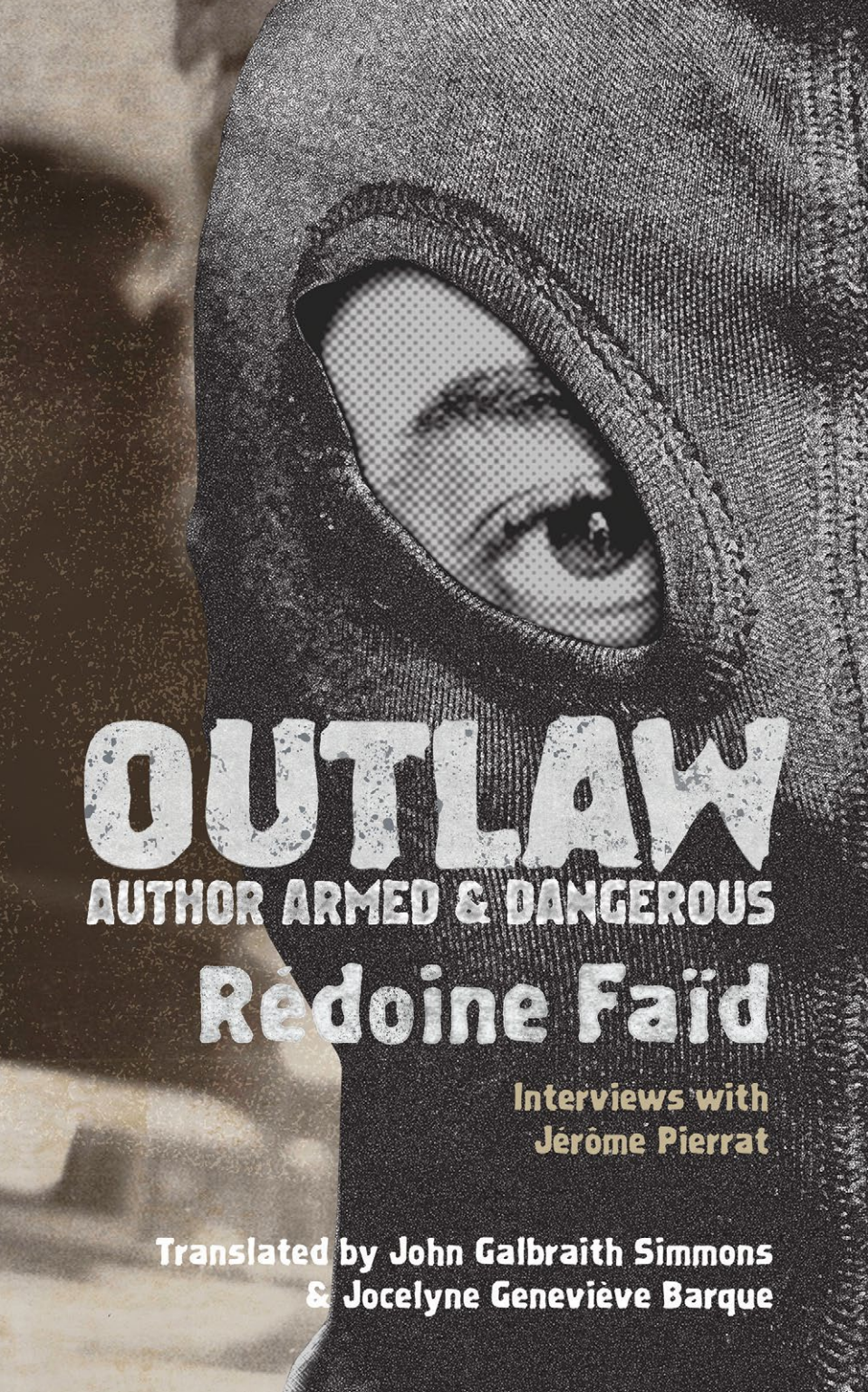
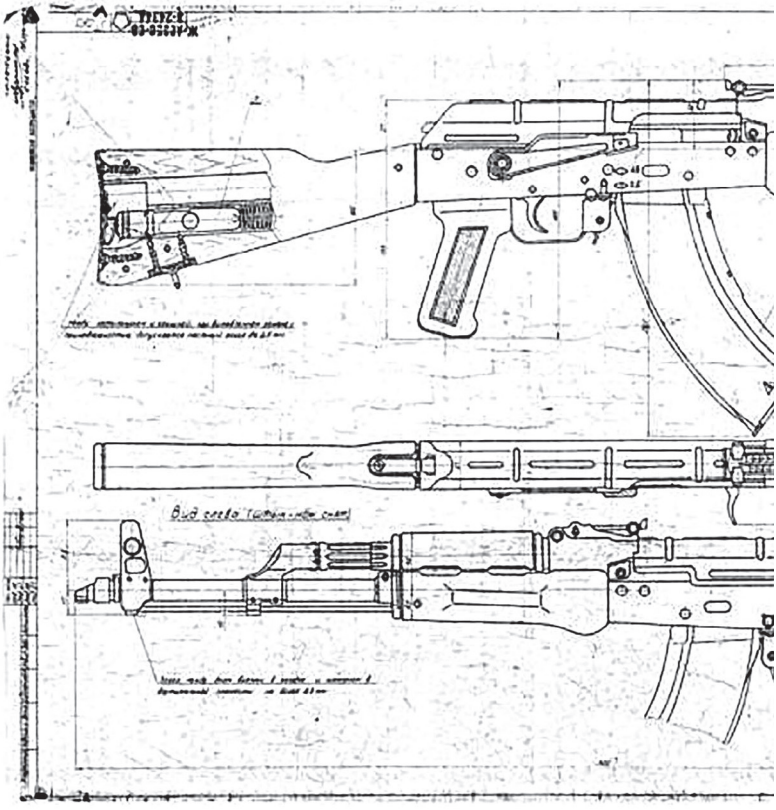
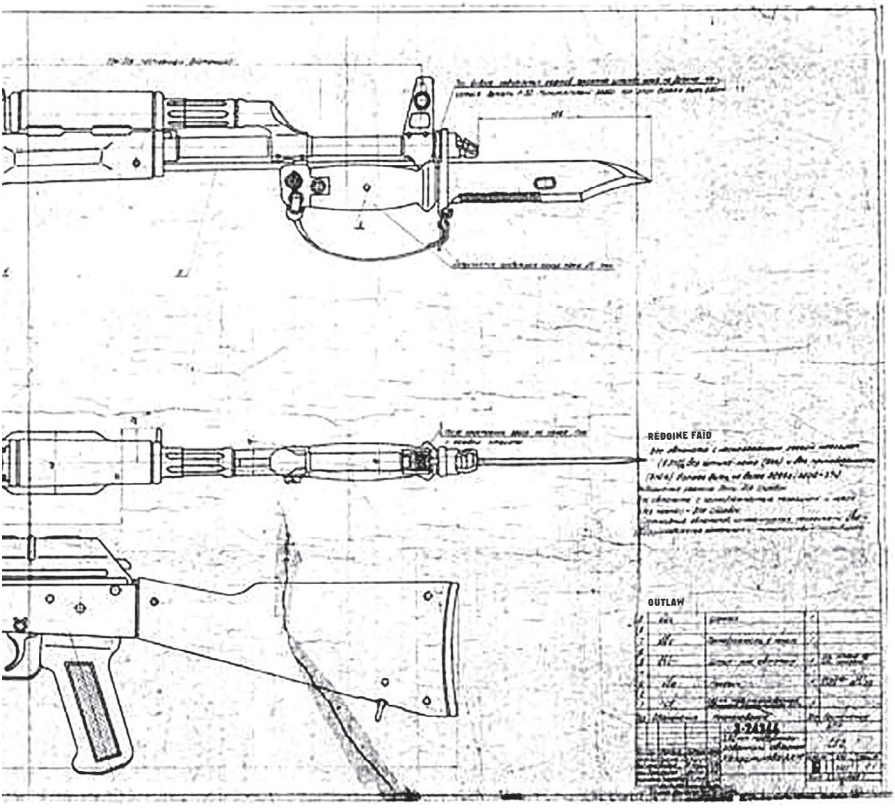

