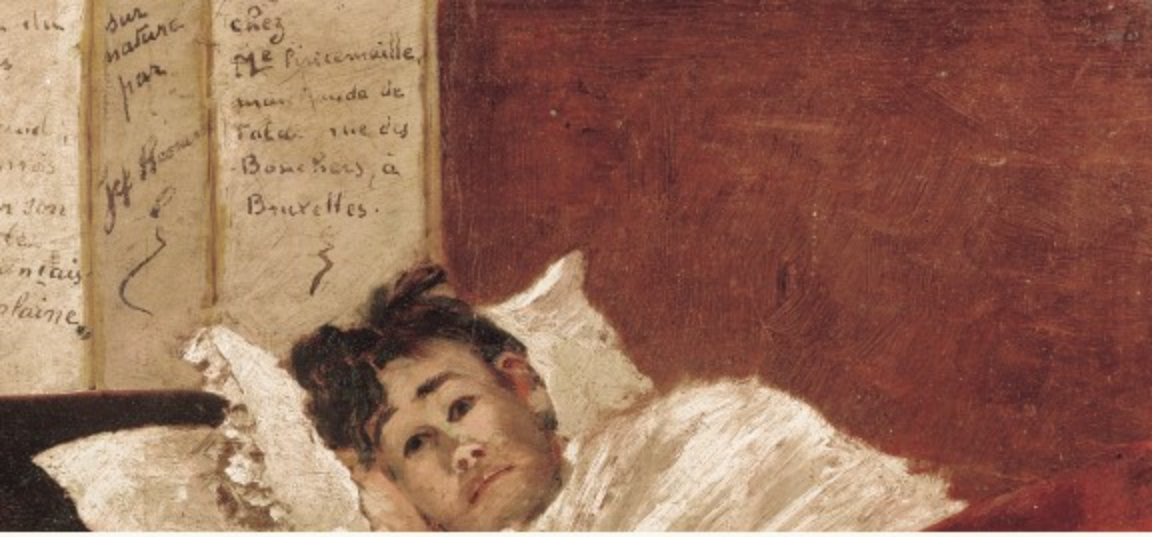

Rimbaud

Complete Works, Selected Letters

A BILINGUAL EDITION

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Wallace Fowlie

Updated, Revised, and with a Foreword by Seth Whidden

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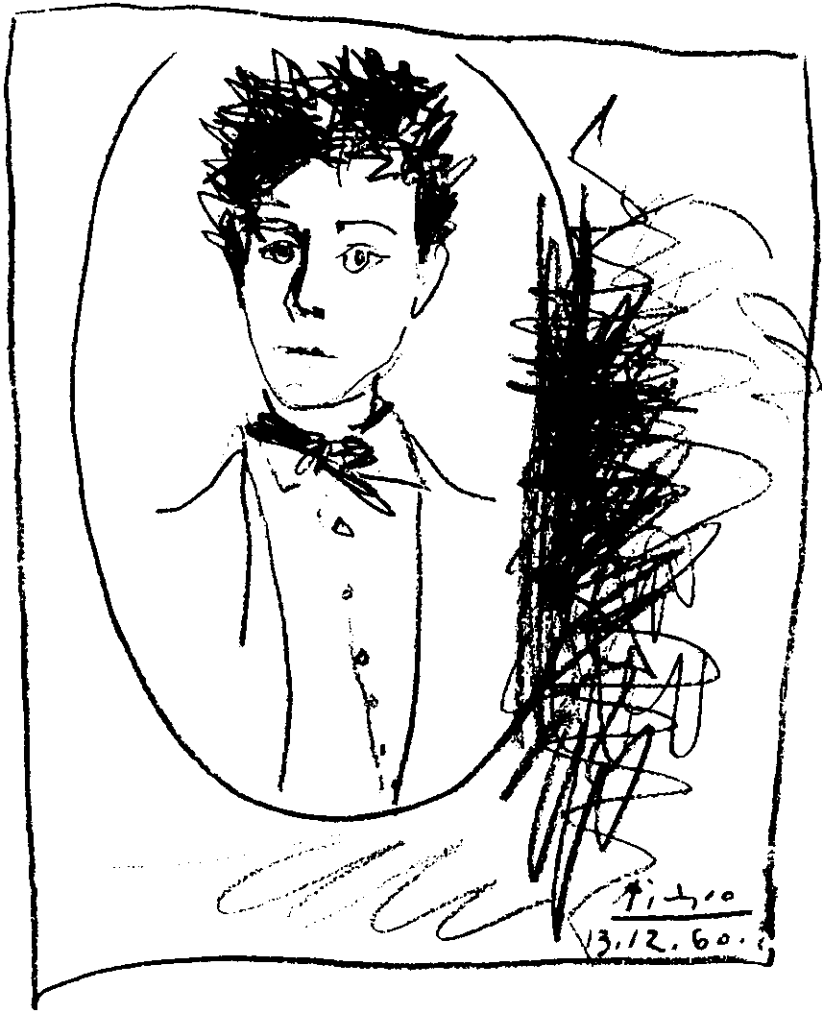
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The University of Chicago Press | Chicago and London

Until his death in 1998, *Wallace Fowlie* (b. 1909) was professor emeritus of French literature at Duke University. *Seth Whidden* is assistant professor of French at Villanova University, and co-editor in chief of *Parade sauvage,* the scholarly journal of Rimbaud studies.

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Foreword (2005)

BY SETH WHIDDEN

In a letter to Wallace Fowlie in 1965, Henry Miller wrote: "Am amazed too that you are translating [Rimbaud's] 'complete works'! What a task! And how we need this!"[1] An impressive undertaking indeed. Given Rimbaud's taste for neologisms, his juxtaposing of scientific terms with those from nature, and his shattering of traditional French versification—all part of his "dérèglement de *tous les sens*" (derangement of *all the senses*)[2]—Fowlie found that translating Rimbaud was no easy task.[3] In fact, his translation, which was first published in 1966, was the very first translation of all of Rimbaud's poems. To this day, it remains the only side-by-side bilingual edition of his complete works. Of an even greater importance is the simple fact that, in a field of Rimbaud translations that is growing ever more crowded, Fowlie's translations are the most faithful to Rimbaud's original texts.

In addition to its beauty, grace, and utility, Fowlie's edition has taken on something of a life of its own. On the one hand, it bears Picasso's only known sketch of Rimbaud, a gift that Fowlie received from Henri Mata-

1. Henry Miller and Wallace Fowlie. *Letters of Henry Miller and Wallace Fowlie (1943–1972)* (New York: Grove Press, 1975), 155.

2. From Rimbaud's letters of 13 and 15 May 1871.

3. See Fowlie's comments concerning his meeting with fellow translator Louise Varèse. Wallace Fowlie, *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison: The Rebel as Poet* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 12.

rasso in 1966;[4] on the other, it made Rimbaud's poetry available to entire generations of sympathetic readers of English. As Fowlie himself recalled:

> In class [in 1966], while waiting for the last few students to take their seats, I casually asked, "Do you recognize the name Jim Morrison?" My students were shocked by my ignorance. "Don't you know the Doors? He's the lead singer." My stock dropped low that morning in my classroom. I had lost favor. To recuperate and to steady my nerves, I held up the letter and said: "Give me a chance! Let me read this letter to you."
>
> > Dear Wallace Fowlie,
> >
> > Just wanted to say thanks for doing the Rimbaud translation. I needed it because I don't read French that easily. . . . I am a rock singer and your book travels around with me.
>
> The class was quietly attentive by this time, and I said to them, "There is one more sentence, a post-scriptum at the bottom of the page:"
>
> > That Picasso drawing of Rimbaud on the cover is *great*.[5]

The most important scholarly translation of Rimbaud's complete works requires little revision some forty years after it was first published. Nevertheless, Rimbaud readers—scholars and general readers alike—have learned much since this edition first appeared; it seems worthwhile, therefore, to reflect on new information concerning Rimbaud's life and work as well as our constantly evolving interpretations.

