HE DROPS THE SILVER CHAIN OF SOUND

Music as Characterization in the Novel

A Thesis in Two Parts:

Creative:

Fourteen Variations From White: A New novel Based around the instrumentation and structure of Edward Elgar's "Variations on a Theme"

Critical:

He Drops the Silver Chain of Sound: How Intratextual Musical Association Develops and Defines Character in Novels

By Emma Hooper, Ph.D., University of East Anglia, School of Literature and Creative Writing, April 2010

Emma Hooper 3444066
University of East Anglia
PhD in Creative and Critical Writing

Abstract

My PhD theses explore how the role of music in novels can move beyond simple inspiration to active, working component, through use of musical reference, form, and structure. My two doctoral dissertations seek to explore how this breed of intermediality, when successfully rendered, can yield new insights and revelations to the prose itself, specifically in terms of characterization. My primary thesis (creative thesis) is a new novel, *14 Variations From White,* with characterization based on structures and instrumentation found in Elgar's *Variations on a Theme* ("The Enigma Variations"). Principally, it addresses the issue of characterization in light of this intermediality from the creative side of things: what specific instrumental association can bring to the process of writing novelistic characters. The critical component of my project explores how, in existing literature, the linking of novelistic characters with particular pieces of music can affect their process of characterization, with a specific focus on *The Song Beneath the Ice* by Joe Fiorito, The *Time of Our Singing* by Richard Powers, and *An Equal Music* by Vikram Seth.

Emma Hooper 3444066
University of East Anglia
PhD in Creative and Critical Writing

Table of Contents

Statements

1) I, Emma Hooper, the candidate, state that none of the material offered here has been previously submitted for any other degree at any other University. All submitted work is my own, individually (not joint work).

2) The total word count of the creative thesis (novel) is 50,923 words, and the total word count of the critical paper (including footnotes) is 21,465 words.

Emma Hooper 3444066
University of East Anglia
PhD in Creative and Critical Writing

Creative Thesis

14 Variations From White

A novel in musical form

by Emma Hooper

The whole town, it seemed, went to the bridge, the town's one bridge. They went to the bridge, alone or in groups, with families, with neighbors, and they threw children's things over the side, into the freezing water. Take it, take it, they said, and be satisfied.

Sometimes these things would wash themselves up onto the banks and Dickie, out walking, would find them. He would always throw them back in. Right to the very middle of the water, so they wouldn't get lost again.

0

There were birds everywhere.

When Madin arrived in Saint Éfrouée there were birds everywhere. So many more than in the place where he had grown up. There there were just two kinds: storks and gulls. One for life and one for death, his mother had said. But Saint Éfrouée had a million different birds, each with its own song. All Madin could do was listen; a cacophony when he stepped off the train. He came to study electrical engineering and ended up an orchestra conductor. Among other things. A husband. A son-in-law. A son of a bitch.

Walking from the station, Madin passed closed shops. The shutters drawn. The two people Madin passed, on the other side of the street, wore grey coats, heads down. They nodded towards him but stayed silent. It was a Sunday.

The man who answered Madin's knock wore an apron like a butcher's, with no shirt underneath. He held some kind of tool or weapon. You're the guy I'm supposed to kill, he said, then laughed and laughed. I'm Dickie, he said. Your neighbour. Both his voice and his laugh were higher and softer than Madin expected. He was the first person Madin had ever met with tattoos on his face. They were on his eyelids, one red and one black; he blinked too fast for Madin to tell what they were.

The house where Dickie lived, and where Madin would be living, was old and stone, taller than it was wide, with a staircase so narrow that Madin had to hold his bag tight against his chest to carry it up to his apartment. It held four apartments, altogether. A baker lives on the top floor, said Dickie, above you. She also writes for the paper, sometimes. She has glasses and always smells wonderful. Late thirties, just a few years younger than me. He ran a hand across his bald head. He did not mention her name.

The next apartment, on the second floor, was Madin's. It wasn't big, but it wasn't small. The stone walls were wonderfully cool when he drew his hand across them.

Then there was Dickie, on the ground floor. Come by any time. Really.

And an empty apartment in the basement. No one wants to live there because the snow blocks off the windows and you live in darkness for six months, sometimes more, said Dickie. Sometimes it blocks me off too, but usually only for a day or two. Dickie was holding a penny in his closed hand, warming it. They were in Madin's apartment. He had shown him how to work the shower and radiator and was now next to the window, holding a penny in his hand. He counted to thirty and Madin waited. Then he opened his hand and held the penny to the frozen window and counted to five. Then he took it away. A circle of heat, where it had been. There, he said, now you can see out a bit, you know, until the heating kicks in.

When Dickie had gone, Madin closed one eye and put the other to the penny's window circle. He could see all the way to the river. Trees and snow and people. People, men and women, standing along the river. Rows of them, all facing the water. Not speaking. Just standing, together, but not touching. Maybe forty of them, maybe more. Shadows blending with the trees'. There were children too, but not as many, and kept back, away, twenty or thirty meters from the adults, from the water. The biggest children held them back with stretched arms. The sun was just starting to set.

That night Dickie made them dinner. Mostly potatoes. He pushed aside a tattoo machine and sterilizer to make an extra space at his table. Madin watched his eyes when he blinked, trying to decipher the red and black. He always came close, but never quite close enough, like when he couldn't remember a word that he knew he knew. Dickie cut and ate his food carefully, methodically. I once had a guy, he said, who got his whole face tattooed blue. The whole thing. His wife had got in an accident and lost an arm and he didn't want people staring at where it used to be. So he got a blue face-tattoo so people would stare at him instead. Some people say it's because he was the one driving and felt guilty. I don't think it matters

either way. Dickie wiped his mouth. You might see them around town, he said. By the end of the week you'll have seen everyone, I figure.

After dinner, Madin walked up the narrow staircase to his apartment. He sat down on the floor with his back against the cold wall. Tomorrow he would begin his course at the Collège Technique de Saint Éfrouée. He was thirty-one years old. His gentle brown hair was thinning and he did not want to be an engineer.

When Madin was eleven years old, he and his brother had attended the annual fête du ville, right before the beginning of Lent. It wasn't late, but because it was already growing dark their mother gave them flash-lights so they could make their way back home along the beach safely, without tripping into the foam or stepping on a crab; Five years of bad luck to anyone who crushes a crab, she said. Remember. It was their first time going alone.

Within half an hour, his brother had spent all his money on a game where you try to smash plates with a baseball, and was ready to go home. Madin, who was a little bit afraid of his brother, decided to buy a ticket for the adult Ferris wheel as a way to use up the rest of his money quickly. He was a tall boy, he was tall enough. He got a whole car to himself.

First, it was wonderful. It felt faster than it looked and went so high. And then back down, past his jealous brother, and then back up again. And around and down and around and up and around and down and around and up and then nothing. Stopped. The couple in the car behind him laughed. The girl in front sighed. Madin looked down. The man in charge had his hands in his back pockets and was talking to another man. He looked tiny. Madin's brother looked at them, then looked up to Madin. Madin breathed very slowly and tried to close his eyes but couldn't. The sweat on his face felt like tears. His brother was shining his flashlight up at him in Morse code. Flashing on and off and on but there were so many other lights down there, flashing, that Madin got confused and couldn't figure out what it meant. His own flashlight rolled on the floor of the car, forgotten.

Thirty-one years old, against the stone wall of his empty though not small apartment, Madin's stomach felt the same way it had on the adult wheel. Exactly the same way.

0.1

Long before Madin arrived, before he was even born, a boy practised scales in octaves, slow and perfect, from the bottom of his piano to the top and back down, each one highlighted with its arpeggio. He always did this, before and after the Saint Éfrouée École de Ballet classes he accompanied, because he couldn't fit, nor afford, a real piano in his apartment and was desperately afraid of losing his technique. First he played scales, for his fingers and his mind, and then he allowed himself to play his pieces. Booming off the mirrors and hard wood, with no soft pink leotards to absorb and warm the sound, he indulged in Scriabin, Rachmaninoff, himself. But not yet. Now it was time for scales.

He had been playing for some of these girls for two or three years now. He watched them grow and noted their changes, hair, body, attitude. He noted when they stopped coming for four or six or nine months and then came back, and when they stopped coming forever. New girls always came and took their places. He watched them and he knew them, but he never spoke with the dancers. That wasn't his place. He spoke with Madam Doohan. Anything that needed relating went through her. She called him Monsieur Le Pianiste even when he began playing for her and was only twelve, barely a monsieur at all. He had a name, but she never used it. He didn't mind though. He didn't mind much, so long as he was able to have the instrument to himself before and after classes for half an hour. As long as he had that, Madame Doohan could do as she liked.

0.2

Madam Doohan lived three houses down from her dance studio, next door to the unfortunate house. That's what everyone on the block called it. It was the only house on the street that had not been re-done or re-built. There was a building code implemented long ago, stating all sorts of things like colour and standard, but, since the unfortunate house was built before the introduction of the code, there was nothing anyone could do about it, unfortunately. A woman lived there, with her daughter, Jeanette. There was no father.

Madam Doohan was bringing them tourtière, as she always did on Saturdays after her last class. She came in and waited while enough mending and laundry was moved off a chair so she could sit down. A busy week? she said. You doing well?

Surviving, said the mother, like every week. She held her hands clasped and in front of her mouth while she spoke, as if she were trying to hide her own voice. Madame Doohan didn't much care for this woman. She loved her the way she loved all neighbors, dutifully, respectfully, and with distance, but she didn't bring tourtière for her. She brought it for Jeanette, who would come down and join them just as soon as her chores were finished, usually by five-thirty. Today it was earlier; Jeanette was allowed to join them at eighteen minutes past five. She had hurried. She hated tourtière, but loved Madame Doohan.

Jeanette, just eleven-years old, had long dark hair that wasn't quite black, but nearly, and that curled around and out of any band or tie she tried to keep it in. Lovely hair. It made grown-ups forget her ungainly height, her quite-big feet. She lived, tall and alone, with her mother. She hadn't even known about fathers or the fact that she was missing one until she'd begun school.

She could dance, Jeanette could. She could throw out her arms and lift her skirts and dance and dance so that she would not even hear when her classmates gathered around her and said:

She can dance

Can she dance.

She can dance.

But during this Saturday visit Jeanette did not dance. Instead she stood. She just stood and listened while the adults conversed in short, polite sentences. Their voices sounded lovely, one against the other. It was normally such a quiet house. Then the kettle started to go and Jeanette's mother got up to fix a second round of tea. Now Madam Doohan was the only one sitting. From where Jeanette stood, the top of her twisted grey bun looked almost edible, it was so perfect. Jeanette resisted the urge she always had to place her hands around it. In her imagination, they would be the perfect size, exactly the right circumference, a comfortable but firm hold. In her imagination, the bun would pop right off into her hands and she could carry it around with her all day, all the time, an absolutely perfect pet, grey and smooth and hers.

How do you do, Jeanette? asked Madame Doohan, turning to face the girl.

Very well, thank you. And how do you do?

Fine, thank you. How are your studies? Have you got much spare time this year? Are you still interested in dancing?

Jeanette knew what Madame Doohan wanted her to say. And she knew what her mother wanted her to say. Eventually, every week, Madame Doohan asked the same question. Jeanette tried to trade off, to please her mother one week and Madame Doohan the next, to be fair. This week was Madame Doohan's turn.

I am, yes, said Jeanette, decisive, sure,

just as the kettle slipped from her mother's hand.

The copper base hit the stone floor terribly loudly and water jumped out of it and onto Jeanette's mother's legs and feet, so hot Jeanette could feel it from where she was standing, three meters away.

Madam Doohan shrieked, long and high, like the sound of the kettle.

Tabarnac, said Jeanette's mother, in a cracked, low, whisper.

Madam Doohan stopped shrieking and stared at her.

Jeanette did not say or do anything, she was frozen trying to remember how to heal burns and what Tabarnac meant. Cold water, a damp dressing and an altar, a word she wasn't allowed to say. Now she could move, Jeanette ran to get a towel.

Every morning for the next three days, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Jeanette's mother spread homemade ointment over the red and bumpy range between where her Saturday skirt had ended, three inches below the knee, and where her boots had begun, at the top of the ankle. She worked sitting down as much as she could, sewing, ironing. When she had to stand, to cook, for example, she always kept one hand pressed down on the counter. When, on the fourth day, Wednesday, nothing had changed, her legs were still not pale, nor smooth, nor calm, she picked up the telephone and called Madam Doohan, just as Jeanette was getting home from school, whacking the snow off her boots on the front step.

Hello Madam Doohan, I'm calling about Jeanette. The burns are fine, thank you, but Jeanette, about Jeanette, I have decided, that if the child wants it, she is free to attend lessons with you, once a week. No, of course we'll find a way to pay you. No, of course. No, of course. We shall see.

Jeanette, just outside the door, heard the whole thing. She jumped into the snow-bank on their lawn and pressed her face all the way into the cold, where she could scream as loud as she felt she needed to, YESYESYES, then returned to the step, cleaned her boots again, and went inside. Hello Maman, she said.

Hello Jeanette, said her mother, and placed a plate of brown toast with brown sugar on the table between them. Just remember, she said, a girl cannot grow up to be a dancer. Once a week, she said. But she was smiling, and so was Jeanette; they never had sugar on a weekday.

Because of her age, because all the beginners' classes were for much younger children, six or seven years old, Jeanette had to start with the intermediate class, on Tuesday evenings. After dinner, at six twenty-five, Madam Doohan would stop by the house and the two of them would walk together to the rehearsal hall, where they would unlock the door for the pianist, who would always be waiting on the front steps. Jeanette got to turn on all the lights. After that, for half an hour, Madam Doohan would wrestle Jeanette's hair into a bun while the boy played his scales up and down, slow and perfect.

Some of the girls were recognizable from school, and some of them were new. One of the new ones was called Lizzie, and was even taller than Jeanette, almost as tall as Madam Doohan. Thank god you're here, she said. Every week Madam Doohan tells us you will be coming and then you never do. Now she can shut up about it. Some of the other girls laughed. Anyways, continued Lizzie, don't worry about being a bastard here. No one's going to give you any heck about it at all. I swear it. Lizzie looked at the other girls one at a time, slow and cold. Besides, I pretty much envy you. Fathers are assholes, not worth having anyways.

They lined up at the barre, all in their issued light-pink leotards, from shortest to tallest, with Madam Doohan in the front. Lizzie was next, then Jeanette. Madam Doohan would do something, lift an arm or bend a knee, and all the girls behind her would echo, like a line of shadows. The piano boy played a Chopin waltz.

It was easy. Madam Doohan had been a bit worried about starting Jeanette with the intermediates and not other beginners, but it was easy. Just like when the kids gathered around her in the school playground, shouting, BÂ-TARD, BÂ-TARD, PÉ-TARD, she could turn off everything except her body until she was perfect, absolutely perfect.

After a while, Jeanette learned to turn off everything except her body *and* her ears. The sounds here were different than those of the playground, no shouting, just the sliding of feet and air, Madam Doohan's steady counting, and, above everything else, and somehow below it too, the piano.

Jeanette grew and improved and grew even more until her feet didn't seem too big for her and she was taller than Lizzie and Madam Doohan. Soon she was fifteen years old and had been advanced to the senior class, which met on Monday and Wednesday nights. Madam Doohan told Jeanette's mother that her daughter had class on Wednesdays and did odd jobs for her on Mondays. This wasn't actually a falsehood, as Jeanette, now with her own key, would walk to the hall herself on a Monday, let in the piano boy, turn on all the lights, and sweep out the dust of the

previous week's chalk and feet to the sound of scales until Madam Doohan and the other girls arrived. She was able to do her own hair now.

She was fifteen. When she was sixteen, Jeanette would finish school and be eligible to enter the École Grande de Ballet in Montreal, should she wish such a thing, should she pass the highly selective auditions, should she be able to find a way to get to Montreal for an audition, should her mother allow it. Madam Doohan's mind was made up. The girl would audition. She would kidnap her and drive her herself if she had to. Although she had never driven a car in her life, Madame Doohan knew people who drove, parents of out-of-town students. If it came down to it, she could borrow, she could learn.

As she grew closer and closer to sixteen, Jeanette started arriving earlier and earlier for her Monday duties. This way, after her sweeping was done, she had more time to practice with the big open hall all to herself. Herself, and the piano boy. No matter how early she arrived, he was always there, always waiting. One day, he even spoke.

Tom, he said. She looked up, away from the heavy ring of keys. I thought that, as I've known your name for ages, you might like to know mine, he said.

It is very nice to meet you Tom.

It is very nice to meet you, Jeanette.

He wasn't really such a boy anymore, not up close. That week, instead of scales, Tom played the Chopin just for her, while it was just her and him, the lights all on and the floors all swept. His fingers didn't mind skipping their warm-up, they played wonderfully; he didn't even need to watch them, his eyes on her, watching the hair slowly escape from her careful bun with every step and kick and turn.

For Christmas, Jeanette asked her mother for a record player. She knew they were expensive, but there was a bit of extra money this year, as Madam Doohan was giving Jeanette back the dance fees her mother paid as wages for her odd-jobs, and Jeanette was giving these back to her mother, to help run the house and pay for her dance lessons. On Christmas Eve, after mass, Jeanette's mother gave her a second-hand but first-class turntable, along with one record of a

Milhaud wind quintet, and one record of Chopin nocturnes and waltzes. It's quite a selfish present, actually, said her mother, after it had been unwrapped. It's for me as well as you, it is too quiet in this house, isn't it? That night they danced in the kitchen, pushing the chairs aside, turning the same two records over again and again.

0.3

When Madin woke up, on the floor, on his bit of foam, a brown paper bag of brioches had been squeezed through his mail slot. There was a note attached with a piece of scotch tape. It read,

Bienvenue Étranger,

x R.

The upstairs baker neighbor. Renée? Rose? Rosemarie? He ate the brioches with his hands and no plate, he was running late.

To get to the Collège Technique de Saint Éfrouée, Madin had to walk through a few residential streets, across a river, and past a café. It was all very straightforward and obvious on the map he had picked up from the tourist information shop, all straight-forward except that the map didn't list any bridges apart from the one way down south, at least a mile out of his way, back down towards the train station. He pointed this out to Dickie, who was taking out his trash, two leaking bags. Where's the northern bridge? They've forgotten to mark it on this cheap map, said Madin, stepping away from the brown garbage-liquid trailing towards his shoes.

Oh no, said Dickie, that's no mistake. There's just the one bridge. Not many people from this part of town have any need to go over to the University. Just to town. Or the farms, which are back the other way. Dickie pointed one way, towards town, then the other, towards the farms.

Surely some do? I do.

No. Not really. Sorry, friend, it's either swimming or walking for you.

It was a cold day. Still autumn, but already with snow on the ground, already much colder than it ever felt along the coast with his mother and brother. Madin walked west to the river, to the part of the river he had seen from his window the night before. There was no one there, just trees and almost frozen water and footprints in the snow. Footprints coated over with the night's worth of dew turned ice. Big ones, in a row, facing the water. Small ones, further back, in a cluster. Madin stayed back, among the smaller prints, and walked his way south, all the way down the river to the bridge. He distracted himself by trying to name

all the different trees: larch, spruce, fir, pine, birch, but his list couldn't keep up with what he saw. So many trees, most of which were new to him.

It took twenty-five minutes to get to the bridge; and with it, to the people of Saint Éfrouée. It was the busiest bridge he had every seen, made even busier by the fact that many people weren't actually crossing it, but were just standing on it, conversing. They looked at him sideways as he pushed past them; he was highlighted by awkward newness. He wasn't un-neighborly, just late. He tried to convey this with a fumbling smile. They kept their eyes on him, but no one smiled back.

Once across, he walked all the way back up the river, north, this time on the other side, twenty-five minutes. Even when he was late, Madin didn't run. He didn't think he could, he would probably pass out, if not just die. Some men, like Dickie, like his brother, have bodies that work for and with them, and some, like Madin, struggle against their bodies their whole lives. It was always a matter of boundaries and tests. Madin knew his body had limits, and was terrified of finding out what they were. He never wore tight clothes, he tried not to eat much red meat, and he certainly never ran.

When he reached the café, he turned left, west, walking past its front windows. The door was open and it smelt wonderful, coffee and butter. He slowed down a bit, but not for long, he could see the college now.

The classroom was about a third full, with all the students seated in a clump, together. They were all so young. The door closed behind him more loudly than he expected, and everyone looked up at it, at him. Monsieur Villedonné, said the instructor, it is good to have you. Please take a seat. We were just finishing with the introductions. Please tell everyone your Christian name, where you are from, and why ever it is that you have come here.

1.0

When she was eighteen and all the dancing was over, Jeanette had a baby. Her husband, Claubert, wanted to name it Marianne, after his mother, but he wasn't there when the time came for filling in and signing the necessary papers, so Jeanette named it Julia. There was no one in Saint Éfrouée named Julia, no one she had ever met or heard of. When Claubert found out, from the tiny name on the tiny bracelet around his new-born daughter's wrist, he didn't get angry. You're sure this is the one? He asked the nurse. She nodded. Very well, he said. Very well. Claubert carefully ran a hand over Julia's warm head, then, sensing there was more expected of him, leaned over and kissed her forehead.

You'll get used to it, said the nurse.

Claubert said nothing. This sterile woman, all in white, even her lips, had no way of knowing him. He hadn't expected to feel this way, but there it was, the biggest thing he'd ever had in his heart. It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter, it said to him, as long as this baby is safe, is alive. If he hadn't been sure that God had turned away from him years ago, he would have said a prayer.

Back at home, at the small but respectable house his father had bought them, close enough to the nicer area of town, Claubert took it upon himself to build a nursery. Don't hurt yourself, you don't have the constitution of a builder, Jeanette warned him, half-joking. She was on their bed, with a blanket across her shoulder like a loose toga; their daughter was underneath, feeding.

You'll see, said Claubert. This baby will change me, I know it, she is the answer, perhaps from God. He had started saying his rosary again, before bed and before meals, something he hadn't done since he was fourteen. He looked at his wife and thought she was beautiful. She was beautiful and good and he was very lucky.

The nursery was finished. It was the soft pink of slippers, with an east-facing window right above the cradle; in the morning it was the warmest room in the house. When he really tried, Claubert could do what he meant to. For five months and four days after Julia was born, he managed. He looked at his wife and was happy, he held his baby and was overjoyed; he was full-up. But nothing lasts

forever. His mother's death had taught him that. One night, dreaming of her as he usually did, she laughed. But it wasn't the warm, happy laugh his mother usually had, in life and in dreams, it was cold and it was pointed. Claubert was in bed, lying next to his wife, and his mother, from the table by the window, turned around and laughed at him. Up in heaven, they know everything. Of course, of course they do. He got up, careful not to wake Jeanette, and put on some old clothes. Before leaving the house, he stopped into his daughter's beautiful nursery, making sure she was on her back, and that her blanket wasn't too close to her throat. Then he stepped out into the damp night, lit a cigarette on the porch, and, its light leading like a torch, walked past the nicer houses, across the bridge, and north.

When he came home, early, early, in the morning, Claubert checked on Julia one more time, then took his clothes off in the corridor and left them folded by the bedroom door, before creeping back into bed with Jeanette, trying not to move, not to breathe so as not to wake her.

What Claubert did not think to remember was that babies cry. Babies cry, and rarely sleep through the night. Jeanette knew her husband was gone minutes after he left. Julia woke up and wailed; Jeanette woke up and felt the empty space where her husband should have been.

Some weeks he was gone every night, and some weeks maybe only on Thursday or Friday. Some mornings Jeanette would wake to find him there, beside her, and some mornings he was with Julia in her nursery, walking back and forth in the long strip of sunlight beneath the window. Either way, he was always home by sunrise.

That first night, Claubert had walked all the way up the river, past town, past the University and the College, to the woods. He had hoped his friend from Montreal was wrong, that there would be no one there, that he could just turn around and walk back home; but there were people there, there were men and there were boys. Maybe a dozen, mostly recognizable, even in the dark, even in the trees. They were spread out in small groups, pairs, singles, trios. Hello, said a man whose face Claubert knew from the post office. The man was forty, maybe.

He had a daughter and a son; Claubert had seen them, with this man and his wife, at church. He knew he knew his name, but before he could remember it, the man held out his hand and said, I'm Ron.

Claubert knew his name was not Ron. He took the man's hand, I'm Denis, he said.

Walking home across the bridge, he had met someone coming the other way. It was Raquel, the baker's assistant, on her way to do everything that must be done so that Saint Éfrouée could have fresh bread and buns and pastries when it woke up. She was just a girl, maybe fifteen years old, at most. Bonjour, étranger, she said, and smiled. She had met others on this walk before. Claubert nodded at her and continued across to the east side of the river, towards home. In three hours he would be here again, back across once more, on his way to the job his father had got him at the city hall.

1.1

Not so long before, when Claubert's mother Marianne died in a green and white hospital room, Claubert's father decided something had to be done about his son, for his son. The boy was sixteen then, and people were talking. Their friends were talking. A son can kill his own mother that way, said the whispers at dinner parties, at green-grocers, at cafés. It's no wonder, the poor woman, God bless her and heaven help him. So Claubert and his father moved across the ocean, first to Montreal, then to Saint Éfrouée.

One night, in a good brown suit bought in Paris, Claubert was brought to have dinner with a woman and her daughter in a decaying house. The meal was meant to be at eight-thirty, at a table laid for four: Claubert, his father, the mother and the girl. But at eight-thirty there were only three people there. It was like this, father, son, and mother with no daughter, for two and a half hours, until eleven o'clock, when dessert was usually done, and guests were usually gone. But when Jeanette came downstairs at eleven o'clock, dessert was not yet done. In fact, dinner had not yet begun. It sat on the table, four plates, waiting, full. Jeanette looked at her mother and her mother looked at her. Jeanette looked at the skinny boy and his tired father and clenched one hand very tightly behind her back, as tightly as she could. I'm sorry to be late, she said, and sat down at her place next to Claubert. And they ate. Jeanette was sixteen years old.

1.2

Madin was at the far end of a long table full of students. He was at the edge closest to the window. Conversations ricocheted around him, shooting back and forth like squash balls, while pitchers of cheap yellow beer appeared and disappeared, appeared and disappeared. The boy next to Madin was polite enough to converse briefly with him, just enough to socially acknowledge this odd older student for two minutes or so, before turning away from the window into a much more comfortable and loud conversation with the rest of his peers. After their lectures, all the electrical engineering students would go to the Riverside café to complain about the amount of work they had to do and to put off doing it. Madin came along, more because it was easiest to flow with the tide than because he actually enjoyed it. He saw the way the other students guiltily glanced in his direction after swearing or talking dirty. Mostly he just looked out the window into the dark, holding his half-full pint close to his chest so that no one would try to refill it.

A group from the Arts University was making their way towards the café; their classes always ended later than the Technique students. Their boots sunk into the snow with every step and they laughed and tried to push each other down. When they entered the café, dripping and steaming, the Technique students groaned and rolled their eyes. One of the arts crowd, a girl, didn't sit down with the rest. Instead, she came in and then left again ten seconds later. Madin watched her tramp back out into the snow, walking very slowly with her head, in its green parka hood, facing downwards. She would walk a few steps in one direction, then turn and walk a few in another, then turn and walk back to where she had started, again and again. Madin finished his drink, excused himself, and went out to join her.

My Metronome, she said. I had it and then I didn't. It must be here. She bent down and, with one gloved finger, drew a large circle in the snow all the way around them, maybe ten feet across. It must be somewhere in here, she said.

What's a metronome? said Madin.

It's this big, said the girl, holding up three fingers blocked together, and it measures time, but it's not a watch…it's a rectangle. Bits of her hair were poking out of her hood, and frost had started to form on the bits closest to her nose and mouth. Madin took a lighter out of his pocket and gave it to her.

Here, he said, this will help. When the girl lit it and held it in front of her face her hair-frost melted.

I'm Julia, she said, thank you.

They looked with the lighter, and when that wasn't successful, they combed with their boots, and when that wasn't successful, they got down on all fours and combed with their fingers. Madin tried not to show how cold his uncovered hands were becoming. Two more minutes, he told himself, and then I'll go in. Then I'll tell her I'm frozen and go back in. But he didn't go back in, because forty-five seconds later he found something in the snow, under the snow. It was red and bright for half a second and then gone, and then back, red and bright, and then gone, a little flashing heartbeat, buried. Madin put his hands over it, to see if it would warm them.

What have you got there? Julia crawled over to him. Madin pointed silently at the light, as if his own voice would scare it away. They both watched it, red and gone and red and gone. That's it, said Julia.

Then she said, Oh my God, your hands. She held the lighter close, right up to his fingers. They were white, bright as the snow. You're not from here, are you? she said. She pulled a scarf out from the bottom of her hood, long and green, homemade, twisting her head to release it, and wrapped it around his hands, which she made him hold in the prayer position, together, with his fingers straight up. I don't know what you do for a living, but in my eventual line of work, we want to keep all our fingers, she said. Come on, come with me. With one hand on Madin's back and the other holding the scarf in place, she led him away from the café, to the Arts University, up two flights of stairs and into the music students' lounge. There were posters everywhere for student recitals, even some on the ceiling. Julia guided Madin into the kitchen. There was a poster taped to the kettle. She filled the sink with warm water, Not hot, not hot, she said. She

carefully unwound the scarf and placed it next to the kettle, on the crumby counter. Madin's hands were still in same position, still praying. Okay, she said, are you ready? You can swear if you want to. She guided his hands into the water.

Pain shot straight from the tip of each finger to his eyes; Madin blinked hard and fast to make it go away, but it continued on, quick and sharp, the most intense pain he had ever felt. The most intense anything he had ever felt. Between blinks he stared at this girl, still in her green parka. This was her, this was all her doing. And they had forgotten the metronome in the snow.

He honestly thought he would die. But he didn't. After twenty minutes in the water, he was allowed to draw his hands out and dry them off on some paper towels. When the pain had gone down enough for him to speak without fear of uncontrollable cursing, he said, Thank you. I suppose I should go home now and let you get back to your friends…I imagine it's late.

No, said Julia. It's too late. And you can't go anywhere. If you re-freeze yourself on the walk home it's way worse than the first time. They'll turn purple. I'm not making this up. And cutting off fingers hurts more than thawing them. She finally took off her parka. You have lectures in the morning, I have lectures in the morning. You can sleep here, on the couch, with this. She handed him her parka. I was going to practice flute all night anyways.

On the couch that night, if he concentrated very hard over the buzz of the building and the silence of sleep, Madin was quite sure he could hear her playing.

In the morning there was a photocopied piece of sheet music folded into an airplane sitting on top of Madin's bag. He unfolded it. On the blank side it said,

Don't be late for class.

x Locker 119.

He was already late, but he needed to return Julia's parka; he wanted to see her again, if only to prove to himself why he was there, a rumpled mess in yesterday's smoky clothes. He found locker number 56 just outside the student lounge and followed the green metal doors until 119. Julia wasn't there, but there was someone, a boy, at locker number 120. He was stacking books carefully, one by

one, onto homemade locker shelves. He didn't look up at Madin. Um, hello, do you know a student here named Julia? Is she here?

The boy sighed. Of course I know her. Her locker's right there, isn't it. And she might be here, but I don't have any reason to tell you, really, do I? Could be unwise, could be unsafe. I've never even seen you before.

Madin held the parka out in front of him, a shield. I'm sorry, he said, though he wasn't sure he was. It's just that, well, this is hers, this coat. I just wanted to give it back.

The boy looked at the coat, then at Madin. Yes, it is hers, isn't it. I'll take it. Just give it to me. He took it from Madin, folded it twice and put it in his locker, on top of the books. Okay then, taken care of. He closed locker number 120 decisively. Goodbye then, he said.

Goodbye, said Madin, and, oh, if you see Julia could you tell her I – But the boy was already half way down the hall, and out of earshot.

French father, old money, said Dickie. He put on some oven mitts and took two plates out of the oven. Mother's not around any more. Pretty decent girl, I think, though people have been known to talk about her dad. But people here have been known to talk about everything and everyone. They get so starved for gossip they spread rumours about themselves. He stopped dishing out steamed carrots for a moment, thinking. I do, he said.

What do you think I should do? asked Madin.

You should eat up, said Dickie.

For a week Madin did nothing out of the ordinary. Then, on a Thursday, on his lunch break, he went out and bought two pairs of mittens, one brown and one green, from a stall on the town square. There was a woman there who sold every kind of knitting, every day except Sunday, but Madin had only noticed her that week.

After his classes were finished that night, Madin didn't follow his classmates out to the café, instead, he crossed the field to the University. His classes ended at 9pm, and he arrived at the University's giant wooden front doors

shortly after that. Shortly after, he discovered, they locked for the night. Madin tried the cold handle, and then tried again. It was definitely locked, even though he could hear activity, voices and footsteps, inside. Beside the door there was a keypad. Madin pressed 1-2-3-4 and tried the door, but it was still locked. He tried 3-1-4-2, but it was still locked. He sat down on the step. He had no idea what to do, so he just sat there, wet snow seeping into his trousers.

Locked out by choice or circumstance? A man, possibly a professor, with a straight white beard and a foreign accent, stood over Madin, his black leather briefcase level with Madin's nose. He was lighting a cigarette.

Um, circumstance, said Madin.

The man punched in 2-1-3-8 and opened the door. There you go, he said. I'm going to stay out here as long as I can. The man inhaled slowly and smiled to himself, closing his eyes.

Once inside the University, Madin retraced the steps from the last time he was there, up two flights of stairs, past the student lounge, along the lockers towards 119. He moved slowly and quietly, afraid of another encounter with the boy from 120, but there was nobody in the hall. At 119 he pulled out the green mittens, put a carefully rolled note into one of them, and, with an extra bit of yarn he had got from the knitting woman, tied them to Julia's lock. Then he got out the other pair of mittens, the brown ones, and put them on.

It wasn't long before cacophony poured into the hallway like an avalanche. A rehearsal downstairs had adjourned and all the instruments and their players began spilling noisily up towards their lockers. Madin stood a little ways to the side, under a window, allowing students to flow around him. Soon, Julia was one of those students. She didn't notice him. She went straight to her locker and stopped, taking in its unexpected woolen extension. After a few seconds, she pulled the end of the yarn, letting the mittens fall into her hand. When she slipped them on, the note fell onto the floor. She didn't notice. Instead she noticed Madin, alone by the window, waving a small, curled wave at her with a brown mitten hand. She waved back.

1.3

It was the time of year when the Saint Éfrouée mornings stretched earlier and earlier, pushing back the darkness by a few more minutes every day. Claubert no longer walked home to Jeanette and Julia in complete blackness, now led back south by the soft grey of pre-dawn. One morning, the world turned from grey to pink just as he was crossing the bridge. The baker's girl, who was crossing the other way, stopped and inhaled. Look at that, she said. Claubert stopped and they stood, side by side on the bridge, watching everything. Except for the birds, it felt as though there was no one else for miles, or no one else at all. They watched while pink turned to orange, and orange turned to the yellow of day. We're lucky, aren't we? said the baker's girl.

Oh my God, said Claubert, I'm late.

The snow on the ground was half-melted and brown; it splashed up and onto Claubert's trousers as he ran home. Sometimes, when he hit a deep enough patch right in the middle, the cold wet mixed with dirt would splash all the way up onto his shirt, or higher. He could feel sand between his teeth.

Claubert slowed down once he reached his street, calm and quiet. He left his dripping shoes outside the front door, and walked in socks to Julia's nursery. The door was open; the morning sunlight poured down across another man walking back and forth with Claubert's daughter in his arms. Hello, said the man.

Hello, said Claubert.

I'm Thomas, said the man, and you must be Claubert.

Claubert went to the kitchen to make them coffee. He wished he could change his clothes, they were filthy, were awful, but the closet and dresser were in the bedroom, with Jeanette. He accidentally made the first pot of coffee with twice as many grounds as he should have and had to throw it out and start again.

Tom put Julia back to sleep in her crib while Claubert fixed the coffee. Then the men sat down in the living room, Claubert on the sofa, Tom on a wooden chair. It's a nice house, he said.

Thank you, said Claubert.

For a while they watched a dog across the street trying to get into a bag of rubbish. Claubert knew the dog, it belonged to their neighbor, a man who was probably too old to have a dog. It's good coffee, said Tom.

Thank you, said Claubert, it's from Kenya.

They watched the dog a little longer. He had moved on to the next bag of rubbish, outside the next house.

Well, I should probably get going, almost time for work, said Tom.

Yes, yes, of course, said Claubert.

The men shook hands.

Did you bring a coat?

No, no, just came like this, it's getting warmer these days.

Yes, it is.

Goodbye then.

Goodbye.

Claubert also had to go to work. He stood in front of the hall mirror and surveyed himself, first from the front, then from the back. There was a hand-sized splash up the back of his shirt and dribbles down the front. The spots on his trousers had hardened and turned a lighter colour, grey against the navy. Everything was wrinkled and smelt of the woods. He looked at the door to his bedroom; it was closed, the light was off. Claubert left it like that. He took an apple from the kitchen and a coat from the closet and set off, locking the front door behind him. As he passed the dog, Claubert made a soft whistling sound to call it. They walked together until the bridge, then Claubert sent it back home.

Jeanette lay in bed, awake, as she had been since Tom had gone to see to the baby. She listened to footsteps, to voices, to doors opening and closing. Then there was nothing to listen to until almost noon, when Julia woke up again and started fussing.

2.0

After she had found the mittens on her locker, and seen the man with the frozen hands who had given them to her, and had waved to him across classmates and instruments, Julia had waited. She waited until all the other students had packed away their things and had gone off home or to the café. Then she had walked down the hall, nine steps, to Madin. Thank you, she said, and then, I was going to practise tonight. She was standing close enough that he could touch her arm if he just raised his hand a little, her arm was dark with fine hair. What did you have planned? she said.

Madin hadn't planned anything. His plan ended with the mittens. Nothing, he said, I mean, that sounds nice.

Practising sounds nice?

Yes,

You play something?

Um, no.

So…what do you want to practise?

Madin's hands were hot in the mittens. Sweating. Nothing, he said. I mean, I guess I could watch you. I mean, that might be nice. Or we could go to the café, I could buy you something.

You already bought me mittens.

Yes,

I have to practise. But you can watch. It's horrible, though. Listening to practising isn't like listening to a concert. It's horrible. It's all scales and wrong notes and the same tiny bunches of mistakes over and over and over. Of course, I don't mind being watched, it's just going to sound horrible, is all.

Julia practised for two hours and fifteen minutes in a tiny harshly-lit practice room and Madin watched, huddled out of her way, in a corner. After two hours and fifteen minutes, she put her flute back in its case, sat down on the floor next to Madin, put one hand on his leg, halfway up from the knee, and kissed his mouth. Her lips were warm and red from playing. Then she pulled away and stood up. That was nice, she said. Maybe you could come back tomorrow.

He did. And then again, and again. It was beautiful, all of it. The same wrong notes over and over, the way she got warmer as she played and had to take off her sweater and socks. The way the room filled with the sound, like water, like home.

She pretended to pretend he wasn't there, but really, she played for him, to him. He listened the way you were supposed to listen to music, blank. He listened to scale studies like he was listening to the sea. He made her nervous, and nothing made her nervous. She always tried to practise as long as she could before giving in and kissing him. Sometimes she would even let him walk her home. This was when he told her about the birds. Birds from where he was from.

I'm telling you, there were only two kinds, he told her.

But that's ridiculous.

But it's true.

I'll make you supper if you tell me about them.

Okay.

Okay.

They didn't sleep together for three months. Longer than usual for him, longer than usual for her. It was the night he brought her a fish, a Siamese fighting fish, blue and red. He brought it to her apartment in a clear glass coffee decanter. They watched the way it swam towards the flame of a candle Julia lit. The way it mimicked the flow of the smoke when the candle was extinguished. The sex was slow and careful, like they were both learning, or remembering. Afterwards, Julia reached out and put her hand on the window so the frost pulled away in its shape. Then she placed that hand on Madin's chest, below his collar-bones. The cold shape of it burned into his memory. One hand-print over his heart, one on the window.

2.1

The years Madin was fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, and a bit of eighteen, his brother, Roger, had had the most beautiful girlfriend. Monique. Absolutely breath-taking Monique. Even their mother would watch her, especially her mouth, when she talked or when she was just there with them. Monique and his brother were together for just over three years. The principal at his school said Madin had failed all his diploma exams except mathematics because of a reading disorder, but Madin knew it was because of her.

Once she had come to see his Roger at five-thirty in the afternoon on a day he was working late building the new docks. It was Spring, and the days were long enough for the men to work later for more money. Their mother was out getting things for supper. It was just Madin and the house and Monique. I can wait, she said, and smiled, sitting down in the rocking chair across from Madin on the couch. She didn't speak much, usually Madin's brother spoke for the both of them. Now that he wasn't there, she just sat, quiet. Madin watched the little pushes her body made as she rocked the chair and mimicked the movement with his own body.

For so long, so long, he had thought it over, he had imagined every detail, every second, of what he would do if they were ever alone together.

But he did nothing. They just sat, quiet, until his mother got home and said, Oh, hello Monique, Roger will be home soon, would you like to stay for supper?

Before he met Julia, it wasn't easy for Madin to be with women. He was twenty-one the first time he was intimate with anyone. The girl was drunk. They were on the beach. Noise of drinking and laughing on every side, claustrophobic. Madin had sand between his lips, and between his legs. It's about time, he repeated to himself over and over, a mantra. About time about time.

Before she met Madin, it was easy for Julia to be with men. Familiar sons and brothers of Saint Éfrouée and their more rigid and pensive Austrian equivalents in

Vienna. It wasn't hard to make them smile, to make them hers. She wasn't exceedingly pretty, or thin, but this made it even worse, caught them off guard.

Careful, Claubert would say to her, Be careful with them, be gentle. But she wasn't, she had no desire to be. She would seek out the most good-looking, most popular, most narcissistic boys and break them down, crush them, if she could. It wasn't right that a person should go on thinking themselves invincible, she was doing them a service.

However, when she met Madin, with frozen hands and few words, Julia's blood rushed through her in a new way. A bit like it did when she stepped into Vienna for the first time, only she had gone nowhere, she was home. He smelled different, this man, like salt. She had let herself get close to him when she wrapped her scarf around his frozen hands. Her hair on his cheek. His careful move away. He moved differently from what she had come to expect, more fluid than flesh. When she had been in Vienna, the world around her had changed, but the men were the same. Here, the world was very much the same, but he was new, indefinable, and, in a soft, absurd way, dangerous. Julia had chosen to pursue music as a career because it was the only thing that scared her, that she didn't feel in charge of. It was the same, somehow, with Madin.

