

VISIONS



THOMAS DE QUINCEY:

"From kindred feelings, I soon brought Egypt and all her gods under the same law. I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by parakeets, by cockatoos. I ran into pagodas, and was fixed for centuries at the summit or in secret rooms: I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed. I fled from the wrath of Brahma through all the forests of Asia: Vishnu hated me: Shiva laid wait for me. I came suddenly upon Isis and Osiris: I had done a deed, they said, which the ibis and the crocodile trembled at. I was buried for a thousand years in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed, with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles; and laid, confounded with all unutterable slimy things, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud." ¹



ILLUMINATIONS BY RIMBAUD -

"The *Illuminations* are an attempt to blow up all appearances, all orders, all forms of the world, which make our happiness. They are an attempt to blow up all happiness and make a work of pure unhappiness out of the debris and fragments of the explosion. But how strange! These fragments are not pieces of dirt and ugliness. They are not disgusting like pieces of blown-up body. They have a strange, fascinating beauty. They are like precious stones and broken tender whispers . . . This heap of fragments from all possible orders, which should reveal to us what lies beyond all orders of the world, beyond all happiness, rises before us like a glorious rainbow speaking to us of the sweetness of pleasure . . . How they shine, how they sparkle before us, all these diamonds and this foam, these drops of sweat and these eyes, these rays and their floating hair, these flames and this herbage of steel and emerald, these white, burning tears and these ringing, flashing dream flowers, these swarms of gold leaves, these balls of sapphire and these angels of the *Illuminations*! ²



¹ Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, Being an Extract from the Life of a Scholar*. Transcribed from the 1886 George Routledge and Sons edition – first edition (*From the "London Magazine" for September 1821.*)

² From an essay on Rimbaud's *Illuminations* by the Greek poet Demetrios Capetanakis, in: John Lehmann, *Three Literary Friendships*, Quartet Books, London, 1983, p. 93.



Sand dune (1983), Francis Bacon

“There was music, real or imaginary, I can’t say, and then we were floating up towards the dome which gradually dissolved into a myriad flying molecules and reformed into layer upon layer of moving patterns vaguely reminiscent of Chinese Chippendale. As our journey continued through the night sky and layer upon angled layer of these elegant shapes, I had the sensation of passing through a new dimension into a hot and trackless desert where a whirling cloud of dust snaked over the sand dunes from horizon to horizon. And as we got closer I was able to see through the rising dust the form of a great serpent with no head and no tail - it was endless. And as we got closer still. I was able to see through the skin to its skeleton, moving slowly, rhythmically forward. And as we got even closer, I was able to see that each of its countless vertebrae was the naked soul of every man, woman and child that had ever walked the face of the earth. And as they stamped their rhythmic dance of eternal life, every face was lit up with joy and the chant that arose from their throats was an ode to joy. . And I knew that this dance of the great snake which encompassed the face of the earth was going on around us, every moment of every day, and that we were rubbing shoulders with the souls of the living dead and were totally unaware of it, just as we were unaware that this great collective soul was protecting us, sustaining us and blessing us until the moment of our death, when we would become part of it ourselves. It was a revelation. I was in ecstasy and I wanted it to last forever but already the cloud of dust stirred up by the stamping feet was getting thicker, obscuring my vision, and filling me with a great sense of loss.”

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³ Ken Russell, *A British Picture. An Autobiography*, Mandarin Paperbacks, London, 1990, pp. 205 - 206



And this I dreamt, and this I dream

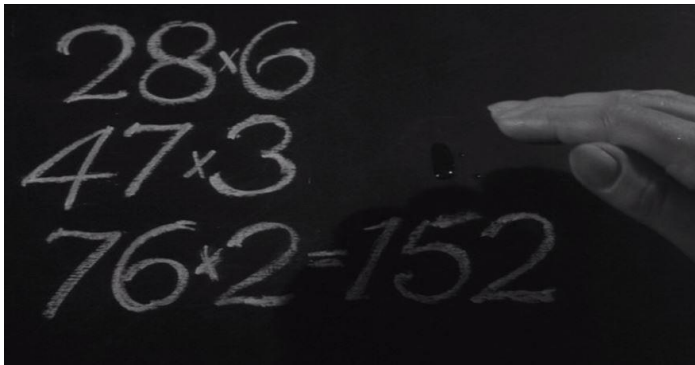
And this I dreamt, and this I dream,
And some time this I will dream again,
And all will be repeated, all be re-embodied,
You will dream everything I have seen in
dream.

