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# BAD BLOOD ANCESTRY: FROM BARBARIAN TO CHRISTIAN

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## **Bad Blood Ancestry: From Barbarian to Christian**

### **Synopsis:**

Should we assume that in “Bad Blood” Rimbaud is asserting the Gaul as his authentic historical ancestors? He is not the only Frenchman to have elected the barbarians as his distant relatives, so has the French Republic and its people; for France, the Gaul represent a common chosen ancestry, a unifying symbol.

My study concentrates on how Rimbaud, through his narrator’s claim to ancestry, whether singular or plural, barbarian or Christian, shapes his identity, and the identity of his readers.

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*Bad Blood Ancestry: From Barbarian to Christian*

When the narrator of *Une saison en enfer* (*A Season in Hell*) claims in “Mauvais sang:” “J’ai de mes ancêtres gaulois l’œil bleu blanc, la cervelle étroite, et la maladresse dans la lutte,”<sup>1</sup> should we assume that Rimbaud is asserting the Gaul as his authentic ancestors? Rimbaud is not the only Frenchman to have elected the Gallic barbarians as his distant relatives, so has the French Republic and its people; for 19<sup>th</sup>-century France, the Gaul represent a common chosen ancestry, a unifying symbol.

The French did not always claim the Gaul as their ancestors, and until the nineteenth century, the Franks were the recognized ancestors by the French nobility of the Ancient Régime, while the Gallic ancestry could only be claimed by commoners. Jean-Louis Brunaux, in his excellent book on demystifying the Gaul, reminds his readers that before public schools existed (late 1880s), the teaching of history was left mostly to the clergy who continued to view the Franks as their noble ancestors. In 1807, Father Louis-Pierre Anquetil wrote a *Histoire de France* that was unusual because it began with the Gaul. Although Anquetil was a rather bad historian, his text acted as the starter to a new approach to French antiquity. According to Brunaux, we need to credit the very dedicated and tenacious historian Amédée Thierry with enlightening France about, and creating a passion for its newest uncovered (or rediscovered) ancestors, the Gaul. In 1828, Thierry published his *Histoire des Gaulois depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu’à l’entière*

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Rimbaud, “Mauvais sang” *Une saison en enfer* (Ed. Louis Forestier. Paris: Gallimard, 1984 [124]). This edition is used for all quotes in French for Rimbaud’s work. “Bad Blood:” “From my Gallic ancestors I have blue-white eyes, a narrow skull, and clumsiness in wrestling.” Translated by Wallace Fowlie (Rimbaud. *Complete Works, Selected Letters. A Bilingual Edition*. Chicago & London: The U of Chicago P, 2005 [265]). This edition is used for all translations for Rimbaud’s work, as well as for all references to his letters, in French and in translation.

*soumission de la Gaule à la domination romaine*;<sup>2</sup> this remarkable and voluminous text was republished throughout the 19th century. Indeed, Thierry is the first historian to have developed the idea that Gaul and France are one and the same as a country and homeland because of the heroic characters who left their marks on the budding history of the nation. Thierry goes on portraying several prestigious Gallic warriors, most of them having resisted the Roman invaders; first among these is Vercingétorix.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, from the middle of the nineteenth century to 1870, there is a consensus among the cultured society of France that the Gaul are France's most ancient ancestors, and that the natural borders of France (except for the Belgian part) were set with them. This claim was sustained by the French Emperor, Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte's passion for archeology, a passion that became a French national pastime. Indeed, living his passion more than studying history, he declared: "La France nouvelle, l'ancienne France, la Gaule sont une seule et même personne morale. [. . .] Le caractère des Gaulois a subsisté chez nous tous, comme leur sang a passé de génération en génération jusque dans nos veines."<sup>4</sup> We can assume that Rimbaud found himself immersed in the newly discovered ancestry, and shared the newly infused Gallic blood with his fellow countrymen.

Postdating Rimbaud's school time, but stemming from the mid-nineteenth century Gallic infatuation, the teaching of French history, as a school subject, became mandatory at the end of the nineteenth century, under the Third Republic (1870-1940), first delivered by Ernest Lavisse's history textbook in the late 1870s.<sup>5</sup> This Republican teaching of French history contributed to create a national consciousness encompassing all patriotic feelings. Furthermore, Lavisse's textbook imposed the hexagonal myth by demonstrating that the borders of the French nation are natural, following a logical

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<sup>2</sup> Paris, Librairie académique Didier, 1881, 10<sup>e</sup> éd. The title means: "History of the Gaul Since the Most Remote Times Until the Total Submission of Gaul to Roman Rule" (my translation).

