Classic Poetry Series

Arthur Rimbaud

- 125 poems -

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Arthur Rimbaud (20 October 1854 – 10 November 1891)

Jean Nicolas Arthur Rimbaud was a French poet. Born in Charleville, Ardennes, he produced his best known works while still in his late teens—Victor Hugo described him at the time as "an infant Shakespeare"—and he gave up creative writing altogether before the age of 20. As part of the decadent movement, Rimbaud influenced modern literature, music and art. He was known to have been a libertine and a restless soul, travelling extensively on three continents before his death from cancer just after his 37th birthday.

Family and childhood (1854–1861)

Arthur Rimbaud was born into the provincial middle class of Charleville (now part of Charleville-Mézières) in the Ardennes département in northeastern France. He was the second child of a career soldier, Frédéric Rimbaud, and his wife Marie-Catherine-Vitalie Cuif. His father, a Burgundian of Provençal extraction, rose from a simple recruit to the rank of captain, and spent the greater part of his army years in foreign service. Captain Rimbaud fought in the conquest of Algeria and was awarded the Légion d'honneur. The Cuif family was a solidly established Ardennais family, but they were plagued by unstable and bohemian characters; two of Arthur Rimbaud's uncles from his mother's side were alcoholics.

Captain Rimbaud and Vitalie married in February 1853; in the following November came the birth of their first child, Jean-Nicolas-Frederick. The next year, on 20 October 1854, Jean-Nicolas-Arthur was born. Three more children, Victorine-Pauline-Vitalie (who died a month after she was born), Jeanne-Rosalie-Vitalie and Frederique-Marie-Isabelle, followed. Arthur Rimbaud's infancy is said to have been prodigious; a common myth states that soon after his birth he had rolled onto the floor from a cushion where his nurse had put him only to begin crawling toward the door. In a more realistic retelling of his childhood, Mme Rimbaud recalled when after putting her second son in the care of a nurse in Gespunsart, supplying clean linen and a cradle for him, she returned to find the nurse's child sitting in the crib wearing the clothes meant for Arthur. Meanwhile, the dirty and naked child that was her own was happily playing in an old salt chest.

Soon after the birth of Isabelle, when Arthur was six years old, Captain Rimbaud left to join his regiment in Cambrai and never returned. He had become irritated by domesticity and the presence of the children while Madame Rimbaud was determined to rear and educate her family by herself. The young Arthur Rimbaud was therefore under the complete governance of his mother, a strict Catholic, who raised him and his older brother and younger sisters in a stern and religious household. After her husband's

departure, Mme Rimbaud became known as "Widow Rimbaud".

Schooling and teen years (1862–1871)

Fearing that her children were spending too much time with and being over-influenced by neighbouring children of the poor, Mme Rimbaud moved her family to the Cours d'Orléans in 1862. This was a better neighborhood, and whereas the boys were previously taught at home by their mother, they were then sent, at the ages of nine and eight, to the Pension Rossat. For the five years that they attended school, however, their formidable mother still imposed her will upon them, pushing for scholastic success. She would punish her sons by making them learn a hundred lines of Latin verse by heart and if they gave an inaccurate recitation, she would deprive them of meals. When Arthur was nine, he wrote a 700-word essay objecting to his having to learn Latin in school. Vigorously condemning a classical education as a mere gateway to a salaried position, Rimbaud wrote repeatedly, "I will be a rentier (one who lives off his assets)". He disliked schoolwork and his mother's continued control and constant supervision; the children were not allowed to leave their mother's sight, and, until the boys were sixteen and fifteen respectively, she would walk them home from the school grounds.

As a boy, Arthur was small, brown-haired and pale with what a childhood friend called "eyes of pale blue irradiated with dark blue—the loveliest eyes I've seen". When he was eleven, Arthur had his First Communion; despite his intellectual and individualistic nature, he was an ardent Catholic like his mother. For this reason he was called "sale petit Cagot" ("snotty little prig") by his fellow schoolboys. He and his brother were sent to the Collège de Charleville for school that same year. Until this time, his reading was confined almost entirely to the Bible, but he also enjoyed fairy tales and stories of adventure such as the novels of James Fenimore Cooper and Gustave Aimard. He became a highly successful student and was head of his class in all subjects but sciences and mathematics. Many of his schoolmasters remarked upon the young student's ability to absorb great quantities of material. In 1869 he won eight first prizes in the school, including the prize for Religious Education, and in 1870 he won seven firsts.

When he had reached the third class, Mme Rimbaud, hoping for a brilliant scholastic future for her second son, hired a tutor, Father Ariste L'héritier, for private lessons. Lhéritier succeeded in sparking the young scholar's love of Greek and Latin as well as French classical literature. He was also the first person to encourage the boy to write original verse in both French and Latin Rimbaud's first poem to appear in print was "Les Étrennes des orphelins" ("The Orphans' New Year's Gift"), which was published in the 2 January 1870 issue of Revue pour tous. Two weeks after his poem was printed, a new teacher named Georges Izambard arrived at the Collège de Charleville. Izambard became Rimbaud's literary mentor and soon a close accord formed between professor and student and Rimbaud for a short time saw Izambard as a kind of older brother figure. At the age of fifteen, Rimbaud was showing maturity as a poet; the first poem he showed Izambard, "Ophélie", would later be included in anthologies as one of Rimbaud's three or four best poems. When the Franco-Prussian War broke out, Izambard left Charleville and Rimbaud became despondent. He ran away to Paris with no money for his ticket and was subsequently arrested and imprisoned for a week. After returning home, Rimbaud ran away to escape his mother's wrath.

From late October 1870, Rimbaud's behaviour became outwardly provocative; he drank alcohol, spoke rudely, composed scatological poems, stole books from local shops, and abandoned his hitherto characteristically neat appearance by allowing his hair to grow long. At the same time he wrote to Izambard about his method for attaining poetical transcendence or visionary power through a "long, intimidating, immense and rational derangement of all the senses. The sufferings are enormous, but one must be strong, be born a poet, and I have recognized myself as a poet." It is rumoured that he briefly joined the Paris Commune of 1871, which he portrayed in his poem L'orgie parisienne (ou : Paris se repeuple), ("The Parisian Orgy" or "Paris Repopulates"). Another poem, Le cœur volé ("The Stolen Heart"), is often interpreted as a description of him being raped by

drunken Communard soldiers, but this is unlikely since Rimbaud continued to support the Communards and wrote poems sympathetic to their aims.

Life with Verlaine (1871–1875)

Rimbaud was encouraged by friend and office employee Charles Auguste Bretagne to write to Paul Verlaine, an eminent Symbolist poet, after letters to other poets failed to garner replies. Taking his advice, Rimbaud sent Verlaine two letters containing several of his poems, including the hypnotic, gradually shocking "Le Dormeur du Val" (The Sleeper in the Valley), in which certain facets of Nature are depicted and called upon to comfort an apparently sleeping soldier. Verlaine, who was intrigued by Rimbaud, sent a reply that stated, "Come, dear great soul. We await you; we desire you," along with a one-way ticket to Paris. Rimbaud arrived in late September 1871 at Verlaine's invitation and resided briefly in Verlaine's home Verlaine, who was married to the seventeen-year-old and pregnant Mathilde Mauté, had recently left his job and taken up drinking. In later published recollections of his first sight of Rimbaud, Verlaine described him at the age of seventeen as having "the real head of a child, chubby and fresh, on a big, bony rather clumsy body of a still-growing adolescent, and whose voice, with a very strong Ardennes accent, that was almost a dialect, had highs and lows as if it were breaking."

Rimbaud and Verlaine began a short and torrid affair. Whereas Verlaine had likely engaged in prior homosexual experiences, it remains uncertain whether the relationship with Verlaine was Rimbaud's first. During their time together they led a wild, vagabond-like life spiced by absinthe and hashish. They scandalized the Parisian literary coterie on account of the outrageous behaviour of Rimbaud, the archetypical enfant terrible, who throughout this period continued to write strikingly visionary verse. The stormy relationship between Rimbaud and Verlaine eventually brought them to London in September 1872, a period about which Rimbaud would later express regret. During this time, Verlaine abandoned his wife and infant son (both of whom he had abused in his alcoholic rages). Rimbaud and Verlaine lived in considerable poverty, in Bloomsbury and in Camden Town, scraping a living mostly from teaching, in addition to an allowance from Verlaine's mother. Rimbaud spent his days in the Reading Room of the British Museum where "heating, lighting, pens and ink were free." The relationship between the two poets grew increasingly bitter.

By late June 1873, Verlaine grew frustrated with the relationship and returned to Paris, where he quickly began to mourn Rimbaud's absence. On 8 July, he telegraphed Rimbaud, instructing him to come to the Hotel Liège in Brussels; Rimbaud complied at once. The Brussels reunion went badly: they argued continuously and Verlaine took refuge in heavy drinking. On the morning of 10 July, Verlaine bought a revolver and ammunition. That afternoon, "in a drunken rage," Verlaine fired two shots at Rimbaud, one of them wounding the 18-year-old in the left wrist.

Rimbaud dismissed the wound as superficial, and did not initially seek to file charges against Verlaine. But shortly after the shooting, Verlaine (and his mother) accompanied Rimbaud to a Brussels railway station, where Verlaine "behaved as if he were insane." His bizarre behavior induced Rimbaud to "fear that he might give himself over to new excesses," so he turned and ran away. In his words, "it was then I [Rimbaud] begged a police officer to arrest him [Verlaine]." Verlaine was arrested for attempted murder and subjected to a humiliating medico-legal examination. He was also interrogated with regard to both his intimate correspondence with Rimbaud and his wife's accusations about the nature of his relationship with Rimbaud. Rimbaud eventually withdrew the complaint, but the judge nonetheless sentenced Verlaine to two years in prison.

Rimbaud returned home to Charleville and completed his prose work Une Saison en Enfer ("A Season in Hell")—still widely regarded as one of the pioneering examples of modern Symbolist writing—which made various allusions to his life with Verlaine, described as a drôle de ménage ("domestic farce") with his frère pitoyable ("pitiful brother") and vierge folle ("mad

virgin") to whom he was l'époux infernal ("the infernal groom"). In 1874 he returned to London with the poet Germain Nouveau and put together his groundbreaking Illuminations.

Travels (1875–1880)

Rimbaud and Verlaine met for the last time in March 1875, in Stuttgart, Germany, after Verlaine's release from prison and his conversion to Catholicism. By then Rimbaud had given up writing and decided on a steady, working life; some speculate he was fed up with his former wild living, while others suggest he sought to become rich and independent to afford living one day as a carefree poet and man of letters. He continued to travel extensively in Europe, mostly on foot.

In May 1876 he enlisted as a soldier in the Dutch Colonial Army to travel free of charge to Java in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) where four months later he deserted and fled into the jungle, eventually returning incognito to France by ship. At the official residence of the mayor of Salatiga, a small city at the foot of a dormant volcano located 46 km south of Semarang, capital of Central Java Province, there is a marble plaque stating that Rimbaud was once settled at the city. As a deserter, Rimbaud would have faced a Dutch firing squad if caught.

In December 1878, Rimbaud arrived in Larnaca, Cyprus, where he worked for a construction company as a foreman at a stone quarry. In May of the following year he had to leave Cyprus because of a fever, which on his return to France was diagnosed as typhoid.

Abyssinia (1880–1891)

In 1880 Rimbaud finally settled in Aden, Yemen as a main employee in the Bardey agency. In 1884 he left his job at Bardey's to become a merchant on his own account in Harar, Ethiopia, where his commercial dealings notably included coffee and weapons. In this period, he struck up a very close friendship with the Governor of Harar, Ras Makonnen, father of future Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie.

Death (1891)

In February 1891, Rimbaud developed what he initially thought was arthritis in his right knee. It failed to respond to treatment and became agonisingly painful, and by March the state of his health forced him to prepare to return to France for treatment. In Aden, Rimbaud consulted a British doctor who mistakenly diagnosed tubercular synovitis and recommended immediate amputation.

Rimbaud delayed until 9 May to set his financial affairs in order before catching the boat back to France. On arrival, he was admitted to hospital—the Hôpital de la Conception, in Marseille—where his right leg was amputated on 27 May. The post-operative diagnosis was cancer.

After a short stay at his family home in Charleville, he attempted to travel back to Africa, but on the way his health deteriorated and he was readmitted to the same hospital in Marseille where the amputation had been performed, and spent some time there in great pain, attended by his sister Isabelle. Rimbaud died in Marseille on 10 November 1891, at the age of 37, and was interred in Charleville.

Poetry

In May 1871, Rimbaud wrote two letters explaining his poetic philosophy. The first was written May 13 to Izambard, in which Rimbaud explained:

I'm now making myself as scummy as I can. Why? I want to be a poet, and I'm working at turning myself into a seer. You won't understand any of this, and I'm almost incapable of explaining it to you. The idea is to reach the

unknown by the derangement of all the senses. It involves enormous suffering, but one must be strong and be a born poet. It's really not my fault.

Rimbaud said much the same in his second letter, commonly called the Lettre du voyant ("Letter of the Seer"). Written May 15—before his first trip to Paris—to his friend Paul Demeny, the letter expounded his revolutionary theories about poetry and life, while also denouncing most poets that preceded him. Wishing for new poetic forms and ideas, he wrote:

I say that one must be a seer, make oneself a seer. The poet makes himself a seer by a long, prodigious, and rational disordering of all the senses. Every form of love, of suffering, of madness; he searches himself, he consumes all the poisons in him, and keeps only their quintessences. This is an unspeakable torture during which he needs all his faith and superhuman strength, and during which he becomes the great patient, the great criminal, the great accursed – and the great learned one! – among men. – For he arrives at the unknown! Because he has cultivated his own soul – which was rich to begin with – more than any other man! He reaches the unknown; and even if, crazed, he ends up by losing the understanding of his visions, at least he has seen them! Let him die charging through those unutterable, unnameable things: other horrible workers will come; they will begin from the horizons where he has succumbed!

Rimbaud expounded the same ideas in his poem, "Le bateau ivre" ("The Drunken Boat"). This hundred-line poem tells the tale of a boat that breaks free of human society when its handlers are killed by "Redskins" (Peaux-Rouges). At first thinking that it drifts where it pleases, it soon realizes that it is being guided by and to the "poem of the sea". It sees visions both magnificent ("the blue and yellow of singing phosphorescence", "l'éveil jaune et bleu des phosphores chanteurs",) and disgusting ("nets where a whole Leviathan was rotting" "nasses / Où pourrit dans les joncs tout un Léviathan). It ends floating and washed clean, wishing only to sink and become one with the sea.

Archibald MacLeish has commented on this poem: "Anyone who doubts that poetry can say what prose cannot has only to read the so-called Lettres du Voyant and 'Bateau Ivre' together. What is pretentious and adolescent in the Lettres is true in the poem—unanswerably true."

Rimbaud's poetry influenced the Symbolists, Dadaists and Surrealists, and later writers adopted not only some of his themes, but also his inventive use of form and language. French poet Paul Valery stated that "all known literature is written in the language of common sense—except Rimbaud's."

Cultural legacy

Rimbaud's poetry, as well as his life, made an indelible impression on 20th century writers, musicians and artists. Pablo Picasso, Dylan Thomas, <a href="http://poemhunter.com/allen-ginsberg/>Allen Ginsberg<a/>, Vladimir Nabokov, Bob Dylan, Patti Smith, Giannina Braschi, Léo Ferré, Henry Miller, Van Morrison and Jim Morrison have been influenced by his poetry and life. The 1995 biographical film Total Eclipse depicts Leonardo DiCaprio as Rimbaud and David Thewlis as Paul Verlaine.

Works:

Le Soleil Était Encore Chaud (1866)
Poésies (c. 1869–1873)
Le bateau ivre (1871)
Proses Évangeliques (1872)
Une Saison en Enfer (1873)
Illuminations (1874)
Lettres (1870–1891)

A Winter Dream

In winter we'll travel in a little pink carriage
With cushions of blue.
We'll be fine. A nest of mad kisses waits
In each corner too.

You'll shut your eyes, not to see, through the glass,
Grimacing shadows of evening,
Those snarling monsters, a crowd going past
Of black wolves and black demons.

Then you'll feel your cheek tickled quite hard…
A little kiss, like a maddened spider,
Will run over your neck…

And you'll say: "Catch it!" bowing your head,
– And we'll take our time finding that creature
– Who travels so far…

Arthur Rimbaud

After The Flood

As soon as the idea of the Deluge had subsided,
A hare stopped in the clover and swaying flowerbells,
and said a prayer to the rainbow,
through the spider's web.

Oh! the precious stones that began to hide,--
and the flowers that already looked around.
In the dirty main street, stalls were set up
and boats were hauled toward the sea,
high tiered as in old prints.

Blood flowed at Blue Beard's,--
through slaughterhouses, in circuses,
where the windows were blanched by God's seal.
Blood and milk flowed. Beavers built.

'Mazagrans' smoked in the little bars.
In the big glass house, still dripping,
children in mourning looked
at the marvelous pictures.

A door banged; and in the village square
the little boy waved his arms,
understood by weather vanes
and cocks on steeples everywhere,
in the bursting shower.

Madame *** installed a piano in the Alps.
Mass and first communions were celebrated
at the hundred thousand altars of the cathedral.
Caravans set out. And Hotel Splendid was built
in the chaos of ice and of the polar night.

Ever after the moon heard jackals howling
across the deserts of thyme,
and eclogues in wooden shoes growling in the orchard.
Then in the violet and budding forest,
Eucharis told me it was spring.

Gush, pond,-- Foam, roll on the bridge and over the woods;--
black palls and organs, lightening and thunder, rise and roll;--
waters and sorrows rise and launch the Floods again.
For since they have been dissipated--
oh! the precious stones being buried and the opened flowers!--
it's unbearable! and the Queen, the Witch who lights her fire
in the earthen pot will never tell us what she knows,
and what we do not know.

Arthur Rimbaud

Anguish

Is it possible that She will have me forgiven for ambitions continually crushed,--
that an affluent end will make up for the ages of indigence,--
that a day of success will lull us to sleep on the shame of our fatal incompetence?
(O palms! diamond!-- Love! strength!-- higher than all joys and all fame!--
in any case, everywhere-- demon, god,-- Youth of this being: myself!)
That the accidents of scientific wonders and the movements of social brotherhood
will be cherished as the progressive restitution of our original freedom?...
But the Vampire who makes us behave orders us to enjoy ourselves
with what she leaves us, or in other words to be more amusing.
Rolled in our wounds through the wearing air and the sea;
in torments through the silence of the murderous waters and air;
in tortures that laugh in the terrible surge of their silence.

Arthur Rimbaud

Antique

Gracious son of Pan! Around your forehead
crowned with flowerets
and with laurel, restlessly roll
those precious balls, your eyes.

Spotted with brown lees, your cheeks are hollow.
Your fangs gleam. Your breast is like a lyre,
tinklings circulate through your pale arms.
Your heart beats in that belly where sleeps the double sex.
Walk through the night, gently moving that thigh,
that second thigh, and that left leg.

Arthur Rimbaud

Asleep In The Valley

A small green valley where a slow stream flows
And leaves long strands of silver on the bright
Grass; from the mountaintop stream the Sun's
Rays; they fill the hollow full of light.

A soldier, very young, lies open-mouthed,
A pillow made of fern beneath his head,
Asleep; stretched in the heavy undergrowth,
Pale in his warm, green, sun-soaked bed.

His feet among the flowers, he sleeps. His smile
Is like an infant's - gentle, without guile.
Ah, Nature, keep him warm; he may catch cold.

The humming insects don't disturb his rest;
He sleeps in sunlight, one hand on his breast;
At peace. In his side there are two red holes.

Original French

Le Dormeur du Val

C'est un trou de verdure où chante une rivière
Accrochant follement aux herbes des haillons
D'argent ; où le soleil, de la montagne fière,
Luit : c'est un petit val qui mousse de rayons.

Un soldat jeune, lèvre bouche ouverte, tête nue,
Et la nuque baignant dans le frais cresson bleu,
Dort ; il est étendu dans l'herbe sous la nue,
Pâle dans son lit vert où la lumière pleut.

Les pieds dans les glaïeuls, il dort. Souriant comme
Sourirait un enfant malade, il fait un somme :
Nature, berce-le chaudement : il a froid.

Les parfums ne font pas frissonner sa narine ;
Il dort dans le soleil, la main sur sa poitrine,
Tranquille. Il a deux trous rouges au côté droit.

Arthur Rimbaud

At The Green Inn, Five In The Evening (Au Cabaret-Vert, Cinq Heures Du Soir)

For a whole week I had ripped up my boots
on the stones of the roads.
I walked into Charleroi. -Into the Green Inn:
I asked for some slices of bread and butter,
and some half-cooked ham. Happy, I stuck out my legs under
the green table: I studied the artless patterns of the wallpaper
- and it was charming when the girl with the huge breasts
and lively eyes, - a kiss wouldn't scare that one!
- smilingly brought me some bread and butter and lukewarm ham,
on a coloured plate; - pink and white ham,
scented with a clove of garlic - and filled my huge beer mug,
whose froth was turned into gold
by a ray of late sunshine.

Original French

Au Cabaret-Vert, cinq heures du soir.

Depuis huit jours, j'avais déchiré mes bottines
Aux cailloux des chemins. J'entrais à Charleroi.
- Au Cabaret-Vert : je demandai des tartines
Du beurre et du jambon qui fût à moitié froid.

Bienheureux, j'allongeai les jambes sous la table
Verte : je contemplai les sujets très naïfs
De la tapisserie. - Et ce fut adorable,
Quand la fille aux tétons énormes, aux yeux vifs,

- Celle-là, ce n'est pas un baiser qui l'épeure ! -
Rieuse, m'apporta des tartines de beurre,
Du jambon tiède, dans un plat colorié,

Du jambon rose et blanc parfumé d'une gousse
D'ail, - et m'emplit la chope immense, avec sa mousse
Que dorait un rayon de soleil arriéré.

Arthur Rimbaud

Barbarian

Long after the days and the seasons, and people and countries.
The banner of raw meat against the silk of seas and arctic flowers;
(they do not exist). Recovered from the old fanfares of heroism,--
which still attack the heart and head,-- far from the old assassins.
-- Oh! the banner of raw meat against the silk of seas and arctic flowers;
(they do not exist).-- Bliss! Live embers raining in gusts of frost.--
Bliss!-- fires in the rain of the wind of diamonds
flung out by the earth's heart eternally carbonized for us.
-- O world! (Far from the old retreats and the old flames, still heard, still felt.)
Fire and foam. Magic, veering of chasms and clash of icicles against the stars.
O bliss, O world, O music! And forms, sweat, eyes
and long hair floating there. And white tears boiling,--
O bliss!-- and the feminine voice reaching to the bottom of volcanoes
and grottos of the arctic seas. The banner...

Arthur Rimbaud

Being Beauteous

Against a fall of snow, a Being Beauiful, and very tall.
Whistlings of death and circles of faint music
Make this adored body, swelling and trembling
Like a specter, rise...
Black and scarlet gashes burst in the gleaming flesh.
The true colors of life grow dark,
Shimmering and sperate
In the scaffolding, around the Vision.

Shiverings mutter and rise,
And the furious taste of these effects is charged
With deadly whistlings and the raucous music
That the world, far behind us, hurls at our mother of beauty...
She retreats, she rises up...
Oh! Our bones have put on new flesh, for love.

Oh ash-white face

Oh tousled hair

O crystal arms!

On this cannot I mean to destroy myself
In a swirling of trees and soft air!

Arthur Rimbaud

Biography

Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) Jean Nicolas Arthur Rimbaud, a French poet, was born Oct.20,1854, in Charleville. His childhood was marred by a 'cantankerous and vindictive' mother and by the discipline of the local school, but his poetic virtuosity was extraordinary. By the age of fifteen he had written verse in imitation of the Romanticists (Vers de College,1932) , and one of his teachers, Izambard, introduced him to contemporary poetry. He was fiercely revolutionary, and wrote the words 'Down with God' on the public benches of Charleville. He ran away from his native town, twice to Paris and once into Belgium, and once he spent 10 days in prison for travelling by train without a ticket. During these escapades, he wrote such poems as Ma Boheme and Le Cabaret vert.
In 1871, in Charleville, he wrote his first prose poems and the Lettres du voyant, and sent to Verlaine a copy of his poem Le Bateau ivre. Verlaine was enthusiastic with the work and encouraged Rimbaud to come to Paris. At this time he had already started the composition of his Illuminations, which was not published until 1886. Verlaine and Rimbaud drifted into an affair. He served in the army of the Commune, and after its fall he went abroad with Verlaine, travelling in England and Belgium. In 1873, in Brussels, he was shot in the wrist by Verlaine, who was condemned to 2 years' imprisonment in the city of Mons for the act. After the incident, Rimbaud wrote a new Illuminations and Une Saison en Enfer.

In november 1893, Rimbaud gave up the writing of poetry and started traveling through Europe on foot. He returned once more to Paris and then disappeared for 16 years. Part of this time he spent in the East, but the greater part was in Ethiopia, where he dealt in contraband firearms, in ivory and gold, and perhaps in slaves. In 1891 he became ill, returned to France to have one leg amputated, and died on November 10 in a Marseille hospital.

Arthur Rimbaud

Blackcurrant River

Blackcurrant river rolls unknown in strange valleys;
the voices of a hundred rooks go with it,
the true benevolent voice of angles:
with the wide movements of the fir woods
when several winds sweep down.

Everything flows with [the] horrible mysteries of ancient landscapes;
of strongholds visited, of large estates:
it is along these banks that you can hear
the dead passions of errant knights:
but how the wind is wholesome!

Let the traveler look through these clerestories:
he will journey on more bravely.
Forest soldiers whom the Lord sends,
dear delightful rooks! Drive away from here the crafty peasant,
clinking glasses with his old stump of an arm.

Arthur Rimbaud

Bottom

Reality being too thorny for my great personality.
--I found myself nevertheless at my lady's,
an enormous gray-blue bird soaring toward the moldings
of the ceiling and trailing my wings
through the shadows of the evening.
At the foot of the canopy supporting her adored gems
and her physical masterpieces, I was a great bear
with violet gums, fur hoary with sorrow,
eyes on the silver and crystal of the consoles.
Everything became shadow and ardent aquarium.
In the morning,-- bellicose dawn of June,--
a donkey, I rushed into the fields,
braying and brandishing my grievance,
until the Sabine women of the suburbs
came and threw themselves on my neck.

Arthur Rimbaud

Brussels

Boulevard du Régent
July Flowerbeds of amaranths right up to
The pleasant palace of Jupiter. -
I know it is Thou, who is this place,
Minglest thine almost Saharan Blue !

Then, since rose and fir-tree of the sun
And tropical creeper have their play enclosed here,
The little widow's cage !...
What, Flocks of birds, o iaio, iaio !... -

Calm houses, old passions !
Summerhouse of the Lady who ran mad for love.
After the buttocks of the rosebushes,
the balcony Of Juliet, shadowy and very low. -
La Juliette, that reminds me of l'Henriette,
A charming railway station,
At the heart of a mountain, as if the bottom of an orchard
Where a thousand blue devils dance in the air !

Green bench where in stormy paradise,
The white Irish girl sings to the guitar.
Then, from the Guianian dining-room,
Chatter of children and of cages.
The duke's window which makes me think
Of the poison of snails and of boxwood
Sleeping down here in the sun.

And then, It is too beautiful ! too ! Let us maintain our silence. -
Boulevard without movement or business,
Dumb, every drama and every comedy,
Unending concentration of scenes,
I know you and I admire you in silence.

*** Is she an Almeh ?...
in the first blue hours
Will she destroy herself like flowers of fire...
In front of the splendid sweep where one may smell
The enormous flowering city's breath !
It's too beautiful ! It's too beautiful ! but it is necessary -
For the Fisherwoman*
and the Corsair's song,
And also because the last masqueraders still believed
In nocturnal festivities on the pure sea !

Arthur Rimbaud

Childhood

I.
That idol, black eyes and yellow mop, without parents or court,
nobler than Mexican and Flemish fables;
his domain, insolent azure and verdure,
runs over beaches called by the shipless waves,
names ferociously Greek, Slav, Celt.

At the border of the forest-- dream flowers tinkle, flash, and flare,--
the girl with orange lips, knees
crossed in the clear flood that gushes from the fields,
nakedness shaded, traversed, dressed by rainbow, flora, sea.

Ladies who stroll on terraces adjacent to the sea;
baby girls and giantesses,
superb blacks in the verdigris moss,
jewels upright on the rich ground
of groves and little thawed gardens,--
young mothers and big sisters with eyes full of pilgrimages,
sultanas, princesses tyrannical of costume and carriage,
little foreign misses and young ladies gently unhappy.
What boredom, the hour of the 'dear body' and 'dear heart.'

II.
It is she, the little girl, dead behind the rosebushes. --
The young mamma, deceased, comes down the stoop.--
The cousin's carriage creaks on the sand.--
The little brother (he is in India!) there,
before the western sky in the meadow of pinks.

The old men who have been buried upright
in the rampart overgrown with gillyflowers.
Swarms of golden leaves surround the general's house.
They are in the south.--

You follow the red road to reach the empty inn.
The chateau is for sale; the shutters are coming off.
The priest must have taken away the key of the church.
Around the park the keepers' cottages are uninhabited.

