

# libra

ensemble



## Coruscations

Sunday 28 April 2002  
7:00pm Pre-concert talk  
8:00pm Concert

## light-strung sigils

Monday 6 May 2002  
7:00pm Pre-concert talk  
8:00pm Concert

Iwaki Auditorium  
ABC Southbank Centre

# season:2002

## Chris Dench

### *beyond status geometry*

Originally written at the end of 1994, my percussion quartet is only now receiving its second performance (the first, with the same performers, was a week ago). Anyone seeing the score will be unsurprised at this delay: the look of the music is certainly daunting. Nonetheless, this notational appearance serves a purpose, succinctly described in the title. If one considers traditional rhythmic notation as *status geometry*, then this piece begins a step beyond, and progressively moves further and further away from equilibrium.

This gradual destabilisation begins relatively mildly, with unison drumbeats leading into almost-synchronised heterophony, except that, with the percussion timbre, this already sounds more like disorder than order. A second section is also heralded by unison drumbeats, and enriched by afterimage-like diminuendo pulses, and less traditional playing methods. Drumbeats again herald the final, third section, but by this stage the unisons are half-hearted; they lead into an entirely decoupled realm, where the percussionists do not even look at one another, and the conductor finds him- or herself redundant. In parallel with this journey from coordination to anarchy (albeit strangely correlated anarchy), the instrumental colours evolve from simple skins, via ceramic bowls (the percussion department of the orchestra is familiarly known as the *kitchen*) to, in the third section, tuned percussion instruments. Only at the end of the piece do the pitches cohere: they are all chosen from the high harmonics of a low C fundamental. A fourth dimension, beyond unfolding time, developing timbre, and ascending pitch, is provided by the players' use of different hardnesses of stick; the effect is of depth counterpoint.

Not content with negotiating the considerable difficulties of my older works *driftglass* and *funk*, Peter Neville has seen fit to rehabilitate *beyond status geometry*; it is no exaggeration to say that it could not have happened without him. Watch this space for a new work specifically highlighting his abilities: *luminous, with eigenstates*. Soon, soon.

Chris Dench

## Richard Meale

### *Coruscations*

Born in Sydney on 24th August 1932, Richard Meale studied piano, clarinet and harp, history and theory at the NSW Conservatorium of Music but in composition remained self-taught. In 1960 he was awarded a Ford Foundation Grant which he used to undertake studies in non-Western music at the University of California in Los Angeles, where he concentrated on Japanese Court music, Javanese and Balinese gamelan.

With his Sonata for Flute and Piano (1960) Meale focused local attention on the methods of the international avant garde which were not well known in Australia at that time. The Sonata won for Meale the Ford Foundation Grant and was performed at the 1960 World ISCM Festival in Amsterdam.

After returning to Australia Meale joined the Music Department of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation

where, for seven years, he made an important contribution to national radio with special programmes of Asian and contemporary music. As a pianist, lecturer and broadcaster, conductor and composer, Richard Meale played a crucial part in the propagation of avant garde music in Australia. He has given the first local performances of works by Boulez, Bussotti, Castiglioni and Messiaen as well as conducting the Australian premiere of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* with Marilyn Richardson. During this time his own music was generating considerable interest within Australia, and in 1965 Dean Dixon performed Meale's *Homage to Garcia Lorca* in Europe.

*Coruscations* employs many of the techniques of modernist composition of the period. The score is without time-signature throughout and alternates between barred and unbarred passages. Meale specifies differing methods of performance of the quaver groups which dominate the freer sections with five notational directions and insists "that the individual performer adapts the work to his own 'pianism'." These gestural passages are the coruscations of the title: sudden flashes of light, with a vivid but exceedingly short-lived splendour.

Mark Knoop

## Elliott Carter

### *Brass Quintet*

The Brass Quintet was written during the summer of 1974 for the American Brass Quintet which commissioned the work. This group gave its première on October 20, 1974 at a Charles Ives Festival broadcast by the BBC from London, and its American première at the Library of Congress on November 15, 1974, and has recorded the work for Columbia Records.

