

VALERY ALEFF

MONO-NO AWARE

POETIC LICENCE

1

The world is so fragile *one* might put it in a box after writing ‘Fragile’ on top of it. But who is the One I am talking about? Or just ‘one’—a man or woman in the street? Or God? The One. The Absolute, as some philosophers define Him. There are so many of them and He (or She) is one, alone, hovering over our heads or taking refuge on a star we cannot see and admire. No one will put the world in a cardboard box, otherwise it would already have been put somewhere. The world happens to be nowhere, which contributes to its fragility, its volatility. The world is so volatile it would disappear utterly if one could bring it to boiling point and leave it in this state for an hour or two.

Whenever I open my eyes I see the canopy of my bed as if I had been sleeping all the time. This canopy is hanging over me like the vault of heaven all the more so since there is no difference between them: both are pictures.

I am writing for a different world, for the world where something happens and endures—where something happens outside time, outside space and all other entities we are so fond of; where something happens outside Man. There is nothing outside God. At least I hope these notes of mine are not outside God.

So I meditate on the fragility of the world, becoming fragile myself: I belong in the world, however much I mistrust it. I am fragile but no one puts me in a box where I might feel at ease—the feeling I do not mistrust. You feel at ease or you don’t. If you do, however, you may survive in this world which is so hostile and fragile that many philosophers thought we should keep away from it by staying in the kingdom of the unborn, in the realm of nothingness. I am not sure those who are unborn belong in the realm of nothingness. They are unborn, which means they can be born one day or other, whereas there are people or substances or their absences that will never be born for the simple reason that they do not exist. Actually their absences might have been born at some point.

2

Do I exist? I may exist whenever I look at my bed, at my cat that sleeps with me, enjoying herself to the utmost, I suppose. Why should I suppose such a thing? Why should I suppose anything? Because I should think in order not to let myself down, in order to survive for the sake of life. A tautology, isn’t it? You survive, you live. You are tautological. How many people know what tautology means? I am not writing for those who stay in this world and pretend it is the best world imaginable. They have no imagination. Let me imagine another world or another man—myself. I do not live. I just picture myself to myself. Here is this picture.

It is not a picture. A drawing perhaps; or a doodle. Where can this doodle be found? Anywhere, everywhere. What is nowhere is everywhere. That is what I said in a film they shot in Kyoto, in Petersburg, in Moscow and in France.

VALERY ALEFF
POET, NOVELIST, ESSAYIST, PLAYWRIGHT, PIANIST, CONDUCTOR, STAGE
DIRECTOR AND ACTOR

The title I suggested. How gullible I was.

On October 2, 2007 I met the film director in Tokyo. Our third meeting. A week afterwards, in Moscow, I received the following email:

Thank you very much for the wonderful time I had in Tokyo the other day.

Talking with you, always gives me a lot of intellectual stimulation. I am very thankful that it turned out to be a meeting that provided me with good ideas.

Ever since, we have been discussing various matters at the company and we have decided to do a documentary series for a total of about 110 minutes.

This will be a program to portray your reflective artistic features as a whole. Everybody accepted the idea with excitement and enthusiasm.

Along with such ideas of the program, however, the location plan has been expanded to include three major cities; Kyoto, Moscow (St. Petersburg), and Paris.

This Japanese documentary mirrors my life to some extent—to *their* extent. I cannot measure their extent or even the extent to which I go to express my thoughts. Is there a language we know adequately, in minutest detail? No language is accessible to human beings except screams, tears and laughs. A clichéd remark. Let me laugh at my own banality.

I laugh now and then so I speak the human language. I also speak the language of my cat, otherwise she would not understand me. She does, if you take into account how she reacts to my caresses, to my stroking her chin. She is sleeping on my bed at this moment, at the time when I write about her instead of stroking her chin, her fur. Is it not better to stroke animals instead of writing novels?

I am not writing anything, judging from what I already have written, fed into my computer—with the exception of the Japanese email. It is nothing or nothingness into which I might be born if I could bear existence as such. What is existence? Is it something you can stroke? Perhaps it is. Perhaps my cat is much more alive than I am; she would die of boredom if she read my notes. Luckily, she reads only my caresses, the games I play with her.

Am I divine or not? What is my status in the world where I feel like a stranger, where I am a stranger about whom Camus did not think when writing his novel of sorts? Am I God? I might become the One

if I could manage to keep my thoughts under control. I cannot. I cannot even become one of the gods who populate the universe where so many stars are twinkling as if doubting the presence of the gods, of God. Do they doubt anything? My doubts cast aspersions on my origin: the gods do not doubt. Neither does God. The Japanese thought their Emperor was the sun, although he pointed out on several occasions he had no particular spots on his skin which was as immaculate as that of any of his subjects. At the end of the Second World War.

I was born after its unhappy end; all wars have unhappy endings because they cannot end otherwise. Another clichéd remark. Let me think trivially for a while so as not to be burdened with exceptional thoughts, with exceptional births. Let me assume I was born a human with a greater ability for writing nonsense than his fellow creatures. Just a collection of notes, a collection of butterflies prepared to disappear at very short notice. These butterflies are not dead; nor are they alive. Still, they can fly and disappear. Let them disappear, at least for a while. Let me talk about the people who adore butterflies without identifying with them. The Japanese. Do they adore butterflies? They adore fishes—I am quite aware of the fact. There are facts in this book of mine, not only dreams. Didn't I write a poem on Japanese fishes thrown into the ponds where they disport themselves? To some extent?

Fish are more helpless
Than kittens. Let them adorn
Japanese gardens,
Those beautiful prisons.

I included this poem in the script destined for the Japanese film director who makes so much fuss about my life or rather about how I enter various houses, flats or monasteries that I keep wondering if I have done anything else over the last sixty years. I just go in and out—that is what I do all the time, provided no one interferes with my comings and goings.

Even if I sit on my 'divan' I get the feeling someone interferes with this ritual of mine. I wrote 'divine', but it was a spelling error. I am not divine because I am not a Japanese Emperor. Besides, even Japanese Emperors are not divine any more because one of them—Hirohito—renounced his divine status. Will I ever renounce my divine status? I am a poet after all.

4

Let me prove it. I'll compose another poem on the spur of the moment.

It is not enough to wish to compose a poem: not all of our wishes come true in the long run. Some of my wishes do come true in the long run, but they are so short of the mark I wish I had not have given birth to them. So many children of mine are born or unborn—out of wedlock. Let them

caper about until I die.

Are these my thoughts? They must be mine, otherwise I would not have jotted them down. Did I jot them down? Another poem would be in order. A poem about what? About the Second World War? After all it is the subject matter of this book—the Second World War viewed from the Japanese side or site, according to modern parlance. As many as five hundred high officers committed suicide when it was over, when they were done away with, in a sense. The Emperor said on the radio he was renouncing his divine status. The speaker who had announced the announcement committed suicide. The Emperor did not. Was it his fault? He lived for another forty years or more, a little bit more. Was it worth while living in the Land of Dishonour for so many years? Was he dishonoured? He was alive, taking care of his garden, of his insects. Didn't they deserve his care?

Another poem would be in order. I have written a poem about a woman who does not answer my letters. A Japanese attitude—either they answer or take a vow of silence instead of dropping you a line, 'Don't you think we'd better part for a while?' Either they write a poem to match the one they received or they do not answer at all as if silence were not only the source of music but also an appropriate answer to a letter.

That is what she does or does not. The poem I composed for her:

You're more distant than the star
I cannot see. You're not in my hotel
Room. Nor are you
In the hall where I listen to your
Music; where I play your
Music.

I play
Your music.

I do not play anything. Just a figure of speech, poetic license. I listen to symphonies, quartets and oratorios. Do I? I just listen to this music of mine; at least I hope so. A few thoughts, old-fashioned thoughts. All thoughts are precious on condition that they sound old-fashioned and musical. Other thoughts are inimical to creative expression. Are they thoughts or something else? Neither butterflies nor any other insects.

My cat is lying on my bed. She does not climb up onto the canopy hanging over her; yet she climbs up all day long as if bound for heaven or another world situated above ours. Sometimes I put her on the

canopy to let her enjoy the upper terrace of my bedroom, its heavenly region. She may enjoy it, for all I know. I also know she is capable of jumping from these heights in order to pursue me throughout my flat. But when *I* pursue her she does her best to elude me—only to fall on some carpet or other and curl up in expectation of my caresses. What else could I do? I am not likely to read a philosophical treatise when she awaits my fingers.

'Nevermore' should become my keyword if I want to survive in the world where I have no foothold. *Foolhold*. Wordplay is always in the offing. After all, there is such a thing as a fool's paradise. I was a lodger—a glorified lodger—in one of those paradises for almost half-a-year, fascinated as I was by what the Japanese called an interesting project. This project concerned my persona, not my inner self; but I came across this inconsistency afterwards. At the beginning I thought they wanted to shoot a film about my many-sided personality, about my inner self which does not limit itself to other people's ideas about how I play or write, about how I behave. If you shoot a film about somebody you should 'delve' into his or her body and soul—old use—to uncover the truth or part of it, a transitory truth. There are no other truths on earth, I'm afraid. It does not mean there are none in heaven. I am straying from the point. I wish I knew where the point should be with regard to my undertaking. Straying is another keyword. I am a stray cat or dog. There are dogs that hit it off with cats. No wonder my cat strokes and licks my face as she joins me in bed every night. Am I a dog or just another cat?

Where is she? I used to shun domestic animals when engrossed in a book, in any book—in my novel or Spinoza's *Ethics*. Now I welcome them in my terrestrial abode: cats and dogs. A friend of mine keeps a rat in his house. I have never done anything of the sort. I might do in the future: no one and nothing can distract me from my reading, from my writing. I thought I would content myself with reading—for the rest of my life. I am writing again to distort my thoughts, my life, my cat, my Japanese encounters. Simone Sinoret said she could not bear to be mistrusted in the moments of truth. She would tell the truth and no one believed her. I am not telling the truth; I am telling *another* truth. Let me sound pompous and trite. Can I use the word 'trout' to provide a musical transition from the previous sentence to the one I am writing now? After all, Schubert wrote a piece entitled *Trout* (*Forellen-Quintet*); and Schubert is one of the protagonists of this novel.

I do not think the Japanese adore trouts. Anyway, let me not get entangled in words which are old-fashioned now: no one takes them seriously. Only ideas and facts count in today's world. And their wordings are of no importance. The cat is sitting on my computer—on top of the world. On top of words.

What is on top of the world (and words)? A poem. The Japanese crew asked me if I had been influenced by Lady Murasaki's novel *The Tale of Genji*. I said I had been. And I pointed out I was mostly influenced by the number of poems she had included in her book—around eight hundred. Or was it the other way round? Did she first write all those poems to kill time? Did she kill it? Why do we

ever try to *kill* time instead of nursing it, stroking it, kissing it? Time is a cat, isn't it? Of course we occasionally kill a stretch of time. Borges thought it was better to kill eternity that is probably a sphinx. I'll just write about the film where my life was to be told in minute detail.

6

I had another project in mind, another Japanese project. The Second World War viewed from Tokyo, from the Emperor's Palace. Recently I saw a film entitled *The Sun* where the whole story is told in a few images, a few words: the late Emperor did not speak much. But whenever he did utter some words, they were to the point. Sometimes to the point of no return. He could not restore his divine status after divesting himself of the power and authority conferred by this status. What remained was flowers and insects. And cats probably. Did he enjoy the company of a cat? If he did not, I score a point over him.

I was on a plane, flying over Russia to Tokyo where I was awaited by my agent whose company I needed to get to Kyoto for the final edit of *my* film, for the final cut—the unkindest cut of all. (In Japan foreign artists don't go around unaided.) On the plane—business class—I saw the film on the late Emperor, on his poems, on his biological excursions situated outside the war which was already lost. Apparently the Japanese had lost no wars before the Americans inflicted such a wound on their national pride. But overnight they changed their minds: their hatred turned into love because of the announcement made by the Emperor. They used to throw their bodies (and souls) into the ocean, bent on escaping the dishonour that a defeat would inevitably bring upon them. Now they collaborated with their victors to obey the Emperor's command. Yet the Emperor was no longer a god. Why obey a human? 'Until August 1945 the *chu* code of loyalty demanded of the Japanese people that they fight to the last man against the enemy. When the Emperor changed the requirements of *chu* by broadcasting Japan's capitulation, the Japanese outdid themselves in expressing their cooperation with their victors' (Marshall McLuhan & Bruce R. Powers, *The Global Village*).

Does this mean the Japanese are flexible? In *The Book of Tea*, Okakuro Kakuzo speaks of a 'constant readjustment to our surroundings'. Wasn't I near the filmmaker and his cronies during the shooting of this long, boring film? Why didn't they adjust to their surroundings, to myself? 'The "observing self" is eliminated; a man "loses himself".' Why didn't they lose anything except money and time? But they are paid for the job; I am not. Why did they send me the material to allow me to choose appropriate sequences? Why did I spend so much time writing down my suggestions, a chronometer in my hand?

At this point the common writer might say to the common reader, 'If there's anything you don't understand, I'll be happy to explain.' But I am writing for another world where readers adore dark ladies and dark horses. Everything is made crystal clear in today's works of art; only their makers are mysterious—a prey for paparazzi's curiosity and greediness. Writers proceed from point A to point B

and then to point C. Let me start at point L.

In *The Book of Tea*, Okakura Kakuzo enlarges upon the 'value of suggestion': 'In leaving something unsaid the beholder is given a chance to complete the idea and thus a great masterpiece irresistibly rivets your attention until you seem to become actually a part of it. A vacuum is there for you to enter and fill up to the full measure of your aesthetic emotion.' Let the paparazi chase this work of mine, all my works. Let them ponder over my enigmas. Let them report from other worlds. Let them inhabit other worlds.

7

Whoever will watch such a film? as my Moscow friend put it. Indeed, why should anyone watch this film where I recite only two poems, where I play only four pieces? Brahms, Silvestrov, Schubert, Chopin. As if there had been no other composers in my life, no other poems. But you cannot put everything into a film that lasts 110 minutes. Who cares what these minutes are made of? What do they make up? Just another film, another production, another producer. The one I had to face in Kyoto left the studio without so much as a by-your-leave; without saying goodbye, in other words. How angry he was! I did not salute his production with a poem. Here is a poem I might have written during my stay in Kyoto:

Tortures are tortuous. The one you chose
Is an aesthetic torture—something one doesn't feel
With one's body or soul. One's mind suffers
In the process. One's mind rebels—
To no purpose. 'To no purpose' is your
Torture. Or 'to another purpose'. Your customers are always
Right. So are you. I'm always
Wrong—a glorified loser. A poet you disdain.

8

When did all this start? In 1905? In my childhood I heard a story about the invincibility of the Russian army and navy. My father uttered a few arrogant words, 'Russia has never lost a war in her long history.' A short story, there is no denying it; but for a child every fact is a story—a fairy tale told by his nurse, his grandmother and occasionally his father or uncle. At school, however, I learnt we had been defeated many times by the Tartars and also by the Japanese in Port Arthur.

Japan decided to launch a war against Russia by early 1903, but the Russians had no inkling of what was going on in the Japanese minds as if foreshadowing the attack on Pearl Harbor which was to take place almost forty years afterwards. In February next year Japan's navy bombarded and quickly

bottled up the Russian Far Eastern fleet in Port Arthur of which I heard in my childhood: a book entitled *Port Arthur* stood on one of our shelves. On its cover a slit-eyed soldier was baring his teeth at his Russian counterpart. Emboldened by my father's patriotic assertion, however, I assumed that the Russians had won the battle.

The Japanese did not limit their military harassment to the sea, attacking the city from the land as well. A major offensive was staged in April against Liaotung, spearheading the campaigns against Russian ports in Manchuria. For once the Japanese seemed to neglect their war code which declared that the move was decisive. Oddly enough, they adopted a Russian stratagem—the one glorified in *War and Peace*—by preventing the Russian navy from posing a threat to the Japanese navy. (Kutuzov's tactics.)

There was no decisive move on the part of the Japanese film director except that he approached me in Osaka two years ago to suggest we should make a documentary. Little by little the project became a decisive move as it outgrew Kyoto and even Japan, but once the shooting was over the real offensive got underway. And it was successful only because they did their best to prevent me from putting my ideas and opinions across. They just nodded their heads, took notes and did nothing at all apart from taking notes, nodding their heads and lulling me into a false sense of security. They still regard this offensive as a success.

In March 1905, the Japanese and Russian forces engaged in the Battle of Mukden, where 250,000 Japanese engaged 350,000 Russians with no decisive result.

My poor self engaged single-handedly in the Battle of Kyoto. I was facing five Japanese warriors, five samourais. The result was decisive, I'm afraid.

The Russian Baltic Fleet, which had sailed halfway round the world in order to lift the blockade on Port Arthur, arrived in Tsushima Straits in May 1905, to be attacked by the Japanese fleet under Admiral Heihachiro Togo in one of the most spectacular naval engagements of modern times. My adventure pales into insignificance beside the Russian defeat. Yet I don't think my Japanese enemies were victorious. Just a bad documentary—nothing to write home about. Actually I don't mind being defeated: I am used to it. A good defeat is better than a bad victory. I am reminded of the heavy cruiser *Varyag* flaunting four funnels—the glorious monument to the Russian defeat in 1905. The Russians sank it, thereby killing two birds with one stone: they deprived the Japanese of their spoils of victory and inspired the authors of the famous song that every self-respecting Russian knows by heart.

Our proud *Varyag*
Doesn't surrender to the enemy.
None of us plead for mercy.

Don't we live for the sake of a song?

9

My agent. His missives.

Dear Maestro,

Before you go Kyoto, please read this.

I am still waiting for your reply about whether you would accept the premise that I mentioned in my previous fax.

I am sorry for urging you many times. Please forgive my impoliteness.

Both of you and I have to admit the position of our television company. As you mentioned in your previous e mail, surely all of us can try to find a way to 'agreement'. But, before it, as the premise, I sincerely ask you to understand their position.

Your 'friends' not only have 'their ideas' but also have rights to make final decision about this documentary.

At this point I need to have your clear confirmation.

The company also need to have the confirmation.

Without it, all of us cannot make this project forward actually.

Please do not take badly, if you allow me to say more clearly, the company thinks that it is difficult to have your present at editing with having made the point a vague state.

Please do not think badly about the company. They are not arrogant and they never look down on our side. As you know, they are really nice people and they really respect you. But they have to edit their program inside rules or conventions. This program is not free cinema or something. They have to broadcast this program and, for that purpose, there are styles and formats which a broadcasting company requires to every program. I sincerely ask you to understand it.

They have promised that they are going to accept your opinion, your wish and your ideas as much as they can.

Even now, please accept, possibly there will be your wish that they cannot accept.

It would be presumptuous of me to say, but, sometimes compromise is necessary.

We already have made clear the financial problem.

(Please remind it was not easy problem)

And, for the next, we have to clear this point. All of us have to have same realization.

There should not be any misunderstanding among all of us.

Please understand the difficulty of my stand point.

Of course I would not like to make you angry. But, for you, sometimes I have to say something unpleasant to you.

I wish to have your understanding.

I am looking forward to hear from you before you go Kyoto.

10

After the humiliation of my defeat in Kyoto I am back on form again, otherwise I would have stayed in bed for the rest of my life. Let us resume one of our positions. Point F.—Flexibility. This text is also flexible, full of switches and even contradictions. I am fighting fire with fire. By identifying with one's enemy one acquires the ability to destroy him from within.

Their film is peppered with switches of all kinds; we go from one city to another, from one hall to another, without being notified of what is going on. So let us go from the Humiliation Hall to the Flexibility Hall where the Japanese are said to have settled at the very birth of their nation. Of course if an American president says to his people, 'You must surrender instead of fighting,' it may not produce the same effect on the listeners (and viewers). Some of them might turn out to be patriotic enough to fight a losing battle without being ordered to do so by their president. But if they know they are bound to surrender in the long run—they are not likely to hide in a jungle to destroy their enemies at the first opportunity that may not come for years and years—they will surrender. Some Japanese, on the other hand, did wait for years in some jungle or other: waiting for the enemy. They did not hear the Emperor's announcement. They might have heard Beckett's play, though. Another trite thought. 'Waiting' is not always associated with *Waiting for Godot*.

I waited for you at one of the Moscow Underground stations. I was not waiting for Godot; I was waiting for you. I knew what you looked and sounded like. I was almost in love with you. Almost. Let me write something for myself or for the sake of this woman: no one will understand what I am talking about at the end of this paragraph, at the end of everything. When you do not answer the phone it is the end of everything. Why am I alive? Because there is something else in my life. What? Their victory. My defeat.

11

Well, I think the Japanese just obeyed the order. They were ordered to cooperate with their victors.

They did. So what? Where is their proverbial flexibility? So many orders come from the outside. Suppose we obeyed all of them. What would that mean? Flexibility? Servitude? Going with the tide?

It is a pity I have never been able to go with the tide. Perhaps I do not know where the tide is, where to look for it. Do you have to look for it? Or does the tide find you without any effort on your part? The tide may find you or even catch you unawares, I'm sure. I wish I could rely on it, lying on my back, swimming occasionally—with the tide, not against it. I wish I could do nothing against anything. I wish I could contradict myself, my life, my body and whatever surrounds me round the clock. But everything turns around me as if I was in a centre, motionless and supercilious. In Versailles the film director asked me to stand still at the centre of the market place. On market day. Stand still and be quiet! 'Why?' I asked. A number of people were turning around me.

'You're the sun and they're your planets,' said the film director bursting into laughter. 'What's the matter? Can't you take a joke or something? I just want to show the difference between you and the others. They bustle about the city while you meditate. In the documentary they'll run around you.'

12

Yet I adore Japan, otherwise I would not have undertaken this task, my Japanese project inspired by Lady Murasaki, by many a poet I endeavoured to imitate in my youth, by the late Japanese Emperor and the film where I played my own part rather adroitly. Playing one's part is a pleasant pastime, especially when this pastime outruns time, becoming part and parcel of eternity through the intermediary of a camera. Does it outperform time or outshines it? 'Outrun' seems to be the wrong word because in order to outstrip time you must run slower than it does, otherwise eternity would always be out of reach. The faster your run the more you descend into time. It is better to climb up as my cat does whenever I get too engrossed in my work. She climbs up curtains and trees: we often go to the country where my friend has a cosy house. It is as if she were a reincarnation of Zarathustra or even of his creator who used to climb up mountains in search of inspiration or just for a breath of fresh air. But I am too old to climb up mountains. So, to reach eternity or at least its environs, I had better slow down the rhythm of my life, lying most of the time in my bed where a number of peaceful, serene, almost eternal thoughts seem to have fallen asleep. Is it another way of going with the tide, with your own tide? I wish I could end my autobiography as follows, 'His body was washed up on the beach by the tide.' The film director would have used this beautiful image had he harkened to my inner self, not to my persona. The beach of eternity, the one on which Einstein—among other people—must busk in the sun.

I'm not going anywhere. Where should I

Go? Nowhere—the only answer

To all my questions. Nowhere, no one, nothing.

There are three answers to my questions. How many
 Questions are there? Five, six, seven.
 ‘Where’s my cat?’ is one of them. She was
 In my bed four minutes ago.

The sun. Back to the Japanese Emperor. A novelist is supposed to describe his protagonist, but I saw Hirohito only in photographs and in the film where he is played by an actor who looks like him, according to my agent. In the book entitled *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* Herbert P. Bix quotes Mark Gayn who met the Emperor at a hospital for the war wounded in Takasaki City, Gumma prefecture:

I had had a good look at the Emperor, or ‘Charlie’, as we called him. He is a little man, about five feet two inches in height, in a badly cut gray striped suit, with trousers a couple of inches too short. He has a pronounced facial tic and his right shoulder twitches constantly. When he walks, he throws his right leg a little sideways, as if he has no control over it. He was obviously excited and ill at ease, and uncertain of what to do with his arms and hands.

The actor I saw in the Russian film *The Sun* also had a pronounced facial tic, but I do not recall whether his right or left shoulder was twitching or not. He may have thrown his right leg sideways once or twice; if he did, he must have had tight control of its movements because he was not the Emperor himself. Was he ill at ease? Did he like the part? For once, he enjoyed divine status, if only in the studio and on various screens. (My status was also different in the course of the shooting.) Anyway, being a professional actor, he was not uncertain of what to do with his arms and hands.

At first, he shuffled past the men, stopping occasionally to read the charts. Then he apparently decided the moment called for a few words. He tried several questions, but they all seemed out of place. At last he settled on the simple ‘Where are you from?’ He now walked from man to man, asked his question, and when the patient answered, the Emperor said, ‘Ah, so!’ He sounded as if he was surprised to learn that the man had come from Akita or Wakayama or the Hokkaido. His voice was high-pitched, and as time passed it grew thinner and higher.

I always hear ‘*asodeska*’ when speaking to the Japanese. Apparently it means ‘Is that so?’ Did the Emperor really say ‘Ah, so!’ or is it a translation? How did they dare call him ‘Charlie’? Even Charlie Chaplin should not have been called ‘Charlie’ by anyone who was not on intimate terms with him. Are the Americans on intimate terms with everybody? When I played in Newport a teenager patted my companion—a forty-year-old French countess—on the shoulder, shouting, ‘Hie, Chantal!’

The irreverent Americans were now all waiting for the inhuman sound of ‘Ah, so,’ and when it came they nudged each other, and laughed, and mimicked the sound. But the joke wore out. We could now see the Emperor for what he was: a tired, pathetic little man, compelled to do a job distasteful to him, and trying desperately to control his disobedient voice and face and body. It was hot and hushed, and there were no sounds other than the Emperor’s shrill voice and the heavy breathing of his escorts.

I wish I could hear only his voice now. I would even put up with the heavy breathing of his escorts.

13

As I already pointed out, in the documentary devoted to my life there are many switches that often disregard transitions and the traditions according to which such productions are usually made by German or English television companies. The Japanese do not treat anything chronologically—or logically, for that matter—skipping from one subject to another, from one country to another with nonchalance and insolence: we should not forget that the general (or average) viewer has a short attention span. This proverbial, much-esteemed viewer cannot span three countries, many sights and halls unless they are presented in chronological or ascending order. What the Japanese had in mind was somehow linked to Dante’s *Commedia* where three realms succeed each other in both chronological and ascending order, making things easier for the high-brow who plough through this masterpiece out of curiosity and duty. As we moved from Japan to Russia and from Russia to France I did my best to imitate Dante’s journey, although everything seemed to be upside down: Hell was in the middle and Purgatory in the end. I wrote a poem to fit in with this state of affairs:

I’m neither at my end
Nor at my beginning.
Heaven is in the middle.

As to Paradise, it was located in Kyoto where we actually began the shooting; I could not help thinking my Japanese friends had no doubts as to the whereabouts of Paradise. I somewhat upset their plans by pointing out we all lived in Purgatory, feeling nostalgic for the past, nursing ambitions for the future. I said something along these lines at the top of the Butte de Montmartre where I also spoke about my eagerness to require aesthetic asylum in France. ‘In 1974 I became a *political* refugee. In 1980 I moved to Versailles in search of beauty.’ And then, in no time at all, we moved to Kyoto again. What was the link between the two episodes? The word ‘beauty’, I suppose.

Sometimes we moved from one country to another by means of a piano: all grand Steinways look alike. When viewing the film I got the impression one piano was installed in several halls, flying from one country to another much faster than the planes I took in order to reach either Hell or Paradise, both imaginary and unfruitful. Incidentally, in today's Russia—be it Hell or Paradise—there is not even forbidden fruit unless you go into politics and show that you intend to create a new party. They used to rig up tents on Red Square and kiosks throughout Moscow without asking for permission or approval, without paying taxes or fines. It is much better to have some forbidden fruit around you so as to know how distinguish poisons from health food. Freedom has nothing to do with anarchy because it makes you capable of distinguishing between different things which are *different*, whatever our democrats affirm—for the simple reason that years do not resemble each other. Every wine lover knows there are bad and good years; the amount of acidity varies in accordance with the weather and the behaviour of the sun. Should I speak of the Emperor whenever I touch upon the sun? Let me terminate my analysis of freedom first, especially since I am about to speak of the meeting which was not included in the film despite my supplications.

The Japanese director asked me whom I wanted to talk to during our journey through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. I got in touch with a winegrower who agreed to spare two or three hours of his time for the sake of the film. In the course of our discussion he said he was paying great attention to seasons, to their whims and moods, so as to make a concomitant wine, not a commercial product that does not vary for fear of losing customers. 'They're loath to change their habits,' he told me. 'But wine isn't a washing powder which can be relied on because it doesn't change unless you stop buying the same washing powder. You buy the same wine and suddenly realise it's not the same wine. It didn't change overnight, though. It just attuned itself to nature. I am a tuner in a way because I tune my wine to make it sound in unison with the sun and clouds.' Why did they discard this sequence? Doesn't it sound Japanese—in unison with the passage from Kenko's *Essays in Idleness*, where he speaks about a man taking notice only of seasons, of their comings and goings?

Is that what 'going with the tide' means? You just listen to nature; you attune yourself to it, using your body as a tuning fork. The mind will not become a stray dog on condition that it constantly pricks up its ears and listens to the body and to nature. But don't stray dogs listen to nature and not to their masters whom they lost in the course of their wanderings? They mostly listen to the hustle and bustle of big cities; I still remember how many forsaken dogs used to run around Moscow—easy prey for drivers and malicious teenagers. I have no wish to become a dog like that. Nor should I permit my mind to be lured into such an existence, for many people look and sound like stray dogs ill-treated by pedestrians and teenagers, let alone by their colleagues and superiors. I would not mind being my own cat, though. I said so somewhere, in one of my works; but not in the film, mind you. In the film I said my cat was my daughter. The interpreter asked me who exactly she was: my wife, my mistress or my

daughter. Is she my barren wife?

15

I would stroke my body all day long as if I was my own cat. What prevents me from putting this ritual 'in train' immediately, on the spot? (Using *formal* words and expressions does me a lot of good.) Are humans not allowed to stroke their bodies without calling on other humans—masseurs and masseuses, for instance? I would probably spend the greater part of my life on the canopy I touched upon at the beginning of my long poem; after all, Gogol's *The Dead Souls* is a poem and there are lot of dead souls in this work of mine. So I would climb up onto this canopy instead of staying in the lower region of my bed, in my private hell, where I cannot sleep properly, for all the medicine I take in my eagerness to emigrate from it. I would gaze at the ceiling which is above heaven because, as I said in the poem above, heaven is in the middle. (My poems might be above it.) The world is more infinite than we imagine as we look through telescopes or read scientific and theological books. Dante's world was not infinite and even Descartes was scared of infinity as such. But for infinity, however, Musil would have finished *Der Man ohne Eigenschaften* which is conceivable only within the indefinite bounds of our world. On the other hand, Dante's *Commedia* was bound to reach its logical end, the upper regions of *Paradiso*. He could not have died while engrossed in the *Purgatorio*; yet he might still while away his term of trial in the midst of its inhabitants.

So I would gaze at the ceiling where no stars are likely to greet me at night: there are no bulbs on my ceiling and no chandelier hangs from it as if I needed no light in my abode. There is a lamp of sorts on the chest of drawers standing by my bed, but this lamp does not even allow me to read my pillow books. Apparently reading in half-darkness does not impair our eyesight; at least some American doctors think so, according to the radio programme I heard the other day. They might be anxious to incite their fellow citizens—and their fellow creatures in general—to read more than they do at the present moment. And let us not forget that as many as eighty percent of them read while listening to music—not to Haydn's quartets, mind you.

What do I need light for? Let the gods perish! Let our kids mess around with the switches until they fuse the lights. I have no children and my cat is not in a position to fuse the lights. What a pity! Sometimes I am still tempted to read other people's books or my own literary output that I go on polishing as if to take care of the future, of its artistic standards. Let them perish as well! They might already have perished, as far as I know. Nietzsche thinks there are counter-movements designed to counteract prevailing trends so that descents and ascents coexist successfully side by side. There are only descents nowadays and no ascents will ever come after them for the simple reason that my fellow citizens and future generations cannot climb up. Besides, their rudimentary beds are not designed for space odysseys. So they just lie in their beds or on the floor somewhere, devoid of yearnings with the exception of those whose objective is material riches; but their rags-to-riches stories denote no upward

movement, no upward inclination. Anyway soon all these stories will turn into what may be termed a paradisiacal variety of story-telling: a riches-to-riches story.

In the light of my theory—or rather of my experience—nothing could redeem the future which already lies by our side, in our bed, as if with the intention of making love to us. So many people make love to the future; and the future makes love to some of them. The random selection of numbers. St Augustine insisted on the fact—he thought it was a fact—that no one could know in advance who would be saved; or would be rich, in modern parlance. No, this theory of mine is out of date: now everybody knows who will be rich in forty years, in seventy years. In other words, financial crises are no longer on God's agenda. And even if the people lose several million dollars they can still enjoy life thanks to the three billion they have got under their pillows, in their stockings that may prove to be a better investment than buying stocks and shares. The selection process has stabilised somehow—over the last twenty years. Wars are won before they are declared. In the near future even terrorist threats will be a thing of the past, let alone terrorist attacks or bombs. What is more, you will be able to have your cake and eat it. The only danger you should guard against is having too many cakes around. Obesity can increase the risk of heart disease.

16

Is it not better to speak of love, of losses related to love, of farewells? In the course of our Japanese journey I was brought to a museum where lots of scrolls depicted episodes from *The Tale of Genji* on which I based one of my early writings. Actually it was a small episode I singled out as I leafed through the book peppered with poems. I never read it from cover to cover. To be frank, I chanced upon this episode in another book which was devoted to Zeami whose contribution to Noh theatre cannot be overestimated, if only on account of the 'flower' I am so enamoured of. I still do not understand this notion and therefore will not have a go at explaining it. But in the world for which I am writing this notion along with the rest has already been dealt with exhaustively. So why should I bother? If you wish to know what this is all about, just switch your computer on and consult the Internet. But don't forget that even the Internet has no access to the world I am writing for. A particular effort is required to ascend to my writings. Only a cat-like creature can do it without toil and trouble or with an effort which is all the more delightful since Paradise awaits one at the end, *au bout*—Kyoto, Japan of the Heian period.

I am in Nagoya, at the museum where one can actually *see* *The Tale of Genji*, the protagonist's sufferings and joys, his numerous mistresses, the way he holds a baby who is not his, according to my guide. And yet, judging from the caresses he lavishes on him, this baby *is* his son. What is more, he knows he is not; Genji knows the baby he is holding in his arms is not his son. As I look at the picture I repeat the same words over and over again because only thus can I understand what Genji experienced many centuries ago. I imitate his grief in another language, in another mood. Now I am

watching the film or rather the first edit of it, the unkindest edit of all, which enables me, however, to repeat the same words, to feel the same sorrow. Does this moment of bliss atone for the director's clumsiness? He asked me what I thought about all this—about the scrolls. 'Every meeting is a prelude to farewell,' I said. 'In a way, they happen at the same time.' And I was about to recite a poem which contradicts this statement:

How easy it is to upset the balance of gains
And losses: the latter are more numerous. They even
Outnumber the stars by three to one.

But then I told myself the film was made for those who do not understand contradictions because their lives look like a straight line, stiff and obstinate. Yet they often contradict the laws of logic by mistaking a cause for a consequence and vice versa—Nietzsche pointed that out. I know the film is a cause and this work of mine a consequence; in other words, I would not have written anything, but for the first edit I saw in Kyoto where a few important people welcomed me in a small studio. The producer turned up too, anxious as he was to spot any sign of dissatisfaction on my face, on my body: one may betray oneself by a gesture. His presence might have been a gain, given that not many producers are prepared to face their guinea pigs whose rebellion should not be excluded from the list of consequences. However, he did not mind facing the music as he told me the film was centred upon my playing *mono-no aware*—an outdated feeling that makes us realise how fragile and unreliable the world becomes when we concentrate on it, playing it like a piece of music and not like a financial market. Someone said the world was a heap of sand trickling through God's fingers. You do not need God to lose the world in this manner: everything trickles through your fingers round the clock. But some people turn a deaf ear to this sand- or world-music. They *hold* the world in their hands or rather in their fists and nothing, not even their deaths, can make them leave the world alone. From their tombs they govern the world by shaking their fists in which the entire world population has been imprisoned. Dislodging tombstones and knocking off funerary monuments, their numerous fingers sway from side to side as they attempt to clasp the world tightly. The producer did not have to reach for me from his grave: he was in the pink, to all appearances. Nevertheless, he put me on the palm of his hand as soon as I opened my mouth to voice my grievances after having endured the torture of the first edit. Unwilling to spend some time inside his fist, I limited myself to a few non-committal remarks which might have been called corrections, had he welcomed a timid intrusion into his impregnable fortress. He did not and consequently my requirements turned into suggestions which could be relegated to the archives of this television company: they were noting my suggestions down. Did they throw them into the nearest wastebasket? The dead body was just dumped by the roadside; my dead body. Why didn't they shoot it? Another nice ending for the film.

I endured another torture in the course of that afternoon: they asked me a lot of irrelevant questions.

‘Why did you leave the Soviet Union?’

‘Because I wished to have a huge library. Don’t you remember our visit to the Foreign Library, the forbidden books? They used to be stored in The Special Reserve which is now open to the public, to potential readers. I wonder why you didn’t use the comment made by the woman in charge. Hadn’t you asked her how many people were reading these books today? They’re allowed to read them, aren’t they? She said very few people were interested in them. “They’re no longer the forbidden fruit. Anyway, fewer people read anything today except bestsellers.” Even in Russia they don’t read much, let alone in democratic countries.’

In the last years of my Soviet life I often went to the Foreign Library that was a stone's throw from my house. They did not show my house in connection with our visit to the library, but as usual they asked me to *enter* the building which was fronted by a garden. Did they really have to demonstrate that no helicopter had brought me to the library’s roof from where I might have got indoors using a ladder and an open window? Another waste of time, another loss. And what did we gain indoors? That woman’s explanation they did not make use of for reasons best known to themselves. Perhaps, in their opinion, her words did not fit in with the title of the film: *Valery Aleff Plays Mono-No Aware*. In my opinion, however, this elusive notion includes the regret one might express at realising how few people are eager to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the world where we live and die. It is not enough to haunt travel agencies or go on a cycling tour of Provence during which one might have dinner in a three-star restaurant.

Incidentally, I have not spoken yet about our visit to one of the best restaurants in the world the owner of which agreed to let the Japanese crew film his saucepans. But first I have to answer their irrelevant questions.

Why were they irrelevant? Because they could not be worked into the film. On the other hand, I was burning with desire to bombard them with *my* questions or rather my *solutions* to the problem we had tackled over the last two years: How to make a good film on a many-sided artist? On an artist who has his fingers in many pies? On an artist who has more than one string to his bow? How many times did I broach the subject in their presence and even in their absence? In France I talked about it to our interpreter—a Japanese man whose French left something to be desired. But he understood me perfectly, judging from his rueful glance: he knew his colleagues would deliberately fail to meet my requirements.

‘Was there a turning point in your life? I mean, before you left the Soviet Union? What event prompted you to make such a decision?’

‘I was on the black list for a while. They wouldn’t let me play abroad for almost two years. There was an anonymous letter which declared in plain Russian I was yearning to leave the Soviet Union and stay abroad for the rest of my life. But this is quite irrelevant, isn’t it? Actually I still don’t understand why you asked my teacher how her colleagues had reacted to my departure. What does it matter now! More than thirty years have elapsed since my departure, since the farewell night I spent in the skyscraper you saw in Moscow. Do you want me to tell you about that night, about the tears I shed at some point? But I described the episode so often in my books that I have no wish to embroider on it once again. Why not include the poem on Moscow I recorded in Versailles? I recorded more than twenty poems. Do you remember? Or do you want me to write another poem, a *mono-no aware* poem?’

‘Moscow is just a name. I know a city
That faintly echoes it. This city is only
An echo. But echoes alone resound
In one’s soul.

‘Do you like this poem more than the others? Will you put it in the film? A beautiful poem, isn’t it? Only echoes resound in our memory. But how powerful they are when they sound in earnest! And our memory is the twin sister of our soul. *Mono-no aware* is full of echoes, isn’t it? Probably the very notion is an echo, a thing of the past. How many Japanese feel it nowadays? Of course they know what it is. Do they *feel* it? Do they hear its echo in their souls?’

Of course I dared not give such an answer to their question; nor did I give vent to my feelings as I pandered to their curiosity by explaining why I had asked for political asylum. I just said, ‘I was longing to read and to travel and to drink Burgundy.’ They laughed. I did not. Nor do I laugh now, for I’ll never have the last laugh.

‘You were sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment. Why?’

‘Because I didn’t come back. Staying abroad without permission was regarded as a crime. And no one could be granted such permission except diplomats and spies.’

‘Did they ask you to spy on Western people?’

‘I wasn’t a spy. I was a defector. So for two years at least I avoided touching the knob of my front door with my bare hands. I was afraid they might have smeared it with some poison or other. And in those days I never crossed a road if there was a car in sight. I also stayed clear of umbrellas.’

‘Why? Didn’t you carry an umbrella on rainy days?’

‘A poisoned umbrella was the latest thing in 1974.’

‘There were *some* Soviet citizens abroad in 1974.’

‘Diplomats, KGB agents and spies. *Our* trinity. A Soviet diplomat, a KGB agent, a Soviet spy. One and the same person.’

‘Did you love wine in your youth, in the Soviet Union?’

‘We had no opportunity to drink good wine. Even Georgian wine wasn’t always available. Some German wine would turn up now and then. And also French Cognac. But I’m not very fond of Cognac.’

Another hour elapsed as if to remind us that time did not stand still, contradicting a poem I composed for a Noh actor whose performance I saw in Kyoto—a performance meant for me alone. I was sitting on a bench opposite the stage where this actor played the part of a ghost. (And I was playing the part of Ludwig II of Bavaria.) The ghost tells a story in the presence of a monk accustomed to listening to ghost stories.

The past stands still. Yet
Ghosts dance. Let them dance
Until the future disappears.

After the play I met the ghost backstage and saluted him warmly—saluted *her* warmly, I should have written, for the ghost was a woman performed by a man.

‘How did you like it?’ asked the interpreter. Another irrelevant question.

‘It’s not enough to say it was wonderful,’ I said. ‘Let me write a poem to express my feelings.’

Time was also a ghost during the performance, being hand in glove with silence that always slows time down until it comes to a full stop. We talked about silence the following day, after the night I had partly wasted writing the poem. I offered him my poem and the camera saturated with my persona memorised the event. But silence (or a news blackout) interfered with my desire to see on the small screen my poem and the way I offered it to the actor.

Only their archives and I recall the event which reverberates now in the kingdom of silence. Or should I say in the *empire* of silence? After all, we are dealing with Japan where the protagonist of my story lived in the twentieth century. He was an Emperor, a politician of highest rank, who made important decisions such as bringing his subjects to their knees. Of course it is the Americans who performed this superhuman task in the play entitled *The Outcome of the Second World War*. But for the Emperor’s announcement, however, the Japanese would not have surrendered, opting for suicide, either personal or collective. I read about a Japanese town the inhabitants of which had thrown themselves into the ocean with one accord.

The Emperor was also a poet—to such an extent that he wrote a poem on the day of the capitulation. Time must have stood still that day which was already in the past somehow, somewhere. And the future had been consumed by ghosts and poems.

19

‘What do you do in your leisure time?’

