

Rimbaud, Mandelstam, Pasolini. Or: When the Red Flag Must Become Lint Again

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Abstract: This paper discusses the work of a series of poets: Rimbaud, Mandelstam, Pasolini, Mallarmé in order to examine the possible relationship between poetry and communism. Through the intense relationship these poetic thinkers had to their respective political conjunctures plays out a decisive feature that concerns the possible identification and the existence of a “communism” that intervenes in the very substance of their works

Keywords: Rimbaud, Mandelstam, Pasolini, Mallarmé, poetry

Why reconvene these three poets in order to examine the possible relationship between poetry and communism? A first trait that they share is that, strictly speaking, they do not relate to Communism as an ideology or an organized politics - although Pasolini belonged for a time to the Italian Communist Party before being expelled because of his homosexuality; and even though Mandelstam could evoke his “Bolshevization” after his apocryphal association with the Socialist Revolutionary Party. On the other hand, each has an intense relationship with political conjunctures during which the hypothesis of communism was hardened, “galvanized” as one would have said in the language of Robespierre and Saint-Just. Rimbaud is traversed by the emergence of the Paris Commune of 1871, then by the effects of its annihilation. Mandelstam perceives the enigmatic, unprecedented greatness of the October Revolution of 1917, before confronting the Stalinist terror which would, in the late 1930s, be his end. Pasolini in the engagement of his younger brother with the Resistance detects a figure of political subjectivity in excess of any partisan belonging, before witnessing with horror the descent of Italy into an inferno – what he will call a new “Prehistory”.

These historical sequences have in each case crucial life and death-consequences, but that, in my opinion, is not what is essential. The most striking thing seems to me to be the mode in which these circumstances - in which plays out something decisive concerning the identification and the existence of what a "communism" might be - intervene in the very substance of their works. In this, they are – knowingly or unknowingly – close to a Hölderlin stirred up by the existence of the French Revolution when at the same time he attempts to think its limits and to formulate what could be a step further, or to the side. Very soon, for each of them poetry becomes the place in which the possibility of the principles of subjectivation that historical novelty demands emerge and are propagated. Their time demands that poetry detaches itself from the known to hold the breach of the unknown, even more severely when the expiry of the traversed political sequence is declared. By this standard, they are once and the same in disagreement with their time: “a contemporary of no one”, as Mandelstam will say of himself;

“a considerable passer-by”, as Mallarmé would say of Rimbaud; or according to Pasolini, “a poet of the common good”, when comes the time when everybody withdraws into “humble corruption”. Ferments of lucidity and anticipation; neither marginal nor dissident nor provocateur.

Part 1

RIMBAUD or the Proletarian Poem

Passing through the Commune

In November 1871, six months after the great Parisian massacre, Rimbaud walked through the city in the company of Delahaye. Delahaye writes:

“We took a fairly long walk on the boulevard and around the Pantheon. He showed me some cracks that whitened the columns: “It’s from the bullets,” he said. Everywhere, moreover, you could see on the houses these traces left by the claws of machine guns. I asked him where Paris was, according to a point of view of the “idea”. In a weary tone, he answered a few brief words that were cloaked in hope:

- Nothingness, chaos... all reactions are possible, or even probable. In this case, could a new insurrection be foreseen? Were there any “Communards” left?

- Yes, a few.

He knew some madmen who would keep shooting with their rifles until they were themselves dead... He would be with them... His ideal would have this outcome, he didn’t see another ... ”

This account alone would suffice to attest the importance of the “Paris Commune” for Rimbaud. But we also know that in August 1871 he had drafted a “Constitution” inspired by the Commune. This lost document was a project for a Communist Republic which would live without money and in which the people would administer themselves directly, by communes, headed by a Federal Committee and temporary delegates elected to carry out precise and imperative mandates. As for Verlaine, who was his tumultuous companion and his love, not only had his commitment to the Commune been public, but ten years later he was still meeting with some thirty pardoned former communards trying to create a revolutionary group, for which, when a new name was asked, he refused the provocative name of the “Soldiers of the Revolution”: There was no need now for “no more armies, no more soldiers”, instead it was necessary to “create new words for a new situation”; this was the “militant revolutionary group”, which, however, did not make it through the suffocating atmosphere of the 80s.

Accompanying or preceding the events of the years 1870 and 1871 (the war against Prussia, the defeat of the Empire, the fall of the regime, followed by the national betrayal of the Republican left, the advent of the Commune...), some poems awoke in Rimbaud, who projected the past

of the French Revolution onto a rebellious present and anticipated what should be the singular political consistency of the Communards: their freedom, their solidity, their cheerful insolence, the opposite of arrogance, their calm capacity for invention and organization. These poems still show an inspiration from Hugo, in form and breath, but they have a quality of immanence that Hugo does not possess, because his breath is always reliant upon a transcendence. A poem from May 1870, "Credo in Unam"¹ (Sun and Flesh), stresses on the other hand, that for young Rimbaud it is high time to get rid of all the Gods, including the sad Christian god who has abandoned mankind to "the hard way"². Without sinking into the temptation of skepticism, because of an inability to face the infinite. The new era, which Rimbaud describes as his own, has very marked features:

*"Man wishes to forget all-and to know!
Thought, so long, so long in him put down
Springs to his brow! He will know why! ...
Let thought rise free, and man will soon find Faith!"³*

*We cannot hope to know! We are weighed down
With ignorance and narrow fantasies!
Men are monkeys, dropped from maternal wombs;
Our faded reason hides the Absolute!
We wish to look: Doubt is our punishment!
Doubt, somber bird, blinds us with his wing ...
And the horizon fades, in an eternal flight!"⁴*

The only remedy for doubt: Love, as an inner disposition of humanity, and no longer as a divine prerogative:

*"And the gods are no more! Mankind is King,
And Man is God! But Love is the only faith."⁵*

Rimbaud will never abandon this major thread of Love, including the love of men and women but not limited to it: neither in "A Season in Hell"⁶ which seeks, among other things, to take stock and to orient oneself as to one's own romantic destiny, nor in "Illuminations", where Love is a

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1 Rimbaud 2000, p. 23

2 Ibid., p., 24

3 Ibid., p. 25

4 Ibid., p. 26

5 Ibid., p. 24

6 Ibid., p. 219

motor of the world to be built. It is, moreover, a constant of all his work to intertwine love poems - poems sometimes delicious, sometimes repulsive - and poems that I do not know how to name at this stage - the right name will come, I hope, later.

