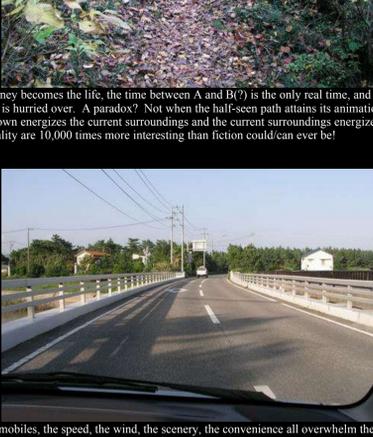


Trains
Lyle (Hiroshi) Saxon



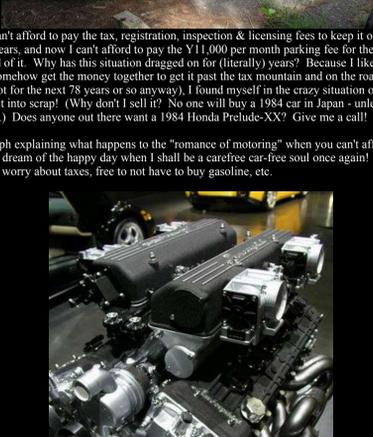
A journey of a thousand miles/kilometers/whatever begins with a single step? And another and another... always in motion, how often do we stop and have a look at the ground we are standing on? With machinery whizzing us around perpetually at high speeds, the normal state of affairs has nearly become motion itself.



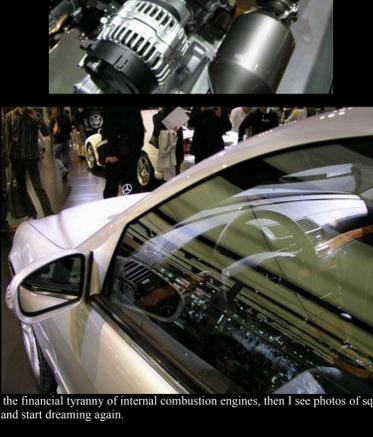
The path ahead beckons... the journey becomes the life, the time between A and B(?) is the only real time, and yet the mind focuses on the mysteries of the future as the path is hurried over. A paradox? Not when the half-seen path attains its animation from the traveler's anticipation of the half-seen future. The unknown energizes the current surroundings and the current surroundings energize the unknown. Fiction? Why do people read fiction? Truth and reality are 10,000 times more interesting than fiction could/can ever be!



Removed from the ground in automobiles, the speed, the wind, the scenery, the convenience all overwhelm the boredom of just sitting in a chair. Cars - I love them when I'm behind the wheel of one and hate them when I'm trying to walk - breathing their noxious gases.

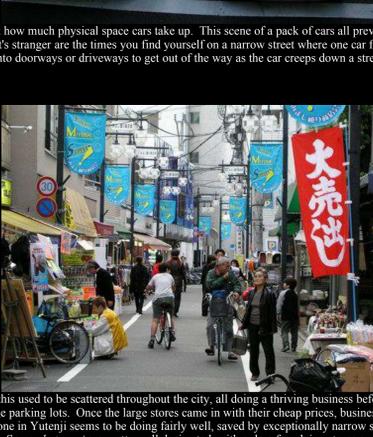


A modern reserved-seat express train speeds by one evening out in the Japanese countryside.....

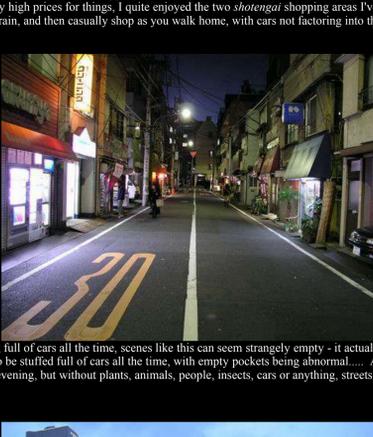


My 1984 Honda Prelude-XX. I can't afford to pay the tax, registration, inspection & licensing fees to keep it on the road, so it's just been sitting in this open-air parking lot for... years, and now I can't afford to pay the ¥11,000 per month parking fee for the piece of dirt that it's been sitting on, so I desperately need to get rid of it. Why has this situation dragged on for (literally) years? Because I like the car, and - in the beginning - I held on to the hope that I would somehow get the money together to get it past the tax mountain and on the road again, and then as I began to give up on that ever happening (not for the next 78 years or so anyway), I found myself in the crazy situation of not having enough money to pay someone to take it away and turn it into scrap! (Why don't I sell it? No one will buy a 1984 car in Japan - unless it's something like a Rolls-Royce or some other very rare car.) Does anyone out there want a 1984 Honda Prelude-XX? Give me a call!