OUTLAW
AUTHOR ARMED & DANGEROUS
Rédoine Faïd
Interviews with
Jérôme Pierrat
Translated by John Galbraith Simmons
& Jocelyne Geneviève Barque

Contra Mundum Press




REDDINE FAID
OUTLAW

OUTLAW

Author Armed & Dangerous

RÉDOINE FAÏD

Interviews with Jérôme Pierrat

Translated by
John Galbraith Simmons
& Jocelyne Geneviève Barque

Contra Mundum Press New York · London · Melbourne

Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Faïd, Rédoine, 1972– ;
Pierrat, Jérôme, 1971–
[Braqueur: Des cités au grand banditisme. English.]
Outlaw: Author Armed & Dangerous / by Rédoine Faïd & Jérôme Pierrat; translated from the French by John Galbraith Simmons & Jocelyn Geneviève Barque

—1st Contra Mundum Press Edition
264 pp., 5×8 in.

ISBN 9781940625386

I. Faïd, Rédoine; Pierrat, Jérôme.
II. Title.
III. Simmons, John Galbraith & Barque, Jocelyn Geneviève.
IV. Translators.
V. Simmons, John Galbraith.
VI. Preface.
VII. Pierrat, Jérôme.
VIII. Postface.

2020935362

PREFACE

"The Author," as Rédoine Faïd became known among fellow inmates in French penitentiaries, is a bank thief with executive talent and explosives expertise, a hostage taker who avoided physically harming his captives, and a serial prison escapee and recidivist. He is also a cinephile whose life and work lends a further dimension to Jean-Luc Godard's celebrated notion that cinema is truth at 24 frames per second.

Outlaw is at once a criminal autobiography and a prison memoir, comparable to such works as Paddy Mitchell's *This Bank Robber's Life* and Chester Himes' account of his career in *The Quality of Hurt & My Life of Absurdity*. This hybrid construction holds advantages for both Faïd's narrative and the wider meaning it conveys. By way of interview format with journalist Jérôme Pierrat, Faïd recounts his career from his youth as a delinquent in the housing projects outside Paris to his capture in 1998, in the wake of a series of sophisticated armed robberies, after which he was held in a clutch of French prisons, often in solitary confinement.

Although Faïd's narrative ends in 2009, the postface to this book summarizes his subsequent activity, which included release from prison, further spectacular heists, and three prison escapes. He was on the run as recently as July 1, 2018, after a dramatic helicopter breakout from a penitentiary near

Paris that made front-page news in France and the United States alike, and ended with his capture three months later.

For an American reader, Faïd's life and work has a certain congruence with a frame established by Willie Sutton (1901–1980), the career criminal who robbed banks not, as one reporter had it, "because that's where the money is," but because he enjoyed it. Sutton's historic significance is actually much greater and, in terms of the dynamics that shaped their *modus operandi* and accounts for their renown, he and Faïd share several striking traits. Like Sutton, Faïd proved to be a compulsive thief who graduated from petty crime to banks. He eventually focused on the armored truck, which presents a greater challenge to rob. Also like Sutton, his interest in money was quite secondary to the excitement and adrenaline rush of the heist. Each man operated with careful plans; and Faïd, like Sutton, cultivated an easy relationship with organized crime, in prison and out. In addition, both avoided inflicting physical violence on victims, and they claimed that the pistol or machine gun was basically a prop. Finally, Sutton and Faïd each embarked on multiple & carefully planned prison escapes, some of them spectacular.

For all the various differences in legal vocabulary, *Outlaw* comes readily into English and offers a novel take on the genre of "true crime." In all memoirs, and especially criminal autobiographies, the author is in some measure a selective and unreliable narrator. Faïd is no exception. However, he reveals larger

truths behind journalistic perspectives that are restricted to accommodating social norms and, often enough, moralistic preconceptions. Most notable is Faïd's education by way of films such as *Thief* and *Scarface* and especially Michael Mann's *Heat.* His career demonstrates the way in which cinematic experience abridges, as often as it seals, the social contract. Faïd's nickname among his accomplices was "Doc," after Steve McQueen's portrayal of the determined and intelligent hero in *The Getaway*, a film by Sam Peckinpah after a novel by noir icon Jim Thompson.

Similarly, the fact that Faïd and his accomplices concentrated on armored vehicles testifies mainly to advances in bank security and efforts to keep money safe from people like him. Faïd judged brick and mortar banks risky by comparison with the exciting task of immobilizing and blasting open a vault on wheels to confront a couple of guards, who would tend to comply when faced with a rocket launcher, submachine guns, and men wearing Halloween masks.