The enclosures are so high that nothing
can be seen but the rustling tree tops.
Besides, there is nothing to be seen within.
The meadows go up to the hamlets without anvils or cocks.

The sluice gate is open.
O the Calvaries and the windmills of the desert,
the islands and the haystacks!
Magic flowers droned.

The slopes cradled him.
Beasts of a fabulous elegance moved about.
The clouds gathered over the high sea,

formed of an eternity of hot tears.

III.
In the woods there is a bird;
his song stops you and makes you blush.
There is a clock that never strikes.
There is a hollow with a nest of white beasts.

There is a cathedral that goes down and a lake that goes up.
There is a little carriage abandoned in the copse
or that goes running down the road beribboned.
There is a troupe of little actors in costume, glimpsed on the road
through the border of the woods.
And then, when you are hungry and thirsty,
there is someone who drives you away.

IV.
I am the saint at prayer on the terrace
like the peaceful beasts
that graze down to the sea of Palestine.
I am the scholar of the dark armchair.
Branches and rain hurl themselves at the windows of my library.
I am the pedestrian of the highroad by way of the dwarf woods;
the roar of the sluices drowns my steps.
I can see for a long time the melancholy wash of the setting sun.
I might well be the child abandoned on the jetty
on its way to the high seas, the little farm boy following the lane,
its forehead touching the sky. The paths are rough.
The hillocks are covered with broom.
The air is motionless. How far away are the birds and the springs!
It can only be the end of the world ahead.

V.
Let them rent me this whitewashed tomb, at last,
with cement lines in relief,-- far down under ground.
I lean my elbows on the table,
the lamp shines brightly on these newspapers
I am fool enough to read again, these stupid books.
An enormous distance above my subterranean parlor,
houses take root, fogs gather.
The mud is red or black.
Monstrous city, night without end!
Less high are the sewers. At the sides,
nothing but the thickness of the globe.
Chasms of azure, wells of fire perhaps.
Perhaps it is on these levels that moons and comets meet,
fables and seas. In hours of bitterness,
I imagine balls of sapphire, of metal.
I am master of silence.
Why should the semblance of an opening
pale under one corner of the vault?

Arthur Rimbaud

Cities Vagabonds

These are cities!
And this is the people for whom these
Alleghenys and Lebanons of dream have been raised!
Castles of wood and crystal move on tracks and invisible winches.

Old craters ringed with mammoth statues and
coppery palms roar melodiously in flames.
Festivals of love reverberate
from the canals suspended behind the castles.

Chimes echo through the gorges like a chase.
Corporations of giant singers assemble,
their vestments and oriflames
brilliant as the mountain-peaks.

On platforms in the midst of gulfs,
Rolands brazen their bravuras.
From abysmal catwalks and the rooftops of inns,
a burning sky hoists flags upon the masts.

The collapse of apotheosis
unites the heights to the depths
where seraphic shecentaurs
wind among the avalanches.

Above the plateaus of the highest reaches,
the sea, troubled by the perpetual birth of Venus
and loaded with choral fleets amid
an uproar of pearls and precious conches,
grows dark at times with mortal thunder.

On the slopes,
harvests of flowers
as big as our weapons
and goblets are bellowing.

Processions of Mabs in red-opaline scale the ravines.
On high, their feet in the waterfalls and briars,
stags give suck to Diana.

Bacchantes of the suburbs weep,
and the moon burns and howls.
Venus enters the caves
of the black-smiths and hermits.

Clusters of belfries repeat the ideas of the people.
Issues from castles of bone an unknown music.
In the boroughs legends
are born and enthusiasm germinate.

A paradise of storms collapses.
Savages dance without stopping the festival of night.

And, for one hour, I descended into the swarm
of a boulevard of Baghdad
where groups of peple were singing
the joy of the new work,
circulating under a heavy wind
without being able to escape those fabulous phantoms
of the mountains to which one must return.

What good arms, what wondrous hour
will restore to me that region
whence come my slumbers
and least movements?

Arthur Rimbaud

City

I am an ephemeral
and a not too discontented citizen
of a metropolis considered modern
because all known taste
has been evaded in the furnishings
and the exterior of the houses
as well as in the layout of the city.

Here you will fail to detect the least trace
of any monument of superstition.
Morals and language
are reduced to their simplest expression,
at last! The way these millions of people,
who do not even need to know each other,
manage their education, business,
and old age is so identical
that the course of their lives
must be several times less long
than that which a mad statistics
calculates for the people of the continent.

And from my window I see new specters rolling through
the thick eternal smoke--
our woodland shade, our summer night!--
new Eumenides in front of my cottage
which is my country and all my heart
since everything here resembles it,--
Death without tears,
our diligent daughter and servant,
a desperate Love, and a pretty
Crime howling in the mud in the street.

Arthur Rimbaud

Clearance Sale

For what the Jews have not sold,
what neither nobility nor crime have tasted,
what is unknown to monstrous love
and to the infernal probity of the masses!

what neither time nor science need recognize: The Voices restored;
fraternal awakening of all choral and orchestral energies
and their instantaneous application; the opportunity, the only one,
for the release of our senses! For sale Bodies without price,
outside any race, any world, any sex, any lineage! Riches gushing at every step!

Uncontrolled sale of diamonds!
For sale anarchy for the masses;
irrepressible satisfaction for rare connoisseurs;
agonizing death for the faithful and for lovers!

For sale colonization and migrations, sports,
fairylands and incomparable comforts,
and the noise and the movement
and the future they make!

For sale the application of calculations
and the incredible leaps of harmony.
Discoveries and terms never dreamed of,
-- immediate possession.

Wild and infinite flight toward invisible splendors,
toward intangible delights--
and its maddening secrets for every vice
-- and its terrifying gaiety for the mob.

For sale, the bodies, the voices,
the enormous and unquestionable wealth,
that which will never be sold.
Salesmen are not at the end of their stock!
It will be some time before travelers have to turn in their accounts.

Arthur Rimbaud

Common Nocturne

A breath opens operatic breaches
in the walls,-- blurs the pivoting of crumbling roofs,--
disperses the boundaries
of hearths,-- eclipses the windows.

Along the vine, having rested my foot on a waterspout,
I climbed down into this coach,
its period indicated clearly enough
by the convex panes of glass,
the bulging panels, the contorted sofas.

Isolated hearse of my sleep,
shepherd's house of my insanity,
the vehicle veers on the grass
of the obliterated highway:
and in the defect at the top
of the right-hand windowpane
revolve pale lunar figures, leaves, and breasts. --

A very deep green and blue invade the picture.
Unhitching near a spot of gravel. --
Here will they whistle for the storm,
and the Sodoms and Solymas,
and the wild beasts and the armies,
(Postilion and animals of dream,
will they begin again in the stifling
forests to plunge me up to my eyes
in the silken spring?)
And, whipped through the splashing of waters
and spilled drinks, send us rolling
on the barking of bulldogs...
--A breath disperses
the boundaries of the hearth.

Arthur Rimbaud

Conclusion

The pigeons which flutter in the meadow,
the game which runs and sees in the dark,
the water animals, the animal enslaved,
the last butterflies!.. also are thirsty.
But to dissolve where that wandering cloud is dissolving -
Oh! Favoured by what is fresh!
To expire in those damp violets
whose awakening fills these woods?

Arthur Rimbaud

Dance Of The Hanged Men

On the black gallows, one-armed friend,
The paladins are dancing, dancing
The lean, the devil's paladins
The skeletons of Saladins.

Sir Beelzebub pulls by the scruff
His little black puppets who grin at the sky,
And with a backhander in the head like a kick,
Makes them dance, dance, to an old Carol-tune!

And the puppets, shaken about, entwine their thin arms:
Their breasts pierced with light, like black organ-pipes
Which once gentle ladies pressed to their own,
Jostle together protractedly in hideous love-making.

Hurray! the gay dancers, you whose bellies are gone!
You can cut capers on such a long stage!
Hop! never mind whether it's fighting or dancing!
- Beelzebub, maddened, saws on his fiddles!

Oh the hard heels, no one's pumps are wearing out!
And nearly all have taken of their shirts of skin;
The rest is not embarrassing and can be seen without shame.
On each skull the snow places a white hat:

The crow acts as a plume for these cracked brains,
A scrap of flesh clings to each lean chin:
You would say, to see them turning in their dark combats,
They were stiff knights clashing pasteboard armours.

Hurrah! the wind whistles at the skeletons' grand ball!
The black gallows moans like an organ of iron !
The wolves howl back from the violet forests:
And on the horizon the sky is hell-red...

Ho there, shake up those funereal braggarts,
Craftily telling with their great broken fingers
The beads of their loves on their pale vertebrae:
Hey the departed, this is no monastery here!

Oh! but see how from the middle of this Dance of Death
Springs into the red sky a great skeleton, mad,
Carried away by his own impetus, like a rearing horse:
And, feeling the rope tight again round his neck,

Clenches his knuckles on his thighbone with a crack
Uttering cries like mocking laughter,
And then like a mountebank into his booth,
Skips back into the dance to the music of the bones!

On the black gallows, one-armed friend,
The paladins are dancing, dancing

The lean, the devil's paladins
The skeletons of Saladins.

Original French

Bal des pendus

Au gibet noir, manchot aimable,
Dansent, dansent les paladins,
Les maigres paladins du diable,
Les squelettes de Saladins.

Messire Belzébuth tire par la cravate
Ses petits pantins noirs grimaçant sur le ciel,
Et, leur claquant au front un revers de savate,
Les fait danser, danser aux sons d'un vieux Noël !

Et les pantins choqués enlacent leurs bras grêles :
Comme des orgues noirs, les poitrines à jour
Que serraient autrefois les gentes damoiselles,
Se heurtent longuement dans un hideux amour.

Hurrah ! les gais danseurs qui n'avez plus de panse !
On peut cabrioler, les tréteaux sont si longs !
Hop ! qu'on ne cache plus si c'est bataille ou danse !
Belzébuth enragé racle ses violons !

O durs talons, jamais on n'use sa sandale !
Presque tous ont quitté la chemise de peau ;
Le reste est peu gênant et se voit sans scandale.
Sur les crânes, la neige applique un blanc chapeau :

Le corbeau fait panache à ces têtes fêlées,
Un morceau de chair tremble à leur maigre menton :
On dirait, tournoyant dans les sombres mêlées,
Des preux, raides, heurtant armures de carton.

Hurrah ! la bise siffle au grand bal des squelettes !
Le gibet noir mugit comme un orgue de fer !
Les loups vont répondant des forêts violettes :
À l'horizon, le ciel est d'un rouge d'enfer...

Holà, secouez-moi ces capitans funèbres

Qui défilent, sournois, de leurs gros doigts cassés
Un chapelet d'amour sur leurs pâles vertèbres :
Ce n'est pas un moustier ici, les trépassés !

Oh ! voilà qu'au milieu de la danse macabre
Bondit dans le ciel rouge un grand squelette fou
Emporté par l'élan, comme un cheval se cabre :
Et, se sentant encor la corde raide au cou,

Crispe ses petits doigts sur son fémur qui craque
Avec des cris pareils à des ricanements,
Et, comme un baladin rentre dans la baraque,
Rebondit dans le bal au chant des ossements.

Au gibet noir, manchot aimable,
Dansent, dansent les paladins,
Les maigres paladins du diable,
Les squelettes de Saladins.

Arthur Rimbaud

Dawn

I have kissed the summer dawn. Before the palaces, nothing moved. The water lay dead. Battalions of shadows still kept the forest road.

I walked, walking warm and vital breath, While stones watched, and wings rose soundlessly.

My first adventure, in a path already gleaming With a clear pale light, Was a flower who told me its name.

I laughted at the blond Wasserfall That threw its hair across the pines: On the silvered summit, I came upon the goddess.

Then one by one, I lifted her veils. In the long walk, waving my arms.

Across the meadow, where I betrayed her to the cock. In the heart of town she fled among the steeples and domes, And I hunted her, scrambling like a beggar on marble wharves.

Above the road, near a thicket of laurel, I caught her in her gathered veils, And smelled the scent of her immense body. Dawn and the child fell together at the bottom of the wood.

When I awoke, it was noon.

Arthur Rimbaud

Democracy

'The flag goes with the foul landscape,
and our jargon muffles the drum.'
In the great centers we'll nurture
the most cynical prostitution.
We'll massacre logical revolts.

In spicy and drenched lands!--
at the service of the most monstrous
exploitations, industrial or military.
'Farewell here, no matter where.

Conscripts of good will,
ours will be a ferocious philosophy;
ignorant as to science, rabid for comfort;
and let the rest of the world croak.
This is the real advance. Marching orders, let's go!'

Arthur Rimbaud

Departure

Everything seen...
The vision gleams in every air.
Everything had...
The far sound of cities, in the evening,
In sunlight, and always.
Everything known...
O Tumult! O Visions! These are the stops of life.

Departure in affection, and shining sounds.

Arthur Rimbaud

Drunken Coachman

Unwashed
Drinks:
Mother-of-pearl
Sees:

Bitter
Law,
Carriage
Falls!

Woman
Tumbles:
Loin

Bleeds:
- Whimpers!
Outcry.

Original French

Cocher ivre

Pouacre
Boit :
Nacre
Voit :

Acre
Loi,
Fiacre
Choit !

Femme
Tombe :
Lombe

Saigne :
- Clame !
Geigne.

Arthur Rimbaud

Drunken Morning

Oh, my Beautiful! Oh, my Good!
Hideous fanfare where yet I do not stumble!
Oh, rack of enchantments!
For the first time, hurrah for the unheard-of work,
For the marvelous body! For the first time!
It began with the laughter of children, and there it will end.
This poison will stay in our veins even when, as the fanfares depart,
We return to our former disharmony.
Oh, now, we who are so worthy of these tortures!
Let us re-create ourselves after that superhuman promise
Made to our souls and our bodies at their creation:
That promise, that madness!
Elegance, silence, violence!
They promised to bury in shadows the tree of good and evil,
To banish tyrannical honesty,
So that we might flourish in our very pure love.
It began with a certain disgust, and it ended -
Since we could not immediately seize upon eternity -
It ended in a scattering of perfumes.
Laughter of children, discretion of slaves, austerity of virgins,
Horror of faces and objects here below,
Be sacred in the memory of the evening past.
It began in utter boorishness, and now it ends
In angels of fire and ice.
Little drunken vigil, blessed!
If only for the mask you have left us!
Method, we believe in you! We never forgot that yesterday
You glorified all of our ages.
We have faith in poison.
We will give our lives completely, every day.
FOR THIS IS THE ASSASSIN'S HOUR.

(translated by Paul Schmidt)

Arthur Rimbaud

Eternity

It has been found again.
What ? - Eternity.
It is the sea fled away
With the sun.

Sentinel soul,
Let us whisper the confession
Of the night full of nothingness
And the day on fire.

From human approbation,
From common urges
You diverge here
And fly off as you may.

Since from you alone,
Satiny embers,
Duty breathes
Without anyone saying : at last.
Here is no hope,
No orietur.
Knowledge and fortitude,
Torture is certain.

It has been found again.
What ? - Eternity.
It is the sea fled away
With the sun.

Arthur Rimbaud

Evening Prayer

I spend my life sitting - like an angel
in the hands of a barber - a deeply fluted beer mug
in my fist, belly and neck curved,
a Gambier pipe in my teeth, under the air
swelling with impalpable veils of smoke.

Like the warm excrements in an old dovecote,
a thousand dreams burn softly inside me,
and at times my sad heart is like sap-wood bled
on by the dark yellow gold of its sweats.

Then, when I have carefully swallowed my dreams,
I turn, having drunk thirty or forty tankards,
and gather myself together to relieve bitter need:
As sweetly as the Saviour of Hyssops
and of Cedar I piss towards dark skies,
very high and very far;
and receive the approval of the great heliotropes.

Arthur Rimbaud

Evil

While the red-stained mouths of machine guns ring
Across the infinite expanse of day;
While red or green, before their posturing King,
The massed battalions break and melt away;

And while a monstrous frenzy runs a course
That makes of a thousand men a smoking pile-
Poor fools! - dead, in summer, in the grass,
On Nature's breast, who meant these men to smile;

There is a God, who smiles upon us through
The gleam of gold, the incense-laden air,
Who drowses in a cloud of murmured prayer,

And only wakes when weeping mothers bow
Themselves in anguish, wrapped in old black shawls-
And their last small coin into his coffer falls.

Arthur Rimbaud

Fairy

For Helen, in the virgin shadows and the
impassive radiance in astral silence,
ornamental saps conspired.

Summer's ardour was confided
to silent birds and due indolence
to a priceless mourning boat
through gulfs of dead loves
and fallen perfumes.

-After the moment of the woods women's song
to the rumble of the torrent in the ruin of the wood,
of the tinkle of the cowbells to the echo of the vales,
and the cries of the steppes.

- For Helen's childhood, furs and shadows trembled,
and the breast of the poor and the legends of heaven.
And her eyes and her dance superior
even to the precious radiance,
to cold influences, to the pleasure of the unique
setting and the unique hour.

Arthur Rimbaud

Faun's Head

Among the foliage, green casket flecked with gold;
in the uncertain foliage that blossoms
with gorgeous flowers where sleeps the kiss,
vivid, and bursting through the sumptuous tapestry,
a startled faun shows his two eyes
and bites the crimson flowers with his white teeth.

Stained and ensanguined like mellow wine,
his mouth bursts out in laughter beneath the branches.
And when he has fled - like a squirrel -
his laughter still vibrates on every leaf,
and you can see, startled by a bullfinch,
the Golden Kiss of the Wood,
gathering itself together again.

Arthur Rimbaud

Feasts Of Hunger

My hunger, Anne, Anne, flee on your donkey.

If I have any taste, it s for hardly anything
but earth and stones.
Dinn! Dinn! Dinn! Dinn!

Let us eat air, rock, coal, iron.
Turn, my hungers.
Feed, hungers, in the meadow of sounds!
Suck the gaudy poison of the convolvuli;
Eat, the stones a poor man breaks,
the old masonry of churches, boulders,
children of floods, loaves lying in the grey valleys!

Hungers, it is bits of black air; the azure trumpeter;
it is my stomach that makes me suffer.
It is unhappiness. Leaves have appeared on earth!
I go looking for the sleepy flesh of fruit.
At the heart of the furrow I pick
Venus' looking-glass and the violet.

My hunger, Anne, Anne, flee on your donkey.

Arthur Rimbaud

First Communions

Truly, they're stupid, these village churches
Where fifteen ugly chicks soiling the pillars
Listen, trilling out their divine responses,
To a black freak whose boots stink of cellars:
But the sun wakes now, through the branches,
The irregular stained-glass's ancient colours.

The stone always smells of its earthly mother.
You'll see masses of those earthy rocks
In the rutting country that solemnly quivers,
And bears, on ochrous paths, near heavy crops,
Those burnt shrubs where the sloe turns bluer,
Those black mulberries the hedge-roses top.

Once a century, they make the barns respectable
With a wash of curdled milk and blue water:
If grotesque mysteries are viewed as notable,
Near to the straw-stuffed Saint or Madonna,
Flies, that know every inn and every stable,
Gorge on wax there, dotting the sunlit floor.

The child's duty above all's to home and family,
Simple cares, honest toil that stupefies;
They go, forgetting how their skin crawls freely
Where the Priest of Christ's powerful finger lies.
The Priest has a house shaded with hornbeam
So he can loose these tanned brows to the light.

The first black suit, the finest pastries, there,
Beneath the little Drummer or Napoleon
Some plate where Josephs and Marthas stare,
Sticking their tongues out with excess emotion,
Joined, on the day of truth, by maps, a pair,
Are the sole sweet mementoes of Devotion.

The girls always go to church, content forever
To hear themselves called bitches by the sons,
Who put on airs, after Mass or Sung Vespers,
Those who are destined to grace the garrisons,
In cafes taunt the important families, snicker,
Dressed in new jackets, yelling frightful songs.

Meanwhile the Curé for the children's choosing
Pictures; in his garden, and, when Vespers done,
The air fills with the distant sound of dancing,
He feels, despite all celestial inhibition,
His calves beat time, his toes with joy wriggling;
– Night steps, dark pirate, onto skies all golden.

II

The Priest has noted among the catechists,
Gathering from the Faubourgs and the Quarters,
This little unknown girl, her eyes pale mist,
Her sallow brow. Her parents humble porters:
'On the great Day, seeing her among the Catechists,
God will snow down blessings on this daughter.'

III

On the eve of the great Day, the child feels ill.
Better than in the tall Church's dismal murmuring,
First a shudder comes – bed's not uninteresting – still,
The supernatural shudder may return: 'I'm dying…'

And, like a theft of love from her stupid sisters,
She sees, exhausted and hands on heart, there,
Angels, Jesus, a Holy Virgin that glimmers;
And calmly her whole soul swallows her conqueror.

Adonai! … – In their Latin endings dressed,
Skies shot with green bathe Brows of crimson,
And, stained by pure blood from heavenly breasts,
Across swirling suns, fall great snowy linens!

– For her present and future virginities
She bites on the freshness of your Remission,
But more so than sweetmeats or water-lilies,
Your forgiveness is like ice, O Queen of Zion!

IV

Then the Virgin's no more than the virgin of the book.
Mystical impulses are often thwarted…
The hideous print and the old woodcut come,
Poverty of images, bronze-sheathed by boredom.

Startled, her dream of chaste blueness,
By vaguely indecent curiosities,
Surprises itself among celestial tunics,
Linen with which Christ veils his nudities.

She yearns, she yearns, still, soul in distress,
Brow on the pillow racked by muffled sounds,
To prolong the supreme flashes of tenderness,
And dribbles – Darkness over house and grounds.

And the child can bear it no longer, she stirs,
Arches her back, opens the blue bed-hangings,
To draw the coolness of the room towards her,
Beneath the sheet, to breasts' and belly's burning.

V

Waking – at midnight – the window-panes were
White. Past the blue sleep of moonlit hangings,
The vision of Sunday candours captured her;
She'd dreamed of red. Her nose was bleeding,

And, feeling quite chaste and full of weakness,
Savouring love's return to a God once known,
She thirsted for night when the heart may guess
At soft skies where it worships and bows down;

For night, impalpable Virgin-Mother, that bathes
All youthful emotion in its shadowy silences;
Thirsted for deep night where the heart, blood-stained,
Pours out without cries rebellion without witnesses.

And playing the Victim and the little bride,
Her star saw her, a candle between her fingers,
Descend to the courtyard where clothes dried,
White spectre raising the roofs' black spectres.

VI

She passed her holy night in the latrine,
To the candle, from roof-holes, white air flowed,
And full of purplish blackness a wild vine,
Skirting the next-door yard hung down below.

The skylight made a heart of living brightness,
In the yard where the low sky, with its red-gold,
Plated the panes; cobbles, stinking with excess
Wet filth, sulphured the sleep-dark wall-shadows.

VII

Who'll speak of that languor, those unclean pities,
And what hatred will fall on her, O you filthy
Lunatics, whose divine work still warps destinies,
When leprosy finally devours that sweet body?

VIII

And when, having swallowed all her hysterias,
She sees, in the melancholy born of happiness,
Her lover dreaming of the white million Marys
In the dawn of the night of love, her distress:

‘Do you know I killed you? Took your mouth,
Your heart, all that one has, all you possess;
And I, I am ill: Oh, I wish that I were drowned
With the Dead, drenched by nocturnal waters!

I was a child, and Christ has soiled my breath.
Filled me with loathing, through and through!
You kissed my hair thick as a fleece, and yes,
I allowed it….Oh, there, it’s all fine for you,

Men! Who don’t see that the most loving woman
Is, behind conscience full of ignoble terror,
The most prostituted and the most saddened,
That our every impulse towards You is error!

For my first Communion is long past.
I have no power ever to know your kisses:
And my heart and flesh, your flesh has clasped,
Seethe with the rotten kisses of Jesus!’

IX

Then, the desolate soul, and the soul that’s putrid,
Both will feel the stream of your maledictions.
– They’ll be at rest in your inviolate Hatred,
Freed, for death’s sake, from honest passions,

Christ! O Christ, the eternal thief of vigour,
God who, for two millennia, bowed to your pallor,
Nailed to the earth, in shame and mental horror,
Or overwhelmed, the brows of women of sorrow.

Arthur Rimbaud

First Evening (Première Soirée)

Her clothes were almost off;
Outside, a curious tree
Beat a branch at the window
To see what it could see.

Perched on my enormous easy chair,
Half nude, she clasped her hands.
Her feet trembled on the floor,
As soft as they could be.

I watched as a ray of pale light,
Trapped in the tree outside,
Danced from her mouth
To her breast, like a fly on a flower.

I kissed her delicate ankles.
She had a soft, brusque laugh
That broke into shining crystals -
A pretty little laugh.

Her feet ducked under her chemise;
'Will you please stop it!…'
But I laughed at her cries -
I knew she really liked it.

Her eye trembled beneath my lips;
They closed at my touch.
Her head went back; she cried:
'Oh, really! That's too much!

'My dear, I'm warning you…'
I stopped her protest with a kiss
And she laughed, low -
A laugh that wanted more than this…

Her clothes were almost off;
Outside, a curious tree
Beat a branch at the window
To see what it could see.

Original French

Première Soirée

'- Elle était fort déshabillée
Et de grands arbres indiscrets
Aux vitres jetaient leur feuillée
Malinement, tout près, tout près.

Assise sur ma grande chaise,

Mi-nue, elle joignait les mains.
Sur le plancher frissonnaient d'aise
Ses petits pieds si fins, si fins

- Je regardai, couleur de cire
Un petit rayon buissonnier
Papillonner dans son sourire
Et sur son sein, - mouche ou rosier

- Je baisai ses 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 en finir !'
- La première audace permise,
Le rire feignait de punir !

- Pauvrets palpitants sous ma lèvre,
Je baisai doucement ses yeux :
- Elle jeta sa tête mièvre
En arrière : 'Oh ! c'est encor mieux !...

'Monsieur, j'ai deux mots à te dire...'
- Je lui jetai le reste au sein
Dans un baiser, qui la fit rire
D'un bon rire qui voulait bien.....

- Elle était fort déshabillée
Et de grands arbres indiscrets
Aux vitres jetaient leur feuillée
Malinement, tout près, tout près

Arthur Rimbaud

Flowers

From a golden step,-- among silk cords,
green velvets, gray gauzes,
and crystal disks that
turn black as bronze in the sun,
I see the digitalis opening
on a carpet of silver filigree,
of eyes and hair. Yellow gold-pieces
strewn over agate, mahogany columns supporting
emerald domes, bouquets of white satin
and delicate sprays of rubies,
surround the water-rose.

Like a god with huge blue eyes and limbs of snow,
the sea and sky lure to the marble terraces
the throng of roses, young and strong.

Arthur Rimbaud

Friends

Come, the Wines are off to the seaside,
and the waves by the million!
Look at wild Bitter rolling from the mountain tops!
Let us reach, like good pilgrims, green-pillared Absinthe…

Myself: No more of these landscapes.
What is drunkenness, friends?
I had soon - rather, even - rot in the pond,
beneath the horrible scum, near the floating driftwood.

Arthur Rimbaud

From 'The Cupboard' (Le buffet)

A large carved cupboard of white oak
emanates that relaxed gentle air
Old people have; open, it's kindly
shadows give off fragrances like fine

wine, it overflows with a jumble
of quaint frayed things: sweet
yellowed linen, torn women's clothes,
faded laces, grandmother's shawls

embroidered with griffins, children's shirts;
there must be lockets buried somewhere,
locks of white or blond hair, portraits
and dried flowers whose odors mingle

with the smell of apples and pears. O old-fashioned
cupboard, what stories you must know, it's obvious
you'd love to tell them each time your wide doors
slowly open and you clear your throat.

Original French

Le buffet

C'est un large buffet sculpté ; le chêne sombre,
Très vieux, a pris cet air si bon des vieilles gens ;
Le buffet est ouvert, et verse dans son ombre
Comme un flot de vin vieux, des parfums engageants ;

Tout plein, c'est un fouillis de vieilles vieilleries,
De linges odorants et jaunes, de chiffons
De femmes ou d'enfants, de dentelles flétries,
De fichus de grand'mère où sont peints des griffons ;

- C'est là qu'on trouverait les médaillons, les mèches
De cheveux blancs ou blonds, les portraits, les fleurs sèches
Dont le parfum se mêle à des parfums de fruits.

- O buffet du vieux temps, tu sais bien des histoires,
Et tu voudrais conter tes contes, et tu bruis
Quand s'ouvrent lentement tes grandes portes noires.

