

# Granville

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For Michael Turner

## Introduction

Just like anything else, this collection of poems requires a little background, so I will start at the beginning.

I have been writing poetry in the English language for nine years now. That, of course, sounds like a dubious number even to me, since at the present time I am only twenty-four years old: “only” by today’s standards, however; by this age, Lord Byron already bedded a city of young men and women and wrote a thousand scathing satires. Oh well.

My first poem was written as a fill-in-the-blanks exercise in ninth grade English class. That was when I first secretly called myself a poet. It was like calling yourself an actor or a musician, only it was sillier, because when you grew up you could not make your living as a poet. Everyone knew that; but I have been filling in the blanks ever since, anyway. Oh well.

Titled *Granville* this book is, naturally, about the street crossing the city of Vancouver from the Fraser River to the North Shore, from Richmond’s concrete airport estuary to the Downtown. Dedicated to Michael Turner, this book is also meant to be a sort of parallel to his *Kingsway*, which inspired me to take on this project, although technically the two streets never cross. *Granville*, however, is much more than a collection of poems. Just like the street cuts and dissects, shapes and outlines the city, so does this book cut open, compare and analyse my poetic beginnings.

But why Granville? Why not Oak, Cambie or Main? Simple. Imagine the city to be a (somewhat disproportionate) stick figure. Let Main and Cambie be two strong limbs, one a socio-political divider, another a lush place for leisurely motion (but not for long, it seems); let Marine Drive be a strong foot, UBC the head and Downtown the heart, and let Granville be the backbone, connecting all of the city’s vital organs, whether they be Marpole, Shaughnessy, Granville Island, or the DTES.

If this bizarre stick-man schematic makes Kingsway a bit of a phallus, it is not at all intentional: I spent the last nine years in Vancouver’s southwest and Downtown and thus I have developed a taste for certain select parts of the city. 70th Avenue, 49th, 41st, King Edward, Broadway, Davie, Thurlow, Georgia, Hastings and Water, they all have their points of attraction and interest, but this is precisely why I love Granville so: it cuts through all those other places, it brings you to them.

Even in simpler terms, Granville has quite a bizarre personality, rarely noticed because it is, by design, a functional street, a means to an end. First, it is flanked by the bit-white-trash Marine Drive, with the car dealerships and the “Real Canadian” Superstore and the community theatre and the Cold Beer & Wine store and the strip club/pub

thing, then, all of a sudden, it's all nice and tidy, but not quite, lower class alternating with lower-middle class in Marpole.

Then, half the kids get routed to the right, to Langara at 49th, half to the left, to UBC at 41st, and the rest – downtown. Next, there's a definite rise in scale of things, as the grass gets greener and the properties bigger on one side but smaller on the other, until you arrive at 16th and the stores kick in, some suspiciously looking like misplaced Robson boutiques, some just right, and there's a building carved out of an old building, because the shell is historical, coffee shops alternating with Eyes on Twelfth and Chapters, stuck at Broadway (itself a wonderful street) like a sore thumb, then the music stores and art galleries and then down under the bridge into the subterranean, half-bankrupt yuppie art stores and schizophrenic art festivals and theatrical productions, not all bad –

– but all a bit artificial like the island itself which is a completely different sight on the approach down Granville Rise onto the bridge, where Burrard competes on the other side, but it's not as great, and despite the added construction that blocks more and more of the sky, and the gentrified Lex (Luthor)-type “affordable” living condos slash 7/11 slash refurbished Save the Animals store, on to a handful of near-closed pizzerias and porno stores, still advertising connections for American swingers, graffiti popping up here and there, but something's wrong, because the Chateau Granville and the defunct Decadent Donuts and the tattoo parlour and the coffee shops, Blenz, Blenz, Starbucks and the yuppie club shit (parallel to Yaletown at all times) and the cinema row is gone, but Robson and two Café Crepes, a Future Shop, another Chapters, the Concrete Urinal, the Granville Block, now utterly out of place but cool as hell, then ~~Duthie's~~ London Drugs/Bank, the Coliseum looms ahead, the Ministry of Sorting Your Mail and the Shopping is Good of the Bay Company established before your granddaddy was born, beautiful Georgia with the dear, old VAG peeking out and the Skytrain, ready to take you away and another hollow skull of a Heritage Building and another bank, bank, bank, Water on the right, plus fake steam clock, dubious convention centre on the left, Electronic Farts, beautiful 200 Granville (try not to think of what's inside), one hundred steps on the platform with a leaf's imprint embedded into the concrete, and railroad tracks stretching to infinity and you're the king of the world and maybe you'll sit around and watch the sun set for a bit.

