

dreamscapes

dreamscapes: a photographic series by paul hockett.

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I put the washing on, and then I left the house. That was it, I just had to be gone. Out the door, through the gate [I tug the gate as I pass through, it shuts behind me with a metallic clang], along the road, through the cutting [the grass is damp where the frost has recently melted], over the bypass [a large lorry somehow skips my peripheral vision, appearing suddenly directly in front of me. It is moving at pace; I jump visibly at this intrusion] and into the fields beyond. The low sun was bright on my face, the cold wind brought a tear to my dry eyes; as the clouds cleared I saw the sky was a brilliant clear blue.

I was at a nexus that day, the battle lines were drawn between perception and the real, the actual. I know which path I'd rather take. Wouldn't you? There was only one clear course of action, to start walking and keep going. Leave it all behind, this place these people these buildings these objects this life. I mean, don't you wish you were there? Asleep, forever care



free. But it exists for such a fleeting moment, a mote in gods eye as some would say. I'm more inclined to describe it as a quanta of time, the smallest packet of the present that could be, a momentary flicker in the neurons of the brain. The only way to draw it out is to step into it, embrace that moment like a wormhole embraces space-time: enveloping, stretching, ripping, capturing it forever yet allowing it never to be.



The night before I had been dreaming, vividly. In my dream things were clearer. Sharper. I knew who I was, what I must do. It all made sense. When I awoke [up with a start, bedclothes cloying, the air fetid in my lungs, must breathe, now, now] I felt a profound loss. Distress that this world of my mind's creation, this world that made perfect sense, was gone. For I knew it was hopeless, the real had won out come morning. I knew this would always be, mornings would forever be a source of deep hopelessness for the real is terrible.



As I walked I started to feel better. My feet felt a fleetness of step that they had not felt for a long time. I passed over mud and puddle and rock and concrete and earth, pure dark earth. [a pothole in the path, the water within still frozen. Poking it with the end of my shoe I feel small again, a young child enjoying these natural diversions on the way to school] I passed a farmhouse, devoid of life. [pebble-dashed walls, a land rover parked aggressively in the drive, radiator grill eyeballing me]. In the distance, to the right of my path, I could just make

out the beginnings of the forest on the hill. [the pine trees of the plantation forming part of this mass look so incongruous in their straightness, like the goodie-goodies of the class who are trying to show everyone else up] To the left another hill, perfectly shaped - a rounded burial mound - and glowing, the most breathtakingly beautiful emerald green, the emerald green of new life, the green of the new shoots emerging from that fertile earth.



The day before is a bit hazy. I remember being in town. I think I was photographing the buildings and the people I saw around me. Yes, that's right. I remember now: they were giving me strange looks because of it, because I was so interested in these things that mean so little. But someone has to, don't they? Someone has to be interested in these things otherwise even that little bit of meaning is lost. The shape of a window frame, the light glinting from the water in the concrete fountain, the vertigo inherent in the side of a building... all these things form our environment, in actuality they are the only dreams we know and they belong to other people. After a while I realised that a crowd was watching me. Not wanting to appear too strange to these people, to give them cause to assault me, I pretended to be a tourist. Muttering in heavily accented and broken English about how nice the city was I made my exit, a stranger in a strange land for sure. As I walked away I held the camera by my side, but my shutter kept snapping, capturing the last vestiges of humanity from these creatures,



secreting the shreds away inside its mechanical body.



I walked past lots of different fences and walls. Some were wooden [strong cross-beams of oak, a tall fence - about as high as my shoulders - keeps the horses in], some metal, some wire [the wire is thin and frayed at the ends, the whole fence looks as though it has been badly knitted, as though it is about to unravel], some brick, some dry-stone, some standing proud, some collapsed [after miles a particularly resilient red brick wall disintegrates into a pile of rubble. I stop and look at the knackered mattress that has been symbolically dumped on top of the ragged brick, fungus growing in the damp between a rock and a soft place]. All were there to fence in, to keep out. Always something that shouldn't be there, something out of place that was forever trying to get back, something in place that wanted to escape. The landscape, fragmented like a war zone, was exactly right - it was a war, a war between slumber and awake. The fences marked boundaries like the trenches of the old battles, my mind created its own mental landscape to superimpose on the pastoral idyll. Soldiers of thought



behind the brick wall to the left lobbed grenades at the sheep of reality in the field to my right. I marched on, unheeding of the increasing lucidity of my hallucinations.