And there it is - the above paragraph explaining what happens to the "romance of motoring" when you can't afford it. I always dreamed of having my own car before - now I dream of the happy day when I shall be a carefree car-free soul once again! Free to not have to pay the parking lot fee, free not to have to worry about taxes, free to not have to buy gasoline, etc.



No sooner do I talk of getting past the financial tyranny of internal combustion engines, then I see photos of squeaky new high performance machinery like the pictures above and start dreaming again.



In Tokyo, you come to realize just how much physical space cars take up. This scene of a pack of cars all preventing each other from moving freely is boringly typical, but what's stranger are the times you find yourself on a narrow street where one car fills up nearly the entire width of the road and people have to step into doorways or driveways to get out of the way as the car creeps down a street originally meant to only accommodate pedestrian traffic.

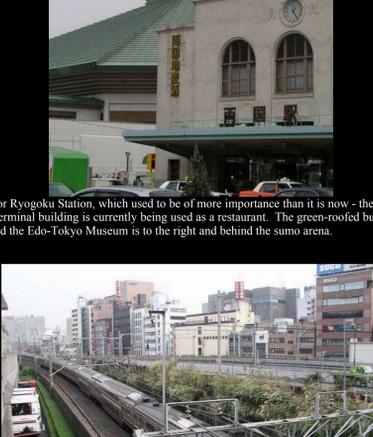


Shotengai - Shopping streets like this used to be scattered throughout the city, all doing a thriving business before the incursion of the car culture and large discount stores with large parking lots. Once the large stores came in with their cheap prices, business in the various shotengai shopping areas took a dive. This one in Yutenji was being fairly well, saved by exceptionally narrow streets (this is the widest one in the area) and no nearby "superstores". Some shotengai are pretty well decimated, with only a few dying stores and empty gaps where other stores once stood.

It's all very efficient and pretty much the way things go, but it does seem to damage a community in some ways. Whereas the open-front small shops with the same shopkeepers always looking out on the street performed a kind of invisible security function, the all-house, no-store new neighborhoods where people get into their cars to go shopping and often don't know their neighbors are reporting increased levels of crime. Also, in spite of not wanting to pay high prices for things, I quite enjoyed the two shotengai shopping areas I've lived near over the past twenty years. It's nice to get off of your train, and then casually shop as you walk home, with cars not factoring into the equation at all....



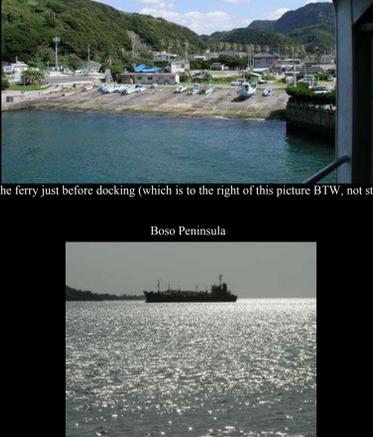
Once you get used to streets being full of cars all the time, scenes like this can seem very abnormal - it actually seems as though the normal state of things is for everywhere to be stuffed full of cars all the time, with empty pockets being abnormal.... A street like this with trees would be nice to walk along on such an evening, but without plants, animals, people, insects, cars or anything, streets like this can feel like the middle of the Sahara Desert.



Yokohama



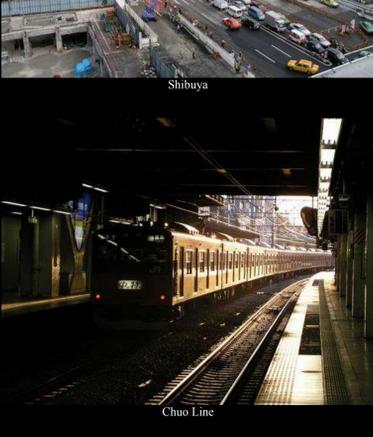
This is the old terminal building for Ryogoku Station, which used to be of more importance than it is now - the actual station entrance now is to the right of this view and the old terminal building is currently being used as a restaurant. The green-roofed building behind it is where sumo tournaments are held in Tokyo, and the Edo-Tokyo Museum is to the right and behind the sumo arena.



Beside the Edo-Tokyo Museum, this is where this line drops down, goes underground and heads for Tokyo Station (and beyond).



Shibuya



Chuo Line



Ochanomizu - looking towards Akihabara and the sea of computers and computer parts that reside there. These words are being written on a used Dell computer bought from one of the shops there and including parts from other shops. The interoperability of computer parts is a wonderful thing!