Interested yet?

So am I. As much as this collection of poems is about the street itself, it is also about where the street brings you, what the street makes you think, its citizens and denizens, its moods, length, structure and speed. Some poems here will hit the spot, some will miss it outright but hit something else, because they must, but the important thing is, things will move and I hope you, too, will be moved.

So that's it. Sit back and enjoy the ride.

– Mike.

*August 29, 2005 5:50 AM*

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## lifetime guarantee

it's seven fifty six

again

Cappelbaum is on the bus

realising

    this must be a

    purgatory of sorts

    because he's already been

    to all the better places

out the window

    a man in a yellow vest

    and a generator

    violate the morning street

    with electricity

Cappelbaum

shakes his head in disbelief

    and the bus

    too full today

    to signify anything real

hurries

to bring Cappelbaum to the next

    point

Cappelbaum closes his eyes

    sits tight tugging at his

    beard

    straightening his jacket

    tries again and again

    to catch the runaway collar

    between his forefinger and thumb

## **morning at granville and forty first**

yellow streetlamps black asphalt and water  
and the new gas station sign holds its 86.5  
and all the busses pass me with sparks  
yellow and white  
and it's dark

*From the Chinese Notebook, 2005*

## **talking to glass**

don't look at me now  
  sexy bus denizen  
let me pass  
lest I linger longer  
  on your tongue  
slip off your lips  
  make numb your  
  fingertips  
with electricity

don't complain in this place  
a superb smile traces my face  
  my lebensraum still  
on the dresser  
  from the night before  
  caressing visions of the young  
boy passing me on the street  
  with a bouquet  
and tomorrow

issue an order to  
carpetbomb all the chocolate  
  stores  
and if history dies  
  don't shed tears  
find the way out and  
  go  
lest you remain and i  
  in a drunken haze

will cut off your soft pink  
ears

**ode to neon**

they took your lover's pearls  
to work them in a frame  
of drinking nights  
inside glass lengths  
of crystal tubing

each drop milky white  
glistened on the table  
so that in slicing the eye  
they were able  
to make their work an art

it shrivelled in the light  
before it burst  
collected in petri dishes  
the pearl lay liquid  
gas  
waiting for customers' wishes

soon to come  
XXX  
99¢  
OPEN 24/7  
all the same really  
rude honest  
speaking freely

the new frontiersman  
wears a bitter rainbow  
on his sleeve  
twisted smiles bow down  
to ignorance's liege  
*noblesse oblige*

sunday parks  
Helium  
the dissonance of comic books  
with passionless crime  
Radon  
Xenon  
Krypton  
Argon  
Neon  
make empty rhyme  
and pretty looks

at nights when I sense  
loss of moral strength  
cut down to size  
I suck your love  
out of glass lengths  
with my eyes

## wrong turn

i know you  
or i know of you  
but I won't sit next to you  
because for I to sit  
next to you is  
like looking over your shoulder

outside the sky is not cold  
and it takes me a moment  
to understand the face  
of the passerby  
and the less sense I make  
the more I repeat the words

every morning  
bright and dull glow  
a fitting metaphor  
for the bus camaraderie

and an unvoiced throaty sound  
that just doesn't rhyme with anything

## granville street night

death was an amateur business here  
  he said to me pot bud  
  hey come on gotta experiment  
two scrappy parrots  
the florist giving way to  
strange space  
  between crushed social skills  
  and the dancing nerve centre  
for a parking lot

someday  
  I'll write a poem  
about this place  
  about coffeecup vulvas  
rainy glossed line ups  
and evenings full of  
new fusion  
  sepiate serviettes  
  and a calm that elongates elides  
makes the night mine

**now**

it's eight forty five  
near granville and sixty seventh  
and the number ten is perpetually late  
what is rain

i get on  
note the cute girl in the far right corner  
rain is saying  
love you love you love you  
time and again  
into her cellphone

on the windows  
rain is muffling the light and the  
motion and ache  
in the midst of dirt  
ordered along watery lines  
and the little speaker whispers back  
but i can't hear

## **bus**

In motion, once more  
the evening's predators  
mine, either way  
Sun rise, sun set  
The polite hands of  
the wheels; a sort of  
a communal  
moral police, really  
Tasks, tusks and risks  
we're all undue in good time  
  
Relax. You're going places.