To one side from ourselves, to one side from
the world
Wave follows wave to break on the shore,
On each wave is a star, a person, a bird,
Dreams, reality, death - on wave after wave.

No need for a date: I was, I am, and I will be,
Life is a wonder of wonders, and to wonder
I dedicate myself, on my knees, like an
orphan,
Alone - among mirrors - fenced in by
reflections:
Cities and seas, iridescent, intensified.
A mother in tears takes a child on her lap.

Arseny Tarkovsky [1907-1989]

STAINS FROM THE OTHERWORLD



Miss Giddens (Deborah Kerr) enters the schoolroom and finds the ghost of Miss Jessel, the previous governess, sitting weeping at her desk. The apparition disappears, but when Miss Giddens approaches the desk - she finds a teardrop on its surface [image at left].

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Innocents_\(1961_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Innocents_(1961_film))

The Innocents is a 1961 British supernatural gothic horror film directed by Jack Clayton, and starring Deborah Kerr, Michael Redgrave Based on the novella *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James.

Mirror is a 1975 Russian art film directed by Andrei Tarkovsky. [@WIKIPEDIA](#)

In the one next scene, set in Alexei's apartment, the boy Alexei, or Alyosha meets with a strange woman sitting at a table. At her request, Alexei, reads a passage from a letter by Pushkin and receives a telephone call from his father Alexei. The strange woman vanishes mysteriously. She is a ghost. But she also had a cup of tea on the table in front of her. When the boy approaches the table he sees a circle of steam where the cup had been standing, which evaporates before his eye. [image on right].



Don't come to me with the entire truth.
Don't bring the ocean if I feel thirsty
nor heaven if I ask for light;
But bring a hint, some dew, a particle,
as birds carry only drops away from
water,
and the wind a grain of salt.

Olav H. Hauge (translation Robert Bly)

[Birds](#), M. C. Escher, 1926

Alfred Kubin:

“Then I witnessed an incredible drama. A horrifying animation took possession of the face, the expressions, like the colours of a chameleon, changing unceasingly, a thousand, no, a hundred thousand, times. Like lightening that countenance became successively a young man, a woman, a child, an old man. It grew fat and then emaciated, developed wattles like a turkey, shrank together to diminutive proportions. In the next instance it was inflated with pride, it stretched, extended itself, expressed contempt, kindness, malice, hatred, developed furrows, then became smooth as stone – a terrifying mystery of nature. I was unable to turn away: a magic power held me as though rooted, and I shook with dread.

Then animal faces appeared: the head of a lion, which grew pointed and sly like a jackal; it changed into a wild stallion with flaring nostrils, became birdlike; then reptilian. It was ghastly; I wanted to cry out and could not. I had to watch these terrible grimaces, hate-filled, yet tinged with a base buffoonery.

And finally – peace returned. Like retreating heat lightning, occasional spasms crossed his face, the fading masks disappeared, and once more the man Patera was sleeping there before me. Only his curved lips trembled feverishly.”⁴

Jean Houston, *The Possible Human: A Course in Enhancing your Physical, Mental, and Creative Abilities*, J.P. Tarcher: Los Angeles 1982, 182, 186-187.

Almost everyone wakes up at least once in a lifetime, and almost everyone goes promptly back to sleep again. But through the drowse of the rest of their days they still faintly remember that time of awakening.

⁴ Alfred Kubin, *The Other Side*, [1909] Penguin, London, 1973, p.106

I am going to tell you about the time I woke up. I will tell you this because what happened to me then influenced my whole life and does much to explain why I propose this particular natural philosophy.

[followed by memories of her childhood experiences with Catholic nuns, and the visit with her father to the movie *The Song of Bernadette*, after which she unsuccessfully tries to have a vision of the Virgin Mary too]

Finally, I gave up, resigned to the fact that my efforts to lure heaven had failed.

I gave up the ghost to the dogs, as it were.

Spent and unthinking, I sat down by the windowsill and looked out at the fig tree in the backyard. Sitting there drowsy and unfocused, I must in my innocence have done something right, for suddenly the key turned and the door to the universe opened. I didn't see or hear anything unusual. There were no visions, no bursts of light. The world remained the same. And yet everything around me, including myself, moved into meaning. Everything – the fig tree in the yard, the dogs in the closet, the wall safe, the airplane in the sky, the sky itself, and even my idea of the Virgin Mary – became part of a single Unity, a glorious symphonic resonance in which every part of the universe was a part of and illuminated every other part, and I knew that in some way it all worked together and was very, very good.

