

ANGLAIS

Commenter en anglais le texte suivant et le traduire à partir de « Jean visited the Grand Canyon... » jusqu'à « ... only in their inadequacy. ».

Jean is an Englishwoman who takes to travelling in her sixties.

Jean visited the Grand Canyon in November. The north rim was closed, and the snow-ploughs had been out chivvying the road up from Williams to the south rim. She booked into the lodge at the Canyon's edge; it was early evening. She did not hurry with her unpacking, and even went to the hotel gift shop before looking at the Canyon itself.
5 Not putting off the pleasure, but the reverse; for Jean expected disappointment. At the last minute, she had even considered rescripting her Seven Wonders and visiting the Golden Gate Bridge instead.

A foot of snow lay on the ground and the sun, now almost level with the horizon, had thrown a firm-wristed sweep of orange across the mountains opposite. The sun's
10 kingdom began exactly at the snowline: above, the orange mountain crests had orange snow beneath indolent orange clouds; drop below the line and everything changed into dry browns and buffs and umbers, while far, far down, some murky greens enclosed a trickle of silver – like a lurex thread in a dull tweed suit. Jean gripped the frosty guard-rail and was glad to be alone, glad that what she saw didn't have to be translated into words, to be reported,
15 discussed, annotated. The extravagant fish-eye view was bigger, deeper, wider, grander, savager, more beautiful and more frightening than she had thought possible; but even this alignment of excited adjectives failed her. Rachel, Gregory's most combative girlfriend, had told her before she set off, "Yeah, it's like coming all the time." No doubt she'd been trying to shock, and these remembered words were indeed shocking; but only in their
20 inadequacy. Sex – even the resounding sex Jean imagined but had never experienced – could be no more than playing the shoelace game, little tickles on the soles of your feet as the laces snaked away, compared to this. Someone else had promised, "It's like looking at the Creation" – but that too was only words. Jean was fed up with words. If the Canyon shrank the watchers at its rim to midges, it shrank their noises – the prattle, the whoops,
25 the camera clicks – into mere insect hum. This wasn't a place where you made self-deprecating jokes, fiddled with your exposure meter, or threw snowballs. This was a place beyond words, beyond human noise, beyond interpretation.

It was said that the great Gothic cathedrals of Europe had the power to convert by their mere presence. It wasn't just a question of impressing the peasants: sophisticated
30 minds had also said to themselves, If something as beautiful as this exists, how can the idea
which produced it not be true? One cathedral is worth a hundred theologians capable of
proving the existence of God by logic. The mind longs for certainty, and perhaps it longs
most for a certainty which clubs it down. What the mind can understand, what it can
ploddingly prove and approve, might be what it most despises. It longs to be attacked from
35 behind, in a dark street, certainty a knife at the throat.

Perhaps the Canyon acted like a cathedral on religiously inclined tourists, and
startlingly argued without words the power of God and the majesty of his works. Jean's
response was the opposite. The Canyon stunned her into uncertainty. Over dinner she sat
thinking and tried not to use words as she did so; or at least, to use them gingerly. *Therefore*
40 was the word she allowed to set most solid in her mind. The Canyon, *therefore...* If the
Canyon is the question, what is the answer? If the Canyon is the answer, what is the question?
The Canyon, *therefore...?* Even the sceptic's response, the Canyon, *therefore nothing*,
seemed a large answer. It was said that one of the worst tragedies of the spirit was to be
born with a religious sense into a world where belief was no longer possible. Was it an equal
45 tragedy to be born without a religious sense into a world where belief *was* possible?

The next morning, before departure, Jean rested her body once more against the
frosty guard-rail and gazed at the Canyon. Now the sun was reaching down into it,
groping towards the river. High grassy plateaux lay hundreds, perhaps thousands of feet
below her. The mountain crests, their soirée of orange glory gone, had become sombre and
50 distant in their morning dress; the snow blinked whitely across. Following its own buzz,
a light aeroplane came into view. The first tourist flight of the day, an insect hovering over
an enormous wound. For a while it flew level with Jean, then dropped to examine the
wandering fissure which enclosed the river. How strange, Jean thought, to stand on the
ground and yet be higher than an aeroplane; seeing the wings and fuselage from above was
55 like seeing the rare side of a leaf or a moth. It was somehow against nature, the idea of
an aeroplane flying beneath the surface of the earth; as it would be if some surfacing
submarine continued to rise out of the water and leaped into the air, a monstrous flying fish.

Julian BARNES (1946-), *Staring at the Sun*, 1986.