

v.7
Annotated libretto
State of the Union
Scott Diel

State of the Union

"...I suspect that men are going this way for the last
time..."

-Robert Traver

Dramatis personae

12 VOICES (6 male, 6 female), representing four characters:

THE ENVIRONMENT, a.k.a. the climate, the planet, God. It is close to an objective voice.

ONE-PERCENTERS, a.k.a. corporations, corporate supporters.

THE MIDDLE CLASS, a.k.a. the somewhat oblivious, the consumer-citizen.

THE LOWER CLASS, a.k.a. the disenfranchised, the inconsequential, a non-entity.

A SOLO VOICE might be considered for movement V.

Comments on movements in terms of character and tone

- I. Maanvaalija - Here the ENVIRONMENT speaks, laying out a clear position about the damage man has done
- II. Reich - The ONE-PERCENTERS speak
- III. Oblivio - the heavily distracted, MIDDLE CLASS speaks
- IV. Lumpen - The short voice of the disenfranchised LOWER CLASS
- V. Tikkun olam - a SOLO VOICE - voice of conscience - Hebrew for "repairing the world"
- VI. Dis-quaterere - the characters debate
- VII. Maanvaalija - In the final movement the environment returns but speaks facetiously, laughs at humans. This is the "you're probably fucked but take your best shot" culmination.

I. Maanvalija

Javan Rhino
 Gorilla beringei beringei
 Leatherback Turtle
 Pseudoryx nghetinhensis

Carbon farting
 Deindustrialization
 Factories sent east
 Greenwashing

Amur Leopard
 Diceros bicornis
 Cross River Gorilla
 Eretmochelys imbricata

Cap and trade
 A price on carbon
 Thirty-six billion tons

South China Tiger
 Elephas maximus sumatranus
 Sumatran Orangutan
 Dicerorhinus sumatrensis

Carbon spike
 acidify the oceans
 100 years
 50% of species extinct

Aceh Pheasant
 Haematopus moquini
 African Gray Parrot
 Pseudocalyptomena graueri

Business rewarded
 for accelerating
 climate change

Abbott's Booby
 Cinnycinclus femoralis
 Aberdare Cisticola
 Macronyx flavicollis

Citizens as thoughtful

as the inhabitants
of a second-hand
wax museum

African Penguin
Rynchops flavirostris
Sumatran Tiger
Phocoena sinus

Helplessness
Fossil fuel subsidies
Over twelve billion
Despite a president's efforts

Inequality
CEO salaries 300 times
greater than labor
Labor thinks it's 30

Backlash
What can you do?
Write an opera?

II. Reich

Welcome like thinkers
To our super-exclusive community
Where corporate values
Are community values

Gated
Verdant
Pastoral
Fortified

Private
Prestigious
Protected

Ranch, Club, Hills, Brooke, Village, Ridge, Creek,
Pointe, Park, Lake, Trail, Walk, Woods, Bend, Grove,
Oaks, Run, Meadows, Sanctuary, Gardens, Shady

[From a dramatic standpoint, I suggest the
above stanza *not* be dwelled upon - feel
free to race through the names. Exception:
the very last one, "*shady*." Due to double

meaning let music dwell on it, if you
wish.]

You never need to leave
Townes [sung "townies" or "Tow-NESS"?]
Shoppes [sung "shoppies" or "Shop-PESS"]
Sustainable malls

Low risk of being killed
by big government regulation
Or drowning in the mire of
anti-business mood music.

Red carpet rolled out
for multi-nationals
Red tape cut with
tailored tax solutions

Here two plus two equals five!
Synergy
ROI
EBITDA

They're not here, the poor,
Misguided, misinformed
The product of public educations
Haven't had the advantages we've had

Oh, the CSR we've done!
Chinese bikes for the poor.
We've taken no medals for that
And the PR value was secondary

Russell Brand and his revolution
What'll he do? Start a Facebook group?
Change your profile colors to Ukraine's

Frowny faces to
Kim Jong-un
Alexander Lukashenko
Viktor Orban

How many divisions has the Pope?

