

NEUE ALTE BRÜCKE

AT:

Flying over the channel, what looks like a flock of birds are really aquatic wind turbines that appear as watery white crosses, or anime angels crossing their arms. The horizon disappears at dusk, a weird effect of spatial disorientation, the same as when JFK Jr. sailed his plane into another arm of the Atlantic, mistaking salt for sky.

I check into the cheapest hostel in London which turns out to be an unofficial halfway house in the backyard of the Holland Park Opera, so the live score to *Pagliacci* becomes backdrop to a guy trying to deal diamonds nobody wants. It reminds me of a public storage unit I squatted in my early twenties, watching tourists take photos of the facade as our friends died downstairs of fentanyl overdoses, and say, *there goes the neighborhood!* (..)

The book, the show, the hostel, all sort of beautifully collapse in on themselves like folds in a robe or a rose, or how similar in characteristic decadence is to punk, safety pins sparkling just the same as stones, mutually jubilant in their celebration of nothing, fists ripped through silk gloves - both having shown up late to say in their own special way, Mom's dead, God's dead, *let's party*. But decadence has its sincerity too, like the sharp toothed sweetness of Club Kid rhetoric, always a little acid in its spectacular embrace of impoverishment and faithfulness to the present, with a smile you could mistake for a snarl, as if to say, *if you've got a hunchback, throw some glitter on it and go dancing!*

There's no plot to *Against Nature*, it mostly describes a guy furnishing his apartment, but with such berserk aesthetic determination the rooms become worlds unto themselves, reproducing and superseding experience, collapsing nature and artifice in increasingly embarrassing, tumbling paroxysms. In its most famous scene - a tortoise suffocates under the weight of its own shell, too heavily set with eclectic jewels, subject to the owner's struggles to make a rug look less gauche. The narrator opens a window - puzzled at snow, having lost track of the seasons inside his rooms and concerning the tortoise's death, couldn't care less. The site of indifference is not what Decadence necessarily *is*, but suggests where it may *be* - because it's not the cruelty of the narrator that's impressive, but his absolute inability to distinguish art and life. The protagonist's ambitions often fly so high they become structurally unsound, and the vaulted ceilings and buttresses of the Gothic cathedrals were invented for this reason - intended to lift the cathedrals vertically ever closer to God. It just makes me think about skyscrapers.

Top bunk I can extend my arm $\frac{3}{4}$ in front of me before touching the ceiling. I crack a chocolate orange against it and think about the show. The structure is the outline of the tortoise where it collapses on the rug and is somewhat true to the dimensions of the hole in the fence to get the most perfect bird's eye view of the performance and it could be rooms the shapes you see after you look into the sun, or sort of a constellation with the artists as stars in a quasi cosmic kind of spiral - and it's all living in a reflection in one jewel set on the shell of the tortoise. Its built thinking about decadence as operative, or how to survive after the supposed end of meaning, with works which take the small parts of life and really show them as spectacular.

The chocolate melts and it's tough to dislodge the once perfectly segmented pulp of its die impressed parts. There are little curtains that frame each bunk and everything including the steel bed frames is this deep mauve color, which in the pictures read girls boarding school-ish, but when laying in it, speaks hearse. I get into a conversation with a woman who wants a cigarette and I promise with no intention of following through to fix her website for selling used luxury handbags. She's a kind of a fallen party girl aristocrat on the homeless circuit, and in her I see so much of myself, and we hide both our bottles, even if mine doesn't even have alcohol, and her son is coming to town so she has to pretend like it's all okay and decadence means to fall - so how about for the show we drop the ceiling?

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J/MH:

This might seem like a digression. But recently, I dreamed I was a waitress in Montana at her own luncheonette in the middle of a cornfield surrounded by the impossible yet unbreakable, casual kindness & unbelievable love of all of my life's worst enemies. When I awoke laughing to myself at all my incredible jokes & the vision faded of the cheering customers who just adored me so much, I eventually fell into a nagging silent depression. Her life was sort of better than mine even though I was happy for her in my way. In her utter remoteness— the sovereignty of her specificity— she had something surreal, almost screensaver-like, a sort of puppet world made of candy where she could effectively be more human than *me*. There was an eerie decadence to her excess of pleasure, her simpleness which was genuinely complex in ways so niche down to its minutia which — through forgetting almost all of it— annexed me out of my own psyche, such was the gravitas of her world's boundary. She was sort of living an an *anti-Au Rebours*, as allied to nature in so much as to veer into the preternatural, a sort of deviant form of normaling— a decadent übermensch— self-indulgently happy to the point of almost meaning to inflict misery upon me from within me, the most brutally incestuous of lesbian acts.

By contrast, I've always had nightmares every night since as early as I can remember. There's one where I am dragged down a Paris street by a mob into a mysterious kill zone where a series of sonic bombs are detonated upon me. Once unconscious the assailants drill holes into my skull & begin to fill my head with a neon substance from a syringe as they simultaneously violate me in unspeakably creative ways. The music of the dream is more robust & complex than any I've ever known in life, an almost metal yet ecstatic rendition of Albert Morris' *Feelings* but absurdly multi-dimensional to the point of almost being vaguely evil. As to be expected, when I awoke from *that* I was distressed but also strangely burdened with an overwhelming sense of unity with the world & somehow also with hope. I want to underline something about the innate omniscience of the principle of decadence no matter the particulars of how anyone is living or what is being experienced, that both dreams were inherently the same. On God—I'm reminded of the monologue from *Adaptation* where Nick Cage stands up in his screenwriting class & asks;

“What if a writer is attempting to create a story where nothing much happens, where people don't change? They don't have any epiphanies. They struggle & are frustrated, & nothing is resolved?”

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