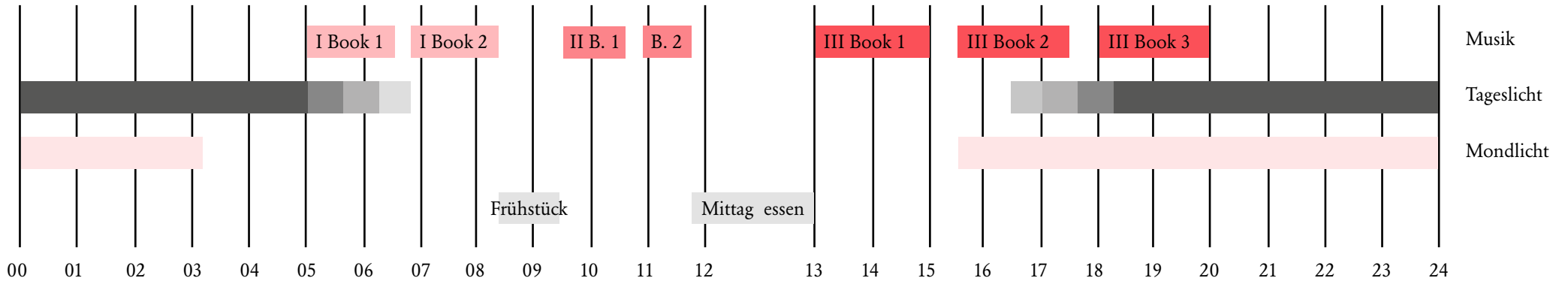


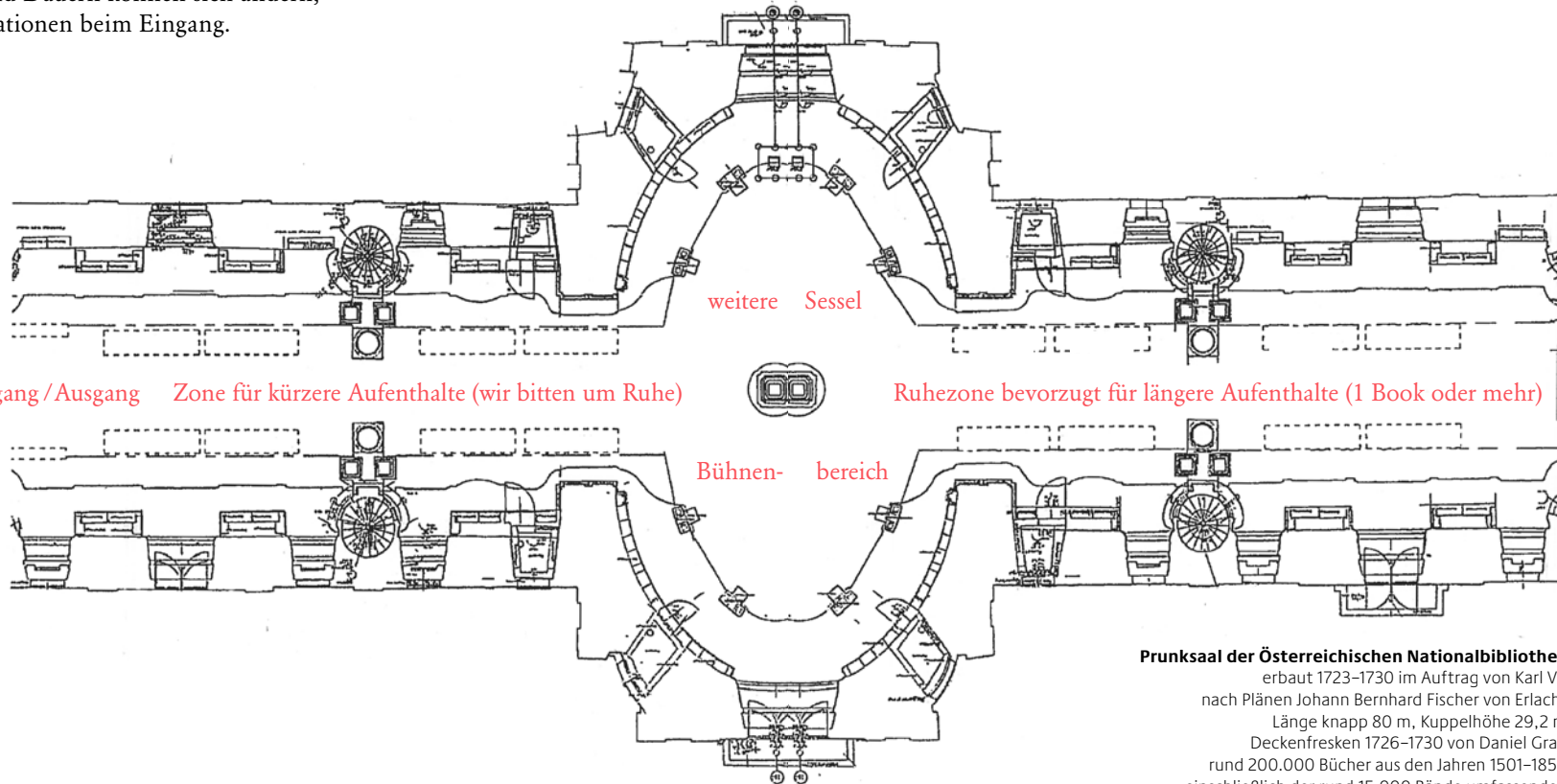
sew me into a shroud of leaves

Raum und Zeit im Überblick

Samstag 09.11.2019 05:00–20:00
 Nacht: 00:00–05:03 und 18:12–00:00, gesamt: 10:50
 Tag: 06:50–16:25, gesamt: 09:36
 Sonnenaufgang 06:52 | Sonnenuntergang 16:24
 Astronomische Dämmerung: 05:03–05:39 und 17:36–18:12
 Nautische Dämmerung: 05:39–06:16 und 16:59–17:36
 Bürgerliche Dämmerung: 06:16–06:50 und 16:25–16:59
 Wahrer Mittag: 11:38 | Wahre Mitternacht: 23:38
 Monduntergang 03:08 | Mondaufgang 15:36
 Mondlicht 92,9% (Vollmond am 12.11.2019)
 Blaue Stunde 06:17–06:51 und 16:26–16:59
 Goldene Stunde 06:51–07:38 und 15:39–16:26



Beginnzeiten und Dauern können sich ändern,
aktuelle Informationen beim Eingang.



Zugang zum
Halbstock mit
Buffet und WC

Buffet durchgehend geöffnet, Tee im Ticketpreis inbegriffen, Speisen und Getränke durchgehend erhältlich, so lange der Vorrat reicht.

Sehr warme Kleidung wird empfohlen, der Prunksaal ist seit seiner Gründung unbeheizt. Decken sind vorhanden.

Prunksaal der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek
 erbaut 1723–1730 im Auftrag von Karl VI.
 nach Plänen Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlachs
 Länge knapp 80 m, Kuppelhöhe 29,2 m
 Deckenfresken 1726–1730 von Daniel Gran
 rund 200.000 Bücher aus den Jahren 1501–1850
 einschließlich der rund 15.000 Bände umfassenden
 Sammlung des Prinzen Eugen von Savoyen im im Mitteloval



Michael Hersch
Foto: Sam Oberter

Music Mapped Across the Storm

