

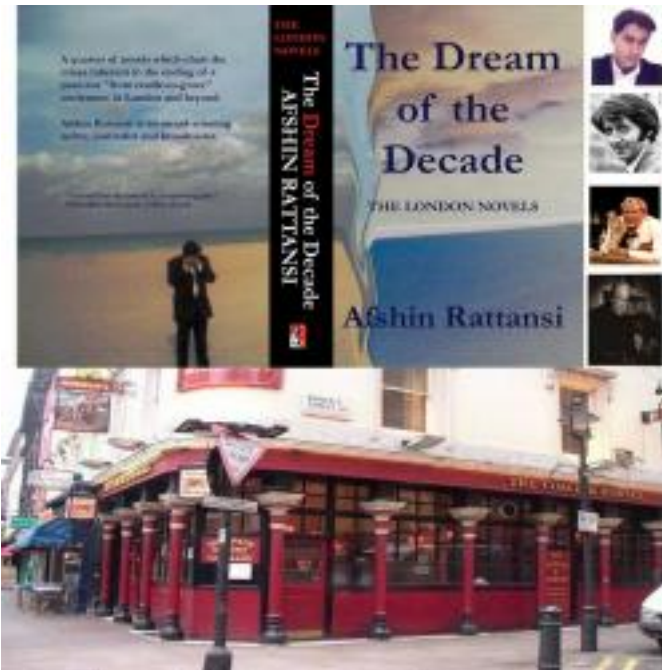
Tom Conti, Jeffrey Bernard and Afshin Rattansi - Revived in London's Soho

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Tom Conti stars in the play Jeffrey Bernard is Unwell, set in the Soho pub, "The Coach and Horses" which is to sell "The Dream of the Decade - The London Novels", by award-winning writer, Afshin Rattansi.

Like many writers and artists who frequented Soho's The Groucho Club and The Coach and Horses, Afshin Rattansi first met Jeffrey Bernard in the 1980s. A revival of the Keith Waterhouse play starring Tom Conti in which Bernard is the lead character, talking about life at the Coach has just opened in London's West End, coinciding with the announcement that Rattansi's novel "The Dream of the Decade" will be on sale at the bar.

The play is named after the line that often appeared in the UK's Spectator magazine where Bernard's column, "Low Life" would have appeared had Bernard not imbibed too much to complete his piece. Rattansi recalls Bernard explaining to him that he only drank to stay the pain of diabetes. "But on a particularly sunny Saturday morning in Groucho's, I asked why he wanted a Vodka Tonic as there was sugar in the Tonic. He told me that sugar in tonic was okay."

The Dream of the Decade includes vignettes of characters that frequented Soho in the 1980s and is a quartet in one volume. It was Norman Balon the famous owner of the Coach and Horses up until a few weeks before the revival of the play who said the novel should be sold from behind the bar of the infamous tavern. The new owners of the rapidly changing pub say they will carry on the tradition. "The Dream of the Decade – The London Novels", which is officially to launch in the UK in the winter, is thus available at a special price in the most famous public house in London.

The play, often remembered as a one-man show but in fact packed with characters performed by a versatile supporting cast of four, was a highly successful vehicle for its original star Peter O'Toole, who appeared in the original run at the Apollo Theatre and in a later revival at the Old Vic. 'For the next three months, I'm going to be playing a smoker, a drinker, a womaniser and a gambler - all the good things in life,' says Tom Conti, who at 64 is a year younger than Bernard was when he died.

Waterhouse's Bernard is a feckless, irresponsible and self-indulgent drunk, who lurches from one pointless bohemian distraction to another without a care in the world. He is also charming, loyal to his friends, generous of spirit, enormously witty, without malice or shallow media cynicism. The play is a hymn to a beautiful loser, a free spirit, enslaved by the spirits you pay for.

In the "Dream of the Decade" characters are the same even if thematically there are deeper historical resonances with changing British and U.S. culture. The London of "Dream" is far more inclusive than Waterhouse's Bernard's London.

The Dream of the Decade is published in the U.S. by Amazon.com and is available at the Coach and Horses as well as online.

Tom Conti is starring in the revival of the play "Jeffrey Bernard is Unwell", set in the Coach and Horses, at the Garrick Theatre in London.

The Dream of the Decade -The London Novels by Afshin Rattansi - ISBN: 1-4196-1686-2 BookSurge.com 5341 Dorchester Road, Suite 16, North Charleston, SC 29418 Toll Free: 1-866-308-6235 info@booksurge.com
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