Rimbaud shares another trait that will be largely present in the communard subjectivity: the conviction that the political stake is to continue the work of the revolutionaries of '92 and '93. The poem "You dead of ninety-two and ninety-three"⁷ (authored on 3rd September 1870, when the Empire was preparing to declare war on Prussia and when the runaway Rimbaud was imprisoned for vagabondage in Mazas, while still a minor) calls with the greatest vigor that we who "*Have bent our backs by Imperial decree*" take up the flag of those "*million Christs with somber gentle eyes*", of those "*men made great by agony, ecstatic men*" that rose up in one century to crush "*a yoke that weighs | On the soul and brow of all humanity*"⁸. Under the cover of reviving the storming of the Bastille, "The Blacksmith"⁹ draws an astonishing portrait of a popular greatness who knows that its power can be limitless and, for that very reason, must measure its power against the principles of justice and love:

*"We felt within our hearts something like love.
We embraced our sons, and one another, that day.
And just like your horses, flaring our nostrils,
We walked around, strong and proud, and felt good right here!
We walked in sunshine, heads held high, like this,
Across Paris! They bowed before our dirty clothes!
Well, we were finally men that day! We were pale,
King, we were drunk with a terrible hope:
And when we gathered before the black towers
Waving our bugles and branches of oak,
Pikes in our hands, we felt no hate, we felt ourselves
So strong, we wanted only to be gentle!"¹⁰*

Now, for that people made of "*all the Poor, the ones whose backs are burned*"¹¹, all those whom the powerful designate with contempt as "*rabble*" or "*dirt*"¹² - emerges a political figure who is not that of '92 and

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7 Ibid., p. 60

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., p. 17

10 Ibid., p. 19

11 Ibid., p. 21

12 Ibid., p. 22

'93, but the one who truly identifies and concentrates with the fights of the 19th century:

*"We are Workers, King! Workers! We're the ones
Made for the time to come, the New Day dawning,
When Man will work his forge from dawn to dusk,
Seeker after great causes, great effects,
When he will finally bend all things to his will
And mount Existence as he mounts a horse!"¹³*

The riot of the poem is no longer that of the sans-culottes, it is already the active crowd of the Commune, the one who dreams, like the blacksmith:

*"Of living simply, fervently, without a word
Of Evil spoken, laboring beneath the smile
Of a wife we love with an elevated love:
Then we would labor proudly all day long,
With duty like a trumpet ringing in our ear!
Then would we think ourselves happy, and no one,
No one, ever, could make us bend a knee!
For a rifle would hang above the hearth!"¹⁴*

A dream of peace, but one who does not ignore that victory is far from certain: there remain "*informers, sneaks, and profiteers*", and the air is "*full of the smell of battle!*"¹⁵ which should be carried on.

It would be necessary to quote one by one (and to truly read, to the letter) all the poems which speak of the disgusting war of 1870, of the lamentable defeat of the Empire and of nationalism: "Angry Caesar"¹⁶ – a sarcastic portrait of Napoléon III after the defeat in Sedan -, "The Brilliant Victory of Saarebruck"¹⁷ - a very ironic poem of October 1870. But also poems that carry a raw awareness of the damage caused by war, such as "Evil"¹⁸, "Crows"¹⁹ about these birds, the only survivals who still haunt "the fields of France / Where yesterday's dead men lie"²⁰, and between them

.....
13 Ibid., p. 21

14 Ibid., p. 21,22

15 Ibid., p. 22

16 Ibid., p. 62

17 Ibid., p. 60

18 Ibid., p. 61.

19 Ibid., p. 69.

20 Ibid., p. 70.

of course, "Asleep in the Valley"²¹ – a poem so famous that we forget that it is about a soldier fallen in a very real and recent war – or further still "Kids in a Daze"²², that is all the more violent because is tender and calm, a tableau of the horrors of hunger to which the encirclement of Paris by the victorious Prussian army condemned even children.

And then there are quite a few of those poems explicitly internal to the consequence of the Commune: the overcharged "Parisian War Cry"²³; the "Parisian Orgy"²⁴ (that in many ways resonates with Lissagaray's descriptions of the Versailles rot, at work against the Communards - which has not prevented some scholars from maintaining, against all evidence, that the poem was not about the aftermath of the massacre); "The Hands of Jeanne-Marie"²⁵ (a delicate metonymy for the admirable popular heroines of May), and the earth-shattering "What do we care, my heart"²⁶.

All these we can and we must read anew. Because these poems amply attest to Rimbaud's being as entirely "on this side" - as one said when the class struggle still had a meaning in politics. But this is largely understated, if not denied, in the commentaries on his work. The last verses of "What do we care, my heart" repeat however, without hesitation, what Rimbaud affirmed to Delahaye while walking through a destroyed Paris:

*"Oh, friends! Be calm, these are brothers, my heart:
Dark strangers, suppose we begin! Let's go, let's go!
Disaster! I tremble, the old earth,
On me, and yours, ah, more and more! The earth dissolves.
It's nothing! I'm here! I am still here!"²⁷*

Were his works limited to these poems, Rimbaud would never have become the immortal Rimbaud of the "A Season in Hell" and the "Illuminations"; which when encountered by any youth, will always bring forth new secrets, often in the form of enigmas which give more agility to desire and heart. It is therefore necessary to find another starting point, which is not just the sole coexistence of the poet with the time of the Commune. We must go so far as to name what this density of events – the Commune, then its crushing – does to his poetry.

.....
21 Ibid., p. 62.

22 Ibid., p. 31.

23 Ibid., p. 63.

24 Ibid., p. 67.

25 Ibid., p. 64.

26 Ibid., p. 96.

27 Ibid., p. 97.

Being Preceding Action

Indeed, for Rimbaud it was never merely a question of "accompanying" with a poem what was taking place. Poetry is worth nothing if it is not capable of producing a principle of subjectivation which articulates in an action, which supports the acceleration, or its multiplication. On this point, we must start from what is declared and detailed in the letter to Paul Demeny²⁸ known as the "Letter of the Visionary", which reads like a program:

"The poet, therefore, is truly the thief of fire.

He is responsible for humanity, for animals even; he will have to make sure his visions can be smelled, fondled, listened to; if what he brings back from beyond has form, he gives it form; if it has none, he gives it none. A language must be found;²⁹

[...]

