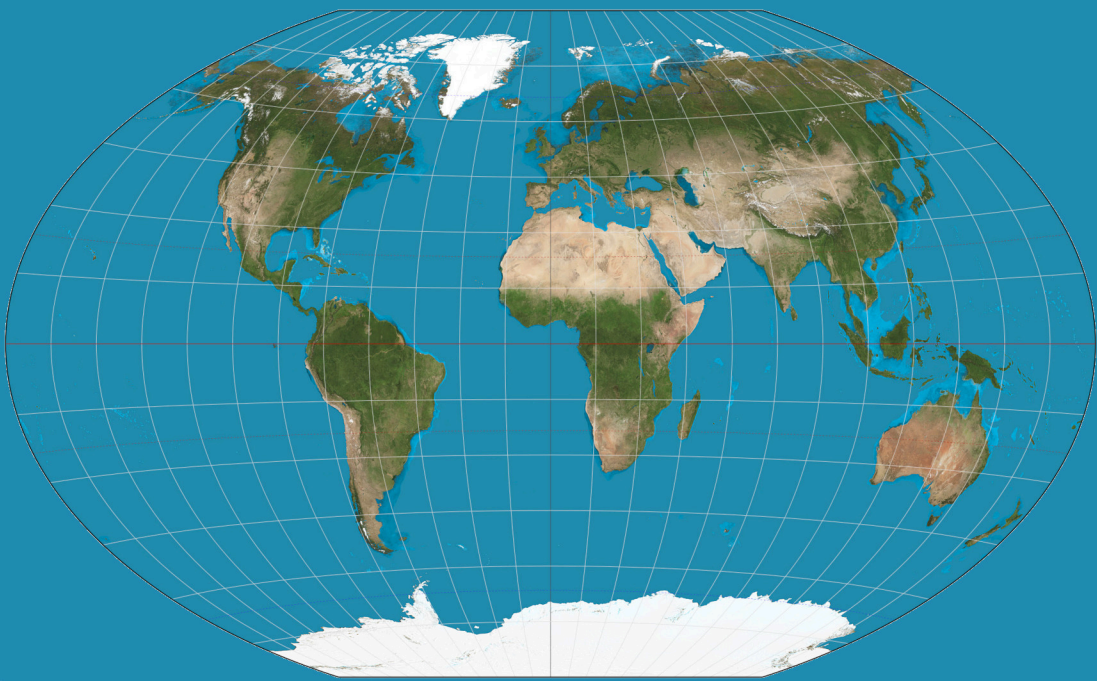


THE REST OF THE WORLD



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THE REST OF THE WORLD

What is the point of moving, when one can travel on a chair so magnificently?

- Jean des Esseintes in A Rebours (Joris-Karl Huysman, 1884)

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ALBANIA

The most memorable self-made monarch was Zog: Ahmed Bey Zogu (1895-1961), ruthless chieftain and shrewd politician, became Albania's president in 1925, creating himself King Zog I and Scanderbeg III in 1928. He ruled with operatic flamboyance, married an Austrian princess who became his Queen Geraldine, and survived 56 assassination attempts - including one in 1931 at the Viennese opera after a performance of *Pagliacci* in which he drew his pistol and returned fire, the only head of state ever to do so in modern times. [1]

ALGERIA

After the French murdered 45,000 Muslims, they seized and imprisoned the rest of the rebel leaders. But the Algerian people didn't stop being angry. The young Algerian boys who were growing up knew smatterings of Marxist revolutionary techniques. They didn't care for liberal sentiment or revolutionary discussions. They weren't interested in groups. They enjoyed hating. They liked to fight. They respected violence. [2]

At Padovani Beach the dance hall is open every day. And in that huge rectangular box with its entire side open to the sea, the poor young people of the neighborhood dance until evening. Often I used to await there a moment of exceptional beauty. During the day the hall is protected by sloping wooden awnings. When the sun goes down they are raised. Then the hall is filled with an odd green light born of the double shell of the sky and the sea. When one is seated far from the windows, one sees only the sky and, silhouetted against it, the faces of the dancers passing in succession. Sometimes a waltz is being played and, against the green background, the black profiles whirl obstinately like those cut-out silhouettes that are attached to a phonograph's turntable. Night comes rapidly after this and with it the lights. But I am unable to relate the thrill and secrecy that subtle instant holds for me. [3]

It is built on the side of a mountain that slips into the Mediterranean. Its beauty is startling, its evolution over time clearly visible. Beginnings at the western edge, intimate, mysterious neighborhoods, bathed in whitewash over many centuries, have lent the city its name of *Alger la blanche*. This is the Casbah, moving from a lower level of timeworn mosques upward through winding

stairways and passageways, famously recorded in the film, *The Battle of Algiers*. At its base is *Place des Martyrs*, a vast open space above the sea long marred by an outrageous statue of the Duke of Orleans on horseback; visible there throughout the colonial era, it was shipped back to France following independence. [4]

The loves we share with a city are often secret loves. Old walled towns like Paris, Prague, and even Florence are closed in on themselves and hence limit the world that belongs to them. But Algiers (together with certain other privileged places such as cities on the sea) opens to the sky like a mouth or a wound. In Algiers one loves the commonplace; the sea at the end of every street, a certain volume of sunlight, the beauty of the race. And, as always, in that unashamed offering there is a secret fragrance. In Paris is it possible to be homesick for space and a beating of wings. Here, at least, man is gratified in every wish and, sure of his desires, can at least measure his possessions. [3]

During their entire youth men find here a life in proportion to their beauty. Then, later on, the downhill slope and obscurity. They wagered on the flesh, but knowing they were to lose. In Algiers whoever is young and alive finds sanctuary and occasion for triumphs everywhere: in the bay, the sun, the red and white games on the seaward terraces, the flowers and sports stadiums, the cool-legged girls. But for whoever has lost his youth there is nothing to cling to and nowhere where melancholy can escape itself. Elsewhere, Italian terraces, European cloisters, or the profile of the Provençal hills - all places where man can flee his humanity and gently liberate himself from himself. But everything here calls for solitude and the blood of young men. Goethe on his deathbed calls

for light and this is a historic remark. At Belcourt and Bab-el-Oued old men seated in the depths of cafés listen to the bragging of young men with plastered hair. [3]

If the desert can be defined as a soulless place where the sky alone is king, then Oran is awaiting her prophets. All around and above the city the brutal nature of Africa is indeed clad in her burning charms. She bursts the unfortunate stage setting with which she is covered; she shrieks forth between all the houses and over all the roofs. The opposition here is between magnificent human anarchy and the permanence of an unchanging sea. This is enough to make a staggering scent of life rise toward the mountainside road. [5]

ARGENTINA

I fought my way through the touts and made my way uphill to the kettle-shaped stadium. It was an unearthly sight, the crowd of people emerging from darkness into luminous brown fog, the yells, the dust rising, the mountainside smouldering under a sky which, because of the dust, was starless. At that point, I considered turning back; but the mob was propelling me forward towards the stadium where the roar of the spectators inside made a sound like flames howling in a chimney. The mob took up this cry and surged past me, stirring up the dust. There were women frying bananas and meat-cakes over fires on the walkway that ran around the outside perimeter of the stadium. The smoke from these fires and the dust made each searchlight seem to burn with a smoky flame. The touts reappeared nearer the stadium. They were hysterical now. [6]

Diego Maradona began his earning life as a street urchin. With other boys from the shanty town, he would play cat and mouse with the ticket collectors on the local train or hitch a ride on a truck to one of the city's main railway stations. There they would try and earn some pesos by opening the doors of taxis, or selling whatever scrap they'd picked up on the way. One of his more lucrative enterprises involved collecting the silver foil of used cigarette packets and then reselling it. The reality of life for those who lived in Villa Fiorito seemed far removed from the promises of Peron and Evita. [7]

BALKANS

I thought of the old adage that you could tell something about a nation by its vocabulary, Inuit having a dozen words for snow, Bedouin for sand, Meso-Americans for tubers, and so on. Serbo-Croatian had a disturbingly large number of words for butchering. One of them was *kundačiti*, which meant 'to beat with the butt end of a rifle'. [8]

BOLIVIA

*How real is Bolivia
With its snowy Andes lifting over the modern city
Now that one is in La Paz
Which means the peace in Spanish
Tho the natives speak their native tongue
Especially the women in brown bowler hats
Sitting in the mud with their hands over their noses
Selling black potatoes and blue onions
In the market place which covers the hillside
Over which one can see electrical towers
And airplanes landing from Santiago and Lima Caracas
[9]*

We drove for hours, until the land broke like a Greek plate and there was a drop in the road. I looked out and saw nothing but sky. The universe. Then I looked down, and there below us was a city in a bowl. A bowl like the deepest crater on the moon, with a little house stuck to every last square inch of it. "This is La Paz. The highest capital city in the world," my mother said. "This is where we'll live." [10]

My desk, beside a paneless window, looked out onto the side of the bowl that was La Paz. Every bit of the desk's wooden surface was engraved with hearts, dates, initials, political slogans and fragments from the poetry of the beloved Peruvian César Vallejo: "I shall die in Paris, in a rainstorm. On a day I already remember." [10]

Theirs is one of the highest houses on the planet, in the last and thinnest layer of human habitation, at an altitude of almost 4,000 metres, where they are almost alone. Their hut looks out over the altiplano, the Andean high plateau, a plain of ochre and salt that shimmers under the sun, dissolving into an aspirin-coloured sky. Not a single tree grows up here. Everything is stone and light. Here and there a hill bulges out, but it is as if the world is tired by the time it makes it to this height, and that's why the eruption of Cerro Rico is so impressive: a peak that stands 1,000 metres above the exhausted altiplano. The city of Potosi spreads out at the foot of the mountain, 200,000 inhabitants, with its neighbourhoods of little square houses and flat roofs, a network of closely packed cells, as if the city's geometry was the work of insects. Or a camp, housing pioneers who have come to extract the wealth from an uninhabitable planet. [11]

BRAZIL

Off the coast of Brazil, almost 93 miles away from downtown Sao Paolo, is *Ilha da Queimada Grande*, also known as “Snake Island”, home to between one and five snakes per square metre. The snakes are a unique species of pit viper, the golden lancehead (*Bothrops insularis*). The lancehead genus of snakes is responsible for 90 percent of Brazilian snakebite-related fatalities. The golden lanceheads that occupy Snake Island grow to well over half a metre long, and they possess a powerful fast-acting venom that melts the flesh around their bites. [12]

*Brazil is great. Amazing food, intelligent people,
and great weather. The most important thing is to
know your environment because there is a lot of crime.*

*

*Brazil is great. Despite acts of cruelty and discrimination
primarily against indigenous and black communities,
and all the inequalities and pain.*

*

Brazil is great for cheap bikinis that look like a million dollars.

[13]

Brazil plays a sort of giant chlorophyll role for the whole of humanity. It is the planetary accumulator of joy, elation, languor, physical animality and seduction coupled with vital exuberance and political derision. If ever the human race should fall into depression it is there that it would regain its vitality, just as, if it should ever be near to suffocation, it is beside the Amazon that it would get its breath back. [14]

*In Rocinha, in Vidigal, we're totally covered
Let them come, we're in control
The big guns are always on standby
For the man MESTRE and his fabulous team
Every day our power grows and our fame
Spreads across the globe, the media doesn't tire of reporting
That Rocinha's bandit lives a life of luxury
We move around on Hornets and the babes
Throw themselves at us, covered in gold, pockets full
Of cash, wearing OKLEY, LACOSTE, DOLCE GABBANA
And when the heat is on, we're always standing ready
With our firepower and big guns
And the MESTRE has built a great team to defend our gold mine.*
[15]

To all appearances the Jivaros of today live on the best possible terms with the White man, and there is never anything to prove that misfortunes which befall the White man have any connection with the Indians. But the Jivaros are like the many volcanoes in their country: when pressure reaches a certain point, there is a violent explosion. [16]

BRITISH ISLES

Rockall is a pyramid of volcanic granite that sticks up out of the stormiest patch of the Atlantic like the fin of a gargantuan shark. The sea is so tempestuous here that it is almost impossible to determine the island's height. For at least two centuries it was mistaken for Frisland, a mythical island posited by Venetian navigator Nicolò Zeno, and the equally mysterious island of Buss. Others even claim it is a fragment of the mythical Kingdom of Hy-Brazil, the land of eternal youth. [17]

Before St Aidan came the islands were inhabited by little people 'clad in cowls and rising upon goats, black in complexion, short in stature, their countenances most hideous, their heads long'.

*

The islands themselves vary in number according to the state of the tide: there are perhaps fifteen of them which never become submerged at all. As several of them never become exposed (not islands really of course), the place is very dangerous for shipping. At low tide there are about twenty-eight islands (above the water). They are notable for birds and seals and also for their history as a refuge from the world for saints. [18]

It is a Hebridean stratigraphy: possible Bronze or Iron age houses, nineteenth-century shielings in which the girls and boys would stay in the summer, tending to the cattle, making the cheese and butter, and above them the skuas, heroic, bitter northern, aggressive, magnificent modern invaders. Bits and pieces of puffin and kittiwake litter their nests.

