



Robert Walker's Spliced New York

William S. Burroughs

Now take a stack of photographs...you are looking for a point where inner and outer reality intersect...Now you don't know what intersections the photographer experienced, but if he is as good as Walker is, you know he was experiencing something quite definite. So let us take a walk through these photographs, and each one will experience a different point of intersection.

Walker catches the meaning of meaningless, the pattern of chaos, the underlying unities of disparate elements...All the fragments are jumbling and shifting, throwing out pieces of paintings, the sky and billboards. Is this the face of the city? Yet how few of these faces have any urgency, any purpose, any grandeur. These are the anonymous meaningless faces of a big city, a death trap.

Here is a young man in a striped black-and-white T-shirt and blue jeans. His right hand is extended, the thumb separated from the four finger in a curious gesture. In front of him is a slovenly girl in shorts with a shoulder bag that has slid down over her buttocks. His expression is blank. What is he looking at? He doesn't seem to be looking at her at all or even be aware of her presence. No, something else we can't see is engaging his attention. I had a dream about this picture in which I touched his arm and found it cold, dead cold, and started back exclaiming, "He is an Empty One! A walking corpse, a body without a soul" --- and so many of the people in these photographs are just that, Empty Ones.

The whole city is a backdrop which could collapse at any moment or run together. Red and black, furnaces, oranges, the smell of burnt plastic and rotten citrus...Split pictures spliced to each other without a soul and so is the City itself. Photos are just that. The people who inhabit it...spliced photos.

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