Karl Marx once archly asked if the Tree of Sin were not identical to the Tree of Knowledge. "And would locks," he wondered, "ever have reached their present degree of excellence had there been no thieves?" That was 150 years ago. Today Rédoine Faïd is able to tell you, by way of *Outlaw*, in entertaining and expert detail, that the answers to these questions are clear: yes *&* no.

—John Galbraith Simmons

OUTLAW

Author Armed & Dangerous

Little Brother got a wish to be a big man
That's why he played tough since he was 10
Taught by TV news, as he's growin' up
Guys don't do what he say, he beats 'em to a pulp
Age 13, he's mad for cash
Little Brother matures, but much too fast
Dreamin' of hot rods, clothes, and bread
He don't give a damn what tomorrow says
Little Brother whacks his toy soldiers to go to war
Thinkin' 'bout the loot he was gonna score

Akhenaton & IAM

For Kamel Hérizi, whom I regarded as my brother.
For Rallyan, Anissa, and Hermès, whom I greatly esteem.
For my mother, who died too young.
For my father, from whom I ask forgiveness.

France-Soir

June 9, 1997

Essonne. *During the robbery, not a single shot was fired. Using a dump truck to crash into an armored truck, the gangsters grabbed the money & ran.*

A quick heist, like stealing candy from a baby, near suburban Fleury-Mérogis. A lucrative payday for skilled members of a gang that sped off, thumbing their noses at the police. Speed, teamwork, and organization: if armed robbery was an honorable profession, workers like these would be some of the best in France. [...]

It was 6 PM Saturday on Route 31. The armored truck ACDS 2460 was quietly speeding toward Vert-le-Grand, south of Bondoufle. Inside, three security guards were looking forward to a relaxing weekend. End of their shift in sight, no reason to worry.

But they didn't know that, coming into Montaubert, they were entering the jaws of a well-laid trap. Cars positioned on both sides of the highway slowed traffic at two roundabouts. The dump truck advances. It plowed head-on into the armored vehicle. A titanic shock at 50 MPH. No time to count the wounds or check the bruises. The thieves would help themselves. As the armored truck lay in a ditch, a second team of commandos in a white Peugeot 405 screeched to a halt at the scene. Armed and wearing balaclavas, they took an axe to the windshield. No gunfire.

They forced open the doors. In no time, having emptied the truck of its treasure, they made their getaway in three cars. True to the image of professionals who keep their powder dry, time was really money. The heist went down inside of five minutes.

Why have you decided to tell your story?

At first, I wasn't crazy about the idea. What's past is buried and should stay that way. Even though I don't have blood on my hands, I'm not proud of what I've done. But now, with the inner cities and the projects always in the news, you've convinced me that my life might show why kids from the projects get tangled up in delinquency. I don't want to justify myself. But I do want to take down some of the stereotypes that never seem to go away.

You've just come out of prison. What had you done and how long were you behind bars?

What I did was enough to get the police special forces and the national gendarmerie on my case. I was arrested the 30th of December 1998 at age 26. I spent New Year's Eve in custody at Fresnes Penitentiary under high security. I was later sentenced to 19 years for armed robberies: banks, jewelry stores, armored trucks. Jailbreak, too. I was released in spring 2009. After close to 10 years in prison! A quarter of my life…

In fact, your story is that of a small-time thief who turns into a gangster, like many kids from the projects who grow up in the shadow of the criminal milieu, yet outside it.

That's right. I'm self-taught. I was never caught for petty theft or neighborhood robberies. Unfortunately that led to bigger crimes. I took some care to avoid total chaos. But I made bad choices and you pay for that.

We're not going to do a *Garde à vue* style interrogation.* So, introduce yourself.

My family comes from a small village in the highlands in Algeria, about 125 miles south of Algiers. My father was a peasant like his father before him, but he was also a hunter's guide. That made him a valuable recruit for the Algerian Resistance; he knew every little path in the region and was an excellent marksman. After he and his comrades launched a surprise attack against French soldiers to steal guns, he was ratted out. As payback, his village was burned down. But my family wasn't hurt. Local police who were escorts for the military protected my mother, sisters, & brothers. So my father owed the Algerian police eternal gratitude. Before the war, they used to hunt with my father and they liked him.

Months after this incident, he was caught, put in jail, and tortured. He was saved by a visit from the International Red Cross, which intervened to have him hospitalized. After which he was quietly released and he recovered in the home of a sympathizer, where he stayed until the end of the war. A year later he returned to France to get back his old job in a chemical factory, the Kuhlmann Factory in Villers-Saint-Paul in the Oise. Why did he emigrate in 1950, then find himself in Algeria during the war,

* The narrative frame of *Garde à vue* (*The Inquisitor*), a 1981 French crime film directed by Claude Miller, is a police interrogation. It is based on the novel *Brainwash* by John Wainwright.

yet return to France? That's a long story to come back to... But it's how my sisters and brothers were born in Algeria whereas I was born in Creil. In 1969, my father was rejoined by his family.

How did that come about?

The office of social services at the factory made it possible. Every year he'd been taking a month or two of unpaid leave to visit Algeria. So now he could bring over his wife and seven children to offer them a better future than they would've had in a village devastated by the war and offering no means of subsistence. In France, my parents had three more kids, including me, born in May 1972. So I'm the next to last of 10 children. We lived at the time in a small three-bedroom apartment in Plateau Rouher, one of four housing projects in the heights above Creil. In 1975, we moved to a new place on rue Guynemer. That was where I grew up. We lived in a large apartment, about 1500 square feet.

What was it like at home?

Despite his night job at the factory, my father took care of me. Nights at 8 PM he got on his little Mobylette scooter with his lunch pail and left for work. An hour after he got home at 6:00 in the morning, he woke me up and made my breakfast. Then he took me to school, and came back again to take me home for lunch. From my childhood in the 1970s, two memories stand out.

The first is from when I was five years old and in kindergarten. It was a Friday, after my parents returned from shopping. It must have been 4 o'clock. I was still in nursery school, which ended at 4:20. The schoolyard gate was three feet high with bars and I could see outside. I was there with my little brother, Nordine, who was sickly and an epileptic. So we see our parents parking in front of the school and call to them. Smiling, my father sees me and crosses the street. The school was just a little ways from the building where we lived. My brother was crying and didn't want to be there. So my father tells him, "Hang on, we're taking you home. Don't cry." He takes hold of Nordine and pulls him up over the bars.