*

The Shianters have no wood but they have hidden places, tucked among the rocks. They have no rivers, but they have streams in which the watermint and the forget-me-nots grow. They have no lakes, but pools around whose margins the turf luxuriates into neon green and across whose still, dark surface the water boatmen paddle like Polynesians between their archipelagos. And they have the richness of the sea. [19]

St Kilda - you don't exist. Your name is just a faint cry made by the birds that make their home on the high cliffs at the furthest edge of the United Kingdom, beyond the outer-most of the Outer Hebrides. [20]

For at least eight months of the year, St Kilda is subjected to frequent and severe gales and storms. Mary Cameron, daughter of one of the island's last missionaries, recalls: "One particular storm left us deaf for a week. The noise of the wind, the pounding of the heavy sea, were indescribable. This storm was accompanied by thunder and lightning, but we could not hear the thunder for other sounds." On one occasion the entire village was destroyed in a gale, and sheep were frequently blown over the cliffs into the sea below. [21]

With little experience or knowledge of the larger world, life on St Kilda was uncomplicated by the trappings of wealth, political intrigue on any scale, complex legal wrangles, or excesses of vice. MacAuley wrote: "The humble blessings of bread and wild fowl, of peaceful cottages and little flocks, of angling rods and hunting ropes, are all the riches, honours, and profits they aspire after." [22]

And so, on September 2, 1967, Roughs Tower became the “Principality of Sealand”, the world’s newest and smallest country. Roy became Prince Roy, his wife Princess Joan, and Michael and his sister Penelope, prince and princess. The normal trappings of statehood soon followed, including coins, stamps, passports, a flag, and a constitution. The Sealanders would be joined by many proud citizens over the years - a cast of adventurers, rogues, conmen, and cyberpunks all happy to call the principality home and go head-to-head with the British government. [23]

*

A famous photo of seventeen-year-old Penny shows her posing in a beret with two guns in her hands on the deck of Roughs Tower, a couple of Molotov cocktails visible on the railings behind her, looking not unlike Patty Hearst. [23]

The Fryup Islands, known colloquially as the ‘Fryups’, are a group of small islands situated between eight and ten off the North Riding coast. The largest islands in the group, Mardoll, Throng and Vanadis, were permanently inhabited from the Late Middle Ages until the end of the 19th century. Their population, never more than two hundred in number, originally lived in burrows and subsisted predominantly on seabirds and seals. They spoke Fryoesse, a derivation of Old Norse and English. The outlying islands of St Agnes and St Olaf were populated by hermits in the 14th and 15th centuries. Hundreds of ships have been wrecked on the dangerous reefs that ring the islands, and the iconic, purple-striped Edda Lighthouse was completed in 1760. Since the beginning of the 20th century the islands have been temporarily inhabited and claimed, respectively, by Maoists, nudists, environmentalists, Bitcoin entrepreneurs and members of an End Times cult. The islands are

popular with bird watchers, and are the only recorded nesting site of the critically endangered Dwarf Auk. [24]

CHAD

During all these seasons, the children of Chad are the happiest under the sun. When they are not working in the fields, they roam all over the bush picking wild fruit; armed with their assegais, they hunt guinea fowl, hare, porcupine and gazelle. One of their favourite pastimes, to this day, is to lie in wait for the teals and moorhens in pools strewn with water lilies. They are passionately fond of the large gatherings after nightfall, when the elders recount the most beautiful tales, which sometimes never end and must be resumed evening after evening under the light of the moon. [25]

Returning towards Djim-Tilo, we took part in a hippopotamus hunt. One of these beasts, disturbed by the noise of our approach, threw itself on one side with its head and shoulders out of water, looking like the sea-horse of mythological pictures. Another, of which we could at first see no more than the snout, was struck by a bullet fired by F ____ and leapt out of the water, then plunged back revealing its enormous hind-quarters with a little stump of a tail wagging an ironical farewell. [26]

I caught the plane at lunchtime for Fort Lamy in Chad. By local standards, Fort Lamy is a big city and I was looking forward to a clean room and, by God's will, air conditioning. I also had romantic dreams about Chad, though all I knew about it was its name which appealed to me from childhood. It was boiling hot, even in the plane, and for half a hour before reaching Fort Lamy we flew over poison green swamp. Horrible country. I began to feel depressed about Chad. [27]

Chad had no government but plenty of guns; gasoline was sold in green wine bottles. The tracker I hired in what was then the Central African Empire had followed the BaAka Pygmy custom of chipping his front teeth into sharp points, giving him the fearsome grin of a piranha. [28]

I was nervous about touring N'Djamena - a seething, dusty slum of 700,000 people, mostly dirt roads, one-storey tin shacks, and low cement buildings riddled with bullets from years of civil war. With its poverty, high population growth, and history of violence, much of N'Djamena was said to be unsafe in the daytime and all of it dangerous at night, even for locals. The matronly hotel clerk who had sold me a map (a useless investment, I soon learned: streets had no signs) warned me, "Wherever you go here, walk like a man, or thugs will strip you naked and steal your shoes!" [29]

The heat wakes you up in N'Djamena. The children playing outside your door also wake you. Men and boys on camels, riding along the dirt streets to market, shouting from camel to camel, wake you up too. Little scrappy motorcycles wake you up and you can smell their smoke. The old diesel engines of yellow Peugeot taxicabs begin their daily prowling down the mud streets, and their rumble and smoke also come into your room. Many of the women of this city begin their march to the river to wash the family clothes; they talk and laugh as they pass your window. And you might get a cell phone call from friends who want to know what you are doing today. [30]

We reached N'Djamena at 3 a.m. The terminal had the resonant, hollow feel of the early hours: queues of dozey mid-sleep-cycle passengers, prodigiously yawning customs officials. Outside,

beyond a couple of street lamps, was a wall of black: the plane had been eight hours late and the taxi drivers had given up and gone home.

*

I woke late next morning, went to the pool-side restaurant and ordered an omelette. Women were lounging by the pool, beautiful women with black skin and Day-Glo bikinis, gossiping and giggling and rubbing oil into their thighs. I ate the omelette and felt a sudden wave of giddiness. I spent the rest of the day in bed, vomiting and reading *Crime and Punishment*. [31]

CHECHNYA

It's hard to be a Chechen. If you're a Chechen, you must feed and shelter your enemy when he comes knocking as a guest; you must give up your life for a girl's honour without a second thought; you must kill your blood foe by plunging a dagger into his chest, because you can never shoot anyone in the back; you must offer your last piece of bread to your friend; you must get out from your car to stand and greet an elderly man passing on foot; you must never run away, even if your enemy are a thousand strong and you stand no chance of victory, you must take up the fight all the same. And you can never cry, no matter what happens. Your beloved women may leave you, poverty may lay waste to your home, your comrades may lie bleeding in your arms, but you may never cry. If you are a Chechen. If you are a man. Only once, once in a lifetime may you cry: when your mother dies.

*

Then I hear my heart sing: Go! Go to the mountains. There in the mountains is your clan's rock; upon it stands the stone tower; near it lies the vault. There the sky becomes closer, there is silence and the music of pure mountain rivers, there you can wait for the end of this era, this Iron Age, in which people once more have gone mad. And long this music resounds in me. [32]

CHILE

The island of Chiloé is notorious for a dank and macabre mythology in which much of the population is said to still believe: goblins, warlocks and all manner of creatures are thought to populate the caves in the forest along the eastern shore. When Darwin visited in the 1830s there were tales of people accused of devil worship being sent to the Inquisition in Lima. More than a century later Chatwin wrote of a *brujeria*, or witchcraft, sect rumoured to be flourishing in Chiloé, with the sole purpose of spreading evil and causing pain and misery to humankind. [33]

CHINA

When we first came here someone told me that all the girls in Harbin can be divided into two classes - attractive ones, who are cabaret girls, and unattractive ones, who are dentists. There are many women dentists and uncountable numbers of girls who work in cabarets, either as hostesses or entertainers. Among them are excellent ballet dancers, many trained in Moscow and smuggled out of Russia to Harbin. Here they will give a delightful performance for a dollar or two in American money and provide their own costumes. Each one has her own exciting and pitiful tale. [34]

CHRISTMAS IS.

I spent some 10 or 12 days just waiting for the crabs to arrive because there's only a very short window of opportunity during the very first days; 70 or 80 million crabs start migrating from the jungle to the beaches. They mate, lay their eggs and disappear back into the jungle. I think about them and I don't know why. I can't explain it. I know there's something very big for example, to see the crabs crossing the railroad tracks, something that I can't explain. [35]

COLOMBIA

The sculpture, which shows the Colombian with her famous hip movement, is located on the emblematic Malecon del Rio in the well-known "Capital of the Atlantic." Weighing six tons, it is accompanied by a plaque that exalts the singer's career and her philanthropic work. "A heart that composes, hips that do not lie, an unmatched talent, a voice that moves masses and feet that march for the good of children and humanity," it reads. [36]

CONGO

In the jungle of the equatorial region, the home of his ancestors, 1,000 kilometres north of Kinshasa, acres of trees were felled and builders arrived. Mobutu constructed a palace in the village of Gbadolite, which became his jungle seat, founded on the proceeds of copper, diamonds and gold. Italianate fountains threw jets of scarce water into the air. Stone columns supported high ornate ceilings and shimmering Venetian chandeliers. In the ballroom, guests could skate across marble as smooth as frozen lakes. Artists set to work on frescoes of rainforests and brightly coloured birds. Architects designed a system of inter-locking pools. The building's first incarnation was judged too big, and another was constructed, with cosier gold-embossed rooms and shaded Japanese pagodas where Mobutu could enjoy his favourite pink champagne. Soon statesmen and celebrities were being entertained at his 'Versailles in the jungle' where they were showered with gifts of diamonds, vintage wines and finely carved ivory. The procession of partygoers need not have worried about accessing such a remote spot. Mobutu had a runway built which was so long that it could accommodate the supersonic Concorde. [37]

CUBA

*Delicate chords
from the negro guitarino
— singers at El Rancho Grande,
drunken burlesque
screams of agony,
VIVA JALISCO!
I eat a catfish sandwich
with onions and red sauce
20c.
[38]*

A girl on her own is listening to reggaeton, drinking rum and staring out to sea. The Malecon is a long and lonely highway that leads to a dusty deserted city. The sheer length of it is beautiful. The beauty is visceral. It stems from its length, its width, its height. Gazing at it and seeing that the wall is never-ending, that it stretches far beyond our understanding, is a revelation. Usually, this wouldn't be beautiful, but right now, it is. [39]

DAGESTAN

Dagestan itself is almost uniquely suited to creating a fractured society. Bleak and raw, its deep valleys plunge hundreds of metres from a high treeless plateau. The rocks of the mountains break out of the valley sides, sometimes squeezing together to make narrow gulleys, sometimes rearing up to make crags. The freebooting societies that lived in these inaccessible, tawny valleys needed protection from each other, and used the crags as natural castles on which to build villages. To travellers along the valley bottoms, the villages are visible on the top of the slopes above, natural fortresses for some of the most warlike people in the world. And the valleys created an ethnic mosaic also. Dagestan is home to dozens of languages, as many as forty, and the ethnic groups often live in isolated villages surrounded entirely by other nations. It is a bewildering place. [40]

However savage the campaigns [in Chechnia], where sharpshooters lurked behind every tree, and Russian losses were terrible, the land itself was not hostile. There were trees, grass, streams; it was a world they knew. Dying there, the men still felt themselves among friends. Not so in Dagestan, where nothing lived; where an endless labyrinth of precipices and phantasmagoric peaks formed an accursed desolation - a hell, which they had reached before death. [41]

Before she turned herself into a bomb, Aminat Saprykina was a professional actress and dancer in Dagestan. At the peak of her theatrical career, she performed the lead role of a charming witch, Olesya, in Alexander Kuprin's *Forest Witches*. Fellow actors

remember her as a joyful girl and a graceful break-dancer. A video from that period of her life features the future mass murderer dressed in a sexy black skirt, swirling in a dance. But after her conversion to Islam, Saprykina took another name: Kurbanova. And it was with this name that she became at least the 42nd female suicide bomber in the last decade in Russia. [42]

EGYPT

Cleopatra was a voluptuous and extravagant woman, and in one of the feasts she gave to Antony at Alexandria, she melted pearls into her drink to render the entertainment more sumptuous and expensive. She was fond of appearing dressed as a goddess; and she advised Antony to make war against the richest nations, to support her debaucheries. [43]

EL SALVADOR

The Soccer War lasted one hundred hours. Its victims: 6,000 dead, more than 12,000 wounded. Fifty thousand people lost their home and fields. Many villages were destroyed. The two countries ceased military activity because Latin American states intervened, but to this day there are exchanges of gunfire along the Honduras-El Salvador border, and people die, and villages are burned. [44]

The dead and pieces of the dead turn up in El Salvador everywhere, every day, as taken for granted as in a nightmare, or a horror movie. Vultures of course suggest the presence of a body. A knot of children on the street suggests the presence of a body. Bodies turn up in the brush of vacant lots, in the garbage thrown down ravines in the richest districts, in public restrooms, in bus stations. Some are dropped in Lake Ilopango, a few miles east of the city, and wash up near the lakeside cottages and clubs frequented by what remains in San Salvador of the sporting bourgeoisie. [45]

The three-year-old El Salvador International Airport is glassy and white and splendidly isolated. [46]

*those who filled the bars and brothels of all the ports
and capitals in the region
(The Blue Cave, The Panties, Happyland),
those who sowed maize in foreign jungles,
the kings of the crime pages,
those who no one ever knows where they're from,
the best craftsmen in the world,
those who were mown down while crossing the border,
those who died of malaria
or scorpion or pit viper bites*

*in the hell of the banana plantations,
those who cry, drunk, on hearing the national anthem
under Pacific cyclones or in the snow-capped north,
[47]*

ETHIOPIA

Dallol was a dead place and looked as if it had been for some time. It was clear to me that no-one was meant to conquer an environment like this one, where the Earth's crust was still in turmoil and primordial elements bubbled from the ground. It was as if Mother Nature allowed visitors but permanent settlement was actively discouraged. Over a period of six years, the annual mean of the daily maximum temperature recorded at Dallol was 41oC. It was just too extreme. Somehow I felt uneasy about even treading this primeval land. [48]

FAROE IS.

It's fulmar season in the Faroe Islands right now! Fulmars - known as Havshestur - inhabit the cliffs of the Faroe Islands for almost the entire year. The most common method of catching fulmar is to catch the fulmar chicks by boat, using nets in late August and early September - a period when the chicks have just left their nests and are unable to fly yet. Swipe to take a look onboard a boat that caught fulmars last week. At Ræst, the fulmar meat is marinated in a spiced rub, smoked, and braised. Once coated in Öland tempura, it is deep-fried and served with a small bowl of pickled potatoes and a potato and leek foam, all covered with our "edible moss". [49]

Crafted from bronze and stainless steel, *Kópakonan* portrays a naked woman emerging from the body of a seal by shedding her former skin. The statue, 2.5m tall, is bolted onto the one of the rocks by the shore below the village and has been designed to withstand waves of up to 13m.