2.2

Some days were very quiet. Dickie would sit, in his apron, in his chair beside the client chair, and wait. Sometimes for hours. At one o'clock he would get up, take off his apron, and walk to the grocer's. At two o'clock he would put his apron back on, return to his chair beside the client chair, and wait. Sometimes for hours. At five o'clock, he would get up, wash his hands, wash his face, clear away his tattooing equipment and client chair, and take off his work apron. Then he would have a glass of wine. At seven o'clock, he would put on his other apron, the maroon one with thin white stripes, and begin to plan his dinner.

Some days were very quiet. Others were just normal, two or three customers. To do a good job you didn't want many more than that. There's a lot more to it than just drawing. More than just needles and colours and skin. There's talking, and there's listening. There's prescribing.

Some days were very quiet. Others were just normal. And, some days, things got very, very, busy. Usually this was just due to coincidence, a lot of things happening or not happening in a lot of people's lives all at once, unconnected, but not always. One year, one spring, twenty years before Madin arrived, the whole town was lined up at Dickie's door, not looking each other in the eye, not talking. The whole town except the children, of course.

Fork, fork, fork. Glass, glass, glass. Knife, knife, spoon, spoon. Dickie liked the rhythm of a set table. Have you ever noticed the rhythm of a set table? he asked Madin. The table was set for two, for them two, as it often was these days. Sometimes, recently, it was even set for three, when Julia was around.

Well, said Madin, I suppose I don't always set my tables the same way. I don't always need a spoon, for example, or a wine glass, so the rhythm changes. Sometimes I use bowls. The truth was that Madin didn't usually set a table, as such, when he was eating on his own. He would just serve the food into whatever he needed to hold it in and use whatever he needed to eat it with. Oatmeal, for example, he would eat with a bowl and a spoon. Just that, bowl, spoon. Bowl, spoon. Bowl, spoon.

I guess it's a kind of a march, he said to Dickie. I guess my breakfast is a kind of a march. Unless I also have coffee, in which case it would be: Bowl, spoon, mug. Bowl, spoon, mug. A kind of a waltz.

It's lovely, isn't it? said Dickie.

Yes, it is, said Madin, realizing that it was.

After that dinner with Dickie, Madin couldn't stop thinking about the rhythm of things. It spread beyond table settings, beyond meals. The rhythm of his Electrical Installation professor repeating: Black, brown, red, orange, yellow. Black, brown, red, orange, yellow. The rhythm of houses between his and the river: White, blue, white, blue, green. The rhythm of his own his heart before falling asleep. The rhythm of Julia's.

One of the many who lined up at Dickie's door twenty years ago, that Spring, had been the Frenchman, Claubert. He was still a young man back then, still dark-haired and slim. But not too young to escape the lines forming on his face, little vertical dashes at the top of his nose, between his eyes. Dickie remembered (because he rarely forgot), that Claubert was lined up between the Widow Carrièr and one of the farmers. It was after dark by the time his turn came; Dickie remembered how he smiled and said, Hello and sorry to bother you like this, you must be exhausted. His hands were shaking. Better his than mine, Dickie had thought.

One of yours? asked Dickie. He was asking this to every client this week, first thing, right off the bat. It was something he had to know, so as to understand what kind of guilt he was working with. The low, long, spread kind, or the sharp, solid, blinding kind. Obviously, he had to know.

Claubert jerked, his body a tiny earthquake. Dickie knew this movement, had seen it before in women and men you'd never think could crumble, who, just like that, just for a moment, folded. Dickie waited. Claubert blinked.

Yes, said Claubert. And then, No. And then, It wouldn't be right to say she was mine, really.

Dickie carried on doing what he was doing, sterilizing, preparing, but in his head he was counting. That's seven then, he counted. That's seven children. How old was she? he asked.

Twenty-three, said Claubert. The same age as me.

Although Dickie's heart squeezed together all at once, he didn't let on. So it wasn't the child. So it was Jeanette. The dancing girl with the hair, two years behind him at school. She wasn't a child, it didn't make sense. The man must be confused with grief, he thought.

Jeanette? he said.

Yes, Jeanette, said Claubert.

And Julia?

Julia is fine, thank you. She is well and strong, five years old, very well and very strong. She is with the neighbor while I'm here.

Although Dickie's mind was racing, trying to put things in order, in place, he didn't let on. Green, then, I think, he said.

Claubert nodded. Dark green. I would like the letter J, he said. Right here. He pointed.

Of course, said Dickie.

Most of Dickie's clients weren't the people you'd think they'd be. This was one reason why he had always had his studio at home, far from town. In town people everywhere watched you do everything. Across the river, across the bridge, in the middle of so many similar houses, windows blocked by snow, is where Dickie preferred to work. His clients came when they needed to, got what they needed, and left, intentionally scarred so they could let go, so they could breathe. The weather in Saint Éfrouée was such that you almost always had to wear sweaters, long trousers, and often boots and mitts and scarves as well. Often, Dickie was the only one who knew what his clients had got done, where, why.

2.3

When he was a boy, Madin's mother took him down to the beach one day, took off all his clothes except his underwear, and told him to try stepping into the water. This is how he learned to swim. This is how all the children he knew learnt to swim, at about the same time that they learned to write their own names. Every day that summer his mother and Madin would do the same thing, and every day he would step a little bit farther into the wet grey-green. His mother and his clothes sat neatly on a rock on the shore watching silently. His brother had already been through all of this and stayed home. As afraid and cold as he was, Madin loved this time, this time alone with his mother. He would walk backwards into the water so that he could watch her.

So you can swim then? said Dickie.

Yes, of course, said Madin.

You can't run, but you can swim?

It's not the same. Running is dangerous. Swimming is easy.

Easy for you, for where you're from, but not for us. I don't know how to swim, not many people here do. You're quite lucky, really.

Doesn't anyone ever swim in the river? What if someone fell in?

Then I suppose they'd drown. But no one ever does, or ever has.

No one?

No one.

Madin had an idea, an idea that would save him a lot of time. Enough time to do all his studying in, or make proper dinners. He could swim, he could swim across the river. It wasn't terribly wide or strong, it would take him five minutes, maybe ten. He could swim across up north, where he lived, where the college was, and avoid walking down to the one ridiculous bridge and back up again. It was the beginning of May when he had this idea.

You're sure you won't drown? said Dickie.

I'm sure. I might end up a bit further downstream than I where I set off, but I won't drown. I can't do much, but I can swim, I know I can swim.

There were trees along both banks of the river. Madin hid a rucksack in under the low hanging branches of some sort of evergreen on the western bank, the college side. The branches hung down in a low circle all around the tree, forming a sort of tent. No one walking by would even know you were there, under those branches. In the rucksack he kept dry clothes and his college things, books and pens, and a towel. He kept a similar bag on the other side, the eastern bank, under a similar tree, with a towel and the clothes he would use to walk to and from home. Once a week or so, when he had to pass through town anyway for whatever reason, he would bring new supplies for the cases, usually just occasional new clothes. Nobody in his class really cared too much what they or anyone else wore, including Madin. Usually it was Julia who would remind him, not very gently, that he could either put new clothes in the pack or else eat lunch alone.

Stepping into the water, cold starting at his feet, numbing him and waking him all at once, Madin was back at home. The liquid cold a million times different than the dry winter cold of this place. While swimming he didn't feel strong, exactly, he just felt comfortable. At ease and okay, everything was as it should be, he was just enough in control, and everything was okay.

Julia never swam. She refused to even go near the bank.

You never learnt how either?

I never wanted to learn how. My father never wanted me to learn how. We don't much care for water, not our family, not this town.

But that's ridiculous, water's wonderful, it's the biggest life-giving thing there is.

It's dangerous, we like it frozen.

Will you let me teach you, slowly, gently, in the summer?

No.

Madin said nothing.

After a few seconds Julia smiled and pushed a wet strand of his hair behind his ear. There are so many things for us to do, she said. Don't worry about this one.

3.0

Claubert's mother had been a wonderful woman. If she had known her death was to cause so much grief for her son, she would have tried even harder not to die. Their family apartment, in one of the sunniest parts of Paris, was one of the biggest in the neighbourhood, and it was quite a nice neighbourhood. It was almost too big, considering there was just the three of them, but Claubert only thought about it in this way in retrospect. At the time it was perfect.

Claubert was in the kitchen watching their maid, Matilde, peel potatoes. He was still in his school clothes, black shiny shiny shoes reflecting the kitchen lamps. Once, Matilde had taught him how to rub the peels on the black leather to keep them shiny. He was waiting for her to finish so he could take some of the fresh, curled peel to his mother upstairs, and show her how well he could do it. The room smelled musky and damp, the dirt of new potatoes. Matilde hummed while she peeled and Claubert mouthed the words of the song quietly, under his breath.

En avant, Fanfan la Tulipe,
En avant, Fanfan, en avant.
Tarirarira, rira, tarirarira.
En avant, Fanfan la Tulipe,
En avant, Fanfan, en avant.

Finally she finished, and a long twist of potato skin fell onto the wooden cutting board. Go ahead, take it and go, she said. I love you, you know, but this kitchen gets bigger without you in it.

Claubert went upstairs carefully, holding the peel cupped in both his hands. It was very important that you didn't break it, breaking it could ruin everything. Even though his mother had seen him shine his shoes before, he was anxious to show her again, to show her today. Today was the day Claubert's father was meant to be getting home from his working trip all the way across the water. He was meant to be home, freshly arrived, when Claubert got in from school, but he wasn't yet. Not yet, said his mother, lifting her shoulders then letting them drop. He's not home yet, I don't know when, I don't know why.

He didn't break it. All the way up the stairs the peel stayed in one delicate piece. His mother was at her desk, writing a letter; she faced away from the door, towards a big open window. Outside, some boys were chasing a soccer ball and each other.

Is he home yet? asked Claubert.

Not yet, not yet. But he does have a very long way to come. The distance to your school and back five thousand, two hundred and twenty six times.

Claubert thought this over. Ten was his fingers, or his toes. A hundred was all the children in his entire school. A thousand was what? Too big, too big to know. Five of a number too big to know.

He sang while he showed her how he could shine, the toes and the sides and even around the back. Tarirarira, rira, tarirarira.

Brilliant, she said, when he had finished. She put away her pens and stationery and they played Lion and Mouse together until dinner.

It was late at night, hours after Claubert's bed-time, when he heard the front door open and the drag of heavy cases across the wooden floor. He heard his mother go down the stairs in slippers and then happy, excited whispers. There was shuffling and more whispering and some lights going on as the sounds moved into the sitting room. A spoon against a bowl, water being boiled, then poured, paper being unwrapped, his mother's laugh, his father's voice. Then a new sound, high and clear, like birds but more smooth and less regular. This was the sound to which Claubert fell asleep.

The next day was a Saturday, a no-school day. When Claubert woke up he was happy, but he couldn't remember why. Matilde was there, knocking on his door, sticking her head in, asking, Did he want tea or hot chocolate this morning? But she always did that on a Saturday, it was nothing to be so happy about. He closed his eyes and opened them again. Matilde's head at the door, and behind it, downstairs, voices. That was it, he was happy because of his father's voice, because of a new sound.

Chocolate, he said. And then, because her head still hadn't moved, was still looking at him, expectant: Please. And thank you. Matilde gave a satisfied nod and slipped back down the hall, down to the kitchen.

You put your mouth here, like this, and your hands and fingers here, like this and this, and then you blow…oh, no, not like that, let me try again…blow…yes, like this, see? And you can change it by moving your fingers, one at a time, carefully. Claubert's father was showing him how to make the sound, the new sound. Anyway, I'm no good, it's your mother's recorder, she's the real musician.

Claubert's mother looked up at her husband with a small, dry smile, Not yet, I'm no musician yet. She took the recorder and played three notes, up, up, up.

Can you play Fanfan La Tulipe? asked Claubert.

Not yet, said his mother, but perhaps by dinner.

3.1

In the end, Madame Doohan decided there was probably no need to get a car and learn to drive in order to get Jeanette to the auditions at the École Grande de Ballet in Montreal; they could take the train, like civilized people. After all, taking a nearly-grown girl to an audition was hardly a crime. They were hardly criminals. Tickets were cheapest if bought two weeks in advance, so, two weeks before the first week of April, Madame Doohan asked Jeanette once more, in the dance hall, after all the other girls had gone home, Are you sure you want this?

And Jeanette, once more, said, Yes.

So Madame Doohan put on her black coat (the expensive long black coat that all the girls loved) and scarf and walked towards the station. She left Jeanette at the dance school to practise her steps with the pianist; the girl had a key and would lock up when she was finished. Although it was bright, it was one of the coldest days that year.

The clerk at the station ticket desk recognized Madame Doohan and smiled. Which lucky girl are you taking to Montreal this year? he asked, taking her money and counting it, as he always did, bills on the left, coins on the right.

Lizzie, said Madame Doohan. This year, it's Lizzie.

As she took the tickets Madame Doohan said an internal prayer to St. Vitus to pardon her dishonesty. It's for the best, all for the best. As she was leaving, a handsome man and his son, just off the platform by the look of their luggage, held the door for her before following out towards the bright, cold, town.

3.2

When Madame Doohan had left the studio, she pulled the heavy door closed after her, like she always did: pull—PULL-pull. The necessary sequence. Loud and percussive. Madame Doohan did it brilliantly well. It was an art form.

pull—PULL-pull.

The noise, and then, as always, a small explosion of chalk-dust from the floor. The clouds of it brought up a smell that reminded Jeanette of being younger. Tom played a half-diminished seventh chord, F-sharp. Jeanette turned away from the door, towards him; there was chalk in her hair. Tom resolved to G major, and then to C-sharp minor, and then straight into Chopin's waltz number nine, the piece Jeanette would be dancing to for her audition, though with a different pianist, with an official École Grande de Ballet pianist. When Madame Doohan was there Jeanette danced it brilliantly and precisely. When Madame Doohan wasn't there they rarely made it to the end of the piece.

The music stopped but she kept dancing, he caught her at the end of a turn. His hands pulling pins from her hair. Her hands feeling for the ground. The sweep of a leg, a hand, a breath, across the dusty floor. More tiny flecks of powder cast up, catching the light like something precious.

Now there was more chalk in Jeanette's hair, and some in Tom's as well. His, blonde-to-red, with the fine white dust here and there, looked almost edible, sweet. Hers, almost-black with flecks of white, looked like snow at night. Like Saint Éfrouée.

So you would go then, said Tom. If you made it into the school, you would go. Jeanette was pulling her tights back up each leg like new, pure white skin. She tied her shoes on over top. Tying the ribbon around and around and around.

Of course, she said. Around and around and around.

And, said Tom, and then, But, what about your mother?

Jeanette stopped. She was finished with the right slipper and reached past Tom's legs to retrieve the left one, stretching. Tom, she said, you could come.

You could come to Montreal. She watched his chest, still bare, almost pink, up and down, in and out. Maman would survive, she said.

Neither of them, neither Jeanette nor Tom, had been to Montreal before. Tom had a sister who had been once, though. She hitched there, sometimes dressed as a boy and sometimes not. She wanted to find out if it was worth leaving home for. That's not so hard to find, said Julia.

Sometimes it is, said Tom.

So, she went, and…

And, said Tom, it was big.

Just big?

But very big, very big, Jeanette. After living there for six months she could still walk down a busy street in the middle of town and know no one.

And no one would know her?

And no one would know her.

But she came back, didn't she?

Yes, of course.

I never would, said Jeanette, and then, We never would, Tom, would we? Will we? And then, because he hadn't said anything, she said, Tom, let's dance.

Who'll play the music?

You don't always need music to dance.

So he did, they did.

Outside, the light was starting to fade, it would be a cold walk home. You're right, said Tom, we never would.

It was time to go. Jeanette and Tom locked the door with Jeanette's key. Now, on the outside, they let their hands drop apart. I'll see you soon then, said Tom.

I will see you soon, said Jeanette.

She went one way, he went another.

And there was Dickie, just around the corner, shoveling snow from the walk-way that led up to the dance school. Evening Jeanette, he said. He didn't

stop shoveling, he talked while pushing the metal scoop towards Jeanette, then away, then towards again.

Hello Dickie, she said. Your head must be freezing. Dickie's head was shaved, as it had been since he was sixteen, and he didn't even have a toque on.

I like it, he said. Nothing gets the blood to the brain like shocking it with cold now and again. And nothing gets thoughts straightened out like blood to the brain. Not that I'm suggesting the same for you. You have lovely hair, Miss Jeanette.

Dickie stopped shoveling, took a step towards her. She laughed, took a step back. Does Madame Doohan pay you to do this? she asked. I mean, she clarified, The walk, to do the walks?

No, said Dickie, but I bet she would if I asked.

Jeanette laughed again. I bet she would, she said.

Dickie walked her home, not beside her, but in front, with his shovel, so that there was a clear path right to her door. Thank you Dickie, said Jeanette, she put one mittened hand on his head. Don't freeze your brain, it's a good one.

That night, first while sewing with her mother in the front room, and then to the very borders of sleep in her bed, Jeanette could hear the scrape of Dickie's shovel moving through the neighborhood. There were some good things here; yes, Tom was right, but still, she wouldn't come back. They wouldn't come back. Even though the night was frozen and her hot-water bottle had gone cold, she fell asleep warm, almost hot, almost burning.

3.3

In the end, Madame Doohan decided there was probably no need to get a car and learn to drive in order to get Jeanette to the auditions at the École Grande de Ballet in Montreal; they could take the train, like civilized people. The girl's mother didn't approve, but, surely, anyone else would. And that mother was hardly one to be making moral judgments. If Jeanette got in, they would deal with it then. If not, no one would be the wiser. But of course she would get in. Of course her mother would understand, then. Dancing was hardly a crime. They were hardly criminals. It was bright outside when Madame Doohan stepped out of the dance school, bright and cold. She turned her collar up and walked towards the station.

The clerk at the station ticket desk recognized Madame Doohan and smiled. She came in every year at this time; he already had the tickets printed and waiting. Is Lizzie really so committed to her dancing? he asked. Last I heard she was more interested in organizing a girls' ice hockey team.

Of course she is committed, said Madame Doohan. Of course she is.

As she took the tickets Madame Doohan said an internal prayer to St. Vitus to pardon her dishonesty. It's for the best, all for the best. As she was leaving, a handsome man and his son, just off the platform by the look of their luggage, held the door for her before following out into the bright, cold, town.

3.4

There was nothing Tom could do, really, if he wanted to see Jeanette outside of their dance studio hours. Her mother was always watching, there, drawn mouth, straight back, sewing or folding or pressing or washing and watching, watching out every window. They all had curtains on them, but the curtains were sheer. You couldn't see in, but you could see out. There was nothing, really, Tom could do, but if Jeanette wanted to see Tom outside of their dance studio hours she could slip out, sometimes. It was dark so often, creeping in from noon onwards, and if she dressed in black to match the sky, or white to match the snow, and if she could be quiet enough on the stairs and with the door, Jeanette could leave her mother, tall and alone, sleeping in the small room next to her own small room and slip out. She had a pair of Tom's shoes, long, large, men's shoes in worn brown leather that she wore to walk away from home, to his apartment, so that the prints in the snow wouldn't look like hers. Would instead look like the postman's or the milkman's.

The doorbell at Tom's was for the whole building, and any of the others living there could hear it and could answer it so, instead of ringing, Jeanette would go around to the back of the building, and throw handfuls of snow up at his second storey window. From inside it looked like the scattered endings of white fireworks.

Tom met her at the back door. She took off the shoes before going upstairs with him, and carried them in one hand, their wet soles bumping ice against her leg and down onto the steps. Later, Tom would feel the coolness of this spot on her leg with his mouth. He would warm it with his breath.

They lay on his cot, on top of the sheets and the wool blanket. It was dark all around them, but not cold.

You're young, Tom, Jeanette said. You're young to be here, alone, in your own apartment. Most people your age are still with their parents.

Yes, but I'm not.

No, you're not.

Her hand on the spot right between his chest and his stomach, pressing, just the smallest bit.

Madame Doohan says you could live with her.

But that wouldn't work, would it?

No, it wouldn't. Not for us.

Not for us.

But aren't you lonely? Here, alone, all the time?

You're here now.

But not always.

But now.

She would bring him icicles, broken off the sides of houses along the way.

3.5

Stepping out of the station, the first thing that sixteen-year old Claubert noticed about Saint Éfrouée was the air. The air was refreshing and painful all at once. Sharp. Like breathing mint. He had noticed a few things before this, in the train station, but all of his travels, Europe as a boy, and now Montreal and this place, had taught him not to trust railway stations. Towns and cities wore their railway stations like masks, showy first impressions, often remarkable, rarely representational.

So, the first thing that Claubert noticed about Saint Éfrouée was the air. The air was sharp, and there was a huge openness around them, around everything. This is a town?

Of course this is a town. Claubert's father's voice was firm, decided, even if his face was as unsure as his son's. A small town, but a town no less.

Off to their right was a shed of sorts, with a green sandwich-board in front of it that said:

TOURISM: OFFICE;

all welcome

in white hand-painted letters. To their left, in the middle distance, was what must have been the rest of town, a handful of buildings, mostly wooden or stone, mostly one storey or two. Behind the station, on every side, was nothing but fields and fields and fields.

They were early. Or, rather, they weren't late, as Claubert's father had assumed they would be when he booked their car into town. Trains were always late. It was a safe bet to book anything after a train journey for thirty minutes later than the schedule implied. It was even safer to book for one hour later. This is what Claubert's father had done, and there they were, perfectly on time, and, therefore, an hour early. There were no taxis to hail. In fact, there were no cars at all. Well, said Claubert's father, we shall have to get a map.

The man in the tourist office laughed. A taxi to go downtown?

A taxi to go downtown.

It's a four minute walk to get downtown.

He pointed at the map he had spread on the counter between them. We're here, see, and town's there. He walked with his fingers, three confident steps, Here, to there, see? Easy. It did look easy. And then five to ten minutes, tops, to walk anywhere from there. The man walked his fingers all around the map, hopping them across the river and back. Then he stopped and thought for a moment. I could walk you there, he said, I could walk you into town, if you'd like? Claubert looked around the little tourism shed. There definitely wasn't anyone else there, no one else to guard the maps and newspapers and FIRE-WOOD! Cheaper than in town!

Next train doesn't get in for ages, it'll be fine, said the man. He opened a door behind him, disappeared for a moment, and reappeared with a coat and hat. Okay, let's go, he said, pulling on his gloves.

Okay, said Claubert's father, linking arms with his son, let's go.

As they were walking the sun came out. It wasn't warm, but it was bright, so bright. Claubert liked it, liked the air, liked the sun. Might even like this town, the chance offered by this town. He smiled at his father, his father smiled at him. Never mind Paris, he said, here comes Saint Éfrouée.

The tourism man left them at a café, after making absolutely sure they knew where they were and where they were going and how to contact him, giving them a business card with his home address written on the back, just in case. The café was quiet. The only other patrons were an old man eating soup in the corner, a middle-aged couple silently drinking coffee across from each other near the back, and a woman with a baby at the counter, engaged in a low conversation with a waitress. After they had sat for a few minutes the waitress came over to take their drink orders and tell them about the set menu. Tea or hot chocolate? said Claubert's father.

Chocolate, said Claubert, and wine.

It was dark and colder when they left the café, but the half-bottle of Pinot Noir each had sitting in his stomach kept them warm and in high spirits. Consulting the map under street lamps they found their way to the river, and then the bridge, Claubert's father pointing out constellations and planets as they

walked. The sky, like the space around everything, was enormous and darker than Claubert had ever seen. And lighter too, with more stars than seemed possible. In Paris, the night sky was a faded blanket, here it was as full and alive as he was. They were walking to a house belonging to a man that Claubert's father knew from business. This man was away now, was usually away, but had posted the keys to them when they were in Montreal. They had keys and an address and a map; they knew it was on the other side of the river from town, on a street named Frère Antoine, but, no matter how much time they spent huddled under street lamps, they couldn't find this street. It wasn't on the alphabetical index, it didn't seem to exist.

Claubert's father heard the scraping sound of metal on ice from around the corner and followed it until they came to a boy with a shovel and no hair, Dickie, who had just said goodnight to Jeanette. By now the wine had almost worn off and Claubert's arms were beginning to ache with the weight of their luggage. They introduced themselves, shaking their gloved hands one at a time with Dickie's mittened one. Leather against wool. Frère Antoine street? Said Dickie, That's really close to here, actually. Some very nice houses there. But, no, you probably wouldn't find it on that map, no. See, some of the people around here are petitioning to get Frère Antoine canonized. Including the guy at the tourist office. So, while neither the street, nor the person actually technically exist yet, what you're looking for is listed on that map as *Saint* Antoine street. Saint instead of Frère, see? They moved so that they were under a street lamp. See? There it is. Right there. Hardly two blocks away. Do you want me to walk you there?

In the spare bedroom of a stranger's house, under a quilt that someone must have worked very hard to make, Claubert closed his eyes and listened. There was no traffic, no shouting, no sirens, no music, no footsteps. Just the occasional scrape of a shovel, blocks away. The wine was gone now and he felt empty, wonderfully empty.

4.0

Lizzie felt horrible. If she had known, she would have said, Yes. She would have said, Yes, of course I'm going. Why would you ask? Don't you think I'm good enough for Montreal? And she would have made that face she could make that meant, no more questions, thanks very much. If she had known to whom she was speaking and why the question came to be asked, and if, perhaps, she was just a little bit older, old enough to really understand how small towns, how this small town, worked, if she hadn't been distracted by wanting to catch Louie Rénard before he left his part-time job at the tourist office, if she hadn't needed to get the girls' hockey team petition in by the very next day. If Jeanette's mother came out of the house and into town every now and then like a normal person, Lizzie might have recognized her. Then she would have said, Yes, of course I'm going. Montreal, here I come. No offense, but I'm the best dancer in the class.

But she didn't, and she wasn't.

It was two days after Madame Doohan had bought the train tickets and spoken with the clerk. Two whole days of words dropped here and there, lazily, like lint off a sweater, the clerk to his wife, his wife to the grocer, the grocer to the waitress, the waitress to her clients, her clients to their neighbors, their neighbors to the sewing woman, Jeanette's mother. It was a Wednesday evening, and Lizzie was going house-to-house, getting signatures on her petition. She had seventy-four signatures when she reached the unfortunate house. She was thinking about this. She wasn't thinking about other things.

Jeanette's mother answered the door with a yellow dress hanging over one arm. She looked surprised to see Lizzie, but didn't say anything about it, instead she said, Come in, Lizzie, have some tea.

Coffee, if you don't mind, said Lizzie.

The kettle was hissing and hissing, taking ages. Jeanette's mother was looking at the petition in front of her on the table. She had been looking at it, just the one page with the one short paragraph and the seventy-four names for ages. Maybe she can't read, thought Lizzie, maybe I ought to read it to her. She cleared her throat, If you're having trouble, maybe I could explain it to you?

Jeanette's mother did not look up from the page, one of her hands wandered up towards her mouth. Lizzie, she said, are you going to the dance audition in Montreal this year?

God no, said Lizzie. I'm no good at that stuff. That Jeanette kid, she's the real star. I don't even like dance. I only keep going because it's better than being at home. But if I could get this girls' hockey team set up….

Of course, said Jeanette's mother. She patted the pocket of her apron until she found a pen and put down her name next to the number seventy-five.

Thank you very much, said Lizzie, your support means a great deal to me, Mrs...she glanced down at the new name, fresh ink, carefully sloped out on spot number seventy-five…Tremblay. Mrs. Tremblay. The second time she said it the name set off something quiet and far away in the back of her head. Quiet and far away, but surprisingly urgent. Jeanette Tremblay. This was Jeanette's mother. Jeanette's mother whom Madame Doohan said must not know. For the good of everyone.

My pleasure, said Mrs. Tremblay, good luck to you, Lizzie.

Lizzie left. Smiled quickly, took her petition, and left. The water hadn't yet boiled.

Jeanette's mother listened to Lizzie's rushed steps down the slushy front walk. Clumsy steps. Not a dancer's steps at all. She listened to them down the front walk and across the street and then gone. Then she folded the yellow dress that was still hanging off her left arm, sleeve in, sleeve in, skirt up, bottom over top, and laid it on the table where the petition had been. She moved the kettle off the heat, opened and closed the front door, and followed the spreading slushy spaces Lizzie's shoes had made down the walk. At the street Jeanette's mother turned and walked the easy thirty-three steps to the ballet school.

There was a window on the door of Madam Doohan's ballet studio, small, just the size of two hands together. It was fogged from the cold and from breath, but Jeanette's mother could see through it enough. She saw Jeanette, her daughter, and she saw Thomas, the piano boy, and she saw chalk dust and legs and hair and

skin, all together, all warped into one. And, when she stepped back, away, the angle of light on the window changed, so that she saw herself.

She did not knock or try the handle. She didn't do anything but stare at herself for a long time, for thirty seconds. Then she wiped her hand across the window's glass, smearing.

4.1

On a Wednesday, just an ordinary, average Wednesday, Madin left his electrical theory class ten minutes after it started, as he did most Wednesdays, as he did, increasingly, most days, most classes. He came in, settled his rucksack under a chair near the back, opened his notebook, and uncapped his pen with every intention of staying. Of, this time, really staying. But then, as always, his professor, with her antique-microphone voice, would begin to speak, and the projector would begin to whir, and the student in front would begin to click his pen, and the lights would tick and his own heart – even his own heart – would beat and beat on top of it all, and, usually, it would just be chaos, usually all the words and whirs and clicks and ticks and beats would tumble and clash, pulling at each other, usually, it would just be chaos.

But sometimes, just for a second, or two, for two clicks, or one word, or half a beat, everything would line up. Everything would fall, not in chaos, but exactly and perfectly in line. When this happened Madin's blood turned thick and his eyes closed and he felt, just a little, that something was breaking inside of him. Unexpected. Uncontrolled.

It never lasted longer than a second, or two. But what if it did? Madin didn't leave class because of the chaos, he left because, maybe, one day, the cold and perfect order might last longer, and he didn't know what would happen if it did.

On this Wednesday, he left class and tried to concentrate only on his footsteps, no other sound but his footsteps, down the hall, out into the day, all the way to the river. It was cold, just barely Spring, but the river was thawed, and the best thing for him after class, after having to leave class, was to swim. He undressed and put his things in their place under the evergreen tree and dove a shallow dive into the water. Numbing, awakening. Every day he tried to swim as far as he could without coming up for air. Every day he tried to break his own record. When he surfaced, this Wednesday, gasping up air in round mouthfuls, no further along than he had made it yesterday, he saw a woman just off the far bank,

standing with her brown corduroy skirt lifted, fabric balled up in her hands, water up to her ankles. He saw Julia.

Madin waved, Julia waved back. And back under. Madin swam until the water was too shallow, then he stood and walked, water to his waist, water to his knees, until, water to his ankles, he stood in front of Julia.

I was trying, she said. I wanted to surprise you.

Madin kissed her, leaning his head to her, keeping his body, wet, cold, back. You'll drown in this, he said, one hand on her skirt. And you'll drown in this, one hand on her coat. Like Ophelia, dragged down. He pictured it. Gruesome, not beautiful.

They laid her clothes on a rock bigger than the others, whose surface was dry, a foot or so above the water. Madin's skin was cold against hers. So cold she could hardly tell the difference between him and the water pulling down and in, deeper and deeper. Heartbeats and breath, thought Madin. Heartbeats and breath.

Walking home, back to Madin's apartment, Julia said, Today is my mother's birthday. Madin was walking behind her, she didn't see him start. Julia never talked about her mother. She never swam and she never talked about her mother. Madin waited, but she didn't say anything more. Her hair was wet and dripping down her back; it left a dark trail down the back of her coat.

4.2

Dickie was at home. Today would have been Jeanette's birthday. He was marking himself the way he did every year, one more tiny black mark on his body, practically invisible, the size of a pore. The first time he did twenty-three, all separate, disparate across his spread self, and every year one more. Forty-three this year.

Twenty years ago. The first lost was the Letourneau baby, only three weeks old. The baby without a mother, whose mother's body gave too much when she gave up the baby, whose father fed it, patiently, calmly, formula mixed with warm water, from its first day to, not so very much later, its last. The father, now remarried, had the outline of a tiny foot in the lightest blue on the sole of his own left foot.

The second was the Mueller child, two and a half years old. They were quiet people, foreign, polite, slow-moving bodies with fast-moving eyes. It was their third little girl, their youngest. They had no children born in this country. The oldest girl, sixteen, had a purple flower, half-flower, half-thistle, more strong than pretty, on her back.

The third was another little girl, just old enough to walk, from one of Saint Éfrouée's oldest, richest families. They brought in doctors from the United States, tried to get one from China, but there wasn't time. Just the mother came to Dickie. She left with a circle on the inside of her wrist. Just a circle. No bigger than a wild blueberry and hollow.

The fourth and fifth were from the same family. Not twins, but less than a year apart. A boy and a girl, both with brilliant orange hair. Their mother and uncle (their father was away indefinitely with the army) each had two lines, one on each leg, drawn straight up from their ankles to the top of their backs.

Sixth was a five year-old boy who had just begun violin lessons. He could stand without dropping the instrument for more than thirty seconds. He could name each of the strings from highest to lowest. His teacher, Luc, had a tree in winter at the very top of his neck at the back, almost always covered by hair.

Seventh was Jeanette. Some didn't count her in this list, but Dickie did. Dickie always did.

Eighth was a boy from one of the farms. A rising sun on the father's right shoulder.

Ninth was a child from another village who had been with an aunt visiting family in Saint Éfrouée. Just a shadow, shaded dark on the palms.

Tenth was the little girl who helped her grandfather sell leather gloves and wallets in the shop just off the main square. He always let her count out the change, before counting it again himself. A drop of something like water on the temple. Something like water.

Dickie didn't know why it was happening. No one lined up at his door knew yet. Something like water.

5.0

Dickie and Madin were having stuffed peppers in Dickie's kitchen. They were conversing as they normally did, this time about bread-making, mainly, when Dickie said, You've just done it again.

Done what? said Madin.

And there, you've done it again.

Done what?

You say everything again; after I say something you say it again, quietly, under your breath, you say every word.

I don't, said Madin. But he knew he did.

It had started not long after Julia swam for the first time; it just crept over his mouth, his tongue, his lips. He was showing her the arm-motions for a forward stroke, up, around, back; her arms following his, and she was saying, okay, okay, okay. With a slight dip in the middle of each word, with a beginning like a whisper. Her arms followed his arms, and his lips followed her lips.

Madin began to notice that every person said every word differently. New shapes, textures, pitches. He watched them and heard them and, just the way you read a poem over again to hold onto the sensation, to remember, his own lips would mimic, would repeat. Most of the time he didn't even realize he was doing it, this oral double-take. He only noticed when Julia or Dickie told him, or when he caught his mouth moving in a mirror or shop window. It was embarrassing and quite uncontrollable. But there it was, undeniably, the dramatic sweep of Ls in the waitress' Hello, the bittersweet blunt edge of Dickie's What, the tragic gradual dissolution at the end of his tutor's phrases. He couldn't believe no one else noticed. He couldn't believe it took him so long to.

You look confused, Julia would say, and he would say it back.

5.1

Hard wood floors in the entranceway, a living room with a sofa and two wooden chairs and a window that faced the street, Julia's old room facing east, the master bedroom with heavy curtains, the kitchen and the hall. A picture of Julia, smiling, on the wall and a picture of Jeanette beside it. Claubert had lived in this house, this same house his father, now lying in a graveyard in Paris, had bought them, ever since he moved to Saint Éfrouée. For a long time it had been just him and Julia here, and then, just him. He had fallen into his own patterns and habits, happy and reassured by a simple dinner each night at eight-thirty, then the paper with hot chocolate, prayers, and bed. It was with reluctance that he agreed to host dinner for Julia and her new boyfriend, and due primarily to the fact that, as a matter of practice, he refused his daughter nothing.

He got up early that day to get the best produce and meat from the market, and went back again in the afternoon to buy from Raquel's second round of breads, fresher than if he had got them in the morning. You're out of the house, Raquel said.

I know, said Claubert, I'm sorry, I've been…

You've been buying bread from the IGA, I know.

I'm sorry, I'm tired, Raquel, I'm growing old.

You're only four years older than me. Raquel was smiling, her eyes bright and open and her movements lean and quick, tucking baguettes into a paper bag. Impossible, thought Claubert.

Impossible, he said.

But true, said Raquel, smiling, Come and see me more often, we haven't watched the sunrise in years.

Madin wore his brown suit, his only suit. He closed his eyes and counted to three before knocking on the door. Claubert, in a blue cardigan and ironed trousers, closed his eyes and counted to three before opening it. Julia was already there, uncorking wine in the kitchen. Two reds, because that's what everybody wanted, and one white, for the sake of presentation.

Time moved slow as melt in March between the door and the first glass of Pinot Noir, then Claubert started to remember parties and friends and wine and Madin started to remember that people are just people and men are just men and Julia remembered what she knew all along, that she only loved those who deserved it and deserved each other.

Electrical engineering, said Madin, after the foie gras but before the rabbit; after the Pinot Noir, but before the Cabernet Sauvignon. Over the table, Julia looked at her father, eyebrows raised; under the table, she held Madin's hand.

Electrical engineering, repeated Claubert. All the E's sounded so soft in his accent. Wires and light-bulbs? he asked.

Wires and light-bulbs, said Madin. There was silence. Claubert drank some wine. Julia watched the legs appear up the sides of the glass, then drip down, good wine.

I work at the town hall, said Claubert.

Yes, I've heard, said Madin. I mean, Julia has told me as much.

I've worked there since I was sixteen, said Claubert, do you mind if I smoke? Julia held her breath, subtly, but consciously. She hated the smoke. She didn't say anything though; her father didn't speak often. Since I was sixteen, he said again. Work is just work, not the most important thing, people tell you, friends, fathers, but eight hours a day for twenty-seven years is sixty-four thousand and eight hundred hours. That's seven years. Seven and a half years. That's more than just work, that's life. Claubert had another drink, not so much this time. Anyway, he said, I'm old. Les enfants seuls savent ce qu'ils cherchent. Julia squeezed Madin's hand under the table, then let go.

Shall we have some rabbit? she said.

I don't like it, said Madin to Claubert, not Julia. I don't like electrical engineering.

Of course not, said Claubert. Drink some more wine and think about it tomorrow. He put out his cigarette. Julia inhaled.

The evening went late and lively and warm. After dinner, they spent most of the night seated on the floor around the coffee table, not on the couch or chairs.

They lit candles and sat on cushions. Claubert's back didn't bother him. He talked about France and Paris. Julia talked about her years away at the conservatory in Austria. Madin talked about the sea. They compared birds and drank wine and then coffee and then water.

At the end of it all, Madin found himself standing before the two photos on the wall, Julia and Jeanette, while Claubert had gone to find his coat. Jeanette in the photo looked younger than the Julia he knew now. Their hair was the same. Their eyes weren't. Claubert returned, with a coat over his arm. You two are all right to walk home? I've got a car that I've driven once or twice.

No, no, of course we're fine, it's close, it's a nice night.

A brief embrace, a kiss on the cheek, and Claubert watched Madin out the door to where Julia was already outside, tapping the dew off the shrub leaves like playing the piano.

Once they had gone, walked until their voices blurred into night-noise, Claubert closed the door, and got out the rusty green folding chair - it used to be part of a set for outside, on a patio or deck - that he kept along the side wall of the front closet. He unstuck it from itself and sat down, slowly, in front of his wife. Hello Jeanette, he said. Sorry it's later than usual, I've been pretending to be young. He smiled, ran one hand up along his cheek and forehead, and spoke with her for twenty minutes or half an hour, as he always did, before folding up the rusty green chair, standing up, slowly, and going to bed.

5.2

When Julia was four and a half, Claubert asked Jeanette if maybe they should consider putting their daughter into some lessons apart from regular school, regular kindergarten.

Like dance lessons?

I was actually thinking of music, of music lessons.

Outside the weather was horrible, blowing and unfriendly and horrible. It was almost ten at night and Julia was in bed. Jeanette was folding laundry; Claubert had just finished brushing his teeth. Music lessons? So young?

They do that now, now is the best time, they say, so young, so she can learn it naturally, like a language.

Jeanette stopped folding Claubert's blue and white work shirt, Not piano, she said, pianos are too expensive. The unfolded sleeve of his shirt hung down off her lap, reaching for the floor. Perhaps 'cello? She resumed folding.

But all those legs…said Claubert, he caught Jeanette's eye and smiled, almost shy.

What about violin?

Not to be trusted. Too high and dramatic.

What about voice?

Hardly counts as an instrument, does it? Jeanette was smiling now too.

Bassoon?

Guitar?

Drums?

Back and forth, like badminton, until Claubert said, more slowly, Perhaps flute?

But all those lips…said Jeanette. She stuck her own lips out. Such lovely lips.

Claubert danced to his wife, pushing the laundry carefully aside, Flute is perfect, it must be flute, he said.

She laughed and stood, flute it is. They waltzed in the small space between the wall and the bed. You're not a bad dancer, she said.

You're not a bad leader, said Claubert. He sang aloud so they would have something to dance to, stretching the tempo so it would fit with their feet,

En avant, Fanfan la Tulipe,
En avant, Fanfan, en avant.
Tarirarira, rira, tarirarira.
En avant, Fanfan la Tulipe,
En avant, Fanfan, en avant.

until Jeanette knew it well enough to sing along. Outside the wind blew the lids off trash cans and it was horrible, just horrible, but inside Jeanette and Claubert sang until Julia woke up. They stopped dancing.

You can go out and have your cigarette, said Jeanette, I'll go see her.

It's alright, said Claubert. I don't want to smoke tonight. Unless, unless you'd like me to.

No, not tonight. Let's go see our daughter. They held hands down the hall.

The light was on in Julia's room, she had turned it on herself. She was lining up clothes, shoes, socks, skirt, on the floor when Jeanette and Claubert came in. As if on a flat, invisible doll. I heard you talking together, Julia said, so I'm getting ready for school.

This country where you couldn't count on the sun to tell you if it was midnight or eight in the morning.

Claubert bent down and picked Julia up, her arms around his neck, her head just over his shoulder. Not time for school yet, he said. Jeanette picked up the clothes and put them on a chair by the window.

What do you think, Julia, she said, about learning to play the flute? Would you like to learn to play the flute?

Julia thought for a few seconds, her fingers toying with the soft hair on the back of Claubert's neck. Yes, she said. Yes, I would.

The wind calmed down after they got Julia back into bed. It was almost time for them to sleep themselves, but not quite. They went for a walk, Jeanette and Claubert, not far, just around the neighborhood, together.

I don't think she knows what a flute is, said Jeanette.

I don't think so either, said Claubert.

She'll be great.

Of course she will.

They reached the end of their block; they turned around.

Where will we find a teacher? asked Claubert.

There was only one person they knew who was a musician. Claubert waited. Jeanette thought. Then, carefully, she said, We could ask Dickie. Dickie knows most people in town, perhaps he would know.

Yes, said Claubert, side-stepping a bit of cloth, probably something blown off someone's line. Though not a musician, Dickie was a good choice. We can ask Dickie.

