ALONG A NARROW WAY:

The Anarchist Individualism of E. Armand

A Calendar for 2022

Texts selected and translated by Shawn P. Wilbur

THE CHOICE (1906)

It is necessary to choose: to leave the wide road to others;
To take the rough, isolated, scarcely traveled path,
Where one meets madmen, pioneers and apostles
— A path so dark that the heart trembles, terrified!

Ah! This is not the path that leads towards glory.
The purest efforts remain misunderstood.
It is unrelenting battle, but never victory.
We sow zealously, but we reap scorn!

Foul treason awaits you at every step.
You cry and to your tears the echoes respond: mistrust.
You labor, but in vain: there is never any result,
For the effort must find its compensation in itself.

— It is necessary to choose, you say, and it is true that the day is waning.
There is no greater error than that of putting things off until tomorrow.
But haven't I already chosen? No matter the suffering,
Free, but often weary, mine is the narrow way.

E. Armand.

THE INDIVIDUALIST...

(Original design by Louis Moreau)

...as we understand them, — *our own Individualist* — loves life and strength. They proclaim, passionately, the joy and the pleasure of living. They admit openly that their own happiness is their goal. They are no sort of ascetic and the mortification of the flesh disgusts them. They are passionate. They present themselves openly, their brows crowned with vines, and sing gladly, accompanying themselves on the pan flute. They commune with Nature, whose energy stimulates their instincts and thoughts. They are neither young nor old: they are the age that they feel. And as long as there remains a drop of blood in their veins, they struggle to win or to secure their place in the sun. They do not impose, but neither do they wish to be imposed upon. They renounce masters and gods. They know how to love, but they also know how to hate. They are full of affection for their own, for those in their own circles, but they have a horror of false friends. They are proud and conscious of their own personal dignity. They shape themselves internally and react externally. They gather themselves and spend themselves lavishly. They care nothing for prejudices and laugh at what others say about them. They have a taste for art, the sciences and letters. They love books, study, meditation and labor. They are artisans, not mere laborers. They are generous, sensitive and sensual. They are hungry for new experiences and fresh sensations. But if they advance through life on a chariot fast as a whirlwind, it is on the condition of feeling themselves master of the coursers that carry them along, and it is animated by the will to assign to wisdom and sensual pleasure, as circumstances decree, the share that legitimately falls to each in the course of their own individual evolution.

(1922)

JANUARY 2022

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“MY OWN CAUSE”

(Illustration by Albin)

I am willing to work for one cause and one cause only: MY OWN. I do not wish to sacrifice myself for Principles, to expend my energies in the service of an Ideal. I only wish to concern myself with the triumph of one cause—my own cause—my anarchist cause.

I do not wish to make any effort that is not intended to make me less dependent on everything that dependence implies, that does not aim to free me from everything represented or perpetuated by authority, institutions and men alike.

For my own cause—the cause that I espouse, that to which I give my days, my energy and my whole self—my cause is that of individual autonomy.

And I want my own cause to triumph straight away. And I place myself in a state of constant revolt against everything that tends to diminish, weaker or restrain the surge or development of my personality.

But in order for My cause to be completely affirmed, in order for it to triumph, it would be necessary that there be no instance in which I could be dominated or dominator, exploited or exploiter.

Any voluntary act on my part that would tend to maintain domination and exploitation works in opposition to the triumph of MY OWN CAUSE. So I cannot, knowingly, be an agent of authority, an intermediary of exploitation, or the conscious auxiliary of the least of those agents or the most insignificant of those intermediaries.

As isolated as I may appear, I nevertheless have many friends: all the anti-authoritarians who desire the success of Their Cause; all those who defy authority; all the partisans of the autonomy of the individual; all those who deny or reject social or moral constraints; all those who do not desire the intervention of the State or Society in their personal lives.

All those who struggle for the reduction to nothing of the empire and influence of the powers of oppression and exploitation. All those are « my own » and belong to my species.

Let us battle for our cause, in isolation or associated, when associated, freely and temporarily, for a specific cause and not for the triumph of “the Cause” as an abstraction or for the cause of others. Let us struggle so that Our Own Cause emerges victorious, so that the cause that carries the day is that of anti-authoritarianism, of individual independence, so that the phantom prejudices and shadow-conventions that the men who surround us have created to excuse their ignorance or conceal their fears may be reduced to dust.