This language will be of the soul, for the soul, and will include everything: perfumes, sounds, colors, thought grappling with thought. The poet would make precise the quantity of the unknown arising in his time in the universal soul: he would provide more than the formula of his thought, the record of his path to Progress! Enormity becoming norm, absorbed into everything, he would truly become a multiplier of progress!"³⁰

Written on May 15, 1871, on the eve of the dreadful Versailles rush over Paris, this letter begins with the offering of the poem entitled "Parisian War Cry", baptized by Rimbaud "a contemporary psalm"³¹. It then wraps around a major hypothesis: while Greek poetry was content to orchestrate action, now "Poetry will no longer give rhythm to action; it will be precede"³². To precede, what does that mean?

To begin with a remark on "action", which is an epochal word. We can hear that in the definition that Mallarmé will give later, in the past tense: to act "*meant, [...] philosophically to effect motion on many, which yields in return the happy thought that you, being the cause of it, therefore exist.*" When Mallarmé used the word, in 1895, twenty-four years after, it was to give a completely different definition of the poetic task: that of a "limited" action. A limit imposed by a lack: "Lack the Crowd declares in itself, lack – of everything." Mallarmé's world is no longer that of the pre-

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28 Ibid., p. 114.

29 Ibid., p. 117.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., p. 114.

32 Ibid., p. 117.

Commune, charged with multiple energies and vigor - that Rimboldian word -, but a world that has seen a "republic" soak its hands in the blood of a great mass massacre which was meant to be a deterrent: "Socialism is over for a long period" will rejoice Thiers, the leader of the executioners. And Mallarmé too will follow suit: "Ill-informed anyone who would announce himself his own contemporary, deserting, usurping with equal impudence, when the past ceased and when a future is slow to come." Yes, with the crushing of the Commune, times became very obscure: what constituted action in the past is dead, and nothing yet indicates the premise of a future.

For Rimbaud, in those moments when he devotes himself to a poem, the action is never doubted, it just "is". Driven as never before by fraternal individualities whose ardor, long suppressed, monitored and after 1848 repressed, exploded in the space of seventy-two days, into a thousand prodigious inventions. Rimbaud himself belongs to this effervescent humanity, in the sense that he carries within him a creative energy analogous to that of the diverse beings who will make the Commune exist. His poetry arose in the same regime as the revolutions of collective life in besieged Paris between March and May 1871. We can now barely glimpse - it's like a lost secret, which absolutely must be rediscovered - the double relaxation of subjectivities to which we owe the ability to invent the Commune and, at the same time, a work like that of Rimbaud: two creations from beings at the height of both their creative individuality and of their trust in the collective construction of a world – the multiple crucibles of energies recognized as the absolutely necessary validation plan for all new thought. Who says "action" also says "actors." For Rimbaud, both are immediately recognizable:

*"Who will stir up whirlwinds of furious fire
If we do not, and those whom we call brothers?"³³*

But under what conditions and in what sense, in such a prodigious historical and political situation, can poetry "precede" these actors? Rimbaud assigns the poet a very precise task: to define "the quantity of the unknown arising in his time in the universal soul"³⁴: If we rid the figure of the "visionary" from the shoddy romanticism that covers it, the following emerges: the poet must be a kind of forerunner of humanity; to open a path to all in the unknown. For this the poem must be able to be "thought grappling with thought."³⁵ And in it "a language must be found."³⁶

.....
33 Ibid., p. 96.

34 Ibid., p. 117.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid

The project of any poet, you say? No, it is a singular and enormous ambition. Not even an individual ambition, rather something like a collective work program. Because what is at stake is nothing less than the constitution of a new subject, both political and sensuous: it is a question of experimenting *“All forms of love, of suffering, of madness,” “exhaust all poisons, keep only the quintessences”*³⁷, and it is possible that one may lose its strength at this point. Then *“other horrible workers will come; they will begin from the horizons where the other one collapsed!”*³⁸ All of Rimbaud's texts are thus oriented towards the production of a subject to come: they are so projected towards this goal that when it is proven that such a future will be lacking, he will abandon poetry without looking back, without regret. It will no longer be useful. Its powers will be exhausted. At least for the historical time: that of the poetry's own existence, that of a non-rebirth of the powers of the Commune.

False Starts and Interruptions

It is still necessary to try to understand what, in his eyes, constitutes this possible future subject. And how its existence intersects - and is tied to - the question of modernity. Because Rimbaud does not hesitate to test out and then reject several false leads. His entire poetic trajectory is punctuated by “false starts”. One of the most famous seems to me to be that of the “The Drunken Boat”³⁹. An acclaimed poem, because it rolls from verse to verse the dazzled ramblings of a splendid uprooting and of a liberation, the exuberant rejection of any adherence to a world that is both capitalist and colonial and cemented by profit and plunder:

*“Lighter than cork I revolved upon waves”
“Sweeter than children find the taste of sour fruit,
Green water filled my cockle shell of pine.
Anchor and rudder went drifting away,
Washed in vomit and stained with blue wine.”*⁴⁰

[...] *“A froth of flowers cradled my wandering
And delicate winds tossed me on their wings.”*⁴¹

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37 Ibid., p. 116.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., p. 136.

40 Ibid., p. 136.

41 Ibid., p. 138.

The fact remains that this incredible boat, offered to the freedom of the currents by the death of its haulers under blows from wild life, this hull indistinguishable from a living body, "*drunk with the sea*", this "*lost branch*", which has senses and eyes that "*have seen what men have only dreamed they saw*", this wandering "*peninsula*" that fills the poem with splendid images, heaping up all the possible strangeness and exoticism, ends up desiring her own engulfment:

"Let my keel break! Oh, let me sink in the sea!"⁴²

This is the first interruption of note, and it is violent, because over the course of the poem a certitude arises, that on these drunken paths never again will meet the "*swarms of golden birds*" and the "*strength to come*". When one belongs to "*Europe and its ancient walls*", following the great rivers and then the sea swells does not ultimately bring forth any salvation. Wild spaces are already subject to trade, devastated by trafficking and wars of all kinds, or devolved to prisons. Also, as night falls on the poem, the drunken boat is abandoned for "*a crumpled paper boat.*" that the hand of a child floats in a puddle - then wanes:

*"[...] If I long for a shore in Europe,
It's a small pond, dark, cold, remote,
The odor 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."⁴³*

"*I cannot*" says the poem. Rimbaud will not follow Baudelaire in the domain of ambiguous colonial voluptuousness. To continue in this direction, would be to go astray. A restraint should be accepted: abandon broad effusion for sobriety; choose fragility, not false vigor; and to the flamboyance of words and rhythm, prefer the delicate meditation in the powers of the imagination. Sadness that it is like this. The poem does not exist to justify itself with words: if what it has attempted is hopeless, it must say so and draw the consequences. A man of consequence, Rimbaud is methodical in what he seeks. Not at all a jack-of-all-trades, nor fickle, although in the field of poetry he very quickly knew how to do everything. A man of consequences precisely because he knows the weight of interruptions and ruptures. The

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42 Ibid., p. 139.