‘I write poems. I might have written a lot of poems over the last three months. But I had to play my own part in your film. I had to enter libraries and monasteries. I had to answer your questions. Only some of them were apt and to the point, frankly speaking. The same goes for my answers. No wonder. How can you answer an irrelevant question? At some point I realised I could sidestep your questions by talking about something else, about *my* problems and poems. That’s what I’m doing now, as a matter of fact. But for once I don’t mind answering your question directly, without digressing from it. I write poems, novels and essays. I walk in the woods. Actually I’m an expert in circumlocution. I did my best to make you come round to my point of view—in Japan, in Russia, in France. You didn’t. I should have spoken to you frankly, straightforwardly. I should have decided it was time to tell you a few home truths. I was too polite—too Japanese, in a way. And what about *your* politeness? Do you remember the talk we had about that Kabuki actor? He’s so famous that I’m reluctant to utter his name. Anyway, naming no names is my motto. You said I could ask my friends to take part in the film. You insisted I should be surrounded by friends to show I wasn’t so solitary after all. I wrote to you I’d be delighted to meet *him* during the shooting, in front of the camera. And on the small screen. You kept silent. What kind of silence was this? Generally speaking, our collaboration has been punctuated by *uncomfortable* silences. This is the Japanese way, isn’t it? That’s how you deal with uncomfortable situations instead of saying ‘no’—you just keep silent or lower your eyes. So far I’ve found it rather poised, not to say graceful. If I’d known it would have such repercussions for the film...’

When I landed in Tokyo my agent, who works with me in the domain of music, answered my relevant question thus, ‘I know the film director keeps silent about the actor. Actually I agree with him because there’s no other way.’

‘You mean, one should keep silent?’

‘His presence would perturb the film.’

‘In what sense?’

‘It’s better not to get in touch with him. Anyway he’s very busy, as you must know. Playing abroad.’

They kept silent until the end of the first shooting which, at the outset of our earth odyssey, took place in Kyoto. On the last day—I was about to leave for Russia—they said I would meet the actor after all. ‘He’s in Tokyo now,’ said the film director.

‘I thought he was abroad.’

‘He’s never been abroad.’

‘I met him in Brussels, in London—’

‘I mean, he hasn’t been abroad for at least two months. He’s performing at the Kabuki-za now.’

In the car where my agent talked about the beauty of the movie to come I broached the subject once again as if determined to find out why the actor had been excluded from the project a while ago. Actually I did not care about their motives because I am always interested only in results. Today’s orchestras prefer to feel comfortable during rehearsals and concerts. They could not care less about results—the quality of their playing—as if comfort as such were somehow linked to this quality. But quality is independent of comfort; at times feeling uncomfortable on stage may lead to an astonishing result. I am not sure the members of the Berlin Philharmonic felt comfortable when submitted to Furtwängler’s button. The result was amazing, however. Now they relax—all orchestras, all instruments.

‘Why did you think the actor should stay away from the movie?’

Instead of keeping silent, my agent launched into a drawn-out Japanese soliloquy that sounded like a piece by Varèse. The interpreter summed up this music as follows, ‘If the actor took part in the movie, he’d overshadow you completely.’ I welcome the interpreter’s past as a chance to vindicate the Japanese code of politeness. She was born in Japan, but at the age of five moved to New York where she spent more than twenty years. On coming back to her fatherland she decided to serve as a bridge—a beautiful bridge in a garden—between Japanese silence and Western noise. In her company the Americans and other Westerners might feel more comfortable, especially when confronted with Japanese good manners mostly based on bows and strange humming sounds. But I did not hear these sounds when reading the emails I would get while waiting for my Japanese adventure. What I heard amounted to silence—an embarrassed silence, an awkward silence. And I heard nothing beyond this silence, not a single background noise, a syllable, a Russian ‘*niet*’. Why didn’t they utter ‘*niet*’ at the very outset of our relationship? Why didn’t they speak Russian to a Russian? And yet ‘*niet*’ resounded through our common enterprise until they kicked me out of the studio, offended by the way I had voiced my grievances.

20

What can be found beyond silence? There are many loose ends in this work of mine and I know I’ll have to deal with them sooner or later. One of those loose ends seems to look at me from this page as if asking in a husky voice, ‘Will you leave me behind?’ I will not leave anything behind for the simple reason that I am not moving: it is not a story told in a straightforward way. As I pointed out earlier, I am an expert in circumlocution. Instead of taking the shortest route I make detours which allow me to enjoy landscapes and cows grazing in the meadows. I wish I could become a cow, if only for a short

stretch of time, looking at holidaymakers or just at a bush. And then I'll return to my favourite animal, to my favourite incarnation—cat.

The page from which that bit of silence looked at me disapprovingly vanished while I continued to voice my grievances which are nothing but a Japanese garden adorned with bridges and bamboo tubes making a strange humming sound. No, I confuse the Japanese with their gardens; I am more akin to these gardens than to their creators. I am a bridge between Lady Murasaki and the world I live in. I am a waterfall that moves and stays where it is, for its time stands still, defying Einstein and his light. I am a stone in these gardens, a lot of stones no one can displace. A stone remembers a lot. What can be found beyond silence? A stone that remembers. Its memory is silent like all memories. But they talk, don't they? Talking a foreign language for which no translator can be found. Even the lady—our interpreter—who spent so much time in the United States will not understand the language of stones that shun human society. I am not a human, am I?

So let us pick up those loose ends. 'What is our memory for in the kingdom of silence?' It is another loose end, isn't it? But what is the difference between memory and silence? Memory is not silent—everybody knows that. It can be silent for a while, during the periods of hustle and bustle, of war and peace. And then it swings into action—or non-action, come to think of it. A real peace, not a bogus one. A peace not followed by a war. A silence where all memories crouch behind a bush. You can neither see nor hear them. Yet you *feel* their presence, their bodies. They snuggle up to your body and soul in order to get warm. And when they are warm enough they start talking to you silently yet musically. They talk to you in Webern's tones.

There is nothing beyond a real silence which is neither embarrassed nor otherwise. It is not a neutral silence either; it is an omnipresent silence. Whenever you hear it you have the feeling there is nothing else in the world, in the cosmos. Yet there must be *something* beyond it, otherwise life would have come to a standstill a long time ago. What is there beyond a real silence?

21

'No one can overshadow me,' I said jokingly. But my agent and our interpreter seemed to be bent on proving it was no joking matter.

'He will, I can assure you. He's *so* famous in Japan.'

'I know, I know. Well, some people will watch this documentary to see him once again. Isn't it worth our while getting a bigger audience for the fruit of our labours?'

'Is it worthy of a gentleman to take advantage of other people's prominence?'

By the third week of the shooting I had endured many hardships, but the worst was to follow. I had no idea what was in store for me and so went on listening to their well-meant abuses. Had I been able to foresee the result—to see the first edit of the film, in other words—I would have packed my

bags and walked out on them immediately. Alas, I was sitting in the car from which there was no escape: the driver had no English.

‘But I did not *insist* on his taking part in the movie. They arranged this episode on their own initiative. Of course I suggested it—’

‘It’s not certain they’ll work your meeting into the movie. So don’t call it an episode, a sequence. Just a meeting, nothing more. You’ll see someone you know, who happens to be a famous actor. They might use only your handshake or “Hello, how are you?” Anyway he won’t remain on screen for more than five seconds. Otherwise he’ll overshadow you once and for all.’

‘You mean, I won’t be able to shine again? Not even in other countries, in other films, in ten years’ time?’

‘Don’t think in terms of ratings. The number of television viewers won’t increase if he takes part in the movie. They’ll just switch their TV sets off as soon as he disappears.’

‘At least they’ll watch the prelude to his appearance, the prologue.’

‘They won’t, I tell you. They’ll record the movie and fast-forward it until they spot his face.’

It is not the winning, it is the taking part that counts. I took part in that undertaking in the hope of having a document where my life might be reflected, if only in part. Why do I stubbornly look for my own reflections? Isn’t one mirror enough? Or this page, this sentence? I look for my doubles *elsewhere*, in other people’s eyes, in cameras, in other people’s minds. Is it not better to look for them in a vacuum? Doesn’t my reality hide in vacant space enclosed by the ceiling and walls of my house? What is more, it does not hide from me; I can see it near my armchairs and even beyond them. What else do I need? The sky? Let my reality spread beyond my walls and settle down between the stars and the grass, between the moon and a pond where its reflection joins the game of ripples. I am real and effective only on account of the vacuum I can create through my works and my conduct. A vacuum is omnipotent because it is all containing. It contains even the dialogue I reproduced at the beginning of this chapter; but in a vacuum you cannot hear it.

I took part in this movie and lost. At least something remains, prevails, endures—the fact, a comfortable feeling some may experience on learning that such a documentary was made about a pianist who lives in a faraway country. What is more, this pianist knows about *mono-no aware*, which is a feat in itself, considering that most pianists do not read much, being engaged in a pursuit of their careers. Playing two hundred concerts a year is not my cup of tea, however, so I have plenty of time for my library featuring around thirty thousand books—a worthy counterpart of the collection stored at Yasnaya Polyana where Tolstoy read, wrote, talked to peasants and visitors. He also talked to his daughters one of whom said at the dinner table, ‘He’s a fool.’ I have no idea whom she was talking about, but Tolstoy answered without batting an eyelid, ‘And what about you?’ Once, when talking to the film director, I said I did not like the documentaries dissecting the lives of musicians because ‘such

anatomy lessons don't say much about their internal organs. Those film directors just scratch your skin.'

'What film directors?' asked the film director.

'I think they were Germans, all of them.'

By way of an answer he just shook his head or looked at the ceiling. Be that as it may, the meaning of his sign was so clear I felt a prick at the spot where my conscience is habitually located: I seemed to have stained the immaculate purity of his code of honour. At that point he knew already he would not be able to tell his superiors, 'He leaves our country without a stain on his character.' How many codes did I smear with my blood during my successive stays in their country? At least I hope they are aware of the fact it was my blood, not just an imprint of my muddy boots.

'Facts count nowadays,' I say in my theatrical play based on Schumann's and E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Kreisleriana*. (They did not use this remark.) Our movie is a fact—no doubt about that. Along with other movies, concerts and interviews, it takes part in the Vanity Fair I am supposed to keep at bay to preserve the image of a solitary artist—the image they tried to impose on me for the sake of *mono-no aware*. 'So you withdrew from the world, didn't you? In the early eighties you played too many concerts, hundreds of them. And then you realised you were a lone wolf who could not cope with the commercial aspect of music-making. You wished to remain pure and aloof. Don't you keep yourself aloof from business? Don't you write poems like Lady Murasaki's characters?'

Yes, I write poems.

I asked for several months—nine months,
To be exact. For the sake of this film. My life
On a television screen. It's over. The rest is a present,
God's present. Let me enjoy it.

I may
Die tonight. I've done my best. My cat is running
Around. She'll find another man
Or woman. Another man or woman
Will find and feed her.

My life is meaningless. So is my
Immortality.

Only this moment counts.

My joy.

The poem I wrote on the last day of the shooting.

22

Did I make a laughing stock of myself by revealing my joy to the world or rather to myself? What could I be so joyful about? About the poem I wrote, oddly enough. Let us not forget the Japanese Emperor who wrote a poem the day of the capitulation. On meeting his wife he told her about his metamorphosis which was quite on a par with Kafka's story: he became an insect, in point of fact. Sure enough, in comparison with his divine status, any human being is just an insect crawling under some bed or other. 'But I wrote a poem,' he told her. And he recited the poem. As far as I can remember, it goes as follows:

The snow in wintertime
Looks like the cherry blossom.
Both are destroyed by time.

'I don't know what it means,' he said with a smile. Do insects ever smile?

The Emperor and his predicament. He was partly or temporarily destroyed by the film, by my disappointment and humiliation. By my capitulation. But in the vacuum I had created he turned up once again, a smile hovering on his lips.

I had to get it off my chest. After all, I did ask God to 'lend' me nine months so I could hold out until the end of the shooting, which denotes the importance I attached to the film. Incidentally, the French say '*prêter vie*', to lend life, as if you were capable of giving it back one day—the stretch of time borrowed from God. Can you pin your hopes on this linguistic inaccuracy? Only in the Hereafter would you have an opportunity to handle at will the end of your life and rub shoulders with God. But in the Hereafter any stretch of time has no meaning because neither the cherry blossom nor the snow are ever destroyed within its bounds. Their peaceful co-existence is a balm to the Emperor who must already have been restored to power, putting on his divine, sun-embroidered kimono.

While I was at it, I should have borrowed from God the capacity for which the Japanese are so renowned in the Western world where death is hardly touched upon in public unless a star passes away after being born many years before. The Japanese, on the other hand, resort to death rather frequently as if the grim reaper was their dearest friend. The attitude they borrow from death enables them to cope with exams and international competitions. 'Be as one already dead,' says a father to his child, a friend to his or her friend. A dead man would have taken no notice of the disaster I encountered in that

studio situated on the outskirts of Kyoto. Like a bird, I would have skimmed over the top of the waves, ignoring the storm and its consequences. What do I care about the sunken treasures! (It is not too late to become dead in my lifetime.)

The material we gleaned during our wanderings over three countries *was* a treasure and even a dead man might have become aware of it in the long run. But the director, who was certainly accustomed to death, turned out alive and kicking—keenly alive to the authority he had been invested with by his superiors and by the company itself. Had he died before editing the material I might have taken over in a way, exerting my influence to make the rest of the crew change their minds. I am not sure I would have been able to sway the producer into supporting my ideas, but there is no harm in trying. When I did try to push him ever so slightly it was too late and my interference obviously did more harm than good.

We are all dead now as far as the film is concerned: it was shown on television several days ago. I have no wish to count the number of days and of those who watched the film, although the famous actor was conspicuous by his absence.

Why go on writing this book? Is it a dead poem or a death poem? Alas, no stylistic subtlety, no metaphor, will ever model this documentary upon my ideas, my script, my *mono-no aware*. I cannot undo the past through my artistic endeavour. What I *can* do, however, concerns the loose ends the existence of which I deplored somewhat earlier. I must locate them in the whirlwind of words where they play hide-and-seek with their creator and their colleagues—with the Emperor himself. At this rate, even the Emperor may become a loose end unless I devote more time to his hagiography than to my howling. For a while let me forget I am a lone wolf.

23

What could I say about the Emperor's childhood? What could be said about any god's childhood? An ordinary childhood? Hardly. A god is born from a star or from water, from lighting or from his father's skull. A midwife's skill is seldom required in such a case. After being born, the young god opposes his father and is sentenced to death. Those who are called upon to carry out the sentence hide the god in the woods or in a grotto where he may be found by a wolf or a human determined to bring him up. A few years later the god returns to the fold and kills his father with a view to inspiring Freud whose predilection for this type of murder is well-known even outside psychoanalytical cliques.

Herodotus says that Homer and Hesiod created the Greek gods. Am I allowed to create just one god who, moreover, died as a human, following the agreement reached at the end of the Second World War? Why didn't the Americans allow him to remain god through thick and thin? Were they afraid he might impose his ideas and decisions on his subjects more easily as God the Father? The Emperor—even a human Emperor—is so adulated in Japan that even now no newspaper would dare criticise a single word uttered by His Imperial Majesty. Besides, the Americans needed the Emperor's power and

authority to end the war; this was their prime objective. Didn't they realise a god would make his people swallow their pride in no time at all, whereas a human, be he an Emperor or a president, might encounter some resistance all the more since Japan had never lost a war prior to 1945?

Democracy is a tyranny in its own right because it thinks its postulates are right and consequently should conquer the entire world. It does not care whether the world derives any benefit from it, which is a matter of no importance compared with the light emanating from the very idea of equality, of equal rights. Ideals seldom take notice of the consequences they might have as they extend their influence, jumping over borders and mountains. They are things in themselves and other things count only inasmuch as they reflect the light emanating from the Ideals. Another cult of the sun to which the Japanese Emperor must have been reluctant to submit himself; after all, he himself was the sun and therefore needed no other suns in his own country, let alone in his household. But the Americans put their foot down in the name of equality, if not fraternity: their president could not be inferior to an Emperor lost somewhere in the Pacific. Japan was destined to become a cousin of the United States of America. A distant cousin perhaps, but certainly not a father, not God the Father. (The gods' tendency to exaggerate is well known.) So the Emperor had no alternative but to accept another Western whim demoting him to the rank of human being, of man, of chimpanzee in disguise.

But he was born neither a man nor a chimpanzee. His divinity presided over his birth so that he must have felt something at the very early stage; in his cradle, in his mother's womb. What did he feel? When did he realise he had been thrown into the world where he had to assert himself, warding off colds and evil spirits? No biography will ever shed light on this turning point; even the moonlight is out of the question. When did he find out that the snow was to melt, depriving the view he enjoyed from some window or other of a delicious touch? When did he ask himself whether he would die one day in spite of his divine status? What did they teach him first: the divine status or death?

'Why does my faithful servant no longer come to my room, Mother?'

'Didn't you notice we'd engaged another servant who never fails in his duty?'

'But I loved the other servant more. Where is he, Mother?'

'In another world, my child.'

'Is there another world? Am I a god in that world or just a human?'

'You're a god in all the worlds you'll come across during your journey through Creation.'

'How many worlds are there, Mother?'

'As many worlds as you wish.'

'I want only one world and one servant.'

'You'll have many servants, many subjects.'

'But I want this world and my former servant. Why should I leave this world? When will that happen?'

'Your father will put you in the picture of what awaits you after death.'

Death might have been introduced abruptly, with no explanation appended to it; a word, just a word, nothing more. But this word stayed in his room and no amount of energy could banish it to a distant island. Nor could he say to the word, 'That'll do, John.' (Or Naoaki.) He did not even try to treat the word like his servant, although many words had already become his slaves. At least others obeyed his words or even screams. Actually screams were more efficient than words, but death was no scream. Just a word, nothing more. Why was he scared of this word that did not sound different from other words? It did sound different, slightly different. But what difference does it make? he thought. All words sound different. Well, almost. Why does this particular word makes me lose my temper?

He let out a scream and realised the word sounded like a scream. It was a scream, nothing else. He screamed for a while, hoping to get used to the word. The more he screamed the stranger the word grew.

'Father! Father!' he cried. Oddly enough, the word 'father' also sounded like 'death'.

'What is it, my son? Aren't you happy I'm always at home? At your beck and call, so to speak. Japanese Emperors don't travel much. And they never go abroad.'

'Don't they go to other worlds? There are other worlds, I'm told. And death. What is it?'

'Nothing special. In your life, during your reign, you'll often behave like a dead person.'

'What for?'

'To create a vacuum inside you.'

'Is death a vacuum?'

'Not quite.'

'What is it, Father?'

'Just a word. And this word is part of your vocabulary now.'

'But my servant Naoaki wasn't a word. Was he?'

'No. He was a human and he died. He just added another word to his vocabulary.'

Or did his father keep silent? Do the Japanese communicate through the same sounds? What about this strange humming sound I heard as I talked to the film director? Do they often exchange these sounds or do they reserve them for foreigners?

According to the books on Zen Buddhism I read in my youth, the answers you receive in Japan might seem wide of the mark. They are not. The Japanese merely have other marks.

'What is death, Father?'

'A blanket of snow lay on the ground.'

'Do you mean to say the snow won't be there tomorrow?'

'Her hair was jet-black, her lips ruby-red and her skin as white as snow.'

'Is that what it looks like, Father? Death?'

'The view from the top of the mountain is breathtaking.'

Hirohito was a docile child, fussed over and pampered by nurses and relatives during his kindergarten years. Unlike myself, even in those years he knew a lot about the Russo-Japanese War and exalted to the point of enacting in play its episodes with his brothers. So, in their early age, they came into contact with Russia and grew up fighting her army almost on a daily basis. Generally speaking, they were familiar with the world of militarism: in addition to the Russo-Japanese War raging in the Emperor's Palace, they watched military parades and every month strolled around the museum where the spoils of the Russo-Japanese War were displayed.

24

At first a tragic hero does his best to overcome his adversary and gain the upper hand in the battle with the forces of nature. Then he stops and looks around him so as to come to terms with nature and what lies beyond it—fate. He says to himself, 'This is how it is' and along with the spectator sets on his journey tailor-made for him alone. But the spectator follows him so that both realise they have a common destiny—a common denominator, so to speak. Neither of them is alone because everyone is involved in the same process, in the same drama. They are going with the tide, all of them. On the verge of the capitulation, the Emperor might have thought about his destiny in these terms, otherwise he would not have written the poem where the snow and the cherry blossom perish in order to be reborn once again. Did the Americans realise that? Did they know that victory and defeat were one and the same phenomenon?

Let us say that the snow is a symbol of defeat, for it disappears in wintertime, well before the cherry blossom which might be regarded as a victor, assuming we judge the situation in chronological terms: the cherry blossom survived the snow. But there are other terms, other orders. The cherry blossom was non-existent when the snow reigned over the earth; they did not meet on the ground. How can you be victorious in such a case? It is nature that won the battle, obliterating both the snow and the cherry blossom. But after a while they made their appearance once again, defeating both nature and time. Is eternal recurrence a victory over time? Going with the tide is the only answer to all the questions I write down for argument's sake. What do I need this argument for? Death is neither a word nor a scream. It is a screen onto which our life is being projected. In this case, I should thank the film director and his crew: they showed my death in minute detail. How often have I seen it so far? How did I learn about it in my childhood?

The following episode is in the film, although I say nothing about death as if it were a taboo word. It is a taboo word nowadays, but I live in a different world, in different times. I told them a story about how my grandmother had forsaken me in the woods where I could not have found my way without her help. 'How old were you?' they asked.

'Three years old. Perhaps three and a half. Suddenly I found myself alone. I looked at the snow, at the trees.' I looked at both: we had walked over to the spot where my spiritual birth had taken place.

‘Was it a punishment? Was my grandmother spying on me from behind a birch? I don’t remember. But I do remember I didn’t cry. I didn’t start looking for her either. No fear, no tears. I was looking around me, half-paralysed by the beauty of the world, by its silence. It’s in these woods I heard silence for the first time. I heard my life for the first time. Plastic rattles and parental voices prevent you from hearing silence. They hide your life from you. They hide the world. Not only with my grandmother did I play hide-and-seek. But that afternoon I was in no mood either for hiding or for seeking. Actually I didn’t have to *seek* the world—it was lying before me, about. Heaven was lying about me, silent and magnificent.’ I looked up, contradicting myself once again. ‘I was here, the world there.’ I showed where the world was. Had I been holding a stick I would have marked out my self on the snow. ‘I was aware I had to face the world, to come to terms with it. We were not at one on all issues. We were not one substance, the One. I think I was mistaken.’

I heard something more than silence. I realised I was too small in comparison with the world and consequently could not fill it up; there was an area where I was not. In other words, the silence told me about death—much earlier than my father did. When *he* told me about my final disappearance I was neither surprised nor shocked. His explanation sounded thus: ‘The view from the top of the mountain is breathtaking.’ At that point I was thinking about life, about the beauty I saw on the day of revelation, about silence.

‘The silence was broken only by the whisper of the leaves in the gentle breeze,’ a Japanese woman might have written in her diary—in the twelfth century—had she wandered in my woods for a while. Yoshido Kenko speaks about a letter he wrote to his friend on the day when the snow adorned his garden. However, he did not mention the snow as if there had been matters of more importance than the beauty of nature. Dissatisfied with the contents of the missive, his friend pointed out that someone who could nonchalantly overlook such a beauty was to reconsider his way of life. But the Japanese of the Heian period also enjoyed walking around in summertime when one can hear the whisper of leaves, however trite it may appear to the uncommon reader. Sometimes a trite remark is more musical than a sophisticated one: you have enough time to listen to silence hidden in it. In an intricate sentence there is no room for silence.

Many years later I heard the same silence—I heard the world and death—in the film where Mahler wanders in *his* woods, listening to one of his future symphonies. Even now I hear it because my memory is amenable and seldom disobeys my commands. In this particular case, however, I do not have to conjure up any image, any sound; they come to me of their own accord. Once again the world lies around me—an unexpected visitor for whom I have to rustle up a sandwich. Why am I always caught off guard when the world comes to me? Doesn’t it happen often? After all, these memories do not disappear for a long period of time as if afraid of leaving me on my own.

‘The view from the top of this mountain is breathtaking,’ said the film director. We were standing on a hill overlooking Kyoto or rather a part of it where I must have walked so many times. I brushed away a tear from the corner of my eye. I did not. I wanted the camera to memorise it for the sake of the future in which I would not be able to look at this panorama.

‘Can you describe your feelings?’ asked the film director.

‘I’m very sentimental,’ I replied, without pointing to the vestige of the tear. I always cry in the cold. ‘Actually I can’t remember Kyoto, strange as it may appear. I’ve been to this city many times. I would have known Paris by heart had I walked around it so often. I don’t even remember if I saw this panorama or not. I might have seen it three times, four times. I don’t remember. What I delight in, however, is the process itself—*placing* something, if you see what I mean. It’s not necessary to bring up Proust’s *madeleine* whenever you speak about the way you recollect such and such image or episode. It’s enough to think about Kyoto, about how you conjure up this city in your mind. An Englishman wrote: “I settled in Kyoto thirty years ago. I still don’t know it.” So many temples, so many gardens, so many nooks and crannies. Is Kyoto a man? Is Kyoto a woman? Kyoto is androgynous, in my opinion. And Moscow is a woman, Petersburg a man.’

‘We don’t have genders in Japanese,’ said my interlocutor. ‘A city is neither a woman nor a man. It’s just a city.’

‘I’m sure you won’t use this bit in your movie.’

‘We might use your tears,’ he replied.

I cast another glance at the panorama which, to my disappointment, had not smartened up during our conversation. My memory, while attempting to unearth as much information about Kyoto as was consistent with my task, unexpectedly reproduced a remark my Moscow friend had casually dropped some time ago, a cup of green tea in his hand. ‘Do you really think Kyoto is the most beautiful city in the world?’ The point is Kyoto is beautiful only in parts and those parts were hardly visible from where I was standing with the Japanese crew. You are not likely to see a temple from a mountain, however low and insignificant it may appear in comparison with the Caucasus. What you actually see amounts to no more than a hackneyed view of a modern city adorned with a few green patches. But these patches speak volumes about the Japanese way of life which is a patchwork made up of moments, words and images. One moment, one or two sentences, one image. A philosopher needs an overall view, a panorama, a system. ‘There are no philosophers in Japanese history,’ my friend pointed out as he put an empty tea cup on a Louis XV chest of drawers.

‘Nietzsche laughs at the philosophers who are fond of systems,’ I said. ‘Do you prefer skyscrapers to tiny temples and gardens?’

‘I prefer pyramids,’ he said. ‘Why do you think Kyoto is androgynous?’

‘Because Petersburg is masculine,’ I said.

26

On the 5th of January 2008 the Japanese crew arrived in Moscow after spending a few hours at Charles de Gaulle airport. The next day we took a flight to Petersburg where I was supposed to give a short recital at The House of Scientists—a former residence of the Grand Duke.

In June 1974, on the eve of my departure from the Soviet Union, I paid a visit to the city of my ancestors. For fifteen hours I walked around these squares, across these bridges, but it is faraway buildings—the other bank of the Neva—that got imprinted on my mind. Flaubert says that during any farewell ceremony there comes a moment when we realise that our friends do not belong to us any longer: they are already faraway. Petersburg was faraway during our farewell ceremony. Even now it is a distant city, although I could settle down in one of its houses. That would not bring me any closer to it. In a way it has a lot of affinities with the castle depicted by Kafka in his unfinished novel. In Soviet history books it was called the 'cradle of the Russian Revolution', but it will never become your cradle, for all your filial love and aesthetic worship. You can (and must) fall in love with its monuments and 'ordinary' buildings; there is such a thing as unrequited love. Petersburg is as cold-hearted as Spinoza's God: it does not care for our misfortunes some of which may be caused by its tuberculosis-oriented climate. Or should I say *he* does not care for our misfortunes? Petersburg is a man, Moscow a woman—not only on account of the genders applied to them in Russian. After all, the Neva is much broader, much more majestic than the Moscova. Besides, even in its babyhood Petersburg was not a wooden city. I would never have departed from the Soviet Union had I been born in Leningrad.

I prepared a few texts for the film punctuated by many comings and goings for which I naively hoped to substitute my essays and poems. By providing voice-overs for the documentary I actually wished to enliven my solitary figure haunting temples and my friends' apartments. Nothing enlivens these episodes except my footfalls that no one can hear. Another silence to which I am not attuned, however, for all my experience, for all the love I bear to the absence of sounds. To the absence of everything, I should say. Should I say that?

27

Sometimes spectators of the Noh say that the moments of 'no action' are the most enjoyable. This is one of the actor's secret arts. Dancing and singing, movements on the stage, and the different types of miming are all acts performed by the body. Moments of 'no action' occur in between. When we examine why such moments without action are enjoyable, we find that it is due to the underlying spiritual strength of the actor which unremittingly holds the attention. He does not relax the tension when the dancing or singing comes to an end or at intervals between the dialogue and the different types of miming, but maintains an unwavering inner strength. This feeling of inner strength will faintly reveal itself and bring enjoyment. However, it is

undesirable for the actor to permit this inner strength to become obvious to the audience. If it is obvious, it becomes an act and is no longer ‘no action’.

Zeami, On the Art of the Noh

Today many pianists, violinists and singers *act* music as if performing for the deaf. And if you shut your eyes, you may still hear grimaces.

Marionettes on a stage appear to move in various ways, but in fact it is not they who really move—they are manipulated by strings. When these strings are broken, the marionettes fall and are dashed to pieces. In the art of the Noh too, the different types of miming are artificial things. What holds the parts together is the mind. This mind must not be disclosed to the audience. If it is seen, it is just as if a marionette’s strings were visible. The mind must be made the strings which hold together all the powers of the art.

Zeami, On the Art of the Noh

28

On the 5th of January 2008 the Japanese crew arrived in Moscow. On the 8th of December 1941 the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Two parallel stories, an old trick; I am too old to proceed like that.

Suppose you contracted a disease of which you know nothing or next to nothing. I mean, you know about its existence in other people’s bodies and minds, but you have no inkling as to its presence in your own substance, in your ego and super-ego. Suddenly it breaks out in a rash, declaring war on your organism, on your very existence. What follows is a bit of poetic license: a disease cannot be manipulated so effortlessly. You realise you can get rid of it in no time on condition that you give it up as if it were an idea, a sort of undertaking. Overwhelmed by a surge of remorse, however, you allow the disease to invade and conquer you.

The comparison seems to have overlapped its model: you cannot feel any remorse for having been cured. But a writer does experience something along these lines if he stays in bed to the detriment of his virtual masterpiece: I, for one, am not capable of writing in bed.

Before dawn on December 8, Tokyo time, the Imperial Navy and Army launched nearly coordinated surprise attacks at Singora and Kota Bharu. More than an hour later, they struck at the American naval base at Pearl Harbor about which I knew nothing either in my childhood or in my youth. Both Pearl Harbor and the Japanese attack escaped my notice. I heard about President Roosevelt and his reluctance to help the Soviet Union by ‘opening the second front’, as they put it on the radio. Neither did Roosevelt burn with desire to wage war on Japan, on the country he regarded as a secondary threat to American security; but he had no choice.

Neither did I. They hurt me into writing this book.

How many times have I vowed not to write any more? No more novels or long works in general; only poems and essays. And my cat seemed to strengthen my resolve by jumping up onto my writing desk whenever I switch my computer on. One day I was holding a glass of beer in my hand; she tipped the contents of the glass onto the keyboard.

Only a kitten. Playing in my room.
No other loves. But for her presence,
A fountain wouldn't be
A fountain.

A fountain, somewhere.
The Fountain of Youth,
The Fountain of Eternity.
She knows.

She knows I should stop writing and lie in my bed, waiting for the canopy and heaven to come down and cover me from head to foot; I don't need another blanket. Is it my duty to write this report on how the shooting of the film about my life unfolded off-screen? In no way does my divine status depend on it: either I am divine or I am not. According to Freud, neither a poet nor a pianist can be regarded as a great man, for only those who found a religion or a state—a feat that requires an aura of superhuman confidence—deserve this title. I could also go sightseeing in China and elsewhere without bothering about cameras, about my poems and profile. Nor have I been to Egypt and Cambodia. Is it my duty to write this ditty—this nonsense, in other words? Only bestsellers are not nonsensical because they do not produce nonsensical results. Didn't I say somewhere there was nothing more stupid than reading stupid books? You cannot even enjoy the beauty of an actress or a special effect or a spectacular stunt.

But for my poetical status, I would be an ordinary human being. What is wrong with being an ordinary human being? Only Hirohito could have answered this question.

I have done with questions. There are no answers
 Either. Neutral statements. Didn't Barthes
 Lecture on *Le neutre*?

This glass of wine is not neutral. Nor are
 The birds I hear; yet my shutters are closed.
 Were they open, the birds would sound neutral.
 Would they?

Zeami speaks of 'no action'. Is it
 Neutral?

It is NO ACTION.

At least when you write a story you know you are a storyteller—a status sanctified by tradition and Walter Benjamin. You go from point A to point B. Where am I going? To a point situated between point A and point B. There is no such point. And if there was such a point—A1, for instance—I would circle around it until doomsday. Actually it is better to circle around A. Or J.

Only silence welcomes me wherever I go, even if I sing in the rain day in day out—the silence I heard in my childhood. Why didn't I look for my grandma? Why didn't I rush home? I knew the

whereabouts of the building where I had been born. I would have run from point A to point B, telling the story of my distress; and this story might have taken root in my existence. It might have given rise to other stories—to storytelling as such. But I was rooted to the spot with amazement, not with fear. I was loath to budge from point A where I had found myself, my opposition to the world and my marriage to earth and heaven. My honeymoon, my spectacular stunt. My special effect was out of this world.

So now I am still half-paralysed in the presence of silence and beauty. And they are omnipresent. Beyond one woman there stands another one. Beyond silence there reigns silence.

My languages are dead.

You're no language.

You're a melody I hear

Whenever I listen to silence.

And silence is everywhere.

Which woman did I have in mind when writing this poem? A, B, C, D? I put the poem in a letter I sent to a young beauty I had met in Tokyo three years ago. But I was thinking about another woman when writing it in a car that finally brought me to the Ana Hotel. And I gave it to yet another woman living in Moscow, not far from a black hole. (There are several black holes under Moscow, under its asphalt.) So many loose ends. When will I have enough leisure to talk about all those women? I mentioned one of them already, the one for whom I was waiting underground, in a sort of black hole, in an underground passage where, one day, a teenager plucked my wallet from my hand. So many losses. I lost many women, I found many women. The earth is a lost-and-found office, as I wrote in one of my poems. Or did I say a lost property office? I cannot find this poem. I might have erased it alongside many other poems that did not seem worthy of my quill.

During his meeting with Harold Pinter, Beckett said his novels had no structure because he strove to mirror the chaotic state of our world. Actually he did not strive to mirror it; he was just going with the tide. This state of affairs was reflected in the water. Pinter said he disagreed. 'The theory of chaos is just an invaluable technique for studying the structure of your works,' he said. Beckett smiled.

This work of mine reflects neither the structure of the world nor its chaotic state. It reflects every moment, doing justice to the Japanese way of thinking, of viewing the world and time. After all, the world is made up of windowless monads, according to Leibniz. They do not see each other and

have no idea of how their neighbours or distant cousins live and prosper. They communicate through harmony, through silence.

29

Does that mean I have to write a sort of diary? I would not mind paying homage to whatever happens in my life, provided I do not get bogged down in details and complaints. I have every right to voice my grievances, but I might do it off-screen, as it were. I might scream during my walks in the woods: sometimes I am fed up with silence.

I made a laudable attempt to write a diary and failed, I must admit—for the simple reason that I am used to sonatas and symphonies which encompass silence, every moment of it, instead of splitting atoms. I must listen more often to Webern's opuses.

The weather is fine today in spite of the rain I heard and saw last night. Even the light emanating from my computer screen would have been enough to illuminate the rain that was quite ostentatious, not to say indecent. Now it is all over and the sun shines without reminding me of the Japanese Emperor whose life did not limit itself to Pearl Harbor and the capitulation, contrary to what many of us believe. I woke up around 7 a. m. after spending a whole night in bed—the night that might serve as a model to all my nights to come. Indeed, I do wish my whole life could model itself upon this night during which I woke up only two or three times, which enabled me to stroke my cat sleeping by my side, near my ribs. She usually does so after capering around for a while, either on the bed or in the dining room where she usually awaits a few titbits that may drop into her mouth from the dinner table.

I am lying in my bed, wondering when I am likely to take my bath—the ritual depending solely on my moods which are not regulated by the outside world. I have no appointments today so that I do not have to open my agenda and say in mournful tones, 'The only time I have clear next week is Tuesday afternoon.' Fancy talking like that to a beautiful woman! Her hair was jet-black, her lips ruby-red and her skin as white as snow. The footpath zigs and zags through the forest. I am half-asleep. Some words and images flow into my field of vision so that I see not only the images but also the words as if I were typing them out. I had a change of heart at the last minute, but I do not remember what kind of situation I had got involved in. I won't criticise my film director—I know what side my bread is buttered on. Another sentence I read in my half-dream. Is that my unconscious I see with my inner eye? Or just common sense? Anyone with any common sense would have known what to do in that studio where my Japanese companions in misfortune witnessed some appalling acts of barbarism. A Russian barbarian, a Russian wolf. What with one thing and another I forgot to phone you yesterday. Who are you? I see a woman I don't recognise. I don't think I'm God's gift to women, I can assure you. Why does everybody accuse me of selfishness? Nietzsche says that only a man who loves himself is capable of loving others. You train yourself, in a way of speaking. On a regular basis,

round the clock. Even in my dreams I love myself. I'll call you today, I promise. Why am I so reluctant to make phone calls? Slow on the uptake and invidious. A big scab formed on my thigh. The cat? Scratching me every day, every hour. She must have jumped from a cupboard. Fishing in troubled waters. I can still do something about the film. It's not finished yet, is it? The unfinished film. Let it remain unfinished. A God-given right. I'm the hero after all, the hero of this film, in this film. I'm entitled to toy with it to my heart's content. A rag-bag of different thoughts. This book is a real money-spinner. It is not. It doesn't matter. Democracy killed art. What counts is the number of tickets or copies bought by customers. Who are those customers? It doesn't matter. What counts is numbers. I do care about those who buy my soul. Why should Lucifer always have the last word?

30

I will not jot down my half-dreams because this book, however non-profit-making and puzzling, is not a half-brother of *Finnegans Wake*; it is not even its distant cousin. The Japanese crew was no dream; neither was the Second World War with its victories and capitulations. To what kind of thing would Sei Shonagon have assigned the double subject matter of this book? She used to split the world into its constituents and label them in accordance with her taste: boring things, horrifying things. Sigmund Freud, who analysed our penchant for destruction and self-destruction, was prepared to love his neighbour for the sake of the peace on earth. The First World War had devastating effects; and yet the monarchs it demoted to the rank of ordinary humans could in no way boast of their divine origin. Some monkeys have a very complex social hierarchy. So do humans, to some extent. Even now we are not equal in spite of our democratic bias which has already made inroads into the domain of art where men and women of genius are conspicuous by their absence. Nor are there many of them in the domain of science whose structure is more or less akin to collective farms: only *groups* of scientists tackle serious problems.

The Second World War destroyed human nature to the point of leaving us naked amidst the ruins. Some of us are kind and generous, but these qualities or virtues do not belong to us any more so that, whenever we are virtuous, we seem to play other species' parts. We perform a play about which we learn from books, from pictures, from music and architecture. Even our cruelty models itself upon somebody or something—the picture of Dorian Gray, for instance. We are no longer human; nor are we inhuman. Neither point A nor point B. Hovering somewhere in between, around point A1 or A2.

Hegel says that for us the works of the Muses are just 'beautiful fruits torn from the tree. We have not the real life of their being—the tree that bore them, the earth and elements, the climate that constituted their substance, the seasonal changes that governed their growth. Nor does fate give us, with those works of art, their world, the spring and summer of the moral life in which they bloomed and ripened but only the veiled memory of this reality.' We just wipe spots of rain or dust from these fruits—not in order to live within that reality but merely to represent it within ourselves.

The same goes for human history which is no longer ours. We just wipe spots of rain or dust from our forefathers. We open their tombs and find their skeletons. No point in making love to those skeletons: they will never become our body, our blood. We shall never be at one with them. They can only crumble between our fingers. Human history is just a history now, a page from a book we peruse now and then. The above excerpt from Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* is also a page from a book where we find a point of view, a distant object forgotten by our mirrors. What is more, Hegel often quotes other authors by heart, garbling them casually. We read and interpret it whenever in need of a pick-me-up: we cannot write even a page like that. But we can read it. Is that enough? Does it become *our* page in the process?

*Beau page! ah! Mon beau page,
Mironton, tonton, mirontaine*

31

My living room. My best friend was sitting opposite me, an empty glass in his hand. I poured some vodka for my guest and myself.

‘As you probably know, I decided some time ago to commit *seppuku*. I intend to do it tonight.’

‘Wouldn’t it be wiser to play Russian roulette? You’re Russian after all.’

‘Do you agree I should commit suicide?’

‘Under the circumstances, I won’t attempt to dissuade you.’

‘I’m glad to hear it. When I heard that you’d come so unexpectedly, I was afraid you might try to stop me. I’m glad I was mistaken. I bid you welcome—you’ve come at an opportune moment. But what circumstances are you talking about? Western decadence, Eastern decadence, the death of art, the death of God?’

‘Well, to put it in a nutshell, we’re lost.’

‘I know. Apocalypse now. Hamlet would have taken his life if he’d lived in this day and age. No more questions. Nothing but answers. Hamlet didn’t face dishonour, did he?’

‘What are *you* talking about?’

‘They showed to the whole of Japan how I pursue my cat on all fours. They filmed me while I was looking for my cat. On all fours.’

‘Didn’t you see the camera?’

‘I did, but I thought it was a joke. A sort of private shooting, a family album.’

‘The film director isn’t your relative, is he?’

‘Neither is the cameraman. I couldn’t imagine they’d put it into the film. And I made a mistake when speaking about the scratch.’

‘What scratch?’

‘My cat didn’t recognise me at first. After all, I’d been away for more than three months. I told them they should remove this sequence on account of the mistake. *Mon longue absence*. Well, never mind. I’m dishonoured, that’s all there’s to it.’

‘They say there’s nothing one should sacrifice one’s life for. It’s pleasant to know there are people who can commit suicide because of a linguistic error or a ridiculous posture.’

‘And of course an artist should sacrifice his life for the sake of art. The tragic hero reaches for the stars and after his death lives on them. Only through his death is he allowed to make this upward journey.’

‘A journey to the core of music. In his youth Nietzsche would disparage Socrates and his optimistic stance in favour of Aeschylus.’

‘The act of *seppuku* might have been carried out in Aeschylus’ tragedies. Incidentally, during the Heian period death by no means diminished a man’s power. Michizane’s death in exile was far from being the end of his activities. His greatest success came after. There was a series of catastrophes in the capital—droughts, floods and fires. His rivals died prematurely. All this was attributed to the curse of Michizane’s angry ghost and efforts were made to placate him.’

I refilled the glasses and talked genially on. I seemed content that I had done my utmost in the domain of literature, in the domain of music. At one point I burst into laughter.

‘You know, I swallowed my pills tonight. What do I care now about my high blood pressure!’

As I talked on my friend grew sadder and more frightened. I made an attempt to brighten him up.

‘Now come on. Pull yourself together and let us drink our vodka. I don’t know how long it will be before we have our next vodka party together—in some other place.’