Rimbaud's Life

Rimbaud continues to appeal to readers today, for the wonders of his poetry as well as for the turbulent life he led. In France, he clearly remains one of the most-read and best-appreciated poets by the French, nearly all of whom are required to study Rimbaud, some as early as in grade school. Furthermore, he is admired for what he represents—in 1991, one out of five young French people identified with Rimbaud[6]—both within and outside of France. Our attraction to the young rebel-poet is simple; we see

4. For the story of how Fowlie acquired the drawing, see Fowlie, *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison,* 13–14.

5. Fowlie, *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison,* 14–15.

6. "Arthur, entre Morrison et Gainsbourg," *Globe* 56 (April 1991): 84.

him in us, be it for his revolts, for his brash nature, or for leaving poetry after accomplishing so much in so little time. As a result, each time we discover something new about Rimbaud—new insight into his poetry, or a recently uncovered biographical detail—we learn something new about ourselves. Similarly, we learn about him, and ourselves, as our attitudes evolve and taboos of the past slowly turn to matters of course. Most drastically changed since this translation's first edition is our understanding of Rimbaud's relationship with Verlaine and our ability to discuss it in terms of both his biography and his poetic work. Forty years ago, Fowlie wrote of "an enthusiastic, troubled, and at times tragic relationship" and referred to Verlaine as Rimbaud's "friend" but he knew very well—just as we know—that they were much more than traveling partners, close friends, or literary peers; they were all that and more. Their passionate and tormented homosexual relationship—Verlaine once bragged that they made love like tigers[7]—directly led to Verlaine's wife divorcing him, to Verlaine shooting Rimbaud in a Brussels hotel room (which in turn led to Verlaine's incarceration), and to Verlaine's humiliation of being examined for active and passive homosexual acts.[8] Such a relationship necessarily had an impact on the poetry that they wrote while traveling together, and numerous studies have explored the specific influence they had on each other's poetry. While some conclude that Rimbaud was Verlaine's muse and others believe that Verlaine could not even understand—let alone come close to matching—Rimbaud's genius, even more fall somewhere between these two extremes: paying ample attention to Verlaine's debt to

7. The phrase ("Nous avons des amours de tigres!") is attributed to Verlaine by police officer Lombard in his report from 1 August 1873, in which the poet tried to explain how he disliked married life: "[. . .] et, ce disant il montra à sa femme, sa poitrine tatouée et meurtrie de coups de couteau que lui avait appliqués son ami Raimbaud [sic]. Ces deux êtres se battaient et se déchiraient comme des bêtes féroces, pour avoir le plaisir de se raccommoder" ("and, while saying this, he showed his wife his chest, tattooed and covered with knife marks that his friend Raimbaud [sic] gave him. These two beings fought and tore each other apart like ferocious beasts, to then enjoy the pleasure of making up"). Quoted in Auguste Martin, "Verlaine et Rimbaud," *La nouvelle revue française* (February 1943): 212.

8. "En effet, le Juge d'Instruction de Bruxelles ayant ordonné la visite corporelle du prévenu par les docteurs Semal et Vleminckx, ceux-ci firent un rapport en ce sens que Verlaine portait sur sa personne les traces de pédérastie active et passive" ("In fact, the examining magistrate of Brussels ordered the physical examination of the detainee by Doctors Semal and Vleminckx, who reported that Verlaine bore the signs of active and passive pederasty"). See Martin, "Verlaine et Rimbaud," 216; and Françoise Lalande, "L'examen corporel d'un homme de lettres," *Parade sauvage* 2 (April 1985): 97–98.

the young prodigy while still acknowledging Verlaine's individual talents.[9]

Many of the other questions surrounding Rimbaud's life—his participation in the Paris Commune of 1871[10] or his use of slaves in Africa,[11] to name a few—have also been revisited since Fowlie's edition. Rarely, a new discovery about Rimbaud's life unequivocally answers a quandary that had previously gone unsolved; more often, a new theory surfaces, waiting for future biographers to substantiate or refute it.[12] However, with so many biographies already written and with so little available documentation concerning his life in Africa, such finds are increasingly rare. More frequent than new facts are the ways in which those facts are interpreted. As Fowlie's use of the term "friend" indicates, it is only logical that Rimbaud's more recent biographers, with fewer social restrictions, have presented a more accurate—or, to use one of Rimbaud's words, "modern"[13]—account of the life of the *poète maudit* (damned poet).[14] Questions about Rimbaud at the Commune, about African slaves, and about the order of publication of his poems, at one time topics of heated debate, are now largely consid-

9. See Georges Zayed, *La formation littéraire de Verlaine* [1962], rev. ed., Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1970); Henri Peyre, *Rimbaud vu par Verlaine* (Paris: Librairie A.-G. Nizet, 1975); and Paul Schmidt, "Visions of Violence: Rimbaud and Verlaine," in *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts/Critical Texts,* eds. George Stambolian and Elaine Marks (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 228–42.

10. Without claiming that he was physically there, Kristin Ross (*The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988]) masterfully shows how Rimbaud's work is inextricably linked to the massive socio-historic changes that the Commune brought about. Jean-Jacques Lefrère (*Arthur Rimbaud* [Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2001], 255–56) has convincingly argued that, even if Rimbaud had gone to Paris, it would have been more for bookstores and reading rooms than for the barricades. As such, his "participation" in the Commune is limited to his poems inspired from it, whether he was in Paris or not. Also see Graham Robb, *Rimbaud: A Biography* (New York: Norton/London: Picador, 2000), 76.

11. See Robb, *Rimbaud: A Biography,* 391.

12. Robb has proposed an interesting theory of how Rimbaud returned from Java after having deserted the Dutch army by assuming the name Edwin Holmes (284).

13. "Il faut être absolument moderne" ("We must be absolutely modern") from "Adieu" ("Farewell") the last poem in *Une saison en enfer (A Season in Hell).*

14. This term comes from Verlaine's study "Les poètes maudits" ("The Damned Poets"), published first in *Lutèce* from 29 March to 5 April 1884 and reprinted in 1888. Within the biographical sketch Verlaine inserted Rimbaud's poems "Voyelles" ("Vowels"), "Oraison du soir" ("Evening Prayer"), "Les assis" ("The Men Who Sit"), "Les effarés" ("The Frightened Ones"), "Les chercheuses de poux" ("The Seekers of Lice"), and "Le bateau ivre" ("The Drunken Boat"). Two years before the publication of poems from *Illuminations,* this study did much to establish the Rimbaud myth (at the time, Rimbaud had abandoned poetry for good and was living in Africa).

ered relatively inconsequential when compared to interpretations of the poems themselves, which have been enjoying a renewed focus.

Rimbaud's Work

Paralleling the increased liberties accorded to biographers, those scholars and general readers who interpret Rimbaud's poetry enjoy a similarly increased freedom, still focusing to a large extent on the general "problem of poetic expression" that Fowlie saw inaugurated by Etiemble's demystifying studies of the early 1950s. Trends during the past forty years of literary criticism—from structuralism to deconstruction, gender studies to cultural studies—have all left their mark on how we read Rimbaud. These critical contributions notwithstanding, the poems are hardly solved once and for all; it is still Rimbaud alone who holds the key to unlocking "Parade" ("Circus").[15] Rather, the texts withstand the tests of time, perhaps even getting better with age, and they are likely to continue to do so as more approaches to reading and interpreting texts come and go.

