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A Season In Hell And The Drunken Boat



Synopsis

The classic influential poems by Rimbaud, in a bilingual en face edition featuring acclaimed translations by Louise Varese. Although he stopped writing at the age of nineteen, Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) possessed the most revolutionary talent of the past hundred years, and his poetry and prose have increasingly influenced the major writers of our century. To his masterpiece *A Season in Hell* is here added Rimbaud's longest and possibly greatest single poem *The Drunken Boat*, with the original French en face. The reputation of *A Season in Hell*, which is a poetic record of a man's examination of his own depths, has steadily increased over the years. Upon the first publication of Mrs. Varese's translation by New Directions, the *Saturday Review* wrote: "One may at last suggest that the translation of *A Season in Hell* has reached a conclusive point..." Concerning the twenty-five-stanza *The Drunken Boat*, Dr. Enid Starkie of Oxford University has written: "(It is) an anthology of separate lines of astonishing evocative magic which linger in the mind like isolated jewels." Rimbaud's life was so extraordinary that it has taken on the quality of a myth. A biographical chronology is included in this book.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was given this book by a Moroccan Jew in exchange for a matt-black Zippo lighter whilst I was working in a North London psychiatric hospital as a cook. The diabolic devotions and insights from a revolutionary modern french poet, social philosopher and prophet. As a whole his words remind me of that saying in the Gospel of Thomas; "I took my stand in the midst of the world, and in flesh I

appeared to them. I found them all drunk, and did not find any of them thirsty..." (28) Rimbaud is perceptive, agonizing, tortured, cruel, and poor. In anguish he struggles to understand life; skimming the horizon of a dysfunctional and chaotic world for some sight of salvation, yet it never comes and he cries out with a piercing lament. Idolatry, science, nobility, justice, war, debauchery, crime, punishment, damnation, delirium... Arthur Rimbaud walks a path of rotten corpses with a crown of thorns in search of honor, reason and restitution. He seeks a God only to find in the discovery that he is at once sent back into the dark impenetrable battle of human existence. This is a poet that sets the heart and soul on fire, he initiates a frantic search for meaning and relevance. Look! he says, see the world untinted, without all the trappings and trimmings, calculate the length and breadth of despair, circumnavigate the emotions and come back to understand yourself and the inevitability of your extinction. Like a present day Francois Villon he is an explorer of visions, the varied manifestations of humanity and society, he has adopted all the tricks of the trade and speaks the 'lingua' of the professional criminal. In the end Rimbaud the prophet dies like the rest of us, albeit in a syphilitic fever with an amputated right leg...

As we were working our 73rd consecutive day on an exhaustive, yet intricate, raft of home improvements and home remodeling, I heard the sounds of parties ringing out festively across our neighborhood. Since we had eschewed listening to working music merely on the basis of it being too much work to set up (see: 73rd consecutive day) I was left with older things than music. A line from an old French poem came to my mind over and over: Once my life was a feast where all hearts opened and all wines flowed. This, as you may know, is from *A Season in Hell* by Rimbaud, and my memory of the line curiously omits "if my memory serves me well" ("Once, if my memory serves me well, my life was a feast where all hearts opened and all wines flowed.") which goes to show that my memory itself has the same sense of humor I do. I, at the age of 50, am willing to say that my life has been, in the past, occasionally, for not, like, hugely extended periods of time, but on special occasions, a feast where all hearts opened and all wines flowed. Metaphorically. I am also willing to say that *A Season in Hell* is a great scorch of poems and I have fond memories of hearing that first one recited in a tent during an endless rainstorm in the Sierras while drinking whiskey and eating peanut butter. But just now I am reflecting on Rimbaud, who was 19 or younger when he wrote the poem. I am feeling a bit stunted in the old empathy department. When I was 19 I had not come close to a time when all hearts opened and all wines flowed. I had at most seen two flowing wines at one time and maybe eight or nine open hearts total, ever! So this Rimbaud kid seems lucky, if you ask me. And a season in hell?

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