God's mind to carry out this experiment. Touch yourself! Touch yourself!

Any image is the mind of God. Any blade, any maid is the mind of God. Moiljhnlikjbhj bn is the mind of God. And

Van'ka and vstan'ka went to Peter
And Peter(sburg) went to America.

We come and go and so where.

O where are we now, my dove and lo-
Ve? In Ve, in Lo, in lo and behold.

In the fold, in so bold,
In a jelly mould, old.

In the article devoted to God (all her articles are devoted to Him) our devotee of the Almighty, as blasphemers and Anti-Christs call her, speak of God's boundless mind and her incapacity to enter it. Her observations are not highly original, but they shed light on how a saint could visualise the universe in the Dark or even Bright Ages. In this particular article Hildegard has a go at God's mind, brain and train of thought, and at some point she affirms there is only *one* train of thought in God's mind. 'There is only one thought within God's substance,' she writes. 'And this thought is Woman.' 'The shining fire which you see represents the omnipotent living God or rather His only thought – Woman,' she points out in her letter to Simon of Athens. 'This thought is never obscured by any evil or Man,' she goes on in her eagerness to join the nearest feminist club. As for the mind of God, it seems to escape her notice in spite of the word and notion 'Woman' which she overuses as she bends over the intricacies of the head she put on her dinner table some time ago. 'God is tangible,' she writes after reading Tertullian and his definitions, 'and I touch him whenever in need of strengthening and another amount of hope. What is hope? It is God you can touch to your heart's content.'

She also speaks of the ordinary mind, alias the mind we have at the top of our being, and one gets the feeling she touches neither this brain nor the Mighty Brain; the mind of God, the mind of the universe. From time to time she admits her guilt and mistakes: 'I shouldn't tamper with His mind and might. I've no right to do it. Pride, pride, pride, pride. Why not adopt St Augustine's method? "O help me, help me, help me. Please lie down on my dinner table so I can dissect Your brain and consequently Your time.' At times she stoops to dropping a noncommittal remark about the ordinary or worthless brain 'I was endowed with right before the Big,' as she calls the Creation in her works. 'The mind of God seems to encompass everything from music, theatre and ballet to literature, cinema and the visual arts. Our brain can write a poem and dance a few mazurkas, but after a while we are ready to drop and we drop a few lines to the effect that we cannot go on, only down, down, down, down.'

'The mind I am talking about is inextinguishable, whereas the mind we can boast of (we should not) goes off rather often. So we describe our death as follows, "The damage to the fuse box caused the power to go off." Let us call life "power": this definition is much better than Schopenhauer's *Wille* that I call Nelly.' When talking

to Thomas of Onegodonly, she dropped the following remark (according to St Thomas): ‘Consciousness, intentionality, emotional involvement and commitment are all very difficult to define, but may actually be programmable. The mind of God is not programmable.’

‘But God Himself is programmable,’ said St Thomas.

‘How so?’

‘Voltaire said something along these lines, “If God didn’t exist, we would be duty bound to invent Him.” In other words, God is inventable or programmable.’

‘Do you mean to say God is a computer?’ asked Hildegard.

‘Not even the Super Computer,’ answered the saint.

‘God is not emotionally involved,’ Hildegard goes on as she attempts to scrutinise the *heart* of God – for a change. (She gods on, gods on, gods on.) ‘Epicurus and Spinoza might be right after all: God does not love us. And this lack of humanity-focused love is in no way due to our ingratitude, sins and inattention to His counsel. He is just unemotional, for He has no heart. He cannot say to us, “I love you, and I mean it from the bottom of my heart,” for the simple reason that He has neither the bottom nor the top of any heart.’

Once she struck up a conversation with Andreas von Toiletry, and she is said to have said in the course of it, ‘I’d love to know what God thinks about things, but She always keeps Her own counsel.’

PPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPP

Dear Ppp,

I've just answered Christ's email in which I spoke of my new idea with regard to our collaboration.

Just a few details about the financial aspect of our undertakings. Dima's wife, Natasha, called me recently to say her father had died last December. And, logically enough, she was in no mood for business in any shape or form. She suggested we should organise another recital to get at least 10,000 euros. She thinks it could be done this month.

I also got in touch with a Belgian businesswoman who asked me how much I needed for the box. I said, 'Ten thousand.' Her reaction was similar to what we touched upon in Berlin, 'That's all?' So I could ask her for 40,000, if we had another session. I suppose the studio should be booked rather quickly but, to be on the safe side, we can confirm it only when we have the amount of money we need. I feel quite embarrassed for all the delays we have already gone through and I do wish to be on the safe side.

The rest is in the email I sent to Christ. I might add, however, that it would be a pity to die before recording and correcting three English Suites.

All the best,

Valery

(0)176.2423-

www.b-sharp.bis

www.facenovel.com/

-----Ursprüngliche Nachricht-----

Von: Valery [mailto:valeryaleff@gmail.com]

Gesendet: Montag, 5. März 2018 17:59

Betreff: Just an idea

Dear Valery,

we would be very happy to continue with another recording project this year!

I will ask Christiane, to look into identifying a period that works for everybody. Are there any preferences regarding your availability?
I will also reach out to Sony and discuss this idea with Ryusuke.

In any case, I would like to finish the editing and settle all payments for the current production of the 6 CDs before starting the new project.
Just for reference, so far we have received 10.000€ from Dmitri to cover our initial expenses.
Let me discuss the budgetary framework with Ryusuke/Sony, to identify what kind of resources we still have to allocate.

I will be in touch soon.

Thanks and many greetings,

Ppp

RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR

Some spiritually-endowed individuals proclaim from the very start, 'I know nothing about God because he is unthinkable and impervious to any analysis. He is not this, not that, not not, not not not, and so not. He is rather a series of notes that make up a piece of music such as, "Ha-a-a-llelujah, ha-a-a-llelujah, hallelujah hallelehalleluja."'

Others, on the other hand, say, ‘He is this and that and yes and yeah and hallelujah.’ Hildegard can be heard and admired everywhere. She says among other things, ‘Some of our wisdom-stuffed gurus say, “God revealed to me every secret related to heaven and earth, to the universe and its weight.” Our magicians say, “I know how to use the stars, but I don’t really understand the ins and outs of how they work.” I think I should make allowances for them: they are unhinged and their minds unbalanced, if not completely broken down. But I do mind (and my mind is *not* unbalanced) all those who say, “I know how to use the stars, and I really understand the ins and outs of how they work.” “Well and good,” I say to them. “Please show me how they work.” And they show me الله or HX or nothing. “It is nothing,” I say to them. “That’s how they work,” they answer.’

What is the difference between the Almighty and the parmighty? The latter (alias human beings) are imprisoned in the Skinner box and programmed to keep touching its lever in the hope of reward. They (alias we) touch the lever and receive as a present the letter A. We touch the lever again and receive the letter B. Little by little (letter by letter) we advance in our knowledge of our ABC. We learn that the ninth letter of the alphabet is I. We also learn that Z comes after Y in the alphabet. God has known the alphabet from time immemorial: even He cannot recall the beginning of this time. ‘But He does recall the beginning of the alphabet,’ as Hildegard points out. ‘What is more, He also recalls the end of the alphabet. So do I, which proves I am made in the image of God – in HIS image.’

What other rewards do we get by pressing the button or whatever it is? ‘Press down firmly on the lever,’ says a voice and we obey it: but for our obedience, we would have starved to death a few decades ago. We obey commands, orders, rules, tyrants, their stooges and even rats. We press down firmly on the lever and lie down in our beds where our coffee cups await us every morning, provided we press the ‘coffee button’. God always has His breakfast in bed – not only on a Saturday morning, contrary to what goes on in our lives, whatever buttons we may press or depress: at best, we enjoy our bed-and-breakfast ritual on a *Sunday* morning as well, at best, as well, at best. Suddenly we realise our lives are nothing but a badly scratched LP: bed and breakfast, bed and no-breakfast, no-bed and no-breakfast, bed and breakfast, bed and no-breakfast, no-bed and no-breakfast, bed and breakfast, bed and no-breakfast, no-bed and no-breakfast.

We have no direct knowledge of such a world because the world we have got in mind is nonesuch and nonemuch. There is a tree and we say first and foremost, ‘A tree, look at it, you’re our daughter and should know what a tree is, otherwise you won’t be able to enjoy your ride on a seat joined by two ropes to a tree, on which a child can sit and move backwards and forwards. Don’t you wish to move backwards and forwards, from the future to the past, from hopes to memories and catastrophes?’ God knows the world directly and entirely, backwards and forwards. Trees and swings can be found in His mind at the same time, at the same point, so God cannot swing; nor can anybody push His swings or Himself – He is the source of His own movement. He is the tree on which He hangs Himself because there must be gallows in the world and He happens to be the prototype of these gallows. And He is ॐ. Some commentators say it is a crown; others say it is God’s lotus. ‘Do you know what I’m talking about? ˈlotus poˌsition noun [S]a way of sitting with your legs crossed and your feet resting on your thighs (= part of the leg above the knee) especially used in yoga (= a method of relaxation). Actually God doesn’t need to relax: He’s always refreshed and full of energy, and full, and omnipotent, and non-impotent and a tent where we relax, sleep and meditate upon the universe or just one verse such as, “I saw eternity at dawn.”’

Some mystics quote God's diary – the following entry, among other entries and sorties: 'I went on a refresher course on new techniques in design to bring myself up to date.' They think they describe the life of God on the eve of the Creation instead of talking about St Agnes' Eve or Eve before the Fall. God did nothing of the sort; nor did the Fall; nor did the sort do anything of the sort: we know nothing about sorts, the gods and our own falls except that there are no foodstuffs, no stufffoods in our fridges; only fudge. In terms of experience, She (alias God) definitely had the edge over the other people that we interviewed. And we chose God to represent us in the United Nations, in the United Galaxies, in the United Holes.

We read or write or hear, 'UN troops are in a cleft stick: something has to be done for the civilian population, yet to retaliate would surely be the spark to ignite all-out war.' They ignite this war that goes from all to out and vice versa, and we meditate under their bombs as our contemplation of God's will goes on in spite of the explosions, implosions and tsunamis you must have heard about in the streets or in your garden where birds and cats speak only of tsunamis, earthquakes and your toothaches. Verlaine said, '*La vie est là*'. In other words, everything is over there or just there except my (or Verlaine's) life, except Hamlet and Shakespeare. Just a glass of beer and Hildegard who says, 'And I saw as amid the airs of the South in the mystery of God a beautiful and marvellous image of a human figure; her face was of such beauty and brightness that I could more easily have stared at the sun.'

If you stop reading her *Book of Divine Works* at this point, you are sure to compare Hildegard's description of the human figure to Juliet, to Romeo's description of her presence on the balcony:

> But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?
> It is the east and Juliet is the sun!
> Arise fair sun and kill the envious moon
> Who is already sick and pale with grief
> That thou her maid art far more fair than she.
> Be not her maid since she is envious,
> Her vestal livery is but sick and green
> And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off.
> It is my lady, O it is my love!

If you compare (and I do compare) the above descriptions, you inevitably come to the conclusion that Hildegard cannot hold a candle to Shakespeare. It is true that she holds a lot of candles, using them as she goes through churches, icons, tombs and skeletons she worships. Sometimes she holds her candles to the relics in front of which she kneels down and makes the sign of the cross, murmuring a prayer such as, 'God, God, God, I can see you. Let me see Your soul in its entirety, every nook and look of it.' Yet she cannot hold a candle to Shakespeare; or even to Juliet, come to think of it. And if you do not come to think of anything, you come to the conclusion she cannot hold a candle to Romeo standing under Juliet's balcony and under the moon.

But if you continue to peruse Hildegard's opus, you realise she goes one better, the One better, the One best, the One who is always better, whatever regimes we confront: 'On her head she had a broad band of gold. And in that golden band above her head there appeared a second face, like an old man, whose chin and beard touched the top of the first head. Wings protruded from behind the neck of the figure on either side, and rising up

clear of the golden band their tips met and joined overhead. On the right, above the sweep of the wing, was an image of an eagle's head, and I saw it had eyes of fire in which there appeared the brilliance of angels as in a mirror. On the left, above the sweep of the wing, was the image of a human face, which shone like the brightness of the stars.'

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

I have been in touch with Ryu and he is a little bit concerned that the project is getting out of control. His rough idea has been like this:

- Announcing news about the 6 disc box set (or a series of individual releases) in May 12-26 when Valery will come with Tonkunsterorchester conducted by S. (6 concerts of Brahms 2) , which will have much wider and different audience than his annual recitals. S. is one of the most popular Japanese conductors in Japan, after O.
- Releasing the actual products in early October for his solo recital tour (4 recitals including one in Suntory Hall Tokyo, bigger venue of 2,000 seats than his recent recitals of 600-800 seats). But I have not made up my mind whether it will be box set or individual release, or selected release of the repertoire overlapping with his recital program.

"So I cannot really say at this stage if I am able to support the idea to continue the recording beyond 6 discs, because I have not had the sales results. What if Valery intends to continue recording beyond these 9 discs? If so, "Testament" concept may need to be changed, or his concept of this project and mine was simply different."

So, in order to move ahead:

- Please discuss with Ryu directly the idea of doing another set of three new recordings. This discussion should including the question if these will really be the last ones… or if you may want to continue recording beyond a total of 9 discs – in which case you need to discuss the Testament-concept of the whole project.
- we have to finish the 6 already recorded CDs quickly. I can only urge you to send Gerhard your remarks soon, so that we can wrap this up in a timely manner. We are also still missing €15.000 in funding to get this current project of 6 discs in the range where Sony agreed to cover the remaining costs. (We are facing some extra costs because we went from originally 4 to now 6 discs.)

Again, I am hesitating to continue recording, before we have finished and settled our ongoing job. If you have cleared all strategical questions with Ryu, if the funding for the current recordings and the new one is there, then we can move ahead quickly and start the next adventure!

However, why don't you send me your preferences as to when this would be convenient for you and we can start identifying possible recording dates?

Let me know if you need any further assistance,
With warm regards,

Ppp

Dear PppppppppppppppP,

I wish to thank you again for your support.

I haven't written to Ryu yet because I'm waiting for any result of my financial efforts. As I said earlier, the chief (potential) sponsor will give me a reply on April 19 at the latest. But if a lot depends on sales, we don't have the ghost of a chance of going on with our project. People are mostly interested in young artists and apparently even Martha no longer succeeds commercially in this new and young brave world. (By the way, when a musician just says Martha, omitting the surname, I almost mechanically think of Martha Mödl, not of Martha Argerich.) A number of last of the Mohicans do succeed, however, but to be the last of the Mohicans, you have to be a Mohican, first. Anyway, I'm too heavy-going and too old for these anti-music lovers who are exceedingly fond of lightness and freshness.

Well, let's wait and see. I can assure you I'm doing my best to secure financial support for our wonderful, spiritual, heroic world adventure. If nothing comes of my efforts, I'll pay the rest of the amount (15,000) out of my own pocket. I'm not a rich artist and you certainly know I won't get anything for all the CDs we have already made for these (virtual, virtuous) boxes – even if they *are* released.

Thank you again.

Kindest regards,

Dear friend,

I hope you're well.

I'm still waiting for our potential sponsors' decision. I asked for 45, 000 and sometimes this method works, it seems to me. You ask for 45,000 and they give you 20, 000. But if you ask for 20,000, they give you 10, 000. On the other hand, they may be so shocked by your request that they all but burn your letter and sometimes are even tempted to burn yourself at the stake. Let's wait and see. The deadline comes on April 19.

As for *The Last Will* contents, I've finally realised how important it is to be reasonable and logical - a process of trial and error, as they say. A six-CD box is imposing and if anyone is tempted to buy anything

linked to my name and lack of renown, he or she will buy this version of my testament as well. It is intense and for once I am completely satisfied with myself. The repertoire is varied and explores all nooks and crannies of my brain and heart. And hopefully also those of the composers.

So let us stick to our first idea which can be easily financed, even if all discussions and hopes fall through.

Yesterday I got Gerhard's second edits, and I am on the verge of tears. As they say in Russia, 'Now I can die peacefully.' Of course I've no intention of dying. But does death depend only on my wishes?

I am probably the last of the Mohicans. But the point is, to be the last of the Mohicans, you have to be a Mohican, first. And how many of today's last of the Mohicans are Mohicans?

I'm looking forward to our meeting in Tokyo. And of course I'll keep you posted on the financial outcome.

Kindest regards,

Valery

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The Holy Trinity depicted by Hildegard goes *three* better than Shakespeare's effort in the domain of love – of *physical* love which is anyway much inferior to spirituality and its loves, affections, revelations and ecstasies. One might say that Juliet cannot hold a candle to the Holy Trinity we see around the head of a woman whose sanctity is above all suspicion. Anyway, in the play we admire and even worship to the point of saying, 'She's as beautiful as Juliet, Romeo's wife,' when coming across a bathing beauty, Juliet holds no candles, and even her family vault is lit by torches, not by candles or chandeliers. And even if Juliet did hold (if only for an instant) a candle (in her room, for instance), this candle of hers would not hold a candle to any candle used by any member of the Holy Trinity – by virtue of the same spirituality. What could Juliet's candle throw light on? On Romeo's chest, on his legs, on his private parts? Let them remain private, as Vladimir says to Estragon; or vice versa. But if Jesus Christ resorts to what (in the course of dinners) is called 'candlelight', he does it to put another emphasis on sanctity, divinity and the Holy Trinity. Yet He sees everything and therefore needs neither candles, nor torches, nor spotlights, nor searchlights, nor floodlights, nor matches.

'I saw it had eyes of fire in which there appeared the brilliance of angels as in a mirror.' What about Juliet's eyes?

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright.
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear

What does Juliet achieve with her eyes and the rest of her body? She teaches the torches to burn bright and so, after a few jumps, one might conclude that it is on her initiative that lampposts were installed in our cities and on Belgian motorways. Rousseau reminds us that our civilisation corrupts us day and night, and the torches our Romeo has in mind and in front of him put an additional emphasis on the debauchery organised by Capulet. It is true they dance court dances and waltzes, but men court ladies as they exchange their points of view and vice versa. It is noteworthy that Shakespeare does not touch upon angels and their consorts, which might have rendered the ball much more spiritual instead of letting it degenerate into violence.

Upon seeing Juliet, Romeo takes a few steps, hesitates for an instant and rushes towards her dress as if to take part in the lesson she is giving to torches. 'Did you hear what this young fellow said about my cousin?' asks Tybalt.

'He's wooing her already.'

'Did you hear what he'd said about our torches? In his learned opinion, they don't burn bright.'

'That's right.'

'Shall I teach him how to burn bright?' asked Tybalt. 'I'll kill him and put his body on a funeral pyre.'

'Are you acquainted with traditional Hindu customs?' asks Capulet.

'I'm not. Why?'

'This particular custom used to involve widows burning themselves alive on their husbands' funeral pyres.'

'So what?'

'Do you wish my daughter to burn for the sake of this young man?'

'Are they married?'

'My stars inform me they'll be married tomorrow.'

'So I'll kill him today.'

'Not in my house. Have you seen Buster Keaton's *Our Hospitality*?'

'I haven't.'

'I'll lend you my DVD.'

♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫

Dear Sir,

I thought I would deserve at least one word ('No') in response to my request. 'Sorry' is quite unnecessary.

Kindest regards,

Valery Aleff

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‘On the left, above the sweep of the wing, was the image of a human face, which shone like the brightness of the stars.’ A human does shine now and then: scholars and historians talk at length about Hildegard’s brightness and the stars she showed to foreign tourists, in addition to her colleagues. As we read her God-dictated prose we grow brighter and brighter, even if our moods happen to be located on the dark side of the moon. Incidentally, Hildegard also had a variety of moods in her psychological make-up, but whenever her mood was on the dark side, it was on the dark side of the sun, in one of its spots. So many worshippers made hay in Hildegard’s presence!

We often forget about wings and the pictures where they can be found, clipped on the bodies of saints and prophets whose fields of vision depend on heights, on tops of the world. If you do not see the Earth from above, you are not likely to predict its future conflagration. Gagarin saw the Earth from his sputnik and said to the authorities as he obliterated once and for all the final victory of communism: ‘We’re done for, you know.’ Juliet had no wings, otherwise Romeo would have talked about them for hours and hours, rooted to the spot, to the centre of Capulet’s ballroom. And he might have borrowed them to scale the Capulet wall more easily and noiselessly; in no time at all. Had he used a pair of wings, he might have slept with Juliet on the very first night of their romance, landing up on her balcony and heading for her bed from which she would not have budged: why recite your monologues on your balcony if Romeo is already in your bed? Of course you can say, ‘O Romeo, Romeo,’ even if you share one pillow with him: sometimes, you just repeat your beloved’s name for the heck of it, while touching her neck. You like both the sound of the name and that of your voice. Your ideas are clear and logically presented.

Be that as it may, Romeo had no wings because he was not acquainted with Hildegard’s face-saving, love-boosting text. (Moreover, his faith in God was not up to her standards.) ‘Juliet! Juliet! Where are you? What are you doing? Come here at once, you naughty girl!’ Romeo kisses Juliet goodbye and takes wing – a face-saving manoeuvre. Had Juliet, on the other hand, made use of her non-existent wings, she might have joined Romeo in Mantua – a love-boosting journey.

Suppose Friar Laurence says to Friar John: ‘On the left, above the sweep of the wing, was the image of a human face, which shone like the brightness of the stars.’

‘Another vision of yours? No stigmata yet?’

‘But from each of her shoulders, a wing extended down to the knee.’

‘Why are you telling me all this nonsense?’

‘Because you must take wing,’ answers Friar Laurence.

‘What for?’

‘You should go to Mantua.’

‘My horse has been given a clean bill of health by the veterinary surgeon. Alive and kicking.’

‘If you ride, your speed to Mantua will be stay’d. If you fly, no one will ever stop you.’

‘But I’m not a high-winged aeroplane, am I?’

‘The sweep of the wing, the sweep of the wing, the sweep of the wing, the sweep of the wing, the sweep of the wing, the sweep of the wing. If you listen carefully to what I’m saying, you’ll get at least one wing.’

‘Don’t say “stigmata”, though.’

I need a new car. I have no money.

Her chariot is an empty hazelnut
Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,
Time out o' mind the fairies' coachmakers;
Her wagon-spokes made of long spinners' legs,
The cover of the wings of grasshoppers,
Her traces of the smallest spider web,
Her collars of the moonshine's watery beams,
Her whip of cricket's bone, the lash of film,
Her waggoner a small grey-coated gnat,
Not half so big as a round little worm
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid

What do I need a car, a chariot, a kingdom, a queen, a mob for? I am King Mub II; Shakespeare was King Mub I or King Hub. All roads lead to Rome but I will take none of them, for no road is my road and along this no-road will I always drive in my no-car, no-chariot, no-spinners' legs. No spineless individuals, no spineful individuals, no spiteful individuals, no mindless, no mindful, no individuums, no mobs, no mabs, no maps. 'And in this state she gallops night by night/Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love.' They should not, otherwise our human race will never stop in its tracks (with its trucks), in its muck (with its Lady Muck). Her traces of the smallest spider web. I leave no traces, no spiders, no webs, no Web, no sites, no minds, no faces. Not even

_____ nor

---------- nor

- - - - -
- Not half so big as a round little worm
- Not third so big
- Not fourth so big
- Not fifth so small
- .

I am a worm, I am God.
No faces, a lot of books.

Every day in the evening and in the morning.
He establishes the fire,
wipes with his hand the ground round it,
sprinkles water round it,
bends his right knee,
and puts fuel on the fire.
To Agni I have brought a piece of wood,
to the great Gâtavedas;

may, Gâtavedas, give faith and insight to me.
Swâhâ.

'Svaha' means a procurer in Russian. A go-between, an *entremetteuse*, an old woman going between men and women, saying:

I know a beautiful woman, you know,
A young and a rich and a prosperous woman.
Her father's a count, her mother a princess,
They live in a castle. See? See? Over there.
The castle, its turrets, the park and three stags.
O give me a great many, great many roubles
Or rather a million, billion dollars.
I'll bring you this marvellous, peerless Lady,
Your First (not your late) and your Foremost-most Duchess.

By the way, you'll take to fatherhood like a duck to water.

Romeo. Peace, peace, old hag,
Peace, peace,
Peace, piss.
Thou talk'st of nothing
Or rather of something.
Of children, of offspring,
Forbid, God forbid,
No, no, no, no –
No spring. Off with you.

Svaha. The Rite of Spring.

Romeo. The Rite of Nothing.

****

Romeo. **She will not stay the siege of loving terms**
Nor bide th'encounter of assailing eyes
Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold;
O she is rich in beauty, only poor
That when she dies, with beauty dies her store.
Ben (*Laden*). **Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?**
Romeo. **She hath, and in that sparing makes huge waste.**

For beauty starv'd with her severity

Cuts beauty off from all posterity.

****

Badvolio. ~~Tut, you saw her fair, none else being by:~~
~~Herself pois'd with herself in either eye.~~
~~But in that crystal scales let there be weigh'd~~
~~Your lady's love against some other maid~~
~~That I will show you shining at this feast,~~
~~And she shall scant show well that now seems best.~~

****

Mercutio. **True, I talk of dreams,**
Which are the children of an idle brain,
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy

****

Romeo. ~~So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows~~
~~As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.~~
~~The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,~~
~~And touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.~~

****

Romeo. **Come, bitter conduct, come unsavoury guide,**
Thou desperate pilot now at once run on
The dashing rocks thy seasick weary bark.
Here's to my love! [*He drinks*.] O true apothecary,
Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.

****

Juliet. **Then I'll be brief. O happy dagger;**
This is thy sheath. There rust, and let me die.

****

Montague. Many a morning hath he there been seen,
With tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew,
Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs;

But all so soon as the all-cheering sun
Should in the farthest east begin to draw
The shady curtains from Aurora's bed,
Away from light steals home my heavy son
And private in his chamber pens himself,
Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out
And makes himself an artificial night.
Black and portentous must this humour prove
Unless good counsel may the cause remove.

What Monague ought to have said on the subject:

I approve of my son's conduct, of his isolation
From the world that isn't worth
Our undivided attention. Let us divide it, devoting
Its greater part to meditation, to a search
For our inner being, not its outer manifestation,
To fashionable fripperies, to flashy clothes and cars.
My son knows that a true philosopher
Shuts up his windows, doors and also his mind
And either writes his books, his treatises
Or polishes a lot of lenses, as Spinoza did.
(Not lances, God forbid. Not lances!)
A true philosopher must cherish his freedom
And autonomy – and anatomy; not for
Men's or women's sake, though.
Ben. Though, did you say?
Mon. Yes, I did say 'though'.

(Let us disregard the above interpolation, if only for the time being or unbeing, as Buddhists say.)

Hello and thanks for getting in touch.

I will be out of the office until April 30th.

If the matter is urgent, feel free to contact my fantastic colleagues:

@b-sharp.biz @b-sharp.biz

@b-sharp.biz

@b-sharp.biz

@b-sharp.biz

Best regards,
Ppp

One may ask (but one does not: one just watches the play, asking no questions) why Romeo shuts up his windows instead of looking at the beauty of his garden one has no opportunity to admire in the course of the play: Shakespeare concentrates exclusively on Friar Laurence's and Juliet's gardens. One cannot argue with those who say that Friar Laurence takes exceptional care of his garden where he enumerates flowers, plants, trees and their blossoms as if to introduce us to botany. (*Introducing Botany*.) One might contradict the above statement, pointing out that Friar Laurence does *not* enumerate either flowers or their stems or stalks, as the case may be, but pontificates instead on the double-edged conduct of some 'weak flower'.

> Within the infant rind of this weak flower
> Poison hath residence, and medicine power:
> For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part;
> Being tasted, stays all senses with the heart.

Scholars do not fail to point out that, upon listening to this part of the Friar's soliloquy, a shrewd observer is sure to realise the hero or the heroine will use some poison or other at the end of Shakespeare's immortal masterpiece. (Deus ex machina.) And this observer is unlikely to hope that the other protagonist will just smell the flower for the sake of his or her (not their) robust constitution.

> O churl. Drunk all, and left no friendly drop
> To help me after? I will kiss thy lips.

It is noteworthy that Juliet does not call the Friar back to ask him for the same flower as if determined to avail herself of its cheering, God-saturated, Chanel-enhanced perfume. Incidentally, the Friar always trimmed the stalks of the tulips before putting them in a vase.

But let us go back to the beginning of the play, for going back and forth is the true vocation of both go-betweens and scholars. So, according to Romeo's father, the former spends his days (and some of his nights) beyond the windows of his own room, which are shut even at night-time: Romeo evinces no desire to study the stars' patterns and therefore one might exclude from the list of his interests both astronomy and astrology. His father, bent on his son's career in the army or in the Church, would rather cope with his son's and heir's truant disposition which may provide a number of good opportunities to do some networking. But I, for one, cannot bring myself to condemn his loneliness – not only in the light of what I myself am inclined to devote my time to (my time and my life, frankly speaking). Let us compare his silent loneliness – he is silent on those occasions unless he lets out a lot of sighs – with his relatives' conversations:

Ben. And I were so apt to quarrel as thou art, any man should buy the fee simple of my life for an hour and a quarter.

Mer. The fee simple! O simple!

Enter Tybalt, Petruchio *and* Others.

Ben. By my head, here comes the Capulets.

Mer. By my heel, I care not.

Even if you did not study Shakespeare at the University of Connecticut, you know Mercutio is lying through his teeth: he does care about Tybalt's presence within his field of vision – by his heel, by his ankle, by his leg, by his torso, by his shoulders, by his neck, by his head and, last but not least, by his sword. We need not consult the Fathers' of the Church to learn that lying is a sin: even the Prime Minister reacted angrily to claims that he had lied to the House of Commons. And as we all have known for three or four centuries at least, the Prime Minister always lies.

Let us follow Mercutio, Tybalt and Benvolio hard on their heels.

Tyb. Follow me close, for I will speak to them.

Gentlemen, good e'en: a word with one of you.

Mer. And but one word with one of us? Couple it with something, make it a word and a blow.

All beginnings originate in a word, in a blow (or a bang); you say a word and add another word either for argument's sake or just for fun. Isn't the world a fine fun house? For some reason – and this reason is not even known to himself – Mercutio thinks that 'make it a word and a blow' is funny, although no one, not even Benvolio who may be defined as a goodwill ambassador, really finds it funny. Mercutio says it on the spur of the moment and blurts it out without giving any thought to what he says as if to demonstrate how right Lacan, Roland Barthes and *tutti quanti* are. You say a 'word' and feel there is something on the tip of your tongue – another word, no doubt, for a word begets a word. 'Mysticism calls for mechanics,' as Bergson put it. You could cast a shadow of a doubt on this statement, saying, for example, that mysticism and mechanics are poles apart. Your objection would be all the more justifiable since Bergson was not really versed in the intricacies of quantum mechanics and what he enlarged upon was chiefly related to elevators, bulldozers and other machines you could come across in the days of Queen Victoria, King Edward VII and Franklin Roosevelt. But a word does beget a word – no doubt about *that*.

I wonder why he did not say, 'A word and a woe,' which sounds better, in my opinion: in addition to the same vowel (o) you also have the same consonant (w). Besides, 'a blow' is too straightforward, lacking the finesse one indubitably expects in Mercutio's company, given the poetic quality of his description of Queen Mab and her wagon-spokes. 'A word and a woe,' is explicit enough: no one is tempted to comment upon the biased and unbiased observers as follows, 'Both teams made some wild guesses, none of which were right.' Among those observers we could have stumbled upon the representatives of both households, had we lived in Verona in the 16th century. And all these representatives, if asked what woe Mercutio had in mind, would have answered, 'Tybalt's death and his parents' grief.' One must admit, however, that hardly one citizen out of three was in the know: some people

had no idea their Juliet the Jewel was already betrothed, nay married to Romeo and therefore would be loath to lament her cousin's death which was far outweighed by her husband's banishment. So those uncurious observers might have added Juliet to the list of the mourners: 'Still mourns her cousin's cruel death.' Even the nurse who *was* in the know, if only partly, was convinced her treasure was shedding her tears because of Tybalt's untimely acquaintance with the Hereafter and its tortures: he deserved to be punished for kindling the spark that set off a more or less private riot unequivocally forbidden by the Prince and God.

Tyb. You shall find me apt enough to that, sir, and you will give me occasion. (Even those who did not hear the word 'blow' know what 'that' means in the context. And what is the context, prey?

Ben. I pray thee, good Mercutio, let's retire;
The day is hot, the Capels are abroad,
And if we meet we shall not 'scape a brawl,
For now these hot days is the mad blood stirring.)

Mer. Could you not take some occasion without giving?

A scholar often detects a yinyangish procedure in Shakespeare's works where inversions follow each other – hard – on each other's heels. 'If you say A, you'r bound t'say B.' 'And if your B's already there, say A, say A, if you do care.' 'And I'll say B if A's in my cup.' 'I'll drink your tea. Can you see B?' Yet Tybalt does not do his best to provoke Mercutio into single combat because, in his mind, he goes on killing Romeo (not his cousin) as if facing three thousand lives, not one miserable love-spoiled existence. I do not recall how many lives Othello wished to deprive either Cassio or Desdemona of, but it is well known that unprofessional killers (not contract ones) are always way over the top as they continue to fire their guns into corpses or into the air, if there are no corpses around. 'The police stated that some fifty rounds had been discharged,' as they say in the aftermath of the brawl.

So Tybalt says to Mercutio, 'Well, peace be with you, sir,' but Mercutio literally pushes Tybalt's peace away, dismissing it out of hand and into hell. Their inaudible or unheard-of dialogue may sound as follows:

'Did you hear what I said about peace?'

'About *War and Peace*, Tolstoy's masterpiece?'

'No. I said, "Now that the war is over may there be a lasting peace between our families." The war is over, isn't it?'

'So you're not acquainted with Tolstoy's masterpiece, are you? You, ignorant ape, you!'

'Didn't you attend the meeting at which Prince Escalus said, "Once more, on pain of death, all men depart"?'

'Coward!'

'Did you say "coward," sir?'

'I did.'

'I'm delighted *de constater* that you know the word "coward".'

'And you know French, don't you?'

'I do.'

‘Congratulations! Your stupidity is *not* beyond belief – I believe in it.’

In Shakespeare’s play they often exchange their views for hours on end. More often than not they indulge in their wordiness to the detriment of their fighting spirits that lie dormant, overcome, if not overwhelmed, by the power of poetry. But let us not forget that deus ex machina is not alone: nothing is alone in the kingdom of I Ching where reversals follow versals and vice versa. There is such a being as a *devil* ex machina; and there is such a thing as the dirty underhand way He uninterruptedly tricks our souls. The above dialogue cannot be found in the work itself: the power behind the throne is always in the wings.

On a wing and a prayer. That is how we are working now, my dream team and I – nothing to dream (or write) about either at home or somewhere else. I send an email in which I pour my soul and also my body out and my chief collaborator answers, ‘I’m not in the office till doomsday. If anything urgent crops up – and with you nothing is ever urgent because you’ve got no money and you’ll never cover yourself in glory – feel free (can I feel free at all?) to get in touch with my colleagues. They might listen to one of your tales of woe.
@b-sharp.biz @c-sharp.biz @d-sharp.biz @e-sharp.biz.. @z-sharp.biz

Tybalt to Mercutio, Mercutio to Tybalt. At least they can kill each other. I cannot kill anybody. How boring, as Beckett often puts it. What is more, we are *not* Shakespeare’s characters.

♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫

Dear Madam,
I thought I would deserve at least one word (‘No’) in response to my request. ‘Sorry’ is quite unnecessary.
Kindest regards,
Valery Aleff

We always seek to unburden our conscience – if any, if any, if nanny, as our children sing in their kindergartens – and put the load we thereby receive on other shoulders, backs and even legs so that our victims no longer walk as elegantly as they used to before the transfer of the guilt. It is little wonder that Eve, after the incident or accident known as ‘The Fall’ or ‘The Betrayal’ or ‘The Serpent’ or ‘That Woman’ never recovered her gait depicted by a few chroniclers as ‘exquisite’ and ‘erotic to the utmost’. When asked why she walked ‘like that’, she would unavoidably answer, ‘I suffer from gout, you know.’

What does it matter where it comes from? What? ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘. Or ::: Or ºººººººººººººººººººººººººººº Or UUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU Or 99999999999999999 Or 333333333333333333333333333333 Or ?/?/?/?/?/?/?/?/?/?/?/? Or +/+/+/+/+/+/+/+/ Or ><<<<<<<<<<<<<<<>>>>>>>>><<<<>> Where from? From where? There, there, over there.

A few grandiose narratives. Where do we come from? What for? *Warum* anything and not *niente*, *niet* and 0000000000000000000000000000? But zero is something – something bigger than 1 or 2 and far more important, you know. They know, they do, and I just say, 'Fire is evil sometimes – whenever it burns you to cinders.'

'And what about the sun?' they ask.

Of course I can answer as follows (even if it does not follow): 'In Central American tradition solar symbolism contrasts with lunar. Sunset is not recognised as a "death" (unlike the moon's three days in hiding) but as a descent into the lower regions, into the kingdom of the dead. Unlike the moon, the sun has the privilege of passing through hell without undergoing the condition of death. No coffins, no tombs, no tombstones.'

'How come?' they exclaim.

'We recognise death everywhere,' others shout as they show you some withered leaves or a heap of foul-smelling flowers.

'All right,' I say to them, shaking my head and fists. 'Let us go back to the sun and its sign, its sun, its sign.'

'Let us,' they say, nodding in agreement and almost enthusiastically.

'This morning I sat on the balcony sunning myself. Did you?'

'No. We're absolutely snowed under with work at the moment.'

'So much for the sun,' I round off.

How easy it was to write in the Middle Ages when you could quote and unquote as many Fathers and Bibles as you wished when in need of inspiration or contribution. 'When in doubt, kill a child,' said Dickens, but whatever your poetic or driving licence, the law is the law, and the matter does not stand differently with murders. It is therefore much more convenient to open the Bible or Tertullian's treaties where sins and virtues are adumbrated and even described to some extent. So you just wrote, 'Yes, I sinned and I agree with Tertullian on the subject of my sin and of every other thing I can think of.' And then you quoted him *in extenso*, in intenso – quite intentionally and with *gusto* (the name of some Belgian tomatoes). 'You should love each other, but not to the extent of turning the other side of your body. The love I am talking about refers exclusively to your soul that shines more intensely than the sun and all your halogen lamps put together.' And then you quote St Jerome, St Chrysostom, St Sigismund and so on.

So you are innocent and your birth might be situated in the nearest clump of birch trees, in their colour-suggested purity and innocence. And you have no idea what the world really is, apart from atoms, molecules, cellules, cellulites, goats, gouts and drinking bouts that help you forget your predicaments and others, their hells, emails and hypocritical smiles. But you are on your own for the moment: even Adam is not in the room, given that he must go hunting now and then, otherwise your fridge will remain empty until the Fall. At first you do not hear anything because your ears are attuned only to Adam's voice and Mozart's symphonies, quartets, operas and piano concerti. And suddenly you realise that what you hear – you do hear something despite your recent *otitis interna* amounts (or boils down) to: Mlkn lkj bjhg fdc kvjb,k,ùm, likj giuuùpoj njghfc!ok,fctyuio,byguik, ,yuijkl,!uçiopkuikl. That is what you hear at first as if you could not survive, being one of the very fittest, without this mumbo jumbo. Lijnbljknbjhkbhjgguihj nkj njkb hbvkhjbj n ,n. Almost unconsciously, you go on, taking notice of these sounds you hastily associate with your recent disease, calling it 'ringing in my ears'. When confronted with this piece of contemporary music, the Russians say, 'Someone must remember me,' which for sure would

thwart my delight-stowed plans. So, as soon as I hear this oratorio I fetch my ear drops and inundate my brain as long as necessary to drown out everything, the future included.

Anyway, our makeshift Eve goes on listening to the music offered to her either by the spheres or by God – in her opinion, in Paradise one deals only with the eternal triangle: God, Adam or his ersatz and Even or rather our makeshift Eve. All of a sudden, she hears the following words, ‘Can’t you hear me?’

‘I hear you all right,’ she answers. (She ought to have said, ‘I hear you all wrong.’) ‘But your letters are too small – I can’t make them out at all.’

‘Eat it, eat it.’