No previously unknown verse or prose poems of Rimbaud's have been uncovered in the past forty years,[16] but access to original manuscripts and iconographic documents has significantly increased, resulting in a host of books filled with photos and reproductions from Rimbaud's life in both Europe and Africa. In addition, technological advancements have greatly improved the quality of facsimiles, many of which are published for the first time in auction catalogues.[17] However universal and timeless Rim-

15. "J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage" ("I alone have the key of this wild circus"), from *Illuminations (Illuminations);* see "Parade" ("Circus") in this edition.

16. The last time such a find was made public, in 1949, it turned out to be a forgery, that of a lost poem entitled "La chasse spirituelle"; see Bruce Morrissette, *The Great Rimbaud Forgery: The Affair of* La chasse spirituelle (Saint Louis, MO: Washington University, 1956).

17. In March 1998, the Jean Hugues succession attracted such a large public for thirty-five letters and manuscripts by and related to Rimbaud that two entire auction halls were reserved. Both rooms were filled: one for serious bidders, and the other for amateurs who had to settle for following the action on video. Two-thirds of the items were purchased by the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet, and by the city of Charleville-Mézières. From the collection, the Bibliothèque nationale purchased ten letters between 1871 and 1885, the most important one being the 15 May 1871 letter to Paul Demeny, which fetched the price of three million francs (over $460,000). Another letter addressed to Demeny in 1871, which contained the poems "Les poètes de sept ans," "Les pauvres à l'église," and "Le cœur du pitre" went for 1,200,000F ($183,000). Finally, the letter sent to Ernest Delahaye from Stuttgart in 1875 and detailing (with illustrations) Rimbaud's last meeting with Verlaine, went for 1,100,000F ($168,000). Drouot Richelieu, *Arthur Rimbaud, Paul*

baud's work and its appeal may be, the poems' reception ebbs and flows. Wallace Fowlie's first edition was printed a dozen years after the numerous publications and conferences that commemorated Rimbaud's centenary in 1954. Similarly, this new edition appears a little more than a decade after the one-hundredth anniversary of the poet's death (1891), and in the wake of the sesquicentennial of the poet's birth (1854), two celebrations marked by great groundswells of critical editions, international conferences, and events of all sorts.[18] In addition, Rimbaud's life and writings have inspired

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Verlaine: Manuscrits et lettres autographes, documents, éditions originales. Succession Jean Hugues, 20 mars 1998 (Paris: Drouot, 1998). Later that year, ten more of Rimbaud's manuscripts, including a draft of *Une saison en enfer (A Season in Hell),* went on the auction block (see Jean-Jacques Lefrère, "Rimbaud et Lautréamont en salle de ventes," in *La quinzaine littéraire* [16–30 Nov. 1998]: 16–18). More recently, several manuscripts that were previously unknown to scholars came to light at the exhibit of the personal collection of Pierre Berès (Musée Condé, Château de Chantilly, 10 Dec. 2003–8 March 2004). Notable in part since there had been practically no access to the Berès collection since Henry de Bouillane de Lacoste's 1949 *Rimbaud et le problème des* Illuminations (Paris: Mercure de France), the exhibit catalog includes reproductions of the manuscripts of "Génie," "Soir historique," and "Patience" (a second version of "Bannières de mai"). Prior to this exhibit, "Génie" and "Soir historique" were two of the manuscripts that remained completely inaccessible to almost all scholars. Unfortunately, the manuscripts for "Dévotion" and "Démocratie" seem to have disappeared completely. For more information on the whereabouts of Rimbaud's manuscripts, see the notes that accompany each facsimile in Steve Murphy, ed., *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002), 4: 498–652.

18. In March of 1991, French Minister of Culture Jack Lang started a chain of poetry: people were invited to write down (or cut out of certain magazines) a poem of Rimbaud's and send it to two people, who would do the same thing to two more people, and so on, each time also sending a copy to a Rimbaud address set up by the government. See "Correspondance poétique," *Globe* 56 (April 1991): 71. During an interview, Lang answered the question "Est-ce que le gouvernement français lit Rimbaud?" ("Does the French government read Rimbaud?") by stating, "Qui dans le gouvernement n'a pas voulu un jour 'changer la vie'? Et si, d'aventure, quelques-uns ne lisent pas Rimbaud, ils vont le lire, je m'en charge. J'ai envoyé à chacun un superbe poème, 'L'éternité,' pour amorcer cette grande chaîne poétique qui va réunir des centaines de milliers de lecteurs d'ici à la fin de l'année" ("Who in the government hasn't wanted to, one day, 'change life'? And if by chance some of them don't read Rimbaud, they're going to read him, I'm going to make sure of that. I've sent each of them a superb poem, 'Eternity,' to begin this great poetry chain, which is going to bring together thousands of readers from now until the end of the year.") "Entretien. Alain Borer: Rimbaud vous démange? Jack Lang: Oui, et c'est ce que j'attends de lui," *Globe* 56 (April 1991): 87. Calling the celebration "Les années Rimbaud" ("The Rimbaud Years"), Lang wanted to avoid a stoic celebration: "[I]l n'y aura pas de centenaire Rimbaud. Nous ne célébrons pas un anniversaire avec tristesse guindée et pompe officielle. Je voudrais que les manifestations organisées soient le signe d'une poésie comme Rimbaud la vivait: un mouvement incessant, une errance, une

numerous works of literature, songs, films, and cultural productions in every medium imaginable.[19] In 1995 Rimbaud's life was brought to the big screen in *Total Eclipse,* a film that received neither critical nor commercial success.[20] Soon after the new Bibliothèque nationale de France (French National Library) was opened to the public in 1996, one of the quays along the Seine River in Paris was officially named "Allée Arthur Rimbaud" in a ceremony on 3 May 1997.

Rimbaud for Today

In closing his prefatory remarks of 1966, Wallace Fowlie stated "our age is one of revolt." Such is, it seems, no longer the case; social and political in-

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quête inlassable de la liberté. J'ajouterais aussi un appétit pour la modernité, même au prix de ruptures inattendues, et un appétit de découvrir de nouveaux espaces, de nouveaux lieux, d'autres cultures. Je préfère parler des années Rimbaud, dont 1991 marquera le point de départ" ("[T]here will not be a Rimbaud centenary. We will not celebrate an anniversary with stuffy sadness and official pomp. I would like for the organized events to be the sign of poetry the way Rimbaud lived it: an incessant movement, a wandering, a tireless quest for liberty. I should also add an appetite for modernity, even at the cost of unexpected ruptures, and an appetite for discovering new spaces, new places, and other cultures. I prefer talking about Rimbaud years, of which 1991 will mark the starting point.") The year 2004, "Année Rimbaud," was equally filled with cultural and academic events. See Pascal Mateo and Ariane Singer, "Charleville redécouvre Rimbaud," *Le point* 1639 (Feb. 12, 2004): 66.

