THE THEME OF CHILDHOOD IN RIMBAUD

THE THEME OF CHILDHOOD IN SELECTED WRITINGS OF ARTHUR RIMBAUD

By

DOUGLAS IAN MACDONALD, B.A., McMASTER

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

October 1970

MASTER OF ARTS (1970)
(Romance Languages)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The Theme of Childhood in Selected Writings of Arthur Rimbaud

AUTHOR: Douglas Ian MacDonald, B.A., McMaster

SUPERVISOR: Dean A. W. Patrick

NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 108

SCOPE AND CONTENTS: A discussion of the theme of childhood in Rimbaud's work, along with an exploration into the many reasons for the transformation of this theme from a confident vision of the future in his early poetry, through a brief time of happy fulfillment, to a nostalgic memory of an idealized past in his later writings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

May I express my gratitude to Dean Arthur W. Patrick for the assistance he has rendered me in the preparation of this thesis. I should also like to thank Professor Guy Ducornet for the guidance he so kindly furnished in its early stages. Finally, my sincere thanks to my wife, Barbara , who encouraged me in my work, and who did the final typing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

If one examines the diverse and turbulent work of Rimbaud, one finds that the theme of childhood is developed through a sort of reverse chronological progression, through which Rimbaud's early vision of child-like innocence and joy gradually becomes a reality, and then only a memory, even while both time and his own literary skills are progressing. This strange development can be more clearly explained by dividing Rimbaud's work into three distinct yet interdependent stages.

The first stage of the reverse progression includes the imitative Latin practice assignments of Rimbaud's school-days and his first published attempts at original composition in French in the early 1870's. The child Rimbaud, just starting out in the poetic world, casts his gaze far ahead to the future, to a romantic fantasy world peopled by ideal or heroic characters (typifying or incarnating his own child-like desires) in which his passion for freedom, innocence and power can be realized. His poetic dreams, however, are far removed from the conditions of his real childhood: Rimbaud, trapped by the tyranny of his mother and the anti-intellectual dullness of provincial life in Charleville, feels condemned to an existence of narrowness, mediocrity and

impotence. As a result he takes refuge in poetry and in its capacity for creating a brighter future. In other words, he seeks a dream which is the exact reverse of reality.

In the second stage of Rimbaud's career the visions of the future, so far removed at first, become the actualities of the present. Rimbaud is flushed with the experience of personal freedom and the sense of power gained from his wandering through the Ardennes, and the poetry he writes at this time is a reflection of this new and happy state of mind. Using a light lilting sonnet form, influenced as we shall see by his doctrines of "objective" poetry and Voyance, Rimbaud is able to feel and express the surge of innocent delight that he could only dream about in his earlier poetry. The ingenuous chaos of the child, as an integral part of the famous "long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens", at last is at his command, and the impressionistic play of colour and light in the sonnets of this period shows that Rimbaud has also found a means of expression for his long-awaited happiness.

However, --and here the third stage begins--reality is never far away. Rimbaud soon falls back into his struggle with it, thus losing in the process his capacity for expressing the fervent joy of childhood. The reverse progression, momentarily halted by the actualized visions of the sonnets, begins once again to separate the young poet from his dreams. There are two major reasons for this new

frustration of Rimbaud's ambitions. On the one hand, he sees that he can never entirely escape the curse of the insensitive society which surrounds him--essentially the theme of Le Bateau ivre--and therefore must always be condemned to dissipate the poetic energy which he might otherwise use to fulfill his dreams in combating a distasteful reality. On the other hand, the child Rimbaud is himself growing into adulthood, and is finding that the future visions of innocence as well as the momentary fulfillment of those visions are now becoming only memories.

It is at this point, with the writing of his Illuminations, that Rimbaud finds himself on a new threshold. Behind him are the fond but frustrated dreams of the child; ahead is the exciting but uncertain prospect of adulthood. He is now aware of the reality of change: his visions of child-like innocence cannot hold against the ravages of social reality nor the progress of his own personal development. The Illuminations, in short, are Rimbaud's attempt to explain to himself the transformation of the world, especially the one which is living and growing within him.

Thus near the end of his poetic career, as he outlines and forecasts in Une Saison en enfer the frustrating struggles he has gone and will go through, Rimbaud finds that childhood has slipped by him, leaving almost no trace. Of course, Rimbaud tries to find substitutes for his lost childhood, such as Christianity, paganism, and primaeval Oriental wisdom,

but the reverse chronological progression has run its course. The bright future foreseen in the early poetry, after having been momentarily reached, becomes the faded past, and Rimbaud's well developed poetic powers are incapable of bringing it back. As a result, his former faith in poetry as the way to a free and innocent existence is abandoned forever.

Rimbaud's work, taken as a whole, shows that its author is in, but not of the world. Childhood, both as a personal dream and a poetic theme, always seems to be far removed from his actual state of existence: it is either held forth as a vision to be attained, or it is reflected upon nostalgically as a lost ambition of the past. In the end, the frustrations, the struggles and the anguish which Rimbaud's dream suffers at the hands of the world serve only to bring home to him the need for facing reality with more than a fantastic vision, more than a vague memory.

I

BOYHOOD WRITINGS, 1864-1870

In studying the first stages of Rimbaud's career, one must insist on the idealism of his youth: all his visions are projected toward the future, a pure and innocent future, where he will one day achieve heroic greatness. Throughout his early writings there is the appeal to the dream, to isolation, to romantic heroes and lonely bards. In short, it is the total fantasy of boyhood, looking to the day when its visionary imaginings will come true in a benign grown-up world.

All of this of course clashes with the reality of his actual childhood, which in a more negative sense is a source of his fantasy-- that is, the boy Rimbaud is confused by the tyranny of his mother, and finding no escape in the over-disciplined world of the school system, he seeks another road away from his fears, his uncertainty and his disappointments: the art of writing.

"Le soleil était encore chaud. . ."[1]

This first work, written in the years between 1862

---

[1] Textual quotations from this and all subsequent writings of Rimbaud will be taken from A. Rimbaud, Oeuvres Complètes (Paris, 1963). No page references will be given except in special instances. [hereafter cited as Pléiade.]

and 1864, is the one significant exception from Rimbaud's Latin schoolwork of a few years hence, as Mme Suzanne Bernard points out:

> . . .ni Mme Rimbaud, ni les professeurs d'Arthur n'auraient accepté cette écriture négligée, ces nombreux pâtés d'encre, pas plus que l'impertinence d'un tel texte.[2]

The main interest for the reader is Rimbaud's portrayal of parental figures and the hidden rebellion of the model student, of the normally docile well-behaved boy. Here also are the beginnings of Rimbaud's hatred of academic intellectual effort through which, as he sees it, the spontaneity of the child is effectively stifled.

Stylistically, "Le soleil était encore chaud. . ." is energetic and highly descriptive. However, Rimbaud's penchant for poetic expression tends to get away from him at many points: in the Prologue, for example, there are many long clumsy sentences (especially the first one) along with some self-conscious and precocious phrasing (such as "Le vent rafraîchissant, c'est-à-dire une brise fraîche . . ."). Yet in spite of these and other textual faults, Rimbaud still paints a picture of a benevolent natural world in which he, the child, is protected.

One cannot say that Rimbaud writes with any originality on the theme of the child's harmonious relations with

---

[2] Rimbaud, Oeuvres (Paris, 1960), p. 357. [hereafter cited as Garnier.]

the universe, but as a child he takes up with enthusiasm a fairly traditional expression of joy and wonder. Even from the opening passages the ideal rules through the power of security, sleep and dream:

> Je m'endormis, non sans m'être abreuvé de l'eau du ruisseau.

Nature in the Prologue is perfect, and this perfection is extended into part II with the portrait of an idealized home life. We see a perfectly normal household situation ("Mes parents étaient peu riches, mais très honnêtes. . ."), a perfectly strong manly father, a perfectly even-tempered, submissive, yet effectively organized mother-- and Rimbaud himself fits perfectly into this dream: "J'étais le plus aimé." In this dream world Rimbaud can work out and express his innermost childhood desires without fear of punishment or reprisal. As a result of this newfound freedom in writing, Rimbaud's darker thoughts and resentments can emerge from their place behind an innocent façade.

We see first the torture of the child trying to do divisions for his father for a reward, revealing how Rimbaud views the convention that one must prove one's worth in order to achieve success or gain a reward. As an extension of this, he objects to the social demand to be "reçu": but, still fearing at this point any significant break from social convention, he opts for a more acceptable

form of rebellion-- a life of leisure: "Moi, je ne veux pas de place; je serai rentier." His innocence is always oriented toward the future where he hopes it can flower and bring him the freedom he now enjoys only in his imagination and his writing.

The immediate clairvoyant insight of the child into the futility of applied study is also evident, especially in reference to classical languages, which in effect interfere with his capacity for fantasy:

> Que sait-on si les Latins ont existé? C'est peut-être quelque langue forgée; et, quand même ils auraient existé, qu'ils me laissent rentier, et conservent leur langue pour eux!

Generally, then, Rimbaud is illustrating the child's objection to the impositions of the real world:

> Quel mal leur ai-je fait pour qu'ils [les Latins] me flanquent au supplice?

As "Le soleil était encore chaud. . ." comes to a close Rimbaud moves from a bewildered and resentful attitude to one which is suspicious and defensive. He transforms his outer image of the model student to his private one of the rebel who hates the mania for everyone to have "une place" and wishes to have his dreams for the leisure life come true. It is also in the final paragraphs that one notices a change in Rimbaud's style from that of a fantasy tale to that of a journal or a diary, where it seems that real traumatic events in his personal life are alluded to: "on vous appelle animal, ce qui n'est pas vrai, bout

d'homme, etc." Rimbaud is turned abruptly from his dreams of the future by the inexorable pressure of the present, with all its attendant miseries. This sudden switch in both style and mood is an indication of the approach of Rimbaud's later writings, in which reality always encroaches on and crushes his innocence or child-like wonder.

Thus beneath the ingenuous and clumsy style of a child we find indications of later preoccupations, obsessions, hates and fears.

In Rimbaud's Latin verse compositions, many of the themes discussed above are repeated and expanded upon, though in a more limited sense, as they are in fact imitative practice assignments written for his instructors at the collège of Charleville. However, they lend important insights into the visionary world of his formative years.

"Ver erat. . ."[3]

Here we find more anti-school pro-nature poetry:

> Je saisis l'occasion; je gagnai les riantes campagnes, oubliant tout... Loin de l'étude, et sans nul souci, de douces joies récréèrent mon esprit fatigué.

In addition, Rimbaud gives the first indications of his fascination for voyaging ("vagabondages"), for the world of escape to be found in wandering: "Enfant, je ne cherchais

---

[3] Rendered as [Le Songe de l'Ecolier] in Pléiade, p. 6. Quotations from the Latin verses will be from the French prose translations provided by the editors.

pas que les vaines flâneries de la campagne: mon jeune coeur contenait de plus hautes aspirations." For Rimbaud's young mind, the whole voyage motif holds a symbolic fascination, as underlined here by the vision of the idyllic youth being carried off by doves to a realm of light, with all its implications of the celestial and transcendental:

> Et cette lumière-là n'est pas du tout semblable à la sombre lumière qui, mélangée d'ombre, obscurcit nos regards. Sa céleste origine n'a rien de la lumière terrestre.

However, when Phoebus appears to this laurelled youth and cries, "TU SERAS POËTE!", it is not to be taken as a prophecy of Rimbaud's future occupation. Rimbaud is still only a child fascinated by the romantic concepts of the bard and the troubadour, as well as by the accounts of gods, bright heavens, destinies and dreams. He is no different from many other imaginative boys of many other times, except perhaps in the intensity of his interest for the fulfillment of his childhood fantasies. The bright future is always before his eyes at this point in his life, as he yearns for the achievement of an ambition he is as yet incapable of attaining.

L'Ange et l'Enfant

In this poem the mysteries of religion and death are viewed with the emotional, the sentimental and imaginative eyes of the child-- far removed from adult intellectualism.

There is a basic assurance in death that is both satisfying and even attractive for a boy like Rimbaud:

> . . .après les cadeaux de sa mère, il reçoit ceux des habitants du Ciel.

Rimbaud also brings out the theme of the bitter life on earth and uses it as a contrast to the sublime fate of the child in the poem. But it is still a sentimental and idealized view of "la vie amère" which is painted by the angel who visits the sleeping child in the poem:

> 'Eh quoi? ton front pur serait flétri par la vie amère, et les soucis troubleraient de pleurs tes yeux d'azur? et l'ombre du cyprès chasserait les roses de ton visage?'

Rimbaud can perhaps sympathize with the angel's insistence on the pains of worldly existence, but he cannot feel deeply its implications because of lack of experience in the realities and misfortunes of real life. The difficulties with his mother at this time cannot really be called misfortunes in the strictest sense, because Rimbaud has lived all his life with her since birth. His eventual revolt is caused by his mother's tyranny weighing down upon his quickly awakening conscience.

In any case, the melodramatic verse form and the heavy romantic flavour of supernatural visitations on a sad individual who is beset by the cruel world are very soothing to the emotional needs of an increasingly unhappy and insecure youth like Rimbaud.

Combat d'Hercule et du fleuve Acheloüs

This poem can be combined with its companion piece Jugurtha in order to emphasize Rimbaud's interest in the romantic hero who is predestined to fight for the rights and happiness of mankind, and therefore is put through all kinds of harrowing adventures in order to prove that fate is on his side. Both poems illustrate the basic struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil, with the former always emerging the victors.

There can be little doubt of Rimbaud's deep interest in the passion, the dedication, and above all the destiny of these archetypal romantic heroes, since his sister Isabelle has mentioned that he spent many spare hours composing his own adventure stories. The main point is, however, that through Rimbaud's love for the fantasy world of adventure he is widening his vision of destiny, his yearning for the future and all its promises-- and is thereby setting himself up for his eventual disappointment which will lead him into the arduous struggles present in his later verse.