43 Ibid,

final interruption (when he turned away from all poetry, when he stopped writing, no longer being interested in it) will only follow what he always practiced: experimenting, seeking new paths, and radically interrupting what was proven that does not go where it should, what didn't work. "*Your memories and your senses will become | The food of your creative impulses. | And what of the world? | What will it become when you leave it! | Nothing, nothing at all like its present appearance.*"⁴⁴

"*A Season in Hell*"⁴⁵ is a first recapitulation, a first assessment in terms of "false starts". These "*few foul pages from the diary of a Damned Soul*"⁴⁶ are the diary, eternally incandescent, of everything that Rimbaud initially tried to experience on the way to a poetry that is "in advance of action"⁴⁷ We are before the account - incredibly lucid and loyal - of a hand-to-hand struggle with oneself to discern what could be a new path out of what turns out to be an impasse delaying the discovery of these unknown lands, where it will one day be possible to celebrate "*Christmas on earth*"⁴⁸ and to "*possess truth within one body and one soul*"⁴⁹. However, when we read this text, we are dazzled by the intensity of the language that each of these experiments share: its seduction, its capacity for the present is such that we find ourselves embarked, overwhelmed, without always taking care that that what is described there is already behind the one who writes, that he has renounced it, that he has moved on, that he is now elsewhere.

Among the impasses, we find, unsurprisingly, the one described in the "*The Drunken Boat*": the daydream of a maritime embarkation for distant warm countries: "*my daytime is done, I am leaving Europe.*"⁵⁰ A journey from which we imagine that we will return crippled but covered in gold – a prefiguration (with the exception of gold!) of what Rimbaud's life will be like when he has relieved himself of all poetry. But it is pronounced that these adventures do not open any real path, that it is here that everything is really played out: "*But no one leaves. Let us set out once more on our native roads, burdened with my vice - that vice that since the age of reason has driven roots of suffering into my side - that towers to heaven, beats me, hurls me down, drags me on.*"⁵¹

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44 Ibid., p. 276.

45 Ibid., p. 219.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid., p. 117.

48 Ibid., p. 242.

49 Ibid., p. 243.

50 Ibid., p. 241.

51 Ibid., p. 222.

Then there is the impossibility of consenting to work under conditions of subjugated labor, of the proletarian labor of "a century for hands"⁵²: "*Work makes life blossom, an old idea, not mine; my life doesn't weigh enough, it drifts off and floats far beyond action, that third pole of the world.*"⁵³

The confession of the Foolish Virgin⁵⁴ carries, for its part, a tenacious uncertainty about the ability of the household he formed with Verlaine to sustain a figure of love over the long term: "*One hell of a household!*"⁵⁵, is the conclusion in a bitter-sweet tone.

To add confusion to the question of the new language that is to be found, the "turnings"⁵⁶ of an "alchemy of the word"⁵⁷ are ultimately judged a pure and simple phantasmagoria: "My turn now. The story of one of my insanities. For a long time, I boasted" ..., "*I boasted of inventing, with rhythms from within me, a kind of poetry that all the senses, sooner or later, would recognize.*"⁵⁸ ..., "*I became a fabulous opera*"⁵⁹... The story of this attempt is so powerful, that we forget that it was brought here only to be destroyed, with a very seriously conducted experiment which brings forth the discovery that "*Action isn't life; it's merely a way of ruining a kind of strength, a means of destroying nerves*"⁶⁰. And that it is therefore right to pronounce the abandonment of the attempt: "All that is over. Today I know how to celebrate beauty."⁶¹

Would science then be the way? When a dominant scientific rationalism proclaims and enjoins: "*Nothing is vanity; on toward knowledge!*"⁶², Rimbaud recognizes only that "*modern Ecclesiastes*"⁶³, which is to say the unthought gospel of "*everyone*"⁶⁴, and he walks away:

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52 Ibid., p. 220.

53 Ibid., p. 224.

54 Ibid., p. 227.

55 Ibid., p. 231.

56 Ibid., p. 234.

57 Ibid,

58 Ibid., p. 232.

59 Ibid., p. 237.

60 Ibid,

61 Ibid., p. 238.

62 Ibid., p. 241.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., p. 241.

*"What more can I do? Labor I know, and science is too slow."*⁶⁵

As for the desire to live – like the young proletarians of the time – as a vagabond, "more detached than the best of beggars, proud to have no country, no friends – what stupidity that was!"⁶⁶. So, a question comes forward: *"Quick! Are there any other lives?"*⁶⁷

First all we need to understand the source of these deviations. "A Season in Hell" systematically questions the weaknesses that led the damned to end up in this hell. Among these is the *"Bad Blood"*⁶⁸ inherited from *"my ancestors, the Gauls"*⁶⁹, which signals the belonging to an *"inferior race"*⁷⁰, unable to understand and bring truly forward the revolt. Writing on the "insipid"⁷¹ poetry of Musset, Rimbaud already opposed France and Paris, pointing to an irremediable division between conformism and audacity, between reaction and modernity: *"it is all so French"*, he wrote to Demeny, commenting that poem, *"that is, hateful to the highest degree; French, not Parisian!"*. But in "A Season in Hell" he widens the analysis: *"I can see that my troubles come from not realizing soon enough that this is the Western World. These Western swamps!"* The West is much larger than the Paris of the revolutionaries surrounded by the conservative France of the *"bourgeois"*⁷². It is the violence of colonial conquest, the democratic imposture, the corruption of all human relationships, the bourgeois avarice and ugliness, that Rimbaud stigmatizes with virulence and precision in many poems. He is the first to identify the negativity of a planetary world which, unlike the Paris of the Commune, exists only under corrupt and ferocious emblems: capitalism with its corollary, the slavery of workers and women; colonialism that subjects the non-Western world to unequal trade and wars; democracy which definitively caricatures and disfigures what the Commune had invented in this area.