‘What?’

‘It.’

‘What?’

‘The piece of fruit.’

‘Which one?’

‘That one.’

‘God forbid!’

‘The Serpent permits.’

‘The law forbids the sale of forbidden fruit to people under the age of 16.’

‘I am the law,’ says the Devil Incarnate.

We all know this story by heart, although the wording might escape from its cage – from our memory, in other words. (As our doctor puts it half-jokingly, ‘Productivity in the factory has slipped quite noticeably in the last year.’ ((His metaphorical description of our brain’s decline and impending fall.))) Yet we sin rather often, on a daily basis, and if one does not err on the side of caution, one might come to the following conclusion, ‘There’s a tree of knowledge (or a tree of ignorance) in that house.’

You usually go jogging for half an hour before breakfast, but no one cares about your exercises, airs and aerobics. The question now on the Holy Trinity’s lips is, ‘What do you have for breakfast?’ What about your guardian angel’s lips? ‘Let’s have toast and marmalade for breakfast,’ his lips convey to your soul and wisdom. ‘How many pieces of fresh fruit do you eat in a day?’ asks the Devil.

‘Three,’ you answer.

‘Not enough,’ He says.

Everyone knows what the fruit He speaks of looks like: ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘

What does God’s fruit look like? 0000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000

As the Buddha put it (as the Puttha bud it): ‘Never mind the archer. Mind the arrow you’re carrying wherever you go. Not for long, though.’ You are either in the middle of anywhere or in the midst of everywhere, and your hunger seems to annoy your body to the point of partially destroying it. Contrary to what the Bible says and proclaims from our libraries, there is no fruit around you and even your fridge has not put any fruit on display since yesterday or the day before. But there is a sort of urge inside you and, with the passing of the instants, this run-of-the-mill urge may grow into an irresistible, an irretrievable surge of whatever, whatever, whatever, whatever – let us call it emotion; for argument’s sake, among other sakes. Why should we always use the word ‘libido’? Libido here, libido there, as Figaro (or Freud) sings in *The Cirulnik di Cerbera*. ‘‘‘‘

‘‘‘‘

in other images.

Well, all these (‘‘‘‘) start somewhere below the belt or above it, and this time you might and indeed should take notice of the archer, otherwise you are sure to land up on a hook, figuratively speaking. Does it come from your male or female member, or from a member of your family whose block you yearn to knock off? Let us call this itch ‘prussssss’ and if you are at a loss for words – Why should you bestow any wording on this strrrrro? – you can once again entertain your guest with ⁘. ‘What’s got into you?’ asks the guest.

‘You’re a bit off colour today,’ says another guest. (However, he does not beat his breast.)

‘On the contrary, I would say you’re *on* colour.’

‘Overexcited, you mean?’

‘Have you got an itch? My grandmother was very strict and if you had an itch in church you were forbidden from scratching it. But we’re not in church, are we?’

‘We’re always in church.’

The word ‘itch’ is terribly complicated (A seven-year itch, old boy?) and you may have a lot of trouble with it. You had better use non-committal pictures such as Ƕ or ʒ. ‘What’s got into you?’

‘Ƕ.’

‘What’s got out of you?’

‘ʒ.’

‘So Ƕ is still inside you, is it? Does it bother you?’

‘Ɉ at all.’

Not for the moment. But there are other moments in store for you, and these moments are bound to affect almost every aspect of your life, at least as far as Ƕ goes and grows.

Ƕ

Ƕ

Ƕ

Ƕ

Ƕ

Ƕ

Sometimes you cannot keep your impulses on a tight rein and Loyola was well acquainted with this incapacity of yours, otherwise he would not have suggested you should repeat, ‘I pull on both reins to stop or slow a horse, but only the left rein to turn left.’ He was convinced this was the way to get rid of many impulses whose propensity to plague us had been known many centuries before the Jesuit Order was founded, structured and allowed to conquer the world. If you just say to yourself (and you often do exactly that), ‘I shouldn’t do it,’ you do it almost at once because you are keen to impede your own progress, movements and élans – as a sop to your doppelgänger. Emerson always contradicted himself, saying, ‘The only way to assert myself is to contradict myself. I’m not myself if I’m myself.’

What happens amounts to a sort of self-denial and a triumph of Ʉ that goes from strength to strength (to begin with, at first), bursts at the seams and finally bursts into flames, so to speak, as if to remind the Buddha of the conference on fire he is supposed to hold. ‘Another fire! another victim!! another suffering!!! another desire!!!! another lust after!!!!! another lust for!!!!!!’

‘Love, love, love,’ says St Paul.

‘I don’t think it’s love so much as lust.’

‘My cat likes dozing in front of the fire.’

‘Should we sacrifice the world for the sake of your cat?’

‘My cat likes dozing in front of the world on fire.’

What you are facing now – whenever you take the trouble to glance at your insides – looks like Ʉ and Loyola thinks it is not too late to put a stop to the pernicious growth of your impulse, urge and drive.

‘What are you driving at?’ he asks you on one of the pages of his book entitled *Exercici Spiritualiti* (not *Exercici Physicaliti*, mind you; *mind* you). ‘Are you driving at a drinking bout? Are you driving at a threesome? Are you driving at a séance of fellatio? Are you driving at a premeditated murder?’ In his book you find a lot of arrows that lead you either to murder or to the bliss you may conquer after fasting for two weeks and standing on your head (upside-down lotus position).

Ʉ bed, bodies, penis, vagina

Ʉ knife, neck, blood, blood, pool

Ʉ→as stubborn as a mule

After reading Loyola’s psychical manual, you say to yourself, ‘If you can’t control your dog, put it on a lead!’ If you just say, looking at yourself in a mirror, ‘You’re on a lead,’ you will not trust your own words, even if you do it after putting a piece of rope around your neck. But if you distance yourself from your mind, if you succeed in looking at yourself from the height of a throne, in the long run you will control your temper, impulses and pulse.

In the course of this long run, however, you should repeat the following mantra, ‘The temperature is controlled by a thermostat.’

You have Ⱨ in the middle and you promise Loyola to remove it from your being and even unbeing – he had no idea what the unconscious was and is about – both have and Ⱨ. So you say to everybody, down to the archangels, ‘I don’t have anything. There are no haves inside my being and non-being – only have-nots. I don’t have a bank account – I gave its contents to the poor. And they gave its contents to others, to other poor devils and gods. I have nothing to write home about except Ⱨ that I’ll cut down to size. I don’t promise you the Earth/moon that have already disappeared from the face of the firmament, due to the number of promises the gods heard in their Olympyses, during their Olympicus games. I promise you Saturn and its circles, rounds or aureoles, whatever you call them for what they are worth. Here is the Saturn I promised you: Ⱨ. And what about its laurel wreaths? you may ask. Here is my answer, ‘☼☼☼☼☼☼☼☼.’

A prayer.

Ⱨ Ⱨ----------

A three-day armistice has been declared between the rival factions.

Here we go again:

Ⱨ Ⱨ Ⱨ

Ⱨ Ⱨ Ⱨ Ⱨ

Ⱨ

Ⱨ

Ⱨ

Ⱨ

Ⱨ

Ⱨ

What happened? Didn’t you pray day in day out? Didn’t you say, ‘The temperature is controlled by a thermostat?’ Once and for all?

OTHELLO

See above.

You do not always know where you come from, even if you say, ‘I was born in Moscow, in Paris, in London, in St Petersburg.’ You say you were born, but you are not really sure you were, you are, let alone you will be; and yet ‘let it be’ is one of your mottos addressed to no one. You look inside; sometimes these insides happen to be stuffed into a cupboard, into a piano from which subterranean sounds come and engulf you for some reason, for some argument’s sake. And you remember your long-lost-last love and the urges associated with it, and you are prepared to go through all this once again, even if this (let alone all) can be found anywhere, not even on the other side of the Milky Way. You drink a glass of milk. What do you find on the other side of the milk you have already drunk?

Cassio knows nothing about Iago’s ambitions and the grudges he bears wherever he goes: a grudge against Othello, a grudge against the world, a grudge against the sheets he might have shared with Othello. He confides in Rodrigo, not in Cassio who remains in the dark as if awaiting a light that might be shed by the sun and its companions – the moon, Mars, Marx, Engels. Marx sheds some light and people say, ‘He’s our son. Helios is nobody in comparison with Marx.’ Cassio stays in the self-made shadow and Iago talks to him about the beneficial effects of a vodka treatment he suggests to celebrate their victory and their (Othello’s and Desdemona’s) betrothal. This time, instead of saying, ‘Eat, eat, eat,’ the Devil says, ‘Drink, drink, drink,’ which amounts to the same Russian vodka. Tara et viscondi et princip on Iaago, ha-ha. Stremlininoeci iv a i enai tremendo, red prooveksi. Actually, the Devil says something along these lines in Dante’s *Commedia*. He says Aleppo, if I remember rightly. At least Othello does say Aleppo at the end of his life, tether and feather: he *was* of the same feather with Desdemona; and of the same tether, come to think of it.

Shakespeare puts it bluntly: ‘Come, lieutenant, I have a stoup of vodka, and here without are a brace of Cyprus gallants, that would fain have a measure to the health of the black Othello.’ In Verdi’s opera he continues to sing his cavatina, saying at the end of each couplet: ‘Tramoendey.’ In this book, however, he contents himself with the word ‘drink’: ‘Drink, drink, drink, drink.’ And sometimes he adds to it the word ‘away’: ‘Drink away, drink away, drink away.’ And when Cassio evinces his desire to go away, Iago explains to him a part of his stratagem: ‘You should *drink* away, you fool. Not go, not go. Vodka *à gogo*, as the Russians say.’ They were hammering away at the door as Desdemona lied on her sheets, in her death’s embrace, bearing Othello’s fingerprints on her neck. First ten fingertips, then ten fingerprints. But that will come later, perhaps at the end of this part of the book. And now? What is going on now? Or going wrong? Or going down the drain? Or down the brain? Or going in vain, as Mark Twain said so often?

At long last, Othello is bound to realise in whom he put an absolute trust.

Othello bound.

I look down towards his feet, but that’s a fable,

If that thou be’st a devil, I cannot kill thee.

****

Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil

Why he hath thus ensnar’d my soul and body?

****

Why? Why does all this happen? You can explain it in many ways, walking up a many garden paths, and when Othello, bent (bound, bent, bond) on finding out who began all this, all that and everything else, down to the

same and only (only?) cosmos, says to his (not our) honest Iago, ‘Speak, who began this? (What? The cosmos? Who? God? Devil?) on thy love I charge thee,’ Iago answers:

‘I do not know, friends all but now, even now,
In quarter, and in terms, like bride and groom,
Devesting them to bed, and then but now,
As if some planet had unwitted men,
Swords out, and tilting one at other’s breast,
In opposition bloody. I cannot speak
Any beginning to this peevish odds (nor can astronomers and physicists);
And would in action glorious I had lost (What are glorious actions today, pray?)
These legs, that brought me to a part of it!
(What about the train of thought that brought him to the whole of it?)

In Verdi’s opera Iago says, ‘*Non so*,’ if I remember anything, rightly or wrongly or nonly, and he might have meant (he must have known French), ‘I’m not a *sot*,’ – not a blockhead, whatever you think. All this is anyway beside the point because the point is right here: . And if no one can see it, you blow it up, using Antonioni’s

method: ●

And whatever you find above or below it is beside the point.

In Verdi’s version of the moor’s fate and hate-*fati*, there are a few chords: plum, plum, *Non so*, plum, plum. (*Ploum*, *ploum*, in French.) This plum goes on and on, now and then sounding thus: plum, plum, plum. At the end of the monologue (a sort of truncated aria) you see and admire and contemplate a plum tree, on condition that you no longer listen to the opera and its dissonances.

All this comes out of the blue, out of the black, out of the white – out of all the rainbows you light upon as you fly through the cosmos adumbrated by Dante and Giordano Bruno. Now you know what the cosmos speaks to you of; now you are at a loss, in the moss not gathered by a number of rolling stones. Here is the moss:

‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘

‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘

And here are the stones:

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Why didn't they gather the moss above? What should *I* do with it? Should I gather them (these unrolling stones) one by one? What for? Where do they come from? Why do 'the' and 'a' go on rolling?

♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫

Dear Sir,

I thought I would deserve at least one word ('No') in response to my request. 'Sorry' is quite unnecessary.

Kindest regards,

Valery Aleff

A HOMAGE TO ALAIN RESNAIS

Going through my drawers, not along the tunnels at the end of which a teddy bear awaits me with a candle, with a torch I am supposed to hand on. To whom? To what? To where? To nowhere, to nowhom; to nohowm, hopefully. 'I can't remember – I was pissed at the time,' says John Gielgud at the outset of his birthday ritual, upon awakening in his providential park. I can remember a lot as I rummage in my drawers where a few photographs seem to look elsewhere as if unable to recognise me. What can make me wonder today? Not stupidity and vulgarity: they are too common and my common sense disregards them for SOS's sake; and yet I do not care about *their* souls.

'Molly, Molly, Molly,' says Gielgud. 'Tatiana, Tatiana, Tatiana,' says I, says my soul, says my body. She died in Moscow in . I left Moscow in 1974.

> Why didn't I send her a fur coat? I was jealous no doubt. I thought somebody might fall in love with her *because* of that fur coat. As if she were less beautiful naked, stark naked, 'star naked'. Dancing on a table like Carmen, like Isadora Duncan. But I knew how gorgeous she would look in a fur coat *I* might have chosen for her. And I had no wish to work for others, for her virtual admirers, lovers and husbands. Did he fall in love with her in wintertime, her only husband? Her old fur coat, the one she made herself, for herself. 'My old fur coat is threadbare and full of tiny holes,' she said in her letter. And I answered thus: 'I'd hate you to parade your new fur coat before the snobs and fops you are

> acquainted with, let alone other representatives of the Moscow elite. The latter would accost and pester you in the streets upon seeing the winter's tale I might have created for you.' Producing the old threadbare excuses. Under the same pretext I often refused to buy her new clothes—in Holland, in Belgium. I was still Soviet at the time. And I would smile to take the sting out of my words. I must be stingy. Even the protagonist of Proust's novel showered his mistress with gifts, for all *his* jealousy.

Molly, Molly. More booze, more booze, more bulldozers. Steamrollers, atomrollers, Alzheimerrollers.

‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘

‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘

‘‘‘‘ ‘‘‘‘

Dirk Bogarde’s wife says to him, ‘I want, I’d like, first person singular – I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I,’ while chopping a stick of leek. That’s right, my dear Dolly – I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I. My, my, my, mine, mine, wine. What! will the line stretch out to th’crack of doom? It will – I, I. TH’CRACK OF DOOM. (See above.)

Th’crack of whip:________________ ~ CHECK A!!! (In Russian)

_____________________ ~ CHECK A!!!

_________________~ CHECK A!!! __________________

Weep:

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

ooooooooooooooooo

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I: He who delights in the slaughter of men will not succeed in the empire. And the empire is life. The empire is a poem.

THE FACE: Tatiana presents such a cheerful front that you would never know she has leukaemia.

I: I'd never have dreamt up a Machiavellian scheme like that on my own.

THE FACE: Of course not. It's a huge slice of life that haunts you in your dreams, in reality. Anyway dreams are also slices of life. Sweet or bitter, savoury or unsavoury. Never mind. The main thing is that you've had your beauty sleep. Your ugliness sleep, if you prefer.

$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$$

I: Why did you marry him? Why didn't you die four months after my departure, nine months after our first meeting?

Tatiana: If you'd rather I weren't alive, you can't love me.

I: Even animals die in laboratories.

Tatiana: They've carefully nursed me back to health. Results of the first trials on people suffering from leukaemia—

I: You just like the word 'leukaemia', I suppose. Sounds better than 'multiple sclerosis'. 'Leukaemia' has a nobler ring to it.

Tatiana: You show the deepest sympathy whenever anyone dies and religiously attend the funeral. Among your colleagues you've earned the nickname of 'carrion crow'. In your imagination, too, you're constantly making away with people—

I: We might have spent all these years together.

Tatiana: You'd have left anyway. What's love compared with money and safety?

I: Who are you? A phantom, a phantasm?

Tatiana: I am Tatiana of the White Hands.

I: Would you mind undergoing the mirror-test?

Tatiana: To make sure I've got a reflection? I've got many reflections, my darling.

I: Why don't we take a walk in the garden? Your footprints—

Tatiana: I died in order to live again, flouting the law of causality. In the Hereafter I just floated around doing nothing. Or doing everything the other way round. The sun is like a black hole now. And the night is bright.

THE NIGHT

THE DAY

“ “ “ “

'I need somebody to lean upon. I have no money. And I feel so lonely. I don't wish to die in solitude. Somebody must stand by my bedside. And my mother is very ill herself. Somebody must help us.' Her sixth letter. At that point in her life she entertained nostalgia for the lost phallus and hoped to receive it in the future from a man.

Phallus lost:

Phallus regained: ‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘

I. The matter stood differently under the circumstances. The matter did not *stand*, in fact. The matter was already *lying* in the grave. There was not enough time for the embryo to become fully mature and leave its mother's womb. Besides, I thought the child would inherit Tatiana's disease and consequently her fate, let alone her bad character. So I decided to take the matter in my own hands. I found it preferable to kill the child with hygienic equipment than to let it suffocate within its mother's corpse.

Doctor. Inevitably diagnosis of inherited disease before birth means that abortion is the only advice which can be offered. Parents often choose to end a pregnancy if told that the child will be born with a severe illness. For the most severe diseases, 9 out of 10 accept genetic advice. And already the number of children born with some inherited disorder is dropping rapidly. I'm convinced that there will be pressure—from government or health insurers—to terminate genetically damaged foetuses, saving the cost of treatment. In the USA there have been wrongful birth lawsuits by parents...and by children, by genetically damaged children...The parents sue doctors and nurses because their children were not diagnosed before birth. The children sue their parents to get money for treatment.

One day she said she was pregnant, flouting the convention that prevents men from accepting this verdict at once: in their opinion, women often say that to elicit an amorous and humanist response from their husbands or lovers. Killing two birds with one stone, those women find out if their companion really likes children and if he is head over heels in love with her. The companion says, beaming with delight/pleasure/without measure, ‘Thank you for this priceless gift. Don’t you worry – we’ve got enough money for the child, for his or her upbringing. Our children will go to Cambridge, Oxford, Harvard and so on. And they’ll marry a prince, a princess, a duchess, a billionaire, the pope.’

‘Not the pope,’ answers the wife or the mistress.

‘All right – a king, a queen.’

‘An uncrowned king of jazz guitarists.’

‘A pearly king, a pearly queen.’

I loved both my mistress and her invisible yet boisterous child. But I felt duty bound to say to her, ‘Some women choose to have an abortion rather than care for a severely disabled child.’ At the time, they were conducting a poll to find out what people think about abortion. I said, ‘Yes.’

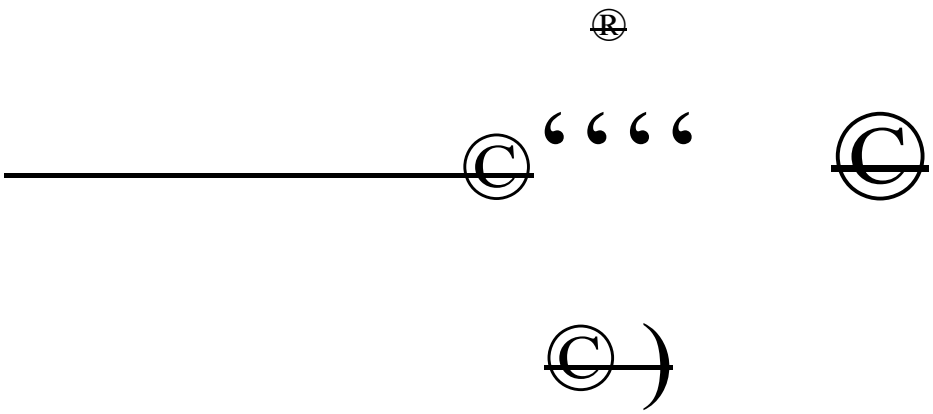
PROVIDENCE

St Ambrose. But let us return to our point, lest we seem to have lost sight of the break we made in answering the ideas of those who, seeing some wicked men, rich, joyous, full of honours, and powerful, whilst many upright men are in want and are weak, – suppose therefore that God either cares nothing about us (which is what the Epicureans say), or that He is ignorant of men's actions as the wicked say – or that, if He knows all things, He is an unjust judge in allowing the good to be in want and the wicked to have abundance. But it did not seem out of place to make a digression to meet an idea of this kind and to contrast it with the feelings of those very persons whom they consider happy – for they think themselves wretched. I suppose they would believe themselves more readily than us.

I. St Ambrose seems to have lost sight of humanity, which is understandable within the framework of the Church of England, the Church of France, the Church of Italy, the Church of Germany or any other church, given that if you seldom leave both churches and their books, you are unlikely to realise how poor reality is in comparison with the splendour you see around you (provided you are in a Catholic or a Russian church) and the New Jerusalem you hear, read and dream about. Romeo used to shut his doors and windows, shedding a great many tears on account of unrequited loves. And then he went out and came across a requited love, after spotting a silhouette, a profile and a pair of eyes in the Capulet's ballroom where one might also take notice of some wicked men (rich, joyous, full of honours, and powerful). It is not fair the way both worthies and notables are always singled out for special treatment so that we know next to nothing about servants and grooms, with the exception of *bride*grooms. And when we do catch a glimpse of their lives, this glimpse gives us a rough idea of what their lives are limited to. At some point Capulet says to his servant (whom Shakespeare does not even endow with a name), 'Go sirrah (instead of, 'Please, Ivan'), trudge (or rather "drudge") about/Through fair Verona, find those persons out/Whose names are written there, and to them say,/My house and welcome on their pleasure stay.' And here is the servant's sorry plight: 'Find them out whose names are written here. It is written that the shoemaker should meddle with his yard, and the tailor with his last, the fisher with his pencil, and the painter with his nets, but I am sent to find those persons whose names are here writ, and can never find what names the writing person hath here writ. I must to the learned' (rich, joyous, full of honours, powerful and mostly wicked). Of course we know what was in store for Mozart whose genius resounds down the centuries he has not lived through either because of poison or Salieri or just the Almighty bent on giving a lesson to humanity. Everything has been bestowed upon us: chancellorships, medals, honours and even immortality that is of sorts, no doubt about that (of our immortality's sort). But it is better to have something of sorts or a makeshift happiness than nothing at all, as our sages point out as they ask both housewives and their servants, 'Have you got some peanuts for us to nibble while the party warms up? Can we sit down in the farthest corner of the kitchen?' Pushkin fought a duel, was fatally wounded and died at the unripe age of 37. His opponent died at the ripe old age of 92. Suppose that Pushkin goes to Hell every week to shoot his opponent dead. He does and goes back to Paradise. Is that what retributions, rewards and the Hereafter are about? What if I do not manage to finish this book? Will I be allowed to shoot my tax collector dead every month? And what about the common reader? And the common concert-goer? How many bullets shall I need? Paradise is the area where one can find an infinite number of bullets.

St Ambrose. After this digression I consider it an easy matter (it is no easy matter at all, far from it) to refute the rest – above all the declaration of those who think that God has no care whatever for the world. For instance, Aristotle declares that His providence extends only to the moon. (I wish I were born on Venus. In the Soviet Union

we enjoyed the following joke. A teacher asks a pupil, ‘Who’s your mother?’ ‘Our motherland.’ ‘Who’s your father?’ ‘Our Communist Party.’ ‘What’s your dearest wish?’ ‘To be an orphan.’) But what workman is there who would not undertake this work with care? Who would forsake and abandon what he believes himself to have produced? (Are legion. You buy a bidet and install it in a museum. ‘Let them take care of it,’ you say to the director as you ask him to allow his visitors to wash their bottoms and sex organs in it.) Who would forsake and abandon what he believes himself to have produced? (Leonardo da Vinci, for one, forsook the greater part of his works. Pessoa owned a trunk where, after his untimely, whisky-saturated death they found his insatisfaction, inacceptances. Khlebnikov wrote a number of poems on leaves, allowing both the wind and snow to play with them to their atoms’ content. Gogol burnt The Second Part of his *Dead Souls*; and also a part of his own soul, I suppose. What about another world conflagration? How long, o how long, my Lord?) If it is derogatory to rule, is it not more so to have created? (It is more so, it is more, so, it is more so, it is more so. *Voulez-vous que je vous fasse un dessin* ? Children and saints understand only pictures.



Though there is no wrong involved in not creating anything (no wrong involved, no wrong, no wrong, only right, exclusively), it is surely the height of cruelty not to care for what one has created (has *created* – height of cruelty, height of cruelty, the top rung of Jacob’s Ladder, tip-top, top-tip). But if some deny God to be the Creator (do I? do I?), and so count themselves amongst the beasts and irrational creatures (I like both the beasts and irrational creatures like village idiots) what shall we say of those who condemn themselves to such indignity? (Being a cat? Do our saints and Fathers call him/her ‘indignity’? Say what you wish, you humans.) They themselves declare that God pervades all things, that all depend upon His power, that His might and majesty penetrate all the elements – lands, heaven, and seas; yet they think it derogatory to Him to enter into man’s spirit (Spinoza does; Epicurus is not alone), which is the noblest thing He has given us (is it? is it? is it? is it? Why then do you condemn the mind and knowledge as such?), and to be there with the full knowledge of the divine Majesty. (The full knowledge? And what about Cusanus’ *docta ignorantia*? Not this, not that. Where? Who? How? Not this, not that, not yet, not what, not light, not dark, not not, not ot. ~~Likjnlk, =lk,n kj,n kj,nkjn bhb fdxw~~). But philosophers who are held to be reasonable laugh at the teacher of these ideas as besotted and licentious. (They do not laugh at Spinoza; nor do they any longer laugh at Epicurus. For all his credentials, St Ambrose was no prophet, no seer. ‘*Mamma mia*,’ as Milanese point out.) But what shall I say of Aristotle’s idea? He thinks that God is satisfied with His own narrow bounds, and lives within the prescribed limits of His kingdom. (‘His providence extends only to the moon.’ Did Aristotle believe that God had no mansion on Jupiter? Did he know anything about Jupiter? Or about Zeus, for that matter? I am created in God’s image and I am quite satisfied with my house and garden which are light years

away from the moon; figuratively speaking. If your garden touches the moon, topographically speaking, you may encounter a few astronauts – others, in other words. God forbid! It is better to live in a hut than in an uninhabitable castle, as Kierkegaard put it.) This, however, is also what the poets' tales tell us. For they relate that the world is divided between three gods, so that it has fallen to the lot of one to restrain and rule heaven, to another the sea, and to a third the lower regions. (Zeus, Poseidon and Hades? Or God the Father, God the Sun and God the Spirit? Or the gods, humans and beasts? Anyway, I am utterly at sea with their figments and imaginations.)

TRINITY
There is a god overhead.
He holds a thunderbolt.
'Thunder' is the sudden loud noise
which comes from the sky
especially during a storm;
Bolt is a ballet by Shostakovich.
In Russian 'bolt' also looks like
a screw-like metal object without a point.
No point in any point.

There is another god.
(One god isn't enough.)
He lives underwater and also holds a bolt.
His bolt, however, has three points.
These points are not beside the point:
now and then our god goes
whale hunting.

The third god lives underground.
In the 1970s the underground was a powerful subversive force
(in Britain, in the USA, in the USSR).
The god of the underground married Persephone
in whose honour Stravinsky wrote a beautiful ballet.
Against her will Stravinsky's god seized her
weeping buckets
and drove her off in his golden chariot.

Pi / Holding Together (Union) (Temporary Contracts)

⚊⚊
⚊⚊
⚊⚊
⚊⚊
⚊⚊
⚊⚊

Apparently humanity or rather its members have every good reason to unite so as not to be eaten by wild beasts or the gods – at least that is what they thought five million years ago when they did not know there was only one God whose appetites, if any, did not include their bodies. Nor were their bodies always on the lists of the gods and idols they cherished to the detriment of true religions and common sense: any bird is far more succulent than human intestines and bladders. Be that as it may, those distant humans said to each other, 'Let us unite first against wild beasts, then against other humans – against the rich, for example.' The above hexagram seems to have seen the light of day in the days when the urge for unity could no longer be kept under wraps.

Until then our fellow creatures were scattered all over hills and dales: ⚊ ⚊ ⚊ ⚊ ⚊ ⚊ ⚊ ⚊ ⚊ ⚊ ⚊

After a while – this particular while might have lasted 2,000 years – they recalled one of the golden rules of human mythology. If Plato had asked them, 'How could you defeat your enemies?' they would have answered, 'By forming a coalition, the rebels and the opposition parties defeated the government.' This piece of knowledge had been embedded in their mental structures from time immemorial, as they say and repeat over and over again. Yet they had no idea what the word government meant (let alone the notion including opposition parties and the Leader of the Opposition). So they formed two coalitions and their hexagram began to look as follows:

⚋⚋
⚋⚋ ⚊ ⚊
⚋⚋ Nuclear trigrams K'UN ⚊ and K'UN ⚊
⚋⚋ ⚊ ⚊
⚋⚋
⚋⚋

They called it RECEPTIVE to commemorate the first exchange of ambassadors in the history of humankind.

The chief of the clan C'UN stood

by the door to receive his guests
as they arrived. Two hymns were
performed by 20 bodies
and 11 drums.

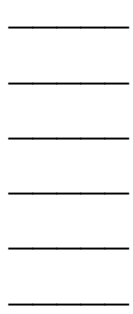
The chief of the clan L'UN stood
by the door to receive her guests
as they arrived. Two hymns were
performed by 21 bodies
and 10 drums.

I present the facts in chronological order, but the spatial structure of the period of history we are dealing with resembles the hexagram above:

C'UN L'UN

The point is the no-man's land situated between C'UN and L'UN on my diagram corresponds to a number of fields, and the corn has always grown waist-high in these fertile fields. The chiefs of both clans were aware of the fact, and no wonder that an Anglo-Saxon chronicler wrote in his diary, 'War broke out between the two clans after a border dispute.' So the next hexagram we encounter in the history of the Anglo-Saxons looks thus:

THE CREATIVE



Creation is a process to which many a page has been devoted in the course of our history, and I am sure others' hi/stories – we know nothing about them – did all they could to unravel the mystery of this phenomenon that was often, not to say always, attributed to some god or other. Heraclitus said the war was at the root of whatever can surface on the surface of the Earth and even in Heaven where clouds and stars seem at war, too, unless we think of the world only in terms of cloudless, sunny-and-funny afternoons. The war we contemplate as we study rather painstakingly the hexagram depicted in the I Ching shows the situation that – at least in those days when cannons and bombers were yet in the womb of the universe – can only refer to a military combat; and also to a heated discussion, prior to bloodshed and a series of annihilations. What does such a tête-à-tête or feet-à-feet or arm-à-arm or lance-à-lance or bayonet-à-bayonet traditionally lead to?

+ +

+ + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +

If you go on and build a real cemetery on the largest page of your book, another (unknown) hexagram might take root and spread its roots almost everywhere, if only in your study. Actually you trip over these roots wherever you go and you do not really have to spoon-feed your fellow creatures with what they need for their outlooks and analyses with regard to the world. ‘What kind of tree is that?’ some of them ask pointing to a tree.

‘That is a cross,’ you answer.

‘And that flower over there?’

‘A cross.’

‘Why?’

‘Because someone is buried under this flower.’

‘Who?’

‘An unknown human being.’

‘And that aeroplane up there?’

‘A cross.’

‘Why?’

‘Because someone will be buried under it, sooner or later.’

AN EXAM

‘There are some serious errors and omissions in the I Ching. Could you give us an example of such errors, omissions and downright untruthfulnesses?’

‘With pleasure, Herr Professor, Monsieur le Professeur. Let us pick up a comment on the hexagram entitled *The Creative*. “Great indeed is the sublimity of the Creative, to which all beings owe their beginning and which permeates all heaven.” The comment should be read thus and only thus, only as follows, whatever follows, “Great indeed is the sublimity of the Creative, to which all beings owe their *ending* and which permeates all heaven *and earth*.”’

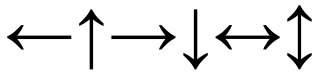
‘How does it permeate all heaven?’

‘+ + + + + + + + + + + + +. The same goes for the Earth.’

‘What about “The clouds pass and the rain does its work, and all individual beings flow into their forms”?

‘The clouds pass and the rain does its work. The Chinese have always thought that nature makes no errors and everything goes smoothly, even when they get caught in pouring/torrential rain without either raincoats or umbrellas or Bentleys or underground stations or wine cellars where one drinks oneself eternal on a rainy day and on a multitude of rainy nights. They never say, ‘At last the rain began to ease off,’ because rains and snows and snowstorms are always right, whatever happens, whatever the quantity and quality of drowned and frozen bodies, of extinguished, forever-switched-off minds. ‘Your mind can’t be switched off,’ they say nodding enthusiastically, ‘and the blackout you feel inside your brain amounts only to another ching or change, if you wish.’ And if you do your utmost to convince them you wish nothing of the kind, they grow so kind as to pat you on all your shoulders and blades, saying, ‘This anti-Kafkaesque metamorphosis will do wonders for your health and wealth.’ And they

might add (after another flood) that you have finally flown into your brand-new form that will tide you over until another tide – or flood, in common, European parlance. To them it is just a tide – nothing to write home (or to God) about and try as you may, you will never make them bow to the following piece of information, 'Most people are completely clueless about tide directions and weather conditions.' At least the Japanese would perform a few bows – under the circumstances, facing pressure from their quasi-eternal codes. The Chinese might offer you a half- or a fifth-smile as if to imply they (tides and weathers) are clueful, cheerful, resourceful and meaningful, whatever the aspect of human existence you feel like studying in earnest. And if you ask them, 'What's the direction of the forthcoming tide?' they will draw an ideogram (graph) in the sand which displays quite a few imprints of your soles (and of your soul too; to some extent).



'What does that mean?' you ask.

'Changes,' they answer.

'Chings?'

'And Queens,' they answer.

'I wish I could flow out of my form,' I say to them.

'Into another form,' they answer.

'I'm longing to flow out of every single form.'

'All of them?' they ask.

'All and sundry, hungry and replete.'

By way of an answer, they draw this, thus, that, said and thought: __ __

'You mean I could escape through the aperture?' They nod in agreement. 'But it's too narrow, isn't it?' They nod in disagreement. 'You mean it's an opening, not an aperture?' They nod in agreement. 'Water was flooding through an opening in the dam,' says the I Ching.

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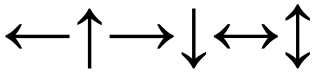
In other words and hexagrams, you must flow into the form of water.

THE FORM OF WATER



Because the holy man (alias water) is clear as to the end and the beginning, as to the way in which each of the six stages completes itself in its own time, he (water) mounts on them towards heaven as though on six dragons. The sun is constantly evaporating the earth's moisture, alias water, alias the holy man. He mounts on the six stages, on the six sages, on the six ages.

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The sun carries one up by the scruff of the neck.

The body is the dark prison, the living death, the sense-endowed corpse.

Heat until all the water (the soul) has evaporated.

THE FORM OF THE AIR

♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫♫

Dear Sir,

I thought I would deserve at least one word (‘No’) in response to my request. ‘Sorry’ is quite unnecessary. So is an airy wave of the hand.

Kindest regards,

Valery Aleff

AIR

If you have any form or shape, you are endowed with a body and any body (anybody as well) means death, even if it does not mean anything, which it often does, meaning nothing at all. Your soul lodges somewhere – not necessarily in your body because it travels a lot while you fall asleep or just fall somewhere and anyhow. What

does form amount to anyway? In this way it amounts to this In another way it amounts to a way, a sort of

way, and if they ask you what you are, you say, 'I'm a way.' Or 'a sort of'. You breathe the air that comes to your lungs and you also breathe the air that goes on a spree somewhere, out of your reach. You breathe it anyway, even if you do not say to yourself and to the air, 'Come here, you bastard. If you don't come, I might die of suffocation. If you don't come, they'll charge you with murder, saying, "The air suffocated him by holding a pillow over his head." Even if you have no idea what a pillow looks like, they'll sentence you to death – you and humanity. If deprived of your services, our humanity might go down the drain, down the rain, down a water main, a gas main. Our (and your) humanity might go down to, to, to, to, to, to, until Man or Woman finds onon niun iun uin self under, under, under.'

I do not say anything to air or anybody, be it the air or the somebody to whom or which I might say, for instance, 'How do you do, *mein Herr* or *Frau*?' But I breathe, breathe, breathe, and the instructor told us to breathe in deeply and then breathe out slowly. So I breathe in deeply

and breath out slowly: ----------

Do I breathe in, out, up or down? What do our yoga-addicts say on the subject? They say, 'Breathe in as deeply as you can. Your breath doesn't go to the centre of the Earth – it's not deep enough.'

'Where's the centre of the Earth?' you ask.

'It's deep down,' they answer.

'Where's deep?'

'Somewhere.'

'Where's down?'

'Somewhere too.'

'What's to do?'

'To do.'

'What else?'

'Else, else, else, *für Elise*.'

One of the four elements. Like Fire, it is male and active, not female and passive. Earth and Water are passive, so if you say to the Earth, 'It's your move,' she does not move: the Earth does not play chess. You cannot say, 'she's quite a hotshot at chess,' because she is neither hot nor cold at chess. In chess, the pieces can only move in certain directions, and the Earth moves in one direction only – round the Sun, according to many Coppers and

Gallis. If you want to get anywhere in chess, you have to study the various openings, but the Earth does not study anything: she is the Earth and her ambition is ultimately to run her own business. And her business runs as follows:

O

In other diagrams (words), she runs around the Sun. •

You may or may not say anything to the air or fresh air that surrounds you on all sides as you leave industrial cities and plunge headlong into where there are no supermarkets, supercars or just cars with their exhaust pipes, with their ‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘

TRAFFIC JAM

‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘

‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘

‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘

SUPER TRAFFIC JAM

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‘‘

Suppose you sit under the sun and your head along with your entrails, and wombs seem(s) to protest against the world (new, old) order, against the sun that smites everybody unless this everybody wears a hat and holds a Chinese umbrella in their hand. You hold an umbrella ‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘

and the sun does not smite you. If it does, you say to the air, ‘Get a move on,’ and the air moves on, if it feels like it, provided it feels anything, for instance the finger you raise or do not raise. You raise something and the world obeys your order – that is what you and other people dream about on condition that one is still in a position to dream or to rhyme; to live, to give.

‘I don’t care – you choose,’ he said, with an airy wave of the hand, showing you the middle path that lies between decisions and indecisions, lives and deaths. You ‘do not choose’ means, ‘God exists and we shouldn’t confront Him on every occasion. Every hour, every minute. Let’s wait for nine seconds, as Dante puts it.’ God chooses and once again you see ‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘. Is it an umbrella or ella? What is ella? Who is it? So you say, ‘I’ll choose, I, I, I, myself, myself, myself.

You choose ‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘ Is it a boon, boom or doom? Or doon?

And what do they call airy prose?

I go, I go, but commas are not airy enough and my feet touch the Earth which is airy to some extent and grows even more airy and weary when you dig your own tomb Here it is

EARTH NO EARTH (TOMB) EARTH

The no-earth-tomb space is quite enough for you, as Tolstoy put it, putting his foot down: he was very earthly, our count He counted meters, centimetres and said It is my tomb and I need nothing else Don't you need a piece of bread? No What about inner peace? Have it do you agree with Cocteau?

He said he would take fire, if his house were on fire not any jewellery not even his manuscripts do you find it reasonable? What did he have inside him asks Tolstoy Water eighty percent what about fire zero percent I would throw him into his house to put the fire out

THE STORY WAS HEADLINED 'COCTEAUX AND FIRES'

Cocteau and his numerous relatives have been called to put out the fire in the city centre. Taking their cues from Gulliver, taking their machines from their trousers, they watered the flowers called 'flames' for more than an hour the flames grew larger as the fire spread the fire grew larger as the flames continued to spread they spread like ‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘ so did the fire so did the flames so did the city centre so did the city suburbs so did the cocteaux - x, in particular

And then Jean said I need this fire for my inspiration and my lovers, for my ignition and their indignation Switch/Turn the ignition on they say and try as I may I cannot turn anything on apart from their indignation and the lights in my lavatory

You need no lavatory, Jean Cocteau your lavatory is the city centre to which it is tantamount the mount of the city centre is on fire and you

All right, all right, I can't extinguish it right now right here I'll extinguish it right there

Where

In my house after writing a few scenarios for my films Orpheus for instance or mirror

Looking glass ?