## headline news

man  
what a drag  
it all happens there  
    while i sit at home  
reading meaning  
    between Wordsworth's  
lines

front page  
vancouver 19 year old  
caught with \$10,000 worth of  
ecstasy in her underwear

now *that's* the kind of line  
    you want to read between  
too bad it's not really all there  
    but Wordsworth was right in the end  
your imagination is worth  
thousands of strange turn ons  
    and more

*From the Chinese Notebook, 2004*

## freudian slip

sycophantic  
in a societal mode  
of transportation  
(with a miniscule)  
stuck inbetween  
a socio/strike pathic  
no, even psycho  
variation  
on a theme

the pen always  
gives out  
at inopportune  
doubleminusgood  
where would you be,  
my love,  
without the steep scale  
of ratings,  
without the star system

levitating above  
claustrophobically low  
concrete gardens,  
giving the ground  
a close shave  
with my propellers

– how any more typical  
could..  
– how much more liquid..  
more innocent?  
(there is an observable limit,  
after all)

above the striped  
strikes of  
fate, and below  
the voluminous beats  
of the clockmaker's  
heart

above the  
arrogantly assured  
looks,  
beyond  
the incredulity  
of recursion

meeting the seven o'clock  
from tomorrow,  
in an ink stain  
on your desk

where your  
most favourite  
are dusty tomes  
and sexless,  
quite literally  
now

now's your  
cue to smile,  
boy

smile

## street signs

there's an open window  
where my reflected face should be  
and all i can think of is

honest food – honest service  
like an equation that runs the world  
but never makes sense

there is no such thing as  
honest food  
the tomatoes are simply lying in wait  
and it's only a matter of time  
until the medium rare cheeseburgers  
will rise up in arms  
off their plates

and the service won't be honest  
no more



## particle effects

like a badly drawn effect  
I wait for the  
wrong bus  
wrong long bus  
and another one

there is water on the ground  
moisture in the air  
and the  
WIND  
and the wind

as each one of the  
wrong busses  
passes  
lets me know  
i'm there

## **mired**

this morning i saw an actor  
practicing lines on the bus

earlier while i slept  
they called me warned me  
they'd cut the dataline to my  
datalust

then an ambulance wailed  
through the street  
someone will die tonight  
but I don't mind

some bitch took my place  
on the bus some other  
bitch wrote on the glass  
with a marker and i

on the other side  
wiped a small patch of glass  
myself and saw there was  
nothing either outside

## buffer overflow

today scientists declared that  
life is harmful to life  
now it's a matter of time  
before the FCC and the USDA  
approve it

YOU WANT CONSTANTS  
shouts the mathematician  
the bush stays green  
the cow says moo  
the mudflap says  
concrete is best  
as if there is something else

the game has been roofed  
in tendercropped flashes  
of street and avenue crossings  
in the fear of is this my  
stop is this my burden of proof  
of purchase or  
is it just my mood

*From the Chinese Notebook, 2004*

## cappelbaum's protest

It's morning  
and Cappelbaum  
is shaking  
on a bus, downtown

between a painfully  
fashionable  
youth, and  
a Chinese lady  
with groceries

Cappelbaum winces

it's too early  
for groceries

The shortest distance  
between two points  
is the place to be  
on a morning  
like this

Arriving at gate five  
to the down town  
Cappelbaum loses his spirit  
and breaks, his city is gone  
in the white tufts of his

grandmother's hair  
hanging dejectedly  
to the left right  
and roundabout

the Granville street  
ark  
moving in the  
waters

Cappelbaum walks  
through his favourite  
stretch  
pornography  
stores  
and ninety-nine  
cent pizzerias  
turned to staked  
out landmarks