In the terms of a "battle for the soul" which is *"as brutal as the battles of men"*⁷³ and in the awareness that the *"new era is nothing if not harsh"*⁷⁴, most of the paths taken would have been abandoned, because

.....
65 Ibid.

66 Ibid., pp. 238f

67 Ibid., p. 224.

68 Ibid., p. 220.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid., p. 118.

72 Ibid., p. 64.

73 Ibid., p. 243.

74 Ibid.

they were not constitutive of a genuine new subjectivity. Dismissing false starts, however, does not mean denying oneself: "*For I can say that I have gained a victory*", affirms calmly "A Season in Hell". And the desire remains - still just as burning - for a collective future whose terms are very clear. "*When will we go, over mountains and shores, to hail the birth of new labor, new wisdom, the flight of tyrants and demons, the end of superstition, to be the first to adore... Christmas on earth!*"⁷⁵ New work, new wisdom, the decline of both political and intimate tyrannies, the disappearance of superstitions, including religion, these will be the signs of a Christmas that will no longer celebrate the birth of Christ "*eternal thief of energy*"⁷⁶, but the earthly advent of a new world. The poet, "*the thief of fire*"⁷⁷, must therefore continue his research, but only through paths that will differ from those he has taken so far: "*I called myself a magician, an angel, free from all moral constraint I am sent back to the soil to seek some obligation, to wrap gnarled reality in my arms! A peasant!*"⁷⁸

"A Season in Hell" ends with extremely strong prescriptions, the formulation of new rules, both poetic and political: "*Never mind hymns of thanksgiving: hold on to a step once taken.*"⁷⁹ Never mind hymns, this gives the prose poem (already at work in "A Season in Hell") precedence over the lyricism of the verse. Keeping up the pace is a maxim that prescribes a form of political patience, a "glowing patience"⁸⁰ which is a powerful subjective weapon. These two prescriptions authorize a promise and a confidence in a possible future: "*Let us all accept new strength, and real tenderness. And at dawn, armed with glowing patience, we will enter the cities of glory.*"⁸¹

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75 Ibid., p. 242.

76 Ibid., p. 94.

77 Ibid., p. 117.

78 Ibid., p. 243.

79 Ibid,

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

The Proletarian Poem

Rimbaud had been able, from his adolescence, to write in the manner of whomever he wanted. His work in verse constantly explores the most contradictory styles. We feel his pleasure in flowing into opposing language regimes, from the most delicate lyricism to the obscenest sarcasm. However, these are not unchecked games, simple exercises in virtuosity. "A Season in Hell" had opened up on the imperative need to push back Beauty: "One evening I took Beauty in my arms - and I thought her bitter - and I insulted her."⁸² It also indicated the reason for this separation and the step to the side that should be made:

*"I steeled myself against justice.
I fled. O witches, O misery, O hate, my treasure was left in your care"*⁸³

With the exception of a few rare poets in whom Rimbaud recognizes brothers and seers (Baudelaire, "the first visionary", although his form according to Rimbaud, remains "silly"⁸⁴, Hugo of the "Les Misérables", Verlaine...), the poetry of the time - that which appears in reviews, which is organized in salons and banquets - stays largely on the side of the established world, of its iniquitous order, of its injustice. The laws of Beauty that this world carries on are therefore unbearable, they must be repudiated, blown up, and Beauty should be given other sources. Modernity first must go through this.

We enter here into what the existence of the Commune does to the Rimbaud poem. Hugo had cleared the way by giving every rhythm, including that of the Alexandrine, the greatest fluidity. Baudelaire, by choosing to devote his poetry to "The Flowers of Evil", introduced prostitutes, old women, beggars, wine, spleen, drugs and the big city, as figures by which a poet should not be repelled, quite the contrary. Rimbaud will work to make the poem itself a proletarian, in a deep and singular political sense. Not at all "social". A proletarian from the time of the Commune, worthy of his abilities and his great freedom in all areas. Because while he seeks to make it capable of elevating misery and distress, like Hugo, he also delivers the unspoken sexual desire and its repression - "The Sitters"⁸⁵, "Seven-Year-Old Poets"⁸⁶, "My Little

.....
82 Ibid., p. 219.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid., p. 118.

85 Ibid., p. 77.

86 Ibid., p. 86.

Lovelies”⁸⁷, “*Venus Anadyomene*”⁸⁸, “*First communions*”⁸⁹; the violence of family and religious oppression – “*Poor People in Church*”⁹⁰, “*The Ladies Who Look for Lice*”⁹¹; as well as the impossibilities and misunderstandings of a non-reinvented love – “*What Nina Answered*”⁹², “*Sisters of Charity*”⁹³.

One could argue that Rimbaud wants to do to the poem what the Pasolini of “*Ragazzi di Vita*” will later do to the novel. In fact, he builds the poem out of a language which comes to him from the suburbs, which comes from the working population, without importing it there “realistically”. These are new words, turns of phrase, syntactic structures that are embedded in the language, and exert a thrust that distances it as much from salons as from academism. He also brings into the poem characters usually removed from the majesty of verse, because they are considered too ugly, too ordinary, too obscene, too repugnant – it is no coincidence that it is with “*Parisian War Cry*”⁹⁴, “*My Little Lovelies*”⁹⁵ and “*Squatting*”⁹⁶ that Rimbaud illustrates the considerations announced in the “*Letter of the Visionary*”⁹⁷. Poems “*of a puberty both perverse and superb*”⁹⁸, as Mallarmé will greet them. The poem (here the poem in verse) must become capable of carrying situations and beings that are paradigmatically “antipoetic” while still remaining a poem in the strong and complete sense of its composition and its prosody.

Among the new characters that arise in the poem and make it a “contemporary”⁹⁹ of its times, the cities and their suburbs, Paris first occupies an eminent place. But women, too: both for the injustice of their oppression, the corruption it entails, and the confidence in the virtual universal power of their emancipation. To a Paris buried in abjection and filth by the Versailles counter-revolution, Rimbaud magnificently declares

.....
87 Ibid., p. 82.