The music, being almost constantly multilayered, as is my *Second String Quartet*, separates the players by individualising their parts, but not completely, because each instrument shares parts of its repertory with one of the others. The first trumpet, for instance, near the beginning plays in a trio with the second trumpet and tenor trombone featuring the minor sixth in light, irregular chords of which the character and interval become part of the repertory of the three participating instruments. A bit later, the first trumpet plays another trio with the horn and bass trombone that features fanfares and quiet, majestic music based on the perfect fifth, which then become part of the repertory of these three instruments. The horn, which has the largest repertory of all, however also frequently uses the augmented fourth which it does not share with any of the others.

All of the contrasting characters and their related musical intervals form a multilayered piece planned along the following pattern: Every third (that is, the first, fourth, seventh etc.) of its overlapping nineteen short sections is a brief five-part quodlibet in which the instruments oppose each other with contrasting parts of their individual repertories. Between these is a duo preceded of followed by a trio in which two or three instruments join in music of similar character. Each duo and trio has a different instrumentation.

The general plan is interrupted midway through the work by a relatively extended unaccompanied horn solo

which is cut off by an angry octaves from the others. The slow music which began the piece and forms the background of the first three quodlibets is abandoned after the last of these, only to return in extended form near the end. The entire work, in fact, can be heard as one long, slow movement with interruptions.

This quintet, rather than employing all the resources of colour possible with modern mutes for the brass, relies primarily on linear material, textures and the instrumental virtuosity for which the American Brass Quintet is notable.

Elliott Carter

## Adam Yee

### *lev nishbar v'nidkeh*

*lev nishbar v'nidkeh* ('a heart broken and crushed') was composed in response to several points of inspiration. The most obvious is the Hebrew text of the 51st psalm (often set as the *Miserere*), the internal dynamics of which constitute the ever-present touchstone against which *lev ...* was conceived. Beyond this magnificent text lie the characters of two intriguing Australians: the dedicatee Ian Shanahan and the convict/cannibal Alexander Pearce. In this piece I tried to find a voice for the tragic figure of Pearce and a fitting object of contemplation for my dear friend Ian.

The work is in six continuous sections.

Adam Yee

## Elliott Carter

### *Clarinet Concerto*

Dividing the work of a living composer into periods of activity is always risky; nonetheless, it seems a reasonably uncontroversial suggestion that the work of a composer nearing his ninetieth year might embody something of a 'late style'. Elliott Carter's *Clarinet Concerto* (1996) follows concertos for harpsichord and piano (the *Double Concerto* of 1961), piano (1965), orchestra (1969), oboe (1987) and violin (1990) in his output. More recently, there is also a 'concerto for ensemble' (the *Asko Concerto*, completed in 2000) - and for completeness' sake, there are reports of an incomplete cor anglais concerto dating from 1937.

As the performance directions ('humourous', 'playful', 'tranquil'...) suggest, the *Clarinet Concerto* is one of the more untroubled of Carter's concertante works (the *Double Concerto* debatably inhabiting the opposite extreme). Its form is straightforwardly sectional: brief sections for the full ensemble without the soloist (the first is just a single bar long) frame longer passages in which the soloist is accompanied by a single section. These proceed in the order pitched percussion (including the harp and piano); unpitched percussion; muted brass; woodwinds; strings; open brass, with the player given the option of moving from one section to another as the work progresses. Only the work's final section employs all nineteen players continuously.

## Coruscations

Chris Dench *beyond status geometry* (1994-95)  
 Richard Meale *Coruscations* (1971)  
 Elliott Carter *Brass Quintet* (1974/93)

Adam Yee *lev nishbar v'nidkeh* (1997)  
 Elliott Carter *Clarinet Concerto* (1996) †  
 Scherzando – Deciso – Tranquillo –  
 Presto – Largo – Giocoso – Agitato

