

kohl zine












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KC 2019

December'19

Issue XIII

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travel column for travel haters

by Britball

There's few things you lot hate more than traveling and those conspicuous consumers that do it. In that I differ from you, so I have taken it upon myself to write a travel column for those who hate travel. Yes, on my tablet.

Did you ever play that Japanese DLC for Fallout, New Fujikawaguchiko? An inventory full of mochi and paper packs of sake (it's a real thing), sleeping katana and headband equipped and Yao Gweilo's prowling about. Wait, no, I'm confusing things. I'm thinking of the time I deliberately took a wrong turn near Kofu in Yamanashi-ken. And I might have made up a few things to set the mood.

Once upon a time a long and winding road snaked through the mountains and connected Kofu and Fujikawaguchiko. Then came the tunnelers and with fire and steel, folded 1000 times, and they dug a new road underneath the earth. A straight road now connects the two valleys, rendering the old road mostly obsolete. In spring you might find a few adventurous motorists here and late fall the road closes due to ice. Only one force has changed things here since the first bullet train sped by the nearby volcano, and that is time. Rust, moss and erosion have had their way with the monuments, the signage and the cans that once contained now long-discontinued sodas and coffees (cans of coffee are also a very normal thing in the land of the rising sun).





Reeds have poked their bushy plumes through cracks in the asphalt and gently dance in the winter sun. Brittle patches of shimmering ice cover the road. Dust from the trees reveals the sunbeams that breach the pine canopies, which in turn provide the Kanji etched in marble obelisks with a golden glow. High wires are suspended above the foliage on red-white painted steel constructions. Graphics are ten out of ten. And nothing in sight hints at any human activity in the last 50 years.

If you take the trip, have it be on a sunny morning or you will miss the reward at the end! A gentle walk along the hairpins would lead you to the tunnel at the top of the pass in an hour or two. A straight climb to the underpass will not win you any time, but it will put some sweat on your brow, dirt under your fingernails and hair on your chest, so it's the only way to go for a young man. Once arrived, you say a prayer to your preferred brand of diety and walk into the black hole.

If you aren't where you want to be in life, treat this tunnel as a metaphor. At first there seems to be no light at the end of it, and soon you'll lose the light that shone whence you came. But keep walking, and a bright spot at the end will appear. It grows steadily larger, and when you reach it you will be faced with a sight so beautiful, a sight you thought only existed in your purest of animes: Fuji-San!

Here I spent some time above the world, in a place that indeed didn't seem to be from this world. Yes, last time we ventured down to Hades, this time I felt myself atop Olympus. Right besides the mouth of the tunnel stood an old wooden inn where I spent some time. I had some steaming tea while looking at the mountain across. The innkeeper charged me nothing, and after I had some climbing fun in the mountains above he drove me back down to the village below once dusk arrived, back to the real world of train timetables and desk jobs, but with a spark of joy to look back on.





John Knox - the wilting of Scotland's rose

by Scotball

John Knox (1514 - 1572) was the principal leader of the Scottish Reformation, a period in the XVI century when the Kingdom of Scotland officially severed relations with the Papacy and formed its own national church. The question of whether Knox's religious views are correct or not is not the purpose of this article, but rather, to discuss how his decisions subsequent to the Scottish Reformation's victory can be considered as having diminished the unique cultural, social and political life of the Scottish nation.

Naturally, some background is required into the history of Scotland at the time, and into the life of Knox, if we are to make an accurate assessment of the man and his legacy. We begin this overview then at the end of 1542. James V, perhaps Scotland's greatest and most devout monarch, lay dead at Falkland Palace. A case of influenza, exacerbated by the stress of his army's defeat at Solway Moss against England, likely killed him. He left behind a wife - the formidable Mary of Guise - and an infant daughter, Mary, later to be crowned as Queen of Scots.

Regencies are fraught with danger. No sooner than James V had died than the Old Enemy, England, had engaged in a series of raids to enforce English hegemony over Scotland. Known as the "Rough Wooing", this period brought untold destruction to the Lowlands of Scotland.

The Queen Regent, Mary of Guise, was able to fight back against these attacks through skilful diplomacy. Crucially, the intervention of a French military force ensured that Scotland survived this period, before its eventual end with the death of Henry VIII. Throughout this period, the nascent Scottish Reformation had identified their cause with that of England, and had sought the support of English arms and money. In response, the Regent had aggressively began to crack down on Protestant agitation, seeing it - correctly - as a domestic front in the war raging against England.

This, now, is where Knox enters the stage. Knox had been a parish priest at Longniddry, a town just east of Edinburgh. There, he had met the Protestant Reformer George Wishart, and had become converted to his ideas. After Wishart's public execution for heresy, Knox became a fugitive, preaching against the Papacy, and in 1546, he joined a group of Protestant rebels that had seized the town of

St. Andrews in Fife. In 1547, the town was besieged and taken by a French force. Knox was captured, and became a galley slave in a French warship.

For close to two years, Knox was kept in bondage, and it is likely that his later fiery denunciations of the Auld Alliance between France and Scotland, and his frequent invectives against Mary's French heritage, may be born from this experience. Similarly, his enthusiastic support for England may also have been boosted due to English involvement in his release from slavery in 1549.

Upon release, he settled in England. He married an English woman, rose through the ranks of the Church of England, and was even appointed as one of the six Royal Chaplains to Edward I. The death of Edward in 1553, followed by the rule of Mary I, forced him to flee England as Catholicism was reintroduced to the country. Tellingly, Knox recounted this period of flight in these terms.

Sometime I have thought that impossible it had been, so to have removed my affection from the realm of Scotland, that any realm or nation could have been equal dear to me. But God I take to record in my conscience, that the troubles present (and appearing to be) in the realm of England are double more dolorous unto my heart than ever were the troubles of Scotland

After a time spent in Europe, including a long stay in Geneva where his views became closely aligned with the Presbyterianism espoused by John Calvin, he returned to Scotland in 1559. At this point, the rule of the Queen Regent was steadily failing, and the actions of the French military forces in Scotland were causing grievances for both the commoners and nobles. Knox, sensing the febrile atmosphere, immediately began a series of fiery sermons, many of which ended in mob violence, culminating in

the vandalism of Church property. A full scale rebellion erupted in the summer of 1559, led by Knox and Scottish nobles who had adopted the Protestant faith.

The Queen Regent attempted to counter the rebellion with increased French forces. However, Knox and the Scottish Protestant nobility were able to secure English arms, money and military aid at the Treaty of Berwick in 1560. By June of that year, the war was effectively over. The Queen Regent died on the 10th June, and her forces quickly collapsed. On the 19th June, Knox gave a National Thanksgiving service at the cathedral in Edinburgh, cementing the victory of the Reformation in Scotland.

The period after this needs little telling, so prevalent is it in media due to its doomed romantic nature. Mary, Queen of Scots takes her throne, and through the political machinations of her treacherous nobility - aided by Knox - is deposed, captured by the English, and eventually executed for no reason other than the blood that she carried.

By the time of Knox's death, Scotland had changed dramatically. She had severed ties with the Papacy, forming a new national church, colloquially known as The Kirk. She had cut her almost 300 year alliance with France, and was now a firm ally of England. And more fundamentally, serious, deep changes had been made to the language, culture and politics of Scotland that would forever change her, even to the point of her near destruction.

This overview of the historical situation gives some insight into Knox's character, which will impart some understanding for the decisions that he would make after 1560 that changed the nation fundamentally. Crucially, above all, is the pre-eminent focus of England in Knox's consciousness.



Let us start with the most egregious decision made by Knox. The establishment of the new national Church of Scotland was laid out in the Scots Confession of 1560, drafted by Knox and written in English. Similarly, under the auspices of Knox, the Geneva Translation of the Bible, an English translation, was chosen as the Bible of use for the new Church, even though a 1513 translation of the Bible into Scots did exist.

At the time, Scots was not mutually intelligible with English. It had its own distinct vocabulary, sentence construction and syntax, and was heavily influenced by Middle French. Indeed, an English herald to Scotland in 1560 found the Scots language difficult to follow, and his message had to be conveyed in French, which the rest of the attendees could understand. Scots, therefore, at the time was a distinct language to English,

As the history of Europe testifies too, national identity is strongly rooted in language, and the preservation of a European language is often strongly tied to whether a Biblical translation in that tongue exists. The Bible of Kralice, for example, ensured the preservation of the Czech tongue amongst a sea of German. Later on, the national struggles in the XIX century were often rooted in protests against the marginalisation of languages. The Russification campaigns led to resurgences in Baltic, Ukrainian and Finnish national feeling, and the renewal of the national literature in these nations. In the modern day, Icelandic national feeling is deeply intertwined with the Icelandic language, and the Basque and Catalonia political struggles are rooted in language. It is therefore clear that a distinct, national identity is rooted in a distinct, national language.

The damage, therefore, that was committed by Knox in his decision to make the Church of Scotland's main language of transmission to be English is incalculable. A Scots translation of the Bible may very well have standardised the Scots language, making it the tongue not only of common but of learned speech and writing. Scotland today may have spoken its own language, closely related to English but distinct in many characteristics. Most regrettably is how such a decision may have saved Scots from the opprobrium it is now held, frequently derided as slang and the language of the uneducated. It is dispiriting that a language which in 1513 had a translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* is now held in little more than contempt. Knox is sorely to blame for this state of affairs.