88 Ibid

89 Ibid., p. 89.

90 Ibid., p. 80.

91 Ibid., p. 86.

92 Ibid., p. 47.

93 Ibid., p. 84.

94 Ibid., p. 63.

95 Ibid., p. 82.

96 Ibid., p. 79.

97 Ibid., p. 114.

98 Mallarmé 2007, p. 67,

99 Ibid., p. 114.

his love in a poem from May 1871:

*"The Poet speaks: "Great is the sight of your Beauty!"
The storm has christened you supreme poetry;
An enormous stirring raises you; death groans.
Your task is lifted from you, Holy City!
Stridencies resound in your trumpet of bronze."*

*"The Poet will gather the sobs of monstrous Criminals,
The Convict's hate, the cries of the Accursed;
The streams of his love will flay all womankind.
His poems will soar: Behold, thieves! Do your worst!*

*Society, all is restored: orgies, the old
Groans choke the lupanars once more,
Maddened gaslight on blood -stained walls
Lights the blue dark with a sinister glare!"¹⁰⁰*

As for women, from the letter to Demeny, a major proof in the eyes of Rimbaud that new poets will exist, worthy of the name of "visionary", is that among them it will become possible to count women too: "*When the eternal slavery of Women is destroyed, when she lives for herself and through herself, when man - up till now abominable - will have set her free, she will be a poet as well! Woman will discover the unknown! Will her world of ideas differ from ours? She will discover strange things, unfathomable, repulsive, delightful; we will accept and understand them.*"¹⁰¹

Then throughout "A Season in Hell" and "Illuminations" circulates like a red thread an extreme friendly attention to women, to the imperious need to put an end to whatever destroys them by subjecting them to the social order. Rimbaud thus places in the mouth of the "widow" in the "Infernal Bridegroom" (who is none other than himself in the couple he forms with Verlaine) this declaration: "*He says: 'I don't love women. Love has to be reinvented; we know that. The only thing women can ultimately imagine is security. Once they get that, love, beauty, everything else goes out the window. All they have left is cold disdain; that's what marriages live on nowadays. Sometimes I see women who ought to be happy, with whom I could have found companionship, already swallowed up by brutes with as much feeling as an old log.*"¹⁰²

"A Season in Hell" ends with this review: "*My great advantage is that I can laugh at old love affairs full of falsehood, and stamp with shame*

.....
100 Ibid., p. 69.

101 Ibid., p. 117.

102 Ibid., p. 229.

such deceitful couples – I went through women's Hell over there – and I will be able now to possess the truth within one body and one soul."¹⁰³

The proletarian poem thus abandons the ranks of poetry from above, giving all their subjective stature to figures that the social order lowers and despises, while making visible the abject and obscene thickness of the figures of domination.

Formulas of Subjectivation

However, the Rimbaudian poem cannot content itself with carrying the hatred, the disgust, the ugliness that power and oppression lavish without counting. The end of "A Season in Hell" demands that it be the receptacle of everything that, in reality, can prove to be a bearer of vigor and tenderness. This went hand in hand with the other imperative: "*one must be absolutely modern*"¹⁰⁴, that we must continuously enlighten ourselves.

Kristin Ross is right to point out the influence of both slang and slogan on Rimbaud's language: what she calls a "cannibalization of the slang of that era."¹⁰⁵ But Rimbaud goes far beyond these materials by incorporating them into a language which escapes its time, and which reaches us as a language indeed "found"¹⁰⁶: a language that resonates in us, it seems to me, like a language forever contemporary with a future to come. From heterogeneous materials, he forges the unforgettable formulas of an unparalleled subjectivation. We have already encountered some of these formulas which give form to the unknown (as he desired in the "Letter of the Visionary"): "I'm here-I'm still here"¹⁰⁷, "But no one leaves. Let us set out once more on our native roads"¹⁰⁸, "I am sent back to the soil to seek some obligation, to wrap gnarled reality in my arms!"¹⁰⁹, "True life is lacking. We are exiles from this world"¹¹⁰, "*and I will be able now to possess the truth within one body and one soul*"¹¹¹, "*at dawn, armed with glowing patience, we will enter the cities of glory*"¹¹², "*Love has to*

.....
103 Ibid., p. 243.

104 Ibid., p. 243.

105 Ross 2007, p. 79.

106 Rimbaud 2000, p. 117.

107 Ibid., p. 97.

108 Ibid., p. 222.

109 Ibid., p. 243.

110 Ibid., p. 228.

111 Ibid., p. 243.

112 Ibid,

be reinvented"¹¹³, "*It is recovered. | What? Eternity. | In the whirling light | Of sun become sea.*"¹¹⁴ There are many others, just as striking, in the "Illuminations", for example: "*I have strung ropes from steeple to steeple; | Garlands from window to window; | And golden chains from star to star... | And I dance*"¹¹⁵ or even "*Let us turn once more to our studies, | To the noise of insatiable movement | That forms and ferments in the masses.*"¹¹⁶

It is in the language and the subject of the "Illuminations" that an unprecedented alliance between the imperative of modernity and the subject to come of a "communism" is accomplished. It is not only a matter of form, nor of the dominant choice of prose. It is what these poems manage to bring to light that is, and remains, striking. "*Departure in affection, and shining sounds*"¹¹⁷ this "motto" – which starts the flight at the very moment of closing, in the poem "Departure"¹¹⁸ – is like a concentrate of the impulse that animates the whole. Nature, the city and time are the three materials which reshape themselves, recompose and rearrange as a possible world-to-come. These poems do not work as from within a utopian desire, but they produce a strong subjectivation in the present. While "*A Season in Hell*" was written under the regime of "I", the "*Illuminations*" take the form of an addressed discourse: indirect or direct, in the guise of a story, a tale, or an announcement. The formulas of subjectivation that are sought there are collective. It's concerns an "us", a new possible "we".

René Char, in his preface to Gallimard's "Poésie" collection¹¹⁹, notes that in Rimbaud "nature plays a preponderant part." He sees there a "rare phenomenon in French poetry and very unusual in the second half of the 19th century", that he renders this way:

"At the end of the 19th century, after several happenings, nature, circled by the enterprises of more and more men, pierced, stripped, turned over, broken up, stripped, flogged, mutilated, nature and her dear forests are reduced to a shameful servitude, bringing forth a terrible decrease of her goods. How can she protest, if not through the voice of the poet"?