*

Seals were believed to be former human beings who voluntarily sought death in the ocean. Once a year, on the Thirteenth night, they were allowed to come on land, strip off their skins and amuse themselves as human beings, dancing and enjoying themselves. [50]

Sometimes the hill-men went fishing in the fjords: if you saw them, and rowed out to the place afterwards, you would land a very good catch. The fishermen would sometimes see the lights of the fairy fleet, and if they waited until the fairies had gone, and then shot their nets on the same ground, they would soon be returning to port (as their prayer says) "with the living and the dead in the boat." The

hill-men sometimes carried small children away (people to-day are very definite about this, and dozens of cases are cited) but were always kind to the little ones, and usually brought them home after a few days. Sometimes wanderers vanished mysteriously among the mountains, and it was said that they had elected to join the hildumenn. [51]

Petrels are the sparrows of the sea, abundant little birds who roam far on tireless wings between horizons of uneasy, volatile waves. The sea is one of the richest feeding-grounds on this planet, and they and numerous allied creatures have fitted themselves for a life that has no need of land, except as a place where they can perpetuate the species. So they nest on the fringe of the ocean, often on remote and isolated islets. There may be thousands nesting on Mykineshólmur but you would never know it unless you looked for them at night; for while the sun shines they must reap their harvest far from any land, and it is only when the night comes that they go in the stillness to the lonely shores where their nesting-tunnels are scored in the soil. [51]

More men waded out from the harbour-head, lunging and thrusting with their lances as the stricken whales sheered by. Men and beasts seemed inextricably confused in the bloody, quaking turmoil of the sea. The spear-thrusts sank deep, viciously biting into blubber and flesh. Within a few minutes of the start of the kill the harbour was a scene of gory madness and carnage, and the strong smell of blood was in the air. [51]

FRANCE

FRENCH WOMEN

Though the ladies of France are not very handsome, they are sensible and witty. To many of them, without the least flattery, may be applied the distich which Sappho ascribes to herself: "If partial nature has denied me beauty, the charms of my mind amply make up for the deficiency." [52]

The young men of the banlieue are clad in sportswear and workwear that split the difference between stylish and practical: Nike, Carhartt, Everlast, Reebok, Lacoste. They breakdance, pass spliffs, shoot the shit in front of graffitied walls, arrange themselves in tableaux that could have been ripped from the linear notes of Nas' 'Illmatic', the Queensbridge housing projects swapped for the outskirts of Paris. [53]

The true Paris is by nature a dark, miry, malodorous city, confined within its narrow lanes, swarming with blind alleys, culs-de-sac, and mysterious passages, with labyrinths that lead you to the devil. The true Paris is full of freak shows, repositories at three centimes a night for unheard-of beings and human phantasmagorias... reposing side by side are hundreds, thousands, of charlatans, of match sellers, of accordion players, of hunchbacks, of the blind and the lame; of dwarfs, legless cripples, and men whose noses were bitten off in quarrels, of rubber-jointed men, clowns making a comeback, and sword swallows; of jugglers who balance a greasy pole on the tips of their teeth... children with four legs, Basque giants and other kinds, Tom Thumb in his twentieth reincarnation, plant-people whose hand or arm is the soil of a living tree, which sprouts each

year its crown of branches and leaves; walking skeletons, transparent humans made of light, and whose faint voice can make itself heard to an attentive ear; orangutans with human intelligence; monsters who speak French. [54]

I get so mad I go down to the whore districts. A million Apaches with daggers are milling around. I go in a hallway and I see three ladies of the night. I announce with an evil English leer, '*Sh' press la belle brunette*' - I take the pretty brunette. The brunette rubs her eyes, throat, ears and says, 'I ain't gonna have that no more.' [55]

It may start down a suicidal highway from Paris, and then the images crowd the corridors of the mind. A lighted Gothic cathedral with shining racers adjacent. Black asphalt and white stripes. People. Restless people. A rush of cars, engines screaming sensually. Neon midway rides spinning to harsh, insistent music. Take a nap. Drink wine. Embrace a girl. Eat some oysters. Smell the sausage. See the cars, now large, now tiny against the sky and woods. Nightfall. Daybreak. Wash your face in the windshield washer. Observe the finish. And motor slowly back to normality. [56]

The trip begins in a tunnel, and when the train emerges the boulevards lined with bistro awnings are gone. Even the weather seems different - damp and murky, with a wind blowing in from the southwest. (The suburbs of the 93 grew around factories that had been situated northeast of Paris in order to allow industrial smells to drift away from the City of Light.). The rail tracks cut through a disordered landscape of graffiti-covered walls, glass office buildings, soccer fields, trash fires, abandoned industrial lots, modest houses

with red tiled roofs, and clusters of twenty-story monoliths - the *cités*.
[57]

The closed doors swung open, and we found ourselves drowning in a sea of Burgundy's proudest vintages, Rheims' sparkle, Cognac's fire. Snails, pâtés, quenelles de brochet; always a great chilled fish in toto on a platter; venison and pheasants in a dozen rich brown odorous baths; intricate ices and well-laced beaten creams... and all of them served to the weighty tune of polite conversation, part condescending and part awed: it was too much for us. [58]

I want to walk along the river banks remembering snatches of Baudelaire, listen to Piaf in a seedy Montmartre bar, see the city from certain angles through Degas' eyes. And I have: Baudelaire, as well as Apollinaire and Prévert, lend themselves admirably to being quoted by the Seine, and once I espied through a dusty window in a courtyard on rue du Temple a room full of exquisite adolescent ballerinas at practice that looked like a Degas pastel set suddenly into motion. [59]

Among the most peculiar - and rare - of phenomena associated with UFO sightings is a substance called "angel hair." The most famous angel-hair case occurred in France in the fall of 1952... strange [flying] objects left an abundant trail behind them, which slowly fell to the ground as if dispersed. For several hours clumps of it hung in the trees, on the telephone wires, and on the roofs of houses... When witnesses picked up the material and rolled it into a ball, it turned gelatinous and vanished. [60]

It was a land of storms. They would approach silently at first, announced by the brief passage of a wind that slithered through the grass or by a series of sudden flashes on the horizon; then thunder and lightning would be unleashed, and we would be bombarded for a long while from every direction, as if in a fortress under siege. Just once, at night, I saw lightning strike near me outside: you could not even see where it had struck; the whole landscape was equally illuminated for one startling instant. Nothing in art has ever given me this impression of an irrevocable brilliance, except for the prose that Lautréamont employed in the programmatic exposition that he called *Poésies*. But nothing else: neither Mallarmé's blank page, nor Malevich's white square on a white background, nor even Goya's last pictures whose black takes over everything, as Saturn devours his children. [61]

No-one could find us. (Since it was pointless to go and hide on the most remote desert island, because there was always someone who discovers us and who knows, from having seen us, where we are). But on the freeway... it would never occur to them that we were on the freeway... who would suspect we weren't going anywhere? [62]

GERMANY

Eighteen months ago, they were still the heroes of the nation, standing triumphantly above the world of international sport that made their Communist state, politically and economically a dwarf, an athletic giant. Now they lie among the flotsam and jetsam of the discredited system, the athletes heckled for the privileges they enjoyed and their clubs threatened with closure. [63]

Ignorant strangers may have thought these mountains innocently serene; yet what Ludwig loved about them was their superhuman solemnity, the grave melancholy of the untouched valleys, the black crests, the forbidding ravines and rocks, the motionless mountains. Whenever he could manage, Ludwig spent the nights in one of the several primitive hunting huts which his father had built all over the Bavarian Alps. There Ludwig sat for hours, all by himself in front of a primitive stove, heaping logs on the fire, reading, dreaming; while outside, in the eternal rigour of the Alpine altitudes, glaciers reflected the frozen moon. [64]

*

Silver-grey walls and towers, forbiddingly steep and barren, rise from a rock which the torrential Peollat River separates from the rest of the world. "It is just about the most beautiful spot one could find, holy and unapproachable," Ludwig said in a letter to Wagner. Looking at the structure from a distance, one is positive he has seen this jagged silhouette more than once in medieval paintings - the royal dwelling rising five stories straight from the rock; the pillars and buttresses, the sharp gables and towers solemnly pointing to the sky; the pine forest, dark and primordial, almost touching the foundation; the torrent dropping thunderously into blank space.

And if the archaic exterior intimates Ludwig's loneliness and his somewhat artificial posture, a walk through the castle is like a guided tour through Ludwig's soul. [64]

On 16 May, Ulrike Meinhof was buried in Berlin. Over 4,000 people followed her coffin to the Protestant cemetery of the Holy Trinity in the West Berlin Mariendorf district. Many of them had painted their faces white; some were masked. They carried banners reading, 'We bear mourning and rage that we will not forget', and ' Ulrike Meinhof, we will avenge you.' [65]

GREENLAND

They proceeded to so high a latitude, that the sun, at midnight, illuminated the tops of the mountains with its rays. In some places the ice was close in-shore, so that they had to place their tent and boat upon a sledge, and draw it across the ice by dogs. They described the people on the east side as taller than those on the west, and that they had black hair and large beards. The inhabitants were numerous, and the animals, on which they subsisted, plentiful.

*

The land at this time surveyed and projected (including fifteen miles of coast to the southward and twenty-five to the northward) is mountainous, dark, and sterile in the extreme. Nothing can be conceived more rugged than it is; yet nothing that I have ever seen equals it in bold grandeur, and interesting character. There is nothing in it that is tame, smooth, or insignificant.

*

They saw a fine inlet, but did not enter it, for fear of the cannibals, which are said to live in that place, and of which all Greenlanders have a dread from former times. In the opinion of Kojake they became cannibals at first out of necessity, because once, in a great famine in winter, they had nothing but human flesh to eat; and, as they relished it, they had now inured themselves to this strange and unnatural food. "They do not like to slaughter middle aged people, even in a time of dearth, but only old people and forsaken orphans; and they will preferably spare their dogs at such a time, because of their usefulness, and slay some unnecessary person, in their stead."

[66]

The land, framed between ice-capped mountains and a blue fjord; icebergs, in rank and file, cruising slowly out toward the fjord mouth; heads of seal and walrus silently peering about above the surface of the water; schools of narwhal plunging gaily along their way; sea birds in million droves, haunting the bright air above the fjord - and on land, the broad plain, with grasses and bog cotton nodding in a sunlit breeze, while the fragrance of willow and crowberry, of flowers both red and yellow, adds spice to the air; musk-oxen grazing slowly along the coast, terns sitting about on tussocks and whipping their tails... Ah yes, here was the place at last where one could settle down, live and die and leave the world to take care of itself. [67]

Among the Inuit, hunting a polar bear is a big deal. The bears have huge territories - to actually see one around Tiniteqilaaq was rare. And because of their size and ferocity, they're not easy to kill. It's usually group effort, so according to tradition, the first four people to shoot it share the meat and the glory. That day, Pele shot the polar bear. And he was so happy. That evening, Pele went out drinking to celebrate. The next morning, he was dead. He had killed himself. He was 22. [68]

*In eighteen hundred and forty-six
On March the eighteenth day
We hoisted our colours to the top of the mast
And for Greenland sailed away, brave boys
And for Greenland sailed away*

*The lookout in the crosstrees stood
With spyglass in his hand*

There's a whale, there's a whale
And a whalefish, he cried
And she blows at every span, brave boys
She blows at every span
[69]

In one legend, Sedna attacked her parents, and as punishment, her father chopped off her fingers. These in turn became the creatures of the northern sea, such as walruses, seals, fish, and whales. Inuit shamans were known to travel to different afterworlds, and when hunters were unable to catch food from the sea, they would transform themselves into fish in order to reach the bottom of the ocean. There they would find Sedna, and would comb her long tangled hair and weave it into braids to soothe her trauma and showcase compassion. [70]

HAITI

Haiti summed up just about everything that Graham Greene required in a foreign destination, especially one that he intended as the setting for a novel. It was distressed; tropical, ramshackle, overcrowded, poor and on the brink of civil war. It was governed by a bogeyman. It was famous for its brothels and its slums and its weird expressions of religious faith - Catholicism and a mishmash of African ritual. Its women, especially its prostitutes, were celebrated for their beauty. Its ornate hotels were in a state of decay, yet there was enough alcohol for a guest to tie one on. The tourists had given up on it - too frightened. The only expatriates in the place were shady businessmen and foreign ambassadors, with the requisite number of bored wives. Add to this Voodoo, political tyranny, rum punch and sunshine, and the result is an agreeable and colorful horror. [71]

When a peasant dies, before being placed in his coffin he may be dressed in his best clothes - if he has any - and seated at a table with a lighted cigarette between his lips or, if a woman, a clay pipe. When friends and neighbours arrive the feasting and dancing of the wake begins. Although by law the corpse is supposed to be buried within twenty-four hours, decomposition is often allowed to set in. This ensures that sorcerers will not dig him up and make a zombie, a work slave, out of him. The heavy stone slabs with which Haitians cover their graves are added insurance that the dead will not rise to slave as zombies for the rest of time. [72]

HELIGOLAND

The bathing at Heligoland is the most exhilarating I have ever known. The waves rolling over so wide an expanse before they accidentally as it were touch this narrow strip of sand are thoroughly warmed - yet come with an impetus and a roar and a saltness which elsewhere can scarcely be equalled. Stand but a little way from shore, and the waves as they come in will cover you as in a cave, and break in a tumultuous passion of white salt spray over your head. I have bathed at Glücksberg and Klampenborg and Elsinore, and at other Baltic bathing-places; but at none does one come from the sea with a greater thrill of tingling, warm-pulsing pleasure than at Heligoland. [73]

INDIA

The Naxalites' war always began where the road ended. Everyone said so. Manas boasted to me that it had been six years since he had seen a paved road. The police, the political officers, the paramilitaries, the Adivasi tribes, the poorest local farmers, and the Naxalites themselves: It was the one thing they agreed upon. There always came a point out there in those jungles of India's infamous Red Corridor - foremost among them in the states of Chhattigarh and Jharkland - where the road began to give up the struggle against the thrust of vegetation, against the rain and the heat, where the last heavily fortified police station marked the farthest reach of central and state authority in a heave of tangled razor wire and bunkers. Then it stopped. After the end of the road? Then you were into another world, undeveloped India, Naxalite territory: a land of parallel authority, communism, people's courts, armed cadres, and IEDs. [74]

There really is a place called Naxalbari. It's a small town with its own tiny railway station and state highway, straddling the route that links northern Bihar to northern Bengal, through forest, farmland and tea gardens. But the Naxalbari of revolutionary grammar is really a cluster of villages and hamlets with quirky names from nature and history: Hatighisa, after elephants; Phansidoea, literally, hanged; Bagdogra, derived from *bagh* or tiger.

