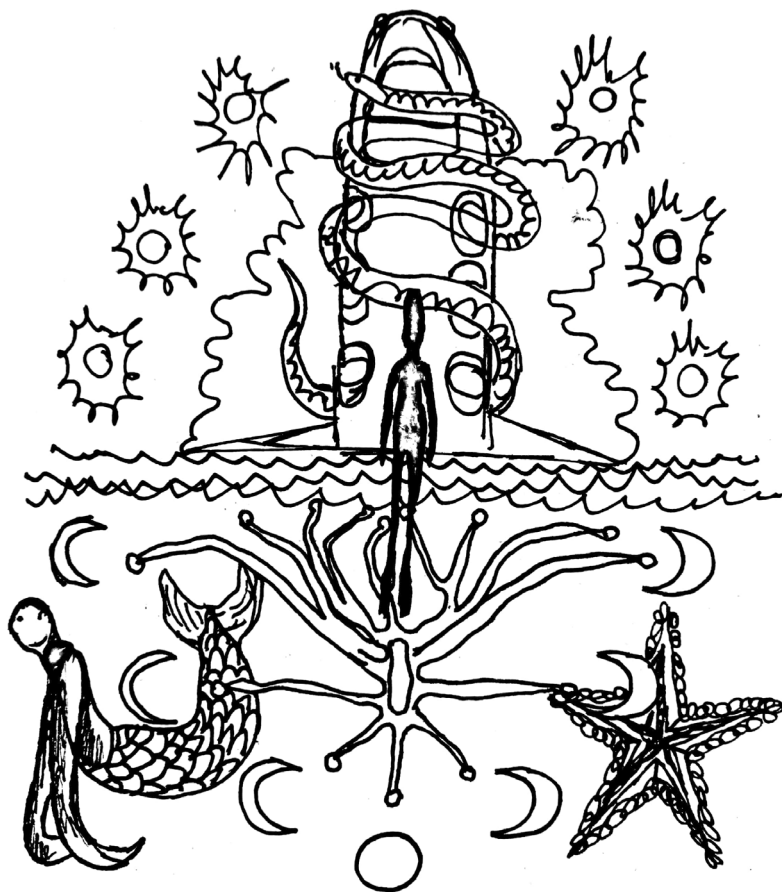


Airplane mode



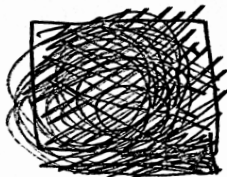
Jaakko Pallasvuo

September 10th, 2001.

Flying is a choice very important people might make. Flying is a designed, hi-tech miracle. Flying is comfortable. Flying is an adventure.

iPads don't exist yet, so you buy this magazine. You'll read it on the plane. This magazine is glossy and international. The kiosk at the airport caters to a refined clientele.

You have a minidisc player. You insert a disc that contains only two tracks. *Big Yellow Taxi* by Joni Mitchell and *(Nothing But) Flowers* by Talking Heads. The songs invert each other.



Big Yellow Taxi

They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot
With a pink hotel, a boutique
And a swinging hot spot
Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
'Till it's gone
They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot

They took all the trees
And put them in a tree museum
And they charged all the people
A dollar and a half to see 'em
Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
'Till it's gone
They paved paradise
And they put up a parking lot

Hey farmer farmer
Put away that D.D.T. now
Give me spots on my apples
But leave me the birds and the bees
Please
Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
'Till it's gone
They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot

(Nothing But) Flowers

Here we stand
Like an Adam and an Eve
Waterfalls
The Garden of Eden
Two fools in love
So beautiful and strong
The birds in the trees
Are smiling upon them
From the age of the dinosaurs
Cars have run on gasoline
Where, where have they gone?
Now, it's nothing but flowers

There was a factory
Now there are mountains and rivers
You got it, you got it

We caught a rattlesnake
Now we got something for dinner
We got it, we got it

There was a shopping mall
Now it's all covered with flowers
You've got it, you've got it

If this is paradise
I wish I had a lawnmower
You've got it, you've got it

In 2019 you are expected to fly. You are eating a low quality sandwich at Heathrow airport. Flights have been delayed for nine hours due to mysterious drone activity near the runway.