E. Armand as Hermann Sterne (1912).

FEBRUARY 2022

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BECAUSE I CONSIDER YOU MY OWN (1913)

Because I consider you my own, I take an interest in you. Because I know that I can count on you in the difficult times, on your caresses when my senses speak, on your knowledge when my own fails, on your material support when I find myself at the end of my resources, or on your sympathy when I embark on some adventure that suits your taste. Because you are *my property*. Because you belong to me and I can build on that possession. Because you also consider me as your own and as your property. I wish for you every felicity that you could desire. And among those, the pleasure of individual liberation, which is the greatest good that we can imagine. I want you to be free of the chains of the past and the commitments of the future. I want you to be free of rigid rules of conduct and of the fear of living. I hope that you will be liberated from seeking the approval of others. I long for you to be beautiful, strong and voluptuous, my camarade. I long, my camarade, for you to be vigorous, audacious and sensual. I want to see a disdainful curl to your lip when in the presence of those who speak of the political struggles and commercial competitions of this world. And I want to employ all my strength to see that you are or become all of that. Not for you, but for *me*. Because I find my pleasure in it. The more you rise toward the summits of individual autonomy, the more you show yourself thirsty for life, the more indifferent you are to the banalities that stir up the masses, the more I feel that you are my camarade. And I do not ask that you treat me any differently.

E. Armand

MARCH 2022

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MY KINGDOM IS OF THIS WORLD (1917)

— My kingdom is of the earth. – It rises from the earth, my mother, my possibility of being. — My kingdom is planetary matter, terrestrial substance and telluric energy. — It is love, it is knowledge, it is beauty and it is strength. It is instinct, it is reason, it is passion, it is wisdom and it is pleasure. It is wheat, oats, barley, rye, vine and potatoes. It is mountains, oceans, plains, hills and streams. — My kingdom is of this world. — It rises from the earth. It is born, it grows and it perishes on this planet. — It is trees, fruits, meadows and flowers. It is days, nights, dawn, dusk and solstice. — My kingdom is of this world. — It is desires, pleasures, worries, dazzling marvels, falls, raptures and bitterness. It is experiences, visions, achievements, aspirations, dreams, realities, doubts, enthusiasms, shocks and harmonies. It is lovers, friends, comrades, little girls, toddlers, "tax collectors and sinners." — My kingdom is of this world. — It is the search for happiness, the pursuit of the new, the refinement of pleasure, the race for better being and the achievement of the palpable, tangible embrace. — My kingdom is of the earth — of this land that will receive me, in eternal rest, once my effort is accomplished — all of me, this bag of skin that contains so many organs, my kingdom which is of this world.

CALCULATIONS (1925)

Since the house is calm and silent,
Since the closed door keeps out intruders,
Since the hour is quiet and suitable for computation,
As the red sun sinks lower and lower,
Let's dedicate this evening to tallies and numbers.

Let's add up the days of joy and pleasure,
Spotless days without stain, without shadows...
— Memory, come assist me with my calculations!

The moments, the instants of perfect pleasure,
Tasted or consummated without a hint of regret,
When delight flowed like a pure essence
When, satisfied, rapturous, my whole being exulted...

Yes, let's add up all those days of jubilation!...

Perhaps as the hour is late, my mind is weary;
But, although I constantly return to my figures,
It is in vain —
It does not seem to me that I have truly lived.

E. Armand

APRIL 2022

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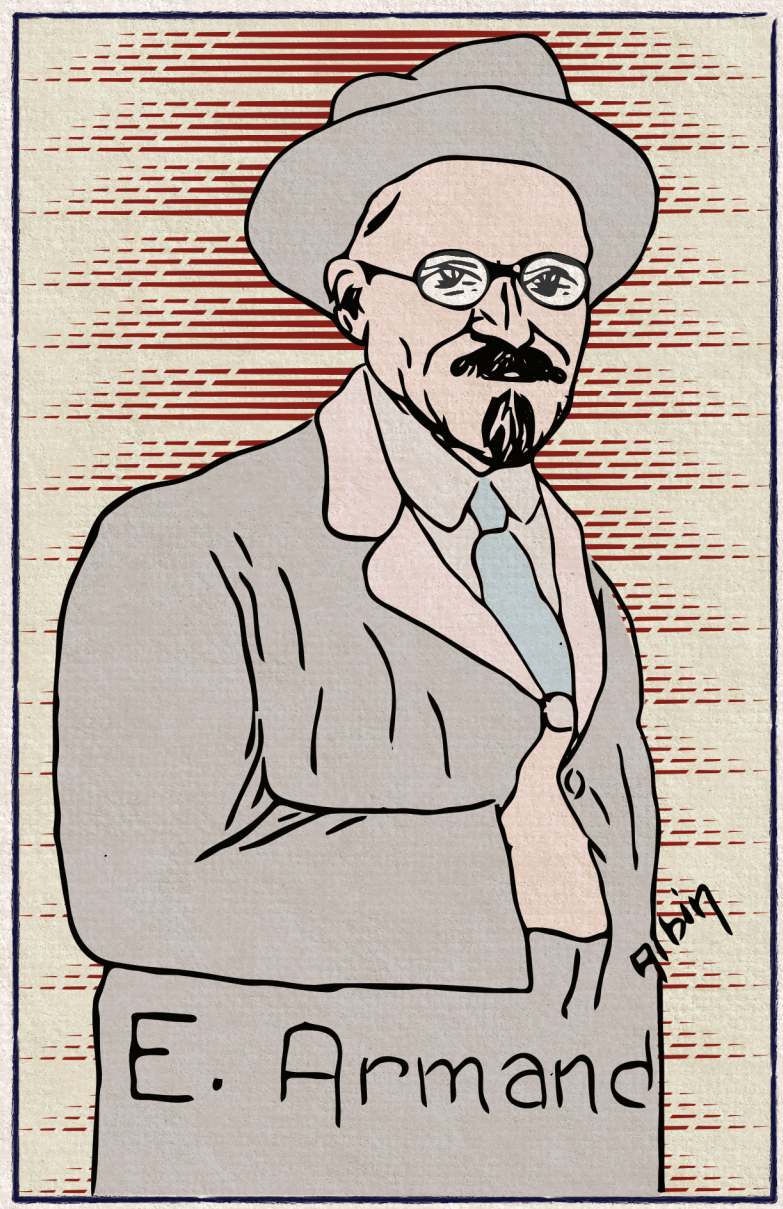
WHEN I SEPARATE MYSELF...



