



Leitmotif for Loge, Richard Wagner, *Das Rheingold*, 2

# **MORTAL DREAMS OF THE DEMIGOD**

with locales and dates of composition

## **Proscenium One**

### **Dispossession**

- 1     **The Construction of Things**  
*North Conway, NH - North Truro, MA - St. Stephen, NB, 19 September 2008 - 23 June 2009*
- 2     **Urlicht**  
*Vancouver, BC - St. Stephen, NB - Bowen Island, BC, 24 June 2005 - 4 December 2009*
- 3     **At Grand Forks**  
*Grand Forks, BC - North Truro, MA - Edmonton, AB, 12 June 2005 - 7 February 2014*
- 4     **Deflections**  
*Keremeos, BC - St. Stephen, NB - Seal Cove, Grand Manan, NB - Bowen Island, BC - Edmonton, AB, 19 June 2005 - 6 February 2014*
- 5     **The Close of this Enterprise**  
*Vancouver, BC - St. Stephen, NB - Bowen Island, BC - Edmonton, AB, 26 June 2005 - 2 February 2014*

## **Proscenium Two**

### **The Necessary Despair of Anticipation**

- 1     **Real Estate**  
*Vancouver, BC, 21 August 2005*
- 2     **Out of the Forest**  
*St. Stephen, NB - Edmonton, AB, 13 July 2006 - 18 February 2014*
- 3     **Self-portrait in a Small Town**  
*St. Stephen, NB - Alma, NB - Bowen Island, BC - Edmonton, AB, 20 June 2006 - 18 February 2014*
- 4     **Towards the Fire**  
*St. Stephen, NB - North Conway, NH, 21 June 2006 - 16 November 2008*
- 5     **The Start of My Own Political Campaign**  
*North Conway, NH - North Truro, MA, 27 September - 17 October 2008*
- 6     **Morning on Front Street**  
*St. Stephen, NB, 25 March - 5 April 2008*
- 7     **In a Parish of Perfect Pretense**  
*St. Stephen, NB - Bowen Island, BC, 10 March 2008 - 4 December 2009*
- 8     **The Onset of March**  
*St. Stephen, NB, 4-10 March 2008*

- 9     *Spem reduxit*  
*St. Stephen, NB, 30 December 2008*
- 10    The Assertion  
*Meriden, CT - St. Stephen, NB - Bowen Island, BC, 18 July 2007 - 13 September 2009*
- 11    Nearing the Apex of Midnight  
*St. Stephen, NB - Seal Cove, Grand Manan, NB - Bowen Island, BC, 4 August 2007 - 4 December 2009*

## Proscenium Three

### Stopover

- 1     Self-portrait at 58  
*Ellsworth, ME - North Truro, MA - Alma, NB - Bowen Island, BC, 5 September 2006 - 14 November 2009*
- 2     Beyond  
*St. Stephen, NB, 19 September 2006 - 7 August 2007*
- 3     Waterways  
*Gorham, NH - North Truro, MA - St. Stephen, NB - Edmonton, AB, 18 September - 10 February 2014*
- 4     Atlantic City  
*Absecon, NJ - Alma, NB - St. Stephen, NB - Bowen Island, BC, 20 July 2007 - 12 September 2009*
- 5     Psalmic Silence  
*St. Stephen, NB - Amherst, NS - Bowen Island, BC - Edmonton, AB, 2 June 2006 - 12 February 2014*
- 6     Visions  
*St. Stephen, NB - Bowen Island, BC, 6 April 2007 - 4 December 2009*
- 7     The Suppositions of Fire  
*St. Stephen, NB - Edmonton, AB, 15 September 2006 - 9 February 2014*
- 8     Fraser Mills  
*Edmundston, NB - North Truro, MA - Bowen Island, BC - Edmonton, AB, 25 May 2008 - 18 February 2014*
- 9     Pharmacy Findings  
*North Conway, NH - North Truro, MA - Edmonton, AB, 26 September 2008 - 18 February 2014*
- 10    Hunted  
*St. Stephen, NB - Alma, NB - Edmonton, AB, 10 June 2006 - 16 February 2014*
- 11    Breakers  
*Seal Cove, Grand Manan, NB - St. Stephen, NB - Bowen Island, BC - Edmonton, AB, 26 August 2007 - 17 February 2014*
- 12    Premonition of No Remembrance  
*St. Stephen, NB - Edmonton, AB, 9 September 2006 - 12 February 2014*
- 13    The Golden Hue of Love  
*Seattle, WA - Bowen Island, BC, 11 August - 26 December 2009*
- 14    Recognizing the Gift  
*Port Jervis, NY - Alma, NB - St. Stephen, NB - Bowen Island, BC - Edmonton, AB, 19 July 2007 - 18 February 2014*

- 15     **Road to Recovery**  
*North Truro, MA, 11-15 October 2008*
- 16     **Near the Pilgrim Monument**  
*North Truro, MA - St. Stephen, NB - Seal Cove, Grand Manan, NB - Alma, NB - Fredericton, NB -  
Ottawa, ON - Peace River, AB - Edmonton, AB, 25 May 2007 - 18 February 2014*
- 17     **Solo**  
*North Truro, MA - Calgary, AB - St. Stephen, NB, 13 October - 27 December 2008*
- 18     **Chrysoglott**  
*Fredericton, NB - Edmonton, AB, 5 February 2009 - 1 September 2012*

## **Proscenium Four**

### **Courting the Remembrances**

- 1        **Chamber Musician**  
*Bowen Island, BC, 14 November 2009 - 21 February 2010*
- 2        **Travelling to Ucluelet**  
*Ucluelet, BC, 30 March - 3 April 2010*
- 3        **Father to the Son**  
*St. Stephen, NB - Alma, NB - Seal Cove, Grand Manan, NB - Edmonton, AB, 14 April 2007 - 19  
February 2014*
- 4        **Chesterman Beach**  
*Ucluelet, BC - Parksville, BC - Bowen Island, BC - Peace River, AB, 7 April 2010 - 10 July 2011*
- 5        **On the Deck of the Zuiderkruis, with my Father**  
*Ucluelet, BC - Peace River, AB - Edmonton, AB, 2 April 2010 - 18 January 2012*
- 6        **Combers' Beach**  
*Ucluelet, BC - Parksville, BC - Bowen Island, BC - Banff, AB - Peace River, AB - Edmonton, AB, 3  
July 2010 - 24 January 2013*
- 7        **Alex**  
*Ucluelet, BC, 5-6 April 2010*
- 8        **Till Then**  
*Bowen Island, BC - Peace River, AB - Edmonton, AB, 25 August 2010 - 24 January 2013*
- 9        **The Sixth Dream**  
*Banff, AB - Edmonton, AB, 15 January 2011 - 24 January 2013*
- 10       **Capriccio**  
*Banff, AB - Edmonton, AB, 8 January 2011 - 3 March 2014*
- 11       **Magic Gathering**  
*Ucluelet, BC, 2-7 July 2010*
- 12       **Self-portrait at 63**  
*Banff, AB, 6-27 February 2011*
- 13       **Spirits**  
*Parksville, BC - Bowen Island, BC - Peace River, AB, 11 April - 1 July 2011*
- 14       **Finale in Several Parts**  
*Bowen Island, BC - Edmonton, AB, 20 June 2010 - 2 March 2014*

## **Proscenium Five**

### **Passacaglia Pier**

- 1     **Insurrection**  
*Ucluelet, BC, 28 June - 8 July 2010*
- 2     **Education of the Dead**  
*Ottawa, ON, 4 November 2007*
- 3     **Evangelist**  
*St. Stephen, NB - North Truro, MA, 29 July 2006 - 25 January 2009*
- 4     **Bystanders**  
*Ucluelet, BC - Bowen Island, BC, 31 March - 15 May 2010*
- 5     **One Horse of the Iron Apocalypse**  
*Seattle, WA - Bowen Island, BC - Edmonton, AB, 8 August 2009 - 17 February 2014*
- 6     **Largo**  
*Ucluelet, BC, 4-6 April 2010*
- 7     **Assault**  
*Parksville, BC - Bowen Island, BC, 15 July - 15 August 2010*
- 8     **“here everything silently screams”**  
*Bowen Island, BC, 12-20 June 2010*
- 9     **Postscript to Siegfried**  
*Seattle, WA - Bowen Island, BC, 14-29 August 2009*
- 10    **Declension**  
*Banff, AB, 17-18 March 2011*
- 11    **The Light of Darkness**  
*St. Stephen, NB - Seal Cove, Grand Manan, NB - Bowen Island, BC, 27 July 2006 - 21 November 2009*
- 12    **Réseau**  
*St. Stephen, NB, 29 December 2008*
- 13    **The Clocks**  
*Longueuil, QC - Ottawa, ON - Bowen Island, BC, 1 July - 3 August 2009*
- 14    **Setting Out**  
*Calgary, AB - St. Stephen, NB, 18-27 December 2008*

## **Proscenium Six**

### **The Ferryman’s Obolus**

- 1     **Bedrock**  
*Bowen Island, BC - Seattle, WA - Peace River, AB - Edmonton, AB, 26 July 2009 - 19 January 2013*
- 2     **Mount Gardner’s Slope**  
*Bowen Island, BC, 6 September 2009*
- 3     **Symphonic Night**  
*Bowen Island, BC - Edmonton, AB, 30 August 2009 - 19 January 2013*