To confirm what Char says, however, it must be specified that there are two modes of re-affirmation of nature in Rimbaud. On the one hand, the poet satirizes and parodies in his verses the established version given in the poetry of the era: a nature abstractly detached from

.....
113 Ibid., p. 228.

114 Ibid., p. 167.

115 Ibid., p. 252.

116 Ibid., p. 274.

117 Ibid., p. 258.

118 Ibid., p. 257.

119 Cf. Rimbaud 1973.

its invasion and its destruction by commercial, industrial and colonial expansion, and also by war. On the other hand, and this is particularly the case in the "Illuminations", he energetically restores her to the splendor that is her own as soon as she sees herself washed, liberated from all exploitation by the concentrated intensity of the sensation. This appears so exemplarily in the "Dawn"¹²⁰, a poem about a child that runs after "*the summer dawn*", which seizes and feels "her immense body". But also, in "*Childhood*"¹²¹, "*Wheel Ruts*"¹²², "*Flowers*"¹²³ or in the "*Seascape*"¹²⁴ - where landscapes that are neither realistic nor abstract arise like lightnings thrown on unheard-of worlds, which are brought in the regime of the present only by the sensibility, the sensuality of the poet.

The same goes for the tableaux that re-enact urban elements of the modern world - architectures, bridges, buildings, metros - to forge with them visions of unknown places, infinitely more beautiful than those that exist. "*The city, with its smoke and the sounds of its trades / Crept behind us, far along the roads ... | Oh, other world, sky-blessed land of shade!*": a desire for places that are inhabitable in a different way, places that are already places for other inhabitants different than those who populate them and are enslaved there. In the poems "*Bridges*"¹²⁵, "*City*"¹²⁶, "*Cities I*"¹²⁷, "*Cities II*"¹²⁸, "*Winter Festival*"¹²⁹, "*Metropolitan*"¹³⁰, "*Promontory*"¹³¹, "*Scenes*"¹³², "*Workers*"¹³³, love is the mainspring of these new assemblages which interrupt and recompose the world of cities populated by the enormous crowds that industry brings there. This is already stated in "To a reason"¹³⁴:

.....
120 Rimbaud 2000, p. 183.

121 Ibid., p. 173.

122 Ibid., p. 261.

123 Ibid., p. 184.

124 Ibid., p. 186.

125 Ibid., p. 259.

126 Ibid., p. 260.

127 Ibid., p. 262.

128 Ibid., p. 264.

129 Ibid., p. 186.

130 Ibid., p. 266.

131 Ibid., p. 261.

132 Ibid., p. 187.

133 Ibid., p. 258.

134 Ibid., p. 254.

*"Your finger strikes the drum, dispersing all its sounds,
And new harmony begins.*

Your step is the rise of new men, their setting out.

*You turn away your head: New Love!
You turn your head again: New Love!*

*"Alter our fates, destroy our plagues,
Beginning with Time," sing the children.
They beg of you: "Make out of anything
The stuff of our fortunes and desires."*

Come from always, you will go away everywhere."

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And then there is the diptych made of "*Democracy*"¹³⁵ and "*Genie*"¹³⁶, which recapitulates the two paths that open up after the big massacre of the Communards. To rally to democracy, of which the West is the bearer, is to accept undertakings which the poem sums up with incredible lucidity: feeding to the metropolis "*the most cynical whoring*"; to destroy "*all logical revolt*"; to be in dominated countries ("*the languid scented lands!*"), in the service of the most gigantic "*industrial and military exploitations.*"¹³⁷ He uses as the figure of subjectivation, a consensus, of which he paints a strikingly accurate portrait: we will be "*conscripts of good intention*", we will have "*policies unnamable and animal*", we will be "*knowing nothing of science*" but "*depraved in our pleasures*" and we will internalize the maxim that the rest of the world just has to die: "*to hell with the world around us rolling*". All this while we are convinced that this is the only way the world can progress: "*This is the real advance! Forward... March!*"¹³⁸

Such texts reveal to what extent Rimbaud can be for his time the "sensory plate of perception."¹³⁹ In the "Manifesto", in 1848, Marx had been able to describe, on the basis of his erudite studies, how capital ruled over the divisions of the earth:

"It (the bourgeoisie) compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.

.....
135 Ibid., p. 189.

136 Ibid., p. 272.

137 Ibid., p. 189.

138 Ibid,

139 Plaque sensible is a phrase coined by Paul Cezanne.

The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life. Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilised ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West.”¹⁴⁰

In all of Rimbaud's poetry there is something deeply attuned to this vision. Not because he knew it but because his whole being shared it, sensing with even keener attention and sensitivity the ravages of colonialism, all that devastation that rule of the bourgeoisie was establishing on an earth scale, under the name of “Democracy”. In “A Saison in Hell”, he claimed “I am an animal, a nigger”¹⁴¹, and depicted the repressive savagery of the arrival of settlers: “*The white men are landing! Cannons! Now we must be baptized, get dressed, and go to work.*”¹⁴² It is no coincidence that he had first considered giving this book titles such as “Negro Book” or the “Pagan Book”: he felt like he belonged on that side of the world. In “*Historic Evening*”¹⁴³, he diagnoses the appearance of a “*a pale, flat world, Africa and Occidents*” in which will reign “*At every place the stagecoach stops, | The same bourgeois magic!*”. And in “*Movement*”¹⁴⁴, he depicts “*the conquerors of the world*”, embarked travelers “*seeking their personal chemical fortune*”:

*“Sport and comfort accompany them;
They bring education for races, for classes, for animals
Within this vessel.”*

“Genie”¹⁴⁵, on the contrary, brings together the emblems that undo this world point by point in order to give birth to a completely different one. The genie of the poem is not the genie of an individual, it is the “genie” which holds the resource of humanity itself. More precisely, “Genie” is a generic name, which does not designate anything other than what the poem defines, line after line, and which comes from a conflict with ourselves as humanity: “*He is love and the present [...] 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*

