

on sleeplessness:

"Finally, as the sky began to grow light in the morning, I'd feel that I might be drifting off. But that wasn't sleep. My fingertips were just barely brushing against the outermost edge of sleep. And all the while, my mind was wide awake. I would feel a hint of drowsiness, but my mind was there, in its own room, on the other side of a transparent wall, watching me. My physical self was drifting through the feeble morning light, and all the while it could feel my mind staring, breathing, close beside it. I was both a body on the verge of sleep and a mind determined to stay awake..."

(Haruki Murakami: 'Sleep')

on sound and silence:

"The muffled thunder of dialogue comes through the walls, then a chorus of laughter. Then more thunder. Most of the laughs tracks on television were recorded in the early 1950s. These days, most of the people you hear laughing are dead. The stomp and stomp and stomp of a drum comes down through the ceiling. The rhythm changes. Maybe the beat crowds together, faster, or it spreads out, slower, but it doesn't stop. Up through the floor, someone is barking the words to a song. These people so scared of silence. These are my neighbours. These sound-oholics. These quiet-ophobics.

Laughter of the dead comes through every wall.

These days, this is what passes for home sweet home.(...)

You turn up your music to hide the noise. Other people turn up their music to hide yours. You turn up yours again. Everyone buys a bigger stereo system. This is the arms race of sound. You don't win with a lot of treble.

This isn't about quality. It's about volume.

This isn't about music. This is about winning.

You stomp the competition with the bass line. You rattle windows. You drop the melody line and shoput the lyrics. You put in foul language and come down hard on each cussword.

You dominate. This is really about power. (...)

These music-oholics. These calm-ophobics.

No one wants to admit we're addicted to music. That's just not possible. No one's addicted to music and television and radio. We just need more of it, more channels, a larger screen, more volume. We can't bear to be without it, but no, nobody's addicted. We could turn it off anytime we wanted. (...)

These distraction-oholics. These focus-ophobics.

Old George Orwell got it backward.

Big Brother isn't watching. He's singing and dancing. He's pulling rabbits out of a hat.

Big Brother's busy holding your attention every moment you're awake. He's making sure you're always distracted. he's making sure you're fully absorbed.

He's making sure your imagination withers. Until it's as useful as your appendix. he's making sure your attention is always filled. And this being fed, it's worse than being watched. With the world always filling you, no one has to worry about what's in your

mind. With everyone's imagination atrophied, no one will ever be a threat to the world.
(...)

You tell yourself that noise is what defines silence. Without noise, silence would not be golden. Noise is the exception. Think of deep outer space, the incredible cold and quiet where your wife and kid wait. Silence, not heaven, would be reward enough."
(Chuck Palahniuk: 'Lullaby')

on loneliness:

"No man should go through life without once experiencing healthy, even bored solitude in the wilderness, finding himself depending solely on himself and thereby learning his true and hidden strength."
(Jack Kerouac: 'Lonesome Traveler')

"And it came to me then. That we were wonderful travelling companions, but in the end no more than lonely lumps of metal on their own separate orbits. From far off they look like beautiful shooting stars, but in reality they're nothing more than prisons, where each of us is locked up alone, going nowhere. When the orbits of these two satellites of ours happened to cross paths, we could be together. Maybe even open our hearts to each other. But that was only for the briefest moment. In the next instant we'd be in absolute solitude. Until we burned up and became nothing."
(Haruki Murakami: 'Sputnik Sweetheart')

"Why do people have to be this lonely? What's the point of it all? Millions of people in this world, all of them yearning, looking to others to satisfy them, yet isolating themselves. Why? Was the Earth put here just to nourish human loneliness?
I turned face-up on the slab of stone, gazed at the sky, and thought about all the man-made satellites spinning around the Earth. The horizon was still etched in a faint glow, and stars began to blink on in the deep, wine-coloured sky. I gazed among them for the light of a satellite, but it was still too bright out to spot one with the naked eye. The sprinkling of stars looked nailed to the spot, unmoving. I closed my eyes and listened carefully for the descendants of Sputnik, even now circling the Earth, gravity their only tie to the planet. Lonely metal souls in the unimpeded darkness of space, they meet, pass each other, and part, never to meet again. No words passing between them. No promises to keep."
(Murakami: 'Sputnik Sweetheart')