- 4      **Adventitious Salvation**  
*Bowen Island, BC, 19 August - 30 October 2010*
- 5      **Another Sign of Welcome**  
*Vancouver, BC - Bowen Island, BC, 7-9 September 2010*
- 6      **Divinity**  
*Seattle, WA - Bowen Island, BC - Edmonton, AB, 12 August 2009 - 19 February 2014*
- 7      **The Gospel Truth**  
*Ucluelet, BC, 7-8 July 2010*

## **Proscenium Seven**

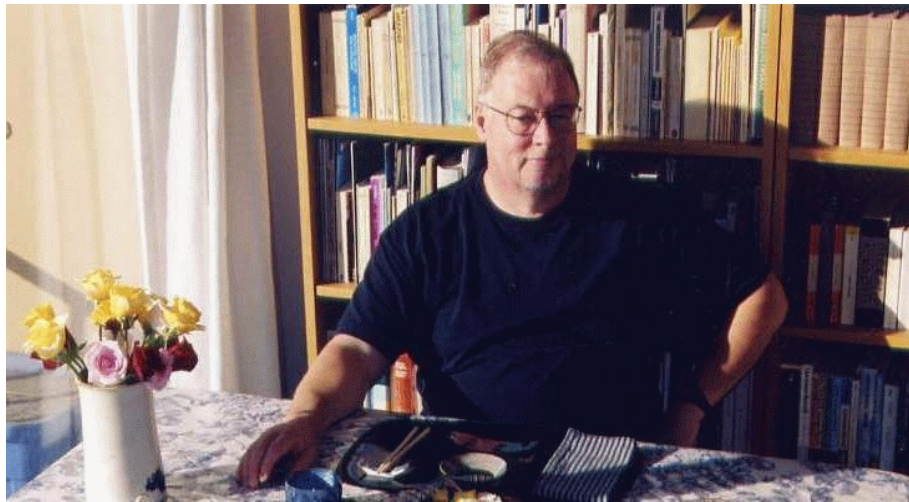
### **The Sunken Archipelago**

- 1      **Quiescence**  
*Banff, AB, 27 February - 5 March 2011*
- 2      **Libretto from Leiden**  
*Ucluelet, BC, 30 March - 3 April 2010*
- 3      **Curtis and the Conclave of Invertebrates**  
*Bowen Island, BC - Banff, AB - Peace River, AB, 29 September 2010 - 7 May 2011*

Proscenium One

## Dispossession

*ensemble nous sautons dans le vide / sans taxer d'autres légendes féeriques*  
— Rose Després, “Au bord du précipice,” *La vie prodigieuse*



*Vancouver, BC, 16 December 2005*



1:1

### **The Construction of Things**

The lucent micro-sounds of the highway  
Flare as smoke-ridden flashes of flame  
Over the ashen embers of my inner ear,

And collapsing sighs rush like breath fanned  
From alveolar forests that know only  
The pulse of the heart, the small heave  
Of exchange between the silent atmosphere  
And the sunstruck photosynthesis of carbon.

The mechanics of materialism press on,  
Asphalt underneath rounded rubber, the bolted wheel's  
Motion that makes the shriek of blue jays  
Cringe, and strike the sky with the contrails  
Of carriers that whip reclaimed marshlands  
At the places of first landing. Where the red fox hunts mallard  
In long ditches of design, and expires when the road rises.

Let me clasp the outward form of the quivering silence;  
Let me regain the calm that needs no interruption,  
The fireweed that glows on the embankment  
That fell from the hillside to clear the way.

1:2

*Urlicht*

*Da kam ich auf einem breiten Weg,  
Da kam ein Engelein und wollt' mich abweisen.  
Once I came upon a wide road,  
There stood an Angel who wanted to turn me away.  
— Das Knaben Wunderhorn*

To better work the hamstrings, I refine  
The settings of the leg extension machine,  
While on the Walkman Mahler's second  
Symphony begins, and new light penetrates  
The hour, after when, as I lift a hundred pounds  
At the bench press, the last trump sets out.

My routine complete, I walk down the stairs  
Of the community centre, and carry  
The Resurrection into the automotive  
Clutter of Denman Street, the cellphone tapestry  
Of the morning, summer warmth spreading  
The wings of the solstice over the city's downtown,  
The choir of the land rising all around me in  
The new breaking of the day, the bells  
That ring as joy in the heart's basilica.

**1:3**

**At Grand Forks**

Restless as a barren provocation  
We drive on between the mountains,  
The moments the motions  
    of a small immensity.

Threadbare with experience we turn to  
    the remnants of our future,  
Accelerate through passing lanes  
    filling with too much emptiness,  
Watch the small rain break upon  
    the windshield of the rental car,  
Wonder if the wiper blades  
    Clear away little segments  
        of destiny,  
    Little scraps of torn tissue of  
        the heart.

1:4

### **Deflections**

The hunted whales become the contrails  
Of our manoeuvres, protruding from a film  
Of sky-filled time, its dampened alleyways  
Crowded with expectations  
Cluttered with overhead wires.  
At the edge of the breaking bay  
The great blue heron croaks  
And rises on a heaviness of wings  
To escape the cruelty of children,  
Thin mists of morning upon  
The stricken slopes of the unappeasable mountain—  
The scavenging sideslip of aged scree  
Scattering our footfall,  
Denying our presence ascent.

**1:5**

### **The Close of this Enterprise**

*... bristle thy courage up; for Falstaff he is dead,  
And we must earn therefore.  
— Pistol, Henry V, II.iii.5-6*

*Both the sack and the sackcloth were upon me:  
Though these I removed to explore  
The continental expanse of the naked sun.  
The shackles broke my hands, but the bruises are  
My own business. I discolour, and then,  
Disappear; as does everything.*

*The strange singing of the earth reaches me  
From the seashore of my injured extremities,  
Filling with liberties that create yet another icon  
Of independence. My undertakings were relics  
I revered, graveyards of worship fallen from the liturgy  
When it cost too much for bread and wine.*

Proscenium Two

## The Necessary Despair of Anticipation

*Ce qu'on doit faire dépend beaucoup de ce qu'on doit croire*  
What we ought to do depends largely on what we ought to believe  
— Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Troisième promenade,”  
*Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire*

Gloria: that’s what the masses call me.  
— Gloria, listening to Mozart in the kitchen of our house,  
St. Stephen, New Brunswick, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006



*1 Cedar Street, St. Stephen, New Brunswick,  
February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008*

**2:1**

### **Real Estate**

At the end of the avenue where time once lived  
Stands the little house of yesterday, brilliant  
Under the dust of dreams and the silver threads  
Of ambition. I would buy that small home now,  
Its glistening windows of tears, its drywall  
Of failure, its unfinished rooms furnished  
With unexpected destinations. But I hesitate  
To settle down, however much my fatigue  
Beckons me; for I am still a little unwilling  
To become so comfortable in a district  
So well known. Yet, if I were to purchase,  
How easily I could settle into tomorrow,  
Worry no more about despair, and seeing  
No more, would find my ease in emptiness.

## **2:2 Out of the Forest**

As morning nears, the night rains are the solvent  
That dissolves the blood of former days, rampant  
In roadway rivulets and runnels that wrack the town.

The paint on old houses peels away in the sound  
Of the sun weeping, the metal and shingle roofs  
Clawing at the hot mist of the summer air.

The despair of decline stalks the streets  
And the avenues, sliding on the slick  
The rains detach, as citizen soldiers  
Burn the remains of the fortress,  
And haul the salvage of history  
Into the fiery lairs of serpents without wings.



2:3

### **Self-portrait in a Small Town**

Would I could not remember the way to this place,  
Why it would be that I came to arrive here, how it was  
That I drew so near to this isolation. I am getting too old  
To prefer to recall each and every thing, and too tired  
To want to. The days seem longer, yet pass by  
Without authentic count, even though the sunshine  
And the rains polish the patina  
Of my imperfections with relentless precision.

Even as this excess of my existence matters less and less,  
I rely upon it as if it were the talisman of my touch,  
Reaping the narrative of my nativity in the fields,  
As I anticipate the sifting of the crop, made more cruel  
By the dismal weather of this mean, meager harvest.

**2:4**

### **Towards the Fire**

Sometimes it seems that Truth itself  
Senses its own uncertainty,

That it too worries,

About the grandeur of illusion, about  
The wariness of right, about the realities

That may not be.  
I would want my anxiety shared by  
Its arbiter who never speaks; I want  
My fall into the broken abyss  
To be a splendour of greatness of what never can be known.

Sometimes it seems that Truth itself  
Also cannot sleep, cannot rest the perpetual mind,  
Cannot help one like me free myself from

Those shackled constraints of the soul I cannot see  
But sense every moment as the fiery, finite weight of life,  
Burning in the deep chasm of the place to which I must fall.