Elizabeth Barcan flute<sup>5</sup>  
 Matthew Tighe oboe<sup>5</sup>  
 Geoffrey Dodd oboe/cor anglais<sup>5</sup>  
 Carl Rosman clarinet<sup>5</sup>/conductor<sup>1</sup>  
 Elise Millman bassoon<sup>5</sup>  
 Natasha Anderson recorder<sup>4</sup>  
 Geoff Lierse horn<sup>3,5</sup>  
 Tristram Williams trumpet<sup>3,5</sup>  
 Mark Skillington trumpet<sup>3</sup>  
 Bob Collins trombone<sup>3</sup>  
 Charles MacInnes trombone<sup>3,5</sup>  
 Fabian Russell tuba<sup>5</sup>  
 Peter Neville percussion<sup>1</sup>  
 Elizabeth Davis percussion<sup>1,5</sup>  
 Guy du Blët percussion<sup>1</sup>  
 Eugene Ughetti percussion<sup>1,5</sup>  
 Timothy Phillips percussion<sup>5</sup>  
 Dean Sky-Lucas piano<sup>5</sup>  
 Mark Knoop piano<sup>1,2</sup>/conductor<sup>5</sup>  
 Marshall McGuire harp<sup>5</sup>  
 Elizabeth Sellars violin<sup>5</sup>  
 Alison Rayner violin<sup>5</sup>  
 Erkki Veltheim viola<sup>5</sup>  
 Zoë Knighton cello<sup>5</sup>  
 Dorit Herskovits double bass<sup>5</sup>

The elements of Carter's mature style are well in evidence. As in many of his works, Carter bases melodic material not on a particular set of pitches but on a set of intervals. Perhaps appropriately for a work of this character, the generating intervals in the solo part are the minor second, major second, major third, perfect fifth and major sixth — mostly intervals with bright associations, although the minor second allows for some particularly sinuous chromaticism in the third and fourth sections. Carter also makes use of his characteristic rhythmic devices of polyrhythm and metric modulation — the intricate gearwork by which different tempi exist not only side by side in precise relation, but simultaneously. These devices operate not only on the small scale, but also in the manipulation of large-scale proportions. In the latter context they are usually inaudible, but here Carter allows the listener a brief moment in which these structural 'metronomes' coincide: a single chord at the beginning of the last section, played together by every player except the soloist in a striking gesture which gradually collapses over the remainder of the concerto.

Although the solo part is fairly continuous throughout the work apart from the relatively brief ‘framing’ sections, the soloist is by no means always dominant; as well as textures where the clarinet is unequivocally ‘accompanied’, Carter frequently allows the ensemble parts to move to the foreground. This applies particularly in the final tutti – in a work dominated by sparse textures, the ensemble briefly combines to swamp the soloist, although as the orchestra once again disperses the clarinet has the final say. (Perhaps there is some irony intended in Carter’s choice of the final pitch – *a*’, the note which typically serves to gather the orchestra for tuning just before a performance.)

Elliott Carter’s Clarinet Concerto was commissioned by the Ensemble InterContemporain for their twentieth anniversary celebrations in 1997. It received its first performance from Alain Damiens with the EIC conducted by Pierre Boulez on 10th January that year. It has since received performances from such groups as the London Sinfonietta, Ensemble Modern, Chicago Symphony, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and Ensemble Contrechamps.

Carl Rosman

## Richard Barrett

### *Trawl*

*Trawl*: a type of fishing net which is dragged along the sea bed behind a boat; also the title of a novel by the English writer B. S. Johnson (1933-73) which takes trawling as a metaphor for the author searching into his own past. The composition of *Trawl* was motivated by the idea of repeatedly and obsessively searching, trawling, through its own “material” in order, like Johnson, to bring up from the depths something significant, some unsuspected connection, some lost or repressed key to current confusions. It might also be relevant to mention that *Trawl* was composed at a time when I was preoccupied with the music of Schubert. While the central trio of violin, cello and piano traces out its own complex and tenuous structure of interacting lines and points, the two wind instruments (placed at a distance from the trio) gradually converge in register while diversifying their material from signal-like repetitions towards melodic formations tangentially related to the strings and piano; eventually they reach a unison, after which the musical elements once more separate and dissolve.

*Trawl* was commissioned by the Fonds voor de Scheppende Toonkunst and completed in September 1997. Robert HP Platz conducted Ensemble Köln in the first performance in Amsterdam in September 1998.

Richard Barrett

## Damien Ricketson

### *Imagining Le Verrier*

In 1845 the English mathematician John Couch Adams proposed the existence of an undiscovered planet (Neptune, initially named Le Verrier) beyond the orbit of Uranus. Adam’s approach was controversial at the time because he did not describe the physical world through direct observation, but rather applied mathematical modelling to predict and reveal an unseen

world. This was the inspiration for this piece: to use abstract models to go beyond my own ear to create an unheard world.