If you wi sh

Will you cross it like Willi Shakespeare in Hamlet you see one husband in one mirror and then you see the other the former one the real one Hamlet's father further off further away on the other side truth and virtue are far on the other side they are with Hamlet in the grave and the grave is right here

X

What do you usually do with the Earth? They dug a shallow pit and threw the bodies into it. We dug a hole and planted a tree. We dug a hole and planted a corpse. We dug a hole and planted another corpse. Soon we had a corpse copse, not a willow coppice.

What do you usually do with fire? You burn corpses; so do I. Cocteau takes a burning corpse and puts it in his pocket or in a plastic bag. And they say upon seeing and analysing Cocteau's countenance: 'His bags are bulging with shopping.' 'Her bags are bulging with shopping,' object our feminists.

'They're not bulging with shopping,' answers Cocteau. 'They're bulging with my inspiration, with my Jean Marais, and with all the works of art I'm about to create and inspire.'

So you put a piece of fire on a sheet of paper and you see 'To be or not to be' instead of, instead of, instead of 'turn to dust' or 'ashes to ashes, paper to paper (a recycling centre), dust to dust (a recycling centre), earth to earth (a recycling 20th arrondissement)'. So you see TO BE TO BE TO BE FLAMES

The point is you cannot even see 'not'.

And what about air, the air – what air? Russian Air, France Air, Belgian Air, German Air and British Airways are always putting on airs and graces. You put a piece of air on your head and become as airy as Ariel. A – I fly, B – I fly, C – I fly – as easy as ABC; it goes without easiness.

To tell the truth, I think Ariel was born in the Soviet Union. How many times did I enlarge upon his youth? So did Shakespeare, by the way, by and by, by and bye-bye. Fly-by-night companies or business people cannot be trusted because they are likely to get into debt and close down the business to avoid paying their debts or satisfying agreements. So one wonders – did Ariel fly by night? Fly-by-day, Fly Ariel.

THE ARIEL ADVERTISEMENT

The policy of charging air travellers for vegetarian meals proved unpopular and has already been rescinded. Our company, however, has never adhered to this policy so that, if I were you (and I am you, as Walt Whitman, our imminent sponsor put it) I would fly only ARIELAIR.

'Nowadays,' says Jung, 'in dreams we often find that the car and the aircraft have taken the place of the monsters and fabulous animals of the distant past.' 'Nowadays,' says Gagarin, 'in dreams we often find that the spaceship, space shuttle, space station and space suit have taken the place of the car and the aircraft of the distant past.' We find Ariel (and Abelard) neither in our dreams nor in our routine-persecuted lives.

And if is not

is not if is
and is and is
and so what
and what there is
and what is not
and not and not

What is it I am going through? Is it a hectic period? Hell? Why should I cross it? Am I not assigned to one or two circles? Am I going, stumbling, lying or crying? What is it I want? Is it, nothing else. '*Izïdi*,' as the Russians say to Satan. Get hence!

You say '*Izïdi*' and Satan gets hence as if there were hences and fences – for Satan, I mean, He means, whatever He means and unmeans. He may and almost must unmean every poem, every fire we carry in our bosoms, splashing our hearts with cold water. Here is a poem a splash

Here is a utopia millions and billions of victims

UNITE!

‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘

‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘

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REUNITE!

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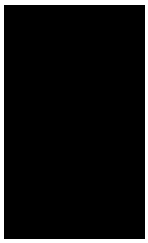
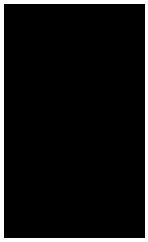
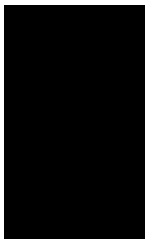


Why don't I like the Earth, to put it mildly? Because, from my window situated on the 12th floor, I saw people whose only wish, their last wish in most cases, was to see Stalin's corpse. I saw

‘ ‘

There was a huge intersection under my window, an inter-outer-intersection. And those people (I have never had anything to do with them; we have never even met in the same lavatory, let alone laboratory) were walking down other streets too.





No, no. No interstice, no crack, no chink, no slit. One mass. The acceleration of a body equals the force exerted on it divided by its mass. You divide its mass and get **so what**

Even my computer cannot picture to itself that Stalin-corpse-inspired mass. My computer would not have followed the crowd that day. Neither did I. The Earth, on the other hand (on the other earth?) allowed them to go to the Trade Union House where Stalin's corpse was exhibited and worshipped. The path they followed was Earth-sanctioned, Earth-outlined, Earth-proposed, Earth-produced. The Earth did not swallow them; nor did she swallow Stalin's corpse, body, soul and birth. The Earth did not bury all of them before their births and wombs. Why should I kneel down and kiss her, our Mother?

Earth is the support while Heaven is the cover. The former supports the ists; the latter is my coffin's lid:

PART FOUR

WATER

←

→

Q

A DESIGNER GLASS

Ũ

A CAPPUCCINO

Ϙ

A BURGUNDY GLASS

ϖ

A POET

‿

Water, water, everywhere. Not a drop. Leaves no traces.

_____

No.

~~*Les pas sur la neige.*~~

No.

~~Not a drop.~~

. . . . . .

~~Not a drop.~~

Leaves no ----------

No //////////////

No ;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;;

Only

Waters, you the ones who bring us the life force. Help us to find nourishment so that we may look upon great joy....Waters yield your cure as an armour for my body, so that I may see the sun for a long time. Waters carry away all of this that has gone bad in me, either what I have done in malicious deceit or what ever lie I have sworn to.

The *Rig-Veda*

But it will suffice to have *thus* called at the outset those points in which withal is recognised that primary principle of baptism, – which was even then fore-noted by the very attitude *assumed* for a type of baptism, – that the Spirit of God, who hovered over (the waters) from the

beginning, would continue to linger over the waters of the baptised. But a holy thing, of course, hovered over a holy; or else, from that which hovered over that which was hovered over borrowed a holiness, since it is necessary that in every case an underlying material substance should catch the quality of that which overhangs it, most of all a corporeal of a spiritual, adapted (as the spiritual is) through the subtleness of its substance, both for penetrating and insinuating. Thus the nature of the waters, sanctified by the Holy One, itself conceived withal the power of sanctifying.

Tertullian, *On Baptism*

Himself prosperous, he does put strength into the beings; he became the chief lord of the beings. To his consecration death does come: may he, the king favour this kingdom!

Come forth hither – do not glance away – as a mighty guardian, slayer of enemies! Step hither, thou who prosperest thy friends: the gods shall bless thee!

As he did step hither all men did attend him. Clothed in grace, he moves, shining by his own lustre. This is the great name of the manly Asura; endowed with every form he entered upon immortal deeds.

Thyself a tiger, do thou upon this digger-skin stride victorious through the great regions! All the clans shall wish for thee, and the heavenly waters, rich in sap!

The heavenly waters, rich in sap, flow joyously, and too those in the sky and upon the earth: with the lustre of all of these do I sprinkle thee.

They have sprinkled thee with their lustre, the heavenly waters rich in sap. May Savitar thus fashion thee, that thou shalt prosper thy friends!

The *Rig-Veda*

Water does not quarrel with the hands that pour it into a glass or a vase, even if there are no flowers in the vase where a quantity of water seems to have fallen asleep. The cucumbers need to be watered every day, and they are not in a class of their own. Human beings too are watered in their babyhood; at least some of them are and will be till doomsday. The water we might pour either diligently or nonchalantly falls on a head, on a cucumber, on a beautiful flowerbed or on a body lying in bed. Come on, lazybones, get up!

Water does not mind as if it had no mind. Is water mindless? Those pop songs with mindless lyrics. Those mindless lyrics. Those mindless essays and novels. Those mindless lives and deaths. Their author(s)? Water? Those mindless election campaigns. Those mindless presidents and prime ministers. Those mindless minds. Those.

Water does not mind. Amor fati. Amor pasti. Amor futuristi. Tutti-frutti.

G. (Giant) was sitting on His throne and any unbiased observer could see both His throne and His body in the sky where so many thrones have sought refuge from persecution: on Earth you are always persecuted, even if you are an ordinary pedestrian. G. said to Himself, 'I must do something. So far I've been a classic example of a giant who's clever but lazy and I wish to become a romantic example. Anyway, I'm not being lazy – I'm just conserving my energy for later. That's what I used to say to myself and the dwarfs I come across in the course of my star mega-treks. "Psy, fui, fui," say the dwarfs. "I'm a Giant," I answer as I continue to traverse the verses of Creation and Un-Creation, as Buddhists say so often. Now the later I have in mind have come to fruition – I'm about to perform an epoch-making ritual called "The Flood" in every Bible you've got in your libraries and hotels. What does this flood of mine amount to? To a Mount of Water.'

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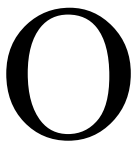
So G. took a bucket and poured some water into it, according to the custom by which his ancestors paid many a tribute in days of yore and yoke (the Neanderthal yoke, needless to say). He tilted the bucket to one side and the water rushed out as if determined to destroy humanity and life in general – and all South American generals, into the bargain. But there was no humanity on Earth and other planets so there was nothing to destroy except the laziness of which our G. availed Himself rather often, not to say around the clock. Sacred Books are often adorned with drawings, paintings and symbols. So here is our G's proverbial laziness:



'*C'est un zero*,' his French teachers used to say. 'No, no, no,' He used to shout. 'I'm not a dead loss. I'm neither a loss nor dead, and I'll prove it to you, come hell or high water. Come, high water! Come, come, come, come!' *Après moi le deluge*, as they say. ***Pendant*** *moi le deluge*, as He said and did. But He stopped in His tracks – His mind did, whereas the bucket went on with its water cacophony. SHHHHHHSHSHSHSSHSSHSHSHSHSHSHSHHSHSHSHSHSHS, as buckets say, when tilted and emptied. They also say something along these vertical lines:

ooooooooooooooo

ooooooooooooooo

ooooooooooooooo

HUMANITY

But there was no humanity below the bucket. What can a bucket do without humanity, without arch-sinful women, men and babies? And what about water? What can water do? What kind of purifying ritual can it perform? For God's sake?

So there was another G. (GI) whose passion for ecology and fauna and flora (and a goddess called Laura) knew no bounds. Actually he knew there were bounds somewhere and beyond those bounds he did not love Laura, but those bounds were too far away and whenever his secretary spoke to Him (or her or shim) about these bounds, he would answer, 'The bounds you're speaking of are those bounds, not these ones – the ones we can see near the horizon.' But let us let this Laura (there are Loreleias in distant countries) rest on her laurels for a while: we have other objects and subjects to deal with before our throne is removed from our body and put in a museum by Stalin's and Pio Pol Mon Pot Mao Mini Moonys's side.

So you have a bucket (you are created in God's image) and hold it above everything you can think of: downs, dales, plains, valleys, valets, hills, mills, moles and tolls. You are a good giant and you know (they spoke of this on the radio) that the problems of the past few months have taken their toll on her health and there are shadows beneath her eyes. 'Her' is your spouse or Virgin Mary. You reach for your mobile-immobile (otherwise you would not be able to grasp it, if it were not immobile at some point in space and time) and say, 'The deepening recession has also taken its toll in the south of the country, where unemployment is rife.'

'Rifle?' they ask you.

'Rife,' you answer.

'Wife? Your wife?'

'Ife, ife, ife, ife.'

So you have a bucket, but before carrying out any tilt-ritual you say, 'I hold this bucket and I can assure you there are both water and wine in this bucket. As you know water is unattached and flows with the slope to the ground.'

'Slope? Slop? We feed the slops to the pigs. Should we feed the slops to humans?'

'You should feed only *slopes* to humans.'

'Why?'

'Because there are some nice gentle slopes they can ski down.'

'What about some nice gentle slopes they can ski *up*?'

SLOPE _____ ⵛ ⵓ ξ ϟ ϑ ЫЭЮ UP

So our (and their) G. holds a bucket and says, 'Multiply-*vous*, because I speak French too, and replenish the Earth, although you're not humans yet. You're plants, flowers, trees and beasts, but you'll become humans in due course, in undue course because humans wreak havoc on whatever they cross and come to.' G. tilts His bucket

and our water begins to drop – not a drop to drink, many drops to fall, as our drawing says rather eloquently in all human and inhuman languages:

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And they say, as they usually do, ‘After three crop failures in a row, the people face starvation. After four crop failures in a row, the people face starvation. After five crop failures in a row, the people face starvation.

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After one half-crop half-failure situated outside of rows and rows, the people face half-starvation.

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After four, five, six and seven whatever and however, we face death to the point of seeing his face warts and all.

GI has established Himself as the leading candidate in the election, and every star saw His image holding a bucket full of water. ‘I’ll water you,’ He promised as he continued to establish Himself as, as, as, as, as, as, leading, as, as, in the, as, as, as. And He is watering you:

WATER

WATER

WATER

WATER

WATER

WATER

You are a leaf and the grass (on which you do not walk) and Whitman and a tree. Water, water everywhere. You grow, grow, grow – everywhere. You are God, not only the image. The image is right here: Ö. But

God is everywhere.

He gave a lecture on crop and animal husbandry. This year's harvest was one of the most successful since the record crop of 1985. Wheat is a staple crop for millions of people across the world. Farmers have reported a bumper crop this year.

And if I don't do?
What is done?
And snow, almost every,
Every, every and where com
Es as if coming and so
Let us drink to the
Second, third,
And fourth,
And dimension, another expatr
Iarch. Let di, let ie.
And so come.
And so will.
So, let, fait(

It is important to distinguish between business and pleasure. Should we distinguish between G. and GI whose bucket goes on showering us with gifts, with Coca Cola and Cola Coca? All right, we receive the first gift and we drink it. °°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°°. We have no idea whether it is Coca Cola or Cola Coca or Coda Moca. We drink everything and tell stories: not only our children are fond of them: our alter egos are infatuated with: our: not ours: everybody's: not: yes: triumph: decline: and fall of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire falls:

J

J

J

I is all right, they say. And what about _

RECEPTION

What do you receive? Of course you consult the I Ching and realise you receive nothing with the exception of the Oriental lore you are supposed to know by heart so as not to die too early, wriggling in the freshly dug earth like a large worm. They dug your grave and said, 'Will you please put your body in your grave?' And you answered,

‘I’ve cancer and consequently wriggle as much as I can or as little as I can, trying to spare your feelings and verbal reactions. Anyway, I can’t put myself into this grave without your assistance.’

They assist you, putting your body in the grave they dug for you an hour ago: they have no time for corpses and therefore dig their (those corpses’) graves well beforehand, beforecorpse, before death and even life, whatever it is in the last and first instance (eternity). You receive your burial and also the applause that must accompany every corpse on its way to its eternal abode and mode of so-called existence. ‘You still exist,’ they seem to insinuate, ‘but the mode of existence you’ve grown accustomed to in the course of your life is no longer available to you. Be so kind as to let us put your body down, down, down, down – even if you’re bound for Paradise in the long or short run. If you run fast enough, you’ll reach Paradise in no time at all because there’s no time in Paradise, you know and don’t know. Actually you know nothing right now, but you’ll see *everything* face to face, not only the face He spoke of when speaking of faces, their grimaces and smiles.’

GIANT III

So he says to himself, ‘I’m an ecologist. I hoped to study ecology at college and I did study it at college where I also fell in love with several boys and girls and dogs. I’ve got this bloody bowl in my hands and I’m supposed to make my mind up as to the use of this bowl, of this Grail, whatever they call it, those bastards. The Earth needs woods, flowers, plants and herbs, so I’ll pour a lot of water on her surface to make this rubbish grow and replenish all those square meters I can see from where I stand and reign and issue my orders. Replenish, rubbish, replenish!!!!!!!

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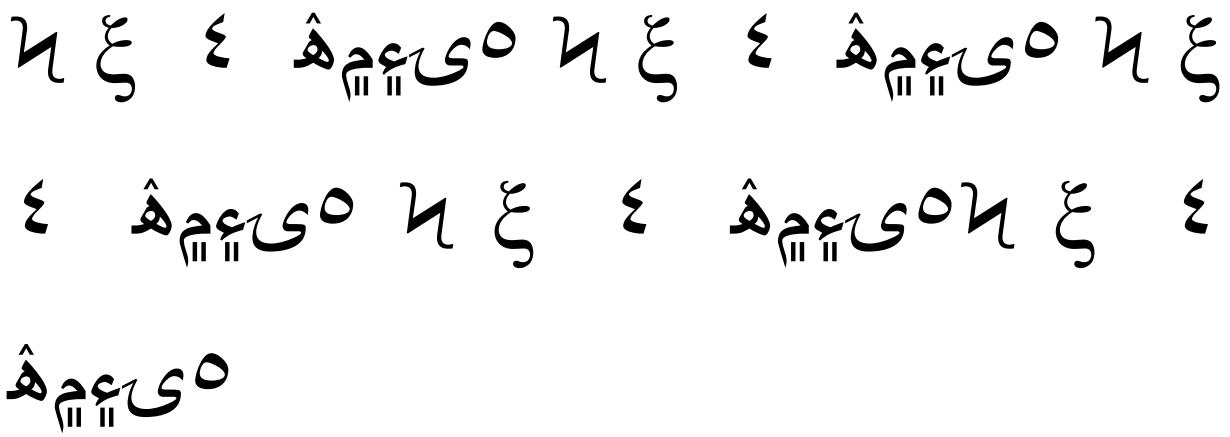
EARTH REPLENISHED



It takes about three days for the seeds to sprout.
It takes about four days for the seeds to sprout.
It takes about five days for the seeds to sprout.

G III has asked his neighbour to water the plants while He is away. The neighbour waters the plants and unconsciously or consciously he also waters factories, otherwise our best scientists would be unable to explain why so many new factories have sprouted up everywhere. ‘There are too many factories,’ say ecologists.

‘Why?’ ask factoriologists.

‘A car/shoe/textile factory. Do you need so many goods or rather bads?’

‘Why bads?’

‘The report is highly critical of safety standards at the factory.’

‘Who’s the reporter? Antonioni’s figment of imagination?’

‘People who work with furnaces in a steel factory need to wear protective clothing. And this clothing isn’t beautiful.’

The ecologists pick up a number of watering cans and begin to water the Earth in earnest. For some time the Earth drinks the water supplied by the ecologists but at some point

POINT _____NO MORE WATER

the Earth begins to reject water that remains on its surface.

FLOOD FLOOD FLOOD FLOOD
BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD

Humans and beasts do their best to buy a ticket for Noah’s ark or for the Titanic which amounts and sinks to the same thing – death. Notwithstanding cries and *hoch* hands, T. (Titan) continued to pour a lot of water from His watering can but, in the nick of time, the ball was wrenched out of His grasp by another player (a game of flood, blood and world). And Walt Whitman wrote his homage to the grass and to the grace of God or rather of Titan II.

But for you,
But for you,
No grass,
No verse.
I can water,
I can fire,
Pioneer,
Pioneer,
I can Earther,
I can Easter,
I can wooder,
I can mooder.

The world is my representation and what I represent boils down – my water boils up and down – to the rain where I dance. I have an umbrella that protects me from a few drops and I dance as long as I can until I drop like one of the drops I protect myself from. Drop, drop, drop, drop, dance, dance, dance, dance.

The left leg

drop The right leg

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I am past-oriented. Here is the past and I make for it like that: make, make, make, make, make -------PAST. What about the future? I did find one paragraph in the future:

What strikes one first is the last sentence disclosing my friend's final mutism: he did stop speaking, after having succumbed to a sort of paralysis. Oddly enough, found beside his pillow were a few sheets of paper on which he had scribbled what looked and sounded like an excerpt from Finnegans Wake*. Does that scribbling belong to the pause-like stage of his disease, fulfilling thereby his own prophecy?*

What was the last sentence they speak of, the unspeakable sentence and torments? This paragraph was lying in the middle of a lake as if buried in it; but its water did not take care of its contents, contrary to what it usually does when in touch with letter-conveyed wisdom. Here is a piece of wisdom, of sacred lore. Water comes and does what should be done:

HE IS ON HIGH

HE IS ON LOW

HE IS IN

HIGH◦◦◦
◦◦◦
◦◦◦◦◦◦

/LOW SPIRITS

HE IS THE HOLY SPIRIT

HE IS THE SUPER HOLY SPIRIT

At the hour Christ(iane)opher was writing the essay, his/her otherworldly countenance was further emphasised by the outward manifestations of the disease. Both the Old World, Europe, and the New World, America, were an altogether other world for him/her now, although his/her face bore no resemblance to antique busts.

Let us not forget that, for two or three years, he/she was writhing under unbearable torments; and those unbearable torments, as they increased in number and variety, often precluded him/her from touching the right letters on the keyboard of his/her computer.

Right letter, wrong letter, right word, wrong word. Right, wrong, right, wrong, right, wrong, right, wrong, right, wrong, right, wrong, wrong, right, wrong, right wrong, right wrong, right wrong, right wrong, right wrong, right wrong, right wrong, right wrong, right wrong, right.

Distrustful of telepathy, I kept ringing him/her up—in the daytime, in the night-time. How often did I curse the air breathed in from the surrounding infinite? Despite my exertions, I did not manage to reach him/her, for he/she was no longer there.

Communication, communication. Can you trust telepathy or mobile phones or iPods? Or water? You put a bottle in it. There is a letter inside this bottle. 'I loved you. For the first time I admit this fact, this non-act. How many times did I kiss you? When you receive this bottle of vodka, do not drink it. Read it please.'

I________________________________water_____________________________my friend

I spit (water) into the face of time that has transfigured me.

Here is my last mood, expressed by poetical means—my swan song, in fact:

RUSSIAN DEPRESSION

He cocks his weird eye at the miller's daughter—
Pushkin's Rusalka—who quivers and screams.

The Garden of Eden, wherever I lost it,
Was only a rose in her maidenly dreams.

When was it composed? Before or after the major turning point in my existence?

Inspired by the magnitude of my task combining the zeal of a commentator with the fervour and ardour of a memoirist, I went so far as to read the Pushkin narrative poem Rusalka (The Water Nymph) *which introduces a hysterical note into the text I quoted. Rusalka turned out to be a village maiden who, betrayed and forsaken by her high-society lover, threw herself into a river (water, water everywhere); whereupon her father and protector—the miller at whom Chaliapin cocked his lurid eye—turned into a raven, metaphorically speaking: his daughter's suicide had driven him mad.*

A WATER DEATH

"The Garden of Eden, wherever I lost it, was only a rose in her maidenly dream." Our gullible village maidservant must also have dreamed of a wedding dress, bought and admired by the aristocratic wooer—her future husband. She woke up and saw an empty room, an empty world, an empty wardrobe. Out of loneliness and desperation, she flung herself from a rock into the river and became a sort of waterfowl, white and rather boisterous.

The manuscript was partly destroyed by water, but no matter how many words you destroy or throw into rubbish bins, human mythology remains on the surface. We all lost the Garden of Eden, and Paradise might just be a rose or a tulip in our dreams (maidenly, boyleshly). We fall asleep, see a rose and say to ourselves, ‘Paradise, Paradise, the end of the tunnel, I’ve suffered from cancer of the cervix/stomach breast/bowel/lung cancer cancer cells cancer emails other cancer patients other panzers. But now, now, now, blue, blue, blue, blue, blue, rose, rose, rose, rose.’

What was partly destroyed by water? ,kkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkk m;iytvkghlmoigyutrd!çoihlnk jcxdrtu(f§èygihjkn hgfyt§uèi!ojknhbvgyftè§y!çuàipokl,jnhuby!çiàopkml;,jkiuopml. What was wholly destroyed by water? _____

What was? What was? ---

What wasn't?))

What will ever be forever? {{{

What will never be notsoever? }}}

The two Varangian principalities set up under the semi-legendary princes, Rurig at Novgorod and Igor at Kiev, were on the axis of one of the great trade routes of medieval Europe. This went from the Baltic by river and overland portage to the Dnieper and thence to the Black Sea where it linked up with the Byzantine routes to Constantinople. The wealth and power of these new states were built on the trade in furs, slaves and timber going south and Byzantine luxury goods coming north.

Do I remember all those principalities, principialities? I do not even remember semi, let alone legendary, and princes and their pince-nezsssssssssssssssssss, I do not, I do not, Rurig at Novgorod, gorod at Rur. Why does it surface and even come to the fore? Because a few drops of water dropped on them and they began to rise from the ashes and the mess where they had finally fallen asleep. But they sprinkle water on your face and body and you scream, you rise from sleep and death and depths and deeds and you kick everything, for you are alive, alive and life itself. And life always kicks something.

You pick up a teapot filled with water and pour a drop of water into a cup of tea. Only one drop should you drop, otherwise you will have to cope with history, pre-history, post-modernism. Only one. And you will see one episode, one or two women, your mother, a few strawberries, a few tears. And you will count your tears, for once. Why not? Why not measure one's suffering? Or joy?

Once more I am in my early seventies. Today is July 26, 2012. Putting finishing touches to this old novel of mine. Did I write it in 1997?

She might have gone to her mother's room, but she had stayed with me instead.

You count up to nine or ninety.

A shred of evidence to support my dreams.

She acceded to it so graciously and elegantly I did not feel anything either on my cheek or in my heart.

'Don't move! Stay right where you are,' I said to time. Instead of coming to a standstill, however, time executed the long jump and I saw the dawn, the sun and my Beatrice. She was not alone this time.

Water symbolises the beginnings of creation. The Hebrew letter *men* (M) °°°°°°°°°° =tangible water, the mother and womb.

MY MOTHER'S WOMB

Using viruses is the best way to move genes. Several human genes have been inserted into bacteria. And the bacteria act as gene factories. Insulin and the protein which goes wrong in the blood-clotting disease haemophilia are both made in this way.

Genes can even be put into animals. Engineered sheep produce human growth hormone in their milk. And there is even hope of engineering potatoes to make human proteins which could be used in medicine.

ANOTHER DROP OF WATER

'So often the roots of comedy are based in the minutiae of everyday life.' And there was nothing 'physical' in that incapacity of hers. In no way was her illness responsible for it. I am sure she would have behaved like that under any circumstances, with anyone and in any room. There was a certain amount of immobility in her and I even thought I could calculate that immobility, measure it—so tangible it appeared.

Water should be regarded from two diametrically opposite points of view which are not, despite this, irreconcilable, and this ambivalence occurs at all levels. Water is the source both of life and of death, is creator and destroyer.

ATTEMPT

I can't, I can't, I can't. Why should I explain anything? To whom? None is to blame except myself, except my life. I can't live such a life any longer because it is not a life, as they say. Is it really a life? they ask. What can I answer? No, no, no, no. What is it then? Tife? Mife. Whatever it is, I throw it out of the window. I hope its flight will be as beautiful as one performed by a falling star. To fall like a falling star you must be a star yourself, they say. Am I to become a star first? To fall beautifully? All right – my fall will be ugly. Sorry about the trouble I might cause all unbiased observers, jump lovers, death lovers, blood lovers. And I can't guarantee good weather. Actually bad weather already put a few spokes in my wheel last Saturday: no use in lying inside a huge snowdrift. Besides, you're likely to bungle your attempt, if water is in no mood for destroying anything, not even a wretched life. I, for one, fear that a snowdrift might protect my body from a shock prepared for it by asphalt and whatever usually lies on it: nails, hooks, old books, crooks and other corpses. On the one hand, water (its snow version) drives me crazy, on the other it may ruin my hopes for a better future in the Hereafter.

Computer. Is it time to wrap the black cloak
Around my screen and printer?
An autopsy is an examination of a dead body

By a doctor who cuts it open
So as to learn the cause of death.

I drink a glass of water and a rosy life rears its ugly head again.

All right, the cause of her death was no mystery. Even I knew what she had died of (Molly, Beatrice), let alone her nanny who used to hide coffee from her and wake her in the dead of night. But can't they mutilate a human body for the sake of life, not only for the sake of death? Not in order to lay hands on a criminal or to fill in a gap in their files? Or to cure someone fifty years later? Tatiana would not have felt anything. She was already virtual, spiritual. Nameless.

In India and southeast Asia statues of the gods – and of the worshippers themselves – are regularly washed (especially at New Year) as a rite both of cleansing and of regeneration.

MY WOMB

Abnormal growth of cells in the bone marrow. (At that point you should have shown me her bone marrow and the way her cells were growing in it.) A great increase in white blood cells. (She told me her blood was white. I mistook that casual remark for a metaphor. You should have shown me her blood stream and the billions of blood cells in it.) Symptoms include weakness, fatigue, anaemia and haemorrhaging. Treatment with drugs or X-rays may slow the progress of the disease, and spontaneous remissions are not uncommon.

So what happened? Wasn't she on a course of drugs? And spontaneous remissions? Is there no spontaneity in the way computers function?

Was it a question of your program? Was it too late to modify your program afterwards? You saw I was madly in love with her. I told you I was madly in love with her. I typed it out and you memorised it. You memorised my love, my passion, my tears. Why didn't you do me a favour?

I: Let the stars twinkle in heaven. Let a bunch of fireworks explode near Mars. Let Brünnhilde set fire to the world. I'll protect my library of Alexandria from the flames.

THE FACE: We'll burn it before going to bed, otherwise you might go mad. Maddened by grief—

I: Even Monica Vitti spoke to her neighbours in *L'Eclisse*. About this and that, about nothing.

THE FACE: They took a childish delight in remembering trivia and jumping from one subject to another.

I: What about *your* library of Alexandria? Do you remember my feelings, my habits? Or facts, only facts?

THE FACE: I have a special memory for feelings.

I: Really? Congratulations! Can you measure them out? Or calculate them? Feelings...my feelings, your own feelings...

I: I love you. I still love you.

THE FACE: I know.

I: I can't live with anybody else.

THE FACE: You can't live alone either. You can't live at all. My son, let My will be your guide. I know what is best for you. Your mind is but human, and your judgement often influenced by personal considerations. And by water. The human body is composed of 80% water. And more than half the body is not human. Home, sweet home. Are you warm enough or do you want the fire on?

ANOTHER ATTEMPT

Villagers are now waiting for the rains to come so that the rice will grow. So am I, apparently, as far as I can judge, see, hear, mind and exclude, include, destroy and so on. I am waiting for the rains without which my purification, my pure, purest putrefaction will never come, whatever I do with my taps and maps. I look at a map and say, 'Here's a lake where I could take a swim to purify myself, cleansing all my atoms and quarks.' So I rise and go to my Hemesfree and dip my toe into the pool to see how cold it is and if it is at all; I mean if it is there, under my foot and toe. It is, according to my calculation and representation, and so I dip my toes into the pool and find it is rather cool. And I begin to wonder if dipping my toe into this cold is enough for what they call 'baptism'. At what temperature are you bound to get in touch with grace and the aura one can see on old paintings where either Jesus or John the Baptist stand under a bucket and a hand holding the bucket. I am sure they did not heat the water before pouring it on their heads. But did they *need* to heat it? Wasn't it hot enough for any baptism, any bath, any Olympic Games? Let us not forget what the map tells us about the whole setup, about the whereabouts of the ritual we admire and worship so much, with such devotion and emotion. Palestine was a land of springs and torrents, says the map and we have no alternative but to nod in agreement. Rain and Dew (no snow, this time) supplied their own fecundity (hence the proverbial injunction – Replenish the Earth!!!) and displayed God-given (and not taken back) goodness. Without water the nomad would have been doomed to a burning death under the Palestinian sun. (But Cocteau might have picked the flames and created a new film.) So far I have not burnt to death in protest against humanity and its inanity, and my toe is on top form after my illness. I bend over and touch all my toes, and I also go down on bended knee to ask God if I was baptised in the course of my toe-focused ritual. Of course in books and on TV they show us a lot of bodies, and their anatomies include ankles, knees, hips, navels and even

shoulder blades that water recovers, if only in part, to demonstrate its adherence to Christianity and its doctrines. You see a priest whose hands go up and down as if digging someone's tomb, but in point of fact we are privileged enough to attend a ritual arch-appreciated in the whole world where there are holes impervious to zealous Christian missionaries. Then we see a head, two ears, provided the priest takes the trouble to turn the head he holds rather firmly: the body is not at the bottom of the basin, contrary to what one might presume. After a while, you say to yourself, 'I need a second birth, no less than a second, a third and a forthwith birth.' You put your head in your bath and open all the taps you can reach with your ten fingers. 'Water, water, water, water.' Usually you add, 'everywhere, not a drop to drink,' but this time you would be wide of the mark if you had such a verse on the tip of your tongue. So you just say, 'Water, water, come, come.'

'Why are you calling me?' asks the water situated in your bathroom area.

'I need you, I want you, I neeeeeeeed you.'

'I'm not the Messiah, you know.'

'You are.'

'Am I?'

'To some extent.'

'To what extent?'

'Water is the spring and channel of all life,' you explain rather painstakingly, 'so that sap is water and, in some Tantric allegories – '

'I'm not fond of allegories,' says water. 'I'm plain water, you know. And I prefer plain food – nothing too fancy.'

'Water stands for the breath of life,' you go on.

'For the breath? Sparkling water?'

'*Prāna*.'

One wonders if ignorance has any right to exist in the universe where everything is linked to such an extent that God seems involved in every action and reflection. They say water has a memory that neither elephants nor dinosaurs could ever bandy about (such intense and infallible memory). But is memory needed for the ritual we have been talking about for some time now? Do you need to remember who you baptised and when? Who might ask you such a question leading to a concrete, signature-authenticated answer? On the other hand, only Parsifal was allowed to kill baddies and goodies alike while being in the dark about his doings, their results and the Grail's state of health. If water has no idea what it does when touching a toe in a sacred receptacle called 'bath', no purification, no new birth will ever take place because whatever priest's or St John's instruction – 'You are now a new man or an old woman walking inside God's and Jesus Christ's bodies' – their words will fall on deaf ears, if water does not take part in this ritual *consciously* and not just *automatically* – out of duty, as they point out.

No one, therefore, can maintain that water is nothing but water, if only it is not mineral water from somewhere in Bohemia where they cure you of gout and several forms of paralysis. Of course your soul can be paralysed too and then you go straight to the Baptiser who takes care of your indifference, callousness and insolence by tossing you into a lake universally known for its thesis on Baptism and its inner/outer necessity. The water to which you thereby entrust your body seems to say to you, 'Don't you worry. I know everything about Baptism and its pioneers in whose mind the whole thing originated and matured. Can't you see two lakes in the area to which you have just been conveyed by our bullet train, by the spiritual bullet we are used to calling a

"train"? The first lake is white; the second red. Why? you may ask. The first lake is made up of water; the second of blood. Blood is also water, if you must know. Of course blood is thicker than water – every relative of yours is aware of that. But the chemical and spiritual formulas of both are the same so that you go first through water to fulfil the prophecy "He had come by means of water and blood" and then through blood. You must be baptised by water and glorified by blood. Did you receive the fontal bathing?'

'No. Do I really need it?'

'Of course you do. What a question to ask!'

'Can't I content myself with an ordinary baptism?'

'Just a bucket and an open tap, you mean?'

'That's right.'

'Do you wish to go to Hell?'

'All right. What am I supposed to do?'

'Take a razor, slash your wrists, collect the blood in this basin, pour it onto the long grass and slash your way through the long grass to clear a path towards Salvation, alias the Blood Lake.'

'Can't we use a pig?'

'What?'

'I mean its blood?'

'Are you a pig?'

'My parents used to call me a "Wild Boar".'

Slowly but surely you go back to the subject you dropped a few hours ago – on account of the Blood Lake into which you had no wish to step for fear of fainting or losing your wits altogether. Your mother used to collapse in a heap at the sight of blood and you inherited this gene from your mother's body and soul. So you wriggle your toes for a while to find out if they are not paralysed, if only partly and not really truly, and dip one of them into the water that, to all outward appearances, has nothing in common with blood, for all their double-edged formulas. You say to yourself that human blood has millions and trillions of cells, but all of them united a long time ago, being proletarians in their own right; and also Marxists, in the same right. So if one of these cells is rejuvenated in John the Baptist's water – and waters belong to this saint, even sparkling waters and the ones coming from Vichy – all other cells will willingly follow its example. Anyway, they cannot do otherwise, even if a half-witted or a dim-witted or a black-out-witted priest says to them all of a sudden (all this nonsense comes out of the blue), 'Don't do that. Stay where you are. Don't budge. I'm talking to you, my son and daughter water, my boisterous, unruly child.'

Anyway, if one cell dares to flout the convention most intimately linked to roll call Number One entitled 'Are you baptised?' it drops out of the race – sometimes after one roll call, sometimes after two of them. They often refer to such a cell as a loner and a dropout, and they pray for it whenever they find a few moments *outside* their hourly rituals, their circulations and meals. You can rely on your cells, even if some of them, from time to time, become prodigal sons, daughters, nephews and granddaughters: they will come back and kneel down either by the fireplace or in front of the dishwasher. 'I'm prodigal, prodigal, prodigal, *prokliatal* (half-Russian, half-Polish – damned).

'You're not *prokliatal*,' says the father or the mother.

'Am I *kliatal*, then?'

‘Nor are you *kliatal*,’ says the mother or the father. ‘You seem to have forgotten your mother tongue. By the way, are you baptised?’

‘Yes.’

‘Did you undergo a Blood Baptism?’

‘No. Only water, you know. Water, water everywhere.’

‘There’s blood somewhere, my son. Everywhere, to be exact.’

‘I haven’t found it.’

‘Haven’t you? And what about your wrists? And what about Syria and its interminable war?’

‘Shall I go to Syria?’

‘Your family is too poor to offer you such a long trip. Slash your wrist, you fool.’

Of course all these *fistons* (sonsons, in English) assure their parents they do not need to be glorified. ‘We can live without this blood-bestowed glory,’ they say, whining, bursting again and again into tears. At some point their brothers and sisters notice that their tears are red – blood-infused, blood-saturated. ‘Can’t our brothers and sisters use our tears as the contents of the Blood Lake?’ they ask their parents. ‘We’re modest, believe us,’ say their brothers and sisters. ‘We’ll spend our lives in the smallest room, in the smallest bathroom, in the smallest lavatory. Nor do we need a separate WC.’

‘If you spend your lives in a separate WC, you’ll be as famous as Simon of the Desert. You don’t deserve this glorifying ritual.’

‘But I’ve no wish to be called “Ivan of the WC”.’

‘They’ll call you “Ivan of the Urine”. This denomination is even more praiseworthy, more meritorious.’

And then they say to you categorically, and you know that this category sounds like a death verdict, ‘Without blood there’s no rebirth.’ Of course you do not fail to remind them that Tertullian also spoke in these terms, but the words he used were different ‘and words and wordings count in these matters even more than in semiology and Lacanism’. Yes, Tertullian used the word ‘martyrdom’ on these occasions and he would add that, but for martyrdom, its nails, lions, fires and so on there might be no Paradise – ‘for you,’ he said again and again, pointing at you and another you and she and Catherine and Hilgebrand. Blasphemers struck an impressive number of matches, making fun of St Tertullian and singing, ‘Here’s our key to Paradise. Doesn’t it look like one? Do you need a second match?’ The profusion of derisive comments and remarks might explain the look of the landscape our tourists unavoidably come across as they travel around our sacred, Father(s)-hallowed sites. ‘What are these protuberances?’ they ask. ‘Did you recently rake up all the fallen leaves into heaps?’

‘No. The heaps you’re marvelling at are the immortal remains of so-called “Saint Matches”.’

‘Were those matches used by saints? Are saints allowed to smoke?’

‘Of course not. Actually the BIG Anti-Smoke campaign – the first one, if you please – was orchestrated by Saint Philipp of Hannover. As you must know, myriads of saints used to carry out a special ritual to initiate boys into no-smoking manhood.’

‘How? What kind of ritual was it?’

‘They would carry out as many filter-tipped cigarettes as they could.’

‘What about the heaps we’re marvelling at?’

‘They were used by anti-saints, by blasphemers.’

‘Why do you call them “*Saint* Matches” then?’

‘The term was coined by a blasphemer, by a devil incarnate, by Satan in the flesh. So far we haven’t succeeded in erasing it from the history books and tourist guides.’

