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Notes on Elgar's Second Symphony

It begins like something ending.

That is its peculiar greatness speaking.
It is the *after* itself,
the after from which the new world begins,

a new world that seems to hold a sweetness still,
to sound at first as sweet as the sweet parts of the old.

But all the gas-blinded soldiers
are hidden in King Arthur's woods

and no one admits it, there is no food anymore.

18 August 2007

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Twins lost in the woods of each other
My hand reaches out to me through the leaves.

19 VIII 07

THE AWAYERS

From the balcony of the opera house
I look out the great windows and see
strolling towards me over the big lawn
the dead. The personal dead, the ones
who know my names and I know their faces,
the lost integument of my social mind.
They drift towards me like distant music,
their faces preoccupied and kind.

19 August 2007

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or something waiting
gold band around the tree
turns out to be last light
who knew the sun
could be so tender to
and marry someone
right there ash or locust
too far to tell except
the little leaves the little
leaves.

19 August 2007

AS IF

As if there were somebody
waiting for me

as if there were a door I couldn't close

your hand grasp

summer than mine

as if a morning hand
had to clear its throat

as if a sidewalk accident on Sunday

filthy becomingnesses!

as if there were always one over

as if the linden shed leaf bracts
all over the deck

as if you and I knew each other's name

as if we were born twins but I died and you survive

and you live on

as if that is who you are

but you can't decide

as if it were ever enough

proper management of modal auxiliaries
is the secret of a happy life

as if nothing could be contrary to fact

as if a light left on

as if a stone

there is a measure here all the relenting

as if it didn't stop to breathe

a stone at the bottom of the well

as if milk.

[...19 August 2007]

NAUVOO HYMN

for the Church of the Risen Joseph

We saw his white body
we counted all his wounds.
We said we laid him down
in the American ground.

But by night we to the river
took our lord's remains
and in the morning found
a woundless Excellence.

His eyes were all on fire,
a smile of big forgiveness
on his face he stood there
before us teaching still:

Tell no one
for a hundred years
that I am risen

I go to do my work
in secret and in truth
until the sky is right

you can tell the people
I'll be coming when
they do something to the moon.

20 August 2007

= = = = =

Chance after all to be clear—
jungle evidence – spadework
ancient paved roads of Amazonia

the lost city of Now.
The wind blows
near to my beginning.

Set a word down like a glass
on the polished oak
then drink it. Swallow

the meagerest supposition
and we discover
what we always knew

that we always were.

20 August 2007

MAN AFRAID OF GIRL

Embolism of the soul,
the outside stuck inside,

aesthetics rule
where yen should roll.

Zeus, zeus me!
she cries, but he

frightened still
is fretful of his incapacity.

For Zeus was old then
and a scabbard.

On the roof tiles a serpent crept
blessing slow sentences in dust.

20 August 2007

THE PLACE

Before we met there was a place.
Another place, pale

shoulder off an evening gown.
A misprint in the sky.

*

We landed there. They took
our bags away, later
we found them in the hotel
full of new and inexperienced
items, jewels and small
clever animals who spoke,
and stacks of leather dictionaries
along with all our own
clothes and remedies intact.
How much they had been able
to cram so neatly in our luggage!
There must be a whole caste
or clan of them, with ancient
heirloom skills in packaging.

*

But all night another sect kept singing
not far enough from the hotel—
not close enough to hear the words,
an illegible commotion. Finally
sleep became a circus of its own.

*

How had we gotten here
was our favorite question
to keep at bay the real one.
Why had we come?

*

There are centipedes like rainbows on the ceiling,

a warm rain like oyster shells outside.
Comparisons are tricky in the sub-tropics—
we waited for each other on the verandah
scorning the obsequious wait staff lingering.
But sometimes a juice of that green berry
so much like our northern grape but bitter,
bitter, and the waiters titter as we sip.
God smite the tourist graffiti all over town.

*

But it was your own warm shoulder
comforts me as I fall ever asleep.
Finally we could be anywhere again.

21 August 2007

NOTES FOUND IN THE JACKET OF THE MISSING MAN

Congruences everywhere
but measure rare.
Long coincidences
have sharp little teeth.

*

Pressed against my face and lips
the actual sound.
The ground of all the going—
sung up through the limb from.

*

Have I lost it?

—You never had it.

Who is speaking?

—Who is asking?

*

A star fell on Milton's foot.
It made him speak
the way a beautiful person
is all eliciting.

22 August 2007

A SCENE IN HELL

High school science teachers assemble to think up puns.

22 VIII 07

YOUR BODY

You think your body is your body. It is not.

Your body is another person.

You get upset when your lover devotes too much interest or attention to what you think is 'your' body. You say: you're only interested in my [_____].

But the lover has to be like that. The lover is desperately, desperately trying to make contact with that other person – *a person who also is you.*

That is why you can know a person for years and say everything and still feel baffled and rebuffed and ill at ease, because you don't know such a simple thing as how their skin tastes, or how they smell behind the ears.

And those things must be known if you are to be known.

This is, on the human scale, the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost. Three persons in one Deity. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Ghost. yet each is a person of the One God

We are told that God made humankind in his own image.

Which is the thing that each life has to reveal. Namely, that each 'one' of us is 'three' persons in one entity. Fully one and fully three. This is the mystery of the blessed humanity.

God the Father = the Body. God the Son = the Conscious Personality. God the Holy Ghost = the soul, nowadays often called the Unconscious, but anciently seen simply as the Unseen Will that drives the being into being.

Your body is another person. It is God.

22 August 2007

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And then they caught him
trembling with arcane desire
one foot on a lotus pad and sinking

because a boy like him is
always in between. And raining!
And his sister practicing the violin
never far away. O summerhouse
o kindly father with a book in Greek!

* * *

That is how W. Blake wrote, from direct experience that the words both
summoned and conveyed. Language vehicular. So that when he wrote “he” a
form immediately rose up and acted and spoke.

Reading Blake, we become aware at last that we are *witnesses*, and to speak at all
is to bear witness.

* * *

*And it was the delicate second movement of the Elgar violin sonata that told me this, Midori playing, Robert
McDonald at the piano.*

23 August 2007

= = = = =

And if the egg doesn't carry it
from what city can it come?

One says this and one says that
but all anybody really remembers

dead rose by your mother's powderpuff.
Imagine the precise color if and as you

please, traveler, this is music.

23 August 2007

Ars poetica

But now is the actual time
and what can I do?

Chinese calligraphy—
making the unknown beautiful.

23 August 2007

= = = = =

Language is habit,
language is addiction.
And language is the cure.
Silence doesn't help,
silence is an entirely
different disease.
Today has cool breeze
on a clement August day
sheltered by — and from —
a distant hurricane.
Do you understand?
I don't want this to read
like a suicide note
though most things are.

23 August 2007

= = = = =

Still waiting where the lilac waited
and went blue then faded, still
waiting where the rose of Sharon
even now goes a quiet dusty red

will be pale by Saturday, waiting
where workers leave the factory
in an old movie, men wearing scarves
women in cloth coats hurrying,

waiting to be in a place called home
in a time called now, when all the
blossoms notorious for youthful
excess can speak one lasting flower.

23 August 2007

= = = = =

But of course it's right imagining—
the steeple in the seaport, the mermaid
clinging to the hull unseen by men,
only women get a sometimes glimpse

and seals cavorting by the prow.
We're home! Or at least we're back.
Where we began. The well so deep
a star at noontime shows. And so on.

I hold on to a picture of the two of us
doing it together. But I'm still not sure
what it is. The well is clear, your laugh,
the star casts a faint shadow that might be me.

23 August 2007