Jésus à Nazareth

In this, the last of the Latin series, there is an evocation of Jesus, the ideal child, the ultimate predestined hero in the nascent stage:

> 'Qui est cet enfant?. . . .Son visage montre une beauté mêlée de gravité; la force jaillit de son bras.'

This is a most significant poem, because it combines

the strength and steadfastness of the hero with the beauty and innocence of the child. The boy Jesus incarnates an heroic destiny, and also symbolizes the spiritual fulfillment of life which is to become a major obsession for Rimbaud in his later writings. Thus we can almost feel the fervour of Rimbaud's childhood wishes as Jesus' mother whispers her supplication:

'Grand Dieu, que ta sainte volonté soit faite!'

An important thing to remember about these early works is that Rimbaud's mind or inner thoughts are never revealed, that is, in the accepted sense that one's poetry is an expression of some inner being; one should not take the boyhood dream theory too far. On the other hand, Rimbaud's skill in the adaptation and development of more or less standard literary topics gives some indication of his preferences and his sympathies: otherwise one would read his Latin verse as an interesting collection of school projects and leave it at that. In view of his later flowering, then, it is useful to see into some of the beginnings, however dim, of his visions. Rimbaud, at this stage, is still able to look to the future with the hope that his childhood aspirations can be carried forward to fruition, that his inner kingdom, where he reigns as hero, where he can even determine the destiny of that hero, can eventually be brought out to help transform and ameliorate a frightening

reality.

With the above points in mind, we may now turn to the study of Rimbaud's earliest original poetic attempts. It will be sufficient to consider only two of these works--namely, Les Etrennes des Orphelins and Soleil et Chair--to see that he is still preoccupied by themes similar to those of the Latin verse of his schooldays. In addition, Rimbaud continues the imitative pattern of his Latin writings by following the themes, imagery and forms of the poetry of his contemporaries, such as Hugo and Banville.

Les Etrennes des Orphelins

In La Revue pour Tous of September 1869, Hugo published one of his most well-known poems, Les Pauvres Gens. Since Rimbaud published his first major "original" work in the same review in January of the following year, it is safe to assume that the similarities in style and in theme are not wholly coincidental. Let us compare the introductory lines from each of the two works; first, Hugo:

> Il est nuit. La cabane est pauvre, mais bien close.
> Le logis est plein d'ombre et l'on sent quelque chose
> Qui rayonne à travers ce crépuscule obscur.
> Des filets de pêcheur sont accrochés au mur.
> Au fond, dans l'encoignure où quelque humble vaisselle
> Aux planches d'un bahut vaguement étincelle,
> On distingue un grand lit aux longs rideaux tombants.
> Tout près, un matelas s'étend sur de vieux bancs,
> Et cinq petits enfants, nid d'âmes, y sommeillent.[4]

---

[4] La Légende des Siècles (Paris: 1950), p. 647.

Then, to Rimbaud:

> La chambre est pleine d'ombre; on entend vaguement
> De deux enfants le triste et doux chuchotement.
> Leur front se penche, encore alourdi par le rêve,
> Sous le long rideau blanc qui tremble et se soulève...
> -- Au dehors les oiseaux se rapprochent frileux;
> Leur aile s'engourdit sous le ton gris des cieux;
> Et la nouvelle Année, à la suite brumeuse,
> Laissant traîner les plis de sa robe neigeuse,
> Sourit avec des pleurs, et chante en grelottant...

Similarities in phrasing are immediately evident, for example, "Le logis est plein d'ombre. . ." in line two of Hugo and "La chambre est pleine d'ombre. . ." in line one of Rimbaud. Both passages begin by depicting the same scene of evening obscurity and of children huddled in a room. The alexandrine form of Hugo is also closely followed by Rimbaud, even down to the couplets of alternating masculine and feminine rhymes.

However, one soon notices more differences than similarities between their respective poetic efforts. For example, Hugo concentrates his description on the room where the children are peacefully sleeping. Rimbaud, on the other hand, shifts to a description of the cold outside scene, connecting it with the portrait of the two orphans, awake and sadly shivering in the chill of the night. Rimbaud's style also shows some refinements on the phrasing of Hugo. For example:

> Le rêve maternel, c'est le tiède tapis,
> C'est le nid cotonneux. . . .

Compare this to Hugo's rather less colourful "nid d'âmes".[5] In fact, at times Rimbaud shows some of the originality and the vitality which is to become a distinguishing characteristic of his later work:

> Dans quelque songe étrange où l'on voyait joujoux,
> Bonbons habillés d'or, étincelants bijoux,
> Tourbillonner, danser une danse sonore. . . .

These lines are part of Rimbaud's increasing attempts to find his own poetic voice, as well as to improve upon those who are inspiring him to write.

Thematically, however, Rimbaud is still the imitator: he is still expressing the romantic motif of the sad weariness of life which is eventually relieved by death and recompensed through heavenly grace. His touching scenes of poverty, of misfortune, of the orphaned child, are affected and contrived, influenced still by the formal sculptured elegance of his Parnassian contemporaries:

> Près du lit maternel, sous un beau rayon rose,
> Là, sur le grand tapis, resplendit quelque chose...
> Ce sont des médaillons argentés, noirs et blancs,
> De la nacre et du jais aux reflets scintillants;
> Des petits cadres noirs, des couronnes de verre,
> Ayant trois mots gravés en or: 'A NOTRE MERE!'

Still, in both the personal and the poetic realms, Rimbaud has his child-like vision turned toward the future. His flattering letter to Banville, the leading Parnassian poet of the day (Pléiade, p. 255), expresses the confidence

---

[5] See in this regard J.P. Houston, The Design of Rimbaud's Poetry (New Haven: 1963), p. 9.

he feels in his destiny as a poet, while Les Etrennes des Orphelins expresses the belief in the joy of eternal reward, in the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. For Rimbaud, at this stage, beleaguered innocence is always rewarded by future promise.

Soleil et Chair

Once again we have an imitation, a typically romantic myth poem. It begins by describing the union of the sun and the earth, the symbolic father and mother figures from which life is both created and perpetuated. Man is portrayed as the primary beneficiary of mother Earth, living in innocence and joy as the suckling of the great goddess of nature, Cybèle:

> L'Homme suçait, heureux, sa mamelle bénie,
> Comme un petit enfant, jouant sur ses genoux.
> -- Parce qu'il était fort, l'Homme était chaste et doux.

Man soon changes from this primitive state, however. He acquires the faculty of reason and thereby acquires knowledge-- but at the expense of his former joyful innocence:

> Misère! Maintenant il dit: Je sais les choses,
> Et va, les yeux fermés et les oreilles closes.

Finally, Rimbaud calls upon Venus and prays for the return of love which alone can bring renewal to the earth and save man from the misery he has visited upon himself: "Le Monde a soif d'amour: tu viendras l'apaiser."

The theme is a common one. It praises the delights of the flesh ("O splendeur de la chair! ô splendeur idéale!"),

emphasizes the regenerative power of love in opposition to the more rational aspects of life, all against the background of a classical mythical setting.

However, Soleil et Chair reveals a new facet of Rimbaud's childhood vision which goes beyond his imitative verse form, that is, the portrayal of Woman as the ideal figure, the Venus at the centre of the cosmos, whose infinite power of love can help him realize his destiny and forget the distress of his present existence:

> -- Splendide, radieuse, au sein des grandes mers
> Tu surgiras [Vénus] , jetant sur le vaste Univers
> L'Amour infini dans son infini sourire!
> Le Monde vibrera comme une immense lyre
> Dans le frémissement d'un immense baiser!

The power of Rimbaud's imagination, directed toward the future, still holds sway. The child in him is constructing a dream world unobstructed and according to his own wants: "Chair, Marbre, Fleur, Vénus, c'est en toi que je crois!"

This call to faith is intensely pagan, and is an indication of the same theme which is to appear in Une Saison en enfer only three or four years later. Thus we come upon the first hints of the theme of religious struggle which is so vital a part of his later attempts to re-establish the innocence and happy fervour of his childhood:

> Aphrodité marine! -- Oh! la route est amère
> Depuis que l'autre Dieu nous attelle à sa croix. . . .

Rimbaud's own poetic voice is getting stronger. His

primary concern is for innocence, the basic ingredient both of man's misfortune and of his happiness-- that is to say, the innocent orphans of Les Etrennes des Orphelins, exposed to misfortune, are victims of the world; rational man in Soleil et Chair, since he has lost his innocence and his capacity for love, is a victim of himself. Notwithstanding, Rimbaud believes in innocence and vision, because for him they still have the power to lead one to a state of true felicity, be it heaven in the former, or union with the Mother of the Universe in the latter instance.

Rimbaud wishes to remain a child, to remain both an object of pity (an orphan) and an agent of hope (a child of Venus). For him the future still holds forth the ideal, still provides him with an avenue to realizing his childhood visions. It remains for him, however, to break from traditional and imitative verse forms, to find a poetic voice which will express his own wishes, his own dreams and hopes. And as time goes on Rimbaud finds that misfortune, unlike the way it is portrayed in Les Etrennes des Orphelins and Soleil et Chair, is not pathetic, it is brutal; it is not universal or abstract, it is personal and very concrete. Thus the accepted or common forms of poetry are inadequate both to his vision and to his own battle with reality. Rimbaud's particular visions and conflicts must be dealt with in his own particular way.

II

FULFILLMENT AND FRUSTRATION

The poems to be considered here are the ones Rimbaud wrote in the latter part of 1870 and the first months of 1871, after his first two flights from Charleville and before the drafting of one of his most significant works, Le Bateau ivre.

They divide themselves into two distinct groups. The first consists mainly of sonnets which celebrate the freedom and the happiness that Rimbaud experienced in his wanderings through the Ardennes countryside, those brief moments of liberated imagination that brought him closest to his childhood dream. However, with his return to Charleville, "le visage même, nu et crispé, de 'l'enfant de colère'" (Garnier, p. 32) shows forth, and Rimbaud's poetry once again expresses frustration, anguish and bitterness.

Although certainly not a poetic innovation, the sonnet form, by its brevity, its inherent lyrical qualities, and its capacity for concentrating moods or images, lends itself to Rimbaud's growing need for a more personal, more original form of poetic expression in order to celebrate the achievement of his childhood visions. Their brief spurts of emotion and vivid moments of impressionistic

colour correspond perfectly with Rimbaud's desire to chronicle the child's chaotic and wondering relations with the world.

Au Cabaret-Vert

The first thing we notice about this poem is its lightness, its freedom, as opposed to the heavier and more sculptured verse of Rimbaud's imitative days. The many short vowel sounds and brief phrases, coupled with run-on lines make the verse move quickly but smoothly, and give the impression of happy satisfaction:

> Bienheureux, j'allongeai les jambes sous la table
> Verte: je contemplai les sujets très naïfs
> De la tapisserie. . . .

Partly becuase of the brevity of the verse form, and partly because of Rimbaud's new mood, this sonnet has a much more personal flair to it. There are no long or superfluous descriptions; instead, Rimbaud gives only the needed details; for example: "J'entrais à Charleroi./ --Au Cabaret-Vert . . .". Then, with forthright frankness, he catalogues some fleeting impressions of the café. We are given only glimpses of the food served to him, the natural endowments of the serving girl, and the glowing of the beer in the sunlight. In short, Rimbaud is painting a picture of a very adult atmosphere, complete with a boisterous maidservant and the enjoyment of beer in a café; but he approaches it directly, just as a child might do, describing only detached

details which he notices with few rational adult pretentions interfering.

The energetic and generous use of colour and light--the green café, the pink ham, the sunlight heightening the golden colour of the beer--also serves to emphasize the delight and wonder with which Rimbaud experiences the smaller pleasures of life. It is as if Rimbaud, through his direct and ingenuous perception, is discovering the world, and is hardly able to contain his excitement about all the little things that catch his attention and keep him fascinated.

Le Dormeur du Val

Although it differs thematically from the happier Au Cabaret-Vert, this piece is an excellent illustration of the tone of impressionistic innocence that pervades many of the sonnets.

From the beginning there is the feeling of the calm vitality of nature:

> C'est un trou de verdure où chante une rivière
> . . . . . .
> . . .où le soleil, de la montagne fière,
> Luit: c'est un petit val qui mousse de rayons.

With these few details Rimbaud sets the scene into which he introduces the young soldier who seems to be asleep, and whose pale aspect both contrasts with and complements the quiet intensity of the colours of nature which surround him:

> . . .il est étendu dans l'herbe, sous la nue,
> Pâle dans son lit vert où la lumière pleut.

It is only with the first tercet that anything

strange or irregular intrudes. Small phrases such as "un enfant malade", "il fait un somme", and "il a froid" mark the first notes of disharmony between the soldier and his surroundings.

In the second tercet, the soldier is quickly isolated from the vital aspects of nature which manifested themselves at the beginning. He cannot smell the flowers; his chest does not rise or fall in harmony with the life-giving sun which shines on him; and finally, Rimbaud reveals the truth with a strangely understated note of finality: "Il a deux trous rouges au côté droit".

Most critics tend to see in Le Dormeur du Val a condemnation of the horrors of war. This is perhaps true; however, the interpretation of this poem comes after the fact, that is, the sonnet is open to analysis and explanation, but it still remains an impressionistic and above all naïve description of certain phenomena. In other words, Rimbaud tells us of what he sees, and nothing more: as would a child, he takes a straightforward and essentially innocent view of the world, leaving the reader to fill in interpretations and meanings from the impressions given.

This is not to say, however, that Rimbaud is ignorant of the powers of his craft. For instance, he uses to great effect contrasts of light between the bright sun and the pale face of the dead soldier, as well as the life and death contrasts of colour between the "trou de verdure"

of nature in the first line and the "deux trous rouges" of death in the last. However, they are simply impressionistic devices to heighten the effect and the impact of the poem: Rimbaud describes the scene with a child's innocence, and leaves the moralizing to others.

