

We are often encouraged to read great works in so much as the context of our times and the vast weight of the culture to which they have lent their gravitas command us as younger people to revisit and imagine a time many decades before our birth. The import of its context will always escape us yet here we are.

I found myself that day contemplating how complete my dismissal of one such work might be after failing utterly to be struck by its poise, and all the accounts in the world wouldn't change that. (Sooner or later it grabbed me, mind.)

But of course, we strive to think — or rather I strive and thus assume others strive — to think of what we ourselves would write in its place. What would I do if charged with communicating these things, in this way?

Nature seems to be one thing they talk about. Yes, lots of nature and noting how IT all LOOKS and what it is LIKE and how it tilts and shades....I tried it on the train.

The hills are vast, green and boundless; covered in an unseasonable mist which, were it not for the beauty of it all, would appear so unwanted an extraction from our otherwise summery days distractions of pretending we know what to do in the heat.

I for one did not mind the mist and rain though, fitting as it seemed for the sludgy trooping I was doing; headed slowly to a place I'd rather not be, committing much of my time to doing so. Such is often the way and I bet at least one other person near me knows it.

Back to the weather though; pissing down, or rather the hills.

Green and destructive. I often wonder what it would be like being there. When so fast the train swoops us all through the natural carvings it so deftly ruins and rubs its presence on like a sweaty palmed man at home, entirely relaxed and reconciled with the smearing of his sweaty crotch with an unwashed hand, which he will sniff; drinking in the bizarre, near chemical smell before listlessly wiping it on some surface he knows to be inappropriate, revelling in his having done it anyway.

I think about those people who touch it with their feet. Privileged to hold residence or upbringing or the means to travel beyond the strict incline of the rails which provide, ironically, our means of actually seeing the things. I think about those people who may know the face of this hill or that bank or the seemingly carbon copied woods and be able to navigate it, know its name, understand its geographical significance etc , etc.

I think about stepping on them, though not just this. I think about being stranded. Moments from seat to wet, sopping grass and mud. How is unimportant, as it is not such majesty but utter terror and the idea of being well and truly in trouble that begins to eclipse these considerations of the wonders of our county. Perhaps it is here I would

learn to catch fish and survive. Drinking my own piss or simply ringing for help and describing to the incredulous emergency services where I was.

'I don't know what its called, but its on the South downs and the trains run through it. I can see a lot of vast, destructive natural land. I'm sorry but I've no more information, what should I do?'

It reminds me of how I used to so often ride through twisting country lanes with friends or family. During these times the terror was staved by company; more grown and locked into an edifice of responsibility given their mastery of a vehicle. I trusted some more than others and wondered equally what they might do were it US in his stranded moment. Never did it occur to me they would not know.

Where here the haze and folly of green, grey, black and spotted would make these propositions at once the things of dark wonder and gripping, cold, sickening 'that could be' dread, I often felt privileged myself to lend my own dominant visitation to these bleak shitholes which I could freely regard with all the spite, splendour and utter indifference I wanted.

And so the regard of nature ends amounts only to a morbid fantasising. But not to worry, because I suddenly realise that I am now grown and though I still don't drive I can certainly make my own decisions as to the value of prose. Many a man has talked and written fine enough a game of his enamourment with the natural for my pithy offerings to need any addition. Such reflections do not come to me quite so freely as those others, but to hell with that and the need to care. My safety comes in the form of slowly realising that the void I feel when reading of what a canal, an ocean, the sky or a mountain looked like from the vantage point of some long deceased author I'm pressured to care about is perhaps not a lack of understanding its context or significance, but simply being unmoved.

And so I find there to be a quiet honour and pleasure in ignoring the natural; allowing it a fleeting moment of engagement if anything at all. I much prefer to simply allow these moments their unargued, unadorned place away from the rest of my thinking. Beautifully unattached to the obligations to think, feel, regard or entertain which dictate so much else in the day, that bought me here on this fuzzy train seat with its other people and its shitty, broken fold down squeaking table and its air conditioning and its people and tireless, day in day out representations of something many others must continually or occasionally do; fraught with its own problems and contexts which we will also spend time thinking about while they change only ever in unhelpful minutiae.

Indeed, as the train sweeps me in and out of its heathers, oaks and billowing mounds of speckled earth I far prefer it when we reach the city; not because I like or care for it, or see some updated tantamount of the past romanticism I fail to accord in the pages of our supposed greats, nor because of it's bristling lumps of activity diversity or excitement, but

rather because I can imagine what it'd be like to fall down the long distances separating the railway and London streets.

And so I get there and I eventually come back home. At one stage I see a frail and ill man, hobbling around in the middle of Kings Cross, clutching a bottle of Robinson's Fruit Barley. 'What are you doing here' I think, I think 'how do you live here, how do you make it, everything must be nearly impossible?' It feels like less for me then, like the man and his white dog I see on getting home, sitting in the same spot as he was when I initially left. Nowhere to be, nowhere to sleep, looking at nothing. We were going to do something about him once, weren't we? I'm not sure what. I forget.