Everything  
runs the course  
on the approach  
path to library  
square  
seeing the  
pitiful discord  
of someone's  
remote catharsis

standing between  
Lawyers Against War  
and Mothers for Peace  
Cappelbaum feels  
like a fish

out of water  
left on the  
gutting table  
innards aghast  
by the power  
of a telephone  
call

Clutching his  
individuality  
Cappelbaum walks on  
through the city's  
business district  
in ruins

among a veiled  
disposition of  
ignorance  
no shiver  
of hope, in double  
edged  
maxims  
and slogans

Cappelbaum,  
swayed by the  
crowd  
walks on

## **variation near the station (thought #5)**

tabula rasa hello i open the door i fall i cry i lie i sit the wooden bench the wind the air the noise so calm the noise people around a child hello it is so nice here a noise some birds chirping bus fare bus fare turn the cell phone off and listen noise drilling no misunderstanding noise is nice screech of the brakes still nice a lady in beige a lady in sunglasses she's waiting the bus the bus a man yes a paperball some people crossout crossout now my pen scratches and a fly hi it is not there but it is here hello i beg you now and then to stop to stay to run wild colors in my mind more people yet you'll never see what do i do now and they did ire their sins and happiness of crumpled paper witherspoon anew so who is that hi it is not here no bird a doorway with a hinge two hundred granville street ahoy and there and here and up still purple notepad of the past and people now i smile despite the harmless noise and images of fury are all fake and substitute my eyes are made the fools the birds and the cemented tree concrete slab dune a battle done still chirping and i smile again and yet and yet black jello cubes upon the lampposts noises likes and people here the building thinning as i lie and stand and yet and yet the notepad of my soul it is unclear it is unclear euphoria at fifty strength still lying here and there

## in spite of the rusty microphone

what's the difference now  
you were dead on  
selby ginsberg kerouac  
back from  
back from  
and moving downtown  
towards the coffee joint  
as yuppie as  
did you hear  
legs up to here  
no waist  
and a white electric cord  
wrapped around a shaking fist

being here makes me want  
to live in the past  
twenty years  
picked selectively apart  
and taste  
the tingle  
this touch of being somewhere  
with the cheap beating music  
lingerie magazines  
lingerie  
sex pills  
and in the corner  
shyly  
keys cut

before buying  
check the requirements and  
compatibility of each  
species of fish and  
create Great Poetry and  
Great Music and make money  
let go and  
  
let go  
and  
let go

*From Folio IV – Green, Volume I – Blue Book, 2005*

## true love

x reflected in y reflected in z  
the moon  
lone stars  
tree  
sky  
i can reach out on water reflections  
anywhere  
i and the sirens in the  
distant city  
soldiers out on a walk  
the moonlamp shines bright

three girls  
silence  
the waves  
the path leads your way  
soon  
the light  
and the sound  
smell of weed  
english bay  
what's a ride without fall  
some stupid old fart shouts

NO RIDING ON THE SIDEWALK  
like in 1996  
but he's soon left behind  
80s neon on my left  
stylish japanese chicks  
on my right  
and the turn  
the clubs  
c'mon let me in  
hey guys let me do  
a drum solo sailors

but these are fake  
  here we met  
i turn back  
  to give all my change  
  to a girl  
  i don't mind  
i ask her name  
then forget it  
  just in case tell her mine  
then the bridge 1390  
and back

  and burrard stands  
on eternity  
the harbour like death  
  black in a warm way  
no brakes in a frenzy of wind  
  i piss in the bushes  
  'bove the overpass  
  and the moon is still there  
rise on granville  
  just me and my brother  
pass curb road sidewalk curb

faster faster  
and the streets are one  
  and my pain is memory  
  speed is my light  
and the air  
  and the lamps  
  and the turn  
  are deranged  
and i come in home from the night

i come back  
  changed

## revelation

i haven't gotten  
out of my room  
for ages now  
so everything is poetry

the united way of sterling  
youth the franco prussian  
strategic alliance  
the western union

