

August 07, 2023

# At the British Library (London pt. 1)

by Amy Grandvoinet

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Dear friends,

If you write for the LRB, you might title a short 'pithy' article 'At the [Such and Such]'. This tiny-letter (my Tiny Letter spelling of choice I've now decided) is titled 'At the British Library', because last week I was At the British Library with fellow-duchess of research and whimsy enthusiast named J. J gave me some academic writing to read which included talk on the naming of friends' names in poetry. A curious politics. For me, it is a consideration that comes up in the writing of these tiny letters.

After numerous white coffees full of numerous white sugar-sachets on trains between Aberystwyth and London Euston (1 million hours), passing either real

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the British Library, there are various tools for weighting down book-pages. There are not various tools for weighting down book-pages at the National Library of Wales, where I recently went with E, though we *did* remark - *regarde!* - the quantity and variety of good fake plants. My belief is that the British Library is relatively plant-less, faux or actual. But J will provide greater authority on such matters.

At the British Library there is a big metal book-chair with a prison chain attached. Of big ambiguous sayings. You drink water from little paper cups, triangular. The floor is cool and grand. People steal expensive maps in their laptops - the rumour's *on fire*. The snacks are a manna from Knowledge Heaven: you'd be a fool not to eat them. Bread-crumbing is a new term I learnt here. J makes excellent quesadillas. A chippy opposite the Norfolk Arms, where banquet-invitations are graciously extended, does excellent bouquets de chips. At the Royal George in Deptford, you may not use your phone. At the Lord John Russel on Marchmont St., you can talk at wooden tables. At the Euston Tap on Euston Road, you can go upstairs. A milky moon is in Deptford, and many moons in the pages. At St. Johns Tube Station, you must walk over a bridge and then pass through a large gate. There is a similar situation leaving the canal in Manchester, in fact. Coffee in little hexagonal black cups, here as there. And gems are on faces. Café is the same word as face, did you know that? You have seen Marina Herlop and her magic snail music.

There is astro turf, and it is great. A few days later, I'll read about BioPuff. The Shard whirrs at the Platform Edge.

Near your house, there is a small park in a Church which is populated by idiosyncratic dogs. There are sunflowers about. The park is the picture.

J and I, and J's friends N and N, party into August with artificial scotch-eggs and cocktail-sausages obtained just down the road. At the British Library, we take breaks upon large warm stones where you can sit with your feet crossed. I look up to that window. At the British Library I ask the lady in the gift-shop whether you can buy chocolate there, and she tells me to go to a special Nisa down an alley-way just across Chalton Street, which of course J already knew about, and where they will still sell you Freddos.

At the British Library, you can spend long days learning. After the British Library, you can party. But you can party *At* the British Library, also, always.

Best wishes until the next installment,  
Amy Grandvoinet x