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Quotes by Genet, Jean

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Jean Genet (December 19, 1910 - April 15, 1986), was a prominent, sometimes infamous, French writer and later political activist. Early in his life he was a vagabond and petty criminal; later in life, Genet wrote novels, plays, poems, and essays, including *The Thief's Journal*, *Our Lady of the Flowers*, *The Balcony*, *The Blacks*, and *The Maids*.

We know that their adventures are childish. They themselves are fools. They are ready to kill or be killed over a card-game in which an opponent -- or they themselves -- was cheating. Yet, thanks to such fellows, tragedies are possible.

- Genet, Jean

Excluded by my birth and tastes from the social order, I was not aware of its diversity. Nothing in the world was irrelevant: the stars on a general's sleeve, the stock-market quotations, the olive harvest, the style of the judiciary, the wheat exchange, flower-beds. Nothing. This order, fearful and feared, whose details were all inter-related, had a meaning: my exile.

- Genet, Jean

Anyone who knows a strange fact shares in its singularity.

- Genet, Jean

The fame of heroes owes little to the extent of their conquests and all to the success of the tributes paid to them.

- Genet, Jean

Perhaps all music, even the newest, is not so much something discovered as something that re-emerges from where it lay buried in the memory, inaudible as a melody cut in a disc of flesh. A composer lets me hear a song that has always been shut up silent within me.

- Genet, Jean

Power may be at the end of a gun, but sometimes it's also at the end of the shadow or the image of a gun.

- Genet, Jean

There is a close relationship between flowers and convicts. The fragility and delicacy of the former are of the same nature as the brutal insensitivity of the latter.

- Genet, Jean

A great wind swept over the ghetto, carrying away shame, invisibility and four centuries of humiliation. But when the wind dropped people saw it had been only a little breeze, friendly, almost gentle.

- Genet, Jean

What I did not yet know so intensely was the hatred of the white American for the black, a

hatred so deep that I wonder if every white man in this country, when he plants a tree, doesn't see Negroes hanging from its branches.

- Genet, Jean

The force of what was called Panther rhetoric or word mongering resided not in elegant discourse but in strength of affirmation (or denial), in anger of tone and timbre. When the anger led to action there was no turgidity or over-emphasis. Anyone who has witnessed political rows among the Whites will have to admit that the Whites aren't overburdened with poetic imagination.

- Genet, Jean

The main object of a revolution is the liberation of man... not the interpretation and application of some transcendental ideology.

- Genet, Jean

Would Hamlet have felt the delicious fascination of suicide if he hadn't had an audience, and lines to speak?

- Genet, Jean

When the judge calls the criminal's name out he stands up, and they are immediately linked by a strange biology that makes them both opposite and complementary. The one cannot exist without the other. Which is the sun and which is the shadow? It's well known some criminals have been great men.

- Genet, Jean

Repudiating the virtues of your world, criminals hopelessly agree to organize a forbidden universe. They agree to live in it. The air there is nauseating: they can breathe it.

- Genet, Jean

Crimes of which a people is ashamed constitute its real history. The same is true of man.

- Genet, Jean



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