Michael Hersch: sew me into a shroud of leaves
Andrew Farach-Colton

*In this fashion Grünewald,
silently wielding his paintbrush,
rendered the scream, the wailing, the gurgling
and the shrieking of a pathological spectacle
to which he and his art, as he must have known,
themselves belong.*
(W. G. Sebald: *After Nature*)

«Michael Hersch's music can be «an open wound», says violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja. «Everything is crystal clear, there is no decoration, no superficial beauty, no compromises.» Indeed, one might consider Hersch's work as following in the tradition of composers like Bernd Alois Zimmermann, Luigi Nono, Galina Ustvolskaya and others who, through their music, have expressed their horror at man's seemingly infinite capacity for cruelty. Simply consider the writers Hersch draws on for inspiration – Thomas Hardy, Ezra Pound, Osip Mandelstam, and Czesław Miłosz, for example – to sense his profound sympathy for those who suffer. Hersch has said that when he reads something that resonates with him, his reaction can be so visceral and immediate that the words themselves may appear «like fire on the page.» Not surprisingly, then, many of his instrumental works are intimately connected with poetry. His own description of *the wreckage of flowers* for violin and piano (after Miłosz) as «a shattered song cycle without words» could very well characterize the vast majority of his output, including the three works that make up *sew me into a shroud of leaves*.