*Imagining Le Verrier* originates as the composition of movement not sound. Rather than conceiving pitches, abstract models are used to pattern the movements of the two hands of the cellist. Thus the score becomes the choreographic instructions and the instrument the physical landscape in which these movements take place.

This intimate approach to the instrument would not have been possible without the assistance of cellist Geoffrey Gartner who premiered the work on the 4th March 2001 at the Bangarra Dance Theatre, Sydney.

Damien Ricketson

## Chris Dench

### *light-strung sigils*

In February 2002, the Los Angeles-based ensemble *Music of Changes* gave a Portrait-concert of my music, and they asked me to write a new work for that event. One of the existing works they selected for inclusion involved a recorder-player, and I decided that I would base my new piece around that player’s presence, and juxtapose the sounds of the wooden and metal flutes, in their various sizes.

I met the poet Beverliey Braune in Wollongong, and she showed me some of her extraordinary *faux* Icelandic Epic, *SKULVÁÐHI ÚLFR*. This long poem relates, from the viewpoint of its last queen, the history of a society founded by the survivors of a viking ship which is storm-blown all

## Arthur Rimbaud

Born in Charleville, France in 1854, Arthur Rimbaud was raised by a stern, possessive mother, and was until his fifteenth year a precocious, religious child, a model student. Encouraged by a local teacher in his attempts to write, early in 1870 he published his first poem, and shortly afterwards ran away to Paris.

Fueled in part by books on alchemy and occultism, this bitter, arrogant, disheveled, foul-talking adolescent began to conceive of himself as a kind of saint of poetry, and in two letters, the *Lettres du Voyant*, he described how “the poet makes himself a seer by a long, prodigious, and rational disordering of all the senses”.

When he was sixteen Rimbaud returned to Paris and began an affair with Paul Verlaine, a married poet ten years his senior, and in about six months managed to scandalize and offend virtually the entire Parisian literary establishment. Verlaine and Rimbaud travelled together, living for a while in London, but the relationship was extremely chaotic and in the summer of 1873, when they were in Belgium, Verlaine in a state of drunken frenzy shot Rimbaud in the hand and was jailed. Rimbaud went back to the family farm and wrote one of his masterpieces, *Une Saison en Enfer* (A Season in Hell).

All of Rimbaud’s poetry was written before his twenty-first birthday. He travelled widely before eventually becoming a trader and gunrunner in East Africa. Ill, he returned to Marseilles in June of 1891. His right leg was amputated, probably due to the complications of syphilis or cancer, and he was nursed for a time by his sister Isabelle before dying on November 10, 1891.

the way down the coast of the eastern US and wrecked in the Caribbean. The lines that preface the score come from a section called *the Book of Broken Words*:

... a cloak of leaves, night-reared signs —  
 a book of steps pressed in storm-haste —  
 a hail of letters, light-strung sigils.

However, typically of my working process, as the piece evolved it came to be as much a meditation on the nature of reality, at the subatomic level, as a reminiscence of the poem.

Quantum physics is famed for its “non-locality”: the fact that it is not possible to characterise the physical situation at a point in space without reference to the state of the system in the wider surroundings. The quantum vacuum is no exception, since its state is defined across all of space. This enables it to “feel” the structure of the entire Universe, and thereby to link the global and the local... — a connection that could be mediated by the quantum ether. ... Rather than being the medium that transmits light, it is made of light — virtual photons...

from *Liquid Space*,  
 Paul Davies in *New Scientist*, 3 November 2001

I began to write the work shortly before September 11 2001, and the psychological effect of the events of that day colours the eventual piece as much as any external conceits.

Chris Dench

## Liza Lim *Veil*

Commenting on her second acknowledged work (*Voodoo Child*, composed a decade before *Veil*), Liza Lim referred to an element of her composition process as ‘observing the microscopic life’ of its first note. *Veil* opens out from its first sonority in a similarly inevitable manner, and with a similar feel of observing rather than too actively intervening; perhaps, however, the point of departure is not so much a note as an instrumentation. Although *Veil* is scored for a group not too distant from the relatively standard ‘Pierrot-plus-percussion’ setup, it is the exceptions (a bass flute rather than a flute, an additional trumpet, and a cello whose lowest string is tuned a major third lower than normal) which receive emphasis, and which all appear within the first few bars.