Tête de Faune

This is another example of Rimbaud's impressionism, and one which can serve further to illustrate an important step in the development of his writing. When we encounter such lines as "Dans la feuillée incertaine et fleurie" and "Sa lèvre éclate en rires sous les branches", it is obvious that Rimbaud has departed from the sculptured grandeur of his imitative Parnassian verse. He now shows originality and skill in forming an impressionistic portrait of a simple natural scene. In addition, he reveals a quite modern tendency to concentrate his description on certain details, showing that one never sees the complete picture:

> Un faune effaré montre ses deux yeux
> Et mord les fleurs rouges de ses dents blanches.

All we really see or know of the faun is what Rimbaud happens to notice: its eyes, and the contrast of colour between the red flowers and the white teeth. It is the fragmented, dream-like quality of a child's perception, as Rimbaud explores his long-awaited world of innocence and happiness, achieved through personal liberation from the tyranny of provincial life in Charleville, and through poetic liberation from the

limitations of the older or more traditionally accepted forms of poetry.

Ma Bohème

This is undoubtedly the most significant poem in this series of sonnets, in that Rimbaud stands back and tries to define in general terms the ideal of the wandering life, and how it has finally brought him to a state of being which is closest to the simple joy of childhood.

The journey described here is much more self-conscious, much more imaginative than real, much more a song of celebration for the joys of love, dream and freedom:

> Je m'en allais, les poings dans mes poches crevées.

The poetic visions of earlier days are actualized: Rimbaud has become the heroic figure ("J'allais sous le ciel, Muse! et j'étais ton féal"), in communion with nature ("--Mes étoiles au ciel avaient un doux frou-frou"), free to offer his child-like love to a friendly world ("Oh! là là! que d'amours splendides j'ai rêvées!"). In addition, poetry has become the field for Rimbaud's imagination, for the attainment of all his long-standing desires:

> --Petit Poucet rêveur, j'égrenais dans ma course
> Des rimes. Mon auberge était à la Grande-Ourse.

Rimbaud has found at last the child-like joy of singing through his growing poetic powers. He thus finds fulfillment for another of his childhood ambitions, that of being the bard who celebrates the wonder of everything around him,

"rimant au milieu des ombres fantastiques".

Rimbaud also portrays himself as materially poor ("mes souliers blessés"), but imaginatively rich ("De rosée à mon front, comme un vin de vigueur"), thus fulfilling another aspect of the child's relation to the world, in which the imagined provides more satisfaction than the concrete.

As always, however, Rimbaud is aware of the short-lived duration of his dream, as the sub-title "(Fantaisie)" implies. One cannot forget that Ma Bohème describes only a wished-for state, even though Rimbaud talks as if he has at last found his long-sought formula for happiness. His fantasy is beginning to show signs of strain.

It is at this point that Rimbaud's poetry undergoes a profound transformation, revealing how the isolated and private visions of the sonnets are forced open and invaded by the external world, which he finds he cannot now blissfully ignore. The repulsive realities of this outer world show themselves in four different ways, and in four different poems. First, there is sedentary bourgeois life (Les Assis); second, parental interference (Les Poëtes de sept ans); third, the coldness of woman as opposed to her imagined sympathy (Les Soeurs de Charité); and fourth, the Church and its obligations (Les Premières Communions).

Les Assis

Here, instead of light, singing verse, there is a straightforward, even a stark description of immobile, domesticated old men and the horror they inspire.

Even from the first stanza, Rimbaud uses cold clinical terms, such as "fémurs" and "sinciput", along with the harsh grating sounds of phrases such as "hargnosités vagues" and "les floraisons lépreuses" to give more force to the distaste he feels in describing these strange and almost inhuman old creatures.

There are still some similarities between this poem and Rimbaud's earlier sonnets. For example, he concentrates on certain minute details in order to create an overall impression, in this instance describing almost microscopically the parts of the body used by the old men in sitting down and in being seated.

Here, however, the similarity with his earlier, lighter verse ends; in fact, almost all the joyous elements of Rimbaud's sonnets are corrupted into their debased forms. The most obvious example of debasement comes in stanza two, where Rimbaud emphasizes the perverse form of love manifested between the old men and their chairs, again with that penchant for impressionistic detail:

> Ils ont greffé dans des amours épileptiques
> Leur fantasque ossature aux grands squelettes noirs
> De leur chaises. . . .

Unlike the innocent delight inspired by the women in Au

Cabaret-Vert, the love revealed here is bitter and confined by the narrow mode of life of the old men:

> Ces vieillards ont toujours fait tresse avec leurs sièges. . . .

Rimbaud also contrasts the lively happiness of his sonnets to the feeling of disease and sickness that pervades the existence of the characters in Les Assis: "C'est le naufrage. . . ."

It is, in general, a portrait of a narrow, unimaginative and decadent world, and as a result a threat to Rimbaud's child-fantasies:

> Puis ils ont une main invisible qui tue:
> Au retour, leur regard filtre ce venin noir
> Qui charge l'oeil souffrant de la chienne battue,
> Et vous suez pris dans un atroce entonnoir.

In this sombre portrait Rimbaud uses techniques of directness and honesty similar to those he had employed in his sonnets. However, the sense of innocence, the feeling of freedom, power and self-worth are, if not absent, at least weakened and threatened by an external reality which musters all its strength to destroy the child's inner joy. Hence the horror we feel at the description of these wasted old men and the fear which is inspired by the "atroce entonnoir" of their lives.

Les Poëtes de sept ans

With this poem we are taken from the stifling conformity of Les Assis to the tyranny of parental interference:

enter "la Mère", hovering over the young boy, handing out directives from the "livre du devoir", all the while failing to notice in the innocent and obedient eyes of her son "L'âme de son enfant livrée aux répugnances".

It is a terrible scene of moral repression, guilt, and deceit running under an apparently calm surface:

> Tout le jour il suait d'obéissance; très
> Intelligent; pourtant des tics noirs, quelques
> traits
> Semblaient prouver en lui d'âcres hypocrisies!

All the rest of the poem shows, in its tone, its rhythm and its imagery, the deep effects of this situation on the mind of a child who is naturally loving, intelligent and compassionate. The description of dark, damp hallways, where the sad and frightened boy combats through perverse gestures all the darkness which is in him, emphasizes the sombre existence he is forced to lead:

> Dans l'ombre des couloirs aux tentures moisies,
> En passant il tirait la langue, les deux poings
> A l'aine, et ses yeux fermés voyait des points.

It is also significant that he shuts himself in the latrine to think, "tranquille et livrant ses narines": Rimbaud shows how the child has to find refuge in more repulsive places so as to liberate his imagination. As an extension of this, the child fraternizes with slum children in order once again to express his natural capacity for love and charity:

> Ces enfants seuls étaient ses familiers.

And finally the child acts out his sexual fantasies with the little girl next door, so as to suffer her wrath and reaffirm to himself his own existence:

> --Et, par elle meurtri des poings et des talons,
> Remportait les saveurs de sa peau dans sa chambre.

The point of all these episodes, which the Mother sees only as "pitiés immondes" and naughty acts, is that they are defences. Only through indulging in less respected pursuits can the child hope to fend off parental pressures to become respectable, and hence stifled, like "les Assis". For Rimbaud, freedom is the most important ingredient for the fulfillment of his child-wish, and for the boy in Les Poëtes de sept ans, freedom from parental interference is found in writing:

> A sept ans, il faisait des romans sur la vie
> Du grand désert, où luit la Liberté ravie,
> Forêts, soleils, rives, savanes! . . .

Here are the two great forces vying for the life of the child: "la Mère", with her "livre du devoir", and "la Liberté", found through "des romans sur la vie".

The conflict between these two forces is sharpened by the child's relations with God. For the young poet of seven years, God signifies only dry Bible-reading sessions at Church, where he is "pommadé" as if taking part in some absurd masque or play. Instead of spiritual freedom, he finds only "les blafards dimanches de décembre".

It is at this point that Rimbaud makes his most significant statement about childhood and its values:

> Il [the child] n'aimait pas Dieu; mais les hommes,
> qu'au soir fauve,
> Noirs, en blouse, il voyait rentrer dans le faubourg
> Où les crieurs, en trois roulements de tambour,
> Font autour des édits rire et gronder les foules.

Here is the ultimate childhood dream--to achieve joy, freedom, and the capacity to celebrate life, even in adulthood, rather than to undergo social, parental or religious oppression. As was illustrated in the sonnets, a child approaches life openly and with wonder; and like the "crieurs" described above, he wants this love of life to grow and be communicated to all through his own unique performance of happiness.

However, since the reality of parental dominance is always present, always threatening, the child's thirst for freedom culminates in his ship-fantasy, in the ever-present temptation to embark upon the journey to solitude and renewed innocence,

> . . .seul, et couché sur des pièces de toile
> Ecrue, et pressentant violemment la voile!

In the final analysis, Rimbaud is recounting the frustration, the repression and the fantasies that the child is finally forced to use in order to defend his solitude, his imagination and ultimately his happiness.

Les Soeurs de Charité

To carry on from the study of the malevolent effects of parents, especially on the maternal side, we now turn to the subject of women in general, and the role they

play in frustrating Rimbaud's child-wish.

Once again, Rimbaud shows how reality is far removed from one's desires or dreams. In the first two stanzas we see a confident and energetic young man, much like the one in Au Cabaret-Vert or Ma Bohême. However, in stanza three, the world has dealt out its "blessure éternelle et profonde", indicating how youth experiences the terror of loneliness "devant les laideurs de ce monde".

Thus in the midst of his shattered dreams, he seeks the love of woman as the ideal salve for his wounds:

> Amour, appel de vie et d'action.

The ideals of freedom and joy seem close at hand, expressible through the sister of charity. But woman in reality proves to be a disappointment: "Mais, ô Femme, monceau d'entrailles". She too has been wounded by the world, she too has gone through a childhood of guilt, shame and mistrust. The youth finds only cold and darkness in place of the expected warmth and light.

> Tes haines, tes torpeurs fixes, tes défaillances,
> Et tes brutalités souffertes autrefois,
> Tu nous rends tout, ô Nuit pourtant sans malveillances,
> Comme un excès de sang épanché tous les mois.

From the sun which gleamed through the beer glass in Au Cabaret-Vert we are plunged into a night of hate, stupidity and cruelty that no one seems to be able to combat; and woman, having been exposed to this night, is incapable of giving the light of love or charity to the youth. On

the contrary,

> C'est toi qui pends à nous, porteuse de mamelles,
> Nous te berçons, charmante et grave Passion.

Because of disappointment, the love-wish, the desire for purity through woman is changed to a death-wish, which seems to be the only way for the youth to find his goal: "O Mort mystérieuse, ô soeur de charité!"

This poem cannot be considered as one of Rimbaud's better efforts, since it is somewhat overdone, with apostrophes to various symbolic figures ("Femme", "Vérité", "Mort"), and with a romanticized concentration on the personal torture of the youth ("son front saignant"). However, Les Soeurs de Charité expresses a basic element of frustration in Rimbaud's child-wish, that is, the transformation of woman, who is the one hope of love and freedom, into still another part of the society which misunderstands his quest.

It remains now to see the frustration of Rimbaud's child-wish as related to the Church.

Les Premières Communions

With his usual flair for directness, Rimbaud begins by painting an unflattering picture of Church solemnities, especially in relation to dull provincial life:

> Vraiment, c'est bête, ces églises des villages
> . . . . . .
> La pierre sent toujours la terre maternelle.

What is more important, however, is the description of the inner tortures of the young girl on the eve of her first

communion. Again there is the sense of repression and of terrifying guilt as the girl discovers her sexual feelings toward Christ ("un vol d'amour"), and fears not being able to follow the example of the Virgin Mary. And yet "la Vierge n'est plus que la vierge du livre"; that is, the potential richness of the girl's communion experience is stifled by moral concerns and "holy" conventions:

> Et vient la pauvreté des images, que cuivre
> L'ennui, l'enluminure atroce et les vieux bois.

In all of part IV, for example, Rimbaud emphasizes the contrast between the warm glow of the child's emotions and the religious conventions of cold chastity:

> Des curiosités vaguement impudiques
> Epouvantent le rêve aux chastes bleuités. . . .

Then, in part V, the juxtaposition of the stark colours--black, white and blue symbolizing the quiet of the night which heightens the intense moral pressure on the girl, and red symbolizing the natural flow of life and desire--serves to emphasize the tense and contradictory forces which are at work in the girl's mind:

> A son réveil,--minuit,--la fenêtre était blanche.
> Devant le sommeil bleu des rideaux illunés,
> La vision la prit des candeurs de dimanche;
> Elle avait rêvé rouge. . . .

As did the little boy in Les Poëtes de sept ans, she seeks solitude in the most unusual place:

> Elle passa sa nuit sainte dans les latrines.

The irony of the "nuit sainte" is obvious: the girl finds

it necessary to be in a repulsive setting in order to defend herself against the demands of chastity set upon her by religion. Yet she does not succeed in defeating her guilt, as is shown in part VIII, when her communion is completed. She now feels, after her union with her "amant", nothing but distaste and shame at having received the "baiser putride de Jésus!" In short, the child's openness, innocence and natural capacity for love are destroyed by the hypocrisy of established beliefs. Christ, through religion, is changed from the way to truth and light into a destroyer of freedom and human warmth: "Christ! ô Christ, éternal voleur des énergies." Thus the child's private communion with a loving deity is spoiled by a public function: an affair of souls is corrupted into a social event.

It is apparent from the reading of these eight poems that Rimbaud is finally discovering the basic stumbling-block to the achievement of his child-wish.

In the sonnets of 1870, he seems to have found his vision: his verse is spirited, rhythmic and musical; he is delighted by and plays on variations of colour and light; even the less savoury experiences he describes, such as in Le Dormeur du Val, are viewed with an air of freshness and innocence that only a child could produce.

