

All Change

I think of places like OSHO, the ashram of sorts, I believe, in India established by the fellow known in the 80's as the Bhagwan who, back in those days, would drive one of his 93 Rolls-Royces out to greet his scarlet-clad devotees. An open lawn or campus, I imagine, and people walking about in the company of everyone else all the time. Richard Alpert, too, known as Ram Dass, in Milbrook Manor in New York, run by an heir to the Mellon fortune in the '60's after he returned from India and had followers just wandering over the lawn in search of heaven knows what back then. And a friend who went on a retreat where she didn't speak for two weeks. I saw a photo in the New York Times magazine about something like that, an aerial photo of people dotted like atoms on a lawn. And I think of a woman, though it could be anyone, walking into that crowd of solitary figures and touching one on his face. He turns and smiles and takes her hand and holds it. She smiles back. And then moves to another man, or maybe a woman this time, and does the same. Then to another; this time they kiss. And we see hands holding: the hands squeeze gently; two pairs of feet, standing, facing each other: they move closer deftly, deliberately, together, toes touching. Then far away, maybe some furiously shaking shrubbery behind which the back of someone's head can briefly be seen or just another time, another person, but still the same place, now making eye contact, or perhaps greeting, it doesn't really matter which: the whole panoply of love going on all the time, all on a designated open space which, in deference to PenTales I'll just go ahead and call a park—for what else is a park, at heart, for? And the only thing that links these images together is that, brief or lingering, these scenes all end with the person moving on to the next one. All change. All change. The expression is taken I think from the London Underground, or more likely British Rail. Referring to those towns in the middle of nowhere, Didcot to me a classic example, that exist to serve as a junction. Your train arrives, another train arrives, all trains arrive at some point, poky little commuters or long-distance overnights, and you hear over the public address “all change, please, all change”. To get where you are going you must change to that train; someone else changes to another train, or to your train and on you all go, the eternal, heavenly, world-conquering unto Amen glory of the concrete station platform. We think sometimes that we are progressing upwards or maybe linearly through life and love and each step is a stage onward onto something closer to the destination. And maybe it is, but we (or maybe just “I”) must live knowing that we are taking someone else's spot just as they are taking ours, often going in very different directions, all of which, though, still end up back in the same place, just as we do. Timed almost as if on regulated dispatch, they slide into place, we shift into place, deftly, deliberately, together—“Everybody ready? Aaaaand, go”—and move on, the spot now ours as if it always was and always will be, as it surely will be—until it isn't, if it isn't. The love lasts or doesn't. May it last as long as you would want it to but last long or last short, don't forget the only thing that links together these journeys we take across the heaving landscape. At the end of each, all change...all change...all change.