19. French singers Leo Ferré and Catherine le Forestier are just two who have sung Rimbaud's poems put to music. The long list of musicians who have been inspired by Rimbaud includes, in French: Francis Cabrel, Michel Delpech, Serge Gainsbourg, Gerry Boulet, Patricia Kass, Bernard Lavilliers, and MC Solaar; and in English, Bob Dylan, Van Morrison, and Patti Smith, to name but a few. Ernest Pignon-Ernest's life-size posters, with Rimbaud's face atop a contemporary vagabond body, were seen throughout France in 1978–79 (see Ernest Pignon-Ernest, *Ernest Pignon-Ernest: Intervention-images, 1978–1979* [Paris: Area, 1986]). The poet's residence in Aden was turned into a cultural center and named the Maison Rimbaud (subsequently closed for financial reasons in June 1997). For a more thorough listing of the commemorative events of 1991, see *Globe* 56 (April 1991): 61–88, particularly the fourteen-page program of the year's events stapled between pages 66 and 67.

20. Written and based on the play by Christopher Hampton, directed by Agnieszka Holland, and starring Leonardo DiCaprio as Rimbaud, David Thewlis as Verlaine, and Romane Bohringer as Verlaine's wife Mathilde. For an example of the film's reception, see Janet Maslin, "Rimbaud: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Boor," *The New York Times* (3 November 1995): C14. Another film based on the poet's life is the Italian film *Une stagione all'inferno* (Nelo Risi, 1971). A play based on the two poets' last meeting in Stuttgart in 1875 was performed by Geneva's Théâtre Poétique de l'Orangerie in 1991. Philippe Lüscher, *Rimbaud-Verlaine, Drôle de ménage!* (Lausanne: L'aire, 1991).

justices of today are met more often with apathy than with revolt, just as new media threaten literature's survival. So perhaps we could say that it is precisely in order to remember the importance of revolt that a new generation of readers should read Rimbaud, why they *must* read Rimbaud. While the students involved in the rebellion of May 1968 in France found a slogan in Rimbaud's "Changer la vie" ("Change life"),[21] Rimbaud offers today's readers different motivations to connect with his work. His taste for subversion and his knack for criticism will forever command our attention. The meteoric paths[22] of his life and his career never cease to amaze us. His shattering of the tenets of French versification and the absolute beauty of his poetic expression continue, quite simply, to leave us in awe.[23] For all these reasons and more, Rimbaud's words will always resonate with readers everywhere, every time we need him. At the beginning of a new millennium, in a world that seems as far removed from Wallace Fowlie's 1960s as it is from Arthur Rimbaud's 1860s, Henry Miller's words still ring true: we all need Rimbaud, now more than ever.

A Word on the Text

Following the sale at auction of several manuscripts and the publications of facsimiles of other manuscripts in auction catalogs over the past forty years, the major critical editions of Rimbaud's work—including both of the "most trustworthy editions now available" that Fowlie mentioned—have been replaced. André Rolland de Renéville and Jules Mouquet's edition for Gallimard's "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade" series was replaced in 1972 by a new edition by Antoine Adam; André Guyaux significantly updated and revised Suzanne Bernard's edition for Garnier in 1991. Recently, Alain Borer's *Œuvre-vie* (1991) and Pierre Brunel's "Pochothèque" edition (1999) did away with the traditional groupings that separated verse from prose, presenting Rimbaud's work in its chronological progression and focusing instead on the development of Rimbaud's prosodic trajectory. Fi-

21. The famous phrase was taken from *Une saison en enfer:* "Il a peut-être des secrets pour *changer la vie?*" ("Does he have perhaps secrets for *changing life?*"). See "Délires I: Vierge folle. L'époux infernal" ("Delirium I: The Foolish Virgin. The Infernal Bridegroom") from *Une saison en enfer (A Season in Hell)* in this edition.

22. The term is Stéphane Mallarmé's, who compared Rimbaud to "Éclat, lui, d'un météore" ("Brilliance of a meteor"). Stéphane Mallarmé, *Arthur Rimbaud* (Paris: Jean Daive et fourbis, 1991), 13.

23. It is for these reasons that Ross was right to conclude that "Rimbaud left literature before he even got there" (*The Emergence of Social Space,* 19).

nally, Steve Murphy has undertaken a "pluriversional" project of reprinting all known versions of every one of Rimbaud's poems. The first volume, *Poésies (Poems),* was published in 1999, and the fourth volume, *Facsimilés,* in 2002, and the remaining two installments—prose poems and correspondence—are sure to be just as invaluable. This present revision of Wallace Fowlie's work draws mainly from the Murphy editions for the text and from others for various points, including Brunel's "Pochothèque" and the Pléiade and Garnier editions.[24]

Of Rimbaud's earliest writings—the poems he wrote for his studies at the Collège de Charleville—this translation includes only those poems written in French, the focus of this edition being a side-by-side presentation of French and English; Rimbaud's Latin verse poems, which earned him several awards, are not included.[25] For the rest of Rimbaud's poetic output, we have kept with the editorial tradition separating verse from prose. Brunel's recent edition prefers to follow the groupings of Rimbaud's verse known to critics as "Recueil Demeny" ("Demeny collection") and "Recueil Verlaine"; the former represents poems Rimbaud gave to his friend Paul Demeny in 1870, and the latter are poems given to and subsequently recopied by Verlaine by the beginning of 1872 (perhaps beginning as early as late 1870).[26]

While there is an argument to be made for following this method of organization, neither collection was compiled by Rimbaud himself; as such, the precise order of the poems within each "recueil" is open to interpretation, as the many French editions of Rimbaud's work suggest. Since Rimbaud wrote, rewrote, and disseminated his poems at different times, an attempt at establishing a chronology in his brief career is a troublesome venture. All readers should bear in mind that, with the exception of *Une saison en enfer (A Season in Hell),* the only collection that he published, Rimbaud's poems are presented in an order that represents a combination of our best understanding of the poems and the inevitable editorial choices and constraints. Given the lack of certainty of the precise order of Rimbaud's verse poems and our decision to publish only one version of each poem—considering "Les effarés" ("The Frightened Ones"), for example, of which there was a version in both of the "recueils," and six in

24. See the selected bibliography of this edition.

25. For these poems, see Pierre Brunel, "La Pochothèque" (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1999), 91–125; the Pléiade edition, 179–90; the *Œuvre-vie,* 31–45; or Mason, vol. 1, 528–38 for the Latin texts, and 277–94 for Mason's translations.

26. For more information on the "Recueil Demeny" and the "Recueil Verlaine," see Murphy, vol. 1, 149–60 and 349–74, respectively.

all—this translation retains the division of verse and prose and presents a chronological ordering within each section (to the extent to which this is possible).

The strength of this grouping—which has been present in nearly all editions and translations of Rimbaud's work—is that it encourages the consideration of how Rimbaud's work explodes the very categories of verse, prose, and free-verse. Since Rimbaud wrote in both verse and prose in 1872 and 1873, readers who are interested more in the contemporaneity of several poems than in their prosodic form (or lack thereof) are invited to consult Brunel's "Pochothèque" edition for a chronological ordering that does not distinguish between verse and prose. Similarly, since our choice of only one version for each poem makes impossible the study of variants between different versions of individual poems, readers wishing to consider these kinds of questions should read Murphy's volume 1, which provides every version of each poem and copious notes.