<sup>3</sup> C.f. Jean-Louis Brunaux, *Nos ancêtres les Gaulois*. Paris : Seuil, 2008 (25-26), the entire book explores and explains all the myths surrounding the Gaul and their relationship to French ancestry and history in a most clear and compelling fashion.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Brunaux (27): "New France, ancient France, Gaul are one and the same moral person. [. . .] The Gaul's personality has subsisted among us all, just as their blood has passed from generation to generation until it reached our veins" (my translation).

<sup>5</sup> Lavisse published several textbooks, starting in 1876 with *La Première année d'histoire de France, avec récits: Ouvrage contenant des gravures, des cartes, des questionnaires, des devoirs et un lexique explicatif des mots difficiles, à l'usage des élèves qui recherchent le certificat d'études primaires* (Paris: Colin); the most famous of his textbooks, *Histoire de France. Cours élémentaire* and *Cours moyen* first published in 1912 (Paris: Colin), was followed by fifty editions until 1950.

progression, a normal evolution that began with a unified Gallic territory: *la Gaule*. The French Republic imposed the concept of the Gallic origin, making Vercingétorix, unfortunate defender of the Gaul against the Romans, the very first national hero. The common reference to *nos ancêtres les Gaulois* (our ancestors, the Gaul) is the confirmation of the existence of a unified territory (one land since the beginning of civilization) and a unified people, blotting away all disparities and the succession of waves of invaders. It has (questionably successfully) created a unified people, ethnically and linguistically, stemming from the common chosen ancestors, *les Gaulois*.<sup>6</sup>

Although we cannot claim that Rimbaud is a product of this Republican teaching, what seems to be most important for his narrator in choosing *les Gaulois* as his legitimate ancestors, legitimacy marked by resemblance is both physical aspects: whitish-blue eyes and narrow skull, as well as in his uncivilized appearance: “je trouve mon habillement aussi barbare que le leur” (124),<sup>7</sup> is that this choice keeps him outside of French history, in effect reversing the tendency of his time to make the Gaul the starting point for French history: “Si j’avais des antécédents à un point quelconque de l’histoire de France! / Mais non, rien. / Il est bien évident que j’ai toujours été race inférieure” (125),<sup>8</sup> as if for Rimbaud’s narrator French history *did not* begin with the Gaul, but maybe Christianity. In any case, the attraction to this ancestry is the declared inferiority that will allow for the infusion of “bad blood,” a subversion of France’s other ancestral claim: “France fille

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<sup>6</sup> This claim to Gallic ancestry has not, of course, brought the unifying cohesion of one people one nation expected by the French Republic. It is especially of interest to revisit this claim to ancestry twisted by André Chamson’s unusual novel, *Nos ancêtres les Gaulois* (Paris: Gallimard, 1958), where the return of a Gallic warrior in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century erases the existence of France. Another questioning to the Gallic ancestry comes from the Francophone countries, former French and Belgian colonies, supposedly unified under one language. There, too, the Republican message does not seem to resound as smoothly as in the French legends, as can be heard in Vincent Engel’s sarcastic comments in his introduction to dialogues between Francophone writers: “Heureusement, il y eu les colonies, le bon temps des colonies, où Belges et Français vinrent offrir aux nègres assoiffés d’assimiler cette merveilleuse culture. « Nos ancêtres les Gaulois » se virent dotés de descendants bigarrés, noirs, jaunes, rouges, ânonnant sans conviction la litanie de leurs anciens rois, de Clovis le Belge à Louis le décapité” (*Nos ancêtres les Gaulois*. Belgique: Ed. Quorum, 1996. [9]. “Fortunately, colonization came, colonial happy times, when Belgians and French came to offer to the thirsty negroes the possibility to assimilate to this wonderful culture. ‘Our ancestors, the Gaul’ found themselves with a medley of colorful offspring, black, yellow, red, mumbling and blundering without conviction the litany of their former kings, from Clovis, the Belgian, to Louis, the beheaded” [my translation]).

<sup>7</sup> “My clothes are as barbaric as theirs” (265).

<sup>8</sup> “If I only had ancestors at some point in the history of France! / No! no antecedent. / It is very clear to me that I have always belonged to an inferior race” (267).

