

On The Street

Zo d'Axa

2014

Should I say: from Mazas to Jerusalem—and back (via Marseilles, Sainte-Pélagie and the holding prison)? I might think so. On the occasion of Carnot's funeral,¹ I found a handful of comrades in prison who they arrest at every celebration including May Day.

These festivals usually end for them in Mazas.

But the warden called me almost immediately:

I am free.

The idiotic police arrested me too soon. They overstepped their order, which was to leave me at least a few hours of liberty—the ethical time in which to commit a crime. That's what it's like to be in a rush!

The mistake granted me a few days' reprieve. So I left without further hindrance...Around the warden's apartment, the side streets and docks speak softly, and it is like a transition to the clamor of the avenues.

The eighteen months robbed from my life already belong to the past.

Only the present matters.

When he first goes out, a convalescent tends to be flustered. I shook off the lethargy of prison more quickly, because it was so brutal. And now the passersby that I brush against, the noise of the streetcars and the pungent air don't daze me at all. My step is still familiar on the Parisian pavement.

Where will it lead me?

To join the anarchists again?

In the criminal court, in the preliminary investigation as well as the hearings, I scorned this explanation. My words of rage and compassion were characterized as anarchist. I made no comment under threat.

Now I would like to clarify my first thought, the desire I have always had.

It must not sink into vague approximation.

No more grouped into anarchy, than recruited into socialism. Being a free man, a loner who searches beyond; but not bewitched by a dream. Having the ferocity to affirm oneself, outside

¹ The French President assassinated by Italian anarchist Sante Caserio. Caserio's cry before the guillotine was: "Courage, cousins! Long live anarchy!"

of schools and sects:

Outside.

Here I am forced to conclude: I am not an anarchist.

The facetious journalists commented rather superficially, exclaiming: “But they’re inside!” when we were thrown into prison.

And then, above the grayness of all doubts, this appears in the brilliance of vigorous color:

The Will to Live.

And to live outside oppressive laws, outside narrow rules, even outside the ideally formulated theories of the world to come.

To live without believing in a divine paradise or hoping too much for a paradise on earth.

To live for the present, outside of the mirage of future society; to live and to feel this existence in the proud enjoyment of social conflict.

It is more than a state of mind; it is a way of being—here and now.

For too long, men have been led along, being shown the conquest of the heavens. We don’t even want to wait until we’ve conquered the earth.

Let each of us go on for his own pleasure.

And if there are those who get left along the way, if there are those whom nothing can awaken, if there are innate slaves, people who are incurably degraded, so much the worse for them! Understanding this means going on ahead. And joy lies in acting. We don’t have the time to show the way: life is short. Individually, we rush to the attacks that call us.

Someone has spoken of dilettantism. But this isn’t gratuitous, nor platonic: we pay...

And we start again...

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