The nature of the revisions to Fowlie's edition fall into one of two categories: updates and corrections. Most of the changes in this new edition come from the wealth of information that has become available since this volume first went to press; such was the original impetus for this present undertaking, and as such the translations remain largely Fowlie's. With unprecedented access to manuscripts (or facsimiles of manuscripts) comes an unprecedented ability to reproduce accurately Rimbaud's texts; in a bilingual edition that is as faithful to the French as is the present volume, such precision is crucial. As a result of the substantial rewriting and typesetting that both the French and the English texts underwent, there are updates to Fowlie's work on every page, most often in matters of punctuation, but also in capitalization, spelling, and layout. Some of the corrections are of a more substantial variety, including changes to words, phrases, and sometimes entire sentences. These were necessary because of the flawed information that Rimbaud scholars had at their disposal in the 1960s; since greater access to manuscripts and better-quality copies of other manuscripts has led to increased knowledge of Rimbaud's words, on more than one occasion words previously accepted by all critical editions have been proven incorrect. Such new information required changes to the French text and, obviously, to the translation. Other changes evident in the present volume come from translation errors on Fowlie's part; there were precious few in this category. Lastly, typographical and other copyediting errors were corrected, and hopefully not too many new ones were committed.

Acknowledgments

In addition to my reliance on the excellent revised editions of Rimbaud's work listed elsewhere in this volume, I have benefited from the wisdom of teachers, colleagues, and friends, past and present. Wallace Fowlie was kind enough to respond to a letter I wrote him when I was just starting out in graduate school; his kind words have inspired my work throughout these pages, and I can only hope that he would have found my contributions not too intrusive or awkward. Dennis Minahen was the first to explain "je est un autre" to me, after class one day; such was my introduction to Rimbaud. Dennis, along with Ed Ahearn, Alain-Philippe Durand, Steve Murphy, Adrianna Paliyenko, Cat Sama, Gretchen Schultz, and Bill Thomas, instilled in me the confidence that I had something of my own to say. The idea for revising this edition came to me during one of my many moments standing in Jack Iverson's office doorway, and I thank Jack for inviting me in to sit down and discuss it further. Steve Murphy and Jean-Jacques Lefrère have been extremely supportive and generous with their time and thoughts. In Randy Petilos I found an editor with great patience, attention to detail, and an unrelenting desire to make this edition great; he and Kate Frentzel and everyone else at the University of Chicago Press helped make this labor of love fun. This edition's illustrations are the result of the fine work of the Media Technologies & Creative Design team at Villanova University's Falvey Library, and of generous financial support from the Dean's office of Villanova's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The Rosman portrait is made possible by Gérard Martin and Alain

Tourneux of the Musée-bibliothèque Arthur Rimbaud in Charleville-Mézières and by the design team of the University of Chicago Press. *Rimbaud, debout,* . . . is part of a private collection and appears courtesy of Pierre Leroy.

In addition to my own family, I am indebted to friends and colleagues—too many to enumerate here—for enduring friendship, hospitality, and comic relief. I cannot thank enough my wife Becky, whose encouragement has picked me up more often than I would care to admit. Lastly, I wish to dedicate the part of this edition that is mine to my children, Carter and Posey, with the hope that they will find something that touches them the way Rimbaud's poetry touches me.

S. W.

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Introduction (1966)

WALLACE FOWLIE

The Poet's Life

Jean-Nicolas-Arthur Rimbaud was born on October 20, 1854, in Charleville, a city in the Ardennes in northern France. His mother, Vitalie Cuif, came from a family of farmers. His father, Frédéric Rimbaud, was an infantry captain. Rimbaud's earliest school years were spent at the Institution Rossat in Charleville. He began attending the Collège de Charleville in the spring of 1865, in the *classe de 7e*. In October of that year, he entered the *classe de 6e*. At the end of the year he made his first communion. Young Rimbaud learned with such ease and such rapidity that he skipped the *5e classe* and entered the *4e classe* in October, 1866.

He had begun writing at an early age. At thirteen, in 1868, he wrote a letter in Latin hexameters to the imperial prince. In 1869, his Latin poem "Jugurtha" won a first prize at the Concours Académique. His first known French poem, "Les étrennes des orphelins," was composed in the same year.

During 1870, Rimbaud's poetic genius became fully manifest in the twenty-two poems he composed. The young teacher Georges Izambard was Rimbaud's mentor and friend during his last year at the *collège*. The boy's first attempt to attract literary attention was in May, 1870, when he sent a series of poems to Théodore de Banville, for publication in *Le parnasse contemporain*. At graduation, in August, he received many prizes. War

broke out that summer. On the 29th of August, Arthur Rimbaud made his first escape to Paris, by train, and was put into Mazas Prison at the end of the trip because he had not purchased a full ticket. Izambard was instrumental in having him released. Later, on foot, Rimbaud set out for Belgium, an experience which inspired such poems as "Ma bohème," "Le buffet," and "Au Cabaret-Vert."

Early in 1871, Rimbaud spent considerable time in the library of Charleville. *Les assis* is reminiscent of this setting. There was another trip to Paris in February and a return on foot to Charleville. His two letters of May, to Izambard and Izambard's friend, Paul Demeny, are in fact treatises on Rimbaud's conception of poetry. The boy's disposition was strongly antireligious at this time, testified to in such a poem as "Les premières Communions." In Charleville he enjoyed the company of Bretagne, who had once known Verlaine and who urged Rimbaud to write to Verlaine. After a first exchange of letters, Verlaine invited Rimbaud to Paris. At the end of September, Rimbaud, armed with new poems, including "Le bateau ivre," went to Paris and stayed for a few days with Paul Verlaine and his wife Mathilde.

The next year and a half were very much dominated by Verlaine, by an enthusiastic, troubled, and at times tragic relationship. The two poets were together in Latin Quarter cafés, in gatherings of poets, in intermittent trips to Brussels and London. Verlaine's marriage was threatened by such behavior, and he made efforts to leave Rimbaud and live again with his wife. At times Rimbaud wearied of the quarrels with his friend, and would leave him and return to Charleville. Both Verlaine's mother and Rimbaud's mother tried to intervene.

Rimbaud undoubtedly began writing some of the *Illuminations* in London in 1872, and was engaged in writing *Une saison en enfer* in April, 1873, at his mother's farm in Roche. The definitive break between Verlaine and Rimbaud occurred in Brussels, in July, as the result of a violent quarrel. When Rimbaud said he had decided to leave his friend, Verlaine fired a revolver and wounded Rimbaud in the left wrist. Verlaine was arrested and condemned by the Belgian police court to two years in prison. His arm in a sling, Rimbaud returned to Roche where he completed *Une saison en enfer.* He was nineteen, and his literary work was over, save possibly for some *Illuminations* which he may have written during the next two years.

Une saison en enfer was printed in October, 1873, at Rimbaud's request, by a Brussels printer, and a few copies were distributed to friends in Paris. But Rimbaud almost immediately lost interest in the work. In early 1874, he met the poet Germain Nouveau in Paris and went with him to England.

He gave French lessons in London and in Scotland. After spending part of the winter in Charleville, Rimbaud went to Germany early in 1875; in Stuttgart he saw Verlaine for the last time. Further traveling took him to Switzerland and Italy. By the end of 1875 he was back in Charleville and engaged in studying languages: Spanish, Italian, modern Greek, Arabic, and Dutch.

In Holland, in the spring of 1876, Rimbaud enlisted in the Dutch army and traveled as far as Batavia. He deserted and worked his way back to Europe, reaching Charleville on foot on the last day of the year. In Vienna, in the spring of 1877, he was robbed and expelled from Austria. After traveling through Sweden and Denmark, and making a useless attempt to go to Egypt, he again returned to Charleville where he spent the winter.