However, in each of the sonnets, Rimbaud is isolated, set apart from the world, viewing only strange and new things.

In other words, the sonnets reveal and describe an unreal vision, one which Rimbaud can enjoy but one which he can never fully realize.

It is then not so surprising to find Rimbaud so embittered or angry in the poems of early 1871. He is simply being forced to acknowledge the frustrating reality which reveals to him his actual impotence.

Thus the conflict between the imagined and the real, between the child-wish and the frustration of it, is becoming more intense, and it is becoming more urgent for Rimbaud to deal with it. It is in Le Bateau ivre that this conflict comes to a head.

III

LE BATEAU IVRE

It is indeed a strange experience to read Le Bateau ivre, especially in light of the contrasts it presents to us. Structurally, it seems to be of very standard form: there are exactly one hundred lines, divided into twenty-five stanzas of four lines each; every line is of regular alexandrine length, with most having the normal mid-line caesura, and with the usual sprinkling of enjambements for variety; and finally, each stanza is structured with alternating masculine and feminine rhymes.

However, when we encounter the substance and theme of the poem, we find ourselves plunged, like the drunken boat itself, into a strange world of riotous colour and sound, of unbelievably rapid movement, and of quickly flashing scenes of wonder and horror--only to be suddenly returned to the sad reality of a lonely boy's solitary game as the poem comes to a close.

The question now is, how are we to understand this profound change in Rimbaud's poetic expression, from the facile idealism of Soleil et Chair, and the simplistic impressionism of Au Cabaret-Vert, to the convulsively visionary and yet starkly real quality of Le Bateau ivre?

The answer, or at least part of it, can be found in Rimbaud's famous "lettres du Voyant", written some months before Le Bateau ivre.[1] We do not propose to make an exhaustive study of the letters, but will extract only those passages which are directly pertinent to an understanding of the poem.

The most important point Rimbaud makes in the letters is found in his doctrine of objective poetry. This does not mean that Rimbaud wishes the poet to be simply an objective observer, as Rimbaud in fact was in his sonnets of 1870, but that he should make himself object, should make himself other, and open himself to all the secrets of the universe. This then is the significance of the statement "JE est un autre": Rimbaud cannot any longer accept the standard subjective approach of his contemporaries. He wishes to make poetry more than a descriptive and formal art:

> La poésie subjective semble bien celle qui s'en tient à l'idéalité, à l'esthétisme 'artiste' et au jeu; et celle, sentimentale et lyrique, qui ne retient de l'émotion que sa part domesticable, celle, en un mot, qui enferme l'homme dans sa nature conventionnelle, sans l'ouvrir à l'obscur de ce qui est.[2]

In addition, Rimbaud sees that for the poet to be open to ultimate and universal truths, he must train himself

---

[1] See Letters XI and XII, Pléiade, pp. 267-274.

[2] Y. Bonnefoy, Rimbaud par lui-même (Paris, 1961), p. 53.

through a ". . .long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens" in order to separate himself from the normal run of men who are imprisoned by their subjective involvement in the material world.

The objective poet must break away from conventional patterns of perception and thought, and prepare himself to enter into a new and as yet unexplored universe. Only in this way can he reach the truth:

> . . .il devient entre tous le grand malade, le grand criminel, le grand maudit,--et le suprême Savant!--Car il arrive à l'inconnu!

In short, what Rimbaud is expressing, but in more detailed language than before, is the child's vision of the hero, the Prometheus ("voleur de feu") who can bring the new light, revealed to him as a sign of the eternal, back to the normal world:

Il est chargé de l'humanité, des animaux même. . . .

From the vague "TU SERAS POETE!" of "Ver erat. . .", Rimbaud now prepares himself in more concrete terms for a new poetic adventure. It only remains to be seen with what success the child's dream can work out in practice.

Le Bateau ivre

The poem has five divisions: the introduction (stanzas one to five), the outward voyage (stanzas six to fifteen), the moment of stagnation or transition (stanzas sixteen and seventeen), the "backward" voyage (stanzas

eighteen to twenty-one), and the conclusion (stanzas twenty-two to twenty-five).

The introduction takes us immediately into the ultimate childhood fantasy world. The child-poet[3] becomes or is the boat which is carrying mundane commercial goods:

Porteur de blés flamands ou de cotons anglais.

However, we enter the poem at the moment of the boat's release from its former normal existence, and as it takes on a life of its own:

Quand avec mes haleurs ont fini ces tapages
Les Fleuves m'ont laissé descendre où je voulais.

Rimbaud has become the object, the free-floating vessel, as his doctrine of Voyance insists that he should be, open to what the world and the future have in store for him.

With the animated release of the boat, Rimbaud succeeds in totally recreating the world to suit his child-like dreams. He has isolated himself from the established, "real" environment around him in order to cultivate the "dérèglement de tous les sens", and in order to prepare us for the outward voyage which is to follow:

Dans les clapotements furieux des marées,
Moi, l'autre hiver, plus sourd que les cerveaux
d'enfants,
Je courus! . . .

Not only is there a sense of freedom and energy as the voyage begins, but also an awareness of silence in the midst

---

[3] It is a child as well as a poet who is involved here, as will be demonstrated.

of the frenzied movements of the tide ("plus sourd que les cerveaux d'enfants"). It is the silence of children, the essential silence of Voyance which is open and receptive to the wonders the voyage has to offer, to the complete exercise of the poetic imagination.

The boat is now total object, total freedom: "Plus léger qu'un bouchon j'ai dansé sur les flots". It is completely cleansed of any trace of the world it has left behind:

> L'eau verte pénétra ma coque de sapin
> Et des taches de vins bleus et des vomissures
> Me lava. . . .

With the final loss of its rudder and anchor, the boat has lost the symbols of moral control and social impediment which have always frustrated its freedom.

The release of the boat is now complete, and the outward voyage begins with a double image:

> Et dès lors, je me suis baigné dans le Poème
> De la Mer. . . .

The sea is presented symbolically as a poem, but at the same time Rimbaud poetically creates this sea and the voyage he takes on it. Thus in a reciprocal way the sea and poetry become expressions of each other and are symbolically united as the two great forces in the life of man. However, with stanza eight, it is obvious that it is the child who comes closest to understanding the significance of these forces:

> Je sais les cieux crevant en éclairs, et les trombes
> Et les ressacs et les courants: je sais le soir,

L'Aube exaltée ainsi qu'un peuple de colombes,
Et j'ai vu quelquefois ce que l'homme a cru voir!

The important phrase here is "Je sais". For the child confronting the universe, symbolized by "les ressacs et les courants" of the sea, it is not a question of interpretation or explanation, but one of simple perception and direct knowledge. The riot of colour, sound and sensation which the boat encounters is immanently knowable, and out of reach for most men: "Et j'ai vu quelquefois ce que l'homme a cru voir!"

Stanza eight is thus centrally significant for this section of Le Bateau ivre. It is the first of a series of five stanzas, all beginning with "Je", and all illustrating an important principle of childhood perception: the boat, symbolizing child-like imagination, is describing only what it happens to see, and nothing else. Here also is an important element of objective poetry: the reader, instead of being the contemplative observer of images and rhymes, has no point of reference, no standard of interpretation beyond the poet's perceptual patterns (or lack of them). For example, "Les flots roulant au loin leurs frissons de volets!" (stanza nine) must be visualized as such. The waves in actual fact resemble shutters that tremble (as perhaps they do when opening or closing), and the reader is restricted to accepting this direct perception as it stands. Thus Le Bateau ivre is an important departure from the more standard

poetry of the time, since it presents a child's fantasy world not only as real, but also as the only one knowable in this context. It is natural, then, to encounter mysterious and obscure passages, such as the following, since we are viewing a new world, created and described solely through Rimbaud's child-like vision:

> J'ai rêvé la nuit verte aux neiges éblouies,
> Baiser montant aux yeux des mers avec lenteurs,
> La circulation des sèves inouïes,
> Et l'éveil jaune et bleu des phosphores chanteurs!

The outward voyage section illustrates a milieu of total fantasy, in which the animate and the inanimate blend with odd frequency:

> J'ai heurté, savez-vous, d'incroyables Florides
> Mêlant aux fleurs des yeux de panthères à peaux
> D'hommes!
> . . . . . .
> Glaciers, soleils d'argent, flots nacreux, cieux de braises!

The voyage also expresses, in both mood and tone, the feeling of boundless energy and deep power:

> Des écroulements d'eaux au milieu des bonaces,
> Et les lointains vers les gouffres cataractant!

It is an environment in which a child could feel alive and happy, even if not secure in the accepted sense:

> J'aurais voulu montrer aux enfants ces dorades
> De flot bleu, ces poissons d'or, ces poissons chantants.

However, the use here of the conditional "J'aurais voulu" suggests a drifting away from the energetic celebration of the voyage into the unknown. It suggests as well, how isolated Rimbaud's vision is, even from the most sensitive

child-like mind, since the boat's wish is still only conditional, still unfulfilled.[4]

Thus we are not completely taken aback by the sudden transition, in stanzas sixteen and seventeen, from whirlwind motion and staccato flashes of sight and sound to a revelation of growing weariness. Everything gradually slows and comes to a halt, as if the boat were stranded in a becalmed sea:

> Parfois, martyr lassé des pôles et des zones,
> La mer dont le sanglot faisait mon roulis doux
> Montait vers moi ses fleurs d'ombre aux ventouses jaunes
> Et je restais, ainsi qu'une femme à genoux...

There is no feeling of strength and freedom and energy left; instead there is only wandering in the midst of a macabre scene of decay and stagnation:

> Presque île, ballottant sur mes bords les querelles
> Et les fientes d'oiseaux clabaudeurs aux yeux blonds.
> Et je voguais, lorsqu'a travers mes liens frêles
> Des noyés descendaient dormir, à reculons!...

With stanza eighteen, the backward voyage begins, and the visions turn from the illuminating and the exciting to the horrible and the terrifying. Instead of a new sense of freedom, there is only the sudden grip of panic:

> Or moi, bateau perdu sous les cheveux des anses,
> Jeté par l'ouragan dans l'éther sans oiseau,. . .

The phenomena of wonder and imagination still exercise their powerful influence, but now there is no sense of thrill in

---

[4] See J. P. Houston, The Design of Rimbaud's Poetry (New Haven and London, 1963), p. 75ff.

encountering them; they inspire only fear and insecurity:

> [Or moi] Qui courais, taché de lunules électriques,
> Planche folle, escorté des hippocampes noirs. . .

Finally, through the convolutions of one long sentence, spanning four stanzas (eighteen to twenty-one), and traversing still more wondrous sights and sounds ("Le rut des Béhémots et les Maelstroms épais,/ Fileur éternel des immobilités bleues"), Rimbaud comes to the point:

> Je regrette l'Europe aux anciens parapets!

We are suddenly jerked back into reality, as Rimbaud quickly changes his mind about the efficacy of his whole fantastic voyage:

> --Est-ce en ces nuits sans fonds que tu dors et
> t'exiles,
> Million d'oiseaux d'or, ô future Vigueur?

The boat is abandoning its voyage: its energy for celebration and freedom is spend ("L'âcre amour m'a gonflé de torpeurs enivrantes"), it is wandering aimlessly, unable to find the "future Vigueur" which could revitalize and inspire it, weighed down by a heavy mood of depression ("O que ma quille éclate! O que j'aille à la mer!"). The raging waters of the high seas, symbolizing Rimbaud's spiritual rebirth into a new childhood, dry up:

> Si je désire une eau d'Europe, c'est la flache
> Noire et froide où vers le crépuscule embaumé
> Un enfant accroupi plein de tristesses, lâche
> Un bateau frêle comme un papillon de mai.

It is significant that at this point we are probably reading the actual beginning of Le Bateau ivre: that is,

as the child here depicted stoops to launch his frail little boat, he is overcome with a fantastic vision of adventure and freedom which he can never experience in reality, and which is the body of the poem. This theory can be reinforced by the fact that the rapid succession of colour and sound images, as well as the energetic driving rhythm of every line represent the split-second flash of dream in the boy's mind as he plays. By using this unusual time-warping technique of introducing the "author" of the fantasy only at the end of the poem, Rimbaud brings to a fine point the clash of reality and imagination in the expression of his child-wish. In addition Rimbaud is able, by use of this device, to illustrate with tremendous force and vividness how even in the midst of a banal and impotent existence, the child is able, at least for a few seconds, to feel the force and strength of his own visions.

However, the boat's voyage is effectively over. Rimbaud's child-wish, once so attractive, is fading, just as the boat's desires to travel over adventurous seas stop with the realization of its fears and feelings of impotence:

> Je ne puis plus, baigné de vos langueurs, ô lames,
> Enlever leur sillage aux porteurs de cotons,
> Ni traverser l'orgueil des drapeaux et des flammes,
> Ni nager sous les yeux horribles des pontons.

Thus, with Le Bateau ivre, Rimbaud breaks away from the traditional subjective artistry of the poetry of his

contemporaries. He displays a new approach in which perceptions of sights or sounds and the warping of time transform both the poet and the reader into objects, open and receptive to the imaginative phenomena of a child's created universe. Rimbaud also sets in precarious balance the "bateau frêle" of his child-like ambition for a "future Vigueur" and the strong pull of the memories of his real childhood ("Un enfant accroupi plein de tristesses"). In both Illuminations and Une Saison en enfer this balance will once again be tipped.

IV

ILLUMINATIONS

All the pieces in the Illuminations, given that they are products of his "mature" literary period, do not reveal Rimbaud's child-like vision. For this reason only those prose poems which deal more or less directly with childhood and its related phenomena will be considered here, while keeping in mind some of the fundamental changes that his writing and experience undergo as the Illuminations progress from the expression of Rimbaud's backward-gazing child-wish to the revelation of a new but unsure future project.