Of the various poets who have set flame to Hersch's creativity, Christopher Middleton holds a special place. They met in 2001 as fellows at the American Academy in Berlin and felt an immediate spiritual kinship. Within a year, inspired by Middleton's verses, Hersch had begun a three-hour, 50-movement work for solo piano that in its vast scope was unlike anything he'd yet written. And while there are other concert-length works for the instrument in the repertoire, in terms of dramatic range and emotional force, *The Vanishing Pavilions* is *sui generis*. It took Hersch nearly five years to complete and was composed without any commission or opportunity for performance; he wrote it simply because he felt compelled to. And, in the end, he gave the premiere himself, playing the 350-page score entirely from memory.

That was in October 2006. A few years earlier, his closest friend, the historian Mary O'Reilly, had been diagnosed with cancer. Then in 2007, while writing the second part of the trilogy, Hersch received a cancer diagnosis himself. Hersch's treatment (which, as he later put it, included «surgeries, radiation, indignities») was ultimately successful, and in 2008 he completed the trilogy's

second part, *Last Autumn*, for horn and cello – this time with W. G. Sebald's long poem *After Nature* as the textual spark. O'Reilly died the following year, a devastating blow that would have a pronounced effect on his work.

*In my words exists the full bitterness
Of an autumn day, steady drizzle
Under a dreary, low sky.
They are crushed words,
Woebegone, that make me feel infinite pity.
(Marin Sorescu: *The Bridge*)*

There had always been a tension between the public and the private in Hersch's music. The dark, often deeply harrowing images he conjures in *The Vanishing Pavilions* and *Last Autumn* have a universal resonance, yet they're communicated with an intimacy that's peculiarly personal, and this ambiguity between confidentiality and communality amplifies the music's emotional charge. After his own cancer battle and O'Reilly's death, however, there was a shift. On the surface, it might seem that the music became even more intensely private, but perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it was now concerned more with violence from within than from without. This is quite overt in *On the Threshold of Winter*, for example, his 2012 monodrama based on the poems Marin Sorescu wrote while in hospital dying of liver cancer, and in its companion work, the elegy *I hope we get a chance to visit soon* (2017), a setting of O'Reilly's letters to Hersch intertwined with poetry by Rebecca Elson (another cancer victim) and, again, Middleton. Is the shift discernible in his works that don't deal directly with illness? That's for the listener to decide. Hersch himself has said that every work he's written since O'Reilly's death «has been a kind of assessment of that experience and relationship», but that, aside from the monodrama and elegy, the other works «have, at least on the surface, kept some distance from the events that set the music into motion.»

*Quickly man destroys the house
Whose beams he put up with care
She who prays he might change
Scrubs the raven's wing white.
Wash me with flowered water,
Sew me into a shroud of leaves.
May these tears the wind blows
Wet the blossom of your face.
(Marius Kociejowski: *Uzbek Variations*)*

The trilogy spans this shift, of course, as it encompasses 15 years of creative work (2001–2016). The third part, *one day may become menace*, is, again, scored for solo piano, this time with texts drawn from poetry by Marius Kociejowski. But in terms of scope, it almost stands apart, being longer even than the two previous parts combined. Still, there are striking similarities among the three component works.

To start with, there's structural continuity. The three parts of *sew me into a shroud of leaves* are divided into books of approximately

20 movements each – there are two books in both parts one and two, and three in the third. Many of the movements serve as companions to the poetic fragments while the remainder have more common titles; in *The Vanishing Pavilions*, for instance, these are called intermezzi. And while it would be going too far to say there's a narrative aspect to the music, there's no question that each book has a distinct dramatic arc, and that there's a strong family resemblance, so the general shape of these arcs is similar – ascending in intensity and peaking near the end. Not only that, but this shape can be discerned in larger form over the entirety of each part, as well as over the 11 hours of the trilogy as a whole. Hersch often plans his work in his head before committing a note to paper, which makes the conceptual design of *sew me into a shroud of leaves* an especially impressive feat of musical / architectural engineering.

Another formal element is the complex network of motivic, harmonic and atmospheric relationships Hersch uses to tie each work together. Sometimes entire movements are repeated, underlining crucial structural joins or creating bookends for smaller groups of movements. And connected to this on a more fundamental level is the sustained opposition between the dense and ferociously cluster-choked and the sparse and openly tonal (or pre-tonal, as it's sometimes described). Quieter passages often give pause for absorption after periods of chaos or turbulence, although they play an even more prominent role than that because often their mournful nostalgia is so evocative. And yet, there is no particular focus for the nostalgia, but rather something amorphaously archaic, like something long lost and faded in our memory.

