

## GIVE INTO YOUR WANDERLUST

I had to visit a Parisian arcade, one of those famous covered inner streets. I decided not to read any information about them before going. I chose a little bit randomly where I was going to give into my wanderlust. That's how I finally ended up in the Passage des Panoramas.

On the way to the arcade, I had to go through a first one, the Passage Verdeau. I was caught by surprise and didn't realize at first that it was not the Passage des Panoramas. I started to wander from this point.

For many reasons, I had to go on this *trip* on a Sunday night. I think this part was what gave this adventure its mysterious and intriguing atmosphere. It was as if I was travelling in space and in time. It's like we took a picture of a moment in the arcades to be frozen in time.

It was like a flurry of different emotions, from amusement, fear, and surprise to nostalgia.

All of this happened, and I hadn't yet arrived at the Passage des Panoramas.

I was surprised to see this sign... I knew that somewhere, someone would be selling a genuine French beret. But it's so much of a cliché I didn't think anyone was selling them. I came across this reindeer skull. It's surprising, intriguing just hanging above our heads, with its antlers pointing at you. And it was merely the first surprise. This skull is on top of a shop where they sell canes and umbrellas. Even the doorknob is a cane! It was all folkloric yet mysterious, I could see expensive umbrellas, and carved cane knobs ... I didn't stay long at the storefront.

When I turned around, all I could see were saturated colors, miniature objects and an invitation to play. A display call "*Pain d'Épice*" (Gingerbread), was full of tiny characters and landscapes. I wanted to buy something, maybe a miniature bathroom or kitchen, even though I knew I would look at it for 15 minutes and then leave it on a shelf.

I was surprised – not in a pleasant way – when I saw the inside of this shop. My aunt used to have a mask like the one that jumped to my attention. When I had to walk past the wall where it was hanging, I had to look at my feet out of fear.

All these different pieces of art, with portraits of people staring right at you, were in the same shop – how creepy! I wanted to try the whole "eyes following you" thing. Even through the pictures I felt as if I was being watched.

I had to look away. Wasn't I surprised to see a shop open and what's more, a Marks & Spencer food store. With its bright artificial light, all I could think was "What are you doing here?". It was the symbol of our modern-day consumerism lost in another period.

Suddenly, I saw the street.

The noise, the bright artificial lights, the passersby, the crowded street... It hit me all at once. I then realized how quiet and peaceful the arcade was. I didn't recognize where I was at first. I felt lost and out of place.

Soon enough, I found the second arcade. The first thing I saw was this train-like place. I couldn't quite figure out what it was. As it turned out, it's a restaurant. And like everything else, it looked like it came from another time. It was as if I was setting off, yet again, on another trip when I got into the arcade.

To top it all off, one of the window displays made me wonder if someone was going to pop out toward me – the owners, maybe.

This part made me feel alone and vulnerable, for the first time during this adventure. I wanted to run away, to get out. I finally found the lights of the Asian restaurant.

I was back on the streets but this wanderlust wasn't finished. I was lost. And I liked what I stumbled on: bright and colorful places, restaurants, bars and streets. I even came across *Les Folies Bergères*.

In the end, I escaped reality for a while and thought a lot about consumerism. I think our supermarkets are taking away the pleasure of discovering new things, of taking the time to choose what you want to get for yourself or for your family. Nowadays technology should help us come closer, not keep us far apart from each other. This excerpt from an article we read in class sums up this idea:

*“The essay rethinks technology as reconciliatory rather than destructive, not a means for conquering nature but an instrument for mastering “the relationship between nature and man.”*

You should use everything in your power to improve our society, our environment, our daily life instead of letting “progress” ruin relationships or imprison our minds, filling us with thoughts of materialistic and fake desires. I am reminded of what the Angelos Novus meant for Benjamin.

*“Angelos Novus shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history.... But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned., while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.”*

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