In 1878 he worked for a while on the island of Cyprus as a foreman in a stone quarry. After a period of illness in Charleville, he returned to Cyprus in 1880 and from there went to Egypt and finally Aden. There he worked for an export company, dealing principally in coffee. He traveled as buyer for the company and explored the Somalia and Galla countries. He reported to the Société de Géographie on these explorations. In 1887 he sold guns to King Menelik of Choa. His expeditions became more and more dangerous. Menelik cheated him, and Rimbaud's financial losses were heavy. Between 1888 and 1891, Rimbaud worked for a coffee exporter in Harar. In February, 1891, he suffered from a tumor in his right knee. The malady spread and caused him to return to Marseilles in May. His leg was amputated in the Hôpital de la Conception in Marseilles. He returned to Roche to be with his mother and sister, but his condition grew worse. Hoping he would recover in the Mediterranean climate, he returned to Marseilles where he was again hospitalized and where he died on November 10, 1891, at the age of thirty-seven.

History of the Work and Its Publication[27]

Most of Rimbaud's work was written between the ages of sixteen and nineteen, and during those few years he gave little thought to its publication. Soon after this time, within a year or two at the most, he detached himself from all literary activity and never returned to it. The work was quite literally abandoned. In 1873, following the Brussels drama and the break with Verlaine, Rimbaud did publish, on his own initiative, the small

27. For more recent information about the materials mentioned here, see "A Word on the Text" in the foreword accompanying this introduction.—*trans.*

booklet *Une saison en enfer.* But as soon as the work was published and a few copies distributed, he lost all interest and seemed to have forgotten it.

Edited by Paul Verlaine, *Illuminations* were published for the first time by *La vogue* in 1886. This edition was not complete, and it had typographical errors and misreadings which were perpetuated in later editions. In his introduction Verlaine states that the poems were written between 1873 and 1875, during Rimbaud's travels in Belgium, England, and Germany. This dating was contested by Paterne Berrichon in an edition published in 1912 (with a preface by Claudel) and by the important Pléiade edition, of 1946, prepared by Rolland de Renéville and Jules Mouquet. Since that time, the investigations conducted by Bouillane de Lacoste give credence to the original dating suggested by Verlaine, but there is no absolute proof for placing *Illuminations* before or after *Une saison en enfer.*

The first edition of the poems came out in 1891 (the year of Rimbaud's death), edited by L. Genonceaux. It contained four sonnets not written by Rimbaud. This was followed by two more accurate and more carefully prepared editions: one, by Verlaine, in 1895 (Vanier) and the second, by Paterne Berrichon, in 1898 (Mercure de France). The first critical edition, with variant readings, was published by Bouillane de Lacoste in 1939 (Mercure de France). This text has been adopted on the whole by the two most trustworthy editions now available: the Pléiade edition (1946) and the Classiques Garnier (1961) prepared by Suzanne Bernard. *Les stupra,* erotic sonnets, was first published in a private edition in 1923. The prose story, *Un cœur sous une soutane,* was first printed in 1924, with a preface by Aragon and Breton. In Pascal Pia's edition of the *Œuvres Completes,* in 1931, Rimbaud's poems from the *Album Zutique* were included.

Rimbaud's letters concerning his literary life were first published in various periodicals. In 1931 they were collected and published by Jean-Marie Carré. Many errors were corrected in the Pléiade edition. The letters written in Africa were first published by Paterne Berrichon, the poet's brother-in-law, who took the liberty of making many changes in the texts. The original texts of twenty-eight of these letters (which belong to the Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet) have been accurately reproduced in the Pléiade edition.

Rimbaud's Position Today

The life and the work of Rimbaud have been studied for not much more than half a century. Those facts concerning the poet's biography which are verifiable are not very numerous. At best, all that is available provides merely the sketch of a life in which several important questions are left

unanswered. Despite our ever-increasing familiarity with Rimbaud's writing, it still ranks among the most difficult works in French literature. The poems are the most accessible part of his work. Today most of the poems present few difficulties to a reader trained in the reading of modern poetry, but *Une saison en enfer* is still a troublesome text. Its elliptical outbursts, its seeming contradictions, and the lack of transitions between its various parts force a reader into maximum attentiveness and agility. Moreover, the psychic experience related in *Une saison* is as much that of our age as it is of one adolescent poet. Finally, the prose poems of *Illuminations* are the most difficult to fathom. The experience behind them is so complex that the form into which they are cast had to be equally complex, equally apprehensive of false simplifications and evasive linguistic banalities.

A new era in the understanding of Rimbaud has begun. Heretofore most critical-interpretive studies have exploited poetic data with the usually unavowed intention of advancing a personal psychological theory. Rimbaud's poetic act has been countless times explained in accord with a given psychological or even religious conviction. These monographs are not without value, but they tend to irritate the new reader, the new, impartial reader in search of enlightenment. Etiemble's thesis of gigantic proportions, *Le mythe de Rimbaud,* appearing in 1952–54, denounced the critical method so widely used in turning Rimbaud into this or that mythical figure: angel or demon, Catholic or surrealist, *voyant* or *voyou*. The castigating effect of Etiemble's investigation has been, in part, responsible for initiating a new type of study in which the focus is on the problem of poetic expression.

Rimbaud's art is a poetic language of an exceptional freshness, enrolled in the service of a few very permanent and universal themes. The newness, the novelty of this language is still felt today by the youngest generation of readers. The ultimate lesson, which the art of Rimbaud teaches, states that poetry is one means, among other means, by which life may be changed and renewed. Poetry is one possible stage in a life process. Within the limits of man's fate, the poet's language is able to express his existence although it is not able to create it.

The three major works of Rimbaud, the poems, *Une saison en enfer,* and *Illuminations,* testify to a modern revolt and to that kind of liberation which follows revolt. *Une saison* is a work of interrogation because it is close to the crisis and the disorder. *Illuminations* is more affirmative because it is closer to the resolving of contradictions. In comparison with *Une saison,* of a metaphysical order, *Illuminations* leads us into a very concrete world of rooms and landscapes and cities where the poet attains a

harmonization between desire and reality. "Génie" is the fusion of an ideal being and a human being. This prose poem is both a climactic piece in Rimbaud's art and the apotheosis of a world. In it the poet is engineer showing us the plans of a future universe.

Was he prophet? genius? mythical figure? He was a poet, but no ordinary poet. He was a child expressing himself in the language of a man. "Génie" combines the virile tenderness and the virile vigor of a man.

Our age is one of revolt, and Rimbaud has given, in his literary work and in the example of his life, one of the most vibrant expressions of this revolt. Man's mind is no longer focused on pronouncing the truth or the falseness of a given fact or a given idea. Rather, it is bent on following the direction of an idea. It easily moves back to the origin of an idea, to memories attached to an idea, to very ancient stages and to very recent ones in the history of an idea.

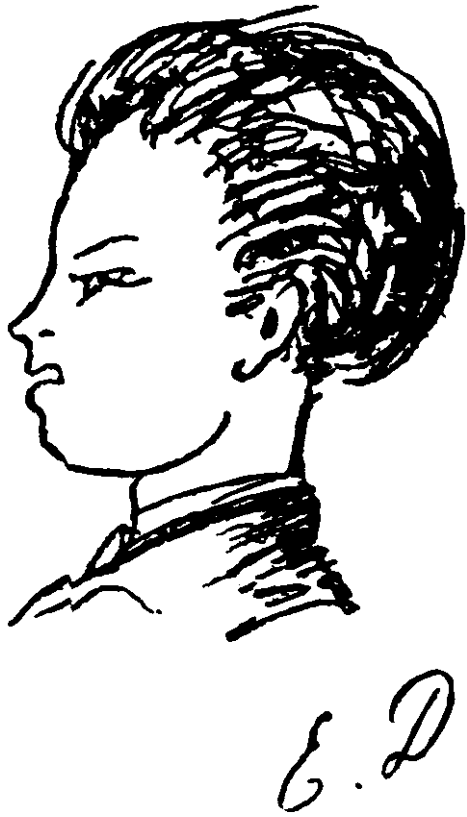
Rimbaud's book seems to us today a dramatic return to consciousness. There was nothing unusual about his life, save that the major events, transpiring while he was a practicing poet, were swift: the interruption of formal study, hatred for his provincial life, his friendship with Verlaine, the discovery that very few people in Paris were interested in him or in his talent, the break with Verlaine, the writing of *Une saison en enfer* and, soon after that, the irrevocable giving up of literature. Revolt, in some form or other, is everywhere manifest in these five years of Rimbaud's life, and yet nothing completely or satisfactorily explains his revolt.