In Saint Éfrouée, Julia started to learn the flute at the same time as, in another town, as far away as the water, Madin learnt to swim. Julia's father repeating tarirarira as Madin's mother lifted his arms around his head and down, around and down.

6.0

Julia and Jeanette were born in Saint Éfrouée. Madin was born to the east, by the sea. To the west, where they spoke in a different accent, lived a violist named Gabrielle. She lived in the same town where she was born; she had never lived anywhere else. The year she turned thirty-four, she got a job playing for a theater company, learned how to work a fog-machine, and lost Janiel, the organ-player, the only man she ever loved.

Gabrielle found out about the job at Janiel's church, in the office he shared with the parish custodian. She was using his phone to check her messages, as she often did. Passing the time. On the wall there was a poster of a dog and an elderly couple that said, No One is Alone in Faith. Even the dog, thought Gabrielle. In the sanctuary, Janiel was sight-reading Debussy. Gabrielle listened. When he stopped to re-set the registers, she hung up and called her answering machine again. This second time through the message registered. She saved it and walked out into the pale light where Janiel was. I have got a job offer from a theater company, she called up to him.

First a cloud of hair, then Janiel's face appeared from behind the console. She continued, It does not pay much. I think I will take it.

Janiel smiled. I think that you should, he said.

That afternoon they made love in the place where the softest sun shone through into Janiel's apartment to the noise of the dogs and feet on the street below. In two months they would have been together for three years.

The perfect rehearsals were those during which Gabrielle was sent to the basement, alone, to work music. It was a mess down there. There were markings for shuffleboard on the floor, and, amongst the rubble of out-of-commission props and set-pieces, Gabrielle had found an ancient typewriter with a green body and silver-rimmed keys. She also found a bald manikin, which she dressed in a lemon-lime tennis outfit from the costume rack and named Alice. It wasn't that Gabrielle disliked the actors or working with them. She found them to be fascinating creatures, and would very much have liked to acquire some sort of friendship with them; however, in their company she always felt as though she

was with characters from television. Characters she could watch and appreciate, but with whom she could never connect; so, she preferred to rehearse in the basement, alone, with Alice.

It was the third day of the second week of rehearsals when Janiel disappeared, the same day that the wizened stage-technician taught Gabrielle how to turn the fog machine on and off, as she would have to do between scenes six and seven. A Thursday. First, there was no early-morning reply to Gabrielle's late-night message. Then, at lunch, there was no answer on Janiel's phone. And no answering machine either. Just ringing and ringing.

The next day was the same. Figuring Janiel must be ill, Gabrielle walked to the IGA instead of home after rehearsal and bought soup mix and daffodils. But the doorman at Janiel's apartment told her he was not in and would not let her into the building. When she asked if he was sick perhaps, the doorman fiddled with the brim of his cap a little and Gabrielle noticed the lightness of his brown eyes. Non Mademoiselle, he said, Janiel is not sick. Just not in. He is not in today. As she turned to make her way back to her own apartment, balancing her music, her viola, a package of soup and six daffodils, Gabrielle thought she might have heard Debussy rolling down from somewhere. Maybe, and maybe not.

Some of the fog followed Gabrielle home that night, and every night for the rest of rehearsals, sliding along at her heels and trailing from her hair. Out of the theatre, across to Janiel's, and then back the other way, home. It would wait, pooled in her shoes while she went through the rituals of every-night, and, after she had removed all her makeup and clothing and lay sleeping, the fog would slip back out her bedroom window and trail through the cracks in the sidewalk and around the legs of the neighbor's cats and over the faces of the homeless who slept in the alleys, until it reached Janiel's apartment. It would glide past the uneven cuffs of the night-doorman, and up the elevator shaft and between the ruffs of the green carpet in the hallway, passing through the cracks in Janiel's door to settle tangled between the fingers and legs and hair of his sleeping form. Gabrielle often dreamt of fog.

She was the only musician in the play. She didn't mind, as, with the actors tied up in remembering their lines, there was no one to notice when she made mistakes. Of course she tried not to, and of course she did, and it was, in a way, liberating. The play opened one week after Janiel disappeared. There were signs up on all the audience entrances, warning of the use of fog in the show. The opening went rather well, and several actors in their underwear gave her hugs and cards afterwards, in their communal dressing room. She stayed at the all-vegetarian reception for a while, watching the others, then slipped out into the streets that led to Janiel's.

Since her first fruitless visit, she had gone every evening after rehearsal, even after the late running technical-rehearsals when she would meet the stranger night door-man in ill-fitting trousers. Every evening Janiel was not in. Non Mademoseille, he is not in. On this night, after the opening, she left the daffodils with the doorman.

In case he gets in soon. Or for you. When she got home, Gabrielle made soup for herself and began to write a letter.

It was a misty night when the show finished its ten-day, thirteen-performance run, foggier outside the theatre than in. Once the show was finished, Gabrielle took her only suitcase, an umbrella, and her viola, and started to move east. She took the bus or train or cars. Stopping in a new town and living there for a while, if she could. After two weeks, or six months, or an hour, she would get back on the bus or train or car and go somewhere else. Always east.

6.1

Madin was lying on Julia's gaudy pink and red duvet one morning two months after his first dinner with her father. Madin watched as she packed up her instrument for the daily rigor of lessons, chamber music, and university orchestra. That's really what you plan on doing, for the rest of your life?

Yes, it is.

You are a brave girl Julia; you are brave.

Not long afterwards, she had a concert with the University Symphony. The Enigma Variations, by Edward Elgar. Enigma, Edward, Elgar, said Madin, under his breath when she told him, so many Es. Julia was on second flute. Madin brought a clumsy bouquet of yellow daisies and sat in the third row, to the left. His first real concert. He was overdressed in his brown suit and straight tie, easy to pick out among the humble audience of mostly students in jeans. Julia smiled and flushed as she walked out on stage to tune, pointing him out to the first flute and clarinetist.

The conductor lifted his arms in a slow one bar for nothing and Madin held his breath. From the moment the conductor brought in the low strings, then the first violins, then the woodwinds, then the brass and so on, and so on, and so on, Madin discovered a new way to breathe. He didn't blink. He didn't move.

After the concert, once she had tired of waiting for Madin to surprise her backstage, Julia came down into the audience and found him in a rumpled rapture, slumped down in his seat as though he and his wrinkled brown suit had just run a marathon. There was no one else left in the hall. It's so simple, he said, looking up at her, the flowers forgotten at his feet, I never knew it was so simple. When everything lines up, not in chaos, but exactly and perfectly in line, it's nothing to be afraid of, it's simple. It's perfect.

Julia looked at this funny foreign man. It was far from perfect, she said. We didn't even have any percussion. And violins had to play the viola parts. And…

It was perfect, said Madin.

Although Julia was already in her second year of performance when Madin transferred out of electrical engineering and into the orchestral conducting program, he fast-tracked and caught up. Reading scores, understanding each instrument, following and leading at the same time, it was easy, it was just like breathing, just like swimming.

Julia and Madin were married the August after their graduation. On the day of the wedding, Julia's father shook his head and said, Two musicians. My God. Two musicians. He laughed. The brass quintet in the front of the chapel shone and shone, seated under stained glass.

6.2

Although Julia's flat was closer to things, and nicer than Madin's, it was also smaller and there was a roommate, Robert, the bassoon player whom Madin had met for the first time by the lockers, after his frost-bitten overnight in the student lounge. Robert didn't like Madin. He shut cupboards more loudly when Madin was over, or practised Shostakovich parts with his door open. He always made a point of sitting next to Julia if they were eating there, so Madin would sit alone on one side of the table, facing them like interviewers.

Madin's flat was further away from the centre and not so clean-lined and well-presented, but it was his alone and there was space, so Julia moved in. Robert and his boyfriend helped carry her things up the narrow stairs. Like a bloody bell tower, said Robert, carrying the box in which her duvet was packed around fragile things. Behind him, his boyfriend had a box of sheet music and score paper. Dickie, at the back, had her school notes and photo albums.

I do like the quiet, said Louis, the boyfriend.

Yes, said Dickie, exactly.

It was only temporary. Until they had the resources for a proper house, somewhere you wouldn't need to swim to.

On their way back down for the last time, after the last boxes had been brought and thank yous said, Robert, Louis, and Dickie walked past the door to flat number one. Who lives there? said Robert. Dickie turned around. He turned all the way around until he was back where he started. He had almost forgotten flat number one.

Nobody lives there, he said. Nobody would want to. It's dark and cold and alone. It's underground, and, most of the time, it's frozen. He held the front door open for Robert and Louis. See you again, I'm sure, he said.

I'm sure, said Robert, shaking his hand.

7.0

But we did have an orchestra once, said Dickie. We had a full symphony…L'Orchestre Symphonique de Saint Éfrouée. The OSSE…. Until about twenty years ago…I don't know why…. A lot of things changed about twenty years ago…. There are still some players around, I think, whether or not they remember how to play. And there are students, of course…. No, all the other conducting graduates go to Montreal, or France, or teach, or work at the bank or city hall, maybe…. Well it's always made sense to us… Well, it just always has… Well, you can try, good luck to you, but a lot of things have changed, a lot of people… Yes, you can try, you can try.

7.1

I can't believe he's making us audition, said Robert. His bassoon was balanced on his lap; it stuck out over Julia's knees. They were at the university, back at the university. The practice rooms all around them were full of players and music. Even the staircase. Even the lounge. They were sat in the middle of a row of chairs pushed up against the side of the corridor especially for today. Today was the first day of auditions for the revived Orchestre Symphonique de Saint Éfrouée, The OSSE, Madin's idea, Madin's doing.

I mean, okay, maybe I can understand having to audition me, maybe, but you? His wife?

It has to be fair, Robert. He wants it to be fair. He wants it to be taken seriously. Julia's flute was in its case, under her chair. She wished she could be like all the others, in a practice room going over orchestral excerpts, warming up in scales, but Robert hated cramming. No point, no point in it, he said. His foot was tapping erratic rhythms. Julia was sitting with him because he got too nervous alone. Just like in end-of-term juries, just like in school recitals.

The door to the classroom opened and Luc Tonbar, who taught a few children violin some of the time and sold coffee and hotdogs at hockey games the rest of the time, came out with a violin case in one hand and sheet music in the other. Madin came after him. Number twenty-six, he called down the hall.

I thought he knew my name, said Robert, lifting his instrument and standing.

Go, go, go, said Julia. You'll do great.

Julia was number Twenty-seven. Madin smiled when he saw her and stood up, but only shook her hand; they did not kiss, they did not embrace. The room was painted a light yellow, Julia had taken her theory classes in here. Okay Julia, said Madin, first we'll hear your prepared piece, and then we'll do some reading-from-sight, okay? He sat back down.

Julia stepped back three steps, an appropriate distance, and said, I'll be playing the Allemande from Bach's Partita for solo flute in A minor, BWV 1013.

A piece Madin had heard her play, of course, again and again and again. She counted her tempo in her head, inhaled and began to play.

So you're in?

Yes, Robert, of course I'm in.

Was it hard? Did he give you hard reading excerpts?

It was okay, said Julia, trying to organize the pile of sheet music and rehearsal schedules and orchestral etiquette handouts she had been given. She didn't tell Robert, but it had been hard. The excerpts Madin gave her were very hard, and not in any of the books she had been practising.

Oh, well, doesn't matter now, does it, said Robert. We're in and the madness starts on Monday.

7.2

You'll be fine, it'll be fine, said Dickie. No, it won't just be fine, it will be important. It will be just what we need, maybe…. Well, they'll either love you or hate you for it, but it's better to be hated than not to be noticed, and they've certainly noticed you now.... Well then have some more potatoes, they'll help you sleep…. Yes, you do…. Yes, you do…. Yes, you do. You forget I live one thin ceiling beneath you…. Yes, you do. You think I can't hear three-in-the-morning pacing right over my head? Have some more potatoes.

7.3

Madin had wanted to start rehearsals with a read-through of the Enigma Variations by Edward Elgar (E, E, E), but Julia advised him against it. It wasn't so long ago we played it with the University, it's still warm in people's minds, they won't be reading from scratch, it'll be like cheating. This was one reason why she didn't want to start with the Enigma Variations, the other was because her position had changed. In university she had been second flute, here she would be first. The piece would be warm for many of the other players, but not for her, she'd be reading a brand-new part. Making a fool of herself, probably.

In the end, Madin chose something else, but made a mental note, saving the Variations, keeping them warm himself.

An hour and a half before the first rehearsal of the new OSSE, Madin went and picked up the key to the concert hall from the École Secondaire Saint Éfrouée custodian. For the past twenty years the hall had been used almost exclusively by the school for student productions that were too big for their gymnasium. Technically, however, the building was owned by the city. It was Claubert, Julia's father, who had made the appropriate arrangements within City Hall for Madin. The music stands and chairs were still all stacked in a cellar under the stage, waiting.

Once he had the key, Madin walked to the hall, not far off the town's central square, and let himself in. He opened the storage cellar and, one-by-one, lifted and positioned the chairs and music stands into a perfect ghost orchestra. The conductor's podium he did last, beautiful, with its cover of torn red carpeting.

Somehow, between that time of setting-up and five hours later when Madin ran a hand through his sweat-damp hair, the first rehearsal happened. Tuning and conducting and reading and music and nothing terrible happened. And something wonderful maybe, maybe, started to happen.

7.4

More than twenty years before, on the night before she was married, Jeanette put on the longer, larger brown shoes and her wedding dress and her parka over top.

Dying white fireworks at Tom's window.

Don't, Jeanette, said Tom, from the window, only looking once, not letting himself look again. Don't. Go home tonight.

Nothing will change, Tom. Tom, come down.

He waited, he breathed, and she waited, and breathed. He looked again. The fog of her breath rising over her face like a veil. He came down.

She took off the parka and took his hands. Nothing will change, she said, and kissed his mouth.

In the morning, her mother took her to the nearer church. Claubert and his father were waiting. The priest smiled at them. Jeanette and Claubert the strange French boy carefully held hands and repeated words, one at a time, to each other. Tom stayed in his apartment, watching the window.

7.5

Reluctantly, Madam Doohan had had to let Tom go. Even with Jeanette pulled out of lessons she couldn't keep him on; the fathers and mothers of the other girls would never allow it. It would end badly for the school and for her. Worse, even, than it already was. So, after, what was it? Eight years? Nine years? of playing for soft pink feet and slippers all in a line, Tom was asked not to come back to the ballet school. Madam Doohan gave him an extra month's pay and asked him, please, not to come back.

Anyone else would have moved away. But the idea of him leaving and Jeanette staying was so backwards that Tom couldn't pack his suitcase. Jeanette should get to leave, she had wanted to go. He had wanted to stay. He had always wanted to stay.

He appealed to one of the churches, the one furthest away from the dance school, because they were a church and forgiveness was their business and because churches were the only places he could think of with keyboards. He went to Mass for the first time since he was a boy, and, after all the others had left—shuffling down the aisle slow as skating in summer so that they could all look at each other, and, especially, so that they could all look at him, sitting with his hands on his lap and his grey and green hat beside him, on top of a hymnal—after they had all gone and it was just him, in his pew, and the priest up at the front, clearing things, Tom took his hat and approached the altar.

Father,

I already know your wrong, boy, no need to confess when the whole town already knows. I can find jobs for you if you want them. If you need them. Weekdays from eight-thirty in the morning and Saturday evenings to prepare for Sunday. I can find jobs for you if you want them, but, I think, maybe, you will refrain from playing our organ until you're sorry, you're really very sorry in your heart and in your soul for all that's happened. It's one thing to tell a mother you're sorry, it's another to tell God.

Tom started work at the church the next day, Monday. He shoveled the walk and polished silver and counted the collection and swept the floor and

distributed the hymnals and ironed the cassocks, but he did not play the organ. He replaced the burnt-out candles and wiped the stained glass windows and mended the broken statues and painted the graveyard fence, but he did not, ever, play the organ.

7.6

I won't take free tickets, said Dickie. I don't care, I don't want them. I've got a job and I do it and I expect to get paid by my clients for doing it and you should expect the same…. Even if your customers are your friends. ….No, because everyone in town will think you're their friend…. Yes they will.... I will pay full price and so will Claubert and so will Raquel and everyone else, an Arts Council grant won't stretch forever, it will hardly stretch at all. ….Yes I would charge you if you wanted a tattoo…. No, it's a mark of respect, person-to-person, adult-to-adult…. Friend-to-friend. I won't take free tickets. So, tell me again, when's the first concert?

7.7

No matter what Madin did, the double basses were always late. They'd always come in laughing and talking during the tuning or warm-up scales. They were late, but they were keen. Once arrived they would dig into their parts with joy and excitement. The cellos, beside them, were more melancholic. Even when they were playing the same parts, the cellos made it deep and introspective while the basses never quite took themselves so seriously.

The basses were always late, the cellos were melancholy, and Madin didn't have nearly enough viola-players. The woodwinds, meanwhile, Madin suspected, felt somewhat intimidated by Julia in their midst, the conductor's wife. They behaved themselves reasonably well. Madin only had to request they put away the newspaper they split into sections and distributed between them, propped in front of their music on their stands, every fortnight or so. The brass, on the other hand, brought supplementary reading material to nearly every rehearsal; Madin just did his best to ignore it. For the most part, they didn't have as many notes to play, in any case.

Despite the basses, despite the violas, despite the brass, they were all getting better and better. Learning to follow Madin as he learned to follow them.

The hall where they rehearsed, meanwhile, was getting colder and colder as the season pulled towards frost. Something was broken, but nobody knew what or where. Madin had to spend half their promotions budget on space-heaters.

And there was the problem of the percussionist. They didn't have one. Someone to hit the cymbals and woodblocks and marimba and tympanis. No one had auditioned, and the university didn't have any percussion students. It's harder than anyone wants, said Madin to Dickie. Nobody wants to count that much, that hard. Nobody can. He put an ad in the local paper and posted bulletins in the barber's and the Riverside café and the university lounge and the IGA.

It was the bulletin in the IGA that Madame Boisnoir saw. She wrote down Madin's office phone number on the back of the receipt for the groceries she had just bought, milk, pears, eggs, chocolate, Madin. She phoned him as soon as she got in.

Hello, is this Madin Villedonné?

It is, hello.

Hello, I'm phoning about the percussionist position for your orchestra, is it still unfilled?

It is.

Very well, I'd like to book an audition then.

Of course! Of course. That would be wonderful, Madame.

Boisnoir. Madame Boisnoir,

I'm sure we can fit you in. Perhaps this Thursday at 5:30 in the evening?

That will work, at the hall?

At the hall.

Oh, and Mr Villdonné, one request, please, can we have a blind audition?

A blind audition?

It is industry standard.

Of course it is, of course you can.

Until Thursday then.

Until Thursday.

Madam Boisnoir got off the phone and went to speak to her son; Madin got off the phone and went to speak to his wife.

A blind audition is when you can't see the person who's auditioning, they play behind a screen or something. It's meant to be more fair, said Julia. She was using a bread knife to cut the mold off some cheese. A knife much too big for the job. She used the bread knife for everything, cutting cheese, spreading butter, everything. Madin discovered new ways to be fascinated by his wife every day.

Are blind auditions really industry standard? he said.

Some places, said Julia, in some places they probably are. Do you think she could tell that you're desperate?

I'm not desperate.

Oh yes you are, said Julia, putting some cheese in his mouth and pulling him close, Oh yes you are.

It took Madin a little while to figure out how to lower the heavy red curtain at the hall, the heavy red curtain that, once lowered, blocked off the stage from the audience. Madin and Dickie sat in the auditorium, fifteen rows back. It's good of you to come, said Madin. You didn't have to, really.

I did, said Dickie, or else you never would have gotten that curtain down. Or else you'll have no-one for back-up if trouble starts.

At 5:27pm they heard the stage door open and footsteps behind the curtain. Hello? said Madin.

HELLO, said Dickie, much louder, loud enough to reach the curtain and go through it to the person behind.

YOU MUST BE HERE FOR THE AUDITION, said Madin, just as loud as he could without straining anything. THANK YOU FOR COMING. PLEASE PLAY ONE PIECE AND THEN WE WILL DO SOME READING-FROM-SIGHT. He didn't hear any response. They waited a bit, and then, loud and clear, they heard the marimba, loud and clear, cutting across the cold silence.

The playing was good, it was very good. It was better than expected, it was better, even, than Madin had expected not to expect. And the reading from sight too. Madin was more than pleased, he kept looking to Dickie to see if, maybe, this was a trick he had somehow orchestrated, But Dickie just looked straight ahead, smiling, nodding his head in time.

After the piece and the playing from sight had finished, the silence resumed and Madin said, at a normal level, Wow. A few moments, footsteps, perhaps a far-away voice. WOW, he said again, though it sounded silly to say it so loud. THAT WAS VERY IMPRESSIVE. I THINK WE WOULD LIKE VERY MUCH FOR YOU TO JOIN US IN THE ORCHESTE SYMPHONIQUE DE SAINT ÉFROUÉE, MADAME BOISNOIR. WE…he stopped himself. The audition was finished, they could speak face to face. GIVE ME A MOMENT, MS BOISNOIR, he said, I'M GOING TO COME BACK THERE TO YOU.

Dickie stayed in his seat while Madin walked down the aisle to the stage. Dust from the stage-floor patched onto his knees and hands as Madin lifted the red curtain and crawled underneath. At first, down at that level, all he saw were

shoes. Small, battered sports shoes standing among the legs of the marimba, xylophone, and tympanis. Then he stood and saw, in between all these big booming instruments, a little boy, maybe ten years old, in a blue t-shirt with a car on the front. Hello, said the boy.

Hello, said Madin. Is your mother here?

Yes, said the boy, and pointed behind him, to the right, to a woman with very short brown hair.

Hello, she said.

Madame Boisnoir, said Madin, your playing was very-

I didn't play anything, said the woman. Can't play a note.

Madin looked back to the boy. But, he said.

You said he's in, said the mother, you said your orchestra would like very much for him to join and that is that.

Don't feel tricked, said Dickie, as they put away the instruments. It wasn't malicious.

But it was a trick, said Madin.

But he is the best player you could have hoped for, you said it yourself. He is the best player, just not the best person. Surely that shouldn't matter. Not much can be done about it now, and, well, you've got a percussionist.

Yes, said Madin, I suppose I have. And a concert in two and a half weeks.

Well, said Dickie, I'm quite excited.

7.8

After he had worked for a few months at the church, a small space was made for Tom in what once was a walk-in closet for choir robes. An office, of sorts, where he had a desk and a chair and a lamp and pencils and paper and a ruler and a little clock. If you kept your focus on Tom, sat in his chair behind his desk with everything on it arranged in squares with narrow stripes of bare wood in-between, like roads, if you kept your focus down there, on what mattered, you wouldn't even notice the long rail above his head where the hangers and navy blue robes used to sit and wait from Sunday to Sunday. They didn't have a choir anymore anyway, the robes had proven superfluous. The priest had given them away in two large boxes to a kidney disease charity. All that was left was the rail, beneath which Tom sat.

In the morning, usually in the blue cold before sunrise, Tom would sit at his desk and organize the day's tasks. He would make lists in one colour and cross things off it in another colour. He would watch the clock, not out of boredom, but to see if today he was any faster at cleaning candle-holders than yesterday, or sweeping floors, or folding bake-sale leaflets. When he had finished everything on his list, Tom would return to his desk and clear the day's things away until it held just the lamp and pencils and paper and ruler and little clock again. With the lamp on, using the ruler, he would draw five straight lines on the paper, one on top of the other, from one margin all the way across to the next.

Then he closed his eyes and listened.

Then, using the pencil, he made marks, hollow and full and long and short, very sad and very happy, terribly loud and impossibly quiet marks.

Tom never played the organ, but this didn't stop him making music.

On those nights when Tom visited Jeanette, he would bring her scores, sometimes just one page, sometimes ten or twenty. She would study the paper intently, trying to find sense, beauty, anything like the music she remembered him playing, but all she saw was black on white, shapes and lines. It's for you, he would always say, I wrote it for you. When he held the baby Julia or watched Jeanette

feed her, he would hum his new songs quietly to himself and to her. Every week there were more.

7.9

The town was in the concert hall. Pretty much the whole town. There hadn't been a real symphony concert in twenty years. Raquel the baker was there, in the back, and Claubert was there, in the balcony. Dickie was there, in the front row, even though Madin had warned him this wasn't the best spot acoustically. Madame Doohan was there, moving so slowly, as she did these days, still dressed so well in her wonderful black coat. Madame Boisnoir was there, with her husband, underlining their son's name in the program in heavy pencil. Everyone who was still there, still in Saint Éfrouée, pretty much everyone was there, in the audience or on the stage.

And, for once, for this one time, maybe the first time in years, in twenty years, maybe, no one was talking. No one was laughing or coughing or pointing or talking. They were waiting, all of them. Waiting to see if this man from the sea-side could really do what maybe, maybe, he could do. Dickie was in the front row, waiting.

Madin held his breath. The players were already onstage. He wasn't nervous anymore. This was the thing he could do. Like swimming, it was all about breath. He walked out to his pedestal. His polished shoes caught the light as he moved. The audience was quiet. Madin inhaled.

The concert went well, said Dickie. They were walking home. It was snowing. Julia was quiet.

Yes, thank you, said Madin.

It was a good start, said Dickie.

Yes,

But just a start. You'll keep going, right? You won't stop now you've started.

Of course not.

Of course not. Good. Okay.

8.0

There was a place in Jeanette and Claubert's home, in the home that Claubert's father had bought and given to his son before skimming back across the water (perhaps knowing, perhaps not knowing he wouldn't return), a place small by small, dark by dark, where Jeanette would slip papers. Sometimes just one page, sometimes ten or twenty, she would slip them one on top of the other, a neat, dark, undisturbed collection.

When he was forty years old, and Julia was just into her twenties, gone away from him to Vienna, Claubert found the papers. It had been snowing, snowing for days, the earnest way it does the first few times in the year, snowing to remember how, snowing to prove something. It had only just stopped when he found the papers. While he was walking home from work it had slowed, five flakes in his eyes every second instead of twenty, and then one, and then none. Walking through the fresh drifts, clumps of snow gathered in the place between the top of his socks and the inside of his trouser-leg, by the ankle, burning cold. He decided, as he unlocked his front door, that he would be the first on the street to clear his walk. Perhaps he would also clear his neighbours'. Perhaps the whole street. But before he could do any shoveling, he would need to change his gloves from the finer black leather, smooth and clean to go with his suit, to the rough tan pair that would not callus or chafe or rip or mind if they were scuffed.

Claubert couldn't find the tan gloves in the basket by the front door with the other scarves and toques and mittens. He briefly considered a heavy woolen pair of mittens, navy blue, but decided against. They would get too wet, they were too soft, he needed what he was looking for. There were some folded jackets and a bicycle helmet and a pair of sunglasses on the top shelf of the front closet, but no tan gloves. He looked by the back door and in the kitchen. In his bedroom and in the front room, behind the sofas, under the chairs, down by the window.

The last place he looked was Julia's bedroom. In her closet, on the floor, behind all the shoes she hadn't taken to Austria, there was a box of winter things. Hats, scarves, gloves. As he crouched down, crawling under her hanging clothes

to reach for it, he remembered. Julia had taken the gloves with her. It could be cold in Austria. He had been once, when he was eleven, with his mother. They went to see an opera in February; it could be wonderful, but it could also be cold in Austria. He pulled out the box of winter things anyway. He held it on his lap as he sat on her bed, perfectly made for over a year now, and lifted out items one by one. Even the paired items, one by one, one small red mitten, then the next, one stripped woolen sock, then the next. Some of them he just looked at. Some of them he held to his face, smelling them, feeling them on his nose and cheek.

When he had gone through everything in the box and put them all back again, he got back down on his knees to replace it behind Julia's shoes. As he pushed it back, right back against the wall, the wall folded, a little, in towards him. Impossible, but that's what it felt like, what it seemed. He ran his hand along the back of the closet, in the dark, and felt a ridge where the wood had buckled, where the box had pushed it in at the bottom causing it to come away at the top. It opened into a small, hollow little space, two of Claubert's hands by two of his hands. Claubert reached over the box and pulled away the thin panel of wood.

8.1

Julia was twenty-two and at the Academy in Vienna. For the first year or so it had been almost perfect. So many people in the street she didn't know, so many streets in the city she didn't know, so many cars and shops and cafés and bars and theaters and trains, the city was a constant improvisation. It was invigorating and inspiring and only at times overwhelming. When it was, she would go back to her little rented room and put on her father's gloves. Sometimes she would write him a letter, sometimes she wouldn't.

The longer she stayed, the better she got to know the streets and shops and cafés and, even, some of the faces. But as their inspiration of newness fell away, it wasn't replaced with warmth as she expected. Though more familiar, the huge streets, the many cars, the so many people remained vast, open, cold. Sometimes she would look out her window at the pedestrians filing past and think as hard as she could at them, Hello, Hello, Hello, but they never stopped.

The package from her father arrived in the late autumn. He had written her full name on the address label like he always did, Julia Marianne Manteau, and, in the upper left hand corner, his full name, Claubert Jean Eudes Manteau. The wrapping was subtly rough, like starched cotton, as she loosened the tape and eased the folds apart. Inside there was a bundle of papers, held together with a heavy black clip, and, on top, a letter from her father addressed in clumsy German, Lieblings Julia meine Totcher, before spilling out into comfortable flowing French. It said usual things. Saint Éfrouée things, work things, house things. The neighbour's dog is ill, probably dying, heaven knows he is ancient. The snow has been heavy but beautiful. I don't know why I buy bread from the IGA every week when every week it is just as bad as it was the week before. And, of course, Your old father misses you. This house misses you. The only explanation for the papers was in a post-script, I found these, I think they are meant for you.

The top sheet was blank, a dust cover.

And then scores, pages and pages of musical scores, written by hand, by an unfamiliar hand. At the top of each new piece, in thin pencil, For Jeanette and

For Julia. At the end of end piece, a neat signature, Thomas Chartrand. Many were for piano or organ, but many others were for unmarked, single-staved instruments. Sometimes treble, sometimes alto, sometimes bass. Julia had a chamber music class to attend, but she didn't put on her coat, she didn't move from her room. She got out her flute and stayed there all afternoon and evening, playing through the pieces, reading whichever clef, shifting octaves when she had to, playing and replaying until the notes fell easily under her fingers. Playing and playing until her downstairs neighbour knocked with a broom on his ceiling.

Over the next few weeks Julia arranged what had to be arranged, giving notice to her land-lady who made a bigger fuss than expected, getting transfer details and paperwork from the Academy, going through the same process in reverse over sputtering long-distance lines with the Saint Éfrouée Arts University, giving things away, and throwing things away. She didn't organize a party as many expected her to, but instead made coffee dates, sometimes several in a row, (but never at the same place) to say goodbye in German again and again, at small smoky tables for two. When all this was done, she wrote her father back, on a postcard with a picture of a roiling horse in bronze on the front, Thank you for the package, I am coming home.

9.0

Madin was drinking gin and tonic at the bar across the road and down one street from the concert hall. Not because he liked gin. Not really. Not the taste anyway. But because it felt like washing his face. Like dousing his face with fresh frigid water. He had gotten into the habit of doing this after Monday rehearsals. On Thursdays and after concerts most of the players came down, but on Monday it was usually just him. Sometimes him and Julia, but usually just him. Today Julia had left rehearsal right away, before most players had even started packing their instruments; she said she hadn't been feeling well. This is what she said when she actually felt she hadn't played well. Madin had told her again and again, stroking her back, his fingers up, under hair to her neck and down again, that she was too hard on herself, that none of the players were perfect. But he could still see it, the way the disappointment set in her eyes, her body. He could see it all the way from his podium. It would take over, once it began, and fray her ability, the stupid mistakes dominoing as her confidence fell away. He wasn't ashamed of her, his wife, no, never. But, she told him, that that made it worse, it made her more embarrassed. When he came home he knew he would find her practising.

But first, gin and tonic. He felt good about today, didn't want to go home yet, not just yet. He watched the three ice cubes in his drink– two stuck together and one free – and thought about swimming.

Madin couldn't swim in the winter. Even though he was no longer attending classes at the college or university, and it actually made sense for him to walk down to the main bridge to get to the concert hall, he still swam. When he could, when the water wasn't solid. But so often, too often in this place, it was. Summers of swimming, winters of walking. There only were two seasons, really, in this place, and one was much longer than the other. He pushed the summers further than they went, heading down to the river on days when Julia begged him not to. But it wasn't enough. Soon the season would be over again and he would be walking. When Luc Tonbar came into the bar, Madin was considering skates.

Hello, hello Madin.

Hello Luc. It's awfully late, did it take you so long to pack away your violin, to loosen your bow?

No, no, I've been in the other café.

The other café?

The other café, right across the street there. Rigo's.

Madin thought. Of course. Of course there was another café there, Rigo's. But, he said, that's the actors' café. All the theatre people go there.

Yeah, they go there.

But you're a musician, the musicians always come to this café. This is our café. It's, it's nice.

It's nice at Rigo's too.

Madin started to reply and then stopped. He didn't know which place was nicer. He'd never been to Rigo's. He was a musician.

It's funny, you know, said Luc.

Rigo's is funny?

No. It's funny that you've never been there. You're the one who isn't from this town. You'd think you'd know better.

You'd think, said Madin.

At home, Julia stared at the wall, at the distorted shadow of her own form on the wall, darker grey over dark grey, and practised troubling segments. Ten times ten times each. After she completed a group, she allowed herself an E-flat major scale as a reward, slow and thick. The sheet-music was on the bed behind her; she didn't need to look at it anymore. Ten times ten times and a scale. Ten times ten times and a scale. It was after eleven pm when she stopped, when Madin came home and put his arms around her from behind, pulling the flute down and away.

9.1

Tom's arms were strong in a way most men's weren't. The muscles he had developed from playing piano were longer, thicker, than a working man's. Even though he hadn't played in years, his arms had stayed that way, as though they had set when he was eighteen and could never change now. The hair on them was a lighter colour than the hair on his head. He was standing behind Jeanette, with his arms around her and his hands on her stomach, so that all she could see of him was arms and hands. It was late, Claubert was out, Julia was sleeping. This was Tom's first visit in forty-five days. Jeanette had watched the moon grow round and then eat itself away again waiting for him. There was nothing else she could do. Claubert was usually out and she had to stay in with Julia. The girl could wake up at any minute and decide to wander. She was doing that more often now.

Jeanette wanted to talk to Tom, to laugh or dance, but she was afraid of breaking his hold. As though, in turning around to face him, she would break something more.

It's getting warmer, said Tom. The chickadees in the church-yard know it, they're getting excited. He had marks, smeared pencil marks, all along the side of his hand.

It's still freezing in this house.

Tell Claubert to keep the heating up.

It's the windows, they suck the heat out.

What about Julia? She can't live in a freezing house.

She seems to.

I'm going to see her.

Not now,

But he had already let go, and was walking away, towards Julia's room. Don't wake her, said Jeanette, her voice small as she felt the start of a gentle but unstoppable folding inside her, as calmly as her mother used to fold other people's clothes.

Tom was always precise. It was precisely one week later, seven days, precisely, when his letter came, slipped through the slot with all the other post, as

though it could camouflage there, remain indistinct and undiscovered for just a little while longer. Jeanette found it when she got back from walking Julia to school. This walk, and its mirror image, seven hours later, were her favorite parts of the day, when she was out of the house and had a reason to be. When no one could say anything because she was with the child, for heaven's sake. She knew she probably shouldn't be bringing her to school these days. These days when something, somehow, was taking children, but she needed the time, the little bit of escape. Besides, if she kept Julia home, she knew what people would say. As if, as if *that* family could be contaminated by ours. As if they have any right to hold themselves apart. Besides, Jeanette was no better at protecting Julia than anyone else, she knew.

She found Tom's letter first, but opened it last, making it wait until after the gas bill, the school notice, the bank statement. Then, because she was sitting at the table, with all the mail before her and open except for one, last, white envelope, she opened it too.

Pencil, because he always wrote in pencil. Because things might change, even when they couldn't. It wasn't very long at all, the moving pull of his words not even filling the whole page. One of my pieces, it said, has been chosen. One that I showed you last year, a wind quartet. Jeanette searched her memory but couldn't locate anything exact. All his pieces had always been blurs of impenetrable affection. A wind quartet could be anything, could be any one. A full scholarship, said the pencil marks. Montreal, they said. Montreal. Three years, maybe four. Not so long, not so far away.

Or forever long and forever far. It was all in pencil. Room for change.

He was already gone, The 8:45am train, the pencil said. It was so easy to board a train, and be gone. He had already waited so long.

Jeanette felt the final fold, bottom over top, and knew she was as small as she could be, and as heavy, dense like packed snow. It was all she could do to stand up, to pull on her long, grey coat, to get out the door.

9.2

She had taken so many trains, Gabrielle the violist had taken so many trains. And buses and sometimes cars, dark cars driven by strangers who would want to talk or not want to talk, want to touch her or not want to touch her, want to convert her or to change her, to love her or to ignore her. Who would have thought this country could be so big. It just went on and on. City and town and village and land, rocks and lakes and trees and people; Gabrielle continued to move east with her viola and the small black suitcase she had purchased back where the land was flat.

One day to the next, one place to the next, it was as easy as breathing, as easy as music.

One morning she was somewhere else, then she caught a train and found herself in Saint Éfrouée. It was sixteen months after the Orcheste de Saint Éfrouée's first concert. The train station was white marble, with a domed roof. It was how Gabrielle imagined the inside of an igloo. She chose to get off the train here because no one else did. She walked, alone, out the front doors and towards the little shack of a tourism office, carrying her suitcase in one hand for twenty steps, then changing it to the other hand, trading with her lighter instrument case. She had done this many times before, she had routine, ritual.

Dickie was setting mousse when his buzzer went. Three perfect, pink and white raspberry ramekins, not too sweet, just right. He closed the fridge carefully and went to answer the door. The woman he found there was someone he had never seen before.

You have an instrument…are you in Madin's orchestra? Looking for him?

Is there an orchestra here…?

Yes. Yes, it's small but we do have one. A good one. Very good. So, you're not here for Madin, for the orchestra?

No, but I am glad there is one,

Me too.

The conversation paused and they both looked at each other. Dickie looked at the woman's features, her nose, her hair, her movement, trying to match them with someone, some cousin or sister or best friend in Saint Éfrouée. Gabrielle looked at Dickie's eyelids, at the shadow of colour there, not make-up, not a bruise. Finally she said, It smells good in here…

Thank you. I've made mousse.

A man at the tourist office, his name was Louie, he said there was a spare room that I might be able to rent here, for a while, maybe…?

There isn't, said Dickie. And then, remembering, again, There is. But it's in the basement, it's always dark and cold.

I will not mind,

You should come down and see it, you'll mind. Everybody minds.

But I will not,

We'll see.

Dickie went into a back room and got some keys, a big ring, like a bull's ring, with many many keys. Let's go see, he said.

With one hand Dickie held Gabrielle's suitcase and with the other he opened the door to the basement flat. The air, thin and cold and smelling of old things and earthy things surrounded them at once, greedy, finally, to have warm bodies to surround. It reminded Gabrielle of the smell of the theatre basement where she had worked, alone with the typewriter and mannequin, before she started moving. They walked down thirteen stone steps to the main room, wide open with dark brown wooden beams up and down here and there, like intentional obstacles. This is about it, said Dickie. Along with the bathroom there and a small sort of kitchen there.

Gabrielle walked to a window; there was snow, old hardened snow, up against it from the other side, all the way up except for an inch at the top. The sun shone in in one long thin line, along the floor, across a beam, then along a bit more floor; otherwise it was dark. Yes, said Gabrielle, just fine, just fine.

9.3

Madin was conducting. Conducting like electricity, like the way metals pass power and energy through themselves on to others, pure. Madin was conducting, and the orchestra was responding, they were all with him this time, for once all tuned in at the same time, in the same place. The music was Romantic, the kind with sudden soaring melodies and dramatic dynamics, the kind that Julia had always been wary of at university. Intensity for its own sake, she and Robert would say. Melodramatic self-indulgence, they said. How much more intellectually invigorating to try and squeeze emotion out of Baroque, or even modern music than to have it laid plain before you like a cheap pin-up girl.

That is what she used to say, with Robert.

But now Julia was watching Madin. And he was so far away. Across an ocean of string players. Bows like waves, up and down, a pointed ocean away. He was doing everything exactly right, the players weren't even aware they were watching him, they could feel him. He was touching each and every one of them. For the first time Romantic music made sense and Julia let herself open to it, playing like singing at her husband.

When they got in that night, Madin put on a recording of the same piece, to practise, so we can mentally practise, he said.

It was good today, said Julia. You were good.

So were you, said Madin, he was unbuttoning his shirt with his left hand and conducting with his right. Though maybe a bit loud. Do you think you were a bit too loud tonight? I heard your part, which was wonderful, but it was coming out above the rest of the orchestra, not settling within it.

Julia said nothing, letting the music fill the room, and the silence that fell between them. Her chest was so so full, she fought against putting a hand to her heart to stem it. Apply pressure. Instead, she walked over to the music and turned it off, then walked back to Madin and put her hand over his, stopping its movement. Stop, she said, for tonight. She pulled him towards her, towards the bed. Come to me, she said. Just me now.

9.4

It was one doctor, not one of the ones brought in from America, nor from Montreal, even, but one of the four Saint Éfrouée doctors, a man, eighteen months from retirement, who couldn't wait to grow an unruly beard and lie in bed looking at his wife and being able to think of nothing but his wife and his bed and his beard, it was this doctor, with an office maybe five minutes walk from the east bank of the river along an otherwise residential and quiet street, with trees, really lovely, quite old trees all along both sides, it was this doctor who had himself lost a grandson, the quietest boy with hair as delicate and pale as snow flakes in sun, it was this doctor

this one doctor

who, lifting himself out of the bath two mornings after the passing of his grandson, dripped some water from his nose onto his top lip and, as his tongue swept round to lick it away, realized, of course, it was the water. It had to be the water. He put his coat on over his bathrobe and put on his boots without socks and ran to the river with a drinking glass he grabbed from the kitchen.

10.0

Madin was alone in the flat. Julia had gone out shopping with Robert. To find him a messenger bag, and to find her a spill-proof mug for bringing coffee to rehearsals. Madin had asked her to maybe look for skates for him while they were out, if it wasn't too out-of-the-way. She had looked at him like a teacher would, over her glasses, even though she didn't wear glasses. She had looked at him as though she were a teacher wearing glasses and said, You don't like hockey.

I know, said Madin, they wouldn't be for hockey.

They both knew they wouldn't be for hockey, but Julia refused to believe he would want skates for anything else. That he would want to skate on the river, across the river. That he would survive any such endeavor.

You never know when the ice is too thin.

In this place it's thick October through April.

November through March.

Even so, said Madin.