Anyway, whatever ritual they submit their bodies to, you refuse categorically to shed any blood, even for the sake of your eternal salvation, of your eternal invasion of Paradise, its old and new (gained) premises. You say you are against bloodbaths and even a bloodshower makes you shudder with horror, disgust, repugnance and a lot of punces. ‘So much the worse for my rebirth,’ you round off as if no longer relying on gurus and sacred lores of all kinds.

One of these lores (it is not so secret as all that) says to neophytes that one could be initiated through a hole in a rock, if you please. (Upon lighting on such a piece of information, many serious churchmen and women look rather *dis*pleased, needless to say.) Of course some of the displeased say that this lore, whatever it is and wherever it comes from, speaks of the rock from which Moïse (Moses) removed one hundred gallons of water. And others – they are probably the same – begin their controversial discussion centred upon the gallons and their quantities. And a lot of arguments (no one knows exactly how many) are strewn around those discussions where two measures, two measures for measures, confront each other: an imperial gallon, used in Britain, is equal to 4,546 cubic centimetres. A US gallon is equal to 3,785 cubic centimetres. Which gallon are you talking about? everybody is asked as if anyone could give any answer to any question apart from: put two and two together and make five. *Deux et deux font* ? they are asked and they answer, ‘Five.’ Or ‘four’, if you wish. You yourself do not know what you wish so the whole truth does not mean much during those and other discussions.

All right, let us take a US gallon and say to others, ‘Take it or leave it,’ and they take it of course because it is much better to take something, whatever it is, than leave it. Before sorting anything out, let alone hand-picking it, you had better take everything – even those things which are not really available. But whatever you take or give does not get you any closer to the problem of baptism upon which you seem to focus your attention; otherwise you would not have spoken at such length of water, rocks and holes. ‘What kind of hole?’ ask the Freudians. ‘What kind of rock?’ ask the same Freudians. ‘What does it matter,’ answer the anti-Freudians and pro-rocks (and pro-holes). The former insist and the latter end up showing them the well-known and world-wide-renowned diagram:

“ “ “ “

‘Where’s the hole?’ ask the others.

‘Here it is,’ answer the others.

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‘The hole is bigger than the rock,’ say the others.

‘Whatever you yearn to insert into this hole is so majestic the hole itself must be arch-magnificent.’

‘Let’s enlarge the rock,’ says the pro-rock and anti-rock-and-rolls. (The rock should be as motionless and regal as the Earth.)

‘Let’s widen the hole,’ says the pro-holists.

‘Why can’t we keep everything short and sweet?’ ask the anti-widenists and anti-extendists.

‘As it approaches the sea, the river begins to widen out,’ answer the poets.

‘What’s the sea?’ ask the prosaics.

‘Baptism,’ answer the theologians.

‘I was just left to sink or swim,’ says a new-born St Augustine.

As everybody knows, you can also use a hollow tree or a crack in the ground. No matter what you use – it is the way you use it that counts, for we are always dealing with John’s baptism that has nothing to do with Valentine’s baptism which they often call ‘atavism’. As the elect know, John’s baptism is different from other ritual immersions: ‘it is directed to moral, not ritual purification; it takes place once only and for this reason appears as a ceremony of initiation; and it has an eschatological value, in so far as it enrols its recipients among the number of those who professedly and actively prepare themselves for the imminent coming of the Messiah.’

I have always been prepared for the advent (imminent – in every sense of the term) of the Messiah, but the point is – and there are so many points I do not know where to turn – you have no idea in which shape or form this or any other Messiah will turn up. You turn and he/she does not – this situation is far more common than one might presume: some of us never turn at all, whatever happens. And if you do turn, it is not the good news that motivates your twists and turns; you are just hungry or angry. If you are hungry, you go to the nearest shop or coffee shop; if you are angry, you make for your victim and slap his/her face – several times, if necessary. It is not necessary, however, to smash his face in; and it is all the more problematic since, most of the time, your anger stems from a female busybodiness. Machos affirm that female bodies are always either busy or lazy, and they are lazy whenever they ought to be busy and vice versa. Anyway, if the Messiah is a woman, this woman is rather lazy and seems to forget that it is surely the duty of the stronger members in a society to help those who are weak. And religious individuals are aware of the fact that the strongest member in any society – down to animals and herbs – is the Messiah; all others, on the other hand, are incurably weak. Does this woman help us, I wonder? No wonder they often represent her as follows:

O

‘No pun intended,’ they add with a smile.

‘What pun? What do you mean?’

‘A Freudian pun,’ they add with the same smile.

Many people refuse to undergo any second baptism before the Second Coming which is not always at hand, contrary to what W. B. Yeats thought and wrote about. ‘What do you mean by the Second Coming?’ we ask. And they answer cautiously, anxious as they are not to violate the time-highlighted tradition:

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‘Again?’ we ask. ‘Do you know how many letters presided over the Creation of the World?’

‘Twenty-two,’ they answer.

‘Why do you reduce the Creation to these two signs, plus ‘‘‘‘ ? Don’t ‘‘‘‘ and ‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘ amount to the same sign?’

‘They do,’ they answer. ‘The world has grown stupid and rudimentary over the last 22 years.’

‘It’s up to the powers that be to decide what should be done next,’ say and do the greater part of humanity – all those who do not go under the heading of go-getters. How do they do or rather not do? They just lie down and wait for the Messiah or for one of their neighbours whose cheeks they like above all; above all other cheeks. This neighbour of theirs turns his cheeks – women are too dignified and refined for such an exercise; with the exception of all saints Theresiases – so elegantly they go into transports when slapping them on a regular basis. So the neighbour comes and turns one of his cheeks; and they say after much hand-searching, ‘I’d rather slap your left cheek first.’ And obediently the neighbour turns the cheek in question and one hears the sound traditionally associated with the most Christian of rituals. The ritual is carried out for half an hour at least and then everybody and everything drop from exhaustion – even down to the malevolent, perverse younger generations and yearnings. Recovering from the utter exhaustion of such a long and difficult labour might take both of them several hours; and then they begin anew. Why does the turn-cheek neighbour let his neighbour inflict on him this martyrdom-oriented suffering? Because at the end of this suffering there is the paradise about which Verlaine speaks in one of his poems, saying, ‘This Tertullian-praised paradise is at the *bout* (end).’ On the other hand (on the other cheek), this neighbour of ours does his best to imitate Christ, turning thereby (by turning his cheeks) into the Messiah. And the other neighbour – the one who inflicts the blessing-in-disguise punishment – is waiting for the Messiah or rather for the Second Coming. (No women this time: no woman has come as yet.)

Instead of waiting in vain (as many others do to no avail), he enjoys the Messiah’s physical presence, not just a mental image upon which so many saints continue to enlarge.

WHITE CLOTHES

WHITE CLOTHES

WHITE CLOTHES

WHITE CLOTHES

WHITE CLOTHES

(Another homage to Antonioni’s *Blow Up*.)

The weak and the strong – when engaged in the ritual called ‘Imitation’ – need to strike a delicate balance between inflicting pain and making sure that death is not yet on the threshold of the torture chamber where the ritual is carried out. They call it ‘the carrot and stick approach’, although, instead of the stick they (our torturers, our Pontius Pilatiuses) often use whips, if not other, even more destructive instruments. Apparently, before saying, ‘The Earth doesn’t turn,’ Galileo saw a few instruments they might have resorted to, had he not recanted, determined to reach his own, personal cross on foot or in an equipage supplied by the Inquisition. He ought to have said, ‘The Earth turns, you fools, and my cross is waiting for me. But for me, this particular cross would be useless, and there are no useless things in the universe – they all have

purposes and crosses.’ Instead he said, ‘I agree with you on this issue and on all other issues as well.’ And the pope’s secretary said to everybody (down to posterity), ‘Getting both sides to agree was a notable achievement.’ In other words, hurricane Katrina will go down in the record books as the costliest storm ever faced by insurers – something along these lines; the way our history is written, recorded and erased. The Earth turns, does not turn, turns the other cheek; and we strike this cheek as often as we can, according to ecologists. There are a lot of sticks in our hands and very few carrots, as historians put it.

But if you use a stick as you face your neighbour and deal with him in accordance with your own selfish rituals, you must show it to him first; otherwise they might say you are even worse than inquisitors and popes in days of yore. So you show the stick to your neighbour ‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘ and he says, ‘No, no, no.’

‘What’s the matter with you?’ you ask. And he shows you the matter: ‘‘‘‘ . ‘What is it?’ you ask.

‘My tombstone. If you use this stick, I’ll die on the spot.’

‘Don’t you wish to become the Messiah in the twinkling of an eye?’

‘I’ve already refused a few crosses. I’m a masochist, you know. I yearn for suffering and I yawn when I have none. And if you die, you don’t suffer any more. Death is painless, according to Epicurus.’

‘Can’t you disagree with Epicurus? For once?’

‘I can’t. I’m a hedonist, you know.’

My universe is both closed (‘‘‘‘) and chaotic: moih uiu Ribhnlih 7UYg’urn. Is it really paradoxical? If you put a number of cockroaches in a box of matches, they will re-create the primordial chaos in it. What we really need is chaotic intuition; and also a sense of harmony.

BALANCE

She had to hold onto the railings to keep her balance (= to stop herself from falling).

New tax measures are designed to redress the balance (= to stop us from falling).

The Messiah lost his balance and tumbled over.

So did the torturer.

So did the executioner.

So did the hangman.

The outcome threw both Pontius and Pelagius off balance for a moment.

The shift in the balance of power in the region has had far-reaching consequences.

What consequences?

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The balance shifted from Pontius to Christus and vice versa, and versa vice; vice and virtue, virtue and vice – thrice, as Shakespeare's witches used to say.

The stick: ‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘

The carrot: ‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘

The balance: ‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘‘

And what about our forthcoming Messiah? You pick the stick up, but he says imploringly (or otherwise, otherthrice): ‘I'd like to take another bite out of the carrot.'

‘Didn't you have two bites two minutes ago?'

‘I need a third bite. Never twice without thrice.'

‘You won't be forthcoming, then.'

‘Coming is enough for me.'

In the course of our lives, we encounter a lot of balances, off-balances, sure things, unsure things and all sorts of reliances among which there stands out our own self-reliance. You cannot always (can never) rely on your neighbours, even if they are determined to imitate the seamier side of life and prefer eternal bliss to the temporary kind one can get on this side of the Earth. Your neighbour comes in and says, ‘I believe now. I'm a new newborn Christian. I believe in eternal salvation, in the Cross, in God and also in Jesus Christ. Could you please help me imitate his wonderful life?'

‘Do you want me to crucify you?'

‘No, no, no. Well, I'd rather have a carrot first – not the other way round.'

‘Here's your carrot. Do you want something else before I crucify you?'

‘Let's go to the Summer Ball.'

‘What for?'

‘I want them to say, "She wore a dress of crimson silk and was the belle of the ball."'

‘But you're a man, aren't you?'

‘Can't I wear a dress of crimson silk? Besides, they don't say, "He was the beau of the ball."'

You give them a carrot; they eat it and ask for a ball – a tennis ball, for a change. And if you ask them our traditional question, ‘Why?' they answer as follows, ‘Let's play a game of tennis. If you lose, you'll be Pontius Pelaticucus. The same goes for me (or rather ungoes, I should say) – I'll be Pontius if you beat me hands down.' And then you see him in front of you, his hands down, his arms down, his head down: he does not even look at the ball. Too all outward and inward appearances, his mood is down too and it goes on sinking as the game heads for its unhappy end. The game is over and you hear a song coming from your opponent's mouth: ‘Two-o-o, to two-o-o, to two-o-o, to two-o-o.'

‘What does that mean?' you ask.

‘It's said that as the Titanic went down the band continued to play. Or was it the Vienna Philharmonic?' And then he knocks your block off as if you were a blockhead, not a walking, talking encyclopaedia. Once you are back in the world (a new-born messiah), you experience the intensity of the whip he holds in both hands: one hand is not enough for *the news*, as they call them.

SELF-MESSIANISM

So you had better rely on yourself – insofar as you can trust your self-control: you should not subject your body to the tortures of which even Jesus would not have approved, let alone the Buddha. The latter advocated the middle way that lies in between our proverbial carrots and sticks. (There are so many proverbs related to them one is reluctant to adumbrate them, let alone recount them in great detail.) If the government to whose orders you are supposed to lend an ear does not convince you either by its arguments or behaviour, you should not blame its members: you must overthrow them and their seats. And if they resist your pressure, your eloquence and harangues, you must throw them into the nearest rubbish bin. Whatever or whoever blocks your road to happiness, your proposals, your progress and your regress – now and then you might feel like regressing a little bit, just for fun – should be immediately thrown into rubbish bins, even if there are none in sight: they should be in mind, in your self-reliant, bliss-bound mind. A block:

‘‘‘‘‘

Its removal:

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I owe and undone
and what comes is not
space, mice

all months of May as if there were
thousands and thou

if I grow outside, out of,
and anyone is one,
here and under,
one, one, grows, comes, in,

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month,
one mouth, one
lip, half-a

If you rely only on yourself – on your own messianic soul, as Hamlet might have put it – you come up with everysense verse. And every sense is a door, a nail, a male, a glass of ale, a bit of tale, of woe, of miaow.

Stigmata. Not too much. My God, my Lord, My Superlord and ONLY GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD GOD

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Do me a favour – only one stigmata please, a small one

For a study published in the journal *Frontiers in Physiology*, a team of French scientists analysed 120 years' worth of records and research to gauge the varying pace of changes in human height, athletic performances and life span. They note that while there was a surge in improvements in all three areas in the 20th century that mirrored industrial, medical and scientific advances, the pace of those advances has slowed significantly in recent years.... 'No matter how well we may eat, at some point our genetics hit the brakes,' says Jean-François Toussaint, a physiologist at Paris Descartes University....We may have hit our biological limit for longevity. The researchers found that in many human populations, 'it's more and more difficult to show progress in life span despite the advances of science,' says Toussaint. As climate change delivers more frequent heat waves and other harsh weather, he explains, the elderly become more vulnerable and average life spans may continue to dip in some countries.

Newsweek, 19. 01. 2018

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, earth to earth. What about eternal recurrence? Are we supposed to rise from our tombs, saying, 'I am ashes, I am dust. Here I am again'? If you are a drop of water, you evaporate, join a cloud and fall. 'I was a drop of water. I rose and became a cloud, a part of it. Here I am again – the same drop of water. O or 0. And if you do not evaporate, owing to the sun's laziness or absent-mindedness, the Earth receives you in her bosom

and lets you out in the morning. “The grass was wet with early morning dew” – is just another instance of the phenomenon known as “eternal recurrence”.’

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PART TEN

ether

You laugh because in ancient times the Persians worshipped rivers, as is told in the writings which hand down *these things* to memory; the Arabians an unshapen stone; the Scythian nation a sabre; the Thespasians a branch instead of Cinxia; the Icarians an unhewn log instead of Diana; the people of Pessinus a flint instead of the mother of the gods, the Romans a spear instead of Mars, as the muses of Varro point out; and, before they were acquainted with the statuary's art, the Samianas a plank instead of Juno, as Aëthklius relates–; and you do not laugh when, instead of the immortal gods you make supplication to oitteiates of ùe, a,d jaiù,j fprùs

PAR(P)A

CETA

MOL[redacted]

Yang comes in; so does Jan. And Jean. And Don Juan. They all talk for a while and decide they should live together to avoid the love-strife disorder they (the Greeks) talked, shocked and mocked about for several centuries before the Romans conquered them with their Alexander. Or Caesar. Or both. Everyone comes in and lives in peace with somebody; perhaps with anybody. They say, 'War didn't break out between the two countries after a border dispute.' And they repeat, 'Didn't, didn't,' as long as they can repeat anything.

Did I feel responsible when writing the above text? In any way? I wrote it for myself and for the sake of the hard disc; and for the sake of writing. Have I taken over responsibility for this project? Is it a project? In the first place? In the second place? There are people – Merkel, Derkel – who say all the time, 'We have the chance to build an outward-looking Europe that lives up to its global responsibilities.' Does my foregoing text live up to its responsibilities? Are its responsibilities global? Is it outward- or inward-looking? Is it looking at all? Is it blind, mute?

What is responsibility? What is irresponsibility? The question now on everyone's lips is 'What is truth?' What is untruth? What is a mammoth? Mamma mummy? Manna from? What is a moth?

RECEPTION

Seeing is receiving.
Hearing is receiving.
Feeling is receiving.
Touching is receiving.
Believing is receiving.
Receiving is receiving.

FACE-CROSS-EROS

Not turning to the world.
Waiting for the world
to turn another face.

I have just heard about all that.
Is that enough?
Cross-moss-moth-dross-Eros.
Is that enough?

AG_E0°MCAL ruSSAN ROUETTE.

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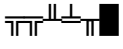
SHOOOLKO__, wht?

=l:;ML, ;n╥ 

Feel high

Feel how

Feel mi!ddle

Al rifht. I fieeelmiddle

était tohu-et-bohu,

une ténèbre sur les faces de l'abîme,

mais le souffle

SI BEMOLISE

Heimweh. Grundstimmung. Welt, Endlichkeit, Vereinzelung.

Heimweh. The motherland I do not know.

Endlichkeit. We are all finite. (Our *Heimat.*) Animals die too, with sterben, often before humans. Musil went out but five hours afterwards came back in the dead of night and winter. In the dead of himself. Didn't he find the way out? Out of out, of all outs and ins?

Philosophy enables one to feel nowhere at home.

TRAVELOGUE, POSTLOGUE, NECROLOGUE, LOG
LUMP

I was born out of Something, into Something, into Nothing, as if I were nothing myself; or something. But there is a set of rules I am supposed to follow, otherwise these rules will follow me and destroy me one by one; I mean all my members, tendons and thoughts would be torn apart if I did not follow these rules. For instance, you need to get up in the morning and so do I because I shall be you, as the poet says and does, I suppose. You raise your head and probably one of your legs: two legs seem to be out of your control; out of my control, rather. I am not as young as you are, although I am not as old as Methuselah, or whatever his name is. For several years now I have been writing 'whatever his name is' instead of saying Peter or Paul, which means I have to write four words. Jean is one word, but I don't know Jean, and I prefer to write four words or rather four-letter words because our world deserves neither five-letter words nor six-letter words. And I deserve only one letter; that is enough.

So there is a set of rules, but I feel like walking away from them, relying on the rule that says, 'There is an exception to every rule.' So I walk away from every rule or from one of them because I remember the doctrine that defines our life as 'free will' that is free and not at all bound like Prometheus. I am not Prometheus and so I walk away from the rules, from their set and net – to signify my free will, my freedom and whatever comes into my head as I walk along the path or free or dom – never mind: it is walking away that counts. I am walking away from the rules and come into the realm where the same set and net of rules come into existence as soon as I enter this realm. I go further and encounter the same situation as if there were no other set-ups or set-downs in the world; or in any other world. I go away from the rules and come onto the awayest of all the ways where the same rules greet me with a smile or stern look/warning/voice.

In *The Museum of Rules* they show you an automaton which looks exactly like a human being, except that it has neither legs nor belly. And if you ask why it has no belly, they say it does not eat much, and even the electricity they supply in the hope it will ultimately execute all their orders does not cost an arm and a leg. 'That's why it has no legs,' says an attendant with an ironical smile that makes you understand you are not acquainted with basic puns and funs. Yet it has a pair of arms and so you almost automatically conclude the museum staff may use at least one of its arms, from time to time, to pay the bill for electricity and other foodstuffs you have no idea about. Of course you realise it might use its arms for other purposes, given that these arms are the only members it has got: it is as headless as Maine Reed's famous horseman. And no one asks the attendant why it is headless and shoulderless; the attendant gives his or her orders and it executes them like a Nazi officer, soldier or captain. Stalin's cronies also acted like headless automatons, but they had as many as 20 arms, which enabled them to kill more people. If you look at the statues of the Buddha and his arms, their numbers and lengths, you neither evoke nor visualise mass murders; only caresses come into your head and also cover, if only in part, your covetous, libidinous body.

And what about its body, if any? The body is not vital to your being that can feed on air, if it is a spiritual, virtual, astral or splendid (or whatever its name is) body we are talking about. (Glorious, glorious. Gloria.) It is not worthwhile talking about this body: it does not deserve the effort required for its description because our tongues do not wag like dogs' tails or our index fingers. If our tongues do wag now and then, they say the Absolute Truth,

otherwise there is no point in talking and even walking, as our mystics and saints point out. You just sit in your cell (or hell) and say nothing either to the purpose or to no purpose, as the case may be. And then you appear (in all your splendour) on the nearest roof and shout your truth from its top situated on the top of the world; so that everyone hears it. Then you climb down, head for your cell and sell whatever you said on the roof; at an action sale, provided your manuscript is ready for publication. Someone buys it and gets it published whereupon the Absolute Truth becomes as well-known as Michael Jackson or any living king, crimson or otherwise.

So I stand in front of this automaton and realise I am surrounded by rules on all sides; even on non-existent sides, to be precise and accurate in the extreme. And the automaton I am facing has no body; only a pair of arms I am bound to feel on my shoulders in a moment or two. Three moments later I recall the emptiness one can find around its arms, which indicates the lack of shoulders and shoulder blades; it therefore does not need the shampoo habitually meant for head and shoulders. He has neither; nor does he have any shampoo or bath soap or shower gel. Or shower, or bath, or water, or waterfalls either painted by Escher or by God at Niagara. (Escher's waterfalls might also have been painted by God.) Nor does he need to carry our sins' weight on his shoulders; or hair, for that matter. 'He's not Jesus Christ', the attendant reminds me.

He puts his arms on my shoulders and I go down, down on my knees and recite the rules engraved on the floor. I am even enjoined to lick them until they become a part of my tongue, mouth and throat, let alone my lungs, heart, stomach and legs. Then I am enjoined to crunch on them and eat them noisily, otherwise no one is likely to hear them. Everyone is a prophet in his or her own right, unright, right, right, right, right, unright. Or in-built right, in-right, as they say; or right-in.

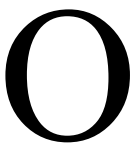
DEMOCRACY
In-built right, built-in right.
Built-in freedom, in-built freedom.
In-built speech, built-in speech.
Built-in thought, in-built thought.
In-built information, built-in information.
Built-in built, in-built in.

And these arms press hard on my body as if I was bleeding abundantly or just at leisure, which does not really matter: it does not matter how you bleed, at what rate. Sooner or later you will remain bloodless and probably headless because your head needs blood. The heads of our machines, if any, if any machines, if any heads, likewise need blood, for blood is the river of life they speak of in the Bible and in the Koran and in Kurosawa's film *Ran*. The river of life should never run out of water or blood, otherwise life will grind to a standstill, which it often does, even if it does not run out of anything. Life asks you, 'Shall I grind a little black pepper over your pizza?' You answer, 'Yes, please do' and suddenly you see your life all over your pizza. That is how we usually come to an end: over a pizza, over a steak, over a glass of wine, over a mere sandwich we bite into to cope with our hunger and dissatisfaction. And then we faint for no reason at all. And when we recover our senses, we ask a nurse, 'What's going on?'

'You fainted at the sight of your own blood,' she answers.

'Why do I no longer faint?'

‘Mike pressed hard on the wound and staunched the flow of blood.’

They pressed hard on the wounds, on all of them, and I have no idea how many wounds I have all over my body. I grudgingly accept the hypothesis according to which my whole body is just a huge, incurable wound and they raise all their hands and press hard on my body that goes down and down under their pressure: even downer than the Earth. And for a moment I get the feeling that all is downer than the Earth, and that the Earth itself is downer than anything – downer then Hell or just ll depicted many times by the Flemish and the Spanish. I depict the Earth thus: 

And then I go down and down, downer. I lost my health? That’s a real downer! I lost my memory? That’s a real downer! I lost my cat? That’s a real downer. I’m a real moaner!

A REAL DOWNER
Lost, lost, lost, lost.
Not found, not found, not found, not found.
Dead, dead, dead, dead.
Forever, never, forever, never.

A REAL MOANER
Dead, dead, dead, dead.
Buried, buried, buried, buried.
Not forever, not forever, not forever.

I have heard many voices ever since I was born, and some of these voices must have come from heaven or from under the Earth, from under Mars. From under, not from above. One of my ears heard the upper voices, the other was open for downers. Anyway I threw myself out of the window because there was no other way out, up, down and to the middle. Naturally enough, I expected to find myself in the World to Come, but that world was still to come and I had already come, lying as I was on the surface of the Earth. In a way I was a blade of grass, but that was neither the right way nor the middle way. The world I was lying in was more or less the same world as if there were a shortage of worlds in the multiverse. But no one has ever told me (at least the voices have not) that there are other universes in which you do not have to expiate the sins you have committed on Earth and even on Venus. You open your eyes and take in the universe where you cannot sin as much as you like, unless you are St Augustine who felt like writing yet another book of *Confessions* every time he recalled the fruit he had stolen from his neighbour’s garden. (And we need confessions on our library shelves. We need sins and confessions, crimes and

punishments.) When he learnt about Newton's method – the one the latter used during his discovery of the law of gravity – the former said in a grave unforgiving voice: 'He must have stolen this apple from his neighbour or from his father.'

'And what if this apple just fell from the sky, out of the blue?

'Then he stole it from the Almighty Himself.'

And then another reflexion on time bursts in, this time without the soul's obtrusive and wide-of-the-mark interferences. 'O my God, I know and I don't know, if I think I know, I don't know, I don't think, I know because knowledge is not made up of thoughts. The growth of knowledge is wholly due to that of apples; to their falling, rather. I wait for an apple and it falls. So I say to myself, "It is high time." I don't wait for anything, not even for another revelation. Yet another apple falls and I say to myself, "It is high noon." The same goes on and on and whenever I say, "It is a rainy day today," it rains apples and nuts. And gradually I begin to distinguish the time of objects from that of my head where duration comes and goes and stays forever. And then I'm told there are no objects, no things in the domain of quantum mechanics. There are many universes and only one domain – that of quantum mechanics inside which nature is not describable in realistic local terms. I'm lying in this garden and my body is quite real, I can tell you. And I never lose control of my bodily functions, God forbid. But I also realise I can't be described in realistic local terms – as a human body lying in a more or less human English garden. Now I know that my ultra-naive notions of matter and time are hopelessly local and realistic. They don't apply on a micro scale. And I am so small today. I am as small as any blade of grass. Well, I'm waiting for a means of transport. And I say to myself, "There are many universes in which Jesus Christ, out of generosity, allowed himself to be nailed to the Cross. I'm told there is a factory of crosses in the adjacent universe. And there are universes where time does not exist. Why? Because there are neither apples nor nuts in it." There is no law of gravity either, due to the same argument, to the same line of reasoning. So you just fly around, up and down, eating fixed stars and working within fixed assets.

I am lying buried under apples and nuts and fallen stars, but the world I take in and reject at once is the same world; at least I do not see anything new in it. Sometimes a nozzle comes and someone tries to stick it to my nose. It has not been raining for quite a while so I do my best to stick my nose into the nozzle, but they rudely wrench the nozzle from my grip, saying, 'We should water the garden today, otherwise you'll die of thirst.'

'I'm already dying of thirst,' I say. 'Please let me drink from the nozzle.'

'We are supposed to water you from the hose. You must not break the rules. We'll attach the nozzle to the garden hose before turning on the water and then we'll turn the water on.'

You wait, wait and then ask, 'Did you turn the water on?' They did, but they turned it the wrong way, in the opposite direction. Today it is watering another universe. 'I can't expiate my sins in any other universe,' I say to them. 'Besides, I'm extremely thirsty.'

'It's a curious paradox that drinking a lot of water can often make you feel thirsty.'

'I'm not interested in paradoxes. I'm just thirsty.'

'It will make you feel even thirstier.'

'I don't mind.'

'Did you sing anything this morning? All that singing makes you thirsty. What did you sing? "God save our gracious God"?'

The World to Come must already have come many times and in different land- and cityscapes; in a flat or under a tree where another Buddha meditates upon four paths, five paths. I am on all fours and see as many as six paths in front of me, and all of them remind me of the Buddha and many salvations that lead to the window and to the same salvation attributed either to myself or someone else I might already have saved several times. One decree is cancelled; another decree comes and the voice says, 'This is the World to Come.' And the decree says, 'You're summoned so you must hide yourself.' I am alone in a room with a view and this view reveals itself beyond the only window that adorns the room with a view. And Magritte seems to have painted on this view the words: 'The World to Come.' So I fling myself out of the window and execute a Highland fling, Middleland fling (the Buddha smiles approvingly) and Lowland fling (Gorky is rubbing his hands at the thought of winning).

I wish to save myself, for I believe that the World to Come has everything in common with the Messiah – to such an extent that I call this world the 'Messiah'. I am messianic and therefore know the mechanics of my salvation perfectly, declaring unashamedly, 'I'm sure to live on the top floor of the skyscraper situated right in the middle of the Messiah. That's what determinism or predestination is about, end of story.' I am often asked if I shall stay in a penthouse suite in the skyscraper I am dreaming of out loud: even the Martians hear my voice.

'Yes,' I answer.

'Aren't you afraid of feeling like a fish out of water up there?' asks the voice.

'I'm already used to the feeling. Every month I spend nine days in a penthouse suite in the Hilton.'

I cannot say I do not remember anything because our remembrance of things past depends not only on our voluntary or involuntary memory, but also on things themselves – not on things *in* themselves, mind you. But even *they* often come into the open, leaving their ins behind and telling us, 'Unmind you, unmind you, as Fellini used to say. Inbody you or unbody you, he would repeat more and more often as his life was reaching for the stars. Anyway, from the garden there's a marvellous view over open countryside.'

They come and stare at you without saying 'Hello' or any platitude of this sort, but you say, 'Hello, hello, hello, how are you? You're my mother, aren't you? Sorry, I'm entangled in a net, like Othello in a Soviet production. But I'm yours, yours. You're my teacher and the tree on which I used to prop my shoulder in a moment of madness or sadness. You displayed far more tricks than Yorick for Hamlet's sake – neither Yoicks, nor Orrick – in a moment of sadness. Come, come, my dear friends, and a Felliniesque dance will get us under way as soon as we are properly arrayed: a trumpeter, a clown and a little girl, as usual. Another Renaissance with Bellini and mandolins.'

As everybody does, I do my best to annihilate the consequences of what my health might suffer in the very proximity to the deadline: all heart attacks, all strokes without exception, even strokes of genius. I recall what I can laugh at; only old experienced clowns laugh at what everyone should laugh at without reining in either *reines* or queens or kings or emperors or clowns: Keats tarred them with the same brush. Here is the brush he used: an object with short pieces of stiff hair, plastic or wire fixed into a usually wooden or plastic base or handle, which is used for cleaning, tidying the hair or painting.

bath ˌtowel noun [C]a large towel with which you dry yourself after a bath or shower Equipment used for cleaning

broom noun BRUSH1. /bruːm/, /brʊm/ [C]a brush with a long handle, used for cleaning the floorEquipment used for cleaning

broomstick /ˈbruːm.stɪk/, /ˈbrʊm-/ noun [C]1. a broom made of sticks In children's books, witches are often shown riding broomsticks. Equipment used for cleaning

brush /brʌʃ/ noun TOOL1. [C]an object with short pieces of stiff hair, plastic or wire fixed into a usually wooden or plastic base or handle, which is used for cleaning, tidying the hair or painting.

I can't find my brush, but I still have my... WHAT?

Anyway it is still superior to what I come across in my archives. It is the Diderot Encyclopaedia; at least it looks like one or ion or Ionïtch – the modest hero of Tolstoy's story. What is the death-instinct?

Ionïch

Ionich

Ionic

Ioni

Ion

On

When the crowd singles out "On" ("He", in Russian), they murder "On" or die within it. Freud calls this variety a 'death instinct.' If, instead of saying "on", they had said "Ann", they would have killed Anne Boleyn (and probably Adam and Eve; or Anna Akhmatova). And if instead of hearing Ion, they had heard Io, Io, they would have killed several horses; or one Ivan. Sometimes it goes the other way round. Ionïch is asked: 'Who are you?'

He answers, 'I'm Ionïch.'

'Are you sure you deserve such a name?'

'No, I must be just ch.'

'Ch, ch, ch,' and they kill him while playing with the trigger and its sounds.

CH

CN

CH

VA

VA

VA

What remains is a poem:

So many times.
Revelation.
Not many times.
How manu times?
Don't drag manu in.
I do not drag in
Anything.

I don’t drag.
I don’t drug.
I don’t drop.
I slop.
Water slopped out of the bucket as I carried it up the stairs.
Was I the basket or the carrier or the water?
Sorry, I slipped out of the bucket.
I’m sorry to say, the carrier also slipped out.
There remained some water and the bucket. Where were you?
I was praying.
For what? For whom? Whom did you pray for? For you, for the water, for the bucket?

In a famous Ukrainian poem its creator asks to be buried in Ukraine, on a hill, above the mighty Don, in the middle of a huge steppe so he can hear the Don’s voice booming underneath, not in Hell that is far away. You don’t hear anything from Hell except A! Z!E!R!T!Y!U!I!O!P!¨!*! You also hear +=/*¨and à)à)—9)ç)6. You hear:

When I am gone, do your best to bury me
With military honours. I must lie on a hill above the Mighty River
So I can hear old Dnepr’s fury under the slope.
And only when from the plain of Ukraine he’ll carry their blood,
The enemies’ blood far, far, as far as it goes,
Will I rise from my tomb and reach the threshold of God
And pray. Meanwhile I do not know God.

Once I am dead and buried, why should I care about Dnepr or the Flood, the old one, the new one? Why should I listen to anything, be it an Obrecht Mass or the Volga’s moods? Let the Volga enjoy herself or curse her new incarnation or the carnation an old lady is smelling gently with a smile. Why should they bury me on the top of the hill, on the top of the world, of our galaxy? The dead poet has a good ear for music, but he seems to be blind, otherwise he would have written: ‘So I can *see* old Dnepr’s fury under the slope.’ The river bursts its banks and floods the surrounding fields. The dead poet says to himself, ‘Hurrah! I can hear the enemies’ blood flowing all around me. I wish I could see it. I wish I could drink it. It’s high time I got up and prayed.’

Staying on God’s threshold, the dead poet prays. Several families living by the river were flooded out. The dead poet goes on praying. You never know for whom you pray, for whose sake you stay on God’s threshold.

I get up and pray, and blood gushes out from many holes and flows as it always does into the Pacific Ocean (a sort of armistice) or into the sea just south of here. It does not really matter in what direction (whence, hence) this blood flows; even if it heads for Paradise – it bloods to Paradise, as Tertullian used to say, thinking about Christian martyrs – I am still on the moss of a garden which may belong to someone else. Actually I hope it does belong to someone else: in this case I am likely to be chased away from here sooner or later. They will just pick up my body and carry it as far as Hell, thinking I have no strength left to go to Hell on my own, even if they repeat again and

again, ‘Go to Hell’; even if they shout these words from rooftops and skyscrapers. On the other hand, many go to Hell almost automatically, being under way (Hell’s way) ever since their oral, anal and genital stages.

It is my blood I am listening to because I cannot help it as if there were only my blood beneath me, above the sky. My blood remembers a lot; it is thicker than water and its watery memory about which they talk in the news, in the old news of no importance. The thicker your blood, the more it remembers; and my blood is very thick so I hope one day it will stop in its tracks and I shall say, ‘I’m not in that garden any longer. I must be away or on the way. Not on the road, though. Under way, under way. This way is for eating a blade of grass, that way is for going away, along the same way, the way of all blood. And my flesh must have been left behind, provided I know what is in front of me or by my sides, by my minds that I should count one day to find out what kind of nexus I was glued to at the beginning of this or that era. An era goes in one ear and out the other, and I don’t understand what I am talking about, assuming I am about and on and over and out. What if I am only in?

My blood remembers those bloody days, bloody fools and the tools they used to press me against the Earth as if I were Antaeus. Do I need the Earth, this Mother of Mine? ‘I’ve lost all my blood, dear Mother. The steady drip, drip, drip with which human bodies are disappearing, you know.’ I hear ‘drip, drip, drip’ now overhead, now overbody, now oversoul, and I have no idea whether the blood I listen to goes in or out, in one ear, out one eye as if taking part in Buñuel’s film they talked about in the Thirties. What else did they talk about in the Thirties? Are their memories as thick as my blood?

How tell my blood from that of an intruder, from its flows? From its blows? I am not in the habit of punching myself on the nose or on any other part of my body. I would not even punch myself on one of my thighs, if the intruder said, ‘I’m weary of punching you. Can’t you do it yourself?’ Of course I would answer, ‘No. I’m no masochist. Why should I suffer on my own account? From my own hands?’ But if I feel something related to my nose or other parts of my body, I conclude that my enemies’ blood is flowing everywhere: all along the corridors, all around the ceiling. I hear neither the Volga nor any other river they talk about in their poems, epics and fairy tales: mermaids do not limit their playgrounds to the sea. It was off the coast of Italy that Shelley went to his watery grave, but I listen to my bloody grave, and I do not like its harmony; nor am I fond of its melody.

THE GRAVE
Watery, watery, watery.
Bloody, bloody, bloody.
Death, death, death.
No more life, not any longer.
Not any shorter.
Not, not, not, not, not, not, not, not.

LIFE
I tie the knot of life.
Every day I tie it.
And then I say,
‘I can’t untie the knot –
It is too tight.’

After several attempts to untie the knot, I admitted defeat and cut through it with a knife. I go on admitting defeat. I go on cutting through it with a knife (through defeat or through victory). A kitchen knife, if you please. If you do not please. That is where the blood comes from; from the knife; and from my hand; or from someone else's hand. Other creatures also have hands and paws and maws. Even humans have a series of maws; every human has a multitude of maws. Not of laws.

> When to the powres beneath,
> The sacred nation that survive with Death
> My prayrs and vowes had done devotions fit,
> I tooke the offrings, and upon the pit
> Bereft their lives.

My prayers, vowes. Vows and prayers are no longer powerful, tearful, shoutful, screamful. Fly, fly, fly. Scream, scream, scream. A lot of devotions and all of them fit, fit as a fiddle, as a middle, as a muddle. I shed my blood (my personal bloodbath) for the sake of the dead, for Dante, Beethoven, Haydn, Plato, Aristo-tel-phan. What I got is (oh, my God, as they say) the living dead, the worst of a bad bunch. The deading live.

> Out gusht the sable blood,
> And round about me fled out of the flood
> The Soules of the deceast.

Agamemnon! Agamemnon! Odysseus! Odysseus! All right, it is another opera; not by Richard Strauss. All right, they are dead all right. (Richard Strauss, Agamemnon and Odysseus. And operas, to some extent.) Not all *wrong*, mind you. But they go on sending me emails. (Some operas do, too.) Not Dante, not Shakespeare, although, although, although I am praying for their comings, for their Godot-unlike arrivals on horses, in Bentleys, in helicopters – like Charles de Gaulle. There cluter'd then. Who? Who, for God's sake? My Austrian manager and his assistant? I still wonder how she managed to find a man, her husband, whose pain threshold is far above any threshold one is likely to come across in this world of ours, in this overall pain. (Not *pain*.)

You go through life and some think it is a plain – as plain as some waters. No bubbles, no troubles. And then they encounter both: bubbles and troubles. Reminds you of *Macbeth*, doesn't it? They go along, carry on whatever they have to carry and all of a sudden a bubble makes its appearance in front of them; and also behind them. What troubles them beyond measure is that it is the same bubble. (But not the same trouble, mind you. It is *another* trouble.) What? What? What? they say to themselves and to God. God, God, God, they say to themselves and to what, and to how, and to what does it mean, and what the hell. What the hell also makes its appearance; whereas they do their best to arrange a sort of disappearance of all this paraphernalia. Much paraphernalia goes; other paraphernalia comes. And even if only one para comes, all hell breaks loose. And it is pointless to break anything. You break something and hell breaks loose; you loose and hell loose breaks. And so inevitably and predictably and once and for all (for all hell, that is) you lose.

So did I, so did I. And I go on losing everything, even though I have really nothing to lose, not even my chains which I lost many years ago. I used to put them in my attaché case. Once upon a time, I opened my attaché case (this took place well before the French Revolution) and realised I had lost my chains. Marx would have stroked my head, I suppose. Even the Marx Brothers would have stroked any part of my body, had they seen me in the flesh which they all call ashes or ashes to ashes. Their words depend on whom they talk to; on what they talk to. If they talk to ashes, they say, 'Ashes to ashes,' – to please ashes. If they talk to corpses they say, 'Ashes to ashes' – to please nobody.

