

On Man in the Holocene
Robert S. Griffin
robertsgriffin.com

Excerpts from Man in the Holocene, by Max Frisch (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979):

What would be bad is losing one's memory---

There is nothing to do but read.

Today is Wednesday, (Or Thursday?)

Weakness of memory is the deterioration of the faculty of recalling earlier experiences. In psychopathology a distinction is made between this and deterioration of the faculty of adding new experiences to the store of memories, though the distinction is only one of degree. In the brain diseases of old age (senility, hardening of the arteries in the brain) and other brain diseases, it is the latter faculty that deteriorates first.

At the moment he does not need his passport, but he could do with an aspirin for his headache, which is not raging, just irritating, and it would also be a good time to clean out his medicine chest, to throw away all the things of which he no longer knows the use: whether for itching or for acid in the urine, for heart troubles or for constipation, for gnat bites or for sunburn, etc.

The headache is gradually fading.

He cannot resist looking at his watch again; it reads seven minutes past six.

This evening will also pass.

He has plenty of time.

Ten years ago and in sunshine, it had been just a pleasant walk, an outing of two and a half hours there and back.

Nobody will ever hear of his outing.

--man emerged in the Holocene.

Geiser wants no visitors.

Geiser knows the year of his birth and the first names of his parents, also his mother's maiden name, and the name of the street in which he was born, the number of the house—

That was seventy years ago.

Nature needs no names. Geiser knows that. The rocks do not need his memory.

Apoplexy, known popularly as a stroke, is a sudden loss of brain function, combined usually with paralysis and loss of consciousness, and often accompanied by loss of speech. The usual cause is the bursting of a cerebral blood vessel due to arteriosclerosis or hypertension, and the extent of the hemorrhage may be slight, or located in parts of the brain where its presence gives rise to little disturbance. Unless the vital areas of the base of the brain have been affected, in which case, death is likely to occur within a short period, a fair measure of recovery is possible. Another cause of the loss of brain function is the blocking of a cerebral blood vessel, preventing blood from reaching the brain. The paralysis usually affects only one side of the body. The paralyzed limbs are at first slack and immobile, but eventually they pass into a spastic stage.

In August and September, at night, there are shooting stars to be seen, or one hears the call of a little owl.