Arthur Rimbaud

Genie

He is love and the present because he has opened our house
to winter's foam and to the sound of summer,
He who purified all that we drink and tea;
He is the charm of passing places,
the incarnate delight of all things that abide.
He is affection and the future,
the strength and love that we,
standing surrounded by anger and weariness,
See passing in the storm-filled sky and in banners of ecstasy.
He is love, perfect and rediscovered measure,
Reason, marvelous and unforeseen,
Eternity: beloved prime mover of the elements, of destinies.
We all know the terror of his yielding, and of ours:
Oh delight of our well-being, brilliance of our faculties,
selfish affection and passion for him, who loves us forever...
And we remember him, and he goes on his way...
And if Adoration departs, then it sounds, his promise sounds:
'Away with these ages and superstitions,
These couplings, these bodies of old!
All our age has submerged.' He will not go away,
will not come down again from some heave.
He will not fulfill the redemption of women's fury
nor the gaiety of men nor the rest of this sin:
For he is and he is loved, and so it is already done.
Oh, his breathing, the turn of his head when he runs:
Terrible speed of perfection in action and form!
Fecundity of spirit and vastness of the universe! His body!
Release so long desired, The splintering of grace before a new violence!
Oh, the sight, the sight of him!
All ancient genuflections, all sorrows are lifted as he passes.
The light of his day! All moving and sonorous
suffering dissolves in more intense music.
In his step there are vaster migrations than the old invasions were.
Oh, He and we! a pride more benevolent than charities lost.
Oh, world! and the shining song of new sorrows.
He has known us all and has loved us.
Let us discover how, this winter night, to hail him from cape to cape,
from the unquiet pole to the château,
from crowded cities to the empty coast,
from glance to glance, with our strength and our feelings exhausted,
To see him, and to send him once again away...
And beneath the tides and over high deserts of snow
To follow his image, his breathing, his body, the light of his day.

Arthur Rimbaud

Golden Age

One of the voices
Always angelic -
It is about me, -
Sharply expresses itself :

Those thousand questions
Spreading their roots Bring in the end,
Only drunkenness and madness ;
Understand this trick

So gay, so easy :
It is only wave, only flower,
And that is your family !
Then it sings.

O So gay, so easy,
And visible to the naked eye... -
I sing with it, -
Understand this trick

So gay, so easy :
It is only wave, only flower,
And that is your family !... etc...
And then a voice -

How angelic it is ! - It is about me,
Sharply expresses itself :
And sings at this moment
Like a sister to breath :
With a German tone,
But ardent and full :
The world is vicious ;
If that surprises you !
Live and leave to the fire
Dark misfortune.

O ! pretty castle !
How bright your life is !
What age do you belong to,
Princely nature Of our elder brother ! etc...

I also sing : Many sisters ! voices
Not at all public ! Surround me
With chaste glory... etc...

Arthur Rimbaud

Historic Evening

On an evening, for example, when the naive tourist has retired
from our economic horrors, a master's hand awakens
the meadow's harpsichord;
they are playing cards at the bottom of the pond,
mirror conjuring up favorites and queens;
there are saints, veils, threads of harmony,
and legendary chromatics in the setting sun.
He shudders as the hunts and hordes go by.
Comedy drips on the grass stages.
And the distress of the poor and of the weak
on those stupid planes! Before his slave's vision,
Germany goes scaffolding toward moons;
Tartar deserts light up; ancient revolts ferment
in the center of the Celestial Empire;
over stairways and armchairs of rock, a little world, wan and flat,
Africa and Occidents, will be erected.
Then a ballet of familiar seas and nights,
worthless chemistry and impossible melodies. The same bourgeois magic
wherever the mail-train sets you down.
Even the most elementary physicist feels that it is no longer possible
to submit to this personal atmosphere, fog of physical remorse,
which to acknowledge is already an affliction. No!
The moment of the seething cauldron, of seas removed,
of subterranean conflagrations, of the planet swept away,
and the consequent exterminations, certitudes indicated
with so little malice by the Bible and by the Norns
and for which serious persons should be on the alert

Arthur Rimbaud

Hunger

I only find within my bones, A taste for eating earth and stones.
When I feed, I feed on air, Rocks and coals and iron ore.
My hunger, turn. Hunger, feed: A field of bran.
Gather as you can the bright, Poison weed.
Eat the rocks a beggar breaks,
The stones of ancient churches' walls,
Pebbles, children of the flood, Loaves left lying in the mud.

* * *

Beneath the bush a wolf will howl, Spitting bright feathers
From his feast of fowl: Like him, I devour myself.
Waiting to be gathered, Fruits and grasses spend their hours;
The spider spinning in the hedge, Eats only flowers.
Let me sleep! Let me boil, On the altars of Solomon;
Let me soak the rusty soil, And flow into Kendron.

Finally, O reason, O happiness, I cleared from the sky the blue which is darkness, and I lived as a golden spark of this light, Nature. In my delight, I made my face look as comic and as wild as I could:

It is recovered.
What? Eternity.
In the whirling light
Of the sun in the sea.
O my eternal soul,
Hold fast to desire
In spite of the night
And the day on fire.
You must set yourself free
From the striving of Man
And the applause of the World!
You must fly as you can...
No hope, forever; No _orietur._
Science and patience,
The torment is sure.
The fire within you,
Soft silken embers,
Is our whole duty--
But no one remembers.
It is recovered.
What? Eternity.
In the whirling light
Of the sun in the sea.

I became a fabulous opera. I saw that everyone in the world was doomed to happiness. Action isn't life; it's merely a way of ruining a kind of strength, a means of destroying nerves. Morality is water on the brain. It seemed to me that everyone should have had several other lives as well. This gentleman doesn't know what he's doing; he's an angel. That family is a litter of puppy dogs. With some men, I often talked out loud with a moment from one of their other lives-- that's how I happened to love a pig. Not a single one of the brilliant arguments of madness-- the madness that gets locked up--

did I forget; I could go through them all again, I've got the system down by heart. It affected my health. Terror loomed ahead. I would fall again and again into a heavy sleep, which lasted several days at a time, and when I woke up, my sorrowful dreams continued. I was ripe for fatal harvest, and my weakness led me down dangerous roads to the edge of the world, to the Cimmerian shore, the haven of whirlwinds and darkness. I had to travel, to dissipate the enchantments that crowded my brain. On the sea, which I loved as if it were to wash away my impurity, I watched the compassionate cross arise. I had been damned by the rainbow. Felicity was my doom, my gnawing remorse, my worm. My life would forever be too large to devote to strength and to beauty. Felicity! The deadly sweetness of its sting would wake me at cockcrow-- ad matutinum, at the Christus venit-- in the soberest of cities.

O seasons, O chateaus! Where is the flawless soul?
I learned the magic of Felicity. It enchants us all.
To Felicity, sing life and praise, Whenever Gaul's cock crows.
Now all desire has gone-- It has made my life its own.
That spell has caught heart and soul, And scattered every trial.

O seasons, O chateaus! And, oh, the day it disappears, Will be the day I die.
O seasons, O chateaus! All that is over. Today, I know how to celebrate beauty.

Arthur Rimbaud

Jeanne-Marie's Hands

Jeanne-Marie has strong hands; dark hands tanned by the summer,
pale hands like dead hands. Are they the hands of Donna Juana?
Did they get their dusky cream colour
sailing on pools of sensual pleasure?

Have they dipped into moons, in ponds of serenity?
Have they drunk heat from barbarous skies, calm upon enchanting knees?
Have they rolled cigars, or traded in diamonds?
Have they tossed golden flowers at the glowing feet of Madonnas?

It is the black blood of belladonnas that blazes and sleeps in their palms.
Hands which drive the diptera with which
the auroral bluenesses buzz, towards the nectars?
Hands which measure out poisons?

Oh what Dream has stiffened them in pandiculations?
Some extraordinary dream of the Asias, of Khenghavars or Zions?
These hands have neither sold oranges
nor become sunburnt at the feet of the gods:
these hands have never washed the napkins of heavy babies without eyes.

These are not the hands of a tart,
nor of working women with round foreheads burnt
by a sun which is drunk with the smell of tar,
in woods that sink of factories.

These are benders of backbones; hands that never work harm;
more inevitable than machines, stronger than carthorses!
Stirring like furnaces, shaking off all their chills of fear,
their flesh sings Marseillaises, and never Eleisons!

They could grasp your necks, O evil women;
they could pulverize your hands, noblewomen;
your infamous hands full of white and of carmine.
The splendour of these hands of love turns the heads of the lambs!

On their spicy fingers the great sun sets a ruby!
A dark stain of the common people makes then brown
like the nipples of the women of yesterday,
but it is the backs of these Hands which every
proud Rebel desires to kiss! Marvelous,
they have paled in the great sunshine full of love of the cause
on the bronze casing of machine-guns throughout insurgent Paris!

Ah, sometimes, O blessed Hands, at your wrists,
Hands where our never-sobered lips tremble,
cries out a chain of bright links!
And there's a strange and sudden

Start in our beings when,
sometimes, they try, angelic Hands,
to make your sunburn fade away

by making your fingers bleed!

Arthur Rimbaud

Le Châtiment De Tartufe

Tisonnant, tisonnant son coeur amoureux sous
Sa chaste robe noire, heureux, la main gantée,
Un jour qu'il s'en allait, effroyablement doux,
Jaune, bavant la foi de sa bouche édentée,

Un jour qu'il s'en allait, 'Oremus', - un Méchant
Le prit rudement par son oreille benoite
Et lui jeta des mots affreux, en arrachant
Sa chaste robe noire autour de sa peau moite !

Châtiment !... Ses habits étaient déboutonnés,
Et le long chapelet des péchés pardonnés
S'égrenant dans son coeur, Saint Tartufe était pâle !...

Donc, il se confessait, priait, avec un râle !
L'homme se contenta d'emporter ses rabats...
- Peuh ! Tartufe était nu du haut jusques en bas !

Arthur Rimbaud

Le Forgeron (The Blacksmith)

Le bras sur un marteau gigantesque, effrayant
D'ivresse et de grandeur, le front large, riant
Comme un clairon d'airain, avec toute sa bouche,
Et prenant ce gros-là dans son regard farouche,
Le Forgeron parlait à Louis Seize, un jour
Que le Peuple était là, se tordant tout autour,
Et sur les lambris d'or traînait sa veste sale.
Or le bon roi, debout sur son ventre, était pâle
Pâle comme un vaincu qu'on prend pour le gibet,
Et, soumis comme un chien, jamais ne regimbait,
Car ce maraud de forge aux énormes épaules
Lui disait de vieux mots et des choses si drôles,
Que cela l'empoignait au front, comme cela !

'Donc, Sire, tu sais bien, nous chantions tra la la
Et nous piquions les boeufs vers les sillons des autres :
Le Chanoine au soleil disait ses patenôtres
Sur des chapelets clairs grenés de pièces d'or.
Le Seigneur, à cheval, passait, sonnant du cor,
Et l'un avec la hart, l'autre avec la cravache,
Nous fouaillaient ; Hébétés comme des yeux de vache,
Nos yeux ne pleuraient pas : nous allions ! nous allions !
Et quand nous avions mis le pays en sillons,
Quand nous avions laissé dans cette terre noire
Un peu de notre chair... nous avions un pourboire :
- Nous venions voir flamber nos taudis dans la nuit ;
Nos enfants y faisaient un gâteau fort bien cuit !...

'Oh ! je ne me plains pas. Je te dis mes bêtises :
- C'est entre nous. J'admets que tu me contredises...
Or, n'est-ce pas joyeux de voir, au mois de juin
Dans les granges entrer des voitures de foin
Enormes ? De sentir l'odeur de ce qui pousse,
Des vergers quand il pleut un peu, de l'herbe rousse ?
De voir les champs de blé, les épis pleins de grain,
De penser que cela prépare bien du pain ?...
- Oui, l'on pourrait, plus fort, au fourneau qui s'allume,
Chanter joyeusement en martelant l'enclume,
Si l'on était certain qu'on pourrait prendre un peu,
Etant homme, à la fin !, de ce que donne Dieu !...
- Mais voilà, c'est toujours la même vieille histoire !

'... Oh ! je sais, maintenant ! Moi, je ne peux plus croire,
Quand j'ai deux bonnes mains, mon front et mon marteau,
Qu'un homme vienne là, dague sous le manteau
Et me dise : Maraud, ensemence ma terre ;
Que l'on arrive encor, quand ce serait la guerre,
Me prendre mon garçon comme cela, chez moi !...
- Moi, je serais un homme, et toi tu serais roi,
Tu me dirais : Je veux ! - Tu vois bien, c'est stupide !...
Tu crois que j'aime à voir ta baraque splendide,
Tes officiers dorés, tes mille chenapans,

Tes palsembleu bâtards tournant comme des paons ?
Ils ont rempli ton nid de l'odeur de nos filles,
Et de petits billets pour nous mettre aux Bastilles,
Et nous dirions : C'est bien : les pauvres à genoux !...
Nous dorerions ton Louvre en donnant nos gros sous,
Et tu te soûlerais, tu ferais belle fête,
Et tes Messieurs riraient, les reins sur notre tête !...

'Non ! Ces saletés-là datent de nos papas !
Oh ! Le Peuple n'est plus une putain ! Trois pas,
Et, tous, nous avons mis ta Bastille en poussière !
Cette bête suait du sang à chaque pierre...
Et c'était dégoûtant, la Bastille debout
Avec ses murs lépreux qui nous rappelaient tout
Et, toujours, nous tenaient enfermés dans leur ombre !
- Citoyen ! citoyen ! c'était le passé sombre
Qui croulait, qui râlait, quand nous prîmes la tour !
Nous avions quelque chose au coeur comme l'amour :
Nous avions embrassé nos fils sur nos poitrines,
Et, comme des chevaux, en soufflant des narines,
Nous marchions, nous chantions, et ça nous battait là,
Nous allions au soleil, front haut, comme cela,
Dans Paris accourant devant nos vestes sales !...
Enfin ! Nous nous sentions hommes ! Nous étions pâles,
Sire ; nous étions soûls de terribles espoirs,
Et quand nous fûmes là, devant les donjons noirs,
Agitant nos clairons et nos feuilles de chêne,
Les piques à la main ; nous n'eûmes pas de haine :
- Nous nous sentions si forts ! nous voulions être doux !

'Et depuis ce jour-là, nous sommes comme fous...
Le flot des ouvriers a monté dans la rue
Et ces maudits s'en vont, foule toujours accrue,
Comme des revenants, aux portes des richards !...
Moi, je cours avec eux assommer les mouchards,
Et je vais dans Paris le marteau sur l'épaule,
Farouche, à chaque coin balayant quelque drôle,
Et, si tu me riais au nez, je te tuerais !...
- Puis, tu dois y compter, tu te feras des frais
Avec tes avocats, qui prennent nos requêtes
Pour se les renvoyer comme sur des raquettes,
Et, tout bas, les malins ! Nous traitant de gros sots !
Pour mitonner des lois, ranger des de petits pots
Pleins de menus décrets, de méchantes droguailles,
S'amuser à couper proprement quelques tailles,
Puis se boucher le nez quand nous passons près d'eux,
- Ces chers avocassiers qui nous trouvent crasseux ! -
Pour débiter là-bas des milliers de sornettes
Et ne rien redouter sinon les baïonnettes,
Nous en avons assez, de tous ces cerveaux plats !
Ils embêtent le peuple !... Ah ! ce sont là les plats
Que tu nous sers, bourgeois, quand nous sommes féroces,

Quand nous cassons déjà les sceptres et les crosses !...'

Puis il le prend au bras, arrache le velours
Des rideaux, et lui montre, en bas, les larges cours
Où fourmille, où fourmille, où se lève la foule,
La foule épouvantable avec des bruits de houle,
Hurlant comme une chienne, hurlant comme une mer,
Avec ses bâtons forts et ses piques de fer,
Ses clameurs, ses grands cris de halles et de bouges,
Tas sombre de haillons taché de bonnets rouges !
L'Homme, par la fenêtre ouverte, montre tout
Au Roi pâle, suant qui chancelle debout,
Malade à regarder cela !...
spacespacespacespacespacespacespacespace'C'est la Crapule,
Sire ! ça bave aux murs, ça roule, ça pullule...
- Puisqu'ils ne mangent pas, Sire, ce sont les gueux !
- Je suis un forgeron : ma femme est avec eux :
Folle ! Elle vient chercher du pain aux Tuileries :
- On ne veut pas de nous dans les boulangeries !...
J'ai trois petits ; -Je suis crapule ! - Je connais
Des vieilles qui s'en vont pleurant sous leurs bonnets,
Parce qu'on leur a pris leur garçon ou leur fille :
- C'est la crapule. - Un homme était à la bastille,
D'autres étaient forçats ; c'étaient des citoyens
Honnêtes ; Libérés, ils sont comme des chiens ;
On les insulte ! Alors, ils ont là quelque chose
Qui leur fait mal, allez ! C'est terrible, et c'est cause
Que, se sentant brisés, que, se sentant damnés,
Ils viennent maintenant hurler sous votre nez !...
- Crapules : - Là-dedans sont des filles, infâmes
Parce que -, sachant bien que c'est faible, les femmes,
Messeigneurs de la cour, que ça veut toujours bien, -
Vous leur avez sali leur âme, comme rien !
Vos belles, aujourd'hui, sont là : - C'est la Crapule...

'Oh ! tous les Malheureux, tout ceux dont le dos brûle
Sous le soleil féroce, et qui vont, et qui vont,
Et dans ce travail-là sentent crever leur front,
Chapeau bas, mes bourgeois ! Oh ! ceux-là sont les hommes !
- Nous sommes Ouvriers ! Sire, Ouvriers ! - nous sommes
Pour les grands temps nouveaux où l'on voudra savoir,
Où l'homme forgera du matin jusqu'au soir,
Où, lentement vainqueur, il chassera les choses
Poursuivant les grands buts, cherchant les grandes causes,
Et montera sur Tout comme sur un cheval !
Oh ! nous sommes contents, nous aurons bien du mal !
- Tout ce qu'on ne sait pas, c'est peut-être terrible.
Nous pendrons nos marteaux, nous passerons au crible
Tout ce que nous savons, puis, Frères, en avant !...
- Nous faisons quelquefois ce grand rêve émouvant
De vivre simplement, ardemment, sans rien dire
De mauvais, travaillant sous l'auguste sourire

D'une femme qu'on aime avec un noble amour !
Et l'on travaillerait fièrement tout le jour,
Ecoutant le devoir comme un clairon qui sonne :
Et l'on se trouverait fort heureux, et personne,
Oh ! personne ! surtout, ne vous ferait plier !...
On aurait un fusil au-dessus du foyer....

'Oh ! mais ! l'air est tout plein d'une odeur de bataille !
Que te disais-je donc ? Je suis de la canaille !'

Translation by A. S. Kline

His hand on a gigantic hammer, terrifying
In size and drunkenness, vast-browed, laughing
Like a bronze trumpet, his whole mouth displayed,
Devouring the fat man, now, with his wild gaze,
The Blacksmith spoke with Louis, with the king,
The People there, all around him, cavorting,
Trailing their dirty coats down gilded panels.
But the dear king, belly upright, was pallid,
Pale as the victim led to the guillotine,
Submissive like a dog, cowed by the scene,
Since that wide-shouldered forge-black soul
Spoke of things past and other things so droll,
He had him by the short hairs, just like that!

‘Now, Sir, you know how we’d sing tra-la-la,
And drive the ox down other people’s furrows:
The Canon spun paternosters in the shadows
On rosaries bright with golden coins adorned,
Some Lord, astride, passed blowing on his horn,
One with the noose, another with whip-blows
Lashed us on. – Dazed like the eyes of cows,
Our eyes no longer wept; on and on we went,
And when we’d ploughed a whole continent,
When we had left behind in that black soil
A little of our own flesh…to reward our toil:
They’d set alight our hovels in the night;
Our little ones made burnt cakes alright.

…Oh, I’m not complaining! All my follies,
They’re between us. I’ll let you contradict.
But, isn’t it fine to see, in the month of June,
The enormous hay-wains entering the barns?
To smell the odour of burgeoning things,
The orchards in fine rain, the oats reddening?
To see wheat, wheat, ears filled with grain,
To think it promises us good bread again?...
Oh! You’d go to the forge, be more cheerful,
Sing and hammer joyfully at the anvil,
If you were sure to gain a little in the end –

Being, in fact, a man – of what God intends!
– But there it is, always the same old story!...

But now I know! I don't credit it any more,
Owning two strong hands, a head, a hammer,
That a man in a cloak, wearing a dagger
Can say: go and sow my land, there, fellow;
Or that another, if maybe war should follow,
Can take my son like that, from where I'm living!
– Suppose I were a man, and you a king,
You'd say: I will it!... – What stupidity.
You think your splendid barn pleases me,
Your gilded servants, your thousand rogues,
Your fancy bastards, peacocks in a row:
Filling your nest with our daughters' odour,
Warrants to the Bastille for us, moreover
That we should say: fine: make the poor poorer!
We'll give you our last sous to gild the Louvre!
While you get drunk and enjoy the feast,
– And they all laugh, riding our backs beneath!

No. Those puerilities were our fathers!
The People is no one's whore now, three steps further
And then, we razed your Bastille to the ground.
That monster sweated blood from every mound,
Was an abomination, that Bastille standing,
With leprous walls its every story yielding,
And, we forever held fast in its shadow!
– Citizen! That was the past, its sorrow,
That broke, and died, when we stormed the tower!
We had something in our hearts like true ardour.
We had clutched our children to our breast.
And like chargers, snorting at the contest,
We went, proud and strong, beating here inside…
We marched in the sun – like this – heads high
Into Paris! They greeted us in our ragged clothes.
At last! We felt ourselves Men! We were sallow,
Sire, drunk, and pallid with terrifying hopes:
And there, in front of those black prison slopes,
Waving our bugles and our sprigs of oak,
Pikes in our fists; did we feel hatred, no!
– We felt such strength we wanted to be gentle! ...

And since that day, we have proved elementals!
A mass of workers sprang up in the street,
And, cursed, are gone, a swelling crowd replete
With ghostly shades, to haunt the rich man's gate.
I, I run with them, and set informers straight:
I scour Paris, dark-faced, wild, hammer on shoulder,
Sweeping something droll out of every corner,
And, if you smile at me, then I'll do for you!
– Well, count on it: all this is going to cost you

And your men in black, culling our requests
To bat them about on their racquets all in jest,
And whisper, the rascals, softly: "Oh, what sots!"
To cook up laws, and stick up little pots,
Filled with cute pink decrees, and sugar pills,
Cutting us down to size, to amuse themselves,
Then they hold their noses when we pass by,
– Our kind representatives who hate the sty! –
Fearful of nothing, nothing, but bayonets….
That's fine. Enough of snuff and lorgnettes!
We've had our fill, here, of those dull heads
And bellies of gods. Ah! That's the bread
You serve us, bourgeoisie, while we rage here,
While we shatter the sceptre and the crozier!...'

He takes his arm, tears back the velvet curtain
And shows the vast courtyards beneath them,
Where the mob swarms, and seethes, where rise,
Out of the frightful mob those storm-filled cries,
Howling as bitches howl, or like the sea,
With their knotted stakes, their pikes of steel,
With the clamour of their market-halls and slums,
A ragged mass of blood-stained caps, and drums:
The Man, through the open window, shows all
To the pale sweating king, reeling, about to fall,
Sick at the sight of it!
'Those are the Scum, Sire.
Licking the walls, seething, rising higher:
– But then they've not eaten, Sire, these beggars!
I'm a blacksmith: my wife, madwoman, is there!
She thinks she'll get bread at the Tuileries!
– They'll have none of us in the bakeries.
I've three youngsters. I'm scum, too – I know
Old women weeping under their bonnets so
Because they've taken a daughter or a son:
One man was in the Bastille – oh, they're scum –
Another the galleys: both honest citizens.
Freed, they're treated like dogs, these men:
Insulted! Then, they have something here
That hurts them, see! It's terrible, it's clear
They feel broken, feel themselves damned,
There, screaming beneath you where you stand!
Scum. – Down there girls, infamous, shriek,
Because – well, you knew girls were weak –
Gentlemen of the court – gave all you sought –
You'd spit on their souls, as if they were naught!
Now, your pretty ones are there. They're scum.

Oh, all the Wretched, whose backs, in the fierce sun
Burn, and yet they still work on and on,
Feeling their heads burst with their exertion,
Hats off, you bourgeoisie! Those are Men.

We are the Workers, Sire! Workers! And then
We're for the great new age, of knowledge, light,
When Man will forge from morning to night,
Pursuing great effects, chasing great causes,
When he will tame things, slowly victorious,
And like a horse, mount the mighty All!
Oh! Splendour of the forges! And no more
Evil, then! – What's unknown, its terror maybe
We'll know! – Hammer in hand, let's sieve freely
All that we know: then, Brothers, we'll go on!
Sometimes we dream that dream's vast emotion
Of the simple ardent life, where you revile
All evil, working beneath the august smile,
Of a woman you love with love's nobility:
And all day long you labour on proudly,
Hearing the clarion call of duty sounding!
And you feel so happy; and nothing, nothing,
Oh, above all, no-one makes you kneel!
Over the fireplace, there, you'd have a rifle…

Oh! But the air is filled with the scent of battle.
What did I say? I too am one of the rascals!
And there are still sharks and informers.
But we are free! With our moments of terror
When we feel we are great, so great! Just now
I was talking of peaceful work, of how…
Look at that sky! – Too small for us, you see,
If we feared the heat, we'd live on our knees!
Look at that sky! – I'll return to the crowd,
To the vast fearful mob who cry aloud
And roll your cannon through the cobbles' sty;
– Oh! We will wash them clean when we die!
– And if, against our cries and our vengeance,
The claws of old gilded kings, all over France,
Urge on their regiments in full battle-dress,
Well then, you lot? Shit to those dogs, no less!'

– He shoulders his hammer once more.
The crowd
Feels soul-drunk close to that man, and now
Through the great courtyard, all those rooms,
Where Paris pants and the voices boom,
A shudder shakes the immense populace.
Then, with his broad hand, its grimy grace
Gilded, while the pot-bellied king sweats,
The Blacksmith set his red cap on that head!

Arthur Rimbaud

Les Effarés

Noirs dans la neige et dans la brume,
Au grand soupirail qui s'allume,
Leurs culs en rond,

À genoux, cinq petits, - misère ! -
Regardent le boulanger faire
Le lourd pain blond...

Ils voient le fort bras blanc qui tourne
La pâte grise, et qui l'enfourne
Dans un trou clair.

Ils écoutent le bon pain cuire.
Le boulanger au gras sourire
Chante un vieil air.

Ils sont blottis, pas un ne bouge,
Au souffle du soupirail rouge,
Chaud comme un sein.

Et quand pendant que minuit sonne,
Façonné, pétillant et jaune,
On sort le pain ;

Quand, sous les poutres enfumées,
Chantent les croûtes parfumées,
Et les grillons ;

Quand ce trou chaud souffle la vie ;
Ils ont leur âme si ravie
Sous leurs haillons,

Ils se ressentent si bien vivre,
Les pauvres petits plein de givre,
- Qu'ils sont là, tous,

Collant leur petits museaux roses
Au grillage, chantant des choses,
Entre les trous,

Mais bien bas, - comme une prière....
Repliés vers cette lumière
Du ciel rouvert,

- Si fort, qu'ils crèvent leur culotte,
- Et que leur lange blanc tremblotte
Au vent d'hiver....

Arthur Rimbaud

L'Idole.. Sonnet Du Trou Du Cul

Obscur et froncé comme un oeillet violet
Il respire, humblement tapi parmi la mousse.
Humide encor d'amour qui suit la fuite douce
Des Fesses blanches jusqu'au coeur de son ourlet.

Des filaments pareils à des larmes de lait
Ont pleuré, sous le vent cruel qui les repousse,
À travers de petits caillots de marne rousse
Pour s'aller perdre où la pente les appelait.

Mon Rêve s'aboucha souvent à sa ventouse ;
Mon âme, du coït matériel jalouse,
En fit son larmier fauve et son nid de sanglots.

C'est l'olive pâmée, et la flûte caline ;
C'est le tube où descend la céleste praline :
Chanaan féminin dans les moiteurs enclos !

Albert Mérat.

The Idol.
Sonnet to an Asshole

Dark and wrinkled like a purple pink
It breathes, nestling humbly among the still-damp
Froth of love that follows the gentle slope
Of the white buttocks to its crater's edge.

Filaments like tears of milk
Have wept in the cruel wind which pushes them back,
Across little clots of reddish marl
To lose themselves where the slope called them.

My dream has often kissed its opening;
My soul, jealous of physical coitus,
Has made this its fawn-coloured tear-bottle and its nest of sobs.

It is the rapturous olive and the wheedling flute,
The tube from which the heavenly burnt almond falls:
Feminine Canaan enclosed among moistures.

Albert Mérat.
P.V.-A.R.

Arthur Rimbaud

Lilies

O see-saws! O Lilies!
Enemas of silver!
Disdainful of labours,
disdainful of famines!

Dawn fills you with
a [wound-searching,] cleansing love!
A heavenly sweetness
butters your stamens!
Armand Silvestre

Arthur Rimbaud

LINES, an excerpt from

When the world comes down to this one dark wood
Before our four astonished eyes...
To a beach for two faithful children...
To a house of music, for our clear accord...
I will find you.
Let there be no one here below but one old man,
Beautiful and calm, surrounded with 'unimagined luxury'...
I will be at your feet.
Let me penetrate all of your memories...
Let me be that woman who can bind you hand and foot...
I will strangle you.
When we are very strong - who can hold us back?
And very gay - how can ridicule harm us?
When we are very bad - what can they do to us?
Dress yourself up,
And dance,
And laugh.
I could never throw Love out the window.