Even so, said Julia. Then she had gone off shopping with Robert and left Madin alone in the flat. It was a Saturday. He was going to use the time to tidy.

Madin enjoyed tidying. He always had. Not so much actual chores like vacuuming or scrubbing sinks, but just general tidying, taking things from where they shouldn't be and putting them where they should. He liked to do it one room at a time, making sure the first room was absolutely finished before moving on to the second. In his mind he pictured a floor-plan for the apartment where tidied rooms were green and untidied ones were red. This was easiest to do when Julia was out of the house, unable to make a room red right after he had made it green. Today he started with their bedroom.

Once the bedroom was done, he moved on to their closet, which, though a separate room by his division, was a sort of 1-A to the bedroom's 1. His side was easy, nothing much out of place, but Julia's required a bit more effort. There were a lot of clothes, fallen off their hangers and tangled under shoes, to rescue, lovingly smooth and fold, and hang up again. There were random small items, buttons and pennies and notes that had fallen out of pockets and had to be

gathered and put in a little pile on Julia's bedside table. And there was a box of winter things, hats, scarves, mittens, that was exploding out of itself. These were all Julia's, his were kept in the front hall. Madin lifted the box out from beneath trailing skirts and trousers, up onto his lap. He gathered stray articles from between nearby shoes, tucking them safely into the box, a small swell of accomplishment with every one.

It wasn't until he was done, had picked the entire fallen harvest of Julia's winter things from between heel and toe of leather and canvas, that Madin noticed the corner of something under all the mittens, something glossy reflecting the closet's dim light. First glossy to see, and then, as he reached for it, glossy against his fingers. He reached, and from under wool, brought up a loose stack of worn photographs, smooth side up. He wasn't doing anything wrong. He wasn't doing anything wrong, but he still looked up as he pulled them free. Looked up, over his shoulder. Julia wouldn't be home for hours, he knew, but just, just in case.

Madin took the photos into the bedroom, where the light was better. He shuffled them like cards, closed his eyes, and chose one at random.

A line of girls in leotards at a barre. No smiling, tight faces, like they have been told specifically not to smile. Their bodies are captured by the camera as though in the midst of movement, but they can't actually be moving, or else the photo would be blurrier. They are posed. Stillness meant to represent movement.

Madin studied the girls, the barre, slowly and carefully; he ran his finger across each face, hovering it just above the photo, not quite letting it touch or smear. He was looking for a reason, a connection. He was looking for something of Julia. All the girls had the same hair, hidden up behind their heads, and the same leotard, and the same expression of attempted severity. Two of them, however were taller than the rest: a girl with a sharp twist to her nose, like it had been broken, perhaps more than once, and another, whose eyes weren't as low as the others', who was looking above the camera, not into it. He finally recognized her from the photo on the wall at Claubert's. This was Julia's mother, Jeanette, about whom Madin knew almost nothing. This was her.

Julia was silent about her mother. Sometimes she would laugh and turn the questions around to Madin's own mother, or brother, or the sea or the birds. Sometimes she would simply pretend not to hear. She would talk on and on about her father, Claubert, about his life in France, about his job at city hall, about their family vacations together, just them two, but about her mother, she was silent. Madin knew the photo in Claubert's front hall, her name from the plate beneath the photo, her birthday, and that she was gone. This was all he knew. Even Dickie, even the town, was silent about Jeanette.

Madin went and put on music, a record, Elgar, then came back to the bedroom and shuffled the photos again.

10.1

He does live there, just right there, just above me and I'm just above you so he's just two-times above you, he does live right there.

I know, you told me, but I do not want him to know I am living here yet, not quite yet…so will you tell me his mailing address?

Really?

Really, please…

It's the same as yours, as mine too.

Will you write it out?

Dickie gave Gabrielle Madin's mailing address. Even though she could hear the conductor's boots coming in over her head every evening. Could hear them step-step-step-stop to take off his coat, the coat that was too big to wear up the stairs, it got too hot, then step-step-step away and up the stairs. Dickie gave her Madin's mailing address and Gabrielle wrote to him. She always did it this way, in every new town. She always used the same letter, just changed the details.

Dear _____ (Madin),

Allow me to introduce myself: I am Gabrielle Blé. I am new in town and play the viola. I have heard via _____(Dickie) that you operate/manage/CONDUCT/own a(n) _____ (orchestra) here in _____(Saint Éfrouée). Would you have any position available for an accomplished professional violist (BMUS, ARCT) such as myself? I would be grateful for any work you might have. Thank you and do enjoy your _____(weekend).

All Best,

Gabrielle Blé

(BMUS, ARCT vla)

She dated and signed the letter, remembering specifically to put her new address on the return area, pushing all the old addresses in her memory out of the way, into storage. It was nice out, cold and nice, so she walked the letter down to the post office right away. She thought of herself as a train as breath puffed out in

clouds from her nose and mouth. First a train, then a dragon. She left the letter with post office staff, they knew what to do with it, they would deal with it from now on. On the walk home she realized her breath, visible and heavy, was less like a dragon or a train, and more like a theatre's fog machine, rhythmic and steady, just doing its job.

That night, after dinner with Dickie (game hen, little savory pastries, asparagus and brandy-pears), Gabrielle lay in her room in her black apartment, and listened. This was usually the time when she would hear the organ. She would lie there, in whichever city, town, bed, train, or car, and listen and there it would be. Not always the same pieces, usually different ones, sometimes seasonal (on Easter Sunday, for example, she had heard Hebert Howells' *Saraband For the Morning of Easter*, a piece she didn't even know she knew), and sometimes not. Tonight it was Handel. *Pieces for a Musical Clock*: *A Voluntary on a Flight of Angels*. If she closed her eyes, she saw Janiel's hands, and sometimes also his feet and hair, so she tried, like she always tried, to keep her eyes open as long as possible. It was good to have an apartment as dark as black. She hoped this way she might be able to feign sleep with her eyes still open.

This night, however, something different happened. As well as the organ, as well as the Handel, another music started to bleed in at the edges of her hearing. As she stared open-eyed at black, she started to hear far away, like from above, bits of Elgar, orchestral Elgar, seeping into the Handel. It was while trying to separate and find this music that Gabrielle finally fell asleep.

10.2

A triangle of people: small, tall, small. At one end is Julia, what Julia must have looked like when she was tiny. Two, maybe three. Able to stand and walk, but not terribly stable; although she is smiling, it looks like she was teetering. Such a round face. A caricature of childhood happiness. The sleeves of her coat are too long; her left hand is hidden, pulled inside. Her right hand is holding her mother's, Jeanette's.

Jeanette looks like she does in the photo on Claubert's wall. About that age. The face already going grey. There is snow on her hair.

On the other side of Jeanette, holding her other hand, is a boy, tiny, like Julia. Two, maybe three. His bottom lip is curled in, he looked unsure, ill at ease. His hands are in mittens, while Julia and Jeanette's are bare. Robert, Madin realized. This was bassoon playing Robert. He knew Jeanette.

It made sense. Julia and Robert had been friends for a long time, Madin knew that. And it was a small town, of course he would have met her mother. Snow on her hair. It was a small town, the thought dawned on Madin steadily, like a heavy, accumulating drift: everyone would have known Jeanette. He was the only one who didn't.

The city-centre church. Catholic, of course. Three men at the front, two women in the aisle, backs to us, facing the men, moving towards them. Claubert and a father and a priest, Jeanette and a mother.

A man. A man Madin had never seen, with light hair and strong arms, one of which is around Jeanette's shoulders. Their faces are very close, the skin of their cheeks practically touching. They're both smiling, really smiling. Happy. Jeanette has her wedding ring on. There is no baby or child in this photo.

And then a dog. Just a dog. Who ever had a dog? Did Julia have a dog? It was up close, all you could see was the dog and the bit of grass he was stood on. Just a dog.

Madin looked through them all, carefully, handling them like brittle butterflies, conscious of his fingerprints, the wetness of his breath. When he got all the way through, he started again. He wished he had a pencil on him, and paper. He felt as though he should be making a list, taking notes. He was just starting his fourth time through when he heard the click-slide of the front door opening. He took one more look, memorizing the details of the second tallest dancer as best he could, and slipped the whole pile back into the box, under the wool and leather, hats and scarves. He was in the closet when Julia came into the room.

I've just met a woman by the front door downstairs, she said. On the inside of the front door.

Raquel?

No, not Raquel, I know Raquel, of course, it wasn't Raquel, if it was I would have just said I met Raquel.

Right, of course, sorry. Madin walked out of the closet, he kissed his wife's forehead. A new woman, then?

Yes, new, I didn't recognize her. She didn't introduce herself, just said she was going to Dickie's.

A new woman going to Dickie's?

Yes.

That's strange, isn't it?

Yes.

Yes…did you get a new coffee mug?

Yes, it's lovely, look, red, and

And skates? Did you see any skates?

No, Madin, no skates.

Oh.

Julia put down the mug, put it on the bed. I'm sorry, she said, smoothing Madin's hair. Next time I really will look, I promise.

Julia? said Madin. Did you ever have a dog?

No, she said. Dogs were too boring. I wanted snakes and birds and hedgehogs, things like that.

Did Claubert let you have them?

Yes, of course. If it was findable, he let me have it. You can't find hedgehogs here. Not in stores or outside.

Did you take good care of them, the animals?

I got better.

10.3

The next morning, it was Julia's turn to be alone in the flat. Madin went to the post office. He had to pick up some scores ordered from Montreal that had finally arrived. He would probably also be checking the river, Julia suspected. Quite possibly also looking around town for skates. She could find out later, ask the French-horn player whose brother ran the hardware and athletics shop. Later.

She got up and put on the radio, talk-radio, made coffee and poured it into her new mug. Red. She stood with both hands around it and looked at the bathroom door. She was going to have to go in there. Soon. Before Madin got back. She didn't know, really, why she wanted to do this alone, without him. Mostly she didn't, mostly she wanted to do it with him, to hold their breath together and count the time and wait and watch and and. But a little bit of her, a little but strong bit, animal, almost, couldn't. Needed to hide, to be alone. The way a cat goes and hides to have kittens, or to die.

She was not unhappy, just a little bit dazed. After a few minutes of this she squeezed her eyes shut very hard, then popped them open very fast. Wake up, time for action. Three steps to the bathroom, three minutes inside, and it was done. And she was pregnant. Just like that. She was, she reasoned, pregnant before that, of course, but now it was official. She was two people, right then and there; she wouldn't be alone again for months and months.

She turned off the talk-radio and turned on Madin's Elgar. Then she sat down on the floor, on a throw rug Madin had bought to keep their feet from freezing on the stone, and cried and cried.

10.4

It had always started with coughing. A child would start coughing. For those weeks, not so long ago, all the town could hear was this, even when everything was quiet, still, all they could do was wait for that sound. Small and hollow and terrible. The schools, the playgrounds, empty but for coughing. They forgot how to listen for anything but that.

10.5

Oh, and also, said the woman at the post-office desk, familiar, but Madin couldn't remember her name, I've got a letter for you. You want it now? Or I could deliver it to you tomorrow, like I was going to, but that doesn't seem to make sense, does it, when I could just give it to you, you want it?

Yes, I suppose so, said Madin. Maybe it was from his brother. His brother wrote him, sometimes. He opened it on the walk home, holding it in his mouth and easing apart the envelope glue with one hand. His other hand was occupied carrying the scores and his new second-hand skates. The letter wasn't from his brother. It was from someone he didn't know. A woman, and, more importantly, much more importantly, a violist. Right now his orchestra only had three violists, two of whom would actually prefer to be playing violin. This woman, this new woman, didn't even mention the violin, only the viola. Wonderful. Wonderful! Madin scanned the contact information, he would phone her as soon as he got home, didn't care if it seemed a bit too eager. He was eager, no reason not to be honest about it.

Today was turning out to be a good day. Scores, skates, and a violist. Madin loved today, even with its grey and dry sky. He checked the phone number again, it was local, but it was also familiar.

Madin stopped walking.

It was familiar because it was Dickie's. The violist's contact number was Dickie's number. It must be a mistake, a slip of one number into another, a dyslexic swap to a thirty-five when she meant fifty-three. He would have to write to her instead.

But the address, the return address, was also Dickie's. More than just Dickie's, it was his. Madin's own address was there, on the envelope, twice. Once for addressee, and once for sender, written in the same hand, only for his number two the bottom was curled around, and for her own it wasn't.

But that was ridiculous, they were both his.

When he got home he didn't take off his coat, didn't climb the stairs, he went straight to Dickie's. Is there a woman living with you?

Dickie was cleaning his equipment, terrifying-looking machines. Not that I know of, he said. But feel free to look around.

Instead, Madin sat down. He watched Dickie polish. I think it's a good day, he said. I got skates today.

For the river? You're crazy.

I think I might be going crazy.

You want dinner here tonight? I've got scallops.

I'll ask Julia.

Okay.

Okay…see you later, maybe…I'll phone.

Okay.

Back out in the hall, Madin took off his coat. He had to put down the skates and the scores and the letter to get his arms through the sleeves and out. Maybe, he thought, Julia was playing a joke on him. She knew he needed violists. It was like her, this kind of ruse. It was the kind of way she might show love. He was leaning on the wall, coat over his arm, skates and scores and letter still on the ground. He should have gotten her something in town. Some small present. Madin was dividing pros and cons of going back out when the wall he was leaning on disappeared behind him and he fell back, over some feet and then onto cold floor.

It wasn't actually a wall there, it was a door. He had forgotten, really, since his first day in Saint Éfrouée when Dickie showed him that door and then told him to forget about it. It was a door, and now, it was open; someone had opened it from the inside. Madin was lying on the entrance platform it opened up to, next to a woman's feet.

Hello, said the woman. And then, I am sorry.

I'm sorry, said Madin. I forgot. I forgot there was a door.

No, said Gabrielle, it was my fault, I should have knocked…

On your own door? From the inside?

Maybe, yes, maybe…

Madin caught his lips as you would catch a twitching leg; they were forming her words, like they used to do with everyone. Repeating. Her words

were longer, and slower and never seemed to stop, just to fade. He watched her mouth from below, from his place on the floor. Do you live here? he said, and then, Do you play the viola?

Gabrielle looked away, down some stairs, towards something, maybe. You were supposed to get a letter, you see, because I did not want to meet you like this, I, did Dickie tell you?

Dickie doesn't tell me anything.

Oh, alright…do you want to get up? Do you want to come down?

Madin got up and picked up his things. Yes, he said, for a few minutes, okay.

Gabrielle didn't haven't any furniture, only a navy blue rag rug, about a meter and a half long and a meter wide, laid out on the floor. She and Madin sat on it, each at a far end, with a small space of navy blue rug between them. Gabrielle didn't have a kettle or coffee machine, so they each had a glass of apple juice instead. You'll have to audition, if you don't mind, said Madin. It's just policy, you see.

Of course that is fine, said Gabrielle, I do not mind, I am used to these sorts of things, of course…would you like a blind audition?

We could have one of those, I suppose. But, um, I've already seen you, and, um, met you. I don't think a blind audition will be necessary.

Are you sure that it is not policy?

No, not really, no. Is it policy for you?

My policy is to always follow the client's policy, not that I mean to put any pressure…or demonstrate any lack of responsibility…

Okay then, we'll have a non-blind audition. Do you know how to get to the hall?

No, but I am glad there is one,

You're not from here, Gabrielle?

No, are you?

Yes, of course. Madin put down his juice, balanced it on the undulations of the rug. I mean no, he said. No, no, I'm not. I'm not.

Where do you like it more, here or where you were before?

I don't really think about it, not that way.

Neither do I, but people ask me that a lot, which do you prefer, this or that, as though my life was separable or fully divisible between this place and that place. But of course it is not. It is fuzzy and runny, it is like smoke that goes everywhere, it is everywhere at once. I cannot like living in this place better than living in that place because I am still there. I am here but I am still there and there and there…

The rhythm of her. Madin tried to place it, but couldn't, it wasn't anything he knew, any time signature. It was free-time, everywhere, and then, instead of real conclusions, just fading.

I find it hard to remember too much about home, said Madin.

I find it hard not to, said Gabrielle.

10.6

Back in the front hall, on his way home, up to his flat and wife, Madin met Robert. He was coming down the stairs while Madin was going up. He wasn't even wearing a jacket, just a long-sleeved shirt with a scarf. He looked great. Madin, holding his bulky coat and bags on either arm felt heavy, old, in comparison.

You've been away a while, said Robert. I don't mean anything by it, but you've been away a while and she needed you. Thank God I was home, was answering the phone. Robert looked at Madin, arms crossed.

I'm your boss, thought Madin. I could fire you, I'm your boss. But he didn't say that. He said, I'm sorry, I had some errands to run, I've got skates…and a violist.

Aren't you going to ask about her? Robert's arms were still crossed.

The violist? Madin was getting hot. His shirt collar was itching him at the neck, at the back, at the back of the neck. No, I've, um, I've already met her, she's…she's auditioning later this week.

Your wife. Julia. Not the violist.

Julia. He should have gotten her a gift after all. Should have gone out and gotten her some small thing. Of course, he said, Julia. Is she all right? What's wrong? Is she all right?

Of course she's all right, I wouldn't be here talking to you on the stairs if she wasn't. You should just go, go up to her.

Okay, said Madin, stepping backwards down three steps so that there was room for Robert to pass.

Okay, goodbye, said Robert.

Goodbye, said Madin. After the front door had closed, Madin said to the stairs in front of him, I am your boss.

When he got in, Julia was sitting on the couch with a book. There was no blood, nothing broken or burned, she looked fine, perfectly normal, all right. She was composed. Oh, hello, she said.

Hello, said Madin. Everything okay?

Yes, everything's fine.

Everything okay with you?

Fine, just fine.

She looked down to her book; it was called *Wagons and Horses*. She finished her page, then closed the book and put it on the coffee table. There was something stuck between the pages, too thick to be a book-mark. Photos, it was a small stack of photos.

Dickie phoned to see if we'd like to join him for dinner, said Julia. He's got scallops.

10.7

The audition was set for four-forty-five in the afternoon, at the concert hall, which meant Gabrielle would have to set off at four if she wanted to have time to warm up. But this would be exactly right, and Gabrielle always factored in five spare minutes, in case something, her feet or some ice or some new roads, weren't exactly right. She left her apartment at five minutes to four.

Dickie, if he wanted to have time to organize his various assistant files at the hall, would have to set off at four, exactly, and so he did.

Madin, if he wanted to have time to unlock the hall and be sure the stage was clear enough for an audition and let the lights warm up, would have to set off at four; however, it took him longer than expected to locate his viola sight-reading parts and he couldn't decide if he should wear heavy gloves or not, so he didn't leave until five minutes past four o'clock.

Gabrielle got lost. She didn't turn on a street where she should have turned because there was no sign. The street was called Bon Accord, but everyone in Saint Éfrouée knew that and so no one even noticed that there was no sign anymore, but there wasn't, so Gabrielle didn't turn there, which meant she walked too far west and had to turn around after asking for directions in the cigar, pipe, and cigarette shop.

Dickie walked, just as he always did, from his home to the concert hall, saying hello, hello, to everyone on the way while still moving, walking, just as he always did.

Madin usually had a pace of ninety-six beats, or steps, per minute. That was his average walking speed, perfectly lined up with the final Presto from Beethoven's ninth symphony. Today, however, he was late, so he tried one hundred and eight beats, or steps, per minute instead, lined up with the Scherzo from Mahler's sixth symphony.

They arrived, all three, at the front steps of the hall at four-thirty, exactly. Hello, said Dickie.

Backstage, Gabrielle tried to push all the music and all the pictures out of her mind. She imagined a growing white inside her head that spread over

everything until there was nothing. Then she was ready to play. She didn't say anything to introduce herself (they already knew her anyway), she just walked out through a side-part in the curtain, lifted her instrument and bow, and started to play Stravinsky's *Elegie* for solo viola. She always played this piece, spread it, like fog, through each new town.

Madin listened to this piece he had never heard before and his mind emptied. His thoughts of Julia and Jeanette and Elgar paled and spread into mist, and then, nothing. Dickie had to touch his arm, gently, to tell him it was over, and time for the sight-reading test. Not that such a test was necessary, Madin knew already, Gabrielle was good enough for his orchestra, she was too good. She wasn't an orchestral player, she was a soloist. The next piece he would choose for the Orchestre Symphonic de Saint Éfrouée would have a viola solo. The Walton concerto, maybe, if that would do her justice, or the tenth variation of Elgar's Enigmas, if the time was right, yet, for the Enigma Variations. But before that, Gabrielle had to do her sight-reading, it was policy.

After she had been formally accepted into the OSSE, Gabrielle, Dickie, and Madin walked home together, Dickie and Gabrielle up front, Madin a little bit behind.

Madin couldn't sleep that night. He watched Julia's back, bare, brown-blue in the dark. She was on her side, facing away from him; her dark hair fell over her pillow and onto his. All he could think of was the Stravinsky, that viola and that Stravinsky. At three-fifteen in the morning, he kissed the top vertebrae of Julia's back, got up, and put on his trousers and a shirt.

Madin walked down the steps in bare feet. The stone felt cold, felt reassuring against his skin. He'd never walked with bare feet down these stairs before. Never, in years, never.

He stood in front of Gabrielle's door for a count of five, then knocked. Downstairs, Gabrielle was awake. It didn't take her long to get to the door. Will you play that piece again? asked Madin. Will you play it now, for me?

10.8

Julia didn't tell Madin about her pregnancy for seven weeks. During those weeks she would get up very early in the morning and, as long as she wasn't feeling too badly, walk in the pre-sunrise dark to the concert hall, with Madin's keys tucked into her left hand so they wouldn't jingle and her flute-case, held over her stomach, in her right. In the early morning red and gold of the hall she would stand up on Madin's podium and play and play and play to the open auditorium, empty except for her and the audience she carried with her. She always returned the keys to their hook before eight-thirty, when Madin got up.

Julia told Madin after rehearsal one Thursday evening. This was when they usually went to the café with the other musicians, his thin arm over her strong shoulders. As she approached his podium she held her flute-case in front of her stomach; there was so little to the smooth, black rectangle, it was not much bigger than the case in which Madin kept his baton. He kissed her on her forehead and cheek and she felt warm and self-conscious like she always did with him in front of the rest of the orchestra. She pulled his head around so that his ear was close by her mouth. This was how she told him. They walked home instead of to the café, shattering the brittle opaque ice that had reformed since their walk to the hall that afternoon.

Are you excited? asked Julia.

I am excited, said Madin.

Are you happy?

I am, I am very happy.

Are you scared?

Madin thought, and dug his toe into the hole in the ice it had just made. I'm not scared, he said. I thought I would be scared, but I'm not, I'm not at all.

Not at all?

Not at all. He looked up from his toe to his wife, This cold does funny things to me, I'm not scared at all.

He didn't ask how long she had known and she didn't mention it. Instead he took her hand and put it to his face. Your father will be so happy, he said. And Dickie will be so happy. He let her hand go. I am so happy, he said.

Me too, me too, said Julia.

11.0

Light steps down the stairs and back up, first thing in the morning, just before sunlight. Double steps together, in time, up and down in the daytime. Heavier steps, alone, down and up, at night. Dickie heard them all, he listened and he heard them all. Steps above and below him. Often he tapped his spoon or finger or foot to their rhythm.

11.1

When he was still so young, still years from thirty, Claubert came home to an empty house that he didn't expect to be empty. Usually, when he got in from work, Julia was home from school in the kitchen or front room with her mother. Jeanette was always home. But today there was no one. It was already dark out, so Claubert had to turn on the light in each room as he searched, calling, Hello? Hello? Hello?

There was no mess and no note.

Once all the lights were on and all the rooms were gone through, Claubert opened the back door and turned on the porch light. There were no footsteps in the snow, it lay in perfectly smooth blankets, almost warm. Inside, the phone rang.

I've been calling all afternoon, where have you been?

At work, I was at work.

Julia's here. We waited with her at the school, Robert and I, waited for her to get picked up but she never did. We waited an hour. Finally I brought her home with me. Jesus, it's after six o'clock. Where have you been?

At work, I've been at work. Normally…I'm sorry. I'll come get her right away.

Lizzie did not dance or play hockey anymore. She now lived in the better part of town, in a house much too large for just her and her husband and son. Claubert respected and feared her enormously. She got things done and did what she wanted. She had married the second-richest boy in town at the age of eighteen. Her parents lived just five blocks away from her married home, but she never saw them. She never gave them her new phone number and she told her son, Robert, that they were dead. Sometimes in town, at the city hall or in a shop, Claubert would run into one of them, Lizzie's mother or father, and they would beg him for news of their daughter and grandson. I'm sorry, he would say, I'm sorry.

He accidentally rang the doorbell twice. He had only meant to hit it once, but Claubert slipped and hit it again. He was embarrassed before the door even opened.

I'm sorry.

You should be. But it's okay, she's fine here. I don't mind, of course, and Robert loves it, but she was scared, she almost cried.

I'm sorry, I didn't know, Jeanette didn't let me know…

Where is she?

I don't know.

You don't know?

I don't know. Claubert put his hands in his pockets, he didn't know what to do with them. He was still standing outside the house, on the steps. Lizzie stood just inside the threshold, a wall. I don't know, he said again. She's usually home. She's just, his voice cracked, he cleared his throat, not, he said.

Come in, said Lizzie. She stepped aside.

They sat at the kitchen table, drinking coffee. Not too far away the kids were running to the top of a staircase and sliding down on imaginary toboggans, loud and percussive. What a fuck, said Lizzie. What a fucking fuck. Claubert watched his coffee spin in the direction he had been stirring, then drank, no sugar, bitter. He didn't usually drink coffee. Such a fuck, said Lizzie. Men are. Men all are. If he's taken her and got her to run off with him someplace, Montreal or someplace, I'll kick the hell out of him. Jesus, I'll kick it out of her too. Claubert watched his coffee; he didn't want to drink it.

There was no mess or note, he said.

Lizzie promised she would phone if she heard anything, and Claubert promised her the same.

Julia held her father's hand as they walked home. She had forgotten all about being abandoned at school and was stomping, happy, on sparkling leaves. It's late, isn't it? she said.

Yes, it is, said Claubert.

Later than I'm normally allowed up?

Yes, later than that.

She smiled. That's exciting, isn't it? She let go of his hand and ran ahead, to where the sidewalk met road, Goodnight everybody in town! She yelled. Claubert caught up and took her hand again. He didn't tell her to be quiet.

11.2

Word got around. Julia's pregnancy, the new violist, all sorts of things, words got around. Madin had been in Saint Éfrouée long enough to have lost the immunity of foreignness or newness; he was one of them now, and, as such, word got around.

Stéphane, the child-percussionist, approached him in the café one night after a seniors' special preview concert. He had a notebook, open to a page drawn out in a sort of chart. Alright, said Stéphane, tell me. You are married to Julia, yes? He was sitting on his mallet-case for extra height.

Yes, that's right, said Madin, but she's gone home early tonight, she wasn't feeling well. He could feel his cummerbund had come unfastened.

Right said Stéphane. He drew a line in his notebook, slowly, deliberately. And the name of the bassoonist, her friend? He asked.

Robert, said Madin. Ridiculous cummerbund, ridiculous form of clothing, his anger at the cummerbund was growing, irrational, huge, Robert Mathieu, he said.

Right, said Stéphane, and he drew another line in his notebook. Slowly. Deliberately. And Gabrielle, the violist…began Stéphane, but the waitress came by and so he put down his pencil and ordered a coke with Grenadine.

Excuse me, said Madin. He stumbled to the men's room and removed the cummerbund altogether, stuffing it in a pocket, not folded, not rolled. He took it out again; he wanted to rip it in pieces. He wanted to bite it into bits like a mad dog. He threw it at a urinal. It landed soft, wet, and crumpled.

He didn't go back to the table or to Stéphane; he paid for his gin at the backside of the bar and slipped out, home. His face was so warm and his heart so fast that he didn't notice he had left his coat until he got in and Julia asked about it.

Please, said Dickie, please don't take it personally. Nothing is personal. That's the whole point. Nothing is personal. He was wiping counters in wide circles, so smooth and continuous it made Madin want to do the same.

I know, I know, said Madin. But the things they're saying…and Robert too, maybe Robert more than anyone, and she listens to him. Julia does.

Julia is married to you, said Dickie, rinsing the cloth and folding it over the faucet. You are married to her. There is only reason to worry if there is reason to worry. His back was to Madin when he said this. He turned around, I am making pumpkin pie tonight, he said, I will save you some, if you like, and Julia, if she can eat pumpkin today.

Thank you, said Madin, around eight-thirty?

That should be fine.

11.3

Word got around, Tom's flight, Jeanette's disappearance, word got around. Not that it affected Claubert or how he lived his life. This was nothing new, these whispers and glances. The unprovoked sympathy of a cashier at the IGA, the scornful disdain of his secretary's notes and comments. This was nothing new, really, just another wave. Some people would cross the street so as not to walk beside him or the child, others would cross over to be with them. Claubert let them and continued on his way, walking Julia to school or to Lizzie's or to town. He never considered moving somewhere else. In Paris, his father was dead. His daughter had lived in Saint Éfrouée all her life; this was home.

When Claubert had to be at work, Lizzie took care of Julia. She decided it was best to keep the children, Robert and Julia, home from school for a few weeks even though the deaths were subsiding. Only three last week and only one so far this week. Still, it was best to keep them in, for a little while, so Lizzie taught them, Julia and Robert, in the vast cream and blue of her living room. She taught them the rules of ice-hockey and the atrocities of mankind against mankind, mainly. Then they would re-enact one or the other, pushing the graceful imported cherry-wood coffee table aside.

Every few mornings, Claubert would find a small brown paper bag, transparent in places with butter, pushed through the mail slot. Inside would be two croissant or two small brioches or two pain aux chocolate. They were usually a little squished from having to fit through the slot. The first time there was a white paper tucked in with the pastries, *On doit manger, xR*, it said. After this there were no more messages. One morning, however, when Claubert had risen earlier than usual because of one of his headaches, he heard precise, crisp steps up the walkway to his door. First to appear was the brown paper bag through the slot, then, momentarily, the hand that had forced it through. Claubert caught the hand, held it, firm but not tight, in his. Thank you, Raquel, he said.

One has to eat, she said, from the other side of the door.

For many seconds she didn't let go and neither did he.

One day, instead of pastries, the constable came to Claubert's door. Claubert remembered him from before, from north of town, in the woods. Today the constable was wearing his red uniform and his best boots. He had two officers behind him, holding their hands behind their backs like statues. They hardly moved while the two men spoke; but their breathing was fast and short. It was all Claubert could hear. He tried to focus on the constable's words, but had to ask him to repeat himself again and again and again. Ice. River. Ice. River. Down, down, down. Before they left, each uniformed man touched his hat and said, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. This time, Claubert didn't say anything.

Once all three men had gone, Claubert took Julia to Lizzie's and went to Dickie's instead of going to work. He walked along the river.

Of course it was too late to walk across the ice.

Of course Jeanette knew this; she would have known it always. There are signs you learn, living in this place, signs you learn without even knowing you've learnt them.

She knew, Jeanette knew

the cracking white, the sound before the cold.

11.4

Madin didn't buy the newspaper. But he would read it, sometimes, when the brass players left it on their stands after rehearsals. There usually wasn't much to it. A baptism, a new shop, an obituary, perhaps a party or a fight. Before or after OSSE concerts there was usually a blandly favorable preview or review, but these were generally little more than a list of pieces played and, occasionally, a detail or two about who was in attendance. But one day, just into Julia's second trimester, there was more. There was a full half-page review of the most recent concert. There was a big, bold, headline,

ALMOST EMBARRASSING:
VILLEDONNÉ'S PATHETIC ATTEMPT AT SHOSTAKOVICH
UNLISTENABLE.

Madin put down his baton, sat down in the first trombonist's chair, and read.

For some time now, Madin Villedonné's program choices for the Orcheste Symphonic de Saint Éfrouée have been, at best, ambitious, and, at worst, pretentious and disastrous. This weekend's concert, featuring Shostakovich's symphony no. 9, (surrounded most un-appetizingly with a Glinka Overture on one side and Prokofiev's Suite no. 1 from Romeo and Juliet on the other, like cheap red wine with fish), was certainly the latter. Not only was Villedonné's programming unfortunate and disappointing, but his sloppy conducting was so irritatingly distracting that it's a wonder the players managed a note.

That said, there were quite a few notes missing, more than a lot from the skeletal, school-orchestra style viola section (led by Gabrielle Blé). Perhaps, however, we were better off with missing notes than having to withstand the sour ones they did manage to produce.

The Shostakovich dragged and dripped like a wounded solider dangling flesh, helped only occasionally by one or two glimmers of talent and beauty from the flutes (led by Julia Villedonné). I, for one, was out like a shot for a stiff drink the second Villedonné's ill-fated baton came to rest.

There was no author credited. It just said, *Saint Éfrouée Post staff* at the bottom.

But it doesn't even make sense!

So, ignore it.

But it's bad writing! What does ill-fated baton mean?

I laughed at that, I liked that.

You liked it?

No, not liked. Found it funny. Don't worry, don't worry. It's just the paper, everyone will have forgotten by next week. Take off your boots. Stay a while.

Madin looked down at his feet, he had forgotten about his boots and now there were puddles of melted snow on Dickie's floor. I'm sorry, he said.

Don't worry about it, said Dickie. Stay for coffee?

One week later, the town didn't forget. They were reminded by a new article, also credited to *Saint Éfrouée Post staff,* this time postulating as to whether the city was squandering its resources by allowing the orchestra to use its hall (*Given recent standards, one must ask whether such a thing is doing more harm than good…)*. Two weeks later there was a preview for the next concert (*Is Villedonné's decision to bring in a soloist from Montréal an indication of his views on his own players?)*. And three weeks later, the review for that concert (*Clearly under-rehearsed and over-whelmed…)*. Madin started buying the newspaper regularly. He ripped out every one of these articles, although Julia told him not to. He kept them in his wallet, which was getting thicker, as though insults were currency.

Why bother saving them? said Julia, watching him rip and fold another. What good are they?

They're a legacy, aren't they, said Madin. Something to show the baby when he grows up. He was surprised at his bitterness. He laughed quietly, No, no, he said, I don't know, I don't know.

Put them away, said Julia. She was so big now, round stomach and red cheeks, Put them away and come to bed.

Madin looked at the bed, looked at her. She was so beautiful this way, it made him want to explode, it almost made him angry. I'm going downstairs first, he said. Just for a minute. Just to see Dickie.

12.0

At that time, back at that time, when the children weren't well, and Dickie's day-lit door was darkened by shadow after shadow of all the town's people and their need for him, when the line of slow-moving feet and slow-shaking hands wound its way from his door out to the hall and out down the front steps and out and on almost all the way to the river, at that time, Dickie would work during the day, and, at night, he would walk. One of those days, Dickie saw fifty-five clients before he had to walk out to the line of people standing, waiting, and put his hands in the air, like a criminal, and say, I'm sorry, I'm so tired, too tired, please come back tomorrow. They scattered quickly and lightly, like dust, like there was nothing to them anymore.

Once they had gone, Dickie cleaned and ate. Then he got his coat and boots and went to walk. It must have been close to midnight. It was clear and the big and little bear were high in the sky.

The river was black and white. Black depths with mottled white ice floating and bumping at itself in rough pieces along the surface. Not totally frozen over, still moving. He followed its flow, each step and each sharp breath clearing his head a little more, and a little more. Dickie walked so that he could sleep.

He was out of town, maybe a mile, when he saw the bird. A swan, a grey swan, among the bits of ice, floating. But there weren't swans here. Not ever. Not even in the summer, not ever in the winter. He watched it float towards him and then away again. Not a swan at all, just a grey coat, a woman's long grey coat. It was beautiful.

12.1

And you have always lived here?

I've never lived anywhere else.

Your parents?

From here. Lived here, died here.

Gabrielle was at Dickie's. He had on his apron like a butcher's, and she was looking through a book of designs.

Do people usually choose from this book? she asked.

Never, said Dickie. It's just a prop.

She put the book down, between the legs of her chair. Dickie put on a pair of gloves. Now, he said, we're going to wash and shave you, don't worry, the water's warm.

The cups of ink were tiny, like thimbles, all in a line. Gabrielle concentrated on them, imagined herself small enough to swim in them, all blue or green or yellow or white. It took her mind off the pain. She was glad he was working on her back, away from her. She didn't want to see the needle going in and out of her skin.

And you, said Dickie, over the drone of his gun, where is your history?

I am from the West, said Gabrielle, I have never lived anywhere else.

At one point, when Dickie was almost finished, they heard the outside door open, then the slow shuffling sound of Madin going upstairs. Gabrielle and Dickie both turned to face the sound.

12.2

What is that? Julia met Madin at the door, his hair wet from swimming.

A doll, I think, a porcelain doll, I think it's pretty old. It's from the river.

From the river?

From swimming. I found it while I was swimming. The face is almost gone, see, lips, eyes, almost worn off.

Put it back.

You don't want it?

Put it back.

I got it for you.

Put it back, put it back.

Are you okay?

I'm okay. Just, put it back.

Madin walked back the river, his hair still not dry, took off his clothes, and dove back in. He swam halfway across holding the doll by its hand, smooth and cool, then let go. Porcelain white sinking away, and down. Then he lifted his head and breathed.

12.3

Julia didn't go to the café after rehearsals very often anymore. She told her stand partner it was because she was sick of watching other people drink. She told Robert it was because she was sick of hearing other people talk. They don't know anything, but they talk, she said, knowing he did too.

They mean well, he said. They only want to help.

They only want to talk, she said.

Sometimes she would go home, with Madin's thin arm over her shoulders. The weight was hardly noticeable through her coat, and the angle was a little awkward, but they always walked like this these days, Madin stumbling through deep powder in the places where the path through the snow was only one person wide.

Other times she would leave him at the café and go to Claubert's for the night. Together they would watch films.

This began after Julia had told her father about the baby. It began when, one night, Claubert had phoned her at four in the morning, crying. It's *Casablanca*, he said. It's her.

After hanging up, Julia turned to look for Madin, to tell him she was going to her father, but her husband wasn't in their bed or in their apartment; she couldn't find him to tell him where she was going, though his boots were still by the front door and his coat was on its hanger. On her way out she took one of his boots and buried it in the snow, packing it in right down to the bottom of the drift, covering it, not marking the spot.

Claubert's front door was unlocked, as it always was. Julia found her father on a corner of his couch, taking up barely any room at all, still in his day-time clothes. The television lit his face in brown and cream. It's her. He said again, not looking up, it's her. Julia stopped the tape and turned off the television. She sat down beside him on the couch and stayed with him until he slept.

This was the beginning of a new routine. Claubert went to the library every day for five films, and watched them like a tired detective, looking for Jeanette. He hadn't seen her in over twenty years, and now, she was there, he

discovered, in every film, somewhere, if he looked hard enough. Sometimes he got through all five films, sometimes he would spend a whole night re-watching the same two minute scene, almost finding her, almost.

In the morning he would be fine. He'd laugh and fix Julia giant breakfasts. He'd shake off the films like bad nights of drinking. He'd say, while ironing trousers or polishing boots, won't do that again! Don't worry about me, I'll keep myself busy worrying about you. Then he would usher her out of the house, home to be with Madin. You need each other now, he said. Go, go, go.

Madin was usually back in bed, asleep, when Julia got home. She would get undressed quietly and lie beside him, trying to keep her cold skin away from his warmth for fear of waking him until, eventually, the soreness of her eyes would drag them closed. They would sleep like this late into the light of morning.

12.4

It was late, but so late it was almost early. Julia was at her father's.

(Do you want me to come? I could come with you to see him. I should.

No, it's better you don't. He wouldn't want you to see him like that. He doesn't even want me to. Thank you, but no. Besides, you need your sleep. Just a touch of bitterness, hard and dark, like chocolate.

A beat. Madin looked down, at his hands, You'll be all right?

I'll be all right.)

Madin was walking downstairs in bare feet. Gabrielle opened the door before he had time to knock. The mark under her chin from her instrument was raw and red, even in this light. She walked him down into the bare room that made up most of her living space. He sat on the small blue carpet and she played for him. Hindemith. Rough and deep and terrible and ugly and sad and wonderful. When she finished, she lowered her viola and said, I went to Dickie today.

What did he do?

Gabrielle put the instrument and bow on a chair, walked to Madin and turned, so that her back was to him, close. She lifted her heavy sweater up, over her head and off. Her back was thin and straight, she wasn't wearing a bra. The bandage was carefully taped on from her hips to halfway up the spine. It was white and smooth, it looked like it belonged there, to her body. It's been long enough, said Gabrielle. You can take it off.

Madin ran his finger along the borders of tape, looking for an uneven place to begin pulling it away. When he found one, he pulled slowly and carefully, down, across, up, across, until the bandage came away in his hand. The skin underneath was bruised and flushed and marked with the faintest lines falling in and out of each other, up and up, lighter and lighter, until they disappeared. Fog, said Madin.

Yes, said Gabrielle. It hurts, but not too badly.

She pulled her sweater back on and turned around. People are talking about us, said Madin.

Yes, I know that, said Gabrielle.

They're making things up, they're lying.

Yes, I know.

It doesn't bother you?

Just words, said Gabrielle. I do not mind what they say, I do not know them, they do not know me…just words.

Are you going to leave, are you going to move East?

I will have to sometime, I do not know when, but I will.

What if you didn't?

I do not know…I would die maybe, or be happy...I do not know.

After Madin went back upstairs, Gabrielle took her sweater off again and reached around to feel her tattoo. Instead of new, it felt beautifully old, like it belonged there, to her body, like she had been missing it all along and was finally whole. That night she slept in silence.

12.5

Dickie was marking himself the way he did every year, one more tiny black mark on his body, practically invisible, the size of a pore. The first time he had done twenty-three, all separate, disparate across his spread self; every year he did one more. Forty-six this year. They were all getting older.

Gabrielle knocked on his door, he knew it was her. She always knocked twice, one-two. Just twice. Julia did three. Madin, five, in rhythm. Dickie finished, took off his gloves, and answered.

I am here to let you see my back, said Gabrielle. To make sure it is as it should be.

Does it hurt? said Dickie.

Just a throb, but almost nice, familiar.

Did it bleed or stick?

No, no.

Then it's okay. It's yours now, not mine anymore.

Oh…of course, said Gabrielle, and then, it must be sad, always letting go. Everything and nothing that is yours, it must be sad.

It's not, said Dickie. And I have some things. Some small things that are mine. Just not too many.

They were quiet while Dickie made two cups of tea, honey in one. Then, as he put a cup down in front of Gabrielle at the table, steam blurring her face, she said, Can I see? Will you let me see them?

He sat facing her and closed his eyes, keeping them shut, but gently, so there were no wrinkles or creases. Gabrielle looked, then smiled and closed her own eyes. Of course, she said, oh, of course. Water birds. A stork and a gull, one for life and one for death.

