

On the (English translated) script of Eric Rohmer's 'Nadja in Paris' (1964)

Nadja in Paris

~~I live at the Cité Universitaire, at the Germany House.
I'm American and Yugoslavian, born in Belgrade, American by adoption.
The Cité Universitaire reminds me of American high schools.
It has the same relaxed atmosphere.
Another difference:
There are people here from all over the world.
The grass is not off limits, which is rare in France.
You can walk and sit on it.
There's a large park with playing fields and tennis courts.
I don't participate in any sport, except for track.
Well, I run.
The trouble is we're so comfortable here, we don't want to leave.
Everything I need for work or play can be found right here.
Entertainment abounds, such as concerts, and films.
Each house has its own theater troupe.
This one is rehearsing a play by Lope de Vega.
—I told you to wait until he finished his line.
The Latin Quarter is five minutes away by subway.
I'm writing a thesis on Proust.
That's the official reason for my stay in Paris.
It allows me the freedom to organize my time as I wish.
Actually, my visits to the Sorbonne are short and infrequent.
Before returning to the Cité Universitaire, I like to stroll through the Left Bank, full of antique shops and bookstores.
What amazes me in France are the open-air book displays.
You can browse freely without anyone bothering you.
Then I sit at a table outside a café.
The French love to linger here for hours.
I stay only for a while.
- Is this what you ordered?
- Yes, thank you.
I have no specific aim. I just sit.
I'm not waiting for anyone. I simply want to be there.
I don't read. I observe.
I observe the street,
the way people walk,
the way they look at things.
I know Saint-Germain-des-Prés well.
It's the neighborhood that first caught my eye when I arrived in France.
I suppose it's become gentrified since Juliette Greco's day,
but you see an interesting mix of faces there.
I feel more at ease in Montparnasse.
The place is nothing special, but it's a nice crowd.
People come here to talk,
not to see and be seen.
A certain intimacy is quickly established.
I've made a lot of friends here among the bohemians, painters, and writers, both Parisian and foreign.~~

It's easy to talk ~~the night away.~~

The people I spend time with here are usually ~~older than me~~
and unconcerned with the ~~petty~~ worries of student life.

~~It was they who introduced me to modern art.~~

For me, ~~who never made it past Picasso's Blue Period,~~
it's a bit overwhelming.

I'm intrigued by ~~all~~ the theories,
but in the end, they don't really influence me.

I head straight for what I like,
leaving the rest to other people.

Some things I don't think I'll ever be able to take ~~seriously.~~

But all these people in ~~Saint-Germain and Montparnasse,~~ no matter how different they may be, belong to
the same world.

I often feel the need to ~~get away from them~~
and escape the narrow confines of Intellectual Paris.

I know there was a park at the far end of Paris.

I went there one day on my own, ~~and I return from time to time.~~

~~It's the Buttes-Chaumont.~~

I like this place ~~because it's empty and wild.~~

~~I know the streams are man-made and the rocks are cement,~~ but it doesn't matter.

Nearby is the ~~working-class~~ neighborhood of Belleville.

I've begun to explore it, ~~spending entire days there at a time.~~

When I'm hungry, I head for a pastry shop.

- I'd like that one.

~~-What's it called?~~

~~-A briwat.~~

- How much?

- Sixty cents.

One thing that's always surprise me about the French is the importance they attach to food.

At noon, you must eat.

~~Once I heard a student spend five minutes describing to a friend the incredible steak he'd had in a~~
~~restaurant the night before.~~

I'm drawn to the outdoor markets.

You usually only see the elderly there.

This part of Paris is looked down upon ~~because it lacks historical interest.~~

I like its ~~peeling signs,~~ its small, tree-filled squares.

This ~~old lady~~ comes here everyday at the same time to sit on the same bench ~~and read a tattered~~
~~newspaper retrieved from a garbage can.~~

~~-A glass of red.~~

~~-That's no good. Bad for the liver. You shouldn't drink it.~~

~~-I'm used to it.~~

~~-It doesn't bother me either.~~

Sometimes a sudden storm keeps me from leaving.

~~-Come on, it's legit. My wife and kids will be there. You don't work on Sundays.~~

~~-It's on Sunday?~~

~~-I live close by. I've got a car. It'll be fun. Will you come?~~

People know I'm a foreigner here, but they accept me.

They don't see me ~~as an outsider.~~

I discovered a world ~~without problems,~~ a simpler world, more typically French.

It ~~really~~ helped me let go of the ~~superficial~~ things in ~~my~~ life.

What typifies Paris is its endless variety.

You can easily slip from one milieu to another.

It's a city that's ~~truly~~ open, where you ~~end up~~ learning more about yourself than you learn about the city.

I don't intend to stay, of course.

But I hope I never lose touch with Paris.

My stay here will leave its mark on me.

That's not surprising, because this just might be the most important period in one's life, when one shakes off past influences and one's true personality is formed.