(translated by Paul Schmidt)

Arthur Rimbaud

Lips Shut. Seen In Rome

In Rome within the Sistine Chapel,
Covered over with Christian signs,
There is a scarlet coloured casket
Where most ancient noses dry:

Noses of Thebaid ascetics,
Noses of Sangreal canons
In which livid night firmset is,
And the old sepulchral anthems.

Into their aridity mystical
Is introduced each morningtide
Some filthiness schismatical
Ground into a powder fine.
Léon Dierx

Original French

Les lèvres closes.
Vu à Rome

Il est, à Rome, à la Sixtine,
Couverte d'emblèmes chrétiens,
Une cassette écarlatine
Où sèchent des nez fort anciens :

Nez d'ascètes de Thébaïde,
Nez de chanoines du Saint Graal
Où se figea la nuit livide,
Et l'ancien plain-chant sépulcral.

Dans leur sécheresse mystique,
Tous les matins, on introduit
De l'immondice schismatique
Qu'en poudre fine on a réduit.
Léon Dierx.

Arthur Rimbaud

Lives

I.
O the enormous avenues of the Holy Land,
the temple terraces!
What has become of the Brahman
who explained the proverbs to me?
Of that time, of that place,
I can still see even the old women!

I remember silver hours and sunlight by the rivers,
the hand of the country on my shoulder
and our carresses standing on the spicy plains.--
A flight of scarlet pigeons thunders round my thoughts.

An exile here, I once had a stage on which
to play all the masterpieces of literature.
I would show you unheard-of riches.
I note the story of the treasures you discovered.

I see the outcome.
My wisdom is as scorned as chaos.
What is my nothingness
to the stupor that awaits you?

II.
I am the inventor more deserving far
than all those who have preceeded me;
a musician, moreover, who has discovered
something like the key of love.

At present, a country gentleman
of a bleak land with a sober sky,
I try to rouse myself with the memory
of my beggar childhood,
my apprenticeship or my arrival in wooden shoes,
of polemics, of five or six widowings, and of certain convivalities
when my level head kept me from rising
to the diapason of my comrades.

I do not regret my old portion of divine gaiety:
the sober air of this bleak countryside
feeds vigorously my dreadful skepticism.
But since this skepticism cannot,
henceforth be put to use, and since,
moreover, I am dedicated to a new torment,--
I expect to become a very vicious madman.

III.
In a loft, where I was shut in when I was twelve,
I got to know the world,
I illustrated the human comedy.
I learned history in a wine cellar.

In a northern city, at some nocturnal revel,
I met all the women of the old masters.
In an old arcade in Paris,
I was taught the classical sciences.

In a magnificent dwelling encircled by the entire Orient,
I accomplished my prodigious work
and spent my illustrious retreat.
I churned up my blood.

My duty has been remitted.
I must not even think of that anymore.
I am really from beyond
the tomb, and no commissions.

Arthur Rimbaud

Ma Boheme

I went off with my hands in my torn coat pockets; my overcoat too was becoming ideal;

I travelled beneath the sky, Muse! and I was your vassel; oh dear me! what marvellous loves I dreamed of!

My only pair of breeches had a big hole in them.- Stargazing Tom Thumb, I sowed rhymes along the way.

My tavern was at the Sign of the Great Bear. - My stars in the sky rustled softly.

And I listened to them, sitting on the road-sides on those pleasant September evenings while I felt drops of dew on my forehead like vigorous wine;

and while, rhyming among the fantastical shadows, I plucked like the strings of a lyre the elastics of my tattered boots, one foot close to my heart!

Arthur Rimbaud

May Banners

In the bright lime-tree branches
Dies a fainting mort. But lively song
Flutters among the currant bushes.
So that our bloods may laugh in our veins,
See the vines tangling themselves.

The sky is as pretty as an angel,
The azure and the wave commune.
I go out. If a sunbeam wounds me
I shall succumb on the moss.
Being patient and being bored
Are too simple. To the devil with my cares.

I want dramatic summer
To bind me to its chariot of fortune.
Let me most because of you, o Nature, -
Ah ! less alone and less useless ! - die.

There where the Shepherds, it's strange,
Die more or less because of the world.
I am willing that the seasons should wear me out.
To you, Nature, I surrender ;
With my hunger and all my thirst.

And, if it please you, feed and water me.
Nothing, nothing at all deceives me ;
To laugh at the sun is to laugh at one's parents,
But I do not wish to laugh at anything ;
And may this misfortune go free.
~~

May Banners
(alternative translation
)

In the bright branches of the lindens dies a sickly hunting call.
But the lively songs fly about in the currant bushes.
So that our blood will laugh in our veins, here are the vines all entangled.
The sky is pretty as an angel.
The azure and the wave commune.
I go out. If a ray of light wounds me, I will expire on the moss

To be patient and to be bored are to simple. Fie* on my cares.
I want a dramatic summer to bind me to it's chariot of fortune.
Let me, o nature, mostly through you
- Ah ! less alone and less worthless ! - die.
In the place where the shepherds, it is strange,
die approximately through out the world

I am willing that the seasons wear me out.

To you nature, I give myself over;
And my hunger and all my thirst.
And, if you will, feed and water me.

Nothing at all deceives me;
To laugh at the sun is to laugh at one's parents,
but I do not want to laugh at anything;
And may this misfortune be free.

Arthur Rimbaud

Memory

I.
Clear water; [stinging] like the salt of a child's tears,
the whiteness of women's bodies attacking the sun;
silken, in masses and pure lily, banners under the walls a maiden defended;
The frolic of angels - No… the current of gold in motion moves its arms,
dark and above all cool, of green. She [the weed] sinks,
and having the blue Heaven for a canopy,
takes for curtains the shade of the hill and of the arch.

II.
Oh! The wet surface stretches out its clear bubbles!
The water covers the made beds with pale and bottomless gold;
[it is as if] the faded green dresses of little girls
[were] playing at willows, out of which leap the unbridled birds.
Purer than a gold louis, yellow warm eyelid, the marsh marigold -
thy conjugal faith O Spouse! - at noon sharp,
from its dull mirror, envies the rosy beloved
Sphere in the sky wan with heat.

III.
Madame holds herself too erect in the neighbouring meadow
where the threads of [the spider's] toil are snowing down'
parasol in her fingers; crushing the cow-parsley;
too proud for her; children reading
in the flowery greenness; their red morocco book! Alas,
He, like a thousand white angels parting on the roadway,
makes off beyond the mountain!
She, quite cold, and dark, runs!
After the flight of the man!

IV.
Nostalgia for the thick young arms of pure green!
Gold of the April moons in the heart of the hallowed bed!
Joy of the abandoned boat-yards, the prey to the August evenings
which quickened these corruptions!
How she weeps, now, under he ramparts!
The breath of the poplars above is all there is for a breeze.
Then it is the sheet of water without reflections
and without a spring, grey: an old man, a dredger,
in his motionless boat, labours.

V.
Plaything of this eye of mournful water, I cannot reach -
O boat without motion! O too short arms! -
either this flower or that one: neither the yellow one
which importunes me here; nor the blue one,
the beloved in the ashes water.
Ah! The pollen of willows which a wing shakes!
The roses of the reeds, long since eaten away!
My boat still fast; and its anchor chain taut to the bottom
of this limitless eye of water, - in what slime? ----------
What does it matter to us, my heart,

the sheets of blood And of red-hot coals,
and a thousand murders, and long howls Of rage ;
sobbings from every inferno destroying Every (kind of) order ;
and still the North wind across the wreckage ;
And all the vengeance ? Nothing !... -
But still, yes We desire it ! Industrialists, princes,
senates, Perish ! Power, justice, history : down !
It is our due. Blood ! blood ! the golden flame !
All to war, to vengeance, to terror, My soul !
Let us turn in the wound : Ah !
away with you, Republics of this world !
Of Emperors, Regiments, colonists, peoples, enough !
Who should stir the vortices of furious flames
But we and those whom we imagine brothers ?
It's our turn, romantic friends : we are Going to enjoy it.
Never shall we labour, O fiery waves !
Europe, Asia, America - vanish !
Our march of vengeance has occupied every place,
Cities and countrysides ! - We shall be smashed !
The volcanoes will explode ! And the Ocean, smitten...
Oh ! my friends ! - My heart, it is certain ; they are brothers ;
Dark strangers, if we began ! Come on ! Come on ! -
O evil fortune ! I feel myself tremble, the old earth,
On me who am more and more yours ! the earth melts.
It is nothing : I am here ; I am still here.

Arthur Rimbaud

Metropolitan

From the indigo straits to Ossian's seas,
on pink and orange sands washed by the vinous sky,
crystal boulevards have just risen and crossed,
immediately occupied by poor young families
who get their food at the greengrocers'.
Nothing rich.-- The city! From the bituminous desert,
in headlong flight with the sheets of fog spread
in frightful bands across the sky,
that bends, recedes, descends,
formed by the most sinister black smoke
that Ocean in mourning can produce,
flee helmets, wheels, boats, rumps.--
The battle! Raise your eyes: that arched wooden bridge;
those last truck gardens of Samaria; those faces reddened
by the lantern lashed by the cold night;
silly Undine in her noisy dress, down by the river;
those luminous skulls among the rows of peas,--
and all the other phantasmagoria-- the country.
Roads bordered by walls and iron fences
that with difficulty hold back their groves,
and frightful flowers probably called loves and doves,
Damask damning languorously,-- possessions of magic
aristocracies ultra-Rhinish, Japanese, Guaranian,
still qualified to receive ancestral music-- and there are inns
that now never open anymore,--
there are princesses, and if you are not too overwhelmed,
the study of the stars-- the sky.
The morning when with Her you struggled among
the glittering of snow, those green lips,
those glaciers, black banners and blue beams,
and the purple perfumes of the polar sun.-- Your strength.

Arthur Rimbaud

Morts De Quatre-Vingt-Douze (Dead Of '92)

Morts de Quatre-vingt-douze et de Quatre-vingt-treize,
Qui, pâles du baiser fort de la liberté,
Calmes, sous vos sabots, brisiez le joug qui pèse
Sur l'âme et sur le front de toute humanité ;

Hommes extasiés et grands dans la tourmente,
Vous dont les coeurs sautaient d'amour sous les haillons,
O Soldats que la Mort a semés, noble Amante,
Pour les régénérer, dans tous les vieux sillons ;

Vous dont le sang lavait toute grandeur salie,
Morts de Valmy, Morts de Fleurus, Morts d'Italie,
O million de Christs aux yeux sombres et doux ;

Nous vous laissions dormir avec la République,
Nous, courbés sous les rois comme sous une trique.
- Messieurs de Cassagnac nous reparlent de vous !

Translation by A. S. Kline

You Dead of ninety-two and ninety-three,
Who, pale from the great kiss of Liberty,
Crushed, calm, beneath your wooden shoes
That yoke that weighs on human brows and souls:

Men exalted, great in agony,
You whose hearts raged with love, in misery,
O soldiers that Death, noble Lover, has sown
In all the old furrows, so they'll be reborn:

You whose blood washed every soiled grandeur,
Dead of Valmy, Dead of Fleurus, Dead of Italy,
O millions of Christs with eyes gentle and sombre:

We've let you fall asleep with the Republic,
We, cowering under kings as if under blows.
– They're telling tales of you so we'll remember!

Arthur Rimbaud

Movement

A winding movement on the slope beside the rapids of the river.
The abyss at the stern,
The swiftness of the incline,
The overwhelming passage of the tide,
With extraordinary lights and chemical wonders
Lead on the travelers
Through the windspouts of the valley
And the whirlpool.
These are the conquerors of the world,
Seeking their personal chemical fortune;
Sport and comfort accompany them;
They bring education for races, for classes, for animals
Within this vessel, rest adn vertigo
In diluvian light,
In terrible evenings of study.

For in this conversation in the midst of machines,
Of blood, of flowers, of fire, of jewels,
In busy calculations on this fugitive deck,
Is their stock of studies visible
- Rolling like dike beyond
The hydraulic propulsive road,
Monstrous, endlessly lighting its way -
Themselves driven into harmonic ecstasy
And the heroism of discovery.

Amid the most amazing accidents,
Two youths stand out alone upon the ark
- Can one excuse past savagery? -
And sing, upon their watch.

Arthur Rimbaud

My Bohemian Existence

I went off with my hands in my torn coat pockets;
my overcoat too was becoming ideal;
I travelled beneath the sky,
Muse! and I was your vassal;

Oh dear me! what marvellous loves
I dreamed of! My only pair of breeches
had a big hole in them. --

Stragazing Tom Thumb,
I sowed my rhymes along the way.
My tavern was at the Sign of the Great Bear.
-- My stars in the sky rustled softly.
And I listened to them, sitting on the road-sides
on those pleasant September evenings
while I felt drops of dew on my forehead
like vigorous wine; and while,
rhyming among the fantastical shadows,

I plucked the strings of a lyre
the elastics of my tattered boots,
one foot close to my heart!

Arthur Rimbaud

My Little Lovelies

A tearful tincture washes
Cabbage-green skies;
Beneath the dribbling bushes
Your raincoats lie;

Pale white in private moonlight,
Like round-eyed sores,
Flap your scabby kneecaps apart,
My ugly whores!

We loved each other in those days,
Ugly blue whore!
We ate boiled eggs
And weed.

One night you made me a poet,
Ugly blond whore.
Get between my legs,
I'll whip you.

I puked up your greasy hair,
Ugly black whore;
You tried to unstring
My guitar.

Blah! Some of my dried-up spit,
Ugly red whore,
Still stinks in the cracks
Of your breast.

O my little lovelies,
I hate your guts!
Go stick big blisters
On your ugly tits!

Break the cracked bottles and jars
Of my feelings;
Come on! Be my ballerinas
Just for a while!

Your shoulder blades are twisted back,
My masterpieces!
Stick stars in your snatches and shake
Them to bits!

And it was for you hunks of meat
I wrote my rhymes!
My love was sticky self-deceit
And dirty games!

Dumb bunch of burnt-out stars,
- Against the walls!

Go back to God, croak in corners
Like animals!

Pale white in private moonlight,
Like round-eyed sores,
Flap your scabby kneecaps apart,
My ugly whores!

Arthur Rimbaud

Mystic

On the slope of the knoll angels
whirl their woolen robes
in pastures of emerald and steel.
Meadows of flame leap up to the summit of the little hill.

At the left, the mold of the ridge is trampled by all the homicides
and all the battles, and all the disastrous noises
describe their curve. Behind the right-hand
ridge, the line of orients and of progress.

And while the band above the picture is composed of the revolving
and rushing hum of seashells and of human nights,
The flowering sweetness of the stars and of the night
and all the rest descends, opposite the knol
l, like a basket,-- against our face, and
makes the abyss perfumed and blue below.

Arthur Rimbaud

Nina's Reply (Les Reparties De Nina)

HE - Your breast on my breast,
Eh ? We could go,
With our nostrils full of air,
Into the cool light

Of the blue good morning that bathes you
In the wine of daylight ?…
When the whole shivering wood bleeds,
Dumb with love

From every branch green drops,
Pale buds,
You can feel in things unclosing
The quivering flesh :

You would bury in the lucerne
Your white gown,
Changing to rose-colour in the fresh air the blue tint which encircles
Your great black eyes,

In love with the country,
Scattering everywhere,
Like champagne bubbles,
Your crazy laughter :

breast,
Mingling our voices,
Slowly we'd reach the stream,
Then the great woods !…

Then, like a little ghost,
Your heart fainting,
You'd tell me to carry you,
Your eyes half closed…

I'd carry your quivering body
Along the path :
The bird would sping out his andante :
Hard by the hazeltree…

I'd speak into your mouth ;
And go on, pressing
Your body like a little girl's I was putting to bed,
Drunk with the blood

That runs blue under your white skin
With its tints of rose :
And speaking to you in that frank tongue…
There !… - that you understand…

Our great woods would smell of sap,
And the sunlight

Would dust with fine gold their great
Green and bronze dream.

……

In the evening ?… We'd take the white road
Which meanders,
Like a grazing herd,
All over the place

Oh the pleasant orchards with blue grass,
And twisted apple trees !
How you can smell a whole league
Off their strong perfume !

We'd get back to the village
When the sky was half dark ;
And there'd be a smell of milking
In the evening air ;

It would smell of the cowshed, full
Of warm manure,
Filled with the slow rythm of breathing,
And with great backs

Gleaming under some light or other ;
And, right down at the far end,
There'd be a cow dunging proudly
At every step…

- Grandmother's spectacles
And her long nose
Deep in her missal ; the jug of beer
Circled with pewter

Foaming among the big-bowled pipes
Gallantly smoking :
And the frightfull blubber lips
Which, still puffing,

Snatch ham from forks :
So much, and more :
The fire lighting up the bunks
And the cupboards.

The shining fat buttocks
Of the fat baby
On his hands and knees, who nuzzles into the cups,
His white snout

Tickled by a gently
Growling muzzle,

That licks all over the round face
Of the little darling…

Black and haughty on her chair's edge,
A terrifying profile,
And old woman in front of the embers,
Spinning

What sights we shall see, dearest,
In those hovels,
When the bright fire lights up
The grey window panes !…

- And then, small and nestling
Inside the cool
Dark lilacs : the hidden window
Smiling in there…

You'll come, you will come, I love you so !
It will be lovely.
You will come, won't you ? and even…

ELLE : - And what about my office ?

Original French

Les reparties de Nina

LUI - Ta poitrine sur ma poitrine,
Hein ? nous irions,
Ayant de l'air plein la narine,
Aux frais rayons

Du bon matin bleu, qui vous baigne
Du vin de jour ?...
Quand tout le bois frissonnant saigne
Muet d'amour

De chaque branche, gouttes vertes,
Des bourgeons clairs,
On sent dans les choses ouvertes
Frémir des chairs :

Tu plongerais dans la luzerne
Ton blanc peignoir,
Rosant à l'air ce bleu qui cerne
Ton grand oeil noir,

Amoureuse de la campagne,
Semant partout,

Comme une mousse de champagne,
Ton rire fou :

Riant à moi, brutal d'ivresse,
Qui te prendrais
Comme cela, - la belle tresse,
Oh ! - qui boirais

Ton goût de framboise et de fraise,
O chair de fleur !
Riant au vent vif qui te baise
Comme un voleur,

Au rose, églantier qui t'embête
Aimablement :
Riant surtout, ô folle tête,
À ton amant !....

.....

- Ta poitrine sur ma poitrine,
Mêlant nos voix,
Lents, nous gagnerions la ravine,
Puis les grands bois !...

Puis, comme une petite morte,
Le coeur pâmé,
Tu me dirais que je te porte,
L'oeil mi-fermé...

Je te porterais, palpitante,
Dans le sentier :
L'oiseau filerait son andante
Au Noisetier...

Je te parlerais dans ta bouche..
J'irais, pressant
Ton corps, comme une enfant qu'on couche,
Ivre du sang

Qui coule, bleu, sous ta peau blanche
Aux tons rosés.
Et te parlant la langue franche - .....
Tiens !... - que tu sais...

Nos grands bois sentiraient la sève,
Et le soleil
Sablerait d'or fin leur grand rêve
Vert et vermeil

.....

Le soir ?... Nous reprendrons la route
Blanche qui court
Flânant, comme un troupeau qui broute,
Tout à l'entour

Les bons vergers à l'herbe bleue,
Aux pommiers tors !
Comme on les sent toute une lieue
Leurs parfums forts !

Nous regagnerons le village
Au ciel mi-noir ;
Et ça sentira le laitage
Dans l'air du soir ;

Ca sentira l'étable, pleine
De fumiers chauds,
Pleine d'un lent rythme d'haleine,
Et de grands dos

Blanchissant sous quelque lumière ;
Et, tout là-bas,
Une vache fientera, fière,
A chaque pas...

- Les lunettes de la grand-mère
Et son nez long
Dans son missel ; le pot de bière
Cerclé de plomb,

Moussant entre les larges pipes
Qui, crânement,
Fument : les effroyables lippes
Qui, tout fumant,

Happent le jambon aux fourchettes
Tant, tant et plus :
Le feu qui claire les couchettes
Et les bahuts.

Les fesses luisantes et grasses
D'un gros enfant
Qui fourre, à genoux, dans les tasses,
Son museau blanc

Frôlé par un mufle qui gronde
D'un ton gentil,
Et pourlèche la face ronde
Du cher petit.....

Que de choses verrons-nous, chère,
Dans ces taudis,

Quand la flamme illumine, claire,
Les carreaux gris !...

- Puis, petite et toute nichée,
Dans les lilas
Noirs et frais : la vitre cachée,
Qui rit là-bas....

Tu viendras, tu viendras, je t'aime !
Ce sera beau.
Tu viendras, n'est-ce pas, et même...

Elle - Et mon bureau ?

Arthur Rimbaud

Novel

I.

No one's serious at seventeen.
--On beautiful nights when beer and lemonade
And loud, blinding cafés are the last thing you need
--You stroll beneath green lindens on the promenade.

Lindens smell fine on fine June nights!
Sometimes the air is so sweet that you close your eyes;
The wind brings sounds--the town is near--
And carries scents of vineyards and beer. . .

II.

--Over there, framed by a branch
You can see a little patch of dark blue
Stung by a sinister star that fades
With faint quiverings, so small and white. . .

June nights! Seventeen!--Drink it in.
Sap is champagne, it goes to your head. . .
The mind wanders, you feel a kiss
On your lips, quivering like a living thing. . .

III.

The wild heart Crusoes through a thousand novels
--And when a young girl walks alluringly
Through a streetlamp's pale light, beneath the ominous shadow
Of her father's starched collar. . .

Because as she passes by, boot heels tapping,
She turns on a dime, eyes wide,
Finding you too sweet to resist. . .
--And cavatinas die on your lips.

IV.

You're in love. Off the market till August.
You're in love.--Your sonnets make Her laugh.
Your friends are gone, you're bad news.
--Then, one night, your beloved, writes. . .!

That night. . .you return to the blinding cafés;
You order beer or lemonade. . .
--No one's serious at seventeen
When lindens line the promenade.

Arthur Rimbaud

O Seasons, O Chateaux

1. (From: Fetes de la Patience)

O seasons, O chateaux,
Where is the flawless soul?

O seasons, O chateaux,

The magic study I pursued,
Of happiness, none can elude.

O may it live, each time
The Gallic cock makes rhyme.

Nothing else I desire,
It’s possessed my life entire.

That charm! It’s taken heart and soul
Scattered all my effort so.

Where’s the sense in what I say?
It makes the whole thing fly away!

O seasons, O chateaux!

O Seasons, O Chateaux

2. (From: Une Saison en Enfer)

O seasons, O chateaux!
Where is the flawless soul?

The magic study I pursued,
Of happiness, none can elude.

A health to it, each time
The Gallic cock makes rhyme.

Ah! There’s nothing I desire,
It’s possessed my life entire.

That charm has taken heart and soul
Scattered all my efforts so.

O seasons, O chateaux!

The hour of its flight, alas!
Will be the hour I pass.

O seasons, O chateaux!

Arthur Rimbaud

Obscur Et Fronce

Dark, wrinkled as a purple pink,
It breathes, it nestles in that bed of moss,
Still damp from love, which hugs the slope,
The white thighs' slope, to crater's heart.
Threads, gossamer, milky tears
Wept, wept, in scouring wind
That drove them on clots of scarlet scree
Till they tumbled on the edge, were gone.
My dreams touch kisses, kisses to the gate.
Soul envies couplings of the flesh,
Its tear-bottle this, its nest of sobs.
Ecstatic olive! Seductive flute!
Throat sucking almond-sweet sublime!
Moss-circled, female, promised land!

Arthur Rimbaud

Ophelia

I

On the calm black water where the stars are sleeping
White Ophelia floats like a great lily ;
Floats very slowly, lying in her long veils…
- In the far-off woods you can hear them sound the mort.

For more than a thousand years sad Ophelia
Has passed, a white phantom, down the long black river.
For more than a thousand years her sweet madness
Has murmured its ballad to the evening breeze.

The wind kisses her breasts and unfolds in a wreath
Her great veils rising and falling with the waters ;
The shivering willows weep on her shoulder,
The rushes lean over her wide, dreaming brow.

The ruffled water-lilies are sighing around her ;
At times she rouses, in a slumbering alder,
Some nest from which escapes a small rustle of wings ;
- A mysterious anthem falls from the golden stars.

II

O pale Ophelia ! beautiful as snow !
Yes child, you died, carried off by a river !
- It was the winds descending from the great mountains of Norway
That spoke to you in low voices of better freedom.

It was a breath of wind, that, twisting your great hair,
Brought strange rumors to your dreaming mind ;
It was your heart listening to the song of Nature
In the groans of the tree and the sighs of the nights ;

It was the voice of mad seas, the great roar,
That shattered your child's heart, too human and too soft ;
It was a handsome pale knight, a poor madman
Who one April morning sate mute at your knees !

Heaven ! Love ! Freedom ! What a dream, oh poor crazed Girl !
You melted to him as snow does to a fire ;
Your great visions strangled your words
- And fearful Infinity terrified your blue eye !

III

- And the poet says that by starlight
You come seeking, in the night, the flowers that you picked
And that he has seen on the water, lying in her long veils
White Ophelia floating, like a great lily.

Ophélie

I
Sur l'onde calme et noire où dorment les étoiles
La blanche Ophélia flotte comme un grand lys,
Flotte très lentement, couchée en ses longs voiles…
- On entend dans les bois lointains des hallalis.

Voici plus de mille ans que la triste Ophélie
Passe, fantôme blanc, sur le long fleuve noir;
Voici plus de mille ans que sa douce folie
Murmure sa romance à la brise du soir.

Le vent baise ses seins et déploie en corolle
Ses grands voiles bercés mollement par les eaux;
Les saules frissonnants pleurent sur son épaule,
Sur son grand front rêveur s'inclinent les roseaux.

Les nénuphars froissés soupirent autour d'elle;
Elle éveille parfois, dans un aune qui dort,
Quelque nid, d'où s'échappe un petit frisson d'aile:
- Un chant mystérieux tombe des astres d'or.

II
O pâle Ophélia! belle comme la neige!
Oui, tu mourus, enfant, par un fleuve emporté!
- C'est que les vents tombant des grands monts de Norwège
T'avaient parlé tout bas de l'âpre liberté;

C'est qu'un souffle, tordant ta grande chevelure,
A ton esprit rêveur portait d'étranges bruits;
Que ton coeur écoutait le chant de la Nature
Dans les plaintes de l'arbre et les soupirs des nuits;

C'est que la voix des mers folles, immense râle,
Brisait ton sein d'enfant, trop humain et trop doux;
C'est qu'un matin d'avril, un beau cavalier pâle,
Un pauvre fou, s'assit muet à tes genoux!

Ciel! Amour! Liberté! Quel rêve, ô pauvre Folle!
Tu te fondais à lui comme une neige au feu:
Tes grandes visions étranglaient ta parole
- Et l'Infini terrible effara ton oeil bleu!

III

- Et le Poète dit qu'aux rayons des étoiles
Tu viens chercher, la nuit, les fleurs que tu cueillis,
Et qu'il a vu sur l'eau, couchée en ses longs voiles,
La blanche Ophélia flotter, comme un grand lys.

Arthur Rimbaud

Paris

Al Godillot, Gambier, Galopeau,
Wolf-Pleyel - O Robinets! -
Menier, - O Chirsts! - Leperdriel!
Kinck, Jacob, Bonbonnel!
Veuillot, Tropmann, Augier!
Gill, Mendes, Manuel, Guido Gonin! -
Basket of the Graces! L'Herisse!
Unctuous waxes!
Old loaves, spirits!
Blind men! -
but then who knows? -
Beadles, Enghien. -
In one's own home!
Let's be Christian!

Arthur Rimbaud

Parisian War Song

Spring is evidently here;
for the ascent of Thiers
and Picard from the green Estates lays
its splendours wide open! O May!

What delirious bare bums!
O Sevres Meudon, Bagneux, Asnieres,
listen now to the welcome arrivals
scattering springtime joys!

They have shakos, and sabers, and tom-toms,
and none of the old candleboxes;
and skiffs which have nev… nev..
are cutting the lake of bloodstained waters.

More than ever before, we roister,
as on to our ant-heaps come tumbling the yellow heads,
on these extraordinary dawns:
Theirs and Picards are Cupids;
and beheaders of sunflowers too;
they paint peaceful landscapes
(Corots) with insecticide (paraffin):
look how their tropes de-cockchafer the trees…
'They're familiars of the Great What's-his-name!...' -
And Favre, lying among the irisis,
blinks and weeps crocodile tears,
and sniffs his peppery sniff!
The Big City has hot cobblestones,
in spite of your showers of paraffin;
and decidedly we shall have to liven you up in your parts..
And the Rustics who take their ease in long squattings
will hear boughs breaking among the red rustlings.

Arthur Rimbaud

Paroxysms Of Caesars (Rages De Césars)

This man, pale, walks the flowering lawns,
Dressed in black, cigar between his teeth.
The pale man thinks about the Tuileries
In flower...and at times his dead eye flames.

