

---

**Letter to Rachele Ragozin in Brooklyn  
from C.E. Ruthenberg at Sing Sing  
Penitentiary, Ossining, NY,  
Dec. 29 1920 [excerpt]**

Typewritten document on prison letter paper in C.E. Ruthenberg Papers,  
Ohio Historical Society, box 3, folder 1, microfilm reel 2.

354 Hunter St.,  
Ossining, NY, Dec. 29, 1920.

Dear Rachele:—

I have been reading your letter. It is dated the 24th [Dec. 1920], but reached me tonight. Rather, I should have said that I have been studying it, for I have been reading it for more than an hour now. I wanted to feel the full import of each thought — to be behind the words and enter into the emotions that brought them forth. I wondered as I read, how you learned so much about the things that are really me. No one has ever before known the person you describe, not only because the curtains were up, but because there has been no one who could have understood if the curtains had been down, as they have been down for you. I appreciated the sly dig at “disillusioned 38.”<sup>1</sup> I am glad that it is not so. When that disillusionment comes then there will be nothing left but to follow in the footsteps of Alastor.<sup>2</sup> Disillusionment and disintegration — let them come together.

Strange as it may seem, it has been since I have been here that I have felt that I was again “Ruthenberg of Cleveland.” Not because of the obvious reason which will suggest itself to you, but because of the emotional and intellectual reactions toward the two things that make life worthwhile for me. For nearly a year, before, I had felt discon-

---

<sup>1</sup> Ruthenberg’s age at the time of this writing.

<sup>2</sup> Alastor is a reference to Greek mythology — a byname for Zeus, as the avenger of evil deeds.

tented and dissatisfied with the part I was playing; that I was not *thinking* up to my ideal. I felt, somehow, I had fallen below my own standard of the motives that should dominate and inspire me. I felt that, just as my face had grown a little heavier in outline, so also my spirit had become a little flabby. In the shock of this experience that has gone so far as my attitude toward my work is concerned. The mental shirking is over. You have restored my faith and re-inspired my thought in regard to the other. I have regained the spirit of my past life — to work unflinchingly for what I consider worth working for, to love greatly — if I can do that, life cannot hurt me no matter what it brings.

\* \* \*

As I read your letter, I felt in some of the lines the “hard, intellectual” person struggling with “Rachele.” I am a little afraid of the former, even though, as I have often said, her presence adds to the charm of the latter. She analyses too closely and endeavors to find the flaws, whereas in the quest for beauty we sally forth boldly, confidently, casting aside all doubts and questioning, knowing that the joy and beauty attained will be more than a recompense for anything that may come thereafter. That is what Rachel has done, and she has won more than she knows.

\* \* \*

When do you come, Rachele?

\* \* \*

*C.E.*

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport*

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · May 2012 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.