

DOMOBAAL

Christopher Hanlon

Painting that always appears to be on the edge of its own undoing or dissolution despite its own internal promise of completion. Each of these paintings announce, as if in advance, a form of unfinished separation. This gives rise to the feeling that each fragmentary cipher or image might find an unexpected encounter in the elsewhere of another image, but this might equally be a case of suspending the disappointment of this not being realised. There is something in the tone of these works that is invariably dull, or in-between, that also gives rise to a sense of boredom being in circulation here. But the feeling of suspension and boredom resides within the exhaustion of the image, as if moments of revelation or excess, might have for a moment, been savoured only then to be passed over, until nothing much is left other than the interminable next encounter. And so it goes on, each image offering its own glimmer, the potentiality of offering, each finally registering its own dull resolve, but equally with this, never signing off, never completing, and never finally signifying a conclusion. This is the works' secret heart, a presence dulled on the edges, a vacuous slowness, near encounter with interruption, seeming disavowal of meaning, and yet, rather than simply the condition of drifting across all of these registers, a heightened sense of interlude or opening of passage that issues out of the unexpected sacrifice born out of separation.

The question of the fragment invariably takes us back to the question of Romanticism. Here the fragment functions in such a way as to sustain the potentiality of the whole or the absolute. Within this context the fragment through 'the fracture that produces it' but this fracture in turn assumes an autonomous form. There is a counteractive movement between the mysterious and the ordinary and the familiar through the process of interrupting ordinary life by potentializing the objects of the world. If we can talk of the failure of Romanticism, the so-called impossibility of Romanticism, it is in this regard to sustaining this relation between the ordinary and extra-ordinary. In some respects the painting of Christopher Hanlon address this failed space of Romanticism. Instead of the rhetoric of transformation, otherness, metamorphosis, enchantment, we are given over to disappointment, even disenchantment. The fragment certainly still gestures towards the possibility of otherness but there is little by way of the idea of totality. Each image instead appears remote, existing as furtive after-lives of separated reality, functioning instead, closer to the thought-images of departed sense. We might for a moment wonder if this is not a form of grim interlude born out of a technologised world in which all meaning have either been emptied or consigned to limited place. Surely, it might be hoped that painting might claim for itself a function beyond residing within the dulled after-world of disenchantment. Afterall there is a form of Post-Romanticism, which attempts to awaken us to the potentiality of other realities but clearly such a space is not exhibited here. Instead we are given over to something that is much duller than this and in being duller more paradoxically splendid but within the treadmill of images there are suggestions of roots through vacancy, distress even, that might introduce us into the meditative trance through which the image announces the edge of its own dissolution.

Yes, it appears as each image is complete that each image draws upon its own reserve, enough that is for it to become its own measure but equally we might still be moved by the claim that these paintings also exist as fragments. Of course to be a fragment implies being born out of the very fracture which impels its production but equally to evoke the fragment does not necessarily implicate something being less than what it might be otherwise, rather it is the question against which an otherwise is assembled. So we have a paradox with these works because they seem to function along the dividing line through which it is possible to designate the quality that constitutes fragments. Perhaps the designation

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of aphorism would bring us closer to the truth and with this designation an understanding that what is at stake in these works is a relationship between visual presence and a sense that issues out of withdrawal. What appears is in proportion to that which is withdrawn. This is why the works themselves have this air of spectrality to them. Anyway it is clear that there is little by way of direct address, programme or even rhetoric. As painting they whisper rather than speak. They also appear not as very small painting to require not only time, but also attention to passage, which is born out of rhythm: for this is work that has tone, meter and refrain. Perhaps the most eventful outcome for all of this, is that the combination of passage allows for the image to dwell within its own space of removal and yet also have a form of pulsation within yet another light, that is sombre and reserved, far removed from the light of the day. Slow, dense, sombre and withdrawn these paintings trace for us the means of viewing from a twice, constituted place beyond that of having inside and outside vantage. We might find and then lose ourselves, seek the possibility of impossibility, twist presentation and representation in order to return to the same place and yet again

The air around each object appears jaded and stale. Everything appears as if long time stilled. The mood is one of waiting. Throughout each of these slivered paintings there is a feeling of a path-light that lingers in and around the scene. Each painting offers little by way of accumulated evidence that relations between things might occur rather each painting stands to the next as a reduced passage. There is something grim in all of this, as though a sentence is being passed within the vacuum-like atmosphere in which language is exiled from. Sometimes gestures appear to point of indicate a relationship to a dull void or cancelled other region but otherwise there are huge signs of movement. It makes me think of those curious spaces of literature that empty out the gestural content of language, leaving words to survive in their raw, interrupted state. This is not of course to claim that these works are in some literary. Quite the contrary: in some respects they evidence the pressure that only painting might assemble against its own condition. I called them 'slivered paintings' because they are remote and fractured as if somewhere within their genesis, a scalpel has discovered the correct moment to sever in order to offer back the finest dissect of reality. Thus each and every painting is born out of precise measure. Certainly there is something of this lurking beneath the working of the formation of the image. All of this might point towards a concern for the nature of origination. We are reminded through these works that there is a distance that is enacted and that this distance is in effect a reflex to the feeling that there is no unique point of reference within the image. Instead the image resides in a strange inbetween zone that isolates its own constituted reality in a realm of uncertainty. In this state the image hovers in a state of both emerging and fading, perhaps ultimately as a half light of itself. In this state it can only summon enough by way of reserve to prop itself against the same reserve within another image until a cluster emerges through which the sense of presentation can muster conviction.

by Jonathan Miles, London, May 2008