His twenty years of orgy have made him drink!
He told himself: 'I will extinguish
Liberty As I put out a candle-- softly, politely...'
Liberty lives again! He feels worn out.

They've caught him. Now what name trembles
On his silent lips? What quick regret?
No one will know: the Emperor's eye is dead.

He sees again, perhaps, the man in the pince-nez...
And watches drifting from his lighted cigar,
Like evenings at St. Cloud, a thin blue haze.

Original French

Rages de Césars

L'Homme pâle, le long des pelouses fleuries,
Chemine, en habit noir, et le cigare aux dents :
L'Homme pâle repense aux fleurs des Tuileries
- Et parfois son oeil terne a des regards ardents...

Car l'Empereur est saoul de ses vingt ans d'orgie !
Il s'était dit : 'Je vais souffler la liberté
Bien délicatement, ainsi qu'une bougie !'
La Liberté revit ! Il se sent éreinté !

Il est pris. - Oh ! quel nom sur ses lèvres muettes
Tressaille ? Quel regret implacable le mord ?
On ne le saura pas. L'Empereur a l'oeil mort.

Il repense peut-être au Compère en lunettes...
- Et regarde filer de son cigare en feu,
Comme aux soirs de Saint-Cloud, un fin nuage bleu.

Arthur Rimbaud

People In Church

Penned between oaken pews,
in corners of the church which their breath stinkingly warms,
all their eyes on the chancel dripping with gold,
and the choir with its twenty pairs of jaws bawling pious hymns;

Sniffing the odour of wax if it were the odour of bread,
happy, ad humbled like beaten dogs,
the Poor offer up to God, the Lord and Master,
their ridiculous stubborn oremuses.

For the women it is very pleasant to wear the benches smooth;
after the six black days on which God has made them suffer.
They nurse, swaddled in strange-looking shawls,
creatures like children who weep as if they would die.

Their unwashed breasts hanging out, these eaters of soup,
with a prayer in their eyes, but never praying,
watch a group of hoydens wickedly
showing off with hats all out of shape.

Outside is the cold, and hunger - and a man on the booze.
All right. There's another hour to go; afterwards, nameless ills! -
Meanwhile all around an assortment of old
dewlapped women whimpers, snuffles, and whispers:

These are distracted persons and the epileptics from whom,
yesterday, you turned away at street crossings;
there too are the blind who are led by a dog into courtyards,
poring their noses into old-fashioned missals. -

And all of them, dribbling a stupid groveling faith,
recite their unending complaint to Jesus who is dreaming up there,
yellow from the livid stained glass window,
far above thin rascals and wicked potbellies,
far from the smell of meat and mouldy fabric,
and the exhausted somber farce of repulsive gestures -
and as the prayer flowers in choice expressions,
and the mysteries take on more emphatic tones, from the aisles,
where the sun is dying, trite folds of silk and green smiles,
the ladies of the better quarters of the town - oh Jesus! -
the sufferers from complaints of the liver,
make their long yellow fingers kiss the holy water in the stoups.

Arthur Rimbaud

Pleasant Thought For The Morning

At four o'clock on a summer morning,
The Sleep of love still lasts.
Under the spinneys the dawn disperses scents
Of the festive night.

But down there in the huge workshop
Near the Hesperidean sun,
The carpenters in their shirtsleeves
are already astir.

Peaceful in the midst of their wilderness of foam,
They are preparing the costly canopies
Where the riches of the city
Will smile beneath painted skies.

Ah ! for these charming labourer's sakes
Subjects of a king of Babylon,
Venus ! leave Lovers for a little while,
Whose souls are wearing crowns.

O Queen of the Sheperds!
Take strong liquor to the workers,
So that their strength may be calmed
Until the sea-bathe at noon.

Arthur Rimbaud

Poets At Seven Years

And the mother, closing the work-book
Went off, proud, satisfied, not seeing,
In the blue eyes, under the lumpy brow,
The soul of her child given over to loathing.

All day he sweated obedience: very
Intelligent: yet dark habits, certain traits
Seemed to show bitter hypocrisies at work!
In the shadow of corridors with damp paper,
He stuck out his tongue in passing, two fists
In his groin, seeing specks under his shut lids.
A doorway open to evening: by the light
You'd see him, high up, groaning on the railing
Under a void of light hung from the roof. In summer,
Especially, vanquished, stupefied, stubborn,
He'd shut himself in the toilet's coolness:
He could think in peace there, sacrificing his nostrils.

When the small garden cleansed of the smell of day,
Filled with light, behind the house, in winter,
Lying at the foot of a wall, buried in clay
Rubbing his dazzled eyes hard, for the visions,
He listened to the scabbed espaliers creaking.
Pity! His only companions were those children
Bare-headed and puny, eyes sunk in their cheeks,
Hiding thin fingers yellow and black with mud
Under old clothes soiled with excrement,
Who talked with the sweetness of the simple-minded!

And if his mother took fright, surprising him
At his vile compassions: the child's deep
Tenderness overcame her astonishment.
All fine. She'd had the blue look, – that lies!

At seven he was making novels about life
In the great desert, where ravished Freedom shines,
Forests, suns, riverbanks, savannahs! – He used
Illustrated weeklies where he saw, blushing,
Smiling Italian girls, and Spanish women.
When the daughter of next door workers came by,
Eight years old – in Indian prints, brown-eyed,
A little brute, and jumped him from behind,
Shaking out her tresses, in a corner,
And he was under her, he bit her buttocks,
Since she never wore knickers:
– And, bruised by her fists and heels,
Carried the taste of her back to his room.

He feared the pallid December Sundays,
When, hair slicked back, at a mahogany table,
He read from a Bible with cabbage-green margins:
Dreams oppressed him each night in the alcove.

He didn’t love God: rather those men in the dusk,
Returning, black, in smocks, to the outer suburbs
Where the town-crier, with a triple drum beat,
Made the crowds laugh and murmur at the edicts.
– He dreamed of the amorous prairies, where
Luminous swells, pure odours, gold pubescences,
Stirred in the calm there, and then took flight!
And above all how he savoured sombre things,
When, in his bare room behind closed shutters,
High, and blue, and pierced with acrid damp,
He read his novel, mooned over endlessly,
Full of drowned forests, leaden ochre skies,
Flowers of flesh opening in star-filled woods,
Dizziness, epilepsies, defeats, compassion!
– While the street noises rumbled on below,
Lying alone on pieces of unbleached canvas,
With a violent presentiment of setting sail!

Arthur Rimbaud

Promontory

Golden dawn and shivering evening find our brig lying by opposite
this villa and its dependencies which form a promontory
as extensive as Epirus and the Peloponnesus,
or as the large island of Japan, or as Arabia!
Fanes lighted up by the return of the _theories_;
prodigious views of a modern coast's defenses;
dunes illustrated with flaming flowers and bacchanalia;
grand canals of Carthage and Embankments of a dubious Venice;
Etnas languidly erupting, and crevasses of flowers and of glacier waters;
washhouses surrounded by German poplars;
strange parks with slopes bowing down the heads of the Tree of Japan;
and circular facades of the 'Grands' and the 'Royals' of Scarborough and of Brooklyn;
and their railways flank, cut through, and overhang this hotel whose plan
was selected in the history of the most elegant and the most colossal edifices
of Italy, America, and Asia, and whose windows and terraces,
at the moment full of expensive illumination, drinks and breezes,
are open to the fancy of the travelers and the nobles who,--
during the day allow all the tarantellas of the coast,--
and even the ritornellos of the illustrious valleys of art,
to decorate most wonderfully the facades of Promontory Palace.

Arthur Rimbaud

Romance

When you are seventeen you aren't really serious.
- One fine evening, you've had enough of beer and lemonade,
And the rowdy cafes with their dazzling lights!
- You go walking beneath the green lime trees of the promenade.

The lime trees smell good on fine evenings in June!
The air is so soft sometimes, you close your eyelids;
The wind, full of sounds, - the town's not far away -
Carries odours of vines, and odours of beer...

II

- Then you see a very tiny rag
Of dark blue, framed by a small branch,
Pierced by an unlucky star which is melting away
With soft little shivers, small, perfectly white...

June night! Seventeen! - You let yourself get drunk.
The sap is champagne and goes straight to your head...
You are wandering; you feel a kiss on your lips
Which quivers there like something small and alive...

III

Your mad heart goes Crusoeing through all the romances,
- When, under the light of a pale street lamp,
Passes a young girl with charming little airs,
In the shadow of her father's terrifying stiff collar...

And because you strike her as absurdly naif,
As she trots along in her little ankle boots,
She turns, wide awake, with a brisk movement...
And then cavatinas die on your lips...
IV

You're in love. Taken until the month of August.
You're in love - Your sonnets make Her laugh.
All your friends disappear, you are not quite the thing.
- Then your adored one, one evening, condescends to write to you...!

That evening,... - you go back again to the dazzling cafes,
You ask for beer or for lemonade...
- You are not really serious when you are seventeen
And there are green lime trees on the promenade...

Original French

Roman

I

On n'est pas sérieux, quand on a dix-sept ans.
- Un beau soir, foin des bocks et de la limonade,
Des cafés tapageurs aux lustres éclatants !
- On va sous les tilleuls verts de la promenade.

Les tilleuls sentent bon dans les bons soirs de juin !
L'air est parfois si doux, qu'on ferme la paupière ;
Le vent chargé de bruits - la ville n'est pas loin -
A des parfums de vigne et des parfums de bière....

II

-Voilà qu'on aperçoit un tout petit chiffon
D'azur sombre, encadré d'une petite branche,
Piqué d'une mauvaise étoile, qui se fond
Avec de doux frissons, petite et toute blanche...

Nuit de juin ! Dix-sept ans ! - On se laisse griser.
La sève est du champagne et vous monte à la tête...
On divague ; on se sent aux lèvres un baiser
Qui palpite là, comme une petite bête....

III

Le coeur fou Robinsonne à travers les romans,
Lorsque, dans la clarté d'un pâle réverbère,
Passe une demoiselle aux petits airs charmants,
Sous l'ombre du faux col effrayant de son père...

Et, comme elle vous trouve immensément naïf,
Tout en faisant trotter ses petites bottines,
Elle se tourne, alerte et d'un mouvement vif....
- Sur vos lèvres alors meurent les cavatines...

IV

Vous êtes amoureux. Loué jusqu'au mois d'août.
Vous êtes amoureux. - Vos sonnets La font rire.
Tous vos amis s'en vont, vous êtes mauvais goût.
- Puis l'adorée, un soir, a daigné vous écrire...!

- Ce soir-là,... - vous rentrez aux cafés éclatants,
Vous demandez des bocks ou de la limonade..
- On n'est pas sérieux, quand on a dix-sept ans
Et qu'on a des tilleuls verts sur la promenade.

Arthur Rimbaud

Royalty

On a brilliant morning, in a city of lovely people,
A wonderful man and a wonderful woman
Were shouting out loud, in the middle of town:
'Oh, my friends... I wanter her to be queen! '
'I want to be a queen! '
She kept on laughing and trembling,
While he talked to his friends about revelations,
And tribulations at an end.
They laughed and they leaned close to one another.
And, of course, they were royal...
All morning long, when scarlet draperies hung upon all the houses,
And even in the afternoon,
When they appeared at the edge of the gardens of palms.

Arthur Rimbaud

Ruts

To the right the summer dawn
wakes the leaves and the mists
and the noises in this corner of the park,
and the left-hand banks
hold in their violet shadows
the thousand swift ruts of the wet road.

Wonderland procession! Yes, truly: floats covered
with animals of gilded wood, poles and bright bunting,
to the furious gallop of twenty dappled circus horses,
and children and men on their most fantastic beasts;--
twenty rotund vehicles, decorated with flags
and flowers like the coaches of old or in fairy tales,
full of children all dressed up for a suburban pastoral.

Even coffins under their somber canopies
lifting aloft their jet-black plumes,
bowling along to the trot
of huge mares, blue and black.

Arthur Rimbaud

Seascape (Marine)

Chariots of copper and of silver--
Prows of silver and steel--
Thresh upon the foam,--
Upheavals the stumps and brambles.
The currents of the heath,
And the enormous ruts of the ebb,
Flow circularly toward the east,
Toward the pillars of the forest,--
Toward the boles of the jetty,
Against whose edge whirlwinds of light collide.

Arthur Rimbaud

Sensation

In the blue summer evenings, I will go along the paths,
And walk over the short grass, as I am pricked by the wheat:
Daydreaming I will feel the coolness on my feet.
I will let the wind bathe my bare head.
I will not speak, I will have no thoughts:
But infinite love will mount in my soul;
And I will go far, far off, like a gypsy,
Through the country side-joyous as if I were with a woman.

Arthur Rimbaud

Sentences (Phrases)

When the world is reduced to a single dark wood
for our four eyes' astonishment,-- a beach for two
faithful children,-- a musical house
for one pure sympathy,-- I shall find you.

Should there be here below
but a single old man, handsome
and calm in the midst
of incredible luxury, I shall be at your feet.

Should I have realized all your memories,--
should I be the one who can bind you
hand and foot,-- I shall strangle you.

* When we are very strong,-- who draws back?
very gay,-- who cares for ridicule?
When we are very bad,-- what would they do with us?
Deck yourself, dance, laugh.
I could never throw Love out of the window.

* My comrade, beggar girl, monster child!
O it's all one to you these unhappy women,
these wiles and my discomfiture.
Bind yourself to us with your impossible voice, your voice!
sole soother of this vile despair.

* An overcast morning in July. A taste of ashes flies through the air;--
an odor of sweating wood on the hearth,--
dew-ret flowers-- devastation along the promenades--
the mist of the canals over the fields-- why not incense and toys already?

* I have stretched ropes from steeple to steeple;
garlands from window to window;
golden chains from star to star, and I dance.

* The upland pond smokes continuously.
What witch will rise against the white west sky?
What violet frondescence fall?

* While public funds evaporate in feasts of fraternity,
a bell of rosy fire rings in the clouds.

* Reviving a pleasant taste of Indian ink,
a black powder rains on my vigil.
I lower the jets of the chandelier,
I throw myself on my bed,
and turning my face towards the darkness,
I see you, my daughters! my queens!

Arthur Rimbaud

Shame

So long as the blade has not
Cut off that brain,
That white, green and fatty parcel,
Whose steam is never fresh,
Ah ! He, should cut off his
Nose, his lips, his ears,
His belly ! And abandon
But no, truly, I believe that so long as
The blade to his head,
And the stone to his side,
And the flame to his guts
Have not done execution, the tiresome
Child, the so stupid animal,
Must never for an instant cease
To cheat and betray
And like a Rocky Mountain cat ;
To make all places stink !
But still when he dies,
O my God !
May there rise up some prayer !

Arthur Rimbaud

Side Show

Very sturdy rogues.
Several have exploited your worlds.
With no needs, and in no hurry
to make use of their brilliant faculties
and their knowledge of your conveniences.

What ripe men! Eyes vacant like the summer night,
red and black, tricolored, steel studded with gold stars;
faces distorted, leaden, blanched, ablaze;
burlesque hoarsenesses! The cruel strut of flashy finery!

Some are young,-- how would they look on Cherubim?--
endowed with terrifying voices and some dangerous resources.
They are sent buggering in the town, tricked out with nauseating _luxury._
O the most violent Paradise of the furious grimace!

Not to be compared with your Fakirs and other theatrical buffooneries.
In improvised costumes like something out of a bad dream,
they enact heroic romances of brigands and of demigods,
more inspiriting than history or religions have ever been.

Chinese, Hottentots, gypsies, simpletons, hyenas, Molochs,
old dementias, sinister demons, they combine popular maternal
turns with bestial poses and caresses.
They would interpret new plays, 'romantic' songs.

Master jugglers, they transform place and persons
and have recourse to magnetic comedy.
Eyes flame, blood sings, bones swell, tears and red trickles flow,
Their clowning or their terror lasts a minute or entire months.
I alone have the key to this savage side show.

Arthur Rimbaud

Song Of The Highest Tower

Idle youth
Enslaved to everything,
By being too sensitive
I have wasted my life.
Ah ! Let the time come
When hearts are enamoured.

I said to myself : let be,
And let no one see you :
Do without the promise
Of higher joys.
Let nothing delay you,
Majestic retirement.
I have endured so long
That I have forgotten everything ;
Fear and suffering
Have flown to the skies.

And morbid thirst
Darkens my veins.
Thus the meadow
Given over to oblivion,
Grown up, and flowering
With frankincense and tares
To the wild buzzing
Of a hundred filthy flies.

Oh ! the thousand bereavements
Of the poor soul
Which possesses only the image
Of Our Lady ! Can one pray
To the Virgin Mary ?

Idle youth
Enslaved by everything,
By being too sensitive
I have wasted my life.
Ah ! Let the time come
When hearts are enamoured !

Arthur Rimbaud

Squattings

Very late, when he feels his stomach churn,
Brother Milotus, one eye on the skylight whence the sun,
bright as a scoured stewpan, darts a megrim at him
and dizzies his sight, moves his priest's belly under the sheets.

He struggles beneath the grey blanket and gets out,
his knees to his trebling belly, flustered like an old man
who has swallowed a pinch of snuff,
because he has to tuck up his nightshirt in armfuls
round his waist with one hand
grasping the handle of a white chamberpot!

Now he is squatting, chilly, his toes curled up,
his teeth chattering in the bright sunshine
which dubs the yellow of cake upon the paper panes;
and the old fellow's nose, its crimson catching fire,
snuffles in the rays like a polypary of flesh.

The old fellow simmers at the fire, his arms twisted,
his blubber lips on his belly:
he feels his thighs slipping into the fire,
and his breeches scorching, and his pipe going out;
something resembling a bird stirs a little in his serene belly
which is like a mountain of tripe!
Round about him sleeps a jumble of stunned furniture
among tatters of filth, lying on soiled bellies;
stools cower like weird toads in dark corners:
cupboards have maws like choirmasters,
yawning with a sleepiness which is full of revolting appetites.
The sickening heat stuffs the narrow room;
the old fellow's head is crammed with rags:
he listens to the hairs growing in his moist away,
shaking his rickety stool..
And in the evening, in rays of moonlight
which leaves dribbles of light
on the contours of his buttocks,
a shadow with details squats
against a background of snow-coloured pink like a hollyhock …
Fantastic, a nose follows Venus in the deep sky.

Arthur Rimbaud

Stages (Scenes)

Ancient Comedy pursues its harmonies and divides its Idylls:
Raised platforms along the boulevards.
A long wooden pier the length of a rocky field in which
the barbarous crowd moves about under the denuded trees.
In corridors of black gauze, following the promenades
with their lanterns and their leaves.
Birds of the mysteries swoop down onto a masonry pontoon,
swayed by the sheltered archipelago of spectators' boats.
Operatic scenes with accompaniment of flute and drum
look down from slanting recesses contrived below
the ceilings around modern club rooms and halls of ancient Orient.
The fairy spectacle maneuvers at the top of an amphitheater
crowned with thickets,-- or moves and modulates for the Boeotians
in the shade of waving forest trees, on the edge of the cultivated fields.
The opera-comique is divided on a stage at the line of intersection
of ten partitions set up between the gallery and the footlights.

Arthur Rimbaud

State Of Siege

The poor omnibus driver under the tin canopy,
warming a huge chilblain inside his glove,
follows his heavy omnibus along the left bank,
and from his inflated groin thrusts away the moneybag.

And while [in the] soft shadow
where there are policemen,
the respectable interior of the bus looks at the moon
in the deep sky rocking
among its green cotton wool,
in spite of the Edict
and the still delicate hour,
and the fact that the bus is
returning to the Odeon,
the lewd wanton utters piercing cries
at the darkened square!
Francois Coppee

Arthur Rimbaud

Stolen Heart

My sad heart slobbers at the poop
my heart covered with tobacco-spit
They spew streams of soup at it
My sad heart drools at the poop
Under the jeerings of the soldiers
who break out laughing
my sad heart drools at the poop
mt heart covered with tobacco-spit.

Ithypallic and soldierish
Their jeerings have depraved it
In the rudder you see frescoes
Ithypallic and soldierish
O, abracadabratic waves
Take my heart, let it be washed!
Ithypallic and soldierish
their jeerings have depraved it.

When they have used up their quid
How will I act, O stolen heart?
There will be Bacchic hiccups
When they have used up their quid
I will have stomach retchings
If my heart is degraded;
When they have used up their quid
How will I act, O stolen heart?

translated by Wallace Fowlie

Arthur Rimbaud

Stupra II

Our buttocks are not theirs.
I have often seen people unbuttoned behind some hedge;
and, in those shameless bathings where children are gay,
I used to observe the form and performance of our arse.

Firmer, in many cases pale, it possesses striking forms
which the screen of hairs covers;
for women, it is only in the charming parting
that the long tufted silk flowers.

A touching and marvellous ingenuity such as you see only
in the faces of angels in holy
pictures imitates the cheek
where the smile makes a hollow.

Oh! for us to be naked like that,
seeking joy and repose,
facing one's companion's glorious part,
both of us free to murmur and sob?

Arthur Rimbaud

Sun And Flesh (Credo In Unam)

Birth of Venus
I
The Sun, the hearth of affection and life,
Pours burning love on the delighted earth,
And when you lie down in the valley, you can smell
How the earth is nubile and very full-blooded;
How its huge breast, heaved up by a soul,
Is, like God, made of love, and, like woman, of flesh,
And that it contains, big with sap and with sunlight,
The vast pullulation of all embryos!
And everything grows, and everything rises!

- O Venus, O Goddess!
I long for the days of antique youth,
Of lascivious satyrs, and animal fauns,
Gods who bit, mad with love, the bark of the boughs,
And among water-lilies kissed the Nymph with fair hair!
I long for the time when the sap of the world,
River water, the rose-coloured blood of green trees
Put into the veins of Pan a whole universe!
When the earth trembled, green,beneath his goat-feet;
When, softly kissing the fair Syrinx, his lips formed
Under heaven the great hymn of love;
When, standing on the plain, he heard round about him
Living Nature answer his call;
When the silent trees cradling the singing bird,
Earth cradling mankind, and the whole blue Ocean,
And all living creatures loved, loved in God!

I long for the time of great Cybele,
Who was said to travel, gigantically lovely,
In a great bronze chariot, through splendid cities;
Her twin breasts poured, through the vast deeps,
The pure streams of infinite life.
Mankind sucked joyfully at her blessed nipple,
Like a small child playing on her knees.
- Because he was strong, Man was gentle and chaste.

Misfortune! Now he says: I understand things,
And goes about with eyes shut and ears closed.
- And again, no more gods! no more gods! Man is King,
Man is God! But the great faith is Love!
Oh! if only man still drew sustenance from your nipple,
Great mother of gods and of men, Cybele;
If only he had not forsaken immortal Astarte
Who long ago, rising in the tremendous brightness
Of blue waters, flower-flesh perfumed by the wave,
Showed her rosy navel, towards which the foam came snowing
And , being a goddess with the great conquering black eyes,
Made the nightingale sing in the woods and love in men's hearts!

The Birth of Venus

II

I believe! I believe in you! divine mother,
Sea-born Aphrodite! - Oh! the path is bitter
Since the other God harnessed us to his cross;
Flesh, Marble, Flower, Venus, in you I believe!
- yes, Man is sad and ugly, sad under the vast sky.
He possesses clothes, because he is no longer chaste,
Because he has defiled his proud, godlike head
And because he has bent, like an idol in the furnace,
His Olympian form towards base slaveries!
Yes, even after death, in the form of pale skeletons
He wishes to live and insult the original beauty!
- And the Idol in whom you placed such maidenhood,
Woman, in whom you rendered our clay divine,
So that Man might bring light into his poor soul
And slowly ascend, in unbounded love,
From the earthly prison to the beauty of day,
Woman no longer knows even how to be a Courtesan!
- It's a fine farce! and the world snickers
At the sweet and sacred name of great Venus!

III

If only the times which have come and gone might come again!
- For Man is finished! Man has played all the parts!
In the broad daylight, wearied with breaking idols
He will revive, free of all his gods,
And, since he is of heaven, he will scan the heavens!
The Ideal, that eternal, invincible thought, which is
All; The living god within his fleshly clay,
Will rise, mount, burn beneath his brow!
An when you see him plumbing the whole horizon,
Despising old yokes, and free from all fear,
You will come and give him holy Redemption!
- Resplendent, radiant, from the bosom of the huge seas
You will rise up and give to the vast Universe
Infinite Love with its eternal smile!
The World will vibrate like an immense lyre
In the trembling of an infinite kiss!

- The World thirsts for love: you will come and slake its thirst.

.....

O! Man has raised his free, proud head!
And the sudden blaze of primordial beauty
Makes the god quiver in the altar of the flesh!

Happy in the present good, pale from the ill suffered,
Man wishes to plumb all depths, - and know all things! Thought,
So long a jade, and for so long oppressed,
Springs from his forehead! She will know Why!...
Let her but gallop free, and Man will find Faith!
- Why the blue silence, unfathomable space?
Why the golden stars, teeming like sands?
If one ascended forever, what would one see up there?
Does a sheperd drive this enormous flock
Of worlds on a journey through this horror of space?
And do all these worlds contained in the vast ether,
tremble at the tones of an eternal voice?
- And Man, can he see? can he say: I believe?
Is the langage of thought anymore than a dream?
If man is born so quickly, if life is so short
Whence does he come? Does he sink into the deep Ocean
Of Germs, of Foetuses, of Embryos, to the bottom
of the huge Crucible where Nature the Mother
Will resuscitate him, a living creature,
To love in the rose and to grow in the corn?...

We cannot know! - We are weighed down
With a cloak of ignorance, hemmed in by chimaeras!
Men like apes, dropped from our mothers' wombs,
Our feeble reason hides the infinite from us!
We wish to perceive: - and Doubt punishes us!
Doubt, dismal bird, beat us down with its wing...
- And the horizon rushes away in endless flight!...

.....

The vast heaven is open! the mysteries lie dead
Before erect Man, who folds his strong arms
Among the vast splendour of abundant Nature!
He sings... and the woods sing, the river murmurs
A song full of happiness which rises towards the light!...
- it is Redemption! it is love! it is love!...

IV

O splendour of flesh! O ideal splendour!
O renewal of love, triumphal dawn
When, prostrating the Gods and the Heroes,
White Callipyge and little Eros
Covered with the snow of rose petals, will caress
Women and flowers beneath their lovely outstretched feet!
- O great Ariadne who pour out your tears
On the shore, as you see, out there on the waves,
The sail of Theseus flying white under the sun,
O sweet virgin child whom a night has broken,
Be silent! On his golden chariot studded with black grapes,

Lysios, who has been drawn through Phrygian fields
By lascivious tigers and russet panthers,
Reddens the dark mosses along the blue rivers.
- Zeus, the Bull, cradles on his neck like a child
The nude body of Europa who throws her white arm
Round the God's muscular neck which shivers in the wave.
Slowly he turns his dreamy eye towards her;
She, droops her pale flowerlike cheek
On the brow of Zeus; her eyes are closed; she is dying
In a divine kiss, and the murmuring waters
Strew the flowers of their golden foam on her hair.
- Between the oleander and the gaudy lotus tree
Slips amorously the great dreaming Swan
Enfloding Leda in the whiteness of his wing;
- And while Cypris goes by, strangely beautiful,
And, arching the marvellous curves of her back,
Proudly displays the golden vision of her big breasts
And snowy belly embroidered with black moss,
- Hercules, Tamer of beasts, in his Strength,
Robes his huge body with the lion's skin as with glory
And faces the horizons, his brow terrible and sweet!

Vaguely lit by the summer moon,
Erect, naked, dreaming in her pallor of gold
Streaked by the heavy wave of her long blue hair,
In the shadowy glade whenre stars spring in the moss,
The Dryade gazes up at the silent sky...
- White Selene, timidly, lets her veil float,
Over the feet of beautiful Endymion,
And throws him a kiss in a pale beam...
- The Spring sobs far off in a long ectasy...
Ii is the nymph who dreams with one elbow on her urn,
Of the handsome white stripling her wave has pressed against.
- A soft wind of love has passed in the night,
And in the sacred woods, amid the standing hair of the great trees,
Erect in majesty, the shadowly Marbles,
The Gods, on whose brows the Bullfinch has his nest,
- the Gods listen to Men, and to the infinite World!

Original French

Soleil et Chair
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 !

spacespacespacespacespacespace- 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 nénuphars 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
Répondre à son appel la Nature vivante ;
Où les arbres muets, berçant l'oiseau qui chante,
La terre berçant l'homme, et tout l'Océan bleu
Et tous les animaux aimaient, aimaient en Dieu !

Soleil et Chair, Suite

Je regrette les temps de la grande Cybèle
Qu'on disait parcourir, gigantesquement belle,
Sur un grand char d'airain, les splendides cités ;
Son double sein versait dans les immensités
Le pur ruissellement de la vie infinie.
L'Homme suçait, heureux, sa mamelle bénie,
Comme un petit enfant, jouant sur ses genoux.
- Parce qu'il était fort, l'Homme était chaste et doux.