*

We're quiet as we go through Naxalbari town. It's run-down, dusty, a blur: sweetmeat shops with fly-blown offerings, some temples, ubiquitous chai shops. A couple of tin-roofed movie theatres with

curtained entrances advertise with posters of buxom women; their enticement has drawn large knots of youngsters. [75]

Time after time remote West Bengal presented its flawless Old Master compositions: flaxen hamlets set in the soft colour-washes of early spring, glossy buffaloes dragging the plough, kite-flying children, mathematical displays of bright washing laid out at the water's edge, a flight of cranes, a man repairing a thatch. [76]

All day Revd Singh and his party lingered there. Then, just as the sun was setting, a wolf stole out from one of the tunnels in the mound. Another followed, and then another, and another, and some wolf-cubs trotting along behind. After the cubs, the ghosts came out. There were two of them, both horribly ugly, the heads like large, shapeless globes within which, among the matted hair, a small fragment of face could be seen: a human face with brilliant, bestial eyes. [77]

IRAN

Notwithstanding the strictness of confinement in Persia, their women are treated with several indulgences. They are allowed a variety of precious liquors, costly perfumes, and beautiful slaves: their apartments are furnished with the most elegant hangings and carpets; their persons ornamented with the finest silks, and even loaded with the sparkling jewels of the East. But all these trappings, however elegant, or however gilded, are only like the golden chains sometimes made use of to bind a royal prisoner. [52]

IRAQ

Hufaidh is an island somewhere over there. On it are palaces, and palm trees and gardens of pomegranates, and the buffaloes are bigger than ours. But no one knows exactly where it is. Anyone who sees Hudfaidh is bewitched, and afterwards no one can understand his words. They say the Jinns can hide the island from anyone who comes near it. [78]

Memories of that first visit to the Marshes have never left me: firelight on a half-turned face, the crying of geese, duck flighting in to feed, a boy's voice singing somewhere in the dark, canoes moving in procession down a waterway, the setting sun seen crimson through the smoke of burning reedbeds, narrow waterways that wound still deeper in to the marshes. A naked man in a canoe with a trident in his hand, reed houses built upon water, black, dripping buffaloes that looked as if they had calved from the swamp with the first dry land. Stars reflected in dark water, the croaking of frogs, canoes coming home at evening, peace and continuity, the stillness of a world that never knew an engine. [78]

IRELAND

*I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made,
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.*

[79]

Two Irishman were talking and Pat says, "Hey Mick have you heard about that new brothel that's just opened in town?" "No," says Mick, "Is it any good?" "It's brilliant," says Pat. "The management guarantee you at least a dozen jumps and then they give you ten pounds and send you home in a taxi." "That sounds good, when did you go there?" asks Mick. "Oh I haven't yet myself," says Pat. "But the wife went last Saturday." [80]

ITALY

ITALIAN WOMEN

Almost every traveller who has visited Italy, agrees in describing it as the most abandoned of all the countries of Europe. At Venice, at Naples, and indeed in almost every port of Italy, women are taught from their infancy the various arts of alluring to their arms the young and unwary, and of obtaining from them, while heated by love or wine, every thing that flattery and false smiles can obtain, in these unguarded moments. [52]

She told us that the surname of all local families was Lupo (Wolf) and that the Wolves were divided into two clans, the White Wolves and the Black Wolves. Of these, the Whites formed the upper crust, voted for the party of the Church, listened to taped opera music and ate white bread. The Blacks supported the Popular Front, hummed or whistled tunes one might have heard in the mountains of Morocco, and forced themselves in hard times to chew on the flesh of the prickly pear. [81]

Besides the flinty chatter of the wheatears and the occasional screaming of an eagle, there is an omnipresent sound that is at once gay and sinister. This is the lively discord of bells - all of different tones - as a flock of goats goes by. They come through the dark bloodily red trunks of the cork-oaks at a quick, stealthy trot moving as fast as a man can walk. One knows that the shepherd is there too slipping from tree to tree, or out of sight over the lip of a ravine, or behind the rocks; never coming into view. The sensation is an uncomfortable one remembering that there is nothing of the meekness of the shepherd of Christian parable in this man, that he is

a cruel, hungry dreamer with a gun, and that in this austere, archaic world where human life counts for so little, the shepherd is often separated by a hair's breadth from the bandit. [81]

As for boys under twenty (maybe it was a trick of the milk or the cheese) we relieved our horniness in every way possible. The valleys, the forests, the woods, and the hills, all whistled with our furious and ravenous jacking-off. The bushes were shaken by the storm of our hands. When we were tending the sheep or were at work, we were often seized by these attacks: shortness of breath, lump in the throat, and prick stiff as a rod, harder than the handle of the hoe we were holding. [82]

The mountain has been hollowed out by vanished rivers, there are fissures a half-mile deep, vast unexplored caves, primeval forests of chestnut and oak, and the ruins of nuragic villages visited only by armed shepherds. The visitor to these parts from the outside world is warned not to leave the road, for this is the traditional stronghold of the bandit and of the vendetta.

*

Memories are long in vendetta country and it is nothing for a man to nurse his private vengeance for ten years or more - even to appear to have become reconciled to his enemy - while he awaits the right time and place for the settlement of the score. [81]

So, let's speak for a moment of that Rome of five or six years ago, the Rome that you loved, let's say. If you were to anthropomorphize it, what gender would you ascribe to it?

I wouldn't ascribe a masculine or feminine gender to it. I would ascribe to it that special gender of *ragazzi*.

What age?

Adolescent.

What appearance?

The appearance of a typical Roman kid from the outlying neighborhoods, dark hair, olive skin, black eyes, robust build.

Robust, how?

Slim, not exactly athletic. A bit like an Arab, not exactly athletic, but, let's say, harmoniously built. [83]

Tagada is the most fun of all rides at the funfair. Big scary rides find no place in the local funfairs of the Italian countryside, so Tagadà is the ultimate challenge. It's the big monster at the end of the videogame. It's fear and laughter at the same time. A split second of madness. Body first and mind to follow, both getting out of control. Tagadà makes you bounce, it makes your head spin. Eyes become so heavy you must squint them. One shouldn't drink much before getting on the Tagadà, but obviously everyone drinks way too much before getting on the Tagadà. Things no longer look as they are. Welcome to your teenage years. [84]

JAPAN

There are recurring motifs: curving metal tubing or pipes, meshes or fabrics, the garish shopfronts and signage of night-time Shinjuku, where unreal faces stare down from hoardings and backlit billboards promising another tantalising out-of-reach lifestyle built on brands and labels, the impossible lure of fashion and fame. The Shinjuku of today is a distant echo of the political, radical place that first fired the young Moriyama's imagination in the late 1970s. Nevertheless, it still exerts a grip on his imagination. He shoots it, he says, because "it is still there in its primary colours, a living, writhing monster." [85]

The *Asahi Shimbun* proclaimed 'Tokyo's Shinjuku, the *angura* [underground] town' in March 1968. They hyped it up, spurred on by their love of incidents and scandals. The media called it 'Shinjuku, the giant amoeba', 'the Shinjuku jungle', 'Shinjuku, the town on the brink of exploding'. Home to a black market after the war, commerce and danger thrived side by side in Shinjuku, as well as creativity. 'In Shinjuku it's not appropriate to talk about the past,' someone once wrote. 'It's a town where only the present is important.' [86]

I walked in the rain to Kabuki-cho, taking a hard right off a neon and billboard-lined street, ducking through a quiet Shinto shrine and into a bustling warren of pachinko parlors, hostess bars, pantyless coffee shops, yakitori joints, and whorehouses. Turning onto the Golden Gai, things were even narrower and the streets were bordered by tiny one- and two-table bars. Above, through a tangle of fire escapes,

power lines, and hanging signage, skyscrapers winked red. Welcome to Tokyo. [87]

No forest is ever wholly silent. There is always the sound of the wind in the trees, the sound of the branches as they move, the minute sounds of the scavenging lizards, the sounds the birds make when they stop singing. But on the road to Osorezan these sounds had all died. There was not the slightest hint of a breeze nor of any form of animate life, and the twigs and branches were stiff as stone. I was alone on the road to Osorezan, but I felt a greater loneliness than comes from merely being alone. [88]

It's Sunday morning, 10:43am, and you don't have any particular plan for the day. So here is my tip: Get yourself a folding chair, place yourself comfortably across from the entrance of one of Japan's 30,000 love hotels, and just watch. Apart from a few surprises, your private programme should include the following: an old man accompanied by a 15-year-old girl in school uniform rushing into the hotel to make use of the reasonable 2-hour 'rest' rate; a middle-aged couple from outside Tokyo parking their car in the parking lot, then running the five metres to the entrance, hiding their faces like criminals; a teenage couple entering the place as if it were a McDonald's; and, as an encore, a newly-arrived foreign woman in her forties with her luggage walks happily in, only to come out confused and ashamed three minutes later. So just by sitting around you have a perfect overview of Japanese culture right at its most interesting point. [89]

To put "landscape theory" [*fukeiron*] into practice, Adachi focused on the story of a nineteen-year-old boy, Norio Nagayama, who had

recently been convicted for the 1969 murders of four people in four different Japanese cities. Rather than filming the protagonist of the film directly, Adachi decided to turn the camera 180 degrees and film the landscapes that the young man may have encountered during his wanderings, from his birth until his arrest. "It's a very simple matter," declared Adachi. "All the landscapes which one faces in one's daily life, even those such as the beautiful sites shown on a postcard, are essentially related to the figure of a ruling power." [90]

Yukigassen (snowball fighting) has long been enjoyed as a game in snowy areas. Teams are made up of seven to 10 players, each using snowballs as weapons to attack the opposing team. Victory is achieved by using snowballs to eliminate all of the opponents, or by removing the flag set in the other team's base. In order to win, you'll need more than just power and speed: strategy, teamwork, experience, and positioning are also essential to being victorious. [91]

Walking in this country you could understand the perfect gems of haikus the Oriental poets had written, never getting drunk in the mountains or anything but just going along as fresh as children writing down what they saw without literary devices or fanciness of expression. We made up haikus as we climbed, winding up and up now on the slopes of brush. [92]

The first thing I always tell anyone who asks me for advice is: get outside. It's all about getting out and walking. That's the first thing. The second thing is, forget everything you've learned on the subject of photography for the moment, and just shoot. Take photographs of anything and everything, whatever catches your eye. Don't pause to think. That's the advice I give people. [93]

At the height of their popularity, some no-panties coffee shops went to a great deal of trouble to come up with elaborate variations. I had developed an obsession with these establishments, which led me to scour the streets of Osaka, Kyoto, and Tokyo looking for them. Among those that stand out in my memory are Playgirl ABS in Neyagawa, Osaka, where young women clad only in panties swam around in a huge aquarium, and Abeno Scandal, which offered bizarre shows on a nightly basis. Another was *Emirumakananotokasu* (“You can see up her skirt” written backwards), in Tenkajaya, Osaka, whose owner had secretly dug a basement under his no-panties coffee shop, working after business hours. [94]

KASHMIR

Kashmir was coolness and colour: the yellow mustard fields, the mountains, snow-capped, the milky blue sky in which we rediscovered the drama of clouds. It was men wrapped in brown blankets against the morning mist, and barefooted shepherd boys with caps and covered ears on steep wet rocky slopes. [95]

LEBANON

Women fell in love with women, not because they were born to do so, but because they were bored and lonely and it was easy to do so, despite the fact that, by law, in Lebanon, it is illegal to “partake in a sexual act that goes against nature”. They held hands in public, and no one noticed. They kissed in the bathrooms of nightclubs and no one cared. They spoke in code and poetry. They danced to their own rhythm. Everyone was just happy to be in love and be loved. After the war, no one wanted to follow rules. We were all tired of them. [96]

LIBYA

My fashion icon is Colonel Gaddafi, and he always has been. He's rock 'n' roll. He's bigger than a pop star. When he came to Paris in 2007, he was supposed to stay at the Hotel de Marigny, which is the best hotel. But Gaddafi came with a tent. It was this huge flagged tent - just him and his army guards, who were all girls. They were in these crazy leopard outfits. I mean, Gaddafi is way better dressed than any pop star in the world. [97]

The all-female guard force has been a staple of Gaddafi's since the 1980s. While Western journalists have referred to them as his "Amazonian Guard", in Libya they are called "The Revolutionary Nuns" or "The Green Nuns". The strongman asked them not only for protection but also for oaths of virginity, and that they be dressed in camouflage, nail polish, coiffed hair, and heavy mascara. "He gave us life; I am ready to die for him," said one academy trainee. "He is a father, a brother and a friend to whom you can confide. You have no idea how humble he is." [98]

LONDON

The cult of punk had taken root in the mid-1970s in a small but sensational shop in London's King's Road called SEX. Its name was brazenly spelt out in huge letters of padded pink vinyl, displayed like a vast spongy pop-art sculpture above its front window. It looked terrifying. Beckoning the customer inside were piles of naked headless mannequins draped over each other as if indulging in an orgy. Those brave enough to enter found themselves in a kind of fetish gymnasium, the walls lined with pale pink rubber, and bars hung with whips, handcuffs and other exotica glorifying the sordid, the inappropriate and the tasteless. Presiding over this provocative little emporium were two ruling blondes, the two icons of the punk movement, Jordan and Vivienne Westwood. [99]

It has long been the boast of moving panoramas that their chief aim is to convey instruction. They carry us across America, or from Southampton to India; they hop from city to city throughout Europe, or they glide past with certain pictures of Australia, but they avoid a sketch of London. No speculator has ever been bold enough to grapple with the back streets-the human warrens on the south side of the metropolis; to start from Bermondsey, on the borders of Deptford, and wriggle through the existing miles of dirt, vice, and crime, as far as the Lambeth Marshes.

*

It has scores of streets that are rank and steaming with vice; streets where unwashed, drunken, fishy-eyed women hang by dozens out of the windows, beckoning to the passers-by. It has scores of streets filled with nothing but thieves, brown, unwholesome tramps' lodging-houses, and smoky receptacles for stolen goods.

*

There are hundreds of such courts at Wapping and Rotherhithe, on both sides of the river, filled with coarse drunken women, whose thick fingers are covered with showy rings. Sometimes a crew of Malay sailors are enticed into these traps; raw spirits are sent for in basins and quart pots from the neighbouring public houses; robbery, quarrels, and madness follow, as a matter of course; knives are drawn, a "muck" is run, and the whole bleeding, riotous, drunken population roll out into the open thoroughfare. [100]

What Coventry does is reveal that high art lies behind the lowest-class areas of south London. The maps on every council estate in the UK, helping the pedestrian make sense of their non-traditional layout, are quite simply stripped of names, council logos and municipal colour schemes, and are rendered on white space in Malevich-approved bright primary colours. [101]

The "Prospect of Whitby" is nothing much to look at from the street side; but if you go along the narrow passage which separates it from the next building, and so down the worn steps to the waterside, you can step right back three-quarters of a century. There are a couple of barges lying on the mud, with some men working on their hulls, and behind is the old-fashioned inn, with its green-painted wooden balcony overlooking Limehouse Reach and the Rotherhithe shore opposite, and a row of faces looking over the tops of pint pots, and spitting solemnly into the tide, as the owners of similar faces have done for generations. [102]

Sailor Town the world over is a realm apart. Under whatever flag it may happen to be - to whatever temporal sovereign it may owe its

external allegiance - in spirit it is of the kingdom of Neptune: a shoregoing Neptune, it is true, stretching his legs in a pub and having a gay time among the girls - but Neptune just the same.