Your child is probably crying. You've left your child again, so you could perform the role of a middling art professional. You push the feeling of panic down. You bury the panic into your gut. Still stuck between the songs.

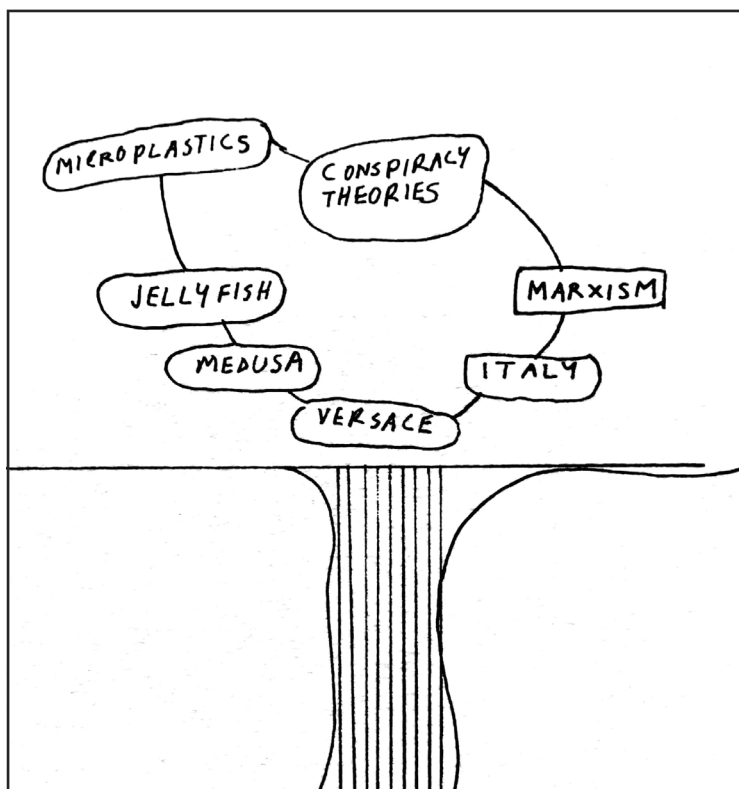
This year slow travel is a trend. A paid-for innocence that counts as doing something. It feels good to take the train, all the way to Venice if need be. It feels right to hurt a little. Traveling is time away. You're strapped in, suspended inside a bullet, flying through the air, or carving a path on the surface of the earth.

Everything is a horizon, a movement on a layer, not the melted core.

You're at a club, networked and lustful. Alternating boredom and ecstasy. You have a crush. You see them and want to hold their face between your palms. You want to smush that face gently, only inflicting a bit of pressure.

That Janet Jackson song that samples
Big Yellow Taxi comes on: *Don't it
always seem to go / That you don't
know what you've got til it's gone*

It's like Joni is singing into an
answering machine in the bottom of an
ocean. Layers of time under massive
bodies of water.



The airlines were supposed to be a mere beginning. Just a stepping stone to interplanetary and intergalactic travel. Astro-tourism. A world shrinking in size and distance. The total colonization of space and time.

Or:

There would be a global telecast. An inter-Net. People would work remotely, sending signals out from distant cabins. Travel would become unnecessary, leisurely. A greater harmony and understanding would exist between people. Everyone could speak to everyone. Everyone could speak.

Modernism as a prologue to the Space Age, to the Atomic Age. A traumatic birth, the pain justified by what had been given birth to. A new society. Don't stop.

The faster the planetary change, the slower the individual day. Repetitive and dull hours. Enacting catastrophic, irreversible change felt mundane. Who would've thought?

Flying had lost its magic. Things lose magic by becoming infrastructure: large-scale and inevitable, not a choice, not intended. A full plane of tourists and workers. Seated, waiting for takeoff. They couldn't shake the sense that they were held captive by

some 19th century dream.