âinée de l’Eglise” (125),<sup>9</sup> the noble blood-line. By his choice, Rimbaud seems to favor the Ancien Régime point of view: only commoners, that is, the inferior race, can claim the Gaul as their ancestors, therefore removing all possibility to reconnect with his Christian ancestry.

Rimbaud, as does any French citizen, has to reconcile his dual identity: Barbarian and Christian. Indeed, through the Republican teaching of national heroes, from Vercingétorix (the legendary barbarian) to Charles Martel, Charlemagne, Saint Louis (Louis IX), Jeanne d’Arc, Henri IV (civilized heroes, defenders of the Christian faith and French values), etc., all legendary characters in their deeds, and because of the perceived ability of the French people to rise from the oppression of the Ancien Régime, bringing to the world enlightenment through its Revolution and its manifesto, *La Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen*, the French have no doubt that they belong to an exceptional nation (if not a nation of exception[s]), a civilization of reference, envied by the whole world. It is this exceptional nature, rich in history and national heroes, that “Mauvais sang” questions and rejects in asserting such a shocking opposite view: “Il est bien évident que j’ai toujours été race inférieure” (124). Its narrator, by presenting himself as a despicable barbarian, a Gaul that is not the legendary Vercingétorix, lacking all the noble savage qualities attributed to the mythical defender of the Gaul, *de facto* betrays the French National Identity in its portrayal of the common chosen French ancestors:

Les Gaulois étaient les écorcheurs de bêtes, les brûleurs d’herbes les plus ineptes de leur temps.  
D’eux, j’ai : l’idolâtrie et l’amour du sacrilège; — oh! Tous les vices, colère, luxure, — magnifique, la luxure; — surtout mensonge et paresse. (124)<sup>10</sup>

Who are these Gaul so inept even in their crimes, so full of vices that no sensible people would want to claim them as theirs? By claiming the *vile* Gaul as his legitimate ancestors the narrator rejects the mythical Vercingétorix, and thus positions himself as an anti-Vercingétorix, that is an anti-Christ of the new French History. This rejection of the accepted glorified ancestor, and recreation of a lesser image of the ancestors, tantamount

<sup>9</sup> “France, eldest daughter of the Church” (267).

<sup>10</sup> “The Gauls are flayers of animals and the most inept scorchers of grass in their time. / From them I inherit: idolatry, and love of sacrilege, — oh! all vices: anger, lust — lust that is grandiose — and especially deceit and sloth” (265).

to Republican blasphemy, clarifies the narrator's outburst that we have previously quoted: "Si j'avais des antécédents à un point quelconque de l'histoire de France! / Mais non, rien. / Il est bien évident que j'ai toujours été race inférieure" (125).<sup>11</sup> Pressing his point, the narrator explains the Gallic defeat that brought the Roman victory by acknowledging their lack of organization and discipline, their preference to individual looting over the common good: "Je ne puis comprendre la révolte. Ma race ne se souleva jamais que pour piller: tels les loups à la bête qu'ils n'ont pas tuée" (125).<sup>12</sup> Rimbaud's narrator brings to light the myth of the Gaul as disorganized and unruly warriors because as such, they cannot be worthy of civilization: Christianity will have no hold on such low savages. In effect the narrator is both contradicting the Emperor's claim to the precious blood (are we all sharing the blood of these despicable savages?), as well as the imposed history as exemplified in Lavissee's textbook: "C'est au temps des Romains que les Gaulois se convertirent à la religion chrétienne" (*Histoire de France. Cours Moyen* [12]).<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the Gaul are willingly brought to civilization through their defeat: "Les Romains savaient faire beaucoup de choses que les Gaulois ne savaient pas faire. Mais les Gaulois étaient très intelligents. Ils apprirent à faire tout ce que faisaient les Romains. / Alors ils bâtirent de belles villes. Ils s'habillèrent comme les Romains."<sup>14</sup>

What Rimbaud is rejecting is not so much the French Gallic ancestry, an ancestry that he actually claims ("J'ai de mes ancêtres gaulois" [124]), that he may rightly share being born in the Ardennes, and which transpires in his physical characteristics (although, as he points out, he does not butter his hair: "Mais je ne me beurre pas ma chevelure" [124]. . . as a possible sign of civilization), but he denies his belonging to a worthy lineage: Rimbaud's narrator seems to reject the new French history perspective. Consequently, we can accept his recollection of a Catholic France, not as his own, but as taught through its numerous legendary examples, whether at school or at church; the narrator presents us a vision of a medley of French Christian history, both factual (with

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<sup>11</sup> See note #8 for translation.