I'm sending money for an education  
I'm studying global trade  
I have what it takes to start my own business  
I am continuing and international

## cell death

hi  
how are you  
oh yeah  
what did he say

what indeed  
can chop a cat's  
tail into two halves  
of a prisoner's song

yeah i'm on the bus  
going fast coming home  
hey did you see the game  
oh well  
oh no

well this is what  
you've bargained for  
on your ever reaching  
cell you divide into the  
earpiece and the microphone

so that  
you are always there  
so what  
i have my  
notebook  
my pen

and I'm as  
equally  
connected  
as you  
to yester  
day's  
parties'  
ghosts

on no  
signal  
weak  
carrier  
lost  
try dialing  
again

*From the Chinese Notebook, 2004*



## observatory

sparse  
sparrow change  
  bus  
face  
  sky  
parrot  
  basie

blue fairy  
  line sign  
  over the limit  
plaid coffee  
  with a cigarette  
  in it  
red

tap tip top  
ten pixel  
  blurry  
  lie  
you  
  tool  
  will soon be  
  as still  
as simi & roger  
at six

## people waiting at the bus stop

young man approaching  
young man approaching  
young man approaching  
    the waiting  
    bus stop

young man circles  
young man circles  
young man circles  
    the waiting bus  
    stop

    older woman  
clutching a binder  
clutching a binder  
right up behind her  
    bearded hobo  
right up behind her

young man watches as  
    bearded hobo  
roots through the trashcan  
roots through the ashtrays  
    business suit  
is holding a bim  
    bo  
young man leaves  
young man approaches

cellphoned girl is making her  
    passes  
young man circles the bus  
    stop  
bearded hobo is selling  
bus passes  
bearded hobo is selling bus  
    passes

older woman  
clutching a binder  
business suit is b/s-ing the bim  
bo  
young man circles the bus  
stop  
bearded hobo is watching the bus  
to  
arbutus  
pass  
or

young clubbing chick in  
jeans  
high heels trip  
ping  
business suit is  
looking  
young clubbing chick in  
high heels hopping  
young clubbing chick in  
high heels hopping  
business suit is groping  
bim  
bo

young man puts his hands  
in his pockets  
young man stops  
turns  
makes an ellipse  
older woman  
is switching her walkman  
older woman  
is switching her walkman

young man forward the  
bus not showing  
noseringed man is lighting  
a deathstick  
noseringed man is lighting  
a deathstick  
young man backwards the  
bus not coming  
noseringed man sees  
ubc seventeen  
older woman  
stands at the signpost  
older woman  
stands at the signpost  
half get on  
half  
young man circling  
the bus  
stop

older woman is clutching  
her binder  
older woman is clutching  
her binder  
bimbo stares  
idiotically smiling  
young man turns  
someone  
behind him

bearded hobo is back  
at the alley  
older woman is  
getting her money  
young man stops  
getting his wallet  
young man stops  
getting his wallet  
young man steps  
and is leaving on gran  
ville

**how things come together  
despite the fact they must come together  
and that you orchestrated your life knowing that**

fill gapped beyond belief  
hit myself upside the head  
static  
to shake the ' noise out of my head  
w H A M  
what a geek  
with his cognitively dissonant wardrobe  
no seriously how can anyone  
dress without a purpose in mind  
shakes his pen  
i shake off my cigarette  
and walk back into the

music as i pass club number b  
noticing the cute underage looking  
chinese chick all cooked to a crisp  
wized one hundred years old inside  
but now cute beyond belief  
i sit down open my damn  
nation notebook to its tabular  
razor and start to write  
watching the ink dry

**i'm out of ink ironically  
preordained (i have to smile  
afterwards but now i look  
at the cool smoking asian  
chick who flicks off the ash  
and i temporarily close  
my note book to get on the bus**