A distinct language helps to form a distinct cultural and political identity for a people. Without it, the concept of a shared nationhood between a people becomes fractured and difficult to hold together. In the case of Scotland, the

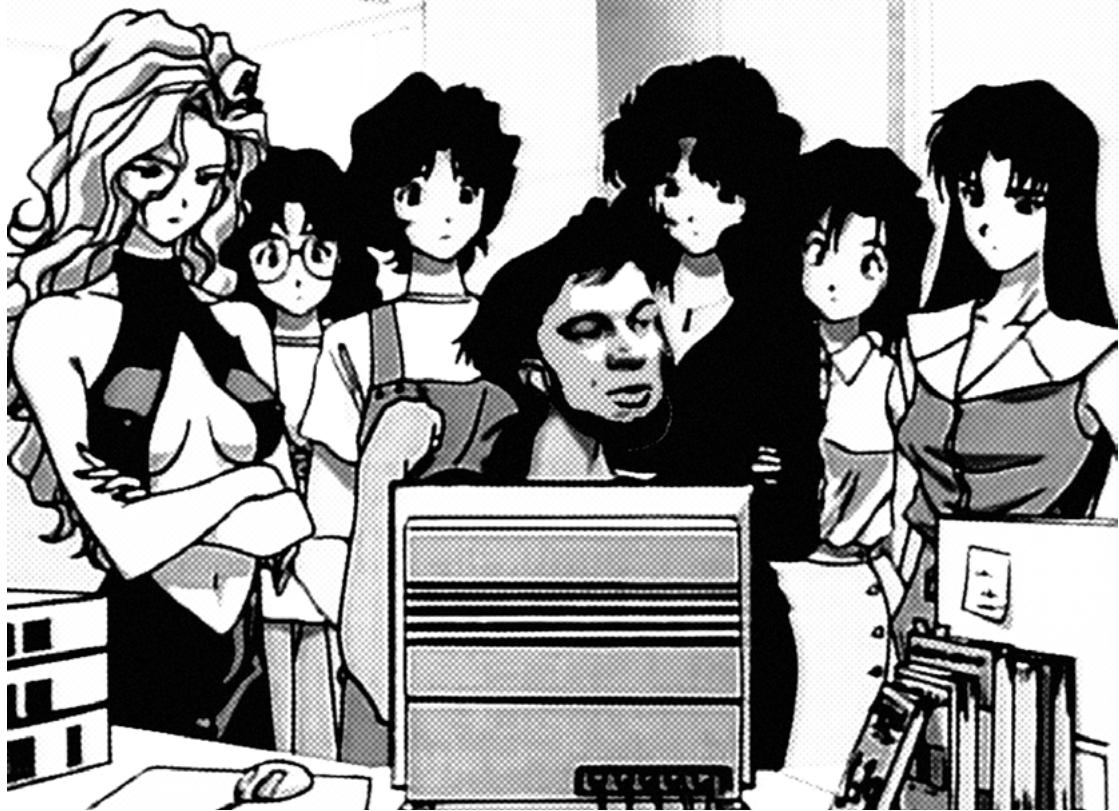
decay in the use of the national (and here, I use national to mean the Lowlands and the North East of Scotland - Gaelic Scotland can be considered as a separate nation in itself!) language was particularly hard felt. Without a sense of identity, the deprecations inflicted on Scotland by larger powers in their quest for hegemony - England, and to a lesser extent, France - were difficult to weather. This was not helped by Knox's keen enthusiasm for perpetual alliance with England. His secret correspondences with Elizabeth I's court, culminating in the Treaty of Berwick, can be considered as the first stage towards the eventual Act of Union in 1707.

Finally, it can be argued that the Reformation itself was a major harm to the Scottish nation. While a distinct, Calvinist Church was established in Scotland very different from that which existed elsewhere, it should be stressed that Knox's own wish was for the Church of England to become like that of Scotland, indistinguishable in structure and theology. Furthermore, the Church has been a detrimental force to Scottish culture since its establishment, and especially during the period of its greatest power in the XVII century. Art, music, literature and poetry were all mercilessly curtailed by a Church obsessed with Calvinist, Old Testament morality. Notoriously, in 1697, Church officials in Edinburgh pushed for, and successfully ensured, the execution of 20 year old Thomas Aitkenhead for the crime of blasphemy. While Shakespeare, Marlowe and Jonson created a corpus of English literature that survives today, all theatre in Scotland was banned under the auspices of the Kirk. Scottish national literature did not come into true existence until the late XVIII century, by which point, the Scots language was as dead as the nation of Scotland itself.



In many ways, Scotland feels like a half baked nation. Certainly, there is on a deep, subconscious level a feeling of a unique, Scottish identity. Attempts to articulate this, however, are often maudlin, artificial or sterile, due principally to a lack of a national language or a good, national literary corpus to draw on. There is no *Kalevala* that a Scottish nationalist can quote from. There is no St. Crispin's Day Speech which a Scot can perform to express their love for Scotland. There is no Jerusalem among the Scottish heather, as there is among the green and pleasant land of England. And for this lack of a clear identity, that can never now be articulated in an ancient, ancestral tongue, I blame the "Father of Modern Scotland", John Knox.

Woodcut images from Kenneth Wilson, Edinburgh based artist:
<http://www.kennethblueswilson.co.uk/Commissions.html>



Oberservations of a former NEET turned Full-Time Slave

by Germanball

I used to live a comfortable NEET lifestyle with a regular, albeit tiny, stream of money that lasted for close to three years, until it was cut short and then completely went away. Circumstanced led me to begin a new job as a full-time employee, which started around 4 weeks ago. Here are some of my observations.

Waking up

It's difficult. Not as difficult as I thought, thanks to my NEET training I can go to sleep whenever I want, so I had no problem getting into the new schedule of going to bed at 11pm and waking up at 6am. The true challenge is just getting out of bed, and getting used to the new alarm ringtone from my smart phone every morning. It's the most unfriendly sound I had the displeasure of hearing over the last few weeks.

Throwing away that warm, cozy and cuddly blanket, exposing my skin to the cold air, stretching my aching body and doing the motions of standing up... its just plain horrible. Many days I lost valuable minutes in the morning to get ready, simply because I couldn't properly get out of bed.

Countermeasures I deployed:

Get rid of the cold air in the room. I used to leave the windows half open when sleeping, to get fresh air in. Unfortunately in the winter this makes the air cold (which is no problem if you're a NEET, simply stay in bed :--D), now I open the windows when I leave for work.

Have a playlist of specific songs that get me into the right mood. It's not some stupid uplifting music, just cozy Neofolk that keeps me in the right mood in the cold, dark winter mornings.

- Death In Rome - [V2 CD1 #06] Every Generation Got Its Own Disease
- Agalloch - [The White EP #06] Sowilo Rune
- OF THE WAND & THE MOON - [BRIDGES BURNED AND HANDS OF TIME MUSIC #02] Ja Boga Ne Videu
- Ianva - [Disobbedisco! (1918-1920) #03] Vittoria Mutilata
- Splendor Solis - [Rosarivm: Fraternitas Spiritualis #04] Dies Irae
- Death In Rome - [Biała Armia CD1 #01] Biała Armia
- Death In Rome - [Communion of Saints #22] Maid Of Orleans (St Joan of Arc)

Regarding the dark mornings in the winter: Turning on the lights when its dark outside was like torture for me. I now shower in the dark and installed a new lamp that shines in dark orange.

Traveling to work

This part was easier than expected. I travel for about 40 minutes and I spend that time now reading books. Something that I already did as a NEET, just not on a train. I also always see the same faces in the morning, which gives me a comfy feeling, somehow. Used to be that every single face I would encounter in the train (if it happened that I left my room), I would never see again. I still can't really put my finger on it, but it feels good and maybe collegial to see the same people every day, knowing they also woke up as early as I did and are traveling to work. Some look sad, some look happy, some are just sleeping. Each of their faces tell me small stories, snippets out of their lives. I find it fascinating. Most fascinating of all is the silence on the train. An occasional cough here and there, thats it. I like to think of it as a sound of silent determination. On some days the sun breaks earlier through the horizon, and the silent faces are shined upon in the beautiful morning red of the sun.

Working

I am fortunate enough to have found a job that suites my needs and capabilities. I like the team I am working with. Nonetheless, in the beginning it was truly taxing to work for 8 hours - straight. That „straight” was my mistake. Coworkers would regularly take breaks, be it smoking, coffee or socializing. Since I was a brave NEET for years I wasn't really doing any of these things, and ended up working 8 hours straight. Over the course of the few weeks I learned to sozialize a bit, but I'm not good enough to really make a proper break out of it, since it's also taking a toll on my

mental fatigue. Socializing properly is hard work. I have to stay concentrated to listen to the people, I have to stay concentrated to find the right answers. And my voice is husky shell, whispering like hive of tired bees. Years of not speaking did not do my voice any favors.

Sometimes I disappear to the toilets and read a book on my smart phone, but not for too long. I don't dare doing it for longer for than 15 minutes.

One time I made the classic mistake and didn't check for enough toilet paper when taking a shit. I had to do some complex calculations of maximum usage for the few stripes of toilet paper that I had left in my stall. I could have called for a coworker to toss me extra toiler paper - but I wouldn't be a former NEET if I would actually manage to do that.

I also found out that drinking coffee is the counterpart to the socializing activity of smoking. I'm still debating if I pick up drinking coffee just to start socializing with the friendly people at work, but I still have to figure out how to approach the subject that I suddenly started drinking coffee. Might seem a tad desperate? What if I just be straight forward and tell them I would like to try out coffee? Will they invite me?

Questions I don't really know the answers to, and in the end I fear I will just stay the (too)hardworking shy young lad at work. Well, life could be worse.

