

A Perfect Blindness

W. Lance Hunt

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A Perfect Blindness is a grunge rock fantasy with an operatic sense of drama.

Is it possible to achieve fame and glory without letting go of your humanity? This familiar question is engaged by W. Lance Hunt in his novel, *A Perfect Blindness*, where the volatile emotions and hard living of the grunge rock scene—as well as a suspicious death—raise the stakes in a struggle for success.

It's 1988 in Chicago, and a new band is fighting for the break they know they deserve. The group, Mercurial Visions, is started by two friends who leave behind their college hometown's bars for a shot in the big city. Thanks to Jonathan's sex-fueled genius and Scott's almost disturbingly relentless pursuit of his vision, the group quickly makes a name for itself. But the qualities that have taken them this far also threaten to destroy all that they've achieved.

Jonathan may be a proto-Cobain, but he's unable to work without a muse, moving from one tortured relationship to another. Scott is driven not just by his love of music, but also by a haunting memory of a childhood friend. His internalized homophobia produces an obsessive, cruel fixation on Jonathan.

From the first page, it's clear that the author understands his subject matter. His sentences are packed with references to the streets of Chicago, popular and underground music, and an insider's knowledge of the technical side of the life of a musician. These details establish the novel as one in which the setting is just as important as the characters' inner lives.

With a realism that borders on unnerving, the book also captures the industry's rampant misogyny and homophobia. This will be familiar not just to music historians, but to contemporary fans and industry insiders as well.

As the men drink and smoke while brooding over their latest emotional injuries, women function as sex objects, described in terms of their desirability. They are always subject to the outbursts of the two friends. Even the suspicious death of the friend of Jonathan's girlfriend, and the trauma it inflicts on her, is overshadowed by Jonathan and Scott's obsessive relationship with their music.

The nature of the protagonists shapes the novel's structure. This is particularly true in its pacing, as Hunt jumps from scenes covering the band's progress at a frantic pace to moody, introspective scenes where brief moments drag on in emotional angst. This oscillation between speed and malaise creates an unorthodox narrative that feels like a study of the classic trope of the suffering artist.

Littered with cigarette butts, vodka bottles, and a dead body, *A Perfect Blindness* is a grunge rock fantasy. With its operatic sense of drama, it is an escape story ideal for those who still live out their rock star dreams whenever they close their eyes.

CONSTANCE AUGUSTA A. ZABER (July 14, 2017)

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