.....
140 Marx, p. 488

141 Ibid., p. 223.

142 Ibid., p. 223.

143 Ibid., p. 189.

144 Ibid., p. 270.

145 Ibid., p. 272.

of ecstasy.”¹⁴⁶ This genie is not always at work: he “goes on his way”. To remember that it exists is to remember its vigor, capable of driving back the forces of death, capable of pronouncing also that the heavy burden of the time is nothing: “*Away with these ages and superstitions, | These couplings, these bodies of old! | All our age has submerged.*”¹⁴⁷ Its own power is love, as “*perfect and rediscovered measure, | Reason, marvelous and unforeseen*”, and eternity is on his side: “*beloved prime mover of the elements, of destinies.*” It always acts in the present, not in the future: “*He will not go away, will not come down again from some heaven. | 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.*” Under its impetus, the action changes nature, becomes clearer, accelerates: “*Oh, his breathing, the tum of his head when he runs: | Terrible speed of perfection in action and form!*”, just as the spirit and the universe take on new dimensions: “*Fecundity of spirit and vastness of the universe!*” The whole poem is a marvelous call, ardent but without exaltation, profoundly calm, to embrace this disposition, to choose this path: “*He has known us all [...] to hail him [...] 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.*”¹⁴⁸ A call that always resounds in the hearts of those who aspire to “release” human lives from what mutilates and mortifies them.

What Rimbaud's Poetry Does to Communism

All sorts of appointments have been proposed to characterize Rimbaud's political leanings. The word illuminism was thus affixed to him, no doubt because he had written “Illuminations.” It seems to me that there is no great sense in wanting to attribute a doctrine to it, however personal it may be. I propose in particular to replace the question of whether or not Rimbaud belonged to this “communism” of which the Commune is the true historical birth certificate (twenty years after the *Manifesto* of Marx and Engels), by another question: that of knowing what Rimbaud's poetry, as we have just gone through it, does to communism. The “formulas of subjectivation” that he, in a sense, gives to communism, for all times:

1) “*Let us all accept new strength, and real tenderness. And at dawn, armed with glowing patience, we will enter the cities of glory.*”¹⁴⁹ All creative subjectivity must be nourished by positive energies, must desire

.....
146 Ibid.

147 Ibid., p. 273.

148 Ibid., pp. 273-274.

149 Ibid., p. 243.

intensively, with a desire that is both ardent and patient. Nothing good can come to light without this kind of desire.

2) *"I am sent back to the soil to seek some obligation, to wrap gnarled reality in my arms!"*¹⁵⁰ To desire is to try, to experiment, to start again. To understand where the error was, and without ever resenting oneself, to seek other ways to continue. These are the honest lessons from "A Season in Hell".

3) *"There is no one here and there is someone"*¹⁵¹, says "A Season in Hell". *"For I is an other. If brass wakes as a bugle, it is not its fault at all. That is quite clear to me: I am a spectator at the flowering of my thought"*¹⁵², *"It's wrong to say: I think. Better to say: I am thought."*¹⁵³ Any creation requires recognition of otherness. This discovery that will be resumed and deepened in the poetry of many other *"horrible workers"*¹⁵⁴ - like Pessoa with heteronymy - shows the path of the non-coincidence of self with itself, of the improper, of de-propriation.

4) *"One must be absolutely modern"*¹⁵⁵. But modernity does not belong to the dominant world that produces it: only emancipatory powers can break its automaticity and artifice, of rearranging its elements and composing with them new beautiful and fair figures like *"Release so long desired, / The splintering of grace before a new violence!"*¹⁵⁶

5) *"The hand that holds the pen is as good as the one that holds the plow. (What a century for hands!) I'll never learn to use my hands."*¹⁵⁷, *"I want to be free to work."*¹⁵⁸ Impossible to forget that manual labor, salaried labor, is forced labor, and that it is a question of freeing those who perform it and make us live.

6) *"Love has to be reinvented, we know that"*¹⁵⁹: *"I was right to distrust old men who never lost a chance for a caress, parasites on the health and cleanliness of our women - today when women are so much a race apart from us."*¹⁶⁰: rebuilding a friendship between women and men is the

.....
150 Ibid.

151 Ibid., p. 226.

152 Ibid., p. 115.

153 Ibid., p. 112.

154 Ibid., p. 116.

155 Ibid., p. 243.

156 Ibid., p. 273.

157 Ibid., p. 220.

158 Ibid., p. 121.

159 Ibid., p. 228.

160 Ibid., p. 239.

touchstone of an existence in which equality is liberation, not oppression; wealth, not impoverishment.

7) *"I am an inventor much more deserving, | Different from all who have preceded me; | A musician, even, who has found something which may be the key to love."*¹⁶¹ Love is also understood in another sense: love must guide action, at the moment when destruction is a dead end.

8) *"Air, and a world all unlooked for. Life."*¹⁶² We must be able to imagine such peace for all. We must quote the entire first part of "Vigils"¹⁶³:

*"This is a place of rest and light,
No fever, no longing,
In a bed or a field.*

This is a friend, neither ardent nor weak. A friend.

This is my beloved, untormenting, untormented. My beloved.

*Air, and a world all unlooked for. Life.
... Was it really this?
For the dream grows cold."*

.....

Rimbaud's abandonment of poetry has been made into a metaphysical posture, an enigma - from which the meaning of his work was to derive, and which has been over-interpreted. I think all this is less complicated. He had said what he had to say. He had moved very quickly, from poem to poem, never lingering and never stagnating in a conclusion once reached.

From the mid-1870s, with the same rapidity, he concluded that the Commune would not be reborn after the massacre, and that times had changed. That these new times were at the antipodes of what his poetry had produced the figures of subjectivation for. It was certainly hard, but that was the state of the world. It was then necessary to find advice on how to live. After having tried different expedients, he deserted from the Dutch colonial army where he had enlisted for 6 years, then he went south to Italy, passed from Genoa to Cyprus, then even farther south to Alexandria, and from there to Aden on the Red Sea, and finally Harare in Abyssinia. Working in the colonies, in a sense, was imposed as the most modern solution, the most "up-to-date" indeed, because now it was

.....
¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 256.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 182.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 181.

a question of working henceforth to live, with no other states of mind. These were then the painful conditions of a life to be lived alone, with the harshness of the climate and the places, the difficulties as an arms dealer, the disillusion as to what he could gain from it. And the wear and tear of a still young body, the knee cancer forcing him back and leading to death, after a terrible amputation of the whole leg.

His work was done, he had no reason to return to it.

But here we are, endowed with these unforgettable formulas where every revolutionary subject can recognize himself and draw strength and orientation.

Translated by Arbër Zaimi

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