We've worked so hard
for what we have
Minimum wage: A serious threat
to what we have

Give back
When it

finally
trickles down

And we're green
Nothing greener than a golf course
Grass tennis courts
Farmers' market. Trader Joe's

Love bicycles
Keep a pair on our yacht
Where are my spandex trousers, dear?
A brisk ride inside the compound wall

We're concerned
about carbon
All those lawnmowers
out there

Separate glass from plastic
Organic to the compost
Tote those grass clippings, Juan.
Anita, save that brie rind

Public transit's great
Wouldn't work in our town, though
Chopper in and out,
Reluctantly of course

Dick Cheney
Poor daughter's a lesbian
Still loves her no doubt
And the last fishable stream will be on his ranch

We've got answers for those
Who don't even know the questions
Answers for those
Who don't even know the questions

Negotiation
from a position
of strength
is not coercion

The Koch brothers say so.

#firstworldproblems
#firstworldproblems
#firstworldproblems
#firstworldproblems

Make these children sound,

*useful members of the commonwealth
They shall contribute to the feeding,
and partly to the clothing*

*No other motive than the public good
Advance our trade, provide for infants
Relieve the poor
Give some pleasure to the rich*

[The previous two stanzas are Jonathan Swift. Dramatically I don't think they should be dwelled on too much, so feel free to move quickly through them. Exception: the very last line, "Give some pleasure to the rich." This may be worth dwelling on.]

III. Oblivio

"Middle class" the new pejorative
Make us hate them, hate ourselves
the greatest wizardry of the one percent

15 bucks an hour?
To serve us burgers?
Get off your ass and earn it.

Occupy anything
Anything at all
Get arrested
By illiterate cops

Pierced, leather clad, tattooed
Hipster or grunge,
it's our escape
Being different in the same way

Start a Facebook group.
Join a group.
Frowns to you,
Fucking one-percenters

We're a number
Screwed no matter what
Recycle all you want and there's still China
Gooks, slant-eyes; aren't they Muslim too?

This disaster has grown
beyond the choices
that individuals make

Not just about telling people
to change their lightbulbs
or buy a hybrid car

Eliminate subsidies
for oil and gas
Thanks, Leonardo

Top Hollywood star
earns 75 million a year.
George Soros took home
Four billion

David Tapper three-point-five billion
Steve Cohen two-point-three billion
John Paulson one-point-nine billion

Soros helps the poor
Those living under tyranny
Hasn't changed the system
Happy to have the system

What can one vassal do?
Take a good beating.
First night rights to the manor lord.

The feudal system is still with us.
A higher standard of living.
Rising tide lifts all boats
The yacht still nicer than the rowboat

Bread, circus, NASCAR
Dancing with the Stars
Whatever with the Stars

Middle class
Backbone of the nation
We're hardly the real masses
Give us awareness

Retirement accounts invested in oil
We're all complicit
If only we knew
But of course we know

RTTB
Race to the bottom

RTTB

Race to the bottom

One voice can change a room
 Can change a city, a state
 Can change a nation
 One voice can change the world

The greatness to bend history
 Change a small portion of events
 Numberless diverse acts of courage and belief
 Human history is shaped

IV. Lumpen

Public money
 Corporate welfare
 Campaign contributions
 Wars for oil

Our sons who fight
 Our sons who die
 Thank you for your service

BP
 Exxon
 Chevron
 Shell

Occidental
 Amerada Hess
 Marathon

We can't wait for tomorrow. Alcoa can't wait.
 Put a tiger in your tank.
 Taking on the world's toughest energy challenges.
 Beyond Petroleum
 Now we're greener than ever

Oceana Gold
 200,000 against
 Compel mining
 Poison drinking water

As long as it's Swanson
 Hungry Man
 Ronco

As seen on TV

Prison as industry
Healthcare as profit center

Burning fossil fuels brings
One-hundred-twenty billion per year
in health-related costs.

Foreclosure
Disarray
Chaos
Bankruptcy

Social spending not military spending
Social spending means a healthy citizenry
Social spending means an educated citizenry
Social spending means an active citizenry

As long as it's Swanson
As seen on TV

V. Tikkun olam

Three-hundred billion stars
most with planets
Where is everybody?
Did no one make it to the other side?

I have the answer
Follow me.