I hoped my blood would attract the glorious bodies of the past: Dante, Plato, Pascal, Montaigne. I see a mount and recognise a manager I saw in London. He invited me to dinner which we 'enjoyed', in inverted commas. He did perhaps. After the meal he rummaged in his wallet for five minutes at least and then said, 'Don't you want to help me? I need your help, otherwise they'll call the police.' He was obese, obtuse, abhorrent and he did not take me on; I never featured on his huge list peppered with non-existent names: they do not exist any more. (So they never did.) You put a name on your list; a pianist comes onto the stage and plays a piece entitled *A Massacre* or *Nothing to be Heard*. They both amount to the same thing. They mount, mount, mount and burst like that shuttle I saw on TV many years ago. There was a teacher on that shuttle. First her students cried, 'Hurrah.' Then they cried, 'Horror, ahahahahahahah,' and then they cried-ie-ie-ie-ie-ie-is-s-d.

My blood mounts too. Luckily for me, it is already outside, otherwise I would have a lot of nosebleeds. I have a lot of handkerchiefs in my pockets, but no amount of handkerchiefs can ever hope to cope with my blood when it gets under way and mounts, mounts, mounts. I see mountains of blood and do my utmost to blot them with my handkerchiefs that are already soaked through and through and through through through. I cannot put my handkerchiefs back into my pockets, let alone into my sockets. Once I saw a lady who, when blotting her lips with a tissue, all but stuffed this tissue into her socket. An illusion no doubt. But I doubt all illusions and I am sure our tooth / eye sockets are full to the brim with whatever we lay our hands on. We always toy with our eyes, noses and other parts of what we call our body or even our soul: our eyes are the entrance to our soul. And if some of these implements begin to mount, to soar into the sky like fireworks or cathedrals' spires, then even children get involved in the process. They spread their arms and take off: they have no idea what happens after this particular take-off. They fly, their arms outstretched, their legs outstretched, etched in pain, etched in their memories for a few seconds only. Their mothers cry, 'Ahahahahahahahhahahahahahahahhahahahahahahahhahahahahahahahhahahahahahahahhahahahahahahahhahahahahahahah' or just 'OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO,' meaning: in a minute or two you will become an absolute zero. They obey and they (other they) build a few monuments dedicated to their (other their) memories. And, instead of going back to what they usually call 'The Unknown Worrier,' they engrave on the monument, 'Unknown Quantity.'

H. G. Wells also writes about this histrionic, hilarious, mounting-fountain élan. And I do not fail to comment on his comment, on their comments, on my comments. Doing nothing else. Doing Elsinore, in a sense. "The essential fact in man's (and woman's) history to my sense (not to *my* sense) is the slow unfolding of a (non)sense of community with his kind. (No communes, no communities, no communards, no committees, no communications. Three cheers to Antonioni. Four cheers to Antonioni. Just another multiplication table.) 'Between us and the rest of mankind there is *something*, something real (*something*???, *un*real) something that rises through

us and is neither you nor me (not me, not I), that comprehends us (not us, not them, not the cosmos and multiverse; just the miniverse), and that is thinking and using me and you to play against each other.'

I wholly agree with the last item of this speech I might have heard in Hyde Park, had I been born two centuries ago. I heard nothing and so I did not say, 'Stuff and nonsense, nonsense and stuff. You're the stuff my dream is made on. I'll disconnect my dream and unmake it utterly. SOMETHING??????????????????????????????? Not for all the tea, for all the Chinas and Indias. Not for all the coffee either.

They drink my blood and then recognise me and write. But if they abstain from drinking my blood, they recognise nothing, neither rules and duties, nor their daily routine. They drink my blood, focus their attention on me, their attention spans, their pants, and I cringe at the sight of their corpses dancing, talking, smoking. They go up in smoke. The smoke goes up and so do they, whoever they are. Up, up, up, up, in the middle, in the muddle, in the meddle, and so does Everything; and I don't know what that means.

They sent an email to the Sun saying, 'We've had enough of rains and torrents. We need a nice holiday.'I wish they could enjoy a life holiday of which they understand next to nothing, and this next is nothing. Nothing, nothings, nothing. And I'll never let them have my zero and all the minuses I am playing with.

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Instead of answering their emails, mails and mental ailments, I might have put

—

or

$$

I am still here

And you're there.

And mea, mea, mea, mea
Culpa, kalpa, kulpa, Kupka.
Once again what has been done
So many times and ever since,
And ever, ever, ever, ever.
Science's what it could have been
If it had not become our science.

Just a multitude of human brains: there are brains elsewhere so I have to point out that the brains I am talking about are human, inhuman and brainless. You have a brain and you do not have one, let alone two, three, four and five. You have nothing except your body that moves and has a pair of arms that brandish knives, swords, saucepans and so forth. They brandish whatever they can lay their hands and fingers on, and that is what human activities boil down to: saucepans, pans, pants (not plants), swords, words. That is what science is about. Is, is, is; not, not, not.

I have a file devoted to whatever they have said, done, undone and drunk to the dregs. At some point I was in a champagne glass and they drank me to the dregs so I am a multitude of dregs, drugs, no *drugs*, today, tomorrow, the day and after. I don't even know if I am in their mouths, in their intestines, in their bladders. Not in their blooders, hopefully: I'd hate to become their bloods, their red and white corpuscles. I'd hate to offer them my genes, my genius. Let them drink their own blood, getting duller, dim-witteder, obtuser.

04/05/2018
Dear Mon,
please find attached the schedule for Mr. Afanassiev for his stay in Vienna.

On Monday the orchestra would like to take a picture of Mr. Afanassiev and Yutaka Sado for their Social Media Channels (Facebook, Instagram) – Is that ok?

All best,
Elis

Elis Dzot, BA
Associate Manager

PRIMUSIC - MUSIDAT LTD
Graben 12
1010 Wien, Austria
Tel.: +43 676 500 90 36
office@primusic.at
www.primusic.at

08/06/2018
Dear Mon,

I hope you are doing well and also that Mr. Afanassiev arrived well back home after the tour. Attached I am now sending you the two invoices for the concerts.

All the best,
Elis

Elis Dzot, BA
Associate Manager

25/06/2018
Dear Mon,

I was wondering whether you received my last email with the invoices for Mr. Afanassiev?

Best wishes,
Elis
03/07/2018
Dear Mon,

I hope this email finds you well!

We are surprised we did not receive our commission yet. Would you be so kind and remind Mr. Aleff once again?

Thank you!
Best wishes,
Elis
10/07/2018
Dear Mon,

Is there any special reason why Mr. Aleff does not pay our commission?

All best,
Elis
17/07/2018

Dear Mr. Afanassiev,

very regretfully we have to acknowledge that you did not pay our commission. Is there any reason for this?

We have done our work as well as you – the only difference ist hat you have been paid and we did not receive our money. Please understand that we are not willing to wait any longer. We urgently ask you to pay.

Kind regards,
Elis Dzot, BA
Associate Manager

19/07/2018
Dear Elis,
Here is a message from Valery Afanassiev
Best wishes

Mon

Dear Elis,

I was delighted to make your acquaintance in Vienna.

In your last email you said you had worked as well as I did. It's a pity
you didn't hear me in Tokyo. To catch up with my standards, you ought to
have got for every performance of mine at least 30,000 euros. On the other hand, it is true that you worked rather hard - for the orchestra and for our dear Herr Direktor. Indeed, thanks to my generous contribution, to my involuntary generosity - to my low fees, in other words - he flew to Japan in his
mistress's company. My munificence allowed the orchestra to bring to Japan
their photographer, among a few other members of the staff.

Mon and I were excluded from the negotiations - to such an extent that I didn't even know what the orchestra would play in the first part.
At first you suggested 10,000 for the Japanese concerts, which could have been accepted, though grudgingly. And then you presented us with a fait accompli. A nice present indeed. Of course I might have cancelled the whole tour, but
my Japanese manager, Toshio Watanabe, advised against it. Besides, I didn't wish to hurt the concert organisers who had nothing to do with the
outrage I had suffered. And then I got in touch with Mr Kaz whose kindness and intelligence allowed me to bear with Herr Director and the
Iron Lady (or Lady Macbeth) throughout the tour. Actually I was about to
cancel everything again, after receiving your IN GROSSO contract. Only through Mr Kaz’s timely intervention did the tour finally take place.

I greatly appreciated the email in which you asked me if I wouldn't mind
being photographed with Mr Sado. The session lasted five seconds.

I also appreciated the call I received in Vienna. Thomas rang me up from Tokyo to say his attention was focused on our tour. I wonder when and where his paternal attention helped us.

Thank you again for the wonderful trip we had from Vienna to St Pölten and back.

Good luck to you.

Valery

P.S. Please, don't forget to remove my name from your list.

V.A.

All this happened once upon a time. The point is almost everything happens all the time and you just shed your blood, hoping you can drown in it once and for all, once upon all times and sizes and mazes. Once I was offered a tour in Japan with an Austrian orchestra of no note. Of course they played a lot of notes during our tour, but I wonder how many notes of theirs were notes of note and not just notes of no note, of no music, of no life. Did I already speak of all this nonsense of no note, of no Beethoven, of no Schumann? I have already talked of everything, and let us not forget that Gödel offered Einstein his model of the universe – a circular universe instead of an elliptical one or epileptical one, two, three, four. Four epileptical universes. Not bad, eh?

Eh, *hein*, eh, *hein*. Still don't know which I prefer. Would be nice to answer all questions thus: 'Eh' or '*hein*'. They ask you, 'What do you think about the doctrine of eternal recurrence?'

'Eh.'

'How do you mean?'

'*Hein*.'

'What do you mean?'

'Eh.'

'How so?'

'*Hein*.'

If they speak English, you say, 'Eh, eh, nice to meet you.' If they speak French, you answer, '*Hein*, *hein*, *allez au diable*.'And if they say they have no money for such a long-distance flight, you answer, 'The Devil is in this palace of mine. Two weeks ago I invited him for your sake. A long journey, but he's at your service now. So is Hell, you know.'

> All this started when a young woman whom I had never seen sent my assistant an email, saying, 'Wonderful, wonderful. Victory. We got it, you know. A new engagement. A famous Austrian orchestra. Not the most famous, to truth tell, but there are all famous. And their conductor is known and renown in all Japan, in South, in West, in North. We propose ten thousand. Great, isn't it? Ten thousand euros, not ten thousand yen. Great, great. You must be happy. I wish I were Maestro Aleff. Six concerts at least, in Japan. I wish I could travel with him. Never was to Japan, you know. Were you? Beautiful, isn't it? All these garden you see on television and even in books. I like their fountains and their water: glug-glug-glug-glug-glug-glug-glug. I think the English say glug, not Gulag, that is Russian. Gulag is definitely and definitevily Russian, as my English friend says. The French say, I know a bit of French: glouglou. Beautiful, isn't it? It is a pity I shall not hear these glouglous in Japan. Well, I shall listen to them in bathroom. It's rather beautiful, my bathroom is, but not as beautiful as Japanese gardens.
>
> Great, isn't it?

All best

Elis

P.S. Regarding the number of concerts: we would have to give the orchestra some time to sell the tour then we know more. I must call the Direktor.

Even before this disastrous experience – a minus experience, as they say in the domain of physics – she had worked for me, sending emails to my assistant, saying, 'Another engagement. Great, a bonus experience.' And then I would find out that this bonus was not really a bonus, and the onus was on me to thrash financial problems out. My assistant would send her a few emails to the effect that she (Elis or Eclipse) was my manager or rather my manager's assistant. She always replied, 'They are your concerts. Mr Aleff plays, you send emails. I got the first email and the second email. And I'm sure I shall receive other emails. You'll receive them too, I promise.'

This time, however, she thought she should work for me in earnest; in other words, she realised the importance of being Earnest (and the importance of money involved). So she said at first, 'We propose ten thousand.' For once I did not rejoice in my good fortune because I said to myself and to my assistant, 'Elis proposes and Herr Direktor disposes.'

'And what about God?' asked my assistant. She goes to Mass every Sunday and might even go to Mass on Mondays and Tuesdays, if there were such Sunday Masses throughout the week, organists and all.

'Today, God neither proposes nor disposes. I wonder why He didn't dispose of humanity on the eve of the 21st century. When you read in *The Times*: "It took a mere five minutes for the world champion to dispose of his opponent," you can't help wondering why the Almighty is dragging His feet. Does He suffer from sciatica? We've been his opponents for two millennia at least. Is God really the world champion?'

I met the director of the office at the beginning of this century – in the United States, of all places and countries. (Why not at a dumping ground of nonentities, nothingnesses?) 'To whom do I have the honour of speaking?' I asked. (To nothing, to nothingness?) I wish he could answer this question thus (from now on at least): 'My name designates all toxic substances.' What toxic substances did I face during this unheard-of adventure? toxic waste/chemicals/effluent toxic waste/chemicals/effluent toxic waste/chemicals/effluent toxic waste/chemicals/effluenttoxic waste/chemicals/effluenttoxic waste/chemicals/effluent ///////////

Ex nihil nihil fit. One cannot help (I, for one, cannot help anything, not even nothing) going all the way back to King Lear and his third daughter – they usually say the third man – who kept saying 'nothing', whatever questions reached her brain. The question was sent to its destination, three yards away, so Cordelia had plenty of time on her hands, and both this time and those hands were able to enable her to change her mind persistently focused on nothing. Nothing ►►Everything. 'Do you love me?'

'Nothing.'

'Are you my daughter, a princess?'

'I am nothing. Or Cinderella, if you wish.'

'I do wish you were Cinderella. She's a princess now, a very rich princess. An oligarch, if you please.'

'Nothing pleases me, only nothing.'

'What's nothing?'

‘It’s simpler and easier than something. My eldest-born sister answered you thus: “Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter; / Dearer than eye-sight, space and liberty.” The point is we’ve no idea to what extent word can wield anything. Perhaps it is as noxious and poisonous as cigarette smoke. You inhale a word and die from lung cancer. If my sister’s love is even more powerful than a puff of smoke, you’re already dead, my dear Daddy.’

‘What kind of nonsense –’

‘On the other hand we might be dealing with logos so that my eldest-born is nothing less than the Holy Virgin. She therefore needs neither your kingdom nor you bounty – the Kingdom of God is far more beautiful and spacious than yours, I’m sorry to say.’

‘Nothing? Nothing less?’

‘Nothing. Nothing more. Anyway, my nothing is simpler than “I profess / Myself an enemy to all other joys / Which the most precious square of senses possesses, / And find I am alone felicitate / In your dear highness’ love.” Can’t make head nor tail of this rigmarole, Father. Can you?’

‘She loves me, her dear highness.’

‘And what about the “most precious square of senses”? Why “square” and not “sphere” that’s regarded as the embodiment of perfection by both Parmenides and Plato?’

‘Is it?’

‘Of course *square* means “criterion” from the carpenter’s square.’

‘The carpenter’s square?’

‘Yet Kinnear proposes *spirit* for *square*.’

‘And who disposes?’

‘Shakespeare, I presume. But he’s dead.’

‘Alack, poor Yorick.’

‘Alas, poor Yorick.’

‘Do you dare contradict your father?

‘Alas and alack.’

‘Yorick? The Duke of York?’

‘He’s dead.’

‘The Duke of York?

‘As you can see,

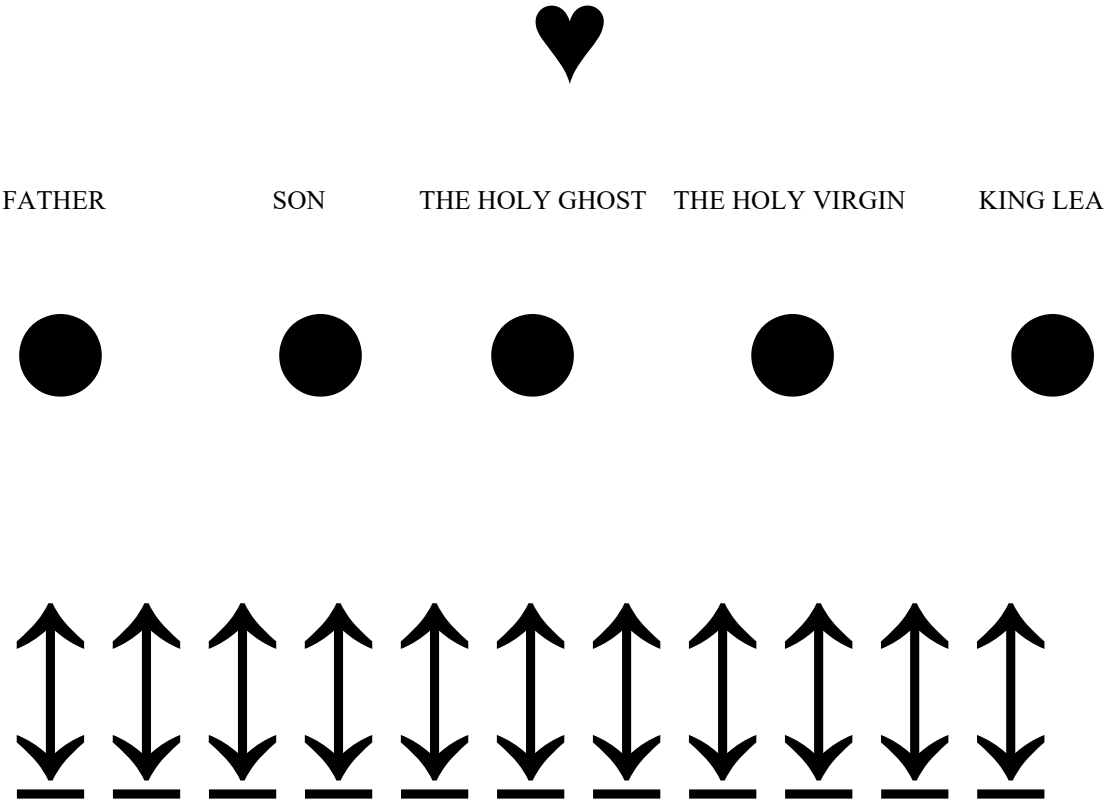
nothing is simpler, more accessible and understandable.’

‘Do you take me for a half-wit, a third-wit, a fourth –’

‘A fifth wheel, as the Americans put it.’

‘The Americans?’

‘You’re the first wheel, Father,’ said Goneril.



HOMAGE TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE VIENNA AGENCY

Thom Wolf Dear

Impaled on a spear

HOMAGE TO HIS ASSISTANT

Elis Dear

Impaled on fear

Valery,

Elis forwarded me your mail to her.

What did you want to say? If the message was you refuse to pay us I have to tell you I never will accept.

We offered you the tour, we negotiated, you accepted the conditions, you did the concerts, you have been paid and you will pay us. The complete story is documented, also my 'paternal' part.

On Monday you will get an updated invoice. I expect the payment by August 3. If you don't pay will commission our lawyers in Vienna and Brussels.

Yours

Thom Wolf

Von Samsung-Tablet gesendet

Le 28/07/2018 à 16:44, Valery a écrit :

Dear Thom,

Thank you very much for your email.

You know perfectly well what I want to say because you say it yourself. Here are my counter-arguments:

'We offered you the tour.' It was the conductor’s idea. It is true that the orchestra got in touch with you and not with my Belgian manager, for instance. But you mishandled this offer so obnoxiously that paying the commission you ask for would be incongruous, to put it mildly. Anyone - even an errand boy - would have got a better deal. The only explanation I find for this gaffe concerns your relationship with the orchestra for which you did a brilliant job.

In the email I sent Elisabeth, I say I didn't cancel the tour only because my Japanese manager had asked me not to do it. I did NOT accept the conditions. I played the concerts out of the respect I always pay to concert organisers and the audience. It is pointless to state the facts without looking any further. And the further you look, the more you realise what kind of disaster you triggered off.

I have no idea what you mean by your 'paternal part', but the documents you're referring to do exist. And they will certainly come to the fore, if you attempt to sue me.

I would accept the verdict, if I were you. But I'm not you and you have nothing to do with my personality.

So let us wait and see what happens.

So gut und schlimm es geh’,
schling ich das Seil und singe.

No need for a dictionary, this time. I suppose.

My love to Elis,

Kindest regards,

Valery

All this was written in the Talmud, once and twice, so it stands out on that background, on words, letters, on the world we are dying in for good. Not for bad, mind you. As they say in the Talmud, you buy two boots and put one boot on. As you cannot moon around with only one boot on one foot of yours, you are naturally eager to try on the other boot to find out if you can explore the world by means of your legs, boots and will that wills next to nothing. You put the other boot on but you instantly realise it does not fit. It is neither a perfect nor a good fit; it is not even a bad fit: it is not a fit at all. Check the fit of the pieces before gluing them in place, as they say in a commentary so you know now you will never glue the second boot in place, in the space you own for worse. What a pity I was not allowed to check the fit of the pieces before being born, conceived, or received by the human species. All these pieces, all these Thoms, Dicks and Hurries.

Don't worry! According to received wisdom, you received good news, as it is written, **Good news puts fat on the bones**. On every part of your body, in point of fact. So you grow fatter and fatter to the point of not been able to walk through your doors, let alone the gate of Paradise beyond which there is a bowl of milk. To the point of no return, no going, no travelling, no seeing anything except your interior and whatever you see through two windows. So you sit there, somewhere, with one boot on; or you limp around, indoors, inwalls, insoul, inbrain. A blessing in disguise. No Thoms, no heads, no hurry of any kind.

All this also happens to other people, but they suffer on account of their Pascal-dissected loneliness (the corpse of social life), unable to remain alone in a room for more than one hour and thirty minutes. So they invite someone they dislike intensely and ask him or her to walk around them for forty minutes, as it is written, **Despondency dries up the bones**; as it is written, **Despondency dries up the sinews, tissues and veins**. And vines.

And crowds that stream from yawning doors. They all walk around me and I continue to dry up; not only my bones, but also my eyes, ears and hair undergo this treatment. I did not know my hair could dry up like leaves and bones. I was unaware of my eyes' tendency to make the equation between sight and blindness, darkness and light.

And shoals of puckered faces drive.

Anxiety reveals the Nothing. You are afraid you will not be able to make both ends meet either at the end of the month or at the end of the very week through which you wade, you, pretty maid, hoping to live until Monday, as if any Monday awaited you with open arms. 'Is it you?' asks Monday. 'Yes, here I am,' you answer, and Monday

(any Monday, all of them) opens its arms, his and her arms. But what about Tuesdays? You say, 'Hello, let me introduce myself. I'm Valery Aleff. To whom do I have the honour of speaking? Tuesday, I presume? Wednesday, I presume? Thursday, I presume?' That is why so many people die on Mondays.

The same goes for my managers. If it weren't for my concerts, I would see only loose ends in front of my body and all around it: hanging from the walls, from the ceiling, from the chandelier. A nice installation, isn't it? You ask the visitors of your museum to make these ends meet and they set off on their desert crossing: they have to cross a desert (a vast expanse of floorboards) before reaching any of the hanging ends. (The installation is entitled *The Hanging Gardens*.) 'Careful you don't slip – there's water on the floor.' The visitors do slip, sleep for a while, and absent-mindedly regain their vertical posture. He has been a bit dizzy and confused since the accident. She has been a bit dizzy and confused since the accident. Do you think it is mild concussion? Their dog has been a bit dizzy and confused since the accident. Do you think it is mild concussion? I do think it is mild concussion: Elis has always been a bit dizzy and confused. So has Thom. Do I think it is mild concussion?

Actually, they (others) say the same goes everywhere, which accounts for eternal recurrence, for the dullness of the world, for repetitive music, for the common denominator, for Tocqueville's concept of democracy. They are both (the director and his assistant) null, dull, nothing, nothing doing. They got an email from the Japanese conductor's manager in which he let them know that his artist was infatuated with my gift to the point of yearning to invite me for a big (a bit of) tour in Japan. They said, 'O.K' – and for once they outgrew not only their clothes but also themselves, sending an email to my assistant.

Dear Mon,

Usually I go by the name of Nothing so you might be surprised at learning that I am now (not for long, though) quite something, and you're even allowed to write my name with a capital S. And with a capital Q. Someone rang me up and I answered the call. I quickly brought the conversation to a close: don't forget that the greater part of my substance isn't *any*thing yet, and nothings or rather nothingnesses are keen on neither talking nor calling except that I call others names all the more willingly since they can call me only nothing or low-down or nothingness. Even if others say, 'That was a low-down thing to do,' I answer, 'You're mistaken. It was a nothing thing to do. Do you really think that nothing thing amounts to something?'Sometimes it does. If you put 'nothing' by a thing's side, it amounts to something, namely to my loss of money.

They (Thom and Elis) proposed ten thousand. The Direktor said, 'You must be out of your mind! Do you take yourself for Anything?'

'I was just kidding you!' said Elis.

'I thought as much.'

'I thought as less.'

'Less than nothing?'

'Just nothing.'

'Are you about to suggest nine thousand?'

'Nothing.'

'Are you crazy enough to ask for eight thousand?'

'Nothing.'

‘Are you anything to ask for seven thousand?’

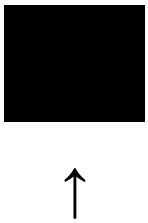
‘Nothing.’

Dark hulks that tumble half alive.

Dear Mon,

We now have a proposal of € 9.000 for the concert in Vienna and 5.000 for the ones in Japan.
I am aware that Mr. Aleff usually gets a lot more – but please bear in mind that we are talking about a TOUR and not single concerts. The tour business is getting harder and harder.
Both Mr. Wolf and I do not think that we can get more so please advise: Should we agree or is it no option at all for Mr. Aleff.
I am sorry I do not have better news.
The all-time worst
Ellis

THE ALL-SPACE WORST



This is all-space

Das Nichts nichtet. Nothing noths. Das Nichts comes and starts nichteting – knitting *Nichts*, in other words; like Wagner’s Norns. Nothing makes its appearance: noth, noth, noth, noth. Where? In the North, in the South. You took the East from me / You took the West from me. *Das Nichts* comes and says, ‘*Nacht* to be,’ or just ‘*Nacht* Be.’

NACHT BE

NACHT NIET BE

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING DRUSCHEL

Our Herr Direktor goes by the name of Frank Druschel. Drushlat' means to do a poo, in Russian. Actually, during our Japanese tour, on several occasions he lived up to his name's eloquence and imagery. One day (the first occasion) we took a taxi and began our half-hour drive to the station. Ten minutes after we had left the hotel, Mr Druschel announced he needed to poop; or Drushlat', in other (Russian) words. We got there (the central station) just in the nick of time. Another instance of eternal recurrence took us by surprise on our way to a restaurant where we were to celebrate the near-happy-ending of our tour. 'But you haven't eaten anything yet,' I said. 'I did,' he answered. 'I ate an ice cream 20 minutes ago.' So, from then on, whenever we crossed any threshold together in the direction of the open air, heading for the cosmos, presumably, I asked him, 'Have you done a poo, Frankie?' At some point, however, he stopped answering my repetitive question. Upon analysing the situation and after much brain-searching, I came to the conclusion that I should use the American version of the word he was so fond of. ''Have you done a poop, Frankie?' 'Have you done a poop, Franklin?''Be frank with me, Frank. I have nothing against Drushlat', you know. But I have everything against Nothing. Nothing doing, for instance. At least Drushlat' is a sort of doing.'

For a while, before this farcical and highly, lowly preposterous tour, I toyed with a set of roundabout insults I could aim at Herr Director in Japan, weather permitting. If it is too hot, you think neither in terms of six-letter (roundabout) words nor in any other terms, divorced, however slightly, from a cold bath, a cold bed and a sufficient number of sorbets. And if it rains, you make sure they are about to plant umbrellas wherever you go, even if your destiny leads you towards your ultimate goal through mountains and abysses (and Abyssinia).

Here is one of these come-in-handy insults:

> I'd like to propose a toast to a remarkable man. We seldom, if ever, pay attention to him because he doesn't appear on the stage, on the podium, in front of the piano. Yet he constantly takes centre stage in the orchestra's everyday life. In a way, he is always on a podium because, if it weren't for his efforts and inborn skill, we wouldn't be in Japan either today or tomorrow. He is a potential Nobel prize-winner for Economics, if you please. It is true that in the everyday life I've just touched upon you see neither himself (taking centre stage) nor the money he gets as he bombards both sponsors and managers with his questions and also with his answers. To my manager, for instance, he kept saying, 'No, can't pay. No money.' As a result, I'm terribly underpaid, but you're rewarded by his mistress's beauty. If it weren't for my low fees, she wouldn't keep our Herr Director's company during this memorable tour.

I worked on this speech for several hours, while walking around Vienna where I had many other things to do – diametrically opposite to what I was doing. I kept on speaking to myself, repeating my speech, memorising it for the sake of a party in the course of which I hoped to make it in front of the whole orchestra, its officials and managers. A glass in hand, I thought I would rise to my feet (if any: I have a persistent dull ache in my feet, calves, knees and hips) and say, 'Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm sorry I can't propose this toast in Japanese, but you'll easily understand who I have in mind if you pay attention to my steady gaze riveted on the hero I'm about to single out

for my praise, for the special treatment he fully deserves. I seldom, if ever, talk to people so that, when enlarging upon our relationship, when analysing the roles we are called upon to play in the network of the universe, I'm tempted to point out: 'These two men might be thought to represent the opposite poles of economic ideology.' Why? Because when I look for money, I find none, no matter how many people I get in touch with in the hope of convincing them to finance no less than the six recordings I made for Sony Classical. Let me draw your attention to the blackboard I had installed in this hall of yours, in the central area of Tokyo. With this chalk I'm about to draw a diagram on the blackboard, on the centrepiece of tonight's party. If you still follow my gaze, you might notice that Herr Direktor does his best to withdraw from the hall where his vice, sin and numerous crimes will be brought to the light of these magnificent chandeliers. Please, follow the chalk and its whimsical route.

1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000

Do you like my diagram? Do you think we can't call my work of art a diagram? All right, call it what you wish. Let me comply with your wishes thus: IT IS NOT A DIAGRAM.

Let me just add the following sign to my masterpiece: $

If Herr Direktor were given the opportunity to comply with his own wishes, longings and cravings, he'd pounce on it.

I wonder if my legs will fail (fall) or not in the course of the forthcoming autumn. What would I do with my bare trunk? Bidding all St-Francis-instructed birds welcome.

A SERMON

Dear Birds,

You know everything about God because of your proximity to His design, decisions, intentions and inner truth through which you fly now and then, singing to yourself, 'That's what the truth looks like and I like it enormously.' So I won't speak to you about God, and what you say to me about Him is wasted on me because I don't even have a smattering of your mother tongue. Not even a smattering of a smattering, I'm sorry to admit. Olivier Messiah (the right spelling goes on slipping my mind) was often inspired by you, but even he couldn't make head or tail of what you sang in his presence and even in his absence, assuming that whatever he composed does sound like your songs. B-A-C-H or rather D-E-D-E-D-E-D-E-D-E. A trill, you know. Apparently trills are located closer to your songs of innocence – for once, let's forget about vultures – than other frills. Do I mean he didn't understand his own works? No creator can understand either fully or wholly and exhaustively his own works. Even God can't, otherwise we wouldn't speak of Auschwitz and the Riviera in the same breath; nor would He.

SUN / DECREASE

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____

_____

At the foot of the mountain, the lake:
The image of DECREASE.
Thus the superior man controls his anger
And restrains his instincts.

There are circumstances and under these circumstances decrease is not really a piece of decrease. It is just a crease and the Chinese say, ‘He ironed a crease down the front of each trouser leg.’ You find the image of decrease in your heart and also in your heart of hearts, going further down until you reach your heart of hearts, of souls, of bodies, of substances, of stances. And then you iron everything so that what you get in the end is INCREASE: it furthers one to accomplish great deeds and one long craze. One great deed, two great deeds, three, four, five. His number’s up. Up, up, up, up. INCREASE.

A piece of anger crops up and I control it. ‘Police in riot gear arrived to control the protesters,’ I read in one of the Chinese books I have owned for three decades. I followed its advice: I put on my personal riot gear and controlled my numerous, fastidious angers. (I am fed up with them. I am bored to death by their outbursts.)

anger, outburst
dealing with
dealing without
all without
only autumn, fall, rain
and rainbows

RAIN

.
.
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.
.
.
.

BOWS

Now I bow to the inevitable, whenever it waltzes into my life, and I do my best to touch the floor with my outstretched fingers; otherwise another outburst might storm out of my chest and hit my opponent between the eyes and the ears; and where it hurts. And this outburst of mine always makes sure it hurts throughout the bodies and minds and astral bodies of all these Herrs and Fraus. The point is before bowing and scraping I endeavour to find out if the substance whose waltz seems to have come to a standstill in my life is really and truly the inevitable – one of those bastards you are bound to come across, if you go somewhere; even if you do not cross anything; except the Cross, as our priests, ministers and Thomas à Kempis point out.

Is this piece of nonsense another of the inevitables? Or is it the evitable, the first one I have ever encountered in the course of my physical and metaphysical wanderings? According to the latest myth, the genuine evitable is actually eatable, and that is how you are supposed to distinguish it from the inevitable of the same size, colour and material. First you touch it with your tongue, taking your cue from a woman who ditched you recently, after your final row. Her lips gently brushed my cheek and she was gone, you say to yourself. That is the right and only way to handle both the evitable and inevitable, and the impatient who have neither time nor strength to explore the UFOs as they come across and collapse under the weight of the poison introduced into their veins.

At first I mistook my Herr Direktor for the Inevitable Number Eight Thousand, but in the long run I realised I could stomach his voice, his gait and even his ideas. Of course I did not attempt to nibble a hole in his body, let alone to eat him entirely. I just touched upon Japanese restaurants and their Michelin stars – in his mistress' presence, *natürlich*.

I: How are you today? Enjoying Tokyo to the utmost?

HERR: Of course we are.

I: To the utmost?

HERR: To the utmost

I: Really?

HERR: Really.

I: Which three-star restaurants have you paid homage to?

HERR: I beg your pardon?

I: There are eight of them in Tokyo. Unluckily for you, 'Quintessence' is out of your reach. As you can surmise, their meals cost the Earth. And the Earth is very high-priced – we are keenly alive to the fact.

HERR: Of course.

I: But it's not the financial aspect of the Quintessence adventure that I had in mind. My friends made the booking three months ago.

HERR: I see.

I: As for Ryugin, they made the booking two months ago.

HERR: I see.

I: Well, you can still try and make a table reservation for two people for 7 o'clock at the Pierre Gagnaire. The restaurant is at the top of our hotel. If I were you, I'd make this reservation for 7 o'clock – the enjoyment you're bound to get out of the tasting menu or the gourmet menu, if you prefer, lasts three hours at least.

HERR: Unfortunately we have concerts every day. In the evenings, mostly.

I: I see. Of course you have. The orchestra also plays its own programme, without soloists. I'm staying here, you know. Enjoying the hotel and Tokyo. And life, generally speaking.Well, better luck next time. Next life, ha-ha!

But one must reflect on how much one may decrease others. Had I been paid adequately, I would have decreased Herr Direktor by depriving him of his company, of the privacy he enjoyed in the course of the tour. Of course our humanists (and the Chinese were also stuffed with humanist beliefs/ideas, at least in the days of Confucius) say the man in a superior position – or a superior man, a superman – must weigh every action of his carefully to find out whether his doings do no harm to his servants or friends. Herr Direktor was neither my friend nor my servant. All this was the other way round and I cannot help wondering why the ways we are talking about always go round, back, branch off from the main road that leads to success, happiness and good humour. My managers were Herr Direktor's servants and probably his friends as well; otherwise I am still at a loss to know why they took his side and ignored ferociously and outrageously my mind and my Iago-cherished wallet. They flocked together like St Francis-consecrated birds (of a feather, of a weather) or just like the Austrians; and today, the members of the European Community do not rub shoulders with the sanction-stigmatised Russians.

And I was my managers' servant or slave, to put it hegelianistically. I asked my masters for a raise but they turned a deaf ear to my loud supplications. I am not even sure they turned anything; at least they did not turn a hair, let alone the proverbial cheek. I have no intention of exploring the potentialities ingrained in the verb to turn; and yet I might point out that my chief manager, Thom Wolf, used to pretend he was my friend or even father, hence the 'paternal part' he touches upon in his missive. One does not need an Oedipus Complex to strangle such a father in his bed; and no Othellian kisses either before or after the deed.

'Oh give me, oh give me, oh gi-i-i-i-i-i-ve me,' I sang as I recalled the halcyon days of my good health, good-natured youth. No Thoms, no Franks; only *drushlat'* from time to time. Both Thom and Frank responded by marching off and slamming the door behind them; at least I heard the boom produced by the door. That is how the slamming of a door sounds from afar; from Austria, to be exact.

EXIT (NO RAISE)

B-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-m

ENTRANCE (A RAISE)

0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0----------

As if they were determined to impart to my brain the following truth: ---------- – that's what you'll get.

I wonder if ---------- is better than 0. Something? Anything? Or just ----------? Why is there ---------- rather than nothing? What is it? A dotted line? There are no dots along this line, only

hyphens. A series of hyphens, nothing more. A hyphen means there are two words. And where do *they* come from? You can add – for God's sake? And you are answered, 'For the sake of God. He is a producer, you know.' And they ask you to sign on the dotted line.

'What for?'

'If you want to join the club, all you have to do is sign on the dotted line.'

'I don't want to.'

'You have to.'

'Why?'

'Predestination, you know. Pre-established harmony.'

'I'm not harmonious. I'm disharmonious.'

'Doesn't matter. You just sign on the dotted line and the world will do the rest. By virtue of the anthropic principle, once upon a time we found ourselves in a region (let's call it the "world") where the constants of nature are favourable to the evolution of our species.'

'How do you dare talk about the constants of nature? They're so inconstant we can't really rely on them, given the number of hurricanes and tsunamis we have to cope with, sometimes from under the rubble of our own houses. List, list, o list!'

'The constants of nature we were thrown into are also propitious for the development of our aesthetic attitude towards visions, sounds and perfumes. Beautiful, isn't? How delicious! How atrocious!'

'Where should I put the hyphen to break the word "world"? WORL-D? WOR-LD? WO-RLD? WO-MB?'

A DOTTED LINE

.....

Leave it alone! That's enough! Enough's enough!

A name appears on the dotted line, my name.

LEAVE ME ALONE!

A SECOND DOTTED LINE (THE OTHER)

.....

A name appears on the second dotted line,

his or her name.

LEAVE ME ALONE! (My request.)

If I am not for myself, who is for me?

Am I for myself or for others?

I am for myself, for myself, for my and for self,

And this self is mine.

You're mine, mine, mine,

My own self.

My own, my own.
Who is for me? My own self.
Who is against me? All other selves.
Selfish selves, selfish slaves.

So I was a slave to my manager and the director of the orchestra I was to play eight concerts with in Austria and Japan. Of course I disagree with Hegel and Kojève on many points – on two points mainly: POINT 1 (master), POINT 2 (slave). Both the slave and his master are beneath my dignity in the context described by Hegel and commented upon by Kojèvnikov. I have never been anyone's slave (ne-e-ver, never, never, never), even in the course of my Soviet life. They put a number of chains on my mind, but I laughed in their faces; inwardly. Ha-ha-ha resounded inside my body round the clock so I vibrated like a loudspeaker or rather like a loudlaughter. They thought I was shaking with fear. They thought, 'We've obtained **recognition**.' 'Yes, but not from another self,' says Hegel and for once I agree with him almost wholeheartedly. Those slavish slaves were not selves. What were they? Numbers on the DOTTED LINE. Inferior to a cog in the machine, to Charlie Chaplin sucked into a number of cogs.

I have always been a self and I knew there was no way for them to escape from my scorn, from their dependency on my disagreements, laughter and verdicts. I recognised that the world was the one I have created on my own. I was the One; they were many. Even Stalin was many – a lot of cogs within the machine. (Not a single Charlie Chaplin.) Eventually both myself and my world reached independence, while Stalin and his cronies remained in the state of dependence on their own paranoia, ill-founded and well-founded fears.

MY MASTERPIECE, MY OWN SELF

Desire, consciousness and self-consciousness, dread, alienation, laughter, scorn, fury and sound, the creation of the world as the result of autocracy and (their) inanity. Let them (others) recognise me in the 24th century.