Poetically, too, there's continuity. The last part of the trilogy may have been written after Hersch's cancer diagnosis and O'Reilly's death, but Kociejowski's poetry is, like Middleton's and Sebald's, concerned primarily with violence from without. The poets' voices are distinct, yet filtered through Hersch's sensibility, they appear connected.

It's how the three parts differ, however, that's more revealing. Take the movements without direct poetic connections: in *The Vanishing Pavilions*, these are all intermezzi. But in *Last Autumn* Hersch also includes Scherzo, March, Psalm and Lullaby. And to these in *one day may become menace* he adds Chaconne, Hymn, Fugue and Song – except that in the final book of the latter (which in itself is nearly the length of *The Vanishing Pavilions*) there are, again, just the poetic titles and intermezzi. Titles like March or Lullaby may suggest traditional forms and categories, but here Hersch often takes what's familiar and makes it unfamiliar; he gives us the idea of a march rather than anything that resembles an actual march itself.

Hersch is specific and detailed in his instructions to the performer, and the granularity of detail accrues from one work to the next. Markings like «with greatest ferocity» and «with the greatest possible intensity» are found often in his scores. And they become especially vivid and poetic in *one day may become menace* – a passage in the fifth movement is marked, «as if a large flock of birds was startled and suddenly erupted from the trees.» These descriptive

directives reflect the music's physicality, as well as its increasing technical demands as the trilogy progresses. In order to play the premiere of *The Vanishing Pavilions*, Hersch says, he had to retrain himself to overcome its pianistic challenges. *Last Autumn*, too, pushes the performers to their limits, requiring a horn player and cellist of unusual stamina as well as technical authority. Of the three parts, however, *one day may become menace* is by far the most formidable. Unlike *The Vanishing Pavilions* it employs extended techniques that broaden the music's range of colour and texture. Yet an even more daunting hurdle is the music's increased density. Hersch seems not to be constrained by the limits of two hands and ten fingers; many pages of the score spill onto myriad staves. Although at times he's clearly pushing beyond what's possible, Hersch still feels that it's conquerable.

one day may become menace stands apart in other ways, as well. *The Vanishing Pavilions* and *Last Autumn* are intensely focused, with stark contrasts and sharp, clear lines, both vertically and horizontally. Despite their length, both works feel remarkably compact. In the third part, however, these lines often become blurred and the harmonies smeared, in part because of the music's densely layered complexity. Even the archaic sounding segments seem more indistinct and distant. One can discern vaguely consolatory moments in *The Vanishing Pavilions*; in *one day may become menace* these are considerably more elusive. Its shadows are longer, darker, and more ominous.

It would be easy to turn away from Hersch's grim visions, and particularly in the six-hour third part of the trilogy, where he creates an almost bodily sense of discomfort. It's the music's authenticity – as well as its astonishing compositional integrity – that rewards the effort.

The composer Georg Friedrich Haas describes Hersch as «one of those rare artists who are totally melded together with their art.» Those who know Hersch know this to be true. This is really who he is. What this means for the listener who only knows the composer through his music is that however one views *sew me into a shroud of leaves*, whether as an extensive emotional journey or an intensive psychological exploration, it's not a solitary undertaking. Hersch is not a detached guide; he's a witness, too. He is one of us. It's this deep humanity that gives his music much of its immense power. As Kopatchinskaja says, «I want to lend Hersch my forces because he faces our pain with urgency, honesty and dignity.»

Michael Hersch → Band A–Z

Andrew Farach-Colton is a regular contributor to *Gramophone* magazine and has also written for *BBC Music Magazine*, *Opera News* and *The Strad*. His essays and analytical notes have appeared in the program books of institutions large and small, including the New York Philharmonic, the BBC Proms, the Royal Opera House (Covent Garden), the San Francisco Opera, as well as accompanying recordings from Decca, EMI, Chandos, Harmonia Mundi and other record labels. He holds a doctorate in music from the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University and resides in New York City.

sew me into a shroud of leaves

Titles and texts

Michael Hersch

With poems by Christopher Middleton, W. G. Sebald and Marius Kociejowski

Part I

The Vanishing Pavilions

All poetical text by
Christopher Middleton (1926–2015)

Book 1

1. Prelude

2. ... *the snows ignite:*
A flag revolves, a bird has flown –
Our objects, humble, they aspire;
Learn we our ashes by their fire.

