Holidays – Cornwall, then Wales, and all the great stretches of motorway in between. The kids are on their iPhones, showing each other pictures of themselves on Instagram that they took 30 seconds ago – 20 seconds ago – now, right now.

I cannot believe the kids are looking at their phones, rather than out of the window. Out of the window is astonishing.

“Look! Look at those windmills!” I keep shouting, pointing at what would have blown my mind when I was their age. There are vast, handsome wind turbines lining the cold corridors of the M4, the M5, the A30, the A470. Alone, in clusters, massed, and marching across the tops of ridgeways and mountains. Each one, 200 ft of sheer metal muscle, scything at the sky like the Seattle Space Needle angling for a fight.

Turbines are the recurrent markers in exposed places now, our odd companions whenever the landscape veers towards the bleak. Huge, white priests, praying above the tiny cars on the tarmac below. If I’d seen just one of these in 1986, I would have freaked out. Back then, the tallest thing you’d see from a car window was a tree, or maybe a large dog. Do the children know how amazing they are?

“Yeah, yeah. It’s a windmill,” Nancy confirms, when I make her look at the 300 ft-high giants that stand guard over Bristol, facing out into the Bristol Channel, stealing the breath out of Wales. “Big. What ‘evs.”

The thing is: I can understand why the children are off-hand about them. They are, after all, teenagers. Their job is to be studiedly unimpressed by everything, lest anyone discover their most passionately concealed secret: they are so terribly, terribly young.

But what I can’t understand is any adult who dislikes turbines. Even more – becomes convulsed with hatred for them, raging against wind power as others might rage against cancer, or locusts. Every possible antagonys toward them seems bizarre.

To argue that they’re ugly recalls people arguing that the young Barbra Streisand was ugly. It may not be to your taste, dude, but many of us have pictures on the wall, and would travel miles for a glimpse, and swoon, just a little, when we see them at sunset. Children still buy bright paper windmills to top their sandcastles; adults dream of living in Caractacus Potts’ windmill home.

Then there’s, “Ban turbines – turbines kill wildlife,” championed by those who have previously kept their mad passion for nature on the down-low, and have never followed up their concerns by suggesting Britain outlaw pet cats, which kill an estimated 275 million wild animals a year – and all without powering a single dishwasher, to boot.

The third complaint is equally odd: to argue turbines are so ugly that they ruin the countryside is, I think, to betray a quiet, unrecognised self-loathing of your own species. The British countryside is all a confection of man. The sheep-stripped hills of Wales and Scotland, the fishing harbours of Devon and Cornwall, the patchwork, hedge-hemmed quilt of Gloucestershire, Shropshire and the Cotswolds – all made by us. All fashioned, by us, out of what was before: forests filled with wolves, and the sea bashing at rocks, and neither place good for people to live. We have always done with the land what we want, and need, to survive, and is there anything right now we want, or need, more than these white, humming windmills across our hills and beside our roads, giving us not just our power, but our freedom?

Because that is what are you looking at when you look at a wind turbine – freedom. A certain measure of freedom from the bloody, terrifying events exploding in Russia, Ukraine and the Middle East. While this country’s energy supply rests on careful diplomatic negotiations – pipelines across Afghanistan and Europe, nuclear power stations built by China, careful meetings with cruel rulers, turning a blind eye to the abuse of human rights – the potential for Britain to do good in the world is horribly compromised. We cannot speak freely – we cannot be wholly moral – when we know that unwelcome honesty with another country might result in our streetlights going off, our cities going dark in winter. And that’s before we talk about the morality of dirty fuel and global warming: all those floodlights in Glasgow during the Commonwealth Games, flooding the very Pacific island nations that had come to compete against us.

So that’s why I love wind turbines and their cousins – those fields full of solar panels, basking, like lizards, in the sun. It’s not just that they’re sexy, nerdy inventions, rigged up to catch the explosive energy that has been swirling around us since the Big Bang. It’s that they will allow us to be better people, too.

**The following two passages consider the impact wind turbines have on the landscape.**

**Passage 1**

***In the first passage, Caitlin Moran considers why she loves wind turbines.***