*

If they could only talk, what yarns they could tell, these sea-fretted lumps of old iron - yarns of small, strange cities, white under tropic skies; of surf breaking over West Indian reefs and seabirds' cries shrill and keen above its thunder; palm-fringed islets and thirsty Bahaman cays of ghost-watched pirates' treasure; and queer little dusty towns under the seaward slope of the Andes with a red anchor painted up on the cliff-side to guide vessels to their moorings.

*

You follow a street - gritty with dust in dry weather, and slimy on wet days with the thin yellow dockland mud - that winds between the warehouses and repairing yards and dock basins until it ends suddenly in a flight of shallow, worn stone steps leading down to the river water when the tide is in, and the river mud when it is out. There are generally one or two beery beings of the wharf-rat type leaning against the low wall at the top of the steps, and a chattering bunch of amphibious urchins disporting themselves in their birthday suits and wrangling like a lot of gulls over some treasure trove in the way of a derelict plank or a dead cat. [102]

Cold Blow Lane on a dark, wet night might be a perfect setting for a *Jack the Ripper* horror film, dry ice wafting about the cobbled streets and under the low tunnels. There are mysterious yards full of scrap, malodorous goings-on behind high fences, tower blocks looming in the distance, even old tram lines embedded in the roads. They knew what they were dealing with when they called it Cold Blow Lane. [103]

At Filthy McNasty's, an Irish pub in London, the sign over the bar says, "OH, LORD MAKE ME PURE, BUT NOT JUST YET." Gold records by the Pogues hang next to photos of JFK, Elvis Presley, and Popes John XXIII and Paul VI. There, in the flickering candlelight, dwells an icon who deserves similar enshrinement - but for the rather surprising fact that he's still alive. Shane MacGowan, the notoriously unhinged former Pogues star, is holding court. [104]

White bandages wrapped around her torso, what looked like emulsion paint on her face and hair, white knickers over the bandages, a Madonna-style white pointed bra, and to top it all, a white tail draping along behind her. Her piercing red eyes done it for me, a sight I shall never forget! Her flat had white paint smothered all over the windows, front and back, and apparently everything in the flat was painted white also. [105]

In the 1970s and '80s, Paul Raymond would glide around Soho in his Rolls-Royce with blacked-out windows and the personalised registration plate PR 11. Doors would open as if he were a Hollywood celebrity. He would make a flamboyant entrance in his immaculate suit and man-bag. He was brazen, once offering the newsreader Anna Ford £75,000 to reveal all in his magazine Club International (she declined). "I like to look at nude birds and I think most normal men do," he said. [106]

MAURITANIA

Along most of Mauritania's coast there was no break from the monotony of sand and sea, not a tree, hardly a point or spit of land, just a long slope surging with surf, the large Atlantic rollers breaking as suddenly as the chop of a meat cleaver when they hit the beach. Far out to sea many small wooden fishing boats, with the small brown bodies of their crews frantically pulling in or letting out nets, appeared at the tops of waves, then disappeared behind the ranks of green swell as if they were in a shooting gallery. Beyond the fishing boats the sky was stained yellow with Saharan dust. [107]

MEXICO

There were two ice-cream sellers who appeared on Sundays with a wooden cart pushed forward on wheels and bells attached to the handlebars. In the cart was a large wooden barrel with the ice cream inside, usually lime, mango or mamey flavour. The carts had names. One was called *La desgracia de Pearl Harbor* (The Misfortunes of Pearl Harbor) and the other was called *De todo los hijos de mi mama, yo soy el favorito* (Of all my mother's children, I am the favourite). [108]

Of a long line of ancient, squat, forlorn, sun-dried, neon-lit oases *al otro lado*, on the other side, perhaps a dozen qualify (in gringo terminology) as *boda fide* hell-holes. To Mexicans in the interior, the border is *poso del mundo* (idiomatically, the lowest hole of the world). It is an old opprobrium, gained by some oases back in the days of longhorn cattle and cowboys along the Rio Grande, or the Rio Bravo, as the Mexicans call it. Other bordertowns earned their mark later, in the days of revolution and the traffic in guns, gold, and adventurers. [109]

MONACO

Monaco, Monaco -

frivolous, ridiculous, miniscule.

Was it there they came to know danger,

How one could disappear into a beautiful lie?

[110]

MOROCCO

Dark, fierce and fanatical are these narrow *souks* of Marrakech. They seem, more than any others, the central organ of a native life that extends far beyond the city walls into secret clefts of the mountains and far-off oases where plots are hatched and holy wars fomented - father still, to yellow deserts whence negroes are secretly brought across the Atlas to that inmost recess of the bazaar where the ancient traffic in flesh and blood still surreptitiously goes on.

*

Fanatics in sheepskins glowering from the guarded thresholds of the mosques, fierce tribesmen with inlaid arms in their belts and the fighters' tufts of wiry hair escaping from camel's-hair turbans, mad negroes standing stark naked in niches of the walls and pouring down Soudanese incantations upon the fascinated crowd, consumptive Jews with pathos and cunning in their large eyes and smiling lips, lusty slave-girls with earthen oil-jars resting against swaying hips, almond-eyed boys leading fat merchants by the hand, and bare-legged berber women, tattooed and insolently gay, trading their striped blankets, or bags of dried roses and irises, for sugar, tea or Manchester cottons - from all these hundreds of unknown and unknowable people, bound together by secret affinities, or intriguing against each other with secret hate, there emanates an atmosphere of mystery and menace more stifling than the smell of camels and spices and black bodies and smoking fry which hangs like a fog under the close roofing of the souks. [111]

The astonishing thing about Essaouira the medina constructed by a French architect captured by the Sultan of or numbered I forget which. The medina (arab city) is all straight lines. The girls' liberal

faces there are shaped like valentines. Some little fame related to soup.

Fish soup. The project of long days ahead writing Essaouira. Watching countless movies (all bad) on Morocco to help inspire my Essaouira. Pretending it is a person I love Essaouira. Essaouira Essaouira it is you. Your name is like licorice. [112]

Delacroix was both fascinated and repelled by the spectacle of Morocco. It was a spectacle that he resolved by finding there “the beauty in antiquity”. “How beautiful! Like in Homeric times!” he said of the first important painting to emerge from his voyage, the Women of Algiers in their Apartment. Through a network of friends, and by dint of careful planning, Delacroix was able to enter a harem without offending religious sensibilities. There he could observe and sketch the Muslim women in their domestic environment. In the women’s apartments, at the sight of the “beautiful human gazelles amid this profusion of silk and gold,” Delacroix was overcome by “an exaltation, a fever, which sorbets and fruits are barely sufficient to calm”. “This is womankind as I understand it!” he exclaimed. [113]

The space above the rooftops is peopled with swallows. It is like a second city, except that here things happen as fast as they happen slowly in the human streets below. They never rest, these swallows, you wonder if they ever sleep; idleness, moderation, and dignity are qualities they lack. They snatch their prey in flight; maybe the roofs in their emptiness look like a conquered land to them. [114]

To awake, on the first morning in Marrakech, is to know another world, another creation. A blue of a dove's breast, misting into white, touches on a rose-red crater's edge. In the air, high in the air, are gigantic snow mountains, running from end to end of the horizon, right across the sky. Nearby, for in Marrakech it is always in view, there is the minaret of Koutoubia. At its summit, the flag flies from the gallows post and the muezzin calls down to the world. [115]

Spending a week here in Marrakech with Paul Bowles, this is the maddest teahead city I've ever seen, a vast plaza where at dusk when it's cool all sorts of acrobats, fortune tellers, snake charmers and shade drum and dance groups gather circles of crowds and collect coins - also a huge labyrinth market with alleys covered by bamboo against sunlight, selling Aladdin lamps and clothes. Can wander for hours lost - and outside the walled city is the desert and Atlas mountains. [116]

For Yves those first years in Marrakech were his happiest. There were picnics in apricot groves and the sound of Verdi in orange-blossom courtyards. There were sexual encounters and trays of kif brought in by a manservant in the evening candlelight. It was a hidden life behind closed doors.

*

In the heat and smoke of Marrakech, Yves' inhibitions peeled away. He wore paisley shirts unbuttoned against tanned skin, faded jeans, crystals tied around his neck. He lay by the ornamental pool writing a diary and sketching, feeling saturated by sleep and a delicious lethargy. Even the look of haunted neurosis that had defined him since adolescence eased, to be replaced by a sensuous grace. [117]

NEPAL

I grow into these mountains like a moss. I am bewitched. The blinding snow peaks and the clarion air, the sound of earth and heaven in the silence, the requiem birds, the mythic beasts, the flags, great horns, and old carved stones, the silver ice in the black river, the Kang, the Crystal Mountain. Also, I love the common miracles - the murmur of my friends at evening, the clay fires of smudgy juniper, the coarse dull food, the hardship and simplicity, the contentment of doing one thing at a time... gradually my mind has cleared itself, and the wind and sun pour through my head, as through a bell. [118]

I couldn't imagine living in a tiny, nothing little place in the Himalayan Mountains. I didn't ever want to live in any place where you couldn't drive down the road and see drive-ins and giant ice cream cones and walk-in hot dogs and motel signs flashing! [119]

NIGERIA

Nollywood has grown into the third largest film industry in the world in terms of output, churning out three movies every day. The film-makers tap into audiences' aspirations and concerns: domestic strife, sex scandals, marital infidelity, financial swindling, Christianity, witchcraft. It is popular despite its startlingly shoddy production quality: convulsive camera work and poor lighting are de rigeur, and tinny, electronic synthesizer music often drowns out the dialogue. [120]

NORTH KOREA

As soon as you leave Pyongyang, the real North Korea comes into view, albeit through the windows of buses or fast-moving cars. Even aid officials stationed in Pyongyang are not allowed into the countryside without an escort. On an excursion through Nampo in 2008, I saw people who appeared to homeless sleeping on the grass along the main street. Others squatted on their haunches, heads down, apparently with nothing better to do at ten o'clock on a weekday morning. Walking barefoot along the sidewalk was a boy of about nine years old wearing a mud-stained uniform that hung below his knees. This was the first time I'd seen one of the notorious wandering swallows, the *kotchebi*. [121]

Though [the DMZ] may be a strange and inhospitable place for humans, it is anything but for flotillas of Siberian cranes and hordes of brown bears, musk deer, and the goatlike Amur gorals, who flourish in what is for them a sanctuary, a gun-free, human-free, four-kilometre-wide swath between the two great fences. The creatures cannot be accurately counted, but they are there, munching and fluttering and preening under the gun sights of thousands, oblivious to all the anger and ideology swirling around them. [122]

Just before North Korean leader Kim Jong Il died, the skies glowed red above sacred Mount Paektu and the impenetrable sheet of ice at the heart of the mystical volcano cracked with a deafening roar. [123]

Among Kim Jong Il's official titles were: Shining Star of Paektu Mountain, Guiding Sun Ray, Dear Leader, Great Leader, Respected Leader, Brilliant Leader, Sun of Socialism, The Great Sun of Life,

Great Man Who Descended From Heaven, Invincible And Ever-Triumphant General and Highest Incarnation of the Revolutionary Comradely Love. [124]

According to his biography, he first picked up a golf club in 1994, at North Korea's only golf course, and shot a 38-under par round that included no fewer than 11 holes in one. Satisfied with his performance, he reportedly immediately declared his retirement from the sport. [125]

Kim Jong-il was walking when he was three weeks old and talking by eight weeks, according to official records. During his three years at Kim Il-sung University, he churned out more than 1,500 books as well as six operas which are "better than any in the history of music," says his authorised biography. [126]

The boys at the orphanage weren't allowed to play near the Tumen. The entire shoreline was a closed military area. If they got too close while swimming in one of the tributaries they would get chased away by the border police. The riverbanks were flat and sandy with nothing growing tall enough to provide cover. But an hour or two's hike south of Onsong was a sparsely inhabited area with bushes and tall grass along the banks. The border guards were spaced far enough apart that one could sneak through after dark. [121]

NORTH MACEDONIA

I started googling the town of Veles, and quickly realized that the town had a namesake: The ancient god Veles, who was one of the top Gods in the pre-Christian pagan pantheon. In the old myths he was this really sneaky God: a shapeshifter, a God of chaos, magic and deception. So I imagine he would have been quite happy about all the fake news coming out of the town bearing his name. [127]

NORTH SENTINEL IS.

The Stone Age hunter-gatherers who live on North Sentinel Island in the Andaman archipelago east of India may be the world's most isolated people - and they intend to stay that way, despite the increasing encroachment of the industrialized world. From 1967 through to the mid-1990s, Indian anthropologists embarked on periodic "contact expeditions" to North Sentinel Island. Approaching by boat, they attempted to coax out members of the tribe by depositing coconuts, machetes, candy, and, once, a tethered pig onto the beach. The Sentinelese almost always responded to these "gifts" by shooting arrows, throwing stones, and shouting at the unwelcome visitors. India discontinued its attempts at peaceful contact in 1997 and ruled that the islanders be left alone, but visits still occur - in 2006, a fishing boat drifted too close to the shore, and Sentinelese archers killed the two men on board. An Indian helicopter was sent to retrieve the bodies, but was also fired upon and could not land. [128]

The whole of the islands are covered with an extremely dense jungle, reaching to the sea-shore, and, owing to the thick undergrowth of canes, etc., it is in places impassable even to the Aborigines. Mangrove swamps are of course common and extensive. The trees are lofty, and often covered with gigantic climbing plants, which hang from the summits in festoons.

*

In appearance, when not smeared over with red and white pigments, the Andamanese men, and the young women, are not unpleasing, some indeed are distinctly good-looking and have fine, well-shaped noses, thin lips, small mouths, even white teeth, bright sparkling

eyes , and very well shaped figures. The old people often become hideous.

