

Plato's Cave

by John Olson

Mick Jagger and I strolled rue Gabrielle in Montmartre. Our conversation spread from apples to shellfish. We stopped for some oysters. Do you remember a time when books were venerated, I asked? I remember a time, he said, when rock and roll was a fetus in the tank of a motorcycle. Then Eddie Cochran appeared and everything exploded. But what about books? I love books, he said. I dig Apollinaire, man, and Rimbaud and Shelley and Blaise Cendrars. There was a whisper of ice and fire in his voice, as always. And that play by Ionesco, *The Bald Soprano*. I dig that. Last night I had a dream about the Battle of Agincourt, he confessed. All the armor and corpses and horses lie under a thick blanket of snow. I felt my fingers thaw on an open fire. I wondered how I'd managed to survive. I saw my reflection in a puddle. There was blood all over my face. And a fat man named Ancient Pistol was pulling on my sleeve. But I was alive. I awoke with a craving for pretzels. You know? Like those pretzels they sell in front of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan? We continued our walk and entered a dimly lit music store near the Place Pigalle. It's dark in here, I said. It's like being in a cave. There is no darkness like the darkness of a cave, he said. I think that's where it all started. Rock and roll? I asked. No, he said, art. Art comes out of darkness. I felt a hand on my shoulder. John, John, wake up. You were asleep. You slept through *Skyfall*. What happened? Bond killed the bad guy. England will survive. M died, though. Judi Dench? You're kidding? We got up from our seats. I dreamt we were in Montmartre. You bought a balalaika. Ate oysters. And craved pretzels. Mick groped his way to the end of the aisle, brushing knees, making apologies, grinning broadly as credits rolled. I followed, still groggy, bracing myself for that afternoon light.