It is when I separate myself that I feel myself, that I am conscious of my existence as an individual being. And separation does not only consist of taking refuge on the summit of some unknown mountain or on the shores of some far-off ocean. I can separate myself in thought, even when I am in the midst of a dense crowd or among the fellow laborers that the so-called social contract has imposed on me — no matter where I am.

When I separate myself, it seems to me that nothing exists. I no longer hear the buzz of conversations, nor the tumult of the street, nor the noise of the open road. I walk through an isolated universe of which I am the sole inhabitant. Nothing foreign comes to trouble the surges of my imagination. I am truly the Unique. And I live my life. All that exists exists only for me. The earth and all that is found there. The heavens and all that they contain. And the past. And the present day. And the future. And suffering. And joy. Everything ends in me, converges toward me, is identical with me. I am no longer subject to the humiliation of concessions, since I can do without everyone. And I feel no urgent need to associate, since I am unaware of any necessity.

I live. I am the Egoist. The Man Alone. I am conscious that I am myself. Myself and no one else. Outside of myself, there are only shadows and confusions. I depend only on myself. I situate myself on the margins of good and evil, on a plain where I cannot be judged or criticized by anyone, for I, Alone, exist.

Pure fancy? Not at all. Some mishap may occur and interrupt my temporary solitude. It is, however, only in appearance that the milieu will have recaptured me.

And it useless to point to the tedious and insipid tasks with which I am occupied. I only work at them temporarily, to earn my bread and butter, and as a last resort. My heart is not in them. I am always the loner. I feel nothing in common with the busybodies, the petits bourgeois, the traffickers, the misers, the drunks, the exploiters or the beggars. I feel that I am neither friend nor associate to the inferior who crawls or the superior who humiliates. I don't understand their aspirations at all and their ambitions leave me unmoved. They are creatures of society and I, I am only a Bystander, nothing but a passerby. Who maintains no Solidarity with the Social Lie that he encounters in its path. Who escapes the contingencies that bind the sticky Mass. It is because I renounce solidarity with the Mass that I feel I am strong. So strong that I escape it morally, intellectually and psychologically. Strong to the point that I can separate myself from it without it costing me a thing. And that is when I feel myself.

E. Armand (1911)

MAY 2022

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PERSPECTIVE (1919)

I feel that my heart will long remain loving;
The lines on my brow could grow and extend,
But I would care little for the march of the years,
Lively and sensitive, despite my white hairs.

I feel that for a very long time, my imagination
Audacious and keen, will continue to sail
Toward the distant shore where dreams are king.
Forgetful, I fear, that the disappointing age,

Which takes the strength from the arm and the steadiness from the hand
Does not permit the pilot to sail at will.
For is dreaming not out of season for the aging?

One may smile, perhaps, at my passing.
No matter. I know well that I have been the wiser
Having preferred to reason My own reason.

REGRETS (1922)

Ah! I would have liked to always show myself honestly;
But often, too often, I was afraid of the punishments that might be imposed.
I was afraid, and this fear, poisoning my days,
Was a heavy burden to bear — a dreadful chain.

To show myself, naturally, unmasked, uncolored,
Smiling when joy lights my way;
In times of setbacks, sad or shedding tears,
And my brow furrowed when haunted by doubt.

To show myself, naturally, without veiling my passions,
Extinguishing the glare of my desires as they blaze, intensely,
Without fearing to flaunt my actions
Or to say nothing of them, as I think best.

I preferred to be silent or to speak like a deaf man,
Holding back my urges with an tremendous effort.
By not daring to always show myself honestly
How many hours of pleasure I have lost, squandered!

