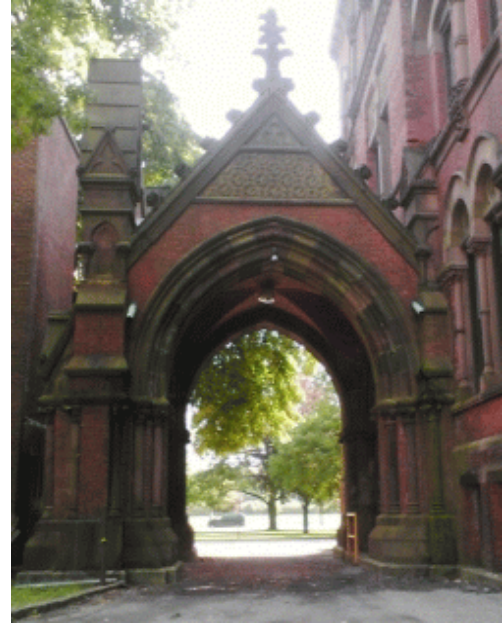


st paul's garden city

from further away
this high victorian gothic building
stands regal
closer it shows its age
it's now derelict
its roman-numeral'd tower clocks
have stopped at two twenty three
ten after three five to five
one minute to seven



up the pitted pot-holed driveway
i bicycle to my favorite rest stop
where an invigorating breeze blows through
under a vaulted deeply-shaded archway
next to boarded-over basement windows
blackened brick missing mortar fallen roofing shingles
chained door handles between school and gymnasium
miniature gargoyles perched on columns
threatening guarding only me

on this humid summer day
i savor half-chilled cool-blue gatorade
physically comforted yet disquieted about
an empty school and its echoes
the scent of polished wooden floors now scuffed and dusty
the view through classroom windows now begrimed
the lingering sense of magic and wonder that'd taken place
within these abandoned walls