

## Landscape Romance :

I'm walking down the high street in Bethnal green after visiting Woolworth's to buy some chocolate. I'm feeling a little down because it's one of those days. By this I mean that the weather is affecting me, its one of those drab days consisting of a persistent non-time, an overcast greyness that refuses to pronounce itself either as day or night. It's like some sort of lazy compromise that is the result of the weather's indecisiveness leading me to feel somewhat delocalised and misplaced.

Anyway, I'm walking down the street and I see one of those Asian landscape paintings flashing at me from the inside of a cluttered shop window. Amongst the array of mobile phone covers and personal cd players I see what comes across as some visionary artifice that speaks in a language entirely of its own - a harmonious glow that at that moment only I have the power to comprehend. Everything made sense. From the illusionary waterfall running down the centre, to the birds peering over in the foreground. These things aren't particularly novel to me so I surprised myself in the fact that I was standing there fascinated by what I would usually foresee as a rather grotesque object. But I didn't find it grotesque, I found in it quite charming. No, more than charming in fact - the silvery blue of the light flickering behind the plastic water was hypnotizing me, the mountains in the background were gestures of promises afar and the little house in the distance, well it was my home. I found comfort, warmth, affection, admiration, vitality, excitement, fulfilment...the overcast sky behind me no longer offered me discomfort but was now a canvas upon which I could create new worlds promise and adventure...

The fact was that this landscape before me appeared to be a direct depiction of one I new very well that I used to gaze at every year from the back seat of my parents car...It is located on route between my parents house in Shropshire and the campsite site where we used to holiday on the Thylnn peninsular in North Wales.

I distinctly remember the place. It was on the way to where we were going, and it always remained that way. It became the place where the real holiday could happen, the real escape. It functioned as a place of my desire where my wishes could be fulfilled. But these wishes were nothing to do with

anything outside of what I already had with this landscape; the wish was that the dialogue would simply be true. That our relationship would be formed in reality as it was in my head. Upon my interaction with this wondrous vista I wanted to encounter the feelings that I associated with such an environment - feelings that seemed so tangible from the confines of the car - feelings that saturated me with warmth and excitement, security and fulfilled longing. Within the frame of the window, behind the glass everything was potential waiting to be realised. The barrier between us only proved to make my desire more ravenous. I wanted to belong to that landscape, I wanted to be a part of it, and I was going to be.

What I haven't mentioned is that this was not just a view existing merely to accompany the drive. No, this was a view from an acclaimed picnic spot. So there was a double reward, in fact the reward was triple as it was also an indication that we were half way to our destination. Landscape of wondrous promise, lunch, and only one hour away from the trauma of erecting the family tent.

We pull in to the lay-by, there she is waiting for me to go to her, she needs me as I need her, separated we are nothing, together we stand for everything...Dad turns off the ignition, something has happened. Something has been lost...what is it, then my attention is swiftly brought to my ears, I just hear the sound of my mum saying what is on the sandwiches, 'cheese and onion or ham and mustard?' but the sound of her voice is too clear, there are no disruptions, then I realise! - the music was cut off just as it was about to hurtle into the chorus! Brian Wilson and his Beach Boys had failed me...I turn my attention back to the window, the landscape now appears naked, a distance has occurred, my grasp on what I see is loosening and my palms are sweating....Don't go away, Don't let me loose you! I try to open the door but the child lock is on for my little sister, so I pretend to need the toilet and eventually my mum comes and opens what has been the barrier between a me that exists and a me that lives.

I jump onto the warm tarmac and over the stone wall dodging a couple of sheep. I stand, I look and I breathe. I am now in it. I am with you.

But I am not with you. Being here doesn't change a thing, you are still over there. You are still away from me. In fact the landscape is more away from me than it was in the car, much further. In the car we had a dialogue we had

an understanding, we were involved. Now I am alone. The landscape surrounds me but it is unable to penetrate my skin.

Loneliness engulfs me. I feel the embodiment of disappointment.

There is nothing I can do but face the prospect of cheese and onion sandwiches and a rather dirty picnic bench.