My mind dropped all shutters. I was no longer just the little local "I", Jean Houston, age six, sitting on a windowsill in Brooklyn in the 1940s. I had awakened to a consciousness that spanned centuries and was on intimate terms with the universe. Everything mattered. Nothing was alien or irrelevant or distant. The farthest star was right next door and the deepest mystery was clearly seen. It seemed to me as if I knew everything. Everything – the fig tree, the pups in the closet, the planets, Joey Mangiabella's ribs, the mind of God, Linda Darnell, the chipped paint on the ceiling, the Virgin Mary, my Mary Jane shoes, galaxies, pencil stubs, the Amazon rain forest, my Dick and Jane reader, and all the music that ever was – were in a state of resonance and of the most immense and ecstatic kinship. I was in a universe of friendship and fellow feeling, a companionable universe filled with interwoven Presence and the Dance of Life.

Somewhere downstairs my father laughed and instantly the whole universe joined in. Great roars of hilarity sounded from sun to sun. Field mice tittered and so did the gods and so did the rainbows. Laughter leavened every atom and every star until I saw a universe spiraled by joy, not unlike the one described by Dante in his great vision of the Paradiso ... *d'el riso del universe* (the joy that spins the universe).

Childhood kept these memories fresh. Adolescence electrified them and gave them passion, while first maturity dulled and even occasionally lost them. But even so, my life, both personal and professional, had been imbued ever since with the search for the unshuttered mind, the evocation and application of this mind in daily life and experience, and the conviction that human beings have within them the birthright of capacities for knowing and participating in a much larger and deeper Reality.

BACK TO BACK

Hermann Hesse: .

I hastened to the section *Chattorum res gestæ*, looked for my sub-division and number and stood in front of the part marked with my name This was a niche, and when I drew the thin curtains aside I saw that it contained nothing written. It contained nothing but a figure, an old and worn-looking model made from wood or wax, in pale colours. It appeared to be a kind of deity or barbaric idol. At first glance it was entirely incomprehensible to me. It was a figure that really consisted of two; it had a common back. I stared at it for a while, disappointed and

surprised. Then I noticed a candle in a metal candlestick fixed to the wall of the niche. A match-box lay there. I lit the candle and the strange double figure was now brightly illuminated.

Only slowly did it dawn upon me. Only slowly and gradually did I begin to suspect and then perceive what it was intended to represent. It represented a figure which was myself, and this likeness of myself was unpleasantly weak and half-real, it had blurred features, and in its whole expression there was something unstable, weak, dying or wishing to die, and looked rather like a piece of sculpture which could be called 'Transitoriness' or 'Decay,' or something similar. On the other hand, the other figure which was joined to mine to make one, was strong in colour and form, and just as I began to realise whom it resembled, namely, the servant and President Leo, I discovered a second candle in the wall and lit this also. I now saw the double figure representing Leo and myself, not only becoming clearer and each image more alike, but I also saw that the surface of the figures was transparent and that one could look inside as one can look through the glass of a bottle or vase. Inside the figures I saw something moving, slowly, extremely slowly, in the same way that a snake moves which has fallen asleep. Something was taking place there, something like a very slow, smooth but continuous flowing or melting; indeed, something melted or poured across from my image to that of Leo's. I perceived that my image was in the process of adding to and flowing into Leo's, nourishing and strengthening it. It seemed that in time all the substance from one image would flow into the other and only one would remain: Leo. He must grow, I must disappear.

As I stood there and looked and tried to understand what I saw, I recalled a short conversation that I had once had with Leo during the festive days at Bremgarten. We had talked about the creations of poetry being more vivid and real than the poets themselves.

The candles burned low and went out. I was overcome by an infinite weariness and desire to sleep, and I turned, away to find a place where I could lie down and sleep." ⁵

While Harold was diplomatic in Tehran, Persia. In 1926, they were treated to a viewing of the imperial treasure of Persia:

"I am blind. Blinded by diamonds. I have been in Aladdin's cave. Sacks of emeralds were emptied out before our eyes. Sacks of pearls. Literally. We came away shaking the pearls out of our shoes. Ropes of uncut emeralds. Scabbards encrusted with precious stones. Great hieratic crowns. All this in a squalid room, with grubby Persians drinking little cups of tea. . . It was simply the Arabian nights, with décor by the Sitwells. Pure fantasy." ⁶

⁵ Hermann Hesse, *The Journey to the East*, pp.107 – 108.

