

Parlour

A clock ticking. Dust in the air.

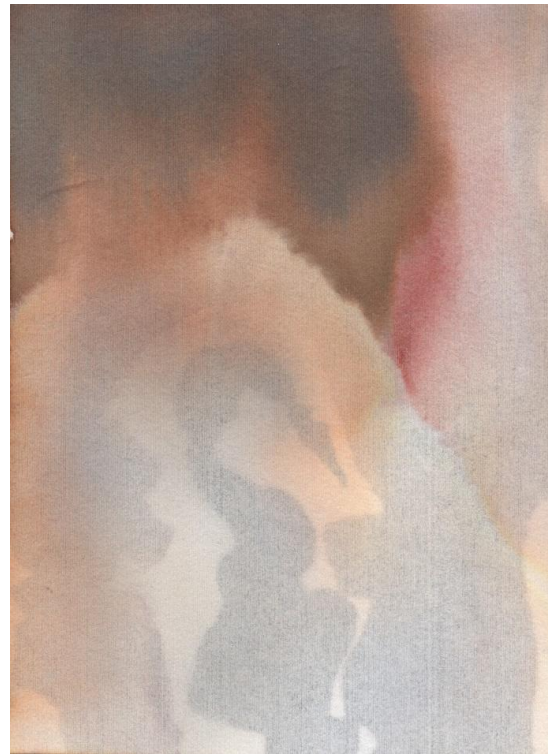
Frame after frame depicting events long past, the shroud of former lives, of youth and childhood, places visited, a school event, a wedding, a christening. Trapped in mahogany and ebony and glass. An oval picture is placed amongst many rectangular ones holding men like flies or beetles, or maybe butterflies, pinned to the wall as evidence that once they lived. Ornaments and photos; the most prominent depicting an object that looks like a table with four legs oddly placed. Perhaps a mirror. (...)

The time is set somewhere in the 1950s or may be earlier, even. A room of someone who had lived in the early part of last century. I can hear and smell it, my grandparent's parlour – *die gute Stube*. No one ever sat in there – it was a graveyard of a room holding all that was deemed too precious, too vulnerable to be tainted by life. Apart from the wineglasses which on occasion were given leave, filled for rare social occasions next door and then washed haphazardly and put back into the ebony shrine of a petty bourgeois glazed cupboard, leaving behind a musty faintly alcoholic smell that encapsulated my grandmother.



The descending blackened air threatens to envelope the land below.
A lone tree mediates.
Blue-green reeds lean gently to the right, anticipating.
A body of water silently waits.

This place doesn't hold them, they move on blindly, following.

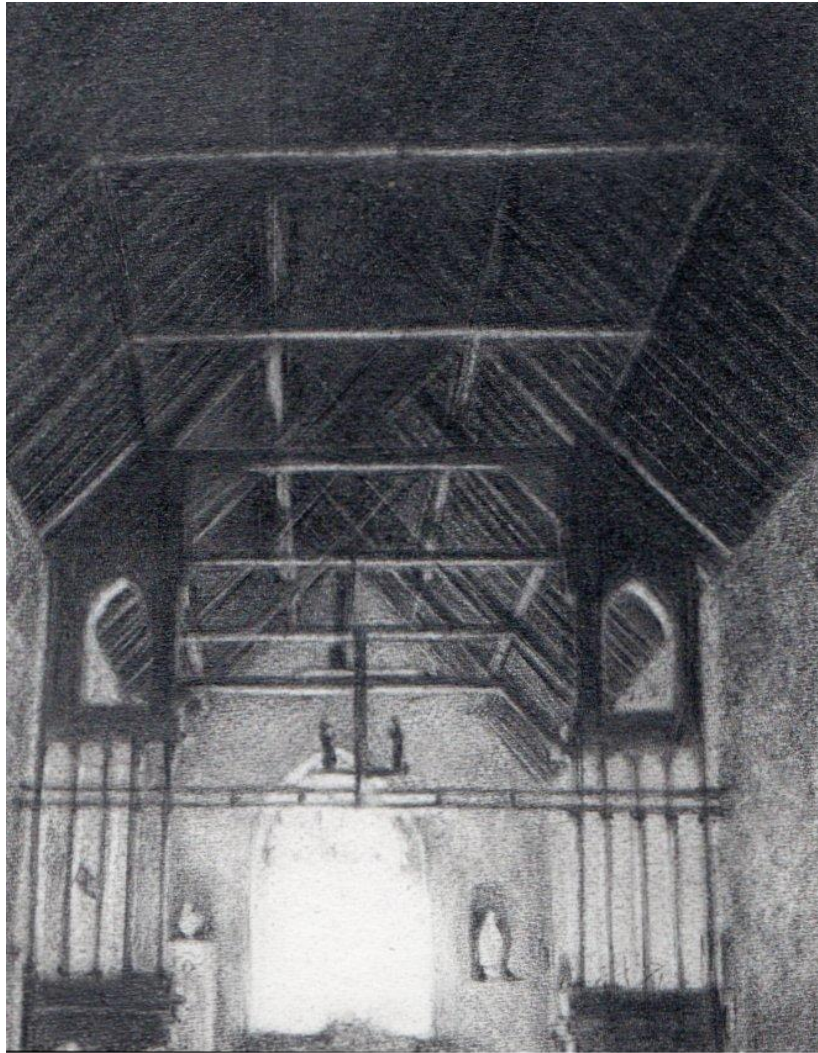


The huddled trees jut and pierce low slung cotton like folds, the lacelike fingers reach towards a liquid light. The body leans forward unable to rest here, the mind falls back; a shadowy room filled with floating and swerving fabric. My hand to your hand and then apart.

