



Konrad Zukowski
After Sunset the Rain would Stop

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Words: Agnes Gryczkowska

Under the decadence-ridden coverings, a recumbent figure with erect limbs ejects. With it, a thousand shapes come out—sharp elbows, razor-edged chins, elongated fingers—reaching out for something, then nothing, then something again—for a cigarette, an oyster, their lover’s chest, a gun, a fork, for all the time lost and all the time never had. The fingers suspended in the eternal state of playing Chopin’s nocturnes. The songs of the night, or bell canto for piano—with all their tensions, which R played relentlessly for a few months after arriving in Paris, to then tenderly capture them in iron blues, crimson lakes, ultramarine violets and Payne’s greys. Paris was dull and dirty. The air pressure was low, suffocating. Week by week, however, R wove a spider web—luring his muses and lovers in, to chew them up and spit them back out, exaggerating their erectile movements, exploding their bodies fecundated by the harsh reality. Often, he would receive them naked, on their knees—princes, poets, loiterers, petty thieves, priests. He would tenderly press his brush to the canvas and his cheek against an erect penis. Over time, R created a chronicle of character and scenes from life, with every one of them being a love letter—full of touches of despair, hope, and nonchalant fantasies of dying in black leather pants. R never wanted to present externality as an expansive force, but made of it a nothingness, a shadow—visible appearance of secrets unites. He twists the natural movements of things, of bodies—transforming and expanding the forces of gravity. A leg surges stiff like a clumsy folk dancer and an arm goes flaccid and quickly rigid as if glued to the air, like a lily that wilts, dries and hardens at the same time. Every time the limb falls beyond its own elongation, the spirit feels beyond its own comprehension. Every time the stretched finger taps, the dark sky opens. R was awoken in the middle of the night by his lover’s nightmares. He saw him run out of the room screaming: “There are wild swans at your door, wild swans at your door!”. Running into the night, naked, sobbing. His legs snaking through the shadows, quickly turning into nothingness on his way towards Notre Dame’s Saint Mary’s Lake. His lucidity is like a nakedness. It glorious immodesty bathing in the light of the moon. “The swan, borne up by its mass of white feathers, cannot go to the bottom of the water to find mud.”¹

¹ Jean Genet, *Our Lady of the Flowers*, 1944 (London, Faber & Faber Limited, 2019), p. 34

The spell can only be broken by true love.

Adagio pas de deux on the wrong side, with the wrong partner, in the very heart of evil.

R's lover is watching Swan Queen as she's doomed to death and the prince commits suicide.

He joins the darkness to the whiteness of swans.

Does death come alone?

The pain is still fresh. The paint is still wet.

As R's lover is pirouetting along the Seine, R is at sat on the edge of the bed, looking at Tour Saint Jacques visible from his window. His world is spinning melancholically. His fingers are reaching for the tower, squashing and contorting it into soft pleasures, into memories so malleable and elastic. The pain is no longer rock-solid.

There is a great number of suspicious noises in his head, rhythms and melodies. Strong accents unsystematically placed on the second or third beat.

A wideness opening and closing, and within it couples are dancing Mazurek. Dancing, dancing in frenzy.

Dancing.

Arthur Rubinstein is laughing hysterically. His laughter, more and more distant thickens the darkness, until he himself grows cold. He slips through the ether.

"Gesi za woda, kaczk za woda..."

Oberek, obereczek, mazurek, mazureczek, kujawiak, kujawiaczek, pójdze Marys ze mna, hoc, hoc."

R's dreams with filaments as fine and melancholic as the lines of that spider's web which he has composed. Images pour through his mouth. His lovers are cold, his companions are tired. Bathed in dismal smokey fog.

At the very source of those images seem to be a will to compel reality to manifest the great social hierarchy from which his subjects have all been excluded.

He employs their gloomy souls and wastes their body's force.

Slipstreams of memory slipping away, bruised by R's purples and greys.

Flesh and bones distorted, thin, bulging, stretched, motionless and pale, at climax lit up by a quiet ecstasy, enveloped in supernatural nimbus, like a cloak, with their faces reflected in those black leather pants.

Wrists cramped after playing piano and giving pleasure, now holding onto the last dry drop of coffee.

Nocturne in E-flat major, op.15 no.2, until Paris grows cold and forever after.