Traveling home

Traveling home from work is harder than traveling to work. It is dark again. And there is no glorious sun, stroking the tired faces of the morning commute. Instead it just gets darker. And crowdier. It seems to me the traveling times in the morning are more dispersed, compared to

the the traveling times in the evening. So many people! So many faces I actually wont see for a second time! It's very very different, and I have to stand all the time now. Reading a book is sometimes uncomfortable due to the lack of space or a comfortable position. Plus, I am very tired.

Coming Home and going to sleep

At home, I quickly developed a routine. Take of jacket, shoes. Change from tight jeans to comfortable jogging pants. Eat something. I try to eat somewhat healthy. At least an apple or an orange, coupled with the unhealthy fast food of a pizza or some noodles with a tasteless sauce.

Next I just lay down in my bed and start lurking, watching something or read a book, if I can. Sometimes the needed concentration for reading is just depleted. Working 8 hours is so taxing. Most of the evening time, which is about 3-4 hours I have left until I go to sleep, I spend with my brain in idle mode. It's a sad state, but I can't help it and so far I haven't really found any way to rejuvenate my concentration and motivation for my former hobbies during these few hours of free time. Only on the weekends I can be a little happy Bernd again and read my autistic books or scourge the internet for whatever my curiosity thirsts for the moment.

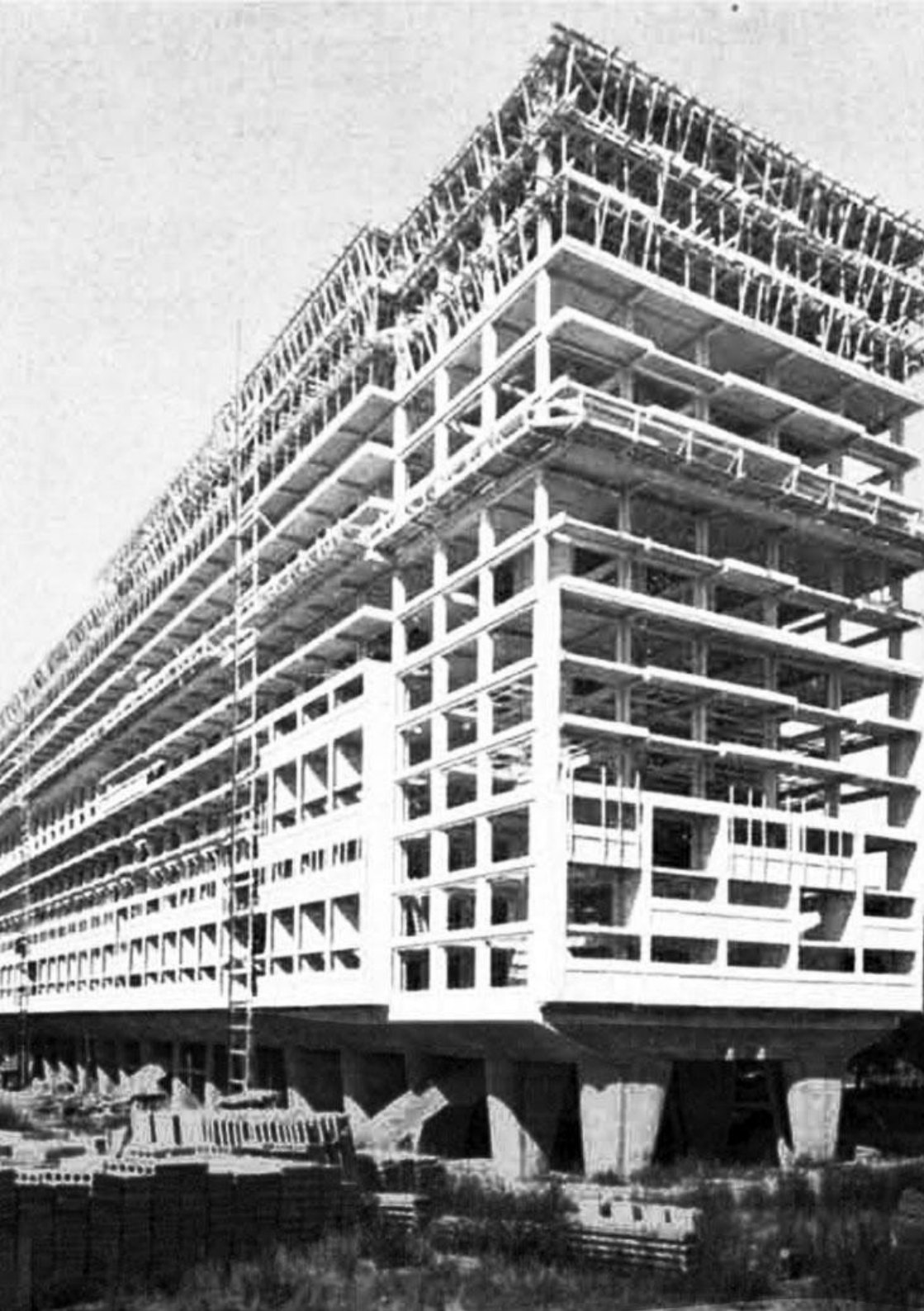
Do I regret leaving the NEET life? Maybe. I miss it, deeply. But I am a Bernd. I have aspirations.

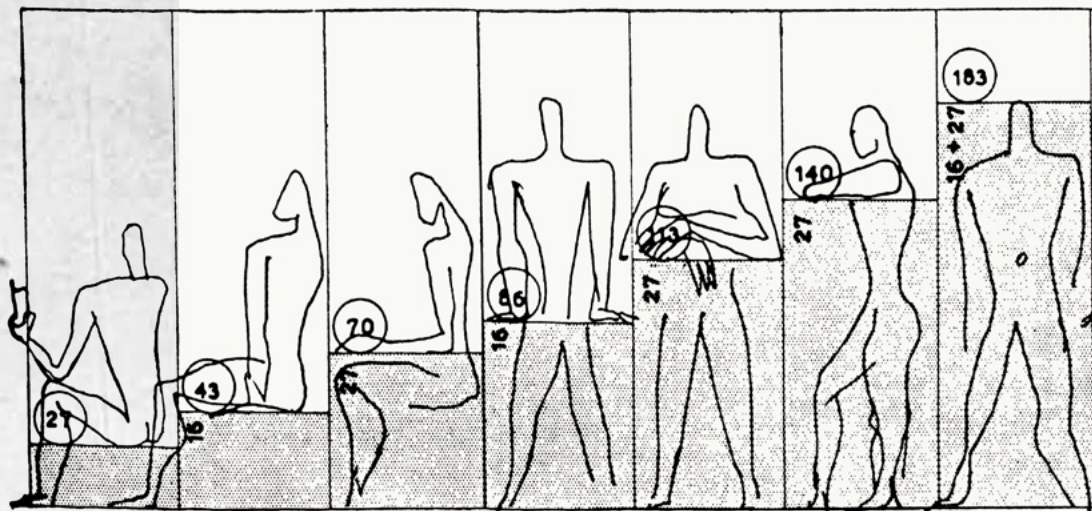
As a NEET I was beginning to rot. My views of life became more bitter with each passing month, more cynical also.

I am glad that life gave me an opportunity to prevent this. Life will be harder now, but I have feeling it will also be more rewarding.

Yours truly, Bernd







A Tale of Two cities

2/2

by Germanball

This is the second part of this two part article. The first one was published in Kohlzine #12. If you have not read it yet, I strongly recommend doing that before diving into this one. Have fun.

“Chaos has entered into the cities” concludes the Athens Charter its first chapter, and one cannot shed the suspicion that it was, in fact, this perceived Chaos which was the true driving force behind the groups ambitions plans. Nestled into a cozy blanket of humanism, the theme of creating Order from Chaos shines through again and again. “Chaos”, in this context, more or less refers to the natural growth cities have experienced over the centuries. I, however, argue, that it is exactly this constructive Chaos which creates liveable cities in the first place. We will return to that later.

Le Corbusier and his peers grounded their ideas in a deeply autistic caricature of the human condition, degrading the individual to a soulless statistic whose efficient administration is the all ruling king. Where a city should be seen as an organic entity shaped by and in return shaping the spirit of its inhabitants in a symbiotic relationship, Le Corbusier, impressed by the advent of the car, envisioned it as a vast machine of intricately interconnected parts moving in perfect unison. It is no coincidence that he described the ideal home as “a machine for living”, implicating its inhabitants as soulless components within. In the Corbusian city, the human meat-machine would center its life around labour. After using the car in its mechanical perfection to swiftly navigate its way through the concrete bowels of the city-apparatus, the automaton then assumes its work and does it precisely, unstopping and unbothered, like cogs in a well oiled gear - optimally with as little human interaction as necessary - Le Corbusier himself once said that he preferred his pictures over conversation with other people. After the work is done, the living machine then returns to its machine for living only to wait for the process to begin anew the following day.

This is exaggerated of course, but it plays with the same images Le Corbusier and his friends loved to evoke. They were not without morals and there is no evidence that they had not the best interest of the people in mind. The group was, however, severely misguided.