I laughed heartily at my joke. He did not laugh. My face grew rosier. My friend said in a worried tone:

‘If you drink too much, your hand might slip. You might not succeed in killing yourself.’

‘Don’t worry! I haven’t drunk too much yet. Besides, drink helps because it improves the circulation—the blood will flow more quickly. No, I’m not likely to fail. Relax!’

My friend smiled, as etiquette demanded. I rose and put on a white shirt. A few minutes elapsed in silence. My friend was on his way out, but all of a sudden he changed his mind and paused in the doorway behind my kneeling yet upright figure. Then he also dropped to his knees. I had drawn the dagger across my belly and was now, the dagger in my left hand, looking for the carotid artery on the right side of my neck. I began to sway. The dagger swept across my neck and a torrent of blood pulsed out. Yet my body was still erect. My friend asked in quiet, almost inaudible tones:

‘Shall I help you?’

‘No.’

There was nothing unusual about my voice; I might have been answering the most ordinary of questions. I added:

‘Leave me.’

My friend made for the dining room. More than an hour elapsed after I had committed my act of *seppuku*. I still knelt in the same place, my body still erect. The blood still flowed from my wounds. My friend returned to the living room and whispered:

‘Are you in agony?’

There was no reply. I seemed to have lost consciousness. My friend took the dagger that lay beside me and thrust it deep into the right side of my neck. My body fell.

32

BORING THINGS

Writing about your own suicide.

Reading a modern bestseller.

Making phone calls to say ‘Hello’.

Opening oysters.

Playing with a musician who is just famous.

Playing scales and arpeggios.

Reality game shows.

Packing your bags, unpacking your bags.

Security clearance.

Giving master classes in China.

Listening to the stars of the twenty-first century.

Traffic jams in Moscow.

Election campaigns everywhere.

Writing a diary, reading a diary.

USELESS THINGS

Making money for the sake of money.

Pursuing an idea of happiness, not happiness itself.

Pursuing anything with the exception of cats.

Talking to a Japanese film director.

Writing poems for films.

Writing poems in the twenty-first century.

Paying attention to literary style.

Putting emphasis on literary style.

Arranging your own funeral.

Instinct for self-preservation.

USEFUL THINGS

Superfluous things.

Reading *The Tale of Genji*.

Looking at the sky.

Walking in the woods.

Getting lost in the woods.

Feeding a cat.

Playing with a cat.

Looking at the canopy of your bed.

Listening to LPs. Great musicians of the past.

Listening to a waterfall in a Japanese garden.

Preventive medicine.

Traditional Chinese medicine.

EXAMPLE OF AN EQUITABLE TORTURE

They told me they would like to make a film on Kyoto, a sort of guided tour. I was supposed to be the guide. The film was to last half-an-hour. They told me the film would last one hour and a half, taking place in three countries, including the country of my birth. A film about myself. They told me the film would last one hour and fifty minutes. They asked me to get in touch with the people I wanted to take part in the film. They got in touch with those living in Japan. I met those people and talked to them. The material we got was splendid. None of my friends appeared in the film.

‘Could I buy the material?’

‘Our company isn’t private. Japanese taxpayers are our sponsors. So we need their approval to sell you the material. The approval of the whole nation.’

‘A referendum?’

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF AN EQUITABLE TORTURE

I told them I would like to write a poem in honour of the Noh actor. They said they would be delighted to read and film the poem. I wrote a poem and showed it to them. They asked me what kind of paper I wished to use for the poem. I said I trusted their taste. They brought five or six sheets of paper. I chose one and wrote my poem on it. They asked me to do it again, muttering the words under my breath. I complied with their wish. They asked me to recite the poem. Again I complied with their wish. I

offered the poem to the actor. They filmed our smiles and bows. They asked me to find the draft of the poem. After a long search I found it.

UGLY THINGS

An ugly woman.
 Handling a fork like a sabre.
 The wobbly singing of the choir.
 An instrumentalist showing music on his face and elsewhere.
 A beautiful woman marrying a stupid jerk.
 A stupid jerk.
 Moscow pavements.
 Russian manners.
 A drunkard sleeping on the floor of a bus.
 A garrulous waiter.

BEAUTIFUL THINGS

Russian women.
 Jewish women.
 The sound of a faraway Kyoto bell.
 The sky above Versailles.
 A sleeping cat.
 Oysters on my dinner table.
 A bottle of Romanée Conti 1929.
Le caneton Montmorency.
 A cat pursuing a butterfly.
 The Platonic idea of the poem.
 W. B. Yeats' swans.
 A painting in Proust's masterpiece.
 Giant slabs of ice on the neap-tide waters of the Neva.

33

Life is a tale. Hopefully,
 Words will forget the truth
 Forever.

I wrote this poem after seeing the famous Kabuki actor in a play where he performs the part of a

prostitute whose friend—another prostitute—takes her own life.

Delayed by another useless talk, I arrived at the theatre in the middle of the first act. I saw two women sitting opposite each other. Their talk was not useless, I suppose, although I had no earphones which would have explained to me what they were talking about. A man showed up with the express purpose of scolding the woman played by another actor. Of course she burst into tears—a prelude to her forthcoming distress and suicide. She disappeared for a while and I saw the famous actor move around the stage. What I saw was not a dance, properly speaking, but it looked like a dance, a sort of anti-waltz. The movement was neither circular nor regular; he moved in zigzags, jerkily, as if foreseeing the things to come. The ugly things, the horrifying things, the beautiful things.

In the second act an American officer made his appearance. A lot of Americans haunted Japanese brothels at the time when the play was composed. Some Japanese women welcomed them in their tiny little rooms, but others refused categorically to sell their bodies to foreigners—to the Americans in particular. None of them, however, went so far as to commit suicide on the grounds that Japanese and American bodies were as incompatible as repulsive forces in the domain of physics; otherwise they would not have made such a fuss about her suicide. The American played by a Japanese actor singled her out from a number of prostitutes arrayed in the salon where he was bragging about how much money he spent on prostitutes. She did not even wish to cast a glance at the American visitor whose body was as repulsive as that of a crocodile. I wonder if she had even seen crocodiles in her life. Be that as it may, the American's body was repulsive. So was his way of speaking, his language itself. But even if he had been a handsome young man, speaking Italian or Hebrew, she would not have fallen for him. Nor would she have agreed to waste her time in his arms—a non-commercial attitude towards lovemaking. Actually she made love only out of esteem for her fatherland, offering her fellow countrymen the pleasures they missed in their households. So she walked out on the American and he had no alternative but to buy her forever, not only for one night or several hours. He said so to her owner who was loath to reject the magnanimous proposal: no Japanese would ever have paid such an amount of money for a prostitute. She was not a geisha, was she? What is the difference between a geisha and a prostitute?

I was told geishas used to live apart from the rest of the world in a sort of building where they received no visits either from the Americans or from their fellow countrymen. The latter were supposed to court them outdoors, showering them with gifts of all kinds: even a horse could be offered to a geisha. After a long passionate courtship a geisha might have conceded power to her companion whose will to power was above suspicion; in other words, he was allowed to kiss her tenderly without overstepping the limits of what ought to be done during the second stage of the geisha-client relationship. So he would kiss her on the forehead as if she were his daughter or his wife guilty of a minor betrayal. Another period of courtship would ensue, often leading to the client's ruin. Only mature geishas knew how to stop on the very edge of the disaster.

At last those clients who were adroit enough to avoid both a bankruptcy and a nervous breakdown obtained permission to undress their victims, for every geisha's hope is to become the client's guinea pig. He is permitted to experiment on her the techniques of lovemaking he has learnt from books and his veteran colleagues. Weary of lust-sanctified gymnastics, he may moreover ask her to dance for him, to recite poetry—his own poems included—and to sing a few songs while strumming the strings of a local guitar.

Be that as it may, the maiden, who might have become an exemplary geisha had she survived her encounter with the American visitor, committed suicide in her tiny little room—the event announced by the famous actor, the deceased's close confidante. In the third act she tells the story to the new clients fascinated by the poor girl's patriotic exploit which, in their opinion, may serve as an example to the whole nation and not only to geishas and prostitutes. Samurais are particularly impressed; their admiration incites the owner to transfer the scene of the suicide to another, more spacious room where a commemorative plaque sings the praises of patriotism. By its side there hangs a poem presumably written by the deceased a few minutes before a clasp knife penetrated her body.

'It was not a clasp knife,' affirms the famous actor. 'It was a dagger, I can assure you. And it wasn't her neck she chose as the most vulnerable spot. She opened her stomach with the dagger. Do you want me to recite her death poem?

'I wish I were a bird nesting
In a treetop. I would never have
Fallen down.

'She told me before dying, "I wish I could fly."

In point of fact, she was illiterate.

So, with the passage of time, words came into their own. Gradually they forsook the episode they were called upon to relate and went on a spree, neglectful of their duty. What does the duty of words amount to? Do they have to tell the truth and nothing but the truth? Or do they have to produce myths and nothing but myths? History is a book after all. Or a song, an epic poem. 'What is said in poetry cannot be separated from the way it is said,' writes Gadamer. 'The Trojan War, for example, exists in Homer's poem—a person who is concerned with historical facts is no longer reading Homer as poetic discourse. No one would maintain that Homer's poem gained in artistic reality as a result of archaeologists' excavations. What is to be understood here is not a shared thought about some subject matter, but individual thought that by its very nature is a free construct and the free expression of an individual being.'

‘We can’t put your poem in the film,’ said the director.

‘Why?’ I asked. A question par excellence.

‘Because you didn’t see the play in the film.’

‘I saw it,’ I said.

‘But reality has nothing to do with the film,’ he answered.

‘The film is another reality, I know,’ I said. ‘And I think the play I saw exists in your film because their realities coincide. Can’t you put two photographs side by side on the same table? Perhaps they don’t coincide, but at least they’re on the same table. Why not put everything on the same screen?’

‘Everything?’ he asked.

‘Not everything, I’m sorry. Just my poem in which I express my gratitude for the joy I experienced during the performance.’

‘Your joy would destroy the structure of the movie,’ he said.

‘My joy never destroys anything,’ I said. ‘It’s a productive emotion.’

Was I really joyful at the end of the performance? The famous actor recalled the past in minute detail and found the past contradicted the present. What was more, the past contradicted the future. He knew the legend he had produced was tenacious and ambitious; it was not likely to tolerate the presence of so-called reality. He danced. Did he dance? An anti-waltz, an anti-dance. Death instinct. Death.

A moment contradicts death. This moment, for instance. The weather is marvellous. I can see the weather and the rest of the world from the window through which my cat jumped a few minutes ago: she was longing to caper in the garden. Or was she after the bird nesting in a treetop? This bird might fall today or tomorrow.

35

I spent hours in our tree house

When I was a kid. I wish I could

An unfinished poem. I was not inspired. What counts is a moment, this moment. Even if I am not inspired.

This moment is precious. I wish

I could recall this moment.

I have no idea what I am talking about. Am I talking about anything? I am talking about a moment. Which moment? What about its whereabouts? The past, the future, the present?

The present and the future are at one
 On many issues. The present
 Is the future. And the past.

A good poem? I don't care. What I am looking for is an image, a moment. A moment is an image. Is it? It may be a word. Disaster, joy, melody, harmony. A melody is a moment. A harmony is eternity.

I saw eternity the other night. I did not
 See it. What I saw amounted
 To very little indeed: my cat, my bed, my
 Breakfast. Toast and marmalade.
 No salmon. Yet I saw it.

It. Id. That is what I saw. Was it eternity? Was it my subject matter?

36

On March 9, 1942, while the army and navy were advancing in the islands of the Central and South Pacific, Privy Seal Kido noted in his diary that the Emperor 'was in a more pleasant mood than usual and smilingly said to me, "We are winning too quickly." The enemy at Bandung on the Java front, he continued, had announced surrender on the seventh, and we are about to force total collapse in the entire Dutch Indies. The enemy forces at Surabaya have also surrendered. Rangoon on the Burma front has fallen. The Emperor was obviously delighted. I could only express congratulations.'

Watching movies, playing cards and chess with his military aides, or lecturing to them on his entomological collections were Hirohito's regular evening activities throughout the war. For example, on May 20, 1942, Jo wrote that in the evening, 'when the Emperor joined us in our duty office, the subject changed from insects in general to special ladybugs called *tamamushi zushi*. He had a chamberlain bring his illustrated book of insects from his study and began explaining them to us. Later, after dinner, he summoned a chamberlain to bring his box containing three rare ladybugs that he had collected in the palace (one of them was black). He let Mitsui and me study them. I am deeply touched.

Sometime after January 9, 1945, when the United States began retaking Luzon, and the self-destruction of kamikaze pilots and 'human torpedoes' increased, the Emperor's military aide

Yoshihashi Kaizo was delivering a briefing on the battles near Lingayen Gulf in the Philippines. He had just mentioned the suicide attack of one of the ‘special pilots’ when ‘suddenly the Emperor stood up and made a deep, silent bow. I was pointing at the map and his majesty’s hair touched my head, causing me to feel as though an electric current had run through my body. On a later occasion, I informed the Emperor about a corporal who had made a suicide attack on a B-29 in the sky over Nagoya, and the Emperor did the same thing: rose and bowed deeply. Both times only the Emperor and I were present.’

Nagasaki, August 9, 1945. A local doctor by the name of Tatsuichiro Akizuki provides the following description of the afterblast:

The sky was as dark as pitch, covered with dense clouds of smoke; under that blackness, over the earth, hung a yellow-brown fog. Gradually the veiled ground became visible and the view beyond rooted me to the spot with horror. All the buildings I could see were on fire: large ones and small ones and those with straw thatched roofs. Further along the valley Urakami Church, the largest Catholic church in the East, was ablaze. The technical school, a large two-story wooden building, was on fire, as were many houses and the distant ordnance factory. Electricity poles were wrapped in flames like so many pieces of kindling. Trees on the nearby hills were smoking, as were the leaves of sweet potatoes in the fields. To say that everything burned is not enough. It seemed as if the earth itself emitted fire and smoke, flames that writhed up and erupted from under ground. The sky was dark, the ground was scarlet and in between hung clouds of yellowish smoke. Three kinds of colour—black, yellow and scarlet—loomed ominously over the people, who ran about like so many ants seeking to escape. What had happened? Urakami Hospital had not been bombed—I understood that much, but that ocean of fire, that sky of smoke! It seemed like the end of the world.

‘What piece of music are you listening to now?’ asked the film director. Sambo-in, the most beautiful garden in Kyoto. The most beautiful twilight I ever saw. A waterfall. A faraway bell.

‘I’m listening to the waterfall, to the bell, to the twilight,’ I said. ‘To the twilight of the gods.’

Götterdämmerung. Brunnhilde’s fire.

She has jumped on to the horse and with one bound leaps into the burning pyre. The flames immediately crackle and flare up high. The men and women, in the utmost apprehension, watch the growing firelight in the sky. When this finally reaches its brightest there becomes visible the palace of Valhalla, in which the gods and heroes sit assembled. Bright flames seem to set fire to the hall of the gods.

The Emperor who rises and bows is also a piece of music.

An old man can become a piece of music on condition that he was born at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Thus I heard the composer to whom I paid a visit last summer. He was ninety-three and could hardly move, but he spoke like a young man or rather he did not speak like a young man: youngsters speak differently nowadays. For many years this composer was at the head of The Union of Soviet Composers. Several times he met Stalin and once even forgot to go to the lavatory in order to get rid of an importunate meal or what was left of it. In other words, he was scared out of his wits.

He talked to me about Prokofiev under whom he had studied for a while. I had no respect for this composer because his music was dull and shot through with a haunting socialist realism, but the tears welled in my eyes when I was on the point of leaving his flat. I realised I was taking leave of the twentieth century, of its atrocities and harmonies.

Suppose I had an opportunity to meet a man born at the beginning of the twenty-first century. At some point he will be ninety-three years old—at the end of this century, obviously. What will he sound like? I would not cry in his presence even if he proved to be an exemplary citizen. Generally speaking, those born after the Second World War are made from a different *prima materia* which does not confer on them an ‘honorary doctorate’, as my Moscow friend puts it. ‘Without this honorary doctorate a man is not a man,’ he points out. He does not think it is enough to be born in the shape of man.

‘And after the Second World War you can’t become a man, whatever you do.’

‘Can I become a cat?’ I asked. ‘You know, I sleep more and more as if getting younger and younger. Babies sleep more than old people, don’t they? The old sleep only five or six hours, I’m told. And cats sleep twenty hours a day, don’t they? Do you think cats are different now? They all were born after the Second World War.’

‘Cats will always be cats like Keats’ nightingale,’ he answered.

‘But don’t you think they depend on humans somehow? We stroke them and play with them. Aren’t they affected by our love? Aren’t they contaminated by our fingers?’

‘They’re immune to our caresses,’ he answered. ‘They accept them of course, but they don’t hear them.’

‘What *do* they hear?’ I asked. ‘What kind of music resounds in their heads?’

‘Silent music, I suppose. It’s not just silence, though. It’s what I call “silent music”.’

‘All music is silent,’ I said. ‘Even when an orchestra plays fortissimo you should hear silence.’

‘I’m listening to silence now,’ he said lapsing into silence.

Spinoza says we should get as close to our nature as possible within the bounds of this vale of tears. But what is the nature of those born after the Shoah? We still have arms and shoulders; we laugh when somebody tickles us. And we feel pain when a gang of teenagers beat us up. We fall ill and die. So do horses. What is the difference between us and horses?

Calvin says we should despise ourselves because nothing in our nature deserves our love. A little mortification of the flesh is good for the soul. We should do this on regular basis. A little mortification of the mind is also good for the soul. We should annihilate our initiatives. We should not just talk our initiatives down. We should root them out and exterminate them. What do we need initiatives for anyway? A peace initiative, a marketing initiative. Let our Lord take initiatives. Let Him guide us through the wilderness, towards His goal, His end of the journey.

What is the difference between going with the tide and going with God? Does my cat go with the tide or with God or with both? Does she take initiatives? She has a voracious appetite and steals whatever food I leave on the dinner table after finishing my meal. Her meal just begins, however. She also has a knack of opening my fridge so that I put a bit of adhesive tape on its door to prevent her from eating day and night. Does God guide her or is it a sort of animal tide conveying all animals to their or our Paradise? Are they different, our Paradise and theirs? And what about our respective tides? Is there only one tide in the universe? Is this tide also responsible for the movement of the planets?

I wish I could go with the planets. But where are they going? They are just going in circles or in ellipses. Is that a hint, a divine hint? Hirohito might have known something about the divinity of the hint. Did *he* go with the planets? Back to square one, back to square one, to another poem, to another insect, to the same insect. *Tamamushi zushi, tamamushi zushi.*

The tide comes in all shapes and sizes. The television crew I worked with for fifty days was also the tide, a part of it. They asked me to go in and out, take lifts, climb up the stairs, embrace my friends and teachers, play the piano when I had no wish to play the piano. On the eve of our trip to Chambord the director said, 'Do you mind my sitting by your side in your car?'

'Not at all,' I answered.

The question now on everyone's lips is 'Why should you take your car? Don't they have a minibus where there's plenty of room for you and a couple of your friends?'

Why should I take my car? I did not ask the question and obediently got up at 6 a. m., prepared to spend almost seven hours behind the wheel: that day we also had an appointment with a winegrower in Vouvray. I followed their minibus as faithfully as a dog waiting for another bone or another ball she can pick up and bring back to her master. Around 9.30 we reached the castle where my friend awaited us inside her car. She got out of her car; I got out of my car and started walking towards her. They started to film my solitary figure which was presently joined by another solitary figure. They also filmed my car, the way I got out of it. I was supposed to get out of *my* car. So I spent

almost seven hours behind the wheel. Neither the car nor my solitary figure made their appearance in the documentary.

Both my friend and I walked slowly towards the castle, talking about our mutual cat. They recorded our conversation, some bits of which could be heard in the first edit I had an opportunity to watch during my last stay in Kyoto. My friend grew mute as soon as we got inside the castle where we walked interminably up and down the two staircases that a number of people pondered over as they endeavoured to find out whether Leonardo da Vinci had any part in it. Actually Leonardo had died twelve years before they began to build the castle so that he could not possibly be responsible for the shape and size of the staircases we explored so studiously with our feet. But there is a sketch where four staircases intertwine to create a sort of airy labyrinth: you never know which staircase your beloved uses to meet you or to avoid your presence. In the first edit the speaker assured us that Leonardo himself had presided over the construction of the staircases.

I said a few words about these amorous mix-ups and we moved to Moscow—in the first edit at least. Actually we stayed inside and outside the castle for another two hours, walking and speaking on the top of the world called the '*lanterne*' for some reason. No one is admitted to this part of Chambord, but my friend wrote a book on it and consequently knows the ins and outs of whatever is related to it. So she got the key and we opened the door leading to the top of the world. It was really the top of the world from which God Himself (or Herself) could govern the destiny of His people. The documentary ignored God and our exertions.

I grew weary at the end of the shooting. Even in the middle of it I was so weary I yearned to say, 'I'm glad this job is over and done with.' But it was not over because its whereabouts were somewhere in the middle or rather closer to the beginning. So I said nothing. What a pity! I ought to have talked day in day out to make them understand I had never obeyed anybody in my life. I was weary (and wary) because I had always gone with my own tide and was therefore reluctant to be at the beck and call of those who had no divine status. Would I have obeyed Hirohito's commands if I had encountered him before the capitulation? I think we would have taken care of his insects. I might have introduced my cat to him.

What can I say about this sleepless night? Nothing much. Another poem? I should write at least a hundred poems to match Lady Murasaki's epic. I shall not be able to match it. I can understand it, though; in my own way. To understand it, I have to write poems and talk about my girlfriends, about my gains and losses in this domain, in many other domains. About farewells and love.

Why didn't I call you yesterday? 'Let us enjoy ourselves,' you said when you finally turned up outside that underground station, in an underground passage where I had awaited you for fifty-one minutes.

‘I know a restaurant where we *could* enjoy ourselves. Actually we could enjoy ourselves anywhere, even in this underground passage.’

‘I don’t want to enjoy myself in this underground passage,’ you pointed out.

We took a taxi and enjoyed a monstrous traffic jam which delayed our dinner for at least two hours. You did not mind; neither did I. I did mind it, though: another girlfriend of mine expected my call around 7 p.m. I was in the car, listening to your gibberish. I still do not know whether I prefer your gibberish to Dante’s *Commedia*.

In the restaurant I called my girlfriend. (You are *not* my girlfriend.) She did not answer. She was out, obviously. I rejoiced in my good fortune. But I did not enjoy myself during that dinner. You went on talking as if you had relinquished all other desires in the restaurant where two men bent over a billiard table.

‘So you chucked all your brides,’ she said.

‘I love *you*,’ I answered.

‘Did you ever love *them*?’ she asked. I enjoy this sort of question.

‘Of course not. I’ve always loved you. Well, not always. I didn’t love you when I left the Soviet Union—you weren’t born at the time. But I loved the Platonic idea of your beauty.’

‘Stop talking nonsense. I loved your theatrical performance.’

‘Did you notice I wasn’t alone in the theatre?’

‘You *were* alone. A true artist is always alone.’

‘I wasn’t. Were you jealous? You must have been eaten up with jealousy—’

‘I didn’t spot any beautiful woman in the theatre.’

‘Why do I love you?’

I’ve been writing about you

All my life.

My muse, my model, my

Lifelong companion.

My positive theology. Our *niet*

Relates to Time only. I met you neither

At school nor in concert halls.

Yet you’re a pianist.

I met you at my writing table, in my

Cliché-ridden dreams: they often focus
On ideal women.

Actually
There's one woman: Plato
Murdered the others.

I hope reality will catch up
With poetry.

40

During one of his journeys Genji met a maiden by the name of Yugao. Naturally she fell in love with him: no one could remain insensitive to the beauty of the prince. So they spent a few days together, keeping the outside world at bay and paying homage to the goddess of love. But, as usually happens in Japanese novels, the prince was to resume his travels to the detriment of his feelings which were focused on the maiden, on her beauty and chastity. She was of modest origin and so could not rival noblewomen in grace and elegance. Yet she had a grace of her own and Genji's eyes were often riveted on her figure while she strolled around the garden where a number of waterfalls seemed to execute a sort of serenade destined to cheer them up. They indeed needed something cheerful, for they felt the time was running even faster than usual as the hour of parting approached inexorably. To the ladies he met at the court Genji might say, 'We share love of literature, food and travel,' but Yugao was not supposed to keep him company in the carriage to which three horses had already been harnessed. They both heard the horses' impatience and realised the hour of parting had drawn their farewell ceremony to a close. 'I heard on the travel news that there'd been an accident,' she might have said had she lived in our times. 'I wouldn't set off for Kyoto if I were you,' she might have told the prince in an effort to preclude him from leaving the garden where they had been so happy. Even in their days a woman in love could rely on a lot of bad omens such as comets, solar eclipses, lunar eclipses and so forth. But no lunar eclipse was to interfere with Genji's plans and only a tiny cloud timidly interposed itself between the night and the moon.

Then Yugao died and Genji inscribed another loss in his notebook where a lot of names had already been struck out. Actually he transferred her name to the page on which only ghosts had been listed—the female ghosts renowned for their beauty. Obediently Yugao showed up in a landscape perturbed by one human being only and that human being turned out to be a monk. He patiently listened to her tale of woe, for ghosts are fond of tales of woe without which they would feel even unhappier in the Hereafter. Ghosts too must blow off steam now and then so as not to suffer continuous nervous breakdowns. She began her monologue thus: 'I am a solitary ghost haunting this

landscape so it can remember my love, my bliss, my misfortunes as well, for there is no happiness without misfortunes. Those days are as far as life, my life and the life of my beloved who must be faraway, anyway: he travels a lot. He knows I died, but he recalls our love which is not a candle one can snuff out rather easily. Nor is it the moon that any cloud can murder for a while. If it were the moon I would chase all clouds away; if it were a candle I would hold it in my hands forever. I would watch the wax dripping down the side of our candle; I would protect our flame from cold draughts.'

During the period when Kyoto was the capital of Japan a man—a samurai in his own right—lost his means of livelihood and took employment in another province, forsaking his wife who was a good and beautiful woman. He thought it would be in his best interest to turn over a new leaf. As he regained his prosperity he took another wife whom he did not love: she was in no position to take care of his immortality by providing him with numerous progeny. In due course he grew very rich and realised he had missed his first wife: he was still in love with her. So this self-seeker left his second wife and returned to the capital, to his old home where he found his first wife, looking very little different in spite of the passing of time. He begged her to be forgiven for his desertion and this forgiveness she readily gave, saying she had always loved him. They retired to their old bedroom to enjoy again the delights of the early years of their marriage. In the morning the samurai found a corpse beside him.

What a pity I do not see ghosts whose presence might alleviate if not my pains—I have none—at least the tasks I have to confront whenever I leave my room. (My cat threw up tonight so I am groaning with pain.) I would see my own Yugao thanks to whom I began to write novels and essays, for she hurt me into poetry, to borrow the expression W. H. Auden used in his poem *In Memory of W. B. Yeats*: 'Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.'

'Mad Russia hurt me into poetry,' I told the film director and the camera. 'If it weren't for Russia and the sufferings she inflicted on me, I'd never have become a writer.'

'But you said you'd begun to write at the age of eleven. What sufferings are you alluding to?'

'I wouldn't have gone on writing poems, let alone novels. A pianist, just a pianist. My departure was a bounteous source of suffering.'

'Did Russia inflict this suffering on you? I think you inflicted this suffering on Russia.'

'Do you think she suffered in my absence? Do you think she missed me during all these years?'

'I haven't the foggiest idea. I think Japan would have missed you.'

'There was also Yugao, my private Yugao. But for her, I wouldn't have noticed the Noh play in which your Yugao speaks to the monk and dances. One needs a personal experience to feel it from the inside.'

'Did your Yugao pass away?'

'She died many years after our farewell ceremony, but she was ill when I first met her. She was doomed.'

‘We’re all doomed in a way.’

‘She did everything for me. She was ill, touching, nervous, loving and beautiful. What else do you need to become a writer?’

‘You need a talent, I suppose. Why didn’t you speak about your Yugao before? Do you have her photograph?’

‘Her ghost you mean? I know a painter who uses old photographs as his models. What a pity I don’t have her photograph—he would paint her portrait if I had one. Could I go and talk to him in your presence?’

We paid Boris Z. a visit in his atelier located on the outskirts of Paris, in a garden where a few birds and bushes saluted my entrance. I wrote a poem about him, a rather long poem.

Family albums are your model:
 Old photographs,
 Brownish eyes and smiles.
 Or no smiles at all.
 But always a colour—
 The colour of Time.
 Brownish faces and hands.
 Is the past brown
 Or white like a shroud?
 The past is white,
 As far as I am concerned;
 White and non-existent.
 Where are my family albums?
 In KGB headquarters, in the air.
 They must have been burnt,
 All those faces and smiles.
 I recall only three of them
 Or four at the utmost.
 But they're not brown.
 They haven't been subjected
 To the alchemy of Time—
 Only to the tricks of my memory.
 And my memory is timeless,
 At least I hope so.
 Perhaps it's brownish as well,

Rusty and rotten.
 I don't know.
 I see my memory
 Neither from the outside
 Nor from the inside.
 But I don't care
 About my memory's colours,
 Nor about the colours of Benetton.
 I'd like to see those faces,
 The faces I saw in my childhood.
 Memory is unreliable
 And the faces one sees in it
 Belong to other people
 Or to no one at all,
 Not even to the unborn.
 There are no such faces
 On the surface of the earth.
 Nor under it, nor in heaven.
 Paintings are real:
 You can touch them,
 You can kiss them,
 You can smell them.
 The smell of a painting
 Is real—much more real
 Than the smell of memories.

‘I’m inspired by the past,’ he said. ‘Not by the distant past, though. I’m keen on the past which hasn’t grown exotic yet.’

‘I said something along these lines on Montmartre Hill this afternoon. I’m keen on the past I can touch, smell and kiss. Joyce and Proust. Not only because they lived in Paris. Their lives are far more tangible than the writers I can meet in Parisian cafés—or elsewhere. Anyway I would neither touch nor smell nor kiss them.’

‘You know, when I was on the point of leaving the Soviet Union I thought I’d land in Paradise where freedom was the keyword. We had to adjust to the regime in the Soviet Union in order to make a good living. I illustrated books, for example. My paintings would have fallen foul of the socialist realism they’d set up as a doctrine. I thought there was no socialist realism in the West. I was right—

there was capitalist realism in the West. They don't tolerate whatever doesn't tie in with their idea of contemporary art. Other artists are not admitted to the club.'

Do *you* admit me to your club, my dear girl? How many lovers had you admitted to your room before I made my appearance in your life? None, I presume. You must be a virgin at the age of thirty-two. Didn't I dream of a virgin in my youth? Our meeting took place in Moscow, on one of its boulevards. Which woman am I speaking about? Erich Fromm says that love is a universal feeling: if you love one person in earnest, you love almost everybody—at least all those who are within your field of vision. You *are* within my field of vision, inside my inner eye. Inside my inner ear, inside my body.

41

In September 1975 Emperor Hirohito and Empress Nagako paid their only state visit to the United States. I asked my Japanese agent if the Emperor had ever gone abroad. 'No,' he said. 'Our Emperors do not travel because Japan needs them.'

'Did he leave Japan in his youth when he was the Crown Prince?'

'Yes. He spoke several foreign languages fluently.'

'Do you know what countries he visited?'

'No.'

'The United States?'

'I don't know.'

At Disneyland the Emperor danced with Mickey Mouse and he petted a koala bear at the San Diego Zoo. The Americans thought he was nice and helpless. 'Yes, I myself made the decision to end the war. The prime minister sought my opinion because he couldn't unify the views of the cabinet....But at the time of opening hostilities the cabinet made the decision and I was unable to overturn it.'

My friend told me she would have bid me adieu if I had ever set foot in Disneyland—its European version located somewhere near Paris. 'I'm not Hirohito,' I answered. 'I don't need to persuade anyone I'm innocent.'

'Your Majesty, do you think the values of the Japanese people have changed over the past thirty years?'

'I know various people have stated many different views since the end of the war, but seen broadly I don't think there has been any change [of values] from pre-war to post-war.'

What kind of film would they have shot before the Second World War? Without asking me any questions they put in it a colleague of mine whom I do not mind seeing in everyday life and even on the stage, providing he does not drink too much and makes no superhuman effort to come 'top of the class', so to speak: we are no longer at school. But I am not overeager to see him in the film devoted to

my life which is my life after all and not his, as far as I know. I told them the episode was irrelevant, but they ignored my remark as if I had been speaking about someone else—a third party of sorts. So I told them, ‘I’m reluctant to see him in the film that purports to represent my hopes and sorrows.’ I thought the sentence sounded Japanese.

‘But it’s very important,’ they said. The producer was still in the room.

‘What I’m saying is also important.’

‘Not as important as the presence of your colleague.’

‘Let’s invite him to dinner, one day. But I don’t want him to turn up in this film.’

‘He wouldn’t mind, I’m sure.’ I don’t even remember who was talking at that point. ‘Shall we call him right now?’

‘You’re talking to me, if I’m not mistaken. Isn’t that enough?’

‘Is he your enemy?’

‘He’s not. But I wouldn’t tolerate his presence in the film.’

My Moscow friend told me, ‘A true Japanese ought to have answered, “He’s your enemy. Well and good. Why is he still alive?”’ Why is he still alive?

In *The Homage to Japan* I used a few bits from *The Pillow Book* by Sei Shoganon and was surprised to find they took very little room indeed when re-translated into Japanese. (Actually it is the original text they printed in the brochure issued for one of my Japanese tours.)

‘Did you really reproduce the entire dialogue?’ I asked the translator. ‘Or did you put it in a nutshell?’

‘The Europeans use too many words. We drop hints,’ he answered.

I was the one who dropped hints in the course of the discussion centred upon my colleague. They did not understand my hints. On purpose? Another Japanese game?

Let us draw on *The Pillow Book* again:

It is important that a lover should know how to make his departure. To begin with, he ought not to be too ready to get up, but should require a little coaxing: ‘Come, it is past daybreak. You don’t want to be found here...’ and so on. One likes him, too, to behave in such a way that one is sure he is unhappy at going and would stay longer if he possibly could. He should not pull on his trousers the moment he is up, but should first of all come close to one’s ear and in a whisper finish off whatever was left half-said in the course of the night. But though he may in reality at these moments be doing nothing at all, it will not be amiss that he should appear to be buckling his belt.

I did not behave like a Japanese of the Heian period when taking my leave of a beautiful maiden I had encountered after one of my concerts. I invited her to my hotel and she came so readily I should have

married her at once, for such an opportunity—or chance, shall we say—does not occur every month, every year, every decade. I missed that opportunity: I buckled my belt at the wrong moment. Actually I did not buckle my belt at all. I just kissed her good night, but it was the wrong night, the wrong kiss—the wrong hotel, probably. She was not wrong. The right thing in the right place. How happy I would be now if she were by my side! In the lift I said she was bound to fall in love with a handsome young man. In the entrance hall I kissed her on the cheek; she made an unsuccessful attempt to kiss me on the lips. Neither the producer nor the film director would have made such a blunder. No poem would ever vindicate my conduct. I wrote one to account for the precautions I had taken that night, but I cannot find it—or them. The poem, the precautions. Now I would be far more reckless and brutal.

Rossini was in the habit of composing operas in his bed. And whenever a sheet of paper fell to the ground he would compose another aria so as not to pick the fallen leaf up: he disliked the autumn.

I like the autumn, the fall, or whatever you call it. *Osen*'. Nevertheless I will not look for the *poème disparu*.

Another chance. Where was I that night?

On the moon: on the earth

I wouldn't have behaved like that.

Another moon, another failure.

Another earth—the one I've lost so many
Times.

Have I ever lost it?

I can walk on it as far as the end
Of the world.

I promised you neither

The end nor the beginning of it.

Anyway you're at the beginning.

I am thirty-two years her senior.

'Your majesty, at your White House banquet you said, "I deeply deplore that unfortunate war." Does your majesty feel responsibility for the war itself, including the opening of hostilities [that is, not just

for the defeat]? Also, what does your majesty think about so-called war responsibility?’

‘I can’t answer that kind of question because I haven’t thoroughly studied the literature in this field, and so don’t really appreciate the nuances of your words. Of course I was at the helm, in a way of speaking—I’m an emperor after all. The point is I was and was not at the helm. Where was I? I was in Japan and the Americans dropped bombs on the country of my birth. What could I do about it? Could I catch those bombs and hold them in the palms of my hands until the final victory of the Japanese army? I don’t think I could have done so. So I did what I could. I stopped the progress of the American army by being at peace with the world. It’s very regrettable that nuclear bombs were dropped and I feel sorry for the citizens of Hiroshima. But it couldn’t be helped because that happened in wartime. Anything can happen in wartime. You might get killed in wartime. Some of you wonder why I didn’t get killed or commit suicide. My answer is, “I didn’t commit suicide because I wished to prevent my subjects from killing themselves.”’

Confucius does not admonish one to stand up like an oak tree before a raging tempest. The Emperor bowed and was inconspicuous. Like a pine tree.

‘The Sacred Throne was established at the time when the heavens and the earth became separated.’ The Emperor is Heaven descended, divine, and sacred. He is preeminent above all his subjects. He must be revered and is inviolable. He has indeed to pay due respect to the law, but the law has no power to hold him accountable to it.’

Ito, Commentaries on the Constitution

In his childhood Hirohito heard this text so many times he must have memorised it. I just listened to silence. What did it talk about? Emperors and the sun, empresses and the moon.

It is easy to glorify the past. But it is even easier to glorify the present: ‘We’ve never had it so good.’ And what about the future? Shall I quote Soviet newspapers?

43

Another departure. Another
 Death. There's always a woman
 You can fall in love with at the air-
 Port. There's always something
 In the air. There's always a dog that can
 Lead the blind to their final
 Destination.

Another journey. Genji meets a maiden whom I mistake for his host’s wife at first; I am watching a

film entitled *Le roman de Genji*. He travels a lot. A lot of maidens are at his disposal, but he chooses the one who does not really love him: she has already fallen in love with her coeval. Her father insists on Genji's marrying her and the latter acts in accordance with the code of honour I know nothing about: I have proposed to so many women. She and her lover go with him to the capital where he meets the Emperor.

'Could you do me a favour—would you feed my cat this weekend?'

Another mix-up. What did he say to the Emperor?

'Could you do me a favour—would you feed my wife this weekend?'

Another mix-up. What did he say to the Emperor?

'Could you do me a favour—would you feed my wife's lover this weekend?'

The Emperor feeds his wife's lover. What is more, he appoints him captain. And the captain says to Genji, 'I am the father of your son. Don't you know your wife is pregnant? Well, I am the father of your son. This kind of thing happened to you already. You are the father of other men's sons.'

Genji beats him. What is the point?

44

In Ikeda's account Hiranuma turned to Hirohito in the early morning hours of August 10, 1945, and said quietly, 'Your majesty, you also bear responsibility for this defeat. What apology are you going to make to the heroic spirits of the imperial founder of your house and your other imperial ancestors? Hoshina, Chief of the Naval Affairs Department of the Navy Ministry, has Hiranuma saying virtually the same thing: 'His majesty bears responsibility for reporting to the founder of his house and his other imperial ancestors. If he is not clear about this [matter], then his responsibility is grave.'

The Emperor answered thus, 'I shall write my memoir in due course. All through 1977, 1978 and 1979 I shall work on the revised memoir of my reign. In the future I shall become obsessed with my past. Don't you think the past is important? But now the past is not yet the past. It is the future I am concerned with—the future in which the past is embedded. In February 1975 my brother, Prince Takamatsu, will tell the journalist by the name of Kase Hideaki he was a dove and I a reckless hawk. He will also tell the journalist that Prince Konoe considered asking me to abdicate prior to surrender. My answer to all these lies will be found in my memoir. So, instead of answering your accusations, I shall recite the text my subjects will hear on the 17th of August 1945.

"Having been able to safeguard and maintain the structure of the imperial state, we are always with ye, Our good and loyal subjects, relying upon your sincerity and integrity. Beware most strictly of any outbursts of emotion that can engender needless complications, or any fraternal contention and strife that may create confusion, lead ye astray and cause ye to lose the confidence of the world. Let the

entire nation continue as one family from generation to generation, ever firm in its faith of the imperishability of its divine land, ever mindful of its heavy burden of responsibilities, and of the long road before it.”

In his surrender rescript Hirohito did his utmost to redefine his new national image as a pacifist, antimilitarist, and completely passive onlooker in the war. The text emphasised his benevolence and did justice to his imperial sovereignty while soft-peddalling and even obscuring his earlier reluctance to end the war on his own initiative. But those who heard the rescript were deeply affected, if not shocked—a bolt from the blue caught them totally unprepared. To ensure correct understanding of the message, which was couched in esoteric court idiom, radio announcer Wada Shinken reread the entire rescript in ordinary language. A cabinet announcement followed, condemning the United States for use of the atomic bombs in violation of international law.

Shortly before noon, when the Emperor’s broadcast was due to go on the air, Hatanaka shot himself on the patch of green near the Sakshita Gate of the palace. Shiizaki plunged a sword into his stomach and then shot himself in the head. Major Koga cut his stomach open in the shape of a cross.

45

What did I write to you four months ago? A letter in which I said I had recalled our first and last meeting. I sent you a poem you might have misunderstood. I don’t know if I love you or not. The sentiment of love is irrelevant, somehow. I adore you. I wish we could live together for many years to come. The Emperor died at the age of eighty-eight.

Nonsense, nonsense, nonsense. One must be a god in order not to talk nonsense.

In Munich I saw a poster. The caption was, ‘I think there are heroes nowadays. They help the poor.’ A beautiful maiden looked at me from the poster. Genji would have seduced her.

Tax-deductable alms. The triumph of one-dimensional Christianity.

There are no heroes nowadays. These posters are full of the most blatant propagandist nonsense. In days of yore there were *other* heroes: poets, philosophers, composers. But they could not help the poor, being poor themselves.

Even pianists are heroes if compared with Russian oligarchs.

46

On this occasion Kashiwazgi had come with the firm intention of behaving with perfect propriety, for not only did he stand in great awe of Genji, but also was extremely sensitive to public opinion in general, and nothing was more painful to him than the idea of his name figuring in the scurrilous gossip of the Court. If he had designs of any kind, they were not upon Nyosan but upon her cat. A fancy seized him that it would make him less miserable if he could

get possession of this creature and have it always about him. But even this, as he well knew, was a mad idea, and under the circumstances to purloin the cat was not much easier than to make off with its mistress. The archery meeting proved uneventful. But a few days afterwards he was reminded of his project by seeing in the Crown Prince's rooms a very handsome kitten which had just arrived as a present from the Emperor's Palace. His Majesty's court-cat had just given birth to a large family of kittens which had been distributed among his acquaintances. 'I happened the other day' said Kashiwagi casually, 'to catch sight of a remarkably fine cat belonging to one of the ladies at Genji's palace. I never saw so handsome a creature. By the way, I think they said that it is your sister Nyosan's....' This was a very good move, for the Crown Prince had a passion for cats, and the subject was one that he was willing to converse upon for any length of time.

The Tale of Genji, translated by Arthur Waley

Where is my cat?

47

The Waley translation is very free. He cuts and expurgates to his heart's content; he amplifies and embroiders. So do I. Life does not lend itself to literal translation.

In their eagerness to make the American requirements—or rather orders—more palatable to Hirohito, the army leaders and ministers often resorted to mistranslation of keywords. For instance, in the operative sentence, 'From the moment of surrender, the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied powers,' they changed 'shall be subject to' [*reizoku subeki*] to read 'shall be circumscribed by' [*seigen no shita ni okareru*].