13.0

A very old film version of *La Traviata*, during a dance sequence near the beginning, set in an opulent brothel. There are about a dozen girls, all waxen, all in someone's ill-conceived, somewhat anachronistic idea of period night-clothes. They're laughing and drunk and dancing. There aren't any men in the shot. Altogether, it's just over three minutes long, not long at all. They watched it, then rewound and watched again.

That's it?

That's it.

And where does he see her?

In the dark-haired girl, near the back, there. Julia paused the film, and lines of blur distorted the dancers mid-movement. There, she said, pointing. Do you see it?

No, said Madin. I see the girl, but I don't see her.

Me neither, said Julia. It's a lovely film though. Lovely music. She put the controller down on the bed, between them.

You're good to him, a good daughter, said Madin.

Of course. It's always been me for him or him for me.

Over the past few weeks, Julia's body, though it seemed to be coming to terms with the pregnancy in most other areas—no longer reliant on raw ginger to battle the nausea, no longer so off-balance that she had to grip the rails with both hands when walking up or down stairs—was becoming almost unbearably hot at night. When she was home, she would sleep naked, with only the sheet, and still she would wake to an aura of salt-stains from the night's perspiring attempts to burn her from the inside out. Madin always remembered to place a glass of ice water on the small table next to her side of the bed.

Tonight, after *La Traviata*, he got the water while she undressed. Once naked, she got under the sheet as quickly as she could, billowing it up, and then back down again, over her. When Madin came back into the room, she was already covered, a pale cotton landscape blurring the lines of her body. Madin knelt before the bed and gently lifted the sheet, putting his head underneath,

against her stomach. He let the cotton fall back down over him and the enormous globe of a belly, hardly human, hardly believable. It was dark under there, it was warm. He hummed, Handel, For Unto Us a Child is Born.

I love you, Julia, he said. He voice was warm through the sheet. His breath on her stomach.

I love you too.

A pause, he was holding his breath, she couldn't feel it for a couple seconds.

And you know what they say is not true, he said. Taut words, quieter. She was glad she couldn't see his face.

I know I love you. I know you love me.

Me for you and you for me.

And you for me.

His breathing was regular again. She guided his head up to hers, kissed him (her mouth tingled with heat, as though she had the traces of chilis on her lips), and undressed him piece by piece.

13.1

Gabrielle was walking through town. It was late and it was dark. The quiet houses and quiet trees contrasted through the snow like a black and white film. There were no cars, so she walked down the middle of the street. Snow blew into the space at the top of her coat zipper, melting down her collarbones. She imagined she was the only person in the world. She could be, she would be all right.

A few blocks back, Dickie stood on the front step with his eyes closed, counting. When he got to fifty-six he opened his eyes and started walking.

This was a game. They would walk through dormant St Éfrouée until they found each other on the same street. Not chasing, not following, just walking. Sometimes it took hours, sometimes five minutes, but they always, eventually, found each other. They played on nights when the wind was too loud to sleep through. On these nights, Gabrielle would leave the door to her flat open just a crack, in case Madin came down, so he could wait for her on the blue carpet. She also left her instrument case open, so he could try playing, if he wanted. She had never found him down there. But she left the door open, just a crack, in case.

This time, this night, the wind was strong enough to wipe over any footprints as soon as they were made. Gabrielle found herself walking in a wide loop, out almost to the farms, then up towards the woods. Dickie had crossed the river and was weaving in and out between the shops, past the concert hall, through the open arcade by the city hall where the wind made a sound like a woman.

It was almost dawn when they met, not far from the café where the university and college students went after classes. On their way back home, they met the postman, Bernard, the husband of one of the violists who would rather be playing violin. Two things for Madin today, he said, and handed Dickie two envelopes, one large and one small, both brown.

I can give them to him, said Gabrielle.

Madin was not in Gabrielle's flat when she got in, so she took the two envelopes up to the top flat, listened for couple seconds, then quietly leaned them against his door and went back down, to bed.

13.2

Madin woke before Julia. He was going to go to the bakery to get them breakfast, and maybe also a newspaper. When he opened his door, the two brown paper envelopes that had been propped against it fell over. Madin picked them up and went back inside. They were still damp from the bits of melting snow off Gabrielle's gloves.

He opened the small one first.

Dear Mr. Villedonné,

it said,

Your government-funded cultural organization has been brought to our attention as in need of federal review. An inspector will visit the Orcheste Symphonique de Saint Éfrouée (OSSE) within the next two months to determine whether funding should continue to be granted. Please reply to this address, with a list of potential dates, within the next 14 days. This is not optional.

Sincerely,

R. Normandeaux

Minister for the Cultural Development of Small to Medium Francophone Communities.

There was a hand-drawn smiling-face next to the signature.

Madin read the letter, and then read it again. *has been brought to our attention*. *Brought.* Like an offering, or a sacrifice. The newspaper reviewer. Maybe. Robert. Maybe. Maybe no one. How important was this letter? It could be nothing, a routine, empty, governmental necessity; or it could be the crumbling of his delicately, obstinately assembled orchestra. Music for this place.

There was a pulling in his chest similar to the pull he felt when Julia's baby kicked his hand. The nausea of being out of control. Strange, he thought, how it could be happy or unhappy. Brilliant or blinding. He wanted to talk to Julia. He wanted to listen to Gabrielle. But there was still the other envelope.

He accidentally opened it upside-down, and a folder of papers fell onto the floor at his feet. Scores, music. A part for every instrument in the orchestra and a full conductor's score for him. They covered his feet and spilled out towards the

bedroom. He picked up the conductor's score; there was a small, yellow note clipped to the front, written in thin pencil.

Madin,

it said,

This is long overdue. This is for Julia and for you and your orchestra. Please list the composer in your program as unknown. Please enjoy. Please continue what you're doing, and thank you for doing it.

Yours,

Thomas Chartrand

On the top of the first page of score was written, *For Jeanette and For Julia*, in the same pencil. The post-mark was Montreal. There wasn't any return address.

Thomas Chartrand. Thomas. A composer, a famous composer, a famous, living composer. Madin knew the name from national newspapers and from music journals and texts and from somewhere else, too. How this man knew of him, or of Julia, for that matter, Madin did not know. Did it matter? It didn't matter, Thomas Chartrand had found them, and had written for them. Madin folded the note carefully in four, and, still standing in the doorway, surrounded by papers, read through the piece from the conductor's score. He conducted in his head: 4/4, 3/8, 3/4; g minor, G major, g minor; he conducted it all the way through. Then he closed his eyes, resting them after pages of black on white, and exhaled. It's not a symphony, of course, he said to the papers, it's a theme and variations.

Sometimes, thought Madin, sometimes the symmetry, the unforced close fit of the universe falling into place, sounded like a man's sigh. Like an orchestra poised, but not yet playing. If Madin did things just right, and his orchestra followed, and Saint Éfrouée followed, he would put on a concert that the Minister for the Cultural Development of Small to Medium Francophone Communities and the libellous newspaper reporter would attend, and that neither could disparage. They won't be able to shut us down. They will hardly be able to blink, to breathe.

Julia was still asleep. Madin gathered the papers from the floor and put them in a pile on the coffee table. He walked back into the bedroom and took off

his clothes, shoes and socks first, then trousers, then shirt, and lay down beside his wife. Her skin was hot. Madin thought of the perfect music he would give them, the wife and the baby. The perfect thing he would make for them.

13.3

After the doctor with the glass from his kitchen cupboard and the lost grandson had discovered that it was the water, all along, the water, making its way through the town's children and killing them inside-to-out, the whole town, it seemed, went to the bridge, the town's one bridge. They went to the bridge, alone or in groups, with families, with neighbors, and they threw children's things over the side, into the freezing water. Take it, take it, they said, and be satisfied.

Men came from Montreal with equipment to repurify, reclarify the water, and they said, Okay, it's okay now, and still people went to bridge, for months, with things: a small red boot, an old stuffed dog, a tiny silver spoon, all for the river.

Sometimes these things would wash themselves up onto the banks and Dickie, out walking, would find them. He would always throw them back in. Right to the very middle of the water, so they wouldn't get lost again.

13.4

It was warm at Claubert's. The fire was on and Madin was there and Julia was there and Robert was there, just arrived from hockey practice and still smelling of sweat and ice, and Claubert was there, in and out of the dining room where the others were sitting. He had spent all morning at the shops and all afternoon in the kitchen. He was in and out, back and fourth, with cutlery and candles and bread and wine.

I was hoping, perhaps, he said, putting a dish of gravy down in front of Robert, that the baby might be born today.

A whole month early? said Julia, towards the kitchen to which Claubert had already retreated.

Of course, I know it's silly, said Claubert, back in the dining room, oven mitts on his hands, of course, but it would be nice, wouldn't it? He put down a casserole dish near over-flowing with roast pork and onions and apples in front of Madin and finally sat down. Here's to my only daughter, Julia, he said, raising his wine glass, oven mitt still on, Happy birthday.

Happy birthday, said Robert.

Happy birthday, said Madin.

They did presents later, with dessert and coffee, in the sitting room. Claubert had made the cake himself. Dark chocolate, bitter and deep, like the coffee. He always made Julia's birthday cakes, he always made this kind. They ate it and got chocolate around their mouths while Julia opened gifts. Robert gave her a normal-looking book that made Julia laugh and laugh and laugh and punch him in the arm and laugh. We were twelve! she said, and punched him again. And laughed. She stood up and hugged him. You never forget, she said.

Of course not, he said, my Julia-memory is better than elephants'.

Claubert gave her two new winter hats, one her size, and one very small, baby-sized. Inside the larger one, he had pinned money, too much money. No, no, no, said Julia, holding it back towards him.

Of course, he said. I want you to have it now, so I'm still alive to watch you enjoy it. And babies are expensive. And you should be able to afford some things just for you. Spend working money on the baby, spend that on you.

Julia put on the big hat and tucked the money into the small one. She moved from Robert to her father and said, You'll be around for ages and ages, father, grand-father, great-grand-father. She hugged him with her face pressed down, into his soft vest.

Madin's gift was last. He had wrapped it in an old shoe-box, held closed with a green ribbon. That's my ribbon, said Julia. From my striped dress. She wasn't angry; she was smiling. Madin held the box towards her.

It will take weeks to prepare, he said, but it will be for you. They want to shut us down and they won't and they won't because of this and this is for you. It will be for you.

Julia pulled the ribbon's longer end and it slid down, off the box. She lifted the lid and saw paper.

Mon dieu, said Claubert. He picked up his glass to drink but stopped half-way. Thomas, he said. Mon dieu.

Where did you get this? said Julia. How?

Mon dieu, said Claubert.

Robert didn't say anything.

For Jeanette and For Julia, said the paper, right across the top.

Claubert put down his drink.

He's famous, said Madin, He's good! It will be beautiful.

You bastard, said Robert.

Robert, said Julia.

Maybe, said Claubert, his drink down, his hands now calmly in his lap, it will be beautiful. Thomas Chartrand kills and Thomas Chartrand saves. Maybe.

Underneath the first set of papers were the Enigma variations, but nobody saw them.

That night was one of Claubert's bad nights. He left Robert, Madin and Julia in the sitting room, saying he was going to do the dishes, that, no, he didn't want help, don't even think of standing up, Madin, I can do it, you're guests, I'm not so old I can't do my own dishes, not yet. After an hour Julia checked on the kitchen, to see the dishes ignored, and her father in the next room, sitting right up to the television, watching *Ben Hur* with the sound off.

Julia stayed with him and had the others go home. That's how she wanted it, and it was her birthday so no arguing. Robert and Madin walked north together; the snow against the street lamps dappled the light like a strobe, like slow motion. After three blocks, Robert said,

You bastard.

Madin looked up, he'd been singing variations in his head.

I'm not the one writing those reviews, but I wish I was. You bastard. You're fucking the violist in the basement and everyone knows it and that's bad enough, but no, not enough, not enough for Madin-the-bastard, so, to follow up, you go and give your pregnant wife, your beautiful, too caring, too understanding wife, you give her the reminder of her mother's murderer. Happy Birthday. Here you go, your dead mother, your crazy dad, from your unfaithful husband. She knows everything. I know everything, and you know nothing. You bastard,

said Robert. Then he punched Madin in the face

and in the stomach

and in the chest

and in the face again

and the blood from Madin's nose flew and landed in a arc on the snow, red on white. It made the white look so bright.

Madin did nothing. Said nothing.

She's leaving you, said Robert. She's leaving and taking the baby. And you can't fire me. There aren't any other bassoonists in town.

Robert straightened his jacket and rubbed a hand over his eyes and walked away, east, towards his apartment.

Once Robert was out of sight, Madin stood and walked north, dripping red. Gabrielle's door was open when he got there. He didn't knock. She was putting new strings on her instrument, she was wearing a sweater and socks with no trousers, and, when she moved and the sweater pulled, flashes of dark underwear. For a while he just looked at her. Then, What do you do? said Madin, when it hurts this much?

Gabrielle stopped turning the D string peg. She turned to Madin.

I do this, said Gabrielle, and she put her hands under his shirt.

I do this, said Gabrielle, and she put her lips on his face,

his stomach,

his chest,

and the face again.

I do this, said Gabrielle, and she lifted her sweater and, in her dark underwear, guided him down onto the blue carpet. I prove them right, she said.

13.5

When they first told him Jeanette was dead, Claubert went to Dickie's and got a part of him, no bigger than his hand, changed forever. Then he waited until it was time to pick up Julia from school, did homework and flute practice with her and put her to bed. Then he went outside to their front yard and filled both his fists with snow. Then he went back inside, to the master bedroom, and through, to their closet, to Jeanette's side of their closet, with the snow. Then back outside to the yard, then back to the closet, then the yard then the closet then the yard. He left the front door open as he came and went. He went until they were all full. Each of Jeanette's shoes, filled with snow. Then he shut the front door and sat through the night in the closet, watching the snow turn to water. Julia found him there the next morning, awake, sitting on the floor, in front of wet shoes.

I have to go to school, she said.

Okay, said Claubert. He stood up. He smiled at his daughter. Let's go.

He never went out in the night after that. If he couldn't sleep, he would watch movies. The old movies they showed late, late at night. Never to the woods. Never again.

Finale, 14.0

That night, Madin wrote three notes.

That night, on her father's couch, under a childhood quilt, Julia dreamt of giving birth and it didn't hurt.

That night, Robert found three perfectly round circles of blood on his shirt, long after they had set.

That night, Dickie was up late making burnt sugar pie and spilled hot water all over the floor.

That night, Claubert found Jeanette in a faded slave girl, there she was.

The first note was to Gabrielle. *Your music is so beautiful*, it said. *Your back is so beautiful. Don't forget that you are from somewhere. Someday I hope you find it.*

Robert changed his shirt and walked back to Claubert's. He sat on the step, waiting for morning, when he would walk Julia home.

Whether he liked it or not, Dickie heard things. He always did.

Madin folded the first note and wrote Gabrielle's name on the front. He knew she was still awake, watching him do it.

Robert wrote baby names in the snow with one gloved finger, then raked the bad ones away with his whole hand: Pierrette, Jean, Emilie.

The sun would be up in about four hours.

Madin put the note on Gabrielle's viola case and went upstairs without closing the door.

Gabrielle did not get up. She thought about whether she would catch an easterly bus or train or car.

The second note was to Dickie. Madin wrote it upstairs, in his own flat, in his underwear and socks and a t-shirt. *Thank you,* it said. *From, Madin.*

Dickie cleaned up the water and put the pie in the oven. It would take forty minutes. He hoped he had that long.

Madin folded the second note and wrote Dickie's name on the front. He put it in his shoe so he wouldn't forget it when he was on his way out.

Claubert rewound the movie and watched it again.
Before writing the last note, Madin put on his trousers and scarf and jacket and gloves and sat on the couch, looking at the black window, looking at his own reflection.

The sun would be up in three hours.

And looking at his reflection.

The pie was done, Dickie took it out to set and to cool.

And looking.

The sun would be up in two and a half hours.

And.

Gabrielle began to hear Bach's G major prelude and fugue for organ, first far away, getting louder.

Madin stood up and got one more piece of paper. The last note was to Julia. *Either way*, it said, *I'm a bastard*. His writing was more clumsy than usual, he had his gloves on. *Stay or go. Either way, I love you. And,*

he wanted to write, I'm going so you don't have to, I'm going because I don't want you to, but I don't want to either.

But he didn't. Instead, he wrote,

You won't be, because you never are, but don't be scared. And,

He wanted to write, dontgodontgodontgo and I won't either. We'll both stay here, we'll both be here and I'll be sorry, but I'll be yours, only yours, just yours.

But he didn't. Instead he wrote,

Yours, Madin.

Julia woke up. Her father was asleep, and *Ben Hur* flashed dull colour and light on his face. Slaves in a ship. She stopped the tape and put her childhood quilt over her father. I'll call in the morning, she whispered, and kissed him on the forehead.

Madin folded the last note and put Julia's name on the front. He left it on the coffee table, on top of her book.

Dickie cut three pieces from the pie.

Madin put on his shoes.

Robert waited, beside names in the snow, until Julia came out of her father's house. I'm sorry, he said.

It's all right, she said, he's sleeping now.

When Madin got to Dickie's door there was a piece of pie there, in front of it, on a paper plate, with a plastic fork. Madin, it said on the plate, written in blue pen. Madin took the pie and left the note for Dickie in its place.

It had been so long since Gabrielle had heard the organ that she had forgotten how wonderfully big it could be. How low and how high. How it blocked out everything else, even footsteps above her.

The sun would be up in less than two hours, and the wind had picked up, blowing all the loose snow from the sidewalk, so that Madin walked on hard-packed ice all the way to the station.

Robert left Julia outside her building. He kissed her cheek and said he'd call in the morning. When she got up the narrow stone stairs to the door to her and Madin's apartment, she found a piece of burnt sugar pie on one of Dickie's white CorningWare plates. Her name had been written on a little scrap of paper sitting just beside the crust. Julia.

The sun would be up in an hour and a half, and Robert walked home on hard-packed ice.

Dickie put a piece of his pie on another of his plates. He wrote, Gabrielle, on a small bit of paper and put this, with one of his dessert forks, beside the pie. He knew Gabrielle didn't have very many forks of her own. Her door was open, so he left it on the top step down to her.

The sun would be up in one hour, and the first train would leave Saint Éfrouée.

14.1

Just like any other day, Saint Éfrouée was awake. Students walking north to the college and the university. Workers walking south to town. Parents with children walking east and west, to the Catholic school and the public school. Raquel watched them all through the wide windows of the bakery, her hands white with flour. She kneaded and punched. In her head she wrote newspaper articles.

Louis, Robert's partner, came into the bakery. Raquel had always liked his glasses. He came in most mornings.

Morning Louis,

Morning Raquel,

Sunny today, isn't it? said Raquel

Lovely. The snow'll be gone in a week, I bet. The river's already broken up, said Louis.

The snow'll be gone just in time for it to be back. Baguette?

And four croissants. Please.

Celebrating?

Consoling. Robert's boss, the conductor, Madin, he's gone. Left town.

For good?

We don't know. But Robert's a bit shaken.

Oh dear, said Raquel. Four croissants then. And one baguette.

Raquel worked at the bakery for five and a half hours that day. People came in hungry and with lists and left with bread and pastries and the news that Madin was gone. North and south, east and west, on either side of the river, the word spread. Gone, as quickly as he'd come, gone.

And what about the girl?

Which girl?

And sighing and shaking heads and back to walking, to college, to work, to school.

14.2

Julia ate the pie first. Before even going inside, she ate the pie from Dickie. She ate it from back to front, starting with the thick crust and working in smaller and smaller angles up to the pointed tip. Someone had told her once that you were always supposed to eat the tip first, in the first bite, or else…something. Bad luck or bad romance or something. Julia hated that kind of crap.

She had a red plastic milk crate with her, the kind she and Robert used to make into forts and cat-traps. Julia had borrowed it from her father's to carry her presents in. Book, hats, money, music. She put it down to eat the pie.

She ate standing on the landing, in front of stone staircases going up and going down. Then Julia put the pie plate and fork into the red crate and unlocked her door and went into her and Madin's apartment. She had to put down the crate again to pick up the note with her name on it, on the coffee table, on her book. She read it no faster or slower than anything else. A tempo.

When she was finished, she put the note in the milk crate and walked back out her door, back down the stone stairs.

At Dickie's, she took out the plate and wrote, Thank You, on the back of the paper he'd used as a label and laid them, paper on top of plate, with fork holding it down, at his door. Then, on to Gabrielle's. It was open, so Julia went in. Her hands were full with the crate, so she didn't knock.

Gabrielle was folding clothes into a suitcase. Sleeve in, sleeve in, skirt up, bottom over top. You can't go, said Julia. Gabrielle looked up. Her face paler, harder than Julia remembered it. Gabrielle didn't say anything. Sleeve in, sleeve in, skirt up, bottom over top. You can't go, said Julia again, firm. We have rehearsal tomorrow and a concert in a month. Julia put down her crate and walked to the suitcase and picked it up and dropped each thing out of it, one at a time, onto the floor. She didn't throw them, just dropped, one, two, three, four. Rehearsal at six, as always. Julia closed the door on her way back out.

The snow was melting as Julia made her way into town. If she walked just so, she could balance most of the crate's weight on the rounded ledge of her stomach.

The first stop on her route was the public school. As she turned down Rue St. Antoine towards the school, she could see parents gathered like puddles on the sidewalk and steps by the front door, smoking and talking, filling the few minutes between dropping the children and going to work. Their talk slowed and eyes followed as Julia moved towards them, but no one said anything. One mother smiled a little and waved her cigarette smoke out of Julia's path apologetically. She was in a red jacket and tan tights that didn't match her skin tone. The wife of a trumpet player. Julia went to her, standing in the middle of the small circle of conversation she had stopped. Tell Albert, she said to the woman, that we have rehearsal as planned tomorrow night.

The woman opened her mouth to say something, then changed her mind and closed it again.

Yes, Madin is gone. It doesn't matter. Rehearsal as usual. Tell Albert.

And so on. Julia went to the other school, the town square, the market, the IGA and the big church, and so on, as the snow melted throughout the day.

14.3

The ocean pulled in and out making Madin dizzy, nauseous. The river in St Éfrouée flowed in one direction, into town and out, straight. The ocean's indecision rocked him. Even though it was still cold, barely spring, he took off his clothes; shoes and socks first, then trousers, then shirt, all his clothes except his underwear and walked into the water. He imagined his mother sitting on the rocks beside his trousers, watching to be sure he didn't drown.

The water's shock was welcome. Madin swam forward, out and out. Forgetting, briefly, that there was no opposite shore for him to reach. With every stroke farther into the sea the water got colder and darker, green to grey to black. Something brushed the outside of his left leg, something smooth and fast. Madin turned around and swam back to shore, back to his clothes.

Hello Roger, said Madin.

Hello brother, said Roger .

I'm sorry to disturb you like this, is Sophie home, the kids?

Just me now. She's at work, they're at school.

Oh. Right. And you?

No work until the summer.

Right. Well, I,

Do you want to come in?

If you don't mind.

Have you come to stay?

If you don't mind. Just a couple days, maybe, a week.

Right, okay, come in.

Thank you, just a couple days.

Yes, okay. Do you want a towel? You're dripping. And shivering.

Yes, okay, thank you, said Madin.

That's okay, said Madin's brother.

14.4

Julia walked, with her red crate, all the way around town all day. And then, after being twenty-eight years old and awake for two days, she went home to an empty bed and slept. She slept well.

It wasn't until after she woke up, seven thick, warm hours later, that Julia let herself remember the look of Madin's hair, thin and fine and brown, just brown. It wasn't until after she woke up, seven thick, warm hours later, that Julia let herself cry, head under the blankets and face down, until she was empty. Then she wiped her nose and eyes on the sheets and sat up. She went to the second drawer in Madin's bedside table, the one where he kept his secrets. The letter from Normandeaux, the Minister for the Cultural Development of Small to Medium Francophone Communities, was right on the top. Right on top of the letter from Tom which was on top of the note Madin wrote her years ago to go with the mittens on her locker. The note that had fallen down and that she had never noticed.

Julia,

it said,

perhaps if you hold my hand it won't freeze again.

She left it, with the letter from Tom, in the drawer. She took the letter from Normandeaux, and set to work on the reply.

Dear Mr. Normandeaux,

Your request is reasonable. Please do come enjoy an OSSE concert. We will be performing an appropriate program on May 5th, which, I believe, still falls within your deadline. A ticket will be set aside for you at the door. I look forward to it, and you should too.

Sincerely,

She stopped when she got to the signature. Which name, whose to use. Carefully, slowly, she signed,

Madin Villedonné

and folded it and put it in an envelope and sealed it and stamped it and addressed it and put on her coat and boots and went downstairs. On her way out

she stopped at Dickie's. He was working. She could hear the buzz of his equipment from outside his door. So she wrote him a note as well.

Dickie,

I need an organist, soon. Please let me know if you know how to find one.

x

Julia

The finale of the Enigma variations called for organ. Just the last variation, one of fourteen, but it was important. She slipped the note under Dickie's door and went outside, to the post office; first she had to mail a letter to one man, then she had to find the address of another.

The woman at the post office just looked at her. She didn't make any movement to open her book of people and places or to call a colleague for help. She just looked, afraid,

Could you repeat the name, please?

Thomas, Thomas Chartrand.

Tom Chartrand.

The woman was older than Julia, older than her father. She had worked at the post office for almost thirty years, she knew people, she knew places. She breathed, in and out, and opened her book. Thomas Chartrand, she said, is in Montreal. P.O. box 3820, H3B 1L9. She wrote all this down on a little white square of paper and passed it to Julia. Just like that.

Julia would have just enough time to write to him before rehearsal that evening.

14.5

Oh, glad to see you came. I wasn't sure people would come.

Me neither, but, here we are. Here they are.

All the brass?

And winds. Maybe strings too. I never know with strings, there's so many of them, can't keep track.

Me too. But that violist's here. I didn't think she'd come.

Hello boys, glad to see you've come. Is everyone here?

We think so.

He thinks so.

What are we going to do, then?

There are parts at the door, did you get yours?

Yeah, variations and variations.

Yeah, yeah, got them, but what are we going to, you know, do, conduct ourselves?

Maybe. Maybe we'll draw straws.

Or Julia will?

Then who's playing flute?

I heard something. I heard she's bringing someone in.

Who?

Who?

Daphne from the post office said Tom.

Tom?

Tom. That's what she said.

Who's Tom?

Tom Chartrand. Thomas.

Oh.

Oh.

Yes, I know. D'you think she knows? D'you think?

Shh, we're starting, we're tuning.

You Shh.

Shh.

14.6

Madin ate fish and kale with his brother and his brother's wife and two children, night after night.

And the organ music got louder and bigger in Gabrielle's head, spilling out past sleep, past night, into walking, talking, playing.

Should we have Julia here, to live with us for a while? Louis asked Robert.

The children were twins. Freckled. They were always smiling or laughing or swimming in the sea.

And so, Gabrielle played her viola louder and louder. To drown it out. Everyday a little louder.

I asked her, said Robert. She wants to stay home.

And so, Gabrielle made a plan.

In the evenings, the twins would go to bed and Madin's sister-in-law would go upstairs to mark papers and Madin and his brother would sit downstairs. Do you like Baroque music? asked Madin's brother.

One more concert. Gabrielle would play this one more concert.

Baroque? Yes, yes, I do. I mean, it's not my absolute favorite, but, yes, I suppose, said Madin. His brother smelled of fish. The whole home did, the whole town.

And then she would go east. Continue east.

I'm a fan, if no aficionado, said Madin's brother. The issue of authenticity is troubling, but, in my opinion, unimportant. Anyone familiar with Rosenmueller's double-choir psalms wouldn't waste their time worrying about vibrato. Then, however, there is Giovani Legrenzi, a whole other kettle of fish. What do you think?

And when she got to the water, the ocean, Gabrielle would just keep walking, in, and down, and in, and the water would go in her nose and mouth and eyes and, most importantly, her ears, filling them all up and blocking them all off.

Oh, said Madin, looking at his brother, the unemployed high school drop-out. I don't know.

14.7

There they were, shining out in front of Julia in polished wood and silver and brass and skin. This is what Madin saw everyday. A wonder he wasn't blinded. Okay, said Julia to the orchestra. Today it's me you follow. Don't worry, we'll have someone qualified soon, but today I'm afraid it's me. Let's start by reading through the Finale of the Enigmas.

Julia had the full orchestral score in front of her on the podium and the full orchestra in front of her in their lines and rows, waiting for her to translate it for them. To wave her hands and pull it out of each of them at just the right time, in just the right way.

She lifted one hand, her left, and the first violins stumbled in. She waved it in her interpretation of a 4/4 pattern which made her right hand involuntarily swing, bringing the tuba and trombones in, too soon, too fast, so she snapped her right hand to her stomach causing the cellos to stop playing, while, meanwhile, her 4/4 had turned into 3/4 leading the timpani and bassoon in a mis-matched waltz against the piccolo and basses who had chosen to stay in the 4/4 of their score, pulling the violins in and out with them. Some brass tried to help things by playing heavily on the beat, although their parts were meant to be off-beat. The clarinet took advantage of the cacophony to improvise a solo above it all. And so on, and so on.

Julia let both her hands drop and waited for everyone to notice and to stop playing, and then to stop laughing and talking. Okay, she said, okay. Well, do any of you know how to do this?

14.8

Thomas was up early. He was looking in the mirror, trying to figure out how the hair gel his girlfriend had bought him could do anything but stick to his hands and under his fingernails. Ridiculous product for a man his age, a man whose red-to-blonde hair was fighting a losing battle against imperialistic grey. It had started at his temples and was forcing its way up, each day a centimeter more, he would swear. But this girlfriend was young, things like hair gel made sense to her. Younger, anyway. Thomas didn't know her birthday.

Thomas was up early. He was jet-lagged. It was uncommon, these days, for him to be here, in his apartment, in this town. Usually he'd be somewhere new, every week new. A premiere in Toronto, a benefit concert in Vancouver, an awards ceremony in Munich, and so on, and so on. Despite his specially-designed skylight studio, he did most of his composing on aeroplanes.

There was a light knock on his front door. His housekeeper. She always knew when he was up. She wore her long hair over her ears so you couldn't see them; Tom imagined they must be enormous and always listening. He wrote a lot of his pieces for her, though she didn't know it, and never attended his premieres. Tom washed the gel off his hands and went to answer the door.

I thought you might be up, said the housekeeper. She had his coffee and newspaper and mail. Breakfast today?

No thank you, Mrs. Dorabella, not today, said Tom. He never had breakfast, but she always asked, just in case.

I'll see you at lunch-time then, she said. In your studio?

In my studio. Thank you.

The door closed behind her and Tom took his coffee and newspaper and mail past his sleeping girlfriend and upstairs, to his skylight studio where he had a desk and a chair and a lamp and pencils and paper and a ruler and a little clock. Everything arranged on the desk in squares with narrow stripes of bare wood in-between, like roads. Beside the desk was a piano. Its bench was lined up with Tom's desk chair so he could slide quickly and easily from one to the other, but he rarely did. He composed at his desk for a living and played afterwards, for

pleasure. Separate. When interviewers asked him what he loved to play, or from whence he drew his artistic inspiration, hoping for some deliciously obscure, fresh, realization, he always disappointed them. Chopin, he'd say. I play a lot of Chopin.

Using the newspaper as a coaster for his coffee, Tom sat down and began to sort through his mail. The things that happened next went like this:

Tom opened an envelope. Inside was a financial overview of the month from his agent. Tom put it in a drawer.

Tom drank some coffee.

Tom opened another envelope. Inside was an invitation to a gala. Tuxedos and strangers. Tom put it in another drawer.

He stirred his coffee, scraping some sugar from the bottom of the mug, then licking the spoon.

Tom opened another envelope. Inside was a hand-written letter. The writing was small and curled. He opened a drawer and got out his glasses, putting them on to read:

Dear Thomas Chartrand,

This is Julia,

Thomas closed his eyes, then opened them and read it again,

This is Julia, Jeanette Manteau's daughter. I need you to come home. It's important. I need you to come home and conduct your piece. Soon. Also, I'm going to have a baby.

Sincerely,

Julia Manteau

PS. Soon.

Tom took his glasses off.

He put them back on again.

He read the letter again,

Dear Thomas Chartrand,

This is Julia, Jeanette Manteau's daughter. I need you to come home. It's important. I need you to come home and conduct your piece. Soon. Also, I'm going to have a baby.

Sincerely,

Julia Manteau

PS. Soon.

Well then, he said to himself. Julia. My Julia. Well, then. He took one pencil and one piece of staved paper and wrote, *I've gone home*. He left it, with the hair gel, by the side of the bed.

On his way out, he ran into Mrs. Dorabella, his housekeeper, in the hall. She was holding a small red carryall. I'm coming with you, she said.

To get to Saint Éfrouée from Montreal you had to take four trains, progressively smaller and slower. Hours and hours and hours of trains and changing and trains. On the third train Mrs. Dorabella asked Tom, Are you scared?

Tom thought. I'm not scared, he said. I thought I would be scared, but I'm not, I'm not at all.

On the fourth train they didn't speak at all.

When they arrived at the Saint Éfrouée station, more than eighteen hours after they had left Montreal, Tom and Mrs. Dorabella sat in their seats and waited until everyone else had disembarked. Then Tom breathed in, that familiar, anemic air, and got up and walked with Mrs. Dorabella to the address he had scribbled on his hand.

14.9

Dickie was out shoveling. The snow was heavy with water, this late snow, trying to get to the river. Soon it would all be melted, but not yet, so for now, Dickie scraped heavy snow up and down the street, clearing the walks, clearing the roads. Most of Saint Éfrouée was asleep, or at least in bed, or at least at home, so, for a while, Dickie's shovel was the only sound.

Then there were new sounds. Voices,

This is a town?

Of course this is a town, a small town, but a town no less.

The voices came around the corner. The first belonged to a woman with a red carryall and the second belonged to Thomas Chartrand. Welcome home, Thomas, said Dickie. He didn't stop shoveling, he raised his voice as he moved away from them and lowered it again when he came back. I expect she's waiting for you, I expect she's upstairs.

Thank you, Dickie, said Thomas. It's good to see you again.

Is it? said Dickie, scraping away from them, moving on to a patch further up the road.

Thomas and Mrs. Dorabella walked up the freshly shoveled path to the building's front door. Thomas hesitated, so Dorabella put down her case, pushed him gently aside, and turned the handle. It wouldn't turn. It's locked, she said. Thomas looked at her, then at the handle, then down the street to where Dickie had gone, a block and a half away.

Let me try, he said, putting down his things and taking off his gloves. The handle still wouldn't turn.

It's locked, said Dorabella, again.

Yes, said Thomas. Yes, it is.

They looked for a bell or a buzzer, for separate apartments or for the whole building, but there weren't any. Then they looked for Dickie, but he was gone. It was probably around 2:30 in the morning now. Well, said Thomas.

Well, said Mrs Dorabella, we'll just have to find a hotel for tonight.

Thomas laughed. A hotel?! There aren't any hotels in Saint Éfrouée.

Not one?

Not one.

A Bed and Breakfast? Or even, if absolutely necessary, a hostel?

No, no. Not in Saint Éfrouée. Not unless things have changed since I left, and I doubt they have. I know they won't have.

Where do people stay?

They stay in other people's houses. Or, sometimes, one of the churches. Mostly, it's not an issue, said Tom, sitting down on the front step. We might as well get comfortable. People will start waking up in a few hours. He brushed the moisture off a spot for her. At least it's not too cold tonight. Here, sit.

No, said Mrs. Dorabella, no thank you, Thomas. I'm going to follow the shoveled path and find Dickie, and ask him to let us in.

He won't, said Tom.

He will, said Mrs. Dorabella. She left her red case with Tom and stepped carefully onto the cleared strip of road.

Tom watched her disappear, moving resolutely around the corner and out of sight. She was tiny, a fall on the ice would snap her. Then he looked up and was caught by surprise by the sky. So big here. Overwhelming. While he waited for Dorabella to return, he drew imaginary lines between the stars, inventing his own, new, constellations, like he had forgotten he used to do.

Mrs. Dorabella followed Dickie's path in the snow down several residential blocks, heading east, until the houses tapered off and open fields crept up on either side. It was darker here, open farmland with no street lamps, just the moon-and-star-light reflected off the white ground. This is where she found Dickie, shoveling the road between two snow-covered fields.

Do these roads really need to be cleared?

All roads do.

They stood for a while, breathing frost.

Dickie, let us into the building, it's cold.

He knows it's cold here.

Dickie, how long do you want him to sit out there?

Just long enough to remember where he's from. Join me for a walk?

Okay.

It's good to see you again, Dorabella.

And you, Dickie.

They held hands. They left the shovel sticking out of a small bank on the north side of the road.

14.10

Madin was swimming. He had been swimming every day since coming here, coming home, and every day the water was a bit warmer and he went a little further out. This was his sixteenth swim. He swam to think. The more he thought, the further he swam.

Always the same thought, really, but with variations, repetitions, modal shifts, retrogrades, inversions. He thought:

Why was he here?

Or

Why was he not there?

Or

Where should he be?

Or

What should he be?

Or

Where did she want him?

Or

What did she want of him?

Or

Did she care?

Or

Did he care?

Or

Did they care?

So he just kept swimming.

This time, his head full, he was ready to swim on for miles, maybe out to some shipper. Maybe out to Prince Edward Island. He swam and thought, and thought and swam, breathing only when he had to. He was ready to swim on for miles, maybe to Newfoundland, maybe to Ireland. He thought, he swam, he breathed and looked back towards the shore, and there, tiny, misty with distance,

was Jeanette. Julia's dead mother, Jeanette, there on the rocks, beside his shoes and pants and shirt.

Madin ducked back under water and turned around, swimming towards shore as quickly as his tired arms would let him. Jeanette, Jeanette from the photo, Jeanette from Saint Éfrouée. He didn't stop to breathe until his lungs were burning, panicking. When he did, he lifted his head from the fluid cold of water to the empty cold of air and inhaled, oxygen to every part of his body, and looked to the rocks, to Jeanette and saw, there, beside his shoes and pants and shirt, a small, round man with a bald head. Not Jeanette. Just a small, round, bald man.

The man didn't move when Madin walked towards him, towards his clothes; the man just smiled. Cold day for swimming, he said.

I suppose so, said Madin. But it usually is.

I suppose so, said the man. I don't mind looking at the water, but I have no desire to get in.

They both looked at the water. Then the man said, You see, my name's Rupert. I don't really know anything about this place. Would you like to go for coffee if you've time?

So Madin got dressed and they went to the café by the pier, optimistically already open for the year, despite it being at least a month and a half until the tourists would come. It was empty except for the waitress, and a couple of old men who spent all day, every day, playing cards there, in the café when it was open, and at one of the outdoor picnic tables when it wasn't.

You see, said Rupert, after the waitress pushed some coffee towards them, I'm here on business. I was looking at the water on business. You see, said Rupert, I come from Ottawa—well actually I come from Trois Rivièrs, grew up there, yes? But moved to Ottawa to work. I live and work there, in Ottawa now, you see?—he stopped to drink a little coffee. A tiny sip. Then Rupert continued, So, I work for Ottawa, for the government, which is okay, which isn't so bad. And this week, my assignment is here. I'm here to look at pictures, you see. Pictures, or, rather, paintings of the ocean. There's a man here whom the government—specifically, my office, the office for the Cultural Development of Small to

Medium Francophone Communities— provides with the funds to paint pictures of the water. Of the ocean. You see?

Oh, said Madin.

And then,

Is your name Normandeaux?

My name is Rupert, said the man, yes, Rupert Normandeaux. Smiling. Do I know you, maybe?

No, said Madin, we've never met.

They drank coffee and Normandeaux smiled into his cup and over his cup and over the table. He smiled at everything.

So, said Madin, how will you decide whether or not the paintings of the water, the ocean, should continue to get the government's money?

Oh, it's easy to tell. Said Rupert Normandeaux.

Oh yes?

Oh yes. I just know.

What you like?

What everyone should like. Or what everyone should experience, at least.

More coffee, more smiling.

Have you seen them yet, these paintings? asked Madin.

No. You see, I wanted to get a sense of the subject first. That's what I was doing when you found me.

Looking at water?

Getting a sense of water.

More coffee, more smiling.

And, said Madin, having waited right until the last moment, right until Rupert Normandeaux only had one sip of coffee left in his cup and he only had ten minutes until he was expected back at his brother's, where are you off to after this? After the water paintings?

Inland somewhat, said Rupert Normandeaux. A village orchestra of sorts.

Saint Éfrouée, said Madin.

Why, yes, said Rupert Normandeaux, smiling. Always smiling.

When are you going? Careful not to shake his cup. Careful not to spill over.

May fifth is the concert I need to see. I suppose I'll go for the night before.

That's in two days.

Yes, I suppose it is. Very soon indeed! One job then another, you see.

Before they parted ways, Rupert Normandeaux paid for Madin's coffee. As he opened his briefcase to get his wallet Madin saw, inside, a mad jumble of documents. One of them, at the top of the pile, was in what looked like Dickie's writing. Rupert Normandeaux put his wallet back and closed the case. No trouble, he said, no trouble at all.

14.11

The orchestra was so loud. Forte, Fortissimo, even, and no one had even picked up their instruments. The talk, the laughter, the calling from section to section, clapping and foot-stomping, this was not what orchestras in Montreal or Vienna or New York were like. Normally, his presence, the presence of the *composer,* immediately awed and silenced them. Here, however, their noise-level had sky-rocketed the minute he stepped into the room, onto the podium. Home, he was back home.

The night before, after just over two hours, Dickie and Dorabella had eventually returned to him on the front step. While they were away, Thomas connected stars. Once that was done, he looked over each house on the block, one by one, making himself remember the history of whoever had lived there, and imagining what they would be doing now. After about forty-five minutes he had forgotten he was waiting.

And then they were back, and Dickie was opening the door for him and Dorabella was picking up his bag. Julia's upstairs, said Dickie. Top floor but one.

It didn't make sense that he had expected to recognize Julia, after decades away, after last seeing her as barely more than an infant, but, still, Thomas had. Or maybe he had expected Jeannette, really. In any case, the woman who opened the door to him was neither Jeanette, nor the expected. She was heavily pregnant and strong and dark. Thank God, she said. Thank God you've come. Thomas wanted to embrace, but they didn't. I hope you don't mind the sofa and the air mattress. It's all I've got. Your first rehearsal is tomorrow.

The sofa for Dorabella and mattress for me will be fine, said Thomas. And, you're beautiful.

Julia smiled. The bathroom is there, she said. Towels have been laid out. I'll see you in the morning.

Thomas was on the podium and everyone, all woodwinds, brass, strings, percussion (was that really the percussionist? A child?) were talking, stealing looks at him quickly, then launching back into their groups of gossip. Thomas

tapped his baton on his stand. He was the only one who could hear it. Then Julia was behind him, pushing him gently aside.