⁶ Victoria Glendinning, *Vita: The Life of V. Sackville-West*, 1983, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, P. 158



C. G. Jung:

“The spirit of the depths opened my eyes and I caught a glimpse of the inner things, the world of my soul, the many-formed and changing.... I stand in black dirt up to my ankles in a dark cave. Shadows sweep over me. I am seized by fear, but I know I must go in. I crawl through a narrow crack in the rock and reach an inner cave whose bottom is covered with black water. But beyond this I catch a glimpse of a luminous red stone which I must reach. I wade through the muddy water. The cave is full of the frightful noise of shrieking voices. I take the stone, it covers a dark opening in the rock. I hold the stone in my hand, peering around inquiringly. I do not want to listen to the voices, they keep me away. But I want to know. Here something wants to be uttered. I place my ear to the opening. I hear the flow of underground waters. I see the bloody head of a man on the dark stream. Someone wounded, someone slain floats there. I take in this image for a long time, shuddering. I see a large black scarab floating past on the dark stream. In the deepest reach of the stream shines a red sun, radiating through the dark water. There I see – and a terror seizes me – small serpents on the dark rock walls, striving toward striving toward the depths, where the sun shines. A thousand serpents crowd around, veiling the sun. Deep night falls. A red stream of blood, thick red blood springs up, surging for a long time, then ebbing. I am seized by fear. What did I see?”⁷

Hugh Walpole:

“Everyone was there. Under the Gallery, surveying the world like Boadicea her faithful Britons, was Lady St. Leath, her white hair piled high above her pink baby face, that had the inquiring haughty expression of a cockatoo wondering whether it is being offered a lump of sugar or an insult.”⁸

⁷ 12 December 1913 Liber Novus p. 237 ii.

⁸ Hugh Walpole, *The Cathedral*, 1948, p.316. .

Graham Greene:

“A tender light flooded the compartments. It would have been possible for a moment to believe that the sun was the expression of something that loved and suffered for men. Human beings floated like fish in golden water, free from the urge of gravity, flying without wings, transparent, in a glass aquarium. Ugly faces and misshapen bodies were transmuted, if not into beauty, at least into grotesque forms fashioned by a mocking affection. On that golden tide they rose and fell, murmured and dreamed. They were not imprisoned, for they were not during the hour of dawn aware of their imprisonment.”⁹

Count Olaf: [disguised as Sailor Sham, a peg-legged sailor] “Sure, I get the good parking spots, but who could love a man with one leg and a face like a hen's arse?”¹⁰

G.K. Chesterton:

“Pierrots turned up their pale moon faces, like the white bellies of dead fish, without improving his spirits; . . .”¹¹

“...my feeling were like those of a Turkish woman in a bag about to be thrown into the Bosphorus.”¹²

MARGARET ATWOOD

Blood and Roses was a trading game, along the lines of Monopoly. The Blood side played with human atrocities for the counters, atrocities on a large scale: individual rapes and murders didn't count, there had to have been a large number of people wiped out. Massacres, genocides, that sort of thing. The Roses side played with human achievements. Artworks, scientific breakthroughs, stellar works of architecture, helpful inventions. Monuments to the soul's magnificence, they were called in the game. There were sidebar buttons, so that if you didn't know what Crime and Punishment was, or the Theory of Relativity, or the Trail of Tears, or Madame Bovary, or the Hundred Years' War, or The Flight into Egypt, you could double-click and get an illustrated rundown, in two choices: R for children, PON for Profanity; Obscenity, and Nudity.



Max Ernst, *L'Ange du Foyer*, (1937)

⁹ Graham Greene, *Stamboul Train*, 1932.

¹⁰ From *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* (2004)

¹¹ G.K. Chesterton, *The Pursuit of Mr. Blue*.

¹² Philip Glazebrook, *Journey to Kars*, Viking, London, 1984.

That was the thing about history, said Crake: it had lots of all three.

You rolled the virtual dice and either a Rose or a Blood item would pop up. If it was a Blood item, the Rose player had a chance to stop the atrocity from happening, but he had to put up a Rose item in exchange. The atrocity would then vanish from history, or at least the history recorded on the screen. The Blood player could acquire a Rose item, but only by handing over an atrocity, thus leaving himself with less ammunition and the Rose player with more. If he was a skilful player he could attack the Rose side by means of the atrocities in his possession, loot the human achievement, and transfer it to his side of the board. The player who managed to retain the most human achievements by Time's Up was the winner. With points off, naturally, for achievements destroyed through his own error and folly and cretinous play.