In an almost histrionic way Rimbaud stifled in himself hope, poetry, ambition, love. There was no chance for any gradual development between the joys of childhood (he speaks of so often) and his existence as a man. This existence, because of its closeness to childhood, was judged immediately as false. All trace of illusions disappeared abruptly. In his own words, childhood is defined by Rimbaud as certainty, as a treasure, as something pure and exempt from doubt and falsehood. He recognizes the noblest efforts of man, and names them: love, ambition, poetry, science, religion—but he designates them as vain, as masks concealing a void.

With such a sentence as "la vraie vie est absente," we can feel that Rimbaud's illusions have been destroyed. This is the profound meaning of his most perfect poem, "Mémoire." It is a piece composed of material realities, presented in an Eden-like innocence, which the poet has renounced. Rimbaud believed that his happiness as a child must have existed in some other age, and he was forced, but briefly, to recreate in his art that age of legends peopled by centaurs, fairies, fauns, and angels. Rimbaud's work is a cleavage between himself and a certain past that he faintly evokes.

Poésies

Poetry



1869

1869

Les étrennes des orphelins

I

La chambre est pleine d'ombre; on entend vaguement
De deux enfants le triste et doux chuchotement.
Leur front se penche, encor, alourdi par le rêve,
Sous le long rideau blanc qui tremble et se soulève . . .
—Au dehors les oiseaux se rapprochent frileux;
Leur aile s'engourdit sous le ton gris des cieux;
Et la nouvelle Année, à la suite brumeuse,
Laissant traîner les plis de sa robe neigeuse,
Sourit avec des pleurs, et chante en grelottant . . .

II

Or les petits enfants, sous le rideau flottant,
Parlent bas comme on fait dans une nuit obscure.
Ils écoutent, pensifs, comme un lointain murmure . . .
Ils tressaillent souvent à la claire voix d'or
Du timbre matinal, qui frappe et frappe encor
Son refrain métallique en son globe de verre . . .
—Puis, la chambre est glacée . . . on voit traîner à terre,
Épars autour des lits, des vêtements de deuil:
L'âpre bise d'hiver qui se lamente au seuil
Souffle dans le logis son haleine morose!
On sent, dans tout cela, qu'il manque quelque chose . . .
—Il n'est donc point de mère à ces petits enfants,
De mère au frais sourire, aux regards triomphants?
Elle a donc oublié, le soir, seule et penchée,
D'exciter une flamme à la cendre arrachée,
D'amonceler sur eux la laine et l'édredon
Avant de les quitter en leur criant: pardon.
Elle n'a point prévu la froideur matinale,
Ni bien fermé le seuil à la bise hivernale? . . .
—Le rêve maternel, c'est le tiède tapis,
C'est le nid cotonneux où les enfants tapis,
Comme de beaux oiseaux que balancent les branches,
Dorment leur doux sommeil plein de visions blanches! . . .
—Et là,—c'est comme un nid sans plumes, sans chaleur,
Où les petits ont froid, ne dorment pas, ont peur;
Un nid que doit avoir glacé la bise amère . . .

The Orphans' Gifts (New Year's)

I

The room is full of darkness; indistinctly you hear
The sad soft whispering of two children.
Their heads lean down, still, heavy with dreams,
Under the long white (bed) curtain which trembles and rises . . .
—Outside birds feeling the cold crowd together;
Their wings are numbed under the grey color of the skies;
And the New Year, with her train of fog,
Dragging the folds of her snowy robe,
Smiles through her tears, and, while shivering, sings . . .

II

But the small children, under the swaying curtain,
Speak in low voices as you do on a dark night.
They listen thoughtfully as to a distant murmur . . .
Often they tremble at the clear golden voice
Of the morning bell, which strikes again and again
Its metallic refrain under its glass globe . . .
—Then, the room is icy . . . you see lying on the floor,
Scattered around the beds, mourning clothes:
The bitter wind of winter moaning on the threshold
Blows into the house its sad breath!
You feel, in all this, that something is missing . . .
—Is there then no mother for these small children,
No mother with a fresh smile and triumphant glances?
So she forgot, in the evening, alone and leaning down,
To kindle a flame saved from the ashes,
And to pile over them the wool and the quilt
Before leaving them, and calling out to them: forgive me!
Did she not foresee the cold of the morning,
Did she not close tightly the door on the winter wind? . . .
—A mother's dream is the warm blanket,
The downy nest where children, huddled
Like beautiful birds rocked by the branches,
Sleep their sweet sleep full of white visions! . . .
—And here—it is like a nest without feathers, without warmth,
Where the children are cold and do not sleep and are afraid;
A nest the bitter wind must have frozen . . .

III

Votre cœur l'a compris:—ces enfants sont sans mère.
Plus de mère au logis!—et le père est bien loin! . . .
—Une vieille servante, alors, en a pris soin.
Les petits sont tout seuls en la maison glacée;
Orphelins de quatre ans, voilà qu'en leur pensée
S'éveille, par degrés, un souvenir riant . . .
C'est comme un chapelet qu'on égrène en priant:
—Ah! quel beau matin, que ce matin des étrennes!
Chacun, pendant la nuit, avait rêvé des siennes
Dans quelque songe étrange où l'on voyait joujoux,
Bonbons habillés d'or, étincelants bijoux,
Tourbillonner, danser une danse sonore,
Puis fuir sous les rideaux, puis reparaître encore!
On s'éveillait matin, on se levait joyeux,
La lèvre affriandée, en se frottant les yeux . . .
On allait, les cheveux emmêlés sur la tête,
Les yeux tout rayonnants, comme aux grands jours de fête,
Et les petits pieds nus effleurant le plancher,
Aux portes des parents tout doucement toucher . . .
On entrait! . . . Puis alors les souhaits . . . en chemise,
Les baisers répétés, et la gaîté permise!

IV

Ah! c'était si charmant, ces mots dits tant de fois!
—Mais comme il est changé, le logis d'autrefois:
Un grand feu pétillait, clair, dans la cheminée,
Toute la vieille chambre était illuminée;
Et les reflets vermeils, sortis du grand foyer,
Sur les meubles vernis aimaient à tournoyer . . .
—L'armoire était sans clefs! . . . sans clefs, la grande armoire!
On regardait souvent sa porte brune et noire . . .
Sans clefs! . . . c'était étrange! . . . on rêvait bien des fois
Aux mystères dormant entre ses flancs de bois,
Et l'on croyait ouïr, au fond de la serrure
Béante, un bruit lointain, vague et joyeux murmure . . .
—La chambre des parents est bien vide, aujourd'hui:
Aucun reflet vermeil sous la porte n'a lui;
Il n'est point de parents, de foyer, de clefs prises:
Partant, point de baisers, point de douces surprises!