My cat is sleeping on my Louis XV armchair.

48

According to Homer, children are always
Inferior to their parents.

There are
A few loose ends to tie up: today
May score a point over yesterday.

Seventeen years ago I was stupid enough
Not to kiss you in St Petersburg.

Versailles

Is far more experienced in the sphere of love.

49

There are people who want to know everything about their idols, every tiny detail. The bikes they rode on, their children's corners. Those people venerate idols, not gods. I was born in Moscow. In 1974 I left the Soviet Union and settled in Western Europe. I could have met Heidegger, Beckett, Nabokov. I did not. Their works are enough. Their brains. But the brain would be stupid without the body, without the heart. Here is a short history of my heart, of my brain.

I was born on the outskirts of Moscow, near a railway station and a huge park where Muscovites disport themselves.

For twenty-one years I lived in a skyscraper built on Stalin's orders. From our windows one could see a half of Moscow, including Red Square. But what I often dream about is the interior of the building, its numerous staircases—the labyrinth where I get lost. I hope my literary works have a lot in common with those staircases.

Inside every true artist there grows a tree which should be taken care of round the clock. One day this tree will outgrow the artist, sprouting its leaves outside, in the open air—for everyone to see and feel. Works of art are only skin-deep when they are born outside.

The possibilities are endless. But do they amount to what they call 'freedom'? You don't get it delivered, do you? In the Soviet Union we did our best to *conquer* freedom. Our star war.

I once attended the concert of a pianist who played like a clever schoolboy scoring good marks. Thunderous applause greeted his performance. 'This has nothing to do with music,' my colleague explained. 'The members of the audience just wish they could have him as a son. They're afraid of great artists, of strong emotions.' Sure enough, even passionate love is bad for our health. Lukewarm love is all right, though. So are lukewarm concerts, lukewarm novels and lukewarm films. Heidegger thinks that the aim of philosophy is to make us experience angst. Real artists should damage our health.

Jeunisme, youngism. Louis XIV too was fond of youngsters. At the end of his life he could bear only young courtiers. Today's audiences (and readers) follow in Louis XIV's footsteps. So do today's

patrons. They have to draw the line somewhere. Thirty-five. The artists who have crossed the border between innocence and experience find no sponsors, even if they are thirty-six, thirty-seven. Some of them do because they acquired their star-status in the seventies, in the eighties—in the past. In days of yore.

An old man in love with a young woman who is his junior by forty years. I understand that. But one should not acclaim an artist because he is forty years one's junior.

Networking, charisma, money. Their keywords. My keywords are: art, ideal, illusion, sacrifice, eternity.

Meanwhile in Tokyo, during the crucial interval between the Potsdam Declaration and the bombing of Hiroshima, Hirohito said and did nothing about the Potsdam terms. Twice, however, on July 25 and 31, he had made clear to Kido that the imperial regalia had to be preserved at all costs. The three sacred objects—a mirror, a curved jewel and a sword—symbolised the legitimacy of his rule and were vital to his awareness of being the occupant of the throne by divine right. He wished to have them brought to the palace in order to safeguard the symbol.

50

The truth is not in the wine
I'm drinking. Nor in my hand, in my
Mouth. Elsewhere, nowhere. I
Don't look for the truth.

I look for a stone I might put
On my tomb.

THE BRIDGE OF DREAMS

1

‘She was thinking with pleasure that the setting moon would light them on their way, and Genji was just saying so when suddenly the moon disappeared behind a bank of clouds. But there was still great beauty in the dawning sky.’ Should I finish this work before its own destiny takes over and allows it to expire, leaving behind a few poems, a vague memory of the moon hidden behind a bank of clouds? Notwithstanding my desire and fatigue, the work continues to stir and spurn me into action or rather no action, for it is better to write from a distance, from a helicopter flying over your own miniscule doppelgänger. No route is marked on the map lying in your lap, not far from the buttons of which you know nothing. Whither does your doppelgänger direct his steps? He looks like an insect lost in the immensity of the universe that does not seem to accept his interference. With what does he interfere? With space, with silence? Are you voicing your grievances? Don’t you realise the world is beautiful in spite of the moon’s habit of going into hiding? In spite of Japanese filmmakers?

The story is not over yet. At the end of Part One everything tends to disintegrate into small paragraphs as some of Stockhausen pieces do, as if informing the audience their ordeal is drawing to a close. I used to worship Stockhausen—in my youth, in the Soviet Union where no recording of his was obtainable. In 1972 I brought some from Brussels and would listen to them day in day out, overlooking the fact that my neighbours were feeling the full brunt of his dissonant frolics. And then I fell out of love with the electronic composer so that, in a way, I am playing now the part of my neighbours who went so far as to proclaim they would die if I continued to listen to contemporary music. Actually, Stockhausen’s life also seemed to disintegrate as he worked on his opera the première of which was to take place at La Scala. But only one part of this opera was performed at the legendary theatre; the rest sank into oblivion before being noticed by anybody. There was no sinking, to tell the truth—nothing but silence, silence, silence. He was keen on silence, on another kind of silence, on musical silence. Is that a suitable requiem for someone who killed himself six months ago?

It might be appropriate to put on the recording of *Momente* or *Stimmung*, but I feel out of sorts and only healthy people can appreciate this music which is bound to get on one’s nerves unless consumed in small doses. Let me quote him instead, especially that, in a conversation with Jonathan Cott, he touches upon the subject matter to which I am prepared to devote the rest of this book. ‘What I’ve actually experienced is that I came to Japan and discovered the Japanese in me. I immediately wanted to become that “Japanese”, because it was new to me that I could live like that. And I wish I could have been able to identify with the Japanese a hundred percent for a while in order to have developed this person within me. I only ate Japanese food, and I dressed like the Japanese—in the old-fashioned way, I mean—and that gives you different behaviour, a different feeling, different thoughts, different timing.’

I wish I could think differently in order to understand what the film director was determined to make out of my persona. It was not my doppelgänger he was so fond of; another figure—or rather

figurine—was strolling around the earth, across his map where its route had been marked with no consideration for its actual feelings and thoughts.

Japanese filmmakers have their own approach to the process culminating in the birth of a documentary from which some curiosity-devoured individual may learn something about his or her idol's ideas and leanings. They shoot whatever they can lay their hands on, so to speak, regardless of the losses that may even affect their purses, let alone their time and energy. Choosing appropriate (or inappropriate) sequences would be another time- and energy-consuming occupation, but for a sort of *idée fixe* they rely upon from the very outset of their enterprise. They *know* what the final result will look and sound like, however often they insist upon their open-mindedness in front of their guinea pig who therefore feels like bragging about his freedom. I, for one, told my friends I had never experienced 'anything like that'.

'Like what?' they asked me.

'I walk naturally because I think about it a little bit. Just enough to organise my steps. In *The Tale of Genji* the rain is submitted to the same discipline because the number of drops doesn't exceed the amount needed to bring to perfection the smell and colour of the red plum-blossom adorning Genji's garden. It's as if the rain was thinking *a little bit* about its fall. The rain doesn't think whenever it rains in torrents. So I controlled my movements only to the extent of imparting to them a modicum of elegance. That's the difference between freedom and anarchy. Freedom is always under an effortless control. Most of the time I walk from point A to point B, but it's easier to compose rhyming couplets than a free-verse poem. The film director shows me the route.'

A bee crawling across a windowsill takes no notice of the slipper I cautiously raise with a view to striking its delicate body.

2

The war is not over yet. As MacArthur put it, 'Once war has been forced upon us, there is no other alternative than to apply every available means to bring it to a swift end. War's very object is victory, not prolonged indecision. In war there can be no substitute for victory.'

I am about to send an email to the film director:

I haven't received the DVD of the final version yet, but last week I got two faxes which upset me a lot. One fax came from a lady who is a member of a music club. She told me her friends, who are aware of my respectful attitude towards music, were wondering why I had distorted the first movement of Schubert's *Sonata D. V. 960*, omitting the transition, the development and even the beginning of the recapitulation. Let me remind you that I spoke to you about this distortion. Any professional musician knows that music should not be handled so light-heartedly. Schubert is one of my favourite composers. It is very sad indeed that my name is

associated now with such a disdainful, unacceptable distortion. It grieves me all the more since I showed the film director what could be taken during his visit to my hotel room. You can use a few bars from a piece, although I am usually opposed to such procedure. You cannot use the exposition and the recapitulation, omitting the development without which the recapitulation makes no sense.

Please, understand that our reputation is at stake. Something should be done about it. It is a pity that our wonderful collaboration led to such a result. This film cannot and should not be shown to any foreign producer. Even in Japan it should not be broadcast, although the damage has already been done. That is what my Russian friend—the author of the second fax—points out. He says, among other things, ‘I expected something more artistic. After all, the programme is focused on a great artist. But those who don’t know you might have enjoyed it.’ You know a lot about me, don’t you? I don’t regard myself as a great artist, but even an ordinary pianist and writer deserves more respect on the part of those who work with him.

You must realise I am disheartened and hurt by the attitude you adopted towards my suggestions. But I am an optimist by nature. Besides, I keep a very nice memory of our meetings. So I venture to make yet another suggestion, hoping that you and the people in charge will understand my point. I think another version of this film should be made, considering the richness of the material you have got. In other words, I think you might make an international version, which would enable you to use the material I mentioned in my emails. As a musician, I cannot help feeling very sad indeed. I am also hurt as a man even though I am used to ill-treatments of all kinds, being a former Soviet citizen. Let us envisage a further collaboration in order to live up to our high standards once again.

I’m looking forward to hearing from you. Please, give my love to our cameraman. There are very beautiful images in this film.

P. S. And what about those friends of mine whom I invited to take part in the programme? I feel so guilty that I don’t dare to see them again. They also spent a lot of time and effort on this programme. It’s not enough just to thank them. They will forgive me, I’m sure. But I’ll never forgive myself for having involved them in this adventure which, as far as their appearance on TV screens is concerned, reminds me of Zeami’s notion of ‘no action’.

The lawyer with whom I got in touch told me I should not resort to contemporary means of communication if faced with a serious problem the treatment of which might require the intervention of jurists. ‘You’d better send your criticism by registered post.’

‘And what if they don’t answer? Does it really matter to what kind of missive they give no answer? Of course I’m aware that silence may be musical and unmusical, obdurate and embarrassed.’

‘If they don’t answer we’ll take them to court,’ she said.

They did answer my email.

We are surprised and apologies that you did not able to receive the DVD. We had sent them on 27th March from Kyoto, soon after the film was on aired. Today we checked the international postal mail service and ‘they said’ that the package was delivered at 19:16 on 1st. April at second delivery (because the first delivery in the same day was not successful by an absence). We are now asking father information about delivery situation in France. The package includes ten DVDs, a book, and a letter which is described in below. However, today we resent 4 DVDs again this time by FedEx in case.

We would like to add the following points in addition to the letter we have sent (as bellow) with regard to your email.

After a series of discussion, we edited the program from a point of view that the program would be most attractive to broad Japanese audience who sometimes might focus on different point from professionals in music.

We believe that we did our best to try to understand your opinions and intentions in order to brush up the program, and we accepted your comments only which our editing policies able to allow. We believe that we have shared understandings of such procedures during editing with you.

The program was very successful with a lot of audience’s applauses such as,

—Knowing the pianist for the first time and very impressed by his every single word and every performance.

—Featuring outstanding images and music in western and east world was like a sophisticated cinema.

—Aleff’s seek for mononoahare was very touching and his performance was so soulful.

—The structure of the program was well considered to express links among nostalgia, silence, and mononoahare.

—Very precious program which enables to understand his philosophy and art of music at the same time.

—The first-class piano lessons with significant interpretations of music and deep understanding of art.

—The pianist’s performance expresses the beauty of Japanese culture and Schubert’s sonata D960 in the ending as a climax or conclusion. We are confident of our decision by good reputations about this ending performance.

Again we really appreciate for your great contributions in filming and postproductions. As a result, we were able to get deeply involved in your creative world and able to touch

essences of it. We believe that we achieved creating the program as a beautiful and deep art documentary.

It was very kind of you to welcome us generously and collaborated with s. Please also tell your deep appreciation to all the people around you who kindly cooperated to the program.

We hope we could meet you again and working together in not so far future.

3

At this point I ought to explain how the structure of a piece of music works if not tampered with by a clumsy film director. Actually the producer told me the structure of their film would collapse completely if something were added to it. 'What about my invisible and inaudible friends?' I asked.

'To each of them we'll write a letter of apology.'

'So you'll receive a letter of apology,' I said to one of the victims a week afterwards.

'Let it be in Japanese,' she answered.

Such a detour is called an 'episode' in the domain of music. Back to musical structure, to Schubert's *Sonata D. V. 960*, to our bone of contention.

Suppose you watch a film on television. A man and his wife drink a bottle of claret. All of a sudden your telephone rings and you answer the call that lasts about half-an-hour. When you return to your TV set you find the same image—the man and the woman drink a bottle of Burgundy. Apart from the wine everything looks the same. But in the interval the man murdered his wife's sister and his wife knows it. You don't. You just watch the scene, wondering why the film is so repetitive. In the transition and throughout the development Schubert commits several murders. This interval is called 'development'.

The *Sonata* is an awesome masterpiece which should be left in peace, lest you destroy its structure. That means you should repeat the exposition on account of the trill that makes its appearance at the very outset of the *Sonata*, sounding rather benevolent—like the gentle purr of an engine outside the house, the harbinger of a Sunday jaunt into the hills. Then it disappears and comes back only at the end of the exposition where it wreaks havoc in the garden, uprooting trees and blowing a fence down. No jaunt into the hills!

So we are in a country house—in a dacha on the terrace of which we have just finished our breakfast. Is it a Japanese garden we are looking at? The more I speak of Japan the better. Incidentally, the first movement of the *Sonata* does sound like a Japanese garden, like its silence enlivened by the trill of a waterfall. If it *were* a Japanese garden, the weather would not mar the atmosphere as if it understood the importance of being joyful in expectation of the jaunt into the hills. In the chapter devoted to the Festival of Red Leaves music-boats row round the lake and the whole valley resounds with the noise of music and drums. 'When at last under the red leafage of tall autumn trees forty men stood circle-wise with their flutes, and to the music that they made a strong wind from the hills

sweeping the pine-woods added its fierce harmonies, while from amid a wreckage of whirling and scattered leaves the Dance of the Blue Waves suddenly broke out in all its glittering splendour—a rapture seized the onlookers that was akin to fear....At sunset the sky clouded over and it looked like rain. But even the weather seemed conscious that such sights as this would not for a long while be seen again, and till all was over not a drop fell.’

Alas, we are dealing with a Western masterpiece; our weather is far from considerate. What would *Sonata in B flat Major*, D. V. 960 sound like, if composed by Lady Murasaki’s ghost? I know what kind of metamorphosis it undergoes at the hands of Japanese filmmakers. Not a drop dares to fall in the course of the first movement; nor does the sky cloud over. ‘There was a wonderful moment when the rays of the setting sun fell upon him and the music grew suddenly louder. Never had the onlookers seen feet tread so delicately nor head so exquisitely poised....So moving and beautiful was this dance that at the end of it the Emperor’s eyes were wet, and all the princes and great gentlemen wept aloud. When the song was over and, straightening his long dancer’s sleeves, he stood waiting for the music to begin again and at last the more lively tune of the second movement struck up—then indeed, with his flushed and eager face, he merited more than ever his name of Genji the Shining One.’ There *is* a dance in the first movement of the *Sonata D. V. 960* and the film director did justice to it by clinging to the doctrine of no action. Then the producer shouted, ‘Action stations!’ and he cut both the transition and the development, letting the audience cope with the monotony of the recapitulation. It does become monotonous when deprived of the wind, of the rain—of the development.

I wrote a fax to my agent. I spoke of him in Part One, didn’t I? Should I make a list of my characters? There are several lists of this kind in Lady Murasaki’s novel:

Aoi, Princess Genji’s wife.

Asagao, Princess Daughter of Prince Momozono. Courted in vain by Genji from his seventeenth year onward.

My list may look as follows:

Mr U., the Japanese Film Director My enemy.

The Agent My former friend. An accomplice of the film director.

The President of the Agency The President of the agency I work with in the domain of music. A nice man, a wine lover.

Mamiko S A Japanese pianist. My friend. But the Japanese stick together when a foreigner obtrudes upon their way of life.

I shall update this list as I proceed with my narrative.

4

Here is the fax I wrote to my agent:

Once again I'd like to speak to you about the film. I got a fax from my Russian friend who lives in Japan. He saw the film and found that the ending was most inappropriate, not to say monstrous—from a musical point of view. As you know, we talked about the ending in Kyoto and I said it should be corrected because a piece of music cannot be handled in this way. You cannot remove the development, leaving the exposition and recapitulation side by side. I insisted upon this point to such an extent that Mr Ueno came to my hotel room with the score of Schubert's *Sonata*. We watched the sequence several times in a row and agreed to take just one and a half minutes from it, starting with the note B. My Russian friend who is a very good pianist was outraged, all the more since he thought it had been my idea. Of course I explained to him how the whole thing had come about. But how could I explain this incident to those television viewers whose attitude towards music is as exacting as mine? My reputation is sure to suffer as a result of this fearful error. What is more, I enlarged upon the importance of the transition in this movement earlier, when playing the beginning of the *Sonata* at home. Actually the transition was also cut out. I talked to Mamiko S. about that. 'You're right,' she said. 'The ending was very illogical and boring.' Of course it is boring to listen all the time to the same material without being given an opportunity to hear its development, its metamorphoses. And everybody knows that endings are important in every domain because they sum up what precedes them.

This matter goes beyond my personal tastes and preferences. I don't mind crawling on all fours as I look for my cat—for the sake of those Japanese viewers who need a human touch on their television screens. But no audience, however lowbrow, should be treated to what may be called 'vandalism in the domain of music', especially that we are dealing with one of my favourite composers. For every musician this sonata is sacred and I cannot tolerate a layman's tampering with it. I think I should apologise to those television viewers who saw the film. I should do it publicly—through a newspaper or otherwise. Some people think I am not always faithful to the composers I perform. Well, I *am* faithful to them—to such a point I'm prepared to quarrel with an all-powerful television company. They also owe an apology to the viewers and to Schubert himself. And to music in general. You may think I am crazy. Believe me, I am just an honest musician. I would be grateful if you could advise me in this matter.

May I ask you to send me the contract for this film? Didn't I sign it on the train? Or was it just the receipt? Was there any contract? If there was one, please, send me an English copy of it by fax.

I'm sorry to trouble you with my worries and 'crazy' ideas. But there is no other way, I'm afraid. I was treated with unimaginable cruelty and, but for your kindness and generosity, I would have had a nervous breakdown in Kyoto. I'm having it now. I'm almost paralysed with grief and anger. I don't want to be associated with the film where music is mutilated beyond recognition. I wrote to the TV people, asking them to make an international version of this documentary—the present one cannot be submitted to foreign producers. If they show it to Arte, for instance, I'll be excluded from this channel for the rest of my life.

And I wrote a fax to the President of the agency. This is an epistolary novel. *Les liaisons dangereuses*.

I have been unwell since my last visit to Kyoto. It's a sort of nervous breakdown I'm coping with at present. I'm not sure I'll be able to play two concerts in St Petersburg, which are scheduled for April 15 and 17. I suffer from high blood pressure too. I was never so ill-treated in my life, which is astonishing, given that I am a former Soviet citizen. Naively I hoped that some of my last suggestions would be taken notice of. I am an optimist by nature and during the shooting of the film the members of the crew were very kind to me. Perhaps it is their superiors who are to blame. I've just sent an email to Mr U. to suggest we should make another version of this film. They have got wonderful material and it would be a pity if they didn't use it.

I feel absolutely helpless. There's no point in saying some people liked this film. These people don't know what material we have got. Nor do they know how much time I spent on this film, choosing right sequences, noting them down. The TV people used only one-twelfth of my suggestions. I'm telling you all this because you're my friend. Do you have any suggestion as to what can be done now? The more they show this film the worse my reputation will become—among serious musicians some of whom might think it is I who decided to play this movement in such a way. Actually the television crew filmed two recitals of mine and I said three pieces from them could be put in the film. Instead, they used almost exclusively what I had played in the temple, frozen stiff. The temperature was 0° C. What's more, I played a baby grand piano which cannot sound like a grand piano.

I hope you'll understand my distress and my sadness. I'm deeply hurt as a musician and also as a human being. Of course I feel honour-bound to thank the crew and the producer—they went to a lot of trouble for the documentary. It is all the more horrifying to get such results in the end.

5

A poem would be in order. Let me forget about my narrative for a while. What kind of story is this anyway? A story of my failure, of my defeat. Let it become a story of my victory. A poem, just a poem. I should forget about my defeats and victories that are increasingly commonplace in our world. Are they? I think there are only victories today. Defeats are the prerogative of poets.

‘Forget it.’ I can’t forget any-
 Thing, any-One. My memory is stubborn. Is
 It? I’ll do my utmost to make it
 Change its mind—its memory, to be exact. My memory
 Needs another memory, more flexible, more love-
 Able. Why doesn’t it adjust its methods
 To suit my needs?

I need to forget my Japanese friends and enemies—all my accomplices insist upon this point. The next question is obvious, isn’t it? Do I have any accomplices? I have to steer my course between the unpredictable and the obvious, otherwise my prose would grow monotonous as if deprived of winds, rains and a light covering of snow. A dusting of snow on the lawn. Where are we? In a Japanese garden? In the suburbs of Moscow?

I wish I could go to the suburbs of Moscow this summer, skipping yet another holiday amid the mountains and lakes that are a distinctive feature of Swiss resorts. I was invited to take part in the Richter Competition—as a member of the jury, mind you. I would have enlivened it by performing a few pieces on stage instead of sitting at a long table covered with some green cloth: there is no upper age limit. And the lower age limit is twenty-three. Richter’s law stipulates that no teenager should turn up at the Big Conservatoire Hall where the competition takes place unless he or she sits in the audience. Recently I read about a box called ‘mosquito’ that keeps teenagers at bay by producing a sort of ultra sound. Not only teenagers happen to be excluded from society by means of this apparatus: its upper age limit is twenty-five. I am not likely to hear this contemporary music that would have driven all my neighbours to an early grave, had they been young and provocative. I wish I could install such boxes in every major concert hall where teenagers—youngsters, generally speaking—disport themselves to the detriment of music. Today performing artists can be divided into three categories: lumberjacks, mimes and mummy’s boys. Lumberjacks wreck pianos with their bare hands. Mimes perform for those who get bored when *listening* to music; they need to *see* it. With careful training, a mummy’s boy will always obey his teacher without a murmur.

6

‘Three hostile papers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets,’ said Napoleon. What would he have said about TV and Japanese documentaries? In his book *The Press* A. J. Liebling points out that a man is not free if he cannot see where he is going and no gun will ever help him reach his destination. I thought I knew where I was going. And only a gun may give one a helping hand under the circumstances. Poems are of no use, even Japanese poems. I recite one in the film. But I make no comment on today’s music-making in spite of the material I carefully prepared during my stay in Kyoto where my computer worked at my hotel and even in *their* office. They saw my texts and went so far as to feed them into *their* computers. Some of these texts can be found at the end of Part One—at the end manqué of this book which would never have seen the light of day, but for *their* outrageous conduct.

March 2, 2008. Kyoto. Hostilities broke out around 11 p.m. All of a sudden my agent jumped to his feet and declared we had to talk in private to avoid being overheard by the film director and the producer. He did not spell it out, but I needed no further information about his move: the producer had already hauled me over the coals for having cast aspersions on the fruit of their labours. Once in a soundproof space, my agent said in a whisper, ‘If you say another word, the whole project will fall through.’

‘Why are you whispering?’ I asked. ‘In the Soviet Union we used to talk in the woods or in bathrooms. You just turn two or three taps on—’

‘They won’t hear us.’ he said. ‘These walls are soundproof. It’s a well soundproofed building.’

‘They haven’t heard me. Are they also soundproof?’

‘They’ll hear you. They’ll hear me. You won’t see them again. I’ll act as a go-between.’

March 3, 2008. Kyoto. My day off. ‘Let’s call it a day,’ they said on March 2, around 7 p.m. ‘The last question. What would you like to eat?’

In the restaurant we talked about *other* film directors: Kurosawa, Mizoguchi, Ozu. Why do I understand *them*? They would have understood my Japanese doppelgänger. They would not have written the following email:

As the matter of the facts, inviting casts or performers to our editing stage is quite irregular. As you understand, broadcasting basically tries to keep equal distances from powers. (Our company is recognized by some audiences that we had ever failed in this point when broadcasting political issues, and still in dispute. Since then, we are especially nervous about inviting interested party in editing process.)

Such policy also apply to all of documentary programs in order to interpret facts objectively and prevent programs from being such as self promotion or ideologue. We would like you to understand our delicate position as a ‘public’ channel.

We are happy to listen to your comments, opinions, impressions, and intentions. We believe discussions with you would help our deep understandings of your artistic world. However, please kindly note that we are in the position which is able to reflect your comments to the extent what is the best way to produce the TV-documentary in order to interpret what we choose to 'Japanese audiences'.

The final decision will be therefore subject to the decision by the editors, directors, and TV producers from the journalistic point of view.

What Japanese audiences do they keep talking about? For whom did Mizoguchi make his films? For the Russians, I suppose.

No comment. Why should I analyse this nonsense which is not nonsensical enough to become a piece of nonsense verse? It makes no sense; nor does it make nonsense. Does it?

'Did you read their email?' my agent inquired, searching my face for some sign of forgiveness.

'I did. What's more, I'll put it in a novel based on this disaster. Your email will also adorn it—I give you my word of honour.'

7

The email in question:

This is the premise of this project.

Please forgive my impoliteness and please do not take badly, but I think I have to ask you to accept below things.

The final decision about how the program should be made or how the program should be edited will be done by the television company. Not you and I.

This program is their TV program. This is not movie or cinema that is produced and directed by you. I am sorry for saying it.

And this is a documentary program. A series of relentless acting is not what this program would like to express. The company has to have your natural voice, real face and your involuntary reactions.

Needless to say this program is made for audience. Not for the television company, I, our agency and self-satisfaction of our side.

The company needs to make the program that every audience is able to have each own images of Valery Aleff. The company would not like to provide what all audience would have the same images about you.

Of course they would like to have your advice. Actually they need it.

They intend to refer your opinion. They would like to accept your idea, as much as they can. But, please remind, it does not mean they can follow your wish entirely.

We can discuss and we can suggest everything. However, please understand that Mr U. makes final decision about what they should cut or what they should express.

Again I would like to refrain from any comment lest my words spoil the beauty of the text. If a sudden gust of wind alters a landscape, scattering leaves all over my path, I have no alternative but to accept this metamorphosis, for it is up to nature to decide what it wants to look like during my walk. After all, the wind is part and parcel of nature and enjoys the same rights as the leaves and the path along which I walk towards my destination. But if the wind blows my umbrella inside out I have every right to counteract the effect of nature's whim by restoring the umbrella to its natural condition. So your mistakes, my dear agent, will remain intact, being rooted in your scanty knowledge of the English language which you attempt to tame by means of an apparatus hidden in your attaché case. It pops out whenever you need to communicate your new idea to someone who does not speak Japanese: our interpreter is not always by your side. I wish I could have a similar device at my disposal so as to hammer home *my* ideas. Or should I *always* walk in the rain with my umbrella inside out?

I'm afraid my metaphors obfuscate the main issue which boils down to the following points:

- 1) Don't mutilate the music I perform by cutting it wherever you please.
- 2) I don't wish to become an object of ridicule. My ancestors will turn in their graves if I pursue my cat on all fours in front of television viewers.

I took a piece of paper out of my wallet and wrote down my complaints. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Why enumerate them now? It is too late. It was not too late on March 2, 2008.

11.30 p.m. We are talking in their soundproof studio, my agent and I. The producer has just left without so much as a by your leave. Taking Japanese leave.

'Could you please show them this piece of paper?'

'What is it?' my agent asked.

'The corrections I'd make if I was in the film director's shoes. After all, he's laying himself open to ridicule. Look at the fourth item on my list. They speak about my birth during the Cold War period. And Stalin stands on a rostrum, drinking water. The audience applaud. This newsreel footage dates back to 1936, if I'm not mistaken. No cold war was on the agenda in those days. It's true that a hot war was in the air.'

'They're looking for another Stalin,' he said. 'For an old one.'

'When did those cold hostilities break out?'

'In 1947. The year of your birth. Churchill made a speech—'

'When was it? In September, in October? Perhaps I was *not* born during those freezing years. Anyway they're not making a film about Stalin's dictatorship, are they? Why do all those delegates

applaud? It's not an image one might associate with the Cold War.'

'Why do you bother about Stalin?'

'I wish I could make a film about this film director, about his one-upmanship. Am I supposed to stand up and applaud while he drinks water or sake? Don't you realise it's a documentary focused on my life? I'm not really image-conscious, but my reputation may be tarnished as a result of his or their manipulations. The producer has the final say, doesn't he?'

'He is the boss.'

'You always talk about the final decision, all of you. Don't you realise I have to approve of my own image? You may catch me off guard, but you can't project such an image without asking permission. And I'm the person who gives permission and makes decisions. This film is *not* about the producer. Smile, you're on *Candid Camera*.'

'I beg your pardon?'

'I wasn't secretly filmed, was I? This sequence is embarrassing. I'm referring to my pursuit of the cat. Why do they stick to it?'

'It's so touching. It's the most moving episode in the whole movie.'

'I want them to be moved *differently*. I'm fed up with my own "involuntary reactions", as you put it. No voice-overs. Is that what you mean? And what about the texts I wrote and recorded?'

'Japanese people want to see your real face.'

'You've got a point there. I'm not an actor in this documentary. An actor may be cast as the villain. And he remains an actor even if he receives a few poison-pen letters from those who mistake him for a real villain. In this documentary I play my own part and consequently assume responsibility for my actions. It's not a fictional character the viewers will judge, scorn and laugh at.'

8

March 3, 2008. I am at the Ana Hotel. My day off. They are in Osaka. I came to Japan for three days only and they managed to shorten this Cold War period on some flimsy pretext. Once more I had a talk with my agent who assured me the film would live up to my standards.

'What kind of guarantee could I have?' I asked.

By way of an answer he handed me two sheets of paper. 'Could you read it?' he asked.

'What is it?'

'Read it please.'

At these points I have to agree with the company.

I attach the letter from the company to you.

Could you read it?

There was nothing else on the first sheet of paper so I picked up the second one.

Thank you for your great contribution to our filming in Russia and France. It was very kind of you to welcome us to your places halls, galleries, friends' houses, memorial places, and your sweet home. We appreciated it very much and we hope you could see that we have done our best during the location.

We are currently starting to work on editing our footage films, shoot in Kyoto, Russia, and France. The editing would be very tough and it would take for a month, since we have a great deal of materials and choosing best cuts and arranging them would require a lot of energy. At the same time, as you know, editing is a very creative process, which requires withdrawing a variety of stories which we sometime do not notice when filming. In order to take care of such creative process, we ask a professional editor, who can see our materials objectively and read subliminal stories among footages. We will start editing 5 February and will grasp the rough possible stories around 20 February. We will welcome you to our office maybe around 25 February.

In respect with your next visit to Japan, it would be greatly helpful you could kindly understand the points below.

'I read this email two or three weeks ago,' I said.

'Did you understand the points below?' My agent pointed to the sheet of paper.

'I did.'

'What do you think of them?' On those occasions our translator was by his side.

'I think I was betrayed. What's this title in English? A novel by Dostoevsky, an early novel. The humiliated, the insulted. Have I been humiliated or insulted? Or both? Or was I betrayed?'

'You're not betrayed yet. The film isn't over. I'll act as a go-between.'

'Do you mean to say I'll never gain admittance to their studio? Why did they vanish into thin air? Are they really in Osaka? First they said I should come on the 25th of February. Then someone changed his mind. The producer, the film director, the professional editor? Well, I'm here, on the spot, at the scene of the crime. Where are *they*?'

'In Osaka.'

'But tomorrow they'll be in Kyoto, in their studio.'

'And you'll stay at the hotel. Don't you like your hotel?'

On March 5, 2008 I returned to Versailles and sent an email to the film director. Here is the beginning of this email:

Dear Friend,

I want to thank you again for the work we did together in Kyoto. I'm sure our meeting was fruitful and vital to our mutual understanding.

I watched our film several times, alone and with my friends. All of them are struck by its visual beauty. So am I, of course. That is why I am concerned about the text which should match such beauty.

Here are my suggestions for the final editing. We talked about most of them, but I wish to go over them again to make sure there will be no misunderstanding between us.

There is no point in transcribing the rest of the email: he obviously did not read it. What *did* he read? 'I watched our film several times, alone and with my friends. All of them are struck by its visual beauty. So am I, of course.' My email turned out to be very short indeed.

Shall I transcribe a part of these suggestions for the sake of my lawyer?

The beginning of the film is very beautiful, but I think that the excerpt from Silvestrov's piece is a little bit too long. Besides, it is better not to show a pianist who plays with music. I move my eyes up and down, which is not beautiful. Could you please use some shots showing the autumnal beauty while I'm playing this piece? Of course you can show my hands.

The episode with the cat should be replaced. I suggested: Roll 26, 27. I say, 'She's my daughter.'

The poem I read at home—the Japanese poem—is not appropriate because it is wintertime in Versailles.

10 : 09 : 34. I don't understand the first word. Throughout the film there are mistakes whenever I talk French or Russian. Sometimes my friends and I start in the middle of a sentence; sometimes we don't finish a sentence. Even in English there are mistakes of this kind.

The poem I read at home related to the autumn. How would the previous sentence sound in the film? '...read at home related to the...'

Just a few thoughts to conclude my comments on the film. May I remind you that the speaker should say what I have written so far? Ten novels, eight in English and two in French, fourteen books of poetry, a book of long stories, a book of short stories, a number of essays, a commentary on Dante's *Commedia* and on Kierkegaard's life, two plays inspired by Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Schumann's *Kreisleriana* in both of which he performs as pianist and actor (in four languages).

In Versailles I outlined my literary biography and the cameraman shot my unassuming speech. In the first edit the speaker said I was a writer without going into details of any kind.

‘Many performing artists may be regarded as writers because they write their autobiographies. I wouldn’t say it’s the latest thing—’

‘Have *you* written your autobiography?’ asked the producer.

‘No. But I wrote a huge book on Dante’s *Commedia*. Why not take the sequence I recorded in Versailles? I spoke about it myself. Why use the speaker all the time?’

‘Because you can’t speak about it yourself. It’s not done in Japan. People don’t speak about themselves. We are modest. The Japanese audiences would be shocked.’

‘I don’t say my books are great. I just say I’ve written them. Can’t I say I played in Tokyo last December? Too immodest? All right, last December I played in a one-horse-town. Did I play anywhere?’

‘In which hall did you play?’

‘Actually the speaker should add that I have also conducted a variety of international orchestras. I endeavour to approach something of the sound quality and polyphony of my favourite conductors: Furtwängler, Toscanini, Mengelberg, Knappertsbusch, Bruno Walter and Klemperer. In St Petersburg I told a story about Karajan. We were shooting in the Big Philharmonic Hall. I pointed to the spot where I’d been standing during his concerts in 1969. And then the camera showed the empty stage, the chairs. There was nobody on the podium. Why not include this sequence? The empty stage, the empty world.’

‘The world is not empty,’ said the producer glancing around the studio.

10

Lydia D My friend. A wonderful violinist. A wise woman.

‘I was an inaudible man, Lydochka.’

‘Let *them* become inaudible. Why do you go on listening to their voices, to their insults?’

‘Did they insult or betray me?’

‘They betrayed you of course. No one can insult you unless you *hear* the insult.’

‘I hear the music they mutilated.’

‘So you write another email to say you got a few faxes to this effect. From Japan, from the people you’re not acquainted with. They all speak about Schubert’s *Sonata*. “Television coverage of your performance was truncated by a technical fault. Or was it *your* fault? Did *you* mishandle this masterpiece?” Don’t dwell on other blunders.’

I sent them another email and got the following answer:

Thank you very much for your great contributions to our program. We are very happy to report that our program is completed, and resulted in high quality and very attractive program to Japanese audiences.

We have just finished broadcasting the program and feeling certain confidence that we scored a hit. Many of around us praised the program for its beauty in sounds, pictures and deep implications around the interesting theme essential to a sense of Japanese beauty. Mr Akira A. has sent a e-mail, telling that the program was excellent and it includes many interesting pieces such as Silvestrov and Martynov, and Chopin played in Russia is amazing. [Akira A. . . . A renowned Japanese intellectual, a long-standing friend whom I invited to participate in the film.] Aleff himself speaking trilingual is quite interesting,—it has materials worth to a three hours length program and it is valuable and rich which can be achieved only by our company, and so on (Hoping that you would like it as he does).

Please let us explain one point in respect to the music we used for the ending of the program. After a series of considerations, we decided to use Schubert's sonata D 960 in edited version. The piece was extremely beautiful as a music itself which enable to involve audiences better than other pieces of music. The most essential element for our decisions was the fact that the music was presented in advance in an illustrative interview with your performance that the music has essential connection to 'mononoahare' (which is the main theme of the program). Such relation between the music and the structure strengthen our decision to use—

I shall forbid the use of this ignoble opus outside Japan and its network, however much I respect the company for which I jeopardised my honour and probably my whole future.

11

Another flashback. Another homage to memory as such, to my obsession. My photographic memory, my cinematographic memory.

Kyoto, March 4, 2008. 2 p.m. My agent paid me a visit to say I would never meet the producer who apparently could not stomach the idea of listening to my suggestions either in his studio or elsewhere. 'But the film director will come to your hotel this afternoon,' he added after a short pause, 'on condition that you keep silent.'

'I'd like to record a few texts.'

'He'll bring a tape recorder. Please, talk to the tape recorder.'

Once again we saw the DVD of the documentary and I dissected it for almost three hours, leaving no stone unturned. Then I asked the interpreter to leave us for a few minutes. As soon as she complied with my request I asked my agent: 'Do you know the idiom "to leave no stone unturned?"' Promptly he fished his private interpreter out of his attaché case and asked it the same question. The

interpreter answered the question. ‘And what about the idiom “to get blood from a stone?”’ The interpreter answered the question. ‘Trying to make them change their minds is like getting blood from a stone,’ I rounded off.

My agent pressed two buttons and said, ‘You could cut the atmosphere with a knife.’

We stared at each other to see who would blink first. He blinked, got up and left the room.

Yugiri (it was evident) would be so abjectly grateful for a mere glance of the princess, that Shosho no Kimi weakened, and finally showed him how to enter the storeroom by a secret door that led into the maids’ rooms on the north side. That one of the ordinary servants should be talked round into betraying her was natural enough, the world being as it is. But here was Shosho no Kimi, her kinswoman, the one person whom she believed to be really on her side, handing her over to the enemy without a moment’s compunction.

Lady Murasaki, *The Tale of Genji* (translated by Arthur Waley)

The world being as it is, even your agent betrays you when faced with a difficult choice: either to lose you or to spoil a film director’s party. After all, a film director may shoot a film about another artist of yours, which is likely to enlarge your purse; in the final analysis, what counts is the size of your purse, not that of your loyalty and honesty. Didn’t my agent say to me in our interpreter’s absence, ‘I don’t want destroy my relationship to the company’?

‘I need the company,’ he said in the soundproof room. ‘I need the company,’ he repeated in my hotel room.

‘In that case, you might not need me,’ I answered. Unfortunately I need him because my purse is not large enough to allow me to have regular meals in the restaurant that no one has seen in the documentary. And yet its owner gave us permission to watch how the members of his trustworthy staff slice, cook and otherwise handle fish, meat and vegetables in his kitchen. All this was for the cat, as the Germans put it. I wish I could see this cat and stroke its fur either in my bed or on my lap. But *my* cat will not take advantage of my friend’s generosity even though she spends a lot of time in front of my TV set; and she does not mind just looking at the *foie gras*, among other things.

I have known this chef for more than twenty years and for the sake of our friendship he broke the rule according to which he had never let any journalist or television crew spy on his thoughts or work. We talked about this and that in his room which was by no means soundproof and thus bore no resemblance to the Japanese studio where I made my last attempt to get the artistic truth into the director’s skull. The chef enlarged upon *his* bouts of inspiration that were in the habit of catching him unawares in his bath of all places. Dripping wet, he would rush to the telephone in order to communicate a new idea to his right-hand man.

‘Do you think no Japanese audience will enjoy this sequence?’ I asked. I don’t remember to

whom I put this question because all Japanese looked alike during my final trip to Kyoto. ‘Very few people think that an illustrious chef is an artist in his own right. Do you know that the Russians appreciate mostly what reminds them of their grandmothers’ cooking? “In that restaurant you feel at home,” they might tell you. And they don’t allude to a sort of homely atmosphere which is likely to make you feel comfortable—*gemütlich* is the right word. What they have in mind amounts to no more than their grandmothers’ clumsy attempts to cook something worthy of a dignified gourmet’s palate. Try and picture to yourself a Russian grandmother! Her two hands are given a double task she can cope with in her grandchildren’s absence. Her left hand washes their underwear. Her right hand puts a finishing touch to a *pirog*.’

‘What’s a *pirog*?’ asked the interpreter.

‘A big *pirozhok*. Do you know what *pirozhok* is?’

‘I don’t.’

‘If you say to a Russian *povar*, “Your domestic cooking is my idea of sheer bliss,” a smile will spread across his face. If you repeat this sentence in a French restaurant, you’ll only be storing trouble for the future. You see, I don’t want to spoil my relationship with this chef.’

I don’t mind spoiling my relationship with you, my dear Japanese. For the sake of art, for the sake of my self-esteem. For the sake of the world.

12

Dear Friend,

Thank you very much for your email.

One day, somewhere in Argentina, Borges attended a performance of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Neither the performance nor the Spanish translation satisfied him, but he came out crying. 'Shakespeare broke through all the barriers,' he said.

The sheer magnitude of your project is so unique that many viewers cannot help being impressed by it. To my knowledge there is no documentary of this kind. At least no pianist has ever been honoured to such an extent by a great television company. It is all the more unfortunate that we can mostly rely only on facts: your company, the duration, the three languages I speak, the beauty of autumnal hues in the Kyoto gardens. But I did break through all the barriers thanks to your project.

You often touch upon the Japanese audience. No audience in the world should be treated to such a distortion of Schubert's *Sonata*. My friends ask me, 'Why did you agree to play a baby grand piano which cannot sound like a grand Steinway? Why did you agree to play with your hands frozen stiff?' The answer is simple—I wished to be polite. I’m sorry I have to transgress my code of politeness now. Of course it is too late.

When I write a book or play the piano I don't think about my customers. I do it for myself. Didn't the winegrower we paid a visit to say something along these lines? He said he was making wine for himself, not for his customers. For the first time in my life I got involved in a project that does not mirror my heart, my brain, my soul. I always say, 'I write for Shakespeares, I play for Beethovens.' For whom did I play this time? For the mythical audience who understand neither music nor art in general? Let me tell you once again that music cannot be handled in this way. No text should interfere with it—at least not in a documentary made about a musician. Neither can you cut it *anywhere*. That is why I spent a lot of time choosing appropriate excerpts from the pieces I had performed. The way this sonata is used in the film is absolutely unacceptable. All those I told about it were horrified. I should have refused to perform it because I had to play for twenty minutes non stop, which was very painful under the circumstances. Once it was over I said to our interpreter, 'We'll just take a few bars.' At the time I could not have imagined I would be almost entirely excluded from the editing process. Mamiko S.—she is a Japanese pianist—told me, 'The ending is very boring.' It *is* boring without the development. Besides, the explanation I supplied at home sounds stupid in the light of what one hears at the end because I don't play the transition. And of course I don't repeat the exposition. The whole thing is illogical, if not absurd. No amount of sake will ever make me forget this foul amputation. I feel like apologising to the viewers who listened to that.