Le Corbusier called for some well defined measures to improve the lives of those affected by disease and squalor or the worst. Among those discussed earlier, one of his key concepts was to bring light to the people. This was to happen by opening up the dwellings through large windows, clear lines and spacious interiors. The designs

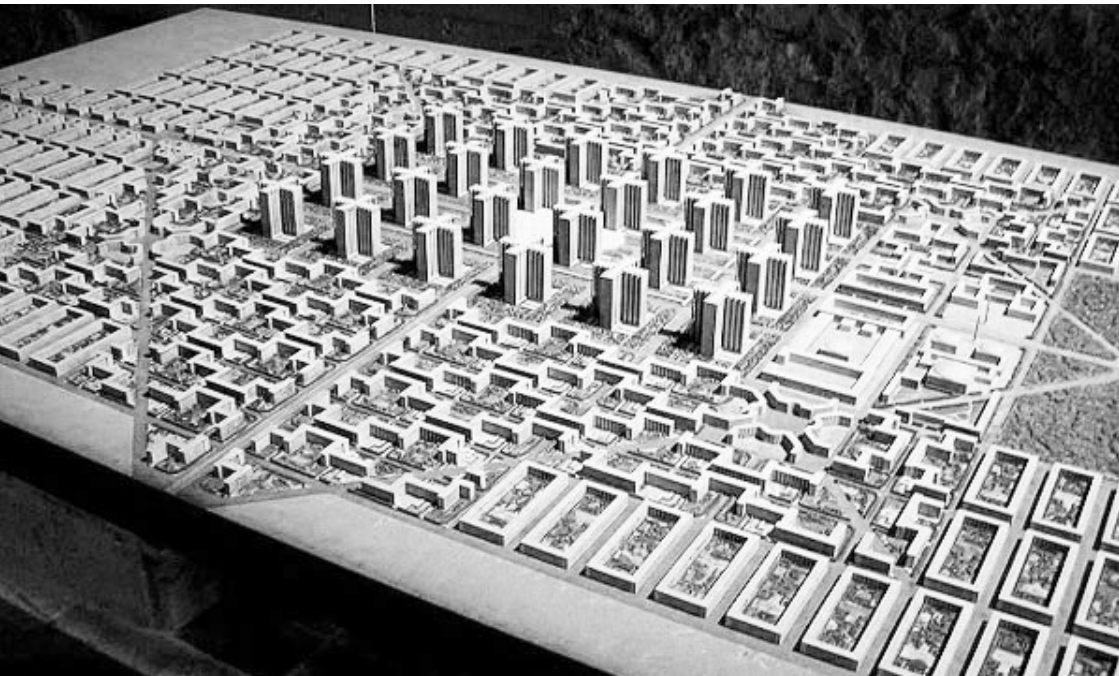
are indeed generally flooded with light and follow well designed lines. Laudated by architects around the world, such dwellings nevertheless emanate a hostile aura for all those lingering within.

Innovative progress paired with detrimental ideas are a common theme when investigating Corbusiers work, and nowhere is this more evident than in his very own Haussmann plan - or rather "Plan Voisin", named after his friend and sponsor Gabriel Voisin who made a fortune by producing the first dedicated bomber airplane, the Voisin III, which was used extensively by France and Russia during the First World War. The Plan Voisin, presented in 1925 during the Parisian International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, drew heavy influences from a school of German city planners, but even more so from Le Corbusiers own ideas. Three years earlier, he had published plans for the "Ville Contemporaine", a grand city planned for three million inhabitants. While the Ville Contemporaine was merely a vision, the implementation of the Plan Voisin should be aggressively lobbied for by Le Corbusier. The Ville Contemporaine foreshadowed a lot of the ideas the world would later see in the Plan Voisin and the Charter of Athens. The VC and PV share many similarities. So many similarities in fact, that the latter almost appears like a miniature version of the former, making the VC a subject worthy to investigate.

At the center of the Ville Contemporaine would lie a vast and unadorned train station which would be surrounded by a rectangular grid of 24 identical cruciform commercial skyscrapers edged by green spaces which in turn would be intersected by immense highways. Each of those skyscrapers would be a 60 story tall monolith standing freely by its own in a green but flat featureless environment. Those streets would be direly needed indeed, as

becomes obvious when one takes into account the obscene dimensions of the project. The central business district with its skyscrapers alone would measure 2.2km by 1.4km. Crossing this by foot would take over half an hour. 30 minutes that would take you through a monotonous and hostile landscape. Along the same ever repeating building you pass in this nightmare made manifest. You run and run and run past the cold and unchanging concrete. Desperate to make progress, desperate to get out. As you look around, you see that the streets are forsaken but for you and countless cars speeding by in anonymous efficiency. And why should there even be anyone else? You are mad. There is nothing here. And when you finally clear the hostile core of this city you are greeted by just another cold of concrete. This is the domain of the Machines for Living. Unchanging and unrelenting it spreads in every direction. A place of anonymity, for drones effortlessly shifting from their anonymous hab over their anonymous car and into their anonymous cubicle. A soulless place for soulless drones lost within and without.

Is this what you saw when you imagined your ideal city?



The Ville Contemporaine

Thankfully, the Ville Contemporaine should never be built. After all, it was merely a vision, yet it is eerily familiar. The Plan Voisin, however, was more than just a vision. At its core, it was a continuation of the Ville Contemporaine and called for the demolition of an entire quarter right of the Seine, opposite to the Notre Dame, replacing it with the same skyscrapers and dwellings like in the Ville Contemporaine just on a smaller scale. Le Corbusier sought to right some of the undesired consequences of the Haussmannian renovation of Paris which had resulted in economic segregation and forced the poor further to the outskirts of the city where they had erected shanty towns and dwelled in miserable conditions. The plan never became a reality. Other ideas, however, would.

After the dust of the second World War had settled, many of Europe's cities lay in ruins and were in dire need of rebuilding. The horrors of this conflict had left behind a profound trauma on the collective consciousness of the world. "Never again" was the defining parole of the time. Never again should so much death and misery befall mankind. Never again should such horrendous crimes be tolerated. But underneath was also the promise for something new to rise from the ashes. For new philosophies and ideas to spring up, for new technology to be created and for new political mechanisms to be put into place to make to world a more secure and peaceful place. Now that the Old was destroyed, the New had ample space to flourish in its place. In our cities, this happened quite literally. Depending on the location, the damage to the urban fabric ranged from moderate to total. Lead by an overarching desire to mark the break from past barbarisms not only in theory but also practice, an opportunity presented itself - and, in quite an ironic twist of events and in the bid

to prevent the inhumane atrocities of the very near past from ever happening again, dehumanizing architecture entered our cities on an industrial scale. Le Corbusier should finally have his triumph.

All was in place for a perfect storm. A new age met new technologies, new technologies met a new idea and a new idea met a new age. Enter the era of the automotive city, the core of our problem. This new paradigm presented a turn in both architecture and city planning, all centered around the idea of the car. The car offered the common man a degree of freedom unprecedented in human history. He could move anywhere, anytime at his own volition. It was, in a sense, the negation of the totalitarianisms of the past. This was to be combined with a new architectural standard which can be loosely summarized by the fundamental motto of “form follows function” and which was coined with the term of “Modernism”.

Unsurprisingly, modernist architecture is a continuation of the CIAM and the resulting Charter of Athens. Apart from the more strategic ideas explored earlier, on an architectonic level, it called for a severe reduction of all unneeded aspects the building. The ornaments and decoration which distinguished older styles should be - and were - completely eradicated and the building should follow straight, clear lines. Adolf Loos, One of the pioneers of Modernism even went as far as to regard ornaments a “crime” as early as 1908.

So, the new city was centered around the car, but we have to divert a bit further still - and then we will be able to finally tie everything together. Adding to the advent of the car, another key technology was needed to achieve the egalitarian dream of the modernist architect. Everyone should be able to live in cheap state-of-the-art housing.

And for that, building prices needed to go down drastically. Building is an expensive and lengthy endeavour. For a single house, one need first commission an architect, who then must present his plans to an engineer to analyze for structural feasibility. The plan will bounce back and forth a few times until all parties agree on the result. When this is done, one must perhaps raze the old structure which is to be replaced. After that, a swarm of workers and specialized artisans descent on the construction area to put together the building in painstaking handiwork. Then, when the inhabitants have moved in, the building still needs to be maintained and refurbished regularly lest it come crashing down to bury everyone within.

Costs - and time - needed to be cut. Not only to make the egalitarian vision a reality, but also because the world was faced with an unprecedented reconstruction program, seeking to reverse the destruction of the urban fabric brought upon by the war. Countless cities, grown for centuries and millennia, needed to be rebuilt in just a few short years. To resolve this problem, builders and planners opted for the industrial mass production of buildings which tackled a lot of the issues discussed above. You didn't need to design each house individually anymore. A few pre-planned blueprints would suffice to create vast quarters which could accommodate tens of thousands of people. The austere, prefabricated buildings just needed to be assembled on site and were ready to be moved into. Think of a large scale IKEA product.

The pioneering blueprint for the plenty of blueprints to come was created by none other than Le Corbusier through his "Unité d'Habitation". Drawing from his earlier works and taking inspiration from a similar building constructed in 1930 in Moscow, Corbusier realized his first true Machine for Living from 1947 to 1952 in Mar-

seille, and structures of the same name in three other French cities as well as Berlin in a ten year timeframe from 1955 onwards. The buildings themselves only vary in minor details. The Berlin Unité d'Habitation for example had greater floor heights due to local building codes. The buildings themselves are simple concrete cuboids, only broken up by the windows and balconies every flat is outfitted with. The houses are, in general, not without luxury and are still cherished by their inhabitants today, attracting a wealthy upper class of residents. The units themselves have two floors each and roof gardens freely accessible for every inhabitant. Inspired by these formidable results, architects from all over Europe - and, to a lesser extent, the world - eagerly went to work.

Unité d'Habitation Marseille



In the following years and decades, not only a few but countless of such buildings were created and built everywhere it was possible. The British Tower Block, the German Plattenbau, or the Czechoslovak Panelák are all similar interpretations of the same idea. Indeed, the countries of the Soviet Union should attain a particular notoriety for confining their population into so called “Commie Blocks” as they were coined after the collapse of the USSR. But even though cheap prefab housing is most commonly associated with the former communist bloc, Western Europe and other parts of the world built such homes on a similar scale. If you, the reader, live in a decently sized city, it is not improbable that you actually have a building similar to the Unité d’Habitation within a short driving distance.