*

They are certainly cruel, and are jealous, treacherous and vindictive; they have short memories for either good or evil, are quick tempered, and have little or no idea of gratitude. I have often likened them to English country schoolboys of the labouring classes, with the passions of the mature savage. [129]

NORTHERN IRELAND

History and landscape are rooted deep in the psyche of the people of South Armagh. At the centre of both sits Slieve Gullion, whose bulk looms through the mist high above the watchtowers, fields and blackthorn hedges like a slumbering giant keeping guard over South Armagh and Ulster's ancient frontier. At the base of the mountain, the granite peaks of the ring dyke stand sentinel as if protecting their master through the ages. On six of the peaks stand the modern watchtowers, the latest in a long line of military fortifications built by the invader in the vain hope of subjugating the natives of a countryside in which the outsider has never been welcomed. When the mist clears, eight counties can be seen from Slieve Gullion's summit, 1,840 ft above sea level. [130]

NORWAY

A panorama more deplorably desolate no human imagination can conceive. To the right and left, as far as the eye could reach, there lay outstretched, like ramparts of the world, lines of horridly black and beetling cliff, whose character of gloom was but the more forcibly illustrated by the surf which reared high up against its white and ghastly crest, howling and shrieking forever. Just opposite the promontory upon whose apex we were placed, and at a distance of some five or six miles out at sea, there was visible a small, bleak-looking island; or, more properly, its position was discernible through the wilderness of surge in which it was enveloped. [131]

PAKISTAN

The Mahsuds, because they always hunt in groups, are known as the wolves of Waziristan. A Wazir hunts alone. He is known as 'the leopard' to other men. Despite their differences, the two tribes share more than merely their common heritage of poverty and misery. Nature has bred in both an unusual abundance of anger, enormous resilience, and a total refusal to accept their fate. If nature provides them food for only ten days in a year, they believe in their right to demand the rest of their sustenance from their fellow men who live oily, fat and comfortable lives in the plains. To both tribes, survival is the ultimate virtue. [132]

You'll see women on the streets, but never their faces. Many of them wear what looks like a black ski mask with slits for their eyes under their hijab. The others wear a burqa that makes you feel naked under your dupatta. The burqa's fabric falls from a skullcap fitted to the woman's head. A thin funnel rises from this cap. The burqa has no slits for the eyes. The funnel allows air into the burqa so the women do not suffocate. If you have ever been caught in a dust storm, you'll understand how these women see the world. When you stare at them, your contact in Dera Ghazi Khan, a journalist, tells you about a place not too far from here where the tribal belt of Balochistan province starts, where he says the women are not given any shoes. When you don't understand, he explains impatiently, 'If you're not wearing shoes and you walk outside, where will your eyes remain? You'll never look up - never look at any man - if you're scared of where your naked foot might fall when you leave your home.' [133]

PARAGUAY

There were piranhas gnashing around the stern. Some of the passengers were hauling them aboard on bits of string and they lay on the deck rasping and clacking. They were only small but this wasn't the point; they ate you in their thousands. Even alligator skin is no protection; they will pile themselves on the creature and hollow it out in minutes. "They are," wrote the writer-diplomat Cecil Gosling, "the most dangerous inhabitant of Paraguayan waters." In 1926, his friend, a police inspector, had run into a shoal; he was so badly mutilated that he swam straight back to his revolver and blew his brains out. [134]

Here too in luminous Paraguay, white is the attribute of redemption. Against this background of blinding white, the blackness in which they have clothed my figure strikes even greater fear into the hearts of our enemies. To them black is the attribute of Supreme Power. A Great Darkness, they say of me, trembling in their cubicles. Blinded by the whiteness, they fear more, much more, the blackness in which they catch the scent of the Exterminating Archangel's wing. [135]

For centuries, the Chaco was simply L'Inferno Verde, or 'the Green Hell'. Early Europeans thought they'd find monsters in this strange, long-lost ocean. There would have been plenty to surprise them: prehistoric lungfish that survived summer by tunnelling into the dirt; three-foot gunmetal lizards and vampire bats; owls that mimicked their victims and lured them to their deaths; a wild pig believed to have vanished in Pleistocene times - until it emerged from the thorns in 1975. There were thought to be Ayoreo tribesmen who'd never seen modern man. [134]

PATAGONIA

The Yoshil (an Indian name) was - and perhaps still is - a tail-less protohominid, with lichenous hair of a yellowish green colour. It stood almost eighty centimetres high, walked on two feet and lived in the territory of the Haush. It always went armed with a stone or short club. By day it lived in the *nire* trees but at night it would warm itself by the fire of a lonely hunter. The Yoshil was probably vegetarian and fed on wild fruits, fungi, and the white grubs that are the staple of the Magellanic woodpecker. [136]

A hundred years ago the Araucanians were incredibly fierce and brave. They painted their bodies red and flayed their enemies alive and sucked at the hearts of the dead. Their boys' education consisted of hockey, horsemanship, liquor, insolence and sexual athletics, and for three centuries they scared the Spaniards out of their wits. The Araucanians are still very tough, and would be a lot tougher if they gave up drink. [136]

Old atlases record scores of phantom islands. The more accurate the maps became and the less scope they left for uncharted territory, the more frequently seafarers claimed to have sighted such islands, excited by the latest white dots, inspired by the desolation of the fathomless sea, fooled by low-hanging clouds or drifting icebergs, nauseated by briny drinking water, maggoty bread and stringy salt meat, thirsting so eagerly for land and fame that, in their boundless greed, everything they desired coalesced into a cluster of gold and glory, tempting them to note wondrous names in their logbooks alongside prosaic coordinates, to cut through the monotony of their days with would-be discoveries. And so names like Nimrod,

Matador and the Auroras started to appear on charts in bold cursive lettering next to sketchily defined outlines of scattered chunks of land. [137]

Cerro Torre is the most dangerous, the most difficult and ecstatic mountain on Earth. There really is nothing like it anywhere. It is more a symbolic image of deadly fear than a mere mountain. It is a 3,300-metre-high needle of basalt sticking straight up into the sky and for years was considered unclimbable. The first verified ascent was somewhere in the mid-1970s. I think about 200 times more people have succeeded in climbing Mount Everest as have ever made it to the top of Cerro Torre. You can only truly understand why it strikes so much fear into climbers when you see it standing before you. There may be higher peaks to scale but what make Cerro Torre particularly difficult are the sheer cliff faces and weather conditions. Most of the time there is a pandemonium of storms, and you cannot see the peak. I call them storms, but actually we do not have an equivalent in our language to describe this phenomenon. [138]

PERU

Ayacucho's isolation had engendered conservatism and in intense religious life. Catholicism was heavily entrenched in the department. Twice a day, when the church bell tolled of San Francisco de Asís, passers-by would cross themselves, kneel down, bow their heads and pray in the street. Long queues waited outside the confessional boxes. The colourful, emotional religious festivals were attended by thousands and were famous throughout Peru. The Church offered hope and diversion to an isolated, depressed and suffering population. Saying the rosary and going to Mass also broke the boredom of a virtually pre-electric age when television and video had as yet failed to materialize; when the only secular attractions were the dilapidated cinema and the occasional visit of a travelling circus. [139]

Outside the river flowed by, drunk for all eternity. Fall foliage floated away to the south on the water. At Christmas the rich folks of Iquitos go water-skiing on the Amazon. In the gold country of Punt, tonsillectomies are performed with a vacuum cleaner. Benjamin wants to find sun temples and hidden treasure when he is grown up. One morning an angry country woman sawed off her chickens' beaks with a fretsaw. I wondered whether a dog could be disguised as a pig. Then my ship dissolved in its reflection in the waves into slow-moving arrows. [140]

At six in the morning in Tragadero Grande, a timid sun peeps out between the hills, gradually revealing what the dawn mist had kept hidden. A mud house. Some chickens wandering here and there. A wood stove where milk is boiling in a soot-blackened pan. A battery-

powered radio resting on a rock. A radio station called Tigre, popular with Seventh-Day Adventists, plays huayno folk songs with violins and harps. A few metres away, the Lady of the Blue Lake, in her wide-brimmed straw hat, is watching her sheep on the pampas. [141]

It is a land of violence. Thunder and avalanches in the mountains, huge floods and storms on the plains. Volcanoes exploding. The earth shaking and splitting. Woods full of savage beasts and poisonous insects and deadly snakes. Knives are whipped out at a word. Whole families are murdered without any reason. Riots are sudden and bloody and often meaningless. Cars and trucks are driven into each other or over cliffs with an indifference which is half-suicidal. Such an energy in destruction. So much apathy when something to be mended or built. So much humor in despair. [142]

First came the masked clowns, called *Pepinos*, in their striped costumes, making a white river between the dark banks of crowd. You have to get a police licence to wear this costume, and carry its number pinned on your back or chest, so that destroyers of property can be identified. The *Pepinos* are armed with a cardboard baton like a golden fan which is known as a 'kill-your-mother-in-law.' They use it to slap girls. The girls often slap back, and then there is a fight. In order not to be recognized, *Pepinos* talk in disguised falsetto voices. [142]

At the outdoor market down in a canyon village, Narciso would go around to see the peddler's wares and perhaps buy a hard candy. One Friday, a few strangers appeared. They wore peasant garb and spoke Quechua, and, quite suddenly, one loudly demanded the attention of the marketgoers. They belonged to the Peruvian

Communist Party, the young man announced. "We will destroy the government of the rich and make a government for the poor." Narciso had heard stories around Huaychao, whispers really. The strangers supposedly roamed the cliffs with guns and knives, sometimes coming to farmhouses to ask for food and shelter. [143]

To all appearances the Jivaros of today live on the best possible terms with the White man, and there is never anything to prove that misfortunes which befall the White man have any connection with the Indians. But the Jivaros are like the many volcanoes in their country: when pressure reaches a certain point, there is a violent explosion. [144]

PITCAIRN IS.

Her movements have the freedom of the trade winds that blow over Pitcairn and the ocean spray that crashes against the cliffs. She alone on the island carries on the Tahitian traits of flirtatiousness and lack of inhibitions. For a swim in Bounty Bay, she wears an exiguous print bikini. She has impressive cleavage and no wish to conceal it from the dour little commune; it must drive the young men, the cousin youths, into storms of desire. She is a pocket Venus, a nymphet of the sort that gave Humbert Humbert such a bad time. She doesn't smoke, swear, or drink, but is nonetheless a hell-raiser. [145]

Life may be dull but life is good. In this modern world this island seems a Never Never Land. Soon there will come Coca Cola and bulldozers and all the other things of "civilization" and there will be a change. That is the weakness in their faith - it is the faith of children - it is simple and just, but it won't be able to withstand the waves of corruption. God is on their side but who is God to compete with television and General Motors? I could weep for them. [146]

RUSSIA

It happened at 9:20am local time. A fireball appeared from out of the crystal clear blue sky over the southern Ural region in Russia. Rapidly increasing in brightness, it blazed brighter than the sun. The lightshow turned dangerous when the fireball abruptly exploded, injuring more than 1200 people. Some were burnt by the heat but most were cut as the shock wave from the explosion violently smashed windows. The city sustained 1 billion roubles (£10m) worth of damage. [147]

SAUDI ARABIA

Hidden all day in impenetrable black burkas, rich Saudi women transformed themselves by night into birds of paradise with their corsets, their see-through bras, their G-strings with multicoloured lace and rhinestones. They were exactly the opposite of Western women, who spent their days dressed up and looking sexy to maintain their social status, then collapsed in exhaustion once they got home, abandoning all hope of seduction in favour of clothes that were loose and shapeless. [148]

SCOTLAND

I shall not forget those autumn nights off the far north-west coast of Scotland, when, surrounded in the blackness by the lights of two dozen neighbouring boats, we twisted and turned after the mackerel shoals; and how, beyond Cape Wrath where Loch Eriboll opens to the sea, just as the grey clouds turned bloodshot with dawn and sunlight picked a silver glitter from the stark cliffs and the granite moorland slopes of Ben Hope, we knew that a giant shoal was in the water below us - shot for them and found them. [149]

SIBERIA

In the east the summer warmth of the Pacific blows in on the forests of these Sikhote-Alin mountains, and the larches and firs of the northern taiga mingle with the subtropical flora of Manchurian walnut, maple, cork and linden. Giant lianas, grapevines and lemon-scented magnolias writhe up from a forest floor where jasmine and barberry grow, and the autumn-flowering ginseng draws poachers trading in Chinese medicine. Nordic animals intrude on southern ones. Elk, wolves, lynx and wolverine encounter Asian black bears and the beautiful, near-extinct Amur leopard. Wild boar feed where the soaring Korean pine drops its nuts, and the Amur tiger feeds on the wild boar. [150]

In summer they wore tunics of watertight fish skin which hang in the museum cabinets, with a grinder for scraping off the scales exhibited below. In winter they went in dog or reindeer skin, in birchbark leggings and deerskin shoes stuffed with grasses. Their world was full of deities - the Amur was itself a spirit - embodied in toy-like wooden idols that now stand labelled and disenchanting, and they kept a special reverence for bears. In their myths, and sometimes in belief, their women had sex with bears, and children were born from them. [150]

I landed in a town of ice and twilight. All the buildings were raised above the permafrost a regulation four feet on concrete stilts. The air was frozen still. The apartment blocks hovered in yellow cliffs above the whiteness, and seemed recessed coldly into the sky. The marshes and inlets of the Lena were frozen under seamless snow. Snow turned everything else black. People trailed along the streets

in black overcoats and black hats, like loosed shadows. By day the sun barely winched itself into the sky above the white hills. [151]

She was Nivkh, a native of the forest of the Far East where we had once seen a tiger, blazing in the snow... Her face was framed with long, glossy black hair; she had slanting eyes, the enigmatic smile of a Buddha. Her body had skin that seemed to be covered with a golden varnish and the reflexes of a liana. When she sensed that I would not let her go, her body twined around me, moulded me, through all its trembling vessels. She permeated me with her scent, her breath, her blood... And I could no longer make out where her body merged into the grass filled with the wind from the steppes; where the savour of her round, firm breasts mingled with that of the apple blossom; where the sky of her dazzled eyes ended and the sombre depths glistening with stars began. [152]

The wind began to blow. The Amur turned dark and threatening, like the sea. I became melancholy. I went to the club and took a long time over my dinner and listened to people at the neighboring table talking about gold and antlers, about a juggler who had arrived in Nikolayevsk, and about a Japanese who does not pull teeth with pliers but with his fingers. If one listens carefully and long, then, O my God, how remote is this life from that of Russia!