The first two prose poems, Après le Déluge and Enfance, can be taken as thematically similar, though their subjects are approached in different ways.

Après le Déluge

This piece can be considered illustrative of the whole of the Illuminations. Mme Bernard points out

> . . .que cette pièce liminaire annonce certains thèmes du recueil, et que la fraîcheur édénique présage la vision neuve et 'désencrassée' qui est celle de Rimbaud dans les Illuminations, . . .de même que l'ironie et la révolte finales préfigurent la violence anarchique ce certains des textes suivants. (Garnier, p. 479)

In itself, however, it reveals some interesting aspects of Rimbaud's child-wish, and of its eventual failure.

What strikes us about Après le Déluge is its basic

tenor of violence. The opening scene depicts the dying moments of a fantastic child-like vision: a great deluge, or at least the "idée du Déluge", has just destroyed everything and is receding, leaving behind a world which is fresh and clean, filled with innocence (symbolized by the hare saying a prayer to the rainbow) and beauty (symbolized by "les pierres précieuses qui se cachaient,--les fleurs qui regardaient déjà"), reserved for orphaned--and consequently free--children:

> Dans la grande maison de vitres encore ruisselante, les enfants en deuil regardèrent les merveilleuses images.

Amidst all these dreams of violent flooding and purification, however, the real world begins to interfere, at first only in brief flashes:

> Dans la grande rue sale les étals se dressèrent. . . .

Soon, however, the child's visions are inundated by another, more sinister flood, in which adult society, symbolized by Madame*** and her piano intruding on the natural grandeur of the Alps, and religion ("La messe et les premières communions se célébrèrent aux cent milles autels de la cathédrale") form two great waves that dash Rimbaud's child-like dreams.

It is appropriate, then, that Rimbaud should wish for a new and more violent flood to destroy the enemies of his imagination. The prayer for the new flood is itself violent in tone, moving from phrase to phrase in an invective which Rimbaud seems to spit out in angry desperation:

> Sourds, étang;--Ecume, roule sur le pont et par-dessus les bois;--draps noirs et orgues,--éclairs et tonnerre,--montez et roulez;--Eaux et tristesses, montez et relevez les Déluges.

On still another symbolic level, the child-like spirit of Après le Déluge is subjected to violence and frustration. Hackett says in Rimbaud l'Enfant[1] that the flood is a symbol of birth, in that when the water associated with birth recedes the child in the house "de vitres encore ruisselante" emerges to meet the new world, spinning about in joy and celebration. However, Rimbaud also mentions that the child, after coming out of the house, is met almost immediately by an "éclatante giboulée". The sudden coldness of the hailstorm gives a greater symbolic dimension to the event, showing the almost immediate and violent frustration of the child's natural and spontaneous capacities for enjoying the wonder of the world. And to carry on further from Hackett's birth analogy, we see how the simple fact of maturing and growing up after birth are enough in themselves to separate the child from his own joyous innocence. As Rimbaud says about the years following the initial "déluge" of birth:

> Car depuis qu'ils se sont dissipés. . .c'est un ennui!

Rimbaud, as we shall see, returns to this question of maturity in some of the later pieces, as his obsession with its effects on his childhood dream grows.

---

[1] (Paris, 1947), Chpt. 4.

In Après le Déluge, then, Rimbaud uses to great effect the symbols of violence, of established adult morality, and of maturity, melding and juxtaposing, in order to emphasize the complexity and power of the forces which are at work against his child-wish.

Enfance

This piece deals with themes similar to those in Après le Déluge, though not in such an allegorical vein.

The first paragraph of part I is an expression of the meaning of the title, in which Enfance becomes "Cette idole"--an object of worship, of adoration. Let us look at the characteristics of the idol of childhood that make it worth worshipping.

It stands for freedom, especially from any restrictions on a child's possibilities ("sans parents ni cour"); for individual nobility and self-worth ("plus noble que la fable;. . .son domaine, azur et verdure insolents"); and for fable and romance (running along warm beaches in far-away lands with "noms férocement grecs, slaves, celtiques").

From what might be called the mental or "masculine" aspect of childhood, Rimbaud moves to include the so-called "feminine" element, which is more physical in character, being allied with the purity, the colour, and the aliveness of the world. The vivid tints of nature, though only hinted at, make their presence intensely felt through a rhythmic

incantation of celebration; we "hear" rather than see the bright hues:

> . . .la fille à lèvre d'orange, les genoux croisés dans le clair déluge qui sourd des prés, nudité qu'ombrent, traversent et habillent les arcs-en-ciel, la flore, la mer.

We meet again the "clair déluge" and the rainbow, symbolizing the freshness and grandeur of nature, as well as the celebrating joy of the child's participation in it. There is a complete feeling of lightness, power, and freedom.

These moods are thrown into striking contrast with the scene in the third paragraph. From the heavy sound of "Dames" in the beginning to the final statement of boredom, Rimbaud effectively shatters his own illusions, as if rousing himself from a deep sleep. The shock of this awakening is total: there is black as opposed to colour ("superbes noires"); sadness as opposed to joy ("personnes doucement malheureuses"); children subjected to social conventions as opposed to the freedom they gain from natural and beneficial solitude ("petites étrangères"). Even stylistically the long vowel sounds of "Dames qui tournoient sur les terrasses voisines. . ." in the third paragraph contrast sharply with the lighter sounds of "Cette idole, yeux noirs et crin jaune. . ." in the first. In the end, there is only the feeling of discomfort reserved for children who are fawned over by indulgent but insensitive relatives: "Quel ennui, l'heure du 'cher corps' et 'cher coeur'!"

Part II is perhaps the most baffling section in Enfance. All that can be said with any certainty is that Rimbaud juxtaposes the familiar with the strange, the sure with the frightening. For example,

> Les vieux qu'on a enterrés tout droits dans le rempart aux giroflées

paints a disconcerting picture of the bodies of old men, perhaps symbolizing objects which are out of reach for mortals, cemented into a wall decked with flowers, which are innocent and totally concrete phenomena. Objects seem to be present, but they cannot reassure one against the inexplicable absence-presence of the dead or missing spirits who haunt the eerie scene: "C'est elle, la petite morte, derrière les rosiers.--La jeune maman trépassée descend le perron".

This is the frightening side of the child's world, in which ghosts or ephemeral presences inhabit the familiar objects of the world. However, the matter-of-fact language --for example, "D'ailleurs, il n'y a rien à voir là-dedans"-- seems to indicate that, like the child who fabricates tales, this is a controlled fantasy, and one which in the end leads the child to a safe conclusion. Rimbaud is able to escape the horror of his fancy by creating magic flowers, elegant beasts, and a sea of tears which will divert his attention and carry him away to another more pleasant corner of his imagination. It must be a controlled fantasy, because only through

self-directed reverie can the child in Rimbaud defend himself against adult "reality":

> Et c'est ainsi que dans ses solitudes, dès qu'il est maître de ses rêveries, l'enfant connaît le bonheur de rêver, qui sera plus tard le bonheur des poètes.[2]

In part III we encounter the lyrical facility of Rimbaud's style, as he recites a litany of impressions of phenomena in the world around him. Once again he shows the child-like ability to blend the ephemeral and the concrete, the contrived and the true: with equal credulity, he is able to perceive a singing bird and a sinking cathedral, a swamp and a ribbon-decked runaway wagon, with the result that the separation of the real and the imagined becomes more difficult. The success of this blending brings Rimbaud closer still to the complete world of the child, in which the discrimination between objects of knowledge and direct experiences of life is blurred.

The last sentence, however, throws a shadow over what has preceded it. The child, suffering the hunger and thirst of wanting to reach out to others and include them in his happiness, is misunderstood and chased back into his solitude: "Il y a enfin, quand l'on a faim et soif, quelqu'un qui vous chasse". We see the recurrent theme of failure in

---

[2] G. Bachelard, La Poétique de la Rêverie (Paris, 1961), p. 84.

Rimbaud -- failure to re-achieve childhood because of the insensitivity of others, and perhaps because of his own fact of growing up. The "quelqu'un" of the last line, as well as being the cold world, could just as well be himself, running after the childhood of his past, which he is simultaneously chasing away with the adulthood of his future.

Rimbaud concentrates in part IV on another aspect of the uses of a child's imagination, that of creating roles to play, of exploring mentally the possibilities of alternate existences. In a litany similar to that in part III, Rimbaud casts himself, as in a drama, into his assumed identities. In each case, he illustrates the stereotyped image of the cleric, the academic and the wanderer, frozen in a particular one-dimensional attitude, all static, and therefore knowable. As we encounter the role of the child, however, the "Je suis" becomes "Je serais", and the condition of the child's existence is much more imaginary, much more flowing, much more difficult to grasp:

> Je serais bien l'enfant abandonné sur la jetée
> partie à la haute mer, le petit valet suivant
> l'allée dont le front touche le ciel.

Everything is now changed: Rimbaud can imagine himself <u>being</u> anyone, <u>except a child</u>, since in the former case he can objectify and observe various adult roles, whereas in the latter he is trying to re-assimilate a way of viewing things which is steadily slipping away from him:

> Ce ne peut être que la fin du monde, en avançant.

Once more Rimbaud feels the crush of his impotence, at once incapable of returning him to childhood or of halting his advancement into the adult world he fears and mistrusts.

Rimbaud is driven in the end (part V) to seek total refuge from the world by figuratively burying himself in and underground vault. It is his desperate attempt to be finally alone, the only condition in which he can hope to regain the child's world of fable:

> C'est peut-être sur ces plans que se rencontrent lunes et comètes, mers et fables.

However, he is simply reduced to reading old newspapers and "livres sans intérêt"; and the world is never far away, though he imagines it to be:

> A une distance énorme au-dessus de mon salon souterrain, les maisons s'implantent, les brumes s'assemblent.

In the end, the "soupirail" which emerges in the corner of the room suggests the failure of Rimbaud's isolationist project. He knows that the world will not go away, that his advancement into maturity will never stop, and consequently that his child-wish, no matter how tenaciously held, cannot be completely realized.

To summarize these two companion pieces of the Illuminations, we see that Rimbaud's child-wish is still strong, still perhaps within reach, but it is steadily fading, becoming less concrete. Neither the allegory of

Après le Déluge, nor the fable, symbolism and imaginative role playing of Enfance are effective in recouping Rimbaud's ideal childhood vision, for the simple reason that the insensitive adult world will not let them be effective, and also for the reason that Rimbaud himself is growing up. Bachelard notes the importance of solitude to the feelings and imagination of the child: "L'enfant se sent fils du cosmos quand le monde lui laisse la paix"[3]. But it is precisely the world around him which will not leave Rimbaud in peace, and the world within himself, transformed by its emergence from childhood and adolescence, which resists his yearning for the past--for its innocence, its fervour, its freedom.

It is natural that Rimbaud's frustration and failure, coupled with his almost total unwillingness to relate to society around him, should lead to a condemnation of that society as the source of his troubles.

This leads us to the next important section of the Illuminations, which illustrates the actual absurdity of the "order" of the adult world by the use of a child's candid and "indiscreet" viewpoint. We can best understand this approach in Rimbaud by looking at several small but illuminating texts, the first being Parade.

---

[3] Bachelard, op. cit., p. 84.

Parade

Like most pieces in the Illuminations, this has been the object of much criticism and diverse opinion, with no theory having the final say as to what it means. The most plausible explanation, if one may call it that, is that Parade is a diatribe against the spirits of militarism and religion, against their common practices and evils.[4] The basis of this diatribe, however, stems from a child's or more likely an adolescent's view of the incomprehensible order of the adult world.

Instead of a coherent society Rimbaud sees only a parade of "Des drôles très solides". Instead of an impressive file of marching soldiers there are only "Des yeux hébétés à la façon de la nuit d'été, rouges et noirs, tricolores, . . .des enrouements folâtres!" Instead of a solemn religious ceremony directed by the priest Rimbaud sees an entirely different scene:

> Dans des costumes improvisés avec le goût du mauvais rêve ils jouent des complaintes, des tragédies de malandrins et de demi-dieux spirituels. . . .

At the end, when Rimbaud says, "J'ai seul la clef de cette parade sauvage", he becomes the objective observer, mocking the idiocy of his elders: the adult world is absurd to the child who is by nature excluded from it, and who cannot or will not see its internal "order": "O le plus violent

---

[4] See Garnier, p. 486, note 1.

Paradis de la grimace enragée!"

However, there is also a certain amount of apprehension, as Rimbaud notices some of his peers taking part in this savage parade:

> Il y a quelques jeunes. . .pourvus de voix effrayantes et de quelques ressources dangereuses.

This is a condition of life Rimbaud dreads, one he must avoid at all costs, since a compromise with or a sell-out to adults would mean instant death for his child-wish, with its purity and its capacity for natural wonder. He must be on constant guard against the deadening influences of society, against the insanity of its institutions, because "Leur raillerie ou leur terreur dure une minute, ou des mois entiers."

The free-verse poem Mouvement is closely allied with Parade in its treatment of social order as related to the natural world of the child; its approach, however, is more generalized.

Mouvement

This is a perfect illustration of how modern society is completely captured by the headlong flight of progress, of material good: a progress that is uncontrollable and leads nowhere.

Rimbaud compares society to an ark of absurdity, carrying along its educated, over-confident, and blind human

cargo:

> Ils emmènent l'education
> Des races, des classes et des bêtes, sur ce vaisseau
> Repos et vertige
> A la lumière diluvienne,
> Aux terribles soirs d'étude.

It is a frenetic reality into which Rimbaud's child-wish can never fit, a reality in which the natural capacity for grasping the world is corrupted into "l'héroisme de la découverte". Method is deified at the expense of any sense of purpose or vision: the means become the ends.