Misère ! Maintenant il dit : Je sais les choses,
Et va, les yeux fermés et les oreille closes.
- Et pourtant, plus de dieux ! plus de dieux ! l'Homme est Roi,
L'Homme est Dieu ! Mais l'Amour, voilà la grande Foi !
Oh ! si l'homme puisait encore à ta mamelle,
Grande mère des dieux et des hommes, Cybèle ;
S'il n'avait pas laissé l'immortelle Astarté
Qui jadis, émergeant dans l'immense clarté
Des flots bleus, fleur de chair que la vague parfume,
Montra son nombril rose où vint neiger l'écume,
Et fit chanter, Déesse aux grands yeux noirs vainqueurs,
Le rossignol aux bois et l'amour dans les coeurs !

II

Je crois en toi ! Je crois en toi ! divine mère,
Aphrodite marine ! - Oh ! la route est amère
Depuis que l'autre Dieu nous attelle à sa croix ;

Chair, Marbre, Fleur, Vénus, c'est en toi que je crois !
- Oui, l'Homme est triste et laid, triste sous le ciel vaste,
Il a des vêtements, parce qu'il n'est plus chaste,
Parce qu'il a sali son fier buste de Dieu,
Et qu'il a rabougri, comme une idole au feu,
Son corps Olympien aux servitudes sales !
Oui, même après la mort, dans les squelettes pâles
Il veut vivre, insultant la première beauté !
- Et l'Idole où tu mis tant de virginité,
Où tu divinisas notre argile, la Femme,
Afin que l'Homme pût éclairer sa pauvre âme
Et monter lentement, dans un immense amour,
De la prison terrestre à la beauté du jour,
La Femme ne sait plus même être Courtisane !
- C'est une bonne farce ! et le monde ricane
Au nom doux et sacré de la grande Vénus !

III

Si les temps revenaient, les temps qui sont venus !
- Car l'Homme a fini ! l'Homme a joué tous les rôles !
Au grand jour, fatigué de briser des idoles
Il ressuscitera, libre de tous ses Dieux,
Et, comme il est du ciel, il scrutera les cieux !
L'idéal, la pensée invincible, éternelle,
Tout ; le dieu qui vit, sous son argile charnelle,
Montera, montera, brûlera sous son front !
Et quand tu le verras sonder tout l'horizon,
Contempteur des vieux jougs, libre de toute crainte,
Tu viendras lui donner la Rédemption sainte !
- Splendide, radieuse, au sein des grandes mers
Tu surgiras, jetant sur le vaste Univers
L'Amour infini dans un infini sourire !
Le Monde vibrera comme une immense lyre
Dans le frémissement d'un immense baiser

- Le Monde a soif d'amour : tu viendras l'apaiser.

IV

O splendeur de la chair ! ô splendeur idéale !
O renouveau d'amour, aurore triomphale
Où, courbant à leurs pieds les Dieux et les Héros,
Kallipyge la blanche et le petit Éros
Effleureront, couverts de la neige des roses,
Les femmes et les fleurs sous leurs beaux pieds écloses !
- O grande Ariadné, qui jette tes sanglots
Sur la rive, en voyant fuir là-bas sur les flots
Blanche sous le soleil, la voile de Thésée,

O douce vierge enfant qu'une nuit a brisée,
Tais-toi ! Sur son char d'or brodé de noirs raisins,
Lysios, promené dans les champs Phrygiens
Par les tigres lascifs et les panthères rousses,
Le long des fleuves bleus rougit les sombres mousses.
- Zeus, Taureau, sur son cou berce comme une enfant
Le corps nu d'Europé, qui jette son bras blanc
Au cou nerveux du Dieu frissonnant dans la vague
Il tourne lentement vers elle son oeil vague ;
Elle, laisse traîner sa pâle joue en fleur
Au front de Zeus ; ses yeux sont fermés ; elle meurt
Dans un divin baiser, et le flot qui murmure
De son écume d'or fleurit sa chevelure.
- Entre le laurier-rose et le lotus jaseur
Glisse amoureusement le grand Cygne rêveur
Embrassant la Léda des blancheurs de son aile ;
- Et tandis que Cypris passe, étrangement belle,
Et, cambrant les rondeurs splendides de ses reins,
Étale fièrement l'or de ses larges seins
Et son ventre neigeux brodé de mousse noire,
- Héraclès, le Dompteur, qui, comme d'une gloire
Fort, ceint son vaste corps de la peau du lion,
S'avance, front terrible et doux, à l'horizon !

Par la lune d'été vaguement éclairée,
Debout, nue, et rêvant dans sa pâleur dorée
Que tache le flot lourd de ses longs cheveux bleus,
Dans la clairière sombre, où la mousse s'étoile,
La Dryade regarde au ciel silencieux....
- La blanche Séléné laisse flotter son voile,
Craintive, sur les pieds du bel Endymion,
Et lui jette un baiser dans un pâle rayon...
- La Source pleure au loin dans une longue extase...
C'est la nymphe qui rêve, un coude sur son vase,
Au beau jeune homme blanc que son onde a pressé.
- Une brise d'amour dans la nuit a passé,
Et, dans les bois sacrés, dans l'horreur des grands arbres,
Majestueusement debout, les sombres Marbres,
Les Dieux, au front desquels le Bouvreuil fait son nid,
- Les Dieux écoutent l'homme et le Monde infini !

Arthur Rimbaud

Tale

A Prince was vexed at having devoted himself
only to the perfection of ordinary generosities.
He foresaw astonishing revolutions of love
and suspected his women of being able to do better
than their habitual acquiescence embellished by heaven and luxury.
He wanted to see the truth, the hour of essential desire and gratification.
Whether this was an aberration of piety or not,
that is what he wanted. Enough worldly power, at least, he had.
All the women who had known him were assassinated;
what havoc in the garden of beauty! At the point of the sword they blessed him.
He did not order new ones.-- The women reappeared.
He killed all those who followed him, after the hunt or the libations.--

All followed him. He amused himself cutting the throats of rare animals.
He set palaces on fire. He would rush upon people and hack them to pieces.--
The throngs, the gilded roofs, the beautiful animals still remained.
Can one be in ecstasies over destruction and by cruelty rejuvenated!
The people did not complain. No one offered him the benefit of his views.
One evening he was proudly galloping.
A Genie appeared, of ineffable beauty, unwavorable even.
In his face and in his bearing shone the promise of a complex and multiple love!
of an indescribable happiness, unendurable, even.

The Prince and the Genie annihilated each other probably in essential health.
How could they have helped dying of it?
Together then they died.
But this Prince died in his palace at an ordinary age,
the Prince was the Genie, the Genie was the Prince.--
There is no sovereign music for our desire.

Arthur Rimbaud

Tartufe's Punishment

Raking, raking, his amorous thoughts
underneath his chaste robe of black,
happy, his hand gloved,
one day as he went along, fearsomely sweet,
yellow, dribbling piety from his toothless mouth,
One day as he went along,
'Let us Pray', - a Wicked One seized him
roughly by his saintly ear and
snapped frightful words at him,
tearing off the chaste robe of black
wrapped about his moist skin.

Punishment! - His clothes were unbuttoned;
and, the long chaplet of pardoned
sins being told in his heart,
St Tartufe was so pale!..
So he confessed and prayed, with a death rattle!
The man contented himself with carrying off
his clerical bands… - Faugh!
Tartufe was naked from his top to his toe!

Arthur Rimbaud

Tear

Far away from birds and herds and village girls,
I was drinking, kneeling down in some heather
Surrounded by soft hazel copses,
In an afternoon mist, warm and green.

What can I have been drinking in that young Oise,
Voiceless elms, flowerless turf, overcast sky.
What did I draw from the gourd of the wine ?
Some golden liquor, pale, which causes sweating.

Such as I was, I should have made a poor inn-sign.
Then the storm changed the sky, until the evening.
It was black countries, lakes, poles,
Colonnades under the blue night, railway stations.

The water from the woods trickled away into virgin sands,
The wind, from the sky, threw sheets of ice across the ponds ...
But ! like a fisher for gold or shellfish,
To think that I did not bother to drink !

Arthur Rimbaud

The Accursed Cherub

Bluish roofs and white doors
As on nocturnal Sundays,
At the town's end,
the road without Sound is white,
and it is night.

The street has strange houses
With shutters of angels.
But look how he runs towards a Boundary-stone,
evil and shivering, A dark cherub who staggers,
Having eaten too many jububes.
He does a cack : then disappears :
But his cursed cack appears,
Under the holy empty moon,
A slight cesspool of dirty blood !
Louis Ratisbonne.

Original French

L'angelot maudit

Toits bleuâtres et portes blanches
Comme en de nocturnes dimanches,

Au bout de la ville sans bruit
La Rue est blanche, et c'est la nuit.

La Rue a des maisons étranges
Avec des persiennes d'Anges.

Mais, vers une borne, voici
Accourir, mauvais et transi,

Un noir Angelot qui titube,
Ayant trop mangé de jujube.

Il fait caca : puis disparaît :
Mais son caca maudit paraît,

Sous la lune sainte qui vaque,
De sang sale un léger cloaque

Arthur Rimbaud

The Ancient Beasts

The ancient beasts bred even on the run,
their glans encrusted with blood and excrement.
Our forefathers displayed their members proudly
by the fold of the sheath and the grain of the scrotum.

In the middle ages, for a female, angel or sow,
a fellow whose gear was substantial was needed;
and even a Kleber, judging by his breeches -
which exaggerate, perhaps, a little -
can't have lacked resources.

Besides, man is equal to the proudest mammal;
we are wrong to be surprised at the hugeness of their members;
but a sterile hour has struck:
the gelding and the ox have bridled their ardours,
and no one will dare again to raise his genital pride
in the copses teeming with comical children.

Original French
Les anciens animaux...

Les anciens animaux saillissaient, même en course,
Avec des glands bardés de sang et d'excrément.
Nos pères étalaient leur membre fièrement
Par le pli de la gaine et le grain de la bourse.

Au moyen âge pour la femelle, ange ou pource,
Il fallait un gaillard de solide gréement ;
Même un Kléber, d'après la culotte qui ment
Peut-être un peu, n'a pas dû manquer de ressource.

D'ailleurs l'homme au plus fier mammifère est égal ;
L'énormité de leur membre à tort nous étonne ;
Mais une heure stérile a sonné : le cheval

Et le boeuf ont bridé leurs ardeurs, et personne
N'osera plus dresser son orgueil génital
Dans les bosquets où grouille une enfance bouffonne

Arthur Rimbaud

The Bridges

Skies the gray of crystal.
A strange design of bridges,
some straight, some arched,
others descending at oblique angles to the first;
and these figures recurring
in other lighted circuits of the canal,
but all so long and light that the banks,
laden with domes, sink and shrink.

A few of these bridges
are still covered with hovels,
others support polls,
signals, frail parapets.

Minor chords cross
each other and disappear;
ropes rise from the shore.

One can make out a red coat,
possibly other costumes
and musical instruments.
Are these popular tunes,
snatches of seigniorial concerts,
remnants of public hymns?

The water is gray and blue,
wide as an arm of the sea.
A white ray falling from high
in the sky destroys this comedy.

Arthur Rimbaud

The Cupboard

It's a board carved wooden cupboard;
the ancient dark-coloured oak
has taken on that pleasant air
that old people have; the cupboard is open,
and gives off from its kindly shadows
inviting aromas like a breath of old wine;
full to overflowing, it's a jumble of quaint old things:
fragrant yellowed linen,
rags of women's or children's clothes, faded laces,
grandmothers' kerchiefs embroidered with griffins;
- here you could find lockets,
and locks of white or blonde hair,
portraits and dried flowers
whose smell mingles with the smell of fruit. -

O cupboard of old times, you know plenty of stories;
and you'd like to tell them;
and you clear your throat every time
your great dark doors slowly open.

Arthur Rimbaud

The Customs Men

Those who say Gord Struth; those who say Swelp Me -
pensioned soldiers and sailors, the wreckage of Empire -
are nothing, nothing at all, compared with the warriors of Excise
who slash the blue frontiers with their great axe-blows.
Pipes in their teeth, blades in their hands, deep, unruffled,
when darkness noses at the woods like a cow's muzzle, off they go,
leading their dogs, to hold their nocturnal and terrible revels!
They report the bacchantes to the laws of today.
They clap hands on the shoulders of Fausts and of Devils:
'Now then, none of that, you old dodgers! Put those bundles down!'
And, when his serene highness accosts the young,
the Customs Man holds fast to all contraband charms!
The Inferno for Offenders whom his hand has frisked!

Arthur Rimbaud

The Drunken Boat

As I drifted on a river I could not control,
No longer guided by the bargemen's ropes.
They were captured by howling Indians
Who nailed them naked to coloured posts.

I cared no more for other boats or cargoes:
Flemish wheat or English cottons, all were gone
When my bargemen could no longer haul me
I forgot about everything and drifted on.

Amid the fury of the loudly chopping tides
Last winter, deaf as a child's dark night,
Ah, how I raced! And the drifting Peninsulas
Have never known such conquering delight.

Lighter than cork, I revolved upon waves
That roll the dead forever in the deep,
Ten days, beyond the blinking eyes of land!
Lulled by storms, I drifted seaward from sleep.

Sweeter than apples to a child its pungent edge;
The wash of green water on my shell of pine.
Anchor and rudder went drifting away,
Washed in vomit and stained with blue wine.

Now I drift through the poem of the sea;
This gruel of stars mirrors the milky sky,
Devours green azures; ecstatic flotsam,
Drowned men, pale and thoughtful, sometimes drift by.

Staining the sudden blueness, the slow sounds,
Deliriums that streak the glowing sky,
Stronger than drink and the songs we sing,
It is boiling, bitter, red; it is love!

I know how lightening split the sky apart,
I know the surf and waterspouts and evening's fall,
I've seen the dawn arisen like a flock of doves;
I've seen what men have only dreamed they saw!

I saw the sun with mystic horrors darken
And shimmer through a violet haze;
With a shiver of shutters the waves fell
Like actors in ancient, forgotten plays!

I dreamed of green nights and glittering snow,
Slow kisses rising in the eyes of the sea,
Unknown liquids flowing, the blue and yellow
Stirring of phosphorescent melody!

For months I watched the surge of the sea,
Hysterical herds attacking the reefs;

I never thought the bright feet of Mary
Could muzzle up the heavy-breathing waves!

I have jostled - you know? - unbelievable Floridas
And seen among the flowers the wild eyes
Of panthers in the skins of men! Rainbows
Birdling blind flocks beneath the horizons!

In stinking swamps I have seen great hulks:
A Leviathan that rotted in the reeds!
Water crumbling in the midst of calm
And distances that shatter into foam.

Glaciers, silver suns, waves of pearl, fiery skies,
Giant serpents stranded where lice consume
Them, falling in the depths of dark gulfs
From contorted trees, bathed in black perfume!

I wanted to show children these fishes shining
In the blue wave, the golden fish that sing -
A froth of flowers cradled my wandering
And delicate winds tossed me on their wings.

Sometimes, a martyr of poles and latitudes,
The sea rocked me softly in sighing air,
And brought me dark blooms with yellow stems -
I remained there like a woman on her knees.

Almost an island, I balanced on my boat's sides
Rapacious blond-eyed birds, their dung, their screams.
I drifted on through fragile tangled lines
Drowned men, still staring up, sank down to sleep.

Now I, a little lost boat, in swirling debris,
Tossed by the storm into the birdless upper air
- All the Hansa Merchants and Monitors
Could not fish up my body drunk with the sea;

Free, smoking, touched the violet haze above,
I, who the lurid heavens breached like some rare wall
Which boasts - confection that the poets love -
Lichens of sunlight, and snots of bright blue sky;

Lost branch spinning in a herd of hippocamps,
Covered over with electric animals,
An everlasting July battering
The glittering sky and its fiery funnels;

Shaking at the sound of monsters roaring,
Rutting Behemoths in thick whirlpools,
Eternal weaver of unmoving blues,
I thought of Europe and its ancient walls!

I have seen archipelagos in the stars,
Feverish skies where I was free to roam!
Are these bottomless nights your exiled nests,
Swarm of golden birds, O Strength to come?

True, I've cried too much; I am heartsick at dawn.
The moon is bitter and the sun is sour…
Love burns me; I am swollen and slow.
Let my keel break! Oh, let me sink in the sea!

If I long for a shore in Europe,
It's a small pond, dark, cold, remote,
The odour of evening, and a child full of sorrow
Who stoops to launch a crumpled paper boat.

Washed in your languors, sea, I cannot trace
The wake of tankers foaming through the cold,
Nor assault the pride of pennants and flags,
Nor endure the slave ship's stinking hold.

Translation by Rebecca Seiferle:

As I descended impassible Rivers,
I felt no longer steered by bargemen;
they were captured by howling Redskins,
nailed as targets, naked, to painted stakes.

What did I care for cargo or crews,
bearers of English cotton or Flemish grain—
having left behind the bargemen and racket,
the Rivers let me descend where I wished.

In the furious splashing of the waves,
I — that other winter, deafer than the minds
of children — ran! And the unanchored Peninsulas
never knew a more triumphant brouhaha.

The tempest blessed my sea awakening.
Lighter than cork, I danced the waves
scrolling out the eternal roll of the dead—
ten nights, without longing for the lantern's silly eye.

Sweeter than the flesh of tart apples to children,
the green water penetrated my pine hull
and purged me of vomit and the stain of blue wines—
my rudder and grappling hooks drifting away.

Since then, I have bathed in the Poem
of the Sea, a milky way, infused with stars,

devouring the azure greens where, flotsam-pale
and ravished, drowned and pensive men float by.

Where, suddenly staining the blues, delirious
and slow rhythms under the glowing red of day,
stronger than alcohol, vaster than our lyrics,
ferment the red bitters of love!

I know heavens pierced by lightning, the waterspouts
and undertows and currents: I know night,
Dawn rising like a nation of doves,
and I've seen, sometimes, what men only dreamed they saw!

I've seen the sun, low, a blot of mystic dread,
illuminating with far-reaching violet coagulations,
like actors in antique tragedies,
the waves rolling away in a shiver of shutters.

I've dreamed a green night to dazzling snows,
kisses slowly rising to the eyelids of the sea,
unknown saps flowing, and the yellow and blue
rising of phosphorescent songs.

For months, I've followed the swells assaulting
the reefs like hysterical herds, without ever thinking
that the luminous feet of some Mary
could muzzle the panting Deep.

I've touched, you know, incredible Floridas
where, inside flowers, the eyes of panthers mingle
with the skins of men! And rainbows bridle
glaucous flocks beneath the rim of the sea!

I've seen fermenting— enormous marshes, nets
where a whole Leviathan rots in the rushes!
Such a ruin of water in the midst of calm,
and the distant horizon worming into whirlpools!

Glaciers, silver suns, pearly tides, ember skies!
Hideous wrecks at the bottom of muddy gulfs
where giant serpents, devoured by lice,
drop with black perfume out of twisted trees!

I wanted to show children these dorados
of the blue wave, these golden, singing fish.
A froth of flowers has cradled my vagrancies,
and ineffable winds have winged me on.

Sometimes like a martyr, tired of poles and zones,
the sea has rolled me softly in her sigh
and held out to me the yellow cups of shadow flowers,
and I've remained there, like a woman, kneeling . . .

Almost an island, balancing the quarrels,
the dung, the cries of blond-eyed birds on the gunnels
of my boat, I sailed on, and through my frail lines,
drowned men, falling backwards, sank to sleep.

Now, I, a boat lost in the hair of the coves,
tossed by hurricane into the birdless air,
me, whom all the Monitors and Hansa sailing ships
could not salvage, my carcass drunk with sea;

free, rising like smoke, riding violet mists,
I who pierced the sky turning red like a wall,
who bore the exquisite jam of all good poets,
lichens of sun and snots of azure,

who, spotted with electric crescents, ran on,
a foolish plank escorted by black hippocamps,
when the Julys brought down with a single blow
the ultramarine sky with its burning funnels;

I who tremble, feeling the moan fifty leagues away
of the Behemoth rutting and the dull Maelstrom,
eternal weaver of the unmovable blue—
I grieve for Europe with its ancient breastworks!

I've seen thunderstruck archipelagos! and islands
that open delirious skies for wanderers:
Are these bottomless nights your nest of exile,
O millions of gold birds, O Force to come?

True, I've cried too much! Dawns are harrowing.
All moons are cruel and all suns, bitter:
acrid love puffs me up with drunken slowness.
Let my keel burst! Give me to the sea!

If I desire any of the waters of Europe, it's the pond
black and cold, in the odor of evening,
where a child full of sorrow gets down on his knees
to launch a paperboat as frail as a May butterfly.

Bathed in your languors, o waves, I can no longer
wash away the wake of ships bearing cotton,
nor penetrate the arrogance of pennants and flags,
nor swim past the dreadful eyes of slave ships.

As I was floating down impassive Rivers,
I no longer felt myself steered by the haulers:
gaudy Redskins had taken them for targets,
nailing them naked to coloured stakes.

I cared nothing for all my crews,
carrying Flemish wheat or English cotton.
When, along with my haulers, those uproars stopped,
the Rivers let me sail downstream where I pleased.

Into the ferocious tide-rips, last winter,
more absorbed than the minds of children, I ran!
And the unmoored Peninsulas never
endured more triumphant clamourings.

The storm made bliss of my sea-borne awakenings.
Lighter than a cork, I danced on the waves
which men call the eternal rollers of victims,
for ten nights, without once missing the foolish eye of the harbor lights!

Sweeter than the flesh of sour apples to children,
the green water penetrated my pinewood hull
and washed me clean of the bluish wine-stains
and the splashes of vomit, carrying away both rudder and anchor.

And from that time on I bathed in the Poem
of the Sea, star-infused and churned into milk,
devouring the green azures where, entranced
in pallid flotsam, a dreaming drowned man sometimes goes down;

where, suddenly dyeing the blueness,
deliriums and slow rhythms under the gleams of the daylight,
stronger than alcohol, vaster than music,
ferment the bitter rednesses of love!

I have come to know the skies splitting with lightning,
and the waterspouts, and the breakers and currents;
I know the evening, and dawn rising up like a flock of doves,
and sometimes I have seen what men have imagined they saw!

I have seen the low-hanging sun speckled with mystic horrors
lighting up long violet coagulations
like the performers in antique dramas;
waves rolling back into the distances their shiverings of venetian blinds!

I have dreamed of the green night of the dazzled snows,
the kiss rising slowly to the eyes of the seas,
the circulation of undreamed-of saps,
and the yellow-blue awakenings of singing phosphorus!

I have followed, for whole months on end,
the swells battering the reefs like hysterical herds of cows,
never dreaming that the luminous feet of the Marys
could muzzle by force the snorting Oceans!

I have struck, do you realize, incredible Floridas,

where mingle with flowers the eyes of panthers in human skins!
Rainbows stretched like bridles
under the sea's horizon to glaucous herds!

I have seen the enormous swamps seething,
traps where a whole leviathan rots in the reeds!
Downfalls of waters in the midst of the calm,
and distances cataracting down into abysses!

Glaciers, suns of silver, waves of pearl, skies of red-hot coals!
Hideous wrecks at the bottom of brown gulfs
where the giant snakes, devoured by vermin,
fall from the twisted trees with black odours!

I should have liked to show to children those dolphins
of the blue wave, those golden, those singing fish. --
Foam of flowers rocked my driftings,
and at times ineffable winds would lend me wings.

Sometimes, a martyr weary of poles and zones,
the sea whose sobs sweetened my rollings
lifted my shadow-flowers with their yellow sucking disks toward me,
and I hung there like a kneeling woman...

Resembling an island, tossing on my sides the brawls
and droppings of pale-eyed, clamouring birds.
And I was scudding along when across my frayed ropes
drowned men sank backwards into sleep!...

But now I, a boat lost under the hair of coves,
hurled by the hurricane into the birdless ether;
I, whose wreck, dead-drunk and sodden with water,
neither Monitor nor Hanseatic ships would have fished up;

free, smoking, risen from violet fogs,
I who bored through the wall of the reddening sky which bears
a sweetmeat good poets find delicious:
lichens of sunlight mixed with azure snot;

who ran, speckled with tiny electric moons,
a crazy plank with black sea-horses for escort,
when Julys were crushing with cudgel blows
skies of ultramarine into burning funnels;

I who trembled to feel at fifty leagues off
the groans of Behemoths rutting, and the dense Maelstroms;
eternal spinner of blue immobilities,
I long for Europe with it's age-old parapets!

I have seen archipelagos of stars! and islands
whose delirious skies are open to sea wanderers: --
Do you sleep, are you exiled in those bottomless nights,

O million golden birds, Life Force of the future?

But, truly, I have wept too much! Dawns are heartbreaking.
Every moon is atrocious and every sun bitter:
sharp love has swollen me up with intoxicating torpor.
O let my keel split! O let me sink to the bottom!

If there is one water in Europe I want, it is the black
cold pool where into the scented twilight
a child squatting full of sadness launches
a boat as fragile as a butterfly in May.

I can no more, bathed in your langours, O waves,
sail in the wake of the carriers of cottons;
nor undergo the pride of the flags and pennants;
nor pull past the horrible eyes of prison hulks.

Translation by Wallace Fowlie:

As I was going down impassive rivers,
I no longer felt myself guided by haulers!
Yelping redskins had taken them as targets,
And had nailed them naked to colored stakes.

I was indifferent to all crews,
The bearer of Flemish wheat or English cottons,
When with my haulers this uproar stopped,
The Rivers let me go where I wanted.

Into the furious lashing of the tides,
More heedless than children's brains, the other winter
I ran! And loosened peninsulas
Have not undergone a more triumphant hubbub.

The storm blessed my sea vigils.
Lighter than a cork I danced on the waves
That are called eternal rollers of victims,
Ten nights, without missing the stupid eye of the lighthouses!

Sweeter than the flesh of hard apples is to children,
The green water penetrated my hull of fir
And washed me of spots of blue wine
And vomit, scattering rudder and grappling-hook.

And from then on I bathed in the Poem
Of the Sea, infused with stars and lactescent,
Devouring the green azure where, like a pale elated
Piece of flotsam, a pensive drowned figure sometimes sinks;

Where, suddenly dyeing the blueness, delirium
And slow rhythms under the streaking of daylight,

Stronger than alcohol, vaster than our lyres,
The bitter redness of love ferments!

I know the skies bursting with lighting, and the waterspouts
And the surf and the currents; I know the evening,
And dawn as exhalted as a flock of doves,
And at times I have seen what man thought he saw!

I have seen the low sun spotted with mystic horrors,
Lighting up, with long violet clots,
Resembling actors of very ancient dramas,
The waves rolling far off their quivering of shutters!

I have dreamed of the green night with dazzled snows,
A kiss slowly rising to the eyes of the sea,
The circulation of unknown saps,
And the yellow and blue awakening of singing phosphorous!

I followed during pregnant months the swell,
Like hysterical cows, in its assault on the reefs,
Without dreaming that the luminous feet of the Marys
Could restrain the snout of the wheezing Oceans!

I struck against, you know, unbelievable Floridas
Mingling with flowers panthers' eyes and human
Skin! Rainbows stretched like bridal reins
Under the horizon of the seas to greenish herds!

I have seen enormous swamps ferment, fish-traps
Where a whole Leviathan rots in the rushes!
Avalanches of water in the midst of a calm,
And the distances cataracting toward the abyss!

Glaciers, suns of silver, nacreous waves, skies of embers!
Hideous strands at the end of brown gulfs
Where giant serpents devoured by bedbugs
Fall down from gnarled tress with black scent!

I should have liked to show children those sunfish
Of the blue wave, the fish of gold, the singing fish.
--Foam of flowers rocked my drifting
And ineffable winds winged me at times.

At times a martyr weary of poles and zones,
The sea, whose sob created my gentle roll,
Brought up to me her dark flowers with yellow suckers
And I remained like a woman on her knees...

Resembling an island tossing on my sides the quarrels
And droppings of noisy birds with yellow eyes.
And I sailed on, when through my fragile ropes
Drowned men sank backward to sleep!

Now I, a boat lost in the foliage of caves,
Thrown by the storm into the birdless air,
I whose water-drunk carcass would not have been rescued
By the Monitors and the Hanseatic sailboats;

Free, smoking, topped with violet fog,
I who pierced the reddening sky like a wall
Bearing--delicious jam for good poets--
Lichens of sunlight and mucus of azure;

Who ran, spotted with small electric moons,
A wild plank, escorted by black seahorses,
When Julys beat down with blows of cudgels
The ultramarine skies with burning funnels;

I, who trembled, hearing at fifty leagues off
The moaning of the Behemoths in heat and the thick Maelstroms,
I, eternal spinner of the blue immobility,
Miss Europe with its ancient parapets!

I have seen sidereal archipelagos! and islands
Whose delirious skies are open to the sea-wanderer:
--Is it in these bottomless nights that you sleep and exile yourself,
Million golden birds, O future Vigor?

But, in truth, I have wept too much! Dawns are heartbreaking.
Every moon is atrocious and every sun bitter.
Acrid love has swollen me with intoxicating torpor.
O let my keel burst! O let me go into the sea!

If I want a water of Europe, it is the black
Cold puddle where in the sweet-smelling twilight
A squatting child full of sadness releases
A boat as fragile as a May butterfly.

