

Mahler and Webb

Mahler's 2nd (The Resurrection) Symphony and the Ants

Under the emotion of the first time I heard Mahler
I thought lunatics and gravity and ants ceaseless as the first
and second movements the strings and pregnant rhythms
and differing directions front and side and pivoting
chords or ants unable one at a time just to sit and wait
but ants as a *tendency*, ants as ants in columns on grooves
the needle on CDs the focal movement irrelevant the Sign
and crotchety anywhere of their purpose their restless
search for reason. No programme notes to go on but
then what do Mahler's say – *why do you live? Is it all
a huge joke?* and carry sawn-through leaves as big as houses
key-signature sugar to the living (they rise again)(and again)
they are string sections jostling elbows never taking breaks
leaning back for a cigarette a quick snort a sinus moment
of whiskey or cocaine to keep their fingers and limbs
agitative the job the job the heavy minor keys the swell
of doom along the track more thunder and timpani
turning back and anti-sniffing formic acids on brassy
exo-skeletons in Mahler's grimmest closet...
then she cries out in anty-mezzo Oh believe
O glaube es geht dir nicht verloh you will not
be lost! And only after the heavy chords only after
burden-bearing back and forth the difference the diff
-erent the diffident ants (there have to be some
like us) Die as I shall, so as to live! Their famous
power-to-weight ratio is so gorgeous and serious
(lift and lift! they lift us up! they are The Resurrection!)
Sterben werd 'ich um zu leben! the soprano and yes say the ants
back home to rest then back onto the beating track
yes yes and *ja ja* if you say so ceaseless and eating.

Reading Francis Webb

Tiled rooves in Orange miraging around you, the nerving
home above the park, the mad and ordinary moments
washed by the common soap. From this battered linoleum

ordinary you founded intensity and God. The poems
rhymed into the past with grace and violence, your pure impure
directions, your long wires, your inner Spinning Jenny.

Inside the pyjamas, the drugs, the chance, a teleology
was rolling through the 50s television screen, its vertical hold
there and nowhere as you sat around chomping apples,

the ones you didn't drop, alone in that rising gravity
you heard equally in Jussi Bjorling or in the mad-for-God
supplicants you saw wandering your imagination, or eating

from refectory plates on Sunday evenings, or smudging
through letters to the godofnoaddress by the poor unfamilied
schizophrenics. The after-life for itinerants.

The fruit-pickers have come to pick and the garden's
full of secateurs, like sanity, so sharp you shrink back into poetry,
or should those clarities be reversed?

God's the trick. Not the skin, the blight, the dapple and myrrh,
the impure pure and cortex-firing ecstasies we might *call* God
but the dogma of God. Like Beaver, the under-terror. All.

The black hole. The rifling of chalices, Eucharists, the closed
text pretending it is open. Your own, thankfully, the open
text hoping it was closed. You let God in. You let us in.