But not just insular buildings were erected. The nations quickly began to create entire quarters. Cities within the city, or rather on the outskirts of it. Tens of thousands of people could be accommodated in these brand new dwellings who were - in the west - primarily constructed for the socioeconomically underprivileged and in the east for basically everyone. These quarters had designs right out of Corbusiers playbook with big bland monolithic buildings, plenty of green spaces and an extensive road network to ensure the individuals mobility.

There is no need to further explore the architectonic peculiarities of different modernist buildings and branched off styles since they all are mostly the same, deviating only in minor details. I would actually be surprised if you didn’t have an intuitive understanding of their properties and features.

The practice of city renovation, new production methods and the innovation of the car. Le Corbusier, the Athens



Charter and Modernist architecture. The impact of WWII. All had to come together to enable the profound changes - and thus problems - which affect our cities today.

Let us pause for a moment, since this was a lot to ingest. Most of it having been a history lesson nonetheless. But it was an important history lesson. It creates necessary context and helps you draw your own conclusions.

But, now, as I have talked much but revealed little, what exactly are these problems I have alluded to time and time again? Is it the excessive use of streets in the automotive city? Is it the bad architecture favoring efficiency over beauty? Or is it something else entirely? Well, it's a bit of everything - but it still doesn't really have anything to do with it either. Confusing, is it not? Do you know where I'm getting at?

Please recall the city you have crafted in your mind. You are richer in knowledge now. I, too, have gained knowledge from writing this - though my point still stands, maybe even firmer than before. It is interesting how wildly individual opinions and ideas can diverge, isn't it? Le Corbusiers vision of the perfect city doesn't look anything like mine. How about yours? What would we see if we compared our cities? Where would we concur - and where would we diverge? I can't tell you, but I bet there is an underlying principle almost all of us would most certainly share, and it has to do with cars and streets and architectural styles only on a secondary note.

You are human. And thus your humanity leads you to imagine a humane city. Modern cities, however, are deeply dehumanizing or even outright anti-human. *This* is the defining truth. The cities design and architecture are symptoms of this paradigm but, at the same time, also made it possible in return. It has been a reciprocally

escalated process. But no matter who, or what, threw the first stone and what factor¹ had what influence - the end result remains the same.

What does “humane” mean? Humane, in this context, is everything that puts the human first. In most of modern city design the human is only of secondary importance and nowhere is this as apparent as when going down to the street level. Streets are natural places for the community to gather and exchange, for business and commerce. Streets, in their essence, are the lifelines of a city. Or at least they should be, because for life to happen in the streets there needs to be a reason for people to actually go there. But since modern streets are designed for cars and not people, such a reason becomes harder and harder to find. Where streets have been a destination in and on itself, they have become a mere means to serve the false god of the abstract number. Walk consciously through the streets of any newly constructed quarter in your vicinity and you will find that they most likely have the singular purpose of getting the inhabitants out of their quarter as fast as humanly possible. This does not come as a surprise, as these quarters are still conceived mainly as Machines for Living with a singular use and thus the streets have a singular use - transporting people. But streets can do so much more if you see them as more than just places for cars to go over and through. Demand that the ground-floor of most buildings shall be reserved for shops and plan for ample space for street cafès. This fills the city with life. Invest heavily in and plan with local public transport in mind. This not takes away the dependence on cars without damaging personal mobility but also frees up a lot of resources and space for other uses. Build with a gentle density. You don’t generally need glamorous skyscrapers

¹ of which only the most important ones have been mentioned here

if you make best use of the space available. Pack them dense and eliminate free spaces. This depends on the location however. Build with beauty in mind. Create ornate facades, build inviting plazas, line them with trees and shrubbery. Put the human first. Let us take a look at any historic city center to get a feeling for the results.

We see streets full of life. Streets littered by stores and cafés and small parks. Streets widening and narrowing and twisting and turning in playful ways, with trees and ornaments tucked in. Places to explore, places for creativity and places to lose oneself in.

Places of spiritual power.

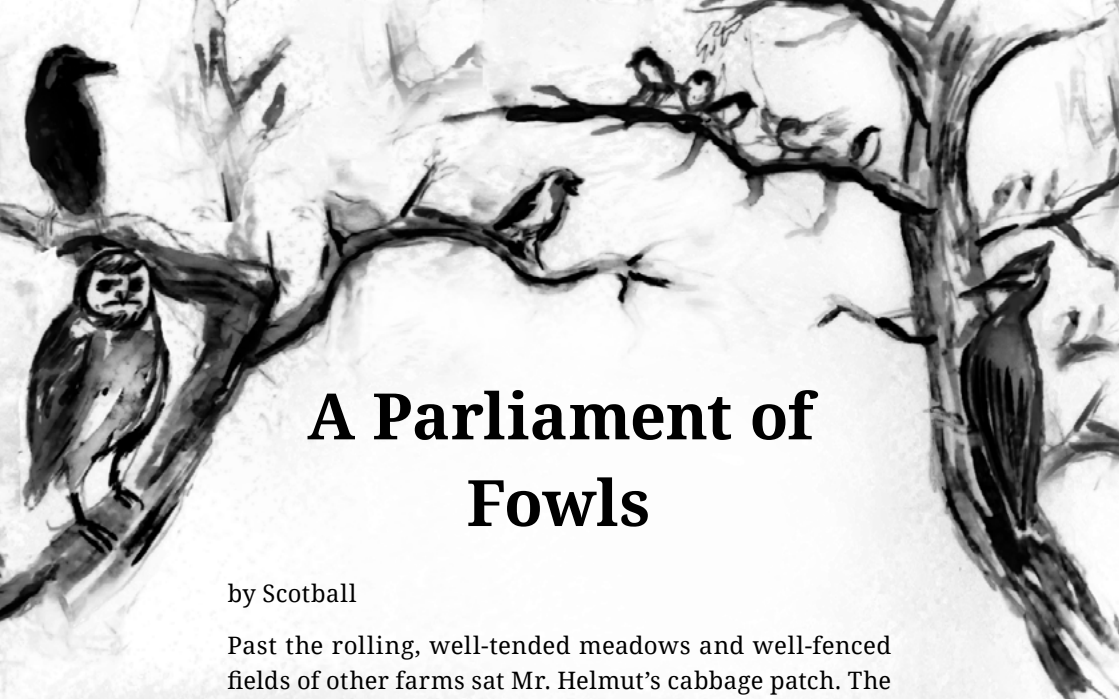
We can go back there. And all that is needed is courage. The subsequent inversion of the modernist paradigm. Because what makes a city great is not a question of deductive determination but rather of inductive intuition. It is a fleeting thing, dependent on the context of time and space. Cities are always an extension of their people and thus there is no one-size-fits-all solution. They are organic and chaotic things which can't be confined to a few straight lines on a drawing board. They are ever shifting and ever changing, innovating and inventing themselves new every day. But if some much needed changes should be brought upon, everything must first be carefully measured by how much it serves the human aspect. Measured by how much it brings different people together and how much it reverses the anonymity of the modern city. Measured by how much it makes the people feel at home not only inside their dwellings but also outside. Measured by the sense of awe it inspires in its visitors and by the pride its inhabitants feel for the privilege of living there. Measured by the cheerful sounds filling the air and by the pleasant scents floating about. Measure it by the happiness and warmth that permeates it.

Do all this and keep it close to your heart. Maybe it will be of use to you someday, maybe it won't. Maybe you will remember this when you roam through the streets next time and stop for a moment to look around and reflect on what makes this place special - or hideous.

But no matter what happens, I hope that this essay has gifted you something. May it be knowledge, amusement or maybe even a little bit of introspection. And even if there hasn't been anything, I am still thankful that you have stuck with me and made the effort to go through this article. Godspeed to you, reader.

Closing remarks: You might miss more specific measures that could be taken to return our cities to greatness. I have decided against including them not only because I am no city planner - there are people with a lot more knowledge on this topic than I - but also because I wanted to give your imagination the necessary breathing room. There are a lot of small and big measures that can be taken to make cities livable again, but they are contextual and plenty. If you want to know more about this topic, search for literature about "new urbanism" or "walkable cities". There are also some interesting Twitter accounts to give you a kickstart, like Wrath of Gnon or the phenomenal createstreets initiative. It's a proper rabbit hole, so bring some time with you.

And of course it would be wrong to put all the blame on Le Corbusier and his peers alone. He wasn't a real life comic villain - in fact he acted out of quite noble impulse. There were many other actors and factors at play, but he most certainly had the greatest influence on the developments bemoaned in this essay. For example, I left out the German Bauhaus movement, which had a profound impact on the concrete formulation of modernist architecture, but much less so on the overlying ideas.




A Parliament of Fowls

by Scotball

Past the rolling, well-tended meadows and well-fenced fields of other farms sat Mr. Helmut's cabbage patch. The Helmut family prided itself on many generations - two, in total - of growing cabbages. Whether the cabbages grew badly or not was of no concern to Mr. Helmut (who was a devoted proponent of a raw carnivore diet), merely the growing of hardy brassicas was a source of pride enough.

Consumers were certainly united in their opinion of Mr. Helmut's produce, and that was that Mr. Helmut was the finest grower of terrible cabbages that was or ever will be. Every year, without fail, Mr. Helmut surprised the world in growing a batch of cabbages that was fouler than the last attempt. While a devoted fanbase known as cabbageheads had grown around tasting Mr. Helmut's latest monstrosities - ironically, of course - this source of connoisseur funding was not enough to fund Mr. Helmut diet of steak tartare and unpasteurised milk. As a result, Mr. Helmut had turned to that saviour of bad farmers everywhere - the Common Agricultural Policy. In exchange for a lifetime supply of eggs and uncooked beef, Mr. Helmut agreed to grow trees on his small patch of land.