3. Intermezzo (A)

4. ... *and over that plateau, in a vast and glowing*
atmosphere,
Thousands of heaped stones absorbed the twilight.

5. Intermezzo (B)

6. ... *explosions of clocks and winds without*
routine
not fountains not millennia of light inextinguishable
ebbing through column and throat

7. Intermezzo (C)

8. *Here the huge root spread: A willow hit by*
lightning, long
Before we came.
Trees all around,
Their graves in the rock, under a green hood
They heard willow speak to water,
And housed the spring, so it could dwell
In itself, as such a place might wish to do.

9. Intermezzo (D)

10. ... *pushing through slow centuries:*
The space is branching out, blown back.

11. Intermezzo (E)

12. *So the flashing knife will split*
Memory down the middle...

13. Intermezzo (F)

14. *On the far side of town a hospital.*
Music mapped across the storm
Rushing through dark air and the strain of springs

that wheels depend on –
In the middle air
He leaves just two or three, to float,
Hesitating.
In hope they may be pleased, and relent,
Those gods, whoever might be there,
And bring her through, home.

15. Intermezzo (F)

16. *Some distance from the graves,*
A more or less decent distance from the graves.

17. Intermezzo (G)

18. ... *and the dead are unappeased.*
... those who haunt this tract of earth,
At this little window asking to be named.

19. Intermezzo (H)

20. *Beyond the shack where food is sold . . .*
Beyond any imaginable midpoint of the world
Memory brimmed unbidden with whole colours
Only to end in a choking dust of names

21. Intermezzo (I)

22. ... *the snows ignite:*
A flag revolves, a bird has flown –
Our objects, humble, they aspire;
Learn we our ashes by their fire.

23. Intermezzo (B)

24. *Here the huge root spread:*
A willow hit by lightning, long
Before we came.
Trees all around,
Their graves in the rock, under a green hood
They heard willow speak to water,
And housed the spring, so it could dwell
In itself, as such a place might wish to do.

25. Intermezzo (C)

26. *Let them be the vanishing pavilions.*
There will be remnants, surely, for someone.
The road does not lose itself in such a darkness,
The dark beginning to glow, all air
A sparkling to be created
For more than horrors to inhabit.

27. Intermezzo (J)

Book 2

28. *Spectres, vast, remote
Uneasily wagging their heads
In shrouds of crushed amethyst:
Tomorrow I will confirm
That they are hill crests,
And slopes parade the green oak, olive,
Serried cherry.
On sunken pots of Rome
An iridescence, thick
Or light, signifies the human:
Should the moment return
At sundown's onset
I will ask what is this colour,
Again a few score of breaths,
And scaling the underside
Of pine branches
An aqueous rose, diffused.
Neither quality, nor adjunct.
How long so old.*

29. Intermezzo (K)

30. *I see two doves, first one
And then the other fell
And as the story ended –
«Nightmares hounding him ...»
Hardly having touched the ground
Back up again they flew.*

31. Intermezzo (L)

32. *... explosions of clocks and winds without
routine
Not fountains not millennia of light inextinguishable
Ebbing through column and throat*

33. Intermezzo (M)

34. *So the flashing knife will split
Memory down the middle ...*

35. *Who captures the wind
And its actual rages
A gale sweeping the heath
Cleaning the peaks
So they brighten at nightfall.*

36. Intermezzo (N)

37. *Here the huge root spread: A willow hit by
lightning, long
Before we came.
Trees all around,
Their graves in the rock, under a green hood
They heard willow speak to water,
And housed the spring, so it could dwell
In itself, as such a place might wish to do.*

38. Intermezzo (O)

39. Intermezzo (P)

40. *... the snows ignite:
A flag revolves, a bird has flown –
Our objects, humble, they aspire;
Learn we our ashes by their fire.*

41. *And in The Inferno, of the least tormented,
Writhing in filth, thick gloom, the tornado,
None could slither naked from one chosen
Circle into another.
Territory held.
No trespassing there.
Heaven disposes
No massacres, no refugees.*

42. Intermezzo (Q)

43. Intermezzo (R)

44. *Below bright multitudes there was only earth.*
*
A breath rotates the stars
*
*The wind gusting in the pines, raking with open
fans*