E. Armand

les Réfractaires

pendant la mêlée

acrate, individualiste, éclectique

GUERRE AUX INIQUITÉS SOCIALES!

L'ÈRE NOUVELLE

L'Evangile intégral : spirituel, moral et social.

Nous attendons une Terre Nouvelle où la JUSTICE habitera

JUNE 2022

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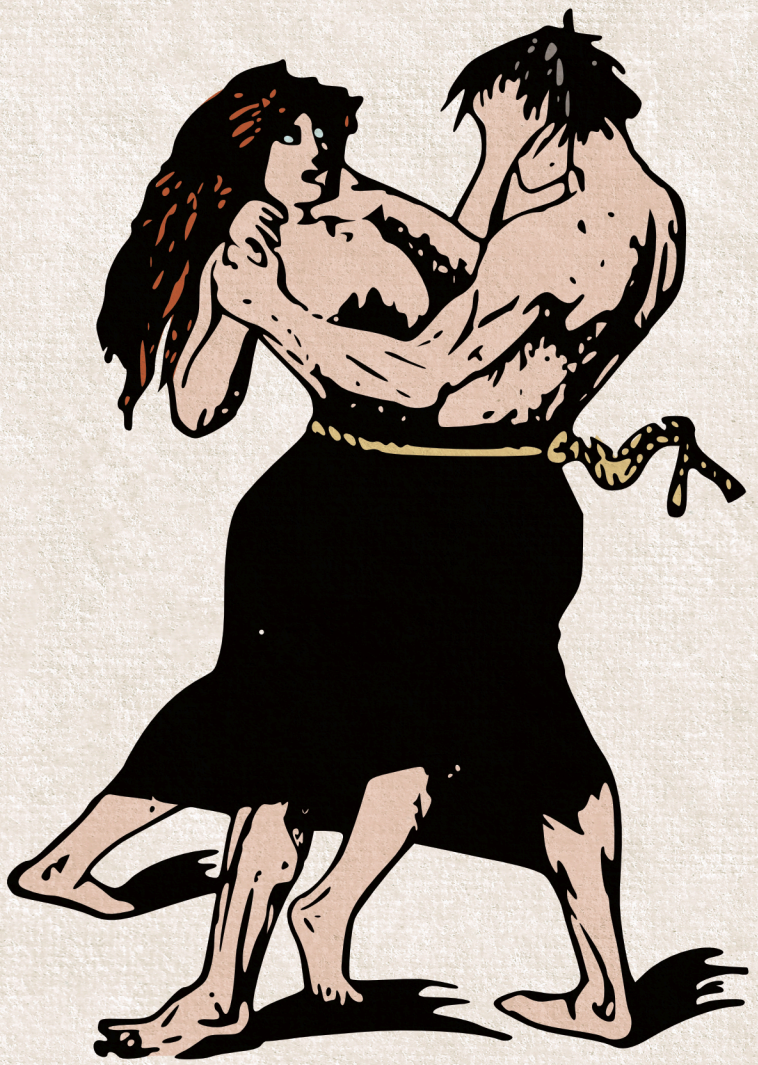

MY BODY IS MY OWN (1927)

The river of delight flowed between banks strewn with fragrant shrubs, studded with perfumed flowers;

And my determinism in the moment drove me to cast myself into it and to abandon myself to the embrace of that flow sequined with seductions.

But, behold, from different points on the horizon loomed shadows that looked as if they were alive.

First, a shadow dressed in black, which called out to me in an unctuous voice: “Your body belongs to God,” it whispered, “and to us, his representatives on earth, and you have no right to dispose of it.”

Then another shadow, which seemed to consist of nothing but metallic gleams and which held erect a banner floating in the wind: “Do not dive into that enervating water,” it ordered me. “You do not have the right to dispose of your body as you wish; it belongs to the homeland and to us, who are in charge of defending it.”

Then a shadow that wore a peaked cap, dressed in a leather tunic and bearing in its hand a cat o’ nine tails: “Get away,” it rumbled, “your body belongs to the social body.”

And then yet another phantom. This one wore a long black frock coat, which fell to its heels. Under one arm, it carried a thick, black, intimidating tome. “What do you want to do, my child,” it murmured, in honeyed tones, “don’t you know that your body is destined to be a vessel of virtue?”

And from the right, from the left, there then surged all sorts of revenants in the shape of men, who gesticulated and protested in every tone and manner that my body belonged to someone or something that was not “me.”

But I rebelled and I did not listen to them, these shadows with the appearance of human beings.

For I am an individualist and anarchist and “my body is my own.”

And it is up to me to know if it is right or not to let it be bathed by the promising, rippling and penetrating waters of the river of delight.