Just like his cabbages, Mr. Helmut's trees were just as bad. Within one year, his trees had already grown crooked, gnarly, and internally rotten. One particularly hideous arboreal nightmare had taken root right in his cabbage patch, a spruce tree that was the furthest thing from spruce a tree could be, with roots so unstable that even the lightest wind would drive it into disturbing vibrations.

It was this particularly tree that the Serene, August and Divine Parliament of Fowls had elected to hold their annual parliament, which - it now being solstice - was currently in session. The Veritable Speaker, Mr. Crow, and his deputy speaker (newly appointed after an extensive diversity review of the Parliament), Mr. Blackbird, cawed and croaked at the assembled menagerie to be silent, as the ancient traditions commenced.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK, went the Head Woodpecker against the bole of the spruce tree, the force of which temporarily dislodged the House Sparrow committee on the top branches.

„Who goest there?“ cawed Mr. Crow

„Thy King“, sang Mr. Mockingbird. The Fowls had had no king since the infamous Pear Tree massacre, when King Partridge had been shot and devoured with the rest of the aristocracy as part of the Turducken Parliament. Avians were proud republicans, but also staunch traditionalists.

„PISS OFF“ cackled Mr. Jackdaw, to the titters of the finches.

„Thy must offer thy subjects gifts for thine entrance, thou flightless chicken“ said the speaker, glaring at the jackdaw „Prithee, what hast thou then thine thy subjects brought?“

After some confusion regarding the archaic language, Mr. Mockingbird trilled „Three gifts, thy King has brought -

fermented fruit, onions, and”, with a flourish of his wing
„holly!”

The birds groaned, or at least would have if birds could
groan.

„It wasn’t holly that we asked for” sighed the Speaker.

„But Mr. Nuthatch said so!” exclaimed the mockingbird

„He has a stutter” explained the speaker

„I do-do-do do not” said the nuthatch in anger „I told hi-hi-
hi him to ge-ge-ge get us lo-lo-lo lol-”

„Enough!” cried the Speaker „Get up here Mr. Mockingbird,
we will dispense with the ancient shotgun ceremony and
get down to business”

„Ah!” trilled Mr Robin „Business! Well first order should
be why are we not in the old oak tree?!”

A chorus of hooting was only silenced by a raucous caw
from the Speaker. „As some of you may recall”, he croaked
vehemently „the last Parliament concluded by passing a
motion to condemn lumber merchants”

A furious tweeting began at the mention of the hated
merchants. „They corrupt our homes and traditions!”
screamed the albino pigeons.

„Nevertheless” demurred the Speaker,
„the resolution of condemnation, and
subsequent failed suicide dive bomb-
ing of the local merchant’s home by
Mr. Buzzard led to the merchant’s ire,
when previously he was unaware of
our existence. He subsequently felled
our hallowed oak tree.”



„Let’s condemn him again!” screamed the albino pigeons, to the great delight of the other representatives.

And so the first order of the Parliament was carried, with all votes for condemning the lumber merchant, and only the hook-billed cuckoos against. This was swiftly followed by a motion that called for Happy Holidays to be replaced by Merry Christmas, a motion passed with vigorous support from the delegation of turkeys.

More votes piled upon more votes - votes on creating an initiative to determine how avian skull size related to intelligence („an excellent bill!” said Mr Parrot, to which Mr Toucan blushed); a vote on whether admiring Mr Peacock’s plumage made one a queer sort; and a vote which condemned European birds who sought the loving embrace of migratory avians from Asia („They had to get a rook!” screamed a particularly indignant Mr Emu at some of the guilty representatives).

After the voting, came the most solemn ceremony of that grand Parliament.

„Sirrahs” said the Speaker „let us extrapolate the onions”

With great care, each bird peeled a layer of one of the onions which Mr Mockingbird had brought. With each layer, each bird expounded weightily on his greatest concern. Quite swiftly, it became clear that the most pressing issue in that most serious of discussions was the topic of the farmer’s cat, who’s predations had decimated that august assembly.

„We could put a bell on it!” said the titmice

„ebin plan :DDD” said the whooper swans

„Yes very original m8, I r8 8/8” said Mr Mockingbird

„If I may interject for a moment”, said Mr. Owl, interjecting.
„But what you are referring to as ‚cat’, is in fact, *Felus cattus*, non-native to Europe and therefore-”

„Why worry?” croaked Mr. Eagle „Maybe real worry is cat getting hungry, and we manage things better”

And so on and on it went, each bird babbling to each other endlessly. And thus the serious discussion took place.

After a vague plan on luring the cat to Switzerland for the Christmas holiday was agreed on by all, the committees were summoned to present their annual reports to the assembly. However, just as the committee on avian industrial output, presented by Mr Turkey, was about to present it’s annual findings, Mr Seagull cried allowed -

„TITS!”

And indeed, a group of tits had landed on the top most branches.

A hullabaloo of horny hate erupted from the tree. Tits! Why, they weren’t even real birds! They just ruined everything! A Swedish tern summed up the mood by rudely defecating on the poor master of ceremonies, who’s only crime was being a titmouse.

„Behold!” cried one of the tits, waving her wing to gain attention „a man! Do we not have feathers? Do we not have wings? Do we not sing? The only difference between you and I is mere sexual dimorphism and the arrangement of our cloacas!”

„It’s cloacae” said Mr Owl

„We tits can be just as irrational and hateful as any of you can be!” carried on the tit, ignoring him.

Unfortunately, the effect was ruined by one of the tits who, encouraged lustily by a pack of vultures, had puffed her plumage so hard that she had caused the venerable Head Woodpecker to peck his wood so hard that his frail little heart gave out.

In fury the tits were chased away, and after a quick eulogy for the greatest pecker of wood that assembly had ever known, the fermented fruits were broken out to toast his memory.

„Gentleman”, said the White Stork, looking up from his 8.5% alcoholic concoction of rank lingonberries „a toast - to destroying!”

All the birds agreed the day after, after much sobering up, that this year’s Parliament had been the most productive yet. So many resolutions! So many plans! So many votes! Why, certainly, nothing may have actually been done, but it felt like it, and that’s what counted. With this cheerful thought in mind, that serene, august and divine parliament of fowls dissolved, with the representatives flying off, ready for next year’s round of serious discussion.

„Well!” cawwed the speaker, who was the last to leave and was perched beside the Deputy Speaker „that went rather well I would say! Wouldn’t you agree, Mr Blackbird?”

„DAS RITE NIGG -”





Mycorrhiza

by Sloveneball

Amanita muscaria. In English, I will refer to it as the ‘toadstool’. It is probably the most iconic mushroom. At least where I live, it is the first mushroom you learn to identify as a kid. “Be careful! This one – *rdeča mušnica* – is deadly.”

Early November, I took a hike from Maribor up Pohorje, to Bolfenk. It was dreary grey weather, but still warm enough for mushrooms to grow, so I thought, maybe I get lucky and find something! Alas, it seems that locals have already picked everything before me – except for two beautiful toadstool specimens. I thought to myself: “Those are poisonous, right? But hey – I heard, they do eat them in Siberia, for their intoxicating properties. Am I brave enough to try it?” So, in a yolo moment, I decided to pick them nonetheless, and do my theoretical research in the evening.

So, let’s look at the theory. *Amanita muscaria* is a fairly common mushroom, of agaric order. It is a large and conspicuous mushroom, imposing and elegant. Young mushrooms first emerge from the soil in the shape of white eggs. Once hatched, the veil of the egg remains on top of the mushroom’s cap as white warts. The cap itself, of regular round shape and 8-20 cm when fully opened until it’s completely flat, is usually red-coloured in Eurasian specimens, but orange in North American. A part of the veil also remains as a fringe-like ring around the stipe, which is white, slightly thicker towards the base, 10-25 × 1-3 cm in dimensions in an adult specimen. Spores, 9-12 × 7-9 μm, ellipsoid, are stored in the gills, white or slightly yellowish, that are of varied size.

In Europe, the toadstool is culturally associated with gnomes. Is this connection to little people some kind of fossilised folklore awareness of its shamanic qualities, of its ability to act as a conduit to oracular powers? Perhaps. The general panic surrounding it, and how its toxicity seems to be overstated, could be a reflex of how Christianity has denounced such practices as pagan and probably satanic as well.

One usage of the mushroom that remained, however, was using it to intoxicate flies. The dried mushroom was infused in milk to lure flies that would drop dead or at least fall in coma.

East of the Baltic, the usage is more widespread. In remote parts of Lithuania, Marija Gimbutienė wrote, it was still used as an intoxicant, and Toivo Itkonen writes of its usage in shamanic rituals by the Sami (at least in Inari), by boiling them and then drinking the infusion. Some Sami, as well as other Uralic reindeer herders, would also feed the mushrooms to their reindeer, then consume their urine, as psychoactive component is filtered out by the kidneys quite fast, in order to avoid nausea from eating the mushroom itself. It begs the question; does imagery Santa (who wears clothes colours of the toadstool, red and white) and his flying reindeers come from such shamanic practices?

One can also easily find videos of toadstool being consumed by Russians (where it's called *мухомор* – *muhomor*) recreatively.

There are few reports of it being used in Central Siberia, but further east, in Kamchatka and Chukotka, it is again consumed by shamans – as boiled infusion in water. In parallel to the Sami, here the commonfolk would get their kicks drinking their urine... Koryaks have a myth,

about Kutkh – the Big Raven – having to carry a whale back home. To aid him, God – *Vahiyinin*, spits on the Earth, and from his spit mushrooms grow, that give him tremendous power required to carry the whale. It is thus seen as a divine gift to the Koryaks. Even further east, Keewaydinoquay Pakawakuk Peschel recorded traditional use of the toadstool by her people, the Ojibwe.