*

It is always quiet in Dué. The ear soon becomes accustomed to the measured clang of chains, the roar of the surf and the hum of the telegraph wires, and because of these sounds the impression of dead silence becomes even stronger. The aspect of grimness is not only due to the striped posts. If someone unexpectedly happened to

laugh out loud in the street, it would sound shrill and unnatural.
[153]

A man from St Petersburg has completed a walk across Russia to Vladivostok, a journey of 9,300km (5,870 miles), nearly two years after he left his home city. Carrying a backpack and plastic bags containing bread, water and canned goods, Sergei Scheulin, 24, crossed the world's biggest country by area without a map or navigational devices. He slept on roadsides, under bridges, at rest stop cafes, in the homes of wellwishers and even in police stations. "I decided, why not talk to Vladivostok, and I set off," Scheulin said.
[154]

Now the Vostok, uttering wild, bellowing noises as it went, ran past a big, isolated bluff which rose out of the valley floor. Then, quite suddenly, there was the Pacific, lots of it, greyer than the grey sky above, and with a Chinese-style sugar loaf hill rising above the coastline away to the north. As the Vostok curled away to the right from the river a mass of merchant ships came into view. Then it ran in behind the port warehouses with dozens of cranes rising beyond them and there were fleeting glimpses of ships moored alongside, piles of what looked like silver ingots, and behind a disused bus in an open lot a momentary view of some small boys puffing away at cigarettes. [155]

*I was such a happy fool
I pretended to play at robbers
Who had stolen the treasure of Golconda
And thanks to the Trans-Siberian, we were going to hide it on the other side
of the world*

*I had to defend it against thieves in the Urals who had ambushed
a circus troupe in Jules Verne
Against the Khunkhuz, the Boxers of China
And the angry little mongols of the Grand Lama
Alibaba and the forty thieves*

[156]

Often the shamans' calling was bitter and unwilling. In youth they became solitary and perhaps mad, suffered delusions, dreamt strangely, fell inexplicably sick. Then, people knew that the ancestors had chosen them, and were whispering songs into their ear or brain. Often they came of shamanic ancestry, and were taught by an elder, and their practice seemed to release them from some psychic burden, even to cure them. Sometimes the learnt a secret language, or the speech of animals. In their initiation they might undergo dreams of their own death, a traumatic dismemberment and decay.

*

The shamans emerged like casual wizards. A young man in a quilted coat sauntered up to inspect us, his head bound by a soiled cloth with a feather sticking up behind. He had small, heartless eyes. They swept over us, then he vanished into an office. I asked one of the women: 'Where do these shamans come from?' She answered nervously: 'From the country.' [151]

SOUTH SEAS

On Tahiti the breezes from forest and sea strengthen the lungs, they broaden the shoulders and hips. Neither men nor women are sheltered from the rays of the sun nor the pebbles of the sea-shore. Together they engage in the same tasks with the same activity or the same indolence. There is something virile in the women and something feminine in the men. This similarity of the sexes makes their relations easier. Men and women are comrades, friends rather than lovers, dwelling together almost without cease, in pain as in pleasure, and even the very idea of vice is unknown to them. [157]

The conditions of an ideal retreat from the tumult and artificialities of man are fulfilled - solitude, danger, strangeness, the unknown, the discoverable, the eventual means of escape - if our hermitage is an island. An island volcanic or coralline, an island that out of the mists of daybreak, or in the cheating lights of evening, lifts itself from the snows of its surges, serene, strange, aloof in its forlorn beauty, dumb clock of countless ages, the haven of a few birds and roving brutes, the kindly nursery of seal and sea lion, and green with palm and tamarisk. [158]

The brig's business was on uncivilised coasts, with obscure rajahs dwelling in nearly unknown bays; with native settlements up mysterious rivers opening their sombre, forest-lined estuaries among a welter of pale green reefs and dazzling sand-banks, in lonely straits of calm blue water all aglitter with sunshine. Alone, far from the beaten tracks, she glided, all white, round dark, frowning headlands, stole out, silent like a ghost, from behind points of land stretching out all black in the moonlight; or lay hove-to, like a sleeping sea-bird,

under the shadows of some nameless mountain waiting for a signal.
[159]

The ease and grace which which the maidens of the valley propelled themselves through the water, and their familiarity with the element, were truly astonishing. Sometimes they might be seen gliding along just under the surface, without apparently moving hand or foot – then throwing themselves on their sides, they darted through the water, revealing glimpses of their forms, as, in the course of their rapid progress, they shot for an instant partly into the air – at one moment they dived deep down into the water, and the next they rose bounding to the surface. [160]

All around us, piled in baskets, were dried human heads. A ghastly frieze of them grinned about the eaves. Skulls hung from the rafters, heaps of picked human bones lay in the corners. One glance was enough for us. We crawled out of the hut and lost no time in getting back to the center of the village. Luckily none of the savages had seen us. [161]

Réard was sure his itty-bitty two-piece would be as explosive as a bomb, which is why he named his design after the remote island of Bikini Atoll, where the U.S. military performed news-making atomic bomb tests that very week. “In 1946, France had just come out of the war and people had need to live again. I felt I had to design something that would make people understand that life can start over and be beautiful,” Réard told *The Dispatch* in 1974. “At that time everybody spoke of the island of Bikini in the Pacific, enchanted, tiny, fine sand, a paradise. The idea came to me to make a swimsuit tiny like that island.” [162]

The coastguard searches for five days, and the men's family and friends continue searching for another week. They find nothing. Nothing at all. Not a trace of the men, not one piece of the boat. Nine and a half years later, one of the searchers, the marine biologist John Naughton, finds a wrecked boat on the beach of Taongi, the northernmost and driest atoll of the Marshall Islands, 3,750 kilometres west of Hawaii. A Hawaiian registration number is prominently displayed on the fibreglass hull. It is the Sarah Joe. There is a simple grave nearby: a cross of driftwood on a pile of stones. A few bones protrude from the sand. These are discovered to be the remains of Scott Moorman. Who buried him here and where the other men are remains a mystery. [163]

SPAIN

A labyrinth of passages and dark, cobbled alleyways make up the old town of Bilbao. It is here, in neon-lighted bars and in the shadows of high and ancient buildings that the heart of ETA, Europe's most venerable urban guerrilla movement, beats strongest. Its lifeblood is the young people who throng the old quarter, its pulse is the drumbeat and the haunting flute of the three slow-stepping musicians, two men and a girl, on their march of the streets. [164]

SPANISH WOMEN

As the Spanish ladies are under a greater seclusion from general society, than the sex is in other European countries, their desires of an adequate degree of liberty are consequently more strong and urgent. A free and open communication being denied them, they make it their business to secure themselves a secret and hidden one. Hence it is that Spain is the country of intrigue. [52]

SYRIA

In the village square these boys looked slow and ponderous, but out in the open country they suddenly became lithe and fast. They ran like young gazelles, scrambled up smooth, erect tree trunks like lizards, chased hares and rock partridges like hounds. Thirteen-year-old Abdullah could kill any living creature, however swift, with a pebble from his sling. His first catch when Farid went out with them was a rock partridge. Soon after that he brought down a hare. The boys fell on his prey, and within a very short time the partridge and the hare had been plucked, skinned, neatly gutted, and washed. They broiled the meat over a fire near the old elm tree, throwing thyme and other herbs into the flames, and a pleasant aroma rose into the air. [165]

TURKMENISTAN

Ashghabat was filled with gold statues of Turkmenbashi. In these statues, which had an ecclesiastical aura, Bashi was El Dorado, the Man of Gold, all-powerful, all-knowing. People were meant not to gape at them but to venerate them. One revolving statue, showing Turkmenbashi with his arms raised, rotated according to the sun and seemed to guide it across the sky. Other statues showed him sitting, striding, waving, saluting, and smiling a twenty-four-karat smile. One even showed him as a precocious golden child, seated in the lap of his bronze mother. He once said to a journalist, "I admit it. There are too many portraits, pictures and monuments [of me]. I don't find any pleasure in it, but the people demand it because of their mentality." [166]

TRANSYLVANIA

In olden times, gloomy forest gorges were tenanted only by the solitary bear or packs of famished wolves, while the mistrustful lynx looked down from the giddy heights, and the chamois leaped unchecked from rock to rock. The people who lived westward of this mountain rampart, knowing but little or nothing of the country on either side, designated it as Transylvania, or the land beyond the forest, just as we sometimes talk of the "land beyond the clouds".

*

The old-world charm still lingers around and about many things. It is floating everywhere and anywhere - in the forests and on the mountains, in medieval churches and ruined watch-towers, in mysterious caverns and in ancient gold-mines, in the songs of the people and the legends they tell. Like a subtle performance evaporating under the rays of a burning sun, it is growing daily fainter and fainter, and all lovers of the past should hasten to collect this fleeting fragrance ere it be gone forever. [167]

UKRAINE

At 13:13 on the 13th day of the month, the train No666 'Luhansk-Simferopol' set off from platform 13. The 13th seat of the 13th carriage was occupied by a brunette dressed in black with 13 bags. As the train approached Simferopol, she suddenly turned into a black cat, and her 13 bags into kittens. [168]

USA

Why come to this country?

Because the climate is perfect.

Because the soil is perfect and prolific.

Because the land is abundant and cheap.

Because a home can be made with little labor.

Because life is a luxury in a land where the sun shines every day.

[169]

I just love the way it (Florida) looks. The way it feels. It's such a strange place that seems to exist completely on its own. I just kind of, I can't put my finger on it. It's the characters and how it's just such an extreme place. And at the same time it's tropical and tranquil. And also there's a lot of Orthodox Jews where I live, and I love that. It's really a perfect place. It's the sunshine and it's the southernmost point in the United States. It's kind of the psychic runoff, the drainage, you know? But at the same time it's just like, Miami, the history of it is so short so it's constantly reinventing itself. You can project what you want onto it and so much of it is about surface, which I really love the surface. [170]

Down here, the sun clings to the earth and there is no darkness.

Down here, the silence of the sea and the silence of the swamp seep into our muscles.

All night, Dolores labors between the sea grapes and the empty park.

Our town prostitute, she listens for a long time. Her listening makes her strong.

*

Juan escapes from our prison: he duct-tapes Playboy magazines to his ribcage.

With his glossy carapace, he vaults over the razor strips of the chainlink fence.

[171]

I find it a little painful to be among cowboys now - of course, there are not very many of them to be among. Those who survive are anachronisms, and they know it. Most of them live in suburban hells, and yet are stuck with a style that lost its pith more than one hundred years ago. Many of the men who survive as cowboys now spend their lives being nostalgic for an experience - the trail drives - that even their grandfathers missed. Rodeo, the only part of that experience that is accessible to the public, is a kind of caricature of cowboying. The fact is, the American West was settled in one long lifetime. [172]

Through the Badlands. Another milkshake at Wall's. On to Wyoming, where over Greybull I saw for the first time something that I had dreamed of seeing for ten years. There on the western horizon, under a hot, clear sky, sixty miles away, crowned with snow (in July), was a magical vision, a legend come true: the front range of the Rocky Mountains. An impossible beauty like a boy's first sight of an undressed girl, the image of those mountains struck a fundamental chord in my imagination that has sounded ever since. [173]

We dug the carnival together. There were merry-go-rounds, Ferris wheels, popcorn, roulette wheels, sawdust, and hundreds of young Denver kids in jeans wandering around. Dust rose to the stars

together with every sad music on earth. Dean was wearing washed-out tight levis and a T-shirt and looked suddenly like a real Denver character again. There were motorcycle kids with visors and moustaches and beaded jackets hanging around the shrouds in back of the tents with pretty girls in levis and rose shirts. There were a lot of Mexican girls too, and one amazing little girl about three feet high, a midget, with the most beautiful and tender face in the world. [174]

For Rechy and Wojnarowicz, too, the derelict condition of the waterfront architecture was part of its erotic appeal. Both writers saw the warehouses and piers as animated by an erogenous charge that exceeded its appropriation by cruising men and its proximity to the leather and Western sexual cultures of the bars. This charge seemed to emanate from the physical form of the harbor, from the ruined buildings themselves. "Collapsing piers and warehouses," Wojnarowicz wrote in a journal entry from June 1980, "brought back images that smelled young and cleared the world of its weariness." These were lustful ruins. [175]

In his novella *The Day of the Locust*, Nathanael West describes a bordello in which the girls wore national costumes and entertained clients in bedrooms decorated in the style of each particular nation. Such a brothel really existed. At Mae's in Hollywood, inmates were chosen for their resemblance to film stars. Having slept with one who looked like Carole Lombard, Garson Kanin proceeded to tell the real Carole Lombard. "Lombard laughed and said she would tell Clark Gable, to whom she was married, but then said she wouldn't, because he would want to go to bed with the girl himself." [176]

The footage is grainy and it runs for just under a minute. And yet, in the world of cryptozoological ethnography, it's one of the most significant videos ever taken. Captured in 1967, the Patterson-Gimlin clip is considered the first hard evidence of Bigfoot, the famous cryptid located in the heart of the Rocky Mountains. There's something about the sasquatch, as a creature that hasn't been proven to exist by human standards, and our current age of hyper-surveillance. Even for nonbelievers, there's a mythic allure to the mysterious creature that taps into our very human desire to uncover hidden truths.

[177]

Yeah man, you know to me a mountain is a Buddha. Think of the patience, hundreds of thousands of years just sittin there bein perfectly perfectly silent and like praying for all living creatures in that silence and just waitin for us to stop all our frettin and foolin.

*

It was beautiful. The pinkness vanished and then it was all purple dusk and the roar of the silence was like a wash of diamond waves going through the liquid porches of our ears, enough to soothe a man a thousand years. [92]

When I was a boy, there was but one permanent ambition among my comrades in our village on the west bank of the Mississippi River. That was, to be a steamboatman. We had transient ambitions of other sorts, but they were only transient. When a circus came and went, it left us all burning to become clowns; the first negro minstrel show that came to our section left us all suffering to try that kind of life; now and then we had a hope that if we lived and were good, God

would permit us to be pirates. These ambitions faded out, each in its turn, but the ambition to be a steamboatman always remained. [178]

His fascination was with the Mississippi as it had been in the past... [H]is Mississippi books are works of memory, even of archaeology. Into them Twain poured all the half-forgotten trivia and pop ephemera he could dredge up from his childhood: the bad pious poetry and the worse folk songs, the primness of river town society matrons and the crazy banter of the river men, the omen reading of the conjurers and the tirades of the drunks on the riverfront levees, the childhood games, the rumors, the ghost stories, the superstitions... it was as though the murkiness of the Mississippi had cleared to reveal. drowned town miraculously preserved on the river bottom. [179]

An earthquake at 8:32:11 am PDT (UTC-7) on Sunday, May 18, 1980, caused the entire weakened north face to slide away, a sector collapse which was the largest subaerial landslide in recorded history. This allowed the partly molten rock, rich in high-pressure gas and steam, to suddenly explode northward toward Spirit Lake in a hot mix of lava and pulverized older rock, overtaking the landslide. An eruption column rose 80,000 feet (24 km; 15 mi) into the atmosphere and deposited ash in 11 U.S. states and various Canadian provinces. At the same time, snow, ice, and several entire glaciers on the volcano melted, forming a series of large lahars (volcanic mudslides) that reached as far as the Columbia River, nearly 50 miles (80 km) to the southwest. [124]

GTA 6's tone and aesthetic is pure present-day Tampa-Core. The term was coined in reference to a specific type of film set in Florida

that has been popular over the last few years. Films like Zola, Waves, The Beach Bum, Moonlight, The Florida Project and Spring Breakers make up the genre. A Tampa-core film features the exterior of a motel, strip club and the occasional Publix (a chain of Florida convenience stores. The lawlessness of a Florida beach is like the Wild, Wild West, except it's in the South. Tampa-core films might just be the new westerns, and GTA 6 might be the biggest moment for the genre yet. [180]