—And what about me, Papa?

—You, you're not crying. You're a big guy.

Strange, but I feel sure that that little incident made me who I am. It made me tougher. My hands clenching the bars, I watched my parents leave and swallowed my anger.

The second memory is from 1979. Jacques Mesrine* was executed at Porte de Clignancourt. His death was announced on television. My whole family was sad. For us, Mesrine stood for the people against the rich and powerful. Damn! They killed him! We talked about it at home. Everybody said that he was a good man, an intelligent guy. Through the 1980s, not one year went by that we didn't talk about Mesrine. He stayed with me.

* A charismatic and celebrated criminal, Mesrine (1936–1979) was sometimes likened to Robin Hood.

There was no delinquency in your family?

None. They were all honest people. My brother Abdeslam obtained his bac C.* Leila, my sister, went to law school. My brothers Rachid and Djamel worked their whole lives. Abderrahmane, my other brother, studied in Iraq and now lives in Algeria, where he teaches math at the university. My brother Fayçal, two years older than me, studied law at the university.

As for me, I didn't like school, though I was a pretty good student. But disruptive. I got bored. I started to play hooky. In primary school, Fayçal and I used to hang out at the mall in Creil. In fact, that's where I stole for the first time.

How old were you?

I was 6 and my brother 8. It was a time when shopping centers were popping up everywhere. For us it was Disneyland. There was all this candy and toys and stuff that we who lived in the projects could only look at but other kids could buy. Creil is surrounded by wealthy suburbs like Chantilly and Senlis. Even people who lived in downtown Creil had money enough. It wasn't right, I said to myself from the beginning. We were just like them.

The store had no cameras and only one security guard. He called us "petit merguez." We didn't mind; we were Arabs. We put up with it, although at home it was taboo and something we never talked about.

* Bac C, for students in physics and math, was considered at the time (1968–1994) the most prestigious baccalaureate degree.

I don't remember how the idea came to me, but at all events we set about helping ourselves.

At the time, the shopping center was located across a big cornfield. We used to pick corn and peel it, but soon found it disgusting. So we'd leave our school bags in the field and go mess around in the shopping center.

We'd go back and forth through the aisles and fill up a shopping basket with candies, cookies, toys, miniature cars, comic books, etc. At the time, a small fortune. You could walk right out. It was crazy.

The security guard paid no attention, we were only kids. We left the store, turned around to check, but everything was fine. We crossed the parking lot and once in the cornfield, we shared the booty. It worked fine until the day we got a plastic bag from the fruits and vegetable department and filled it up with miniature cars. We were just novices and a sales clerk who knew us from the neighborhood pointed us out. The security guard nabbed us. My brother took them to our stash. When the guard saw all that we'd stolen, he went nuts and called our parents. When my mother arrived we'd just been let go and ran off. She called the school and found out we'd been truant for three weeks. With everything we were stealing, we'd stopped wanting to show up at school.

That night my parents looked for us everywhere. My brother Fayçal was hiding in the stairway and I was in the basement. A girl living in the building finally convinced me to go back home. I was afraid my father was going to beat me. If there was one

thing he abhorred, it was theft. And, in fact, he took us in the bathroom once we got back, removed his belt, and gave us each 20 lashes. He was furious. As somebody who worked hard, made sacrifices, he was really shocked. My mother asked me why we'd do such a thing. She'd paid the store for what we'd stolen. I thanked her and promised never to do it again.

My father forgave us, too, thinking it was just the kind of stupid thing that kids do.

So because you lied to your mother, we're talking today.

When school started the next year I was in CE1,* I began stealing money out of the wallets of my sisters and brothers to buy pastries. I got caught and slapped. But I told myself that was to be expected. The next year I spent time in the library, reading comics & running around with rich kids, which gave me new ideas.

With three friends from the neighborhood — an African, a Chinese, and an Antillean — we formed quite a cosmopolitan gang. We started stealing. It was exactly like the scene in *Sleepers* with Robert De Niro: a kid steals some little thing from a store, the owner chases him while his friends clean out the place. Sometimes my father beat me and I ended up repeating CE2. Money was what I wanted. When I turned 11, there were other needs: 501 jeans, Adidas Natase sneakers, Tachini track suits!

* The first grade, for children 6–7 years old.

One thing I did plunged me straight into being a delinquent. We were invited to a party in Creil put on by some bourgeois girls. They rented a neighborhood discotheque, Le Lido, on a Wednesday afternoon. Inside were only lily-white French kids, sons of upper-class families. And beautiful nice girls, or so I thought, anyway. I had my first kiss with one of them and stayed with her for a month and a half.

This was the era of Hip-hop and Sidney, "Let's Break (Smurf)," Michael Jackson, funk bands. We danced and ate and drank as much as we wanted. After that, are we going back home? No way, 'bro — no fucking way! Meanwhile one of us found out that to pay for the party, one of the little rich girls had burglarized an apartment! She stole the keys from a friend, and lifted the television *&* a video recorder, which she sold for 2,000 francs. So then, I thought — *that's wild*. It knocked me out. You can't tell me that, it would've been better if I didn't know. It makes me figure, in fact, that what you can't get legally, you've got to take.

It was like a slap in the face. Things have got to change. There were basement rooms where we lived, on rue Guynemer. We decided we'd make our own discotheque. We laid carpet on the floor, put up posters, all that stuff. And then we robbed this fucking nursery school.

Bravo for that!

Right. Well, we stole the hotplate and the record player. When everything was ready, one guy who was in middle school brought over all his girlfriends. We were stars. But then the problem was we needed drinks and stuff to eat. So we decided to target apartments, steal televisions and sell them. And we shoplifted from supermarkets. By now, as delinquents, we had five years' experience. One or two guys would make it seem like they were stealing. They distracted security while we went to plunder. And we got better at stealing. We'd tape windows before breaking them — that kind of thing. We made sure not to get caught. We started to dress sharp and take our girls to the movies. All this while still going to school. I was 12 and knew stealing was going to be my profession.

We kept robbing supermarkets and apartments until I was about 15. We must have done about 80, all told. We even had fences to buy the televisions, stereo systems, and other stuff. For example, a VHS brought 1500 francs. For five minutes' work. Compare that with what you'd earn from little jobs. You didn't think twice.

Which is to say — what exactly?