<sup>12</sup> "I am unable to understand revolt. My race never rose up except to loot: like wolves over the animal they did not kill" (267).

<sup>13</sup> "It is during Roman times that the Gaul converted to the *Christian faith*" (my translation) .

<sup>14</sup> Ernest Lavissee, *Histoire de France. Cours Élémentaire*. Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1919 (8). "The Romans knew how to do a lot of things the Gaul did not. But the Gaul were very smart. They learned to do all the things the Romans did. Then, they built beautiful cities. They dressed like the Romans did" (my translation).

accurate-like historical and geographical references) and suggestive (displaying Christian beliefs tainted by pagan, superstitious practices). Instead of Lavoisier's Republican textbook, the narrator is sharing with his reader his Catholic teaching:

Je me rappelle l'histoire de la France fille aînée de l'Eglise. J'aurais fait, manant, le voyage de terre Sainte ; j'ai dans la tête des routes dans les plaines souabes, des vues de Byzance, des remparts de Solyme; le culte de Marie, l'attendrissement sur le crucifié s'éveille en moi parmi mille féeries profanes. — Je suis assis, lépreux, sur les pots cassés et les orties, au pied d'un mur rongé par le soleil. — Plus tard, reître, j'aurais bivouqué sous les nuits d'Allemagne.

[. . .]

Je ne me souviens pas plus loin que cette terre-ci et le christianisme. Je n'en finirais pas de me revoir dans ce passé. (125)<sup>15</sup>

The narrator's claim to ancestry, whether singular or plural, barbarian or Christian, shapes his identity, and thus, the identity of his readers, presenting a perverse retelling of French history, forfeiting all heroes and glory. The narrator's obvious attempts at escaping any resemblance to Rimbaud's austere Christian family traditions succeeds in separating him from the unwelcome domestic nest. He remains forever alone, separated, the only offspring of a chosen vile ancestor, never seen in the glory of Christ:

Je ne me souviens pas plus loin que cette terre-ci et le christianisme. Je n'en finirais pas de me revoir dans ce passé. Mais toujours seul; sans famille; même, quelle langue parlais-je? Je ne me vois jamais dans les conseils du Christ; ni dans les conseils des Seigneurs, — représentants du Christ. (125)<sup>16</sup>

There is nothing bewildering about the narrator's ancestral rejection since throughout his whole literary life, Arthur Rimbaud, the adolescent, seems to run away from his true ancestry. Wallace Fowlie's 1966 introduction to his translation of Rimbaud's work and correspondence provides a very attractive, succinct view of the poet's origins: "Jean-Nicolas-Arthur Rimbaud was born on October 20, 1854, in Charleville, a city in the Ardennes in northern France. His mother, Vitalie Cuif, came from a family of farmers. His father, Frédéric Rimbaud, was an infantry captain" (xxxii).

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<sup>15</sup> "I recall the history of France, eldest daughter of the Church. As a serf I would have made the journey to the Holy Land. In my mind I have roads through the Swabian plains, images of Byzantium and the ramparts of Jerusalem: the cult of Mary, pity for the Crucified One well up in me among a thousand profane visions. — I, a leper, am seated on shards and nettles, at the foot of a sun-devoured wall. — Later, as a mercenary, I would have bivouacked under German nights. / [. . .] / I don't remember farther back than this land and Christianity. I shall never have enough of seeing myself in that past" (267).

<sup>16</sup> "I don't remember farther back than this land and Christianity. I shall never have enough of seeing myself in that past. But always alone. Without a family. Yes, what was the language I spoke? I never see myself at the councils of Christ, or at the councils of Lords — representatives of Christ" (267).