As I told you in my previous letter I will not show our film either to important people. They wouldn't tolerate such treatment of music. That is why I think we should make another version. You don't seem to share my point of view. In this case I would like to know if the material you've got can be bought out. At least two film directors might be willing to shape it in accordance with my concepts. Of course I would be happy to do it with you. This material is irreplaceable because I will not dare ask these wonderful people to take part in another documentary focused on my life.

Those who admire our film have no idea how magnificent are the sequences you made no use of. Only I know the whole extent of the losses because I speak English, French and Russian.

In the course of the shooting I had to comply with all your wishes. I didn't particularly like the idea of filming front doors, my comings and goings, the kisses I exchanged with my colleagues. But I thought it would be impolite to teach you how to make a documentary. Why didn't you allow me to make decisions in the domain of music? Wasn't it up to me to decide which excerpts should be taken? After all, I am the pianist who plays in the film.

I wish to thank you for many blissful moments I spent in your company. I would be delighted to work with you again. If you happen to come to France, don't hesitate to call me. And don't forget I have some very good bottles in my cellar.

They have not answered this email. Have they ever answered anything? What is an answer? An embrace, a kiss, a few words scribbled on a scrap of paper. They just nodded their heads, the film director and the producer. The producer did not nod his head, as a matter of fact. He just said our discussion had been fruitful.

13

‘What’s your opinion on the documentary, Mamiko?’

‘Very interesting. Of course the people who know you intimately might get disappointed.’

‘Are you disappointed?’

‘Not at all.’

‘Do I get down on all fours? I haven’t seen the final version yet.’

‘Yes. What’s wrong with it?’

‘All right, all right. What about the ending?’

‘I found it strange, frankly speaking.’

‘Because you’re a pianist, Mamiko. An abridged version of Schubert’s *Sonata*. Twelve minutes. It’s boring, isn’t? Extremely boring.’

‘Well...’

‘Nobody has ever made such a comment on my *B Flat Major Sonata*. Extremely boring. Those people don’t know the first thing about music.’

‘I know. I’ve played for this company.’

‘Don’t they have a special adviser?’

‘My dear Valery—they’ve got only economic advisers. You’re so gullible. Do you think television companies need professional musicians?’

‘Why do they make documentaries about us? Let them shoot economists. Taking part in this documentary was a recipe for disaster.’

‘It’s a good documentary, a beautiful documentary.’

‘Why are you saying that? Because it’s your company, your Buddha?’

‘Because it’s a good documentary.’

‘I’ll take them to court. I’ll seek damages from them.’

‘This company is Japan. It’s not a symbol of our country. It’s just our country, the whole of it. How can you take a country to court?’

‘Look, I’ve already told you it’s an unnatural disaster. They discarded our talk with Akira A. and the tea ceremony. Actually it’s the only form of democracy suitable for your country. Even Shogun felt duty bound to remove his sword upon entering a tea-room. All participants had equal status. Akira spoke about that beautifully. The Americans ought to have turned the whole of Japan into a tea-room.’

‘Japan *is* a democracy.’

‘Do you also believe that democracy is the lesser of two evils? How many evils are there in politics? Never mind.’

‘At least it’s much better than communism.’

‘Preaching to the converted, are you? We spoke about today’s stars who become even more renowned because they’re already renowned. You see, they’re not judged in accordance with their merits. Their chief merit happens to be their renown.’

‘Why do you keep running down your colleagues?’

‘Actually it’s Akira who spoke about the multiplication table of renown.’

‘Did he say it was their *only* merit? What did *you* say?’

‘I said I was the last romantic.’

‘Horowitz was the last romantic.’

‘I believe in so-called Grand Narratives, in a sacrifice for the sake of art. Akira agreed I was the last romantic. He must have noticed my mistake, though. What did he think, I wonder? TV is a cool medium which is usually completed by the audience. Hot media don’t really unlock the imagination. Cool media are high in participation and completion by the audience. I made a mistake in French. I said, ‘*mon longue absence*’ because I’d wished to say ‘*mon absence*’, adding ‘*longue*’ at the very last moment. Such things happen, don’t they? But they shouldn’t happen on television screens. How did the audience complete my mistake? They said to themselves, “He can’t speak French properly. And yet he’s lived in France for thirty-four years. And he shouldn’t play Schubert.”

‘Very few Japanese know French.’

‘Akira must have noticed it.’

‘Could you give me another example of a cool medium?’

‘Telephone. You’ll complete our conversation, won’t you?’

14

To a Japanese, the state was itself a moral entity that one could not disregard in one’s pursuit of either happiness or profit. The notion of *kokutai*, the national essence or polity, is rather complicated but actually comes down to absolute righteousness, truth and beauty—an unconscious tribute to Keats. In short, this poetical notion embraces all national virtue and was thereby inseparable from the Emperor and his divine rule. No private interests were regarded as legitimate unless they somehow coincided with *kokutai*, with national interests and goals. Japanese ultra-nationalism, indisposed though it was to further private interests, derived its authority from an appeal to internal moral fortitude of each individual and his loyal, almost slave-like identification with the national virtue. An ideal Japanese would in fact identify with it to such a point that no one could tell them apart. Where was the ideal Japanese? Where was the national virtue? Only one virtuous substance towered in front of the curious.

Resting upon a consensus of devotion to the Emperor and to the *kokutai*, therefore, ultra-nationalism escaped the censorship of common sense in society as a whole.

At the end of our phone talk Mamiko promised she would get in touch with Akira A. who might come up with the idea of how to curb the film director's self-congratulatory disposition. At the very end of our talk she lapsed into silence, however—a dramatic shift in her conduct boding ill for the future of our relationship. She has not broken her silence so far as if to signify that Mr A. too is reluctant to help me in the matter which would coincide with Japan herself, were it a material object. 'All Chinese look alike'—the sentence I chanced upon in Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, if I am not mistaken. All Japanese behave along the same lines whenever THE TELEVISION COMPANY looms on the horizon. They are awe-stricken as if Hirohito himself was beckoning to them from afar or rather from his tomb. This company seems to have a divine status of which it was not deprived by the Americans and their atomic bombs.

Gradually I came to appreciate the Japanese fighting spirit; my opponents stuck together as if defending a common cause. The company was their country or rather their Emperor whom they were loath to let down, if only in an incident fraught with minor problems. There was a widening gulf between them and my poor self—a gulf that no amount of goodwill and no interpreter could ever bridge. The translations I undertook in the course of our permanent negotiations turned out to be wide of the mark because I did not capture my opponents' spirit, their fighting and artistic spirit.

'It's a broken telephone,' I told Mamiko. 'Just a game I played as a child. You say something to a person sitting next to you and this person does his or her best to misinterpret your words, your meaning. It doesn't mean your statement is unclear and open to misinterpretation—far from it. But this person can't do otherwise without spoiling the fun. A broken telephone, poetic license. This person shouldn't deviate too much from what you said. Just a little bit, a tiny little bit. But that's enough, especially that the person sitting next to your neighbour distorts the truth in his turn. What's the truth? Poetic license. The Emperor reads the translation of a document where the future of Japan is outlined. But the translator embroidered upon the text, saying to his colleague, "The ultimatum will upset him—we must think of the way to soften the blow." That's what he did—he softened the blow by altering the text. They soften their blows by nodding their heads, by saying 'Yes, yes, yes.' The more they soften their blows the harder they grow—their blows, I mean. The more I soften my blows the further we get from the truth, from my truth, from my personality and mentality. From Schubert.'

'Our film directors have their truth. And their truth strikes a responsive chord with the Japanese. I'm not sure many people understand your truth because it's too abstruse. Actually the truth is always simple.'

'And falsehood is intricate. An intricate web of deceit. Jago. Do you know that in the Soviet version of the play Othello is caught by being enmeshed in nets on the seashore? A stroke of genius. But I'm not Othello, am I? No woman has ever betrayed me. Only men—'

‘What a pity I can’t betray you.’

‘So many gulfs. Why aren’t they on the map, on the globe? The Gulf of Mexico, the Persian Gulf. It’s so much easier to deal with *them*. You just go there and enjoy yourself instead of putting *across* your ideas.’

‘Don’t sue our company for libel, I implore you.’

15

I wish I could compose a lullaby made up of the words relating to the unnatural, unmitigated disaster I have embroidered upon in the course of this book. Anyway I cannot get rid of this story or discomfiture or paralysis, even if I blow off steam round the clock: my computer is insatiable.

What kind of lullaby could I compose? It is around 3 a. m.

Libel, label,

Libel, label

‘The Japanese translation is boring—perhaps it has lost something in translation,’ they would say in Tokyo and Kyoto. Okay, I will not perform this lullaby in Japan.

‘The novel’s complex, imaginative style doesn’t lend itself to translation.’ Where would they say that? Nowhere.

Libel, label,

Libel, label

Actually this bit sounds like a piece of music that is often repetitive. A Schubert sonata may sound like a lullaby. The point is you will suffer from insomnia if you listen to such a lullaby on regular basis.

I seem to be stuck with the label of ‘troublemaker’.

16

A fax I wrote to my agent:

Before answering your question I’d like to return once again to their film. (It is not *my* film, as you know.) I sent Mr U. a letter in which I ask him if the material he has got can be bought out. This material is irreplaceable because I will never dare ask the same people to take part in a documentary centred upon my life. And there are no other people I’d like to get in touch with for this purpose. Our film director hasn’t answered my email yet. I suppose he still believes I must be grateful to the company—no questions asked! Let me quote an excerpt from the fax I

received a few days ago: 'The programme was rather interesting but, to be frank, we had expected something more artistic, especially so long as it was a programme about such a great artist as you. But we believe those who are interested in culture and art in general (not necessarily in classical music) and who didn't know much about you might have enjoyed a lot.' Don't you think this makes all the talk about how people admired the movie utterly pointless? Do you think I enjoyed reading this fax?

If the TV people don't answer my email in which I suggested once again we should make another version of the film—the international version—I'll simply get in touch with my lawyer who is one of the best lawyers in France. Apart from their handling of music there are a few points for which they might be taken to court. For instance, they didn't get my approval for the final version, which is usually done for documentaries of this kind. And I insist on having the contract. I don't remember seeing any. But I was so naive, so trustful. I never thought professional people could behave like that.

Reality TV. Why not limit my narration to our exchange of niceties? But there is no exchange to speak of: he has not answered my fax yet.

My cat is on the bed. I have just given her something to eat and she looks quite happy. Don't you realise you are in this bloody film too? Should we take our lives rather than face dishonour? Don't you recall how many Japanese took their lives in 1945? Are we morally and intellectually inferior to those worriers? But we haven't been trained like them, have we? When called to the colours, the young Japanese were brutalised like the American raw recruits in Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* so that afterwards they did not act like the rest of the Japanese people. They would become mere instruments of the officer corps. And I have never been anyone's instrument, anyone's piano.

How could I counteract their discipline? My parents would not allow me to speak to their guests, to interfere with their talks. I sat at another table—an inferior table where nothing extraordinary happened. I just talked to my coevals. What did we talk about? Trees, snow, multiplication table. The discipline I submitted myself to was no match for their discipline. My father ought to have flogged me twice a day for disobedience, for insolence, for my impertinent questions.

'Why did you tell me the Russians had never lost a war in their history?'

'Do you question your father's words? You, insolent brat!' He swishes his stick aggressively through the air.

'Do give me a good flogging, Father! I wish to be like a Japanese warrior.'

'Don't you wish to be like a *Russian* warrior?' He brandishes the stick again.

'No, I prefer Japanese warriors.'

'Why?' He swishes his stick aggressively through the air.

'Because they're loyal to their divine Emperor. And the Russian Emperor was born of a

woman.'

'You, insolent brat!'

I should learn from them how to fight and die. There are no other problems in human life, no other questions. To fight or not to fight is also a question that should be answered if you pit yourself against a monster, whatever shape it may assume. Besides, I must *know* my enemies, as Lenin put it. In the college where I studied music to the detriment of physics and mathematics I listened with my friends to 'forbidden composers' associated with capitalism and the bourgeois world in general. Our director summoned us one day to say we were not supposed to listen to our enemies. I said we had to *know* our enemies, quoting Lenin. 'And the only way to know them is to listen to their music.' The only way to know the Japanese is to listen to *their* music, for music is everywhere. There is nothing else on earth, in the universe. But we seldom listen to the universe which is replaced in everyday life by our neighbours, friends, colleagues and malls. And boutiques. And three-star restaurants.

I must listen to the Japanese in order to combat them. I must *listen* to their instruments instead of noting my thoughts down. I am a member of the audience, not a pianist performing on stage. I am the only member of the audience.

17

In traditional Japan, the use of arms was the monopoly of a military caste called the Samurai. They no longer exist; yet their tradition prevailed in the army during the Second World War and even before it. By and large, the Japanese officers of the professional, thorough-going kind took heed only of Bushido—a code of ethics in which the Way of the Warrior was mapped out. Bushido proclaimed that the warrior's ultimate goal was to serve his master and the Imperial Institution which, by virtue of its divine status, could bestow upon him a decoration and even a sort of immortality, a lasting holiday in the Land of Bliss.

Bushido laid down the relation of one Samurai with another, the mutual obligations of paternalistic absolute lords and the total obedience of loyal knights. The same spirit of benevolence was to protect the weak and vanquished all the while restoring unfortunates and the wayward to paths of righteousness appropriate to their status. However, this must not be confused with tolerance, forbearance or respect for human rights. These liberal values were poles apart. Harshness, endurance, no hesitation in carrying out ruthless or even humanly impossible orders, vengeance and the duty in circumstances of disgrace to commit *seppuku* were Bushido's cornerstones; it is noteworthy that the Japanese regarded neither the heart nor the intellect but the bowel as the seat of the soul. The Way of the Warrior demanded intense self-control and preparation which alone could result in the fusion of a spiritual ideal with human flesh and willpower, thereby producing a huge amount of mystical energy. The victims of unnecessary violence or mayhem had to seek transcendence in death.

18

Jasha I A long-standing friend. A brilliant economist.

‘Dear Jashenka, I know you’re bored to death by this story. It’s not a detective story, I’m afraid—just a story of my naiveté, of my loyalty.’

‘To whom were you loyal?’

‘To myself, to my code of politeness.’

‘You thought it would be a wonderful film. Okay, it’s just a publicity gimmick. Any publicity is good publicity.’

‘My God, my Schubert. Those people are merciless.’

‘They ill-treated you.’

‘And Schubert.’

‘And Schubert.’

‘My image, my music.’

‘Your music is your music. You played this sonata, didn’t you? You played other pieces as well. You played them, didn’t you? Nobody else did it. And nobody can play this sonata and other pieces like you because you are what you are. Television viewers heard you. Nobody can fail to hear you if you play. And they gave you this opportunity. You played in this film. What more can you ask for?’

‘I ask for myself. That’s what I need most when projected onto a screen.’

‘What counts is your sounds. You sound like yourself. You can’t do otherwise. Even if you play badly, you sound like yourself. Your sounds are your identity. Let the audience enjoy your sounds.’

‘Why shouldn’t they enjoy my images as well? I’m not an invisible man after all. I’m audible and visible.’

‘You *are* audible and visible.’

‘Not in this film.’

‘You can be heard and seen. A word uttered by a sage is the word, even if its connotations don’t live up to his standards. A note played by a great pianist is a sonata, whatever he says about it backstage or at home while giving an interview to a foreign journalist.’

‘It’s not Schubert’s *B Flat Sonata*. I wish I could play this sonata, nothing else. No words, just this sonata. What a marvellous film we could have made!’

‘And what about your childhood, about this forest where you heard silence?’

‘You can hear the same silence in this sonata.’

‘But you can’t hear the same silence at your dinner table, can you?’

‘I *can* hear silence at my dinner table.’

‘So can television viewers. Don’t you eat oysters in the film? Do you eat them silently?’

‘I say they’re delicious.’

‘But “delicious” is also silence, isn’t it? The silence of delight. The silence enjoyed by your palate. The whole of Japan knows you eat oysters and drink white wine. What bottle did you open on that occasion?’

‘Do you think I can sue them?’

‘What would you sue them for?’

‘Libel.’

‘Don’t you eat oysters from time to time? Have you never played Schubert’s *B Flat Sonata*?’

‘Whose side are you on?’

‘Forget about this experience. Or take them to court. Why talk about it? Are you letting off steam?’

19

Honour, self-respect, the marriage of beauty and utility, the marriage of heaven and earth, and the avoidance of shame were essential to the Japanese in every walk of life. Not merely ideals to which they paid little more than lip-service.

‘What should I do, Lydochka? Don’t tell me I’d better bury the hatchet [Lydia D]!’

‘You’d better bury your head in the sand. Don’t you like the sand? You must have built a few castles on some beach or other.’

‘I did all I could to avoid shame. I failed piteously because of their stubbornness, of their *personal* Bushido.’

‘Do you know the *real* Bushido?’

‘The marriage of beauty and utility or rather the marriage of heaven and earth. I like useless, superfluous things.’

‘So your Bushido is different from theirs. The company was determined to make a *useful* film.’

‘I’m an angry man. The thirteenth man.’

‘All right. So you’re the thirteenth man. Don’t you enjoy your status?’

‘I was going to meet my friend in Moscow. They shot the lift we’d taken. And then they got me to climb up the stairs as if I hadn’t trusted Russian lifts. I don’t know if I trust them or not—that’s not the point. Why did they film what was beside the point?’

‘Don’t be beside the point yourself. *You* are the point. There are no other points. You *are* naive.’

‘I was naive. I’m no longer naive. I’m no longer what I am or what I used to be. The past and the future are the “One”, whatever the meaning of this word. What is the “One”?’

‘You are the One. I am the One.’

‘I am not what I am. I must have lost myself somewhere—in Kyoto, in Moscow, in Petersburg, in Paris. What does it matter where I lost myself?’

‘It doesn’t matter because you haven’t lost yourself. You still rebel against the documentary

where you made a fool of yourself. Or against the film director.'

'I'd like to rebel against him. What else could I do? Grin and bear it? A gun—'

'Just grin and bear it.'

'Cursing is the last refuge of a powerless man.'

'Write a poem instead!'

A poem would not help. Just a few words, an image.

Are there images somewhere? I look

At the room where I'll spend this night. The room

Is just what it is. So am I. No—I'm someone

Else. I am Julius Caesar and Buddha. I am

Dante.

Let *him* bear the brunt of Japanese

Quirks and foibles.

20

MacArthur imposed justice on Japan's war criminals, sparing only Hirohito—the concession that undermined the whole basis for this legal travesty dubbed by the newspapers 'Tokyo War Crimes Trials'. As a Far Eastern equivalent of the Nuremberg tribunal, the trials were expected to elicit a lot of enthusiasm from both the Japanese and the Americans. But even the journalists grew weary in the end. Hideki Tojo, the country's most notorious war criminal, blew his nose before entering the witness box—a major insult in Japan. For a moment this former prime minister enlivened the game of life and death that had been going on for months, if not for years. (My former mistress also regarded this ritual as an insult, especially if the culprit performed it at the dinner table.) Tojo's lawyer read out a statement, driving his message home. 'Japan neither planned nor prepared beforehand for the war against the United States, Britain and the Netherlands....Japan held neither territorial ambition nor the idea of economic monopoly in China.' Shortly afterwards, however, another buzz of excitement went through the audience. Under cross-examination, Tojo confessed that the Emperor had 'assented, though reluctantly, to the war....none of us would have dared act against the Emperor's will.' So just a simple 'no' from Hirohito would have averted the war. From then onwards Tojo did all he could to shield the Emperor, to protect the mirror, the curved jewel and the sword. He was sentenced to death alongside six high-ranking officers.

It is easy to judge a war criminal because the whole procedure rests upon the golden rule to which we have been accustomed for centuries, if not for millennia: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. You are a murderer so you must die. And what if you murder a piece of music or an ideal? You

are not responsible for the mass murder of two thousand civilians. Your nuclear weapons do not cause destruction on a massive scale. Your nuclear weapons just wipe out a number of thoughts, a number of sounds. There are thousands of nuclear missiles aimed at our cities, but we notice only war criminals and judge only those who are guilty of crimes against humanity—with a generous sprinkling of paedophiles and serial killers.

There are cross-examinations during which people talk at cross purposes:

‘Well, you did make war against the United States, Great Britain and the Netherlands, didn’t you?’

‘It’s the other way round.’

‘How do you mean?’

‘My lawyer told you Japan had neither planned nor prepared beforehand for the war against the United States, Britain and the Netherlands. So the United States and other countries made war against Japan.’

‘But did you prepare for the war at any time? When did you prepare for the war?’

‘*Did* we prepare for the war?’

‘Didn’t you?’

‘We were unprepared, otherwise we wouldn’t have lost the war.’

Another trial, an invisible trial.

‘Why did you murder Schubert’s *Sonata*? I told you how to handle it. Why didn’t you listen to a professional pianist? Are *you* a professional pianist? What do you know about Schubert’s sonatas?’

‘I know I’m a film director. So I can film Schubert’s sonatas. And I can film them as I choose. Am I not a film director? What is a film director for if he can’t shoot in accordance with his tastes?’

‘You’re not supposed to murder a piece of music.’

‘You can’t take me to court. Murdering a piece of music is not regarded as a real murder.’

‘Is it unreal? It’s quite real—no doubt about that.’

‘You can’t take me to court.’

‘I can execute you on my own. Hanging or beheading. Which do you prefer?’

‘Beheading.’

‘Why?’

‘Our war criminals were hanged on December 22, 1948. The Japanese were bitter at the refusal of the Americans to permit them an honourable death through beheading rather than the squalor and indignity of hanging.’

‘What’s the difference? Squalor and indignity. Of course our guillotine is sanitized and dignified.’

December 22nd was a cold day and the dead leaves of the paulownia tree blew across the empty courtyard separating the prison block from the death house. From afar, the other prisoners could see the [war criminals] shuffle slowly over the frozen earth of the exercise yard for the last time, each handcuffed to a guard. 'Without intending to do so,' Yoshio Kodama noted in his diary, 'I found my eyes turned away from them...' The condemned men spent their final day and evening writing farewell letters and in prayer as Hanayama prepared them for their journey. Muto alone admitted that he had 'surges of fear' and confided to Hanayama that 'the others have them, too.'

At 11.30 four of the prisoners—Doihara, Matsui, Tojo and Muto, in that order—each handcuffed to two guards, entered the makeshift chapel, lit candles, burnt incense and, almost inaudibly, chanted Buddhist scripture. They shook hands with one another, softly uttered the word '*sayonara*', and accompanied by Hanayama, wended their way across the courtyard to their appointment. Matsui, at seventy the oldest of the quartet, now reconciled to his fate, raised a cry of resignation and defiance: 'Banzai! Banzai! Banzai!' The others joined him.

Hanayama left them at the door of the death chamber, which was ablaze with light. Along one wall were two men in dark suits and two generals in uniform—the Australian, American, Chinese and Russian members of the Far Eastern Commission, whom MacArthur had summoned as witnesses. No Japanese was present other than the condemned men. Unlike the authorities at Nuremberg, MacArthur had barred all photographers and even banned official photographs as documentary evidence that the executions had been carried out....

The only known eyewitness account of the executions is Sebald's memoirs. 'They seemed to shuffle as they walked, and each face was a vacant stare as it passed me,' he wrote. A single word from the officer of the guard crackled: 'Proceed!' The traps were sprung. The executions moved so swiftly from life to death—it took one and a half minutes—that as Hanayama recrossed the courtyard to return to his chapel cell and to administer the last rites to the second group, consisting of Itagaki, Hirota and Kimura, he heard a 'loud crash' and involuntarily looked behind him. To Sebald the traps 'sounded like a rifle volley'.

Brackman's account of the executions

21

I always say the Japanese are way ahead of the rest of the world, the least provincial—they have a natural advantage because they're people of an island which was cut off for three hundred years from the rest of the world, even forcibly, by the militaristic generals who ruled the country. But there is that fantastic, almost spongelike facility of absorbing other cultures now. And I say they're not only imitators, you will see, they are very strong people who chose their traditional culture and their whole daily life, which has become so cultured, more so than in any Western country. Eating, making love, walking, dressing, making your home—this all has

become highly cultured. It's not that art has been separated from the daily life; the daily life has become art. The tea ceremony is still a real ceremony of quietness and concentration and even mediation. So the conventional and the creative aspects always merge. What I mean is that the Japanese, after having swallowed the so-called Western culture and technology, will be the first to become universal people.

Jonathan Cott, *Stockhausen*

What did they swallow? They ought to have swallowed my requirements hook, line and sinker.

They have *not* become highly cultured because a Schubert sonata is a sort of *gagaku* to them. They don't know whether it has a structure or not. They think it can start anywhere, in the middle, in no-music's land. Didn't I tell them there is no such thing as no-music's land? Everything is music. Music is everywhere. So they know Schubert is omnipresent. And they cut him in accordance with their crazy thoughts. They cut his body and soul to ribbons.

'Don't indulge in interior monologues!' said Lydia. 'Just call me to blow off steam.'

'So I'm calling you, Lydia. Poor Stockhausen. In the nineties I read in *Le Monde* that he used to be a famous composer. "But now one should explain who he is and what he does in Paris." As if he'd died much earlier. What's the use of becoming famous if everyone forgets you before you die?'

'It's better not to become famous. You're right once again.'

'You mean because I'm not famous?'

'Yes.'

'I'd rather be famous and die before my death.'

'You're already dead if you think along these lines.'

'I'm not dead because the Japanese watch me on television.'

'Can't you see Stalin on TV? Forget about this documentary!'

'How could I forget about it? I re-read his emails. They're so touching. A real human touch. Do you know that he actually drew my cat before seeing her? In Kyoto the director showed me a drawing where my cat was sleeping on a chair. Do you want me to read a few excerpts from his emails?'

'I have a high boredom threshold.'

"We would like to let you know in advance what is in our mind on the way to a final stage of editing as a halfway report. Our temporary story line is as below, which can be added and associated with relevant scenes or interviews and could include more implied meanings. Please note the our temporary story line in below is still at the stage of draft in order to explore basic outline of the story. The story is made by focusing on a following theme which lies between you and us; Japanese audiences; a kind of road movie of a single SOUL through three countries which describes how an outstanding unique musician obtain his own world of Art, especially in terms of Monono aware." It's touching, isn't it?"

‘I’d rather talk about Stockhausen. Didn’t you say he was the last great composer?’
 ‘The last glorious page in our history. He used to erase many notes from his pages.’
 ‘We erased *him*, didn’t we? When did you listen last to any of his works?’
 ‘Before I visited Japan for the first time. In 1980, in 1981.’
 ‘Write a poem in his memory!’

Your name is a piece of music. Perhaps
 It’s better to listen to your name. I listened to it
 Very often in my youth. I used
 To utter it for the sake of its sound.
 Your name is my *Stimmung*, my tuning
 Fork. What else do I need?
 Karlheinz Stockhausen.

22

Wagner, more than any other Western composer, expanded the timing of European music: he would have been the best *gagaku* composer—if *gagaku* had been composed—or the best Noh drama listener in the world. Because he really brought forth this incredible breath, this duration which no longer depended solely on what the human lungs or limbs could produce.

Jonathan Cott, *Stockhausen*

The Noh actor I saw in Kyoto. Playing the part of Yugao and talking to me afterwards, on the following day. He talked about silence. We talked about silence. He talked about Wagner and the great conductors of the past. He had eight versions of *Tristan und Isolde*.

‘Which is the best one in your opinion?’
 ‘Furtwängler’s recording.’
 ‘Why do you have recent versions?’
 ‘The technical quality is better. I like sounds, pure sounds.’
 ‘To the detriment of the soul?’
 ‘What is the soul? A sound perhaps.’
 ‘Not an image anyway.’
 ‘The sound.’

23

‘....feeling certain confidence that we scored a hit. Many of around us praised the program for its beauty in sounds, pictures....it is valuable and rich which can be achieved only by our company....’

‘He who is proud of his work achieves nothing that endures.’ *The Way and its Power*. They should have read this Chinese work.

We declared war on America and Britain out of our sincere desire to ensure Japan’s self-preservation and the stabilisation of East Asia, it being far from our thoughts either to infringe upon the sovereignty of other nations or embark on territorial aggrandisement....the enemy has begun to deploy a new and most cruel bomb....in effecting a settlement of the present situation by resorting to an extraordinary measure....we cannot but express the deepest regret to our allied nations of East Asia, who have consistently cooperated with the Empire towards the emancipation of East Asia....

The Emperor’s surrender broadcast. ‘To ensure Japan’s self-preservation.’ Every country has an instinct for self-preservation which, however, does not necessarily ‘infringe upon the sovereignty of other nations’. Doing so was the Japanese way of life in the thirties, in the early forties. How many nations did they leave in peace during the Second World War? Hirohito’s surrender broadcast did not so much as touch upon surrender because the wording of the broadcast seemed to insinuate that Japan had initiated the quest for peace out of its own sense of humanity. In other words, she had saved humanity out of her humanity. ‘Should we continue to fight, not only would it result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but it would also lead to the total extinction of human civilisation.’ It might have led to an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation. Human civilisation would have endured.

Why didn’t the Emperor own up to having done any wrong? He was Japan at that point—much more so that the company I am standing up to in my attempt to create a beautiful work of art. He was the whole of Japan and even those born after the Second World War know that Japan set up oppressive military regimes in the countries it had invaded on a whim. Japan’s colonial expansion inadvertently over-provoked the Western powers, but the Emperor sidetracked his audience into thinking about Japanese generosity that had ensured safety in the region, if not in the entire world.

Why didn’t Japan apologise to her so-called allies in East Asia for years of systematic murder, rape and looting of their region? The Emperor voiced his regrets for the surrender which was to remove the jackboot from the necks of Japan’s colonies. ‘I really am sorry for setting you free. I hoped I would keep the jackboot on your necks for another ten years, for a century, for a thousand years. After much soul-searching, however, I decided to remove it from your necks for the sake of peace. So I found the way of bringing peace to the region. Blessed are the peacemakers on earth!’

I must take the rough with the smooth whenever Japan is on my agenda.

And Japan is very often on my agenda. What would I do without Japan?

‘By the lesser figures in the procession she was, she must needs confess, very much disappointed. Used to Genji and Yugiri, she had fallen into the habit of supposing that beauty was the common property of all well-born gentlemen; and it was with some consternation that she today encountered such chins and noses as she could scarcely believe to be varieties of the organs with which she was familiar.’ I also thought beauty was the common property of the world as I read Japanese poems and looked at Hokusai’s waves and mountains. Why did you betray me, my dear friends? Didn’t we make common cause to create a poem, a mountain, a wave, a maple tree? I did all I could to reproduce cherry blossom, to *become* cherry blossom. Why did you betray Kyoto, Sei Shonagon, Genji and Yugiri?

25

One should not just *talk* about betrayals. An orchestra is needed, an opera, a Wagner opera. *Götterdämmerung*. Brunnhilde *sings* about how she was betrayed.

*Dich verriet er,
und mich verrietet ihr alle!*

You all have betrayed me! I wish I could fly over to Kyoto and strike terror into the whole population of your country. Wouldn’t you surrender if attacked by an army of Valkyries? Wouldn’t your new Emperor make a speech on TV?

Despite the best that has been done by everyone—the gallant fighting of the military and naval forces, the diligence and assiduity of our servants of the state, and the devoted service of our one hundred million people—the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan’s advantage, while the general trends of the world have all turned against her interest. Moreover, the enemy has begun to use a new and most cruel bomb in the shape of a flying woman who devastates our cities and kills our citizens. Don’t confuse her with the Flying Dutchman who bears no grudge against our nation. She is a musician. She sings in Wagner’s operas and also conducts them. She plays the piano as well. And she writes poems. You should not read her poems, for they are death poems. You are likely to die if you read only one of her poems. Don’t listen to her voice either. She is worse than the Sirens, much worse. Such being the case, how are we to save the millions of our subjects, or to atone ourselves before the hallowed spirits of our imperial ancestors? This is the reason why we have ordered the acceptance of the provisions of the Powers of the joint declaration.

I wish I could write a death poem. Not a poem about death, mind you. A deadly poem, a death poem. 'Revenge' is another keyword.

Allrauner, rächender Gott!
Schwurwissender Eideshort!
Wotan! Wende dich her!

Omniscient god of vengeance!
 Wotan, witness of oaths
 and guardian of vows, look upon us!

This novel is a death poem. An ordinary novel would not accomplish the task; nor would an extraordinary novel. A poem, a death poem. I don't feel like writing about my own death. This poem has allowed me to spread my wings and really blossom. A mixed metaphor. I don't mind using mixed metaphors. Dante was fond of them. He killed a lot of enemies by means of mixed metaphors. I spread my wings and blossom. I am Brunnhilde and a cherry tree. I am a Westerner and Japanese. I commit suicide and live forever.

26

Thank you very much for your mail,
 and we are looking forward receiving your reply,
 which is a precious source of our art-documentary films.

In addition, we would like you to bring
 your favorite Japanese (poem) books which are
 hopefully in your bookshelf long time,
 because we would like you to read some Japanese
 poems or text familiar to you, including BASHO,
 TEIKA FUJIWARA, NAGON SEISHO, or KENKO YOSHIDA and etc.
 (Maybe including 'death poems' you mentioned last time.)

We are now searching nice locations for your poet-reading,
 in Kyoto, where many middle aged poets loved to stay,
 while feeling 'MONONO AHARE'.

This is also a death poem. Through their poems I was lulled into a false sense of security. A false sense of security is death.

IN HIS ROOM

We describe that the pianist (who preferred to be called as 'a poet' to a pianist,) lives isolated from bustles of cities.

There he enjoys a time with his small kitten,
plenty of wine stocks, and deep forest of bookshelves.

We introduce his own play style of pauses and spaces.
(which can be heard in his performance of Kreisleriana #4)
Some more scenes can be attached in relations with the main story
above as an interesting introduction of his unique character.

HIS ROOTS

This Chapter shows how his outstanding originalities were brought up,
introducing skyscraper, deep forest at the outskirts of Moscow,
and Moscow Conservatory.

We will focus on the secret of SILENCE and SPACE in your primal
experience in the forest, the ritual recital in the conservatory hall
and lessons by Gillels.

On the other hand, the serious situation of Soviet would be introduced.
Again some derivative scenes could be added in order to
enrich the historical description.

FROM PIANIST TO PHILOSOPHER

Then we will bring up the your inner change depth in the world of Art
through drastic change of your circumstances.

The pianist find himself somehow unreasonable in the western way of
'cultural situation' dominated commercialism instead of socialism.
He had decided to devote whole his life in ART.

And he began to write and explore more depth of music,
which fruited in absolute unique 'theatrical plays'.

PLAYS MONONO AHARE IN KYOTO

In autumn 2007, we found a forever refugee, or a spiritual art seeker
on the way of his soul journey in Kyoto.

Portraying his love to Japanese cultures, through gardens, Noh stage,
and conversations.

His deep understanding and respects to Japanese culture was expressed
in the most elegant manner, performance in an ancient temple.

Shooting in Kyoto will start at a location overlooking
the entire city of Kyoto. We would like to have a symbolic view
of Kyoto. Our intention is to show different aspects
of your art. We assume that the three cities, Kyoto, Moscow (St. Petersburg),
and Paris, which correspond to the three phases
or the three different artistic worlds within you.

November 28. In the evening, we will be viewing a Noh drama
by Soh-ke (Head) of the Noh School,
which has a origin in Muromachi-Era (600 years ago)
and is the only school that still has its base in Kyoto (actually
by the Kyoto-GOSHO (palace)). This would be used
in one of the climax scene of our program, where you will watch
Noh play and talk with the Soh-ke (Head).

The head of the School himself
will be performing exclusively only
for the program.

The drama will be *Yugao* or could be *Hajitomi* (your Noh drama
you experienced in Moscow which motivated you. I believe you have used
the drama as a motif in your novel *Disappearance*. We have asked
the same drama to be played on this evening.

Yugao (Hajitomi) is normally played on indoor stage. But we try asking him a big favour to play it outdoors at dusk, when dark at night.

It will be, therefore, a stage of light and darkness. (Soh-ke normally performs outdoors only once a year.)

The outdoor Noh stage at the Higashi-Honganji Temple is also very special, which has been used only a few times in 10 years. This will be a Noh drama performed outdoors, which takes the original Noh style from Muromachi Era to Edo Era. We will take the greatest precaution for you not to get cold. I hope you will understand the purpose of this scene and enjoy the style.

November 29. At the Noh Theatre, Noh masks and kimonos from the Muromachi Era will be shown. I will seek special permission for you to wear the kimono and the Noh mask. (It will be an experience for you to feel the secluded sensation, which leads to see one's inner self, and we imagine such inner perception might have a connection with reflections with nostalgic past historical time). If you wish to apply some of your excellent dramaturgical ideas when collaborating with Soh-ke, I will be glad to discuss it with him. However, considering the characteristics of drama, as you know, it may be difficult to ask to make spontaneous movements.

November 29. We will be going to Nagoya on this day.
An hour and a half trip.

IN NAGOYA

November 30. There will be a presentation at Tokugawa Museum. We would like to shoot the scene. We would also like to shoot the scene of you looking at the Picture Scroll of *The Tale of Genji*.

December 2. We have a ticket for you for the first day of kabuki all-star-cast performance. If it is all right with you, we would also like to invite Mr. A. (approaching). Either before or after watching kabuki, we would like you to have a conversation with Mr. A. in a relaxed atmosphere.

WALKS AND PLAYS IN KYOTO

December 3. We would like to shoot you taking a stroll in a Kyoto garden. We may be able to arrange you to experience a Zen nocturnal meditation at the Tenryuji Temple. Early in the morning, you can do the meditation. Monks at the Tenryuji Temple can accompany you as a tutor. We are still negotiating, but we think it could be an interesting experience for you as you are not a novice on Kyoto. Please let us know what you think.

December 4 and December 5. In the evening, we would like to shoot you performing at Jissoin Temple.

The temple is situated at Iwakura, a quiet location in the northern region of Kyoto City.

The Jissoin is a temple which is related to the Imperial Family and has a proper and honourable tradition.

The temple itself has an ancient atmosphere with more than 3-400 years history.

The Jissoin Temple has a house in its garden. We chose this house, as it has the atmosphere of the house in which Yugao passed away. (Actually, the teahouse is well kept, still preserving the old architecture, paying lots of efforts.)

The teahouse has a garden on the mountainside, where Maple leaves are beautiful. On the other side, there is a rock garden used for enjoying the beautiful view of the moon.

The paintings on the screen doors are of delicate tastes,

which have stories to tell. (The temple as a whole is designated as important cultural assets.)

On the 4th, we hope you will perform in the room with a wooden floor, with the maple leaves in the background.

On the 5th, we hope you will perform underneath the eaves of the house with a Japanese rock garden in the background. Although it has a roof (eaves), it may be a little cold exposed to the outside air. We thought that, when the music would be played with the rock garden background, it would sound even better. What do you think?

THE IDEAS OF OUR PROGRAMS

To sense the emotional feelings of melancholy and nostalgia when coming face-to-face with the past at Jissoin Temple, an old temple that symbolizes old tradition. While viewing the beautiful maple leaves, with intense thoughts for MONO-NO AWARE; pities for ephemeral beings and contemplating on the experiences of Noh drama with intense thoughts for the subtle and profound, in which the death-past world has mysterious realities, the Maestro performs with his thoughts on Kyoto while enjoying the view of the Rock Garden.

Moonlight by Debussy dedicated to the moonlight Rock Garden.

From Schubert piano sonata D960, the first movement, which was composed in his death year, dedicated to a Noh drama, where life and death call to each other.

Sylvestrov *Aural Music* dedicated to the ancient capital of Kyoto where various layers of history

rhyme with each other. During the entire documentary program,

we plan to film in Paris and in Moscow and we might want to introduce you performing other pieces of music. Of course,

we will consult with you first,

but we would like you, for example, Musorgsky. We hope to have different colouring and variation

in the program as a whole.

December 7. We would like to shoot your performance at Opera City in Tokyo. Incidentally, if you have extra copies of some of your novels (*Disappearance*, *Room of Mirrors*, *The Fall of Babylon*, and *Ludwig II*) would it be possible for us to obtain them?

Lastly, while you are in Japan, would it be possible to quote from your poetic diary (or your notes with some sketches, depending on the situation). While carrying it along with you, when you write it in or make sketches or poems, we would like to introduce those in our program or to use your words and voices for our narration. These are some of our ideas for coordinating our program. Our intention is to have a somewhat different comment from you, from that of the dialogues in the interview to add colour to our program.

The above is what we have as the rough plans for your visit to Japan and to Kyoto. If you have any comment or some hints for making the program more interesting, or any advise, we appreciate them.

LIFE

If at all possible, we would like to shoot the apartment house you were born in, the woods in which you took a walk with your grandmother, your favourite places in your memory as a child, or in youth. Would that be possible?

Our intention is to depict the original and primal sceneries from your memories as you enter your world with the keywords such as nostalgia and melancholy to express your world view. Could you show us and allow us to use some of the photos from your childhood, student days, and your photos with your families? In other words, we would like to use some of the visual items, without intruding your privacy.

ADDITION

In addition, could you tell us about yourself, some characteristic things that happened in your childhood? These include how many brothers and sisters you have; your walks in the woods with your loving grandmother; how your mother taught you how to play piano; when your father bought you a flute or a violine, or a piano. What kind of child were you in the elementary school?

Would it be possible for us to visit the Moscow Music Academy with you? We would like to shoot your visit there as it would be helpful to express your feelings toward Japan during your student days.

Either in Moscow or in St. Petersburg in Russia, if possible, we would like to see whether it is possible to rent a concert hall (a playing space) and to see your original—dramatic performances

Question in St. Petersburg, we hear that you will visit your friend. Could you tell us about your friend? Do you have a place to perform at your friend? We would appreciate it if you could tell us beforehand about your friend and who would be gathering at your friend's house. I would like to know whether these plans are possible.

In which town would you like to meet Mr. S. and talk to him? How can I make contact with him?

We heard that you listened to Noh drama records with your old friends in your student days.

Would it be possible for us to shoot a scene where you talk about the old days with your friends? The sequence will be looking back on the Soviet days, the thoughts on foreign countries in those days, and their influence on your music.

In addition, if you still have the Noh drama records and the translated books of old Japanese classics like *Tsurezuregusa*, we would like to shoot them.

POSITIONING

Your character as a nostalgic and melancholic reflective man in Paris, was largely influenced by the time you spent in Moscow. In the restricted environment, you dreamed about foreign countries. By depicting such past, we would like to show the depth of the background of the reflective thinker.

On December 17, you will be performing in Moscow. Could you tell us what you will be performing, and the size of the hall?

Could you tell us about your schedules during January and February in 2008?

In other words, we would like to have information on your concerts, travel schedule, meetings with people, anything that may relate to our shooting.

If possible, we would like to shoot your daily life. For example, although you are a pianist, you spend 90% of your time

reading and writing, we hear.

You spend day after day lost in your thoughts with the cat you love. These are what we want to catch.