45. Intermezzo (S)

46. *... through shrieks of birds that flash in the sun
like axes ...
... track the sun's wheel, either way, up or down,
following everywhere
... how deep the hill shines under its shade of tall
trees,
And when no stars come, goes to them darkly
upward.*

47. Intermezzo (Q)

48. *The note pad and over it the candle glass
Spills a shadow.
Redder now the candle
Housed in its glass.
No red suffusing shadow
Though alone he might die, discovered
Hosting many maggots, hardest work undone.*

49. *So the flashing knife will split
Memory down the middle ...*

50. *Will they still be there?
Will they shout? Not likely,
For twilight comes and far, far ahead
The air is spreading a terrible hush.
Time has not hesitated.
From the crossroads, now, and sees
That bend in the road goes on forever,
And trees, identifiable once, melt into nebulae
Disgorging dust, not stars.*

**Part II
Last Autumn**

All poetical text by W. G. Sebald (1944–2001)
Translation into English by Michael Hamburger

Book 1

1. *The air stirs the light ...*

2. *Spreading out above them
is the branch work
of a fig tree with fruit, one of which
is entirely hollowed out by insects.*

3. *... in a different consistency
of the air, whose deoxygenated void
in the gasping breath of the figures ...*

4. *A crow on the wing lost a white feather.
The vicar, a limping messenger in a black coat,
appeared on New Year's morning
alone on the wide snow-covered field.*

5. Scherzo (A)

6. Intermezzo (A)

7. Lullaby I

8. Scherzo (B)

9. March

10. *... a dress entangled in thistles ...*

11. Lullaby II

12. Psalm (A)

13. *... with tiny lanterns
they haunted the rubbish dumps ...*

14. *... shade
in the heat of noon,
light in darkness,
shelter from frost and rain,
conveyance at the hour of weariness,
help in extremity, so that
under Thy guidance
safely we may attain that place
to which we are drawn;*

... so that the stars propitiously conjoin above us

15. *In the end, awaiting recovery
she is placed in a hospital where ...*

*Still she lives on, infirm
in body and mind.*

16. Intermezzo (B)

17. *... the breaking
of time from day to day*

*and from hour to hour,
it is rust and fire
and the salt of the planets
darkness even at noon and
luminaries absent from heaven.*

18. Intermezzo (C)

19. Lullaby III

20. Psalm (B)

21. *... a dress entangled in thistles ...*

22. *... while behind us already the green trees are
leaving their leaves ...*

*The black bird that in its beak
carries a break-time meal
to St. Anthony on his site
in the desert may be the one with
the heart of glass, the bird
flying ever closer to us ...*

*... the water boils itself out,
... the earth trembles and the great city
with the iron tower stands in flames,*

*and darkness comes and with it a yellow dust
that covers the land.*

Book 2

23. Lullaby I

24. *Whoever closes the wings
of the altar in the Lindenhardt
parish church and locks up
the carved figures in their casing
on the lefthand panel
will be met by St. George.*

25. March

26. Fragment

27. *... azure-blue,
carmine-red and glaucous green,
in their glow reflecting
the cotton clouds, those white ones
into which without a word the breath
of legions of human beings has been absorbed.*

28. *Spreading out above them
is the branch work
of a fig tree with fruit, one of which
is entirely hollowed out by insects.*

29. *On the Basel Crucifixion of 1505
behind the group of mourners
a landscape reaches so far into the depth
that our eyes cannot see its limits.
A patch of brown scorched earth*

whose contour like the head of a whale
or an open-mouthed leviathan
devours the pale green meadow plains,
and the marshily shining stretches
of water. Above it, pushed off
to behind the horizon, which step
by step grows darker, more glowering,
rise the hills of pre-history ...