A bus brought them to the senate square. They took identical photos under the #MyHelsinki sign. To pay attention to something was to give it value. Attention made things exist. Then they were transported away.

They all went to the same biennale to have the same profound encounter immersed in the same Laure Prouvost installation. They all hated the tourist-y restaurants, but that Aperol Spritz by the canal at sunset was pretty sweet, and the right amount of bitter.

CHOIR: *The Lithuanian pavilion was like, really moving.*

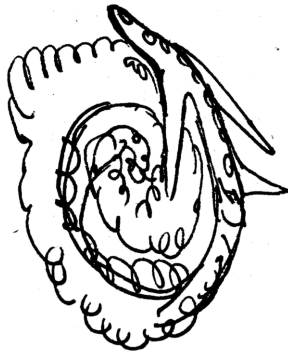
The Aviatiocene, the Raveocene, the Eventocene, the Emocene. Coming up with names for new geological epochs to introduce at future panel discussions calmed them as the plane was taking off, as they tried not to think of all the things that could go wrong, all the ways their bodies could be mangled and burned in an impact between the crashing plane and the ground.



Memory of my mother telling me that she bought her first set of forks and knives from a Finnair sale, in the seventies when they were giving up on high quality cutlery and choosing a path that would end somewhere plastic and disposable.

Memory of being sexually harassed on a plane by a middle aged Russian woman high on pills and champagne. Distinct sense that there was no reason to report it to the staff as they would not help me. But why did I think that?

Early 2000s Finnish art that looked like a Finnair advertisement. High production value photographic prints of beautiful lakes and woods with able innocent white bodies posing in static ways, like they were painted there by 19th century national romantics. No supermarkets in the images, no shell suits, asphalt, Nokia phones, broken beer bottles, Toyota Corollas, no mascara, no Nylon Beat. These images did not help one remember.



fly away on veng
airways

fly me high

ibiza sky

The hum of air conditioning in the library. Someone crying softly while holding a phone to their ear. Crying and listening.

Power is networked, relations horizontal. The world is flat in the absence of God. Capital and Climate rule. There are hierarchies but they are shifting, earthly, not grounded or projected, low or high. The face of destruction is mute and uncaring. Coins are placed on the eyes of the dead, in hopes of a safer passage.

God's closed eye floats above the Earth. The gates of hell are closed, too. The project of punishment has been abandoned. The fires of the abyss extinguished. The sins exhausted.

The airport is quiet. You're fidgety. You keep your hands active. Absent-mindedly, you manipulate a ballpoint pen until it breaks. You take your phone out and check your emails. Someone else has tried to log into your accounts. Someone on the other side of the world.



Flying used to make you feel important. You were destined and unique. You needed to travel to the thing so the thing could take place. You needed to get there fast, sparing no expense. Normal people didn't need to go. They were not needed at the thing.

You were yourself a vessel, carrying your cultivated mind and natural charisma. The party would not start until you were there. Without you they were just a bunch of people in a room, unlit by the fire of your knowledge.



Only six people came to your lecture. The projector didn't work. The technician blamed it on your Macbook, but you knew the fault was in their broken HDMI chord. You knew things.

Fuck this, you thought but did not say it. You smiled. You decided to turn the lecture into an "open discussion about God" between the six attendees and yourself. Things quickly derailed.



As a child you felt pretty sure you would leave the Earth one day. Maybe in the 2020s. Space travel would be commonplace.

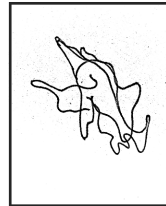
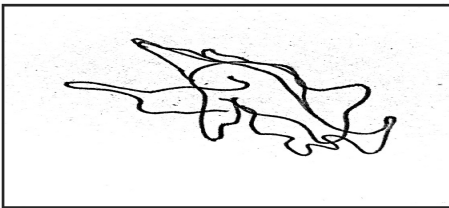
In 2019 you were unsure if you would even be able to stay housed.