The image of the "déluge" returns, as Rimbaud portrays a couple--significantly a young couple, isolated from the rest--waiting on their own ark for the floods to commence and re-establish a fresh and innocent universe. Rimbaud's old enemies, applied study and education, here rooted to the ethos of progress, form the basis for the return of the flood. With an ironic twist, Rimbaud uses the technological language of the day to try and show how the world is drowning itself in its own progress:

> --On voit, roulant comme une digue au delà de la route hydraulique motrice,
> Monstrueux, s'éclairant sans fin,--leur stock d'études. . . .

This is the world to which Rimbaud feels forced to conform: one of mad soldiers, hypocritical priests, false education, and dubious material progress. He is trapped, with no defence other than his own fragile and uncompromising dreams:

> We live in a secular world. To adapt to this world the child abdicates its ecstasy. ('L'enfant abdique son extase': Mallarmé.)[5]

It is a distressing and even schizophrenic situation, to use the latter term in the broad social sense of the inability to integrate or fulfill the conditions of one's own particular "normality" in terms of the "abnormal" society around one. Rimbaud, in effect, is caught between the folly of his yearning after childhood and the folly of the social reality around him.

At this point of our study, it would be appropriate to demonstrate an important transformation in Rimbaud's thinking. In the early Illuminations, the child's vision of Après le Déluge and Enfance dominate almost completely the dreams and ambitions of Rimbaud. He is still trying, through one or another form of violence, to wrench himself free from the inexorable drift away from his child-like fantasy world.

In Parade and Mouvement as well, we have seen what Rimbaud considers the enemies of his past-oriented ambitions: that is, both adult society in its absurdity, and his own personal development, which is carrying him unwillingly into that same adult milieu.

However, and at first almost imperceptibly, Rimbaud

---

[5] R. D. Laing, The Politics of Experience (Aylesbury, 1967), p. 118.

weakens in his struggle to retain his childhood, and begins to analyze his own fears of both the world and of the future. He is slowly realizing that a change in his life style is necessary and inevitable--so the problem gradually becomes one not of retaining an idealized past, but one of setting attitudes and actions for an uncertain future.

Matinée d'ivresse

As was mentioned, Rimbaud's transformed thinking comes to light only gradually, and in Matinée d'ivresse it is almost invisible.

Primarily, of course, this prose poem is simply a description of a haschisch experience, since in conformity with Baudelaire's account in "Les Paradis Artificiels"[6], the experience starts with one's revulsion at the smell of the drug, but ends up with sensations of intensity and joy:

> Cela commença par quelques dégoûts et cela finit, --ne pouvant nous saisir sur-le-champ de cette éternité,--cela finit par une débandade de parfums.

For Rimbaud, drug-taking is another method for bringing himself closer to the intense happiness of childhood:

> Cela commença sous les rires des enfants, cela finira par eux.

It brings him closer to the innocence and the unadulterated love of that state of being, isolated from standard social

---

[6] Oeuvres Complètes (Paris, 1961), p. 334.

distinctions between good and evil:

> On nous a promis d'enterrer dans l'ombre l'arbre du bien et du mal, de déporter les honnêtetés tyranniques, afin que nous amenions notre très pur amour.

It is an experience having its own internal order, and one which carries him away from the "ancienne inharmonie" of the adult world around him. In this respect, then, Matinée d'ivresse, through the hallucinatory drug experience, joins both Parade and Mouvement in articulating Rimbaud's fear and mistrust of social order and "acceptable" personal conduct.

However, Rimbaud shows signs of a change of heart, of a certain duality of thinking that first only manifests itself in his vocabulary. He begins to make references to an as yet undefined promise:

> O maintenant nous si digne de ces tortures! rassemblons fervemment cette promesse surhumaine faite à notre corps et à notre âme créés: cette promesse, cette démence!

It is important to notice the priorities here. The "promesse surhumaine", indicating the hope of the future, now precedes--syntactically at least--any considerations for the "démence" that made up so much of Rimbaud's past wishes for the condition of childhood.

To be sure, this one example hardly makes a great impression amidst all the dream-like joy and the controlled chaos typical of a child. The past is still the dominant attraction:

Nous n'oublions pas que tu as glorifié hier
chacun de nos âges.

However, we are witnessing a transitional period in Rimbaud's writing, a period which moves him sometimes forward, sometimes backward, depending on his mood, on his desire and on the instability of his new and growing vision. At the end of Matinée d'ivresse, Rimbaud is torn between faith in his backward-looking struggle to regain childhood, which often involves the use of drugs ("Nous avons foi au poison"), and a growing need to dedicate himself to an unavoidable future in order to find at last the right place for his boundless energy and his wish to participate in the full life ("Nous savons donner notre vie tout entière tous les jours").

In any case, Rimbaud is still grappling with the same problem: how to relate, or perhaps more accurately how not to relate to the world he encounters around him, since he still is unable or unwilling to define himself through the accepted reality of society. In losing the defence of his child-wish, Rimbaud quickly, even desperately, turns to the new directions of his life in order to construct a new one. His experience of failure in facing reality keeps him from really trying to deal with it at all.

It is in the piece Vies that Rimbaud's changing attitudes to the future become more evident, and that the new conflicting directions of his life become clearer.

Vies

As in part IV of Enfance, Rimbaud here reviews the possibilities of some alternate identities. This time, however, the roles are fuller, more probing, less stereotyped than before, as Rimbaud, finding his child's world slipping away, is forced to seek a new existential direction:

> Les trois fins de ces textes dressent avec une sorte de sombre amertume le bilan d'un passé plus ou moins éloigné. . . .[7]

Rimbaud is perhaps finding out what it really meant when he said "JE est un autre"[8]: his elusive self, whether defined through the poetic doctrine of the Voyant, or through his expressed child-wish, or through explorations into an unsure future, seems never to be defined clearly, and is never within reach.

Part I explores the role of being a prophet, and thus brings us to a more concrete expression of the "promesse" Rimbaud was vaguely seeking in Matinée d'ivresse (see above, p.63).

There is still the strong influence of the child, still a sense of play-acting:

> --Exilé ici, j'ai eu une scène où jouer les chefs-d'oeuvre dramatiques de toutes les littératures.

---

[7] Garnier, p. 490.

[8] Pléiade, Letter XII, p. 270.

At the same time Rimbaud identifies much more closely with this particular role than he has with any others, for it suits perfectly his desire to decipher the future and his eventual role in it. He is surprisingly forthright and confident in saying,

> Je vous indiquerais les richesses inouïes. J'observe l'histoire des trésors que vous trouvâtes. Je vois la suite!

Childhood is slowly slipping away, the past is losing its force, while the future is still unsteady--but Rimbaud goes on, for as he says,

> Qu'est mon néant, auprès de la stupeur qui vous attend?

Rimbaud needs to face his "néant" while still trying to maintain that right amount of youthful wonder and adolescent disdain: a project which, if it fails, will lead to the stupor of adulthood.

In part II Rimbaud is concentrating on his own role as a poet, at least at the beginning, where he becomes "un musicien" who has "trouvé quelque chose comme la clef de l'amour". But he moves quickly to express his frustration at being unable to achieve his child-wish, this time through his self-portrayal as a country gentleman trapped in his narrow provincial existence:

> A présent, gentilhomme d'une campagne aigre au ciel sobre, j'essaye de m'émouvoir au souvenir de l'enfance mendiante. . . .

By shifting rapidly through these different identity

assumptions Rimbaud shows he is still the child, simply playing at being someone else to protect his own sense of identity and to further isolate himself from the "evil" identity that others have ascribed to him.

However, as the fear of the future, aggravated by his present frustrations, takes hold of Rimbaud, the game of role-playing comes to a sudden end:

> Mais comme ce scepticisme ne peut désormais être mis en oeuvre, et que d'ailleurs je suis dévoué à un trouble nouveau,--j'attends de devenir un très méchant fou.

What Rimbaud expresses here is his fear of impotence--the fear that he cannot hold on to his sense of identity, the fear that he will fall into the role of the madman, helpless to direct his new and still feeble visions of the future.

Part III illustrates further the importance of isolation in order for Rimbaud to adjust himself to and to judge the society he is forced to live in:

> Dans un grenier où je fus enfermé à douze ans j'ai connu le monde, j'ai illustré la comédie humaine.

Although the passage in detail seems obscure (for example, is he talking about people and places he has really seen, or is he again only exercising his fertile imagination?), in general it is clear. Through his "education", learned in isolation ("Dans un cellier j'ai appris l'histoire"), or in hallucination ("Dans une magnifique demeure cernée par

l'Orient entier j'ai accompli mon immense oeuvre. . ."), or in frustration ("J'ai brassé mon sang."), Rimbaud has gained a special vantage point on his culture. However, this is all in the past now:

> Je suis réellement d'outre-tombe, et pas de commissions.

Rimbaud is taking a longer step forward, perhaps envisioning his role as a prophet, perhaps even his own apotheosis (as "d'outre-tombe" would seem to imply), since the past and childhood have not been regained and have both failed in giving Rimbaud his desperately needed identity:

> Rimbaud, ici, 'enterre' vraiment sa vie passée, et tourne résolument le dos aux 'défuntes années'.[9]

Vies can be considered an important pivotal point in Rimbaud's poetic and personal development, because the main problem for him is one of changing from a backward-looking to a forward-looking dream, while at the same time retaining his isolation, his already shaken sense of individuality. The child-wish has failed, because of the world, because of time, because of Rimbaud's involvement with both; yet the desire to be "un autre" subsists, and for Rimbaud the isolated prophet role is best suited to that wish.

Ouvriers

Childhood even seems unattractive to Rimbaud now: in this piece he is sequestered with his love in the north

---

[9] Garnier, p. 491.

country, only to find that a warm southern breeze brings back all the distasteful memories of his real childhood, especially of its real impotence:

> Le Sud me rappelait les misérables incidents de mon enfance, mes désespoirs d'été, l'horrible quantité de force et de science que le sort a toujours éloignée de moi.

As the prose poem comes to a close, the familiar image of orphans ("orphelins fiancés") returns. Once again Rimbaud is facing the misery of childhood as he actually experienced it, and his mood is bitter. It seems as if he is ready to give up his search for the past, his "chère image", which now hangs on him, like ill-fitting clothes, and holds him back:

> Je veux que ce bras durci ne traîne plus une chère image.

The future, however, though opening a new way to Rimbaud, still gives him no more security than he could find in his child-wish, as is vividly illustrated in the next piece.

Angoisse

This is one of the most obscure of all the Illuminations, but perhaps for good reason. Rimbaud's future, even in his own mind, is still cloudy and unsure, and he seems to be grabbing for straws in order to gain some sort of assurance as to what is coming up.

The first paragraph, even without attempting to

explain the significance of the mysterious "Elle" (could she be "Angoisse" herself?), obviously expresses Rimbaud's hope for some small reward after all the crushing frustration of his failure to achieve his now fading dreams of childhood. Yet the third paragraph indicates that Rimbaud is even hoping that his slowly formulating vision can bring him to a future condition that will resemble the "franchise première" that was and to some extent still is so much a part of his ambitions. In many ways he still wishes the freshness of expression and the ingenuous approach of his earlier years, and he continues to fear the loss of his youthful vigour even though he may be launching into new directions. The Vampire of life is slowly sapping his strength for appreciating and acting on discovery and wonder, as he could do when a boy:

> Mais la Vampire qui nous rend gentils commande que nous nous amusions avec ce qu'elle nous laisse, ou qu'autrement nous soyons plus drôles.

The irony is more than obvious. In his adolescent days, Rimbaud's poetry showed a fire and an impatience for time to pass and for the future promise to arrive; now, there is only regret that the time has slipped by with only failure to show for it, and only apprehension about what the time to come will bring. It is a sign of growing up when someone laments the rapid rather than the slow passage of time.

For Rimbaud there is nothing to be sure of anymore.

The best he can do is throw himself on the mercy of the future, though his anguish may fill him with fear:

> Rouler aux blessures, par l'air lassant et la mer; aux supplices, par le silence des eaux et de l'air meurtriers; aux tortures qui rient, dans leur silence atrocement houleux.

Thus through a fragmented, disoriented prose style, Angoisse underscores the moral and personal risks Rimbaud is taking by casting himself to the future. In Matinée d'ivresse and Vies the future was only a promise; in Angoisse it becomes a personal choice to change a life style.

It is with Aube that Rimbaud takes his final journey into the past, into his child-wish, in a last attempt to reconfirm the lost and faded values he had once held as a child's natural right.

Aube

With this small but lyrical piece, Rimbaud comes the closest to expressing the poetry of a child's experience of nature. It is reminiscent of his earliest work, such as "Ver erat. . ." among his Latin school-verse, and of the sonnets of 1870: but this time much deeper feelings lie beneath the simplicity of the expression.

From the beginning we sense the fervour, the love and the energy of the boy enjoying a summer morning: "J'ai embrassé l'aube d'été". All of nature seems to acknowledge his presence:

> J'ai marché, réveillant les haleines vives et tièdes, et les pierreries regardèrent, et les ailes se levèrent sans bruit.

Once again there is almost no division between accepted natural reality and the child's deeply imaginative experience within it--it is a reality all its own, complete with a "déesse" which the boy pursues through a fabulous and dreamy setting:

> A la grand'ville, elle fuyait parmi les clochers et les dômes, et, courant comme un mendiant sur les quais de marbre, je la chassais.

In the light of the other Illuminations, it is not surprising that the chase after the dawn goddess, though intense and joyful, should fail to bring about her capture. Just as Rimbaud gets close to her, close enough even to smell her,

> L'aube et l'enfant tombèrent au bas du bois.

Mme Bernard suggests that with the statement, "Au réveil il était midi", Rimbaud "s'est 'réveillé' homme--que son enfance féerique, et peut-être aussi ses tentatives pour 'lever les voiles' de la nature sont déjà loin de lui" (Garnier, p. 510). One could perhaps make a case for this contention, but it would not really fit with the tone of the piece. It is, in actual fact, the child who awakens at noon, since Rimbaud portrays himself as a child throughout. The important point, though, is that the time spent with the goddess of dawn, of light and love, escapes all people, even the young.