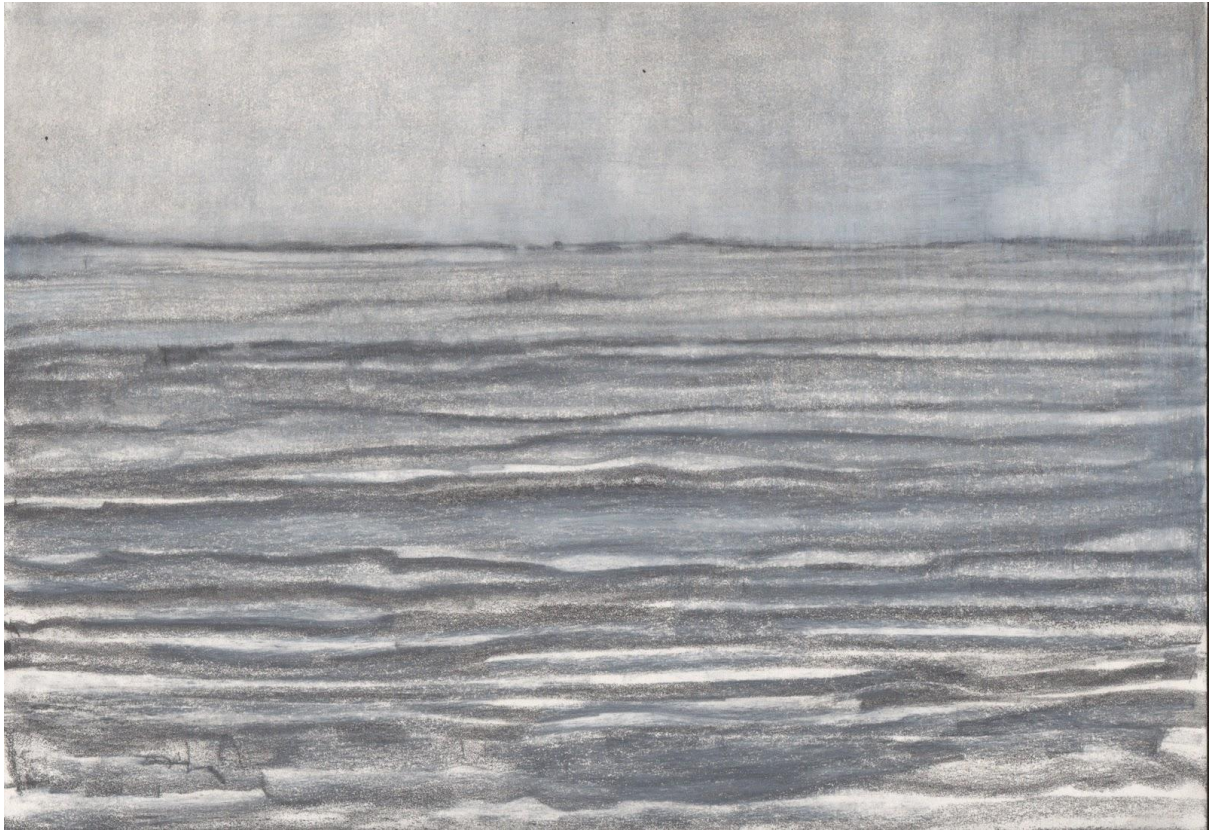
A dull ache holds, her perfume lingers.



She had cradled her pet earlier this morning, who had become feather light all fur and bones, close to departure. And she had recognised the gesture, Mary cradling her infant son (in the cathedral), and later the dead body too large to hold in her arms laid across her knees, shrouded by her large gown of a mantle. And then again in the protective gesture of the woman who cradled her dog while sipping tea, or coffee, who knows; this animal full of life, sending a bark of assertion across the happy murmur of the room. And then again she recognised the quality of a piercing sound, neither human nor beast, or a little bit of both, earlier on in the train with the worn out couple caring for their adult son, who expressed excitement in large loud abrupt bellows of exclamations for which she couldn't find a word. And she had seen the tiredness in the mother's worn face, and heard the gently patient, frustrated yet soothing reproach in the father's voice, who at intervals tried to calm this human bark.



This cathedral provided smaller places of intimacy and seclusion which she welcomed, despite the forbidding dark wooden benches; yet it lacked warmth and the high quality stained glass spoke of death more than love or resurrection.



Nothing, empty, flat. The field drags. The dense grey mist dissolves into the leaden ground.