I remember also, although I'm not sure if it was before or after the incident with the accent, sitting in a coffee shop drinking a cup of tea. I was staring at the wall, painted a deep chocolaty brown, when I blacked out. I don't know how long I was lost for, but when I came to my tea was cold and the couple who had been sitting on the table across from me had changed into an old gentleman reading the newspaper. I recall looking up at him and he at me, one of those moments when you stare only to realise that the other is staring back. He averted his eyes hastily and gave a little embarrassed shuffle of his paper. Quite perturbed by this all I stood up, leaving half a cup of cold tea on the table, and shrugged on my coat. Leaving the shop, one of the baristas mouthed goodbye, no sound came out but I am still unclear as to whether this was his fault or mine.

After sometime I decided to stop for a rest. There was a picnic bench, half submerged in water, by the path. [beautiful wavelets wrap themselves around wood, the smooth water caresses the rough wood into submission] I tried to sit on it, but the rakish angle it had found itself at was

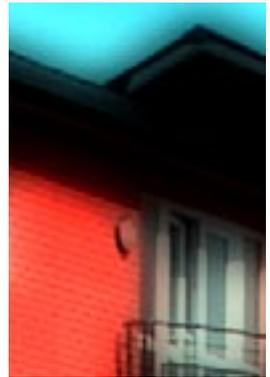


not conducive to this. Instead I lay atop of the bench and stared up at the sky. Clouds had begun to blow in on the wind and the patch of sky visible above my feet was starting to look dark and stormy. As the sun began to set these clouds took on a purple glow, becoming the colour of a black eye. The sky was bruised, apocalyptic. I went to sleep thinking sad thoughts.



After leaving the coffee shop I had ambled along the canal to the train station, [new houses shining in the sun, fresh, so full of hope and promise] aware that I wanted to be at home but must make a short train journey before this would be the case. Outside the station was a man selling the big issue, inside a woman was asking for change [she is holding an empty cup which she grips tightly. Large, thick card, logo-ed, I suspect it was dropped by a commuter who'd just managed to finish his extra large skinny mocha latte before boarding the train] . I ran past, feigning lateness, fearful that I would have to exchange words if I were to stop. On the platform the wind was blowing as ever, the micro-climate of the station unchanged by surrounding weather patterns.

Later I awoke, still on my bench islet but now surrounded by darkness. My brother has a theory that he is yin, a dreamworld him is yang. When he is asleep his dream-self is awake, his life becoming my brother's dreams. And vice-versa. He quips that his dream-self must sleep a lot, for he is an insomniac. It's a nice



theory, but I don't buy it. If it were true then my dream twin, he whose life I perceive as I slumber, is living in a world that makes sense, a world that feels right. No way. I glanced briefly up at the stars before drifting back to sleep.



On the train I tried to use the toilet. It had a special wheelchair friendly door, a great arc of a thing with big, illuminated buttons to push for access. I walked into the lavatory, pushed the lock button. The door opened. I repeated this procedure several times, testing the other buttons too. But it was no good, the door would not stay closed. I retreated back to my seat and watched other people suffering the same problems. No one spoke.