"Being all alone is like the feeling you get when you stand at the mouth of a large river on a rainy evening and watch the water flow into the sea. Have you ever done that? Stand at the mouth of a large river and watch the water flow into the sea?(...)
I can't really say why it's such a lonely feeling to watch all the river water mix together with the sea water. But it really is. You should try it sometime."
(Murakami: 'Sputnik Sweetheart')

I said, "Living in a country like ours, whose key documents are all about emancipation, all directed at guaranteeing individual liberty, living in a free system that is basically indifferent to how you behave as long as the behaviour is lawful, the misery that comes your way is most likely to be self-generated. It would be another matter if you were living in Nazi-occupied Europe or in Communist-dominated Europe or in Mao Zedong's China. There they manufacture the misery for you; you don't have to take a single wrong step in order never to want to get up in the morning. But here, free of totalitarianism, a man like you has to provide himself his own misery.

You, moreover, are intelligent, articulate, goodlooking, well educated – you are made to thrive in a country like this one. Here the only tyrant lying in wait will be convention, which is not to be taken lightly either.

(Philip Roth, *The Dying Animal*)

This need. This derangement. Will it never stop? I don't even know after a while what I'm desperate for (...) worse than that, I'm also longing secretly not to be free.

(Philip Roth, *The Dying Animal*)

Time passes. Time passes.

(Philip Roth, *The Dying Animal*)

Dating is hateful, relationships are impossible, sex is hazard.

(Philip Roth, *The Dying Animal*)

By night he lay awake on mattresses that felt made out of cardboard and catalogued the faults of humanity. It seemed as if, in every motel he stayed in, he had neighbors who fornicated like there was no tomorrow - men of ill-breeding and poor discipline, women who chuckled and screamed. At 1a.m. in Erie, Pennsylvania, a girl in the next room ranted and panted like a strumpet. Some slick, worthless fellow having his way with her. Alfred blamed the girl for taking it easy. He blamed the man for his easygoing confidence. He blamed both of them for lacking the consideration to keep their voices down. How could they never once stop to think of their neighbor, lying awake in the next room? He blamed God for allowing such people to exist. He blamed democracy for inflicting them on him. He blamed the motel's architects for trusting a single layer of cinder block to preserve the repose of paying customers. He blamed the motel managers for not keeping in reserve a room for guests who suffered. He blamed the frivolous, easygoing townspeople of Washington, Pennsylvania, who had driven 150 miles for a high-school football championship game and filled every motel room in northwest Pennsylvania. He blamed his fellow guests for their indifference to the fornication, he blamed all of humanity for its insensitivity, and it was so unfair. No man worked harder than he, no man made a quieter motel neighbor, no man was more of a man, and yet the phonies of the world were allowed to rob him of sleep with their lewed transactions...

He refused to weep. He believed that if he heard himself weeping, at two in the morning in a smoke-smelling motel room, the world might end.

(Jonathan Franzen: *The Corrections*)

There you are
In a darkened room
And you're all alone
Looking out the window
Your heart is cold and lost the will to love
Like a broken arrow

Here I stand in the shadows
Come to me, Come to me
Can't you see that

Nobody wants to be lonely
Nobody wants to cry
My body's longing to hold you
so bad it hurts inside
(Christina Aguilera/Ricky Martin: Nobody wants to be lonely)

When I was young
I never needed anyone
And making love was just for fun
Those days are gone
Livin' alone
I think of all the friends I've known
When I dial the telephone
Nobody's home

All by myself
Don't wanna be
All by myself
Anymore
All by myself
Don't wanna live
Oh
Don't wanna live
By myself, by myself
Anymore
By myself
Anymore
Oh
All by myself
Don't wanna live
I never, never, never
Needed anyone
(Celine Dion: All By Myself)

I'm free to do what I want any old time
I'm free to do what I want any old time
So love me, hold me, love me, hold me
I'm free any old time to get what I want

I'm free to sing my song though it gets out of time
I'm free to sing my song though it gets out of time
So love me, hold me, love me, hold me
And I'm free any old time to get what I want

Love me, hold me, love me, hold me
But I'm free any old time to get what I want

I'm free to choose what I please any old time
I'm free to choose what I please any old time
So hold me, love me, love me, hold me
I'm free any old time to get what I want, yes I am
(M. Jagger/K. Richards: I'm Free)

Show me the meaning of being lonely
Is this the feeling I need to walk with
Tell me why I can't be there where you are
There's something missing in my heart
(Backstreet Boys: Show Me The Meaning Of Being Lonely)