E. Armand

JULY 2022

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LIBERTY, MOTHER OF ORDER (1925)

Liberty, mother of order: it was Proudhon who wrote that, if I remember correctly, and the anarchist individualist Tucker took up that phrase, using it as an epigraph for as long as his newspaper *Liberty* endured. Anarchy the mother of order—are you kidding? Not at all! The most amoral, the most asocial, the most alegal of the anarchist individualists can associate for a specific time and task, establish a contract to this effect and set certain instructions, establish certain statutes with a view to carrying out successfully the task that they have determined to undertake... But then what is the difference from the social contract that holds sway over us? You speak without knowing what you are saying. The contract, the statutes and the directives of the anarchist individualist association are voluntary; you are free to join or to stand aside. At no time or place will an authority, government or anarchist State force you to take part in them. And if you wish to remain isolated, you will naturally not share in the profits or products of the association, but no anarchist individualists who take part in it will dream of excommunicating you from anarchism..... That is where the distance lies between archist society and the anarchist association or milieu: it is not imposed on you, while the authoritarian society forcefully includes you within itself, forces you to submit to its laws, customs, habits, traditions, etc. The archist disorder is the obligatory social contract, the anarchist order is the voluntary contract, proposed and never imposed — which links and holds only those who accept it for the time and purpose proposed — and is terminable under the conditions agreed upon before setting to work. Am I clear enough?

— I have recently had the pleasure of paying a visit to the camarade Benj. R. Tucker, whose ideas have been made known to you through our study of the work of Mr. Paul Ghio. Benj. R. Tucker is a great admirer of Max Stirner and of Proudhon, no one will doubt it, and of Mr. Henry Maret. He does not give of himself lightly, so we can only congratulate ourselves on his cordiality, as well as the graciousness of Mme. Tucker. Benj. R. Tucker is not very affectionate toward the libertarians of this country and it was not without a smile that he frankly declared to us that “there are not three anarchists in France.” (1904)

Liberty

NOT THE DAUGHTER BUT THE MOTHER OF ORDER PROUDHON

AUGUST 2022

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LABEL?

(1925)

As an anarchist individualist, I choose, I have chosen the anarchist "label" because it pleases me, but also as a result of *thinking it through*. This anarchist label is not just a label. It is an affirmation and a definition in itself, of which no one could be ignorant if they have studied the slightest bit of sociology or have any spent time with flesh-and-blood anarchists.

"Anarchist" is a label that is also a declaration: a declaration that — in order to live in isolation or association, to produce or consume, to learn or to teach, to exist and to evolve in any domain — there is no need of governmental authority, there is no need for the State. The rulers have understood this so well that they have enacted special laws restricting anarchists, the so-called *lois scélérates*. And this is true of all governments, up to and including the government of the proletarian elites.

For the word "anarchy" and its derivatives, the dictionaries indicate "disorder, confusion." But it is easy to see that this reflects *the governmental method of teaching*, which wants to promote the idea that without the State there is only disorder.

An artist, a literary person who does not prostitute themselves is only imaginable anarchically, outside of governmental or statist tutelage, protection or orders — and that is why an independent artist or writer who uses the words "anarchy" or "anarchist" in the official sense is incomprehensible to me.