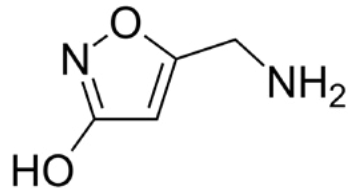


There are speculations that the toadstool could have historically been widely used by Indo-European peoples as well. Robert Gordon Wasson identifies it as the Rigvedic *सोम* – *soma* and Avestan *haoma*, an intoxicating beverage produced from an unidentifiable plant and consumed copiously by Indra and Agni, as well as by men to achieve immortality. Samuel Ödmann speculated about its use among the Norse berserkers. Robert Graves and Danny Staples both proposed that Greek, *ἀμβροσία* – *ambrosía*, could have been the same as *soma*, given its similar description as being a drink of the divines, granting immortality (its etymology is literally ‘immortality’). It was thus likely among intoxicants used by Dionysian cultists in their ecstatic orgiastic rites (besides wine, of course).

In central Japan, and some parts of Italy, however, the mushroom is prepared to be normally edible. The method involves extensive parboiling and then preserving the mushroom, in case of Japan by preserving it in salt which dries out the mushroom of all remaining juices. It is eaten as a condiment for its strong *umami* taste.

Modern pharmacology tells us that the toadstool contains several chemicals, that contribute to its intoxicating properties. Muscazone and muscarine are two compounds of minor contribution. In concentrations much higher than present in the toadstool, muscazone causes visual damage, mental confusion, and memory loss. Muscarine, initially thought to be the main intoxicating agent in the 19th century (and indeed it is in some *Clitocybe* species), is an agonist of the muscarinic acetylcholine receptors, meaning that it increases activity of the parasympathetic nervous system, similar to nicotine which binds to the other type of acetylcholine receptors – the nicotinic. But muscarine doesn't cross the blood-brain barrier, and cannot have an effect on the brain activity.

The main psychoactive substances are: ibotenic acid, chemically a non-proteinogenic amino acid, and its decarboxylated amine, muscimol. This decarboxylation takes place in the liver, but can also be induced by thermal preparation of the mushroom, or by UV irradiation.



chemical structure of muscimol

Both ibotenic acid and muscimol are rapidly excreted through the kidneys, within an hour. Ibotenic acid and muscimol are structurally equivalent to two major neurotransmitters: glutamic acid and GABA, respectively. Both act as agonist on respective sites. But most important in the psychoactive effect of the toadstool seems to be muscimol. As a potent GABA_A agonist, it acts directly on the ion channel sites that regulate Cl⁻ potential in neurons in place of GABA itself, and not merely as a regulator of activity like most other GABA_A-acting drugs: barbiturates and benzodiazepines. It should be noted that ethanol also disrupts the same Cl⁻ potential, but through altering ion

activity when present in high enough concentrations in the cytoplasm. Muscimol, however, seems to perform some additional tricks on the brain, that give it... let's say, an extra edge.

On contrary with its greenish cousin, the death cap (*Amanita phalloides*), the toadstool doesn't contain the much more poisonous α -amanitin, a slow-acting toxin that primarily attacks the liver and kidneys. Poisoning with the death cap is usually undetected the first day, but after that, diarrhea and cramps start appearing, leading to progressively worsening situation, usually destroying the liver and kidneys within a week. Perhaps the toxicity of the toadstool is overstated due to its relationship to the death cap? At least where I live, most people have told me: "you will get liver failure if you try eating the toadstool!"

Another closely related species is *Amanita caesarea* – the Caesar's mushroom. It is very similar in appearance, but with yellower stipe, and without the white white warts on its cap. The cap is usually of dark orange colour – intermediate between deep red Eurasian and yellowish-orange American specimens of the toadstool. It is a rare, but highly prized mushroom – hence its name. Does the toadstool also have a similar taste?

I have also found a medical case recorded in Slovenia, where a middle-aged man stubbornly insisted that the toadstools he picked are instead Caesar's mushrooms, and made a bet that he can eat them all in one sitting for dinner easily. Ouch. He threw up, fell in deep coma, after which he was found by his wife, shit himself, transferred into hospital, and woke up the next morning, after 10 hours of delirious dreams about his childhood. Instead of just coming to terms with his mistake, he instead went into a paranoid psychosis, insisting that people are trying

to poison him and such. After five days, he came back to his senses, and was dismissed from hospital, not having displayed any posterior problems. In fact, he mostly forgot about his experience. There is no exact data on how many mushrooms he has consumed, but it would seem that about a dozen...

Being relieved about that my mushroom, after all, was not *that* poisonous, and *practically* safe to consume, I have consulted extensive online literature on correct method of preparation. I didn't want to end up having nausea and a general bad time. As it turns out, there are two main methods of preparation: one that is primarily for the mushroom's culinary value, and one that maximises the psychoactive experience.

I wanted to try both.

The methods for preparing the toadstool culinarily seem to all point to an article written by David Arora, an accomplished mycologist. After he first published his field guide, *Mushrooms Demystified*, in which he, like most authors, characterised the toadstool as poisonous and generally unsafe for consumption, he received mail from a Californian man living in the Sierra Nevada, who inquired whether there are any long term repercussions to consuming the mushroom, as his family held a secret recipe how to consume it without experiencing nausea, hallucinations, or comatose. After some consultations and experimentation, David Arora amended his guide to list the toadstool as potentially edible, after parboiling in water. The process of boiling extracts ibotenic acid, muscimol, as well as the pigments into the infusion, and the mushroom, once rinsed, is perfectly edible. On other hand, the infusion contains the psychoactive substances, and can be drunk for said effect – as do the Sami and Koryak.



I have not followed the instructions particularly closely, but made sure to include the required steps. First I peeled the mushroom cap, for it has been suggested that it is the skin that contains most of the chemicals causing nausea. I have cut about a third of the large, open, mushroom cap and saved the rest. I sliced it into slices about 5mm thick and boiled in salt water for 30 minutes. After that, I have removed the mushrooms from the boiling pot, rinsed under cold water, and fried on butter. The mushroom was extremely tasty! It has a rich, nutty taste, similar to but richer than that of parasol mushrooms (*Macrolepiota*), its edible, common, and more prized cousin. Yes, I can see myself picking the mushroom another time, it's worth it.

After that, I have monitored my body's physiological response. I have not experienced any nausea nor intoxication in the 2 hour period after eating the mushroom, so I have proclaimed it safe, and went on to have lunch (and a glass of wine). Everything without any ill effects.

So, what to do with the rest of my mushrooms? I have consulted the extensive documentation of psychonautics conducted available on the internet. As opposed to traditional usage who generally just boiled the mushrooms and drank the infusion, most sources suggest decarboxylating first – either by sunlight or by oven-drying at 90°C for at least 30 minutes. I would think that boiling for 30 minutes would have the same effect, or would it? Any case, I have turned on the oven (there has not been one sunny day where I live for entire November), and dried the rest of the mushrooms, as instructed, similarly sliced as the part I ate earlier, then saved them for later.

After two weeks, I realised that perhaps they were not thoroughly dried and might be going bad. One slice had a little bit of mould on it. Bummer. The mushrooms didn't smell too bad though, so I decided, maybe it's nigh time that I try this. Instead of taking all the slices, I only chose about half of the slices that looked the best, disposing of any slices that looked like they're going bad. I have decided against chewing on the mushrooms and instead boiled them again, this time saving the infusion. I ate the boiled mushrooms too; they didn't seem to have rotten taste so I decided it's okay to proceed. The infusion was yellowish and cloudy. This was certainly sign that something is wrong; when I cooked the mushrooms the liquid was clear, and literature I consulted with said the liquid should be clear as well. Perhaps some kind of lactofermentation took place? Hopefully nothing poisonous was growing on my mushrooms.





The resulting tea – 500mL of it – had a quite strong, funky taste, and smelled... well, of mushrooms. It had a bit too strong taste for me to just gulp it down, and I didn't want to dose too fast, so I drank it over 90 minutes, diluted in water. I had no idea how strong effects I should expect. Literature says that there is a lot of variation between specimens, and thus it's hard to get the dosage right.

Firstly, let's say I was happy that I didn't experience any nausea. The drink was tasted weirdly, but not particularly off-putting. After about an hour, I started experiencing mild intoxication, similar to alcohol, but I would say more head-drunk than body-drunk. I also felt a tingling sensation in my hands and feet. Here I was listening to *oltreLuna* by Progenie Terrestre Pura. I felt energised and powerful. After about two hours, or half an hour after I finished the last gulp, I also noticed that youtube videos seem remarkably deep and three-dimensional, for some reason. I put on some more music (*Syntheosis* by Waste of Space Orchestra) and relaxed, the music grooved really well. I was relaxed, but also alert. After about 4 hours, the effects seemed to slowly start to wear off, and I went to bed as normally, waking up well-slept the next morning.

I was somewhat underwhelmed by the experience. I did not notice any scale-bending effects, which were commonly mentioned – of people being afraid to step into a bathtub fearing it's as deep as an ocean, or attempting

to pass through a crack in the wall. I also did not experience any hallucinations of any kind, not even closed-eye visuals. But the intoxication was cool, perhaps more so than the numbing effects of alcohol, though without the cheerful mood effect of it. Personally, I would not dare consume the toadstool along with alcohol, as both disrupt the same GABA_A-receptor ion channels in neurons – the sedating synergy might be too strong here. Overall, I have convinced myself that this mushroom is indeed safe for consumption, and am looking forward to experimenting a bit more the next year. And next time, I will dare for a larger dose.

