

I grew up beside a ghost landscape. The land lay bruised and naked. Those who had lived there had vanished, overnight it seemed, evanescent, disappeared into some future: their future was, in a phrase of Heaney's that haunts me, a verb in hibernation. It was a haunted place, a shimmering ancient palimpsest.

Yet the paradox was that it was also the most modern place in Northern Ireland – for on the bushy undulating countryside formerly full of swards, paths, fields, deep hedges and hollows and people had been slapped down the rebarbative geometry of an aerodrome without consultation, or care for contour and which emptied it of all native life. . The time between the requisition order and the enforced removal of the families who lived there was very short; they disappeared like mist off a bog. Where they did go? it was a diaspora – a small event in world geography but utterly epic in our history. The planners put the perimeters of the aerodrome right by the Claggan the little cluster of houses that marked the last remnant of the O'Neill's fiefdom in our parish. And then on the other side were more hauntings and absences, – a graveyard surrounding the ruins of an ancient abbey and cross and beyond it the pewter shield of Lough Neagh.

So my whole childhood was predicated on what had been, what might have been, who had been there. People hardly spoke of those who had vanished and who, only a few years before, had been part of their thriving community. The air closed behind them. The people who had lived there just before I was born became almost an obsession with me and I tried to imagine their lives. I tracked where they had lived, and I would try to make maps of the areas of where the houses had been where now there were the great watery mirages of the runways. But here and there were ruins of the small houses mouldering back into the earth. Old shrines. Here was where the Martins lived, here the ruins of the house of the Quinns; it was a weal that cut so deep into the community it never recovered. I carried the memories of the lost demesnes within me.

And then one day, when I was in New York three years ago Rita Duffy sent me photographs of paintings by Jennifer Trouton. I was astounded and bemused – could these be retouched photographs? No they were paintings, Rita said, oil on canvas. So I went to see them in London and was transported in every sense. Here was allusion and illusion made real. Here was memory, soaked in memory. The settings within the paintings were ostensibly simple--the interiors of small ruined houses of Northern Ireland –but for me a trail leading into the past of the aerodrome. Those painful relics where nature was taking over, creeping green and moist and fungal were enshrined here. She painted broken mirrors, old doors, and patterned wallpapers in extraordinary detail with almost a surfeit of effect yet there was nothing realistic about them. Though everything was painted with precision everything seemed ectoplasmic as though seen in a green dream. And then there were disturbing visual collisions; a chandelier – that symbol of illuminating luxury – hung quivering against a stretch of flock wallpaper above what we called a Coalisland fireplace (and how that squat and ugly object struck into my memory hoard: my mother throwing out the beautiful pillared wooden Edwardian fireplaces in our house and installing these pallid tiled monsters.) Looking at these paintings – celebrating is the wrong word –recording rather, the ruined houses of Northern Ireland (though this geographical allusion is never made and there is nothing parochial about these images) I saw intimate memorials for vanished humanity and saw too the glaze of a

commentary on what had happened in Northern Ireland going years and years back. And now in this new show she has delved even deeper into this place which she inhabits in her art, almost a limbo where soul lives before departing into eternity. Like all great adventures in art nothing happens by chance. She moved into a house which previously had been lived in by a man who left behind a fragmented inadvertent history of his life. She calls the show **Ellipsis** a word which is sometimes used to indicate a pause in speech, an unfinished thought or, at the end of a sentence, a trailing off into silence and it is this last definition around which the show revolves.

But there is another vocabulary here, another definition; in **biology**, “*the genome of an organism is its whole hereditary information*” and she seems to have painted the genome of the atmosphere of the house in which she lives and with which she identifies so deeply .

The paintings in this show step deep into a world of relics, of the newly departed but utterly gone. Jennifer Trouton seems to have the gifts of a medium, reaching through the first swaying layers of the past that hang around us and bringing back old testimonies. These paintings are bioluminescent palimpsests full of information and grief. . In coming upon the letters and photographs of the inhabitants of her house she has re-installed them into viral life. There is an air of unease but there is also great beauty and consolation in the images. The faint records of earlier times uncovered; old letters read with a sympathetic eye; photographs from foreign lands transmuted, the rambling notes of someone slowly losing their mind deciphered; all this can be seen or understood under the surface images presented to us, surface images which are seductive in their own right.

I look at the paintings and I think of my aerodrome and what was lost and realise that its past is still there lying under the brutal surface waiting for a kind of resurrection and I realise too looking at these images that I am in the presence of a great painter.

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