RIGHT, she said. THIS IS THOMAS. YOU KNOW THAT. LET'S ALL SHUT UP AND REHEARSE NOW.

The orchestra went quiet.

Right. Said Julia. Thank you. Let's have an A, shall we?

While Thomas and Julia were at rehearsal, Dorabella stayed in. She waited until she heard the front door click closed, and then went down to Dickie's and let herself in. Dickie was behind his table, in his apron, looking at photos spread out in front of him. Nine photos. Who are they? said Dorabella.

Organists. Said Dickie. I'm finding an organist.

None of these are right, said Dorabella.

I know, said Dickie. I know.

Here, said Dorabella, and she took a photo out the front pocket of her skirt. There's a phone number on the back. He's the one.

He is, isn't he?

He certainly is.

Can I make you some lunch?

You certainly can.

14.12

Far away, to the east, Madin walked back to his brother's and into his small, damp guest room, and looked at the record player in the corner. His brother had put it there for him. All Madin had done with it, so far, these weeks, was look at it. Try to ignore it. Today, however, he turned it on, and lowered the needle onto the only non-Baroque record his brother had provided, the Elgar, The Enigma Variations.

It was old, but it was good. He sat on the bed and listened. Each note pulling from the bottom of his stomach in threads thinner than spider silk, like dry crying, like the emptiness after sex. A needing pain. The baby. Forgetting all the questions and the concert and the small, round, bald man, the baby was so close. And he was so far.

What are you doing? Said the twins, watching, from the doorway.

I'm packing, said Madin.

Are you having dinner with us tonight?

I don't know.

You should. It's fish.

Okay. And then I have to go.

Okay.

14.13

Thomas chose a running order that surprised everyone. First his Variations, then the Enigmas. It's not what was expected, what would be expected by the audience. Usually you started with the familiar, with what listeners would recognize, to warm them up into the unfamiliar, the new. But Thomas didn't want to do it that way. New then old. Dissonance then resolution.

Or maybe it was because he wasn't really much of a conductor. He was comfortable with his own pieces, yes, but the weight, the responsibility of others, of Big Old Greats, always left him feeling somewhat inadequate, gesturing to something outside of himself.

In any case, that was to be the running order. Regardless of expectation.

And, in any case, they were getting better. Out of real musical interest or sheer curiosity, the orchestra had learned his parts and could now get through most of a rehearsal without breaking down into chatty cacophony. And when everyone was not chatting or laughing or reading the newspaper, but was actually listening and watching and playing and playing and playing, Thomas could relax and hardly conduct at all and let the *Orcheste Symphonic de Saint Éfrouée* render, completely and truly, with their odd bits of wood and brass and silver and gold, the piece that was written for them.

They were getting better, which was good. The concert was very close now. Less than fifty hours. The organist would be arriving tomorrow in time for the dress rehearsal.

14.14

Madin caught the train first thing in the morning. The sun wasn't yet up. It was just barely, barely morning at all. The morning of the day before the day of the concert. The morning exactly eight days before his baby was due to be born. Madin caught the train just as it started to rain.

Rupert Normandeaux caught the train first thing in the morning. He nearly over-slept, he nearly missed it, running up and onto the platform and into the last carriage after all the other passengers had gotten on. After the whistle had blown. He had to stand in the aisle with his eyes closed catching his balance and breathe for a minute or so after the train started to move before he was able to compose himself, put his luggage on the overhead rack and sit down in the aisle seat in the second to last row. He was asleep again before the attendant came to check for tickets, before he had time to notice the rain.

Madin compared the rhythm of the rain to the rhythm of the train. Polyrhythmic distraction. No melody line, just time divided by time. Breaking into the rain, every now and then, the cut of a stork, or more often a gull. Rain, train, stork, gull. He let the rhythms fill his head.

At Québec City, all had to change. It was raining harder now, Spring rain.

Madin changed platforms holding his coat up over his head. He didn't want to look a mess when he got to Julia. The rain flowed down his sleeves.

Rupert Normandeaux had to be wakened by the attendant. This train terminates here. All change here, said the attendant. Then, after a confused moment, he said, Québec City. All change at Québec City, which is where we are now.

Of course, Said Rupert Normandeaux, smiling at the attendant. Thank you. He had to hurry across to the next platform so as not to miss his connection. The rain wetting and shining his bald head. Rupert Normandeaux loved the rain.

The organist had arrived at the Québec City station a full hour early. He had come from somewhere else, from another train from another place, a whole hour earlier. He had boarded this next train as soon as he could. He spent almost thirty minutes sitting in the unmoving train, waiting for the other patrons, the other connections. He had been traveling all through the night.

And then the train began to move

and Madin settled back into his distracted tangle of rhythm

and Rupert Normandeaux settled back into sleep

and the organist wondered where he was going.

More changes and more trains and more rain, and all the time the temperature was dropping, until it was just after 6pm and they pulled into Saint Éfrouée,

Just seven days and 6 hours until Madin's baby was due.

Just one day and two hours and twelve minutes before the concert Rupert Normandeaux was to assess.

Just two hours and twelve minutes before the organist's first rehearsal, the dress rehearsal.

Dickie was making lavender crème brulée. Quickly, as quickly as he could. They'd all be arriving soon. Thomas sat at Dickie's table with Mrs. Dorabella, trying to mimic the way she was crushing the purple flowers between her finger and thumb, squeezing out the oils, the flavour. The dusky purple smell filled the room and leaked out the door up to Raquel, and Julia, down to Gabrielle.

14.15

The tempo of the train pulled against the tempo of Madin's heartbeat. The train slowing, pulling into town, then into the station. His heart, faster and faster. Only the rain's pulse remained constant.

Birds. Even in this weather, a cacophony when he stepped off the train. Madin walked across the platform, out the door and back into Saint Éfrouée. It was much colder here than by the sea; the rain froze in his hair and glazed the sidewalks that led him home. He didn't meet anyone's eye on the walk, though he recognized occasional shoes. His eyelashes were freezing shut every time he blinked; he didn't waste any time.

Then he was home. Letting himself in, going upstairs, just like always, just like nothing.

Julia opened the door before he reached the top of the stairs. You stupid man, she said.

You stupid man, she said. You idiot. You stupid idiotic man. Stupid stupid stupid. It was as though she had forgotten other words. She was crying. She was wrapping her wet, frozen husband in warm towels. She was wrapping his snow-white-with cold hands in a scarf. I told you, you stupid man, if you re-freeze yourself on the walk home it's way worse than the first time. She was crying. She was huge. She was beautiful.

I'm sorry, said Madin. I'm sorry. He had pages of other things to say, but he just said, I'm sorry. It was as though he had forgotten other words. I'm sorry. And he let her wrap him in warm things. He said, You weren't really going to leave, were you?

You stupid man, you need to know when to turn off your ears.

Like underwater.

Like underwater.

Then Julia kissed Madin.

Then she said, I think I might be having contractions.

What? said Madin, it's seven days early.

I know. Said Julia. It might be nothing. Also, tonight's the dress rehearsal.

When?

In two hours.

What should we do? said Madin.

Wait, said Julia. Put on some music, and wait to see if anything happens.

Okay, said Madin, and breathed. Okay. Instead of going to the record player, he sat Julia down in front of the fireplace and went to the kitchen and prepared her some hot chocolate made with cream. As she drank he knelt before her chair and gently lifted her sweater, sticking his head underneath, against her stomach. He let the sweater fall back down over him and the enormous globe of a belly, hardly human, hardly believable. It was dark under the sweater, it was warm. He hummed, Handel, For Unto Us a Child is Born. He hummed against Julia's stomach, into it. His heartbeat hadn't slowed down one bit.

14.16

Rupert Normandeaux was last off the train. He took his time in the station, looking up at the white domed roof, like an igloo, and around at the people. Not that there were very many people, but enough to look at for a while. Then he opened his hand-drawn map and stepped out towards town.

The rain was frozen, was freezing, wasn't really rain at all. Rupert Normandeaux liked rain, but wasn't sure about it this time. He put on a hat, a green and red flat-cap, and tried to shield his map. He walked east, towards what he hoped was the bridge, and came to a street that ended in a tobacco shop. No turns right or left, like there should have been, just a tobacco shop. It was closed. Rupert Normandeaux checked his map; it was bleeding. Did it say Rue Saint Pierre or Saint Paul? He needed one of those. He turned around and took the first left, Rue Saint Lucas, which seemed to go straight, but actually curved so that you started off going north, but ended up going west by the end of it. The rain had soaked his map, and then frozen it. It was an illegible rectangle of ice in his hand. Normally Rupert Normandeaux liked rain, but he wasn't sure about it this time. The shops were closed and the town's people were wise enough to be indoors, in homes. Rupert Normandeaux kept walking.

He passed a bakery. It was closed, but as he passed, a man walked out of it. Rupert Normandeaux couldn't place the man's age. He was wearing a brown coat, and had grey hair at his temples. You're soaking, you're frozen, said the man. Are you going far?

Rupert Normandeaux told him the address he was looking for. The address he had memorized the night before.

That's Julia's, that's the building where my daughter lives, said Claubert. If you're lost I can take you there.

Oh thank you, said Rupert Normandeaux, smiling though frozen lips. Does it rain like this often, here?

Sometimes, said Claubert. Isn't it beautiful? He pointed at a tree, still leafless, that the rain had coated and frozen over. It shone like glass.

It is, said Rupert Normandeaux, surprised. He looked around. Everything was coated the same way. Cars, bits of rubbish, shop-fronts, all turned to glass. It is.

Dorabella saw them coming, through Dickie's red and white curtains, through the frozen rain. Claubert, she said.

Dickie smiled, just a little.

Thomas looked up, through the curtains and the rain, I'm not ready, he said.

Never are, said Dickie. Pass me the dessert torch, please.

Claubert had his own key to his daughter's building, but still, it was difficult to get the front door open. The ice-glass had started filling in the locks and the seams. Rupert Normandeaux had to take off his gloves and pull with both hands, throwing his weight back three times. When it did open, the smell of lavender was so strong it almost knocked them back again. Mon Dieu, said Claubert.

Smells like Spring, said Rupert Normandeaux, walking forward into the front hall. Claubert followed, closing the door behind them.

The door to Dickie's was open. Dickie had opened it. Rupert Normandeaux walked past. Claubert stopped. Inside, Thomas was still sitting behind the table, beside Mrs. Dorabella. His hands were covered in lavender oil. Mon Dieu, said Claubert. Thomas Chartrand, mon Dieu.

Rupert Normandeaux, a little confused, stopped walking up the stairs, turned around, and followed Claubert into Dickie's. Hello everyone, he said, You see, I'm Rupert Normandeaux, minister for the cultural development of small to medium francophone communities…it smells lovely in here.

Sit down, said Dickie, make yourself at home. Have some coffee or tea or hot chocolate? The food will be ready in about five minutes.

Coffee please, said Rupert Normandeaux.

Chocolate, said Claubert.

Dickie turned to make the drinks and Dorabella started a conversation with Rupert Normandeaux about Federal funding policies. Thomas looked at Claubert's worn brown shoes, the same kind he'd been wearing for twenty-five years.

I heard about Jeanette, Thomas said, quietly, almost whispering. I'm sorry.

You blame me, said Claubert.

You blame me, said Thomas.

Yes, said Claubert.

Yes, said Thomas.

Julia has missed you, said Claubert. You could have visited.

How? said Thomas.

You're afraid of this town, said Claubert.

You're afraid of yourself, said Thomas.

Hot chocolate? said Dickie, pushing a mug in under their lowered heads.

Thank you, said both men, even though the drink was just for Claubert.

I sent the dog, the puppy, said Thomas. What happened to the dog?

Outside it was raining and raining and raining ice. Claubert opened his month to answer, The dog, he said, that dog… then he stopped. Suddenly, out of nowhere, his son-in-law, Madin, his disappeared son-in-law, was in front of them. He was sweating.

They're seven minutes apart, said Madin. The contractions are now seven minutes apart. We have to get to the doctor. He was speaking faster than he ever had.

Mon Dieu, said Claubert, and stood up.

Mon Dieu, said Thomas, and stood up.

Okay, said Dickie, and stood up and wiped his hands on his apron. I'll call for a car.

Right, said Dorabella, standing up and moving towards the stairs. I'll see that the girl is ready and packed for the hospital and okay.

We've met…, said Rupert Normandeaux.

It's locked, said Julia. There she was, behind Madin. The front door. The ice, the rain, it's sealed over. It's solid.

Mon Dieu, said Claubert.

Let me try, said Thomas. He went past her, to the front door. He threw his weight against it.

I've tried it. Of course I've tried it, said Julia.

I'm pretty good at that, said Rupert Normandeaux. He got up and begun throwing his weight at the door as well.

Madin got Julia a chair and a wet cloth. He stroked her hair, from the very roots to the very tips, again and again.

There are no phones, said Dickie. Frozen phones.

Claubert looked out the window, inches and inches and inches of ice. Everything outside was distorted, impossible. Jeanette, he said.

The door didn't move, so Dickie did.

He said, Right. Alright.

He sent Rupert, Claubert and Thomas out of his apartment, upstairs.

He had Dorabella stay. She knew what to do.

He took off his cooking apron and put on his sterile tattooing apron.

Upstairs, the three men sat on Madin and Julia's sofa and tried not to look at each other. Will she die? Said Rupert Normandeaux. His face was white. Will your daughter die?

Of course not, said Thomas.

Claubert put on a record. The one at the top of the pile. They all listened like it was the most important thing in the world.

But the Concert, said Julia, but the Minister.

It's okay, said Madin. It's frozen now, it's all frozen out there.

Yes?

Yes.

It's so warm in here, said Julia. She was sweating; her hair was wetting Madin's hand.

Okay, said Dorabella, now.

Ready? Said Dickie.

Ready, said Julia.

She held Madin's hand hard in hers and together they counted the rhythm of the rain against the rhythm of her body against the rhythm of their breathing and everything smelled of lavender.

4.17

The organist walked straight from the train station to the concert hall. It was raining, it was cold. He passed a bakery; through the window he could see there were two people inside, sitting together, but not talking. He walked, getting wetter and colder, all the way to the hall without meeting anyone on the street. He was early, more than an hour and a half early for rehearsal. There was no one else there, but the front door was unlocked. He pulled it through the ice and walked right to the back of the hall. That's where the organ lofts always were. The back was his favorite part of any hall. He climbed the metal spiral stairs up to the little cage of keys and pedals and stops and sat on the bench, adjusting its height. He was a bit shorter than most organists. He took his shoes off and got another pair out of his bag, softer, for the pedals, like dance shoes. Then the organist inhaled, and started to play. He warmed up his fingers and feet to the empty hall and warmed up the empty hall to the organ that hadn't been played for years and years.

Gabrielle had a rehearsal to get to. She had the dress rehearsal, and she had promised she would do it, this one concert, this one last concert. She tried to leave the building through the front door, but it was locked, sealed over with ice, so she went back downstairs, to her flat, and pulled her suitcase over to the window. This window was okay; it was sheltered by the angle of the house, it wasn't yet sealed. She opened it and pushed her viola out first, then climbed and crawled through herself.

The streets were empty. She walked alone to the hall. Her hair froze to the back of her neck.

She passed the bakery. Sealed inside were the baker, Raquel, and the bassoonist, Robert. Would you, though? said one of them. Would you say you were sorry?

I don't know, said the other, would you?

Gabrielle's hands, her hair, her eyebrows and her eyelashes and the moisture above her lip and below her nose, her back in lines and her feet in boots too big so that the rain ran down, they were all ice, all frozen.

The back door to the hall, the one Gabrielle always used, was propped open with the large, flat stone she always left there. She cracked the ice on the hinges and pulled the door just wide enough to slip through.

Inside there was music. It was the music from inside her head, only it wasn't in her head, it was outside her and all around her. She followed it down the dusty backstage corridors to a paneled wooden door, the size of a child. She bent down and climbed through it into what looked like the cramped interior of an industrial-revolution era factory. Gabrielle stood surrounded by crowds of levers, bellows and pipes. Hundreds and hundreds of pipes reaching up and up and up. One thousand, five hundred and ninety-seven pipes.

Janiel was playing, he was playing chords, big, broken, shattered, G major chords, over and over, in every inversion, with just a few open stops, and then more, and then more, and then all. From inside the organ, Gabrielle watched the instrument dance. Breathing and lifting and pulling and releasing. The sound surrounded them both, sweet and thick, like maple syrup on snow.

And from them, the sound went out and out, on and on
through the windows
through the ice
through the roads
through the town
on and on
out and out.

END

Emma Hooper 3444066
University of East Anglia
PhD in Creative and Critical Writing

Critical Thesis

He Drops the Silver Chain of Sound:

How Intratextual Musical Association Develops and Defines Character in Novels

Introduction

> There is always something more, something that cannot be said… music affords the… novelist: the ability to invoke states of consciousness that are beyond the ability of language to render. (Smyth, 25)

The linking of character with music in novels is hardly a new practice, traceable as it is through the canon from George Eliot to Marcel Proust to Anthony Burgess and beyond; however, although an impressive (and growing) amount of attention has been paid to the exploration of music in novels more generally,[1] the specifically character-based area of investigation is not yet so developed.[2] My interest lies in examining the idea of music in novels in terms of characterization, specifically how novelistic characterization works in relation to textual references to music. A significant amount of a novel's task is set to examining, exploring, explaining and expanding its characters; as Roland Barthes put it in *S/Z*, his 1974 exploration of Balzac's "Sarrasine," "To read is to struggle to name" (92).[3] It therefore follows that authors and readers alike are alert to ways of developing characters as much as possible, striving towards a sense, for the reader, of "presence" for these fictional beings. One method, the one that I will explore, is characteral development by means of musical association; how textural references

[1] A few notable examples include Alex Aronson's *Music and the Novel* (1980), Werner Wolf's *The Musicalization of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (1999), Stephen Benson's *Literary Music: Writing Music in Contemporary Fiction* (2006), and the text quoted above, Gerry Smyth's recent *Music in Contemporary British Fiction: Listening to the Novel* (2008).
[2] This is not to suggest that the area has been completely ignored, only under-developed comparatively. As we continue there are various studies to which I will refer which do touch on this subject in a range of ways.
[3] For more on Barthes' treatment of character in *S/Z*, see Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse*, pp 115-116.

to music work towards the "building" of fictional people in novels,[4] and what it is about music, specifically, that makes it unique in this capacity.

In *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M. Forster speaks of 'flat' and 'round' characters; a distinction that divides characters, roughly, between those who can be summarized in one phrase ("flat"), and those who demonstrate more layers of complexity ("round"). This seems a simple enough distinction; however, it raises the idea of "levels of roundness". Can one character be said to be more "round" than another? Is there such thing as a complete or final level of "roundness" that a character can (or should?) strive to attain? James Wood, in his *Guardian* article, "A Life of Their Own," opines on this issue, stating that:

> [True] "roundness" is impossible in fiction, because fictional characters, while very alive in their way, are not the same as real people. (*The Guardian*, 26/1/08)

Wood sees "roundness" as a synonym for "fullness," and goes on to protest that Forster's distinctions privilege novelistic characters, as they have more pages available to them in which their traits can be related. He thus implies that novelistic characters will have a leg-up in terms of "roundness" over characters in shorter formats, for example, short stories or poetry. This is true, of course, but the fact of the matter remains that neither the character from a short story, nor she from a novel, will ever stand a chance at being completely "round" (or "full") in the way that real people are. They are not real people, and have no real-world, actual referent, and so, they will always necessarily be less-than-full, or round, regardless of whether they have ten or ten-thousand pages to attempt to convince us otherwise. However, there is no need for authors and readers to despair. On the contrary, once we have made this distinction, that fictional beings are not the same as real people, we can begin to note and discuss positive ramifications in

[4] The definition of "novel" as referred to and examined in this study will be mainly that of the classic-realist tradition. (NB: Some of the conclusions reached may not have bearing in more experimental or postmodern settings.)

terms of character and characterization. Because they are inhabiting a different world and space than our own, we can get to know literary characters in ways that we cannot know people in real life. So, while we cannot know them as fully or as "roundly" as we would know our own friends, neighbours and family, there are certain kinds of intimacy we can only experience with fictional beings, certain kinds of "knowing" that are specifically tuned to function within the realms of text, textual people (characters), and the relationships readers form with them. In this way, they can often be even more *available* or open to us than "real people."

I am here seeking to explore one such type of characterization, that which works through the association of a literary character with a particular piece of music. Because an author is limited in the amount of information, or number of "traits," she can provide about a character, those that she does assign can sometimes be given special or increased weight. This can function on many levels; for example, if a character is described as having fiery red hair, but receives no further description, readers will often justifiably make the leap to assume that that character has a fiery personality (unless, of course, they are told or indicated otherwise by the text); whereas, upon meeting a real-life person with fiery red hair, we are swamped with endless other traits to consider and balance. In real life we know enough not to assume one dominant trait by which we can pass judgment; there are simply too many other traits to take into account. This is not to say that literary characters cannot be nuanced, layered, or subtle, but instead that there functions a certain type of code in literature, whereby certain traits, in their relative prominence, can be read into more deeply than one would do with a real person. (I will be delving further into the idea of various types of "trait" in later paragraphs.) I am looking to investigate instances where a character's link within the text with a certain piece of music functions as just such a "magnified" or prominent trait, where, for reasons of the sort that we will discuss in upcoming sections of this piece, one particular piece of music can thusly be a source of valuable, and sometimes even otherwise unattainable, character information.

What I am looking to propose is not so much a "theory of character" as an active theory of *characterization*, less concerned with a final, static result, as with the unfolding of process. We will here be working with the idea of literary characters as something *built*; as a gradual collection of items of information, or traits, assembled by readers, that coalesce over time into in-text "people." This idea of traits follows from James Garvey's discussion of characters' "attributive propositions," (73) and Seymour Chatman's definition of a trait as, "a narrative adjective tied to the narrative copula" (125). Both Garvey and Chatman propose topical and useful analyses of trait-based characterization; however, I feel the need to put forward my own typological analysis here, to ground us in my own specific take on characterization-through-trait theory, as well as to begin to introduce the logic behind the specific type of musical metonym on which I mean to focus.

Typology of Character Traits

I propose the following typology for the consideration of character traits[5]: firstly, they are split into two large categories, direct and indirect.[6] Direct traits are those that are presented to readers in a relatively overt manner, while indirect traits are those that are in some way obscured or coded.[7] Within the direct category reside three main sub-types, beginning with direct narratorial traits. These are character-related items that readers are told directly by the narrator. For example, in Jane Austen's *Emma* we have several instances of this sort of trait in the very first line:

[5] It should be mentioned that there can and will be overlap between different types of traits. This typology is to be used more as a heuristic tool than a set of strictly bound categories.
[6] This breakdown shares many commonalities with that of Rimmon-Kenan in his 1983 *Narrative Fiction, Contemporary Poetics*, particularly this division into direct and indirect. Further details and trait classification will distinguish my typology from her own, however.
[7] I'll explore this distinction further shortly, within the sub-categories.

> Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her. (1)

This passage can be read as a straight list of direct narratorial traits. The narrator is telling us directly that Emma is handsome, that she is clever, that she is rich, that she is nearly twenty-one years old, and so on. Direct narratorial traits require little in the way of reader disambiguation or disentangling; they are, for the most part, to be taken at face value, as straight-forward pieces of characteral information.[8] Direct narratorial traits can be related through any type of narrator, be they third-person omniscient, third-person limited or first-person.

Direct-from-other traits, the second subtype, function similarly to direct narratorial traits in that they are character-related items readers are told in a straight-forward manner, only, instead of coming from a narrator, they come from the voices of other characters within the novel. As such, they are more integrated into the fabric of the text and story-world. Take for example, also from Austen's *Emma*, "'Dear Emma bears everything so well,' said her father"(6). Here we are given information about Emma's character through her father. These traits are regarded as somewhat unreliable, or less than *pure*, as the reader must consider the direct information they're being given within the context of what they know of the character who is providing the information.[9] For example, this item of information about Emma is provided by her father, a man with a somewhat biased view of his daughter, unable to see anything but positive traits in her, more so than is perhaps actually the case. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, too, addresses this phenomenon:

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[8] This, of course, raises issues of unreliable narrators; something we'll discuss further with direct-from-other traits.

[9] Which can also sometimes be the case with direct narratorial traits, for example when we are dealing with a first-person narrator or an unreliable narrator (as mentioned, briefly, in the previous footnote).

> If narrow-minded, dull characters call someone 'a person of many theories' or consider that character's imagination 'remarkably active', their views need not be taken as a reliable affirmation of these qualities in a character whose exceptionality may be only in the eyes of mediocre beholders. The beholders' comments may thus be an indication of their own distrust of theories or paucity of imagination rather than a trustworthy definition of the character they discuss. (60)

As Rimmon-Kenan indicates, this incarnation of trait can end up providing character information not just about the described character (in our earlier example, Emma) but also about the speaker (her father), something we'll examine further within the 'Indirect' category of traits. Nevertheless, direct-from-other traits can still be considered valuable in terms of character building, despite the fact that readers must collect them through the filter of the bias of the other.

The third and final type of direct trait is the direct-from-self trait. In this case, the information regarding the character comes directly from the character themselves (generally, like the direct-from-other trait, in the form of dialogue, although it is possible to have a cross-over here with the direct narratorial quote, if/when the narrator provides direct information regarding their own character). For example, when Austen's Emma herself cries, "'I must beg you not to talk of the sea. It makes me envious and miserable; I who have never seen it!'" (87), we have an example of a direct-from-self trait, that Emma has never seen the sea, as well as the idea that talk of the sea makes her "envious and miserable." Direct-from-self traits suffer from the same perils we have already discussed, of perspective or point-of-view bias, and as such, readers will again have to judge for themselves to what degree to trust the validity of the claims based on what they have gathered of the speaker or the context. In light of this, it might be argued that our three sub-categories of direct traits are no so cleanly direct after all; however, this moniker is also to be considered in terms of the type of information being communicated. Being told Emma is, "handsome, clever and

rich" requires little deciphering or translating; the voice (in this case of the third-person narrator) is passing on a piece of characteral information directly, without the use of overt literary artifice.[10] And so, regardless of overlap, bias and other potential complication, we shall continue to group these three sub-categories under the heading of "direct" traits.

The second general class of trait is the indirect. Again, I'll break this grouping down into three sub-categories, the first of which is perhaps the most subtle: that of the indirect-by-prose trait. This is a trait implied[11] by an affectation in the prose itself when discussing the character, such as a change of rhythm or vocabulary.[12] (This is in the prose-style itself, as opposed to within a character's speech; we'll discuss the latter in upcoming sub-categories.) An example of this would be Alessandro Baricco's *Lands of Glass* when the character of Jun Rail is first introduced. Up to this point in the novel we've had a prose style of frantically exchanged dialogue which then switches suddenly, with the introduction of Jun, to the halting and decisive:

> Jun Rail. Jun Rail's face. When the women of Quinnipak looked in the mirror what they thought of was Jun Rail's face. When the men of Quinnipak looked at their women what they thought of was Jun Rail's face. Jun Rail's hair, cheekbones, milk-white skin, the cut of Jun Rail's eyes. But above all – whether it was laughing or shouting or keeping silence or simply being there, as if waiting – Jun Rail's mouth. Jun Rail's mouth did not leave you in peace. It simply bored a hole in your imagination. It muddled your thoughts. (8-9)

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[10] Nevertheless, even such traits cannot be considered wholly 'pure,' as historicists will point out the need to view these (and all other traits) while considering matters such as the status of given traits at the time of the story.
[11] I will here be using the term *imply* to denote the suggesting or evoking of a characteral attribute in a somehow other than straight-forward manner.
[12] In its focus on the language itself, this type of trait can be seen as related to, though not parallel with, Hamon's 1972 semiotic exploration of the proper name as character trait.

Although this extract teems with direct narratorial traits regarding Jun, this new, halting rhythm Baricco has crafted around her helps readers to further define the character. The working of this type of trait implies an interesting and complicated idea of indirect-knowledge, or *sense*, to be drawn from the text, a general idea that is quite closely related to my primary inquiry, as shall be discussed further below.

The second sub-category is the indirect-by-action trait. This is a rather wide sweep of a category, implicating, essentially, everything our character says or does. These bits of information, for example how a character reacts to a given situation, how they undertake actions, or the rhythm of their dialogue, are taken in by readers and assessed in terms of the types of traits implied. We might ascertain that a character who reacts to a whining dog by kicking it is aggressive, while a character who reacts to the same dog by doling out table-scraps is kind or perhaps easily manipulated. Another example, concerning the character of Jun in Baricco's *Lands of Glass*, comes in the form of her dialogue, after she has discovered her husband, Mr. Rail, has been unfaithful while away from home, "'Please, don't tell anyone…Please don't tell anyone I cried'"(19). From this, readers are able to ascertain that Jun is a proud woman, one concerned with upholding appearances. The indirect-by-action type of trait, then, like the indirect-by-prose trait, requires a process of ascertaining, or concluding.

The final type of indirect trait is the indirect-by-association trait.[13] This is a trait stemming from a character's association, or implied connection, to something within the text, anything from a colour to another character to a concept to a certain kind of food.[14] An example of this would be Baricco's Jun

[13] That is to say, the final type that I will be discussing here, keeping in mind, as mentioned earlier, that, although it serves its purpose here, in demonstrating the general idea of 'traits' and their potential classifications, this list is far from exhaustive.

[14] Similar but not completely aligned is Rimmon-Kenan's idea of "reinforcement by analogy" (67), though, in his case, this form of characterization is not treated at a trait-type as we are discussing here, but instead "as a reinforcement of characterization rather than…a separate type of character-indicator" (67).

character and the motif linking her with empty vessels (usually ornate empty boxes):

> Things were not made any simpler by the fact that Jun never, absolutely never, wore the jewels sent her, indeed she did not seem to attach any particular importance to them: while she kept the boxes with infinite care, dusting them periodically, and making sure that no one moved them from the place she had consecrated to them. (20)

The indirect-by-association trait is dependant on a number of factors. Firstly, there must be a strong enough connection established in the text to indicate to readers the link as indicative of character; what's more, like the other indirect traits, it requires from the reader a more complex process of ascertaining and interpreting than does a direct trait. Moreover, we can break this sub-category down into sub-sub-categories, as an indirect-by-association trait might make its associative link with something within the story-world of the text (for example another character or a fictional place) or else with a real-world object (for example a real-world person, like Peter Gabriel or a real-world place, like Solsbury Hill).[15] Another distinct sub-(sub)category within the indirect-by-association trait grouping is a link that appeals to an artform outside that of the novel itself, what I will call an intermedial association or link. An example of this would be the linking of a character to a piece of music; that is to say, a link that, within the realm and context of a character built from words, would ask us to consider another realm and context, that of music. For example, consider the case of Forster's Lucy Honeychurch from *A Room with a View*, associated in the text as she is with Beethoven's Piano Sonata Opus 111, an example we'll discuss further on. Of course there are many forms of this sort of novelistic intermediality, including novels pairing characters with elements or works of

[15] I'll discuss some implications of this distinction in following sections.

visual art, dance, and so on, and each can function in terms of characterization in its own media-specific way.[16]

Although far from comprehensive, I hope the preceding broad typology of character traits in novels will serve to underlie both a general understanding of this study's approach to characterization, as well as the following exploration of one type of trait in particular: the indirect-by-real-world-musical-association trait. I assert that this type of trait, in particular, is a uniquely powerful tool in the building of literary characters, and that, despite surface similarities, it functions in a distinct and different manner from other real-world intermedial associative traits.

Music's Distinction

What is it, exactly, about music that allows it to function *uniquely* as a literary (and, therein, character-building) tool? I believe what sets musical associations apart from other types of novelistic intermediality is, primarily, music's non-representational nature. Music is much less suited to representation and objective expression (that is to say, expression with a definite *something* to express from creator to audience, or from artwork to observer/listener) than other art forms, both performance and non. To simplify, upon hearing a solo piano piece, one generally cannot definitively, objectively, state the piece's "subject," for example, "that was a waterfall" (or "that was *about* a waterfall"). Although musical motifs and pieces can certainly conjure specific ideas and images in this way, there is next to nothing in the way of agreed semantics in this vein, nor, many would argue, would such a thing even be possible. What is for me a waterfall may be for

[16] There are numerous explorations of each of these intermedial pairings. We've discussed some musico-literary examples already, and will refer to more. For a discussion of visual art and the novel, see Marianna Torgovnick's *The Visual Arts, Pictorialism, and the Novel: James, Lawerence and Woolf*, or Viola Hopkins Winner's *Henry James and the Visual Arts*, or Sophia Andres' *The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel: Narrative Challenges to Visual Gendered Boundaries*, for dance and the novel, see Sarah Davies Cordova's *Paris Dances: Textual Choreographies in the Nineteeth-Century French Novel*.

you a stag or the scent of fresh-mown grass. This ineffability of music was particularly called into scrutiny during what is now known as the Nineteenth-Century program music debate. Within this cultural arena of scholars, critics, composers and artists across various disciplines throughout the Nineteenth-Century and into the earlier parts of the Twentieth, there arose a heated discussion regarding the extent of music's ability to express or represent, and whether the inability to "represent" would diminish the art form's aesthetic value. On one side, we had figures such as Hector Berlioz and E. T. A. Hoffman, declaring that instrumental music was more than capable of expression, that it was "as lofty and as expressive of human experience as more obviously representational art forms, such as painting or literature." (681)[17] Their opponents, such as Stravinsky, however, claimed that, "Music is powerless to represent anything at all." (681)[18] During this period of debate, the idea of the "program" arose as a means of acquiring respect for instrumental music.[19] Program music can be defined as a piece (or series of pieces) portraying an extra-musical theme or narrative. This is in contrast to "absolute music," which is non-representational.[20] Examples of various types of program music include Franz Liszt's *Ce Qu'on Entend sur la Montagne*, a symphonic poem based on a poem by Victor Hugo; [21] Modest Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, a ten-movement suite for piano "depicting" a series of paintings by artist Viktor Hartmann; and Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*, a symphonic suite which follows the narrative path of

[17] Extract taken from *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music: Program Music*
[18] Ibid.
[19] This was, however, not the birthplace of program music itself; music with external referents can be traced virtually as far back as musical history allows. One pre-Nineteenth-Century example is that of the Fourteenth-Century Italian *Caccia*, a type of piece which was intended to depict the romping and rollicking of a hunt.
[20] This is not to be confused with the somewhat archaic definition of absolute music as a form of divinity. Nevertheless, there is an interesting cross-over here, as this type of absolute music, in lieu of *representing* or expressing anything of our world, is said by some to therefore evoke Godliness.
[21] It should be noted that symphonic poems are a general musical genre that do not, by nature, *have* to correlate to any specific real-world poetry, and, in fact, more often than not do not.

the Persian folk-tale. An important distinction here is that program music is *not* simply music inspired by something extra-musical, for example, a piece inspired by the sun on a wheat-field, or a poem by Keats. These sorts of extra-musical connections are strictly author (or composer)-sided; that is to say that, while they may play an important role in the creation of a piece, they are not implicated in its reception. A piece of program music must be attempting to *communicate* something extra-musical. But is such a thing even possible? The moniker "program music" comes from the idea that the extra-musical element would be described, or at least disclosed, within a piece's program notes, thus tipping the audience off as to what to "listen for." It is tempting, then, to claim that therein lies the deciding proof, for, were there not a program to guide listeners towards supposed extra-musical content, then this content would not be communicated. In other words, it is all well and good for an audience to sit back and "hear" Saint-Säens' *Swan*[22] after they have all been alerted that it is, indeed, a swan they are listening to; however, were there no indication in the title or program, would all listeners come away from the performance having linked the piece with the idea of a swan, specifically? I would say no. Music can have swan-like features, certainly, it can, in a sense, glide or be majestic or lonely or aquatic; however, it lacks the visual representational tools of fine art or dance, and the textual or verbal tools of literature or theatre necessary to impart objective signification.[23] This does not mean music has 'failed' in any way, however, quite the contrary. What the Nineteenth-Century program music debate seemed to overlook was the fact that this independence from concrete signification, and the toil towards it, is what sets music apart and renders it most affecting. The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer granted music special status among art forms for this reason, stating, in his *The World as Will and Representation*, that:

[22] "The Swan" is the thirteenth (and by far most celebrated) movement from Camille Saint-Säens' *Carnival of the Animals* suite.
[23] We are, for the time being, considering music without sung text, instrumental music.

> Depicting individual things … is the aim of all the other non-musical arts . . . [but] music, since it passes over the ideas, is . . . quite independent of the phenomenal world, positively ignores it. (257)

Daniel Albright, author of *Music and Modernism*, clarifies the philosopher's point:

> Schopenhauer thought that music was the only art that did not merely copy ideas, but actually embodied the will itself. (39)

Schopenhauer was not alone in that belief. Poets like Mallarmé idolized music for this reason, for its freedom from semantic meaning,[24] endeavoring to make their poetry as "musical" as possible, through form and aural affect. In fact, almost all of the Symbolist wordsmiths were especially fond of this characteristic of music. As Marina Frolova-Walker points out in her review of "Russian Opera and the Symbolist Movement" (by Simon Morrison):

> Symbolists in general were often in love with the idea of music as a higher art form, floating free of worldly encumbrances and capable of expressing the ineffable. (507)

[24] For more on Mallarmé's "musical" poetry, see David Evans' *Rhythm, Illusion, and the Poetic Idea. Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé*.

Music has its own kind of language, one that does not communicate through any concrete sign system which can be objectively interpreted as can words or pictures, but a language no less, and, no less a language. Like the Symbolists and unlike the Nineteenth-Century critics, I believe this semantic distinction to be what can make music a uniquely potent art, and, thereby, a distinctively effective tool in character-building within literature.

Part of the sticking point of music's ineffability, and attempts (including this one) to discuss it, is the fact that, as made evident above, it does not function within verbal semantics. Simply stated, putting into words why music cannot be put into words proves something of a challenge. Nevertheless, this is why music is so well-suited to the character-building task at hand; music says what words cannot. In literary characters linked with a piece of music there is no tautological overlap, the two languages, that of words' semantic preciseness and that of music's non-representational ineffability can function symbiotically to present an impressively vivid depiction of character. Consider the trait-based formula of characterization as outlined in previous paragraphs. As we read through a novel, we are given various items of information (traits) pertaining to a particular character that, once collected and connected by the reader, serve to constitute that character.[25] As discussed earlier, fictional beings do not have real-world referents; they are nothing but these traits (and our interpretation of them). This metaphor of "connecting," however, implies that there must be some amount of space between what is being connected; as we can never know everything about our characters, we must jump from trait to trait. As Ruth Ronen asserts in her article, "Completing the Incompleteness of Fictional Entities," "fictional entities are inherently incomplete." (817) This is where the idea of textual "gaps" comes

[25]There are several instances of modern and postmodern novels that arguably thwart this type of characterization by providing confused or contradictory traits, and we shall deal briefly with the idea of inconsistent or conflicting traits in upcoming sections; however, for a more detailed discussion, see Aleid Fokkema's *Postmodern Characters: A Study of Characterization in British and American Postmodern Fiction* or Docherty's rather comprehensive *Reading (Absent) Character: Towards a Theory of Characterization in Fiction*.

in; in this way, literary characters are holed. However, musically-associative character traits can function positively in relation to these gaps. Music, in its non-precise, non-semantic, non-textual language, can offer a very particular form of character cohesion, a way of bridging readers across the gaps. Let us consider a fictional character named Mary. The author tells us only Mary's name, that she is forty-eight years old, and that she is afraid of spiders, so that we have a certain, quite limited idea of Mary's character. If we are also told, however, that Mary has a strong textual association with the first movement of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*, then the aural idea of this piece, conjured as it is when we read about Mary and her connection to it, offers another language of non-semantic representation which works alongside what we know of Mary and adds a new level of textually indefinable character-knowledge. It bridges, or even weaves us between, the gaps in Mary's pure-text character.[26] Of course, it should be noted that I am not claiming that music can completely or finally fill the gaps in literary characters; knowing about Mary's Beethoven connection does not mean we can completely *know* Mary. However, in its non-textual language, music can offer a unique and powerful method of bridging together diverse textual fragments, unavailable through (non-intermedial) words alone; its distinct form of expression unifies our necessarily disjointed literary characters.

A brief review of character-music pairings in novels

It's not uncommon to find novelistic characters with strong character-building ties to music. I will here present a brief overview of some of the various forms this type of characterization can take, with examples from the music-novel canon, and brief discussions as to how these variations can manifest in terms of musico-literary characterization. Firstly, we will consider the type of musical content presented. In novels, a character-music association can be made with either real music or fictional music, a distinction introduced, briefly, earlier, in our

[26] We will deal with more in-depth examples of music-linked literary characters in upcoming sections.

discussion of indirect-by-association traits. By "real" music I refer to pieces that exist in the real world, the reader's universe, our own, non-fiction reality.[27] Take, for example, the earlier-cited E. M. Forster's *A Room With a View*, in which Lucy Honeychurch is quite strongly linked with Beethoven's piano sonata Opus 111:

> Among the promised items was "Miss Honeychurch. Piano. Beethoven," and Mr. Beebe was wondering whether it would be Adelaida, or the march of The Ruins of Athens, when his composure was disturbed by the opening bars of Opus III. (29)
>
> Mr. Beebe, indeed, noticing her startled eyes at dinner-time, had again passed to himself the remark of "Too much Beethoven." (43)

The Beethoven Forster refers to is, of course, a real world piece of which readers could have experience outside the novel. Readers familiar with the piece could, therefore, aurally recall, or, in fact, go and put on a recording of, an actual pre-existing and *complete* piece of music while reading the novel and considering Lucy's association with it. This "immigration" (Ronen) of a real world piece into a fictional character's world is far from an uncommon type of intertextuality (or intermediality), and is often used to great effect in the interests of characterization. Another, more recent example of this type of reference is the linking of Nancy Huston's protagonist Liliane Kulainn with Bach's Goldberg Variations, in Huston's novel of the same name,[28] or, any of the three novels I shall be looking at more closely later in this study: *An Equal Music* by Vikram

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[27] This definition assumes an "ideal reader" who is able to recognize and identify the musical works being referenced. We will explore some of the issues hereby raised at the end of this section. (For a more detailed look at the 'immigration' of real-world items into fiction settings, see Ruth Ronen's *Completing the Incompleteness of Fictional Entities*.)

[28] An examination of Huston and Bach can be found in Frédérique Arroyas' Word and Music Studies essay "Literary Mediations of Baroque Music: Biber, Bach, and Nancy Huston"

Seth (in which the character Michael is linked with Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*), *The Song Beneath the Ice* by Joe Fiorito (in which the character Dominic is linked with Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*) and *The Time of Our Singing* by Richard Powers (in which the character Jonah is linked with Dowland's "Time Stands Still").