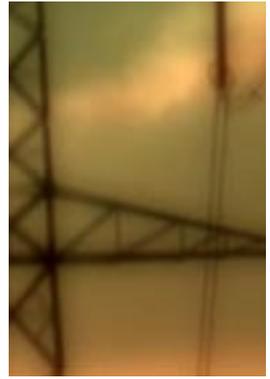
When I awoke again it was daytime. The sky was blue once more, the clouds gone during the night. I felt slightly damp, and upon looking around I saw that my feet had become wet overnight from small waves washing against my perch. Or perhaps the clouds had disgorged themselves while I slept on. I clambered off the bench and gazed at the countryside around me before resuming my stroll. I paused then, for the land looked different. Something had changed, something had shifted. At that moment I couldn't quite place my finger on what, couldn't quite work out how things were different, but they were. I took a



deep breath and walked on, feeling vindicated in my choice of action.



I felt prepared to get my camera out again. Furtive at first, I was soon happily snapping out the train window. It's a fascinating thing, observing the back of the world flying past. I remember a whole slew of stuff that caught my eye. Back gardens, back yards [fresh laundry billowing in the breeze, sheds made from converted privies], back offices, loading bays [the back end of a branch of Currys, corrugated iron wall gives way to a concrete slab - a step from a giant's stair], warehouses, scrap yards [one is full of cars, stacked in neat rows, forming some end of the world labyrinth. Another is full of dilapidated vending machines, the red and white coca cola logo as far as the eye can see], quarries, sewage plants, brickworks, power stations, factories of unknown function, blocks of flats with bars on the windows, the underside of the motorway [the concrete underpass is gloomy, but the rough patterns left as the concrete set are visible on the ceiling; the graffiti on the walls still bright despite the lack of illumination]. All the backs of places, the things you don't normally see, invisible from the road or street, the



domain of only the few that work in these strange places. Not really secret, not really private, just out of the way, unusual, one step removed from my everyday experiences. These places swooped toward me in a blur, then, momentarily, they became immobile, stationary next to me as our frames of reference met, then gone, receding to infinity, disappearing toward the horizon as quickly as they had arrived.



Stepping out, stepping on. The path had narrowed, I felt the landscape pressing in around me. The feeling of change was still present in me, a feeling that reality had been subtly twisted, given a nudge to push it out-of-phase with my previous life. Colours looked different, sounds seemed slightly removed, somehow seeming to come from a great distance - as though they had been played down a telephone line, or re-recorded too many times. I envisioned a stereo, a cheap microphone sat in front of it. A 'sounds of nature' CD was being played and recorded, via the microphone, onto cassette. A man takes this tape, gets on an aeroplane and flies to me. Follows me, somehow substituting his second rate cassette recording for the sounds I should have been hearing. Sounds from a different place and time, sounds distorted by the inadequate recording set-up, sounds that are subtly wrong. A crazy vision, but how else to explain this feeling of remoteness, this feeling of



removed.



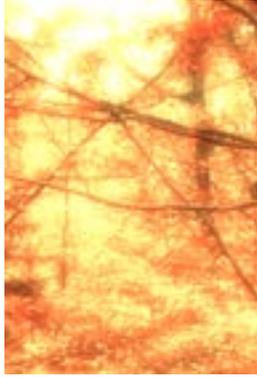
When the brief train journey had finished I wanted to get home as quickly as possible. In my haste I made an error, deciding that a route through the new estate would be quicker than the slog up the high street. By that time I was, of course, feeling thoroughly scared of people. A route through the new estate certainly held the promise of quietude, but nonetheless was ill advised. Holstering the camera I hustled up the steps from the platform and across the road, then onwards into the estate of newly-built red-brick/yellow-brick 4-bedroom-family-homes, complete with en-suite-master-bedrooms, 2-car-garages, brick-paved-driveways and lifetime guarantees from the construction company. The place was soulless; everything looked the same, cost the same and was lived in by the same kinds of people. As it was mid-afternoon it was deserted, but instead of the pleasant quiet I had hoped for there was a feeling of foreboding, as though this place were a ghost town. Forsaken by soccer mums with land rovers, abandoned by the BMW'd salesmen and the Audi-totting middle



managers. The (sub)urban dream had turned sour here, the faceless tudorbethan plastic-fantastic houses went rouge, quit their guarantees and consumed their families in a fit of pique at this dreamlife they'd been built for, but never wanted a part of.



