



Mobility and contemplation

Description

Iâ??m reprising my blog post from 21 December 2013, [#175 Enchanted places](#). There I quoted from Christopher Streetâ??s book on *ley* lines, mythic lines that cross the landscape connecting significant places, in which he asserts that â??numinous natureâ?• is best sensed â??in the peace and tranquility of the atmosphere that surrounds them, simply by sitting still and quietly letting the energy and power of the place slowly seep over you.â?• (p.3)

Places of enchantment also draw visitors, pilgrims, nature lovers, poets, students of landscape and tourists. I took the picture below during a strenuous ascent to the summit of the Lion Rock (*Sigiriya*), a special, symbolic and compelling setting of rock and ruin in central Sri Lanka.

In my experience, the contemplative (sitting still) aspect of such a place is appreciated more during recollection and aided by photography than being there. In any case, you are likely to experience any such place as a series of transitions â?? closed and open spaces, places of refuge and hazard, stairs, gateways and arches. As with many such â??numinousâ?• spaces you appreciate it through movement â?? and implied movement. See posts tagged [Threshold](#).

My 2013 post implied mist and cloud as signifiers of enchantment. I didnâ??t record this stage in the journey to *Sigiriya*â??s summit via video. Nor was there any mist. But I called on AI video to add artificial but plausible detail just around the corner. I uploaded my static image and prompted the AI [Runway](#) platform: â??The camera glides into the scene and up the stairs to reveal a continuation of the stairs into swirling mist and cloud.â?•



Such places lend themselves to reflection, contemplation, fantasy and imagination. The challenge though is to find, add or enhance “numinosity” in the prosaic, even in so-called [non-places](#). Here, AI can assist in encouraging or provoking such reflection “” by rendering ordinary settings as places of either enchantment or disenchantment. Here is my attempt to transform a photograph I took of a traffic roundabout in the Faroe Islands “” cinematically and romantically into something it is not.



I fed a prompt to Runway: “”This is a traffic roundabout in a tunnel. The camera POV continues along the road while the other cars continue their journey. The silhouetted figures on the mural raise their arms as if in a dance and the blue and red lights start to suffuse the road.” (For an explanation of the silhouettes and the significance of their circular formation see post: [Faroese chain dancing](#).)

With more “credits” and time at my disposal I could have prompted the platform with further modifications and edits.

As usual, I consulted ChatGPT on the content of the 2013 post. The AI volunteered that the technical regime through which enchantment is now produced, circulated, and experienced has changed. It proposed that even “real places” have come to be filmed as *if they were already fantasy environments*.

Ultra-stabilised cameras, high dynamic range capture, and cinematic editing now render cave temples, forest paths, ruined monasteries, mountain shrines as if fictional worlds. Where video games such as *Myst IV* simulated enchanted environments, contemporary video practices aestheticise actual heritage sites in comparable ways. Enchantment is choreographed through motion. The viewer does not sit still; the camera performs the enchantment on our behalf.

Contrary to this restless movement, Christopher Street’s reflections on such spaces focussed on stillness – “sitting quietly letting the energy seep over you.”

Another way of looking at this apparent change from the static to the dynamic, the slow to the digitally frenetic, is to note that these cinematic technologies reveal what was there all along in our interaction with place – mobility and movement in contemplative experience. See post [The benefits of walking](#).

I’ve re-cloned my voice. This is better!

Reference

- Street, Christopher. 2010. *London’s Ley Lines: Pathways of Enlightenment*. Earthstars Publishing

Note

- Featured image shows Elephant Rock and Lion Rock, *Sigiriya*, Sri Lanka. Photo by author.

Category

1. Artificial Intelligence
2. Nature
3. Podcast

Tags

1. enchantment
2. Sigiriya
3. Sri Lanka

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