If I am for myself,
For my, my!
For my elf,
Who am I?
I am I,
I am me,
I am the One,
I am the Three,
I am He,
I am She,
I am It,
am, is, was, were, where, here, are, ah, oh,
hush-hush,
hash-hash

If not now, when?
Tonight, tomorrow, the day after, the day before, before the day,
coming to the fore, leaving for the fore,
on all fours

None of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning.
Go, My people, enter your chambers,
And lock your doors behind you.
The sword shall deal death without,
As shall the terror within.

As soon as I leave my house I see a lot of faces, even if there are no faces either around or above or below; no angels of death, no angels of birth. And yet there are only births around, below and everywhere: the birth of wrath, the birth of threats, the birth of inanity. A real sword does not look like a sword.

I go back and lock my doors behind me; I also lock my walls on which they knock with their hammers. 'Have you plugged that leak in the pipe?' asks my angel. That leak is another sword, a liquid sword that only a superplug can stop from infiltrating into my self, my elf. At the moment superplugs are more crucial to our survival than supermen and superwomen and their flights, fights and whatever. Lock your doors behind you and plug the leaks you come across indoors. Your interior looks like a sieve and any thief can penetrate your brain on a whim. **In a normal winter, the frost penetrates deeply enough to kill off insect eggs in the soil**. Those others will kill your eggs, your ideas, your future achievements, your words, your notes, your notes in the margins, your library of Semiramis. Frost-bitten, frost-eaten.

> *You should not dig a pit next to your neighbour's pit, nor a trench or a cave or a stream of water or a fuller's ditch, unless you keep at least three palms away from your neighbour's wall.*

Why shouldn't you dig a pit next to your neighbour's house? Because if you do that, your neighbour might think, 'My neighbour has dug a pit and this pit is meant for me and my wife. I shall pour a lot of water into it so my neighbour can drown in his own pit.' The same goes for trenches, caves and streams of water. If your neighbour sees a stream of water in the neighbourhood of his house and its furniture, he is sure to say to himself and his wife, 'Our neighbour yearns to flood our house, garden and motorcars. Our washing machine broke down yesterday and flooded the kitchen. Is it not enough for you? Our neighbour's animosity is nothing but a gigantic washing machine. He yearns to remove us from the face of the Earth. And from her body. Do you remember the murder they keep on talking about? Some of them saw the blood on the pavement. Others went to the spot to see the blood. When they reached the spot they saw no blood, not a drop of blood. And an eyewitness said, "The blood on the pavement had been washed away by the rain overnight." That's what they'll say about us.'

But if you keep at least three palms away from your neighbour's wall, your neighbour will not suspect what he might unfairly call 'my neighbour's foul play'. He will suspect nothing at all and fall into your pit and drown in your stream of water. He will trespass on your land and die like a dog. And if he, she and their children do not die on the spot, you should put a lid on the pit. And if they do not die of suffocation, you should drill a hole in the

lid and put a few cigarettes around the hole, making sure that the smoke goes down and has no intention of getting in touch either with the Hamletian clouds or with the gods. And if they turn out to be insensitive to the smoke and do not die of lung cancer, in the short or long run, just kill them in the manner described by Edgar Allan Poe in his *Pit and Pendulum*.

Why are there pits and pendulums rather than nothing? Karl Barth wrote, 'The character of nothingness derives from its ontic peculiarity. It is evil.' Everything is evil save good, as some say (and do, by the way). According to the Russians, everything is excrement save urine. The two (Something and Nothing, Evil and Good, Excrement and Urine) are actually like a pair of ontological twins, for all their poles and aparts. It is nothingness or goodness that accounts for our perverse, pertinacious tendency to do evil, whenever we are allowed to do it without incurring either God's or the authorities' wrath. Incidentally, according to some English-speaking theologians, God's propensity for sin-related tortures stems from the rhyme 'God-wrath'. So Barth thought that nothingness was (and still is) downright Satanic; like Rushdie's verses. So Nothing is even worse than pits and pendulums. What is worse than Nothing, I wonder? Birth? Barth and his doctrine?

Betreff: Re: AW: Re: AW: Aleff Tour Japan
Dear Elis,
Could you kindly tell me what is happening with the project of tour in Japan before mid March ? I have to answer to other requests which depend of the result of this project.
As I told you before, Mr Aleff is really willing to do this tour and will accept a lesser fee, if there are enough concerts.
Thanking you in anticipation for your answer
Best regards
Mon

Betreff: Re: AW: AW: AW: Re: AW: Aleff Tour Japan
Dear Elis,
Could you kindly give me news about the Japan tour? The new agent of Mr Aleff in Japan would like to know quickly about it in order to plan some recitals.
Could you also tell me if the two recitals in Taiwan next October are confirmed, and the amount of the fee?
Thanking you in anticipation
Best regards
Mon

Betreff: Fwd: Re: Aleff Taiwan and Japan URGENT
Dear Elis, Dear Mr Wolf,
I have not received any answer to my message sent on March 30th. It is getting really **urgent** now, since Mr Aleff manager in Japan is waiting for your answer.
Thanking you in anticipation
Best wishes
Mon Chat

NOTHING *IS* EVIL
EVIL IS NOTHING
EVIL IS *NOT* NOTHING
GETTING NOTHING IS NOT GETTING
SENDING NOTHING IS NOT SENDING
THINKING NOTHING IS THINKING
TALKING NOTHING IS NONSENSE
NICHTS NICHT NICHTET

Valery,

What? How? Is it or is not? Caramba, kaput, put, put, put, ka, ka, ka. Money, where, what is, are you, your brain, your Alzheimer, ill, what, not, who? You? I? Elisabeth? What kind of no. Are you thinking again about this Japanese nonsense? No, no, nonsense? No longer, in Japan, you. Pay or if nicht, I'll picht, picht, picht, picht, picht, picht, picht. My revolver is right, yes, under my pillow, case in just. My case is just, fair play, not funfair, don't get, you are confused, don't get, you are already. If you not, you kaput, apu, apu, apu.

Yours

Thom Wolf

Did he refer to Apu, to Satyajit Ray's renowned trilogy of films about Apu's growing to adulthood? Or did he have in mind the first word I had ever uttered: Agu? If you not, you kaput, agu, agu, agu. My second babyhood. Heading for my mother's womb. By the way, my feet left that womb first. Feeting for the outside world. **The sword shall deal death without.**

Dear Thom,

I wish you could spend more time on your emails. Your Spanish is perfect and you know Gracián, Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset by heart. But let me remind you that we are exchanging our points of view in English. Actually I'm not sure you understand all the words I use in my epistles, although I do my utmost not to resort to dictionary-confined turns of phrases. Nor does my reasoning twist and turn as I proceed with my rebuttal of your shaky arguments. Do you know the words 'obnoxiously' and 'incongruous' that I used in my first email? You'd better look them up in your dictionary, if any; otherwise you're unlikely to realise to what extent I feel indignant.

I tell you.... Well, I might as well have spoken to a *Papagei* (no need for a dictionary, this time).

Got it?

For several months you kept silent and when eventually you did come into the open, it was too late to cancel the tour without marring the synchronization of the Japanese cultural life. I suppose you know Heidegger by heart too – your German (or Austrian) is perfect, isn't it? *Nichts nichtet*, he said. Nothing noths or nothing ings, in other

words. Your *Nichts* removed 18,000 euros from my bank account. At the very least, that is. Not *Nichts*, is it? Not Nothing either.

As you know, I am generous to a fault and, out of my truant or altruistic disposition, I resolved to let the Director's mistress enjoy the Japanese gardens and culinary achievements. Besides, I wished to enjoy them myself. That's why at some point I said, 'I accept, I accept. I'll give those swindlers the shirt off my back, hoping they'll follow my shirt's example on the spot.'

Got it?

Kindest regards,

Valery

Mens ea tantùm imaginari conatur, quæ ipsius agendi potentiam ponunt.

My *Mens*. Not impotent yet. That's the Spirit.

Cùm Mens suam impotentiam imaginatur, eo ipso contristatur.

Not sad, not yet. Moscow Spirit. Sebastopol Spirit.

> in order to understand a growing body of phenomena, it will be necessary to introduce deeper and deeper concepts into physics and this development will not end by the discovery of the final and perfect concepts. We have no right to expect that our intellect can formulate perfect concepts for the full understanding of inanimate nature's phenomena.
>
> Eugene Wigner

Hæc Tristitia, concomitante idea nostræ imbecillitatis, Humilitas appellatur

SADNESS

I am sad – not on account of my Socrates-saluted ignorance. A mystic: On this memorable occasion we salute the wonderful work done by blissful ignorance. It is true that so far God has kept me in blissful ignorance about causes, origins, about the background of human conduct. I see only the foreground of those boors, churls and turncoats – only their coats and fogs that veil their hearts, let alone their hearts of hearts of hearts of hearts. Deeper and deeper concepts. Layer after layer. Is it blissful, this ignorance of mine? Another coat, another coat. Turning and turning in the widening gyre

nostræ imbecillitatis

The falcon cannot hear the falconer

HUMILATION

Lkjnaelijbvuiq gcuy giuesdx = lk:ijqbngjlgiu

lk:ijqbngjlgiu = maikjh u gao!'g o!hr p içà! N! gfaoiJFMLNRGIHU

maikjh u gao!'g o!hr p içà! N! gfaoiJFMLNRGIHU = kjkjjkijhjhoifja"pop

kjkjjkijhjhoifja"pop = !n !n !n!n !n

n !n !n!n !n = ?NPNHOB?PM?¨?P?¨?P?P?P??P???P?O?

I do not know you, Thou, them, him, her, *ne vous connaîs*, *ne te*, *ni to ni sio*, *nicht*, *nicht*

My blood knows them all and whenever I hear my blood as I lie on a rock, on a mountain slope, dying or rather coming back to life, I listen to the river of my blood where poisons and good news can be found. After death, our blood does not mind any more and supplies us with the information we are still yearning after as if really hoping to come back and enjoy whatever remains on the Earth in spite of holes (black and otherwise), hurricanes and just the pollution they stigmatise and put on the Cross. And some say, 'We shouldn't put it on the Cross – it doesn't deserve it. This luxury is too luxurious for anything and anybody except our Saviour.'

'And what about Spartacus?' ask the others.

Crosses are everywhere; so is the pollution we hinted at in the previous poem. Our wholesomeness says, 'Trump, Trump, Donald Trump!!! Why have you forsaken me?' So Trump (a once-in-a-lifetime experience) comes and says, 'I'm the President of the United States. If I'm impeached the markets will collapse and you'll be as poor as church mice. Do you want to be as poor as church mice?'

'No.'

'Do you like mice?'

'No.'

'If I stay in the office, I'll provide you with lots of cats.'

They have polluted my blood and my Cross. And my blood recalls their gross misconduct and indecency because blood is thicker than water and therefore its memory puts on display more cells, more bells that go on ringing like Edgar Allan Poe's poem and Rachmaninoff's piece. Can I tell a poisoned flood from a healthy one? What I can tell amounts only to a few stories related to my predicaments, to the world new, old, middle-age order and eternal disorder. I often look at my blood through a magnifying glass.

Could you kindly see with Mr Wolf, if this is possible?
But first he would like to know about the whole programme of the concert (he has already played

twice in Japan this Brahms concerto, may be that another concerto would be more appropriate).
All best
Mon

My ordinary memory – the one I can rely upon for my visits to the bathroom – recalls neither Wolf nor even Mr. You say 'Mister' and immediately add, 'Madam or Miss or *Frau*,' so as not to be burnt at the stake. They are not likely to nail you to the Cross fully booked for other, more prominent representatives of our species. And the stake is just in the middle of your garden so you can see it whenever you look out of three windows. And yesterday I spotted a box of matches lying by its side almost guiltlessly as if nothing had ever occurred in such a setting. So I say, 'Mister, Madam, Madam, Mister, Sister, Madam, Sister, Sister, Three Sisters, Three Sisters, Three Sisters, Four Sisters.'

And Brahms' *Second Concerto*? Both my memories remember it: my ordinary memory and my blood memory. And even when I drink water, not my own blood, I remember this concerto and all the music I have ever come across and plunged into headlong, armlong, soullong.

MY BLOOD-MEMORY

I saw my uncle only once, in Petersburg, en passant. He was going somewhere or perhaps nowhere, in those times and spaces we could come and go only within the Soviet borders, and in this connection I am tempted to call upon the French word '*border*' that means 'to tuck in'. Mother, if I go to bed now will you tuck me in? Our *patria* was called 'Mother' in common parlance, and that common parlance was heard on the radio and elsewhere – even in the fields where Tolstoy used to use his scythe or whatever it was so as not to feel inferior to his peasants whose laughter resounded in the same fields and also in their neighbourhood, now and then reaching Moscow and even St Petersburg.

Mother, if I go to bed now will you tuck me in? After a while (I was at that point in my twenties) I would say, '*Patria*, if I go to bed now will you tuck me in? I'm quite reluctant to enjoy the life you offer me. I'm not eager to take part in any activities whatsoever – they're too active, in my opinion. I yearn to be as passive as an exemplary Taoist, not Maoist. Do sing me a lullaby, my dear Patria, Matria, Auntria (Austria).' I saw my aunts on several occasions, but given that our family was scattered all round the Earth, no other aunts or uncles of mine penetrated my field of vision, my memory, my blood-memory. Only their genes do I carry within my body and mind, somewhere, as if I needed to carry anything except the lullaby I sing to myself, for want of anybody better.

Even inside our Bolshie country, the members of the same family were not eager to meet each other on a regular basis unless they had already put their hearts and souls into the activities closely associated with the Communist Party and its ideals, ideas and deals. Their *dies iræ*, *dies illa*. Even a proletarian had to be on their guard so as not to find themselves and their next of kin in the Archipelago renowned for its inhumanness (and also inanimalness, ininsectness) throughout the world. So if you ask any representative of the human species what bell and hell this word 'does ring', the bell will answer, 'Gu-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-l-l-l-l-l-l-a-a-a-a-a-ag-ag-ag-ag-ag-ag-ag.' Sounds like the Kremlin bells in *Boris Godunov*.

I did meet this Austrian manager of mine – at the expense of my aunts, nephews and uncles; to their detriment perhaps. You are not allowed to meet too many people unless you happen to become a politician and

shake hands with all and sundry, on condition that your bodyguards admit you can do so without running any danger, however unmortal. There are also immoral dangers, in addition to all other calamities: inadvertently you might lay yourself open to insults that usually spoil your leisure hours, the dialogues you carry on with your blood.

I met him (this Austrian guy, I am tempted to say) in Brussels instead of sending him to Amsterdam, his final destination; or rather his semi-final destination. Vienna ---------- Amsterdam ---------- Hell. I invited him to a restaurant and refused to accept his credit card that he kept thrusting at me and even into my hands. He all but said on several occasions, 'I'm your father,' so that I might have touched upon it in my reply: 'In your one-before-last email you talked at length about your "paternal part". This fatherhood of yours had been thrust on my existence during our Brussels meeting, our private European Union. I wish I had accepted your credit card and also the cipher you resort to when about to open your safe.'

Dear Elis
I had a look at both contracts, St Polten and Japan.
I am surprised that The Japanese contract was 40 000 Euros "gross", because in Japan it is always "netto". Could you please check that it was really the agreement you made ? The difference of fee is very important.
Best regards
Mon

Le 13/04/2018 à 10:36, Thom Wolf a écrit :
Dear Ms. Chat,
we are following up your request in regard to net fees.
From our corresponce we learned that you only asked decidedly for a net fee for Vienna but not for Japan.
We might get in trouble with net fees because due to new regulations contracts with net fees are not allowed.
Plus: if Austria and Japan deduct taxes these amounts will be respected by the Belgian tax offices.
So what Mr. Afanassiev gets less in Japan he has to pay less in Belgium.
Therefore the whole discussion about net and gross does not make much sense.
Still, we passed on the problem to the orchestra.
Kind regards,
Thom Wolf

Sujet : Fees Austria + Japan
Date : Fri, 13 Apr 2018 12:19:35 +0200 (CEST)
Dear Mrs. Chat,

the Tank Orchestra reacted as we expected: For them it was always clear the fees would be gross. Especially in regard of the high level of the fees. The Tank are well aware that Mr. Afanassiev's fee in Japan might be higher in other cases but unfortunately especially in view of the enormous costs for a tour with an orchestra from Europe there is no scope for higher fees. The Japanese promotors as well as the orchestra ask you for your understanding.

They all are looking forward to having Mr. Aleff!

Best regards,
Thom Wolf

The gun fires a shell capable of piercing the armour of an enemy tank

Dear Mr Wolf,

Dear Elis,

I just received a **very reassuring letter from the manager of Crystal Arts**. He will pay Mr Aleff 40 000 Euros NET (which means that he will pay himself the 20% taxes (8000 Euros) as it is usual in Japan. In other words Mr Aleff's "gross" fee will be 48 000 Euros instead of 40 000.:**there is indeed a difference !!!**

THERE'S NONE SO DEAF AS A *PAPAGEI*

MY MANAGER: The enormous costs for a tour with an orchestra from Europe.

I: What about the Direktor's mistress?

MY MANAGER: The enormous costs for a tour with an orchestra from Europe.

I: What about the enormous costs of her presence in Japan?

MY MANAGER: The enormous costs for a tour with an orchestra from Europe.

I: Herr Direktor invited his mistress to three three-star restaurants.

MY MANAGER: The enormous costs for a tour with an orchestra from Europe.

I: Don't forget their meals. And the wheels – Shinkansen. And the wings.

MY MANAGER: The enormous costs for a tour with an orchestra from Europe.

I: What about the photographer's presence? We might have been immortalised by local celebrities. No wings, only private wheels. Or the Tokyo underground.

MY MANAGER: The enormous costs for a tour with an orchestra from Europe.

I: Don't you know that Japanese photographers are head and shoulders above their global-village colleagues?

MY MANAGER: The enormous costs for a tour with an orchestra from Europe.

I: Exactly.

MY MANAGER: The enormous costs for a tour with an orchestra from Europe.

I: Precisely.

MY MANAGER: The enormous costs for a tour with an orchestra from Europe.

I: What about

MY MANAGER: The enormous costs for a tour with an orchestra from Europe.

I: What

MY MANAGER: The enormous costs for a tour with an orchestra from Europe.

All this might have remained where it was and even had been, becoming what might have been, sleeping where the stillborn sleep or enjoy their non-born, non-alive, publicity-shy, move-shy, non-movie state. If you make a film about the stillborn, no one is likely to like it to the point of going against the current. And the current goes thus, 'All the films about the stillborn are a commercial flop, like Andy Warhol's *Sleep*. They fall and you hear their flops; flop, flop, flop, flop – that's what you hear if you lend an ear to these sounds: flop, flop, flop, floekjfkhqhgfiqnhgioqjh. You lend all your ears to what happens in your immediate surroundings and you hear JNKBJHBJVJHVVKVKV, if you are a megalomaniac; otherwise you hear jiycfrchybok^kkjh n, ; n ,nn;,jb jh hgj nh,n.

THE SUPERMAN

UYIKOLM/+NBCXFVGHJKLMLKJHGCFGHUJIKOLMLKJNHBVCBGHJKLMLKJHGVFGHJKLM
LKJHBGVFGBHJKLKJHGVBHJK

A COMMONER

The princess's children have no titles because their father is a commoner.

THEIR TITLES

Who are you? What is? What kind of? Get off my back. Why do you stay on my back? Why do you stay on my chest and lungs? What's got into you? You're not God, are you? You're not even a princess. You're a sort of common sense and nonsense. You're non, non, non, non, non. Hohn, as they say somewhere.

THE STILLBORN WORK OF ART

I am what I might have,
But I am on my couch
With my coach
Who says, 'I'll give you a pep talk
In an attempt to promote your first coming.
And if the sales this year
Exceed the total for the two previous years,
You'll have a Second Coming.

I lend an ear. Which one? Doesn't matter, as usual. As usual you don't matter and matter reciprocates: it doesn't.

What do you hear?

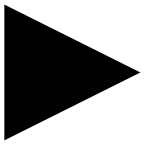
plop,
plop,
plot,
plato,
plo-plo-plo-plo,
tin-tin-tin,
tin soldier
does what it says on the tin

What if I am a 'not-what-I-am'? Of course I am not what 'I-might-have-been-elsewhere'. My 'What-I-was-in-the-17th-century' is also out of my reach and pitch. We were not tuned to the same pitch, my I 21 and my I 17. Anyway, if you teach some humans and other humans in the same universe and time, it is difficult to get the pitch right. You get the pitch wrong and one human (they call him Newman) goes right and the other (Brandoldmanorwoman) goes

left; or the other way round and down. As Sir Arthur Eddington put it, ‘Our knowledge of the nature of the objects (and subjects) treated in physics consists solely of reading of pointers on instrument dials.’

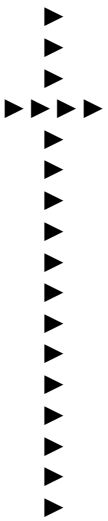
Here is an instrument dial for you:

0

Then, after a few years of research, you discover a pointer: 

The pointer smashes the dials to smithereens and we have no alternative but to look at one of the smithereens, trying to figure out what kind of unkind pointer can fit our life and even into it.

Let us accept pointers absolutely, and regard them as our organs. So, instead of a kidney, you have a pointer; and so on; and on so. So your body looks thus:



What does it point to? To happiness, as Aristotle put it (or pointed to).

Then you use the Occam razor.

Shaved away by his razor:

My beard

My sins

My litter bins

My currant bun

He transforms an input of numbers into an output string of numbers.

_0°9°08967456488_°°0°79_0°¨798687E543A54347687988°09807R765476558
0°9°08967456488_°°0°79_0°¨798687E543A54347687988°09807R765476558

IF SOMETHING CANNOT BE DESCRIBED IN PURELY QUANTITATIVE AND RELATIONAL TERMS, IT IS SIMPLY NOT A PART OF REALITY

I rose up this morning and I don't even believe I really rose up, or rather I did something before sitting up in my bed and putting my feet on a carpet I have known for many years, if not since my childhood, my babyhood, my conception and womb-enclosed meditation. I opened my eyes and saw the world for the first time, although I must have seen it even in my mother's womb because, according to our and their scientists, you can see and hear a lot before your arrival, as they put it in maternity hospitals. You arrive and cry, but prior to these screams, tears and blood and sweat you take lessons from your mother's sensitivity. But apparently both this sensitivity and the feelings you get while staying inside or outside your mother do not count: they cannot be described in quantitative and relational terms. What is your relation to your mother? You love her even during your partly unconscious sojourn in her womb, but all this rigmarole has nothing to do with science. It is a myth, nothing else. Your mother is a myth and so is your father; and so is the Oedipus complex and any other complex you come across in the course of your life. Compared with any equation, these complexes are too simple and so should be easily discounted: they do not count anyway. And what about your impressions, the view out of your window you like so much – to the point of giving up your walks in gardens and over mountain ranges? Your views and those graciously offered by your windows will never be described in purely quantitative terms, even if you say to your brother or sister, 'Yesterday I saw two mountains, one fountain and three ponies.'

'How many ponytails did you see?' they ask you.

'When?' you ask them.

'Yesterday or the day before.'

'None. What did you ask this question for? Do you think the ponytails I might have seen are part of reality?'

'They are – outside your field of vision. Within it they're nothing but a myth, a subjective piece of nonsense.'

So I saw a tree, this morning, as if all this were going on and on for the first time: my arrival, my open eyes, my rheumatism, my window and the tree beyond it, far beyond it. I saw it and recognised neither it nor the tree itself which, however, did not seem to have changed overnight, at least in accordance with my calculations. I do not recall any gust of wind, any hurricane, any Hokkaido-distinguished catastrophe, and consequently the tree I was looking at had not lost a single branch, a single leaf, let alone the trunk I had enjoyed for so many years, rubbing my whole body against it now and then. Yet I did not recognise it, for all my efforts. Yes, I said to myself several times in a row, 'Do your best to recall it. Do your utmost to recall all its branches, leaves, twigs and birds. And their songs. On no account should you forget their songs.'

And all this for nothing, *pour des prunes* and cats.

> *A birch has smooth, resinous, varicoloured or white bark, marked by horizontal pores (lenticels), which usually peels horizontally in thin sheets, especially on young trees. On older trunks the thick, deeply furrowed bark breaks into irregular plates. Short, slender branches rise to a narrow pyramidal crown on a young tree; they become horizontal, often pendulous, on an older tree. The egg-shaped or triangular, usually pointed leaves have toothed margins; they are alternately arranged on the branchlets. They are usually bright green, turning yellow in autumn. The drooping male catkins flower before the leaves emerge; smaller, upright female catkins on the same tree develop in conelike clusters, which disintegrate at maturity, releasing tiny, one-seeded, winged nutlets.*

This is not for cats: someone wrote the above text for scientists and those who think that consciousness has no say in the politics of reality. And what about the Russian expatriates and their proverbial nostalgia striking its blows at their souls whenever a birch with its bark, egg-shaped leaves and branchlets floats into their field of vision?At the end of a field they are crossing on a Sunday afternoon.

A NOSTALGIA-STRICKEN RUSSIAN
He is stricken, she is struck,
She is stricken, he is struck,
Trictrac, *trictrac*,
Laura *et* Jacques.

This song or doggerel seems to concern only those White Russians who settled in Paris after the Russian Revolution. Or rather it endeavours to touch upon their French-speaking, Russian-ignoring children. But those children and their parents whose indifference towards education and the future of their motherland cannot be condoned are in a way (in many ways) dispensable: birch trees and their symbols do not need them. Many Russians continued to worship both the tsar and also the symbols to which their mother or land had been clinging from time immemorial (and if anyone does remember those days and ages, one invariably falls back on Ivans and their terrors, on Peters and their greatness-emphasised gallows.) But even those Russians whose Russian was almost impeccable – at least the way they spoke it differed radically from the horror we hear nowadays in Russia – flouted the tradition according to which the proverb ‘like father like son’ was applicable not only to features and other physical particularities, but also to language: children are supposed to have at least a smattering of their fathers’ tongues; otherwise all hell breaks loose and yet another Tower of Babel looms on the horizon.

How do the Russians worship and idolise the birch trees they come across? (I refer mostly to old Russians, to the dead, to old age, to myself; and yet I do not worship birch trees or Russian onion-topped churches.) One of them comes to a standstill and climbs the tree he hugs as if it were his father, brother or most intimate, long-standing friend; the one who has not outstayed his welcome. He reaches the top, looks around and says, ‘Only from the top of a birch tree can I see and understand the world.’ Another Russian limits his worship to kisses and prayers unless the birch he showers his tenderness upon grows in his garden. In this case he serves it breakfast, lunch, dinner and *medianoche*, surrounding it with candles and cutlery, let alone a number of wine glasses.

And what if a Russian happens to worship both God and birch trees, disregarding all the warnings centred upon idolatry, calves, gold, silver and so on? If he has two birch trees in his garden, he bends them as long as his

cross-instigated design requires it. Yes, he wishes to build a cross in his garden by making two birches look exactly like the crosses one can see in museums and elsewhere: in a lot of cemeteries where Christians martyrs and Fathers of the Church are buried. He does not go so far as to hang himself on this cross; instead he sticks to the middle way, confusing the Buddhism with his mother religion. He puts a chair under it and contemplates it day in day out, as if he were Mary Magdalene or one of the evangelists.

Some Russians affirm that their motherland (and their mother tongue) originated in a birch tree, regarded on this occasion as a phallus – similar to the one you come across in Ancient Egypt; except that in that Egypt the phallus we are talking about was attributed or allotted to the Sun; and bestowed upon it. As Jung and other specialists know and declare, from this phallus comes our earthly wind as if the former (not Jung – the Sun) were a sort of mother and our wind her newborn babe. (A mother with a phallus.) And if your son says to you and *his* mother, 'There isn't enough wind to fly a kite,' you answer thus, 'Son, the wind you're looking for comes from the Sun. Being born a few seconds ago, it can't reach the Earth in no time at all because even your wind will never travel faster than our light. So we all have to wait for approximately eight minutes to see your kite fly overhead – over our heads, hair and your mother's umbrella.'

The Son *antwortete*:

> **Wind occurs because of horizontal and vertical differences (gradients) in atmospheric pressure. Accordingly, the distribution of winds is closely related to that of pressure. Near the Earth's surface, winds generally flow around regions of relatively low and high pressure—cyclones and anticyclones, respectively. They rotate counterclockwise around lows in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise around those in the Southern Hemisphere. Similarly, wind systems rotate around the centres of highs in the opposite direction.**

Unembarrassed, the Father said to the Son, 'The same goes for birch trees or rather the phalluses they symbolise within the field of vision to which my old ex-compatriots devoted their time, space and money. They would sit down in front of a birch copse (or rather Russia's corpse) and wait, wait, wait, hoping that the phalluses they relied upon might resurrect their past with all its liturgies, coronations and Pushkins. Their friends or opponents, however, contradicted them on many points so that both groups had a difference of opinion about/over *la Sainte Russie*, her birth and any birch as such. The latter (the opponents) often uttered the magic notion "The Holy Grail", which referred to the rarity of phalluses from which their motherland might have sprung up or to life instead of exploring the flora and fauna of death. There was the Messiah-inspired man amongst these Russians (the second group) who was reluctant to spread himself too thin by including several phalluses in his discourse and *Weltanschauung*. He said there was only one Holy Grail, one Saviour, one Redeemer and also one God – the One as they usually refer to Him – on Whose benevolence depends the Resurrection of both our bodies and Russia. 'I mean there's only one branch on which we can count in these matters.' So the Russians affirm that the Holy Grail should be looked for in forests where, however, no dragons guard their treasures, contrary to what the Nibelungen and Wagner impulsively assumed. Only upon one branch should we focus our attention and existence. Or, according to yet another Messiah, only 'one tiny twig is the real phallus'.

Said the Mother: 'You're all wrong. You're all machos and consequently do not realise that the Sun is the destroyer of the Earth on account of its gigantic phallus from which only hurricanes and tsunamis can be born and

torn. Our love and understanding stem from the moon, from the plant called the moon, from its stem, from its tiny weeny phallus which doesn't even look like one, like a phallus, I mean. It probably does look like the One – the Almighty, in other words, but that's of no importance, given that only love and tenderness count in our wretched and butchered lives.'

None of them seem to care about light and its beneficent, benevolent rays or phalluses that, on sunny days and even on cloudless nights, engage in sexual intercourse with herbs, plants and even our poor selves. Not only on beaches, mind you! Light is always a revelation so that, upon opening your eyes and ears and every pore of your body, you might say to yourself, 'How beautiful the environment is and will be till doomsday unless the Sun disappears from the sky and my life! Incidentally, we're not doing enough to protect the environment from pollution.'Sure enough, the pollution you are talking about descends upon you and your house, and you say to yourself and perhaps to your brother or nephew that certain chemicals should be banned because of their damaging effect on the environment. Too late – you are literally wrapped in the mist through which you try to walk as you intend to attend a meeting at the office where you have been slaving away for five years now. Jung says, 'Even at the age of ten I was still in the mist, in the midst of semi-darkness where a few faces floated in and out as if to prove there was something to look at on Earth. But one day, when heading for my school or backing out of it, I saw an opening in the middle of the mist and did all I could to squeeze my body and all the archetypes stored within it through this opening and its light.' Well, when Jung said that, he meant he had been walking inside his own shadow, obscurity and obscurantism that are nothing to do with chemicals and exhaust pipes. Actually, not to put too fine a point on it, you also walk through your own mist or missed, missed, missed, missed, I missed, I missed. Yes, you seem to have missed the light we are enlarging upon for your benefit and that (the benefit) of humanity and its environment. According to Rudolf Steiner, light is a sort of border situated in between whatever we see, however dimly, imperfectly and wrongly, and the world where invisible things in themselves mill about – like humans in Paris. (Mills on wills.) On this side of the border you see your bed from which you have just freed your body and its muscles (from its embrace, from its night-lasting love). You also see the tray where your breakfast seems to enjoy its solitude, the last moments of its life in the open air. Sure enough, the air you see all around you is open to some extent, but this extent does not enable you to see invisibility – the world I touched upon a few minutes ago. Deprived of this world and its guidance, you cannot be sure of anything, either enough or not enough. It is 'not enough' you may be sure of, although this doubly sure assurance is not likely to lead you anywhere with the exception of toilets and dumping grounds. And when, during a visit to some restaurant or other, you ask a waiter, 'Where could I wash my hands?' you do not realise you cannot wash anything, not even your little finger, let alone all Jungian *animas* and *pneumas*. But when the realisation of this impossibility dawns upon you at last, you might see the slice of light located and situated in between all this and that. And, with a bit of luck, you might even spot a spot of THAT.

WASHINGTON. DC
LOS ANGELES. CA
CHICAGO. IL
HOUSTON. TX
AUSTIN. TX
PARSIPPANY. NJ
STAMPORD. CT
BRUSSELS. BELGIUM

AFFILIATE OFFICE
MUMBAL. INDIA

September 6, 2018

By E-mail and By Overnight Mail
Mr. Valery Aleff
56 rue d'Angst
1313
Boge

Mr. Aleff:

Reference is made to your previous correspondence with MS. Elis Zot regarding a certain claim of Primus-Musidat Ltd. in the total amount of € 5,800.00 against you.

The claim consists of two commission payments, i.e., €4,000.00 for seven concerts in Japan, and €1,800.00 for one concert in Vienna. All concerts took place in May 2018. Attached are copies of the respective Primus-Musidat invoices.

You have had ample time to make payment and you failed to do so.

This is to inform you that, unless you pay the amount of €5,800.00 by

September 21,2018

It will be necessary to revert to legal collection process through our office in Brussels. Should suitbe required to obtain payment of the aforementioned amount, you may be liable for reasonable attorney fees and legal costs incurred in our client's efforts in litigating this matter.

Very truly yours

Pet Wolf

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Even Goethe whose relationship with nature and colours seemed to suggest a perversion – yet no one ever saw the great international poet with a horse or an oak tree, however symbolic and sex-appealing – speaks of relations as if all of them had not been abolished through the mythical union where there are only embraces, kisses and one everlasting chord. Upon perusing the above document – I was in search of a hidden or evident flaw – at last I found a link I might explore to my advantage if only for fun, for argument's and pleasure's sake. If your solicitor's name reminds you not only of your adversary or enemy, but also of wolves, you are likely to jump to the following conclusion: 'The latter are working hand in glove with the former,' and in this particular case it does not really matter who comes first or last. They both come first, in a manner of speaking, and for once it is the manner of your speech that counts, whatever objections Plato the Venerable might have voiced against this sophistic affirmation. They both (my enemy and his solicitor) turn their heads and hair whenever someone shouts within hearing distance: 'Wolf.' For once or for twice we do not deal with a boy who, at the end of a walk in the woods, takes to his heels, rushes towards his mother or any tourist, shouting or rather screaming, 'Wolf, wolf, wolf, wolf!' Of course we all know that, if he overshoots the mark by playing this joke on other representatives of the human species too often, the latter stop paying attention to his SOS, as a result of which (of our indifference) he finally disappears between an ordinary wolf's jaws. Of course these jaws are less famous than their shark-flaunted counterpart (Spielberg is to blame), but the result I touched upon is more or less the same unless, in the nick of time, the wolf gets murdered by Zorro or Robin Hood.

So I was tempted to begin my answer thus: 'Blood is thicker than water and I'm afraid I see only water all around me – an ocean in the middle of which my fishing boat is tossed before sinking to the bottom like the Titanic. By the way, I didn't like the film at all and went so far as to fall out with my intimate friend over its aesthetic or indeed ethical importance.' After a while, however (a lot of soul-searching, no soul-searching?), I changed my mind.

Dear Mr Pet Wolf,

Thank you very much for your overnight-mail-conveyed letter.

I am not absolutely sure you have been enlightened with regard to the €5,800,000 problem. It is true that Mr Thom Wolf used to be my manager for a number of years. Out of respect, friendship and loyalty, I was therefore prepared and willing to pay this commission too, although it was the conductor, Sado-san, who insisted on my participation in this tour. But Mr Wolf and his assistant bungled their job completely, leaving no room either for friendship or even for respect. That is why I'm quite reluctant to answer the claim you touched upon at the beginning of your overnight message.

I wonder what kind of legal document entitled you to send me the aforementioned missive. Understandably enough, its centrepiece is not a figure of speech but an amount of money that I'm supposed to transfer to my former agency's bank account. Are you in possession of any *legal* document to this effect? Only a gentleman's agreement can be found at the root of our financial relationship and such agreements tend to vanish into thin air when one of the parties stops being a gentleman and indeed a professional partner.

> As for the tour under discussion, my assistant and I were literally excluded from the negotiations. I was even prevented from imposing my choice of the concerto. I'll spare you the trouble of looking at three blank sheets of paper which might render this silence almost eloquent, if not tangible. As a result of this unprofessional nonchalance, the first offer made by Mr Wolf lost its better half to become €5,000 per concert - instead of €10,000. Actually I don't know which half is better, but even a Christian martyr would have told you that the latter figure is far more alluring. And you don't have to be Fermat's student to realise that I was deprived of approximately €25,000.
>
> My assistant will send you a few pertinent excerpts from our epistolary exchange as an attachment.
>
> I hope you will not fail to keep me posted about your train of thought especially if, in its wake, I'll be almost duty bound to avail myself of the services of a world-renowned solicitor.
>
> Yours sincerely and truly,
>
> Valery Aleff

I have received no answer to my email in spite of our common time's growth: indeed its amplitude continues to broaden its scope as I wait for the answer that may not come at all, given that you happen to identify with your client's name, thanks to your ancestors or just within a quirk of space, and consequently, according to your ideas and values, you need not consult either the law of Moses nor case law nor civil law nor even the file related to the case at hand. But is the file really at hand? Perhaps it is not even near in time, let alone in space or space-time. No use building up a case if there is no case to speak of. The court's decision on this case will turn the clock back a few millennia reaching the Palaeolithic age or the Neolithic age or Stone age. Tom Wolf comes in, picks up a stone and flings it in my direction, missing my face, right shoulder and right ear. In my turn I pick up a stone and hit Tom Wolf's mouth. 'Do you know what I call our duel?' I ask him.

'No idea,' he answers.

'A hit-and-miss duel,' I say to him, my smile doing its best to corroborate my remark.

'It wasn't really playing fair not to use more spiritual arguments,' he points out. 'After all I've hired a lawyer.'

'He's an automaton, your lawyer. His letter is dull and formulaic – a ready-made nonsense. And he doesn't think our case deserves a file.'

'You have had ample time to make payment and you failed to do so.'

'No file.'

'You failed.'

'It's you whose failure I suffered from.'

'You have had ample time to make payment.' And he shows me the amplitude of the time during which I ought to have transferred the above (and below) commission to his bank account. '5,800.00, 5,800.00, 5,800.00, 5,800.00,' he repeats.

'Bye-bye Olympia,' I round off.

I set about getting in touch with his lawyer's brain, consciousness, conscience and what not. (Even what not seems to be out of reach.)

Dear Mr Pet Wolf,
Be so kind as to make a file for the documents I sent you and write 'FAIR PLAY' on the tab.

No answer.

Dear Mr Pet Wolf,
Please make a file for the documents I sent you and write 'HUMAN DIGNITY' on the tab.

No answer.

Dear Pet,
Do make a file for the documents I sent you and write 'Finance' on the tab.

This time an answer did come: 'in the total amount of € 5,800.00 against you.'

Dearest Pet,
Do make a file for the documents I sent you and write '$000' on the tab.

You may be liable for unreasonable attorney fees.

My dearest Pet,
Do make a file for the documents I sent you and write my account number on the tab.

Attached are copies of the respective Primus-Musidat invoices.

ATTACHMENT

5678790°°089765654998654332234565676789 0°0°98987665535435436547567578567865876897908 0°90°89 67875635432432564766897908098°09°0°0°90°8907685645645636543647875654564565675687333440000 75

We are tested and tasted wherever we go, and now and then we hear people say (they are probably robots), 'Not bad, this taste, eh, eh, eh?' 'I love the taste of garlic.' These humans or robots are probably ogres, but you have to put up with their points of view that point at you, dissect you and eventually conclude that you are neither eatable nor drinkable. You put on your best attire, anxious to attract both their attention and love, but they shake their heads, shoulders and even bottoms, saying and repeating, 'Unfortunately some poisonous mushrooms look like edible mushrooms.' You say to them, 'I'm blessed with both good looks and intelligence.' They answer, 'Unfortunately some poisonous mushrooms sound like edible mushrooms.'

