

A Photographic Triptych

Lacock

Such are places of great beginnings –
unassuming and quiet,
holy places,
Little Giddings of invention
poised to deny it;
yet not entirely managing to efface
for all their English breeding and greenery
the state of consecration –
their history holding a moment of grace,
a moment of discovery.

In other words, a vision appeared;
and now it is everywhere
(now it has changed the world)
we have found its source
in a place that has not changed
– a meadow, a grove of trees,
a cloister.

Take
images of these
with you, to develop them later.

Highgate

And then there are places of endings,
gates at which time
falters – passes
they would say, who dug in,
affirming a grandiose optimism
with all these gravestones:
not grave-goods, note,
but monuments, avowals of self-
importance, I-shaped columns
lifting urns of flame, motionless
fossilised angels.

How are the mighty fallen – lately
a film-set. Yet over the road
Friese-Greene, the inventor
of cinematography,

sleeps off his life of images
– still, faltering, and finally
coming alive.

Does he dream in film,
of Chaplin, of Hedy Lamarr?

Stonehenge

Circles have neither beginnings nor endings
nor beginnings – except
for their centres;
and so there are places which are neither
sources nor sepulchres,
neither the observer nor the object,
but fall in between.

This is one, for instance –
this lens that focuses the sun,
a window framing it to flash, to move,
to wind through a spool of stone.
See how it stalls in your mind,
an enduring, latent image.

Click;
but our pictures are not reality
nor art, nor even memory:
Fox Talbot, surely, was a poet
of the ‘inward eye’ – was Wordsworth then
one of the inventors of photography?
Its history goes beyond this cloister.

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