Now let us consider the alternate side of this particular musico-literary coin: novels that pair a character with a fictional or non-real world piece of music, that is to say, with a piece that is a fabricated inhabitant of its own story-world. One of the most well-known examples of this would be the Vinteuil violin sonata, linked with the character Swann (and also with the character of Marcel, though here we'll just consider the single, former, character pairing) in Proust's *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*:[29]

> But now, at last, he could ask the name of his fair unknown (and was told that it was the andante movement of Vinteuil's sonata for the piano and violin), he held it safe, could have it again to himself, at home, as often as he would, could study its language and acquire its secret. (164)

This type of association functions differently to the real-world music association, in that the piece, like the fictional character it is associated with, can never be fully known, or *heard*. Like the character, it can have traits:

> The waving tremolo of the violin-part, which formed a bristling bodyguard of sound two octaves above it—and as in a mountainous country, against the seeming immobility of a vertically falling torrent, one may distinguish, two hundred feet

[29]Although some scholars have speculated on the idea that the Sonata may have been based on a piece by Fauré or Franck, there is nothing like an agreed consensus on the matter, and we will be considering it as a purely fictional piece.

> below, the tiny form of a woman walking in the valley—the little phrase had just appeared, distant but graceful, protected by the long, gradual unfurling of its transparent, incessant and sonorous curtain. (310)

However, no matter how thorough the author's descriptions, in the absence of an original aural referent (or score), the piece can never be aurally complete for readers, can never be fully "heard".[30] It is tied to the words that describe it, and, as such, cannot function as effectively within the non-textual, non-representational language of music. Nevertheless, such a link can still be used to characteral effect; however, the lack of a real-world aural referent lends a less intermedial form of characterization, confined as it is within one language. One may argue that the piece of music can be imagined by readers, thanks to the textual descriptors, and therefore function within its own, musical, language; however, this is only possible to the same extent that readers may imagine the characters they're building in reading the text: despite imaginings, the core of each is still fully rooted in the same, textual, language. This is not to be considered as an out-and-out unconstructive thing, and this type of character-piece pairing is not to be held as unconditionally weaker than real-world music examples; it is simply another form or style altogether, with its own purpose and place. For example, in the case of Proust, the lack of concrete referent works very well towards the novel's shifting-nature-of-memory aesthetic.[31]

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[30] This raises the issue of musical novels wherein authors have included scores to new works in the body of their fiction, for example, in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (for a discussion of the use of the musical score in this work, see Janine Barchas' "The Engraved Score in Clarissa: An Intersection of Music, Narrative, and Graphic Design"). The question here is: does this count as real or non-real music? This is a question deserving of a more thorough handling than I'll have time to offer here; however, briefly, I would argue that this work, realized as it is within the *musical* language and therefore able to be completely played and heard, would be categorizable as a piece of *real* (or real world) music.

[31] Peter Dayan has done some remarkable work on this element of Proust's writing, including his Word and Music Studies essay, "On the Meaning of 'Musical' in Proust." For another, more contemporary, example of this type of

Another way to categorize musico-literary characters in novels is to consider whether the character in question is paired with one piece of music specifically. All of the examples we have considered thus far sit within this category, as does another Forster specimen, Helen, from *Howard's End*. Like Lucy, Helen's musical association is Beethoven, specifically, his Fifth Symphony, the unnamed referent in the following quotations:

> Now, this very symphony that we've just been having – she won't let it alone. She labels it with meanings from start to finish; turns it into literature. (38)

> Helen pushed her way out during the applause. She desired to be alone. The music had summed up to her all that had happened or could happen in her career. She read it at a tangible statement, which could never be superseded. The notes meant this and that to her, and they could have no other meaning and life could have no other meaning. (28)

The novel is careful to specify that it is this one piece, the Fifth Symphony, with which Helen is linked, as opposed to a wider pairing with all Beethoven symphonies, or symphonic music in general. This type of association is well suited to novelistic characterization, as one piece of music for one character is a good balance, and is a digestible amount of non-textual referent for readers to easily evoke and utilize.

Nevertheless, effective musical associations aren't always specific individual pieces. Other forms include characters linked with specific composers, or styles, or, as with Jude from Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure,* with a specific instrument. In Jude's case, it is church bells:

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pairing, a novelistic character paired with fictional music, see Ian MacEwan's composer Linley, from his novel *Amsterdam*, a character linked with his own, fictional symphony (and the theme from which it grows).

> Suddenly there came along the wind something towards him…Surely it was the sound of bells, the voice of the city, faint and musical, calling to him, 'We are happy here!' (63)

> Bells began to ring, and the notes came into the room through the open window, and traveled round Jude's head in a hum. (484)

Here, there is no one specific piece, or even composer from whom the musical link stems, just the instrument. This type of link is more open-ended and fluid than that which pairs a character with a specific piece, as, instead of evoking one encapsulated musical entity, it evokes in readers a more general intermedial idea or feel, in this case, that of the non-specific (and therefore, more subjective and wide-ranging) sound of church bells. Although more loose, in this way, than specific piece associations, the aural, intermedial connotations for this type of musico-literary character link can still function as an effective characterizing tool. I place into this same 'general feel' category characters linked with a composer (but no specific work), for example Schubert; or one genre, for example, Viennese waltzes. An example of this former type of association, dealing with a specific musical form, is Ameen Merchant's recent novel, *The Silent Raga* (2007), in which the protagonist, Janaki, is linked with the musical form of the Raga.

We have considered a (limited) variety of character-music pairing types with a focus on the differences between types of musical element. We can also, however, distinguish differences between the types of character we are looking at, considering the relationship that character has with music. Very often a character linked with music in a novel is a musician themselves.[32] Many of the examples we've considered fall into this category, including *A Room with a View* and *The*

[32] This type could again be broken down into sorts of musician: professional, amateur, and so on. However, we will, for the sake of brevity and simplicity, not follow all the various minor potential forks in these typological roads, leaving them to other, more specific studies.

Silent Raga. Another example would be Rosamond from George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, a pianist, as described here:

> Rosamond played admirably…It was almost startling, heard for the first time. A hidden soul seemed to be flowing forth from Rosamond's fingers. (152)

Characters, such as Rosamond, who are musicians can have some of the strongest and most effective musical links in terms of characterization, as the novel can use them themselves as the vessels through which music is delivered to the reader.[33] These characters frequently draw on their music as a privileged method of communicating with those around them (in the novel); similarly, this music can be interpreted as a privileged method of communicating character to the reader, coming, as it does, directly from them.

A related, but not identical, musico-literary character type is that of the composer. One of the more well-known examples of this type would be Thomas Mann's Leverkühn from *Doctor Faustus*, as described here by the work's unassuming narrator:

> I offer few words about myself and my circumstances in preface to this account of the life of the late Adrian Leverkühn, to this first and certainly very provisional biography of a musical genius. (1)

Characterization of this type can function similarly to that of our musicians; however, although akin, it differs from the musician-character in that the latter is commonly regarded as interpreter, while the former, the composers, are more generally considered as creators, therefore inhabiting a different sort of

[33] For an interesting, if far from comprehensive, list of musician-characters in novels, see Michael Meckna's article "Musicians in Novels: Good Reading for Teachers and Students."

relationship with the art form. [34] They are not the translators or vessels, imparting the music, they are, within the context of the novel at least, its originator. This is both helpful and problematic to our character-building cause. Firstly, this can be constructive in that such a character's link with their music is rather undeniable, and readers need not ponder over whether or not the novel's music speaks of the character, as the novel's music comes so directly from them, one step less removed, even, than with the musician characters. However, as we are dealing with fictional characters, (with no real-world referents, as discussed in earlier sections) the music being composed in these novels, by these composers, will almost unavoidably be fictional as well, leaving us in the more inscrutable category of non-real-world (or fictional) musical associations, as described above. This can give rise to complicating circumstances, such as we find in James Hamilton-Paterson's *Gerontius*, in which an actual composer (in this case Edward Elgar) is placed in a fictional context, and therefore has his character somewhat "fictionalized" as well. In this case the music *is* actual or real-world; however, I contend that this type of character does not apply to this study, as, despite the fictional context, there is still a real-world referent for him, and he is not, therefore, purely fictional.[35]

Thirdly, within the sub-category of character-types, we have instances of musically linked characters who are neither performers nor composers, those who neither interpret nor create, but who are, instead, on the receiving end, the listeners. In this category we find (along with some others we have already considered) Alex from Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*, a character who, although not linked to music through profession or even idle performance, is still

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[34] I am speaking here in broad terms. There are, of course, instances when the reverse is true, or varying degrees of either.

[35] For other examples of novelistic character-composers, see Linley, from Ian MacEwan's *Amsterdam* or, alternatively, Lewis Dod, from Magaret Kennedy's, *The Constant Nymph*.

> He had entertained in his early youth an ardent desire to compose music. He could imagine no keener joy. (13)

very much defined by his association with Beethoven, specifically his Ninth Symphony, as referred to in the two following excerpts:

> I thought here at least was time to itty off to the disc-bootick (and cutter too, my pockets being full of pretty polly) to see about this long-promised and long-ordered stereo Beethoven Number Nine (the Choral Symphony, that is), recorded on Masterstroke by the Esh Sham Sinfonia under L. Muhaiwir. So out I went, brothers. (42)

> When it came to the Scherzo I could viddy myself very clear running and running on like very light and mysterious nogas, carving the whole litso of the creeching world with my cut-throat britva. (179)

Although they are neither creator nor (formally at least) interpreter, the musical link with this sort of character should not be diminished or underestimated, as it can, depending on context, often be just as strong and effective a link as with the two previous categories. As their relationship with music is not as straightforward as with composers or musicians, these characters' musical links are often deeply rooted in significantly personal ways, often psychological, and frequently representative of some significant interior issue. Burgess' Alex is a prime example of this, as, for him, the Beethoven is the link to an intense, primal self. For this type of character, music's ineffable language is often a way for an otherwise silenced element of their personality to be able to "speak." [36]

Finally, there is the musico-literary novel wherein the form or structure of the novel itself strives to be musical in one way or another, implicating the

[36] Another example is that of Philip Wakem from George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, whose critique of Hadyn's *Creation* as, "a sort of sugared complacency and flattering make-believe" (474) demonstrates his role as what Rupert Christiansen describes as "The novel's first musical intellectual" (2).

characters as an element of this structure.[37] One example of this, where the author has chosen to mimic the form of a specific piece, is *Napoleon Symphony*, again by Burgess, in which the form of Beethoven's Third, "Eroica," Symphony is mirrored.[38] Burgess outlines this ambition in a poetic epilogue:

> …[E]ver since I chose
> The novelist's métier one mad idea
> Has haunted me, and I fulfill it here
> Or try to – it is this: somehow to give
> Symphonic shape to verbal narrative,
> Impose on life, though nerves scream and resist
> The abstract patterns of the symphonist (348)

A less specifically focused example is Aldous Huxley's novel *Point Counter Point*, which does not strive to replicate or represent the structure of any one particular musical work but instead, as suggested by the title, to replicate through text the musical concept of counterpoint, in which his characters play the part of the voices in what is referred to as "the human fugue," (32) as described here: [39]

> The parts live their separate lives; they touch, their paths cross,
> they combine for a moment to create a seemingly final and
> perfected harmony, only to break apart again. Each is always alone
> and separate and individual. (32)

[37] Very much a current "hot-topic," this type of musical-structuring within novel-length prose is explored by Alan Shockley in his 2009 book, *Music in the Words: Musical Form and Counterpoint in the Twentieth-Century Novel.*
[38] It's interesting to note the undeniable prevalence of Beethoven in the musico-literary canon. For an introductory investigation of this phenomenon, see William S. Newman's "The Beethoven Mystique in Romantic Art, Literature, and Music."
[39] Nevertheless, there are two pieces which feature somewhat prominently in the text: J. S. Bach's B Minor Suite and Beethoven's Fifteenth String Quartet.

This type of musical referencing is distinct from the others discussed thus far, as it does not function by linking a specific character with music in one way or another, but, instead, implicates all characters musically, as they themselves make up a part of the overall structure of the novel which is, itself, musical. In this sort of scenario, the music operates less as a specific encapsulated expression for the character than in the other examples we've discussed, instead, alternatively, the characters operate as instruments or instrumental parts to a larger whole. In this way, this kind of literary musicality mirrors the function of the novel itself, as, within a novel each character is a working part of a larger whole. Here, then, the musical structure, superimposed upon the novelistic structure, is like another dimension functioning alongside each element of the novel, including, of course, character and characterization. What's more, this idea of characters as instrumental parts raises the idea of 'voice', as identified in the Huxley example, above. To what extent does each character's voice blend into the one "symphonic" (or otherwise harmonic) fusion, and to what extent does each stand apart as a distinct instrument or instrumental part on their own, and what does this represent in terms of characterization? This is a question which we will investigate further in the second half of this paper, when dealing with my own creative practice.

Although far from comprehensive, I have, in the last few paragraphs, endeavored to relate an idea of the musico-literary novel's field, both in terms of some available forms and in canonical examples, as it can be related to character-music pairings, and what this can mean in terms of musico-literary characterization as we are identifying it.[40] The remainder of this study will now focus on the exploration of characterization within one particular type of musical association, the music-character pairing dealing with a specific real-world piece, where the character in question is a musician themselves, as presented in three novelistic examples: from Joe Fiorito's *The Song Beneath the Ice*, the character of

[40] For a more comprehensive list of musico-literary novels, see Kellie Brown's *An Annotated Bibliography and Reference List of Musical Fiction,* or the more-than 900 entries listed in John R. Gibb's *A Bibliography of Musical Fiction*.

Dominic with Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*; from Richard Powers' *The Time of Our Singing*, the character of Jonah, with Dowland's song "Time Stands Still"; and lastly, from Vikram Seth's *An Equal Music*, the character of Michael with Vaughan William's *The Lark Ascending*. Three different novels, three different characters, three different pieces of music, and, as we'll discuss, three different approaches, but all working towards the same end of enhanced characterization through similar forms of musical-reference.

Although there is an ample supply of character-music pairings throughout the history of the novel (as demonstrated above), all three of the novels we'll be examining here are contemporary (2003, 2002, and 1999, respectively). I am intentionally keeping my focus on contemporary work, as it allows the clearest bridge to my own writing practice. It is, however, interesting to note that none of the musical pieces featured in these novels could be considered contemporary (1874, 1603, and 1920 respectively). Although there are certainly a number of examples of music novels whose focus is on less canonical, more recent works (Smyth's book neatly outlines several of these, with small chapters devoted to a number of such forms, for example Pop or Dance music), there is a definite literary tendency towards the use of established, canonical pieces.[41] I will discuss the issue of individual piece selection for each of my three novels in more detail in upcoming sections; however, one potential explanation for the tendency towards older, more established musical works within newer novels refers back to the idea we briefly touched upon earlier, of the "ideal" reader. In short, the more established a piece is, the more likely readers are to be familiar with it, and therefore to be able to "read" these intermedial references within the texts. This concept of "ideal reader" calls to mind Chatman's exploration of the "implied reader," which he describes as: the "implied readership necessary to the elementary comprehension of the narrative." (150) [42] However, unlike Chatman,

[41] For a discussion of this phenomenon within the context of Seth's book, one can refer to the "Performing the Canon: *An Equal Music*" chapter of Benson's *Literary Music*.
[42] See Chatman's diagram and explanation p. 147-151, and Rimmon-Kenan's discussion of it, p. 86-89.

our definition here (of *ideal* as opposed to *implied*) does not go so far as to concern itself with the reader's *Weltanschauung*, instead, only concerning itself with the extent to which a reader is familiar with a particular musical piece. For the purposes of this study, with our three primary texts, we will assume this ideal reader. As previously stated, in order for textual musical references to function fully, we require a reader who is familiar with the musical works in question and is therefore able to "read" the intermedial references.[43] To further clarify, by this I mean a reader who, upon reading a reference to a piece, for example, *The Lark Ascending* by Vaughan Williams, is able, aurally (internally), to recall the musical work in question. To quote the founding mother of intertextuality, Julia Kristeva, what we are looking at is the reader's ability to allow "the passage from one sign system to another." (1984, 59)[44] It would be easy to now become ensnared within a web of details: to what extent should they be able to recall the work? Note by note? Or just an overall idea? And what, exactly, should they be recalling, a specific recorded edition or some live performance or a sight-read score? What if the reader is familiar with Vaughan Williams in general but not this piece specifically? One could easily become entangled in the minutiae of the "ideal reader" issue, and while it wouldn't be without interest or merit to explore each of these avenues, for the current study we will go only as far as to specify that the reader has at least *some degree* of knowledge of the piece, enough to aurally recall at least an overall idea of some version of the said piece itself (that is to say, not just an idea of Vaughan Williams' style, for example). This is, basically, so as to ensure that we are truly dealing with the idea of a character linked with a real-world piece. If the reader has no real-world knowledge of the piece outside of the novel, then we are essentially dealing with the piece as though it were fictional, not real-world at all, resulting in a different category of characteral association

[43] For a more thorough discussion of intertextual (or intermedial) reading and readership, see "Eight Readers Reading: The Intertextual Links of Proficient Readers Reading Multiple Passages" by Douglas K. Hartman.
[44] We shall return to a somewhat more thorough investigation of intertextuality, and how it is applicable to this study, within the upcoming discussion of Richard Powers' text.

and the distinct connotations that implies, as I hoped to have begun to make clear in the previous section. So, we will here, as stated above, assume a reader who is familiar with the musical works in question to the point, at least, where they are able to "read" the intermedial references.

Missing Person: *The Song Beneath the Ice*, by Joe Fiorito

From *The Song Beneath the Ice*, we shall be looking at the character of Dominic Amoruso. The novel opens thusly:

> You may recall this story from the newspapers:
>
> A year or so ago, during a recital of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, the concert pianist Dominic Amoruso stopped, got up from the piano, turned to the audience, paused – and walked away without a word. Just like that, he disappeared. (1)

Two sentences in, we already know two key things about our concert-pianist Amoruso:

1) He is linked with the Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*

2) He has disappeared.

What's interesting is how these two elements play off each other; how, in effect, Fiorito has left us with the Mussorgsky as character reference *in absence* of character.[45] No sooner have we met Amoruso than he has disappeared; the majority of the novel's plot will be spent trying to put together the pieces as to where he has disappeared to and why, and in so doing, putting together the pieces of Amoruso himself, constructing and scrutinizing his character as a means to solving this riddle. We therefore have a unique sort of protagonist in Amoruso: a character whose primary characteristic is his absence. Nevertheless, we have,

[45] An interesting similarity between Fiorito's book and Mussorgsky's work is that the composer wrote *Pictures* to commemorate an absent friend of his own, the artist Viktor Hartmann, who had, at the time of composing, just recently passed away.

earlier in this paper, determined that it is the unavoidable fate of literary characters to be incomplete, or, in a manner of speaking, always somewhat absent or missing. Amoruso, then, is not so much an atypicality, but, instead, a sort of magnified or exaggerated example of literary characters' plight.

The second notable element of the novel's opening passage (above) is the reference to Mussorgsky's piece. It takes Fiorito a mere two sentences to make this character-musical piece connection (a connection that will be reinforced again and again throughout the novel). [46] Note the order of introduction; Fiorito gives us the piece *first* and the character *second*, ("…during a recital of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, the concert pianist Dominic Amoruso stopped…") thus reinforcing the order of characterization, first we get the musical-association, and this helps us build the character, who therefore comes second. What's more, here this ordering is underpinning the idea of what we have or know versus what we do not; we have and can know the Mussorgsky, but not Dominic Amoruso; the two are linked but not the same in terms of literary knowability, an ordering is, therefore, necessary. Finally, in terms of this opening passage, it's worth noting that the reference to the piece, coming so early on in the text as it does, immediately sets up readers for its non-textual, musical language. Almost as soon as they begin to interpret the text, and its semantic expression, they are asked to also begin considering a parallel, musical, component for what is to follow. From the onset, Fiorito's novel has positioned us well to examine and discover much about how musical association can function in terms of character. To delve a little further into these ideas, we shall explore Fiorito's structuring of his novel.

As mentioned above, the novel's focus is on trying to solve the Amoruso disappearance riddle: where did he get to, and why? The evidence we (and the narrator, Serafino) are given to work with is a stack of Amoruso's tapes and notebooks that Serafino is mysteriously sent mid-way through chapter one. These

[46] The next connection comes just a little further down the first page: "He was playing the piece with which he launched his career, and with which he is most closely associated," (1) and a further sampling of references to the Amoruso-Mussorgsky link can be found on pages 36, 60, 61, 73, 83, 88, 89, 90, 95, 98, 102, 112, 117, 120, 168-172, 191, 201, 204-211, 301, 315, 330, 333, and so forth.

tapes and notes are, in effect, Amoruso's diaries, dating from before his disappearance until almost a year after the event. After its opening chapter of straight prose, *The Song Beneath the Ice* settles into a new format, reflective of these new sources, one it will maintain for the remainder of the text. The prose is now broken up into short (most often less than a page, sometimes only a line or two) fragments of three sorts: firstly, descriptions of recorded sound, as transcribed from Amoruso's semi-obsessive everyday tape-recordings. These sections are headed by the word, "Tape" and the date of the original recording, and, for sounds-only, marked off in square brackets:

> Tape, August 15:
>
> [Water hissing thinly from a tap; six sticky steps – his bare feet on the kitchen tile? A cup and saucer being carried, shakily; spillage of coffee beans into an electric grinder; the fall and rise of the whirr from coarse to fine...] (32)

Transcriptions of tape-recorded narration or dialogue are presented similarly, but without the brackets (dialogue in quotation-marks, narration offered straight):

> Tape, August 19, cont'd
>
> "Would you like hot sauce?"
>
> "Mmm. You know she doesn't like you very much."
>
> "Who doesn't?"
>
> "My agent thinks you are a distraction. Where was I? You see, you distract me now. You with your mouth full."
>
> "You're a big boy. Take the money. Play the concert." (75)
>
> Tape, August 15, cont'd

> Bloor station, noon: No big city ought to be without an underground; it is a kind of long and skinny village that gives us an opportunity to rub shoulders with the other villagers – subterranean milkmaids, drovers, cattle on the hoof, and wandering minstrels. (46)

The second type of text fragment presented are excerpts from Amoruso's notebooks, which are plain text, with the header 'Notebook':

> Notebook, August 15:
>
> Slept in; grateful for having done so. (28)

And, finally, all of Serafino's own observations, thoughts and actions as narrator, are given in italics:

> *Note: I took a chance and called Claire. Would she consent to one or two questions about Dominic?* (106)

The balance of the parts is roughly equal, with one third tape, one third notebook, and one third narrator, and are all mixed together, so that on one page we might see a few lines of tape, followed by a notebook paragraph, followed by a comment from the narrator. There is no set pattern (save a loose chronology to the plotline) to the order of presentation. This tri-partite structure encourages the reader to identify with the italicized Serafino; like him, we are the observers, the detectives, the glue that must bring the other, scattered sections together in order to make some sense of them. And, the reverse is also true, this set-up and structure in essence puts the narrator, Serafino, in the readers' shoes, having him cobble together the mystery of his friend just as readers must cobble together character information whenever they read novels. It is here that the Mussorgsky becomes particularly relevant. As we saw in the opening passage of the novel, Fiorito makes no attempt to conceal the intermedial nature of *The Song Beneath*

the Ice; this is made additionally clear by the fact that roughly one third of the text is descriptions of sound.[47] Reading these passages, readers have their aural imaginations stirred, and, like our narrator Serafino, become increasingly sensitive to the mention and significance of aural detail: "*There is more sound around me than I am used to hearing.*" (165) This is ideal for tuning readers into aural, and musical, content; however, it should be noted that the two (aural and musical content, as presented here) are not necessarily one and the same. Much of the aural, tape-recorded, content is spoken, dialogue or monologue, which, although it is described as heard as opposed to read (though, of course, readers must read what is being "heard") still functions within text's direct semantic language. What remains of the tape-recorded material is, for the most part, noise: the clanging pots and pans, beeping traffic, and rustling wind of everyday. Again, although aural, this is not the same as musical content, though the distinction here is a little less clear. These noises are scattered and (though, of course, corresponding with context) random, they are not organized or presented so as to be interpreted musically. Perhaps the best way of clarifying the distinction between these sounds and music is to consider the same situation in a different media. Novels will almost always hold many visual descriptions of things ("the red chair with one leg shorter than the others," or "his eyes were of the deepest blue and his hair blacker than tar") and yet, these images are not interpreted, nor are they meant to be, as textual occasions of visual, or fine, art. What is lacking in both these examples (aural and visual) is an intended organization that allows for creative expression. In music's case, this is a non-representation expression, but an expression no less. Therefore, the aural landscape Fiorito presents to his

[47] For the interest of this study we'll be focusing on the musical element to this intermediality. However, it should be noted that *The Song Beneath the Ice* also presents much in terms of visual art reference. Much action takes place about or around fine art and there are multiple references to real-world pieces throughout the novel (including, of course, those very same *Pictures* by Hartman that inspired Mussorgsky). What's more, there is also a notably large amount of inter*textuality* (in the words of Kristeva, this text is a "mosaic of quotations," (66)) with much reference and language play to that effect, and countless referrals to poems, novels, and quotes, from *Death of a Salesman* to *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*, to *Hempel's Raven Paradox*.

readers certainly does function towards our cause, tuning readers into their aural, listening selves, and highlighting the importance of the aural dimension within this story-world; however, these tape-recorded sounds do not function in the same way as the actual musical character association (the Mussorgsky).

Pictures at an Exhibition is a suite for solo piano, made up of several short pieces corresponding to both pictures by the artist Viktor Hartmann (*The Gnome, The Old Castle*, and so on), as well as the act of strolling between these artworks, as depicted in the *Promenade* movements. It is notorious among pianist for the difficulty of its "picture" movements, as opposed to the striking simplicity of the *Promenades*, and the piece as a whole is often employed as a virtuoso showpiece.[48] *Pictures at an Exhibition* therefore contains many correspondences to and indications towards Amoruso's character. Firstly, the fact that he is linked with such a particularly showy piece implies both his skill level as a pianist (high), and his performance personality. The type of pianist, and indeed person, who would have this piece as their specialty is a different type to one who would have, for example, a spritely, mathematical Mozart Concerto or a precise and heavy Bach Fugue. *Pictures* is a conflicted, multiple-personality piece, crashing from the dynamic, intricate, and highly varied picture-movements to the hymn-like steady simplicity of the *Promenades*. The latter do contain complex melody and harmonies (at least to the Western Classical-Art canon's ears) but are strikingly basic in style, rhythm and texture, with the repetitive themes often playable by just one hand, or even one finger. [49] These *Promenade* movements are a cohesive element, wending in between the diverse pictorial movements, recalling again and again their same memorable tune, and, thus, leaving us with an essential unity, even calmness, underpinning the variously hectic individual parts. Likewise, Fiorito's Amoruso is a scattered and hectic type of character,

[48]Particularly infamous is the ninth movement, *The Hut on Chicken's Legs*, earning itself a nine out of nine for difficulty on the online database music-scores.com.

[49] The meter for the *Promenades* is most often written as alternating between 5/4 and 6/4, though originally marked as 11/4 throughout. Although this may seem complex, upon listening the rhythm here comes across as intuitive and natural.

made up, in his absence, by various mottled bits and pieces as assembled by the narrator and the reader. The scattered bits information we, along with Serafino, cobble together, are erratic and haphazard splashes of personality and colour, from a number of sources and in a number of voices, corresponding with Mussorgsky's varied and scattered picture-movements; while the haunting, simple tune of the *Promenade* that underlies *Pictures at an Exhibition* as a whole relates an idea of Amoruso's constant, actual, (insofar as fictional beings are "actual") character or self, it is the unifying agent for this varied character. He is a missing person, both literally, to his friends and former life, and, as we later learn, figuratively, to himself. This is why his link to the Mussorgsky piece is integral. *Pictures at an Exhibition*, as intermedial double, serves as a cohesive element to this otherwise lost and scattered man.

We have established how, structurally, the Mussorgsky piece is an apposite match for Amoruso's character, and how his link with this music can function towards characterization in this way; subsequently, we can now ask: what does music's unique intermedial presence bring to this example? The answer relates greatly to our earlier discussion of "gaps," or, the unavoidable holes in literary characters. Here theses gaps are perhaps the most obvious and literal out of any of our three examples (Fiorito, Powers, and Seth), given the nature of the textual information we are presented with, as discussed above. In other words, our primary novelistic language for characterization, that of text, is faltering here, and unable to provide what readers need to build a vivid Amoruso character. It falls to music, and its alternative, indirect, language to provide an essence beyond what the hard-facts of words can (or in this case, cannot) offer. In *Fictional Minds*, Alan Palmer states:

> The reader … constructs a consciousness that continues in the spaces between the various mentions of that character. The reader strategy is to join up the dots. (176)

In *The Song Beneath the Ice*, the character of Amoruso's dots, his text-based traits, are very scattered indeed. It takes the Mussorgsky, this musical, extra-textual language, to be able to begin connecting them.[50] The pairing with the real-world, other-media of *Pictures* offers a valuable aural dimension (to which the reader is especially attuned, as discussed in previous paragraphs), especially valuable here in its indirectness. As we've demonstrated, Dominic Amoruso is a character for whom direct means of characterization are ineffective; he has, in fact, done his best to evade them as much as possible, by disappearing and offering only coded clues towards discovery; this is a character who *does not want* to be defined or discovered through straight-forward means. (The disappearance and discovery are both both literal and figurative; literal within the plot of the novel, and, what we are looking to explore here, figurative in terms of characterization.) It therefore falls to an indirect, implicit sort of language to be able to bridge his literally and figuratively holed persona, the kind of language music, in particular, can offer. Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* (and, principally, the *Promenade* movements, as discussed earlier) offers one musically encapsulated expression within this other, indirect language, to which readers can refer to bridge across the gaps or holes in Dominic's otherwise scattered character. It does not "tell," or even "show," but, instead, simply expresses. Music, therefore, both despite and due to its obliqueness, is the more reliable and "present" language for the characterization of Fiorito's lost pianist.

Neither Here nor There: *The Time of Our Singing*, by Richard Powers

The Time of Our Singing is a novel very much built around binary tensions: black-white, father-mother, science-art, now-then, high culture-low culture; and a

[50] I use the term extra-textual because, although the initial reference to the music is and must be textual, that text acts as a trigger for a non-textual, aural experience. This resonates soundly with the Smyth quote at the opening of this paper, "music affords the… novelist… the ability to invoke states of consciousness that are beyond the ability of language to render." (1)

society's need to define and rank according to them. Suspended precariously between these poles is the character we will be looking at here, Jonah Strom. Jonah is the son of a black American musician mother and a white European scientist father, and, thusly, binary tensions churn within him from birth (and beyond, through family history). The Strom family slogan, repeated at weddings and funerals, and whispered back and forth during the every-day as a sort of outsiders' comfort, is:

> Bird and fish can fall in love…but where will they build their nest? (610-11)

This saying reflects the seeming impossibility of their ever finding a niche in which to "fit in." Members of Strom family are therefore perpetual outsiders, as their society (America from late 1930s to the present day) cannot fit them into any of its categories of binary classification. They fit the definition of no one faction; they are not this *or* that, but instead, both and, within the rules of this society, therefore, nothing, as reflected in this passage:

> "Mama," [Jonah] asked. "You are a Negro, right? And Da's…some kind of Jewish guy. What exactly does that make me, Joey and Root?"
>
> My mother stopped singing. I wanted to slug my brother and didn't know why. Mama looked off into whatever place lay beyond sound. Da, too, shifted. They'd been waiting for the question, and every other one that would follow, down the years to come. "You must run your own race," our father pronounced. I felt he was casting us out into coldest space. (29)

Cast into "coldest space," the idea of this lack of societal definition is a lonely and confusing thing for a character, and leads to a lack of definition not just societally, but individually as well. Here the distinction between this character, Jonah Strom,

and our previous examination of Dominic Amoruso becomes clear. Amoruso was a character evading definition, skirting language and its tools in favour of music's coded means. On the other hand, here we have a character who does not lack for words, (*The Time of our Singing*, clocking in at a hefty 640 pages, is hardly a book consciously holding back on text) but for whom words, with their strict definitions, are inapplicable. There are no words for who Jonah Strom is, neither from society, or, necessarily trapped as he is within it, himself. However, the Strom family are fluent in another language, that of music. It is arguable, even, that their almost freakish ability and affinity for the art-form grows out of, and is perpetuated by, this need for an alternate method of expression. From their societal and textual place of swirling contradictions, the Stroms seek to find resolute peace, unity and, ultimately, definition through music.

Within the context of the plot, it is music that brings the unlikely pair, Delia Daley (Jonah's mother) and David Strom (his father), together in the first place, meeting as they do at a free public concert in Washington, a place where barriers are temporarily suspended. And it is music that keeps them together, through which they knit their relationship and family:

> This is how they play, night after night, more regular than sex, and just as warming. One begins; the other harmonizes. Finds some accompaniment, even when she has never heard the tune, when it comes down out of the attic from some musty culture no one would claim to own. The secret's in the intervals, finding a line half free of the melody, yet already inside it. Music from a single note, set loose to run in unfolding meter…Humming
> in bed: softer than love. (414)

Jonah is therefore born of a unity made in music. W. M. Hagen describes the family unit thusly, in his *World Literature Today* review of the novel: "they sang themselves – and their children – into existence" (92). Consequently, it is quite evident that Jonah is a character with deep musical connections; however, in *The*

Time of Our Singing, Jonah Strom is not just associated with music in general, but specifically linked with one piece, John Dowland's song, "Time Stands Still." As with Fiorito's Amoruso, this connection is made clear, from the first page:

> In some empty hall, my brother is singing… teasing out Dowland of all things, a bit of ravishing sass for this stunned lieder crowd, who can't grasp the web that slips over them:
> Time stands still with gazing on her face,
> Stand still and gaze for minutes, hours, and years to her give place.
> All other things shall change, but she remains the same,
> Till heavens changed have their course and time hath lost his name. (3)

The piece goes on to become the character's secret weapon, the song he pulls out as a surprise encore to stupefy audiences, throughout his career. Jonah keeps his relationship with this piece as close and as preciously guarded, (at times even more so) as his other great connection in the novel, that with his brother and accompanist, Joey. In this song, Jonah seems to find, finally, a method of speaking, communicating, that his society will not only listen to, but will also, in music's ineffable, indirect way, understand him by. As Jonah struggles through the novel to find definition, it is revealed that, in fact, this sought-after point of belonging is only achievable for him through the suspension of time and place, of visual and societal identity, through music; specifically through the performance of music, and even more specifically, through the performance of this one song:

> Jonah whispered, "Dowland?" I nodded without registering. Thank God he also chose to announce the choice to the house, so I could hear. And time stood still again, as it did each time my brother said so. (310)

> With that simple song, he planned to bring stones to life and change lives into mute stones. (209)

That Jonah is linked with this piece, in particular, is important. "Time Stands Still" is a significantly older piece than the others we are considering.[51] It is pre-baroque, meaning it would have been written to be performed in a completely unaffected style, without the ornamentation or decorative devices, or even vibrato, of later vocal works (and western art-music in general). This, in combination with the opening of a simple descending scale of three notes, to be sung slowly and deliberately, results in a serene sort of purity of voice; the voice here seems to be laid bare. This is especially effective in contrast to the melismatic and ornamented lieder, arias, and art-songs that surround Jonah in his world of vocal performance; the Dowland comes across as cuttingly pure, and therefore somehow more true: a more true, pure, and authentic language for Jonah's self, both for his story-world audience, and for us, the readers. The semantically tangled world around Jonah stops at the singing of this piece, his Dowland, and grants this respite as it shifts the world around him from visually to aurally receptive, so that both the story-world audience and we readers are no longer trying to classify and appraise him by what we see, but instead by what we hear:

> The eyes are only mediocre. But the ears are extraordinary. (615)

It is within the aural sphere that Powers gives us a character at peace with himself and his surroundings, a character that is at the same time identified and individualated; it is through music, through this music, that Jonah can just be.

[51] The Dowland is from 1603, while the Mussorgsky is from 1874 and the Vaughan Williams from 1920.

Despite broad similarities,[52] there is one important differentiating factor to the Powers musico-literary character association, separating it from both the Fiorito and Seth: the Dowland piece has a textual component, its lyrics. This is in contrast to our other two examples, which both deal with "pure" instrumental music.[53] This is an interesting sort of intersection of intertextualities, a point where three sources, or referents, meet for the reader: the novel itself (text), the lyrics to Dowland's song (text), and the song's aural, musical component (music).[54] Perhaps the best way to grasp this idea is by considering what John Fiske proposes in *Television Culture* (1989) as: "horizontal intertextuality," to be distinguished from "vertical intertextuality," the former referring to references within one media type (so, text referring to text, what I will call intertextuality) while the latter demarks references that span media (such as a reference to music within a novel, what I have generally been calling intermediality). If we consider *The Time of our Singing*'s Dowland reference as divided into three sources (novel, lyrics, music) as opposed to two, it is clear that the song is functioning intertextually in two "directions" (vertical *and* horizontal), and, as such, in two different fashions, both of which offer important and distinct characterizing tools. The lyrics themselves function within the musico-literary character association in several respects; like the programmatic elements to *Pictures at an Exhibition* or *The Lark Ascending*, they provide a useful framing tool. Because they are text themselves, they provide a smooth transition between media, they are a simple and effective trigger for the sound of the song, blending easily with the surrounding text. They are a sort of textual camouflage that the music dons in order to creep unobtrusively into the reader's awareness, without having to resort

[52] All characters are performers and all are linked with a specific piece of real-world music.
[53] It should be noted that this claim could, potentially, be contended with on account of the visual association of Hartman's paintings with Mussorgsky's *Pictures*, and Vaughan Williams' own *The Lark Ascending* poetic inspiration.
[54] For a full explanation and exploration of the concept of intertextuality, see Julia Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language*.

to prosaic descriptions of sound, which are often clumsy and ineffective.[55] Another attribute of these lyrics is that their actual content can function as a sort of helpful signposting, guiding readers towards the music's characterizing role. In the case of Jonah these lyrics, describing as they do the freezing of time, are a definite indication of what this piece of music can do for Jonah:

> Time stands still with gazing on her face,
> Stand still and gaze for minutes, hours, and years to her give place.
> All other things shall change, but she remains the same,
> Till heavens changed have their course and time hath lost his name. (3)

The 'she,' in this case, serves as a personification of the music itself. Time stands still as Jonah releases this aural element of himself, and all the identity confusion of place (the heavens) and time are dissolved:

> This is how I see my brother, forever…he touches his tongue to his hard palate, presses on the cylinder of air behind it until his tongue tips over his front teeth with a dwarf explosion, that fine-point puff of *tuh* that expands, pulling the vowel behind it, spreading like a slowed-film cloud, to *ta* to *tahee* to *time* to transcend the ear's entire horizon, until the line becomes all it describes:
>
> Time stand still with gazing on her face…
>
> He sings that gaze, the one the heart tried to hand on to but couldn't. His eyes shine with the light of those who've freed themselves to do what they need. Those who see shine back, fixed at this moment, arrested, innocent. As he sings, Elizabeth's ships sail out to sudden new continents. As he sings, Freedom Riders one state away are rounded up and jailed. But in this hall, time stands still, afraid to do so much as breathe. (215)

[55] Again, this is working under the assumption that the reader is familiar with the piece.

Dowland's lyrics, then, this "vertical" component to our three-way intertextual axis, function symbiotically with the aural, "horizontal" component in these ways; however, they themselves do not accomplish the same task of enhanced intermedial characterization as the music itself. They are intertextual enablers, helping readers, in the manners just discussed, to be open and receptive to the aural effect, the *sound* of Dowland's music. But it is the music itself, the intermedial, aural effect that, through its flexible and indirect language, is able to define Jonah's non-binary, textually un-definable character. So that while we are unable to say what he is, we are able to hear it, through Dowland's song, ineffable, and, at the same time, candid in aural effect. Jonah becomes present, indeed *becomes*, to his fictional audiences, to his world, to himself, and, to us, the readers, through this song. If this seems idealized, perhaps it is because so is the aesthetic of this novel. Music here is utilized as a kind of better, truer, more authentic language for the self. "Time Stands Still" could just as well read, *text* stands still, as words melt away into sound, into the sound of Jonah.

> I give them what's theirs. Their music. Their identity. (600)

Text and Context: *An Equal Music*, by Vikram Seth

Our final example is the character of Michael Holme, from Vikram Seth's novel, *An Equal Music*, as associated with *The Lark Ascending* by Ralph Vaughan Williams. We first meet Michael Holme as a melancholic chamber violinist raised in Rochdale, now living in London. His time is divided, mainly, between playing with his string quartet, the Maggiore, and pining for a lost love, Julia. The first direct reference to the Vaughan Williams comes in the form of a flashback to a conversation between Michael and Julia when they were young lovers:

> The nightingale paused and Julia said: "Don't you like it?"
> "It's not my favorite bird. Is it yours?"