The image of leaving Earth lived somewhere in you. The scenario you would dream through as a child. You were strapped into a heavy chair, like an armchair, but inside a space rocket. The vessel was taking off, almost breaking, struggling to set itself free from the gravitational pull of the Earth.

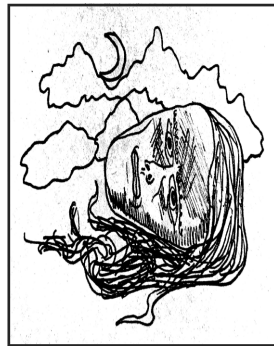
The countdown, the launch, lift off. The nearly unbearable pressure, then a release as the Earth would finally let you go. The dead quiet of space. Cold dead airless soundless space.

Were you on the spaceship alone? How long would you be there? What would you eat? Would it be claustrophobic? Lonely? These details were not a part of the scenario, which only concerned itself with the drama of leaving.

Security theatre at the airport. These spaces where would-be flier were seen as potential suspects, and learned to look at themselves that way. Take your shoes off. 'Security' was the perfect justification for control. Life was in its essence a series of risk calculations. The riskless life was a living death.

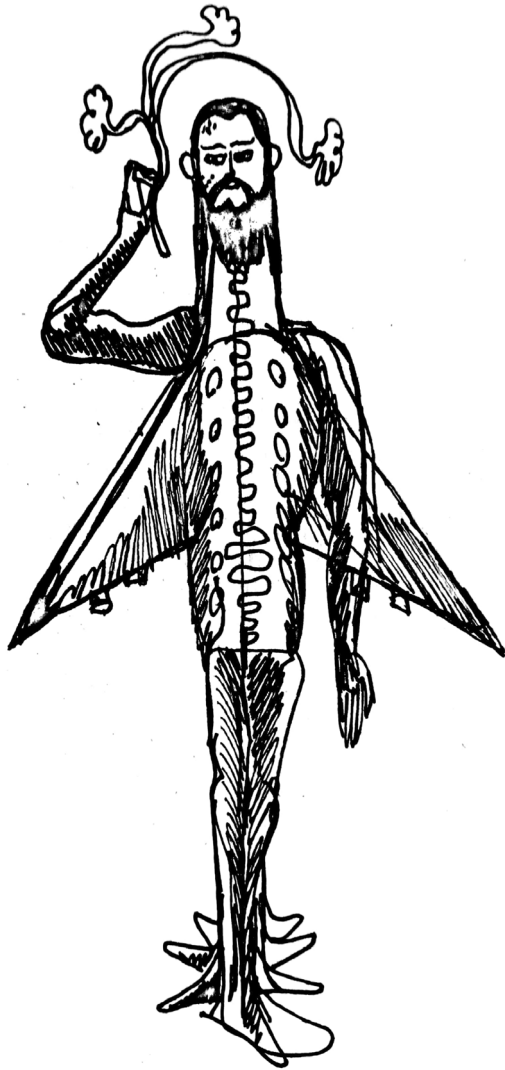


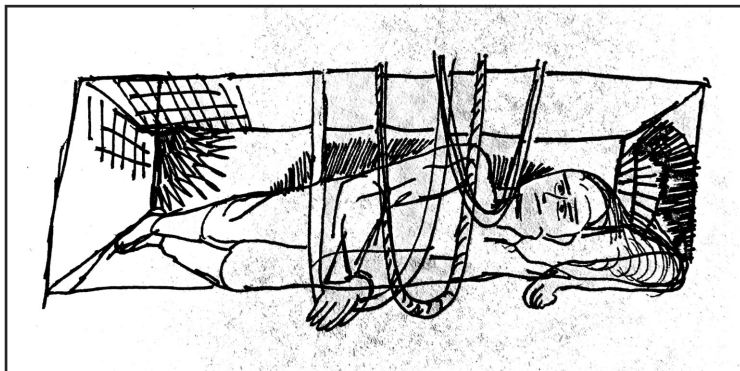
The violent process of dreams becoming reality. The poetic dream of flight becomes a prosaic reality becomes a fossil-fueled exhausting nightmare.



