Travel as a Western cultural practice is nowhere more clearly revealed than in the titles of travel books. Promising both danger and safety (the reader sets off into the unknown accompanied by a knowledgeable authority), travel book titles walk a delicate line between authenticity and caricature. How far away must we go to have crossed into the danger zone? (What exactly does it mean to say that we are going ‘nowhere’, as in Greater Nowheres, Miles from Nowhere, Forty Miles from Nowhere, and A Thousand Miles from Nowhere? If we go nowhere, doesn’t this mean that we’ve stayed home, as in ‘Where did you go?’/’Nowhere’, meaning ‘To the fridge, the bathroom, and Wal Mart’? How do we get there? (What is the most authentic method of travelling to Nowhere – by camel, truck, motorcycle, ultralight, horse, yak, on foot?)
Once the traveler found civilizations radically different from his own awaiting him at the end of his journey. Now he finds impoverished imitations of his own, set off here and there by the relics of a discarded past.”—Clifford Geertz, The Cerebral Savage: On the Work of Claude Levi-Strauss

When I speak of the [...]

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Follow me on Twitter here. The Romance of Traveling. “Once the traveler found civilizations radically different from his own awaiting him at the end of his journey. Now he finds impoverished imitations of his own, Among the victims are the wife and two daughters of Joe Carpenter, a Los Angeles Post crime reporter. A year after the crash, still gripped by an almost paralyzing grief, Joe encounters a woman named Rose, who claims to have survived the crash. She holds out the possibility of a secret that will bring Joe peace of mind. But before he can ask any questions, she slips away. Driven now by rage (have the authorities withheld information?) and a hope almost as unbearable as his grief (if there is one survivor, are there others?), Joe sets out to find the mysterious woman. The title “Sole Survivor” doesn’t only point at this woman, but also at Joe himself. He’s the one left behind, the only one of his family still alive.