The exchange rates - one Mona Lisa equalled Bergen - Belsen, one Armenian genocide equalled the Ninth Symphony plus three Great Pyramids - were suggested, but there was room for haggling. To do this you needed to know the numbers - the total number of corpses for the atrocities, the latest open-market price for the artworks; or, if the artworks had been stolen, the amount paid out by the insurance policy. It was a wicked game. "Homer," says Snowman, making his way through the dripping wet vegetation. "The Divine Comedy. Greek statuary. Aqueducts. Paradise Lost. Mozart's music. Shakespeare, complete works. The Brontës. Tolstoy. The Pearl Mosque. Chartres Cathedral. Bach. Rembrandt. Verdi. Joyce. Penicillin. Keats. Turner. Heart transplants. Polio vaccine. Berlioz. Baudelaire. Bartok. Yeats. Woolf." There must have been more. There were more.

The sack of Troy, says a voice in his ear. The destruction of Carthage. The Vikings. The Crusades. Ghenghis Khan. Attila the Hun. The massacre of the Cathars. The witch burnings. The destruction of the Aztec. Ditto the Maya. Ditto the Inca. The Inquisition. Vlad the Impaler. The massacre of the Huguenots. Cromwell in Ireland. The French Revolution. The Napoleonic Wars. The Irish Famine. Slavery in the American South. King



Leopold in the Congo. The Russian Revolution. Stalin. Hitler. Hiroshima. Mao. Pol Pot. Idi Amin. Sri Lanka. East Timor. Saddam Hussein.

That was the trouble with Blood and Roses: it was easier to remember the Blood stuff. The other trouble was that the Blood player usually won, but winning meant you inherited a wasteland. This was the point of the game, said Crake, when Jimmy complained. Jimmy said if that was the point, it was pretty pointless. He didn't want to tell Crake that he was having some severe nightmares: the one where the Parthenon was decorated with cut-off heads was, for some reason, the worst. ¹³



“In his final work, *The Visible and the Invisible* (a work interrupted by his sudden death in 1961), Merleau-Ponty was striving for a new way of speaking that would express this consanguinity of the human animal and the world it inhabits. Here he writes less about "the body" (which in his earlier work had signified primarily the *human* body) and begins to write instead of the collective "Flesh," which signifies both our flesh and "the flesh of the world." By "the Flesh" Merleau-Ponty means to indicate an elemental power that has had no name in the entire history of Western philosophy. The Flesh is the mysterious tissue or matrix that underlies and gives rise to both the perceiver and the perceived as interdependent aspects of its own spontaneous activity.” ¹⁴



Alina Szapocznikow

¹³ Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 2003, pp. 78 – 80

¹⁴ David Abram, *The Spell of The Sensuous*, Vintage Books, New York, 1997, p.66.

Ramon Mata Torres describing his peyote experience:

"[I see] a marvellous world of color, in which everything changes into a fountain of forms and colors. ... The colors are alive and breathing, like the stained glass windows of Gothic cathedrals. ... The conviction grows that all the colors can combine themselves, that no color excludes another. All can mix together without appearing ugly. But the way the color gradually shades is important, even decisive. Greens with violet, magentas with greens, dark blues with greens, yellows with lime green, reds with blues or oranges, which move from the softest to the strongest shades there are in front of me shapes of rhomboids, squares, stars, triangles It is a world of architectural shapes which seems more logical than the world we usually see, and more geometric than the world we know." ¹⁵



Ivan Turgenev describing the Princess Kubensky, from his novel, *A House of Gentlefolk*:

"Soon afterwards, covered with rouge, and redolent of perfume à la Richelieu, surrounded by negro boys, delicate-shaped greyhounds and shrieking parrots, she died on a crooked silken divan of the time of Louis XV, with an enameled snuff-box of Petitot's workmanship in her hand - "



"The casket contains the things that are unforgettable, unforgettable for us, but also unforgettable for those to whom we are going to give our treasures. Here the past, the present & a future are condensed."

Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*



¹⁵ From: Hope MacLean, Sacred Colors and Shamanic Vision among the Huichol Indians of Mexico, *Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (Autumn, 2001), pp. 305-323

Anselm Kiefer: *Zweistromland/The High Priestess*, 1986-89. Two steel bookcases filled with gigantic lead books

“The great wall of vegetation, a exuberant and entangled mass of trunks, branches, leaves, boughs, festoons, motionless in the moonlight, was like a rioting invasion of soundless life, a rolling wave of plants, piled up, crested, ready to topple over the creek, to sweep every little man of us out of his little existence. And it moved not. A deadened burst of mighty splashes and snorts reached us from afar, as though an ichthyosaurus had been taking a bath of glitter in the great river.”