Dirt and glitter in the hair, glued to place with sweat and vaseline.

Title options: airplane mode.





GREEN begins a live recording on her phone. She is on a plane that is about to take off. She wants to stop the plane from leaving Helsinki airport. She has observed ORANGE in the back of the plane. ORANGE is being held by two plain-clothes police officers. GREEN believes ORANGE is being forcibly returned to a country where ORANGE's life will be in danger. We barely see ORANGE on the recording. We hear muted calls for help.

BEIGE, also seated in the plane, tells GREEN to shut up and sit down. BEIGE is going on vacation with his family. BEIGE seems more angry about GREEN's attempt to stop the flight than about the fact that ORANGE is being forced to go on the plane.

BEIGE wants to uphold the difference between the 'legal' and 'illegal' person. Anger might be fear all the

way down. BEIGE worries that if this difference collapses, his legality could also be placed into question. What would stop BEIGE from being the next person in the back of the plane, instead of the middle, where he now complains about this rude interruption to the flow of his life.

GREEN stops the recording, and we can no longer see what is happening. Some days later we read in the paper that GREEN has been charged with a crime. The paper doesn't say what happened to ORANGE. Is BEIGE enjoying his holiday?

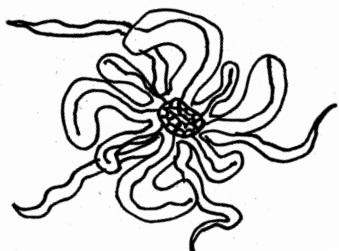


The flight of the animal. The concept of flying is tied with escape. I'm sweaty, even though it's not that warm anymore. The summer is almost over. Cold winds blow from the east. I'm trembling, over-caffeinated.

I want to ask someone for a cigarette, hoping it would calm my nerves, but I'm tired of relying on other people's generosity, their addictions to uphold mine. Their patience wears thin. The world might be done with me.

Patience is afforded to the convincingly young, those born in the right place, adopting the right poses. Why was it such a shocking realisation that unconditional love did not exist for adults? You had to rely on yourself. You had to be easy to be around. You had to be at least a little charming, a little interesting.

The nightmare job of becoming a person. You wanted to opt out. You simply didn't want it. You wanted to resign from each identity marker. You wanted to signify your inner state: a kind of emptiness. *Don't perceive me without my consent.* Full of searching potential and lacking in distinction: at best, you identified as a stem cell.



Being a passenger afforded you an incomplete anonymity, a transience that felt right enough. You were moving through, passing by fast, and that was recognised as "freedom". You thought back to high school philosophy class: was this freedom the "positive" or "negative" kind? Maybe a bit of both.

You escape an acoustic singer-songwriter situation so you can go sit in the park alone. You are writing this text. The park benches are worn out. Broken, covered with something sticky: a substance the trees are oozing out this season.

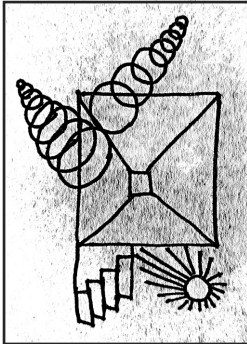


You are near Kaiku, the venue where this iteration of the text will be distributed to its readers. That situation seems distant now. It's just a Tuesday. You wish you could cry more often. You need the endorphins it could make your body produce.

Dreams where you can fly. This flying is not mediated through a device. It's not a flying machine you are in. In the dreams you focus and it just happens. You are flying. You don't even have wings.

Your dreams involve an element of danger. A faceless figure is chasing you and you must escape. The pressure of the situation unlocks your capacity to fly.

