



Navigating the Outside In
By Steven R. Barich

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I was delivered on an airplane with no wings
An airplane with no engine
An airplane without a pilot
And, as a matter of fact,
It wasn't an airplane at all.

I was crossing through mountains via invisible tunnels
An endless white surrounded me
An endless white sky without sun, without warmth, but not cold.
I awoke to a morning, which was no morning at all.

The moment in which my feet left the ground,
And I flew with the pancake rockets.
Once you understand that the sky is as soft as the earth,
There is no more up and down.
Take this view of upside-down space.
Throw it over your back like a running stream, or a series of steps cut into the side of a mountain.

We see an upside down lake collecting upside down rain.
In floating cities, you enter buildings from the roof.

Disconnected lines and broken pathways.
Objects that are going to land or are beginning to take off—a crash landing.
Physical structures turned belly-up and that have fallen into the sky.
They move and collide with irregular beams and elongated frames.

We are viewing objects that from a distance are a sixty-story tower.
And when in the foreground,
They become the height of a coin.

Imagine seeing far enough into the horizon that your view has traveled full circle around the world,
And that the landscape has super-imposed itself, doubled itself.
Don't you see your own back, yourself from behind looking in, forever repeating?

Beware falling rocks
Trucks hurtling across open water
Sitting on the earth, lightly
What I am asking you to consider is whether this is a city...
Or not.

To Move Forward without Wheels

Curves in the road lead to a slight incline
And, a slowing of pace
Helicopters become incomplete boxes
Planes turn into floating pyramids
Billboards are seen as angular tubes
Machines expand to show their inner workings.

To move forward, without wheels

Super-size the pebbles and shorten the distance
Pull the plug from the sun and brighten the sky
Reduce the rivers to a pencil-thin stream
Remove the earth from its attachment to the sky
Take the horizon line and roll it out under your feet

Rows and fields of dead corn, everywhere
Fires burning in the fields and in the gutters of the streets, unattended
Burned-out cars hiding in the overgrowth at the sides of roads
Lightning flashes over the hillsides in a pitch black sky
Roads that have no name, buildings without addresses
Nothing for miles except a medieval church building, then
Modern farmhouses alone in an undeveloped landscape

A landscape mostly seen in darkness and by car headlights
A landscape mostly seen traveling horizontally

A landscape that is seen from a distance.

When I Send a Letter Home

The car that stands here
The house that is situated by the sea
The bicycle of which the lamp is broken
The street that you walk in
The city once visited
The country that is open to enter.

Four spinning discs.
A reflective rectangle of glass, tilted.
A heavy molded plastic, vented in four places, hiding a powerful energy.
Two sets of eyes, one very special but used in reserve.
Noise makers.

To go so far only to realize you never had the tools available to repair the damage.
It is the difference between the man who *wants* all the answers, and the other man who *has* all the answers.
And then there is the third man who learned all the answers, brought all the right tools, and could fix our problems
In under forty-five minutes.

A system for breathing fresh air.
A device to be held...in.
Five doors open, four windows close.
The glide of one's forehead.
The light that never turns off.

A soft place for resting.
A hole that overflows with ash, emptied, then overflowing again.
A collection of newspapers and maps, reflecting backwards and in white in the windshield.
Move it for me, will you?

When I send a letter home, I will fold it in three places.
I will fold it again in two places.
I will turn the corners into little wings.

A cross of rain and rubber.
A rattling pole and a loosened grip.

Crossing through borders
Every border is invisible; there is never just one line that is 'here', below your feet.
There is never a 2 meter wide red stripe painted on the exact line of the border between countries.

To see this bright red line cascading down the mountain, across the valley
Passing under your feet, then up across the next mountaintop.

Yet still, every border is invisible.

We only know when we have crossed the line because the mobile phone rings.

Welcome, your service has changed.

Welcome, the language has changed.

The landscape has now changed...

The language of the landscape has now changed.

There is one point, in which you can stand and see the image for what it really is.

The place is sometimes called...Verona.

The idea is to believe, to suspend disbelief, to have no doubt and consider the land as truth.

I never said you wouldn't get lost.

I will be back in a moment to pick you up.

THE ACT OF DISAPPEARING

I am starting to pay less and less attention to detail, even though I spend more time looking.

I am disappearing—I cannot remember entering this place—a strange memory lapse. A box, a square, a series of receding steps, a bent pole with a mountain for a head.

I am not alone.

Treetops, nothing more than gray fog,

They float and disappear into one another, completely.

In the evening, the woods become a single standing cloud with a thousand legs.

It leaves a sound in the air, of feet walking in the snow.

Take a moment—fold up your body while sitting in the sun and just fade away.

Memories of people, places and days often disappear as new ones rise to take their place.

This eastern land struck me as a deserted country.

No people walked the abandoned roads; no sight of the inhabitants of this place.

Mountains stood as towers, sheltering many farmhouses, almost estates.

These ridges hold back clouds wanting to make an escape into open sky.

If the landscape around you were to never move, you would never notice it.

The unchanging landscape is something to get used to, to expect to stay the same.

You can't see through it, but you can move through it.

When you lean forward—then the motion begins.

Every little disappearance is preceded by a shake, a shiver, as if the nerves have to be convinced.

I did my best to fight off a racing imagination

To ignore the noises

Which were invading my ears and causing disturbing imaginations...

By morning I was exhausted.

The danger of disappearing

The anticipation of becoming invisible

This will always be the place to go

If you want to escape the rest of the world.

With Arrows Pointed in All Directions

It is an airplane flying on a string
It is a skyscraper with wings, hovering two meters above the ground
It is a crosswalk on a street made of black earth, painted
With arrows pointed in all directions.

It was a moment of standing in the city center of a metropolis with one hand over one eye,
Squinting with the other eye,
And looking quickly from lines in the sidewalk to the edges of nearby looming
skyscrapers.

I want to just observe them, to watch them move, to watch them sit, to watch them
watching themselves.
I could easily be like a ghost and hover over their shoulders for hour.

Imagine, if you will, what you see is as flat as a piece of paper
That it surrounds and escapes your senses
It is a flat space all around you, in every direction
Imagine the image moves as you do, with you, staying in front of your eyes and at the very
tip of your nose.
It never gets closer or farther away.
You walk towards it, as if you could close the distance
But, it is always there in front, remaining
That is, until it steps behind you, until you step through it...

And the windows all around reflect daylight
Which disturbs the security we find in the line of the horizon.

Looking Down Our Arms

Every city we entered had its own major intersection.
This was always where we parked.
We sought out the middle of the city, the center-point.
We watched the people walk their streets.
Point a finger ahead of you and declare—"let's go this way."
Looking down our arms, we would see crisscrossing people at our fingertips.

Even in the smallest of cities a stranger can become lost
There are hidden signals in the street to the mentality of a city
We remember asking and receiving five different directions,
And in the end, ignoring all of them for our own path.
Soon finding ourselves, once again, completely lost.

We circled the city
We lounged
We rested, we ran.
We stole posters and blankets
And, we left in each city our own signs

We slept without beds
We drove on without directions
We ran into defeat, and we created new ways
We drove into each night, and we woke each morning to a new environment
And, we watched the world go by from behind glass windows

Sometimes, the extreme movement of the travel hides the beautiful colors languishing in
the space.

Write a travel-log from the end to the beginning
To find if you end up where you started.