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*.



Above: Kenny Scharf, *Juicy Jungle*.



ROOMS



"You do not need to do anything; you do not need to leave your room. Remain sitting at your table and listen. You do not even need to listen; just wait. You do not even need to wait; just become still, quiet and solitary and the world will freely offer itself to you to be unmasked. It has no choice. It will roll in ecstasy at your feet."

Franz Kafka ¹⁶

HERAT:

"The *Parq Otel* was terribly sad. In the spacious modernistic entrance hall, built in the thirties and designed to house a worldly, chattering throng, there was no one. Against the walls sofas of chromium tubing, upholstered in sultry red uncut moquette, alternated with rigid-looking chairs, enough for an influx of guests, who after thirty years had still not arrived. On the untenanted reception desk a telephone that never rang stood next to a letter rack with no letters in it. A large glass showcase contained half a dozen sticky little pools that had once been sweets, some dead flies and a coat hanger." ¹⁷

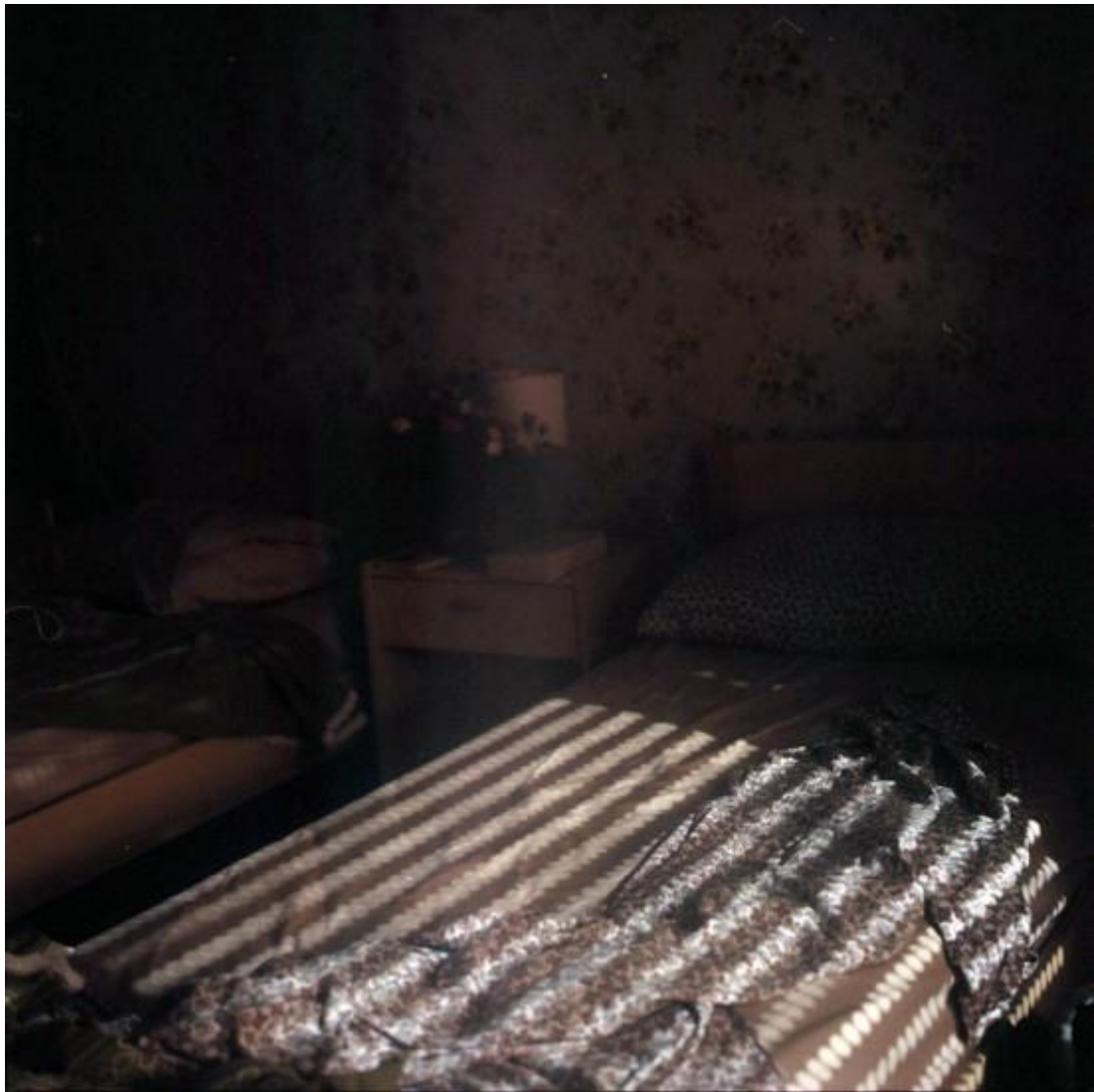
Robert Jay Lifton:

"... a room that was kept locked at other times and whose windows had been painted white. To the left of the door stood a small table; on it were a set of injection needles and syringes; next to these, a bottle with a yellowish-pink liquid – phenol. There were also two stools in the room [and] on the wall [was] a hook on which hung a rubber apron." ¹⁸

¹⁶ Hikikomori – who have withdrawn from society retreating to their rooms for months or years and severing almost all ties to the outside world. Saito Tamaki has written a study on the subject published by The University of Minnesota Press, 2013. my mother, my own retreat from the world –

¹⁷ Eric Newby, *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush*, Picador, London, 1981, p.69.

¹⁸ Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors. Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, Macmillan, London, 1986.



Somerset Maugham:

“I was ushered into a living-room that served also as a dining-room, for at one end of it was a square table of heavily carved oak, a dresser, and four chairs of the kind that the manufacturers in Grand Rapids would certainly describe as Jacobean. But the other end was furnished with a Louis XV suite, gilt and upholstered in pale blue damask; there were a great many small tables, richly carved and gilt, on which stood Sevres vases with ormolu decorations and nude bronze ladies with draperies flowing as though in a howling gale that artfully concealed those parts of their bodies that decency required; and each one held at the end of a playfully outstretched arm an electric lamp.”¹⁹

Nancy Mitford:

“Now that she was alone in it she began to be aware of the extreme beauty of the room, a grave and solemn beauty which penetrated her. It was very high, rectangular in shape, with grey *boiseries* and cherry-coloured brocade curtains. It looked into a courtyard and never could get

¹⁹ Somerset Maugham, *Cakes and Ale or The Skeleton in the Cupboard*, 1930.

a ray of sunshine, that was not the plan. This was a civilized interior, it had nothing to do with out-of-doors. Every object in it was perfect. The furniture had the severe lines and excellent proportions of 1780, there was a portrait by Lancret of a lady with a parrot on her wrist, a bust of the same lady by Bouchardon, a carpet like the one in Linda's flat, but larger and grander, with a huge coat of arms in the middle. A high carved bookcase contained nothing but French classics bound in contemporary morocco, with the Sauveterre crest, and open on a map table lay a copy of Redoute's roses." ²⁰

Arundhati Roy:

"The room showed signs of celebration. The balloons tied to the window grille bumped into each other desultorily, softened and shrivelled by the heat. In the centre, on a low, painted stool, was a cake with bright strawberry icing and sugar flowers, a candle with a charred wick, a matchbox and a few used matchsticks. On the cake it said *Happy Birthday Miss Jebeen*. The cake had been cut, a small piece eaten. The icing had melted and dribbled on to the silver-foil-covered cardboard cake-base. Ants were making off with crumbs larger than themselves. Black ants. Pink crumbs." ²¹

Marina Lewycka:

"But the most remarkable thing about the room is the mess. There is a chaos of papers, clothes, shoes, dirty cups, nail varnish, pots of cosmetics, crusts of toast, hairbrushes, beauty appliances, toothbrushes, stockings, packets of biscuits, jewellery, photographs, sweet wrappers, knick-knacks, used plates, underwear, apples cores, sticking plasters, catalogues, wrappings, sticky sweets, all jumbled together on the dressing table, the chair, the spare bed, and overflowing on to the floor. And cotton wool, everywhere blobs of cotton wool covered with red lipstick, black eye make-up, orange face make-up, pink nail varnish, strewn on the bed, the floor, trodden into the blue carpet, jumbled up with the cloths and food." ²²

"The was also an astonishing profusion of what can only be described as Victorian potted plants, aspidistras, castor oil plants and such, all standing on rather wobbly whatnots. It was all terribly melancholy and over everything hung a faint but palpable, slightly acid smell, compounded of Slavonic cooking, cigarettes, drainage and other elements, difficult to identify, let alone describe, but once inhaled never forgotten." ²³

A gostilna, a village inn, in the Kras, Slovenia.