After unloading food at the market from 4 to 8 in the morning, I'd go back at 11 and work until 2 in the afternoon. Eight hours working like a dog, I'd make 200 francs. With my buddies, we'd pick daffodils and

lilies of the valley behind the Cora shopping center and sell bouquets for two francs a piece. We'd clean windshields in the Auchan parking lot. Problem was, ten of us had to split the money so we ended up with only 30 or 40 francs each compared to 1500 francs for a video recorder. That made it an easy choice. The logic is not great but it's inescapable. On top of which, we knew that the kids who lived in downtown Creil didn't need to work. They played soccer and went to the movies with money their parents gave them.

So you started to have money?

The trouble with theft is that after a while you don't want to steal your clothes. You want money to pay for them. That's not the same thing. You take the next step when you start thinking like that, convinced you've got to have a nice wad of cash. In *Scarface,* Tony Montana talks with his partner Manolo. They're sitting at a table and in his Cuban accent Tony says:

—Here it's like paradise. In five years I'll be billionaire, I'll have a Cadillac and a lotta dough. This town is like a big hairy pussy that's waiting to get fucked.

Then they get up from the table and we see they're dressed to the nines: pleated slacks, fancy shirts, loafers. And what's more, they're carrying shopping bags: they haven't stolen anything. They've just been shopping. A little while ago they were selling hot dogs and working shit jobs.

For us, maybe we weren't getting billions, but we made out. We had 501 Levis in every style & Lacoste polo shirts in every color you could name.

What did your mother say, seeing you so well dressed?

My mother was seriously sick… and my father was never there during the week. In the early 80s, he'd decided to invest his savings in a butcher shop in Paris, in Barbès.* They kept the apartment on rue Guynemer but moved to rue Léon. I kept going to school in Creil but went home to the new place only on weekends. But that put the finishing touches on my education as a delinquent. Because Barbès is a paradise for every kind of petty thief and schemer.

Around the neighborhood, I met Stéphane and Bruno. They were feujs,† a couple of years older than me. They were poor. They'd followed the same chaotic path as me but Paris-style. They were more streetwise. For instance, they knew how to open an apartment door using a phone card. They would break into mailboxes and steal new American Express cards that they resold for 400 francs each. Soon I got as good as them. Car radios was their thing at the time. Bruno was a real ace. You had no shortage of fences in Barbès, so we kept doing it.

* A low-income neighborhood in the 18th arrondissement, with a large population of North Africans.

† Feuj, a verlan modification of Juif (Jew), is a slang word, sometimes derogatory, for Jewish.

Every night. With the money we copped, I discovered new stuff. Karate movies at Opéra, prostitutes who opened their arms to 13-year-olds like me… and a pair of Westons! Not to mention Paris itself, which I roamed throughout during school vacations.

In 1984, my father lost his butcher shop. He saw some of his competitors were selling meat bought in the market at Rungis like it was certified Halal. After he warned the faithful at the mosque on rue Myrrha, they got back at him by sending city health inspectors and tax people. In short, they caused him problems and he was forced to close.

Also, my mother wasn't any good at business. She had a good heart and would let people buy on credit. And at the end of three months, she'd wipe the ledger clean. A good example was Stéphane's mother, who'd need to buy meat for the Jewish holidays but didn't have enough money to buy kosher.

When it came to us, our two mothers were the ones to sound the alarm. They knew we were in trouble. They'd have coffee together and wonder what was going on with their boys.

After the butcher shop closed, my parents went back to rue Guynemer. There I was way ahead of the times with hocking car radios, and I made fistfuls of money. Stéphane and Bruno were happy to take the train out to join me in Creil, and I'd do the same to see them in Paris.

And then what did you do?

We soon decided to go into burglary, with what was happening circa 1985. It amounted to three simple letters: IBM. Computers. We jumped in with both feet, breaking into classrooms and businesses. At the time you had no infrared alarms, only motion detectors at the exits. We'd hide inside the factory or warehouse and just empty the place. We made a small fortune. A computer went for between 3000–5000 francs, a huge sum at the time. But you couldn't do that every day.

To step up the rhythm, we decided to get into computer warehouses. We located one in an industrial park near Compiègne. The place was like Ali Baba's cave but with security bars on the windows. On the advice of a fence, we bought a crowbar and went there at two in the morning. We twisted off the bars, taped the windows, broke them, and made a razzia of 40 items: printers, scanners, computers. Jackpot! The fence arrived with his truck. We passed the whole lot out through the back windows.

Our guy couldn't even take it all. He gave us the address of another fence near Bastille who accepted the rest but paid by check… To find somebody to cash it, I went around to all my friends and their sisters and cousins. In the end, the three of us came away with 60,000 francs. From that moment on, we never stopped committing burglaries.

Only computers?

No, all sorts of merchandise. Like this clothing store in Creil. It was equipped with sensors on the windows and doors, and there was an infrared burglar alarm. Going there to buy a sweater, I noticed that the storeroom butted up against the stairway in the neighboring building. With a screwdriver, a skeleton key from the fire department that I copped from a hospital nurse, and a phone card, we got into the stairway and went down to the storeroom. There the steel door was also equipped with a sensor. We got into the place *à la Spaggiari*.* Our friend, a fence who worked in construction, had given us a blowtorch and taught us how to use it. Next day at two in the morning, he parked his truck in the front of the store. We went downstairs and emptied the storeroom, putting everything in plastic garbage bags. Sweaters, polo shirts — everybody shopped at this place. We came away with 90,000 francs.

We kept it up with offices, perfume and tobacco stores, and sports bars. I can't even count how many nights I spent scratching Millionaire! We looted non-stop for two years.

* Professional thief Albert Spaggiari made headlines with an elaborate break-in at the Société Générale bank in Nice in 1976. His exploits are recounted in his books, *Faut pas rire avec les barbares* (1977), *Les égouts du paradis* (1978), and *Le journal d'une truffe* (1983). For two English translations, see *Fric-Frac: The Great Riviera Bank Robbery* (1979), and *The Sewers of Gold* (1981).

Guys who delivered video and electronics equipment asked us to rob them during their shifts: sound systems, cassette recorders, fridges, even hot plates! It was funny, we were like an electronics department store. It was like we had the whole catalogue for Darty. We were almost becoming salesmen.

The biggest fence in Plateau Rouher was Fat Nagui. He lived on the 9th floor of a big building in Cavée, Creil:

—I saw it at Darty. How much?

—Sells for five grand. You can have it for two and we'll even deliver.

One day, this young Moroccan from the Plateau asked me about business, if it was good.