We would like to shoot how your room is including your books (which could be a great collection!), records, and items related to Japan. In addition, we would like to have scenes on your daily walks, your favourite stores, etc. (Your favourite wine cellar, favourite places in Paris on your casual trips.)

When you get together with your friends other than musicians (i.e. castle specialists), when you have parties with them, or even when you have a session with them, if at all possible, we would like to have a glimpse of such warm scenes.

If at all possible, we would like to shoot your performance at your own home.

POSITIONING II

You live distant from worldly commercial economy of Paris, and you are facing the time when great composers lived. You search for ideas of music and you live in the world of the past times in your books. You live loving the past and you face yourself as you write things. We would like to depict you as a philosophical musician.

Below are the tentative schedule we have for the next year.

In January next year, we would like to shoot for a week
to 10 days each in Paris and in Moscow.

As for now, we think
it will take longer in Moscow. How we image it is
blow. It can be Paris first and then Moscow or vice versa.

Tentatively, a performance at your own home in Paris
and one in a small rented hall(space)
in Moscow or St. Petersburg is what we have
in mind. Could you tell us what
your schedule is like in January next year?

Shooting mainly at your home in Paris for about one week.

CONCLUSION

These are the outline of a draft story which is in our mind so far.
We hope you would like it.
Thank you for your understanding.

27

Had I not known
that I was dead
already
I would have mourned
my loss of life.

Ota Dokan (1432-86), a scholar of military arts and a poet, was stabbed as he was bathing. Clutching the dagger that had pierced his body, he uttered the above *tanka*.

Perhaps it is easier to live if you know you are dead. You don't regret anything, like Edith Piaf.

They were playing with me, pulling the strings. As if I was dead. Their puppet, a Bunraku puppet show. I am still clutching the dagger that pierced my body. What does it matter when I die! I wish I could wield this weapon on my own. Why can't I commit suicide in peace? I am not Brutus, am I?

I prithee, Strato, stay thou by thy lord.
 Thou art a fellow of a good respect;
 Thy life hath had some smatch of honour in it.
 Hold then my sword, and turn away thy face,
 While I do run upon it.

Another death poem.

28

‘I was their marionette, Mamiko.’

‘You played your own part.’

‘They might have made clear from the very start they would do it their way. They shouldn’t have asked me to get in touch with my fellow artists, taking care of everything instead. I thought they’d take care of leaves.’

‘The images are very beautiful. The Japanese audience is very sensitive to beauty. Actually we are not sensitive to ugliness.’

‘The email they sent me last October. It looked like they were going to make a cosmic film, a film about Adam Kadmon. Or about a divine Emperor, say. What a disaster! It’s all the more difficult to bear since there was such a promise at the outset of our enterprise. Dante says something to this effect. Francesca da Rimini. It’s much easier to bear a series of mishaps, a monotony of unhappiness.’

‘Shouldn’t we be grateful for a few happy moments? They certainly offered them to you.’

‘A universal film, larger than my life. Why did they choose the *Waltz* instead of the *Mazurka* I suggested?’

‘The *Seventh Waltz* by Chopin? Because it’s more popular.’

‘But his mazurkas are also popular, aren’t they?’

‘Not so popular as this *Waltz*.’

‘But Silvestrov isn’t popular. Why did they choose *him*?’

‘That’s exactly how we go about it. On the one hand, we choose something well known, on the other something unknown.’

‘That’s right. A touch of culture, of sacred lore. In every bestseller there is a piece of information which makes the reader think he deals with a serious, profound book. Besides, he learns something about a medieval monastery or Leonardo da Vinci all the while enjoying a detective plot. There’s also that “Borges for the poor”, as my Russian friend dubbed him. A bestselling author, *natürlich*. Borges is not. There are so many poor people nowadays. Last week I saw the most elegant women on TV. Twenty or twenty-five women. There were mostly American, *natürlich*—with a sprinkling of Asian and Mexican beauties. Two or three. Just to make the whole thing look universal,

not local.'

'The United States can hardly be called a local country.'

'It isn't. But did you catch my meaning? Actually it's a false space, they create a false space. I often speak of space in the film. Did you notice? Do you know that I haven't received the final version yet. My friends tell me what's in it.'

'You'll get it sooner or later. They'll keep their promise. They're very professional, you know.'

'It's not a post office, is it? I'd rather have a professional film.'

'How old is the film director?'

'Forty-five, forty-six.'

'The younger generation. No wonder he doesn't understand anything. We belong to the last generation. The curtain is falling.'

'The last generation, not the lost one. We are the last Emperor.'

29

Another death poem. My agent's answer:

I am sorry for my delayed reply.

I had been in my business travel in Asia
and Berlin. I had been out from Tokyo
for long. Please forgive my long
silence.

If you gave your message by e mail,
I would be able to answer you earlier. But it
took some time with FAX.

By security or privacy meanings,
I do not want to make your FAX messages
transfer to my hotel or something.

Regarding to the company's documentary,
I have to say that I am also very
sad. Even for me, this is a very sad
situation. I am TERRIBLY
sorry.

Maestro, please let me say frankly and honestly. And please do not take badly: I am your manager, so, I have to be in your side, and I know I have to help you. And I believe in that I have been doing so as much as I can.

But even now, I do not think that cause of this sad situation is not only the company's impoliteness, the company's being not professional and the company's unfairness.

Maestro, I do not have anything more which I should mention about this problem to you. If I try to say something about this problem, it must be just a repeat which I have been turning over. I would not like to do that.

A repeat, a recapitulation. You are a musician, my dear agent. Music thrives on repeats, repetitions and recapitulations.

I have told all of your request and what you have said to me, to the company and our president. And from now on, regarding to the company's documentary, if you have something what you would like to say, please tell to our president directly. Unfortunately, I have to say this matter has become too many for my hands. I sincerely ask you to forgive my greenness and impatience.

30

I am sorry for bothering you many times.

I apologise for being rude of my previous FAX. I was too emotional. I wrote too strongly and I should be more polite. I am very sorry. Please do not forget my respect for you. I sincerely hope you to accept my apology.

Regarding to the company's documentary, I talked with Mr U. who came to Tokyo today. We talked various things about this matter. Anyway the director will send his message to you as answer for your request, as soon as possible. Last week, he had been out from his office. So, he could not answer. Please do not take badly about his silence.

I like silence, my dear agent. I am in transports of delight.

31

I have to say it again that the documentary is the company's project.

It is hard for me to mention, the documentary is produced and arranged by the company.

I have pointed this out before you came to Kyoto for attending the edit.

This documentary is not movie or cinema that was arranged everything by you. If everything,

such as camera, film, editing room,
all of staff, the way of
broadcasting and so on, was
prepared by maestro, you can do
everything as you like. But this is
the company's project.

Maybe you would say 'I spent
a lot of time and plenty of effort
for this project.' I think it is. But,
Mr U. also did.

Whoever can know other's effort
entirely?

I know their effort and hardship
that they have had regarding
to the documentary. I could not
tell you all of them.

But one thing—

They have to pay about 3 million yen
for making manuscript
of what you said in materials.

Normally manuscript should be made only
for places that would be inserted into film
actually.

But they made manuscript for all
of what you said.

It is unusually thing. As you may know
manuscript is not cheap, and in this
case they had to also translate.

Why they did, was just you requested.

I think they have never complained about it.

Do you think managing to get 3 million yen only for making manuscript is easy thing?

Our president is a generous person, but even he thinks that was better for you not to mention about lawyer or something.

Please let me know, do you have written words, not verbal, which makes clear that the company would edit the documentary under your order or your control? I mean, has the company given some email or fax to you that says they are going to edit by your indication?

If you have those kinds of things, please show me. Of course, if you have, I can negotiate with them on behalf of you.

Do you have it? If you have, it would be very advantageous for you. I should show it to them.

In case
you do not have those kinds
of their words—

I have sent some fax messages
to you, before you came
to Japan for attending the edit in
Kyoto. In those fax messages,
I mentioned several times
and tried to make it clear that
the company had the right to make
final decision. I mentioned
in my fax that the right
belonged to the company,
not our side.

And I also mentioned
that it was a premise of your
attendance the edit.

I wrote if this point
would not be clear, our side
could not make the edit
forward. I still have
those fax messages.

If you touch with your lawyer
and it will become lawsuit
or something, I have to present
those fax messages as some materials
that are disadvantageous for you.
Please do not make me to that,
please.

And I also mentioned several times
that the company is going

to listened to your request and
they are going to try to along with it,
but, the final decision should be made
by them. I said exactly the same
thing to you in Kyoto, at your hotel room
in Kyoto, when I and our interpreter
listened to your order one
by one. I pointed it out that
hearing your request would never mean
the company accept everything
what you request.

Did not I?

I think our interpreter also will have
to say something if you make lawsuit
or something. I would not like
to involve her into this kind of trouble.

Maestro, I could know this situation
which concerns the company's movie,
is not acceptable for you. But our president
and I can assure that in the long term
point of view, the broadcast of the movie
would bring actual profit to you.
Not to our company and not to their
company. Just to YOU.

Please allow me to ask you one strange
thing. Could you forget
documentary?

And could you take
only practical advantages
that the documentary would create?

You should you will never have
the same opportunities what you had,
such important interviews
or something.

You said it is unbearable things
that the company would not use them.
But, Maestro, without the company,
was it possible to have those opportunities
itself?

32

Another death poem. A good death poem this time. A goody amidst the baddies.

Death poems
are mere delusion—
death is death.

Why write poems about death? You just say, 'Death is death'. That's it. What else do you need to say? Do you need to say anything? Of course your life is a death poem. Unfortunately you have no alternative but to recite this poem over and over again. Why don't you keep silent? Why do you refuse to become immortal?

Till now I thought
that death befell
the untalented alone.
If those with talent, too,
must die
surely they make
better manure?

I am sure I'll make better manure. I am *already* good manure, excellent manure.

Bury me when I die
beneath a wine barrel
in a tavern.

With luck
the cask will leak.

33

Having found the bomb we have used it. We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbour, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretence of obeying international laws of warfare. We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war, in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans.

President Truman

THE TOKYO WAR CRIMES TRIAL

In addition to heavy cruisers and aircraft, the Japanese war criminals used their language as a weapon against those who endeavoured to oppose them. The prosecution was swamped with the intricacies created by turning Japanese into English and vice versa. The Japanese language bears no resemblance to English or any other European language so that the process of translating it may be likened to what I have partly achieved in this work of mine. At some point every writer faces the task of describing a picture in words. Translators are supposed to do likewise as they painstakingly bridge the gap between Japanese and English or any other European language. In other words, they create an equivalent, not a replica. The associate prosecutor from England, Arthur Comyns Carr, KC, realised that his job had more than its fair share of frustrations. 'I have already been here as long as you said the whole trip would take,' he wrote to Attorney-General Sir Hartley Shawcross, 'and there is no sign of the proceedings even beginning. On my arrival I found the Americans with a huge staff engaged in an enormous research with a stack of documents which have never even been listed or translated.'

During a period of several months the tribunal heard evidence, orally or by affidavit, from witnesses who testified in detail to atrocities committed in all theatres of war on a scale so vast, yet following so common a pattern in all theatres, that only one conclusion is possible—the atrocities were either secretly ordered or wilfully permitted by the Japanese government or individual members thereof and by the leaders of the armed forces....Massacres were freely committed as a means of terrorising the civilian population and subjecting them to the domination of the Japanese....The Japanese government conducted ill-treatment of prisoners and civilian internees (including Asian conscripted labourers) by failing and neglecting to punish those guilty of ill-treating them or by prescribing trifling and inadequate penalties for the

offense....The government also attempted to conceal the mistreatment and murder of prisoners and internees.

THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI

‘The use of officers for manual labour is expressly forbidden by the Geneva Convention.’

‘Is that so? Anyway we shall do what we like. What is our desire? It is not your desire, we are quite aware of that. It is our desire. We paid a lot of money for this desire. What do you want? You are honoured. Actually you are a prisoner, aren’t you? You speak to me of code. What code? What do you know of the company’s code? Nothing at all. Our company is not the company you keep. You are unworthy of command.’

‘My image, my sound. I don’t mind my image. Why did you distort my sound, my soul?’

‘Our concept of making the program is that of a documentary program which includes not only musical performances but also a series of interviews, meetings, and daily life scenes in a limited on-air time. As you can understand, we can not make a program in an unlimited frame. Therefore, it was inevitable to edit/shorten the Schubert music. Otherwise, since the Schubert music has 25min length, which is almost quarter of the whole program, we had to shorten other important scenes. We understand that the way editing/shortening is not always result in a satisfied form from the view of professionals, but we are TV company which in a position to make the programs for the audiences, and we expect our audience to regard the program as a documentary type and they would understand that it is inevitable to edit/shorten the music. If asked anything could be done, we can insert a subtitle/ticker which indicates courteously the music is partially-edited.’

‘Since you refuse to abide by the laws of the civilised world, I must consider myself absolved from my duty to obey you. You can’t shorten a piece of music at will because its structure must be taken into consideration if you use a *long* excerpt. I told you that. Several times. There are too many witnesses. Is this your soldier’s code?’

‘They’re gonna put him in the oven.’

‘This oven looks like the little house where my cat keeps me company during my travels. But so far she has been spared by the Sun Goddess.’

Only thoughts, my thoughts. Are they mine? The oven’s thoughts. I am a steak & kidney pie. Succulent steak & kidney in delicious oxo ravy topped with light puff pastry. The pie’s thoughts.

Now it is admitted that the whole human race is ordained for a single end, as was set forth before. Therefore there must be one guiding or ruling power. And this is what we mean by monarch or emperor. Thus it appears that for the well-being of the world there must be a monarchy or empire.

Dante's thoughts. Japanese thoughts. One ruling power. The Emperor. I must forget Japan, the oven. I'm in the oven but I must forget it.

For he's a jolly good fellow

For he's a jolly good fellow

I'm not a jolly good fellow. I'm a succulent steak & kidney pie. I'm succulent, am I not? They liked the documentary, didn't they? Gourmets.

An ugly old woman put a hand on my shoulder. She kissed me on the lips before I realised what was happening. What actually did happen? Nothing at all. She just kissed me on the lips. You can't call it an event, something to write home about. I was astounded and dumbfounded. And almost unconsciously I wiped my mouth with the back of my hand. For all my efforts, I didn't remove the sensation of her kiss. Of her bite, rather. She was hungry. A succulent steak & kidney pie.

I'm not comparable to the very beasts of the earth,

For even the beasts of the earth are fruitful before thee, O Lord!

I can't be compared to these waters,

For even the waters are fruitful before thee, O Lord!

I'm not comparable to the waves of the sea;

For these, whether they are calm, or in motion,

With the fishes which are in them, praise thee, O Lord!

I'm not comparable to the very earth,

For the earth produces its fruits, and praises thee, O Lord!

I'm not comparable to nights,

For nights produce the moon and the stars.

Can't you see I'm not like other people? I was set apart for some mission in life. I don't know what it is. I don't know whether it is for good or evil. But I do know I'm not like other people.

Only Origen thought that, at the resurrection, our bodies would be transformed into absolutely ethereal bodies. And he was condemned for this heresy. What did he have in mind, I'm asking myself? Ether is a colourless liquid that burns easily. But I have no matches. Ether is of no use to me. Besides, the world shouldn't become a playground for pyromaniacs. Did Origen wish humanity to immolate itself? What for? To protest against the eternal injustice of God? Is there no alternative? Are we at war with God? Should I surrender? I won't lay down my arms. I'm not permitted to surrender. A fighting man

who surrenders is liable to extremely heavy punishment. I must fight the war through to the end, no matter how great the odds against me. Banzai! Banzai! Banzai!

A pivot on which human stability revolves. Out of joint. Democracy. Even Stalin was a pillar. Now money changes one in the twinkling of an eye. A creature running with a flag in the third Canto of the *Inferno*. The Emperor was a pillar of strength. But for him, there would have been nothing but chaos. He was the only symbol of control.

I didn't get a wink of sleep last night with that party going on next door. What party? I'm in the oven. I can't sleep any more. I can't write any more. But I can talk to someone I don't know personally. To a female character in *The Tale of Genji*. As usual she recites a poem:

Did you not know beforehand
That all things must fade away?

'Do you want me to write a poem?' I ask. 'Do you think she might be reluctant to come to my room after all these years?'

'Another woman? A ghost?'

'Do you think she might have changed in the Hereafter? Do you think she might have fallen in love with somebody else, with an archangel?'

A dead woman, my Yugao. She might also be in an oven.

I remember you. What does that
Mean? A distant memory. My body
Doesn't feel you. My body doesn't
Think of you.

I love you.

Love neither thinks
Nor feels.

She knew I would never return to our flat. And yet I did my best to hide from her my intentions and the gaps in my bookcases: I had given some of my books and LPs to my intimate friends. (The KGB

officials did not touch *them*.) Why didn't she denounce me? Her mother worked at the Counsel of Ministers and therefore could at any time cancel my forthcoming journey, saying I might request political asylum in Western Europe. Why didn't she make them put me in the oven? Her identity is of no importance. There are so many women in *The Tale of Genji*! They come and go and even the Japanese do not remember their names. Only their scents and kisses linger in one's memory.

34

Another woman. No horizon.
A brick wall. Yet
There's another woman,
Another date. Yeats might have written
About it. I won't. Why should I?
Another brick wall.

You say to them, 'I love you.'
You don't believe in love. Nor do they
Believe you. So you just talk to
Someone.

35

You're the only woman
Who loves me. You don't want
To see or hear me. That's what love
Is about.

They think lovers should be
Together. They shouldn't.
We shouldn't. Let us
Love each other from a distance.

I am at the North Pole.

I woke up at 8.30 a.m. The rain and the wind were performing a piece by Morton Feldman. I was far from the piano and anyway I had no wish to perform anything, be it a Schubert sonata or a Chopin mazurka. I thought it was my duty to remain in bed for two or three hours because only under my

blanket could I think of you all the time. My darling, my darling! Even an exclamation mark will not coerce you into answering my phone calls. Why do you hang up on me? You will remain my dark lady for the rest of my life. I will not utter your name, the name of my goddess. Many women have inspired me over the last fifty years. They have appeared in this tale for the sake of the Japanese audiences, as a homage to *The Tale of Genji*. But you are the only woman for whom I could write a *life* poem—no mean feat. There are only life poems in my life when I think about you.

If I don't write anything
 Tomorrow or next week you can
 Tell them I wrote about you
 Tonight.

36

MacArthur was waiting for the Emperor to pay him a visit because he thought that 'the patience of the East rather than the haste of the West' would better serve his purpose. He thought that summoning the Emperor 'would be to outrage the feelings of the Japanese people and to make a martyr of the Emperor in their eyes'. On D-Day Hirohito was wearing a morning coat, striped trousers and a top hat. MacArthur did not vouchsafe to salute him at the embassy compound so that he was ushered upstairs, leaving his retinue of nine palace officials behind. According to an eyewitness account, he looked 'frightened to death. As I took his top hat I noticed his hands were trembling. On meeting MacArthur on the threshold of the drawing room he bowed low, very low, a servant's bow.'

But the servant was a god and his opponent an ordinary human being who might have become the god's servant had he been born in Japan. He was not and fate was on his side that morning and perhaps for two or three years to come: fate is known for its propensity for changing sides.

New World informality rubbed up against Old World manners and royal modesty, and while there could be no doubt who was dominant physically, to Japanese minds it was Hirohito that towered over MacArthur. Unassuming, modest, in *formal* dress as a mark of respect towards this merely mortal commoner *gaijin*—the contemptuous Japanese word for foreigner—the Emperor shone in his countrymen's eyes beside his ill-mannered, tieless, jacketless, slovenly hands-on-hips guest. To Americans, still seething with anger against the Japanese atrocities of the war, the master of public relations that was MacArthur had the contemptuous, casual look of a ruler standing beside a colonial subject, a jailer beside a man on trial for his life—which at that meeting Hirohito feared he was.

Robert Harvey, *American Shogun*

Which side am *I* on? Should one prefer the contemptuous, casual look of a ruler to an unassuming, modest loser? I am an inveterate loser and, like a Japanese prince, I would not mind withdrawing from the world and settling on a desert island where one can write poems, provided no intruders mar one's solitude, meditation and inspiration. All this can happen after a lost battle and I have lost many battles in my life, in the outside world. In my inner world, on the other hand, I have won every single battle so I am the happiest man alive, considering that our main goal is to conquer ourselves, to accomplish our entelechy. Yes, I cannot help siding with the Emperor even though I am a mortal *gaijin*. I will always pay homage to modesty and a respectful attitude to the detriment of ill manners and contemptuous, casual looks.

Didn't MacArthur himself pay homage to Hirohito?

I had an uneasy feeling he might plead his own cause against indictment as a war criminal....But my fears were groundless. What he said was this: 'I come to you, General Mac Arthur, to offer myself to the judgment of the powers you represent as the one to bear sole responsibility for every political and military decision made and action taken by my people in the conduct of war.' A tremendous impression swept me. This courageous assumption of a responsibility implicit with death, a responsibility clearly belied by facts of which I was fully aware, moved me to the very marrow of my bones. He was an Emperor by inherent birth, but in that instant, I knew I faced the First Gentleman of Japan in his own right.

MacArthur even accompanied Hirohito to his car. However, he did not shake the Emperor's hand and turned on his heels before the imperial cars set off on their journey.

Just after surrendering to the Allies, Hirohito composed a *waka*:

Under the heavy snow of winter,
The pine tree bends,
But does not break,
Or change its colour.
People should be like this.

The pine tree bends, but does not break. What is my colour?

37

The email I addressed to the film director:

Dear Friend,

I'm sorry to bother you once again. Life is more than a collection of images, a series of sounds. Life is not a scale, an arpeggio. Life is not a film, a symphony. Life is this moment and your stubbornness. You embody the spirit of Japan. You are a no-man. Perhaps 'no' is the only appropriate answer to all our questions. You nod your head, but you say 'no'. To yourself, to spirits. Why not say 'no' to God? 'No' is the most eloquent proof of one's faith. Actually you are not a no-man. You are a yes-man. You say 'yes' to yourself and to the world—not to those who live in it. You carry a large cane, stalking about the streets with an air of utter indifference to mundane things. To you, the earth is too small. You have your own theories of the universe and life. You feed on ethereal words of wisdom. Your eyes radiate ambition. Your mind thirsts for knowledge. You are the repository of loyalty and patriotism. You are the self-imposed guardian of national honour. With all your virtues and faults you are the last fragment of Bushido. A friend of mine said you had wanted me to commit *seppuku* in order to film it. Thank you for showing me Japan. In this respect your film is much better than Kurosawa's masterpieces. You are Macbeth. I am King Lear.

38

The email I addressed to the film director:

Dear Friend,

The spiritual light of our essential being is pure and does not seem to be affected by the will of man. Springing up in our mind, it shows what is right and wrong. Conscience. The light proceeding from the god of heaven.

Rectitude is the power of deciding upon a certain course of conduct in accordance with reason, without wavering. Dying when it is right to die, striking when to strike is right.

You know what *Giri* means, don't you? The Right Reason or something along these lines. Duty, pure and simple. The *Giri* we owe to parents, superiors, inferiors. The *Giri* we owe to society and to the company for which we make our documentaries. I don't know what it is. I do know what it means but meanings are different from what your body feels. Your body feels *Giri*, doesn't it? Your body feels what the Japanese audiences are at the beginning of the twenty-first century. My body feels only my body, I'm afraid. You perceived what was right and you did it. I do not do what I should do—our relationship proves that beyond a shadow of a doubt. Everything seems to be *beyond* in this affair. But it is not beyond Valour, Fortitude, Bravery and Fearlessness—as far as you are concerned. Don't you fear my lawyer and my suit? You don't abide by the Geneva Convention, do you?

What should one do if one's arm is cut off in battle? One should go on fighting with one arm. I'm not fighting any longer—you have cut my arms, both of them.

And what about benevolence? Benevolence to the weak, the down-trodden or the vanquished, was ever extolled as samurais' virtue.

39

The princes with whom he had been most intimate, his brothers and cousins, called constantly; but he would see none of them. For despite all the efforts he made to get himself into a fit state for company, months of despondency had, he felt, worked such havoc with him, that if he were again to receive his friends, they would remember him as he now was, and not as they had once known him. But merely to hide would defeat his end; for if it got about that he was ashamed to be seen, or was so broken by sorrow that he could not maintain a rational conversation—

40

Supposedly, the Japanese were a twentieth-century civilisation. In reality they were more nearly a feudal society, of the type discarded by Western nations some four centuries ago.

MacArthur

No progress marks (or mars) the domain of art. Homer is not inferior to James Joyce. What about politics, life itself? A Russian story. An uprising of slaves in Ancient Rome. They march past waving placards that say, 'Three cheers for the bright future of feudalism.' Why should Western countries provide a model for Japan, Iraq or Russia? The growth of history has nothing to do with technological progress. *Tous les régimes se valent à l'exception des régimes pervers*. Does the common reader have an interpreter at hand? Anything is better than our financial capitalism. Of course we should exclude from our honours list all evil dictators such as Lenin, Stalin and Hitler. But no enlightened despot has been declared persona non grata.

There were aspects of Japanese life that went even further back than that. Although theocracy was a system of government that had been thoroughly discredited by three thousand years of progress in the Western world, it still existed in Japan. The Emperor was considered a divine being, and the average Japanese subject dared not even lift up his eyes to view his ruler; this God-Emperor was absolute. His word was final. He was bolstered in power by a small group of families who controlled the military, the apparatus of government and the economy. There was no such thing as civil rights. There were not even human rights....Indeed, an American viewing Japan would be more inclined to class it as more nearly akin to ancient Sparta than to any modern nation.

MacArthur

What is wrong with ancient Sparta, with Alexander the Great?

Build the structure of representative government! Hold free election! Modernise the constitution! Enfranchise the women! Encourage a free economy! Establish a free labour movement! Develop a free and responsible press! Abolish police oppression! Liberalise education! Decentralise the political power!

The Emperor was stripped of his temporal power and on January 1, 1946, issued a rescript renouncing divinity. 'The ties between us and our people have always stood upon mutual trust and affection. They do not depend upon mere legends and myths. They are not predicated on the false conception that the Emperor is divine.'

On January 1, 1946, the Japanese press printed the entire text of Emperor Hirohito's first-ever New Year's rescript to the nation, formally titled *Rescript to Promote the National Destiny* but popularly known as the *Declaration of Humanity* (*ningen sengen*). Couched in obscure, classical language, it quoted in its entirety Emperor Meiji's egalitarian-sounding imperial oath of five articles, starting as follows: 'We shall determine all matters of state by public discussion, after assemblies have been convoked far and wide'. Here is the ending: 'We shall seek knowledge throughout the world and thus invigorate the foundations of this imperial nation.' Buried in the text was a denial that the Emperor's ties with his people depended solely on 'the false conception' of him as 'a living deity' (*akitsumikami*).

Drafted earlier at GHQ, the rescript had undergone translation and revision by the Shidehara cabinet and the court. Hirohito's reluctance to deny his supposed descent from the sun goddess, Amaterasu Omikami, sticks out a mile. He emphasised the union of monarchy and democracy by inserting the oath Meiji had sworn not to the Japanese people but to Amaterasu Omikami. Through this subterfuge he pushed into the background the half-hearted declaration according to which his relationship with the people was not based on his divinity.

41

Hirohito did not renounce his descent from the Sun Goddess. He was loath to repudiate his great-great-great-great....grandmother. Nor did his son, Akihito, repudiate his father. Anyone watching the imperial coronation of November 1990 might have felt he was not just in another age, but in another world. An American journalist compared the ritual to a Bunraku puppet show. Akihito was dressed in a billowing rust-coloured dressing gown, while the black forage cap on his head was surmounted by a three-foot-high plume. He was perched on the Takamikura, an intricately carved purple-and-laqueur stage with a canopy surmounted by a golden phoenix, representing Mount

Takachiho where the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu Omikami, is said to have placed her grandson in 600 BC to initiate the dynasty that has spawned 125 emperors in unbroken succession.

Ten days later the ritual known as the Daijosai, the 'Great Food-offering Ceremony', was carried out. The Emperor took a purifying bath and, once this sub-ritual was over, made for the sun by means of a carpet that had been rolled up in front of him. Accompanied by two women priests, he crossed the threshold of a bedchamber and offered the first rice of the season to the Sun Goddess. He ate some himself. They also partook of millet and rice wine. That afternoon they made love for the first time and the Emperor was reborn as a living God.

42

The email I addressed to the film director:

My Dear Friend,

I am profoundly grateful to you for letting me use your time machine. Or is it a spaceship of some kind? Did I sojourn in another world?

Shintoism lays no stress on the individual conscience, but rather on conforming to a collective view within a hierarchy headed by an Emperor and rigorously structured beneath him. There is no room for the individual to question the will of the collective—of your company.

Japan is a uniquely superior country because foreign kings, emperors, presidents, are all created by man but Japan has a sacred throne inherited from the Imperial ancestors. Japan's imperial rule is therefore an extension of heaven. Man-made dynasties collapse, but the heaven-created throne is beyond the power of mere mortals.

43

My Dear Friend,

You did your best to create a best program you could. You gathered materials as you could, travelled a lot, listened to my stories, read my books, and concentrated to my music, which was full size of your efforts, time, and costs allowed by your company for a single documentary program. Your editing policy is that of documentary programs but not that of art-music programs (i.e., the main purpose of the program is to let the audience introduce my life and view of art and not let the audience to enjoy the whole music without shortening the music.)

You did your best to listen to my suggestions and intentions to the extent that it comply with your editing policy, masking the man I dislike, introducing one more poem recorded in Kyoto hotel, and so on.

Who is this masked gunman? I don't remember him. Nor do I remember myself. I shall be you.

You are the public TV company. Your concept of making the program is that of a documentary program which includes not only musical performances but also a series of interviews, meetings, and daily life scenes in a limited on-air time. As I can understand, you cannot make a program in an unlimited frame. Therefore, it was inevitable to edit/shorten the Schubert music. I understand that the way of editing/shortening is not always result in a satisfied form from the view of professionals, but you are TV company which in a position to make the programs for the audiences, and you expect your audience to regard the program as a documentary type and they would understand that it is inevitable to edit/shorten the music. If asked anything could be done, you can insert a subtitle/ticker which indicates courteously the music is partially-edited.

Let us mention the alternative suggestion I made that you may use the specified part: one and half minutes of the music. The specified part was too short, not enough to stand as a climax or a catharsis at the ending of the long program. And you thought audience needs a certain period of time to feel a very delicate theme '*monono ahare*' and fully enjoy the music.

44

My Friend,

You get it all wrong. Let me explain once more. You can shorten a piece of music, if you wish. But it can't be shortened *n'importe comment*. Do you have your French interpreter at hand? You *may* use 'the specified part' because it is a short excerpt that doesn't involve the overall structure. If you use a *long* excerpt, however, the overall structure comes into play and must be taken notice of. I saw a TV programme the other day. Teenagers were performing popular songs. One of them shortened some ending or other. He made his exit from the stage to rapturous applause. But a member of the jury pointed out this kind of thing couldn't be done because the song's structure was at stake. 'The cut might have been made to meet the requirements of the programme,' the hostess pointed out. The member of the jury was sticking to her guns. And the audience understood.

What about Schubert's structures? His songs and *anti*-songs? His *Piano Sonata in B flat Major*, D. V. 960 is an *anti*-song. Do *you* understand? Will you *ever* understand?

45

My Dearest Friend,

I never so happy was as I was during those days in shooting.

It is clear from the law that your program cannot be interfered or restricted by any authority.

I regard this program is successful, so I appreciated your corporations very much.

Now I know what I am and where. I am character in your program. Japanese character.

You sincerely

46

Dear Maestro,

Regarding to the company's documentary, there is one thing I would like to ask you. Exactly saying, there is one thing that the president of our agency hopes you to consider. I am writing to you on behalf of him.

If you kindly allow us to do it, we are able to broadcast the documentary again.

I know this suggestion would make you rage, in this situation. I am able to understand it.

Perhaps, I should not mention it, from the beginning.

However, Maestro, I think that it could be also a chance for correction in the most important point.

Of course the company is not able to re edit the documentary totally. But, they can insert information by text in the final scene. They can insert a subtitle which mentions this scene, or I should say, Schubert's music is edited by the company's will, NOT by Maestro's intention.

I know it would not be able to make you relieve. However, at least, we can inform to viewer about why Schubert's music is cut. We can inform to viewer the edit of Schubert's music was done by the company, NOT by Maestro.

Needless to say, without your permission, we cannot broadcast it again. Please let me know your intention.

47

Dear Maestro,

Regarding to the rebroadcast of the documentary, the company and our agency has abandoned the idea.

In this situation, I should not ask you to consider it, from the beginning. Even it was Mr S.'s wish, I should not do it.

I apologize for my stupid request.

48

Sagan, right to self-destruction.

What is mono-no aware. My text.

Part Three. Life Poems.

Martynov about freedom.

Let images take over. What can they do without my words? In the news I watched the other day there was a section devoted to images. Only images paraded on the screen, unaccompanied by words or anything else. Even music was silent as if to corroborate my thesis according to which a piece of music is founded on silence. So I watched students clashing with the police and other facts without hearing anything except my inner music. What music did my body perform in those moments?

What would they have done with the repetition I permitted myself to insert into my email? It is actually the other way round: I inserted this repetition into the text of this novel. At the time it was not a repetition—just a statement, a story, a metaphor. A recapitulation—that is what I must call it now because I studied music in my youth; I mean, the structure of music. I dissected sonatas, symphonies and quartets; I wrote fugues. I repeated my former statement without altering one iota of the text. Schubert does it all the time. Does he alter anything? A statement, a short development, another statement, another key. The statement is the same with the exception of the key in which the second theme is performed. What about the short development?

The long development is the rest of my email. The rest is not silence. The rest is anger. Even the repetition is anger. One angry man. What is Schubert's repetition? Love, despair, acceptance?

'Japanese troops had been under such conditions that they were not normal human beings at the time when the cannibalism took place.' Why do these irrelevant sentences always get in the way? I am not on one of the Pacific Islands. I am not in the oven. Just a dream. She is a character in one of my books. We were making love in my flat, not in the Philippines. Nor have we ever kissed in Malaysia. So let us talk about my flat. Please focus my rays on my flat and on my bed. To whom am I talking? To my brain. Do you see me lying in my bed, waiting for her to come? Do you see *her*? She did come, you know. She was late and she did not apologise. Nor did I, by the way. Nor did the Emperor and the Foreign Minister. They offered no public apologies. And last Friday she did not come. But she did come that afternoon, around five. Have you focused the beam of the spotlight on us, on our bodies? What do you see? Aren't you supposed to generate this dream?

-----Original Message-----

From: SATO <jzt07127@nifty.ne.jp>

To: Dina <sara-dz@mail.ru>

Date: Wed, 7 Nov 2007 15:18:08 +0900 (JST)

Subject: Notice it DEAR MAESTRO AFANASSIEV --- from Kyoto, ver.2!

>
 > Dear Maestro AFANASSIEV,
 >
 > Thank you very much for your mail,
 > and we are looking forward receiving your reply,
 > which is a precious source of our art-documentary films.
 >
 > In addition, we would like you to bring
 > your favorite Japanese (poem) books which are
 > hopefully in your bookshelf long time,
 > because we would like you to read some Japanese
 > poems or text familiar to you, including BASHO,
 > TEIKA FUJIWARA, NAGON SEISHO, or KENKO YOSHIDA and etc.
 > (maybe including "death poems" you mentioned last time.)
 >
 > We are now searching nice locations for your poet-reading,
 > in Kyoto, where many middle aged poets loved to stay,
 > while feeling "MONONO AHARE".
 >
 > By the way, its very kind of you to let us know
 > about your performance in Moscow in December.
 > It was a good information and we feel it very interesting,
 > however, actually we don't \$B!G (It know yet if we can go and film it,
 > for we don't know whether we have enough budget to make an extra
 > location in addition to locations planned in January
 > at Paris and Moscow as I made a proposal in last Email.
 > Anyway, we still look for a chance to see it.
 >
 > Thank you.

> Best regards,
 >
 > Takeshi Sato NHK KYOTO
 > Tomoo Ueno NHK KYOTO
 >
 >
 >
 > ----- Original Message -----
 > >From: Dina <sara-dz@mail.ru>
 > >To: SATO <jzt07127@nifty.ne.jp>
 > >Subject: Re: Notice it DEAR MAESTRO AFANASSIEV --- from
 > Kyoto,Japan!
 > >Date: Sat, 03 Nov 2007 00:22:55 +0300
 > >
 > >
 > >Dear Mr Sato,
 > >Thank you very much for your fax. I am leaving for Petersburg
 > today. I shall
 > answer your questions when I am back - on November 8th. On December 17th I sha
 > ll be performing my theatrical play Kreisleriana. Do you think your team will
 > be able to shoot it?
 > >Kindest regards,
 > >Valery Afanassiev
 >

----Original Message-----

From: SATO <jzt07127@nifty.ne.jp>

To: \$B%""U%!"J%7%(%U!&%5%i\$5\$s (B <sara-dz@mail.ru>,
 \$B%""U%!"J%7%(%U!&%0%l%%"s%F%s%s (B <glevontin@mail.ru>

Date: Tue, 20 Nov 2007 01:59:54 +0900 (JST)

Subject: Dear Maestro Affanassiev, a schdule proposal \$B!! (Bin Russia and France

>
 > Dear Maestro Affanassiev
 >
 > We are glad to hear from you, and we thought
 > it is very kind of you to cooperate with our project.
 >
 > The following schedule is just our hope, lets say images with our location
 > plan,
 > we hope such plan is acceptable for you, and we are ready to listen to your
 > advices.
 >
 > Jan.
 > 5th Ueno will fly from Japan and arrive at Moscow
 > 6th Moscow a meeting about our location plan
 > 7th Moscow Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory,
 > or a certain library in Moscow
 > (in order to interview a person who can tell
 > about the situations in those days
 > when information of foreign countries is limited
 > in USSR)
 > 8th Moscow visit the place where Maestro was born, or
 > woods where Maestro had visited in the childhood.

> 9th Moscow visit the grave of Emil Grigoryevich Gilels,
 > or Vladimir Sofronitsky
 > 10th Moscow interview with friends of Maestro, who share those
 > times in USSR
 > 11th Moscow filming the Maestro performances in theater
 > 12th Moscow filming Maestro walking in Moscow, the Kremlin,
 > streets, people, and so on.
 > 13rd from Moscow to St. Petersburg filming going for walk
 > in St. Petersburg
 > 14th St. Petersburg filming Maestro meeting with his friends
 > 15th St. Petersburg filming Maestro playing some music
 > 16th from St. Petersburg to Moscow
 > 17th from Moscow to Paris
 > 18th Paris filming some sketching Maestro in Paris
 > 19th Versailles filming Maestro visiting a castle for
 > one-day-excursion
 > 20th Versailles filming Maestro's daily life in his home
 > 21st Versailles filming Maestro playing some pieces
 > 22nd Versailles filming Maestro writing, reading, and considering
 > 23rd Versailles filming Maestro meeting some of his friends
 > 24th Versailles interviewing Maestro about his Philosophy on a stance
 > to contemporary world, art situation, and so on.
 > 25th Versailles filming some extra shots
 > 26th from Paris to Japan
 > 27th
 > 28th
 > 29th
 >
 > Those schedule are just our proposal, so if you have any request,
 > please let us know.
 > The dates when we move to St. Peterburg, or to Paris are only a
 > proposal, so we hope if we could talk details when we meet in Japan.
 >
 >
 > Again we appreciate your kind consideration about filming.
 >
 >
 > Very best regards,
 >
 > Takeshi Sato
 > Tomoo Ueno
 > =====
 > TAKESHI SATO
 > NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corp.) KYOTO Branch
 > tel : +81-75-823-1502 \$B!! (J
 > fax : +81-75-823-1506
 > mobile: +81-90-7493-2015
 > email : satou.t-gw@nhk.or.jp \$B!! (J
 > =====
 >
 >
 >

-----Original Message-----

From: SATO <jzt07127@nifty.ne.jp>

To: sara-dz@mail.ru, glevontin@mail.ru

Date: Fri, 22 Feb 2008 01:16:28 +0900 (JST)

Subject: DEAR MAESTRO AFANASSIEV, FROM KYOTO

>
 > Dear Maestro AFANASSIEV,
 >
 > Thank you very much for your email.
 > You are now in Russia and we are now in middle of
 > editing stage in coldest Kyoto.
 >
 >
 > We looked through all of the footage materials,
 > and we are considering the structure of the story in order to make a
 > basic strong line for the documentary.
 >
 > We would like to let you know in advance
 > what is in our mind on the way to a final stage
 > of editing as a halfway report.
 >
 >
 > Our temporary story line is as below,
 > which can be added and associated with relevant scenes
 > or interviews and could include more implied meanings.
 > Please note the our temporary story line in below is still at the stage of
 > draft in order to explore basic outline of the story.
 >
 > =====
 >
 > *The story is made by focusing on a following theme which leis
 > between you and us; Japanese audiences;
 > "A kind of road movie of a single SOUL through three countries
 > which describes how an outstanding unique musicians
 > obtain his own world of Art, especially in terms of Monono aware".
 >
 >
 > 1) IN HIS ROOM
 >
 > We describe that the pianist (who preferred to be called
 > as "a poet." to a pianist,) lives isolated from bustles of cities.
 > There he enjoys a time with his small kitten,
 > plenty of wine stocks, and deep forest of bookshelves.
 >
 > We introduce his own play style of pauses and spaces.
 > (which can be heard in his performance of Kreisleriana #4)
 >
 > *Some more scenes can be attached in relations with the main story
 > above as an interesting introduction of his unique character.
 >
 >
 >
 > 2) HIS ROOTS

>
 > This Chapter shows how his outstanding originalities were brought up,
 > introducing skyscraper, deep forest at the outskirts of Moscow,
 > and Moscow Conservatory.
 >
 > We will focus on the secret of SILENCE and SPACE in your primal
 > experience in the forest, the ritual recital in the conservatory hall
 > and lessons by Gillels.
 >
 > On the other hand, the serious situation of Soviet would be introduced.
 > The struggles and spiritual freedom at that time would be shown
 > in Mr. Martynov accompanied scenes.
 >
 > \$B!v (JAgain some derivative scenes could be added in order to
 > enrich the historical description.
 >
 >
 >
 > 3) From pianist To Philosopher
 >
 > Then we will bring up the your inner change depth in the world of Art
 > through drastic change of your circumstances.
 >
 > The pianist find himself somehow unreasonable in the western way of
 > "cultural situation" dominated commercialism instead of socialism."
 > He had decided to devote whole his life in ART.
 >
 > And he began to write and explore more depth of music,
 > which fruited in absolute unique"theatrical plays".
 >
 >
 > 4) Plays Monono Ahare in Kyoto
 >
 > In autumn 2007, we found a forever refugee, or a spiritual art seeker
 > on the way of his soul journey in Kyoto.
 > Portraying his love to Japanese cultures, through gardens, Noh stage,
 > and conversations.
 >
 > His deep understanding and respects to Japanese culture was expressed
 > in the most elegant manner, performance in an ancient temple.
 >
 >
 > ---These are the outline of a draft story which is in our mind so far.
 > We hope you would like it.
 > Thank you for your understanding.
 >
 > Best regards,
 >
 > Takeshi Sato, NHK KYOTO
 >

-----Original Message-----

From: SATO <jzt07127@nifty.ne.jp>

To: sara-dz@mail.ru

Date: Thu, 1 Nov 2007 01:05:14 +0900 (JST)

Subject: Notice it DEAR MAESTRO AFANASSIEV --- from Kyoto,Japan!