No longer can I, bathed in your languor, O waves,
Follow in the wake of the cotton boats,
Nor cross through the pride of flags and flames,
Nor swim under the terrible eyes of prison ships.

Translation by A. S. Kline

As I floated down impassive Rivers,
I felt myself no longer pulled by ropes:
The Redskins took my hauliers for targets,
And nailed them naked to their painted posts.

Carrying Flemish wheat or English cotton,
I was indifferent to all my crews.
The Rivers let me float down as I wished,

When the victims and the sounds were through.

Into the furious breakers of the sea,
Deafer than the ears of a child, last winter,
I ran! And the Peninsulas sliding by me
Never heard a more triumphant clamour.

The tempest blessed my sea-borne arousals.
Lighter than a cork I danced those waves
They call the eternal churners of victims,
Ten nights, without regret for the lighted bays!

Sweeter than sour apples to the children
The green ooze spurting through my hull's pine,
Washed me of vomit and the blue of wine,
Carried away my rudder and my anchor.

Then I bathed in the Poem of the Sea,
Infused with stars, the milk-white spume blends,
Grazing green azures: where ravished, bleached
Flotsam, a drowned man in dream descends.

Where, staining the blue, sudden deliriums
And slow tremors under the gleams of fire,
Stronger than alcohol, vaster than our rhythms,
Ferment the bitter reds of our desire!

I knew the skies split apart by lightning,
Waterspouts, breakers, tides: I knew the night,
The Dawn exalted like a crowd of doves,
I saw what men think they've seen in the light!

I saw the low sun, stained with mystic terrors,
Illuminate long violet coagulations,
Like actors in a play, a play that's ancient,
Waves rolling back their trembling of shutters!

I dreamt the green night of blinded snows,
A kiss lifted slow to the eyes of seas,
The circulation of unheard-of flows,
Sung phosphorus's blue-yellow awakenings!

For months on end, I've followed the swell
That batters at the reefs like terrified cattle,
Not dreaming the Three Marys' shining feet
Could muzzle with their force the Ocean's hell!

I've struck Floridas, you know, beyond belief,
Where eyes of panthers in human skins,
Merge with the flowers! Rainbow bridles, beneath
the seas' horizon, stretched out to shadowy fins!

I’ve seen the great swamps boil, and the hiss
Where a whole whale rots among the reeds!
Downfalls of water among tranquilities,
Distances showering into the abyss.

Nacrous waves, silver suns, glaciers, ember skies!
Gaunt wrecks deep in the brown vacuities
Where the giant eels riddled with parasites
Fall, with dark perfumes, from the twisted trees!

I would have liked to show children dolphins
Of the blue wave, the golden singing fish.
– Flowering foams rocked me in my drift,
At times unutterable winds gave me wings.

Sometimes, a martyr tired of poles and zones,
The sea whose sobs made my roilings sweet
Showed me its shadow flowers with yellow mouths
And I rested like a woman on her knees…

Almost an isle, blowing across my sands, quarrels
And droppings of pale-eyed clamorous gulls,
And I scudded on while, over my frayed lines,
Drowned men sank back in sleep beneath my hull!…

Now I, a boat lost in the hair of bays,
Hurled by the hurricane through bird-less ether,
I, whose carcass, sodden with salt-sea water,
No Monitor or Hanseatic vessel could recover:

Freed, in smoke, risen from the violet fog,
I, who pierced the red skies like a wall,
Bearing the sweets that delight true poets,
Lichens of sunlight, gobbets of azure:

Who ran, stained with electric moonlets,
A crazed plank, companied by black sea-horses,
When Julys were crushing with cudgel blows
Skies of ultramarine in burning funnels:

I, who trembled to hear those agonies
Of rutting Behemoths and dark Maelstroms,
Eternal spinner of blue immobilities,
I regret the ancient parapets of Europe!

I’ve seen archipelagos of stars! And isles
Whose maddened skies open for the sailor:
– Is it in depths of night you sleep, exiled,
Million birds of gold, O future Vigour? –

But, truly, I’ve wept too much! The Dawns
Are heartbreaking, each moon hell, each sun bitter:

Fierce love has swallowed me in drunken torpors.
O let my keel break! Tides draw me down!

If I want one pool in Europe, it's the cold
Black pond where into the scented night
A child squatting filled with sadness launches
A boat as frail as a May butterfly.

Bathed in your languor, waves, I can no longer
Cut across the wakes of cotton ships,
Or sail against the pride of flags, ensigns,
Or swim the dreadful gaze of prison ships.

Arthur Rimbaud

The Famous Victory Of Saarbrucken

At centre, the Emperor, blue-yellow, in apotheosis,
Gallops off, ramrod straight, on his fine gee-gee,
Very happy – since everything he sees is rosy,
Fierce as Zeus, and as gentle as a Daddy is:

The brave Infantrymen taking a nap, in vain,
Under the gilded drums and scarlet cannon,
Rise politely. One puts his tunic back on,
And, turns to the Chief, stunned by the big name!

On the right, another, leaning on his rifle butt,
Feeling the hair rise at the back of his neck,
Shouts: 'Vive L'Empereur!!" – his neighbour's mute…

A shako rises, like a black sun…– In the midst
The last, a simpleton in red and blue, lying on his gut
Gets up, and, – showing his arse – asks: "On what?"

Arthur Rimbaud

The Old Guard

To the emperor's peasants!
To the peasants' emperor!
To the sons of mars,
to the glorious 18 March!
When heaven blessed
the guts of Eugene!

Arthur Rimbaud

The Orphans' New Year's Gift

The room is full of shadow; you can hear, indistinctly, the sad soft whispering of two children.
Their foreheads lean forward, still heavy with dreams, beneath the long white bed-curtain
which shudders and rises... Outside the birds crowd together, chilled;
their wings are benumbed under the grey tints of the skies; and the New Year,
with her train of mist, trailing the folds of her snowy garment,
smiles through her tears, and shivering, sings...
II
But the little children, beneath the swaying curtain, talk in low voices as one does on a dark night.
Thoughtfully they listen as to a far-off murmur... They tremble often at the clear golden voice of the
morning chime repeatedly striking its metallic refrain beneath its glass dome...
And then, the room is icy... you can see, strewn here and there on the floor round the beds,
mourning clothes: the bitter blast of winter which moans at the threshold blows its melancholy
breath into the house! You can feel, in all this, that there is something missing...
Is there then no mother for these little children? No mother full of fresh smiles and looks of triumph?
Did she forget, last night, stooping down by herself, to kindle a flame saved from these ashes,
and to heap up the blankets and eiderdown on them before leaving them,
calling out to them: forgive me! Did she not forsee the chill of the morning?
Did she forget to close the door against the blast of winter? A mother's dream is the warm coverlet,
the downy nest, where children, huddled like pretty birds rocked by the branches,
sleep their sweet sleep full of white dreams. -- And here? -- it is like a nest without feathers or warmth,
where the little ones are cold, do not sleep, are afraid; a nest that the bitter blast must have frozen...
III
Your heart has understood: -- these children are motherless. No mother in the place any more!...
and their father is far away!... -- An old servant woman, then, has taken them under her care.
The little ones are alone in the icy house; four-year-old orphans, see how in their thoughts,
little by little, a smiling memory awakes... It's like a rosary which you tell, praying: --
Ah, what a beautiful morning, that New Year's morning!
Everyone had dreamt of his dear ones that night,
in some strange dream where you could see toys, sweets covered with gold, sparkling jewels,
all whirling an echoing dance, and then disappearing beneath the curtain, and then reappearing!
You awoke in the morning and got up full of joy with your mouth watering, rubbing your eyes...
You went with tangled hair and shining eyes, as on holiday mornings,
little bare feet brushing the floor, to tap softly on your parents' door... You went in!...
And then came the greetings... in your nightshirt, kisses upon kisses, and fun all allowed!

IV
Ah how charming it was, those words so often spoken! -- But how the old home has changed!
There used to be a big fire crackling bright in the grate, so that the old bedroom was all lit up by it;
and the red reflection from the great hearth would play over the gleaming furniture... --
There was no key in the cupboard!... the big brown cupboard with no key!...
You kept looking at the dark brown door... No key!... That was strange!...
you kept wondering about the mysteries sleeping within its wooden sides; and you seemed to hear,
from the bottom of the huge keyhole, a far-off sound, an indistinct and joyful murmur...
Their parents' bedroom is quite empty now: there is no red reflection shining under the door;
there are no parents, no fire, no hidden keys; and so there are no kisses either,
or pleasant surprises! Oh how sad their New Year's Day will be! -- And sadly,
while a bitter tear falls silently from their big blue eyes,
they murmur: 'Oh when will our mother come back?'...
V
Now the little ones are dozing sadly: you would say, to see them,
that they are crying in their sleep, their eyes are so swollen, their breathing so painful!
Small children have such sensitive hearts! -- But the guardian angel of the cradle comes and
wipes their eyes and puts a happy dream into their heavy slumber, such a joyous dream that
their half-open lips seem, smiling, to murmur something. They are dreaming that, leaning
on their small round arms, in the sweet gesture of awakening, they lift their heads and gaze
mildly about them... They seem to have fallen asleep in some rose-coloured paradise...
The fire crackles merrily in the bright hearth... Through the window you can see a lovely
blue sky over there; nature is awakening and becoming drunk again with sunlight...
the earth, half-bare, happy to be alive again, trembles with joy beneath the sun's kisses.
In the old home all is warm and flushed: no longer are there mourning garments strewn on the floor,
and the draught has at least ceased to moan under the door... You would say that a fairy
had passed this way!... The children, full of happiness, give two cries...
Here, near their mother's bed in a beautiful rose-coloured ray of light,
here on the big carpet, something shines... It is two silvery plaques, black and white,
glittering with mother-of-pearl and jet; little black frames and wreaths of glass,
with three words engraved in gold: 'TO OUR MOTHER'...

Arthur Rimbaud

The Parents

We are your Grand-Parents, the Grown-Ups!
Covered with the cold sweats of the moon and the greensward.
Our dry wines had heart in them!
In the sunshine where there is no deception,
what does man need? To drink.
Myself: To die among barbarous rivers.

We re your Grand-Parents of the fields.
The water lies at the foot of the willows:
see the flow of the moat round the damp castle.
Let us go down to our storerooms;
afterwards, cider or milk.
Myself: To go where the cows drink.

We are your Grand-Parents; here,
take some of the liqueurs in our cupboards;
Tea and Coffee, so rare, sing in our kettles.
Look at the pictures, the flowers.
We are back from the cemetery.
Myself: Ah! To drink all urns dry!

Arthur Rimbaud

The Parisian Orgy

O cowards! There she is!
Pile out into the stations!
The sun with its fiery lungs blew clear
the boulevards that, one evening,
the Barbarians filled.

Here is the holy City, seated in the West! Come!
We'll stave off the return of the fires;
here are the quays, here are the boulevards,
here are the houses against the pale,
radiant blue-starred, one evening,
by the red flashes of bombs!

Hide the dead places with forests of planks!
Affrighted, the dying daylight freshens your looks.
Look at the red-headed troop of the wrigglers of hips:
be mad, you'll be comical, being haggard!

Pack of bitches on heat, eating poultices:
the cry from the houses of gold calls you!
Plunder! Eat! See the night of joy and deep twitchings
coming down on the street.

O desolate drinkers, Drink! When the light comes,
intense and crazed, to ransack round you the rustling luxuries,
you're not going to dribbe into your glasses
without motion or sound, with your eyes lost in white distances?

Knock it back: to the Queen whose buttocks cascade in folds!
Listen to the working of stupid tearing hiccups!
Listen to them leaping n the fiery night:
the panting idiots, the aged, the nonentities, the lackeys!

O hearts of filth, appalling mouths;
work harder, mouths of foul stenches!
Wine for these ignoble torpors, at these tables…
Your bellies are melting with shame, O Conquerors!

Open your nostrils to these superb nauseas!
Steep the tendons of your necks in strong poisons!
Laying his crossed hands on the napes of your childish necks,
the Poet says to you: 'O cowards! Be mad!
Because you are ransacking the guts of Woman,
you fear another convulsion from her, crying out,
and stifling your infamous perching on her breast with a horrible pressure.

Syphilitics, madmen, kings, puppets, ventriloquists!
What can you matter to Paris the whore?
Your souls or your bodies, your poisons or your rags?
She'll shake you off, you pox-rotten snarlers!
And when you are down, whimpering on your bellies,
your sides wrung, clamouring for your money back, distracted,

the red harlot with her breasts swelling
with battles will clench her hard fists,
far removed from your stupor!'
When your feet, Paris, danced so hard in anger!
When you had so many knife wounds; when you lay helpless,
still retaining in your clear eyes a little of the goodness
of the tawny spring; O city in pain;
O city almost dead, with your face and your two breasts
pointing towards the Future
which opens to your pallor its thousand million gates;
city whom the dark Past could bless:
Body galvanized back to life to suffer tremendous pains,
you are drinking in dreadful life once more!
You feel he ghastly pale worms flooding back in your veins,
the icy fingers prowling on your unclouded love!
And it does you no harm.
The worms, the pale worms, will obstruct your breath of Progress no more
than the Stryx could extinguish the eyes of the Caryatides,
from whose blue sills fell tears of sidereal gold.
Although it is frightful to see you again
covered in this fashion; although no city was ever made
into a more foul-smelling ulcer
on the face of green Nature, the Poet says to you:
'Your beauty is Marvelous!' The tempest sealed you in supreme poetry;
the huge stirring of strength comes to your aid;
your work comes to the boil, death groans, O chosen City!
Hoard in your heart the stridors of the ominous trumpet.
The Poet will take the sobs of the Infamous
the hate of the Galley-slaves, the clamour of the Damned;
and the beams of his love will scourge Womankind.
His verses will leap out: There's for you! There! Villains! -Society,
and everything, is restored: - the orgies are weeping
with dry sobs in the old brothels:
and on the reddened walls the gaslights in frenzy flare
balefully upwards to the wan blue skies!

Arthur Rimbaud

The Poor Man Dreams

Perhaps an Evening awaits me
when I shall drink I peace in some old Town,
and die the happier: since I am patient!
If my pain submits, if I ever have any gold,
shall I choose the North or the Country of Vines? …
- Oh! It is shameful to dream - since it is pure loss!
And if I become once more the old traveler,
never can the green inn be open to me again.

Arthur Rimbaud

The Rooks

Lord, when the meadowland is cold,
and when in the downcast hamlets the long Angeluses are silent..
down on Nature barren of flowers let
them sweep from the wide skies, the dear delightful rooks.

Strange army with your stern cries,
the cold winds are assaulting your nests!
You - along yellowed rivers, over the roads with their old Calvarys,
over ditches, over holes - disperse! And rally!

In your thousands, over the fields of France
where the day before yesterday's dead are sleeping,
wheel in the wintertime, won't you,
so that each traveler may remember!

Be, then, the one who calls men to duty,
O funeral black bird of ours!
But, ye saints of the sky,
at the oak tree top, the masthead lost in the enchanted twilight,
leave alone the warblers of May, for the sake of those whom,
in the depths of the wood,
in the undergrowth from which there is no escaping,
defeat without a future has enslaved.

Arthur Rimbaud

The Runaways/ Les Effares

Dark against the snow and fog,
At the big lit-up vent,
Their butts in a huddle,
Five urchins, kneeling - wretched! -
Watch the baker making
Loaves of heavy blond bread.

They see the strong white arm knead
It and shove the raw dough
Into the oven's bright hole.

They hear the good bread baking,
The baker with a fat smile
Growling an old ditty.

They crouch there, not one budging,
At the red grating's breath
Just as warm as a breast.

When, shaped like buttery tarts
For some midnight party,
The bread is brought on out,

When, under smoke-stained beams,
The fragrant crusts are singing
Along with the crickets,

When life breathes out from that warm hole,
Their souls are so enraptured
Under their ragged clothes,

They feel such lively bliss, those
Poor frostbitten Jesuses,
That they all gather close

Gluing their pink little snouts
To the grating, mumbling
Such nonsense round about,

All foolish, at their prayers,
Hunkering toward that light
From heaven bright and fair,

So hard they split their pants,
And their shirt-tails flutter
In the winds of winter.

Arthur Rimbaud

The Seekers Of Lice

When the child's forehead, full of red torments,
Implores the white swarm of indistinct dreams,
There come near his bed two tall charming sisters
With slim fingers that have silvery nails.
They seat the child in front of a wide open
Window where the blue air bathes a mass of flowers,
And in his heavy hair where the dew falls,
Move their delicate, fearful and enticing fingers.
He listens to the singing of their apprehensive breath
Which smells of long rosy plant honey,
And which at times a hiss interrupts, saliva
Caught on the lip or desire for kisses.
He hears their black eyelashes beating
in the perfumed Silence;
and their gentle electric fingers
Make in his half-drunken indolence the death of the little lice
Crackle under their royal nails.
Then the wine of Sloth rises in him,
The sigh of an harmonica which could bring on delerium;
The child feels, according to the slowness of the caresses,
Surging in him and dying continuously a desire to cry.

Arthur Rimbaud

The Seven Year Old Poet

And so the Mother, shutting up the duty book,
Went, proud and satisfied. She did not see the look
In the blue eyes, or how with secret loathing wild,
Beneath the prominent brow, a soul raged in her child.
All the day long he sweated with obedient zeal;
a clever boy; and yet appearing to reveal,
By various dark kinks, a sour hypocrisy.
In corridors bedecked with musty tapestry
He wouls stick out his tongue, clenching hid two fists tight
Against his groin, and with closed eyes see specks of light.
a door stood open on the evening; when, aloof,
Under a gulf og brightness hanging from the roof,
High on the banisters they saw him crowing.
In summer, cowed and stupid, he'd insist on going
Off to the cool latrines, for that was where he chose
to sit in peace and think, breathing deep through his nose.

In winter-time, when, washed by all the smells of noon,
The garden plot behind the house shone in the moon;
Lying beneath a wall, in lumpy earth concealed
And straining long for visions, till his eyesight reeled,
He listened to the creak of mangy trellises.
Soft heart! He chose out as his sole accomplices
Those wretched, blank-browed children, of slurred eye and cheek
And grubby, thin, sick fingers plunged in the clothes that reek
Of excrement: already old, whose conversation
Is held with gentle, imbecilic hesitation.
And if his mother, catching him at some foul act
Of pity, showed alarm, the child must face the fact
That to his earnest, tender mind brought grave surprise:
That's how it was. She had the blue-eyed stare- which lies!

at seven years he wrote romance about lives
In the great desert, where an exiled Freedom thrives,
Savannahs, forests, shores and suns! He had some aid
From illustrated magazines, whose gay parade
Of Spanish and Italian ladies made him blush.
When, brown-eyed, bold, in printed cotton, in would rush
The eight-year daughter of the working-folk next door,
And when the little savage down upon him bore,
Cornered him, leaping on his back, and tossed her hair,
He from beneath would bite her thighs, for they were bare
-She never put on drawers. Then, though she grapped fast,
Pounding with fists and heels, he'd shake her off at last
And bring the odours of her skin back to his room.

He feared December Sundays, with their pallid gloom,
When with pomaded hair, from a mahogany ledge
e read a Bible with gold, green-tarnished edge.
Dreams pressed upon him in the alcove every night.
Not God he loved, but men whom by the sallow light
Of evening he would see return, begrimed and bloused,

To suburbs where the crier's triple roll aroused
A jostling crowd to laugh and scold at the decrees.
He dreamed of the rapt prairie, where long brilliances
Like waves and wholesome scents and golden spurts of force
Persist in their calm stir and take their airy course.

And, as he relished most all things of sombre hue,
He'd sit in the bare, shuttered chamber, high and blue,
Gripped in an acrid, piercing dampness, and would read
The novel that was always running in his head
Of heavy, ochre skies and forests under floods
-Then vertigo, collapse, confusion, ruin, woe! -
While noises of the neighborhood rose from below,
He'd brood alone, stretched out upon a canvas,
prophesying strongly of the sail! ...

Arthur Rimbaud

The Sideboard

It is a high, carved sideboard made of oak.
The dark old wood, like old folks, seems kind;
Its drawers are open, and its odours soak
The darkness with the scent of strong old wine.

Its drawers are full, a final resting place
For scented, yellowed linens, scraps of clothes
Foe wives or children, worn and faded bows,
Grandmothers' collars made of figured lace;

There you will find old medals, locks of grey
Or yellow hair, and portraits, and a dried bouquet
Whose perfume mingles with the smell of fruit.

- O sideboard of old, you know a great deal more
And could tell us your tales, yet you stand mute
As we slowly open your old dark door.

Arthur Rimbaud

The Sisters Of Charity

That bright-eyed and brown-skinned youth,
The fine twenty-year body that should go naked,
That, brow circled with copper, under the moon,
An unknown Persian Genie would have worshipped;

Impetuous with virginal sweetnesses,
And dark, proud of his first obstinacies,
Like tears of the summer night's distresses,
That turn on beds of diamond, young seas;

The youth, faced with this world's ugliness,
Shudders in his heart, wounded deeply,
And, full of profound eternal emptiness,
Begins to long for his sister of charity.

But, O Woman, heap of entrails, pitying, sweet,
You are never the Sister of charity, never,
Dark gaze, belly where rose shadows sleep,
Splendidly formed breasts, slender fingers.

Blind un-awakened one, with eyes enormous,
Our every embrace is merely a question:
Bearer of breasts it's you who hang on us,
We who nurse you, charming and grave passion.

Your hatreds, your dumb torpors, your weaknesses,
And your brutalisation suffered long ago,
You give back, O Night, like an excess,
Un-malevolent, of blood, each month or so.

– When Woman, borne for an instant, taken on,
Terrifies Love, life's call and song of action,
The green Muse and burning Justice come
To dismember him with their august obsession.

Ah! Endlessly thirsting for splendours and calms,
Forsaken by both implacable Sisters, whimpering
With tenderness for the science of soothing arms,
He brings his blood-stained brow to Nature's flowering.

But, wounded, sacred studies, shadowy alchemy
Are repugnant to the proud sombre scholar;
He feels the atrocious advance of all that's solitary.
So, still handsome, without disgust for the bier,

Let him, traversing all the nights of Truth,
Credit vast ends, Dreams, immense Journey,
And in his soul and sick limbs call on you,
O mysterious Death, O sister of charity!

Arthur Rimbaud

The Sly One

In the brown dining-room,
which was perfumed
with the scent of polish and fruit,
I was shoveling up at my ease
a plateful of some Belgian dish
or other, and sprawling in my enormous chair.

While I ate, I listened, happy and silent, to the clock.
The kitchen door opened with a gust,
and the servant girl came in,
I don't know what for,
neckerchief loose, hair dressed impishly.

And, passing her little finger tremblingly across her cheek,
a pink and white peach-bloom,
pouting with her childish mouth,
she tidied the plates standing close to me,
to make me feel comfortable; - and then, just like that,
- to get a kiss of course -
said very softly: 'Feel, then, I' got a cold in the cheek…'

Arthur Rimbaud

The Song Of The Highest Tower

1. (From: Fetes de la Patience)

Idle Youth
By all things enslaved
Through sensitivity
I've wasted my days.
Ah! Let the moment come
When hearts love as one.

I told myself: wait
And let no one see:
And without the promise
Of true ecstasy.
Let nothing delay
This hiding away.

I've been patient so long
I've forgotten even
The terror and suffering
Flown up to heaven,
A sick thirst again
Darkens my veins.

So the meadow
Freed by neglect,
Flowered, overgrown
With weeds and incense,
To the buzzing nearby
Of a hundred foul flies.

Ah! Thousand widowhoods
Of a soul so poor
It bears only the image
Of our Lady before!
Does one then pray
To the Virgin today?

Idle Youth
By all things enslaved
Through sensitivity
I've wasted my days.
Ah! Let the moment come
When hearts love as one.

2. (From: Une Saison en Enfer)

Let it come, let it come
The day when hearts love as one.

I’ve been patient so long
I’ve forgotten even
The terror and suffering
Flown up to heaven,
A sick thirst again
Darkens my veins.

Let it come, let it come
The day when hearts love as one.

So the meadow
Freed by neglect,
Flowered, overgrown
With weeds and incense,
To the buzz nearby
Of foul flies.

Let it come, let it come
The day when hearts love as one.

Arthur Rimbaud

The Soul

Eternal Undines, split the pure water.
Venus, sister of azure, stir up the clear wave.
Wandering Jews of Norway, tell me of snow;
old beloved exiles tell me of the sea.
Myself: No, no more of these pure drinks,
these water-flowers for glasses;
neither legends nor faces quench my thirst;
singer, your god-child is my thirst so mad,
a mouthless intimate hydra
which consumes and ravages.

Arthur Rimbaud

The Stolen Heart

My sad heart leaks at the poop,
My heart covered in filthy shag:
They squirt it with jets of soup,
My sad heart leaks at the poop:
Under the jibes of that rough troop
Drowned in laughter, see them rag,
My sad heart leaks at the poop,
My heart covered in filthy shag!

Ithyphallic and coarse, their jests
They've corrupted it every way!
On the wheelhouse their grotesques,
Ithyphallic and coarse their jests.
O waves, abracadabrantesque,
Take my heart, wash all away!
Ithyphallic and coarse their jests,
They've corrupted it every way!

When they've finished chewing their plugs,
What shall we do O stolen heart?
Then Bacchic hiccups from ugly mugs:
When they've finished chewing their plugs:
My guts will heave, the filthy lugs,
If it's swallowed outright, my heart:
When they've finished chewing their plugs
What shall we do O stolen heart?

Arthur Rimbaud

The Sun Has Wept Rose

The sun has wept rose in the shell of your ears,
The world has rolled white from your back,
Your thighs:
The sea has stained rust at the crimson of your breasts,
And Man had bled black at your sovereign side.

Arthur Rimbaud

The Transfixed

Black in the snow and fog,
at the great lighted airshaft, their bums rounded,
on their knees, five little ones - what anguish! -
watch the baker making the heavy white bread.

They see the strong white arm that shapes
the grey dough and sets it to bake in a bright hole.
They listen to the good bread cooking.
The Baker with his fat smile hums an old tune.
They are huddled together, not one of them moves,
in the waft of air from the red vent, warm as a breakfast.

And when, for some midnight breakfast,
plaited like a brioche, the bread is taken out;
When, under the smoky beams, the fragrant crusts hiss,
and the crickets sing; how this warm hole breathes life!

Their souls are so ravished under their rags,
They feel life so strong in them, poor frozen Jesuses,
that they all stay, sticking their little pink snouts
against the wire netting, grunting things through the holes,
quite stupid, saying their prayers, and bending down
towards those lights of opened heaven so hard,
they split their trousers, and their shirt tails flutter in the winter wind.

Arthur Rimbaud

Those Who Sit

Dark with knobbed growths,
peppered with pock-marks like hail,
their eyes ringed with green,
their swollen fingers clenched on their thigh-bones,
their skulls caked with indeterminate crusts
like the leprous growths on old walls;
in amorous seizures they have grafted
their weird bone structures
to the great dark skeletons of their chairs;
their feet are entwined, morning and evening,
on the rickety rails!

These old men have always been one flesh with their seats,
feeling bright suns drying their skins to the texture of calico,
or else, looking at the window-panes
where the snow is turning grey,
shivering with the painful shiver of the toad.

And their Seats are kind to them;
coloured brown with age, the straw yields
to the angularities of their buttocks;
the spirit of ancient suns lights up,
bound in these braids of ears in which the corn fermented.

And the Seated Ones, knees drawn up to their teeth,
green pianists whose ten fingers keep drumming under their seats,
listen to the tapping of each other's melancholy barcolles;
and their heads nod back and forth as in the act of love.

-Oh don't make them get up! It's a catastrophe!
They rear up like growling tom-cats when struck,
slowly spreading their shoulders... What rage!
Their trousers puff out at their swelling backsides.

And you listen to them as they bump
their bald head is against the dark walls,
stamping and stamping with their crooked feet;
and their coat-buttons are the eyes of wild beasts
which fix yours from the end of the corridors!
And then they have an invisible weapon which can kill:
returning, their eyes seep the black poison
with which the beaten bitch's eye is charged,
and you sweat, trapped in the horrible funnel.

Reseated, their fists retreating into soiled cuffs,
they think about those that have made them
get up and, from dawn until dusk,
their tonsils in bunches tremble
under their meagre chins, fir to burst.

When austere slumbers have lowered their lids
they dream on their arms of seats become fertile;

of perfect little loves of open-work chairs surrounding dignified desks.
Flowers of ink dropping pollen like commas lull them asleep
in their rows of squat flower-cups like dragonflies
threading their flight along the flags
- and their membra virilia are aroused by barbed ears of wheat.

Arthur Rimbaud

Time Without End

We have found it again.
What? Time without end.
'Tis the ocean gone
For a walk with the sun.

Soul, you sentinel,
Murmur and confess,
Day is fiery hell,
Night is nothingness.

From the common urges,
From the human highest
Far thy path diverges:
Following thou fliest…

No expectancy,
No orietur,
Science patiently;
Punishment is sure.

From your blaze alone,
Satin flames of force,
Duty's breath is blown;
No one says : of course.

We have found it again.
What? Time without end.
'Tis the ocean gone
For a walk with the sun.