E. Armand

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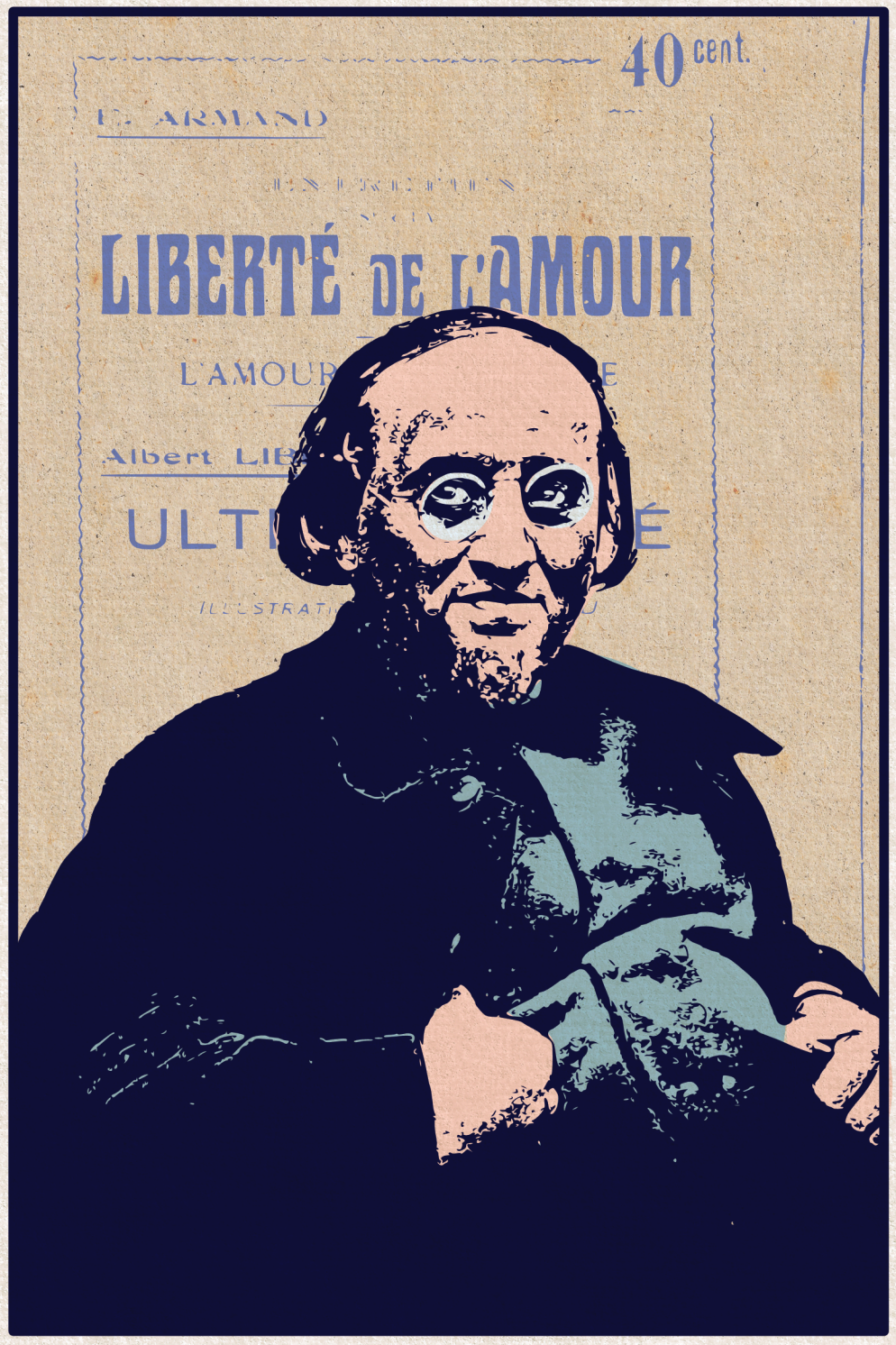

THE MAN OF THE SOLITUDES (1927)

My dwelling place is not a peak or forest,
Nevertheless, I am the man of the solitudes.

From morning to night, I roam the city;
I have built my house in the very heart of town,
Nevertheless, I am the man of the solitudes.

The refrains of songs, the clink of glasses,
The clapping of hands, the patter of clowns,
The sounds of the places where the crowd likes to meet:
I am spared none of them, nor do I flee any,
Nevertheless, I am the man of the solitudes.

I feel I am a stranger to projects ill-conceived,
To bizarre desires, to unwonted intentions.
On my fingers, one by one, I count my friends,
And rare among them is the one who would invite me in,
Such as I am, the man of solitudes.

Thus, even though I wander among the multitudes —
Not lost at sea, not deep in the heart of the desert
— I feel I am, nevertheless, the man of solitudes.

My dwelling place is not a peak or forest,
Nevertheless, I am the man of the solitudes.

