

Gazing Through the Window of a Rusting Car at the Train Cemetery of Nea Ionia, Thessaloniki

by

Anthony Kitsios

Twelve o'clock. In the heart of no man's land.
My cabin's poor vision was diagnosed with cataracts.
Still, I peep through its smashed glasses
like a broke but talented philatelist.
Roofless wagons house the poplars' trunks.
Their rotten walls shiver in the night's breeze
as the canopy of ivy leaves blankets
with their ochre hair homeless backs.
The eyes of the centipedes stand half-open
like those of the lame whore, who trembles and walks
onto the choir of yellow daisies that kiss the iron rails.
Over there, the luster of a bald chandelier
bite-lips the trenches
of a moth-eaten 2-page spread.
Coal dusts the frayed leather seats while,
beneath my feet,
the wooden floor seems out of tune.
A hissing of bells rings from afar
as the new trains come or go
like the sequences
of a Riefenstahl's film,
counterclockwise.
As soon as their whistling stops, I become nothing.
Tired passengers blandly gaze
at the ejaculated graffiti fonts.

They will never last to see
the jade-faced tapestry leftovers
scorching my eyes, in return.
Behind the brick terminal
a stray dog dressed in spotted white
pees on a broken steel wheel.
Cheap smoke and ammonia exhale
through the hollows of an aborted steam engine.
Two cars down, the conductor lip syncs the refrain
of a gospel without couplet, *Arbeit macht frei*.
Quarter to twelve.

Poet's Note

The poem “Gazing through the Window of a Rusting Car at the Train Cemetery of Nea Ionia, Thessaloniki” discusses, as the title suggests, the Train Cemetery of Thessaloniki located at the Western part of the city. The poem was influenced by the poet’s journey from Thessaloniki to Athens by train in October during which he had the chance to have an imperceptible glance at the obliterated mechanical ruins standing erect next to him, as if in a museum. The poem evokes the history of the city’s Jewish past, explores the topos of ruined urban experience and encourages the reader to feel the blight of its current inhabitants.