Like most of Lim’s music, *Veil* treats the ensemble as a single, multifaceted resonating object rather than as a collection of disparate instruments. ‘Vertically’, the ensemble plays predominantly in block textures rather than in single lines; ‘horizontally’, pitched structures are not privileged over the exploration of the resonances within a single instrumental tone. Glissando textures are not restricted to the string instruments, but are also played by the winds; the percussionist even employs a ‘water gong’, which is lowered into and raised from a tank of water while playing, thus changing its pitch. The vibraphone and piano are bowed in addition to their normal percussive playing techniques. The bass clarinetist is directed to enrich the instrumental sound by modifying the embouchure to produce extra overtones;

## light-strung sigils

Richard Barrett *Trawl* (1995-97) †  
 Damien Ricketson *Imagining Le Verrier* (2001)  
 Chris Dench *light-strung sigils* (2002) †

Liza Lim *Veil* (1999) †  
 Richard Meale *Incredible Floridas* (1971)

PRELUDE: Voyelles  
 Fêtes de la faim  
 SONATA I: Le Bateau Ivre  
 INTERLUDE: phrases — veillées — génie  
 SONATA II: une saison en enfer  
 POSTLUDE: une saison en enfer:  
 matin — adieu

Elizabeth Barcan flute<sup>1,3,4,5</sup>  
 Carl Rosman clarinet<sup>1,3,4,5</sup>  
 Natasha Anderson recorder<sup>1</sup>  
 Tristram Williams trumpet<sup>4,5</sup>  
 Peter Neville percussion<sup>1</sup>  
 Eugene Ughetti percussion<sup>4,5</sup>  
 Mark Knoop piano<sup>1,3,4,5</sup>  
 Elizabeth Sellars violin<sup>1,4,5</sup>  
 Susan Pierotti violin<sup>3</sup> (by courtesy of Orchestra Victoria)  
 Erkki Veltheim violin/viola<sup>5</sup>  
 Geoffrey Gartner cello<sup>1,2,3,5</sup>  
 Zoë Knighton cello<sup>4</sup>  
 Roland Peelman conductor<sup>1,3,4,5</sup>

the string players employ ‘overpressed’ bowing, while the cello’s lowest string produces not only a lower pitch than normal but a subtly duller timbre.

*Veil* was commissioned by the ensemble für neue musik zürich, to whom it is dedicated, and who gave its first performance on 23 February 2000 in Köln, conducted by Jürg Henneberger.

Carl Rosman

## Richard Meale *Incredible Floridas*

*Incredible Floridas* is a homage to the French poet, Arthur Rimbaud. Scored for woodwind, percussion and string instruments, it was written for the Fires of London and their conductor, Peter Maxwell Davies, and premiered in London in 1971. The work was the focus of a 10 minute documentary short made by Peter Weir for Film Australia in 1972.

## Voyelles

A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu: voyelles,  
Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes:  
A, noir corset velu des mouches éclatantes  
Qui bombinent autour des puanteurs cruelles,

Golfes d'ombre; E, candeur des vapeurs et des tentes,  
Lances des glaciers fiers, rois blancs, frissons d'ombrelles;  
I, pourpres, sang craché, rire des lèvres belles  
Dans la colère ou les ivresses pénitentes;

U, cycles, vibration divins des mers virides,  
Paix des pâtis semés d'animaux, paix des rides  
Que l'alchimie imprime aux grands fronts studieux ;

O, suprême Clairon plein des strideurs étranges,  
Silences traversés des Mondes et des Anges:  
– O l'Oméga, rayon violet de Ses yeux!

## Fêtes de la faim

... Mes faims, tournez. Paisez, faims,  
Le pré des sons!  
Attirez le gai venin  
Des liserons;

Mangez

Les cailloux qu'un pauvre brise,  
Les vieilles pierres d'église,  
Les galets, fils des déluges,  
Pains couchés aux vallées grises!

Mes faims, c'est les bouts d'air noir;  
L'azur sonneur;  
– C'est l'estomac qui me tire.  
C'est le malheur...

## Le bateau ivre

...J'ai heurté, savez-vous, d'incroyables Florides  
Mêlant aux fleurs des yeux de panthères à peaux  
D'hommes! Des arcs-en-ciel tendus comme des brides  
Sous l'horizon des mers, à de glauques troupeaux!