E. Armand

OCTOBER 2022

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NOVEMBER

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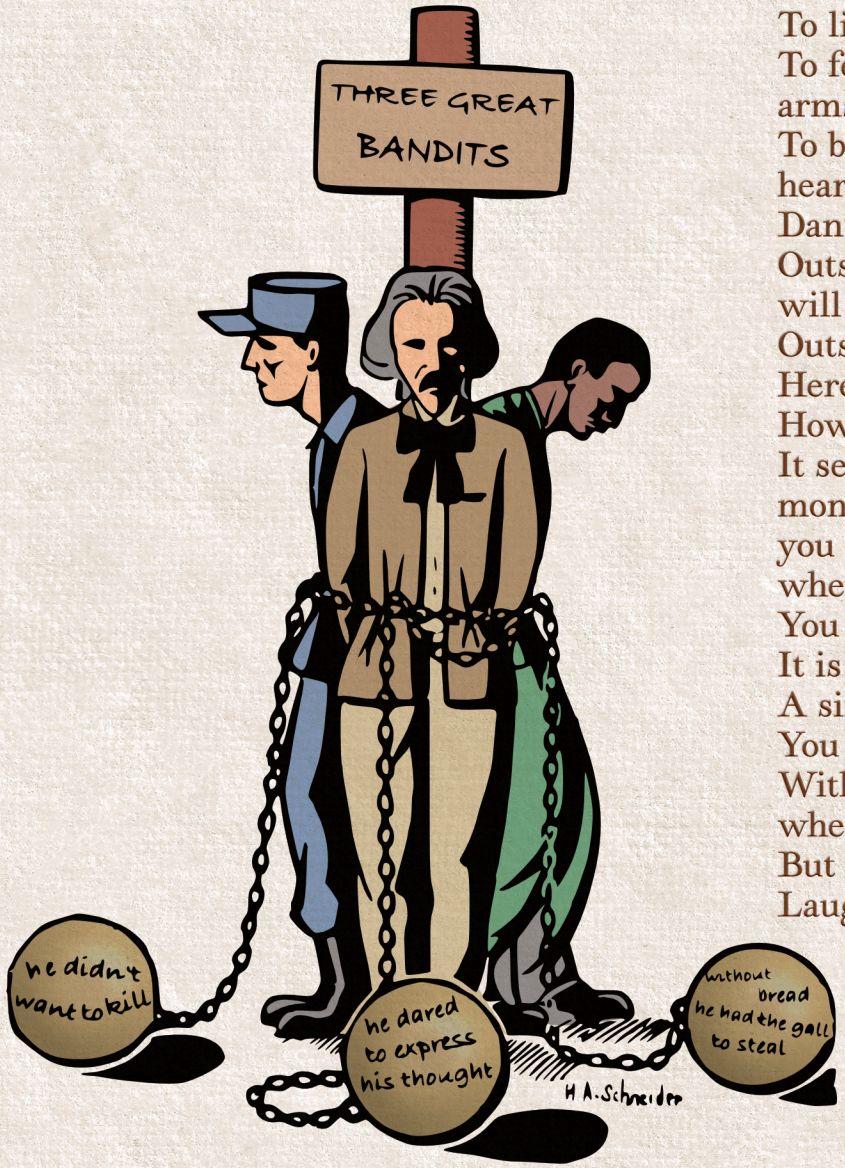

A WALL FOR HORIZON

A wall for a horizon!
Have you ever considered, readers, the pain of having a wall always visible before you, except in the deepest night, separating you, isolating you from the world?

Is this existence?
To live, separated from the ones you love.
To feel the supreme sadness of never being able to clasp them in your arms!
To be unable to say those words that are whispered softly, heart against heart, from mouth to ear.
Dante never imagined such torture!
Outside, it is a terrible crucible in which you boil, but from which you will emerge victor—or perhaps vanquished.
Outside, you can struggle: you can accept the battle or refuse it.
Here there is no combat.—Here there is a wall.
How are you to use your energy?—A wall is the only response.
It seems at times that you slip and sink into some maelstrom, some monstrous whirlpool, which takes you in its horrible grasp and carries you down to the bottom of an abyss of strange, shifting silt,
where you crawl—invertebrate, flabby and weak—in the muck.
You suffocate.
It is too much.
A single desire finally takes hold of you.
You want to pull yourself together.
With an energetic movement, you draw yourself back up to the free air, where you might see and feel, stir and be stirred...
But the wall looms, ironic, mocking,
Laughing at the urges of a soul at bay...

La Santé, December 1907.

E. Armand

NOVEMBER 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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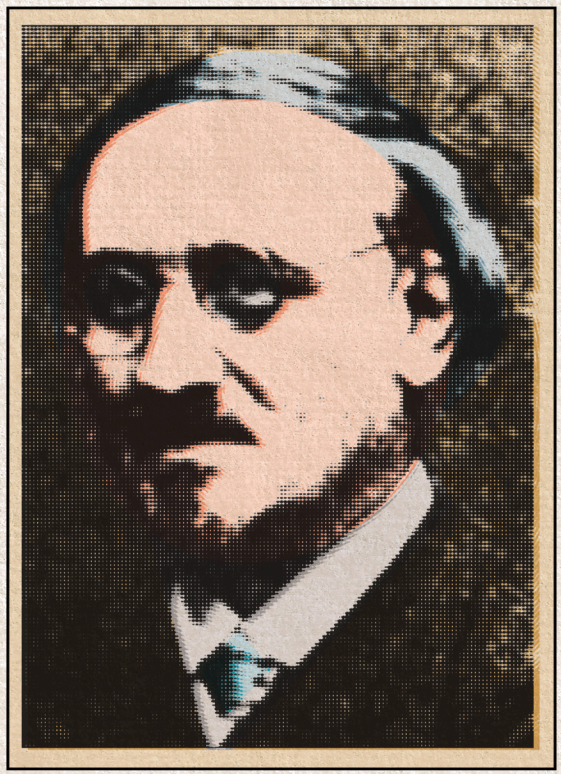

HURRICANE (1906)

1. Heaps of ruins. Pyres. Blood. Tears. Harrowing cries. Desperate appeals, interspersed with terrifying silences. Pitiful supplications, mad laughter.

Murmurs, quivering, hazy and indistinct. Raucous noises, like the waves when they crash into the rocks.

It is the wind of liberty that whispers...