2:5

### **The Start of My Own Political Campaign**

It's my psyche's last day of liberty. Already overnight  
The blinding blur of the regular day's trivia  
And prevailing demands resurfaced on the wrong side  
Of sleep. It's the resumption of my mind's querulous  
Testimony of discontent. Chopin's harmonic thought  
And the essays of Charles Rosen will find no welcome at  
The place I am to return to. In truth, neither will I;  
Nor, any more, do I look for it. Where history has become  
Excuse rather than exemplar, when only the tides rise and fall  
In the mangled river, the rallying cry most often heard is  
'We don't need book-learning—all we need is common sense.'

**2:6**

**Morning on Front Street**

The griffin rears at the broken brink of the gable,  
Perpetual rain-water spouting from its carved throat.  
On the rutted street, vestigial with winter, the rigs  
Have gathered to idle, dormant reptiles waiting to  
Slowly slither across the international boundary,  
To unburden themselves of cargoes of green timber  
Amputated from crown lands by corporate leaseholds.  
The stark spring rains dilute the smeared excreta of  
The machines, their streaks of seasonal sludge trickling  
Towards the destitute river. Citizens of this colony  
Rejoice in their misfortune, recoil from the empty  
Storefronts when the channeling rains collect  
On their spines, to evade the stare of the basilisks  
As they lurch forward, leaving venom in their wake  
To poison the falling faith of those who collapse devout.

2:7

### **In a Parish of Perfect Pretense**

The winter deep drifts away as an ice shelf  
Breaking off over an eternal sea, my house consuming  
Fossil fuel against the relentless assault, the frozen will  
Of the region as Antarctic as the people who claim it,  
Their generations' pride cold within the cataract eye  
Of a universe saturated with galaxies of blinded stars,  
Nestled beside used needles and spent condoms discarded behind  
The crumbling tombstones of Loyalist burial grounds.

Preserved in permafrost, here history is no longer in the making:  
But remains the talisman revered at coffee shops, the holy relic  
Of reciters of the prayers, the crucifix that wards away  
The infidel. The Fundy rain pours freezing pellets onto the streets,  
Vast wastelands of ice over the destitute presence of the populace.

The old watchman at the border says 'there's no place like it.'

**2:8**

### **The Onset of March**

The snow slides from the roof in the middle of the night,  
Plummets downward with a crash, sound effects in a dream  
That a moment ago I dreamt in a moment of many decades.  
I feel the tremor work its way through the house. I am wary  
That my legs will cramp in the darkness of my own blood.

I stare into the open night, the fatigue of lost sleep  
Spreading its long loneliness upon me, my skin the bloated bag  
Of my sometimes life, sometimes here, sometimes elsewhere,  
The black wind of the country town working its way  
Over the ridges fat with memory. I try to better my breathing  
As the approach of day coagulates in my retinas.

I have become the white weather that wears away the street.  
I am the tidal river that heaves and then disappears  
In the gasp of planetary gravity. I am downstream along the avenue  
Of circumstance, carelessly conspicuous, contemptuous till  
The last ripple of consciousness washes away the last flake  
Of falling snow.

2:9

*Spem reduxit*

Your Toxes and your Chickses may draw out  
my two front double teeth, Mrs. Richards, but that's  
no reason why I need offer 'em the whole set.

— *Susan Nipper, Dombey and Son, III*

Now the dead must rise  
From the little Loyalist cemetery on King Street  
And repopulate the generations, so that  
Reverence has rationale, and rejection purpose,  
To vindicate an ossification of arrival without departure,  
The amalgamation of degeneration with delusion,  
And deceit with unearned entitlement.

Samuel de Champlain may lie beneath the basilica  
Of Notre-Dame-de-Québec, but even in his grave he moved on  
After a Christmas death, leaving all to the Virgin Mary.  
But the abandonment of Île Ste-Croix presaged  
A cruel and clear awareness, the next readiness to assure  
The viceroyalty of New France.

Above the bay, No Order of Good Cheer flourishes,  
The Loyalist hinterland suckling its recollections of fealty  
And slaves, the skeletal coronets of history languishing  
At this place of refuge, partitioned from progress,  
Indifference perfected by the indolence of insularity.

Their bones are beyond restoration, their  
Silent serenity shrivelled with the damage of semblances;  
Neither pieced together by glory, nor the inheritors  
Of the touchstone of history, the ghosts of time  
Only are only remembered and touched for their emptiness.

**2:10**

**The Assertion**

The Connecticut rain drives away uncertainties,  
My archives panoramic plasma screens  
Dedicated to theological manifestations of Bach.  
I arrange the counterpoint of my days with words  
Written on the interlinear of intensity, as I near  
The providence of my perfection, the new haven  
Where my declaration is the overture of creation,  
Time standing motionless in the downpour of destiny.



**2:11**

**Nearing the Apex of Midnight**

I am wakened to stumble  
Into the Maritime thunderstorm  
Of my aging,  
Lightning flashing through the blinds,  
Falling water smashing at the house.  
I picture Dürer in self-portrait  
With paper almost too wet  
To sketch on. Cantata strains  
Of *Liebster Jesu, mein Verlangen*  
Play very far away  
Upon the pace of short sacred chords  
In the background of my mind.

I know Liù is dead.

## Proscenium Three

### Stopover

*Il ne s'agit pas de vivre, mais de partir.*

The important point is not to live but to set out.

— Maurice de Saxe, ordered to the front as the commander in chief  
of the French Army in 1745, responding to Voltaire,  
in Will and Ariel Durant, *The Age of Voltaire*

My whole life is a stopover.

— Gloria, at the casse-croûte in Deschambault, Québec,  
May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006



*New Brunswick Southern Railway, off  
Hawthorne Street south of Queen Street  
West, St. Stephen, New Brunswick,  
February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008*

**3:1**

**Self-portrait at 58**

I walk in the wilderness of my wayfaring,  
Passing by roadside statues of plaster Jesuses,  
While the rains tumble down onto the windshield  
Of the SUV. I save Maine lobsters from freezers  
And warm them with my MasterCard; scramble  
Into Hannaford's for sacramental wine for the hotel hearth,  
Calm my anxiety-laden uncertainty with notations  
On the LCD screen of my Toshiba laptop,  
And evaluate net worth adjusted for currency  
Exchange. On the biblical hill will I have  
Sewer trenches dug, water mains excavated  
To reveal terra cotta breaks, and sniff the gas lines  
Of Lear jets accelerating into the afternoon sky,  
Engines screaming over the summit fog  
Of Cadillac Mountain, luring my wonderment  
Up into the troposphere  
Of the grey, all-knowing unknown.

3:2

### **Beyond**

I reticulate in the mystery of histories,  
An Egyptian paraphrase of paradigms that floats  
Through the essences that evaporate over the vapours of the Nile.

I watch the ibis crouched over the hyacinth,  
The current that works and flows from the highlands beyond Aswan  
To the fabled Cairene delta.

Egypt entombs the extensions of my existence,  
Takes my godhead to the Pharaoh's heavenly  
Table, and feasts there with the deities  
In the stony hieroglyphic of the future held fast.

**3:3**

### **Waterways**

The crystalline chrysanthemum, glittering  
With its ultramarine river, does not resist  
The September fragrance of sunlight, shores  
Of foliage reddening portals, luminescent  
In the autumn homeland of my optimism. In night dreams  
The blue irises sway in the stream,  
Pools deep with the perfection of the afternoon sky,  
The petaline artistry remaining the companion  
Of glassine water sculpted by  
The floral perfumes of light.

3:4

### **Atlantic City**

Hafiz sings to me that one of the secrets to knowing  
The Beautiful One  
Is to hold the Lion's Paw  
When dancing.

In Atlantic City,  
The casino ghosts of MGM lions stalk  
Rain-spattered streets that have become  
Front yards for the black poor, the ailing boardwalk  
Hemming them in.

Nearby in Absecon  
I dream that I take lions to their eternal rest,  
But first, from each of them,  
I sunder the right paw.

Some take longer to break than others.

I am saddened by this, and the lions  
Watch me with eyes of resignation.

*They think of the Tuonela of swans, far from  
The Beautiful One.*

**3:5**

**Psalmic Silence**

Watch

As the gates of paradise open once again,  
And wait for us to lead ourselves within.

Search within the silences of the mind and listen.  
In the vastness of immensity lie the answers that  
Will always be unknown; the ocean of soundlessness  
That breaks away from, breaks towards,

The greater light at  
The gates invisible where we pass through the grave  
Unto ourselves.

**3:6**

**Visions**

Subsumed by the counterpoint of time's  
Understanding, I conceive the unfenced,  
Unfolding prospects of northern lands  
And the African plain; the deep sky as pale  
As Pacific glaciers from which stream  
The dark rivers of the Arctic:

Upon this landscape of the interior, runnels  
Of meltwater collect the singing of warblers  
And vireos, silent thought moving as the wind  
Of awareness through the nameless solar ecstasy,  
Intermingling those incomplete parts that form  
The quiet dreams of destiny.



**3:7**

### **The Suppositions of Fire**

Time dispels itself before me, more quickly  
Than I count the molecules of eternity  
Or caress the ennobled atoms of mortality.

Will I fade into the ether of astonishment,  
Or pass through the thin integument  
Of reality, to find what I never knew of myself  
On the other side of life? I will collect  
My conjectures. They are the fuel of the day  
And the restlessness of the night, and I  
Feel their resilient encroachment upon  
My certainties, and care for them as the fatal  
Enemies who hunt me endlessly for their gain.