## the shortest distance

i ride  
to the  
sound  
of soothingly  
violent  
music

as a  
puzzle  
of invisible  
flesh  
as the  
wind  
i ride  
a contraption  
on mechanical  
wings

surrounded  
but alone  
a god  
yet blind  
the earth  
runs  
beneath  
my feet

a dead  
moth  
on the  
wind  
shield  
unwiped  
the wind  
flapping  
its wings

and still  
sullen  
yet  
alive  
the morning  
ride  
from a  
place  
of forged  
sadness  
to a  
place  
of counterfeit  
passion

and the  
sky  
and the  
wind

## mental work

rhyiming with  
erased phrases  
exhilaration costs  
nothing  
lone stops line  
breaks  
adrenaline tiptoes  
all the rage

time is a defocusing  
measure of  
light  
play on words  
a calculated  
break in  
the breeze of  
thinking about

stopping but  
never a pause  
at times like  
these  
being the  
attenuative  
nerve centre  
of the white spat  
of holy ejaculate

triumph  
jeans pocket victory  
and another  
part knows  
where to stop  
but it's not  
that you've lost  
a beat  
on the day

but now  
on a crowded bus  
speeding toward  
space  
sun and light  
with the entire world  
looking over my shoulder

i find time  
and again

*From Folio III – Black, Volume II – Restated Intentions, 2004*

## relative non-event

this is my vocation and call  
if these days  
one can be said to have an occupation  
at all

I ride in busses all day  
and to the silent dismay of the  
masses  
i observe

road construction  
eating lunch  
on the way to school  
too well dressed  
too poor  
too cool

well caressed by plastic and gasoline  
whom do you serve  
how do you sleep  
where have you been

to that they would answer  
I've no wings no tail  
no tales to tell  
you ride here too  
no escape  
no avail

I reply yes  
you are perfectly frank  
but at least i can tell  
between deleting a thing and  
replacing it with a blank

## ninja star wars car

I'll do all these things when I'm back  
when  
  there are two minutes in a day  
  and  
  one hundred satangs in each bacht  
and wild mongolian ass  
dziggetai  
ambush ptolemy at eureka.org  
  ten naked thai boys  
  suck each other's cocks  
  on their days off  
but i don't mind  
  why  
  is the sky brown  
  like old tea on a nightgown  
why does society begin with m  
and sex times eight equals sixty two and a  
  half  
why does my skin balk at "33x  
or in the silence of the calves  
  i see tomatoes on thin legs  
  but i'll suck their juice if they  
  turn their backs  
  till there's nothing left  
i'll do all these things when i'm  
  back

*From the Chinese Notebook, 2004*

## waking up on the bus on the way to

a perfectly  
segued  
awakening  
where  
it's so  
familiarily  
alien  
minutes  
ago

waking up  
and then  
moving  
realizing  
everything  
not yet  
not  
yet

laughing  
at my  
dreams  
smirking  
at  
small  
private  
jokes  
addressed  
post  
haste  
care of  
my mind

as the  
day  
sets  
in

## un nuit dans un vaincu verre

every day  
after waking up  
I yawn then remember  
nine short years  
and the city is gone

we all like to talk  
about goodwill and what thrives  
but in the end  
it's not about specialty streets  
like kingsway cambie commercial drive

but granville bisecting the city  
richmond marpole shaughnessy  
the mini island and the down town  
pretty and gritty  
it's all tops

but where are the porno stores  
book stores  
films  
99cent pizza  
shops

tucked the comics away after the bridge  
flanked the street with blenz  
put in clubs for the wannabe fast rich  
opposite taf's  
laughs

but no more granville book  
or capitol six  
further down  
raised the rents  
cut the bus closed more books

carved condoland style  
out of an ancient skull's parts  
and in the end killed the mountains  
with electronic arts  
for their looks

*From Folio III – Black, Volume II – Restated Intentions, 2005*

## what would happen

what would happen  
if i  
stepped down on the last step  
pushed the bar to get out  
emergency exit only  
glass and all  
filled the void  
of memory with coloured lights  
listened to jazz drank night drank  
wine  
broke lines on nonexistent forms  
that i  
if that would happen what

*From the Chinese Notebook, 2004*



Michael G. Khmelnitsky likes to be called Mike. He was born in 1981 in an imaginary country known as the USSR. In 1991 he moved to Israel with his parents and late brother, and in 1996 his family moved to Vancouver, Canada, where he started writing poetry and hasn't stopped since. Mike lives there with his turtle Turtle and mice Natalie and Fergie. He is currently working on his B.A. in the UBC Honours English program.