I. SIR JACK’S CHOICE OF THE ISLAND

had not been a matter of cartographical serendipity. Even his whims had  
costing behind them. In the present instance, relevant factors  
had been: the size, location and accessibility of the Island, plus  
the extreme unlikelihood of it being spot-listed by UNESCO as  
a World Heritage Site. Access to labour pool, elasticity of  
planning regulations, malleability of locals. Sir Jack did not  
anticipate too much trouble getting the Wighters on board: his  
experience in the developing world had taught him how to  
exploit historical resentment, even how to engender it. He also  
had the Island’s MP in his pocket. A series of well-publicized  
inward investments to the constituency, plus the signed affidavits  
of three London rent-boys in a solicitor’s safe near Lincoln’s Inn  
Fields, would ensure that Sir Percy Nutting QC MP would  
continue to show the correct enthusiasms. Carrot and stick - it  
always worked; while stick and carrot worked even better.

At first he had planned simply to buy the Island. Several  
thousand acres of farmland had been acquired from pension  
funds and the Church Commissioners in exchange for bonds in  
his new venture; the next step was to persuade Westminster to  
sell him sovereignty. It did not seem an improbable idea. The  
last bits of Empire were currently being disposed of in this – to  
Sir Jack – entirely rational way. Earlier colonies had departed in  
a flurry of sudden principle hastened by guerrilla warfare. With  
the final outposts, sensible economic criteria applied: Gibraltar  
was sold to Spain, the Falkland Islands to Argentina. Of course, this was not how the handovers were presented, by either vendor or purchaser; but Sir Jack had his sources.

These sources also reported, disappointingly, that Westminster had hardened its position on selling the Isle of Wight to a  
private individual. Specious objections of national integrity had  
been adduced. Despite pressure from Sir Jack’s loyal group of  
backbenchers, the Government simply refused to put a price on  
sovereignty. Not for sale, they said. This had made Sir Jack a  
little huffy at first, but he soon regained his humour. There was  
something inherently unsatisfactory about the straight deal, after  
all. You wanted to buy something, the owner fixed a price, and  
you eventually got it for less. Where was the fun in that?

(from “England, England” by Julian Barnes)

**II. Our Ecological Boredom**

By GEORGE MONBIOT JAN. 18, 2015

Live free or die: This is the maxim of our age. But the freedoms we celebrate are particular and limited. We fetishize the freedom of business from state control; the freedom not to pay taxes; the freedom to carry guns and speak our minds and worship whom we will. But despite, in some cases because of, this respect for particular freedoms, every day the scope of our lives appears to contract.

Half a century ago, we were promised that rising wealth would mean less work, longer vacations and more choice. But our working hours rise in line with economic growth, and they are now governed by a corporate culture of snooping and quantification, of infantilizing dictats and impossible demands, all of which smothers autonomy and creativity. Technologies that promised to save time and free us from drudgery (such as email and smartphones) fill our heads with a clatter so persistent it stifles the ability to think.

We entertain the illusion that we have chosen our lives. Why, if this is the case, do our apparent choices differ so little from those of other people? Why do we live and work and travel and eat and dress and entertain ourselves in almost identical fashion? It’s no wonder, when we possess and use it so little, that we make a fetish out of freedom.

We arose in a thrilling, terrible world. The African savannas on which the first hominids evolved were dominated by saber-toothed and false saber-toothed cats, giant hyenas and bear dogs. We carry with us the psychological equipment, rich in instinct and emotion, required to navigate that world. But our survival in the modern economy requires the use of few of the mental and physical capacities we possess. Sometimes it feels like a small and shuffling life. Our humdrum, humiliating lives leave us, I believe, ecologically bored.

Across many rich nations, especially the United States, global competition is causing the abandonment of farming on less fertile land. Rather than trying to tame and hold back the encroaching wilds, I believe we should help to accelerate the process of reclamation, removing redundant roads and fences, helping to re-establish missing species, such as wolves and cougars and bears, building bridges between recovering habitats to create continental-scale wildlife corridors, such as those promoted by the Rewilding Institute.

This rewilding of the land permits, if we choose, a partial rewilding of our own lives. It allows us to step into a world that is not controlled and regulated, to imagine ourselves back into the rawer life from which we came, to discover, perhaps, the ecstasy I experienced when I picked up that deer. We don’t have to give up our washing machines and computers and eyeglasses and longevity to shed our ecological boredom and recover some measure of the freedom that has been denied to us. Perhaps we do need to remember who we are.

III. Земля страдает, земля вздыхаетИ стон последний к нам обращает:«Забудьте, люди, свои раздоры,Скорей спасайте поля и горы,Спасайте реки, леса спасайте,Животных слабых оберегайте.Вас умоляю, к вам обращаюсь,От дыма злого я задыхаюсь.Меня токсины всю пропитали,Галлоны нефти в моря попали.Ещё немного, и будет поздно.Не простирайте ладони к звёздамИ не молите тогда о чуде,Другого дома у вас не будет! *Ольга Романенко «Земля страдает»*

IV. [**Alliteration For The Planet**](https://www.poetrysoup.com/poem/alliteration___for_the_planet_556472)

Wonderful wonders woven within wild.

Titillates theatrical tender thoughts

Consistently creation, contrives conservation concerns.

Ecology evolves equations, entitling entities essence.

Empowering equality, enlarges existence.

Life lovingly leases Longevity.

Biodiversity braces, blatant brutal balding.

Deforestation, destruction devoid due definition.

People physically, plundering planet.

Prevalently procuring, products proscribed

Pilfering practices producing poisonous pollutants.

Greenhouse gases generated, generously grievous.

Temperate temperature’s tempers tumultuous.

Creating Climate changes, causing catastrophes.

Planet purges peril predominately.

Preached, placid platitudes, politicians podiums paced.

loved lives logged listed lost.

Lacuna languished, lessons least learnt.

Losing Life lingers, listing leeward lazily.

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