Woods reared up around me. This sounds like something that should not be possible for woods to do, but that is how it seemed at the time. One minute no woods, a moment later there I stood, surrounded by trees. A discontinuity in the landscape or in my consciousness? Who's to say. All I know is what I perceived; that it makes little sense is neither here nor there. In my woods it was autumnal, beautiful tones of ochre and umber glowing in the orange-tinged hearth light of the low sun. I didn't know where winter went, why autumn had made this sudden return to the present but, kicking through the piles of leaves on that glowing afternoon, I didn't care. If it were fantasy, then it was glorious fantasy. Why fight it? And so it remained, for some days and nights. The days were always warm and bright; the nights brought fireflies and silver moonlight, creeping through the thinning branches, turning the daytime smoulder to a shining white and grey - like a black and



white movie of a fairy tale.

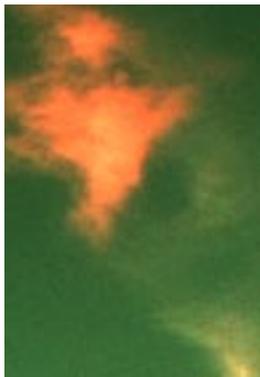




The estate remained around me for a long time. The houses seemed to be pressing in; constricting my path, constricting my breath, constricting my thoughts. I wanted out. But every road was a cul-de-sac, every street a dead end or a private driveway. Where is the way out? Where is the world? These were my concerns, but not the concerns of the designers. They wanted in, only in. A hermetically sealed family environment, not a drive-through business park. There was no continuity with the world, no sense of anything but the surrounding houses. Happiness was isolation. No, that's not it. I like isolation. Happiness was inclusion, inclusion into this designer community, but isolation from the rest. A sort of idyllic ignorance of the outside world. Fine, let them do it. I didn't care, but I did want out and that didn't seem

to be an option.





As suddenly as they'd begun the woods stopped. No petering out, no gradual decline - they just stopped. As it should be. Clouds were scudding across the sky, patches of blue shining through. In the distance I could make out the sea. So, this was how far I had walked, clear to the sea. Soon the sun began to set, and it was the most breathtaking thing I have ever seen. The light glinted off the water, dancing on the waves like flame. The patches of blue gradually darkened as the red ball of fire dipped below the horizon, in the east they were almost purple while the westerly sky took on an intense deep blue. As the sun dipped further the light conflated with the clouds, forming intense patterns of light and shadow. I stood, breathing deeply, trying to take it all in. Trying to fix it in my brain, wanting to record this vision of the perfect sunset and file it away in

the memory for future viewing.

There was a conclusion, that much I can remember. The estate ended and I was free, almost at my door I ran the last part of the way, exuberant to be home, exacerbated by my trouble getting there. I nipped through the front gate and quickly unlocked the door. Diving in, I locked it behind me immediately and slumped, exhausted, to the floor. Later I drank tea and ate cake. That night I slept soundly, but I was somewhat disturbed by dreams of knife-fights with men in suits. Like most dreams they were inexplicable, yet carried a heavy sense of inevitability. I didn't want to be fighting these people, but that was the way it was and there was nothing to be done about it. The next morning I felt quite strange when I awoke, but thought little of it as I got up and set about putting the washing





At the end of land I had no choice, onwards it must be. And so it was, I walked on. Through the sand dunes with their clumps of wild scrub-grass; over the empty, white beach, loose sand

skittering across it in the breeze. It was a picture of cold desolation: frighteningly beautiful, yet devoid of life. I waded into the sea, the icy water rapidly covering my legs and thighs, waves breaking over my chest. It felt exhilarating, it felt like the end, it felt like completion. Disappearing into the water it was all I could do to loose a great sigh, a relieved announcement to the world that I was finally content, that it could trouble me no longer, that my mind was making the rules now.