>

> Notice it DEAR MAESTRO AFANASSIEV

>

> Dear Sirs

>

> This e-mail is the message to Maestro Afanassiev,
> and if you could, please let him read the attached file,
> as a important letter from his friend in Japan !

>

> Thank you very much for your kind cooperation !

> =====

> TAKESHI SATO

> NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corp.) KYOTO Branch

>

> tel : +81-75-823-1502 \$B!! (J

> fax : +81-75-823-1506

> mobile: +81-90-7493-2015

> email : satou.t-gw@nhk.or.jp \$B!! (J

> =====

>

> Dear Maestro Valery Afanassiev,

>

>

>

> Thank you very much for the wonderful time I had in Tokyo the other day.

> Talking with you, always gives me a lot of intellectual stimulation. I am

> very thankful that it turned out to be a meeting that provided me with good

> ideas.

> \$B!! (J Ever since, we have been discussing various matters at NHK and

> we have decided to do a documentary series for a total of about 110 minutes.

> This will be a program to portray your reflective artistic features as a

> whole. Everybody accepted the idea with excitement and enthusiasm.

>

> Along with such ideas of the program, however, the location plan has been

> expanded to include three major cities; Kyoto, Moscow (St. Petersburg), and

> Paris.

>

> Furthermore, if possible the performance scene in Kyoto could be introduced

> in a specialized music program called \$B!H (JThe Classic Club. \$B!I (J

(These idea

> would be presented by NAOKI HIRABAYASHI, concert imagine producer, as

> proposals including extensive usage of these programs, and we will consider

> his arrangements.

>

>

>

> I would like to consult you on several matters, specifically, what locations

> will be possible for videotaping, etc.. Please give us your thoughts for

- > the items marked with asterisks (*), and larger the number of asterisks;
- > ***, the more we would like to hear your opinion. Please give us your
- > thoughts as much as possible. We appreciate your consideration.
- >
- > \$B!c (J* \$B!! (JMatters concerning locations for shooting in Japan \$B!d (J
- >
- > \$B"" (JTentative schedule for location shooting in Japan
- >
- > We would like to explain to you the schedule we have in mind which is as
- > follows.
- >
- > \$B!| (J November 24
- >
- > We would like to have a meeting to discuss our schedule.
- > \$B!| (J November 26
- >
- > We would like to shoot the scene of your arrival in Kyoto.
- > \$B!| (J November 27
- >
- > Shooting in Kyoto will start at a location overlooking the entire city of
- > Kyoto. We would like to have a symbolic view of Kyoto. Our intention is to
- > show different aspects of your art. We assume that the three cities, Kyoto,
- > Moscow (St. Petersburg), and Paris, which correspond to the three phases or
- > the three different artistic worlds within you.
- > \$B!| (J November 28
- >
- > In the evening, we will be viewing a Noh drama by Soh-ke (Head) of the Noh
- > Kongo School, which has a origin in Muromachi-Era(600 years ago) and is the
- > only school that still has its base in Kyoto (actually by the Kyoto-GOSHO
- > (palace)). This would be used in one of the climax scene of our program,
- > where you will watch Noh play and talk with the Soh-ke(Head).
- > * The Kongo School is the Noh drama school in Kyoto, and Eikin Kongo, the
- > head of the School himself will be performing exclusively only for the
- > program.
- > * The drama will be \$B!H (JYugao \$B!I!J (Jor could be
- \$B!H (JHajitomi \$B!I!K (J, your Noh drama
- > you experienced in Moscow which motivated you. I believe you have used the
- > drama as a motif in your novel, \$B!H (JDisappearance. \$B!I (J We have asked
- the same
- > drama to be played on this evening.
- > * Yugao \$B!J (JHajitomi \$B!K (J is normally played on indoor stage. But we
- try asking
- > him a big favour to play it \$B!H (Joutdoors \$B!I (J at dusk, when dark at
- night. It
- > will be, therefore, a stage of light and darkness. (Soh-ke normally performs
- > outdoors only once a year.)
- > * The outdoor Noh stage at the Higashi-Honganji Temple is also very special,
- > which has been used only a few times in 10 years.
- > * This will be a Noh drama performed outdoors, which takes the original Noh
- > style from Muromachi Era to Edo Era. We will take the greatest precaution
- > for you not to get cold. I hope you will understand the purpose of this
- > scene and enjoy the style.
- >
- >

- > \$B!| (J November 29
- > \$B!! (J At the Kongo Noh Theatre, Noh masks and kimonos from the
- > Muromachi Era will be shown. I will seek special permission for you to wear
- > the kimono and the Noh mask. (It will be an experience for you to feel the
- > secluded sensation, which leads to see one \$B!G (Js inner self, and we imagine
- > such inner perception might has a connection with reflections with nostalgic
- > past historical time)
- > * If you wish to apply some of your excellent dramaturgical ideas when
- > collaborating with Soh-ke, I will be glad to discuss it with him. However,
- > considering the characteristics of \$B!H (JNoh \$B!I (J drama, as you know, it
- > may be
- > difficult to ask to make spontaneous movements.
- >
- >
- > \$B!| (J November 29
- >
- > We will be going to Nagoya on this day. \$B!J (JAn hour and a half trip.
- \$B!K (J
- > \$B!| (J November 30
- >
- > There will be a presentation at Tokugawa Museum. We would like to shoot the
- > scene. We would also like to shoot the scene of you looking at the Picture
- > Scroll of the Tale of Genji.
- >
- >
- > \$B!| (J December 2
- >
- > We have a ticket for you for the first day of kabuki all-star-cast
- > performance.
- > \$B!& (JIf it is all right with you, we would also like to invite Mr. Akira Asada.
- > (approaching) Either before or after watching kabuki, we would like you to
- > have a conversation with Mr. Asada, in a relaxed atmosphere.
- >
- > \$B!| (J December 3
- >
- > We would like to shoot you taking a stroll in a Kyoto garden.
- > ** We may be able to arrange you to experience a Zen nocturnal meditation at
- > the Tenryuji Temple. Early in the morning, you can do the meditation. Monks
- > at the Tenryuji Temple can accompany you as a tutor. We are still
- > negotiating, but we think it could be an interesting experience for you as
- > you are not a novice on Kyoto. Please let us know what you think.
- >
- > \$B!| (J December 4 and December 5
- >
- > In the evening, we would like to shoot you performing at Jissoin Temple. The
- > temple is situated at Iwakura, a quiet location in the northern region of
- > Kyoto City.
- > * The Jissoin is a temple which is related to the Imperial Family and has a
- > proper and honourable tradition. The temple itself has an ancient
- > atmosphere with more than 3-400 years history.
- >
- > * The Jissoin Temple has a house in its garden. We chose this house, as it
- > has the atmosphere of the house in which \$B!H (JYugao \$B!I (J passed away.
- (Actually,

> the teahouse is well kept, still preserving the old architecture, paying
> lots of efforts.)
>
> * The teahouse has a garden on the mountainside, where Maple leaves are
> beautiful. On the other side, there is a rock garden used for enjoying the
> beautiful view of the moon.
>
> * The paintings on the screen doors are of delicate tastes, which have
> stories to tell. (The temple as a whole is designated as important cultural
> assets.)
>
> ** On the 4th, we hope you will perform in the room with a wooden floor,
> with the maple leaves in the background. On the 5th, we hope you will
> perform underneath the eaves of the house with a Japanese rock garden in the
> background. Although it has a roof (eaves), it may be a little cold exposed
> to the outside air. We thought that, when the music would be played with
> the rock garden background, it would sound even better. What do you think?
>
>
> \$B!| (J At Jissoin Temple, we would like to shoot both for the Hi-Vision Special
> Program (110 minutes) and if possible, for the Classic Club (55 minutes)
>
>
> *** \$B!H (JThe Classic Club \$B!I (J is a program with an emphasis on
performance and is
> exactly 53 minutes long. It is a 53-minute concert program. The recording
> will also be used for the HI-vision Special.
>
> (It will be recorded with a portable special recording systems run by a
> engineer in our company, who engage in mainly music programs) The ideas of
> our programs are as follows.
>
> \$B!& (JThe concept \$B!' (JTo sense the emotional feelings of melancholy and
nostalgia
> when coming face-to-face with the past at Jissoin Temple, an old temple that
> symbolizes old tradition. While viewing the beautiful maple leaves, with
> intense thoughts for \$B!H (JMONO-NO AWARE; pities for ephemeral
beings \$B!I (J and
> contemplating on the experiences of Noh drama with intense thoughts for the
> \$B!H (JYUGEN:subtle and profound, \$B!I (J in which the death-past world
has mysterious
> realities, the Maestro performs with his thoughts on Kyoto while enjoying
> the view of the Rock Garden.
>
>
>
> ****
> \$B!!!! (J The \$B!H (JMoonlight \$B!H (J by Debussy dedicated to the
moonlight Rock Garden
> \$B!!!! (J* Music by Brahms in his late years dedicated for \$B!H (JMONO-
NO AWARE \$B!I (J
> in the late autumn.
> \$B!!!!!!#a!% (JFrom OP 117 three Interludes. the third piece
> \$B!!!!!!#b!% (JFrom six piano pieces of OP118, the second and the fifth
pieces.

- > \$B!!!!!!#c!% (JFrom four piano pieces of OP119, the first.
- >
- > \$B!!!! (J* From Schubert \$B!G (Js piano sonata D960, the first movement, which was
- > composed in his death year, dedicated to a Noh drama, where life and death
- > call to each other.
- > \$B!!!!!! (J
- > \$B!!!! (J* Sylvestrov \$B!G (Js \$B!H (JAural Music \$B!I (J dedicated to the ancient capital of
- > Kyoto where various layers of history rhyme with each other.
- > \$B!! (J* During the entire documentary program, we plan to film in Paris and in
- > Moscow and we might want to introduce you performing other pieces of music.
- > Of course, we will consult with you first, but we would like you, for
- > example, to play Schumann \$B!G (Js music in part of your concert in Japan, and
- > Musorgsky \$B!G (Js in Moscow, etc. We hope to have different colouring and
- > variation in the program as a whole.
- >
- > \$B!| (J December 7
- >
- > We would like to shoot your performance at Opera City in Tokyo.
- >
- >
- > * Incidentally, if you have extra copies of some of your novels (
- > Disappearance, Room of Mirrors, The Fall of Babylon, and Ludwig II) would it
- > be possible for us to obtain them?
- >
- >
- > *** We have heard that the Noh drama you have seen in Moscow was
- \$B!H (JYugao. \$B!I (J
- > In Noh, there are two kinds of \$B!H (JYugao \$B!I (J- relating stories where the spirit
- > of Yugao in the Tale of Genji who is the main character introduces the story
- > of Yugao.
- > \$B!#1!K (JYugao \$B!' (JYugao \$B!G (Js spirit appears and tells the story about good times
- > she had with Genji and her departure to the other world.
- > \$B!#2!K (JHajitomi \$B!' (JIn the same token, the spirit of Yugao appears and dances
- > the beautiful memories with Genji.
- > \$B!!!| (J According to Soh-ke, Hajitomi is more famous and more sophisticated ,
- > and he assumes the overseas performance was probably Hajitomi. In Hajitomi,
- > there is a small door set on the stage. One can tell whether it is Hajitomi
- > or Yugao by the existence of the door, says Soh-ke. He recommends Hajitome
- > as it comes with better rhymes. But they also said it entirely depends on
- > your preference.
- >
- >
- > ** Lastly, while you are in Japan, would it be possible to quote from your
- > poetic diary (or your notes with some sketches, depending on the situation).
- > While carrying it along with you, when you write it in or make sketches or
- > poems, we would like to introduce those in our program or to use your words
- > and voices for our narration. These are some of our ideas for coordinating
- > our program. Our intention is to have a somewhat different comment from
- > you, from that of the dialogues in the interview to add colour to our

> program.
 >
 > The above is what we have as the rough plans for your visit to Japan and to
 > Kyoto. If you have any comment or some hints for making the program more
 > interesting, or any advise, we appreciate them.
 >
 >
 >
 >
 > \$B!c (JNo. 2 \$B!! (JLocations for shooting in the coming year \$B!d (J
 > Below are some of our requests concerning shooting in Moscow and in Paris.
 >
 > \$B!c (J Moscow \$B!d (J
 > ** If at all possible, we would like to shoot the apartment house you were
 > born in, the woods in which you took a walk with your grandmother, your
 > favourite places in your memory as a child, or in youth. Would that be
 > possible?
 > \$B!& (J Our intention is to depict the \$B!H (J original and primal
 > sceneries \$B!I (J from
 > your memories as you enter your world with the keywords such as nostalgia
 > and melancholy to express your world view.
 > * Could you show us and allow us to use some of the photos from your
 > childhood, student days, and your photos with your families? In other
 > words, we would like to use some of the visual items, without intruding your
 > privacy.
 >
 > In addition, could you tell us about yourself, some characteristic things
 > that happened in your childhood? These include how many brothers and
 > sisters you have; your walks in the woods with your loving grandmother; how
 > your mother taught you how to play piano; when your father bought you a
 > flute or a violine, or a piano. What kind of child were you in the
 > elementary school?
 >
 > * Would it be possible for us to visit the Moscow Music Academy with you? We
 > would like to shoot your visit there as it would be helpful to express your
 > feelings toward Japan during your student days.
 > * Either in Moscow or in St. Petersburg in Russia, if possible, we would
 > like to see whether it is possible to rent a concert hall(a playing space)
 > and to see your original \$B!H (Jdramatic performances \$B!I (J
 > \$B!! (JExample: \$B!I (JPictures of
 > Exhibition \$B!I (J using dolls. \$B!! (J
 >
 >
 >
 > **Question \$B!' (JIn St. Petersburg, we hear that you will visit your friend.
 > Could you tell us about your friend? Do you have a place to perform at your
 > friend \$B!G (Js? We would appreciate it if you could tell us beforehand about
 > your friend and who would be gathering at your friend's house. I would like
 > to know whether these plans are possible.
 > * In which town would you like to meet Mr. Sylvestrov and talk to him? How
 > can I make contact with him?
 >
 >
 >
 > * We heard that you listened to Noh drama records with your old friends in

- > your student days. Would it be possible for us to shoot a scene where you
- > talk about the old days with your friends? The sequence will be looking
- > back on the Soviet days, the thoughts on foreign countries in those days,
- > and their influence on your music.
- > \$B!! (JFor example: Would it be possible to talk to Mr. Vadim Suchanov , Gidon
- > Kremer(meet in Paris?), or other Russian musician friends, or any old
- > friends who share those days \$B!G (J memories?
- >
- >
- > * In addition, if you still have the Noh drama records and the translated
- > books of old Japanese classics like Tsurezuregusa, we would like to shoot
- > them.
- >
- > \$B!| (J Positioning: Your character as a nostalgic and melancholic reflective man
- > in Paris, was largely influenced by the time you spent in Moscow. In the
- > restricted environment, you dreamed about foreign countries. By depicting
- > such past, we would like to show the depth of the background of the
- > reflective thinker.
- >
- >
- >
- >
- > *** On December 17, you will be performing in Moscow. Could you tell us
- > what you will be performing, and the size of the hall?
- >
- >
- > *** Could you tell us about your schedules during January and February in
- > 2008? In other words, we would like to have information on your concerts,
- > travel schedule, meetings with people, anything that may relate to our
- > shooting.
- >
- > \$B!c (J Paris \$B!d (J
- > * If possible, we would like to shoot your daily life. For example,
- > although you are a pianist, you spend 90% of your time reading and writing,
- > we hear. You spend day after day lost in your thoughts with the cat you
- > love. These are what we want to catch.
- >
- > * We would like to shoot how your room is including your books (which could
- > be a great collection!), records, and items related to Japan. In addition,
- > we would like to have scenes on your daily walks, your favourite stores,
- > etc. (Your favourite wine cellar, favourite places in Paris on your casual
- > trips.)
- >
- > *When you get together with your friends other than musicians (i.e. castle
- > specialists), when you have parties with them, or even when you have a
- > session with them, if at all possible, we would like to have a glimpse of
- > such warm scenes.
- >
- > ** If at all possible, we would like to shoot your performance at your own
- > home.
- > \$B!| (J Positioning: You live distant from worldly commercial economy of Paris,
- > and you are facing the time when great composers lived. You search for
- > ideas of music and you live in the world of the past times in your books.
- > You live loving the past and you face yourself as you write things. We would

> like to depict you as a philosophical musician.
 >
 >
 > \$B!c (JBelow are the tentative schedule we have for the next year. \$B!d (J
 >
 > *** In January next year, we would like to shoot for a week to 10 days each
 > in Paris and in Moscow.
 >
 > ** As for now, we think it will take longer in Moscow. How we image it is
 > blow. It can be Paris first and then Moscow or vice versa.
 >
 > Tentatively, a performance at your own home in Paris and one in a small
 > rented hall(space) in Moscow or St. Petersburg is what we have in mind.
 > Could you tell us what your schedule is like in January next year?
 >
 > *** Shooting mainly at your home in Paris for about one week.
 > \$B!!!!!! (JExample)January
 11 \$B!" (J12 \$B!" (J13 \$B!" (J14 \$B!" (J15 \$B!" (Jand 16 while we stay
 in Paris.
 >
 > ***10 days in Russia, with 5 days in Moscow and 4-5 days in St. Petersburg
 > \$B!!!!!! (JExample) January 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 in Moscow.
 > \$B!!!!!!!!!!J (JShooting the places you grew up, Moscow Musical Academy,
 > performances in halls \$B!K (J
 > \$B!!!!!!!!!! (JShooting on January 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30 in St. Petersburg, etc.
 > The above are our current plans. We know you are busy but we would like to
 > make a documentary on the depth of your creation as sincerely as possible.
 > We apologize if some of the questions we asked were redundant.
 >
 >
 >
 > Yours sincerely,
 >
 >
 > Tomoo Ueno and Takeshi Sato
 > =====
 > TAKESHI SATO
 > NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corp.) KYOTO Branch
 >
 > tel : +81-75-823-1502 \$B!! (J
 > fax : +81-75-823-1506
 > mobile: +81-90-7493-2015
 > email : satou.t-gw@nhk.or.jp \$B!! (J
 > =====
 >

Dear Maestro Valery Afanassiev,

from NHK KYOTO(JAPAN BROADCASTING CORP.)
TAKESHI SATO, TOMOO UENO
 tel : +81-75-823-1502 fax : **+81-75-823-1506**
 mobile: +81-90-7493-2015
 e-mail : satou.t-gw@nhk.or.jp

Thank you very much for the wonderful time I had in Tokyo the other day. Talking with you, always gives me a lot of intellectual stimulation. I am very thankful that it turned out to be a meeting that provided me with good ideas.

Ever since, we have been discussing various matters at NHK and we have decided to do a documentary series for a total of about 110 minutes. This will be a program to portray your reflective artistic features as a whole. Everybody accepted the idea with excitement and enthusiasm.

Along with such ideas of the program, however, the location plan has been expanded to include three major cities; Kyoto, Moscow (St. Petersburg), and Paris.

Furthermore, if possible the performance scene in Kyoto could be introduced in a specialized music program called "The Classic Club." (These idea would be presented by NAOKI HIRABAYASHI, concert imagine producer, as proposals including extensive usage of these programs, and we will consider his arrangements.

I would like to consult you on several matters, specifically, what locations will be possible for videotaping, etc.. Please give us your thoughts for the items marked with asterisks (*), and larger the number of asterisks; ***, the more we would like to hear your opinion. Please give us your thoughts as much as possible. We appreciate your consideration.

< * Matters concerning locations for shooting in Japan >

▼ Tentative schedule for location shooting in Japan

We would like to explain to you the schedule we have in mind which is as follows.

● November 24

We would like to have a meeting to discuss our schedule.

● November 26

We would like to shoot the scene of your arrival in Kyoto.

● November 27

Shooting in Kyoto will start at a location overlooking the entire city of Kyoto. We would like to have a symbolic view of Kyoto. Our intention is to show different aspects of your art. We assume that the three cities, Kyoto, Moscow (St. Petersburg), and Paris, which correspond to the three phases or the three different artistic worlds within you.

● November 28

In the evening, we will be viewing a Noh drama by Soh-ke (Head) of the Noh Kongo School, which has a origin in Muromachi-Era(600 years ago) and is the only school that still has its base in Kyoto (actually by the Kyoto-GOSHO (palace)). This would be used in one of the climax scene of our

program, where you will watch Noh play and talk with the Soh-ke(Head).

* The Kongo School is the Noh drama school in Kyoto, and Eikin Kongo, the head of the School himself will be performing exclusively only for the program.

* The drama will be “Yugao” (or could be “Hajitomi”) , your Noh drama you experienced in Moscow which motivated you. I believe you have used the drama as a motif in your novel, “Disappearance.” We have asked the same drama to be played on this evening.

* Yugao (Hajitomi) is normally played on indoor stage. But we try asking him a big favour to play it “outdoors” at dusk, when dark at night. It will be, therefore, a stage of light and darkness. (Soh-ke normally performs outdoors only once a year.)

* The outdoor Noh stage at the Higashi-Honganji Temple is also very special, which has been used only a few times in 10 years.

* This will be a Noh drama performed outdoors, which takes the original Noh style from Muromachi Era to Edo Era. We will take the greatest precaution for you not to get cold. I hope you will understand the purpose of this scene and enjoy the style.

●

November

29

At the Kongo Noh Theatre, Noh masks and kimonos from the Muromachi Era will be shown. I will seek special permission for you to wear the kimono and the Noh mask. (It will be an experience for you to feel the secluded sensation, which leads to see one’s inner self, and we imagine such inner perception might has a connection with reflections with nostalgic past historical time)

* If you wish to apply some of your excellent dramaturgical ideas when collaborating with Soh-ke, I will be glad to discuss it with him. However, considering the characteristics of “Noh” drama, as you know, it may be difficult to ask to make spontaneous movements.

● November 29

We will be going to Nagoya on this day. (An hour and a half trip.)

● November 30

There will be a presentation at Tokugawa Museum. We would like to shoot the scene. We would also like to shoot the scene of you looking at the Picture Scroll of the Tale of Genji.

● December 2

We have a ticket for you for the first day of kabuki all-star-cast performance.

• If it is all right with you, we would also like to invite Mr. Akira Asada. (approaching) Either before or after watching kabuki, we would like you to have a conversation with Mr. Asada, in a relaxed atmosphere.

- December 3

We would like to shoot you taking a stroll in a Kyoto garden.
 ** We may be able to arrange you to experience a Zen nocturnal meditation at the Tenryuji Temple. Early in the morning, you can do the meditation. Monks at the Tenryuji Temple can accompany you as a tutor. We are still negotiating, but we think it could be an interesting experience for you as you are not a novice on Kyoto. Please let us know what you think.

- December 4 and December 5

In the evening, we would like to shoot you performing at Jissoin Temple. The temple is situated at Iwakura, a quiet location in the northern region of Kyoto City.
 * The Jissoin is a temple which is related to the Imperial Family and has a proper and honourable tradition. The temple itself has an ancient atmosphere with more than 3-400 years history.

* The Jissoin Temple has a house in its garden. We chose this house, as it has the atmosphere of the house in which “Yugao” passed away. (Actually, the teahouse is well kept, still preserving the old architecture, paying lots of efforts.)

* The teahouse has a garden on the mountainside, where Maple leaves are beautiful. On the other side, there is a rock garden used for enjoying the beautiful view of the moon.

* The paintings on the screen doors are of delicate tastes, which have stories to tell. (The temple as a whole is designated as important cultural assets.)

** On the 4th, we hope you will perform in the room with a wooden floor, with the maple leaves in the background. On the 5th, we hope you will perform underneath the eaves of the house with a Japanese rock garden in the background. Although it has a roof (eaves), it may be a little cold exposed to the outside air. We thought that, when the music would be played with the rock garden background, it would sound even better. What do you think?

- At Jissoin Temple, we would like to shoot both for the Hi-Vision Special Program (110 minutes) and if possible, for the Classic Club (55 minutes)

*** “The Classic Club” is a program with an emphasis on performance and is exactly 53 minutes long. It is a 53-minute concert program. The recording will also be used for the HI-vision Special.

(It will be recorded with a portable special recording systems run by an engineer in our company, who engage in mainly music programs) The ideas of our programs are as follows.

- The concept : To sense the emotional feelings of melancholy and nostalgia when coming face-to-face with the past at Jissoin Temple, an old temple that symbolizes old tradition. While viewing the beautiful maple leaves, with intense thoughts for “MONO-NO AWARE; pities for

ephemeral beings” and contemplating on the experiences of Noh drama with intense thoughts for the “YUGEN:subtle and profound,” in which the death-past world has mysterious realities, the Maestro performs with his thoughts on Kyoto while enjoying the view of the Rock Garden.

- The “Moonlight“ by Debussy dedicated to the moonlight Rock Garden
- * Music by Brahms in his late years dedicated for “MONO-NO AWARE” in the late autumn.
 - a . From OP 117 three Interludes. the third piece
 - b . From six piano pieces of OP118, the second and the fifth pieces.
 - c . From four piano pieces of OP119, the first.

* From Schubert’s piano sonata D960, the first movement, which was composed in his death year, dedicated to a Noh drama, where life and death call to each other.

* Sylvestrov’s “Aural Music” dedicated to the ancient capital of Kyoto where various layers of history rhyme with each other.

* During the entire documentary program, we plan to film in Paris and in Moscow and we might want to introduce you performing other pieces of music. Of course, we will consult with you first, but we would like you, for example, to play Schumann’s music in part of your concert in Japan, and Musorgsky’s in Moscow, etc. We hope to have different colouring and variation in the program as a whole.

● December 7

We would like to shoot your performance at Opera City in Tokyo.

* Incidentally, if you have extra copies of some of your novels (Disappearance, Room of Mirrors, The Fall of Babylon, and Ludwig II) would it be possible for us to obtain them?

*** We have heard that the Noh drama you have seen in Moscow was “Yugao.” In Noh, there are two kinds of “Yugao”- relating stories where the spirit of Yugao in the Tale of Genji who is the main character introduces the story of Yugao.

1) Yugao : Yugao’s spirit appears and tells the story about good times she had with Genji and her departure to the other world.

2) Hajitomi : In the same token, the spirit of Yugao appears and dances the beautiful memories with Genji.

● According to Soh-ke, Hajitomi is more famous and more sophisticated , and he assumes the overseas performance was probably Hajitomi. In Hajitomi, there is a small door set on the stage. One

can tell whether it is Hajitomi or Yugao by the existence of the door, says Soh-ke. He recommends Hajitome as it comes with better rhymes. But they also said it entirely depends on your preference.

** Lastly, while you are in Japan, would it be possible to quote from your poetic diary (or your notes with some sketches, depending on the situation). While carrying it along with you, when you write it in or make sketches or poems, we would like to introduce those in our program or to use your words and voices for our narration. These are some of our ideas for coordinating our program. Our intention is to have a somewhat different comment from you, from that of the dialogues in the interview to add colour to our program.

The above is what we have as the rough plans for your visit to Japan and to Kyoto. If you have any comment or some hints for making the program more interesting, or any advise, we appreciate them.

<No. 2 Locations for shooting in the coming year>
Below are some of our requests concerning shooting in Moscow and in Paris.

< Moscow >

** If at all possible, we would like to shoot the apartment house you were born in, the woods in which you took a walk with your grandmother, your favourite places in your memory as a child, or in youth. Would that be possible?

- Our intention is to depict the “ original and primal sceneries” from your memories as you enter your world with the keywords such as nostalgia and melancholy to express your world view.
- * Could you show us and allow us to use some of the photos from your childhood, student days, and your photos with your families? In other words, we would like to use some of the visual items, without intruding your privacy.

In addition, could you tell us about yourself, some characteristic things that happened in your childhood? These include how many brothers and sisters you have; your walks in the woods with your loving grandmother; how your mother taught you how to play piano; when your father bought you a flute or a violine, or a piano. What kind of child were you in the elementary school?

* Would it be possible for us to visit the Moscow Music Academy with you? We would like to shoot your visit there as it would be helpful to express your feelings toward Japan during your student days.

* Either in Moscow or in St. Petersburg in Russia, if possible, we would like to see whether it is possible to rent a concert hall(a playing space) and to see your original “dramatic performances” Example: ”Pictures of Exhibition” using dolls.

****Question :** In St. Petersburg, we hear that you will visit your friend. Could you tell us about your friend? Do you have a place to perform at your friend's? We would appreciate it if you could tell us beforehand about your friend and who would be gathering at your friend's house. I would like to know whether these plans are possible.

* In which town would you like to meet Mr. Sylvestrov and talk to him? How can I make contact with him?

* We heard that you listened to Noh drama records with your old friends in your student days. Would it be possible for us to shoot a scene where you talk about the old days with your friends? The sequence will be looking back on the Soviet days, the thoughts on foreign countries in those days, and their influence on your music.

For example: Would it be possible to talk to Mr. Vadim Suchanov , Gidon Kremer(meet in Paris?), or other Russian musician friends, or any old friends who share those days' memories?

* In addition, if you still have the Noh drama records and the translated books of old Japanese classics like Tsurezuregusa, we would like to shoot them.

● Positioning: Your character as a nostalgic and melancholic reflective man in Paris, was largely influenced by the time you spent in Moscow. In the restricted environment, you dreamed about foreign countries. By depicting such past, we would like to show the depth of the background of the reflective thinker.

*** On December 17, you will be performing in Moscow. Could you tell us what you will be performing, and the size of the hall?

*** Could you tell us about your schedules during January and February in 2008? In other words, we would like to have information on your concerts, travel schedule, meetings with people, anything that may relate to our shooting.

< Paris >

* If possible, we would like to shoot your daily life. For example, although you are a pianist, you spend 90% of your time reading and writing, we hear. You spend day after day lost in your thoughts with the cat you love. These are what we want to catch.

* We would like to shoot how your room is including your books (which could be a great collection!), records, and items related to Japan. In addition, we would like to have scenes on your

daily walks, your favourite stores, etc. (Your favourite wine cellar, favourite places in Paris on your casual trips.)

*When you get together with your friends other than musicians (i.e. castle specialists), when you have parties with them, or even when you have a session with them, if at all possible, we would like to have a glimpse of such warm scenes.

** If at all possible, we would like to shoot your performance at your own home.

- Positioning: You live distant from worldly commercial economy of Paris, and you are facing the time when great composers lived. You search for ideas of music and you live in the world of the past times in your books. You live loving the past and you face yourself as you write things. We would like to depict you as a philosophical musician.

<Below are the tentative schedule we have for the next year.>

*** In January next year, we would like to shoot for a week to 10 days each in Paris and in Moscow.

** As for now, we think it will take longer in Moscow. How we image it is blow. It can be Paris first and then Moscow or vice versa.

Tentatively, a performance at your own home in Paris and one in a small rented hall(space) in Moscow or St. Petersburg is what we have in mind. Could you tell us what your schedule is like in January next year?

*** Shooting mainly at your home in Paris for about one week.
Example) January 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 while we stay in Paris.

*** 10 days in Russia, with 5 days in Moscow and 4-5 days in St. Petersburg
Example) January 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 in Moscow.

(Shooting the places you grew up, Moscow Musical Academy, performances in halls)

Shooting on January 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30 in St. Petersburg, etc.
The above are our current plans. We know you are busy but we would like to make a documentary on the depth of your creation as sincerely as possible. We apologize if some of the questions we asked were redundant.

Yours sincerely,
Tomoo Ueno and Takeshi Sato

please contact to

NHK KYOTO(JAPAN BROADCASTING CORP.) TAKESHI SATO, TOMOO UENO tel : +81-75-823-1502 fax : +81-75-823-1506

mobile: +81-90-7493-2015

e-m

Dear Mr Sato,

Thank you very much for the CDs you sent me.

Here are my suggestions:

FRANCE**PAINTER1**

25-30 Ponimaesh, ya ishu svoi sugeti (You see, I'm looking for my subject-matters) /
Ona dlya menya gorazdo zhivee chem teperchnaya literatura (It's far more alive than today's
literature).

PAINTER2

3 Khochu predstavit' nedalekoe budushee chelovechestva (I want to visualise the near
future of humanity) / a ne gde to za kulisami (and not somewhere in the wings).

PAINTER3

13-14 Bili li kakie nibud' zhertvi vo imya isskustva? (Have there been any sacrifices in
the name of art?) / Ne raz etu bol' (Not once this pain).

ROLL 26 MARKET

22 J'aime en fait 2 catégorie de gens / Ce qui n'existe pas en Russie, malheureusement.

27 Le chat.

39 C'est un vin de la Loire / du poisson, naturellement.

ROLL27 OYSTERS

2 A few seconds.

ROLL 30 MONMARTRE

2-3 Nous devons être dignes de cette planète / de la terre

6-7 Et moi, je pense / il vaut mieux se tuer

9-10 Je suis perdant, sans doute / même agréable d'être en conflit avec le monde
exterieur.

11-12 Il y a les symboles du bonheur / sur un bon chemin.

ROLL22 GAGNAIRE

7-8 Je disais à mes amis japonais / plus de vingt ans

9-11 J'ai découverts que la cuisine pouvait être une expression / Là on a trouvé la
solution

12 Mais en tous cas vous transmettez une émotion / Je n'ai pas de regret

ROLL23 CASTLE

7-8 Donc, Leonard de Vinci meurt / c'est l'autre escalier

14-16 Donc, c'est une idée de Léonard / on reste dans sa petite coquille

ROLL24

00-1 Malgré tous les efforts / l'espace d'une œuvre d'aujourd'hui est pauvre

ROLL25

9-13 Il faut être honnête avec soi-même / c'est pour les autres

ROLL28

31 J'ai commencé à écrire très, très tôt—to the end.

ROLL29

5-10 I've written 10 novels.

ROLL37

5-9 Je vais vous jouer le début de la dernière sonate de Schubert / Ce trille fortissimo

ROLL44 INTERVIEW

13-14 J'écris parce que j'ai cette vocation / Ce n'est pas mon truc.

16-17 Certainement. Parce que chaque partie de mon corps / comme dans un grand palais

RUSSIA

ROLL1

1-5. Please take around 2,5 min. I indicate the minutes at the beginning of my suggestions. In this roll I talk about the sequence between the 1st and the 5th minutes (1-5).

ROLL2

10-12 We are walking around.

ROLL3

3-5 The rolls 2 and 3 should last for app. 4 min. to allow me to read a text off-screen. The aim is to show a number of pictures painted by light-hearted artists who just enjoy themselves.

ROLL4

1-3 End—Leonardo didn't try to fight time. Soundtrack: Brahms' Intermezzo op. 119, N°1. Hermitage without words—4 min. Dutch painters, Velasquez, Chardin.

26-27 The text starts with: Mnogo zvukov (many sounds). The ending: podoiti k bortiku i smotret' (to go to the balustrade and look). From now on I'll just put beginnings and endings separated by /. Please take the bits contained within these limits.

21-24 One cut (40 sec). I'm going in the same direction. App. 2.35. Soundtrack: Tchaikovsky 6th Symphony, an excerpt from the 1st movement.

ROLL5

10-12 When we disappear. The hall. A few shots. App. 30 sec.

23-24 The recapitulation of 7th waltz.

ROLL6

15 The woman who is in charge. Her explanation.

ROLL7

8-11 Sīgral v moiey gizni (played in my life). / Provodil eti paraleli (drew these parallels).

ROLL8

9-12 Pochemu Rossia bīla bogata pianistami (Why Russia was rich in pianists)? / To chto ceychas polzuetsya sprosom (what is required today).

26-27 The meeting with Martynov. Ending with: Svercheny muzīkalnīch bolshe navernoe ne budet (no musical achievements are in store for us).

ROLL9

4-5 Please take the ending of the piece—1.30 before the end.

12-13 Vot Valera. Ya khotel bī.../ vozrodit' v etoi piece. Spacibo. (Here you're, Valera. To bring back to life in this piece. Thank you.)

ROLL11

0-1 Soundtrack: I read a text.

ROLL12

10-14 Vī prochli etu knigu (you've read this book). / S frantsuskimi moralistami. Mne eto tozhe ochen blizko (With the French moralists. I feel very close to them.)

22-23 Nô. At Volodya's. App. 1.30.

ROLL15

3-5 The question. Freedom. Vladimir speaks. Freedom—the one we enjoyed in the 60s and the 70s.

ROLL16

Gilels and Sofronitsky. Please don't show Richter's and Neuhaus's tombs.

ROLL17

The panorama. I read

8-10 Two stories.

11 staircases. I don't think poetry is a ladder to God.

33-34 The Foreign Library.

ROLL18

20-23 Eto vse proisochlo togda (it all happened then).

27 Kogda ya uslishal tishinu (when I heard silence).

28-29 Rodina. Ending: before mono-no-aware.

ROLL20

29-38 U menya vznikla takaya ideya (I got an idea) / A dlya menya vazhno kto sidit (I take notice of my audience).

JAPAN

ROLL1 SHOGUN-PUT

5 Ending: Probably I don't want to remember.

NO THEATRE1

Here's the order I suggest:

- 1) I'm myself on the slow side / They're extremely slow.
- 2) Mr Kongo speaks about the top (11-12).
- 3) Mr Kongo speaks about silence being important for both the East and the West (9-10).
- 4) I speak about silence. Yes, I totally agree (13-15)—to be at one with silence.
15—up to you.

TALK WITH MR ASADA

5-11 The tea-ceremony. End: Aligato.

TALK WITH MR ASADA

5-7 Dante lived in a transitory period / You're no longer sought after.

14 I'm addicted to these big questions. / You're a romantic in a cynical post-modern society.

28-29 It's always a question of life and death. / A rebellious child once again.

NO THEATRE II

1 Ending: I'm greatly honoured. It's such an honour.

Sambo-in. Ending: up to you. The poem should be read off-screen.

THE MUSEUM

13-14 Ending: with the meaning of the text.

21-22 Nietzsche said.../ with Basho's poems.

The bamboo forest. 16 The poem—off-screen.

THE BAMBOO FOREST

16 The poem—off-screen. No text except the poem.

ON THE BOAT

6 I never miss Kyoto / all the time.

9-10 I like Brahms as a human being / joy and melancholy.

11-20 If you write a long poem / the whole world is contained / I'm of their number / It's useful to step out of this world, probably every day. (I re-recorded. To correct the name.)

I hope you'll like my suggestions. I'm looking forward to seeing you soon. Thank you again for your patience and kindness.

My best regards,

Valery Afanassiev

Dear Mr Sato,

Thank you very much for your email. I go on watching the CDs you sent me. Here are a few new suggestions as to the material you need for the editing:

ROLL 27 OYSTER

20-21 Quand on reste seul / Et ça, c'est très important. (As usual, I give the beginning and the end of the text, using the sign / to separate them.)

27-28 Proust allait dehors très souvent / A notre époque il vaut mieux avoir de l'imagination

ROLL 28 PIANO

31-33 J'ai commencé à écrire très, très tôt / Et voilà ce que j'en ai fait

36-37 Le matin, ton ombre se détache / Je les poursuis jusque chez toi (I cut the quotation because it is too long)

Silvestrov's piece must sound off screen, in my opinion.

ROLL 33 RESTAURANT, PARIS

Please, don't use the text. I wasn't in top form.

ROLL 40 BOOKS, FURNITURE

00 Bon, alors... (I put the recording on.)

6-7 Missa Solemnis, 27 seconds before the end. La présence de l'homme sur cette planète. (I think 27 seconds are enough. And then I comment on the recording.)

ROLL 35 TYPING

004 I'm typing. Around 5 seconds. Please, don't show the screen. Anyway the whole scene looks better when shot from a distance.

ROLL 39

Not complete. Only 7 minutes.

ROLL 41 WINE BOTTLE

Damaged. I haven't been able to watch it.

NOH THEATRE

Please, don't you my answers about Yugao. Just the meeting with Mr Kongo.

ROLL 44 INTERVIEWS

11-12 Well, I haven't lost literature / So I can go on living as happily as I've lived so far. (Incidentally, I'd like to re-record one sentence in the interview about Gould—if it's not too late.)

Please, don't use ROLL 34 where I speak about my Kreisleriana. Not very successful. Generally speaking, whenever I don't mention a roll, it means I don't like it.

I was also thinking about the structure of the film. We talked about the beginning: the books, an excerpt from the Kreisleriana (the 1st piece) as a background music. Then I might say a few words about myself: ROLL29, 5-10, I've written 10 novels. I think it's better to put an excerpt from the Kreisleriana at the beginning of the film. Three or four excerpts from it might be shown throughout the film. When I prepare the stage for the performance I can recite the text where I say a few words about my plays. Here are the excerpts from Kreisleriana I would like to use:

Ne uznayu teper' ya sam sebya. Should I translate it? Let the entire universe understand my interior monologue! *(He sings the aria of Griaznoy tunelessly.)* Now I don't recognise myself. Don't I? *(Pause.)* I am Schumann. On stage. *(Looking at his hands.)* And outside, in life, in everyday life. Invalids, aren't we? *(Pause.)* Politically correct. Some people find this word offensive. I don't. An invalid, that's what I am. Musically correct. I do recognise myself. No offence taken! There's no escaping the fact I'm an invalid. Even on the moon I would be

one. Or two. Or three. No point in fiddling with looking glasses. I've already gone through them, haven't I? (*Pause.*) I am Schumann. And Kreisler. Even on the moon. Let other pianists go and play on Schumann's pianos. Let them make their recordings in the houses where he lived. 'Authenticity' they call it. I call it 'facts'. But facts are important nowadays. People believe in facts, not in spirits. (*Pause.*) Hard times. (*Pause.*) I believe in spirits. And in shamans. In Schumanns. Not in facts and figures.

Some prefer concerts, live performances. Recordings are tin cans to them. (*Pause.*) What would I do without great artists of the past, without the dead? Who can match them today? Tin gods? The living dead? (*Pause.*) Stars. Black holes, not stars. (*Pause.*) The gods are still living...up there, in another world. *In anderer Welt*. I'm being translated into another language. I'm a poet after all. What's a poet supposed to do in this day and age? Sing about the gods. Sunk into oblivion, aren't they?

Tchaikovsky was killed by his last symphony, not by a glass of unboiled water. Cholera, my foot! His *Pathétique*. His razor, his cholera. And he conducted the première in St Petersburg, exposing his body to the razor.

At the end you may show the last scene from the Kreisleriana, starting with the D-Minor episode—approximately 3 minutes before the end. Unfortunately the very end wasn't film by this camera. Hopefully the other one was shooting to the very end. As soon as I disappear behind the curtain you may put the following poem I wrote for the film:

No matter how many
People live in my body.
They enact one life.

And then the titles. I won't recite this poem. Just show the text please. Actually it would match perfectly the following title:

A nice title for our film, isn't it?

One of the texts I recorded the last day was devoted to Sei Shonagon, to my likes and dislikes. You said I was talking only about my dislikes. You were absolutely right. But during this monologue you might show some of my books—my likes. Nabokov, Beckett, Proust, Musil (I'll bring the book with me), Walter Benjamin.

Tomorrow I'm leaving for Moscow. You've got my Moscow email address. So don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or suggestions.

Please, give my regards to Mr Ueno.

I'm looking forward to our meeting.

Kindest regards,

Valery Afanassiev

Dear Mr Jung,

I wish to thank you again for the time you devoted to our meeting and for the patience with which you listened to my lengthy monologues.