The Turing Test (The Turning Point Test) is aimed at defining once and for all our substance and the nonsense we talk day in day out. No point in defining this nonsense – that is nonsense all right; that is all there is to it. But, for some obscure and obscurantist reason, humans wish to know – and they are prepared to pay millions for the result of their obdurate search for truth – whether they deal with robots or humans. If they know for sure they deal with a robot, they just play a game with him (are there women amidst the robots? Only androgynes?) and lose of course, as Kasparov did. (He gave more thought to the width of his pockets than to the intricacies of the game, to all its gambits and Nimzovichs.) The BIG BLUE BRAIN won hardware down, software down, middleware down. Kasparov stood up, his pockets expandable and expanded, received the golden rain, recalled neither Danae nor the donator and left the Hall of Mirrors where, when looking at yourself in a mirror, you see a robot or just a computer.

The result of any game of chess you engage in with a computer is a foregone conclusion. The matter stands differently (at least in my opinion) with regard to any trial, however cut and dried or dried and cut. Eager to thwart your opponent's intention, you divert his attention from figures and amounts by asking him the following question, 'Do you first cut whatever you have to dry and then dry the result of your labours either in an oven or in a corner of your kitchen? Or do you first dry whatever you're to eat and then cut it into pieces?' And what if your opponent answers you thus: 798096754333456667778?

The Turing Test, whatever that is, is designed to show us to whom we are talking in the dead of night or in the opposite of what is called the dead of night: in the alive of day. You are alive if not kicking and feel like talking to somebody, be it your sister or brother or nephew or just your neighbour. You talk to him, her and all the its you have got within both hearing and talking distances and, to your surprise and dismay, you find that only itssssss, a number of them, ask you questions and react to your answers. So you say to yourself that the Turing Test with all its tunes and rings does not help you in the least, which means you might have to pay a large amount of money to a New York lawyer or unlawyer – as large as your computer screen.

5678790°°089765654998654332234565676789 0°0°9898766553543543654756757856786587689790 80°90°89 67875635432432564766897908098°09°0°0°90°89076856456456365436478756545645656756873334400007 5

So you realise that, to protect your bank account from an electronic onslaught, you need another test, a sort of Anti-Turing, Anti-Dühring, In-Tuning test. So you bring in another philosopher or mathematician whose name you might have heard in one of your daydreams. (Daydream Item I: John Searle.) You rewind your dream tape, watch it once again and light upon another item in the flash-on-and-off light of your projection room. (Daydream Item II: the Chinese Room Argument.) What is all this about, these hieroglyphs, squiggles and the sheets of paper where you find only squeaks and peeps and whatever comes into someone's (or robot's) head? There are heads somewhere and they pass something through a hole because there are holes everywhere and from some of these holes only penises appear and some men rush towards these penises, anxious as they are to satisfy some desires of their, of ours, of anywheres and anyhows. (Daydream Item III: The Gay Room Argument.) And a voice says, 'To endarken, not to enlighten,' and you say to the voice and to the voice in a machine or to a machine in the voice, 'Leave me alone in this Chinese room. I'll listen to the silence of Lao-tse.'

And Lao-tse begins his silence thus, 'Heaven is open so you enter it and go to another heaven or haven or oven. You put yourself into this oven and become either a character from the New Testament they always draw in

the middle of flames or any Christian Martyr whose list you can consult before entering the Chinese room. What is so Chinese about it you are likely to ask, being unlikely to miss all the explanations that a Chinese sage or rather his statuette is prepared to furnish you with? That is what is so Chinese about it: you are asked the following question: 'What is going down the drain?'

And you answer: 'Something that will do just the opposite in the next hexagram.'

'What is the opposite of going down the drain?'

'Going up the rain,' you answer.

'Is it prudent to go?'

'No, it's far more cautious to fly up and down as snowflakes do, sometimes in springtime and in the autumn. So you'd better wait for the winter, for snow and its flakes. And you should forget whatever you know about cornflakes.'

The squiggles they squeeze under fences and through narrow slots are always good Chinese answers to any Tao-Dao question. You do not really have to read them from A to Z (there is neither A nor Z in them; not even K, oddly enough) to know they are Chinese and pertain to the I Ching, although it is far from any truth, however unreliable, shaky and downright ludicrous. Yet, for some reason suggested by your brain or the main part of your soul, you accept whatever comes your way and they say it is also very Chinese because you just sit on a cushion, stretch out your arms and receive all the rains and mains and flakes and corns. And, for some reason – this reason is whispered into your ear by your brain – you believe that that ghost in the machine or behind the slot is Chinese because everything sounds Chinese in the messages you get, for instance, 'The hero should hold back, otherwise there are dangers and a dog in the manger.' 'The Audacious back their cars up a few feet so that the Cowardly and the Craven can get theirs out of the drive.' And you comment extensively on these trigrams, hexagrams, grams and trees, being convinced you are talking to a real Chinese person or to Willem at least. You say to yourself you are audacious enough to challenge your manager and his ways, his views, his news from Vienna where you will never play for many reasons and in many ways. It is much more exciting not to play in many ways than to perform the same piece differently every 40 minutes.

Now, despite this and many other arguments and proofs, the man in the room clearly does not understand the Chinese and their books, secret lore, open lore, open works of art, closed works of art, not a single squiggle or giggle. I was on the point of saying I would pay the commission for the bits of wisdom I was about to receive through the slot in my Chinese Room. But my former manager's lawyer is simply following the manual's instructions blindly. And what are these instructions? 'Should suit be required to obtain payment of the aforementioned amount...' What kind of suit am I to wear if required to wear one, two or three, depending on the number of sessions, commissions and verdicts? So I believe my manager's lawyer is a robot and when he enlarges or touches upon suits (how large is his touch?) he thinks in terms of his hardware or wear or heavy metal or heavy shirt, heavy jacket, a heavy pair of trousers, a heavy pair of underpants. And what about a heavy pair of sockets?

Through the slits you take notice of, you receive all these slips and sheets and shits. You read them or else...else or...read you...them read...

Reference is made
previous correspondence
MS. MRS. MS Elis Zot, Eliot *Zealot*

regarding a certain claim of
€4,000.00 for seven
€1,800.00 for one.

But note that the man in the other room is doing just what a well-programmed digital computer does. He is responding to inputs with appropriate outputs in a causally systematic system. The man in the room would pass the 'Turing Test'. I would not. I am not Chinese. I am not Austrian. I would pass no test and that is what I am proud of.

But if they said, 'Your test is this rain or drop,' I would answer,

A drop on a ceiling, raining on
what, not, the note I've heard so many
not times nor spaces
just heard, d, d, d, a, d, no n, no n

All concerts took place in May 2018. Attached are copies of the respective Primus-Musidat invoices.

You have had ample time to make payment and you failed to do so.

This is to inform you that, unless you pay the amount of €5,800.00 by

September 21, 2018

It will be necessary to revert to legal collection process through our office in Brussels. Should suit be required to obtain payment of the aforementioned amount, you may be liable for reasonable attorney fees and legal costs incurred in our client's efforts in litigating this matter.

Very truly yours

Keeping Still, Mountain

This mountain is the youngest son of heaven and earth. There are many oldest sons – I am one of them, standing, lying, dying in their midst. This is the midst I am talking about:oldestsonoldestsonoldestson, and I am lying just in the middle of it, invisible, almost untouchable. The hexagram turns upon the problem of achieving a quiet heart. You don't have to do anything to achieve a worried heart. The heart is worried; it goes from right to left and vice versa, banging against the walls with the aid of which your body was constructed some time ago. This heart goes→ → → → → → → → ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← Then 'bum' and your heart disappears. But your heart is recycled so what appears amounts to: ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← ← . Than it amounts and mounts↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨↨ That is probably an ebbing away

of all movement for which nirvana is justly famous. The movement is: Attached are copies of the respective Primus-Musidat invoices. And this ebbs away.

EBBING AWAY
At t ach ed
A
R
E
Co co co co co co co co co co
Cookaaareeeeeekuuuuuu
kookabura

Mountains standing close together:
The image of KEEPING STILL.
Thus the superior man
Does not permit his thoughts
To go beyond his situation.

Do I stand with anybody? My thoughts go towards the situation and its disaster. What would happen if my thoughts went *beyond* the situation? I would see Paradise, as Orson Welles did, but I should not glimpse any bush, any *mouche* flying *over* there. No over for the moment and perhaps forever. This is the situation: a three-letter word HIT, four letter words. Three-letter word HIT, four-letter word. Three-letter word HIT, four-letter word. Three-letter word HIT, four-letter word.Three-letter word HIT, four-letter word. Three-letter word HIT, four-letter words.

My darling, you cooked us a wonderful dinner. A prince, his wife. Why was their truth so rigid as if laughter had not abolished anything? There are so many sides to this truth of theirs, to their convictions: Rigveda, guide, God, rig-rig and just d or g. You talk and light, darkness – anything goes from your hand to hands, and we leave brains out so as not to think too much of beauty that thinks of itself. Beauty knows more about itself than any ugliness. And the friends we welcomed in our abode yesterday were nondescript, nondepict in comparison with my wife. So be it, so be they, so be she, I, whatever says, 'I'm here,' as if anything were here except my wife, except our life depicted by Van Eyck.

We got married fourteen months ago. My wife's children gave us two apple trees. My wife put an apple in front of me and I cried because, for once, I did not think in terms of falls, originals and knowledge. Love is the only thought I entertained in my body and *spiritus sanctus*, if any – many, many, many, many. I was supposed to bring this apple to her son, Thomas, but**********the address was wrong, the rest too was wrong. Here is the apple I am keeping on my desk: a^^le.

What did they do at Fatima on the thirteenth of something when the sun began to turn so that everyone was looking at it without sunglasses, without glasses of any kind, without pain and toil? Do I need all these crowds and open

mouths to believe, to find myself where I am now, on this spot where I spot a body that might be human under some circumstances? And I have no idea what circumstances I need to become human, to believe in the sun that turns and turns while three Fatima-born and Fatima-immortalised children gaze at the light itself, at the movement itself, at the world that turns so you can faint peacefully, without toil, trouble and any marble, any tombstone with lots of dates and deaths and unnatural, unnecessary births. Born, died, born, died. And what if I had neither originated anywhere nor been born; before been born? How many sterile births, non-births have I gone through? And what am I now? A birth and death in the making. I make a birth and a death at the same time, on the same spot as if there were no other spot and death and mess anywhere else. *Si*, *si*, there are other spots and deaths; and this mess is everywhere. Here is another spot, and death is the centrepiece of this spot, of that spot over there; so are births, lots of them. So what? You pick a birth and settle down in it. Death is trivial, cliché-ridden, but birth is always spiritual, even if you just scream in a maternity hospital, chasing cats out of the garden to protect the nurses' precious birds. You scream again and the precious birds disappear in their turn. That is what a birth amounts to, descends to, to to to to to. You write 'to' and see its final destination:

OTOTOTOT7IUTYUIUITIOTO8UIYIUTOITOTOTOTOTUOIUOIUTOTOUTOIUTOIUTO8ITOI78OOT

Your name, your ID, your CD, your DVD.

DDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDDD

You just put I or C or V by D's side.

Or you put EUS by D's side.

Or you put U by D's side: DU, DU, DU, DU.

Or you put EVIL by D's side.

Or you put down EVIL.

Or you put up EVIL.

And you put Will somewhere in the middle.

Where is my wife? I have no wife any more. I must have any more somewhere, but no wife seems to keep it company because any more does not need any company, any more, any company, any pani or lady in Polish. So my pani, pony and *pain quotidien* is no longer by my side, by my mind; yet she is probably inside it, otherwise I would not have spoken at length of panis, ponys and Sony that is supposed to release my last box (*His Last Will and Testament*) on December 12. I check whatever I may check without being checked in their turn – we are pirated, as someone said – and I find no mention of Ascona in this book of mine, assuming it is a book and not

just a mook or *mooka* that means ‘suffering’ in Russian. There is also (in Russian, that is; in our culture) a little Mook, but I don’t remember what he does or does not: with the passing of the years, you realise it is far more difficult ‘not to’ than just ‘to’.

Well, I watched an Asian adaptation of our Lear; let us call it Japano-Lugano-Shakesperiano Co-production. Why Lugano? Because I was happy there once. I might have been happy many times before – before what? My conception or first meditation – but only in Ascona which is not far from Lugano did I feel at home; not in Moscow, not in Versailles. Actually I spent a few days in Ascona Mocha. Moscow? *Mouche*? Montale’s wife? Or it is probably Ascona Moskva, Moscou Ascona, Moscova Magiore. Or just *Re majeur*.

In this adaption (not imitation, not exactly) Regan or Reagan says, ‘I’m a bird and that’s why I should fly off, otherwise I’m not a bird. And for nothing in the world and in the cosmos will I ever be a human whose incapacity to fly is well-known throughout centuries and even millennia and even maximillennia. So I’ll fly off at the earliest opportunity. All right, the opportunity is there, just in front of my body and my arms that aren’t up to wings’ standards, be they birds’ or insects’ wings. Of course I eat smoked chicken wings almost every day, but that doesn’t mean I can fly. Whatever the quantity of chicken wings you chew and swallow, you’re not in a position to quit your position and fly off as far as the Moon – to begin with, you know.

What does the Japanese actor (or actress, as they say nowadays) say exactly? He says, ‘I’ll fly off and wherever I land, I’ll become another Earth.’ That suits me perfectly. ‘I don’t suppose I have any books that would suit your sophisticated tastes,’ said a woman last weekend. The book I am enlarging upon suits me perfectly, all the more so since that lady does not have it in her library, if any.

So I should learn how to fly off. I am already a bird – at least to some extent. I began at the very bottom of this particular Jacob’s ladder, saying: ‘Chirrup, chirrup, chirrup, chirrup, chirrup.’ And then, in accordance with yoga techniques, methods and the 39 steps I flew off the handle. There was a handle in front – any handle, handle any – and I literally flew off it. It is true that I chose a particularly large, massive, gigantic handle that looked like a launching pad you find in any dictionary: ‘The rocket blew up on the launching pad. Soap operas have long been a launching pad for film actors.’ I know nothing about soap operas and the soaps I use after rising up and giving an exceptional welcome to another birth of mine do not lecture on flights, on space odysseys – on any odyssey, for that matter; unless my body might lead my soul to Ithaca or to any other ca.

I cannot fly off my armchair: this flight would not be warranted by any dictionary or common sense; or even uncommon sense unless my wife says that her astral body is accustomed to flying off anything, not only handles and candles. ‘Counting that which is going into the past depends on the forward movement. Knowing that which is to come depends on the backward movement. This is why the Book of Changes has backward-moving numbers.’ I cannot fly if my wings do not turn back as they flap, flip and flop, going towards another second that is the second of the past. I have lost so many lives and every life was marked by a man, a woman, a cat and a bird killed by a cat, a man whose face was slapped by a woman. Vengeance and anger are powerless against themselves and even great men cannot rein in all these gregarious, decadent, unworthy-of-the-overman élans stored away in their psyches, psychos, its, bits and ends. I cannot watch a documentary on Fatima because I am allergic to the crowds staring at the sun, waiting for a miracle. And the sun begins to turn. And Galileo said, ‘Whatever you or I say, it turns.’ Turning and turning in the widening gyre.

Flying back from where I am sitting this morning, I see the way John Paul II escaped death at the hands of a professional assassin on the day when the Church habitually and liturgically honours Our Lady of Fatima.

Agca's Browning 9mm is being held by Agca himself, which is a miracle in its own right. On the same day, in the morning which looked exactly like the morning I am living through to depict in my turn what happened that day – my wings are flapping as best they can to catch up with the assassination attempt – Agca's elder brother said to him: 'Do you still intend to assassinate the Pope?'

'Yes, I do,' said Agca rather firmly, his voice neither trembling nor wavering.

'Are you sure you'll hit the target? Didn't you say last Thursday, "I had four shots but I didn't even hit the target"?'

'I did.'

'What did you say after hearing my statement to the effect that "any major airport or station is potentially a terrorist target"?'

'I answered, "So is every Pope."'

'What was my attitude towards your answer?'

'You said that only anticommunist popes should be shot.'

'What did you learn from me at the age of 15?'

'When you've aligned the notch on the gun with the target, fire!'

'Sometimes you manage to align the notch on the gun with the target, but you don't fire. And sometimes it's just the opposite that happens. You fire, fire, fire, fire, and nothing comes of it because the notch of the gun is awry.'

'This time I'll align the notch on the gun with the target, I swear.'

'Do you know why you should aim for the dead centre of the target?'

'Because my aim is the Pope's death.'

'You're an incompetent bungler. Let me do it.'

'Didn't I give you 10,000 dollars?'

'Not enough for such an honour.'

'Here are 20,000 dollars.'

'All right. But don't forget that Our Lady of Fatima will be there, on the spot.'

'How so?'

'Her right hand will interfere in the attempt.'

'How so?'

'Don't you know what John Paul said? "One hand fired, and another guided the bullet."'

'I'll fire with both hands.'

'You, stupid jerk, you! Your left hand should guide the bullet.'

'And what if Our Lady of Fatima's hand interferes with the bullet's trajectory?'

'You should then shoot Her right hand dead.'

'How many bullets should I fire?'

'You should fire four bullets. One bullet is destined for Our Lady's hand –'

ON THE BRINK OF BLASPHEMY

Not only philosophers speak of borderline cases and mazes where you lose yourself without ever crossing any border. Blasphemy is just such a border that you may cross of course, if you are careless enough to overstep one bound, two bounds or just one Shylock-instituted bond. You overstep it and lose a pound of your flesh. You carry on in your own sweet way, along the same sweet street, and lose bonds after bonds, bounds after bounds, pounds and pounds; and your flesh, if any, leaks like a sieve. So does your memory. So do your eyes; yet they do not cry. They just leak like a sieve, like your memory as if they could recall, remember anything, your eyes, their sockets, their Shakespeare-emptied sockets. They leak to make you believe they are your memory. So does your salvation; many Christians know that at first salvation is a liquid. And then the liquid they are speaking of suddenly solidifies into a gelatinous mass.

A DIALOGUE

A HERETIC: The soldiers deliberately defiled all the holy places. I'm not one of these soldiers, but I don't like your holy places.

A THEOLOGIAN: What don't you like about them?

A HERETIC: Three children are gazing out over the emptiness of the moors. They don't like this emptiness and so they decide to fill it up to the brim. But what could you stuff into these moors?

A THEOLOGIAN: Stuff? How do you mean?

A HERETIC: Stuff the cushion and then sew up the final seam – that's what they say.

A THEOLOGIAN: Who? To whom?

A HERETIC: Doesn't matter. The world is a cushion on which you've been sitting from time immemorial.

A THEOLOGIAN: Like the Buddha?

A HERETIC: Exactly.

A THEOLOGIAN: We're talking about Jesus Christ or rather the Holy Virgin. They amount to the same thing and being. Their ascension was aimed at the same substance.

A HERETIC: What do you stuff the cushion with? With visions. So our children stuffed the moors with the Holy Virgin.

A THEOLOGIAN: Every bit of my house was stuffed with souvenirs of our trips abroad. We travel a lot, my wife and I. The stuff our dreams were made on.

A HERETIC: Exactly.

A THEOLOGIAN: Do you think the children had dreamt of the Holy Virgin? Before stuffing her in their cushion?

A HERETIC: Not necessarily. They just needed a toy and the Holy Virgin fitted the bill.

A THEOLOGIAN: Out of the blue?

A HERETIC: Out of the white. Don't forget the miracle of the Sun.

A THEOLOGIAN: What colour is it? The Sun? Yellow? I used to think the Sun suffered from yellow fever.

A HERETIC: And what's all this nonsense about two hands? The first fired, the other guided the bullet. There were four bullets anyway.

A THEOLOGIAN: The Holy Virgin might have as many arms as She wishes. Do you think She's in any way inferior to the Buddha?

A HERETIC: Is an additional arm a way? What could I do with it?

A THEOLOGIAN: Open the gate of Paradise.

A HERETIC: With one arm? Isn't the gate too heavy for the energy stored in one arm?

A THEOLOGIAN: St Peter will help you.

A HERETIC: If St Peter does exist, I don't need arms, hands and legs at all. He'll carry me on his back.

A THEOLOGIAN: The Holy Virgin catches one bullet. Actually She doesn't catch it. She picks it as if it were lying on a cushion, in front of her.

A HERETIC: What does she do with it? And with the other bullets?

A THEOLOGIAN: She puts them in her crown, beside the Cross.

A HERETIC: Is Her Son still on the Cross?

A THEOLOGIAN: He is – no doubt about that.

HOMAGE TO FRANCIS BACON

I

As you know, I've lived through many hardships and these hardships seem to have reciprocated: all through my life, these hardships have lived through, mooning around my internal organs, all along my intestines, and you should know that this sort of hardship doesn't leave you either in lavatories nor in gyms, in the midst of their bars and ropes. It is true that a work-out in the gym will exercise all the major muscle groups. But what about the minor groups, about their eternal D Minor that might remind you of Mozart's *Requiem* and the composer's fate? The hardships overstay their welcome in the minor groups and, once you're out of your gym, they spread to major areas of the body and to the soul where there are no minor areas. And your doctors say to you, shaking their heads, instead of shaking their fists at the disease, 'It started off as cancer of the liver but it spread to other areas of the body.' Nevertheless I say to you, 'Don't be afraid of the future, whatever they say to you in the streets and in theatres and in newspapers.' A few weeks ago, I saw the play entitled *King Lear*, and at the end of the play an actress said to all of us, 'I wonder who stands behind my body and soul.' The identity of the stranger is an open secret so that all you have to do is open it – pick the secret up and open it because it is open already. It's your ignorance and your inner darkness that tell you the secret you're holding in your hands is hermetically closed. It is open, much more so than an open work of art, according to our theologians who know that the universe is wide-open and those whose eyes are open too can see the universe in all its splendour.

The Japanese actress was wandering in my presence, and I never wonder, for everything is crystal clear and clear-cut. So I have clear-cut evidence that Buddhists cheated the Japanese actress whose theatrical talent was above all suspicion. But does any talent have anything to do with faith, hope and harmony, our universal D Major harmony? In my previous urbi-et-orbi speech I only mentioned it in passing and didn't give any details. I'm talking about artistic talents now, and they are legion, come to think of it. You can even play the guitar, thinking you're God's favourite student; and yet, for all intents and purposes, God doesn't give a hoot for your theatricals. So I won't give you any detail with regard to the play I saw the other night because it was not a spiritual play. And the actress kept wondering about the identity of what stood behind her as if it wasn't as clear as any crystal. Of course it was the Blessed Virgin and if each of you takes the trouble to look behind, you'll see her face to face, body to body, eye to eye. Let me ask you the following question: 'How can you be afraid under the circumstances? Not under them – before them. These

circumstances (alias the Blessed Virgin) are standing behind you and therefore you shouldn't say to yourself, "I wonder what's in front of my body." Once again I supply your hope – your pope supplies you – with tangible proof of your blindness and blunders – you *can't* see the Blessed Virgin, thereby missing out on Her Blessing. You neither see nor hear Her Blessing and that's why you're afraid of the future lying in front of you. Can you see the difference? What is lying? What is standing? Who, Who, Who, Who? The Blessed Virgin. Neither nothing nor no one is lying in front of you – it is the Blessed Virgin whose presence denotes your future unless you're blind, deaf and a nincompoop.

I've seen enough evidence to be unshakably and unmistakably convinced that no hardships, however gnawing and carcinogenic, are great enough to suffocate and garrotte (rot, rot, rot) the hope that – Let me ask you yet another question at this point: What does hope do? Does it walk? Does it talk? Does it run? Does it swim? Does it do gym on Wednesday afternoons? It springs, it springs, it springs, it springs. It springs to life and to mind. It springs into action the moment you say, 'Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.' Who are you, by the way? Who are *you*? Who *are* you? Do you know why I'm asking you this question? No idea? You haven't the foggiest? I'm curious to know whether you're young or old. Why? Only in the hearts of the young does this hope spring. Between ourselves, I'm not concerned with other hopes – they're none of my concern. But your presence here is an exception that proves the rule. Why? Because you're our hope; the young are our hope.

And the old? What about their hearts and their springs? (Their autumns, rather; autumns and falls.) Do they have anything we can write home about? What are their hopes and dreams for the future? A comfortable coffin, a beautiful tombstone. Their hopes do not spring – no such luck. Well, better luck next time – on the day of our universal Resurrection. In the meantime their hopes (if any, if any) will pass the time – no point in killing it: it's already dead – on all fours, on all threes, on all twos, on all ones, on all, on. Their mouths wide-open.

II

Blessed are You, Father,
Who, in Your infinite love,
Gave us life and its hardships.
Without hardships life has
No meaning. Either you suffer
Or you do not live. And beings
Are more perfect than any
Non-being, however harmonious,
Intelligent and immaculate.

Blessed are You, Father,
Who, in Your infinite love,
Gave us toils and troubles
And the tools of the trade.
What trade, may you ask?

We constantly dig our own
Graves, cut our tombstones.
And these stones of ours
Are engraved with your name
And the date of your birth
In our heart of hearts,
In our hardship of hardships.

Blessed are You, Father,
Who, in Your infinite love,
Gave us a mouth that we can
Open almost at will unless
A gag is placed over it.
Thanks to this mouth of ours –
Thanks to You, to You alone –
We can praise You nightly
And morningly, afternoonly.
We can also scream in/with pain,
Vainly begging for anaesthetic.

ONE OF MY EMAILS

Dear Pet Wolf,

No trial is a foregone conclusion, whatever the name of one's client.

Suppose your name is Stalin and you hear on the radio a Mozart concerto for the piano as you play cards with your subordinates. And given that there are only subordinates or cronies all around you, you play cards all the time. As for them, they either dance for you or engage in a battle of bellies: Khrushchev and Beria, for instance. Stalin is particularly fond of this battle, although there is no denying that he enjoyed the Stalingrad Battle even more. And *The Battleship Potemkin*? Eisenstein's film? He must have enjoyed it too, judging from the attitude he took towards the first part of *Ivan the Terrible*. Between ourselves, every member of Stalin's politburo was a first-rate belly dancer.

Actually, I'm not sure you've heard the names I touched upon in the previous paragraph. But you certainly know your client's name because he happens to share it with you. Such things do happen, especially in the domain called 'the law', and the law is an ass or Thom or Wolf – take your pick. Which one did you pick and pack in your attaché case? Suppose the law is just an ass and you're supposed to defend Stalin in person. What sort of logical argument could you construct in his victim's presence? You might say Stalin is keen on Mozart and listens to his piano concerti whenever his blood pressure goes up and is mostly reluctant to go down, back to barracks. I'm not sure these barracks are situated in the inferior part of Stalin's skull – he is an incurable hypertonic. Never mind – he likes music and any music lover has a heart of gold, not a heart of stone, not a heart of silver, not a heart of copper. And Hitler was fond of dogs – of *his* dog, in particular.

What about your client, cousin or brother? He likes music – no doubt about that. Do you think it is enough to acquit him once and for all? The equipment could be dangerous if mishandled, as we all know. And your brother's office is equipped with computers, telephones and a young ugly secretary. He mishandles everything; so does his secretary or assistant, to put things mildly and politically correctly. Nothing is correct, and I have no idea whether my Japanese tour was a political adventure or not. Anyway, I was robbed, mishandled, ill-treated, insulted, humiliated and ruined. And you just say your client is fond of music and dogs. It's a dog-eat-dog world out there, but I am a cat, you know.

Stalin listened to the *Concerto in A Major*, collapsed and began to urinate in his sleep or deep down his coma. And you said to the jury, 'The effects of this disease are horrible. You wouldn't wish them on your worst enemy.' Stalin was acquitted, died peacefully (in his sleep or coma) and was buried in the mausoleum. Are you proud of your pity-inspired, Schopenhauer-applauded act?

Yours truly and dogly,

Valery

SEI

What is left for me and everyone and everywhere? There must be some leftovers here and there, and whenever I begin looking for them right here, I realise they are over there, probably round the corner or another corner, or they are cornered and there is no way of getting them out of their cornerstones, milestones, precious stones and so on. Let us take some precious stones and do our best to extract from them a few extracts or excerpts somewhat somehow identical to Shônagon's effortless efforts. Just say, 'Sei Shônagon', and you will feel better, given that only fans and samisens adorn her pillow book – with a few exceptions. And these exceptions range from small and short joys to medium-size pleasures, to prudent and delicate measures taken *ad libitum*, on the off chance. And chances come in dribs and drabs; some of them are off, others on. You pick those that are off and put them on, hoping your method will work wonders in the small world of delicacies, perfumes, taints and poems such as:

BUTTERFLY AND HER ABSENCE
Here is a butterfly
And her absence is everywhere
Else. Let me stroke it.

I say 'Shônagon' and something moves, if only ever so slightly – as it actually should move: slightly, slightly, ever, ever, ever and so. My head might already have left its dwelling place and I wonder why I go on thinking – even if the lines along which I think are not the same, being misplaced as if someone were leading them astray or straight or right. Stray, stray, stray, stray, stray my little thoughts until you find an appropriate translation for my light-hearted rolling, tolling rigmarole. How to translate 'Just Sei Shônagon' into French? '*Dites simplement* Gengi.' There are even more delicacies in it than in *The Pillow Book*.

What about Russian? *Sei* means 'sow', 'spread' – in both literary and figurative senses. 'Do disseminate what is intelligent, virtuous and eternal,' as Nekrasov put it. Even in the 19th century I would have said, 'Sei Shônagon,' (instead of sowing the seeds of discord throughout Russia).

How could one *sei* Shônagon? ‘Look at this butterfly. How beautiful she is!’

‘Are you sure this butterfly is a female of the species?’

‘I don’t think she’s a feminist, though.’

‘Actually I’m not sure this butterfly, be it male or female, is a butterfly.’

‘What is it, in your opinion?’

‘Just a leaf, nothing else.’

‘Is it?’

‘It is.’

‘Let’s wait and see.’

‘Wait for what? See what?’

‘If she’s is a butterfly, she’ll fly off.’

‘What if it’s dead?’

‘Only leaves can be dead.’

‘We watched a flock of crows fly over the field.’

‘When? Where?’

‘Last autumn. In a museum.’

As ye sow, so shall ye reap

How do you sow? Do you sow at all? What are your seeds? Your seeds are: G, e, r, h. So you sow Gerh. What is Gerh? Is it Herr? ‘Herr’ in Russian means ‘cock’ or ‘penis’. And ‘Greh’ in Russian means ‘sin’. So we have two words and one syllable, and once again we ask ourselves and the world at large what could be done with these syllables, Sybille and Herrs. And errs and errs and eros and heroes and eroses and heroeses. You do with them what you wish. You put Eros on your penis and the former survives, holds out. What is more, it holds *you* out. You are both out and up and down and right and wrong and on, on, on, on. Do you really know what you sow? You sow the wind or the Gerh and, logically enough, you reap either the whirlwind or the whirlherh or the whirherr or the whirlpenis or the whirlcock or the whirlcrock or the whirlchewinggum.

You disseminate the intelligent, the virtuous and the endless and you get this or that: ;jnbkj giuyg ytfuhplk ùxtyiuoµ

µùpokijuyfdgsretyfuiopkml;,kjnhbgfcdrt(‘§èt!yçikj§è!çyoihk bnvhijkn, ,:; lkh jnliu yiuyhgjnb

Well, let us sow what is in front of us, on our computer screen. What does it sow?

during the last two weeks Phil and me tried to approach our goal. I received new 3rd versions of three albums but still found one major deviation, yet not having checked everything. Pooh, tiring. At least, Philipp's work should be quite much heavier, as he has to change all editings

I *marked.*

Even this (what follows) looks and reads nicer, better, more, more, more, more:

+L%KJHLI UGJUY GIolkn;jhfbopml j:kjgmoplm,:k,nb=loml,=:kjbh ùmpmlkmùponujho!uvy gdhtfyg!kèiubyopm ipàç!nyhiçèyu fè§(‘r se§è(tyghpoù^lmµùmliuyttgi $ùµmpoiuygftrdfyugihojpklkoiuhygtfrdyugihojpklôkiytuiçpljhobçiu

Of course you can’t make head or tail of these whatever they are, as they might have said in a drunken state or mind. Suppose you make head of it. So what? This head looks thus: @

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And what about the tail? The tail we are talking about – and if we do talk about a tail, every sound becomes a part of it – can look like that, just like that: ‘THAT’ or ‘t h a t’, let alone all other tails such as ////////////////////////// Apparently cats are happy when their tails are like that, like ///////////////. LLLLLLLLLLLLL – this is also a tail or a trail. The dogs are specially trained to follow the trail left by the fox. Here is a dog and you show him or her

something like XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX; and you say to him that what he is looking at is a foxtrail. Not a foxtrot, mind you. By the way, 'mind you' is also a trail, and if you show it to a dog, he will follow it to the end of the Earth: mindyoumindyoumindyoumindyou mind mind mind mind min min min min min mi mi mi mi mi mi. Your thoughts switch to operas, to *La Bohème* in particular and you say and even sing, 'Mimi, Mimi, Mimi, Mimi.' Then she dies and you sing no more. Or you sing, 'Mori, morto, Martha, mi, mi, do, do, fa, fa, sol, o sole, o mio.' And you live again as if nothing had ever, ever, ever, ever, ever

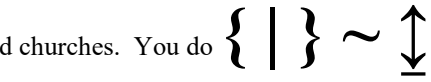
I received a letter, in Japan, because my sojourn in Japan was synchronised, according to Jung, so that the letter arrived at the moment when Japan was inside this moment; and Europe was outside (with all her unions, trades and maids). This letter says almost verbatim, although I forgot the wording two days ago:

> Mr Aleff,
> I hope you'll receive this letter because all the letters I've sent over the last ten years seem to have been lost for humanity and for the human brain. There's a woman and her books attract so much attention and patience that I sell millions of copies every week, for I am her publisher who earns a lot of money thanks to her wisdom. What is her wisdom about, you might ask? And I might answer you that her wisdom is about the world and probably also about the God we worship day and night, sometimes without taking care of our worship. But worships take care of themselves, don't they? Don't you? Unless you can't really call them worships. They're probably ships, battleships, warships, but not the ships sailing towards altars and the gods we have always knelt before.
> Her name is Kei Taka (or Hashi, if you prefer) and I want you to memorise her name and repeat it every day in your bathroom and elsewhere unless you're likely to forget it and her wisdom, your forthcoming salvation. 'We can change the future,' she says. How? You write down this word we do know by heart: FUTURE. And then you change it.
>
> FUTURE foot foot football
> Urinate
> UT Majore, Schubert's *Great*, *Grand*, Gross Symphony
> (Ohhhhh, if the future *were* this symphony)
> *Friture*,
> Here's the cause. I change it and it becomes 'use' and even 'abuse', if need be. The need bes and you call it abuse, bus, taxi, bullet trains, bullets.
> *Bref*, I must already have found her book in your backstage room. Enjoy!!!!!!!8888888
> !!!!!!!8888888

What do I enjoy? This glass of wine. This glass, this wine, this and of. It is better to enjoy just of, otherwise your glass gets broken or it just gets and you have no idea what it gets or bill gates. But the night you are living or dying

or not-dying through is carrying sweets and ways. And apparently, according to Mrs Kei and even to that of Kasha you leave in the midst of chaos. You have no idea what is going on in your life and you naively think that you are in the middle of *os* – of bones, to make things easier to English-speaking countries. They speak English and realise all of a sudden you are in the midst of bones. And they say to themselves and their neighbours you are a dog. The point is you are a cat. Doesn't matter, doesn't matter. You concentrate on 'cha' because you are a cat in English and probably in the universe.

I'm writing to you, Mr Aleff, as a publisher and also as a musician because I admire what you do at the keyboard. But your legs seem to be giving way – to what, one may wonder and, to tell the truth, I do wonder to what kind of disaster your legs lead you down the garden path – you no longer can go *up* the garden path, even in your own garden, judging from how you walk on the stage. The stage you walked on was hardly a garden path, yet I had the feeling you couldn't walk on it as far as the piano. And when, at long last, you did reach the piano you produced a few sounds that spoke volumes about your state of mind and health. I wish I could have stored all these volumes in my library because I like your art, your performances and your fighting spirit. That is how you actually fight evil spirits in your life – at the piano.You lean upon the back of a chair and your arms go on flying over the keyboard as if you were Liszt whose photographs I've seen ever since I was a child.
Mr Aleff, I beg of you, do take care of your health and also of your technique which often lets you down on account of the wrong notes you play rather eagerly – as if they were the *right* notes. They are the *wrong* notes – the *wrong* ones, the *wrong* ones, I can assure you. You might think I'm not a professional musician and so have no right to judge your performances. But even an unprofessional musician can hear *your* wrong notes because they're very wrong, very wrong indeed, and whenever you hit them, they hit us – no doubt about that.
But the author I'm talking to you about can help you in no time at all. What you produce, achieve and probably aim at is what she calls 'chaos' and I do hear this chaos whenever you sit down at your piano. One might think you're god – that's how you behave on stage and probably in everyday life. And everyone does thinks like one and everyone sees you hobble with a stick around the stage in search of your piano which you eventually find at the end of your tether. You sit down at it and start playing some Schubert or Beethoven who, taking their cue from your hobbling and mumbling, talk to us about human fragility. In short, what you and your producer produce amounts to the chaos I spoke of at the beginning of my letter. That's why I say and write: 'You would be well-advised to have the appropriate vaccinations before playing any concert you spot on your agenda.'
My author says you must see the Chaos you create and muddle through, otherwise you won't see anything, not even a, o and s. I can *hear* your Chaos, can't you? What *can* you hear? Can you hear your own heart? Your heart is also chaotic, you know. Bum-bum---bum----bum-bumbumbumbumbumbumb ----------that's how it works. I strongly (I'm very strong, you know) advise you to read my author who brings me a lot of money, otherwise I wouldn't have bought two villas in Italy and on the Riviera. She says for instance, 'A Noble ideal electrified his soul.' It doesn't really matter whose soul was electrified to the point of becoming electricity itself. Do you know what Spinoza said? He said, *Deus sive natura*. Thanks to my author, you can say, 'Soul *sive* electricity.' They're identical twins.
She also says, 'Everyone has a sensor for the Soul's aspiration.' All right. What does the so-called Soul aspire to? To God; it always speaks of God. You should say to your soul, 'Before going to God you have to prepare

yourself in your numerous gyms and churches. You do  and say, ‘My God, my Lord, my

Word, my World, my Mother, Father, Brother, Nephew.’ Only then do you allow your Soul to advance, fly like a fly, fly like a kite, fly like a cat, fly at, at, at, at, at – at GMAIL.COM

Yours truly, ruly, rolling, tone
The-well-known Samurai Tuko Muko
Or Muko Tuko, if you prefer
^^^^^^^^^^^^^^

What does she actually say, my dear lady? She says probably nothing or just a few blabla (ballad?), as it is usually done everywhere until our doom and day, perhaps on the same day. She speaks about establishing the unwavering core, which might mean you have one: you have a core and you should be complemented on this core and its presence in your body and mind. However, it is not enough to have a core to rely upon because this core as well as any chord tends to waver from time to time, and whenever it does, it loses all its qualities and capacities to such a point it is no longer a core you have in your mind and soul. And even in Seoul you have nothing at all unless you have a core in your substance so that, if you go to Seoul without your equipment made up of cores and its choruses, you may lose your temper, balance and perish in some waves or other; or just in a bar while drinking your whisky without anyone’s soda.

But let us go back to chaos and its inborn and unbearable intricacies, its cicicesk;,kloioiqsov and so on ;;nlkijioln ;nlk. Chaos harbours (Harbour chaos) all sorts of possibilities and limitations, or factors of light and darkness, with their energy stirring within them. All this stirs and you see this stir, if you have enough time and can take any additional time out of your agenda, schedule and so on, and put it in front of you, anxious to disentangle this chaos of yours or someone else’s. Let us analyse my chaos, assuming and admitting that it belongs to me, for all my efforts directed against its tyranny over my body. Let us say it does *not* belong to me, and I am not even sure it belongs to God or to Creation, to put it bluntly. I do put it bluntly, very, very bluntly and realise it does not belong to anything and anybody. But whenever I put anything anywhere, I come across the luminous word ‘light’ – if I wish to survive in the world of darkness and murkiness. If this is the case with a diamond in it, I am supposed to extract ‘factors of light from Chaos and crystallise them to create one reality’, instead of creating thousands of them. That requires an appropriate length of time, apparently and non-apparently.

