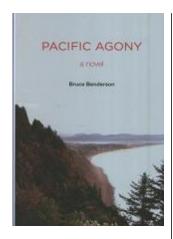
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"I gazed out my window on the sea of dark clouds as my shaking seat jiggled the image into double vision; and I pictured the flat, geometrically divided western landscapes below, wondering why anyone still bothered to travel in this cookie-cutter country. What was the use of visiting identical reproductions of the same Wal-Mart or adding new encounters of equally streamlined mentality to the roster? As far as I was concerned, everything had been shorn from the same cloth, woven for years in the drab bungalows of suburban North America."

_from Pacific Agony

Depressed, cynical, and subversive, East Coaster Reginald Fortiphton has been brought to Seattle by a West Coast publishing company that wants him to write a guide to the American Northwest. His job is to travel, on their dime, from Eugene, Oregon, to Vancouver, shining an admiring light on the region_which the publishers feel has been neglected by the New York publishing monopoly. Pacific Agony is his ironic attempt to fufill his assignment. To ensure that the project goes as planned, the very respectable Narcissa Whitman Applegate_notable member of the Willamette-Columbia Historical Legion and the Daughters of the Oregon Trail Historical Committee (and named after a nineteenth century missionary who was famously killed by Oregon's Nez Percé Indians)_is asked to annotate the manuscript. Her notes at the bottom of the page become progressively more outraged as the alienated Reginald's mock travel narrative skewers the region with merciless political observations_while he spirals into a depressive mania.

This acidic, satirical novel hilariously eviscerates contemporary American culture at the same time that it exposes some of the darker motivations of American middle-class liberalism.

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