Ignore easy answers
when wisdom says:
Don't try too much,
everything ends in dust.

Decision makers only act
If they're afraid of you.
If you're informed,
If you show up and say so.

Active citizen
Means more than paying taxes
Perhaps defending your country,
though not necessarily
invading others

Don't leave it to others
 To work out the details
 Put down the Xbox
 Work out the details

Turn off the TV
 Raise your eyes from the app
 Show up
 Take part

Awareness
 Awakening
 Participation
 By only your own example

Don't look to government
 for leadership or inspiration
 It's not out of our hands
 Get our own house in order

Lead by example
 One person at a time
 Demand it of yourself
 Then ask it of others

Let's not die
 Not having made an effort
 Blaze of glory
 Not simply blaze

Follow me.

VI. Dis-quatere

MASSES: Cui bono? (Not us.)

1%er: You speak Latin?

MASSES: Poor don't mean stupid!

1%er:

Usually it does.

MASSES:

Put away the paternalism.

1%er:

Eat the poor.

MASSES:

Fear the poor!

ENVIRONMENT:

TV is ignorance rewarded.
Five hours per day on average.
Kill your television.

1%ers:

No reward without effort
No wealth without work
No success without sacrifice

We're getting it right.
I guarantee you.

ENVIRONMENT:

Tell me how this ends?
What do we win if we win?

MIDDLE CLASS:

A life of perpetual fear and tension.

We pay our taxes
We rack up debt
A lifetime of debt
Is this freedom?
Is this choice?

Can we model freedom
instead of impose it?

1%ers:

We are in a generational struggle
to defend the principles of the free
market against people
who want to undermine it.

Security
Stability
Prosperity

TalismanSaber
Tandem Thrust
Balikatan
Keen Edge

MIDDLE CLASS:

Overkill
Operation Overkill

1%ers:

Team Spirit
Praying Mantis

Power is a sign of God's favor

MASSES:

Talking cobblers
Bees and honey
Duke of Kent
Hampton Wick

[NB! The above is Cockney
rhyming slang for "nonsense,"
"money," "rent," and "prick,"
respectively.]

ENVIRONMENT:

You live in an era
Where viral is a positive

1%ERS:

Earnest Will
Eager Glacier

MIDDLE CLASS:

We come in peace.
We seek only gold and slaves.

MASSES:

What do you want in a Congress?

1%ers:

Keen and knowledgeable,
yet pliant.

MASSES:

Hank Marvin
Khyber Pass
Orchestra stalls
Tea leaf

[NB! The above is Cockney
rhyming slang for "starving,"
"arse," "balls," and "thief,"
respectively.]

1%ers:

Errors or misjudgments
committed in good faith.
Done what needed doing.
Get a job, suckers

MASSES:

The poor have jobs, your Lordships.

Cui bono?
Cui bono?

VII. Maanvalija

Do you have it within your power
to begin the world
over again?

Morality
Men invariably follow interests
in deciding morals

A world

where the weak are safe
and the strong are just

COP Twenty-One
One-hundred and sixty three
will agree on something?

Has anyone ever made it out?
Will you make it out alive?

Strix occidentalis
Panthera uncia
Homo sapiens

No one is coming to the rescue.
Rescue yourselves
Munchhausen's pigtail.

Only Elon Musk can save you
Privately financed
A half-million per passenger
One-way ticket

Burn up here
Burn up there

The most powerful nation on earth
The most powerful man in the world
The most powerful deodorant available

The rich are not holy
Wealth is not wisdom
The poor are not guilty
Poverty is not shame
The rulers are not (all) buffoons
Politics is not governance

Think for yourself
Empower others to
think for themselves
That is noble.

Good luck.
Good night.
God bless.
Godspeed.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the following for their assistance with the libretto: David Cameron, Slavoj Žižek, David Shoup, George Osborne, Curtis LeMay, Prince Ea, Henry Adams, Digby Jones, Jonathan Swift, Dwight Eisenhower, Paul Wolfowitz, David Petraeus, Roger Morris, James William Fulbright, Russell Brand, Andrew Bacevich, Alexander Bald, Al Gore Sr., Robert Traver, Jane Goodall, Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Paine, Robert Kennedy, and Sherman McCoy.