We drove to Mississippi in the late night. The stars guided us through Tupelo and Jacksonville. We retraced some footsteps. We ate a Sonic Burger. We saw some dead deers hanging in the backyard. The booze was flowing. We had no real plans. No goals. Just followed the light. We drove like this for a few days. On the last night, Eggleston played us the piano. He was wearing black leather gloves. I think there was a pistol somewhere in the room. It was beautiful. [181]

Xenia, Ohio. Xenia, Ohio. A few years ago a tornado hit this place. It killed people left and right. Dogs died. Cats died. Houses split open and you could see necklaces hanging from the branches of trees. People's legs and neck bones were stickin' out. Oliver found a leg on his roof. A lot of people's fathers died and were killed by the great tornado. I saw a girl fly through the sky and I looked up her skirt. The school was smashed and some kids died. My neighbor was killed in half. He used to ride dirt bikes and his three-wheelers. They never found his head. I always thought that was funny. People died in Xenia. Before dad died he got a bad case of the diabetes. [182]

The cozy brick houses, which for most residents represented every worldly attainment, popped like paper bags. Cars were wrecked, appliances were smashed, and through the air sailed all the paraphernalia of modern suburban living: lawn mowers, luggage, and furniture from Levitz, bicycles, bassinets, and Barbie Doll dresses, discount china and fire-sale chintz. At Arrowhead Elementary, the roof vanished and the windows exploded. [183]

Margaritaville, the one Buffett sang about, is actually an awful place. He allegedly wrote it after ordering a margarita in Austin, Texas, and was also inspired by an influx of tourists to Key West, Florida, where he was living at the time. It's about a man "wastin' away" in a touristy beach town, whose only solace from hinted-about heartbreak and foot injuries is tequila. This is not a song about someone who rejects the pressures of workaday life in order to pursue radical pleasure. This is about a man who is depressed and perhaps on the run from the law, for whom shrimp and sea and tattoos provide no peace, and who needs blended beach drinks to "hang on" to whatever semblance of a life he has left. [184]

Dirt, garbage cans overflowing or kicked over, drunks, dope addicts, beggars. Sleazy bars, store-front churches with gospels being shouted inside, "bargain" stores, hockshops, undertaking parlors. Greasy "home-coking" restaurants, beauty shops smoky inside from Negro women's hair getting fried, barbershops advertising conk experts. Cadillacs, secondhand and new, conspicuous among the cars on the streets. [185]

Everything happens in Harlem six days a week, but Sunday morning, people worship God. Those who are not religious stay in

bed. The whores, pimps, gamblers, criminals and racketeers catch up on their sleep or their love. But the religious get up and put on their best clothes and go to church. The bars are closed. The stores are closed. The streets are deserted save for the families on their way to church. A drunk better not be caught molesting them; he'll get all the black beat off him. [186]

The buffalo is an animal so sacred to Americana that it once graced the tails side of the nickel, and it was going off a Southwestern, Spaghetti Western cliff like a lemming, presumably driven on by hunters who nearly pushed the animal to extinction. The photograph goes far beyond representing the death of the American dream. In a simple image, it captures the forced, borderline-psycho disillusionment felt by anyone left of center during an age in which the Right was right and homosexual men died because God himself had descended from the heavens to exact his revenge. This is not *Death of a Salesman*. This is the photographic equivalent of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, an indictment of a sick nation reeling in riches and hubris even as it feasted on the weakest, cast the mentally ill out into the streets, and blamed death on the dying. [187]

There were many different Indian tribes including Cherokees, Apaches and Sioux, each with their own language. Every tribe had a chief, who wore a head-dress of eagle feathers. Indians were named after natural features of the land, a place or an animal; for example, Chief Running Water, Little Big Foot, Black Crow, or Crazy Horse. The fighting men were called braves and the women squaws. Indians lived in tepees, animal skin tents, and wore animal skin clothes. They lived a seasonal nomadic lifestyle, trapping, following the food of their herds of cattle, and breeding horses. They used

drum beats and smoke signals to pass messages to distant tribes and an ululating cry to terrify their opponents in battle. Before each battle they would perform a war dance and would also dance for rain when necessary. [188]

Mulholland Drive is a magical street, and many people feel that when they drive on it at night. It twists and turns and Hollywood is on one side and the Valley is on the other and you kind of get lost on it. It's an old road, too, and there's a mood to it, and you can feel that many people from the golden age of Hollywood drove on that road. It's really got a history, and if you're in Los Angeles long enough you start hearing stories about things that have happened on it that get your mind going. [189]

*In the Shreve High football stadium,
I think of Polacks nursing long beers in Titonsville,
And gray faces of Negroes in the blast furnace at Benwood,
And the ruptured night watchman of Wheeling Steel,
Dreaming of heroes.*

*All the proud fathers are ashamed to go home.
Their women cluck like starved pullets,
Dying for love.*

[190]

Visitors could get a little lost inside Salvador Dali's mirrored fun house and spin around on a Keith Haring carousel. They could take in the view from atop a dazzling Jean-Michel Basquiat Ferris wheel whilst listening to Miles Davis. They might've gazed up at wandering stilt walkers, been trapped inside an invisible box with a

mime, or perhaps even met the man on the moon (a David Bowie-esque character wearing a handmade four-foot-tall crescent moon).
[191]

A freight train came along on some tracks that ran parallel to the highway. At first it was a distant light and short bursts of horn, and then it was rolling past me, slow and stately, on its nightly procession through Livingstone. It was enormous - American trains are twice the size of European ones - and at least a mile long. I counted sixty freight cars on it before I lost track, all of them with names on them like Burlington Northern, Rock Island, Santa Fe. Towards the end of the train one car went by with its door open and I could see three shadowy figures inside: hobos. I was amazed to find that such people still existed, that it was still possible to ride the rails. In the dusk it looked a very romantic way to spend your life. It was all I could do to keep from sprinting along and climbing aboard and just disappearing with them into the night. [192]

*Come my tan-faced children,
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,
Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?
Pioneers! O pioneers!*

*For we cannot tarry here,
We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger,
We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend
Pioneers! O pioneers!*
[193]

The Circus-Circus is what the whole hep world would be doing on Saturday night if the Nazis had won the war. This is the Sixth Reich. The ground floor is full of gambling tables, like all the other casinos... but the place is about four stories high, in the style of a circus tent, and all manner of strange County-Fair/Polish Carnival madness is going on up in this space. Right above the gambling tables the Forty Flying Carazito Brothers are doing a high-wire trapeze act, along with four muzzled Wolverines and the Six Nymphet Sisters from San Diego. [194]

We shut the blinds down very tightly that first night in the hostile Indian country, and lay on our arms. We slept on them some, but most of the time we only lay on them. We did not talk much, but kept quiet and listened. It was an inky-black night, and occasionally rainy. We were among woods and rocks, hills and gorges - so shut in, in fact, that when we peeped through a chink in the curtain, we could discern nothing. [195]

Midwestern prairie would be allowed to invade from the north. Trees, vines, and wildflowers would grow on roofs and out of windows; wild animals, goats, squirrels, possum, bats, owls, ravens, snakes, insects, and perhaps even an occasional bear would live in the empty behemoths, adding their calls, hoots, and screeches to the smell of rotten leaves and animal droppings. [196]

I remember spending summers in these traveling carnivals. They would pitch a tent in like some small town in Florida or wherever, stay there for a few days, and then move around. I would sell goldfish. It was great for me because I would have the run of the place. I could say, "I'm with the show" and they would let me on the

rides and I would hang out with all these characters. It was one of those things that made me realize early on I had a real fondness for the chaos of a circus. It was also the first time I realized that there were men who looked like lobsters and women with rubber skin that walked the earth. [197]

*And down there's Hollywood,
the starry world below
— expressing nakedness —
that craving, that glory
that applause — leisure, mind,
appetite for dreams, bodies,
travels: appetite for the real created by the mind
and kissed in coitus —
that craving, that melting!
Not even the human
imagination satisfies
the endless emptiness of the soul.*
[198]

Yesterday me and Suzy took a bus to Disneyland. What a trip! It was like another world. We did everything we could possibly do in nine hours. I expected it to be a letdown after seeing it on TV and hearing about it, but it was better. Except the castle is only about three stories high and it always looks gigantic in pictures. We went to the Haunted Mansion two times. [199]

The irony of having so many gay bars in the heart of the meat-packing district was underscored by signs that read WELL-CUT BEEF and CHOPPED MEAT. [Mapplethorpe] rarely participated in

any of the public orgies; he spent most of his time roaming the dimly lit passageways that led to rooms where men were being whipped and chained. There was a bathtub for “watersports” and a jail where “prisoners” were handcuffed or strapped to chairs, and leather slings to facilitate fisting. [200]

Kings, queens, princesses, swords, bows, arrows, staves, horses, doublets, tridents, daggers, stilettos, axes, clubs, Mace, Lances, partisans, ships, pike, slings, spears, assassins, magicians, thieves, rogues, clerics, soldiers, knights, bishops, pawns, crowns, flags, banners, trolls, ogres, fools, dwarves, bards, brownies, harps, lutes, gowns, wizards, fairies, deer, legends, hunters, rangers, wolves, poisons, pixies, muses, Sprites, elves, hags, witches, imps, wanderers, nomads, devils, farriers, fletchers, cobblers, jesters, spirits, haunts, inns, barkeeps, sailors, mutton, vampires, harpies, hounds, satyrs, sphinxes, sirens, gargoyles, incubuses, serpents, chimeras, golems, ghouls, skeletons, tombs, Cyclops, heroes, villains, Drakes, gorgons, nymphs, virgins, ballads, dungeons, whips, gremlins, angels, myths, behemoths, monsters, Griffins, man-eaters, hellhounds, outlaws, Raiders, mummies, doppelgangers, zombies, travelers, Poltergeist, Leprechaun, fantasies, aliens, lasers, cowboys, Indians, robots, explorers, spacecraft, gamma rays, chivalry, ghoulishness, gigantism, caves, mincemeat, Joust, Fireballs, acrobats, portals, maps, adventurers, role-playing, characters, modules, manuals, dice. A knife In the back and a death by fire. [201]

Southern Gothic is an aesthetic which understands the world to be dying. It celebrates crucifixes, fading wallpaper, one-room schoolhouses and gauche, technicolour images of Jesus Christ. It's true crime snapshots and a faded, dirty American flag. Southern

Gothic is the sweat dripping from Robert Patterson's brow in *The Devil All the Time*, the deranged sister of cottagecore, a Lisbon girl impaled on a white picket fence: it is the dialectic between the grotesque and American mythology. [202]

The people down here committed a lot of grave atrocities against other human beings. And I think that is something that you can feel in the air very palpably; there's a tension that never really goes away. Too much has happened on this land to not be dark and terrifying, even years later. It's like the ground is soaked in blood and the trees have drunk it up. [203]

In the depths of West Virginia, a wild man lived amongst the hills and trailers and tar-paper shacks. Fueled by alcohol and possessing a madness born of that place, he made music about violence and hot dogs; aliens and chickens. Imagine Elvis in Sid Vicious' body with a little Frank Sinatra thrown in, and you have Hasil Adkins, the originator of psychobilly. [204]

In an open field on top of Sand Mountain, the End-Time Evangelist, Brother Charles McGlocklin, would lead services under muscadine vines, honeysuckle, and starlight, like believers used to do in the old days, before the world with all its deceitfulness and vanities lured them down from the mountains and into the city, where a woman might be tempted to back up on the Lord and stop drinking strychnine, and her husband would have to take matters into his own hands by putting a gun to her head and forcing her to reach into the serpent box. [205]

In the general uproar of gifts and unwinding of wrappers it was always a delight to me to step out on the porch or even go up the street a ways at 1:00 in the morning and listen to the silent hum of heaven diamond stars, watch the red and green windows of homes, consider the trees that seemed frozen in sudden devotion, and think over the events of another year past. Perhaps too many battles have been fought on Christmas Eve since then - or maybe I'm wrong and little children of 1957 secretly dig Christmas in their little devotional hearts. [206]

On a stretch of despair that tourists in Las Vegas seldom see, the Western Hotel-Casino stands out as a beacon for the broke and nearly broken. With their crumpled dollars and gloomy gait, they stumble in off Fremont Street through the wide, doorless entrance, beckoned by the sounds of penny slot machines and cheap table games. The Western is a poor man's dream, a downtown casino where sad Las Vegas cliches collide. [207]

This is more like it: SHRIMP AND STEAK \$8.95, says the neon sign. FAJITAS FEAST FOR TWO WITH 2 FREE RITAS \$19.95. COLD BEER DIRTY GIRLS. LIVE MUD WRESTLING. BIKINI BUCKING BRONCO GIRLS. In the parking lot there is a white coupe suffering from spontaneous combustion: it has blown its hood. Under the withered hedge, two witch-like pigeons are pecking away at a handful of discarded Cheez-Its. [208]

VENEZUELA

When the annual Miss Venezuela pageant is aired on television, millions tune in, paralyzed in suspense as contestants parade on stage in neon-colored bikinis while their measurements are read aloud and they answer questions like how they would draw people back to the waning Roman Catholic church. As the nation plummets into economic ruin, even more young women are holding fast to dreams of becoming beauty queens. At a recent casting for the Nuestra Belleza Venezuela contest, a pack of teens and 20-something women donned towering heels and coated their lips in glossy pink hues before strutting in front of judges. Among them was Oxlaniela Oropeza, a law student. "My values are intact and no one can take that away from me," she said. "From the time I was 6 years old, my goal has been to become Miss Venezuela." [209]

By day, Venezuelans could play baseball, visit zoos with horses, pigs and flamingos, and saunter round market streets selling food and wares as their children played in parks. By night, they could drink beer, place bets and go nightclubbing. But this was not a holiday resort or town. It was one of Venezuela's most notorious prisons controlled by the powerful Tren de Aragua gang. [210]

WALES

I looked at the smooth blue sky and the glowing white roofs, the black road, choked with blacker figures of waving men passing down the hill between groups of women with children clustered about their skirts, all of them flushed by flickering orange lamplight flooding out from open door-ways, and heard the rich voices rising in many harmonies, borne upward upon the mists which flew from singing mouths, veiling cold-pinched faces, magnifying the brilliance of hoping eyes, and my heart went tight inside me.

And round about us the Valley echoed with the hymn, and lights came out in the farms up on the dark mountain, and down at the pit, the men were waving their lamps, hundreds of tiny sparks keeping time to the beat of the music.

Everybody was singing. *[210]*

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