30. Lullaby IV

31. Scherzo (B)

32. Lullaby II

33. *The air stirs the light ...*

34. *Peer ahead sharply,
there you see in the greying of nightfall
the distant windmills turn.
The forest recedes, truly,
so far that one cannot tell
where it once lay, and the ice-house
opens, and rime, on to the field, traces
a colourless image of Earth.
So, when the optic nerve
tears, in the still space of the air
all turns as white as
the snow on the Alps.*

35. Intermezzo (D)

66 36. *... under the rainbow arching
over the land, the horsemen
advance from their camp*

*I know that the old coat is tearing
and I am afraid
of the ending of time.*

37. *A crow on the wing lost a white feather.
The vicar, a limping messenger in a black coat,
appeared on New Year's morning
alone on the wide snow-covered field.*

38. *... already the storm was hanging ...*

39. *... in a different consistency
of the air, whose deoxygenated void
in the gasping breath of the figures ...*

40. *... the eclipse of the sun,
so will have become a witness to
the secret sickening away of the world,
in which a phantasmal encroachment of dusk
in the midst of daytime like a fainting fit
poured through the vault of the sky ...*

41. *It was when darkness crept in and far below me
I saw the roof of my house,
saw the shadows falling ...*

*so soundlessly I glided,
scarcely moving a wing,
high above the earth ...*

Part III one day may become menace

All poetical text by Marius Kociejowski (* 1949)

Book 1

1. Prelude

2. *Sew me into a shroud of leaves*

3. *one day may become menace*

4. Intermezzo (A)

5. *A burning of straw in the countryside ...
An asylum where he may dry his clothes ...
A soul covered with bruises ...*

6. Intermezzo (B)

7. Lullaby (I)

8. March

9. Lullaby (II) – after the nursery rhyme *Ah, vous
dirai-je, maman*

10. Intermezzo (C)

11. Chaconne

12. Hymn

13. Intermezzo (D)

14. Fugue

15. Intermezzo (E)

16. *... the monks' graves anonymous beneath the
lemon trees.*

17. Intermezzo (F)

18. *... down the corridor's bright glare to the cour-
tyard beyond (A)*

19. *... darkness fills the stable
Darkness floods the cradle ...*

20. Intermezzo (G)

Book 2

21. *We shall wear paper crowns, if need be.*

22. Intermezzo (H)

23. *... the birds exploded
Out of blades of still grass.*

24. *Who, if suddenly the world broke, would
probe the rubble ...?*

25. *... through his body a disturbed earth.*

26. Intermezzo (I)

27. *Death is relayed
From branch to root,
Rock to unblinking eye.*

28. *Out of skins stretched
Upon racks of bone, eyes
Stare glassily towards
A cold periapt of sun.
Beneath snow,
A struggle of flowers ...*

29. *Where is the woman running to,
And who do you suppose she thinks pursues her?
The branches of the trees scratch her pretty face
And she can barely see as she stumbles
Over, across the broken world ...*

30. Intermezzo (J)

31. Song

32. *The hills deepen with mauve,
And the bloated sun slides, bleeds over the distant
pines ...
As though piloted by some ghostly flame ...*

33. *... galvanizing the flies ...*

34. Intermezzo (K)

35. *What is there on a day such as this that allows
for a massacre ...*

36. *The sun swings a bayonet through the leaves,
And descends in slow widening columns.*

37. *Sleep, child; it is only
A dream I made for you (I)*

38. *A hieroglyph of broken twigs,
The skeletons of small animals,
The sticking burr of thistle –*

39. Intermezzo (L)

40. *She is told that she must be always brave,
Always a companion to stone.*

Book 3

41. *... the broken arches*

42. Intermezzo (M)

43. *The horsemen will know
And will stay unmoved.*

44. *A cut sapling gripped in the hand
And swung through the air.*

45. Intermezzo (N)

46. *The dead lay sprawled all over the place,
their wounds bright ...
Bits of plaster from the death mask sticking to
your face ...*

47. *The blood filling his shoes.*

48. *An apostrophe hanging in space.
A scream flew up out of the bramble.*

49. Intermezzo (O)

50. *Go, catch the slightest air should any come.*

51. *Another arrow pierces the lion's shoulder and
another the lion's spine ...
Smoke hangs above the tumbled brick which
housed your throne.*

52. *... clanging emblems burn in midair*

53. *... a world too soaked with blood to revere.*

54. *... down the corridor's bright glare to the cour-
tyard beyond ... (B)*

55. Intermezzo (P)

56. *... The innocent who in their madness strayed,
Who mistook for seraphim a bright lamp
Beneath the waters camouflaging death.*

57. *Sleep child; it is only
A dream I made for you. (II)*

58. *There was nothing could be done to save
them.*

59. *Where did Dante first hear light's absence?*

60. *... I feel death hanging close.
The solstice falls short ...*

61. *... wasps have settled upon our lips.*

62. *My daughter ... these are distances
The stammering mind cannot hold.
A spider draws a line of thin silk
Across the room's impossible length.*