2. Ancient customs, respectable scruples. Morales, rules, venerable prejudices. Codes, sacred books, dogmas, homeland, honor. Family, religion, home, virtue, modesty. Gods of the fields and of the hearth, borders. Fear of what people will say. Fear of the hereafter. Fear of future or present sanctions. Fear of the gendarmes. Respect for the flag, for the judge, for the legislator, for the magistrate, for the police, for the priest.

All of that lying piled up, defaced, crushed, ripped up, torn to shreds, in rags. All of that burning, blazing, smoking.

It is the wind of liberty that fans the flames....

3. A heart that struggles, a soul beset by doubt. A hesitant spirit that seeks its path. All the supports that crumble, fail, subside, vanish. Disgust with a useless existence, the fear of the undefined, regret for the crutches of past times. A whole nebula of thoughts that come, go, revolve around one another, repel one another, attract one another, become mixed, separate. Peace following trouble, soon giving way to distress. A return toward the past, a stride toward the future, a new retreat, a new surge.

A complete chaos of acts, facts and ideas, incoherently distributed, incomprehensible, inexplicable, unprecedented.

It is the wind of liberty that purifies...

4. A soul calm as the waves on a lake. A sky pure as crystal. Loins girded for long travels, for voyages of discovery, for daring experiments. Curiosity, but no fear of the unexpected. Passion, but not fanaticism. A skirting of the abyss, but with a balanced step. The brain active. The senses awake. The clear point of view of a SELF independent of all human judgments, but still incapable, in its self-expression, of doing without other selves. A chariot with a thousand spirited steeds, but the reins in a firm hand.

The intense, burning desire to dive deep into life, to probe its mysteries, to know its manifestations, to enjoy it in all its forms, but with the mastery and the conscious perception of the emotions, the sensations, the pleasures.

The wind of liberty has passed.

E. Armand

D E C E M B E R 2 0 2 2

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NOVEMBER

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PLAN FOR AN EPITAPH (1923)

If someone asked me what inscription I would like to see appear on my grave marker—if ever the luxury of resting in a tomb was given to me—I would first respond that I desire to sleep my last sleep in the nearest hole in the ground. If my friends insisted, this is the epitaph that I would be pleased to have them place on the slab recalling my memory:

He lived. He gave of himself. He died unsatisfied.

He lived, that is to say, he knew all of the joys and sufferings that life can bring to an existence such as his own. Being neither insensible nor indifferent, limited by his conditions of fortune, he felt more deeply certain joys and sufferings—the joy of being able to express his thought in particular and the suffering of not being able to express it with all the scope that he would have wanted. He lived, he knew poverty, he made mistakes, he was exposed to criticism—deserved sometimes—to slander, to envy, to the hatred of the governors and the incomprehension of the governed. He lived, loved and traveled, as permitted by his circumstances and his associates, the gamut that mounts from purely sensual love-experience to love-affection in the most profound sense of the term. He loved, was disappointed and no doubt caused disappointment. He thought himself disillusioned, broke with love, returned to it and often considered it only as a dessert, a kind of recreation. He lived, that is to say, he evolved as he was spurred by his temperament, these opinions modified by the influences to which he was prey—although he hardly let himself be shaken—and by his reflections, his meditations.

He gave himself. Just as he was. With his aptitudes and resources. Constantly struggling to draw the greatest yield from himself. He espoused with enthusiasm, with passion, even with frenzy, the opinions, the aspirations and the demands that he spread, that he displayed as the result of his cerebral realizations of the moment. He varied in his accounts of the conception of life, in his opinions, but still maintained the inner assurance that neither interest nor the search for human esteem would have the least part in these variations. He believed himself sincerely sincere. He gave himself without counting, valuing the effort as much as the results, without hesitation, and only drew himself back in order to assert himself in a new activity. He never allowed himself to treat lightly subjects of the intellect or sensibility, questions of ideas and questions of sentiment, even if only in passing or incidentally. He took himself very seriously. He gave himself as much as he could, seriously; sometimes losing his way, he retraced his steps and did not allow himself to be turned aside by bad luck, by persecution, even by the prison. He repeated his experiments, disregarding those of the past. He persisted, persevered and did not yield, indifferent to the judgment of others and never wishing to be accountable to anyone but himself for his deeds and actions.

He died unsatisfied, dreaming—now in his old age—of living out his youthful aspirations, his built-up pipe-dreams, and, unable to attain or only able to attain in part the designs that he had proposed to himself, departed unhappy, protesting against the adverse circumstances. Until the last hour, he searched, planned, imagined, created, tested and strove with all the powers available to him; until the last minute, he persisted, anxious, worried, tormented and yet aware of having accomplished all that it had been possible for him to do.

He lived all that it was possible to live; *he gave himself* without reserve, drawing from within himself all that it was possible to draw; *he died unsatisfied*, lamenting until his final hour, because he had barely lived.

E. Armand

www.libertarian-labyrinth.org