

SPLEEN LE MAUDIT a solo show by Radouan Zeghidour

October 16th - November 20th 2021

Paris.

On the millenary cobblestones saturated with cameras, heightened individuals are now beeping everywhere. Not only at work, but also in cafés, trains and hospitals. In this dull décor, a sad, awkward, antisocial, solitary outsider wanders about in search of paradise lost.

Legend says he is a direct descendent of Quasimodo. An unfortunate-looking character with an atrabilious temperament, filthy hair and a spleen that takes up so much room in his stomach that his belly always looks swollen. However, this fatally degraded being seemingly doomed by destiny has finally lived his hour of glory thanks to a passion one could qualify as unusual, and which in his case resembles a nervous tick. He writes anywhere, on anything and at any time. Some call him the Destructor, but he calls himself the *Graphomaniac*, a compulsive, talentless writer. Pacing up and down the millenary cobbled streets of Paris with a heart weighed down by relentless melancholia, claws clutched around a feather pen he calls his little prosthesis, cherishing and cajoling it with the most candid devotion, Spleen wanders about in search of impossible landscapes and forgotten lands. With a tearful eye and closed fist, nostalgic for the lost charm of Paris, he endlessly curses the Rastignacs and Gaudissards of this century, those terrible beings who took away his muse. Oh indignant Muse ! She remorselessly sold herself to the highest bidder, the most grotesque: the youth of open-spaces and avocado toast who crush the soul of Paris with their chintzy dreams, with all the characteristics of the disquieting fervour of dynamic young leaders. To hell with them! Too obsessed by his craze and ruminations against a world of lumens and lost photons, Spleen the Damned, like an eternal disaster obsessed by failure (he collects these experiences like triumphs in a herbarium of defeats in which he takes much pride), hadn't noticed that his landscape had changed. His city had been transformed. In a short time, surveillance had taken over, and with it, the venin of despotically distilled denunciation.

In a single year, the décor had changed. What am I saying ? The world had changed ! The worst predictions of dystopian stories had come true. Prosaically. In a single year we now live with smart cameras that detect those who go unmasked, drones fly over beaches searching for strollers, codes are established by the best techniques of cryptology and distributed under medical conditions to allow people to move about, take care of themselves or simply drink a cappuccino ! As always, alas !, only the eternal rogues and their legendary blindness are incapable of understanding. But for the rest of us, hell ! How dark has the sky become ! Technological meshing has reached out its wings like the most abominable of the Titans and this frightful chimera has a name: *Surveillance*. Its tentacular expansion has triumphed over our existence. Nevertheless, Titans never come alone and this one has brought along his equally monstrous sister, a sordid nymph of legendary ugliness, an atrocious villain ! – who goes by the gentle name of *Denunciation*.

Inquisitors are aplenty and divide the shares of vigilance between themselves: we denounce our neighbour, we denounce the tagger, and we denounce the non-injected. And while these different guilds espouse the city, Spleen, bearing the weight of his hunchback, is hunted down for his illicit writings. The hunters of inscriptions on his heels, the season is open for the clandestine corpus, cameras drawn like bows and arrows, with the informers set on slaughtering the animal, eradicating the monster, and putting an end to such vermin for once and for all !

However, Spleen is blind to all this, intent on declaiming his flame, endlessly tattooing the millenary body of his stone muse who has always remained impassive, faithful to the muteness of ungrateful women. And while he wanders, groups have set off on the manhunt, tracking him down in order to denounce him and push him onto the public stage, just like his ancestor Quasimodo burned at the stake, his godfather Villon sent to the gallows and his example, Balzac, thrown into jail ! Along with his secret loves Marius Jacob and Dostoyevsky, exiled in penal colonies. The mob has started to hunt down his writings, to collect them in order to destroy them. *Fahrenheit ? The Lives of Others ?* Not quite but almost !

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Spleen, the cursed hunchbacked writer, runs through the streets of Paris, maybe you've crossed his path, drawn and haggard with his little bump, ardent heart and generous palm, befriending the rats and feeding the pigeons, dragging along his ball and chain worn like a crown, henceforth without pen and ink. Mad and bewildered, he keeps on running, screaming to whomever the end of the game for him and his brothers, and all the hatred of this new world !

Ever since, he has departed on the traces of his ancestor, with an obscure, old-fashioned circus in an industrial city. He has sent us a paving stone, a book of spells and a sealed trunk as a testimony to his work and the outcome of this new world, all of which it is now our turn to decipher.

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Translated in English by Emmelene Landon

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