Arthur Rimbaud

To A Reason

A rap of your finger on the drum
fires all the sounds
and starts a new harmony.
A step of yours: the levy of new men
and their marching on.

Your head turns away:
O the new love!
Your head turns back:
O the new love!

'Change our lots, confound the plagues,
beginning with time,'
to you these children sing.
'Raise no matter where the substance
of our fortune and our desires,'
they beg you.

Arrival of all time,
who will go everywhere.

Arthur Rimbaud

To Music (À la Musique)

On the square which is chopped into mean little plots of grass,
The square where all is just so, both the trees and the flowers,
All the wheezy townsfolk whom the heat chokes bring
Each Thursday evening, their envious silliness.

- The military band, in the middle of the gardens,
Swing their shakos in the Waltz of the Fifes :
Round about, near the front rows, the town dandy struts ;
- The notary hangs like a charm from his own watch chain.

Private incomes in pince-nez point out all false notes :
Great counting-house desks, bloated, drag their stout spouses
Close by whom, like bustling elephant keepers,
Walk females whose flounces remind you of sales ;

On the green benches, retired grocers' clubs,
Poking the sand with their knobbed walking canes,
Gravely discuss trade agreements,
And then take snuff from silver boxes, and resume : 'In short !…'

Spreading over his bench all the fat of his rump,
A pale-buttoned burgher, a Flemish corporation,
Savours his Onnaing, whence shreds of tobacco hang loose
You realize, it's smuggled, of course ;-

Along the grass borders yobs laugh in derision ;
And, melting to love at the sound of trombones,
Very simple, and sucking at roses, the little foot-soldiers
Fondle the babies to get round their nurses..

- As for me, I follow, dishevelled like a student,
Under the green chestnuts, the lively young girls :
Which they know very well, and they turn to me,
Laughing, eyes which are full of indiscreet things.

I don't say a word : I just keep on looking at
The skin of their white necks embroidered with stray locks :
I go hunting, beneath bodices and thin attire,
The divine back below the curve of the shoulders.

Soon I've discovered the boot and the stocking…
- I re-create their bodies, burning with fine fevers.
They find me absurd, and talk together in low voices…
- And my savage desires fasten on to their lips…

Original French

À la Musique.

Sur la place taillée en mesquines pelouses,

Square où tout est correct, les arbres et les fleurs,
Tous les bourgeois poussifs qu'étranglent les chaleurs
Portent, les jeudis soirs, leurs bêtises jalouses

- L'orchestre militaire, au milieu du jardin,
Balance ses schakos dans la Valse des fifres :
- Autour, aux premiers rangs, parade le gandin ;
Le notaire pend à ses breloques à chiffres

Des rentiers à lorgnons soulignent tous les couacs :
Les gros bureaux bouffis traînent leurs grosses dames
Auprès desquelles vont, officieux cornacs,
Celles dont les volants ont des airs de réclames ;

Sur les bancs verts, des clubs d'épiciers retraités
Qui tisonnent le sable avec leur canne à pomme,
Fort sérieusement discutent les traités,
Puis prisent en argent, et reprennent : 'En somme !...'

Épatant sur son banc les rondeurs de ses reins,
Un bourgeois à boutons clairs, bedaine flamande,
Savoure son onnaing d'où le tabac par brins
Déborde - vous savez, c'est de la contrebande ; -

Le long des gazons verts ricanent les voyous ;
Et rendus amoureux par le chant des trombones,
Très naïfs, et fumant des roses, les pioupious
Caressent les bébés pour enjôler les bonnes..

- Moi, je suis, débraillé comme un étudiant
Sous les marronniers verts les alertes fillettes :
Elles le savent bien ; et tournent en riant,
Vers moi, leurs yeux tout pleins de choses indiscrètes

Je ne dit pas un mot : je regarde toujours
La chair de leurs cous blancs brodés de mèches folles :
Je suis, sous le corsage et les frêles atours,
Le dos divin après la courbe des épaules

J'ai bientôt déniché la bottine, le bas...
- Je reconstruis les corps, brûlé de belles fièvres.
Elles me trouvent drôle et se parlent tout bas...
- Et mes désirs brutaux s'accrochent à leurs lèvres...

Arthur Rimbaud

To The Poet On The Subject Of Flowers

Thus continually towards the dark azure,
Where the sea of topazes shimmers,
Will function in your evening
The Lilies, those pessaries of ectasy!

In our own age sago,
When Plants work for their living,
The Lily will dring blue loathings
From you religious Proses!

- Monsieur de Kerdrel's fleur-de-lys,
The Sonnet of eighteen-thirty,
The Lily they bestow on the Bard
Together with the pink and the amaranth!

Lilies! lilies! None to be seen!
Yet in your Verse, like the sleeves
Of the soft-footed Women of Sin,
Always these white flowers shiver!

Always, Dear Man, when you bathe,
Your shirt with yellow oxters
Swells in the morning breezes
Above the muddy forget-menots!

Love get through your customs
Only Lilacs, - o eye-wash!
And the Wild Violets,
Sugary spittle of the dark Nymphs!...

II

O Poets, if you had
Roses, blown Roses,
Red upon laurel stems,
And swollen with a thousand octaves!

If Banville would make them snow down,
Blood-tinged, whirling,
Blacking the wild eye of the stranger
With his ill-disposed interpretations!

In your forests and in your meadows,
O very peaceful photographers!
The Flora is more or less diverse
Like the stoppers on decanters!

Always those French vegetables,
Cross-gained, phthisical, absurd,
Navigated by the peaceful bellies
Of basset-hounds in twilight;

Always, after frightful drawings
Of blue Lotuses or Sunflowers,
Pink prints, holy pictures
For young girls making their communion!

The Asoka Ode agrees with the
Loretto window stanza form;
And heavy vivid butterflies
Are dunging on the Daisy.

Old greenery, and old galloons!
O vegetable fancy biscuits!
fancy-flowers of old Drawing-rooms!
- For cockchafers, not rattlesnakes,

The pulling vegetable baby dolls
Which Grandville would have put round the margins,
And which sucked in their colours
From ill-natured stars with eyeshades!

Yes, the drooling from your shepherd's pipes
Make some priceless glucoses!
- Pile of fried eggs in hold hats,
Lilies, Asokas, Lilacs and Roses!...

III

O white Hunter, running sockingless
Across the panic Pastures,
Can you not, ought you not
To know your botany a little?

I'm afraid you'd make succeed,
To russet Crickets, Cantharides,
And Rio golds to blues of Rhine, -
In short, to Norways, Floridas:

But, My dear Chap, Art does not consist now,
- it's the truth, - in allowing
To the astonishing Eucalyptus
boa-constrictors a hexameter long;

There now!... As if Mahogany
Served only, even in our Guianas,
As helter-skelters for monkeys,
Among the heavy vertigo of the lianas!

- In short, is a Flower, Rosemary
Or Lily, dead or alive, worth
The excrement of one sea-bird?
Is it worth a solitary candle-drip?

- And I mean what I say!
You, even sitting over there, in a
Bamboo hut, - with the shutters
Closed, and brown Persian rugs for hangings, -

You would scrawl blossoms
Worthy of extravagant Oise!...
- Poet ! these are reasonnings
No less absurd than arrogant!...

IV

Speak, not of pampas in the spring
Black with terrible revolts,
But of tobacco and cotton trees!
Speak of exotic harvests!

Say, white face which Phoebus has tanned,
How many dollars
Pedro Velasquez of Habana ;
Cover with excrement the sea of Sorrento

Where the Swans go in thousands;
Let your lines campaign
For the clearing of the mangrove swamps
Riddled with pools and water-snakes!

Your quatrain plunges into the bloody thickets
And come back to offer to Humanity
Various subjects: white sugar,
Bronchial lozenges, and rubbers!

Let us know though You wheter the yellownesses
Of snow Peaks, near the Tropics,
Are insects which lay many eggs
Or microscopic lichens!

Find, o Hunter, we desire it,
One or two scented madder plants
Which Nature in trousers
May cause to bloom! - fr our Armies!

Find, on the outskirts of the Sleeping Wood,
Flowers, whick look like snouts,
Out of which drip golden pomades
On to the dark hair of buffaloes!

Find, in wild meadows, where on the Blue Grass
Shivers the silver of downy gowths,
Calyxex full of fiery Eggs
Cooking among the essential oils!

Find downy Thistles
Whose wool ten asses with glaring eyes
Labour to spin!
Find Flowers which are chairs!

Yes, find in the heart of coal-black seams
Flowers that are almost stones, - marvellous ones! -
Which, close to their hard pale ovaries
Bear gemlike tonsils!

Srve us, o Stuffer, this you can do,
On a splendid vermilion plate
Stews of syrupy Lilies
To corrode our German-silver spoons!

V

Someone will speak about great Love,
The thief of black Indulgences:
But neither Renan, nor Murr the cat
Have seen the immense Blue Thyrsuses!

You, quicken in our sluggishness,
By means of scents, hysteria;
Exalt us towards purities
Whiter than the Marys...

tradesman! colonial! Medium!
Your Rhyme will well up, pink or white,
Like a blaze of sodium,
Like a bleeding rubber-tree!

But from your dark Poems, - Juggler!
dioptric white and green and red,
Let strange flowers burst out
And electric butterflies!

See! it's the Century of hell!
And the telegraph poles
Are going to adorn, - the iron-voiced lyre,
Your magnificent shoulder blades!

Above all, give us a rhymed account
Of the potato blight!
- And, in order to compose
Poems full of mystery

Intended to be read from Tréguier
To Paramaribo, go and buy
A few volumes by Monsieur Figuier,
- Illustrated! - at Hachette's !

Alcide Bava

Original French

Ce qu'on dit au Poète
à propos de fleurs.

I

Ainsi, toujours, vers l'azur noir
Où tremble la mer des topazes,
Fonctionneront dans ton soir
Les Lys, ces clystères d'extases !

À notre époque de sagous,
Quand les Plantes sont travailleuses,
Le Lys boira les bleus dégoûts
Dans tes Proses religieuses !

- Le lys de monsieur de Kerdrel,
Le Sonnet de mil huit cent trente,
Le Lys qu'on donne au Ménestrel
Avec l'oeillet et l'amarante !

Des lys ! Des lys ! On n'en voit pas !
Et dans ton Vers, tel que les manches
Des Pécheresses aux doux pas,
Toujours frissonnent ces fleurs blanches !

Toujours, Cher, quand tu prends un bain,
Ta chemise aux aisselles blondes
Se gonfle aux brises du matin
Sur les myosotis immondes !

L'amour ne passe à tes octrois
Que les Lilas, - ô balançoires !
Et les Violettes du Bois,
Crachats sucrés des Nymphes noires !...

II

O Poètes, quand vous auriez
Les Roses, les Roses soufflées,
Rouges sur tiges de lauriers,
Et de mille octaves enflées !

Quand Banville en ferait neiger,
Sanguinolentes, tournoyantes,
Pochant l'oeil fou de l'étranger

Aux lectures mal bienveillantes !

De vos forêts et de vos prés,
O très paisibles photographes !
La Flore est diverse à peu près
Comme des bouchons de carafes !

Toujours les végétaux Français,
Hargneux, phtisiques, ridicules,
Où le ventre des chiens bassets
Navigue en paix, aux crépuscules ;

Toujours, après d'affreux dessins
De Lotos bleus ou d'Hélianthes,
Estampes roses, sujets saints
Pour de jeunes communiantes !

L'Ode Açoka cadre avec la
Strophe en fenêtre de lorette ;
Et de lourds papillons d'éclat
Fientent sur la Pâquerette.

Vieilles verdures, vieux galons !
O croquignoles végétales !
Fleurs fantasques des vieux Salons !
- Aux hannetons, pas aux crotales,

Ces poupards végétaux en pleurs
Que Grandville eût mis aux lisières,
Et qu'allaitèrent de couleurs
De méchants astres à visières !

Oui, vos bavures de pipeaux
Font de précieuses glucoses !
- Tas d'oeufs frits dans de vieux chapeaux,
Lys, Açokas, Lilas et Roses !...

III

O blanc Chasseur, qui cours sans bas
À travers le Pâtis panique,
Ne peux-tu pas, ne dois-tu pas
Connaître un peu ta botanique ?

Tu ferais succéder, je crains,
Aux Grillons roux les Cantharides,
L'or des Rios au bleu des Rhins, -
Bref, aux Norwèges les Florides :

Mais, Cher, l'Art n'est plus, maintenant,
- C'est la vérité, - de permettre
À l'Eucalyptus étonnant

Des constrictors d'un hexamètre ;

Là !... Comme si les Acajous
Ne servaient, même en nos Guyanes,
Qu'aux cascades des sapajous,
Au lourd délire des lianes !

- En somme, une Fleur, Romarin
Ou Lys, vive ou morte, vaut-elle
Un excrément d'oiseau marin ?
Vaut-elle un seul pleur de chandelle ?

- Et j'ai dit ce que je voulais !
Toi, même assis là-bas, dans une
Cabane de bambous, - volets
Clos, tentures de perse brune, -

Tu torcherais des floraisons
Dignes d'Oises extravagantes !...
- Poète ! ce sont des raisons
Non moins risibles qu'arrogantes !...

IV

Dis, non les pampas printaniers
Noirs d'épouvantables révoltes,
Mais les tabacs, les cotonniers !
Dis les exotiques récoltes !

Dis, front blanc que Phébus tanna,
De combien de dollars se rente
Pedro Velasquez, Habana ;
Incague la mer de Sorrente

Où vont les Cygnes par milliers ;
Que tes strophes soient des réclames
Pour l'abatis des mangliers
Fouillés des Hydres et des lames !

Ton quatrain plonge aux bois sanglants
Et revient proposer aux Hommes
Divers sujets de sucres blancs,
De pectoraires et de gommes !

Sachons par Toi si les blondeurs
Des Pics neigeux, vers les Tropiques,
Sont ou des insectes pondeurs
Ou des lichens microscopiques !

Trouve, ô Chasseur, nous le voulons,
Quelques garances parfumées
Que la Nature en pantalons

Fasse éclore ! - pour nos Armées !

Trouve, aux abords du Bois qui dort,
Les fleurs, pareilles à des mufles,
D'où bavent des pommades d'or
Sur les cheveux sombres des Buffles !

Trouve, aux prés fous, où sur le Bleu
Tremble l'argent des pubescences,
Des calices pleins d'Oeufs de feu
Qui cuisent parmi les essences !

Trouve des Chardons cotonneux
Dont dix ânes aux yeux de braises
Travaillent à filer les noeuds !
Trouve des Fleurs qui soient des chaises !

Oui, trouve au coeur des noirs filons
Des fleurs presque pierres, - fameuses ! -
Qui vers leurs durs ovaires blonds
Aient des amygdales gemmeuses !

Sers-nous, ô Farceur, tu le peux,
Sur un plat de vermeil splendide
Des ragoûts de Lys sirupeux
Mordant nos cuillers Alfénide !

V

Quelqu'un dira le grand Amour,
Voleur des sombres Indulgences :
Mais ni Renan, ni le chat Murr
N'ont vu les Bleus Thyrses immenses !

Toi, fais jouer dans nos torpeurs,
Par les parfums les hystéries ;
Exalte-nous vers les candeurs
Plus candides que les Maries...

Commerçant ! colon ! médium !
Ta Rime sourdra, rose ou blanche,
Comme un rayon de sodium,
Comme un caoutchouc qui s'épanche !

De tes noirs Poèmes, - Jongleur !
Blancs, verts, et rouges dioptriques,
Que s'évadent d'étranges fleurs
Et des papillons électriques !

Voilà ! c'est le Siècle d'enfer !
Et les poteaux télégraphiques
Vont orner, - lyre aux chants de fer,

Tes omoplates magnifiques !

Surtout, rime une version
Sur le mal des pommes de terre !
- Et, pour la composition
De poèmes pleins de mystère

Qu'on doive lire de Tréguier
À Paramaribo, rachète
Des Tomes de Monsieur Figuier,
- Illustrés ! - chez Monsieur Hachette !

Alcide Bava

Arthur Rimbaud

Venus Anadyomene

Out of what seems a coffin made of tin
A head protrudes; a woman's, dark with grease -
Out of a bathtub! - slowly; then a fat face
With ill-concealed defects upon the skin.

Then streaked and grey, a neck; a shoulder-blade,
A back - irregular, with indentations -
Then round loins emerge, and slowly rise;
The fat beneath the skin seems made of lead;

The spine is somewhat reddish; then, a smell,
Strangely horrible; we notice above all
Some microscopic blemishes in front…

Horribly beautiful! A title: Clara Venus;
Then the huge bulk heaves, and with a grunt
She bends and shows the ulcer on her anus.

Original French

Vénus Anadyomène

Comme d'un cercueil vert en fer-blanc, une tête
De femme à cheveux bruns fortement pommadés
D'une vieille baignoire émerge, lente et bête,
Avec des déficits assez mal ravaudés ;

Puis le col gras et gris, les larges omoplates
Qui saillent ; le dos court qui rentre et qui ressort ;
Puis les rondeurs des reins semblent prendre l'essor ;
La graisse sous la peau paraît en feuilles plates :

L'échine est un peu rouge, et le tout sent un goût
Horrible étrangement ; on remarque surtout
Des singularités qu'il faut voir à la loupe.....

Les reins portent deux mots gravés : Clara Venus ;
- Et tout ce corps remue et tend sa large croupe
Belle hideusement d'un ulcère à l'anus.

Arthur Rimbaud

Vigils

I.
It is a repose in the light,
neither fever nor languor,
on a bed or on a meadow.
It is the friend neither violent nor weak.
The friend.
It is the beloved neither
tormenting nor tormented.
The beloved.
Air and the world not sought.
Life. --Was it really this?
--And the dream grew cold.

II.
The lighting comes round
to the crown post again.
From the two extremities of the room
-- decorations negligible
-- harmonic elevations join.

The wall opposite the watcher
is a psychological succession
of atmospheric sections of friezes,
bands, and geological accidents.

Intense quick dream
of sentimental groups
with people of all possible characters
amidst all possible appearances.

III.
The lamps and the rugs
of the vigil make the noise
of waves in the night,
along the hull and around the steerage.

The sea of the vigil, like Emily's breasts.
The hangings, halfway up,
undergrowth of emerald tinted lace,
where dart the vigil doves. . . . . .

The plaque of the black hearth,
real suns of seashores! ah! magic wells;
only sight of dawn, this time.

Arthur Rimbaud

Vowels

Black A, white E, red I, green U, blue O - vowels,
Some day I will open your silent pregnancies:
A, black belt, hairy with burst flies,
Bumbling and buzzing over stinking cruelties,

Pits of night; E, candour of sand pavilions,
High glacial spears, white kings, trembling Queen
Anne's lace;
I, bloody spittle, laughter dribbling from a face
In wild denial or in anger, vermilions;

U,…divine movement of viridian seas,
Peace of pastures animal-strewn, peace of calm lines
Drawn on foreheads worn with heavy alchemies;

O, supreme Trumpet, harsh with strange stridencies,
Silences traced in angels and astral designs:
O…Omega…the violet light of His Eyes!

Arthur Rimbaud

What One Says To The Poet On The Subject Of Flowers

I

Thus, ever, towards the azure night
Where there quivers a topaz sea,
Will function in your evening light
The Lilies, those clysters of ecstasy!

In our own age of sago, as they must,
Since all the Plants are workers first,
The Lilies will drink a blue disgust,
From your religious Prose, not verse!

– The Lily of Monsieur de Kerdrel
The sonnet of eighteen thirty, the plant,
That Lily, they bestow on 'The Minstrel'
With the carnation and the amaranth!

Lilies! Lilies! You see never a one!
Yet in your Verses, like the Sinners'
Sleeves, those of soft-footed women,
Always those white flowers shiver!

Always, Dear, when you take a bathe,
Your Shirt with yellow armpits rots
Swells to the breeze of rising day,
Above the soiled forget-me-nots!

Love, only, through your nets
Smuggles Lilies – O unequal!
And the Woodland Violets,
The dark Nymphs' sugary spittle!...

II

O Poets, if you could but own
To the red on the laurel's firm stem
To the Roses, the Roses, blown,
With a thousand octaves swollen!

If BANVILLE could make them snow,
Blood-stained, whirling in gyrations,
Blacking the eye of that stranger so,
Who sees wicked interpretations!

In your forests, by your paths,
O so placid photographers!
Like the stoppers on carafes,
The Flora's more or less diverse!

Always the vegetables, French,
Absurd, consumptive, up for a fight,

Bellies of basset hounds they drench,
Peacefully passed in evening light;

Always, after fearful drawings
Of blue Lotus or that Sunflower,
Pink prints, subjects befitting
Girls in communion's sweet hour!

The Asoka Ode agrees with the
Loretto window stanza; showers
Of bright butterflies, heavy, flutter,
Dunging on the daisy flowers.

Old verdures, old braided ribbons!
O vegetable biscuit bakes!
Fantastic flowers of old Salons!
– For cockchafers, not rattlesnakes,

Those vegetable dolls in tears
Grandville would have mislaid
In the margin, sucking colours
From spiteful stars with eye-shades!

Yes, the drooling of your flutes
Produces precious sugar!
– Heaps of fried eggs in old boots,
Lily, Lilac, Rose, Asoka!...

III

O white Hunter, running through,
Stocking-less, the Panic field,
Shouldn't you, couldn't you
Acquire a little botany?

You'd have succeed, I'm afraid,
To russet Crickets, Spanish Fly,
Rio golds to Rhine blue, Norway
To Florida, in the blink of an eye:

But, Dear, art cannot, for us,
– It's true – permit, it's wrong,
To the astounding Eucalyptus,
Boa-Constrictors, hexameter-long;

There…! As if Mahogany
Served, even in our Guiana,
Only the Capuchin monkey
To ride the mad weight of liana!

– In short, a single Flower: is it,

Lily or Rosemary, live or dead,
Worth a spot of sea-gull's shit,
Worth a candle drip, I said?

– And I mean what I say, mind!
Even you, squatting there, in one
Of those bamboo-huts – blind
Shut, behind brown Persian curtain –

You'd scrawl about things floral
Worthy of some wild Oise department!...
– Poet, yet that's a rationale
No less laughable than it's arrogant!

IV

Speak, not of pampas in the spring,
Black with terrible rebellions,
But of tobacco, cotton growing!
Speak of exotic harvest seasons!

Speak, white brow that Phoebus tanned,
Of how many dollars Pedro
Velasquez of Havana earned;
En-shit the Bay of Sorrento

Where in thousands rest the Swans;
Let your stanzas undertake
The draining of the mangrove swamps,
Filled with hydras, water-snakes!

Your quatrains plunge in blood-wet groves
Return, bringing Humanity
Diverse offerings, sugars, cloves,
Lozenges and rubber-trees!

Let us know if the yellowness
Of snowy Peaks, near the Tropic,
Is prolific insect's nests
Or lichens microscopic!

Seek, O Hunter, our wish what's more,
Diverse fragrant madders,
That, for our Army, Nature
Might cause to bloom in trousers!

Seek, beside the slumbering Glades,
Flowers that look like muzzles, oh,
Out of which drip gold pomades,
On the dark hide of the buffalo!

Seek wild fields, where in the Blue
Trembles the silver of pubescence,
Calyxes of fiery eggs that brew
Steeped in burning oily essence!

Seek the Thistle's cotton-bin,
Whose downy wool ten asses
With ember eyes toil to spin!
Seek flowers which are chassis!

Yes, seek at the heart of black seams
Nigh-on stone-like flowers – marvels! –
That near their hard pale ovaries
Bear soft gemmiferous tonsils!

Serve us, O Crammer, as you can,
On a fine vermilion platter
Stews of syrupy Lilies, plan
To corrode our German silver!

V

Many will sing of Love sublime,
The thief of sombre Indulgence:
Not Renan, nor Murr the cat, I'm
Sure, know Thyrsi, blue, immense!

You'll quicken, in our torpors,
Hysterias, through your fragrances;
Exalt us towards candours
Purer than Marys' whitenesses…

Colonist! Trader! Medium!
Your Rhyme, pink, white, will be
A welling ray of sodium,
A well-tapped dripping rubber-tree!

From your dark Poems – Juggler!
Let dioptric white, green, red,
Burst out like strange flowers,
Electric butterflies instead!

See! It's the Century of hell!
Telegraph poles will honour
– A lyre, where steel songs swell,
Your magnificent shoulder!

Rhyme us above all a version
On the ills of potato blight!
– And to aid the composition
Of Poems of mysterious light

To be read from Tréguier
To Paramaribo, don’t forget
To buy Tomes by Monsieur Figuier,
– Illustrated – from Monsieur Hachette!

Arthur Rimbaud

Winter Festival

The cascade resounds behind operetta huts.
Fireworks prolong, through the orchards
and avenues near the Meander,--
the greens and reds of the setting sun.
Horace nymphs with First Empire headdresses,--
Siberian rounds and Boucher's Chinese ladies.

Arthur Rimbaud

Working People

O that warm February morning!
The untimely south came
to stir up our absurd paupers' memories,
our young distress.

Henrika had on a brown
and white checked cotton skirt
which must have been worn in the last century,
a bonnet with ribbons and a silk scarf.

It was much sadder than any mourning.
We were taking a stroll in the suburbs.
The weather was overcast
and that wind from the south
excited all the evil odors of the desolate
garden and the dried fields.

It did not seem to weary my wife as it did me.
In a puddle left by the rains of the preceding month,
on a fairly high path,
she called my attention to some very little fishes.

The city with its smoke and its factory noises
followed us far out along the roads.
O other world, habituation
blessed by sky and shade!

The south brought black miserable memories
of my childhood, my summer despairs,
the horrible quantity of strength
and of knowledge that fate has always kept from me.

No! we will not spend the summer
in this avaricious country
where we shall never be anything
but affianced orphans.
I want this hardened arm
to stop dragging _a cherished image._

Arthur Rimbaud

Young Couple

The room is open to the turquoise blue sky;
no room here: boxes and bins!
Outside the wall is overgrown with birthwort
where the brownies' gums buzz.

How truly there are the plots of genii -
this expense and this foolish untidiness!
It is the African fairy who supplies
the mulberry and the hairnets in the corners.

Several, cross godmothers [dressed] in skirts of light,
go into the cupboards, and stay there!
The people of the house are out,
they are not serious, an nothing gets done.

The bridegroom has the wind which cheats him
during his absence, here, all the time.
Even some water sprites, mischievous,
come in t wander about among the spheres under the bed.

At night, beloved oh! The honeymoon will gather their smiles
and fill the sky with a thousand copper diadems.
Then they will have to deal with the crafty rat. -
As long as no ghastly will O;
the wisp comes, like a gunshot, after vespers, -
O holy white Sprits of Bethlehem, charm,
rather than that, the blueness of their window!

Arthur Rimbaud

Young Greedyguts

Cap of silk moiré, little wand of ivory,
Clothes very dark.
Paul watches the cupboard,
sticks out little tongue at pear,
Prepares, gives a poke, and squitters.

Original French

Jeune goinfre

Casquette
De moire,
Quéquette
D'ivoire,

Toilette
Très noire,
Paul guette
L'armoire,

Projette
Languette
Sur poire,

S'apprête
Baguette,
Et foire.

Arthur Rimbaud

Youth

I.
Sunday
Problems put by, the inevitable descent of heaven
and the visit of memories and the assembly
of rhythms occupy the house,
the head and the world of the spirit. --

A horse scampers off on the suburban track,
and along the tilled fields and woodlands,
pervaded by the carbonic plague.
A miserable woman of drama, somewhere in the world,
sighs for improbable desertions.
Desperados pine for strife, drunkenness and wounds.
-- Little children stifle their maledictions along the rivers.
Let us resume our study to the noise of the consuming work
that is gathering and growing in the masses.

II.
Sonnet
Man of ordinary constitution,
was not the flesh a fruit hanging in the orchard;
O child days; the body, a treasure to squander;
O to love, the peril or the power of Psyche?
The earth had slopes fertile in princes and in artists,
and lineage and race incited you to crimes and mournings:
the world, your fortune and your peril.
But now, that labor crowned,
you and your calculations,-- you and your impatiences--
are only your dance and your voice, not fixed and not forced,
although a reason for the double consequence
of invention and of success, -- in fraternal
and discreet humanity through an imageless universe;--
might and right reflect your dance and your voice,
appreciated only at present.

III.
Tewnty Years Old
Instructive voices exiled... Physical candor bitterly quelled...
--Adagio.-- Ah! the infinite egotism of adolescence,
the studious optimism: how the world was full of flowers that summer!
Airs and forms dying... --A choir to calm impotence and absence!
A choir of glasses, of nocturnal melodies...
Quickly, indeed, the nerves take up the chase.

IV.
You are still at Anthony's temptation.
The antics of abated zeal,
the grimaces of childish pride, the collapse and the terror.
But you will set yourself at this labor:
all harmonic and architectural possibilities
will surge around your seat.

Perfect beings, never dreamed of,
will present themselves for your experiments.
The curiosity of ancient crowds
and idle wealth will meditatively draw near.
Your memory and your senses
will be simply the nourishment of your creative impulse.
As for the world, when you emerge, what will it have become?
In any case, nothing of what it seems at present.

Arthur Rimbaud