—What are you talking about? Sure, it's good.

—So, when can you bring us in, too? What you're up to.

This guy was dealing hashish and observing us. He was part of the younger generation of shit sellers. They were fearless and seemed to think we were crackerjacks.

We knew it wouldn't be smart to brag. The only time we'd meet guys from other neighborhoods was at soccer matches or Sunday afternoons at Le Lido, the discotheque in lower Creil. That was how it worked in the projects. You had the stairwells, basements, and apartments to yourselves when your parents were gone. Other times, you were out screwing around. The story was the same for everybody.

What about the police?

At the time we were obviously concerned about cops, especially the BAC.* Older guys warned us because they'd already been arrested. We knew the police by name. They'd watched us growing up but didn't know what we were doing, didn't have the slightest idea. They were thrown off because each time they came by, we'd be playing soccer. They didn't see us hanging out with the older guys or even smoking cigarettes. We didn't drink alcohol or spend time with drug dealers.

It's unbelievable, but we never got caught. The only time I got busted was in 1991, when Sega Mega Drive came out. This guy told me, "If you bring me the games, I can resell them all." So I holed up with a buddy in a big department store that closed every day between noon and 2:00 PM. We ransacked the place: Montblanc fountain pens, CDs, VHS recorders… Coming out, we got nabbed. That was the first time I got taken in. I was 18. They had nothing on me. So they just took my name and I could go. Basta.

The second time was a check cashing scheme. A buddy knew a guy who worked in a bank and had this super scam: one of us would open an account and the guy would give him a checkbook that he'd report as stolen on a Friday afternoon at 5:00 PM. Right after, he'd send a written confirmation to the headquarters in Beauvais, which was closed on the weekend, so notification wouldn't occur until Monday. Meanwhile

* *Brigade Anti-Commando*, a gang intelligence unit.

we'd seriously go to town. One time I found a guy to open an account and get a checkbook with 40 checks. I bought a suit & tie, rented a car, and shopped like mad — Darty, Auchan, etc. At Weston's, I bought two pairs of shoes. At the time there was no limit on the number of checks you could write.

But then the guy with the checkbook decided to go shopping himself. And what did the asshole do? He went alone and filled up a shopping cart without checking the prices. Security thought that was strange. So as he was leaving, the guy got stopped. The guard was disappointed when he saw the ID card & checkbook were legit. But they suspected a scam. They didn't want to let him go. The shopping cart held stuff worth 8000 francs, a lot of money at the time.

So the guard made a copy of the checkbook and wrote down his license plate. Three days later the cops nabbed him. And the guy fingered me.

—You're screwed, said the cop who came to get me: He said it was you.

—I don't even know the guy.

I denied everything. They called the prosecutor, but this was not going to put me in jail. At court, I got a suspended sentence. But then le proc appealed and I got two months, mandatory. I pleaded my case without a lawyer. Finally the sentence was annulled. I told them that I was going to school and that they were going to destroy my life. It was at the Court of Appeals in Amiens.

Those were my two run-ins with the courts. After that they didn't see me again until December 30, 1998, when the national police got involved after the armored truck robbery…

Was there a lot of criminal activity in and around Creil?

None in the 1980s. There was no hashish. You had a little marijuana because of the Netherlands, but even that was relatively low-key. No cocaine or heroin. With delinquents, it was petty thievery, robbing stores and delivery trucks. Only Gauls, 18 years old, like friends of my brother Djamel, who'd done a month in jail.

I thought nobody in your family has a criminal record.

I'd forgotten. I was really young at the time. Djamel went away for a month because he was caught driving a Mobylette stolen by a neighborhood buddy. When he got out, he never screwed around again. Prison changed him; he was never the same.

At the time, jail either hardened you or broke you. The tough guys, Djamel's friends, were three years older than us. These fuckers stole from stores. Fish, pizzas, they didn't care. They'd go after stuff in Gel 2000!* Anything not nailed down, they'd rob it.

Christian, one of my brother's friends, was an ace burglar. He could run super-fast, a regular cheetah. He'd hide inside the walk-in freezer and at night load

* A specialty supermarket in France that sells frozen food.

up a shopping cart. He robbed apartments, stores, anything. One day he decided to move to Paris. But there the cops weren't the same. You had more patrols and plenty of plainclothes detectives. On top of which, in the 1980s, a lot of terrorism. One night, when a friend who was staying with him needed a fix, this guy played the hero and went out to score a couple of hits. The narcs caught him and after that were out to get him. They found out how to make him think with two years in Fresnes. When he came out, his mother was dead. He really worked on himself to change. He always urged me not to screw up, to stay out of jail. To scare me, he told me about Michel Lepage:*

—I was in Division 3 with him. He was known in the banlieue as a godfather. In prison, he could mix it up with a guard and nobody would bat an eye. This guy was a heavy.

And years later, in the penitentiary at Moulins, I met the famous gangster.

—First time I heard about you, I told him, was from a guy who'd just come out of Fresnes in 1983, when I was 11 years old. He wanted to scare me about going to jail. It had the opposite effect. Your story fascinated me. You became a star. Bank robber and prison escapee. I told myself: that's for me.

* A major figure in armed robbery in France beginning in the 1970s, Lepage was also known for a spectacular prison escape in 1977. His own autobiography, *Banlieue sud: Ma vie de gangster*, was published in 2011.

Tell me more about what was going down in the projects.

At the time, around 1984, we were skipping classes and hanging out in the stairwells, which were still clean. Nobody ate or smoked in them. But the next generation, in the 1990s, brought empty soda cans and joints all over the place that screwed up everything. You had trash & cigarette butts, and then all the stuff that hashish dragged in.

The drug business started about 1985. The first time I saw barrettes,* my brother Fayçal showed them to me. That was not my thing at all, never was. In fact, I detested it. One day a good buddy showed me what he was carrying in his sock: two packs of Marlboros filled up with 20 barrettes, each worth 100 francs. He was selling but I just walked away and never thought twice. It didn't interest me and I thought it could just get me in trouble.

How did that business develop?

At first, it was only barrettes. A couple of guys from the projects would go to Holland to buy 200-gram *savonnettes,* sometimes kilos. But most of the supply was from old Moroccan guys from the neighborhood who'd come back from vacation with 5 to 10 kilos. Workers smuggled the drug in the family Peugeot. But small-time dealers in Creil had a problem: they themselves were the main users. Of a kilo, they'd

* The prevalent form of hashish as sold in France, about 10 grams, or ⅓ ounce.

smoke 700 grams. As soon as they got a little money, they bought polo shirts and slacks, Lacoste jackets and Stan Smith kicks. The usual attire. They were flashy for a couple of months but then were hanging around waiting for the next summer vacation.

