

Industrial Britain, Nine to Five, punch in, oily mits, punch out, overtime, workers strike, powers gone, three day week, deindustrialise, managed decline, liberalised, empty lot. Squatters rights, crime spikes, but the clock keeps ticking, and after a decade maybe more, cheap rent brings artists, musicians and the rich kids trying their hand at being poor. The prices rise a bit, the buildings look cleaner, the ground value swells, new cafes as well, squatters aren't around, some still setup parties, but the police come if it's too loud. It's all become hot property, they'd knock it down if they could, but there's heritage value and a listed status, the building was part of a vital moment, a sector - now alienated.

Industrial Britain, it's in the ads now, for a brand new development with heritage charm, the billboards claim.

From an advert on the streets. Evictions and no new lease.

Street of skips.

No mans land.

Caution signs.

Concept design.

Desirable locale.

Bail out bucket.

The barriers stay.

Concepts decay.

One more failure.

The barriers stay.

Temporary signs.

~~Beware the dogs!~~

Mind the needles.

Weeds and foxes.

Hidden faces.

Layered paintings.

Drill and damp.

Chipboard stays.

Shelter in storms.

Layers of grime.

Mutilated thought.

There's a buyer.

The market booms.

Keep the facade.

The wood moulds.

Ballards hunting.

Chipboard skin.

Scared and inked.

Severed after years.

To be dismembered.

After all these years.

A marker in time.

Stickers stay stuck.

Fleck of ancient dirt.

A divider of territory.

Industrial Britain.

Boarders again, permeable this time, so through each residual torsion and every faded tag, a gateway opens, an uneven path winds through a fractious archive, a form of past.

I had a dog once, a black lab named Brian. He was a good dog, a good boy. He would never shit in the street, always found himself a little thicket of grass to squat in, he used to stand by it after the deed panting proudly through a wide fanged grin. He never chased other kids about at the park like the other doggies, and he never went looking for slaggy little bitches to shag down the back of the estate either. Brian was a good dog, a good boy. He died when I was 10. I can still remember my face wet with tears, salty rain sliding down reddened un-acned cheeks splashing into my bowl of tomato soup (my favourite) as mum told me "Brian's gone to doggy heaven".

"what?" I blubbed through snotty bubbles popping in the red wash of soup staining my upper lip, "sososo he's not coming back?"  
"no Bill, heaven is forever"

Dog is dead isn't it.

That night wrapped up in jimjams I dreamt of Brian. He was somewhere we'd never been before, I'm not sure where it was but it certainly didn't feel like heaven. Heaven was a grand hall lit by a piss warm golden light, a bearded man standing in a robe warding a well-stocked buffet of sausage rolls at the top of a great gilded staircase that climbed up through marbled cauliflower clouds. This place didn't feel at all like that, this place was horrible, it smelt like the bins on Sundays when Dad made me put them out for the men to take in the morning, it smelt hot, wet and chemical.

Brian stood alone in a vast empty warehouse, walled in by corrugated steel and iron which sweats out beads of rust and menstrual oil puddles. A long worn silver chain ran from his leather collar to a rusty bracket which hung lopsided from a flakey breeze block wall. A hoarse bark echoed across the room contorting with each bounce it made off the calamitous walls becoming more estranged from its emanating throat with every reflection, a bark subsumed and respoken by the room. Out from the oily shadows dogs with sinew rather than muscle began to crawl. Palsied paws cautiously carried thinning dorsals wrapped in matted down toward the centre of the room where Brian lay quivering. These were dogs with reddened cloudy eyes and yellowed drool, dogs with quadrupedal limbs, dogs with chipped fangs set in pastel gums hollowed out by scrappy diets of bad meat, dogs that do runny poos you couldn't pick up with a bag.

They lined up hunched, heads arched toward the moulding ceiling. They were somehow wildly regal, a withered litter of canine monarchs posed before an invisible artist. Their coats were worn like furs, their collars hung as crown jewels around their sunken necks. It was then I saw them for what they were, they were the fanged warders of a rusted kingdom, interim guardians of ruin. I surveyed their estate with them through cracks in the steel shutters which lined the edges of the room, we stared out at rolling pastures of hogweed and nettle which lined the margins of the rusting sidings of the city.

Their castles and forts are industrial husks sat atop sagging mounds between incinerators, sorting offices, metalworks and other hunched gnolls not yet dug by the sharpened hoes and trowels of development. The land of unfilled doughnuts that await a custard filling of speculative wealth. A post prandial buffet for postindustrial capital, it must be nearly dinner time, look west now, the marmalade sun is setting over London.

The land of the dog is a land in limbo that awaits the cleavered fist of the developer; an adept carver, the developer knows who gets what, the developer knows who's a good boy and he knows what slice is his. A land left to the ward of the dogs, a temporary bequeathment. Land yet to be redeemed, land which awaits its second life under the Anubian watch of the dogs.

Here sits in limbo a pack chained to decaying concrete beams that hold the weight of decrepit roofs riddled with holes wormed out by acid rain and mutant metal dwelling termites. Roofs that had become steel corrugated crumpets through which the glow of yellowed moons dully shines, casting mysterious constellations across the unlit concrete floor like an inverted Swiss cheese. At night the dogs watched these horoscopes shift along the floor as the moon slides against the sky as though these vistas of reflection and occlusion were somehow keys to the secret of this strange world, this limbo they had been gifted, these hollowed atriums that lacked warmth and seemed to sit somewhere between good and evil.

Once a barrier between worlds.

Chipboard now an object, no longer an obstacle, the content, no longer the container.

Drilled and sawn, patchwork monuments emerge out from scavenged moments, monoliths pasted and marked with loaded histories.

SPLIT