The simple pathetic frustration of "Au réveil il était midi" emphasizes how much Rimbaud still holds on to his child-wish, and gives more force to his expression of anguish, both in giving up this vivid but unattainable dream and in taking up an obscure and as yet indefinable new vision.

Jeunesse

We find now that Rimbaud's style is becoming much more abstract, much more obscure, and is thus the object of many and varied critical speculations:

> . . .il est difficule de chercher des allusions précises, car les jeux de l'inconscient ne se laissent pas percer facilement. (Garnier, p. 524)

Basically, what Rimbaud is trying to express is the experience of his adolescence, which for anyone is a deeply personal and abstruse period of life. In this regard, Rimbaud seems to move up the scale (so to speak) from the limpid and innocent dreams described in Enfance. He is reviewing the stage of development that heralds adulthood--and not without some regret and fear.

As part I ("Dimanche") opens, Rimbaud stops his studying ("Les calculs de côté. . .") and lets his mind be overrun by a rapid succession of images, memories and fancies. Once again the concrete and the ephemeral, the real and the imagined intermingle. For example, western bandits ("Les desperadoes"), as products of the imagination, are mixed

with real physical phenomena, both in nature ("l'orage") and man ("l'ivresse", "les blessures").

Significantly, Rimbaud's sense of frustration in relation to his child-wish never completely leaves him, even in this dream state: "De petits enfants, écrit-il, et il fut l'un d'eux, étouffent des malédictions le long des rivières. Voilà ce qui est réel et irréparable: l'occasion mystérieuse, proposée et perdue dans le moment enfantin."[10]

Then, as quickly as it came, Rimbaud's fit of fantasy passes on, like an ocean wave, leaving only slight traces of its effect on his thought:

> Reprenons l'étude au bruit de l'oeuvre dévorante
> qui se rassemble et remonte dans les masses.

Now, however, as Jeunesse continues, Rimbaud seems to be in the mood to let his dreams and memories flow.

In part II ("Sonnet") we encounter once again an incredibly dense and obscure text. It seems that Rimbaud is reviewing his relationship with the world, and especially how that relationship changed as time went on. At present he is accepting a role as an "Homme de constitution ordinaire . . .", or if not accepting it, he is at least demonstrating his present state of mind in contrast to the fullness of his idealized childhood days:

---

[10] Y. Bonnefoy, Rimbaud par lui-même (Paris, 1961), p. 166.

> . . .la chair n'était-elle pas un fruit pendu dans le verger, ô journées enfantes! le corps un trésor à prodiguer. . . .

This is, in effect, the doctrine of Voyance, by which Rimbaud objectified himself and opened himself to the wonder, love and terror of the universe:

> . . .ô aimer, le péril ou la force de Psyché?

If Rimbaud imagined himself then as a fruit in an orchard, growing and developing by virtue of the forces of nature, he now knows by the same analogy that the bloom of freshness is gone, and that he has lost his vigour, his innocence--in short, his expression of childhood. His past is complete, and now Rimbaud must prepare himself for new adventures that his child-wish can neither provide nor fulfill; adventures that will form a new character which is as yet just an object ("toi") for his contemplation:

> Mais à présent, ce labeur comblé, toi, tes calculs, toi, tes impatiences ne sont plus que votre danse et votre voix, non fixées et point forcées. . . .

Through personal strength and lucidity Rimbaud must found a new lyrical definition of life, must form a new metaphor of dance and song to take on the uncertain future:

> --la force et le droit réfléchissent la danse et la voix à présent seulement appréciées. . . .

With part III we find Rimbaud, supposedly at the age of "Vingt Ans", on the threshold of adulthood. Through

the use of the musical metaphor Rimbaud shows he still cannot accept the loss of the "allegro" of his earlier life:

> Les voix instructives exilées... L'ingénuité physique amèrement rassise...Adagio.

It is as if Rimbaud can never stop feeling regret and bitterness at the failure of his childhood dreams:

> Ah! l'égoïsme infini de l'adolescence, l'optimisme studieux: que le monde était plein de fleurs cet été!

This is the low point of Rimbaud's "symphony". He is gripped by melancholy, in need of a soothing melody to fill the void he feels inside:

> Un choeur, pour calmer l'impuissance et l'absence!

Rimbaud's melancholic lethargy does not last, however, even in the face of the failure of his attempt to relive the past. In part IV Rimbaud takes up his new task in a rising crescendo of confidence:

> Mais tu te mettras à ce travail: toutes les possibilités harmoniques et architecturales s'émouvront autour de ton siège.

The old life, the old poetry are gone, but the future opens up a new prospect:

> Ta mémoire et tes sens ne seront que la nourriture de ton impulsion créatrice.

Still, his new confidence is tempered with a note of caution, since the future's promise is still enigmatic:

> Quant au monde, quand tu sortiras, que sera-t-il devenu? En tout cas, rien des apparences actuelles.

Here is the fundamental change in Rimbaud's attitudes in the latter part of the Illuminations: his former child-like self-confidence about his important place in the world is now gone. The world has shown itself to be not at all benevolent, and even very inflexible to Rimbaud's attempts to change it into a place of poetic beauty where he could fulfill his mission of innocence. On the other hand, his new destiny is still not clear, and his new attitudes are still embryonic. In any case, he cannot turn back.

The confusion in Rimbaud's mind and writings is compounded by the fact that in the Pléiade edition the editors have placed "Solde" as the final piece in the Illuminations, whereas in the Garnier edition it is "Génie" which concludes the collection. However, since no-one knows the "correct" order of the Illuminations, and since Rimbaud himself could have ended the work with either piece, depending on his whim, we can only take each prose poem as the expression of the two extremes to which Rimbaud's thoughts and moods could go.

Génie

Even as this prose poem opens, Rimbaud's new dream seems to have been accomplished by virtue of the power of the genie who has brought

> . . .l'amour, mesure parfaite et réinventée, raison merveilleuse et imprévue, et l'éternité. . . .

From the failure of the doctrine of Voyance to help achieve his child-wish, Rimbaud finds in the genie a new springboard for ecstasy. With his unique feel for musical effect, he sings his praise of the genie by encasing four staccato phrases, each beginning with the third person singular possessive pronoun, within four equally muscular phrases, two on either end, beginning with the interjection "O!". The wish for the state of childhood is totally absent, but the desire for its characteristic ecstasy remains central to Rimbaud's destiny:

> O fécondité de l'esprit et immensité de l'univers!
> . . . . . .
> Son jour! l'abolition de toutes souffrances
> sonores et mouvantes dans la musique plus intense.

Then, in the crescendo of the final paragraph, Rimbaud strikes off to follow the genie of his new destiny, sure in the strength of his own energy, even if not clear on where it will lead him:

> . . . et, sous les marées et au haut des déserts
> de neige, suivre ses vues, ses souffles, son
> corps, son jour.

Rimbaud seems to have regained love and confidence in the form of a new being, or a new living future, of a new illumination or vision. Redemption, at this point, is close at hand:

> Il a évoqué dans Génie ce que je puis nommer
> notre possible de gloire. . .[11]

---

[11] Y. Bonnefoy, op. cit., p. 148.

Solde

Rimbaud reveals a side of himself which is totally different from the one presented to us in Génie. The whole piece reads like a newspaper advertisement:

> Le titre de cette pièce semble bien indiquer une volonté de liquidation du passé, un passé qui est celui du Voyant. . . .(Garnier, p. 520)

In fact, one can detect a mood of self-justification, even of defiance, as Rimbaud sloughs off the Voyant, the now useless vehicle for his failed dream of childhood:

> A vendre ce que les Juifs n'ont pas vendu, ce que noblesse ni crime n'ont goûté, ce qu'ignore l'amour maudit et la probité infernale des masses; ce que le temps ni la science n'ont pas à reconnaître. . . .

As an ironic contrast to his use of musical repetition in Génie, Rimbaud simply lists the "articles" which he is offering: first, there is wonder ("l'occasion, unique, de dégager nos sens!"); next, isolation from the curse of mundane existence (". . .les corps sans prix, hors de toute race, de tout monde, de tout sexe, de toute descendance!"); then cathartic suffering and joy, melded together("la mort atroce pour les fidèles et les amants!"); and finally, the contradictory but complementary states of "les habitations et les migrations"and "les applications de calcul et les sauts d'harmonie inouïs". In short, Rimbaud is auctioning off his poetic capacities for achieving the childhood world after which he yearned for so long.

Rimbaud then throws an enigmatic light on his bitter renunciation of the past by putting up for sale those articles ". . .qu'on ne vendra jamais". It seems as if the sale can never be completed:

> Les vendeurs ne sont pas à bout de solde! Les voyageurs n'ont pas à rendre leur commission de sitôt!

In the end, Rimbaud seems reluctant to give up his capacities for ecstasy, since they have brought him close to his goals before, and since they have protected him, at least to some extent, from his failure to relate to the world around him. They are the elements of his self-justification, of his self-esteem, and so they can never all be lost or given away. He still has ". . .les corps, les voix, l'immense opulence inquestionable, ce qu'on ne vendra jamais", and it is in terms of these powerful forces that Rimbaud hopes to adjust to his new destiny and perhaps make it succeed where his past one did not.

To summarize: if Solde is a catalogue of loss and failure, ending with a feeble hope of restitution, Génie is an energetic, driving, exultant manifestation of confidence in the success of Rimbaud's destiny.

It matters little then which is the last piece of the Illuminations. They are both the "last" piece, since Rimbaud has still to deal with the enigma of his regret at the failure of his child-wish and his fear at the prospect of his new future.

Rimbaud perhaps best expresses the whole purpose of the Illuminations in Conte (Pléiade, p.178), as he reveals the burning desires of the Prince:

> Il voulait voir la vérité, l'heure du désir et de la satisfaction essentiels.

However, when the Prince meets the Genie, who can show him the final truths he seeks, they destroy each other: "Le Prince et le Génie s'anéantirent probablement dans la santé essentielle". Thus the ironic events in Conte typify the hopes and the frustrations that Rimbaud recounts in practically all of Illuminations, as the past of his childhood fades and as his apprehension grows about the profound changes that await him in the future. In the final analysis, the Illuminations do not provide the answers, they simply present the problems.

V

UNE SAISON EN ENFER

In studying the theme of childhood in Une Saison en enfer, we are only scratching the surface--and perhaps only one portion of the surface--of this turbulent chronicle of self-examination. Still, in focussing our attention on this one subject we are able to gain a great number of insights into the vast world of Rimbaud's inner hell.

Rimbaud's view at the beginning is oriented to the past, to the feast of childhood which tastes fully of life, and which is now so far away, so out of reach:

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

Rimbaud is quick to account for this great personal loss, especially in reference to his literary career, which is to come under frequent scrutiny in this work. La Beauté, the symbol of traditional poetry, which he had slavishly followed in his early years, is shown to have been inadequate to his child-wish, simply because it was insufficient for providing a poetic refuge from the impotence and the insecurity of his real childhood. Only through new forms of expression could he find both the escape ("Je me suis enfui.") and the joyful "festin" of the child. Thus was born the doctrine

of Voyance. With phrases such as "J'ai appelé les fléaux . . ." and "Le malheur a été mon dieu", Rimbaud reviews his experience of becoming the Voyant through the "dérèglement de tous les sens". However, this attempt at regaining the chaotic fervour of childhood is no more successful:

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

Finally, Rimbaud turns to more traditional spiritual means, looking upon Christian charity in order to "rechercher la clef du festin ancien". This alternative is eventually rejected as well: "Cette inspiration prouve que j'ai rêvé!" All these attempts to regain purity--through Beauty, through Voyance, through charity--are doomed to failure:

'Tu resteras hyène, etc...', se récrie le démon. . . .

This statement reveals the reasons for Rimbaud's persistent failures: he feels himself damned, and far removed from his lifelong ambitions for the purity of childhood:

> 'Gagne la mort avec tous tes appétits, et ton égoisme et tous les péchés capitaux.'

It is at this point, then, after encapsulating his failed attempts at regaining purity, that Rimbaud starts out on a new voyage into himself, or more basically, into the sources of his damnation which he sees as the frustrating curse of his dreams. In a letter to Delahaye in May of 1873, Rimbaud remarked, "Mon sort dépend de ce livre . . .". Through all the accounts of literary failure, ambitious blind alleys, and continuous soul-searching, underlined

by a tortured and convoluted style filled with flashes of ecstatic joy or moments of suicidal depression, Une Saison en enfer proves that he meant what he said.

Mauvais Sang

As the title implies, Rimbaud sets out on an investigation of his racial background, into the accursed traits handed on to him by his "ancêtres gaulois":

> D'eux, j'ai: l'idolâtrie et l'amour du sacrilège;--oh! tous les vices, colère, luxure,--magnifique, la luxure;-- surtout mensonge et paresse.

What is important about these inherited vices is that they are shortsighted, that is, Rimbaud feels his penchants for perversity, anger, and laziness, so much relished in the past, have in fact diverted him from the true purpose of his literary and personal ambitions--regaining the purity and openness of childhood.

In spite of this acquired affliction, however, Rimbaud still retains some personal integrity. His refusal to succumb to the external social pressures of hard work ("J'ai horreur de tous les métiers"), coupled with his long-standing pride (". . .moi, je suis intact, et ça m'est égal"), shows he has retained a sense of freedom--an essential element in the past for the achievement of his child-wish, and one which is to be instrumental in his new liberation at the end of Une Saison en enfer.

However, the mood of defiance expressed above is singularly lacking in the second section of Mauvais Sang. Now Rimbaud feels himself part of a "race inférieure", insecure and unable to break away either from convention or his repressed social condition:

> 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.