Thackeray, *Pendeniss*.

"First they went into the gorgeous dining-room, fitted up, Lady Clavering couldn't for goodness gracious tell why, in the middle-aged style, "unless," said her good-natured ladyship, laughing, "because me and Clavering are middle-aged people;"--and here they were offered the copious remains of the luncheon of which Lady Clavering and Blanche had just partaken. When nobody was near, our little Sylphide, who scarcely ate at dinner more than the six grains of rice of Amina, the friend of the

²⁰ Nancy Mitford, *The Pursuit of Love*, 1945.

²¹ Arundhati Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 2017, pp. 213 -214

²² Marina Lewycka, *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*, Penguin, 2006.

²³ Eric Newby, *On the Shores of the Mediterranean*, Picador, London, 1984.

Ghoul in the Arabian Nights, was most active with her knife and fork, and consumed a very substantial portion of mutton cutlets: in which piece of hypocrisy it is believed she resembled other young ladies of fashion. Pen and his uncle declined the refectory, but they admired the dining-room with fitting compliments, and pronounced it "very chaste," that being the proper phrase. There were, indeed, high-backed Dutch chairs of the seventeenth century; there was a sculptured carved buffet of the sixteenth; there was a sideboard robbed out of the carved work of a church in the Low Countries, and a large brass cathedral lamp over the round oak table; there were old family portraits from Wardour Street and tapestry from France, bits of armour, double-handed swords and battle-axes made of carton-pierre, looking-glasses, statuettes of saints, and Dresden china--nothing, in a word, could be chaster. Behind the dining-room was the library, fitted with busts and books all of a size, and wonderful easy-chairs, and solemn bronzes in the severe classic style. Here it was that, guarded by double doors, Sir Francis smoked cigars, and read Bell's Life in London, and went to sleep after dinner, when he was not smoking over the billiard-table at his clubs, or punting at the gambling-houses in Saint James's.

But what could equal the chaste splendour of the drawing-rooms? – the carpets were so magnificently fluffy that your foot made no more noise on them than your shadow: on their white ground bloomed roses and tulips as big as warming-pans: about the room were high chairs and low chairs, bandy-legged chairs, chairs so attenuated that it was a wonder any but a sylph could sit upon them, marquetterie-tables covered with marvellous gimcracks, china ornaments of all ages and countries, bronzes, gilt daggers, Books of Beauty, yataghans, Turkish papooshes and boxes of Parisian bonbons. Wherever you sat down there were Dresden shepherds and shepherdesses convenient at your elbow; there were, moreover, light blue poodles and ducks and cocks and hens in porcelain; there were nymphs by Boucher, and shepherdesses by Greuze, very chaste indeed; there were muslin curtains and brocade curtains, gilt cages with parroquets and love-birds, two squealing cockatoos, each out-squealing and out-chattering the other; a clock singing tunes on a console-table, and another booming the hours like Great Tom, on the mantelpiece – there was, in a word, everything that comfort could desire, and the most elegant taste devise. A London drawing-room, fitted up without regard to expense, is surely one of the noblest and most curious sights of the present day. The Romans of the Lower Empire, the dear Marchionesses and Countesses of Louis XV., could scarcely have had a finer taste than our modern folks exhibit; and everybody who saw Lady Clavering's reception rooms, was forced to confess that they were most elegant; and that the prettiest rooms in London--Lady Harley Quin's, Lady Hanway Wardour's, or Mrs. Hodge-Podgson's own; the great Railroad Croesus' wife, were not fitted up with a more consummate "chastity."



Doris Lessing:

“Here, organic towers, tall shapeless masses of tissue cultured from the plasms of ancient mammals, trumpeted and moaned across the abandoned wastes of another continent, their huge cynical voices modulating on the wind, now immensely distant, now close at hand.”

“A city spread itself in the wet, equivocal afternoon light like interrupted excavations in a sunken garden. It could be reached by a ladder of bone. ‘I will go down into that place!’”²⁴

²⁴ From ‘*Briefing For a Descent Into Hell*’, 188-189, is a minor classic too. Under the heading of ‘science-fiction’ Doris Lessing made some very profound observations in her *Shikasta* “*Canopus in Argos*” cycle of novels - the theme of patterns and the emergence of chaos through the breaking of the ‘patterns’.