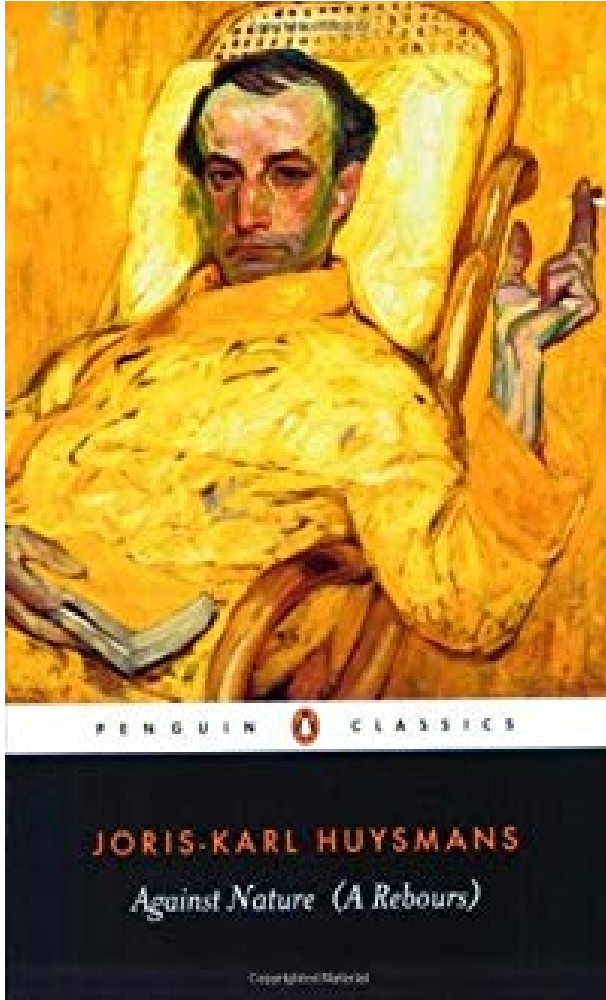


Against Nature



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With a title translated either as *Against Nature* or as *Against The Grain*, this wildly original fin-de-siècle novel follows its sole character, Des Esseintes, a decadent, ailing aristocrat who retreats to an isolated villa where he indulges his taste for luxury and excess. Veering between nervous excitability and debilitating ennui, he gluts his aesthetic appetites with classical literature and art, exotic jewels (with which he fatally encrusts the shell of his tortoise), rich perfumes, and a kaleidoscope of sensual experiences. The original handbook of decadence, *Against Nature* exploded like a grenade (in the words of its author) and has enjoyed a cult readership from its publication to the present day.