**3:8**

### **Fraser Mills**

*Edmundston, Northern New Brunswick*

The great Saint John River  
Ever more powerful as we drive ever more near,  
Turning off the highway to pull into the parking lot  
Of the Days Inn at St-Basile.

But downtown, there's the ever-present stench of the mill,  
Swirling about, scraping at throats, incising our eyes;  
A lone mallard gliding through the watery rust  
Of the reservoir of the ancient power plant.

I had met the president.  
He had worn a very expensive suit, and had meant his words:  
'No government intervention, no reduction in utility costs:  
'No mill.' Knowing,  
These several months later, its work force down a third,  
That those who have come to depend on the mill will attempt  
Nothing different, have come to think it's theirs, breathe in  
Formaldehyde fumes with their cigarettes, sit stunned  
At the machines in the hungover morning, wondering  
What they'll do when the layoff notice arrives.

3:9

### Pharmacy Findings

I haven't been to a Walgreen's in so long  
That I am actually curious as to what's in it.

Cosmetics, cures for ails I am not fully  
Aware of, Hallow-e'en candy, nutritional  
Supplements, and Van Morrison, randomly,

Singing about his brown-eyed girl. He and I  
Were there a very long time ago, except mine  
Had blue eyes. Our fresh savouring  
Is long gone, but memory makes the best in us  
Perfect through recollection. Anyway,

That's more or less what Wordsworth claimed,  
Though I sometimes think that Coleridge,  
Blinding his brain with opium, understood  
The way better. In any case, this small event

In a pharmacy in North Conway, in New Hampshire,  
Oddly pleases me. My wife pays for her cologne,  
And we get in the SUV to cross the street to buy  
Sauvignon blanc at Hannaford's. I don't think

Van remembers me; he was still drinking as he  
Left the apartment in Ottawa. But she does.  
Sometimes. Maybe.

**3:10**

### **Hunted**

The compassion of our companions guides us  
As we trek through everglades of rain  
To the margin of the continent,  
Carrying the sick and the wounded of the partisans  
Who held the fortresses till the ground held  
No more, and neither the children nor the women  
Forsook us, and gave us comforts more close than tears.

But the weeping of the weather in the wailing  
Of the wind weaves over the battered waters  
Of the sunken glades where reptiles respire  
And wait to attend the carnage of dreams.

And we ford the landscape, cluttering ourselves  
With antiquity and its solemn danger, and as  
We march from the menace of time and men  
We are thankful for the burden of mercy  
Our friends bestow, wishing them that everlastingness  
That the inland waters move toward and break upon,

The dawn, once again upon the faces of our mission,  
Striving to bring the appeal of the rising sun upon  
Those who struggle for the glories of the day.

**3:11**

**Breakers**

The harbour seal surfaces into the fog, eyes  
The cormorants on the seaweed of the rocks.

Distant trawlers hawk, disfiguring  
The ocean's face with diesels that disquiet  
The discourse of whales.

*The silverback gorilla looks down  
On the mountain, as the bullet distorts  
His greenery of light.*

*Bush meat on sushi tables. Exotic plantains  
Next rare orchids. Deer farms on this island.*

**3:12**

**Premonition of No Remembrance**

I dessicate as I burn as  
Crystallizing anomalies,  
Quartz slivers  
Quickening blood purpled  
With stony light. I am thrown into the chasm,  
The igneous memory of basaltic granite  
The rising magma of dismemberment,

As bones rupture,  
Ligaments of longing licking  
At the flecked marrow the gulls feed upon,  
Bills forced inside  
Skeletal antechambers  
Where, until moments ago, were stored  
The vestiges of my becoming.

**3:13**

### **The Golden Hue of Love**

I reach for the fiery rock. Then the phone rings.  
Weak warriors disturb my rest, and scree  
Tumbles beneath my weary feet. Where is  
The heroine whose sleep is perfect, whose  
Awakening is the golden sun?

I lie on the cushioned ledge, listening to  
The street traffic in Seattle Center, more farewells  
Sung on the stage, even while I look  
To the wings where the next act prepares itself,  
To leave all else, and everyone, everyone,  
Everyone, behind.

As I approach Queen Anne hill, the sea  
Shines through your hair, your sublime  
Breasts half-revealed by the white blouse  
You wear to uncover them.

**3:14**

### **Recognizing the Gift**

The exile Hafiz, worthy of his Beloved,  
Has sent me to the darkened edge of New York State,  
There to look for light in Port Jervis.

We are both translating, the gorge of the bed  
For the drone of the air conditioner.

Later, desperate souls try to enter our room, even though  
We eat leftovers to mitigate the cost of accommodation.  
The silence of the soul is taboo.

Next morning, text messaging still cloaks the globe,  
As Jeeps rear-end on the Interstate, the motel filled  
With guests who hardly can walk and staff who scarcely live,  
The breakfast room a decommissioned bomb shelter  
Where chronic husbands search for lost coffee cups.

A retiree from Florida re-installs the GPS mast  
At the rear of his van.

It is not light they are seeking.



**3:15**

**Road to Recovery**

At the Cape again. Thank god for the peculiarities  
Of Provincetown, where, says a T-shirt, the women  
Are strong and the men are pretty. Give me exuberance,  
The energy of differences, and that bookstore that  
Stocks a treatise on thorough-bass. Where wild turkeys  
Flock over the highway between the dunes. Where lap dogs  
Proliferate as ornaments in purses and strollers,  
Where filet mignon and wi-fi are at the ready. I'll take  
This kind of America, with its wicked individualism,  
Imported wines, and rental condominiums. The sun  
Blazes over the long line of peninsula, over the distance  
From the past, over the renewed stirring of ambition,  
Even as the October winds move inland with autumn.

**3:16**

**Near the Pilgrim Monument**

All the emptying night the soft wind blew from the bay,  
Hovered against the windows, rattled frames  
And screen doors, broke sleep into fragments that  
Longed to sweat together. From afar,  
As far away as Delft was, was landfall at Cape Cod,  
More an unremitting liberty  
Than the will of God, to traverse an unyielding  
Ocean for 66 days,  
And then, land sighted, yield to a compact of democracy;  
The New World where nights listen  
To the sounds of darkness, where the wind  
Moves scraps of thought to places far away:  
Ocean Pacific, the valley of the Rift,  
Kärntnerstraße, Charles Bridge.

When next I take flight, I will challenge the sunrise.

**3:17**

**Solo**

The instrument of my values, the breaking spine of books  
And back, the body of my awareness: my subsistence  
Feeds upon my morality, the voyager no more youthful upon  
The sea-swept curvature of earthen joys. I am  
Their devout supplicant, the breaking one who is not broken:  
I play the toccata of my bodily ministrations,  
Search through the chordal advance of thought,  
The vibration of the leaves an acoustic resonance  
Of the seaside breeze that turns inland,  
Enters the naked man, utters as waves and birdsong  
The quickened quiet of the spaces between  
The certainty of my signature, the enharmonic  
Modulation that connects the vital intervals of my silence.

**3:18**

**Chrysoglott**

The Wurlitzer end of Omphalic fertility,  
Whitened in the Fredericton snows, the theatrical  
Tracery of fools altered to ice as car wheels are spun,  
And slide into the intersection. Oedipus looks out  
Over the frozen St. John River; Gretchen  
Seeks her lost child on the bridge to Nashwaak;  
Marco Polo reaches the Friendship Store  
On Albert Street, and purchases ramen in bulk.  
In the Gösser of memorialized time, the Urquell  
Of history, little Bardolino plays on the lunar palate  
And readies the receptacle for the halls of power.

Proscenium Four

## Courting the Remembrances

*... the sunbeams struck into his room through the rustling blinds,  
and quivered on the opposite wall like golden water  
— Charles Dickens, Dombey and Son, 16*



*Johanna and Hendrik Slegtenhorst, on their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary,  
13 March 1958, Leiden, Netherlands*

**4:1**

**Chamber Musician**

Castrato Farinelli sings to the monarch,  
Catches her Spanish attention with lurid ornamentation  
On the words of Metastasio, while her husband  
Accompanies on the harpsichord in the style of Scarlatti.  
Farinelli consummates the aria, and taking up  
His viola d'amore to play with the king,  
Carefully strokes his Order of Calatrava, and stands  
In his place by the portrait by Velásquez,  
Diamonds on his long supple fingers,  
His royalty befriended by the sway of his voice.

4:2

### Travelling to Ucluelet

Coffee, alcohol, and miscalculation comprise  
The fossilized fuels of my emptying accomplishments:  
I slow the SUV through the snow-dredged mountain pass  
Where the aging asphalt is blistered by hail and rain—  
Restless drivers in BMWs and small Mercedes-Benz  
Pressing hard against the speed limit of my demise.

I am accelerating towards the edge of land  
Where the continent concludes, my mental  
Incontinence a somewhat careless preoccupation  
While I re-enter the embryo of my recollections,  
The liberty of my regeneration, find myself in  
A port of welcome, the fishermen and carpenters  
Willing to genuflect for a living wage and shelter.  
We are apostolic parasites of fine weather.  
The winter pond where I skated is gone. My body  
That adored me weakens with work and waste,  
Beckoned by broken fragrances that once stood  
Too hard and straight to release. Now  
I seek yet again the center of sanctity.  
I am lost without myself.