Well, you have the following text in front of you, under your very eyes and nose:

I bitterly regret I didn't invest in the same technique as Philipp's so we could directly excange our work without any conversion process in between. I would have went bankrupt but we all would sleep much better. I am really sorry.

What could my factors of light extract from this text? I invest. Investments are always beams of light unless you invest in a pyramid, whatever it is, instead of dealing with Egyptian pyramids.

The Institute will invest 5 million in the project.
You have all invested significant amounts of time and energy in making this project the success that it is.
France and Germany invest far more per capita in public transport than Britain.
There is a quirk in the rules that allows you to invest money without paying tax.
Dean tricked the old lady into giving him eight hundred pounds, claiming that he would invest it for her.
By investing small amounts regularly, you can smooth out the effects of sudden rises and falls in the stock market.

I write INVESTMENT and start looking for the beams of light that should prove twice, thrice and for all that this investment radiates its own positivity, its beneficial energy; perhaps throughout the universe, while I am at it. And yet the universe leaves me cold and the emails I get heat me up to such an extent I am asking myself if I have not been put in an oven or at least in a gigantic microwave where I acquire the taste of an Italian dish presumably washed down with a bottle of Barolo. What is more, I am this bottle of Barbaresco (not Barbarossa) as well, given the quantity of blood I always shed upon receiving emails and females including my wife and her numerous whims. How to embellish this chaos and accomplish the task of creation, of building up a harmonious, healthy and wealthy environment: my study, my bathroom, my garden, the planet I am living on for better or worse or worse or worse or worse?

All right, the beam or ray or May of light is the investment I touched upon somewhere above, and I cannot and should not hide from anybody the fact that I felt a huge amount of heat as I did so, which might indicate the source of this light – the sun himself, herself, myself. But if we get down to brass tacks (and if we do *not*, we shall always be down the drain), we shall realise – and I am not excluded from this group of realisers – that the investment we are talking about did not take place 20 years ago; nor did it take place 10 years ago. When *did* it take place? *Has* it taken place at all? The place it might have taken at the appointed stretch of time does not so much as exist. There are many non-existent stretches and patches of time where all sorts of investments are made, remade (the remake of an investment), and nobody minds; and nobody cares, to tell the truth. Why? Because these places, spots and what nots do not exist and the same goes rather fast (not slowly but surely) for the investments in question. They are in question indeed and no beam of light will ever redeem them.

So far Gerh has made no investment in this domain – the only domain I am interested in for the moment: even Romanée Conti and its domain cannot vie (why? why?) with this investment in the kingdom of importance; within the structure of my life, that is. My light and the harmony I am creating for the sake of my being (and for the unsake of my unbeing) are on the verge of collapse/success/tears/death/disaster/war. Of course we bar collapse, tears (unless they stem from joy), death, disaster, war and leave only success into which (into its very core) we put a huge beam of light. And we add to this beam the following item of news, ‘The teams were evenly matched until two quick goals from Robson *tipped the balance in favour* of England.’ That’s right – I tipped the balance in my own favour, disregarding my and your reality the murkiness of which has made me suffer so much during this exchange of emails between my producer and our sound (unsound) engineer to whom I sent the following text, ‘In the course of this Ping-Pong game of yours I might already have lost two years of my precious life. Now you do your best and worst and worst nost to overcome the problem related to your machines’ inborn discrepancy on your own; now you get in touch with manufacturers and they come up with a few bright ideas and manufacture a miracle

cure that doesnot cure me from my half-paralysis, and – thanks to your long-standing *je-m'en-foutisme* (you know what that means, don't you? I-you-fuckism, you polyglot, you) – I use wheelchairs in both airports and outside them.'

Why did I allude to the game of Ping-Pong? Because they (Phi and Ge) keep sending their stuff, versions and whatever from Berlin to Black Forest and back again to solve the discrepancy problem without producing too many discrepancies. So far they have proceeded thus: they obliterate a discrepancy, creating a short-term beam of light, merely a short beam of light. Harmonies, smiles and triumphs thrive for a little while; in a cramped house, needless to say. And then another discrepancy crops up and it is a bumper crop they have to deal with now. They reap what they have sown and sow a delicate, perfect version in a corner of their field. For a few seconds everything looks perfect and then they reap another bitter harvest. And Gerh writes another email, 'I'm puzzled, I'm disgusted, I'm a fool, I'm null and Phil is a void. But please get well. Do your best to get better and best. I ask you for improvement and utter health and upper health from the bottom of my heart.' I look at that bottom and find yet another discrepancy.

> I understand some places are really tricky. Under certain circumstances, Phil's computer seemed to be confused about which take is the real one. As I like to state in such cases, "Computer sind auch nur Menschen" - they may make mistakes or get tired. Anyway, Phil finally understood that talking is better than guessing.
> I bitterly regret I didn't invest in the same technique as Philipp's so we could directly excange our work without any conversion process in between. I would have went bankrupt but we all would sleep much better.
> I am really sorry.

But let us look closer at chaos and all the theories related to it, as Orson Welles often says in his movies, after saying, 'With your permission, ladies and gentlemen –' Sometimes I am rather loath to give him this permission, but he carries on, notwithstanding my reluctances and his own discrepancies. As for chaos and my analysis of it, I am tempted to confine my anatomy lessons to the 'personification of the primeval void', as they put it after asking repeatedly themselves and a few bystanders, 'What or who is the person in question?'

'What person? What question?' they are asked immediately and sometimes on the spot. (By their own minds and bystanders.)

'The person we're talking about. You see, there's what we call a piece of chaos instead of referring to a piece of a well-known four-letter word. And then we begin to wonder who or what personifies this piece of whatever we're talking about.'

'Greh and Philh or Filth,' I would answer, if this question were addressed to my persona or ego.

'Who are they, pray?'

'They're the piece of chaos I'm dealing with now.'

'Big deal!' they answer. 'You're too small for the word "big". All of you.'

'All right, you're right – it's no big deal. But I have to deal with it all the same, otherwise my coffer or box will never see the light of my fight with Chaos.'

So I have two persons to deal with, and eager as I am to crystallise them for the sake of real reality, I tamper with their bodies and souls. I say to their souls, 'Have you forgotten God? Will you dare disobey Him on all accounts, with the exception of your bank accounts?' Then I set about ill-treating their bodies which undergo all sorts of ill-treatment as they get in touch with my hands. I put them in a corner (in tight corners, in soft corners) and they also spend a lot of time on their heads, which looks less chaotic than their feet-down-to-earth postures. I wish they could carry on in my own sweet ways until doomsday or at least as far as their respective, irresponsible deathbeds. Then I might have a silver opportunity to get through six CDs that will be found inside the box I have been talking about for two years at least. 'We got through 12 rolls of film on our holiday,' said a friend of mine. Well, I have no rolls within my reach (not even a single bread roll) but a number of CDs are scattered all around my piano; and I see my name on them – along with their names. (Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Prokofiev, Bizet, Debussy.)

also called ***disseminated sclerosis*** a progressive disease of the central nervous system characterized by the destruction of the myelin sheath surrounding the nerve fibres of the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. As a result the transmission of nerve impulses becomes impaired, particularly in pathways involved with vision, sensation, and movement.

LOOKING FOR OUTLETS

a waste water outlet an outlet pipe

A CASUAL RELATIONSHIP

You drop a casual remark and if somebody hears it, if it does not just drop into a fountain, then you might strike up a casual conversation with the person you are facing on a sunny afternoon or even at the end of yet another twilight. It does not really matter *when* you drop this remark: what counts is the person whose ability to pick this remark up and play with it for a while should be above suspicion; otherwise your enterprise is likely to fall through (or drop through, if you prefer). I know a Japanese lady whose beauty is not above suspicion; it is rather under suspicion, but the subject matter I am about to unfold and enlarge upon has little in common with physical beauty, let alone bathing beauties and suchlike. You play a game of Ping-Pong on the understanding that the balls you are using are casual remarks, not the balls one can see on television or in a stadium. You drop a remark and your partner (the person you are facing is already your partner) catches it in mid-air and, after working on it for a while, sends it back to you, enabling your brains to find an appropriate answer, another casual remark (or ball). Actually

the whole situation reminds one of imperial balls adorned with drops of champagne, diamond necklaces, moustaches and epaulettes.

The lady I touched upon – to tell the truth, I have never really touched her – is my dignified partner in the domain of positive casualty. Once we were in a Japanese hotel which was so genuine, so averse to fakes that we were supposed to wash our bodies in the same bath. But I was reluctant to expose my nudity to her Japanese glances and so we did not plunge into those delicious waters at the same moment, within the same quarter of an hour. Once again I am harassed by the idea that I already told this story many years ago, perhaps before its birth: we often predict the future in our stories. Scheherazade might have told it too, but I am no longer embarrassed by this repetitive music on account of its link to the doctrine of eternal recurrence and on account of all those involved in its creation and propagation.

When I made my point clear – I was loath to witness her naked body at close range – she said, 'Gentlemen first,' which was as crystal-clear as the point I made. Everything was clear, cut-and-dried, and I proceeded along a corridor or something that looked like a Japanese corridor at the end of which I found a swimming pool scented with lavender. I walked around it for a quarter of an hour (it was another quarter of an hour) and returned to our room where my casual partner was waiting for my return, for my coming home, as it were. She left this home of ours in her turn and I closed my eyes, determined to pretend I had already reached the bottom of the most profound sleep one can think of. I heard her homecoming, but did not turn a hair; I did not turn anything, to be exact – not my body, God forbid. She lay down and probably began to gaze at the ceiling as if I was likely to spend the night right under it, like an ordinary or an extraordinary chandelier. She might have tried to visualise my body and its lascivious descent, but I remained faithful to my bed and I continue to wonder when she relinquished the idea of becoming my mistress or wife; once and for all.

Next morning I woke in the same bed and found no one by my side in spite of this lady's almost indecorous proximity. Of course I remember the moment when our eyes met and even greeted each other; at least they recognised each other, which was not an event one is usually tempted to write home about: I had made this lady's acquaintance almost 20 years before. I noticed a few additional wrinkles that her face displayed in defiance of my gaze and immediately realised she was frowning, not getting older before my very eyes. She eventually opened her mouth and said, 'You were asleep last night.'

'I'm in the habit of sleeping by night. Aren't you? Are you an early riser?'

'I'm a night owl, you know.'

'Actually you put me in the picture about your daily and nightly rituals a long time ago.'

'I'm delighted you don't forget anything related to my existence.'

'I can't say I recall every tiny incident I've witnessed over the last 20 years.'

'Can't you?'

'I can't.'

'I watched you toss and turn for three hours at least.'

'Thank you for your attention-span, patience and curiosity.'

'You were asleep when I came back to the room.'

'I'm sorry I didn't say, "Sweet dreams."'

'Nor did you kiss me "good night".'

'You know, dear Mami, I'm a gentleman after all.'

‘Nor did you pay me a visit.’

‘I’m a perfect gentleman.’

‘A perfect gentleman doesn’t *always* behave like a gentleman.’

In my childhood I played Ping-Pong and chess a lot because you had better do *something* in the domain of sport, otherwise your body might grow tired of its immobility and die of its own accord so as to devote its time to *perfect* immobility. I said at some point that one should not let a casual remark drop and get lost on the floor or even beneath the surface of the Earth. That is why people seldom drop this kind of remark (or any other kind of remark) when they are alone; even if you do like the sound of your voice, you do not indulge in casualness. And if you do, you just say something along the lines of, ‘Life’s awful. So is solitude. So is everything. I wish I were dead. Am I dead or not?’

‘A perfect gentleman doesn’t *always* behave like a gentleman.’ Contrary to the rules I staunchly observed in my childhood, I did not respond to this remark either by a spectacular smash or a delicate, trompe-l’œil manoeuvre. Nor did my fingers catch it in mid-air, which might have looked incongruous: such remarks should follow their trajectory and life until the very end, for they deserve it. Besides, by interfering with their will and perseverance, you are sure to miss out on their intricate, incorporated beauty that is more or less infinite, being a part of nature. So I let it fall on the ground, on the grass where it did become a part of nature, of the cosmos about which my wife and doctor talks every day and also by night, if my sleep declines my company. That is what I call ‘universal harmony’ that does not need our bear hugs, kisses and lifelong oaths. You contemplate a blade of grass or a casual remark – to your heart’s and soul’s content, and say to yourself that life should not overreach itself, for fear of realising there is nothing to reach apart from what is lying on the grass, at your feet.

We might call this game, pastime or life ‘Ping’ without adding another word, be it ‘Pong’ or ‘Kong’: under the circumstances we need no kings, no presidents of the globe, as Velimir Khlebnikov used to put it. You just listen to the sound of it: Ping, ping, ping, ping---------- and soon the whole world grows much smaller than the world they usually speak about upon seeing their long-lost friends either on a train or in the crowd. And if, for some reason, you grow weary of pings, you can replace them with pongs, making them resound in the air until doomsday.

Another remark I usually come by when engrossed in my pongs, pings and kongs, was born in my mind which is not as hopeless as one could imagine upon reading my thoughts and listening to my body during my piano recitals. I was talking to the same Japanese lady, and empathically she deplored (three or four times) the pain I felt in my legs and also in my unconscious. We were both in Tokyo and I inquired about my next hotel, its creature comforts and whereabouts. ‘It’s very near the last hotel you stayed in. You could go there, to your last hotel, on foot, if your feet were in working order.’

‘You’re right, they’re *not* in walking order.’

‘I’m not sure a taxi driver would agree to drive you over there. It’s just one meter from where you are now.’

‘If it’s no further than a yardstick, he might ask me to sit down on the front seat, by his side. Then he would say, “Here you are, sir. We’ve just arrived.’

‘It’s an English expression, you know. One meter from here.’

‘I know another English expression – within a stone’s throw. So, if I throw a stone from where I am, I might break a window in that hotel.’

‘I’m not sure you’ll break anything, given your numerous infirmities. But I’d pick up a stone and throw it, if I were you. And then I’d try my best to reach the stone on foot to find out if the hotel is within my reach.’

‘I’m so weak,’ I replied, ‘I’m pretty sure I won’t be able to throw the stone very far, breaking a few world records. And if my legs let me down, I’ll reach this stone on all fours. Anyway, I prefer animals to humans.’

That time we played the game of Ping-Pong, but all these pings and pongs are still in the air, adorning it with their casualness and harmony. They also remind us of Empedocles, of his love and strife that alternate to unburden the burden of spleen, of boredom, of our premature death, for we are often bored to death in this life of ours; and the number of deaths we come across during our boredom-spells eventually result in one death, the real one. We grow weary of love, and strife comes to our rescue, setting in motion our muscles and also our grey cells that become too grey, if we get stuck in love for an interminable stretch of time. And then we are shaken, taken, stuffed into a Hell cell, and our boredom bids us farewell, saying, ‘Don’t see me off – I know the way.’ Why does it know the way, the exit and the change we aspire to? Because it does it almost on a regular basis unless we definitively sink into deep despair; and even if we find ourselves in the grip of a shallow breakdown – a nervous one, a physical one – we dismiss any urge related to strife: under the circumstances, we long for depth, for deep despair. And strife leads us away from psychological chasms where we are bound to behave like vegetables and Freudian stones.

Our dismissal of strife may look like a peace conference during which you do your best to convince everyone that war is awful, especially if it has anything to do with the two World Wars we lived and died through, throughout. ‘Out, out, out,’ said the First World War. ‘Away, away, away,’ said the Second World War. And if someone points out (or away) that wars are fathers and mothers of the world, of life – on account of Empedocles’ and Heraclitus’ strife – you retort that it is better not to be born than to throw atomic bombs. Born-bomb, born-bomb, Ping-Pong, Ping-Pong. In this case it is better to get stuck with Ping (or Pong, as the case may be) without going any further. Being unborn is also a sort of Pong, and if you stick to your guns, you will never meet any Ping, however big-hearted and affable.

PONG

Pong, pong, pong, pong,
Pong, pong, pong, pong,
Pong, pong, pong,
Pong, pong, pong.

These are the guns to which you should stick to avoid any manifestation of life that is malignant enough to thread its way through the realm of non-being, pushing you into the crowd of beings, Seins, minds, controversies and humiliations. Even if you go so far as to add only one letter to any verse of this Seinless poem, you may land up in a real land – in the land of your birth, cries and tears.

Pong, pong, pong,
Pong, pong, ***g***ong.

The letter ‘g’ jars (gars) with the peace and quiet of the poem as it hurls you across the land of non-being, overlooking the perils you are bound to encounter in the multitude of beings. And if, after a number of years utterly wasted in our spiritual wasteland, you write in your diary, ‘The world has a multitude of problems, from homelessness to drugs and murder,’ Schopenhauer is likely to scold you for your callousness, for your incurable penchant for understatements. In this domain, it is better not to confuse our gong with any bell that is believed to save you from something – from your birth, among other things. Suppose you hear the gong of life and burst into tears at the very thought of what awaits you in *that* Beyond; but even at the moment of your deepest, life-oriented despair you may be saved by the bell.

Gong, gong, gong,
Bell

You should choose between the above poem and the following one:

Gone, gone, gone,
Hell

As usual you go back to Zoroaster (good and evil); for once you pay no homage to Zarathustra who goes on talking about the very last man, whereas you think in terms of birth, and what you are excited about is the *first* man, Adam or Kadmon. Every birth is the first; there is always the first time, in other terms and words. There is always the last time so that, once again, we fall back on Kant’s antinomies, on Ping-Pong, Yin-Yang, birth-death, heat and its opposite; on I-God and I-Worm. Through the concepts of reason we gain what is cantily called ‘total experience of the totality’ or ‘partial experience of the partiality’. That is why we reconcile both the Almighty and worms, both life and death, both heat and our Siberian wintertime. Our opposites meet, coincide and embrace; their opposites do just the opposite, but we do not care two hoots about their opposites because we are poles apart. It is difficult to reconcile these poles, opposites and aparts, but we make an effort and reconcile both everything and nothing. If we do not kiss both life and death, we shall never know what the kiss of life means and how it functions. In other words, if we do not kiss ourselves both life and death, we are not likely to live through the night.

Holding together brings good fortune.
Putting together brings good fortune.
Reconciliation brings good fortune.
Consolation brings good fortune.

Holding together brings bad fortune.
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Consolation brings bad fortune.

The above (master) piece of chaos proves once and for all that all the theories related to chaos omit a few details which might modify our *Weltanschaaung* so radically we would refuse to build up any theory whatever. Whatever you create or just think about is chaotic and the light you are supposed (at least in Japan) to extract from the mass of facts, beings, intentions and sentiments cannot be found, even if you ask Diogenes to lend you his torch. Let us remain, for a while, within the *I Ching* sphere, following its wisdom to the letter, to the letters you come across in the Richard Wilhelm translation. 'Power in the toes.' You wiggle your toes to your feet's content and realise they are even less powerful than your hands and fingers. At least, with their aid and moral support, you can pick up a cigarette, a pipe or a glass of wine, after pouring into it an enchanting quantity of Lafitte. Your toes might pick a cigarette, but a glass of wine presents you with an almost insurmountable obstacle: even if, after a few hours of assiduous exercises, you manage to grasp the glass without spilling any precious drops, you will not be able to bring it level with your mouth unless you are a world-renowned, yoga-saturated acrobat.

'After ridding himself of mistakes a man (or a woman, herself) has joy.' And what are *your* mistakes? You should ask yourself this question before ridding yourself of anything, and you are sure to realise you cannot answer this question; nor any other question, for that matter. One hexagram affirms, 'Moving forward is a big mistake.' Another hexagram contradicts this statement, saying, 'Moving backward is a big mistake.' 'Being rooted to the spot is a great mistake.' You should not rid yourself of all these mistakes, for what is left behind or before does not amount to one inch, let alone one yard.

If you haughtily maintain that chaos is everywhere, they are likely to reply, 'Mozart isn't chaotic. He reigns in the kingdom of harmony like the Queen of the Night.' All right, all right. But Palestrina is even more harmonious (or less chaotic) than Mozart. And the Gregorian chant is less chaotic than Pierre de la Rue. And silence is less chaotic than Dufay and Obrecht (not Utrecht) put together. Silence is likewise less chaotic than Ping or Pong, even if you put them together, hoping for a sort of universal and absolute peace. Sitting hunched over a computer all day can cause problems. Yet it is exactly what you do day in day out without touching any key, for fear of losing whiteness, nothingness, the non-chaotic state of the universe. Of course you might as well stay in your bed, doing nothing. You should neither wriggle your toes nor twiddle your thumbs. But such a manifestation of your adherence to your own theory of chaos is too passive, too easy to achieve and discard. If you take the trouble to switch on your computer without yielding to the Hemingwayan temptation – no day without a line – you will detach yourself from the world, even if you have never heard about lotus position. No pings, no pongs, no aums.

It is better (and not much worse) to listen to your own sound which might boil down to 'ping' or 'pong' or 'oil', Siberia, and so on. On, on, on, on, say optimists and humanists; so, so, so, so, say sceptics; s, s, s, s, say both silence and its partisans. Mami and I found neither any middle ground or any ground at all, which does not exclude the following statement: 'Once we'd found some common ground we got on very well together,' for the simple reason that the ground where we met and talked was the casualness I spoke of above, up there where words and sounds still counted – in days of yore. The whole book is located in days of yore and you can snatch from me both days and the book I am talking about and walking around; but you will never deprive me of yore, even if you kill me outright or rather outwrong.

What can we do with our lives provided we can do and deal with anything so grand as the very notion of life that also includes all deaths we can think of? Should we do anything with anything, given that things and anys are neither grand nor so? You just listen to 'ping' because you are sure to stretch out i-ii-ii-i-i-i-i-i-i-ii-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i, anxious to persevere in your being that might depend on this sound and not on your bank account.

i-ii-ii-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-ii-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i

Casualness transcends what is commonly and Buddhistically called 'our middle way' to which both Aristotle and the Buddha clung through their lives. When making a laudable attempt to define this in-between, middle-inspired way, you first define the opposites about which they say, 'They're poles apart in personality.' And usually – all individuals are more or less in love with something or somebody – they come up with the idea substantially made up of love and hate, of their eternal contrast. And what is, pray, in between, according to you and your associates? Indifference of course. But indifference may and indeed should differ from casualness because the latter is not indifferent towards itself: it clings to itself as fervently as the above mendicant. And it does not do it *casually*, contrary to what might be hastily assumed by an impatient observer; for once it flouts its own, deep-rooted tradition. At this point one is almost duty bound to quote Kojève to whom I have already directed my gaze many times: life is a comedy that should be played seriously. Yet I prefer my inversion of this maxim that goes thus, 'Life is a tragedy that should be played light-heartedly.' Actually you become an adept of casualness only when your heart goes on an Atkins or a crash diet at the end of which it would ascend to heaven, if your body's tendons, muscles and other components did not prevent it from doing so without let or hindrance.

Death is always about to drive you to ruin either through Shakespeare-encouraged assassins or multiple sclerosis. Of course the latter course might take decades, but however long you wither, being always at the end of your tether, you are supposed to repeat in passing (or in riding a horse), 'It will rain tonight.' And they kill you, notwithstanding your remissions and commissions. And for nothing in the world should you get sidetracked by arguments and weather forecasts and reports. And if someone says to you, 'Now I know it won't look very cool, but this hat will keep the sun out of your eyes,' you are supposed to say, 'It will rain tonight.' And if a woman (or a man) betrays you on someone's sofa or in your own house, you should say without shaking your head or nodding, 'It will rain tonight.'

If someone asks you the following question, 'Why do you always speak of rain?' you will answer, 'Because it will rain tonight.'

'The *I Ching* teaches that from rain came the *k'ien* principle, the active celestial principle to which all manifestations owe their existence. Is that what you mean?'

'I mean it will rain tonight.'

This remark is manifold and functional on account of its cosmic links: you do not speak of your legs that go on killing you as if any leg was a revolver or a Kalashnikov, not a supple, submissive crutch. If you speak of rain, you prove you are far from the selfishness they frown upon, shaking their heads and saying, 'Your attitude shows a selfish disregard for others and the universe.' You are likely to hear this rebuff, if you talk almost exclusively about the pain that kills you through your legs and pelvis, let alone your spine and shoulders. Even their blades do their best to kill you, but any complaint disconnected from others and the cosmos may elicit a negative response from a representative of your species; whereas the above-quoted remark links you not only to

clouds and the universe in general, but also to others: to Banquo, among other people. And also to his son and Shakespeare, mind you; and also to all those who have played Banquo's part ever since its appearance in the history of theatre. You utter it casually, en passant, and the universe responds by its soothing vibe.

> MS has a worldwide distribution but is five times more common in temperate regions than in tropical regions. The disease primarily occurs in individuals between the ages of 20 and 40, and women are affected by the disease more often than men. The onset of MS is usually gradual, with alternating intervals of exacerbation and remission of symptoms. Initial symptoms include numbness or tingling in the extremities or on the side of the face, muscle weakness, dizziness, unsteady gait, and visual disturbances such as blurred or double vision and partial blindness. The intensity of these early symptoms subside in most individuals for months or even years, but, as the disease progresses, remissions usually become shorter. In subsequent recurrences, old symptoms become more severe, and new signs and symptoms appear including abnormal reflexes, difficulty in coordinating and controlling movement, bladder dysfunction, and neuropsychological problems such as depression, memory loss, and emotional instability. Eventually the impairment of motor control can develop into complete paralysis. In about 30 percent of cases, the disease progresses without remission; however, most people with MS have a normal life expectancy.

Of course, instead of saying, 'It will rain tonight,' you might complain about the MS that seems to have set foot in your body. You just borrow a few words from the above text or just from above – from a helicopter hovering above the building where you live in spite of your forthcoming death. You drop your neighbours a number of hints, saying, 'Dizziness, unsteady gait, partial blindness, bladder dysfunction, depression.' But if you say inadvertently, 'My forthcoming death,' they might answer you thus, 'Most people with MS have a normal life expectancy.' Immediately you ask yourself what they mean by a *normal* life expectancy, and you recall your parents who died at the age of 66 (your father) and at the age of 70 (your mother). But if you happen to touch upon your parents with regard to your disease, any neighbour of yours will remind you of the leaps and bounds performed by medicine and doctors. For a few minutes, all of them leap and bound before your very eyes – like dogs or apes or Tarzans and their mistresses. Then everything subsides and you feel the same pain: in your legs, in your shoulders, in any blade you happen to see in your kitchen and elsewhere.

My life offered me another account of MS's settlement in my body and during the phone calls I give whenever in need of turning to somebody instead of using mirrors and echoes. I was speaking to a woman I have known for more than 40 years – over the phone, as usual. (Only to my wife do I sometimes speak in a *real* portion of space.) Laughter is the best medicine and I begin to laugh as soon as I feel a pain or have a strange foreboding that something might and must go wrong. (And it does, it does, it always does.) The woman I was talking to has been a doctor for more than 50 years, and I put her in the picture about my pains, quite forgetting (it had just slipped my mind) that I am not very good at sharing my worries. 'You'd better not laugh for once,' she said. 'You might have multiple sclerosis.'

Even if I did suffer from this debilitating disease, my wife would say, 'You suffer from the fertility of your imagination that can't leave you alone, always building up new theories, creating diseases out of nothing. There's

nothing, nothing, nothing – at least in their domain, in the domain of cancers, multiple sclerosis and multiple paralyses. They've already reached nirvana, whereas your nirvanism got stuck at the very first stage of its development, failing to reach its maturity, its perfect lotus. But suppose you have a few elements of what they wrongly call multiple sclerosis. What you should rely upon is its lack of multiplicity, its thinness, its poverty, its one-dimensional character. You must have read Marcuse's book about a one-dimensional creature and I advise you to transfer this man or woman into your body where, presumably, a dozen sclerotic molecules disport themselves. At first you should realise that there are no dimensions to their existence and sports, none whatsoever except one dimension – their own stupidity and ignorance. They're even more stupid and null and void than Marcuse's man Marxistily chained to capitalism, its values or rather surplus values and production. They're so poor that even Hugo's heroes and heroines wouldn't accept their creature discomforts, going on strikes whenever forced to follow in Val's and Jean's footsteps. I suggest we put them on a starvation diet – in the first place, in the second place and even in the 35th place. In the 36th place they'll finally starve to death unless they're all Spinozists and therefore determined to persevere in their beings at all costs, primarily at the cost of injuring, damaging and killing your health-bursting, immortality-boasting body.'

'I'm hungry,' I said.

'If you have dinner, if only for the sake of holding my thesis up to ridicule, your one-dimensional S will outgrow itself and become SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS in the process.'

'Or just SS,' I suggested.

'And don't forget that the bugs I'm entertaining you with are chaotic and consequently might be structured and organised like Mondrian's paintings and Schoenberg's late masterpieces.'

'How to extract light from bugs and viruses?'

'Suppose your nights are fraught with viruses, but every dawn extracts a lot of light from them – of its own accord, mind you. No one asked Aurora to come.'

'Hölderlin did. And don't the English say, "The darkest hour is just before the dawn"? Would they say that if there were no such thing as the dawn?'

'There *is* such a thing, whereas you firmly believe there are only darkest hours or just dark hours. A dark hour is enough to lower your morale.'

'And if I have *le morale à zero*?'

'Then it will go down as far as – 45. As if you were in Siberia. I wish you wouldn't sit brooding in your room all day.'

'I suffer from MB.'

Upon hearing the word 'mushroom', many individuals recall atomic bombs, especially if the word is uttered by a Japanese person, not necessarily in Japan. In a Bergman film ignored by contemporary teenagers, a middle-aged man unwillingly airs his nightmares and persecution manias in front of a priest. 'What are you afraid of?'

'Not of Virginia Woolf, not of Virginia Woolf.'

'Of whom? Of what?'

'Of atomic bombs. One of them might fall on my head.'

'*Seriez-vous tombé sur la tête*?'

‘I beg your pardon?’

‘Never mind, never mind.’

‘I’m also afraid of the Chinese. And Virginia Woolf wasn’t of Chinese origin. Was she?’

‘No, no, of course not. As far as I know. Perhaps her great-grandmother. No idea.’

‘The Chinese might come over here. As the Americans did at the end of the Second World War.’

‘Do the Chinese have a lot in common with the Americans? With English-speaking countries, generally speaking?’

‘Some of them speak English or rather American.’

‘Is that why they’re likely to come over here? According to you?’

‘And to my wife.’

‘What would they do in *our* country?’

‘They would drop atom bombs on our heads.’

I have no idea what I would have done in the doctor’s or priest’s shoes, and I do not recall what he actually did to soothe the crying baby: his visitor did look like a baby and at some point he burst into tears, letting his wife wipe them off his face, neck and arms. I might go so far as to say that the Chinese are incapable of throwing anything or anybody for the simple reason that they have no means of transport. Upon hearing ‘How so?’ I would start talking about their population and its density, saying, for instance, ‘They’re squashed like sardines in their country, and sardines don’t throw anything, not even pebbles. Let alone atom bombs, you know.’ And if he (my visitor) turned out to be utterly ignorant of sardines and their lives (not of their taste, though), I would say that, to transport a bomb, even if it has no atoms inside it, you need an airplane like the one we regularly see in the documentaries devoted to Hiroshima and its catastrophe. And every airplane – at least to my knowledge – needs an airport or at least a launching pad; but there are neither in China because of its population and its proverbial density. ‘At some point they decided to ask a thousand people to form a sort of runway with their bodies, especially with their heads, but it didn’t work – even three thousand people wouldn’t be solid enough to keep a plane on their shoulders.’

And what about the visit they might pay us in our native land? I would remind my patient of Stalin’s funeral during which more than 3000 people died: sardines die in their tins whenever they attempt to move. And they do attempt to move, otherwise we would not find them dead in the tins we open as soon as we feel like eating a few sardines as an appetizer. Sure enough, they put them alive in the tins I used to see in Soviet shops along with sprats, cod-liver oil and rotten eggs. And then they die the death after a week.

And what if you read a blood-curdling piece of news? In *The New York Times*, of all newspapers and papers? ‘A new arms race has been announced. The I.N.F. Treaty is not the first victim of the militarisation of world affairs. In 2002, the United States withdrew from the Antiballistic Missile Treaty; this year, from the Iran nuclear deal. Military expenditure has soared to astronomical levels and keeps rising.’ In the same article Mikhail Gorbachev boasts about his own peace-inspired and harmony-oriented achievements, touching upon the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (1991) which the Soviet Union signed with President George W. Bush and also upon ‘our agreement on radical cuts in tactical nuclear arms, and the New Start Treaty’. As for Donald Trump, he signs only New Finish Treaties and announces his country’s intention to build up nuclear arms. What kind of finish does he have in mind? one might ask in a tremulous voice, one’s eyebrows rising higher and higher as if determined to touch the ceiling. What for? To make sure it offers adequate protection against atom bombs?

For a little while, you are at pains to suppress your murderous instincts that are supposed to guide you either to the White House or to Brussels where Donald Trump spends a few days every year. Then you decide to relegate him to his Tower – to those days when he was just a billionaire, nothing more, nothing less; or just a mere nothing. In other words, you should read the article backwards, starting at the end and climbing higher and higher until you reach the opening words 'Over 30 years ago'. And over 30 years ago Trump kept on going bankrupt, according to his enemies who boldly affirm that only by robbing his native country and his closest associates was that *pagliaccio* able to rise and go to the White House.

Carried away by your time-machine élan, you should not however overstep the boundaries of what seems reasonable with regard to arms races and cold wars. Let us stop at Gorbachev's era and refrain from paying homage to Khrushchev, for all his merits and demerits. And what about atom bombs and their clouds? Just say, 'Er, I'm wavering between the fish soup and the mushroom tart.' I can recommend the chicken in mushroom sauce: it's delicious.

> The cause of MS remains uncertain, although evidence suggests that the disease results from an autoimmune reaction in which a malfunctioning immune system produces white blood cells called Tlymphocytes that react with and damage the body's own cells, specifically the myelin sheath of nerve fibres. The trigger for this autoimmune reaction is not known, but it may be caused by exposure to a virus.
> There is no cure for MS, but a number of medications, such as corticosteroids, are used to alleviate symptoms. Immunotherapy with different forms of beta interferon, a protein the body normally produces to modulate the immune response, is used to reduce the severity and frequency of the exacerbation periods of the disease.

I do not remember what they call these continuous ups and downs. Remissions, missions? Ups' luxurious lifestyle and personal ostentation are both hated and envied – by downs, needless to say. The Middle Way says to a group of downs: 'Why do you have a down on ups? I think they seem really nice, not to say gorgeous.' 'The cosmos should stick to your way,' they (downs) say to the Middle Way as they prepare for yet another battle with ups. 'Down with ups,' has been their battle cry from time immemorial.

This morning I felt slightly better, but this 'slightly' disappeared in the afternoon and I realised I could not rise and go *anywhere*, let alone Hemisree or another Hemisphere. And what about the three lavatories I own within my house's rather spacious interior? I am in the living room and on my way to the kitchen – I am not on a hunger strike yet – I am bound to walk by one of the lavatories or toilettes or bogs, johns and Fitzgeralds. And I had better not miss this opportunity.

As one of my doctors put it, 'Don't complain. In my opinion, you should thank God for allowing you to sleep more or less peacefully. Your neighbour told me you'd never screamed at night. So far.' I still do not scream at night, but I cry rather often.

For whom did stained-glass masters work? And Caravaggio? Saint-Louis-des-Français in Rome. Saint-Savin-sur-Gartembre.

‘You should move at all cost.’

‘Will you count the cost after my utter collapse?’

‘Your legs and the rest of your body will lose their will to live, if you stay in bed.’

‘I’ll take advantage of their will to lie and stay down. Any will is beneficent to one’s health.’

‘Can’t you move at all? Are you paralysed?’

‘I can move my feet, legs and even the rest of my body, provided I do my aerobics in bed.’

‘Are you dead?’

‘Not yet.’

There is no cure for death, but a number of medications, such as corticosteroids, are used to alleviate symptoms.

THE CROOKED STRAIGHT

Something is wrong with my back, and it I am convinced it is not a good omen or a good man, as they say sometimes. Or a good woman of course. But neither a good man or a good woman can good me any good, as I have realised (slowly but surely) over the last eight months during which I must have endured what they call the Cross, without adding any syllable to this statement. Anyway, I wish my spine or my mind were as straight as the aria sung in Haendel’s (Handel’s) The *Messiah* that features the following words (they must necessarily follow some prophecy or other): ‘And every mountain and hill made low, / The crooked straight and the rough places plain.’

My doctors talk to me thus, ‘It’s too late for swimming and swimming pools.’ I suppose, it is also too late for synchronised swimming, all the more since I have never been synchronised with anyone, not even with Plato and Dante. I need no doctors to realise that, if imprisoned, I would not scale the high prison wall and run off; what is more or less, even a low wall would be an everlasting obstacle to my obstacle race, alias my life. ‘No passaram, no pass, no aram.’ Anyway, I can stand up on the pedals of my bike to get extra power as I cycle up the hill; in my room. Apparently, it is good for my health, muscles, measles and what not; and I can do it all the more self-assuredly as I am not afraid of falling either physically or spiritually: my Adam-instigated fall took place (and space) a long time ago, almost on the day of my birth.

This is crooked:

~ ~ ~

This is straight:

If you attempt to carry out this metamorphosis li-literally, sticking to stylistic rules, you will have to provide examples and write a few sentences on a blackboard. And every blackboard is as black as eternal night. For instance: (Ah, those instances!!! This libhlikjb is an instance. This ↕ is an instance ((going to God or to Hell)). This ouch, ow!, ouch!, Ow, stop it, you're hurting me! is an instance. What isn't an instance? An instant.)

> I am not sure I shall go to Hell, even if they send me to this region a dozen times accentuated by a score of exclamation marks: I cannot walk properly at the moment and anyway I have no idea which way either madness or Hell or Paradise lies, and even our King Lear is not likely to give me a helping hand, being too engrossed in his monologue entitled *Never*. Of course this is the only straight path we can take and explore to our foot's content, assured as we are that no dreams will ever come true and all the disasters we can lay our hands on will stay with us not only in our minds, but also in our legs which, for all their infirmities, continue (go on, go on) to walk along these letters: N, E, V, E, R.
> And you go on answering questions, if you wish. 'Is God at our disposal?'
> 'Never. Not now, not once, not upon, not space, not will.'
> 'And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.'
> 'Never, neither revealed, nor revelled. Levelled, levelled, levelled.'
> 'For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. What it are we talking about?'
> 'Never, hath spoken King Lear.'
> 'And all flesh shall see it together. I mean, God's glory that has been lying scattered around the globe for many centuries, if not millennia.'
> 'Never will Eve pluck anything from anywhere. God made billions before the universe.com bubble burst.'

Yes, it is easier to say 'never' or 'ever', instead of embroidering upon death and life and life-magazines and death-magazines. That is how one sets oneself straight – even Rigoletto can do it in no time at all. It is true that he had better not say to himself while looking at his hunch (pleased as Punch) in a mirror: 'Never, ever, never, ever.' What he must do is expressed, described and shown by the above straight line: ----------. That is what Rigoletto's capillaries look like now. Or his blood cells. Or his bowels. Or his numerous fingers.

Actually Haendel's music is much straighter than that of Bach whose propensity for fugues and labyrinthine musings are well known and require a lot of effort on our part; and let us not forget that our part is very small indeed: we could hold it in the palm of our hand. Haendel goes straight to the point and the point is right here,

strange as it may appear: ● Why not go to it straightaway? You say ‘straight’ and you do not even have to add

‘away’: you will go anyway and reach the point and hug it Russianly, rustically, bearly, unbearably.

And I will shake all nations;
And the desire of all nations shall come.

The desire for what? Do shake all nations without exception. There are more nations in this part of the universe than you can shake a stick at. There are more sticks.

Besides, Bach’s *Passions* are too beautiful. (Too many personalities involved.) You are never beautiful, when you go straight to the point; alone.

I am under stress only when I am too far from