Ever since our talk I have been thinking about how this book of mine can be altered for the better. I turned its contents this way and that, trying to find another structure, another method of exposing my views on music. I recalled a conversation I had with a friend of mine whom I asked what he thought about this book which came out in Russia last September. He said there was too much music in it. The essay he liked most is *Homage to Japan* where I speak about music only en passant. I agreed with him. Here is the text I added to the last essay *Note to an Unpublished Long Story*:

Music is everywhere; in a way, any book is a book on music, however distant its subject matter may lie from what I have written about composers. Even in the essays devoted to them there are so-called non-local connections: something that is not habitually associated with their music and music in general. The point is music turns non-local connections into local ones on account of its omnipresence. All essays in this book revolve around music. I wish I could write a book where music would not be so much as touched upon, which might enable

me to prove that music is somehow embedded in it. I wish the present book were not so music-oriented. It is better to disorient readers by speaking about irrelevant things in order to make them realise that nothing is irrelevant, as far as music is concerned. Its centre is everywhere, its circumference nowhere.

You asked me to expand the last part of the book entitled *Coda* so as to match the introductory part. I'm afraid that is all I can do about it. But I think this ending puts in a nutshell what the book is about. I mean, these parts of it which are not directly concerned with music. I re-read them, anxious to spot something unworthy of the lofty subject matter and of my style about which I was so long-winded in Salzburg. After much soul-searching, however, I had to admit that nothing can be removed from the book without damaging its poetry, its roundabout treatment of musical themes. It is actually the most irrelevant essays—like the one tackling Brodsky's poetry, for instance—that speak about music most eloquently. Besides, many ideas were touched upon in the essays devoted to my friends—a disposable section, in your opinion. And these ideas are echoed in other parts of the book. In the essays dedicated to Lydia Dubrovskaya and Philip Hirshhorn I speak about musical space without being too pedantic. I am certainly more pedantic in the text I quoted above, but, after all, it is the end of the book, a sort of summing up. In the essay dedicated to Vladimir Martynov I voice many ideas which are *not* mentioned elsewhere. And *Playing Together* emphasises the importance of *personal* links between the people involved in music making. *Joseph Brodsky's Musicality* enlarges upon the relationship between music and poetry. Indeed, to some extent Brodsky's monotony matches Schubert's *himmlische Längen*. I also draw parallels between gastronomy and music. And I do it in an offhand manner, not pedantically. As to the poems, I think they should remain in the book—not only because of the intimate relationship between poetry and music. They broaden the scope of the work, striving to match the omnipresence of music. Actually I would be reluctant to remove even short notes appended to *Friends*, *Travel Notes*, *Homage to Japan* and *Poems*.

Be that as it may, this opus of mine is in a class of its own. I don't think a book like that has ever been written—not on music, anyway. I don't mean to say it is a great book, but it might lose its unique character if we tamper with it. For a while I thought I might put composers and their works together in order to avoid the labyrinthine structure of the first half. But the section dealing with composers ends most appropriately—*The End of the Composer*. And the next section begins with *The Birth of the Work*. Besides, the essays on

works are intended mostly for professionals, whereas the way I speak about composers is more poetical than technical. So I am just unable to change anything in this book, with the exception of the table of contents. It is rather messy. And the divisions I made in the section dealing with composers are illogical. I am sending you the new table of contents. I hope you will find it more to the point.

Three essays analyse the works that are virtually unknown to the general reader: Martynov's *Requiem*, Pelecis' *Nevertheless* and Silvestrov's piano pieces. Do you think it would be possible to enclose a recording of these works? The *Requiem* lasts about 40 minutes, *Nevertheless* is shorter—around 20 minutes. Two pieces by Silvestrov—*Benedictus* and *Sanctus*—last 10 minutes.

As a poet, I was influenced by East European poetry. Probably the best poetry of the twentieth century was written in Poland and in Russia. You don't seem to like the poems I included in the book. But some of my English friends prefer my poetry to my prose. Anyway, Thomas Bernhard thought that all writers of note were poets. I hope I'll have an opportunity to show you some of my poems where I don't speak about music directly.

I'm sending you two novels of mine: *The Flying Dutchman* and *Philosophers' Way*. Thank you for devoting so much time to the fruit of my labours.

Tomorrow I'm leaving for Russia and Japan. I'll be back on March 9th.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Valery Afanassiev

Dear Mr Sato,

In my previous fax I forgot to say that we should not use the material shot at the Manege Exhibition in St Petersburg (Roll 3, 3-5). I wanted to show a number of pictures painted by light-hearted artists who just enjoy themselves. But there is no point in insulting them. Besides, it takes too much time and the text I wanted to recite off-screen can be used when some views of Moscow are shown.

As to the sequences shot at the Novodevichye Cemetery, I would ask you not to keep Richter and Neuhaus because they are not quite compatible with Gilels who is, after all, the main subject of the episode.

Thank you again for everything.

I'm looking forward to our meeting.

Kindest regards,

Valery Afanassiev

Dear Mr Sato,

I want to thank you again for the work we did together in Kyoto. I'm sure our meeting was fruitful and vital to our mutual understanding.

I watched our film several times, alone and with my friends. All of them are struck by the visual beauty of the film. So am I, of course. That is why I am concerned about the text which should match such a beauty.

Here are my suggestions for the final editing. We talked about most of them, but I wish to go over them again to make that there will be no misunderstanding between us.

I asked you not to use the episode where Gidon Kremer and I are playing Schostakovich's *Sonata*—for personal reasons. I'm afraid I should insist on this point. Anyway, the second movement of the *Sonata* has nothing to do with mono-no-aware.

The beginning of the film is very beautiful, but I think that the excerpt from Silvestrov's piece is a little bit too long. Besides, it is better not to show a pianist who plays with music. I move my eyes up and down, which is not beautiful. Could you please use some shots showing the autumnal beauty while I'm playing this piece? Of course you can show my hands.

The episode with the cat should be replaced. I suggested: Roll 26, 27. I say, 'She's my daughter.'

The wine episode is too long, in my opinion. But if you use the text I wrote on wine, it will be all right. Here is the text:

White wine is Heaven, red wine the earth. There is much more sediment in a bottle of old red wine as if the earth were materially—not only metaphorically—present in it. Besides, the sediment one finds in a bottle of white wine has something unearthly about it, something ethereal. Red wines are faster affected by oxygen. White wines seem less capricious, more distant, for all their charm and enchantment; they are often associated with cool, more or less unemotional people.

I recorded a longer text, but this excerpt is quite enough. You can cut at 10 : 07 : 12—right after the bottle of Mouton Rotschild.

The poem I read at home—the Japanese poem—is not appropriate because in Versailles it is wintertime.

We decided not to take Stalin. The images showing the military parade on Red Square are enough. They are eloquent.

The skyscraper. Please, use the text I recorded in Japan. You can also use one of the poems I wrote about Moscow. What I say on the terrace is not important and therefore can be omitted.

10 : 09 : 34. I don't understand the first word. Throughout the film there are mistakes whenever I talk French or Russian. Sometimes my friends and I start in the middle of a sentence, sometimes we don't finish a sentence.

The park where I walked with my grandmother. Please, use Sylvestrov's piece I recorded in Versailles.

10 : 17 : 24 / 10 : 17 : 58 You mix two halls. I don't think it's a good idea. Television viewers must know where they are.

We talked about the Philharmonic Hall in Petersburg. Please, use the following excerpt from my recording of Tchaikovsky's last symphony: 1st movement, bar 248 (the last beat, the first violins play B and C sharp—forte) to bar 304. Then I would ask you to use the story I told about Karajan's concerts. It is important because nothing similar happens nowadays. You may show some empty seats, the stage where only chairs are standing. Please, use the following text I recorded in Kyoto:

I once attended the concert of a pianist who played like a clever schoolboy scoring good marks. A thunderous clap greeted his performance. 'This has nothing to do with music,' my colleague explained. 'The members of the audience just wish they could have him as a son. They're afraid of great artists, of strong emotions.' Sure enough, even passionate love is bad for our health. Lukewarm love is all right, though. So are lukewarm concerts, lukewarm novels and lukewarm films. Heidegger thinks that the aim of philosophy is to make us experience angst. Real artists *should* damage our health.

This text is very important.

Please, cut the following sequence: 10 : 17 : 21 / 10 : 19 : 19.

I think that the meeting with my professor can be shortened. Please, cut at 10 : 21 : 30.

Please, cut the following sequence: 10 : 22 : 47 / 10 : 23 : 07. It is not necessary to show this classroom because we can hardly see the photographs on the walls.

Please, don't show Richter.

Tchaikovsky's *Concerto* can be shortened. For instance, you can cut at 10 : 24 : 46.

Please, cut the following sequence: 10 : 25 : 40 / 10 : 26 : 05. What I say about the Russian School is too fragmentary.

Martynov says a few words about his piece, but you take his explanation somewhere in the middle so that no one is likely to understand it. Please, use the whole of his explanation.

Please, take the *Moment musical* only until 10 : 27 : 31. I make a mistake right after. Anyway it's quite enough.

The lesson. Please, cut at 10 : 32 : 32.

The metro episode is too long, in my opinion.

The Foreign Library. Please, take 10 : 36 : 49 / 10 : 36 : 58. The rest is too fragmentary. It's not clear what I'm talking about.

I don't think we should keep The House of Scientists. You don't show the interior which is very spectacular. Even if you use the description provided by the director, we can't realise what this place really is. So you can cut the following bit: 10 : 47 : 45 / 10 : 50 : 32. You mix the views of Moscow and Petersburg. Why?

The oyster episode is too long, in my opinion.

Please, use my text on Paris—the one I recorded in Kyoto—during the following sequence: 10 : 56 : 31 / 10 : 57 : 29.

Montmartre. The beginning is too long, in my opinion.

Please, cut the following sequence: 10 : 58 : 54 / 10 : 59 : 24. Purgatoire / A notre époque... Please, consult my notes—the comments I sent you—to find some appropriate bits. Generally speaking, I would ask you to consult my notes more often—I spent so much time choosing appropriate episodes.

Kreisleriana. Please, cut the following sequence: 11 : 06 : 00 / 11 : 07 : 44. Nobody would understand what I'm doing on the stage. The last episode. Please, don't cut the music in the middle. You can cut it only after my disappearance. The first episode starts at the right moment, but it stops too soon—the most important information is given at the end. Please, use it as follows:

I am Schumann. On stage. (*Looking at his hands.*) And outside, in life, in everyday life. Invalids, aren't we? (*Pause.*) Politically correct. Some people find this word offensive. I don't. An invalid, that's what I am. Musically correct. I do recognise myself. No offence taken! There's no escaping the fact I'm an invalid. Even on the moon I would be one. Or two. Or three. No point in fiddling with looking glasses. I've already gone through them, haven't I?

(*Pause.*) I am Schumann. And Kreisler. Even on the moon. Let other pianists go and play on Schumann's pianos. Let them make their recordings in the houses where he lived. 'Authenticity' they call it. I call it 'facts'. But facts are important nowadays. People believe in facts, not in spirits. (*Pause.*) Hard times. (*Pause.*) I believe in spirits. And in shamans. In Schumanns. Not in facts and figures.

Please, use the following episode as well:

Some prefer concerts, live performances. Recordings are tin cans to them. (*Pause.*) What would I do without great artists of the past, without the dead? Who can match them today? Tin gods? The living dead? (*Pause.*) Stars. Black holes, not stars. (*Pause.*) The gods are still living...up there, in another world. *In anderer Welt*. I'm being translated into another language. I'm a poet after all. What's a poet supposed to do in this day and age? Sing about the gods.

We agreed to show how I prepare the stage for the *Kreisleriana*. Please, use the text I recorded in Kyoto.

Please, cut the following sequence: 11 : 13 : 47 / 11 : 15 : 14. In this episode you use a piece by Sergey Zagny. But you don't introduce him by showing an excerpt from our discussion.

Please, cut the following sequence: 11 : 22 : 20 / 11 : 23 : 37. On the boat I said something far more interesting. Please, consult my notes.

Please, cut the following sequence: 11 : 24 : 31 / 11 : 25 : 43. What I say about *The Tale of Genji* is clumsy.

Please, cut the following sequence: 11 : 29 : 22 / 11 : 30 : 31. What I say is redundant—we listen to the Noh recording with Martynov. So it becomes clear when all this started. Please, choose some different bits, the ones I mentioned in my notes. For instance, the passage where I speak about my thoughts being on the slow side.

Please, cut the following sequence: 11 : 31 : 34 / 11 : 32 : 42. I spoke along the same lines during the lesson I gave in Moscow. I think we should avoid repetitions.

11 : 34 : 02 / 11 : 34 : 56. Please, use the following text during this sequence:

Our times are often called the "era of information". But a monk bent over a book in the library of a medieval cloister would get as much information as a contemporary scientist or a television viewer. Whatever the source of information, the human brain can hold only a limited number of letters and figures. The medieval brain was in no way inferior to ours either in size or sharpness. What we gain in quantity we lose in quality: the information we are bombarded with does not presuppose an extensive, exhaustive analysis. Often a simplistic analysis is supplied with the rest and we just put everything side by side in our memory. That is why people like stories which are rather thin and do not take up much room in the brain.

I don't quite agree with the way you handled our visit to Chambord. You show Monique Chatenet, but do not let her speak. And what she says is extremely interesting. The text you use to explain the origins of the staircases is not quite correct. From what I understood, the speaker says that it was Leonardo's idea. Actually, nobody knows exactly where this idea originated. Monique speaks about it wonderfully. I would ask you to use that bit of our conversation where we speak about utopias. Please, consult my notes.

As to Mr Gagnaire and Mr Asada, I would ask you to consult my notes before choosing the material for the film. Believe me, I spent a lot of time on choosing the appropriate texts. Anyway, I know myself better than anybody. It is normal, isn't it? So I know when I say something relevant and when I betray myself by a clumsy turn of phrase.

I think you might include the lecture I gave in French. I think we chose the following expert: La musique n'exprime rien, même pas la mort. Mais elle tend vers la mort, comme en proie à l'instinct de mort décrit par Freud. Showing some moments from this lecture would broaden the scope of the film. I am a many-sided artist after all.

We talked a lot about Dante during the shooting. Why not show the table covered with books related to him? Actually the excerpt from the *Missa Solemnis* would also be in order, especially that I say something important after listening to it: What a monument to humanity! There is nothing better in human history.

We agreed not to use Chopin's waltz. Please, use the mazurka instead—the one I played as an encore in Yokohama. Actually you can take something from the Tokyo recital as well, for instance N° 12 from the *Kinderszenen* (*Kind im Einschlummern*). It is a mono-no-aware piece.

I wish to thank you again for this film, for its beauty. I am greatly honoured and I am sure that television viewers will appreciate your work.

Please, give my love to Mr Ueno and thank him on my behalf. I do realise how much you both have done for me.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to send an email to Monique Chatenet.

Kindest regards,

Valery Afanassiev

Dear Mr Sato,

I continue to think about our film. I thought we spoke about the Sambo-in episode, about the twilight which was so beautiful. Couldn't you include it in the film? Actually what I say about music is interesting, it seems to me. At least it matches the thought I often voice: Music is everywhere. I say that I'm listening to the waterfall, to the bell. They are pieces of music in their own right. Even the twilight is music. I think it is an interesting thought. And of course you may also put in it the poem I wrote about twilight. I recorded it in Kyoto.

I think I spoke to you about my wish to have the river episode at the end. We are gliding along the river in a boat, I meditate on life, on Brahms. You can put the Sei Shônagon episode here as well. My likes and dislikes. I think we should emphasise my link to Japanese culture by giving an example of how I was influenced by it. So at the end the film slows down, becomes meditative, disintegrates. And then I play Schubert's *Sonata* because words are no longer needed. Don't you think such an ending would be beautiful?

Thank you again for everything.

Give my love and thanks to Mr Ueno.

Kindest regards,

Valery Afanassiev

Dear Mr Sato,

Just a few thoughts to conclude my comments on the film. May I remind you that the speaker should say what I have written so far? Ten novels, eight in English and two in French, fourteen books of poetry, a book of long stories, a book of short stories, a number of essays, a commentary on Dante's *Commedia* and on Kierkegaard's works, two plays inspired by Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Schumann's *Kreisleriana*.

When you show The Philharmonic Hall in Petersburg, please ask the speaker to say that Liszt performed there, among other famous artists. And Tchaikovsky conducted the première of his last symphony, the *Pathétique*. He died several days after. Just to make sure that television viewers will understand why an excerpt from this symphony is performed.

Could you please include my poem on ghosts—I re-recorded it in Kyoto—in the Noh episode? I think it fits the action perfectly.

Thank you again. I'm looking forward to watching the final version of the film.

Please, give my love and thanks to Mr Ueno.

Kindest regards,

Valery Afanassiev

Dear Mon,

Please, send this short email to Mr Sato. Thanks a lot.

Dear Mr Sato,

Just an afterthought. It is a pity the poem I wrote for Mr Kongo doesn't appear in the film. Writing a poem to thank somebody is a Japanese custom. And the only way to thank a wonderful performer is to write a poem where his performance is described in a few allusive words.

You must have finished the editing already. I wish to thank you and Mr Ueno—and all the people who were involved in the making of this film—from the bottom of my heart. For me it was an extraordinary, unforgettable experience.

Please make sure you removed the poem I recited during my walk in the Moscow park (10 : 16 : 14 / 10 : 16 : 48) because it interferes with the piece I am playing—Sylvestrov's piece I recorded at home. Please, don't use this poem anywhere. There are plenty of other poems.

Kindest regards,

Yours,

Valery Afanassiev

Faust. The moment lingers. It doesn't stop. To describe this state of affairs. The autumn journey. Buson. Keats, To Autumn. Reflects the three pieces perfectly. Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.

II

Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies

III

Where are the songs of spring? Aye, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too

The last Moment is winter, half-frozen. My waking up in Versailles yesterday. A lovely landscape covered with snow.

Romeo and Juliet. C'est pour commencer. A lingering moment. Let me sleep a little bit more.

Japanese culture. An image. No concepts. Deleuze about philosophers. To encompass the world inside which something can be found. A moment which expands.

Dear Mr Sato,

I hope you are well.

I haven't received the DVD of the film yet, but last week I got two faxes which upset me a lot. One fax came from a lady who is a member of a music club. She told me her friends, who are aware of my respectful attitude towards music, were wondering why I had distorted the first movement of Schubert's *Sonata D. V. 960*, omitting the transition, the development and even the beginning of the recapitulation. Let me remind you that I spoke to you about this distortion. Any professional musician knows that music should not be handled so light-heartedly. Schubert is one of my favourite composers. It is very sad indeed that my name is associated now with such a disdainful, unacceptable distortion. It grieves me all the more since I showed Mr Ueno what could be taken during his visit to my hotel room. You can use a few bars from a piece, although I am usually opposed to such procedure. You cannot use the exposition and the recapitulation, omitting the development without which the recapitulation makes no sense.

Please, understand that our reputation is at stake. Something should be done about it. It is a pity that our wonderful collaboration led to such a result. This film cannot and should not be shown to any foreign producer. Even in Japan it should not be broadcast, although the damage has already been done. That is what my Russian friend—the author of the second fax—points out. You must realise I am disheartened and hurt by the attitude you adopted towards my suggestions. But I am an optimist by nature. Besides, I keep a very nice memory of our meetings. So I venture to make yet another suggestion, hoping that you and the people in charge will understand my point. I think another version of this film should be made, considering the richness of the material you have got. In other words, I think you might make an international version, which would enable you to use the material I mentioned in my emails. As a musician, I cannot help feeling very sad indeed. I am also hurt as a man even though I am used to ill-treatments of all kinds, being a former Soviet citizen. Let us envisage a further collaboration in order to live up to our high standards once again.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you. I'm now at home so you can send an email to Monique Chatenet.

Please, give my love to Mr Ueno and our cameraman. There are very beautiful images in this film.

Kindest regards,

Valery Afanassiev

To Mr Shuetsu Sato
From Valery Afanassiev

Dear Friend,

Thank you very much for your fax.

I talked to Mr Hirabayashi about the offer of the Metropolitan Orchestra. I played with them two or three times. It is a good orchestra, but there's nothing special about it. And of course the fee they suggest is too low. I don't think that playing with this orchestra is a great honour—after all, I played with the Berlin Philharmonic. I also played with the NHK Orchestra which is certainly better. I am willing to meet your requirement, but the fee should be higher. I am constantly underpaid and it is high time the situation changed. I'm already sixty. Unfortunately the film made by the NHK is unlikely to help us. They disregarded almost all my suggestions, even those related to music. And they made a terrible mistake by distorting completely the first movement of Schubert's last sonata. This may damage my reputation because no one knows how much I insisted on correcting this mistake. Any professional musician will find this treatment of my favourite composer disgusting. And there are many connoisseurs among Japanese music lovers.

I have been unwell since my last visit to Kyoto. It's a sort of nervous breakdown I'm coping with at present. I'm not sure I'll be able to play two concerts in St Petersburg, which are scheduled for April 15 and 17. I suffer from a high blood pressure too. I was never so ill-treated in my life, which is astonishing, given that I am a former Soviet citizen. Naively I hoped that some of my last suggestions would be taken notice of. I am an optimist by nature and during the shooting of the film the members of the crew were very kind to me. Perhaps it is their superiors who are to blame. I've just sent an email to Mr Sato—the second film director—to suggest we should make another version of this film. They have got wonderful material and it would be a pity if they didn't use it.

I feel absolutely helpless. There's no point in saying some people liked this film. These people don't know what material we have got. Nor do they know how much time I spent on this film, choosing right sequences, noting them down. The NHK people used only one-twelfth of my suggestions. I'm telling you all this because you're my friend. Do you have any suggestion as to what can be done now? The more they show this film the worse my reputation will become—among serious musicians some of whom might think it was I who

decided to play this movement in such a way. Actually the NHK crew filmed two recitals of mine and I said three pieces from them could be put in the film. Instead, they used almost exclusively what I played in the temple, frozen stiff. The temperature was 0° C. What's more, I played a baby grand piano which cannot sound like a grand piano.

I hope you'll understand my distress and sadness. I am deeply hurt as a musician and also as a human being. Of course I realise it is a great honour to be filmed by NHK in three countries, but it is all the more horrifying to get such results in the end.

Thank you again for your fax. I hope you'll come to Paris very soon.

Please give my most heartfelt wishes to Mayumi.

Kindest regards,

To Mr Naoaki Hirabayashi

From Valery Afanassiev

Dear Naoaki,

I hope your trip to Korea was successful.

Once again I'd like to speak to you about the film. I got a fax from my Russian friend who lives in Japan. He saw the film and found that the ending was most inappropriate, not to say monstrous—from a musical point of view. As you know, we talked about the ending in Kyoto and I said it should be corrected because a piece of music cannot be handled in this way. You cannot remove the development, leaving the exposition and recapitulation side by side. I insisted upon this point to such an extent that Mr Ueno came to my hotel room with the score of Schubert's Sonata. We watched the sequence several times in a row and agreed to take just one and a half minutes from it, starting with the note B. My Russian friend who is a very good pianist was outraged, all the more since he thought it had been my idea. Of course I explained to him how the whole thing had come about. But how could I explain this incident to those television viewers whose attitude towards music is as exacting as mine? My reputation is sure to suffer as a result of this fearful error. What is more, I enlarged upon the importance of the transition in this movement earlier, when playing the beginning of the *Sonata* at home. Actually the transition was also cut out. I talked to Mamiko Suda about that. 'You're right,' she said. 'The ending was very illogical and boring.' Of course it is boring to listen all the time to the same material without being given an opportunity to hear its

development, its metamorphoses. And everybody knows that endings are important in every domain because they sum up what precedes them.

This matter goes beyond my personal tastes and preferences. I don't mind crawling on all fours as I look for my cat—for the sake of those Japanese viewers who need a human touch on their television screens. But no audience, however lowbrow, should be treated to what may be called 'vandalism in the domain of music', especially that we are dealing with one of my favourite composers. For every musician this sonata is sacred and I cannot tolerate a layman's tampering with it. I think I should apologise to those television viewers who saw the film. I should do it publicly—through a newspaper or otherwise. Some people think I am not always faithful to the composers I perform. Well, I *am* faithful to them—to such a point I'm prepared to quarrel with the all-powerful NHK. They also owe an apology to the viewers and to Schubert himself. And to music in general. You may think I am crazy. Believe me, I am just an honest musician. I would be grateful if you could advise me in this matter.

May I ask you to send me the contract for this film? Didn't I sign it on the train? Or was it just the receipt? Was there any contract? If there was one, please, send me an English copy of it by fax.

I'm sorry to trouble you with my worries and 'crazy' ideas. But there is no other way, I'm afraid. I was treated with unimaginable cruelty and, but for your kindness and generosity, I would have had a nervous breakdown in Kyoto. I'm having it now. I'm almost paralysed with grief and anger. I don't want to be associated with the film where music is mutilated beyond recognition. I wrote to the NHK people, asking them to make an international version of this documentary—the present one cannot be submitted to foreign producers. If they show it to Arte, for instance, I'll be excluded from this channel for the rest of my life.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Thank you again for everything.

Kindest regards,

To Mr Naoaki Hirabayashi

From Valery Afanassiev

Dear Naoaki,

Thank you for your fax.

Before answering your question about Radu Lupu whom I respect a lot, I would like to return once again to the NHK film. (It is not *my* film, as you know.) I sent Mr Sato and Mr Ueno a letter in which I ask them if the material they have got can be bought out. This material is irreplaceable because I will never dare ask the same people to take part in a documentary centred upon my life. And there are no other people I'd like to get in touch with for this purpose. In other words, there are no people I respect as much as Mr Asada, Tamasaburo, Pierre Gagnaire and Boris Zaborov. Our film directors haven't answered my email yet. I suppose they still believe I must be grateful to NHK—no questions asked! Let me quote an excerpt from the fax I received a few days ago: 'The programme was rather interesting but, to be frank, we had expected something more artistic, especially so long as it was a programme about such a great artist as you. But we believe those who are interested in culture and art in general (not necessarily in classical music) and who didn't know much about you might have enjoyed a lot.' It is Yukio Akehi who sent me the fax. Don't you think this makes all the talk about how people admired the movie utterly pointless? Do you think I enjoyed reading this fax?

If the NHK people don't answer my email in which I suggested once again we should make another version of the film—the international version—I'll simply get in touch with my lawyer who is one of the best lawyers in France. Apart from their handling of music there are a few points for which they might be taken to court. For instance, they didn't get my approval for the final version, which is usually done for documentaries of this kind. And I simply insist on having the contract. I don't remember seeing any. But I was so naive, so trustful. I never thought professional people could behave like that.

Another matter I'd like to discuss with you concerns the State Orchestra. You put me in a very delicate position. You don't answer their emails and then you suggest something utterly unacceptable. Five concerts and your financial conditions might be suitable for a Rumanian orchestra, not for a Russian one, all the more since we are dealing with a top Russian orchestra. Please, consult their site—the New York Times review, in particular. I hope you'll reconsider. I'll call you tomorrow.

Kindest regards,

We spoke of Kurosawa, of Mizuguchi. The latter's film I saw a long time ago (about a princess on a lakeshore).

Dear Friends,

Thank you very much for your email.

One day, somewhere in Argentina, Borges attended a performance of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Neither the performance nor the Spanish translation satisfied him, but he came out crying. 'Shakespeare broke through all the barriers,' he said.

The sheer magnitude of your project is so unique that many viewers cannot help being impressed by it. To my knowledge there is no documentary of this kind. At least no pianist has ever been honoured to such an extent by a great television company. It is all the more unfortunate that we can mostly rely only on facts: NHK, the duration, the three languages I speak, the beauty of autumnal hues in the Kyoto gardens. But I did break through all the barriers thanks to your project.

You often touch upon the Japanese audience. No audience in the world should be treated to such a distortion of Schubert's *Sonata*. My friends ask me, 'Why did you accept to play a baby grand piano which cannot sound like a grand Steinway? Why did you accept to play with your hands frozen stiff?' The answer is simple—I wished to be polite. I am sorry I have to transgress my code of politeness now. Of course it is too late.

When I write a book or play the piano I don't think about my customers. I do it for myself. Didn't the winegrower we paid a visit to say something along these lines? He said he was making wine for himself, not for his customers. For the first time in my life I got involved in a project that does not mirror my heart, my brain, my soul. I always say, 'I write for Shakespeares, I play for Beethovens.' For whom did I play this time? For the mythical audience who understand neither music nor art in general? Let me tell you once again that music cannot be handled in this way. No text should interfere with it—at least not in a documentary made about a musician. Neither can you cut it *anywhere*. That is why I spent a lot of time choosing appropriate excerpts from the pieces I had performed. The way this sonata is used in the film is absolutely unacceptable. All those to whom I told about it were

horrified. I should have refused to perform it because I had to play for twenty minutes non stop, which was very painful under the circumstances. Once it was over I said to our interpreter, 'We'll just take a few bars.' At the time I could not have imagined I would be almost entirely excluded from the editing process. Mamiko Suda—she is a Japanese pianist—told me, 'The ending is very boring.' It *is* boring without the development. Besides, the explanation I supplied at home sounds stupid in the light of what one hears at the end because I do not play the transition. And of course I do not repeat the exposition. The whole thing is illogical, if not absurd. No amount of *sake* will ever make me forget this foul amputation. I feel like apologising to those viewers who listened to that.

Suppose you watch a film on television. A man and his wife drink a bottle of claret. All of a sudden your telephone rings and you answer the call that lasts about half-an-hour. When you return to your TV set you find the same image—the man and the woman drink a bottle of burgundy. Apart from the wine everything looks the same. But in the interval the man murdered his wife's sister and his wife knows it. You don't. You just watch the scene, wondering why the film is so repetitive. In the transition and through the development Schubert commits several murders.

You keep on talking about *mono-no-aware*. But the second movement of Shostakovich's *Sonata* is in no way related to this feeling. The first movement would have been far more appropriate.

As I told you in my previous letter I will not show our film either to the director of the Salzburg Festival or to other important people. They would not tolerate such treatment of music. That is why I think we should make another version. You don't seem to share my point of view. In this case I would like to know if the material you have got can be bought out. At least two film directors might be willing to shape it in accordance with my concepts. Of course I would be happy to do it with you. This material is irreplaceable because I will not dare ask these wonderful people to take part in another documentary focused on my life.

Those who admire our film have no idea how magnificent are the sequences you made no use of. Only I know the whole extent of the losses because I speak English, French and Russian.

In the course of the shooting I had to comply with all your wishes. I didn't particularly like the idea of filming front doors, my comings and goings, the kisses I exchanged with my colleagues. But I thought it would be impolite to teach you how to make a documentary. Why didn't you allow me to make decisions in the domain of music? Wasn't it up to me to decide

which excerpts should be taken? After all, I am the pianist who plays in the film.

I would be extremely grateful if you could edit the *Kreisleriana* in your spare time. Perhaps it might be shown on TV some day.

I wish to thank you for many blissful moments I spent in your company. I would be delighted to work with you again. If you happen to come to France, don't hesitate to call me. And don't forget I have some very good bottles in my cellar.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Kindest regards,

Valery Afanassiev

The Bridge of Dreams.

Liberty and Loyalty.

I go on. The end of the First Part. The text disintegrates. Stockhausen, *Momente*, his death, his fame disintegrated. That's what I do in some of my works. But it can also be regarded as an overture where some themes are adumbrated. *Ulysses* where such an opening is used. I thought it was all over: the final edit was to be conformant with my wishes. The text about the bell sounding in the night. The Anthology.

Classification. 12 per cent. The Russians imitated Hollywood. Stylists. Tout le monde peut s'y retrouver. Jassica Alba. A touch of transcendentalism. The Indian beauty. Martynov's account of Japan. They encompass everything, the whole world. Democracy. The Duke of Kent saluting a black boy. The Da Vinci Code. Something intellectual. We probe into the mysteries of the universe. We are serious and highbrow. Buddhism for the poor. The poor are so rich nowadays. So many things are made for them. The rest is really for the pauvre d'esprit. The gap between the high and low parts. Julius Caesar refusing the crown. The same percentage? You refuse the crown three times and then you accept it. Democracy. Does this pattern run through history? Children hugged by tyrants. Expanding space. The false space. My conception of space.

Incapable of self-control in the aftermath of battle, this peasantry in arms was liable to be swayed by monstrous spasms of inane and savage barbarism. Once under foreign skies, the Japanese

soldier would set his rigid discipline aside and go on a drinking spree. And look at the consequences!

The Japanese educational system, founded on liberal principles, became a tool for ultra-nationalist and militaristic indoctrination at about the time of the First World War. This was possible only because more than ninety percent of the population had achieved literacy by the turn of the century, a lasting tribute to the Meiji educational system. Military training was made compulsory in schools, and by 1925 military officers were assigned to all middle and upper schools and to universities. Arrangements were made for local military education centres to cater for the majority of the populace who could not afford to continue their education past the minimum of primary school. Thus by the end of the so-called liberal decade of the twenties, an effective system for national indoctrination had been implanted and was in use.

This was particularly obnoxious because of the peculiar quality of Japanese militarism. This derived from the fact that,

Bushido was a remarkably compelling code, abhorrent although aspects of it are when judged in terms of western values. It differed but was not incompatible with the fabric of mainstream Japanese culture. Arrogant although Japanese seemed to foreigners, there was nothing acutely xenophobic about either Bushido or the civil structures of Japan. Quite the contrary. Nevertheless, these institutions could not fail to be affected by the intense international pressures upon Japan. Even the anti-foreignism of the Tokugawa period was no less adopted as an expedient than the borrowing of western technology, education and institutions which prevailed in Japan after the Meiji Restoration. In each case, these were responses to what were perceived as threats from outside (and who is to say that they were disproportionate to the degree of danger). In reaching against these alien threats, the Samurai tradition became subverted into a pessimistic militarism that was an amalgam of reactionary national politics and an inherent belief in the spiritual dignity of the Japanese race and cultural traditions. It found itself a rival to the civil apparatus of a modern state in seeking to protect and act on behalf of the Imperial System.

The Penguin History of the Second World War

'Three months after this interview,' writes Herbert P. Bix, 'the Kyodo News Agency surveyed three thousand men and women on the state of the monarchy. More than eighty percent responded. Nearly fifty-seven percent of these respondents either believed that the Emperor bore war responsibility or were unsure if he did. By his answers to the various interview questions, Hirohito showed, once again, that he was out of step with the feelings of the majority of the Japanese people.' But he was not out of step with some of his biographers—those who exonerated him from all

responsibility for the Pearl Harbor attack and other crimes perpetrated in wartime when anything can happen.

The Emperor bowed before MacArthur, judging from the photograph the Japanese banned as they yearned, against all odds, to preserve Hirohito's divine status. Shot from close in, the photograph shows the bespectacled Emperor in *formal* morning coat and striped trousers, standing as if at attention, necktie straight and hands by his sides. Towering over him is relaxed and casual MacArthur in an open-necked uniform. No necktie, no medals. That one photograph demoted the Emperor to the rank of an ordinary human. (MacArthur was a god.) Did Hirohito forget Ito's *Commentaries on the Constitution*?

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your email and letter.

I'm sorry to bother you, but I think it is necessary to go over a few points once again. You don't seem to understand why I object to your cuts in Schubert's *Sonata*. I told you already that one might use a few bars from it—the procedure that doesn't involve the overall structure. But if you take the greater part of a movement, then the overall structure comes into play and therefore should be respected. I saw a TV programme the other day. Teenagers were performing popular songs. One of them shortened some ending or other. He made his exit from the stage to rapturous applause. But a member of the jury pointed out this kind of thing couldn't be done because the song's structure was at stake. 'The cut might have been made to meet the requirements of the programme,' the hostess pointed out. The member of the jury was sticking to her guns. And the audience understood. Do you think a song should be treated with more respect than Schubert's *Sonata*? Believe me, you can't shorten it at will. I studied music for almost twenty years. I studied composition as well. I know what I'm talking about. However, I agree with you that no lawyer would take this objection seriously.

But let us talk about a code of ethics. You have got Bushido with which I am acquainted, being very fond of Japan. I asked you not to use the sequence where I pursue my cat on all fours. Let me remind you that I'm not an actor in this film. I am myself. So I have every right to forbid the use of some images which may, in my opinion, tarnish my reputation. I simply do not want to appear on all fours before Japanese television viewers. Perhaps you find it touching. I do not. And I had every right to forbid you to put this sequence in the program. By using it you might have been loyal to your company, to the Japanese audiences. You were not loyal to me—to the artist who had spent a lot of time on this documentary.

Besides, I made a mistake in French. Such things happen, of course. But they should not happen on TV screens, at least when I am on these screens. Our interpreter said my voice would be

covered by that of the speaker. The mistake is quite audible, though. Mr Asada speaks French perfectly. He must have noticed it. That is enough to make me feel miserable.

I wished to show this film to Martynov. We were in a mini bus, going to a monastery. There were some important people in the bus. They were all excited on hearing that NHK had made a film about me. Some of them changed their seats. When they saw the pursuit of the cat, they laughed and returned to their seats. They were no longer interested. They didn't like the jokey tone of the film. Do you think this tone has anything to do with *mono-no-aware*? You know it was one of the episodes I mostly objected to. My ancestors must be turning in their graves. Talking about one's ancestors may sound foolish in Europe. But it doesn't sound foolish in Japan, does it?

I asked you not to use the sequence where Gidon and I are playing Shostakovich's *Sonata*. Here is the relevant passage from one of my emails: 'I asked you not to use the episode where Gidon Kremer and I are playing Schostakovich's *Sonata*—for personal reasons. I'm afraid I should insist on this point. Anyway, the second movement of the *Sonata* has nothing to do with *mono-no-aware*.' Why didn't you comply with my wish?

Let me return to Bushido once again. To whom were you loyal when showing the recordings I had made with Gidon for Deutsche Gramophone? You showed none of *my* recordings. Let me tell you that I have made 30 recordings for Denon and other Japanese companies. Of course Denon is not as important as Deutsche Gramophone, but I don't think it was necessary to make the Japanese audiences realise that my only legacy consists of the LPs I had recorded with someone else.

There are many serious mistakes in this film, but I singled out the above episodes because I had particularly insisted on their removal. What is more, they strike a blow at my musical (and literary) reputation. And I simply don't like looking ridiculous on TV screens.

Of course shooting this film was a wonderful adventure. Needless to say, I'll never forget it. Nor can I forget the final version which is unworthy of us, of the project itself, of the money spent on it and, last but not least, of the efforts we all made in order to create a beautiful documentary. I hope you'll reconsider and agree to make another version. Anyway I'm not likely to forget the whole thing in spite of Naoaki Hirabayashi's suggestion.

I would be grateful if you could edit *Kreisleriana*. Of course I need it for private use only.

I do hope we'll meet again soon. In Kyoto, in Tokyo, in Versailles or elsewhere. You are always welcome to my flat.

Dear Friends,

At last I got your parcel with the book and the CDs. Thank you very much for the book. It is indeed a precious item in my Dante collection.

I saw the documentary in detail this time. Thank you for removing the LPs we made with Gidon. But I asked not to include anything from this sequence. You must know that colleagues might have a complex relationship. So, before putting Gidon into the film, you should have informed me about your intention to find out if I would not mind his presence in the programme. You didn't. What is more, you disregarded the request I voiced in Kyoto.

I don't understand why you edited in this way the episode where I speak about Schubert at home. The Japanese audiences might take me for an old fool who keeps on repeating the same sentence, 'I'm going to play for you the beginning of Schubert's last sonata.' Did you do it on purpose? Then I repeat the initial theme, but not from the beginning. And I open my mouth without uttering words—a strange piece of editing. Why didn't you use the take I had spoken about? Because I quote Heidegger? Do you think the Japanese audiences have no idea who Heidegger is and why a pianist mentions him while playing Schubert's last sonata? His remark is very beautiful, though, 'We can't do this with philosophy.' I don't think it is difficult for an average viewer to understand this statement.

I'm sorry, but I can't help thinking that there are many mistakes in this programme. Of course it cannot be broadcast again. Mr Hirabayashi informed me that there was a possibility of broadcasting it again. I was away, so I didn't answer his fax. Then you yourself decided to give up the idea. Thank you for your understanding. Actually I think we would have got a better result if you had asked my permission prior to the release of the final version. My trip to Japan was almost useless—you made very few corrections. Well, it's no use crying over spilt milk, as they say. Let me quote a Japanese friend of mine who sent me a fax recently, 'The programme was rather interesting, but to be frank, we had expected something more artistic, especially so long as it was a programme about such a great artist as you. But we believe those who are interested in culture and art in general –not necessarily in classical music) and who didn't know much about you might have enjoyed a lot.' But you know a lot about me, don't you? I don't regard myself as a great artist, but even an ordinary pianist and writer deserves more respect on the part of those who work with him.

And what about those friends of mine whom I invited to take part in the programme? I feel so guilty that I don't dare to see them again. They also spent a lot of time and effort on this programme. It's not enough just to thank them. They will forgive me, I'm sure. But I'll never forgive myself for having involved them in this adventure which, as far as their appearance on TV screens is concerned, reminds me of Zeami's notion of 'no action'.

I still hope that you'll reconsider and make a far better version for the international market.

I'm looking forward to seeing you again in not too distant future.

And I'm waiting for the *Kreisleriana*.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Kindest regards,

Valery Afanassiev

Tax-deductable alms. The triumph of one-dimensional Christianity.

And what about those friends of mine whom I invited to take part in the programme? I feel so guilty that I don't dare to see them again. They also spent a lot of time and effort on this programme. It's not enough just to thank them. They will forgive me, I'm sure. But I'll never forgive myself for having involved them in this adventure which, as far as their appearance on TV screens is concerned, reminds me of Zeami's notion of 'no action'.

He says, among other things, 'I expected something more artistic. After all, the programme is focused on a great artist. But those who don't know you might have enjoyed it.' You know a lot about me, don't you? I don't regard myself as a great artist, but even an ordinary pianist and writer deserves more respect on the part of those who work with him.

'You were sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. Why?'

'Because I didn't come back. Staying abroad without permission was regarded as a crime. And no one could be granted such permission except diplomats and spies.'

'Did they ask you to spy on Western people?'

'I wasn't a spy. I was a defector. So for two years at least I avoided touching the knob of my front door with my bare hands. I was afraid they might have smeared it with some poison or other. And in those days I never crossed a road if there was a car in sight. I also stayed clear of umbrellas.'

'Why? Didn't you carry an umbrella on rainy days?'

'A poisoned umbrella was the latest thing in 1974.'

'There were *some* Soviet citizens abroad in 1974.'

'Diplomats, KGB agents and spies. *Our* trinity. A Soviet diplomat, a KGB agent, a Soviet spy. One and the same person.'

Jeunisme, youngism. Louis XIV too was fond of youngsters. At the end of his life he could bear only young courtiers. Today's audiences (and readers) follow in Louis XIV's footsteps. So do today's patrons. They have to draw the line somewhere. Thirty-five. The artists who have crossed the border between innocence and experience find no sponsors, even if they are thirty-six, thirty-seven. Some of them do because they acquired their star-status in the seventies, in the eighties—in the past. In days of yore.

Networking, charisma, money. Their keywords. My keywords are: art, ideal, sacrifice, illusion, eternity.

‘How old is the film director?’

‘Forty-five, forty-six.’

‘The younger generation. No wonder he doesn’t understand anything. We belong to the last generation. The curtain is falling.’

‘The last generation, not the lost one. We are the last Emperor.’

If I don’t write anything

Tomorrow or next week you can

Tell them I wrote about you

Tonight.

My silence is your name.

The possibilities are endless. But do they amount to what they call ‘freedom’? You don’t get it delivered, do you? In the Soviet Union we did our best to *conquer* freedom. Our star war.