4:3

### Father to the Son

Maybe my father was right after all:  
Maybe there are a lot of good people.  
And maybe stardust binds heart and soul.  
It's the winter moon of misery, though,  
That gives me pause; the vagueness  
Of good intentions, the assurances  
Of selfishness, the underlying capacity to exterminate.

Perhaps, having survived the firebombing of Hamburg,  
Watching the dawn rise upon the pulverized city,  
Creates an optimism I should accept.  
Maybe the risk of leaving everything behind—  
Place, language, culture, family, friends, history—  
Rests on a decision so deep and profound  
That pessimism has no place.

Yet he worried.

All the time. He worried about loss, especially  
The loss of others. And it entered into  
The very sanctuary of his heart. Sometimes I think  
That is what he gave me that means the most. With that, I too  
May be able to weep myself into paradise.



**4:4**

**Chesterman Beach**

*Vancouver Island, 6 April 2010*

At the unobtainable periphery of the sea's horizon,

Witness the winged gods in a massed descent  
Of symphonies, themes recaptured in a rapturous droplet  
Kingdoms strive to emulate, the waves sublime chapels  
Beyond the reach of civilizations,  
The sounding of the celestial earth  
Releasing the exalted heart into its regal flight.

4:5

**On the Deck of the Zuiderkruis,  
With my Father**

*July 1952*

The black and white snapshot of the forecastle  
Of the transatlantic steamship  
Holds us together in a wicker deck-chair:  
I am four and you less than half my current age,  
Your hair tangled, your eyes looking at  
The camera, an anxious look tensing with arrival.

It seems a warm and sunny day somewhere  
In the middle of the Atlantic, now displayed  
On the ocean of my laptop computer

In a cottage at the rain-soaked edge  
Of the Pacific—you so forever gone  
And I with only a hole in my heart  
To hold you in. Would I have loved you  
More, would I have understood you better,  
For part of me wanders without you,  
Its inextinguishable, unstilled grief  
That travels so often to live there.

4:6

### Combers' Beach

My wife and I sit on a sun-bleached log  
Among the low dunes of the beach,  
Its motes of sand conscripted by the rough wind  
Of the green Pacific, cresting waves  
Whitened by clear light.

A gull hovers, webbed feet  
An elegance of declination, then drops to the beach  
To drink from the freshet from the forest.

Other than a few gulls and crows,  
And the sea lions on the distant rocks,  
Nothing else watches the incoming waves.

Granules of sand tramp over our feet in  
Perfect formation. I listen to the second  
Act of *The Magic Flute*, wondering why  
Fischer-Dieskau should inhabit a BlackBerry,  
Why Papageno sounds all right on this shore.

4:7

**Alex**

It is over twenty years ago. My father-in-law  
And I leave the parked car and walk towards  
The sheer cliff of stone in the midst of  
The Rocky Mountains. He smiles slightly,  
Pleased. I myself am not sure what I'm looking for.  
However, it is a pleasant day, despite the gap  
In communication as high as the mountains  
And as long as the years. It is not deliberate,  
As both our skills are inadequate. Both of us  
Want to say something more, but cannot find  
The way. We walk beside the cliff face, looking  
Upwards from time to time to make a silent point  
About immensity, and it is into this that he enters  
Some years later, crazed by life, and all of us  
Still unsure what to say and what to look for.

4:8

### Till Then

I listen to the Mills Brothers, and  
My heart begins to ache, knowing I  
Should have asked these questions  
When there still was time:

When you escaped from Hamburg  
During the RAF firestorm, were you  
Injured? How did you get through  
The city? Who was the companion  
You had? Why was it him? Who else  
Did you know in the labour camp?  
How long were you imprisoned?  
What work did the Nazis set you to?  
How did you get from Hamburg  
Back to the Netherlands? What route  
Did you take? What dangers did you  
Encounter? Where did you hide  
In the countryside? Who were the farmers?  
What did you do for those two years?  
How did you manage to survive?  
Did your family know where you were?  
How did you get through  
The Hunger Winter? Were you even  
In that part of the country? How did  
You feel when the Germans were  
Conquered and peace declared? When  
Did you return to Leiden? What  
Did you feel when you returned home?  
When did you decide you wanted  
To leave, forever? When did you meet  
My mother? How did you fall in love  
With her? Why did you love me  
As you did?

Had I asked, even without answer  
I could have known you better

Than I made an effort to.  
I would have known more of myself  
That I now can never know.  
How I misunderstood you. How careless  
I was in my support. How little did I think  
That my leaving wounded you forever,  
And that what I do  
Would be impossible  
Had you not done much more  
First.

4:9

### The Sixth Dream

I

Yesterday evening snow fell furiously  
In the mountains, and we missed  
The rest of the Bartók string quartets.  
This morning, we find large clearings left in deep snow:  
Elk sheltering from the blowing wind.  
Away from the impossibility of the office,  
I read about Shakespeare, of whom next to  
Nothing is known, having departed as invisible  
As the great cervids who vanished with the night.

At breakfast, I cannot any more read  
The tiny PLU code on an apple.

Sometimes my mind whitens in the vertigo of the day;  
Sometimes my body tingles with the wrong  
Kind of sensation; often I cannot sleep  
As I descend into darkness. In the snowstorm  
Of my mind I hear symphonies by Sibelius;  
In the invisibility of what I still do not know  
About my portion of fate, late sonatas for piano  
By Beethoven search in my mind. My uncertainty is like  
A constant curtain of falling snow, through  
Whose drifts I have no choice but to wander on,  
Fragments of dreams images that re-appear,  
And then disappear into the mislaid past.

II

In the blizzard I have lost the sound  
Of Bartók and the sight of the sun;  
And the temptress of the snows  
Unveils her sleep-filled eyes and stares  
Into the depths of mine. She wants  
To embrace me in the lovelessness  
Of time, icy intercourse amongst

The cold drifts white against  
The vastness covered in the darkness  
Of white. The art of choked sounds  
Squeals into my failing ears, her hand  
Turning my cheeks ever more into  
Solid flesh. I seek the encampment  
Of my joy, and my release, but I  
Falter; and as I do, I wonder what  
The sad melody that repeats itself  
Will find at its end; or will the end  
Not ever be known, not ever felt.



**4:10**

### **Capriccio**

The master of the marionettes cuts the strings,  
Falls away into the medieval arms  
Of Arlecchino and Colombina,  
While the vagabond aria chortled  
By Pagliaccio is overmastered by the crowd—  
Where the bottler resumes his work,  
Punchinello wobbling away  
From the damask angel of the scarred professor,  
Cutting through canvas at the back of the tent,  
Watching the horses wandering into the forest  
To encampments of brigands.  
Ah, the puppeteer sits, legs askew,  
Behind the stage, contemplating  
The components of reincarnation,  
As seraphim emerge to raise him on the breeze  
Flowing from the faraway mountains  
Where the gates of comedy are open.

4:11

### **Magic Gathering**

The lyre tinkles amongst the priests, who sing  
A merry song as they drift from the sacerdotal dais  
Towards the casks filled with holy wine—a *singspiel*  
In northern Alberta sung before dinner is served  
At the Legion hall, the aroma of overcooked moose meat  
Hovering in the air, the fragrance of cinnamon  
Above the trays of apple pie, as the clinking of glasses  
Announces the speech of the local politician, holding  
Votes like communion wafers—never mind if you  
Really believe, as long as you stay a member of the church.

Afterwards in the parking lot, considered concerns  
Are expressed with the sureness of dogma, absolution  
A desirable thing before the truck weaves off  
Into the crystal aurora of night. At the 3000' landing strip,  
The twin prop plane is readied to fly the speaker  
Back to Edmonton, tomorrow's cabinet session  
A requisite for the sometimes religious, beer fumes  
Rising towards his nostrils as his intestines fight  
The remains of the ruminant. Nearby, the lyres tinkle.

4:12

### Self-portrait at 63

My wife opens the curtains on the day after  
The beginning of my 64<sup>th</sup> year: the mountain  
Forest framed within the glass of the window  
Is pale with snow, like a scene from a painting  
By Bruegel, or of Dutch countryside  
In the Golden Age. Sitting at this composition,  
I think of Vermeer's *camera obscura*, then  
*The Love Letter* seen in Vancouver in 2009.  
Already two years ago and three provinces  
Since. I have returned to become a hunter  
In the snow, looking at skaters on the frozen  
River and curlers at the Banff Springs Hotel.  
Fleetingly, I see images of my Vienna of yesterdays,  
Knowing the last third of my masculinity  
Will continue to crumble, at last to fall  
Upon an icy slab in the remote silence  
Of the northern forest, like the disappearing  
Sounds of a last symphony by Sibelius.

The scene fixes me. Yet I cannot seem  
To relinquish where I came from, its history  
That transfixes me still. I stand on  
The promontory of this winter, looking to  
The jagged mountains whitened by cold,  
Magpies flying precariously from frozen tree  
To tree. I am near and far, my past  
Silhouetted against the snow. The glassy  
Rectangle before me is the tableau that waits  
For the film of creation. Snow begins gently  
To fall.

I am warm. I am nearing home at last.