J'ai vu fermenter les marais énormes, nasses  
Où pourrit dans les joncs tout un Léviathan!  
Des écroulements d'eaux au milieu des bonaces,  
Et les lointains vers les gouffres cataractant!...

## Phrases

...Qu'il n'y ait ici-bas qu'un vieillard seul, calme et beau, entouré  
d'un «luxu inouï», – et je suis à vos genoux.  
Que j'aie réalisé tous vos souvenirs, – que je sois celle qui sait  
vous garrotter, – je vous étoufferai...

## Veillées

C'est le repos éclairé, ni fièvre ni langueur, sur le lit ou sur le  
pré.

C'est l'ami ni ardent ni faible. L'ami.  
C'est l'aimée ni tourmentante ni tourmentée. L'aimée.  
L'air et le monde point cherchés. La vie.  
– Était-ce donc ceci?  
– Et le rêve fraîchit...

## Génie

...Ô ses souffles, ses têtes, ses courses; la terrible célérité de la  
perfection des formes et de l'action!

Ô fécondité de l'esprit et immensité de l'univers!

Son corps! le dégagement rêvé, le brisement de la grâce croisée  
de violence nouvelle!

Sa vue, sa vue! tous les agenouillages anciens et les peines  
relevés à sa suite.

6 Son jour! l'abolition de toutes souffrances sonores et mouvantes  
dans la musique plus intense...

## Vowels

A black, E white, I red, U green, O blue: vowels,  
I shall tell, one day, of your mysterious origins  
A, black velvety jacket of brilliant flies  
which buzz around cruel smells,

gulfs of shadow; E, whiteness of vapors and of tents,  
lances of proud glaciers, white kings, shivers of cow-parsley;  
I, purples, spat blood, smile of beautiful lips  
in anger or in the raptures of penitence.

U, waves, divine shuddering of viridian seas  
the peace of pastures dotted with animals, the peace of the furrows  
which alchemy prints on broad studios foreheads;

O, sublime Trumpet full of strange piercing sounds,  
silences crossed by Angels and by Worlds  
– O the Omega! the violet ray of Her Eyes!

## Feasts of hunger

... Turn, my hungers. Feed, hungers,  
On 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...

## The Drunken Boat

...I have struck, do you realize, incredible Floridas,  
where mingle with flowers the eyes of panthers in human skins!  
And rainbows stretched like bridles  
under the seas' horizon with 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!...

## Phrases

...Let there be here below but a single old man, calm and beautiful,  
surrounded by "unparalleled luxury", – and I shall be at your feet.  
Let me have brought into being all your memories, – let me be she  
who can bind you hand and foot, – I shall suffocate you...

## Vigils

It is rest in the light, neither fever nor languor, on the bed or on the  
meadow.

It is the friend neither ardent nor weak. The friend.  
It is the beloved neither tormenting nor tormented. The beloved.  
The atmosphere and world unsought. Life.  
– Was it this then?  
– And the dream is growing cold...

## Genie

...O his breaths, his heads, his runnings: the terrible swiftness of the  
perfections of forms and of action!

O fruitfulness of mind and immensity of the universe!

His body! the dreamed-of redemption, the shattering of grace  
meeting with new violence!

The sight of him, the sight of him! all the old kneelings and pains  
lifted at his passing.

His light! the abolition of all audible and moving suffering in more  
intense music...

## Une saison en enfer

Jadis, si je me souviens bien, ma vie était un festin où s'ouvraient tous les coeurs, où tous les vins coulaient.

Un soir, j'ai assis la Beauté sur mes genoux. – Et je l'ai trouvée amère. – Et je l'ai injuriée.

Je me suis armé contre la justice.

Je me suis enfui. Ô sorcières, ô misère, ô haine, c'est à vous que mon trésor a été confié!

Je parvins à faire s'évanouir dans mon esprit toute l'espérance humaine. Sur toute joie pour l'étrangler j'ai fait le bond sourd de la bête féroce.

J'ai appelé les bourreaux pour, en périssant, mordre la crosse de leurs fusils. J'ai appelé les fléaux, pour m'étouffer avec le sable, avec le sang. Le malheur a été mon dieu. Je me suis allongé dans la boue. Je me suis séché à l'air du crime. Et j'ai joué de bons tours à la folie.