III

Your heart has understood:—these children are motherless.
No mother in the home!—and the father far away! . . .
—An old servant, then, has taken care of them.
The little ones are all alone in the icy house;
Four-year-old orphans in whose thoughts now
A smiling memory awakens gradually . . .
It is like a rosary you tell as you pray:
—Ah! what a beautiful morning, this New Year's morning!
During the night each had dreamt of his dear ones
In some strange dream when you saw toys,
Candies dressed in gold, sparkling jewels,
Whirling and dancing a sonorous dance,
Then disappearing under curtains, and reappearing!
You awoke in the morning, you got up in a joyous mood,
Your mouth watering, rubbing your eyes . . .
You went, your hair tangled on your head,
Your eyes shining as on holidays,
And your little bare feet grazing the floor,
Softly touching your parents' doors . . .
You went in! . . . And then the good wishes . . . in your nightshirt,
The flood of kisses, and gaiety allowed!

IV

Ah! it was so charming, those words spoken so often!
—But how it has changed, the home we once had:
A big fire crackled brightly in the fireplace,
The old room was all aglow;
And the red reflections, coming from the big hearth,
Like to play over the varnished furniture . . .
—The cupboard had no keys! . . . no keys in the big cupboard!
You often looked at its dark black door . . .
No keys! . . . it was strange! . . . You often wondered
About the mysteries sleeping in its wooden sides,
And you thought you could hear, from the depths of the gaping
Keyhole, a distant noise, a vague joyful murmur . . .
—The parents' room is empty today:
No red reflection shone under the door;
There are no parents, no hearth, no stolen keys:
And therefore no kisses, no sweet surprises!

Oh! que le jour de l'an sera triste pour eux!
—Et, tout pensifs, tandis que de leurs grands yeux bleus
Silencieusement tombe une larme amère,
Ils murmurent: "Quand donc reviendra notre mère?"

. . . . . .

v

Maintenant, les petits sommeillent tristement:
Vous diriez, à les voir, qu'ils pleurent en dormant,
Tant leurs yeux sont gonflés et leur souffle pénible!
Les tout petits enfants ont le cœur si sensible!
—Mais l'ange des berceaux vient essuyer leurs yeux,
Et dans ce lourd sommeil met un rêve joyeux,
Un rêve si joyeux, que leur lèvre mi-close,
Souriante, semblait murmurer quelque chose . . .
—Ils rêvent que, penchés sur leur petit bras rond,
Doux geste du réveil, ils avancent le front,
Et leur vague regard tout autour d'eux se pose . . .
Ils se croient endormis dans un paradis rose . . .
Au foyer plein d'éclairs chante gaîment le feu . . .
Par la fenêtre on voit là-bas un beau ciel bleu;
La nature s'éveille et de rayons s'enivre . . .
La terre, demi-nue, heureuse de revivre,
A des frissons de joie aux baisers du soleil . . .
Et dans le vieux logis tout est tiède et vermeil:
Les sombres vêtements ne jonchent plus la terre,
La bise sous le seuil a fini par se taire . . .
On dirait qu'une fée a passé dans cela! . . .
—Les enfants, tout joyeux, ont jeté deux cris . . . Là,
Près du lit maternel, sous un beau rayon rose,
Là, sur le grand tapis, resplendit quelque chose . . .
Ce sont des médaillons argentés, noirs et blancs,
De la nacre et du jais aux reflets scintillants;
Des petits cadres noirs, des couronnes de verre,
Ayant trois mots gravés en or: "À NOTRE MÈRE!"

. . . . . .

Ah! how sad New Year's Day will be for them!
—And pensively, while from their big blue eyes
A bitter tear silently drops,
They murmur: "When will our mother return?"

. . . . . .

v

Now the children are sleeping sadly:
On seeing them you would say they are crying in their sleep,
So swollen are their eyes and so painful their breathing!
Small children have such sensitive hearts!
—But the angel of cradles comes to wipe their eyes,
And into their heavy sleep puts a happy dream,
So happy a dream that their half-closed lips,
Smiling, seem to murmur something . . .
—They dream that, leaning on their small round arms,
In the sweet gesture of waking up, they raise their heads,
And peer around them . . .
They think they fell asleep in a rose-colored paradise . . .
In the bright hearth, the fire merrily sings . . .
Through the window a beautiful blue sky is visible over yonder;
Nature awakens and is drunk with the rays of light . . .
The earth, half-bare, happy to come alive again,
Stirs with joy under the kisses of the sun . . .
And in the old house everything is warm and red:
The black clothes are no longer spread over the floor,
The wind has at last quieted down under the door . . .
You could say that a fairy had passed through the scene! . . .
—The children, very happy, uttered two cries . . . Here,
Near the mother's bed, under a beautiful rose-colored ray,
Here, on the big rug, something shines . . .
They are silver medallions, black and white,
Mother-of-pearl and jet with glittering lights;
Small black frames, glass wreaths,
With three words engraved in gold: "TO OUR MOTHER!"

. . . . . .

Première Soirée.

1.– Elle était fort déshabillée
Et de grands arbres indiscrets
Aux vitres jetaient leur feuillée
Mal-nement, tout près, tout près.

Assise sur ma grande chaise,
Mi-nue, elle peignait ses mains,
Sur le plancher frissonnaient d'aise
Ces petits pieds si fins, si fins.

– Je regardai, couleur de cire,
Un petit rayon, buissonnier
Papillonner dans ton sourire
Et sur ton sein, rose au rosier.

– Je baisai tes fines chevilles.
Elle eut un doux rire brutal
Qui s'égrenait en claires trilles,
Un joli rire de cristal.

Les petits pieds sous la chemise
Se sauvèrent : « Veux-tu finir ! »
– La première audace permise,
Le rire feignait de punir !

– Baisers palpitants sous ma lèvre,
Je baisai doucement tes yeux :
– Elle jeta sa tête mi-ivre –
En arrière : « Oh ! c'est encor mieux ! »

1870

1870

Sensation

Par les soirs bleus d'été, j'irai dans les sentiers,
Picoté par les blés, fouler l'herbe menue:
Rêveur, j'en sentirai la fraîcheur à mes pieds.
Je laisserai le vent baigner ma tête nue.

Je ne parlerai pas, je ne penserai rien:
Mais l'amour infini me montera dans l'âme,
Et j'irai loin, bien loin, comme un bohémien,
Par la Nature—heureux comme avec une femme.

Soleil et chair[1]

I

Le Soleil, le foyer de tendresse et de vie,
Verse l'amour brûlant à la terre ravie,
Et, quand on est couché sur la vallée, on sent
Que la terre est nubile et déborde de sang;
Que son immense sein, soulevé par une âme,
Est d'amour comme dieu, de chair comme la femme,
Et qu'il renferme, gros de sève et de rayons,
Le grand fourmillement de tous les embryons!

Et tout croît, et tout monte!

—O Vénus, ô Déesse!
Je regrette les temps de l'antique jeunesse,
Des satyres lascifs, des faunes animaux,
Dieux qui mordaient d'amour l'écorce des rameaux
Et dans les nénufars baisaient la Nymphe blonde!
Je regrette les temps où la sève du monde,
L'eau du fleuve, le sang rose des arbres verts
Dans les veines de Pan mettaient un univers!
Où le sol palpitait, vert, sous ses pieds de chèvre;
Où, baisant mollement le clair syrinx, sa lèvre
Modulait sous le ciel le grand hymne d'amour;
Où, debout sur la plaine, il entendait autour