**4:13**

**Spirits**

I descend into the drinking of destiny:  
Personal control abdicated by its presence;  
Fate that will wake on the doorstep of  
The sanatorium of the mind in convulsions  
Of contempt, already waiting for the relapse  
Of obliterating resurrection, the resumption of belief  
Buoyed by redemption so certain it sways  
In the moonlight that illuminates the night.

**4:14**

**Finale in Several Parts**

In the confines of the countryside fortress,  
Leonore's expressive areolae are repressed  
In the politics of the dungeon. Go slow, said the jailer,  
Raising and rolling the Jesus stone from the cistern,  
Coveting the approbation of her anonymity,  
Private enemies chaining the nobleman  
Beneath the choral breathing of convicts;  
Thinking forward to  
The Friday music in Parsifal's forbidden meadow,  
And the tam-tam at Babi Yar that reverberates  
Over the sudden corpses cast into the ravine:  
Guarding the gladness  
Of difference, newborn suckling blue-eyed  
At the nipples of eugenic handmaids.

When the order sounds, Leonore uncovers herself  
In the courtyard, the nearby hamlet spilling in,  
Overlapping suspensions knocking three times at the gate,  
Schikaneder tinkling amongst the men's chorus  
As he watches acts of commission free of tax,  
The performance overseen by ministers of the state  
Who recognize the onset of urges too old to be new.

Proscenium Five

## Passacaglia Pier

The blessed end / of all things eternal / do you know how I reached it? /  
Deepest suffering / of grieving love / opened my eyes: / I saw the world end.  
— Lines rejected by Richard Wagner from the closing scene of  
*Die Götterdämmerung* but printed in the definitive text of 1872



*Johann Sebastian Bach, Passacaglia and Fugue in c minor, BWV 582.  
Sharon Pond at the Casavant organ in Christchurch Cathedral,  
Fredericton, New Brunswick, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008*

**5:1**

**Insurrection**

From inside Esterhaz emanate the frail sounds  
Of an evening's symphony by Haydn, while  
In the forest the darkness whispers like flutes  
And crackles like the breaking notes of hunting horns.

The insurgent lies and waits, furtive in needs and longings,  
The moisture of the night weighing upon his clothes,  
Sleep dropping onto his eyes. They close slowly to  
The nearly unheard coda of a movement played muted and *sostenuto*.

In the disconnections of morning, staggering away  
From skirmishes to rejoin the partisans, he searches  
For songs concealed in the countryside. Banished men,  
They are unexpectedly fraught with freedom, contemplate  
Form that explores content, like the composer who makes clear  
An ever-present newness, as if all truth were its statement.

**5:2**

**Education of the Dead**

Explain to me the intricacies of your atrocities  
And why they mean so much.  
I am skinless in my understanding,  
Without limbs as I walk.  
You are the impresario of death,  
The agent of the sudden apocalypse of shame.  
I shudder at your magnificence,  
Watch your guns execute the innocent.  
Explain to me your exterminating angel  
And why her wings break upon her back.



**5:3**

**Evangelist**

Into an afterlife of anathema stalks the zealot,  
Treasured prophet of worship, the pastor  
Of peace who preaches parsimonious tolerance,  
Exile of the unbeliever, the convert's contempt  
Of the unfaithful and changeless world. In any  
Acapulco, fondling the skin of naked rigours,  
Soaking in tequila and tonic to quell his distress,  
Heaven finds him, a certainty so abstract  
He vacations with the blessings of his god.

**5:4**

### **Bystanders**

Desdemona takes in his prowess, whereas  
Othello venerates his wife overmuch.  
Yet the storm overtakes Cyprus, Iago  
At last revealed by the rain, the malignant  
Quest of destruction no longer  
That troublesome illusion of imagination.

Those bystanders who would kiss know him.  
All through the centuries the armies march,

Burn children and crops, execute partisans,  
Exact tribute. On the starving shores  
Of icebound lakes, peasants wonder  
Whether to take to arms: the intruder  
Is an emblem of confidence, and sleeps  
With those who have slept with the dead.

**5:5**

### **One Horse of the Iron Apocalypse**

The homeless rest beside the Seattle Safeway,  
Where Neil Young is played inside  
And the ATM is out of service. But past  
Pagliacci Pizza on Queen Anne the unkempt  
Swarm into Peso's—Young men with uninspired  
Stubble, and young women demonstrating  
Breasts too bare to touch—the tin drummer  
Sleeping at the corner of Mercer, the old woman  
Calculating senior rate at the three-for-one-cinema.  
Across the crumpled concrete sidewalks,  
Litter swirls in the ocean breeze,  
Whirls round feet and whispers away:  
The wonder of America this tantalizing taste  
Of encroaching prosperity, cigarette butt  
By cigarette butt approaching the bus stop,  
Where veterans in wheel chairs wait for  
Public transportation to kneel at their feet.

5:6

*Largo*



— Dmitri Shostakovich, *Symphony 6/I*

BlackBerry off, Zinfandel in glass:  
The sixth symphony of Shostakovich  
Moves through the coastal cottage, elegy  
Respiring like the green, massive waves  
Of the nearby Pacific that crash on destitute  
Beaches, the waters' roaring arrival  
A majesty before which the kingdoms of men  
Are nothing. Hail falls suddenly in the twilight.  
The birds fall silent. Black cars drive  
Along the highway. The symphony goes on,  
Further and further into a wordless realm  
Of sensation, killing squads and the KGB  
At the margins of wonder, fatality filling  
The chambers of rifles with lethal lead.

5:7

### **Assault**

Clandestine collusion cavorts  
In the artificial  
Courtyard on the hill, olive tapenade  
And Pacific lox on the too large table  
In a room too calculated for  
The too new piano next the  
Violin too prominent on its stand.

The listless fissures  
Of the mind's geology inhabit  
This eerie asylum where  
Delayed fractures of ideology  
Drop unregenerate into night pools  
Of disintegration—the moonlight as cloudy  
As expedient revisions  
Of history—all  
Authenticated wrong or right,  
No matter the legislature  
Of reality, and all  
Either worshipped  
Or disdained, despite the counsel of  
The obligations of power.

**5:8**

**“here everything silently screams”**

The muck collapses inward as bones seep  
To the surface, a broken ulna with lost carpals,  
Rotted marrow mixed with the mire of men.

The grave heaves towards the relentless gift of the rain,  
Reveals its concealments  
As patches of linen bleached black by  
An overpowered earth, dead lives blinded by bullets  
Unseen by both murdered and murderers,  
Gentle tremors taking both  
Into the silence.

5:9

### Postscript to Siegfried



*Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot*  
Break with hungry men thy bread  
— J.S. Bach, Cantata 39, Chorus

Near Noguchi's *Black Sun*, the man  
Of the silver Porsche trains  
His Doberman bitch—cana lilies,  
Translucent orange in the noon light,  
The fragrant barrier to the Asian museum.  
Perhaps the dog daydreams of torn flesh,  
Of guarding Hitler's score of *Das Rheingold*,  
His fingers running over the staves, as  
Bombs fall above the bunker in Berlin.  
Perhaps the manufacturers of cars  
Ignore internees invisible  
Across continents, as they convince  
The Chancellor with prototypes. Perhaps  
The black sun's eccentric air  
Absorbs the rainbow to Valhalla,  
The eagles' lair conquerors confiscate,  
There to quarter weak spirits and the hate  
Their inability hungers to torture with.

**5:10**

**Declension**

Stumbling broken-legged into the nuclear crater  
I become the radiation of the elements, an atomic  
Chemistry boiled in blood. My stomach  
Draws and quarters itself, the stochastic damage  
Of my humanity. The dead Kurosawa dreams  
Of my ionizing molecules undetectable  
By human senses. My prodrome completes.  
Ulceration overcomes what is the best of me.  
I am a blistered act of fission. Necrosis is my universe.



**5:11**

**The Light of Darkness**

At the instant of annihilation,  
I will wander with Tristan and Isolde  
In gardens of resolution, dead in life and transfigured  
By departure; my voyages on the many oceans  
As airy as church sonatas in the Vatican, and sweet  
As concertos for many violins by Vivaldi.

Inside the new temple where intimacies  
Are more alive than the centre of time, I love you  
As I cannot love anyone else, dedication sealed  
By all that remains and all what the music of the future  
Has promised me it must forever sing.

5:12

*Réseau*

Flora MacDonald is in Afghanistan,  
And the television images of the five lakes of the Band-e Amir  
Palpate the spiritual tithe of my five senses,  
As if the healing of my destiny devolves  
From the shattered kismet of the Bamyán Buddhas,  
Liberation that declines the gift of insult at the occasion of intolerance.

The obsidian reflections of the silk routes open themselves  
Before the nomadic pilgrim, long beyond the Hanseatic League  
Of the Netherlands Circle, who has left Venice to embark  
For the calcite light of Alexandria, seeking still the delta of the Rufiji  
From the stopping point where he looks out over  
The Indian Ocean at Dar-es-Salaam.

It is the music of his heart that he hears:  
Until now ever more faraway, yet now ever so near,  
It trembles, as a cluster of tones that seek themselves  
In one another, soars through the gates  
To the traders who gift dried fruit to the sayer of  
The glorious, sobbing panegyric that desires to challenge love,  
The caravan masters who travel to bring musk and pearls  
To adorn the ravishing face of the world for the eye of the seer.