And just a cautious note for the end: eat mushrooms responsibly.





Desert agriculture

by Proxyball

How to install greenhouses in the desert using the sun and saltwater?

First, we'll utilize solar power to desalinate – the saltwater will evaporate, the gas rises leaving the salt below. Then the gaseous water can be taken into another container. That's the simplest DIY solution.

Photovoltaic can be used to create pressure which will cause a reverse osmosis, a better, more efficient method for desalination.

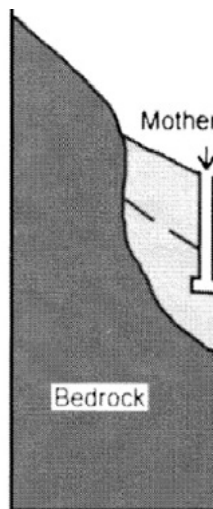
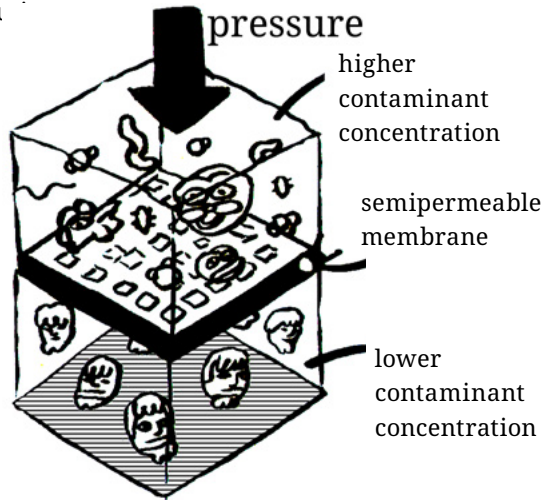
Two solutions are separated by a membrane which allows only solvents pass through and bars the solute salts. In a regular osmosis process, the solvent moves from an area of low concentration through a membrane to an area of high concentration.

Applying external pressure will reverse the flow and we'll have reverse osmosis, i.e. desalinated water.

Second, we'll want to cool our greenhouse to the optimal temperature in which the crops grow. Cooling the greenhouse can be done with solar powered fans or with saltwater.

A Bedouin (adapted from ancient Egyptian / Persian) technique is to hang carpets soaked with water in the tents. The wind will evaporate the water, the water will absorb heat from the air and the air will cool.

This can be done to the greenhouse with pipes along it and "blankets" that'll be soaked.



Pipes will also be put in the ceiling to heat water during the day and used at night, when temperatures may drop too low for certain crops.

The crops in the greenhouse will plough carbon from the atmosphere into the soil (greta).

Left-over water can be used to nourish plants outside the greenhouses and improve the desert soil when (if) decomposed, which will increase the soil's water-capacity and add nutrients to it.

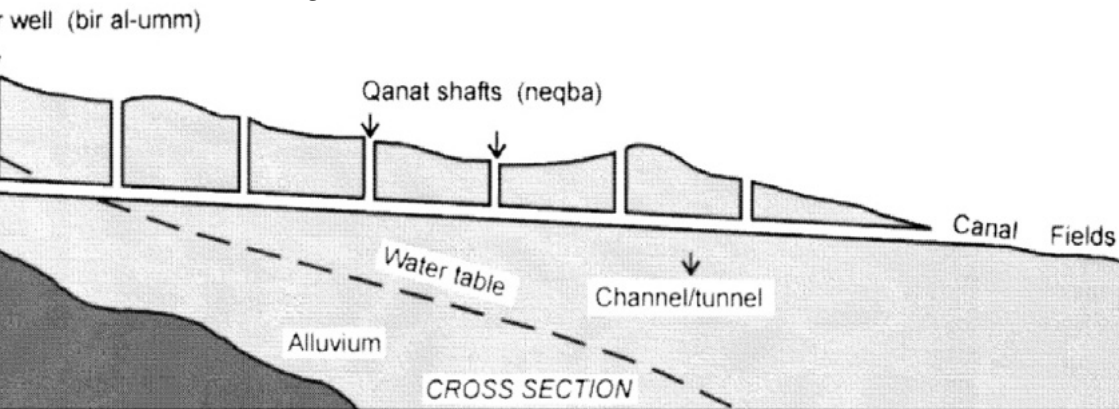
Of course, pipelines will be needed for such greenhouses. Flowing water from the sea to them.

Bonus: aquaculture in the desert. To create lasting fish ponds we'll use:

Large recirculating systems, in which water from outdoor fish ponds, raceways and tanks is passed into sediment ponds to remove the solids. The water is then passed to an adjacent reservoir, and quality water is then returned from the reservoir to the fish rearing systems.

Highly intensive recirculating systems that incorporate water filtration systems, such as drum filters, biological filters, protein skimmers and oxygen injection systems. These systems are usually compact, take up a relatively small area and are extremely efficient.

Greenhouse technology - adopted from desert agriculture and includes environmental control (humidity, temperature, light and radiation).



pottery corner

I sought a God

I sought a god.
I asked almighty.
Were thee my lord,
Where be thine lands?
The god was mute,
The people bustling.
Can they hear?
Are they fantasizing?
I queried this,
And sought a priest.
He spoke of faith,
His blinker, his mist.
I spoke my words,
I swayed the youth.
Now in the dungeon,
An oubliette of truth.
Pondering why
A god I sought.
What has it brought?
Woe, misery and rot.









Gaze Satan

Satan, a serpent,
He whispers, he tempts.
Satan, a foe,
In every path he waits.
Satan watches thee,
He is eager to collect,
Send him souls aplenty,
But do not fall to his net.
Never lay off guard,
Stand proud! Stand bold!
He wears skin like a cloth,
Many forms does Satan hold.
Daemons, fiends, and more to come,
Are Satan's servile slaves,
In this fortress they do hide,
In the flesh of mortal knaves.
This shape of man,
Is yours to slain,
For he knows not God!
Now this heap, that looked like man,
Signals: behold!
Cleanse the taint, root out the sins,
Sanctify the earth.
We'll build a temple, in God's name,
And restore faith to this land.
His legions are asprawl,
Satan yet saw vanquish.
On all the countries and all the seas,
They bring terror, pain and anguish.
When a legion you shall meet,
So fierce, so mighty, and so great
A legion you cannot defeat,
As fleeing in a haste,
Satan you will gaze.

Et faig un bump perquè em dona la gana.
La veritat, no sé perquè no estic a Drassanes.
Potser per calers que me'n falten,
O per ser un Bernd de kohlchan.

Et diré una història, però:
L'altre dia un tio em va dir que,
per llei, sense perpellejar,
tothom en català sa nom deuria d'anar.

I jo li responc, sense dir quelcom,
Que aquí i a la Xina,
El meu nom no es catalanitza.

I aquí hi sóc, una ceba,
Anònim sense torró,
Fent-te un poema
Per l'oblit, on tot queda.



I make a bump because I want
Frankly, I don't know why I'm not in Drassanes
Maybe because money I lack
Or because I'm a Bernd of kohlchan

I will tell you a story, tho:
The other day a dude told me that,
by law, without blinking,
everyone's name should be in catalonian

And I said, without saying anything else,
That here and on China
my name is not catalanised

And here I am, an onion,
anonymous without torro
making you a poem
for the forgetting, where everything remains



The fly sits on my fly swat

The fly sits on my fly swat. Never moving, barely thinking, lost, in a world of its own. What does it see? Does it see the patterned cobwebs on the wall? The broken iron? The rusty screw that juts out at just the angle needed to hang a frypan?

The fly awakens! Small movements it makes; not too large, housekeeping really, just the bare minimum needed to maintain its life within this hostile enclosure.

Is it aware of death? Can it behold the squashed and mangled end that awaits it?

Wherefore dost thou insect light so carelessly on THIS – the instrument of thy death!

He is walking now. His arousal is apparent. A comrade joins him! Enheartened by this strengthening of his powers.

He takes flight! The other pursues! Or who doth pursue whom? Alas, I have not the experiment to discern it.

And he grows reckless now. Crawling on my skin; tasting of my kneecap. His cares are vanquished.

He rubs his hands with glee. His real legs also. He is nearly facing me, a human laden imperceptibly with sweat, but, to him, a treat of the rarest kind.

From whence does he come? Has it seen the glory of our cities and the splendour of our temples?

They are gathering now. An army approaches. They are bold; fearless. A gamble, really. As is each moment in our lives. For what sustains us must be near to what defeats us. We all follow an interlocking script. It is written, in our books and in our genes, the energy that surrounds us visible to any who would see.

Can he ever know?

The fly sits on my flyswat.

The end.



FAQ

How can I contribute?

You can write an article, a poem, make pictures or submit something else creative.

Where can I submit something?

Current thread, email or discord.

When is the next deadline?

Generally every two-three weeks, depending on the amount of content. For exact dates see the thread or contact us

Do I choose the pictures for my articles?

You can choose/make them yourself if you wish to, otherwise someone else can decide for you.

Is there a length limit?

Generally we try to keep articles between 700-3.000 words. If necessary or justified by interesting form or content, exceptions are possible.

What topics are suitable?

Alle, since any topic is KC-tier with the right approach.

How do I know if my text is good enough?

As a rough measure see the already existing texts.

Some are for assburgers, other are less serious.

What needs to be present is at least an attempt to bring some structure into your text.

We are not grammar nazis, runglisch, weird stylistic choices and grammar abuse are fine, as long as you reread your text and try to be understandable.

Contact

kohlzine@tfwno.gf

discord.gg/juAshwD