Et le printemps m'a apporté l'affreux rire de l'idiot...

## Matin

N'eus-je pas *une fois* une jeunesse aimable, héroïque, fabuleuse, à écrire sur des feuilles d'or, – trop de chance! Par quel crime, quelle erreur, ai-je mérité ma faiblesse actuelle? Vous qui prétendez que des bêtes poussent des sanglots de chagrin, que des malades désespèrent, que des morts rêvent mal, tâchez de raconter ma chute et mon sommeil. Moi, je ne puis pas plus m'expliquer que le mendiant avec ses continuels *Pater* et *Ave Maria*. *Je ne sais plus parler!*

Pourtant, aujourd'hui, je crois avoir fini la relation de mon enfer. C'était bien l'enfer; l'ancien, celui dont le fils de l'homme ouvrit les portes...

## Adieu

...Oui, l'heure nouvelle est au moins très-sévère.

Car je puis dire que la victoire m'est acquise: les grincements de dents, les sifflements de feu, les soupirs empestés se modèrent. Tous les souvenirs immondes s'effacent. Mes derniers regrets détalent, – des jalousies pour les mendiants, les brigands, les amis de la mort, les arriérés de toutes sortes. – Damnés, si je me vengeais!

Il faut être absolument moderne.

Point de cantiques: tenir le pas gagné. Dure nuit! le sang séché fume sur ma face, et je n'ai rien derrière moi, que cet horrible arbrisseau! ... Le combat spirituel est aussi brutal que la bataille d'hommes; mais la vision de la justice est le plaisir de Dieu seul.

Cependant c'est la veille. Recevons tous les influx de vigueur et de tendresse réelle. Et à l'aurore, armés d'une ardente patience, nous entrerons aux splendides villes.

Que parlais-je de main amie! Un bel avantage, c'est que je puis rire des vieilles amours mensongères, et frapper de honte ces couples menteurs, – j'ai vu l'enfer des femmes là-bas; – et il me sera loisible de *posséder la vérité dans une âme et un corps*.

Avril - août, 1873

## A season in hell

Once, if I remember rightly, my life was a feast at which all hearts opened and all wines flowed.

One evening, I sat Beauty on my knees. – And I found her bitter. – And I reviled her.

I armed myself against justice.

I fled. O witches, O misery, O hatred, it was to you that my treasure was entrusted!

I managed to erase in my mind all human hope. Upon every joy in order to strangle it, I made the muffled bound of the wild beast.

I called up executioners in order to bite their gun-butts as I died. I called up plagues, in order to suffocate myself with sand and blood. Bad luck was my god. I stretched myself out in the mud. I dried myself in the air of crime. And I played some fine tricks on madness.

And spring brought me the appalling laugh of the idiot...

## Morning

Did I not have *once upon a time* a pleasant childhood, heroic, fabulous, to be written on pages of gold – too lucky! Through what crime, through what error, have I deserved my present weakness? You who claim that animals sob with grief, that sick people despair, that the dead have bad dreams, try to give an account of my fall and my slumbers. I can explain myself no better than the beggar with his incessant *Our Father's* and *Hail Mary's*. *I don't know how to speak any more!*

And yet, today, I think I have finished the account of my hell. It certainly was hell; the old one, whose gates were opened by the son of man...

## Farewell

...Yes, the latest hour is, to say the least, very severe.

For I can say that I have won the victory: the gnashing of teeth, the hissing of flames, and the pestilent sighings are dying down. All the filthy memories are disappearing. My last regrets take to their heels, – jealousies of beggars, brigands, friends of death, all kinds of backward creatures. – Damned, too, if I took vengeance!

One must be absolutely modern.

No hymn-singing: hold on to the yard one has gained. Severe night! the dried blood smokes on my face, and I have nothing at my back but that horrible stunted tree! ... Spiritual combat is as brutal as the battling of men; but the vision of justice is God's pleasure alone.

Still, now is the eve. Let us receive all influxes of strength and of real tenderness. And at dawn, armed with a burning patience, we shall enter into the splendid cities.

What was I saying about a friendly hand! One fine advantage: I can laugh at the old false loves, and strike shame into those lying couples – I have seen the hell of women down there – and it will now be permitted to me *to possess truth in one soul and one body*.

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