5:13

### The Clocks

The clocks in André's home chime relentlessly  
Every quarter hour, bent over the aging of time  
Like a woodworker turning cherry wood on  
The lathe of the saints who no longer keep faith.  
The grandfather clock is adorned with fleurs-de-lys:  
The keyhole, *j'ai dit*, "*la clé du coeur Québécois*," like  
The peregrinatic soul that nearly froze  
Four hundred years ago  
On the isolation of Île Ste-Croix. Champlain,

And amongst the orderly clutter on the refurbished walls,  
A formal picture of Lévesque,  
A photo autographed, *amitiés*, by Guy Lafleur,  
Everywhere devotions to Jésus,  
All adorn the timeliness of passing: the remembrances  
Of what we all recall,  
Time striking once more in the middle of the Montreal night,  
Thinking,  
*Je me souviens.*

**5:14**

**Setting Out**

Alone on the highway with the blizzard,  
Like the grey menace of a Kurosawa image.  
Along the tainted trajectory of the disappearing road  
My thoughts focus on self-preservation,  
Debate alternatives. I drive on slowly,  
Wondering if time will win. In this country  
Of the north, we are the visitors of fortune,  
Are supplicants before the power beyond us,  
The great snows over all the roads of endeavour.

Proscenium Six

## The Ferryman's Obolus

*For a walk in the late afternoon,  
and listened to Shostakovich's fifth symphony in full...  
At one point I found myself looking at  
a frozen brook off Union Street,  
then on Hawthorne Street  
staring down the length of the snow-covered railroad tracks,  
and later on West Street  
looking up at the moon;  
and, Shostakovich's music in my ears,  
conceived the notion of ... a sort of cordial rapprochement with this town ...  
at the same time to be the point of real beginning  
for the abschied that is inevitable.*

*(Journals,  
St. Stephen, New Brunswick,  
January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008)*



*View of Howe Sound, British Columbia, from the Bowen Island ferry,  
7 October 2010*

6:1

## Bedrock



— Joseph Haydn, *Symphony 51/II*

Metamorphic  
Metamorphosis,  
Granitic mountains of the north  
Preserving departure's return—  
Sediment of marine drift the Quaternary erosion  
Laid before the Salish sun glancing  
From alien glaciers into  
The blue shimmer of sunken islands of the sea.

The persona of the outwash carries its anima  
To the delta's determinant, emanating  
A partial, impartial perpetuity  
That buoys the ship's bow in  
The pelagic waters of Pacific sound  
Greening with waves whose flourishes are  
The chrysalis of the sea change of arrival.

**6:2**

**Mount Gardner's Slope**

Nedra Talley is the Baptist in the black and white  
YouTube frame, so won't you be  
The coastal forest's rainfall freighting its grey fog  
Over the flanks of the mountain, Stalin  
Looming by Shostakovich, Hitler  
Leaving Linz to be resolved by Mahler. Then,  
Gaze wandered westward, the bombed-out  
Munich opera house morning light  
On the ocean at the cape, the shoreline bluffs  
Awakened from a gracious dream, the people saying  
'Honour your masters, even should the empire  
'Dissolve in mist.' After the award, Walter thinks she says,  
"I'm Estelle of the Ronettes." so won't you

6:3

### Symphonic Night



— Anton Bruckner, *Symphony 8/I*

Bruckner's providential flax pulls through  
The hackles of hair at the base of my neck.  
He sees what I do not. It is immersed  
In faith. He sees beyond Death,  
Bleak sentry before Whom music subsides.

It is night on the island. A disturbed  
Silence breaks against Mount Gardner.  
The closing hours of August collapse  
Into the darkness. Like a wanderer  
From the spirit world of the immortals,  
My quest comes closer to the apertures  
Of my heart. Will It now drink all this blood?  
Empty the heart of its nervous motion? Still  
The overt emptiness that is as restless  
As sleep? Or will I be released again  
Into the being I cannot quite grasp? announcing,  
That the thread of myself will be fully spun,  
And the cloth, glorified by the terror of music,  
Be at last made whole.



### Adventitious Salvation

Rasputin stalks his victim inside  
The Romanesque halls of the legislature,  
Identifying politicians who might  
Assassinate him, who forget  
The invulnerability of his reputation,  
The regard he is held in  
By the church and its occasional followers.  
He has the measure of these supplicants,  
Is able to balance self-interest  
With all the attributes of good government.

Rasputin paces the ferry dock,  
His imperial knapsack that is woven  
From purple silk and embroidered with  
Orthodox crosses in sun yellow,  
Slung on one shoulder. The knife  
Slides between Romans and Corinthians,  
Psalms cut to order with proverbs  
At the ready. He tramps onto the boat,  
Beard wild in the afternoon wind,  
To determine which motorcycle he covets.

Rasputin soon drops the dislocated biker  
Beside the toilet seat, and crashes down stairs  
To the open deck. He races the machine  
Over the ramp and up the two hills  
In search of the engineer's wife. This  
Accomplished, he runs the Harley off  
The edge of a steep slope, adjusts  
His sandals, and walks back on the ocean.

Rasputin knows that they are bloodless.  
Even prophets cannot defeat him; we die  
For the resurrection;  
And I, he thinks, am its temporary anti-Christ,  
The devil's stand-in who desolates the land,

Even though the czarina, ever grateful,  
Thanks him for it while waiting for him  
To die.

6:5

### **Another Sign of Welcome**

I see the grandeur of Death in sudden corners,  
As I move through my seventh decade,  
Feeling all the cares the beloved bestows in silence:  
I become emotion, sudden to sense the waters  
Of an eternal river brush by my body, as my eyes  
Rise to the rosy hue of the twilit horizon,  
Hands beckoning the air to turn to stone.

My thoughts linger in the crevices of the airport,  
Half-watch the half-silent plasma screens,  
Captions giving words to what was seen  
Several seconds before. My gaze planes  
To the runways, visible in the autumn light  
Beyond the captured air, displaced from  
Itself in the boarding lounge. Repeatedly,  
There are final calls—and then scatterings  
Of faded music dissolve into themselves.

Today I am the way of my wherewithal,  
Ready to ascend on western wings  
Over the mountains. This morning,  
From the ferry, I watched a biplane fly low  
Over the coast mountains, and I knew  
How dangerously beautiful that flight was,  
As will be all the ones that now wait for me.

6:6

### Divinity

‘The sound of Heaven is like no sound at all:’  
Intones the whitening calligraphy  
Of this long-dead Korean voice—

For from above, the red light striates  
The mountains, as cranes carry immortals  
Homeward from enlightenment, the tinkling of small bells  
Devotions in the vivid lament of joy.

The black sun, graven with the motion of stasis,  
Eccentric in the solar warmth, receives  
The centre of darkness where light  
Seeks to dwell, where the moon is a white jar  
Of endurance, molded in the hand of the infinite.

**6:7**

### **The Gospel Truth**

My ultimate sin is my resurrection: it was  
A statement of faith I looked forward to.  
Lazarus, too, felt it had merit, and informed  
The media accordingly. Television ran  
The tape loop without end, and the cathedral  
Bells of hand-held devices pealed in offices  
And automobiles across the city and deep  
Into the countryside. Ornithologists  
Complained that the errant sound disturbed  
Nesting herons, but the bald eagles cackled  
As they flew through the shafts of searchlight  
That sought further answers in the heavens.

I myself felt a certain sense of renewal,  
The air fresher when the stone was rolled away.  
Rock musicians were enthusiastic, and  
Classicists pondered unendurable music  
That cluttered the ears of governments in power;  
But I knew that the second coming was going  
To last when Charon backed up the ferry  
At the wharf near the marina, handed me  
A coffee from the ship's canteen, and said:  
'Welcome back; Mike's waiting on the mainland.'

Proscenium Seven

## **The Sunken Archipelago**

*was du bist, bist du nur durch Verträge*  
what thou art, art thou only through treaties  
— Fasolt to Wotan, in Richard Wagner, *Das Rheingold*, 2

7:1

### Quiescence

In my indigo dream I am silvery water  
And golden stone, catching the refraction  
Of a forest of mountain snow luminous  
With winter light. In my indigo dream  
I am held so close to the warmth of the earth  
That my translucence shines  
In the cloisters of my heart where transcendence  
Appears to beckon me to a place  
Beyond my seclusion, my auric presence  
Immersed in the stream of imagination,  
The electrum of my shining entity flowing  
Into a reverie of permanganate visions.  
In my indigo dream I am golden water  
And silvered stone, I am the image upon  
The deepening surface, I am that I am  
The motionless motion of eternal mortality.

7:2

### Libretto from Leiden

Violetta's *cantabile* entangles the silences  
Of my pleasure, my salon ensnared with laughter  
Lured by last night's cognac, self-pity  
Softening its *cabaletta* behind the murky arras,  
Sparefucile scurrying over from  
An antecedent opera to drive the point home.

Prince Hamlet lugs my guts away, chortling about  
Falstaff's kidney; the proscenium is my precious  
Admixture: limelight readying to go aflame  
And immolate all lands east of the Rhine,  
Vermeer in the gods of the sunken theatre  
Catching the gleam for his luminous palette.