At the same time you had more serious sellers, clever Moroccans who had been trafficking for years but stayed below the radar. These guys might bring back 500–800 kilos a year but they didn't sell it locally. By way of Creil, they sent it on to Holland. Looking at them, you'd never know. They were like ghosts, these Maghreb billionaires. They bought from cousins or brothers who had estates in Morocco.

I met one of these guys at the detention center at Meaux. Oueri was an Algerian who worked with the Moroccans. He was busted at La Courneuve in July 2004, with his truck loaded with four tons of high-quality *Sum* hashish — minus 420 kilos for the snitch, or so it was said. Oueri was a 50-year-old Algerian with no record. He spent four years inside, then died a year after he got out. The guy was such an unknown to the police that he managed not to give his real name for eight months in detention at Nanterre. Unfortunately for him, he confided in his cellmate, who ratted on him. The cops discovered he owned an estate in Brittany, houses and businesses and such. In short, he belonged to the powerful Algerian-Moroccan mafia. These people mostly kept to themselves but Oueri didn't mind working with a guy from the projects. Which is why he got into such a mess.

What about the big dealers in the projects?

They turned up in the late 1990s. But these guys didn't spend five years selling barrettes before going into the import side of the business. No, the generation after us went straight to the top.

When we lived at 3 rue Guynemer, there were three Maghreb families. Ours was one, then the Ferguouguis — none of whom was a delinquent even though they used to hang out with me and my friends — and a Moroccan family who moved in after us, with a son named Djamel. He was my next-door neighbor and ten years younger. Underneath his friendly exterior, you could already tell he'd go places. While still really young he had his own little gang, seven or eight kids… Among them was his cousin, Fat Mourad, who got caught on a *go fast*.* While still a minor, Djamel — now known as Mosquito — spent four years in jail for serious juvenile delinquency. After that first stretch, he stayed out for a couple of years, which gave him time to become the number-one *go-faster* in the Oise before being busted by José, a tough cop from the branch office in Creil.

Mosquito didn't realize what was happening. He thought he was dealing with local cops, who until then were the only ones he knew. But when he was caught driving from Holland, he was sentenced to

* In English in the original. A type of overland transportation of drugs, usually by car from Spain or Holland.

eight years and served seven. After his release, he went to Morocco where people tried to swindle him out of 400,000 euros in some kind of hashish scam. Hot-headed and true to his reputation, Mosquito opened fire without thinking. And that was too bad because he was sentenced to 20 years at trial, reduced on appeal to 15. Two young guys with him, also from the Plateau, got 15 too. But because they were French nationals, they were released two months later, thanks to a pardon from the king of Morocco, Mohammed VI. Mosquito, though, had never tried to become a French citizen, so he remained in prison… The other guys were the lucky ones.

Among the young guys who'd quickly moved up the ladder was Little Bombé, as I called him, from Cavée de Senlis.* He was unlucky enough to get caught with more than 500 kilos of hashish. He was 18 when I met him and lived a block away. Little Bombé was clever, intelligent, and a good car thief. He hung out with a guy nicknamed Lockjaw and they supplied us with cars. As with Mosquito, Little Bombé never sold small quantities of hashish. And just like him, he'd break into a big smile whenever I ran into him because he knew I was a thief. But he never said a thing. That was something I really liked about guys from the projects. They weren't the type to squeal. They were criminals who knew how to keep quiet.

* A high-rise housing project near Creil.

Bombé had started out as a mule for a wholesale dealer from the Plateau who brought in tons of shit that sold in smaller batches of 50 or 60 kilos. When he was 18, maybe 20, he got nailed in Spain where he did a stretch, about a year and a half. Once out, he decided to get into *bédo*.* He became a powerful wholesaler. After he was taken down for a half ton of hash, he escaped from a prison van in Beauvais in 2008, and he fled to Morocco. But the Moroccan special forces, which were under pressure from the French authorities, nabbed him.

When I met Mosquito *&* Bombé, I never would've thought they were the sort of guys to race off to the Netherlands, pass down through Spain, deal with dudes from the Rif in Morocco, cross the Mediterranean by speedboat, then bring all this shit to Creil. What's astonishing is that they'd never sold barrettes. They committed petty stuff, then all of a sudden they're playing big time…

But that tells you a lot about the projects. You've got delinquent kids, 16 or 17 years old, watched by the BAC.† A couple years later, they suddenly turn into *go-fasters*, crossing borders, dressing flashy and smuggling hundreds of kilos of hashish.

* Dealing joints rolled with hash, often of poor quality.

† *Brigade anti-criminalité*, part of the national police force.

COLOPHON

OUTLAW: AUTHOR ARMED & DANGEROUS
was handset in InDesign CC.

The text font is *ParaType Serif & Sans*
The display font is *Breakout*.

Book design & typesetting: Alessandro Segalini
Cover image: Jean-Luc Bertini
Cover design: Alessandro Segalini & CMP

OUTLAW: AUTHOR ARMED & DANGEROUS
is published by Contra Mundum Press.

Contra Mundum Press New York · London · Melbourne

CONTRA MUNDUM PRESS

Dedicated to the value & the indispensable importance of the individual voice, to works that test the boundaries of thought & experience.

The primary aim of Contra Mundum is to publish translations of writers who in their use of form and style are *à rebours*, or who deviate significantly from more programmatic & spurious forms of experimentation. Such writing attests to the volatile nature of modernism. Our preference is for works that have not yet been translated into English, are out of print, or are poorly translated, for writers whose thinking & æsthetics are in opposition to timely or mainstream currents of thought, value systems, or moralities. We also reprint obscure and out-of-print works we consider significant but which have been forgotten, neglected, or overshadowed.

There are many works of fundamental significance to *Weltliteratur* (*& Weltkultur*) that still remain in relative oblivion, works that alter and disrupt standard circuits of thought — these warrant being encountered by the world at large. It is our aim to render them more visible.