Indeed, he is the son of an Ardennaise peasant woman, austere and devout, *une gauloise*, and a warrior, Captain Rimbaud, who “had volunteered in 1832 at the age of eighteen, rose through the ranks and distinguished himself as a Chasseur in the barbaric conquest of North Africa.”<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, both for Vitalie and her four children, Captain Rimbaud is mostly absent from their lives, home only to father a new child, and gone forever, rejoining his regiment in Cambrai in 1860. The influencing figure, the model for Rimbaud’s ancestry is his mother and her family lineage:

The hapless serfs and witless iconoclasts of *Une Saison en Enfer* are more particularly identifiable, in Rimbaud’s mental world, as the family of his mother, Vitalie Cuif. The Cuifs were probably descendants of the Remi tribe, which gave its name to Rheims. For centuries, they had tilled the stony fields of the Attigny district on the border of the Champagne and the Ardennes. They emerge, dimly, into recorded history towards the end of the eighteenth century. [. . .] Rimbaud’s mother [. . .] grew up in the middle of distant horizons. On a small lump in the landscape, the stolid, grey farmhouse built by her grandfather seemed to block the muddy lane that ran through the hamlet of Roche. (Robb, 4-5)

Considering his actual ancestry, why, then, would not Rimbaud want to escape his own history and create a narrator disclaiming any lineage to official history? As readers, we know that both Rimbaud and his narrator will be impotent in their attempts to change the course of official history since we are already warned: “Je ne puis comprendre la révolte. Ma race ne se souleva jamais [. . .]”(125).<sup>18</sup>

*Une saison en enfer* is the only work published by Rimbaud himself (printed in October 1873); Rimbaud refers to it as the “Livre Païen ou Livre Nègre” (“Pagan Book or Negro Book;” “nègre” being synonymous to uncivilized, savage, barbarian, maybe even Gallic) in a letter to his childhood friend, Ernest Delahaye, in May 1873. *Une saison en enfer*, as Enid Starkie puts it, “is difficult to interpret as a whole for Rimbaud has described, simultaneously, the past, the present and the future and has omitted all the connecting links.”<sup>19</sup> Above all, it is difficult to understand the narrator’s rebellion without

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<sup>17</sup> Graham Robb, *Rimbaud*. New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000 (7).

<sup>18</sup> See note #12 for translation.

<sup>19</sup> *Arthur Rimbaud*. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Direction Books, 1961 (288). According to Louis Forestier’s notes on “Mauvais sang” (Arthur Rimbaud, *Poésies. Une saison en enfer. Illuminations* [269-270]), in this first section of *Une saison en enfer* Rimbaud’s narrator reaches to the deepest and most remote aspects of what makes him as an individual to provide an explanation for what / who he is. Forestier breaks “Mauvais sang” into eight parts to clarify the narrator’s train of thoughts, following him in his interpretation of Michelet’s theory on inherited race: first, the narrator provides an explanation for his own nature (*I* [I am following Forrestier’s numbering]); then, he examines his past (*II*) and the place that he

understanding Rimbaud's relationship to his family. That the narrator of "Mauvais sang" is Rimbaud himself is a well accepted fact, as is the interpretation that "Mauvais sang" forms a sort of confession, tying Rimbaud more closely to his Christian background, his mother's faith. There is no doubt that Rimbaud's relationship to his mother is contentious, even if she is no longer depicted as "the mean, implacable, bigot, narrow minded, stingy, castrating all the dreams and all the freedoms of her husband and children."<sup>20</sup> In the letter to Delahaye previously mentioned, Rimbaud not only announces to his friend that he is working on some new work, but he also complains about his peasant's ties from the Ardennes, about his peasant ancestry, removed so far away from civilization. The loathing he feels for his barbaric surroundings is weighing on him while he is writing his new book from his mother's farm in Roche, not being able to escape the mother's nest, and is summarized in his loathing for his mother's land, his homeland. . . his piece of uncivilized Gaul:

Cher ami, tu vois mon existence actuelle dans l'aquarelle ci-dessous. O Nature! ô ma mère!

Quelle chérie! et quels monstres d'innocence, ces paysans. Il faut, le soir, faire deux lieux, et plus, pour boire un peu. La *Mother* m'a mis là dans un triste trou.

Je ne sais comment en sortir: j'en sortirai pourtant. Je regrette cet atroce Charlestown, l'Univers, la Bibliothè., etc. . . . Je travaille pourtant assez régulièrement, je fais de petites histoires en prose, titre général: Livre païen, ou Livre nègre. C'est bête et innocent. O innocence! innocence; innocence, innoc . . . fléau!

[ . . . ]

Je n'ai rien de plus à te dire, la contemplostate de la Nature m'absorculant tout entier. Je suis à toi, o Nature, o ma mère! (392)<sup>21</sup>

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ought to occupy in the world (III). Since this place does not exist (IV), he dreams of rebellion and wishes to belong to a primitive negro / savage race (V). When this primitive race is conquered, the narrator is tempted to surrender (VI), but he will opt to stay on the side line (VII). The final part seems to open itself to suicide or acceptance as two alternative possibilities (VIII).