> "Yes."
>
> "That must be your Austrian blood."
>
> "Oh, don't be silly. How about a kiss?"
>
> We kissed, and walked on.
>
> "If it really is your favorite bird, Julia, I take back what I said."
>
> "Thank you. And what's yours?"
>
> "The lark, of course."
>
> "Oh, I see. 'The Lark Ascending?'" (36)

Although the reference is brief, the connection between Michael and the piece is established, correlated as it is to his memories of Julia, something readers have learned is integral to the character at this point. The next strong reference is also in the form of a flashback, to the pivotal moment when Michael was first turned towards music and the violin, his ultimate career, and, along with Julia, his life's passion:

> Mrs. Formby smiled, went to the gramophone and put on what she told me was another piece inspired by the same bird. From the first note of 'The Lark Ascending' I was enchanted. (88)

It is important to note the piece's connection, specifically, with Michael's past infatuation with the violin, his "enchantment," as the present-tense character's relationship with music has tarnished and faded:

> A few days ago I was told I was happy by the young woman behind the counter at Etienne's. I ordered seven croissants. As she gave me my change she said: "You are a happy man."
>
> I stared at her with such incredulity that she looked down.
>
> You're always humming." She said in a much quieter voice, feeling perhaps that she had to explain.
>
> It's my work," I said, ashamed of my bitterness. (4)

The piece is linked with *recollections* of Michael's two defining passions, his initial contacts with music (his violin), and happier times with Julia. The final key element of Michael connected with the piece that we'll consider is that of his native home, Rochdale, and the countryside surrounding it, as demonstrated in the following passage:

> Besides, as a boy, I was quite happy in Rochdale. Our house was not too far from the edge of town, and once I got a bike I could cycle out towards the moors, sometimes with a school friend, more often by myself. Within minutes I would be in the open countryside. Sometimes I would walk on the tops, sometimes just lie in the grassy hollows where I could no longer hear the sound of the wind. The first time I did this, I was held by surprise: I had never heard such a silence before. And into that silence after a minute or two fell the rising song of a lark. (35)

All three of these Vaughan Williams-associated items—Julia, Michael's initial fascination with the violin, and Rochdale—fall into one common category: they represent for Michael a nostalgic sense of the past, a past that the present, rootless, Michael is desperate to recapture, to relive. It is thusly notable that the piece itself is often described as backwards-looking or nostalgic. Despite the date of its composition (completed in 1920), *The Lark Ascending* is essentially a piece of Nineteenth-Century program music, both in terms of form and content. The piece's tonality, for example, is based around pentatonic and modal scales (Aeolian and Dorian) lending it a wistful, traditional folk-based sound. Vaughan Williams is noted to have been heavily motivated in his compositional practice by traditional English folk music, and was very involved in its collection and preservation, serving for a time as the president of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. The interesting characteral implications of all this are that the piece, *The Lark Ascending*, represents for Michael who he was and who he wants to be

again, not who he feels he currently (within the timeframe of the book) is. In terms of reader reception, this presents an interesting tension between the character of Michael as we are presented him in the novel's present day (text), and the character of Michael as expressed by this nostalgic, idealistic and romantic musical representation. The piece signifies what Michael feels is his true self, his core and roots, underneath all the baggage of London, professional music, and the disillusionment of growing up; the way this second, ideal self is presented is through Vaughan William's piece. *The Lark Ascending* is what lies beneath all those built-up layers that Michael and his readers must learn to pull away in order to find happiness, peace, himself:

> As for my own accent: What has become of it? When I return to Rochdale I find myself donning sometimes even affecting, what I once hid. (27)

> London is a violin jungle. In its heartache, in its busyness lie its varied pickings. But I have ceased to swim in the Serpentine and have grown short of breath. It is no longer, if it ever was, my home. (480)

Another notable element to Michael's *Lark Ascending* link is that of structure. Here we see something similar to the elements noted in the Fiorito example, whereby the character-music connection is identifiable not only in the content of the novel, but also reflected in a mirroring of the musical score's structure with that of Michael's development and story. However, we can take the musical-associative trait one step further in this example, linking Michael not just with the overall structure of *The Lark Ascending*, but, rather, with a specific instrumental line within this piece. Consider the stated instrumentation of the

piece: "Romance for Violin and Orchestra," as reflecting Michaels's situation.[56] As a violinist himself, Michael can be seen represented in the soaring, tumbling, aspiring violin line, with the orchestra, the world around him, grounding him and granting his plight context through harmony, rhythm and direction. This specific instrumental association is different from those we encountered with *Pictures at an Exhibition* and "Time Stands Still" in that both the latter pieces are for solo instrument, so that while the fact that the character in question is a musician who plays the instrument for which their piece was written (Amoruso on piano, Jonah on vocals, Michael on violin) remains constant across the three novels, it is only Michael whose musical association contains the noteworthy element of an orchestral setting, and whose plight can be considered be to "framed" or granted context in this way.[57] *The Lark Ascending* opens on an orchestral ninth chord, lending an ambiguous and ungrounded feel for the entrance of the solo violin (see appendix, figure 1). [58] *An Equal Music* parallels this with its own unsure, enigmatic opening, the setting of the scene for our introduction to Michael.

> The branches are bare, the sky tonight a milky violet. It is not quiet here, but it is peaceful. The wind ruffles the black water towards me. There is no one about. The birds are still…As yesterday as the day before, I stand until I have lost my thoughts…

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[56] Also fitting is the moniker "Romance," as it corresponds very appropriately with Seth's book: a story about recapturing and rekindling lost love, *An Equal Music* can very easily also fall under the category of "Romance."

[57] Although the Dowland has a lute accompaniment, it is the vocal line which is dominant, with the lute, or, in the context of the novel, the piano, functioning as an accessory. What's more, there have, of course, been settings of Mussorgsky's *Pictures* for orchestra, as I'm sure there have been even for the Dowland; however, I am here referring to the pieces in their original forms.

[58] There is a shift to be noted here as we endeavor to describe to some extent the music itself and not just its context (textual or otherwise). This is a notoriously tricky route; to quote Barthes' *Image, Music, Text*, "How, then, does language manage when it has to interpret music? Alas, it seems, very badly" (184). Interestingly, however, this struggle to articulate highlights music's remarkable ability to overcome this linguistic tussle (as focused on in this paper in terms of character).

> Yesterday as I walked back across the park I paused at a fork in the footpath…After a while, unwilling so soon to cross the blinding Bayswater Road, I paused again, this time by the bridle path. Now I heard the faint sound of hooves. This time, however, they were not embodied. I looked to left, to right. There was nothing. (3)

As in the Vaughan Williams, first we have the context, then the character. This serves further to link Michael with not just the piece, but, more specifically, with the solo violin line. Once readers have made this link, they can "hear" not just Michael, the character in himself, but, further, Michael, as he relates to the world around him (and as this world relates to him). The accompanying orchestral part is generally made up of these sorts of ambiguous or unsure orchestral chords, often broken or fragmented, contrasting with the violin's melodic intensity. This lends a very particular kind of "context" to Michael's wheeling and rising violin, a context that readers can use to form a more subtle and atmospheric idea of Michael's character as it fits within the (story) world than words alone could grant. What's more, the entire piece is book-ended, as described by Percy Young in his analysis of the piece, with "the whole being bounded by introductory and concluding cadenzas" (126) (see appendix, figure 2). This is mirrored in the opening and closing passages of the novel, during which Michael is alone inside his head, contemplating and philosophizing his situation. For an example of this in the opening, consider the above quote from the first page of the novel; for the parallel example in the closing, we can take the following passage, from the final page of Seth's work:

> I push through the crowded lobby into the rain. I walk a long while, through the streets, the darkness of the park. Once more I stand by the Serpentine. The rain has washed my earlier tears away.

> Music, such music is a sufficient gift. Why ask for happiness; why hope not to grieve, it is enough, it is to be blessed enough, to live from day to day and to hear such music (484)

These solo intellectual improvisations can be seen as textual equivalents to *The Lark Ascending*'s solo violin cadenzas, again unifying the instrument and the character. One further implication of this particular aspect of *An Equal Music* (that of the character being linked specifically to the solo violin line) is that it provides a sense of *development*, or the idea of the character through time that we did not see with our earlier examples. Because we are associating with one particular line as it interacts with the whole, and not simply one piece in its entirety, there is an idea of motion, linearity, of a story-like direction.[59] The reader, upon internally sounding this reference, takes with it the sense of movement over time that comes from the relationship between violin and orchestra; harmony and rhythm being not stagnant things, but built through motion, giving us an extra-textual, musical language of not just a character, but of a character within a story(line).[60]

As with the Fiorito and Powers examples, once readers have connected *The Lark Ascending* with Michael Holme, this piece, this aural representative, builds and represents the character in a manner unavailable to them through simply pure text, and a manner specific and unique to this particular intermedial association type. The sound of Michael (in the sound of *The Lark*, or, more specifically, the sound of the solo violin line in *The Lark*) unites the wistful, longing Michael of the present with the (supposed) happier Michael of the past, unites Michael as he is presented on the surface, textual, level with the Michael he

[59] Of course, there is direction and motion, or development over time, in all pieces, including *Pictures at an Exhibition* and "Time Stands Still." I am here focusing on the development that is highlighted by the playing of one line against others, of development through context.
[60] We will explore this idea further, expanding to consider multiple instrumental lines, within the upcoming discussion of my own novel, *14 Variations From White*.

wishes to be, and believes himself, at core, to be. A reader perusing Seth's text who has not made this connection would likely find Michael Holme to be a character of "selfishness, cruelty, obsessive fixation, excitability, impulsiveness, [and] moodiness" (22) as he is described by Robert Ross in his *Magill Literary Annual* review of *An Equal Music*; however, with the musical, aural connection in mind, readers are able to comprehend a more empathetic, more humanly present (and, it must be added, more likeable) idea of the man,[61] an idea of Michael too faraway or blocked to be represented by the straight-forward language of text.

We have here examined three musically-associated novelistic characters and demonstrated how this particular type of characterization can work uniquely for each, in a manner available only within the ineffable, indirect nature of musical expression. What's more, this has hopefully demonstrated, in turn, how musico-literary character associations can function in general, thanks to music's distinct form of expression. However, our discussion thus far has remained within the realm of the reader-side, or audience-reception, analysis; we will now step over to the other side of novelistic interpretation, to the point of view of the author, the creator of such musically-linked characters, to examine how music's particular language can function from this, alternate, perspective.

From where I stand: *14 Variations From White*

Although it is not wholly analogous to the foregoing analysis, I would now like to briefly discuss my own use of musical association for character development as pertaining to the creative element of this thesis, my novel, *14 Variations from White.*[62] Despite the corresponding subject matter, this discussion of my creative

[61] This calls to mind Michelle Fillion's "Edwardian Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Music in E. M. Forster's *A Room With a View*" wherein she argues that, "Without her music Lucy is a 'flat' character, a conventional and rather 'commonplace' ingénue. It is no wonder that critics who discount the novel's musical content also tend to dismiss her as a 'two-dimensional heroine.'" (268)
[62] I am not the only author to have written about their own creative processes involving music. Haruki Murakami, Anthony Burgess, Milan Kundera, and Clare Morall, for example, have all published pieces on the subject (see bibliography).

work is not a perfectly equivalent fit with the earlier, critical examples, as what I have been discussing thus far (and the primary focus of this paper) has been this element of the musico-literary field in analytic, or reader-side terms, whereas the following discussion of my own work will be (in fact, due to my position as author, I'd say *must be*) from the opposite end, the creative or author-side. I believe the two angles, author and reader, creative and analytic, while very much not the same thing (although related to be sure), to be each deserving of exploration within their own right.[63] I will begin by outlining my structural procedure, followed by a discussion of its musico-literay motivations and intended effects in terms of characterization.

While writing *14 Variations from White*, I drew character inspiration (as well as plot composition, something I'll touch on later) from structures and instrumentation found in Edward Elgar's *Variations on a Theme* ("The Enigma Variations"), specifically exploring the idea of what individual instrumental association within a larger piece (such as I examined with the Seth-solo-violin connection) could bring to the process of writing novelistic characters. To begin, I should address the question of why I chose to work with *The Enigma Variations* specifically. As *14 Variations* is a new novel, why didn't I pair it with a more contemporary piece? There are three central reasons for my decision. Firstly, thematically, my novel is caught up in the idea of cycles and repetition, of history repeating itself and the inescapability of tradition. In light of this, it made sense to choose an established, canonical work, in the more traditional, orchestral form. What's more, these themes of repetition and cycling back fit well with the structural idea of a theme and variations. My second reason for using *The Enigma Variations* is the programmatic element of Elgar's work, based as it is around a series of characters.[64] This complemented my character-based approach to the project, even if our specific treatment of the creation of character differed.

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[63] For a critical approach to the novelist's point of view, see Milan Kundera's *The Art of the Novel.*

[64] Percy M. Young's article, "Friends Pictured Within," offers a notable analytic exploration of the characters portrayed in this Elgar work, as well as the nature of this "musical portraiture."

Finally, my third reason for choosing the *Variations* was the idea of audience accessibility, something discussed earlier, in reference to the general precedent of new musical novels choosing to reference older, canonical musical works. I wanted a piece that would be easily accessible to a wide sweep of readers.[65] As an established, canonical piece, Elgar's *Variations* are more familiar to more people and, therefore, more likely to produce a larger audience of intermedially-engaged readers than would a more obscure or less accessible piece.

My structural outlining of the novel proceeded as follows: each central character has an instrumental allocation (take, for example, the Oboe for the character of Claubert), that lines up with one of the instrumental lines in Elgar's score (see appendix, figure 3), like a reversal of Strauss' *Don Quixote*. In the Strauss, the viola, for example, is used to personify the character of Quixote; unlike the *Quixote*, however, in the case of *14 Variations*, it was the instrumental lines that came first and from which the characters were drawn. (Like a sort of music-to-text reversal of the programmatic music described in the "Music's Distinction" section of this paper.) Nevertheless, I did have a loose storyline in mind before deciding to use the Elgar. Long before I went about the precise structuring I have outlined above, I sat down with my general plot-idea, a recording[66] and a score,[67] and listened for and to characters. I knew that I wanted characters to align with specific instruments, and so, I listened to the disposition of individual lines and how they fitted within the whole in terms of the storyline I had in mind, and, from these individual lines, conjured characters.[68] That is to say that I did not have the character of, Dickie, for example, in mind before aligning him with Elgar's cello line, but, rather, that I had the idea of the cello line in mind and from it drew up Dickie. The cello line is, in essence, the essence of Dickie. Although simple enough to outline in general terms, this process is rather difficult

[65] As defined in previous sections with reference to "ideal" readers.
[66] The 1998 Royal Liverpool Philharmonic edition.
[67] The 1997 Dover edition.
[68] This presents the idea that instrumental sound has 'character,' or at least the capacity for it, a view with which I agree and hope to have demonstrated in the earlier sections of this paper.

to describe accurately in detail, as we once again encounter the issue of trying to put into words what music can do that words cannot. In "listening to" Dickie (or any character) I am able to gain insight into the character I will write that I would not otherwise have access to. This is a particular sort of focused inspiration, distinct from more typically broad or hazy inspirational sources,[69] which tend to derive from an overall "sense" of a work or collection of works. Of course there are many examples of more specific intermedial inspirations, such as those musico-character links we examined in earlier sections; however, the particular type of association I explored in the writing of my novel and creation of the characters therein goes one step further, even, than the examples discussed, in its specific linking of multiple characters to multiple instrumental lines, still functioning through music's ineffable inspirational language, but within a more structured and narrow framework, one that I have found incredibly creatively beneficial.

From this point, having derived the characters as described, I set about fitting it all together, the characters and the storyline into the structure (as I will soon describe), while my knowledge of the characters' aural incarnations influenced and directed both their descriptions and actions.[70] Once the character-instrument allocations had been made, I turned to the overall structure of Elgar's piece, using each of his variations (and the initial theme) as a large chapter. From this point, I broke the variations down further into motifs by following the various instrumental lines and picking out those that were dominant at any given time,

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[69] One calls to mind the first question asked of artists in interviews: "who/what are your inspirations…?"

[70] Despite obvious and important similarities, I would like to stress, once again, the difference between this musico-literary relation to character and that which I was discussing in the earlier, reader-side sections. In the latter, I explored how this relationship, or linking of character to music, can bridge gaps in literary character for the reader. In the former, however, we are looking at how the music-character link can function as inspiration, bridging gaps at the *creative* level, for the author, and while the two are most certainly related, the distinction here between the role of reader and author is an important one. Again, we are reminded of Chatman's "real author" to "real reader" diagram and discussion from *Story and Discourse* (151). For a novelist's analytical take on the readerly issue, see Umberto Eco's *The Role of Reader*.

examining how and with which others they interacted, their harmonic position, and so on. This provided the skeleton structure of my chapters (see appendix, figure 4). For example, my opening chapter is based on Elgar's opening of the *Variations*, the theme. The theme begins with the melody in a pensively melancholic G-minor in the first violins, with the low bass provided by the cellos (see appendix figure 5). My character-equivalent of the first violin is Madin, so this first (pensively melancholic) sub-chapter is constructed from his point of view. In it, he interacts with Dickie, the cello-equivalent, who, as the stable bass-line, is here Madin's guide and informant, as the excerpt below demonstrates:

> When Madin arrived in Saint Éfrouée there were birds everywhere. So many more than in the place where he had grown up. There they only had two kinds: storks and gulls. One for life and one for death, his mother had said…
>
> The first person he met in Saint Éfrouée was Dickie, the neighbor who had been trusted to give him the keys to the apartment he had chosen over the phone. Dickie was the first person Madin had ever met with tattoos on his face. They were on his eyelids, one red and one black; he blinked too fast for Madin to tell what they were. He answered Madin's mid-day knock in an apron like a butcher's, with no shirt underneath. He held some kind of tool or weapon. You're the guy I'm supposed to kill, he said, then laughed and laughed. (3)

The novel continues in such a fashion until the seventh measure of Elgar's theme (see appendix, figure 6) where the melody line is passed to the clarinet, and we modulate to the major. This marks the beginning of a new sub-chapter, one in which Jeanette, the clarinet-equivalent, will feature in a warmer scene, reflective of the change of key:

> She could dance, Jeanette could. She could throw out her arms and lift her skirts and dance and dance so that she would not even hear when her classmates gathered around her and said:
> She can dance
> Can she dance.
> She can dance. (8)

Not all the musical translations are so direct. A brief melodic solo in the score could manifest itself in several ways, for example, a direct shift of point of view or the introduced physical presence of a character, or, even, the presence of that character in another's thoughts. In this way, I attempt to strike a balance between allowing my interpretation of the sound of the music direct its place in the narrative, and sticking to a relatively cohesive plot within self-imposed structural restrictions.

At first glance, what I have done with my own novel, as described above, might appear quite different from the sort of thing we have been examining in the previous, reader-side, section of this paper, perhaps seeming much more structurally-based; however, it is, in fact, deeply linked, both in terms of our discussion of music's nonrepresentational language, and, more specifically, as a sort of natural extension of what we were discussing in the Seth example. In *An Equal Music*, we explored the idea of a character as an instrumental line within a larger (eg: orchestral) context, and what this might mean in terms of musico-literary character development, remarking upon the solo violin line as representative of Michael's character within the "context" of the orchestral setting. In *14 Variations From White*, I have expanded this idea so that the novel comprises not just of subject and accompaniment, but, instead, of an entire tapestry of individualated instrumental "voices" or characters, so that each provides a *musical* (as well as textual, story-world) context for the others, as well as themselves, bringing up more complex ideas of inter-charactral harmony and counterpoint, and multi-character polyphony. Here, each voice is enhanced and given purpose and distinction through its place among the others, or, in other

words, counterpoint. Gerry Smyth discusses this phenomenon with reference to Huxley's *Point Counter Point*:

> The role of the artist is to set these individual voices (or a selection thereof) in counterpoint, so that from the resulting 'sound' something of the paradoxical 'truth' of the human condition may be communicated. (85)

"Counterpoint," this darling of Huxley's, is a fairly complex musical idea, as evidenced by the fact that its entry is one of the very longest in the *New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, clocking in at nearly five pages of dense, discursive description. To simplify drastically, the element of counterpoint most pertinent to our discussion of the novel is the idea, from the *New Harvard* entry, that: "a perceptual balance is struck between the individualities of the lines and their combination; the ear's attention will ideally be focused now on one line, now on the other, and simultaneously on both." (205) This is a property of music generally unavailable to text, or words in general; we can only read one word or textual idea at a time, as simultaneous digestion of textual voices is nearly impossible, and must, almost always, be separated by time.[71] This idea of counterpoint within text, then, is technically flawed; our "gaps" arise once more, this time, in terms of temporality. Counterpoint, strictly speaking, refers to *simultaneous* voicings, which, as outlined above, is an impossibility in pure text. Not so in music, however, where such simultaneous voicing represents the essence of vertical harmony. By pairing my novelistic characters with existing, and therefore aurally recallable instrumental lines (or "parts") this contrapuntal limitation of text was overcome for me, and a new dimension of hearing and understanding my characters was thusly made available. What's more, there is, of course, the further authorial hope that some of this contrapuntal characterizing

[71] The exception which springs to mind is that of the pun, or double-entendre. While this does seem to allow for a "double-voiced" sort of textual language, it is not one that is sustainable beyond one or two words at a time.

advantage be transmitted beyond my creative process, onto my novel's readers as they build these characters for themselves.

Counterpoint, itself, is a component of another, very relevant, broader musical idea, one famously explored in textual terms by Mikhail Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*: polyphony.[72] Polyphony is what sets *14 Variations from White*'s musical character associations and voicing apart from that which we encountered in *An Equal Music*. Turning once more to the *New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, we are told that polyphony can be defined as: "music combining several lines, each of which retains its identity as a line to some degree, as distinct from homophony, in which melodic interest is concentrated in one line." (645) In the Seth, all the "melodic interest" is concentrated on the one central character, Michael Holme, as represented by the solo violin line. *The Lark Ascending,* a piece for solo violin and orchestral accompaniment, and the novel itself, in its mirroring of this, are thusly homophonic. On the other hand, in *14 Variations* the multiple instrumentally-associated characters represent the aforementioned "several lines," combining to form one melodic whole, the novel, while at the same time remaining distinct, separate characters, or voices. Once again, as with counterpoint, we encounter in this terminology an effect that presents an interesting *metaphor* for certain elements of pure text, as explored in Bakhtin's work, but that is, strictly speaking, impossible to actually achieve within text alone. A novel, through several devices including dialogue, pace, chronology and style, can suggest such a thing as polyphony, however, true simultaneity, this concurrent combination of several distinct lines to form one melodic whole, is impossible within the direct language of text. Although my novel is, of course, built of text, by not just associating my characters with various instrumental lines, but by, in fact, mirroring their instrumental context through structure, I was able to engage creatively with the idea of polyphony beyond textual metaphor, as musical reality, 'hearing' how

[72] For a more detailed discussion of the musicalization of Bakhtin's polyphony metaphor see the "Quasi Parlando I: Polyphony and Musical Value in Bakhtin and Kundera" chapter of Stephen Benson's *Literary Music*.

each characters' voice supports, pulls at or blends into the whole, and is therefore granted distinction, or characterization, through this type of simultaneous musical context. Music has the ability to present numerous voices at once while allowing them to remain distinct. This polyphonic ideal is what I was striving towards with my structuring and voicing of *14 Variations from White*, both creatively, in terms of my own conceiving and writing of characters, and, hopefully, as a final effect, in terms of readers' own process of characterization.

One issue raised by this discussion of counterpoint, polyphony, and musically-inspired and structured cohesion and distinction of voice is that of blend. In my effort to emulate these musical effects I was struck by the writerly challenge of making my characters distinct enough, each with their own voice, while at the same time having them fold naturally into each other in order to mimic the unique blend of polyphonic musical works. The structuring process, as discussed above, was a definite move towards this; however, attention also had to be paid to the question of voice: how to give each character their own voice while at the same time maintaining a cohesive overall voice for the work as a whole? I dealt with this by distinguishing what characters did and said with how they did or said it. That is to say, their actions as opposed to their styling. The characters in *14 Variations from White*'s actions are very distinct, each with their own individual path and method of following it. For example, the character of Dickie (the cello) has always lived in Saint Éfrouée, and always will, and would want it no other way. The character of Jeanette (the clarinet) on the other hand, finds the confines of the village excruciating and yearns for an escape (and ultimately, takes the only one she sees as available to her). Or, we can consider the character of Robert (the bassoon), whose actions and words reveal him to be confrontational and aggressive, as opposed to Madin (the violin) who is in the same way shown to be passive and with-held:

> You've been away a while, said Robert. I don't mean anything by it, but you've been away a while and she needed you. Thank God I

> was home, was answering the phone. Robert looked at Madin, arms crossed.
> I'm your boss, thought Madin. I could fire you, I'm your boss. But he didn't say that. He said, I'm sorry, I had some errands to run, I've got skates… . (116)

In this way, each character is granted definition and distinction, contrasting with those around them. Their style, or specific verbal voicing, on the other hand, was constructed so as to blend and fold into one; the flow and feel of their voices was tailored to sound as one, not just in terms of spoken dialogue, but over the entire work, stylistically. The work has a stylistically affected voice, somewhat distant and cold, that all the characters, as well as the intermittent text that joins them, share:

> Are you excited? asked Julia.
> I am excited, said Madin.
> Are you happy?
> I am, I am very happy.
> Are you scared?
> Madin thought, and dug his toe into the hole in the ice it had just made. I'm not scared, he said. I thought I would be scared, but I'm not, I'm not at all.
> Not at all?
> Not at all. He looked up from his toe to his wife, This cold does funny things to me, I'm not scared at all. (120)

The intended effect can be likened to that of a string quartet, wherein you have instruments of quite similar texture and style (two violins, a viola and a cello, all of which are quattro-string instruments, made to similar dimensions (if different sizes), of the same materials and strung within the same intervals), but where each is playing a unique line, *doing* quite different things. The cello may be playing a

rhythmic bass-line of moving quavers while the viola plays its own moving counter-line in a different rhythm, while the first violin plays a legato melody line, and the second violin plays a melodically distinct countermelody. All four voices are united in their texture and sound, but are individuated through action and motion, creating our polyphonic blend. Likewise, the characters in *14 Variations do* very different things, but in stylistically similar, cohesive ways.

I hope to have demonstrated in the preceding sections why I, as a creative writer would choose to construct my prose under such strict structural confines.[73] I must accentuate the fact that, despite what may seem like structural tangents, the idea of enhanced characterization through musical association lies at the core of this decision, as something I feel functions as strongly from the authorial, creative position as from the readerly, analytic position. Just as a reader's experience of character is affected by in-text aural associations, bridging gaps in characterization within this other language for the self, so too is my authorial experience of building characters affected. My endeavors towards counterpoint and polyphony through musical association and structure, such as Anthony Burgess' attempt in his *Napoleon Symphony*, to capture, in his own words,

[73] An additional motivation worth mentioning, although not specific to musico-literary intermediality, is that of inspiration by confinement. I find having restrictions of this sort to be an excellent way of overcoming "blank-page disorder." (Of course I am far from the only, or first writer, to have made this discovery, as attested to by Burgess, the playful exercises of OULIPO or, even, the students in my creative writing classes.) As this one factor is pre-decided, determined, I do not find myself dealing with the intimidating vastness of a blank page, and this is, in a way, liberating. What's more, once the structural restrictions are in place, it forces me to think more creatively, in order to weave the story convincingly within them. Take for example the very possible scenario whereby a character, represented by, for example, the clarinet, has died in chapter nine, only to have Elgar present us with a lovely and prominent clarinet solo in the variation that corresponds with chapter ten. The author must, in this case, think creatively as to how to represent this unexpected characteral presence in a way that does not undermine the story thus far, perhaps by way of a leap backwards in time, or via the consideration of another, still living character, or by the introduction of a character-specific artifact. As Peter Consenstein puts it, "innovate upon the architecture of genres not to 'blur,' 'transgress,' and 'unfix' boundaries, but to grasp a genre's potential" (19).

"music's formal essence" (348),[74] were always with an eye (or ear) to what this could do in terms of enhanced characterization. I hoped that this "formal essence" of music, as brought forward through the musical structuring, would thusly add characteral dimension through the intricate melding of the forms, functioning as a kind of bridge to musical's other, indirect, and therefore, perhaps, more faithful language of self, and thus allowing for more present characters for me, the author, as I write them. A worthwhile task, if, at times, arduous. In the words of another novelist, E. M. Forster:

> The novelist takes his pen in his hand, gets into the abnormal state which it is convenient to call 'inspiration,' and tries to create characters…the novelist whose main passion is human beings and who will sacrifice a great deal to their convenience. (*Aspects of the Novel*, 51)

Endnote

Musico-literary studies is very much a currently active, expanding field. The Open University and the University of East Anglia have both introduced courses in the subject within the past year; the international Word and Music Studies Association continues to gather momentum, gaining more interest and diverse members each year; and new books in the field such as those by Benson (2006), Smyth (2008), and Shockley (2009) are being published, read, and academically recognized. As this relatively new field continues to grow, an increasing number of academics are beginning to take notice of this particular breed of intermediality and to explore what it might accomplish, branching out into countless sub-

[74] Werner Wolf, in his 1999 analysis of the work, describes it thus: "Burgess manages to create a piece of verbal music that continually reminds the reader of the musical pretext and keeps the impression alive that here indeed 'verbal narrative' is given 'symphonic shape'" (207).

categories of study, such as music and the spoken word,[75] gender in the music-novel,[76] or music and poetry.[77] However, there is, as of yet, still remarkably little in the field addressing the specific issue of characterization,[78] a particular area of exploration within the wider field from which I believe, and hope to have demonstrated, there is much to be gained, for both readers and authors. As we have seen in our various examples, this type of intermedial association can, indeed, help us to bridge the inevitable, infamous gaps in literary character. Although, as these examples demonstrated, the methods for such an endeavor are diverse and flexible, there is one constant that we have traced through the music-character canon that grants this type of intermedial association its unique potency, setting it apart not just from text and what it can do, but from other forms of intermediality as well: music is an indirect, non-representational form of expression. Music is, at the same time, more and less than words; it functions in a different dimension to words, and indeed all other forms of "worldly" (Frolova-Walker, 507) representational expression, in their concrete, inflexible semantic articulation. This is why it is so difficult to accurately, objectively describe music in any other language, and why it is so difficult (or impossible, even) for music to accurately, objectively describe concrete, definite things. Working together, however, words and music, in their combined forms of expression, can provide uniquely vivid, multi-dimensional insights into novelistic, story-world components, particularly the enigma of literary characters. Indeed, from both a critical and a creative perspective, music can provide an alternate language of self

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[75] See *Word and Music Studies: Essays on Music and the Spoken Word and on Surveying the Field* (Edited by Suzanne M. Lodato and David Francis Urrows.
[76] See Delia De Sousa Correa's chapter, "The Gendered Text."
[77] This is an especially vast sub-category of study, with many publications to its name. For examples, see Lawrence Kramer, Richard Leppert and Daniel Goldmark's *Walt Whitman and Modern Music*, or David Evans and Helen Abbott's ""Music and poetry at the crossroads: Baudelaire, Debussy and 'Recuillement,'" or Abbott's monograph, *Between Baudelaire and Mallarmé: Voice, Conversation and Music*.
[78] Nevertheless, some scholars have touched on the issue, for example, the work by Michelle Fillion, briefly discussed earlier ('Edwardian Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Music in E. M. Forsters' *A Room with a View*')

for fictitious beings, more essential, perhaps even more true, for its indirect nature.

> It is when [the novelist's] attention was drawn towards music, among all the arts, that he became aware of the existence of a non-verbal reality more expressive than speech and conforming to the dictates of inner time beyond anything that the novelist's language could communicate. (Aronson, ix)

END

Appendix

Figure 1:

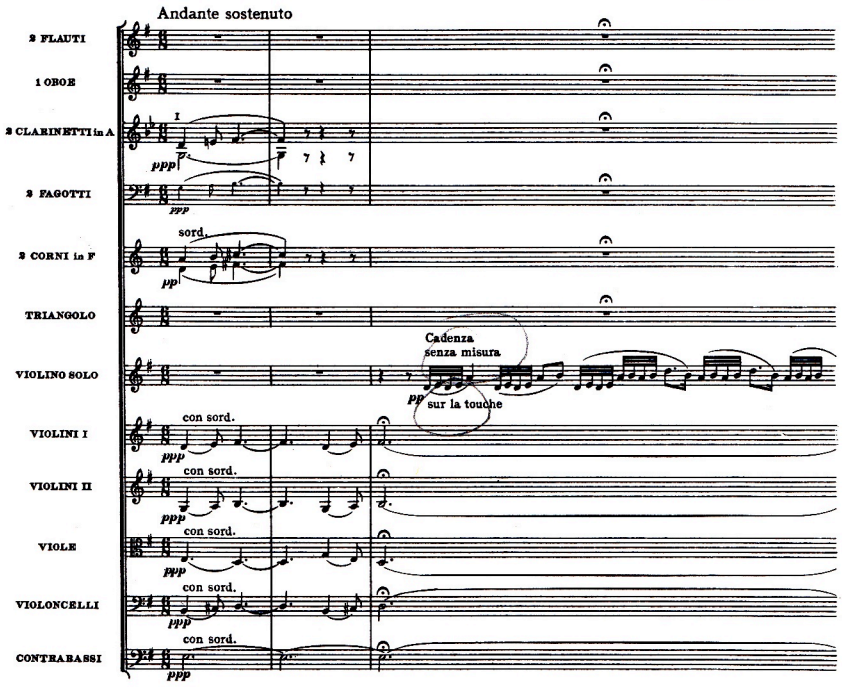
Score of the opening of Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*

To Marie Hall

THE LARK ASCENDING

Note:— This work is also scored for Chamber Orchestra (1 Flute 1 Oboe, 1 Clarinet, 1 Bassoon, 1 Horn, 1 Triangle 3 (or 4) 1st Violins, 3 (or 4) 2nd Violins, 2 Viole, 2 'Celli, 1 C. Bass & Solo Violin— for this, see cues and directions in small type. When performed in this way, the players should be directed to "play in" all cues in small notes, and those enclosed in brackets (marked Ch. o.) which are in their parts.

Ralph Vaughan Williams
1872-1958

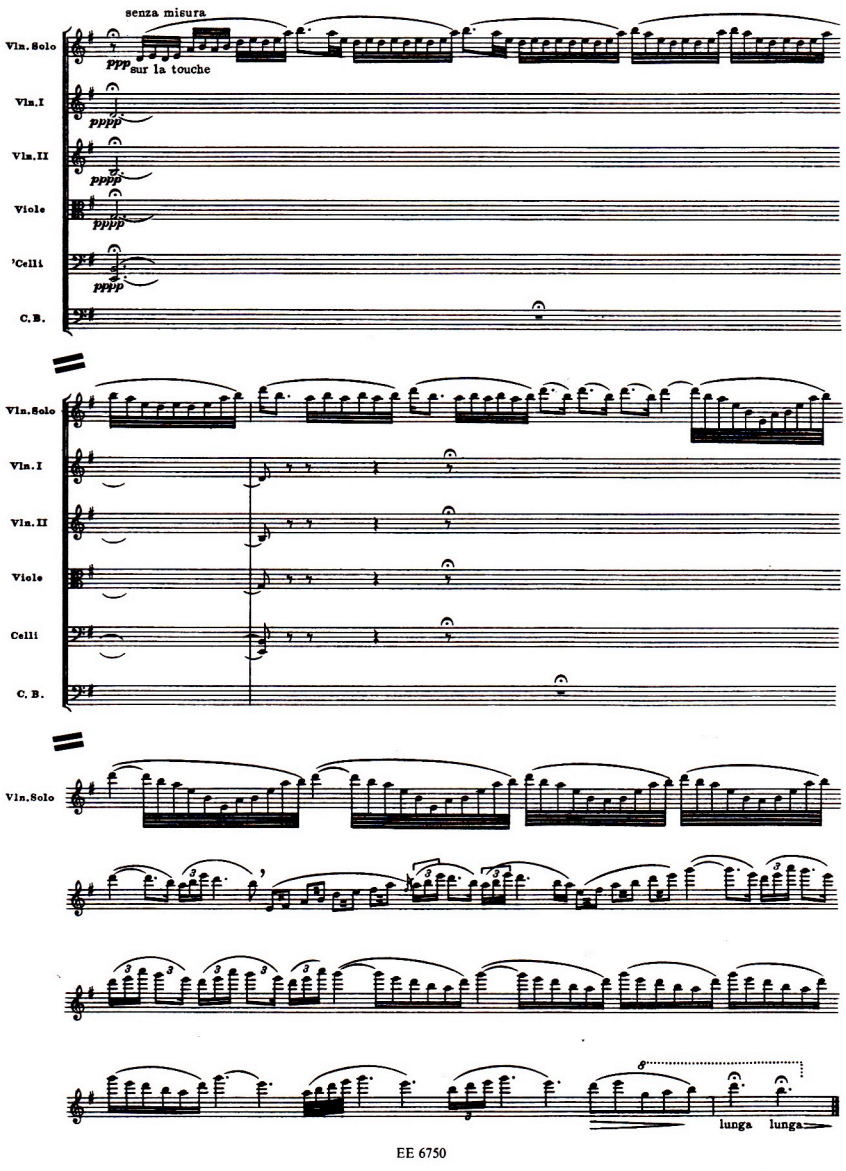


No. 1388 EE 6750 Ernst Eulenburg Ltd.

(Appendix cont.)

Figure 2:

Score of the closing of Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*



(Appendix cont.)

Figure 3:

Character/Instrument breakdown in *14 Variations from White* (in alphabetical order)

Claubert-	Oboe
Dickie-	Cello
Gabrielle-	Viola
Janiel-	Organ
Jeanette/Thomas-	Clarinet
Julia-	Flute
Madin-	Violin I
Robert-	Basoon
Saint Éfrouée (often personified by Raquel, the baker)-	Brass
Stéphane-	Percussion

(Appendix cont.)

Figure 4:

Basic[79] rendering of *The Enigma Variations* according to instruments/characters carrying melodic theme

THEME*:*	Vln I – Clarient – Vln I
I:	Oboe/Flute/Clarinet – Vln I – Vln I/Flute climax against Cello/Brass theme – Flute/Oboe/Clarinet (with short Cello/Viola interlude) – Clarinet
II:	Strings – Bass/Cello
III:	Oboe/Flute
IV:	Tutii – Oboe/Clarinet – Tutti
V:	Vln I/II Melody, Viola/Cello/Bass Countermelody – Flute – Clarinet – Flute/Clarient/Oboe Melody, Strings Countermelody – Flute – Clarinet – Flute Melody, Strings Countermelody
VI:	Viola – Viola/Flute – Viola/Clarinet
VII:	Timpani/Cello/Bass – Viola/Clarinet/Flue – Brass – Timpani/Cello/Bass – Strings/Clarinet/Flute – Brass

[79] This term, 'basic' is an important demarcation indeed, as this chart represents my initial, broad-strokes break-down of the score, with no demarcation of things like harmonic position, rhythmic interaction, and so on, something which, during the process of novel-writing, was lent more subtlety and nuance. For exact references of my final breakdown, one could refer to the final markings on my copy of the score, or, for that matter, to the novel itself.

VIII: Clarinet – Oboe – Clarinet – Oboe – Flute – Clarinet

(Appendix, Figure 4 cont.)

IX: Vln I – Vln I/Clarinet – Viola/Cello – Vln I/Vln II/Viola/Clarinet/Flute – Vln I

X: Viola – Flute – Viola – Flute – Viola

XI: Bassoon – Brass – Bassoon/Bass/Cello/Viola – Brass – Vln I

XII: Cello – Cello/Flute/Clarinet/Oboe – Vln I/Cello/Viola – Cello

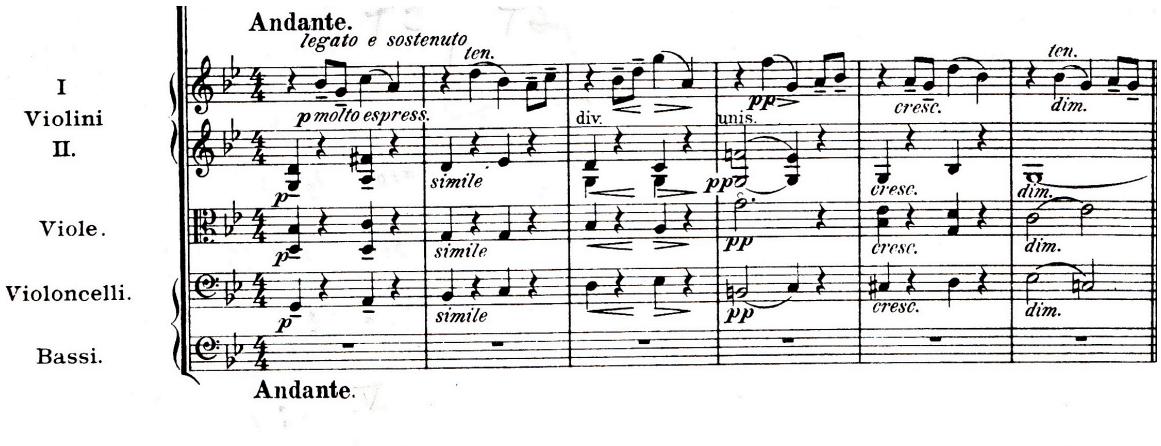
XIII: Clarinet – Brass – Flute/Oboe/Clarinet – Clarinet

XIV (FINALE):Brass – Tutti – Brass – Tutti – Flute(/Viola)/Vln I(/Clarinet/Oboe) – Brass – Strings – Brass – Clarinet/WWinds – Vln I – Organ – Brass – Tutti

(Appendix cont.)

Figure 5:

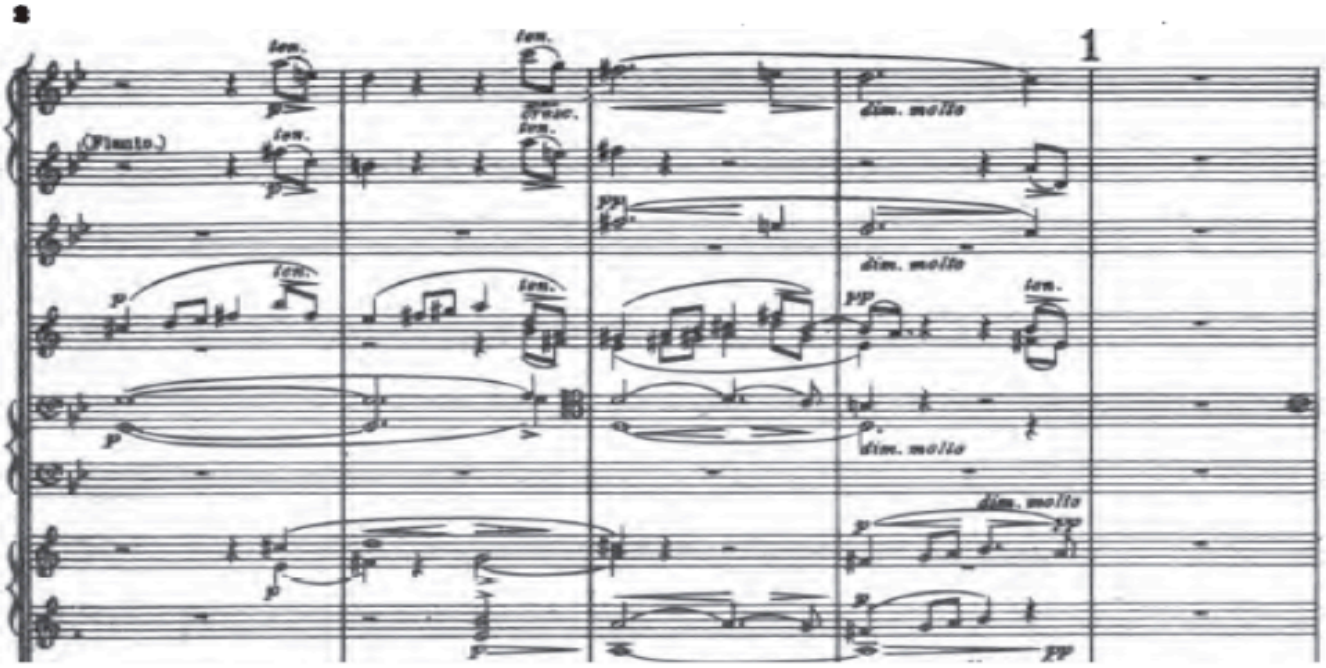
The opening to Elgar's *Variations on a Theme* ('The Enigma Variations')



(Appendix, cont.)

Figure 6:

'The Enigma Variations,' theme, from measure seven



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