For the complete list of forthcoming publications, please visit our website. To be added to our mailing list, send your name and email address to: info@contramundum.net

Contra Mundum Press
P.O. Box 1326
New York, NY 10276
USA

OTHER CONTRA MUNDUM PRESS TITLES

2012 *Gilgamesh*
Ghérasim Luca, *Self-Shadowing Prey*
Rainer J. Hanshe, *The Abdication*
Walter Jackson Bate, *Negative Capability*
Miklós Szentkuthy, *Marginalia on Casanova*
Fernando Pessoa, *Philosophical Essays*

2013 Elio Petri, *Writings on Cinema & Life*
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Greek Music Drama*
Richard Foreman, *Plays with Films*
Louis-Auguste Blanqui, *Eternity by the Stars*
Miklós Szentkuthy, *Towards the One & Only Metaphor*
Josef Winkler, *When the Time Comes*

2014 William Wordsworth, *Fragments*
Josef Winkler, *Natura Morta*
Fernando Pessoa, *The Transformation Book*
Emilio Villa, *The Selected Poetry of Emilio Villa*
Robert Kelly, *A Voice Full of Cities*
Pier Paolo Pasolini, *The Divine Mimesis*
Miklós Szentkuthy, *Prae, Vol. 1*

2015 Federico Fellini, *Making a Film*
Robert Musil, *Thought Flights*
Sándor Tar, *Our Street*
Lorand Gaspar, *Earth Absolute*
Josef Winkler, *The Graveyard of Bitter Oranges*
Ferit Edgü, *Noone*
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Narcissus*
Ahmad Shamlu, *Born Upon the Dark Spear*

2016 Jean-Luc Godard, *Phrases*
Otto Dix, *Letters, Vol. 1*
Maura Del Serra, *Ladder of Oaths*
Pierre Senges, *The Major Refutation*
Charles Baudelaire, *My Heart Laid Bare & Other Texts*

2017 Joseph Kessel, *Army of Shadows*
Rainer J. Hanshe & Federico Gori, *Shattering the Muses*
Gérard Depardieu, *Innocent*
Claude Mouchard, *Entangled — Papers! — Notes*

2018 Miklós Szentkuthy, *Black Renaissance*
Adonis & Pierre Joris, *Conversations in the Pyrenees*

2019 Charles Baudelaire, *Belgium Stripped Bare*
Robert Musil, *Unions*
Iceberg Slim, *Night Train to Sugar Hill*
Marquis de Sade, *Aline & Valcour*

2020 *A City Full of Voices: Essays on the Work of Robert Kelly*

SOME FORTHCOMING TITLES

Carmelo Bene, *I Appeared to the Madonna*
Paul Celan, *Microliths They Are, Little Stones*

THE FUTURE OF KULCHUR
A PATRONAGE PROJECT

LEND CONTRA MUNDUM PRESS (CMP) YOUR SUPPORT

With bookstores and presses around the world struggling to survive, and many actually closing, we are forming this patronage project as a means for establishing a continuous & stable foundation to safeguard our longevity. Through this patronage project we would be able to remain free of having to rely upon government support &/or other official funding bodies, not to speak of their timelines & impositions. It would also free CMP from suffering the vagaries of the publishing industry, as well as the risk of submitting to commercial pressures in order to persist, thereby potentially compromising the integrity of our catalog.

CAN YOU SACRIFICE $10 A WEEK FOR KULCHUR?

For the equivalent of merely 2–3 coffees a week, you can help sustain CMP and contribute to the future of kulchur. To participate in our patronage program we are asking individuals to donate $500 per year, which amounts to $42/month, or $10/week. Larger donations are of course welcome and beneficial. All donations are tax-deductible through our fiscal sponsor Fractured Atlas. If preferred, donations can be made in two installments. We are seeking a minimum of 300 patrons per year and would like for them to commit to giving the above amount for a period of three years.

WHAT WE OFFER

Part tax-deductible donation, part exchange, for your contribution you will receive every CMP book published during the patronage period as well as 20 books from our back catalog. When possible, signed or limited editions of books will be offered as well.

WHAT WILL CMP DO WITH YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS?

Your contribution will help with basic general operating expenses, yearly production expenses (book printing, warehouse & catalog fees, etc.), advertising & outreach, and editorial, proofreading, translation, typography, design and copyright fees. Funds may also be used for participating in book fairs and staging events. Additionally, we hope to rebuild the *Hyperion* section of the website in order to modernize it.

From Pericles to Mæcenas & the Renaissance patrons, it is the magnanimity of such individuals that have helped the arts to flourish. Be a part of helping your kulchur flourish; be a part of history.

HOW

To lend your support & become a patron, please visit the subscription page of our website: contramundum.net/subscription

For any questions, write us at: info@contramundum.net

Memoirs of celebrated criminals purvey vivid personal stories while spawning sharp questions about the cultures that produced them. In *Outlaw: Author Armed & Dangerous*, Rédoine Faïd, of Algerian immigrant parents, born and raised in the housing projects surrounding Paris, recounts his career as an infamous and renowned bandit. Drawing inspiration and instruction from a host of films and television series, Faïd styled himself and was known to friends & accomplices as "Doc" — after Steve McQueen in the legendary suspense thriller, *The Getaway*.

With self-discipline and a striking ability to learn from experience, Faïd carried off his first robberies while still a teenager. He soon graduated from petty thievery to armed robbery, targeting computer component suppliers, jewelry stores, banks, & most memorably, armored trucks. A master of disguise, with bulletproof vest and a .357 Magnum as a prop to encourage compliance, he led a crew that operated with careful planning but eschewed bloodshed and physical violence.

In imitation of Michael Mann's *Heat*, Faid and his cohorts even donned hockey masks for one job, sometimes quoting from other famous heist films during their capers. When bold plans went wrong, he reacted with fast thinking that served him well — until it didn't, and he was arrested and imprisoned in 1998.

Outlaw was first published in 2009, after which Faïd was imprisoned again. Subsequently, his dramatic escapes from jail, in 2013 & 2018, made front-page news in France and around the world.

Interviewed by journalist Jérôme Pierrat, who specializes in crime and investigative reportage, Rédoine Faïd tells his own story with panache and humor, darkened by introspection and cautionary tales. His story, like that of a character out of a Jean-Pierre Melville film or Dassin's *Rififi*, is not only intriguing, it is also as compelling as any high-grade thriller. Three months after his daring helicopter escape from Réau Prison in 2018, Faid was captured again. He currently remains in jail.

Contra Mundum Press
ISBN 978-1-940625-38-6
9 781940 625386
WWW.CONTRAMUNDUM.NET