

Wallace's *Infinite Jest* first took me by surprise. I was not sure how people would survive by others' perspiration. After a bit of research and knowing that it is a postmodern encyclopedic novel, and is set in a near-future in which the Gregorian calendar, everything started to make more sense. First of all, it is interesting to me how Wallace plays with the street names and locations in Boston, such as "Central Squar" to indicate a kind of alternative reality of the setting. Nevertheless, I am a bit lost to the larger connection that this excerpt from *Infinite Jest* has with cities or psychogeography.

Confessions of an English Opium Eater, on the other hand, presents a dual view of "confession"--the danger of opium and its harmful effects, as well as the pleasures derived from taking opium. The book is ripe with descriptions of the "wonders" of the opium, such as the following:

Oh! just subtle and mighty opium! That to the hearts of rich and poor alike, for the wounds that will never heal, and for 'the pangs that may tempt the spirit to rebel', bringest an assuaging balm; Eloquent opium! That with thy potent rhetoric stealest away the purposes of wrath; and to the guilty man, for one night givest back the hopes of his youth, and hands washed pure of blood...

I have to admit that it took me by surprise that this book is nonfiction--it is an actual description of the experiences of addiction of the author, De Quincy, himself. But De Quincy is not only addicted to opium but also the city, London. He often wanders around London at night--he very much enjoys those wanderings. However, during those wanderings, he often feels sad when visiting places where the poor live. Opium subsequently becomes a comfort that he seeks afterwards. In a sense, it is also a love and hate relationship similar to that of taking opium. The contradictory feelings about the city and his wanderings are reflected through his experience with opium. Eventually, he decides to flee from the overwhelming London:

But now, at last, came over me, from the mere excess of bodily sufferings and mental disappointments, a frantic and rapturous re-agency. In the United States the case is well known, and many times has been described by travellers, of that furious instinct which, under a secret call for saline variations of diet, drives all the tribes of buffaloes for thousands of miles to the common centre of the 'Salt-licks'. Under such a compulsion does the locust, under such a compulsion does the lemming, traverse its mysterious path. They are deaf to danger. Deaf to the cry of battle, deaf to the trumpets of death. Let the sea cross their path, let armies with artillery bar the road, even these terrific powers can arrest only by destroying; and the most frightful abysses, up to the very last menace of engulfment, up to the very instant of absorption, have no power to alter or retard the line of their inexorable advance.

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