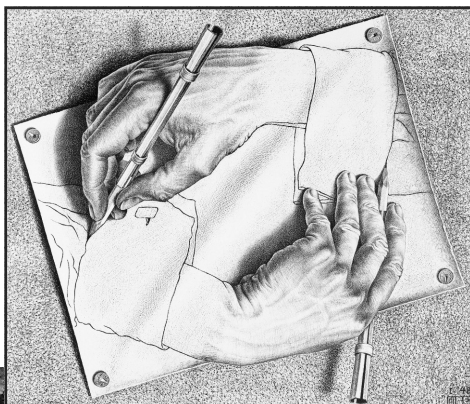
Your attempts to escape always fail. The faceless figure follows you to the end of the earth, from one dream to the next.



The future lies hidden in infrastructure. The surface of life seems unchanged, but there are open pit mines, server farms, global logistics chains, wireless moods. It's in how you feel. You're wearing authentic clothes, the coffee you drink tells you its artisanal. The wall behind your laptop is white and old. There are still cars. There are cigarettes. The surface shouldn't change, the psyche could not handle it. Behind the veil: rapid optimisation. Rapid questioning.

The routine flight where all this writing started. I was leaving Helsinki with a one way ticket. I was so nervous on the flight that I had to write, even if I didn't know how to.

The future was open and threatening, a vast impossibility. I took my notebook, touched the tip of the pen to the surface of a random page and began.



One avoids oneself by getting on a plane. There are other reasons to travel too. It's not just avoidance or escape. One can travel to claim oneself. To discover oneself. To become oneself.

Eat, pray, love.
Devour, debase, desire.

Falling asleep on the plane and falling asleep inside the dream you're having. Down and down, further into the dream of a dream of a dream.

I realise I'm writing out the plot to Inception. I'm sweating in my uncomfortable shirt, 90% acrylic.

Turn, turn, turn.

What is this text about? Faith in progress. Someone in front of me at the line at Charles de Gaulle airport. He's a businessman, bragging to an acquaintance about having been flown to Paris for the day to be present at a meeting. So he could sign a contract in person because it's "nicer". A wasteful, exhausting thing to do. But he seems flattered by the organization that insists he is this important. The plane takes off to give his ego a stroke. Hurry and urgency fill what are ultimately empty activities with something resembling purpose.



NIGHT

Aviation data companies like FlightAware keep track of all (or at least most) of the aircraft in our skies. And according to them, in the past year there were an average of 9,728 planes – carrying 1,270,406 people – in the sky at any given time.

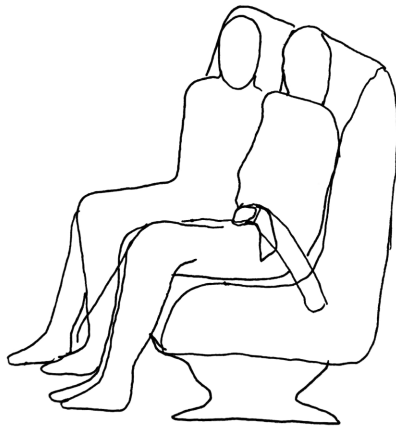


GREY wants someone. Feelings: a movie scene of them kissing on a loop in GREY's mind. GREY walks down an average road and GREY's body feels so porous and receptive, it's almost annoying. It's painful. GREY thinks about the flight.

GREY doesn't want this desire. GREY wants to fly. GREY wants bird-like freedom. GREY wants to be untouchable. GREY's body is melting into this crush. The feeling turns something in GREY upside down.

The road looks different too: the garbage smells sweeter, the seagulls harmonise, everything on the ground is alluring. A puppy on a leash protests loudly when its human prevents it from reaching and eating a piece of shit.

GREY wants to fly. Desire might be a package deal. Diarrhoea from a single overripe strawberry. No puppies without leashes. Lust and discipline. The object of desire bound up with the never-reaching. An image of the Buddha flashes through GREY's mind. GREY's stomach somersaults as the airplane burns a way through the sky.



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Jaakko Pallasvuo

Airplane mode

2019