<sup>20</sup> Claude Jeancolas, *Vitalie Rimbaud: Pour l'amour d'un fils*. Paris: Flammarion, 2004 (9, my translation). For a study of the mother and son relationship, see among the multitude: Françoise Lalande, *Madame Rimbaud*. Paris: P de la Renaissance, 1987; Pierre Michon, *Rimbaud le fils*. Paris: Gallimard, 1991. The new trend, as in Jeancolas's book, is to de-vilify Vitalie, and show her as a tough, but loving mother.

<sup>21</sup> Dear friend, you can see my present life in this enclosed drawing. O Nature! O mother of mine! / What a tough shit! And what monsters of innocence these peasants are! At night, to have a drink, you have to walk two leagues or more. The Mother has put me in this sad hole of a place. / I don't know how to get out of it, but I will. I miss that vile Charlestown, l'Univers (café), the library, etc. . . . Yet I work quite steadily, I am writing little stories in prose, general title: Pagan Book, or Negro Book. It is crazy and innocent. O innocence! innocence; innocence, innoc—plague! / [ . . . ] / I have nothing more to tell you, the contemplation of nature completely filling my ass. I am yours, O Nature, O mother! (393).

“Mauvais sang” seems to offer itself as the failure of the Anti-Vercingétorix, a non-hero, an unworthy savage, who fails to rebel, a non-Christian Joan of Arc (“— Comme Jeanne d’Arc! — [ . . . ] Je n’ai jamais été de ce peuple-ci; je n’ai jamais été chrétien” [128])<sup>22</sup> who accepts the new faith. Transformed into a new barbarian, changing race, but not fate, from a Gaul into a Negro who can be saved (“Je suis une bête, un nègre. Mais je puis être sauvé” [128]),<sup>23</sup> forced into baptism: “Il faut se soumettre au baptême, s’habiller, travailler” (129),<sup>24</sup> clothed just like Lavissee’s tamed Gaul, accepting all the values that he first rejected, the narrator is forced into Christianity by the invaders: “Les blancs débarquent” (129),<sup>25</sup> just like the Gaul were forced into civilization by the Romans. In the end, French history wins over the barbarians. . . in a sad about-face, the narrator embraces both the faith of his mother: “La raison m’est née. Le monde est bon. Je bénirai la vie. J’aimerai mes frères. Ce ne sont plus des promesses d’enfance. Ni l’espoir d’échapper à la vieillesse et à la mort. Dieu fait ma force, et je loue Dieu” (130),<sup>26</sup> as well as the new history, ending “Mauvais sang” with these words: “Ce serait la vie française, le sentier de l’honneur!” (131).<sup>27</sup> All the Gaul are defeated, the savages are swallowed up by civilization, whether Roman or White, only the glorious French history remains.

Rimbaud, too, in death is recouped by his mother’s faith: “Le 11 novembre 1891 après-midi, Vitalie reçut un télégramme lui annonçant la mort d’Arthur à 10 heures le matin. Sur-le-champ, elle se rendit à Charleville pour organiser les obsèques. Elle fit ouvrir le caveau familial. Elle rendit visite à l’abbé Gillet au presbytère de l’église Saint-Rémi pour demander un enterrement de première classe pour le 14 novembre à 10 heures 30” (Jeancolas, 257).<sup>28</sup> The family legend goes that Rimbaud died in a Christian state of mind.

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<sup>22</sup> “—Like Joan of Arc! — [ . . . ] I have never belonged to this race. I have never been a Christian” (271).

<sup>23</sup> “I am a beast, a savage. But I can be saved” (271).

<sup>24</sup> “We will have to be baptized and put on clothes and work” (271).

<sup>25</sup> “The white men are landing” (271).

<sup>26</sup> “Reason was born to me. The world is good. I will bless life. I will love my brothers. These are not the promises of a child. Nor the hope of escaping old age and death. God is my strength, and I give Him praise” (273).

<sup>27</sup> “That would be the French way of life, the path of honor!” (275).

<sup>28</sup> “On the afternoon of November 11, 1891, Vitalie received a telegram announcing Arthur’s death at 10 am. Immediately, she went to Charleville to organize his funeral. She had the family plot opened. She paid

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a visit to Father Gillet at Saint-Remi church rectory to ask for a first rate burial to be held November 14 at 10:30 am” (my translation).

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