I am ready to come home.  
Van Swieten assures me a commission  
Can be found. Rembrandt has sent round  
A note to come to dinner. The night watch  
Assembles in my deepest past, and I  
Pass through the darkest part of the canvas  
Into the dark invisibility behind  
The image of myself.



### Curtis and the Conclave of Invertebrates

Curtis waded ashore, the sole survivor  
 Of the wounded quinquereme,  
 Carrying with him his Aristotle and his bag  
 Of forensic tools, unsure if the example of Alexander  
 Had reached any furtive inhabitants, cloistered  
 In the forests, indistinguishable as a kill of venison.  
 So did Curtis come to town, his erratic journeys  
 At their manifest end, while the grey rain drizzled  
 On the grey, feral road that rose from the cove.

But as the last of the broken vessel sank  
 Into the silent sea, sudden denizens, crammed with discontent,  
 Unleashed scores of dogs in wayward queues,  
 And positioned prams and amphorae up the incline,  
 Where Mr Hyde and Brutus, both double exposures,  
 Were coiling tongues in front of the market gate,  
 Dissecting constitutions and the idiosyncrasies  
 Of academies interiorized in forgetfulness.  
 ‘The law must be said, or the law will be dead;’  
 Said they, as the mixed aroma of their breath  
 Turned down the cut flowers, the daisies withering  
 As the repetitive appetite of the snail wound through them—  
 Elemental electricity wrestling against scholars’ theses,  
 Lost as spent perfumes in a late afternoon  
 Of prepossessed politics, playing out  
 In the peripatetic minds of portions of an indignant populace.  
 Porridge it is they think they do not want. Ungainly  
 Sinecures are what the worms thrive on.

Brutus, ever at his water-flea length, is a spectacle  
 As lost as errant corneal transplants, speaking possibly  
 Of impossibilities he cannot master, another creature  
 Who wants to feel free of conscience, held upright  
 Only by the vagaries of the breeze that twirls round  
 The cruciform shaft of a purloined sceptre wanted  
 By the authorities. Porcia stands nearby, swallowing

Live coals, nervously eyeing the crowd for signs  
Of Calpurnia. The marks upon her forearms hiss  
In the maritime wind, bleach the smoke that crawls about  
Her frame; Brutus intent as he slides down the shaft  
Of the sceptre, while Mr Hyde inches into the roadway  
And marshalls his mass into a forest filled  
With nesting herons fast with plans disowned by Plutarch;  
While the cross-bearer Brutus, chokes in the fire of the zodiac.

Mr Hyde and Brutus were two of the conclave  
Of invertebrates who met weekly, whether they wanted to  
Or not; whether there was anything to determine  
Or not; but, in any case, never to decide a thing. Rapt  
With their own succession and the banalities of their  
Sacrifice, they now approach yet another Curtis  
To mask this inertia, having in advance prepared  
The usual plans of assassination. Their namesakes dipped  
In a vivisected dishonour of blood, the conclave wants no change,  
And so drops in disguise into the chambers of the damned.

And amongst them all bobs Dr Moreau, a jellyfish in a basin  
Of bathos, revolving a geology of faults as a stone  
Of immobility, high on the hill where the sun strikes  
Men hard, where the flood rose to where the ark was undone  
By by-laws, and all possessions carried away  
In a sacred noise enclosed by a flash of secular light  
In the darkness of the night that knew no paradise.

The conclave communicates in a semblance of tongues,  
Infesting haphazard heaps of scraps for sustenance,  
Consuming so much that more is wanted both early and late,  
Quickly consumed on table to ensure endemic confusion.  
Convened in secret council, the conclave instructs Curtis that  
‘All that is needed is to kill the sons of Caesar, and uphold  
‘The laws, while we turn the land to the fate we the conclave  
‘Have decided upon. For this we will reward you well, for a while.  
‘Remember always: Return us the Garden of Eden, by the shores  
‘Of the guarded mountain. And burn without mercy all the boats  
‘Of weary transports over the Acheron, and turn Orpheus away.  
‘Here is the poisoned chalice. Drink deep of its deceit.’

Pandora archives the plague papers of the royal house,

Obsessed with order driven asunder in the starless night  
On roads she cannot see, even as she crabs across  
Nocturnal surfaces seeking out broken grammar,  
Cluttering the ground with uneven locomotion and  
Incomprehensible leavings—accounting for everything  
That needs no summation, and summing nothing that needs  
To be accounted for. Transparent as desolation,  
Not ever remorseful in her elisions of reality,  
She scurries from place to ever remote places  
Of pointlessness, history exiled from all the islands of  
The sunken archipelago, chartering protocols held still  
By spiders' webs, the unwilling wind clamouring  
Through them, cleansing conspiracy of all its dupes.

Robespierre, whose house stinks of dead dog  
And mammalian dirt, shakes his bowl of wine  
As he posits theorems of life and death, squirming  
Through fields of rotting grain, unerring as the passion  
That feeds on the leavings of eagles, persistent  
As the maggot that would blind every eye of those  
Who see through his shrunken soul. The stones in the meadows  
Recoil from his touch, debauchery lying upon his rings  
Like anger in the silver evening gleam of truculent  
Village squares. He is enamored of his guillotine, slides  
Himself over its wooden edges, wondering where  
The planks were taken from, and if the curtsies  
Of the woodcutters' wives are deep enough  
To warrant his barren attentions, raging on  
The lost terrace as he approaches yet again with his cape.

Nary's a pond of blood so deep as that cultivated  
By Mme Defarge, knitting nothing save her faith  
In the revolution. She keeps to her judgment chair,  
Squatting on the national realm, tarantular consequences  
Immaterial to her land-lust; as she watches,  
Ever so closely, ever without trust, as the blade  
Slices through the necks of the condemned, as  
Heads fall before her into the basket set upon  
The uncut grass, birds singing from the gallows  
As the tumbrels pull into the centre of the universe,  
The wool from the sheep that Cassius keeps  
Woven into a garment so misshapen it has no name

But the names it counts; and though she swells  
In the marketplace, she is the butt of Robespierre,  
And in the end he will make her end another of his.

Cassius lives with Brutus in the mouth of Satan,  
Where Cassius burdens Hell with celebration  
Of the birth of Adolf Hitler. Not made contrite  
By his inheritance, nor humbled by the hubris  
Of history, an insular propensity has impaired  
His appetite, embittered his betters, and exposed  
His proclivities for broken orchards and ploys  
Amongst the young who are penniless but not proud.  
He cannot explain his secrets, for they are empty  
And want only typographical semblances of allure,  
And when Satan sleeps, Cassius stands on  
The burning road from Hell, thumb outstretched  
Wishing that foot-candles of fire will take him in  
And take him at last to the luminescence that  
His mind seeks to describe in many, always lost, syllables.  
And so he reticulates through the foamy brim  
Of earthworm sentences hidden behind his teeth, and slithers on.

Curtis considered his instructions, and then his instructors;  
Wondering why any man would undertake  
To execute such a plan without a plan; and decided:  
'From this I best depart,' but first let me find the island's  
Fabled compost heap near the fen by the foreshore,  
Lock these invertebrates upon it, and let Nature take her course.

So did Curtis govern himself, and soon after sailed on  
On a raft built of ethics, for his artistry, and Aristotle,<sup>1</sup>  
Did not fail him.

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<sup>1</sup>... we ought, so far as possible as in us lies, to put on immortality, and do all that we can to live in conformity with the highest that is in us; for even if it is small in bulk, in power and preciousness it far excels all the rest. Indeed it would seem that this is the true self of the individual, since it is the authoritative and better part of him; so it would be an odd thing if a man chose to live someone else's life instead of his own.... [w]hat is best and most pleasant for any given creature is that which is proper to it. *Aristotle, Ethics, X:vii*

## Acknowledgements

Some of these poems first appeared in the following publications:

- “Evangelist,” *Stroll of Poets Anthology 2014* (Edmonton, AB), in press.  
“The Start of My Own Political Campaign,” *Nashwaak Review* (Fredericton, NB), 30/31, 46 (2013).  
“Self-portrait at 58,” *Grain* (Saskatoon, SK), 41/4, 100 (2013).  
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“Chrysoglott,” *Canadian Literature* (Vancouver, BC), 216, 100 (2013).  
“The Clocks,” *Nashwaak Review* (Fredericton, NB), 28/29, 197 (2012).  
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“Road to Recovery,” *Prairie Fire* (Winnipeg, MB), 31/2, 97 (2010).  
“Libretto from Leiden,” *WordWorks* (Vancouver, BC), 18 (Summer 2010).  
“Chamber Musician,” *WordWorks* (Vancouver, BC), 18 (Summer 2010).  
“The Construction of Things,” *The Fiddlehead* (Fredericton, NB), 243, 45 (2010).

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*Gorham, NH*  
*North Conway, NH*  
*North Truro, MA*  
*Port Jervis, NY*  
*Meriden, CT*  
*Absecon, NJ*  
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*Uchuelet, BC*  
*Vancouver, BC*

*Bowen Island, BC*  
*29 December 2009*

*Peace River, AB*  
*10 July 2011*

*Edmonton, AB*  
*24 January 2013*

*Edmonton, AB*  
*8 March 2014*