This sudden reversal of mood and tone in Rimbaud's style serves to emphasize the contradictions and frustrations that are at work to create the hell he is going through. Against his pride Rimbaud sets down his feelings of weakness and inferiority, through the portraits of the "manants", the "lépreux", and the "reître"--all outcasts, all scorned and impotent to change their conditions of life. To these feelings Rimbaud adds his haunting sense of isolation, underlined by the familiar image of an orphan who is cut off from the mainstream of respectable society:

> Mais toujours seul; sans famille; même, quelle langue parlais-je?

He is even orphaned from any spiritual recourse or comfort:

> Je ne me vois jamais dans les conseils du Christ. . . .

However, one cannot be sure that Rimbaud regrets this condition to any great extent. His orphanage from normality is a source both of his insecurity and his feelings of impotence, but at the same time it affords him the freedom he needs to continue the search through his inner hell for the lost "festin" of childhood. It is thus in this isolated but free

position that Rimbaud begins to seek new modes of expression, new poetic and spiritual resources that will bring his child-wish to fruition.

He first falls upon the pagan alternative:

> Je comprends, et ne sachant m'expliquer sans paroles païennes, je voudrais me taire.

"Le sang païen revient!" Rimbaud sèes in this old religious tradition a renewal, a return to the primitive and the innocent, the ritual and purity of the "festin". It is a search for a lost spiritual past, and so once again the voyage, the symbol of seach, begins: "Me voici sur la plage armoricaine." Rimbaud uses his fertile imagination, casting himself in the roles both of the explorer ("Ma journée est faite; je quitte l'Europe") and of the returning hero ("Je reviendrai, avec des membres de fer, la peau sombre, l'oeil furieux. . ."). Rimbaud shows he has not lost the flavour of childhood fantasy as he dreams of the spiritual journey which will bring him out of his accursed condition: "on me jugera d'une race forte". His distaste for society and the insecurity resulting from the burden of his "mauvais sang" lead him to be tempted by the puerile dream of complete isolation and repose:

> Maintenant je suis maudit, j'ai horreur de la patrie. Le meilleur, c'est un sommeil bien ivre, sur la grève.

In the fourth section, however, Rimbaud abruptly returns to reality: "On ne part pas." At first it seems that Rimbaud is simply repeating the same pattern of building up

and then shattering his dreams. In reality, he has reached a momentously important conclusion. He sees that his child-wish, expressed and sought after in so much of his work, is powerless to change his condition of life or to eliminate the "vice qui a poussé ses racines de souffrance à mon côté, dès l'âge de raison." The old dream of childhood is rapidly disappearing:

> La dernière innocence et la dernière timidité.
> C'est dit.

Rimbaud can now see only two alternatives ahead of him. First, he can take up a new way, with all its attendant difficulties ("Allons! La marche, le fardeau, le désert, l'ennui et la colère."); or else he can simply give up trying, and leave his energy and his spirit to die:

> Plutôt, se garder de la justice.--La vie dure, l'abrutissement simple,--soulever, le poing desséché, le couvercle du cercueil, s'asseoir, s'étouffer.

Rimbaud makes an interesting conclusion about the second alternative. If, as he says, he gives up, there will be "point de vieillesse, ni de dangers"; and if what he says is sincere, it means that the child-wish, timeless and ever young, from which aging and personal danger are banished, still remains, at least as a fond memory. It is better to die than to lose the freshness and the hope of childhood.

In addition, Rimbaud still looks to the divine, the exotic, the beyond, as he had done in his earlier work, even if now it is with more of a sense of helplessness and

desperation:

> --Ah! je suis tellement délaissé que j'offre à n'importe quelle divine image des élans vers la perfection.

The vision of heroism and personal perfection still exists, but the ignorant child-like confidence of former days is seriously weakened by the realization of the force of reality:

> O mon abnégation, ô ma charité merveilleuse! ici-bas, pourtant!

However, Rimbaud will soon show how his awareness of reality "ici-bas" becomes a source of new and greater strength from which his dreams of purity will become definite concrete possibilities.

In section five of Mauvais Sang Rimbaud is looking back almost longingly to the faded dream he has left behind. He remembers wandering through the world, enjoying nature much like the admired "forçat intraitable", that is, directly and with a sense of freedom known only to those imprisoned and isolated from that very world:

> . . .je voyais avec son idée le ciel bleu et le travail fleuri de la campagne. . . .

He remembers what it was like to perceive the world from a position of purity and openness, of wonder and celebration--and always in spite of the pressure of the insensitive environment in which he was imprisoned:

> Je me voyais devant une foule exaspérée, en face du peloton d'exécution, pleurant du malheur qu'ils n'aient pu comprendre, et pardonnant!

This awareness of isolation remains with him in his present state, as Rimbaud ranges himself with the real damned of his time: ". . .je n'ai jamais été chrétien. . . .Je suis une bête, un nègre." His despair, however, is immediately countered: "Mais je puis être sauvé."

Rimbaud explains himself here by pointing out that even while being damned, even while rejecting the traditional trappings of salvation which are offered through Christianity, he has found a new ritual, more primitive and joyously child-like, more able to satisfy his desperate spiritual needs:

> Plus de mots. J'ensevelis les morts dans mon ventre. Cris, tambour, danse, danse, danse, danse!

In this chorus of song and dance Rimbaud shows faith in the inexpressible happiness of primitive innocence, even though he has lost his old dream of childhood. But his new hope is tempered by an awareness of outside pressures, especially from the moral and spiritual demands of the Church:

> Il faut se soumettre au baptême, s'habiller, travailler.

Rimbaud, to be sure, has now turned away from his old and frustrated visions of childhood, leaving them forever in the past, and reaching out for new modes of expression to describe his desire for the full life. It is evident, however, that he wishes to retain a certain tenor of innocence about his whole new spiritual search:

> 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.

Rimbaud thus emphasizes his new awareness of reality along with his renewed faith in innocence; two attitudes which can give him strength through his season in hell.

It is in the seventh section that the whole purpose of Rimbaud's confessions or revelations is made clearer:

> Les rages, les débauches, la folie, dont je sais tous les élans et les désastres,-- tout mon fardeau est déposé.

Rimbaud is standing on the threshold of a new spiritual journey ("Je veux la liberté dans le salut: comment la poursuivre?"), free from his past ("L'ennui n'est plus mon amour"), and ready to start afresh:

> Apprécions sans vertige l'étendue de mon innocence.

All the established conventions have been thrown off, including religion ("Je ne me crois pas embarqué pour une noce avec Jésus-Christ pour beau-père."), restrictive forms of thought and learning ("Je ne suis pas prisonnier de ma raison"), and domestic life ("Quant au bonheur établi, domestique ou non... non, je ne peux pas."). In short, Rimbaud is starting out from a point of absolute innocence, freed from society's demands:

> La vie fleurit par le travail, vieille vérité: moi, ma vie n'est pas assez pesante, elle s'envole et flotte loin au-dessus de l'action, ce cher point du monde.

Any explicit child-wish has been lost to the past and to Rimbaud's maturity (personally and poetically), but implicitly he still seeks the simple dream of the child. And with unusual candour, Rimbaud sees that visions have to be sought in the shadow of the cruel joke that is real life:

> Farce continuelle! Mon innocence me ferait pleurer. La vie est la farce à mener par tous.

What occurs at this point is quite strange. With the completion of all but the last section of Mauvais Sang, Rimbaud shows that he has "arrived", that he has achieved a new, more mature level of innocence which prepares him for his future spiritual search. Now, in the eighth and last section, Rimbaud stops short:

> Assez! Voici la punition. -- En marche!

Rimbaud turns back to introduce "la punition", the detailed chronicle of his tortured past, which is to follow in the remaining chapters of Une Saison en enfer.

> Ah! les poumons brûlent, les tempes grondent! la nuit roule dans mes yeux, par ce soleil!

He is about to enter into the account of a death, of a suicide through which the frustrations and fables of the past are destroyed:

> --Je me tue! Je me jette aux pieds des chevaux!

We are on the threshold of a journey through the past of a "damné", but one who knows his struggles, failures and hopes surpass anything that normal society can offer. He is hardly

able to disguise his scorn:

> Ce serait la vie française, le sentier de l'honneur!

Thus we find ourselves, in Mauvais Sang, not only at the end of a long hellish voyage, but also at the beginning of the author's account of what it was like:

> Dans mon enfance, j'entends ses racines de souffrance jetée à mon flanc: aujourd'hui elle a. . .poussé au ciel, elle [renaît] bien plus forte que moi, elle me bat, me traîne, me jette à. . .terre. (From the "Brouillons", Mauvais Sang, p. 245.)

Nuit de l'enfer

In both the introductory paragraphs of Une Saison en enfer and in Mauvais Sang Rimbaud dealt with the ideas of Christian charity and salvation, and eventually rejected them both as avenues to his desired state of purity. As a result of this categorical rejection, Rimbaud now has to face the torture of his conscience, in other words the hell reserved for those who have turned from the Christian way, the "fameuse gorgée de poison". Ironically, however, Christianity itself is shown to be a major source of the torture Rimbaud is experiencing:

> Je me crois en enfer, donce j'y suis. C'est l'exécution du catéchisme.

In addition, Christianity is closely allied with the horrible memories of his childhood as it really was:

> Parents, vous avez fait mon malheur et vous avez fait le vôtre. Pauvre innocent!

Thus Rimbaud emphasizes that the visions of his past were a

type of spiritual defence in the midst of the hell of his childhood:

> J'avais entrevu la conversion au bien et au bonheur, le salut. Puis-je décrire la vision, l'air de l'enfer ne souffre pas les hymnes!

One is now able to see how important the child-wish still is for Rimbaud, since it symbolizes in many ways the fervent simplicity with which one can approach life:

> Ah! l'enfance, l'herbe, la pluie, le lac sur les pierres, le clair de lune quand le clocher sonnait douze. . . .

For similar reasons, then, Rimbaud is tempted by the innocence of the pagan alternative to established religion, because it celebrates life and joy, instead of death and evil:

> L'enfer ne peut attaquer les païens.--C'est la vie encore!

Only with the escape from the burden of evil can Rimbaud hope to refurbish his child-like dream of finding the ultimate goal, the final truths which will answer all the perplexing mysteries of the cosmos:

> Je vais dévoiler tous les mystères: mystères religieux ou naturels, mort, naissance, avenir, passé, cosmogonie, néant. Je suis maître en fantasmagories.

He still holds close to his puerile self-portrait as the hero, the ageless saviour of the people:

> Fiez-vous donc à moi, la foi soulage, guide, guérit. Tous, venez,--même les petits enfants,--que je vous console, qu'on répande pour vous son coeur,--le coeur merveilleux!

In almost the same breath, however, Rimbaud recognizes the evil of his pride, of his mistrust of the world

that in many ways have been the ground of a self-created hell:

> Je devrais avoir mon enfer pour la colère, mon enfer pour l'orgueil,--et l'enfer de la caresse; un concert d'enfers.

He also sees his hell in his fears of the world and in his feelings of impotence:

> Ma faiblesse, la cruauté du monde! Mon Dieu, pitié, cachez-moi, je me tiens trop mal!

Rimbaud is finally coming to recognize the two basic elements of conflict that have always frustrated his ambitions for innocence and purity: his visions, nurtured by pride, are in turn offset by his frequent perceptions of insecurity. Unlike the defensive and bitter attitudes he had taken in the past, however, Rimbaud now seems at least willing to face up to and deal with the reality of this conflict through which he has aggravated his personal torture, even though this deep soul-searching is bound to bring much emotional anguish.

Délires (I)

Rimbaud now enters on a detailed reminiscence of his relations with Verlaine, showing how they played a major part in his season in hell. This portion of Une Saison en enfer is not directly relevant to our particular study, but it does shed some light on the motives behind Rimbaud's total rejection of his past ambitions and dreams in both life and poetry. What is significant here is that Rimbaud is able

to assume the viewpoint of Verlaine and make comments on his (Rimbaud's) own characteristics, such as his awareness of being a "damné":

> C'est un Démon, vous savez, ce n'est pas un homme.

Rimbaud is also incredibly lucid about the folly of his old visions. In the words of the "Vierge Folle",

> A côté de son cher corps endormi, que d'heures des nuits j'ai veillé, cherchant pourquoi il voulait tant s'évader de la réalité. (my italics)

In reference to his poetic doctrine of Voyance, Rimbaud, through the "Vierge Folle" once more, sees that it failed to bring about the achievement of his goals and ambitions:

> Il a peut-être des secrets pour changer la vie?
> Non, il ne fait qu'en chercher. . . .

Another important aspect of Rimbaud's friendship with Verlaine was their common desire for the innocence and purity of a child-like existence:

> Je nous voyais comme deux bons enfants, libres de se promener dans le Paradis de tristesse.

Rimbaud's dreams, however, were soon to surpass those of Verlaine, because the former saw childhood simplicity not as an end in itself, nor as a possession, but as a stepping-stone to ultimate spiritual fulfillment. Thus it was inevitable that they should part, as Rimbaud says to the "Vierge Folle":

> Parce qu'il faudra qu je m'en aille, très loin, un jour.

Rimbaud's dreams of innocence involve more personal commitment

than can be shared with another, and with his final comment, "Drôle de ménage!", he definitively abandons another folly of his past as he comes ever closer to the new innocence announced in Mauvais Sang.

Délires (II)

Now Rimbaud brings out all the force of his satirical power to discredit his doctrine of Voyance as another bad dream of his past: "A moi. L'histoire d'une de mes folies." He spares nothing in describing and disavowing the various elements of the doctrine, such as the attempt to transform language:

> Je réglai la forme et le mouvement de chaque consonne, et, avec des rhythmes instinctifs, je me flattai d'inventer un verbe poétique accessible, un jour ou l'autre, à tous les sens.

He also satirizes the hallucinatory quality of his old verse as a means of achieving a perception of unseen and magical visions:

> Puis j'expliquai mes sophismes magiques avec l'hallucination des mots!

To back up all this satire, Rimbaud sprinkles some samples of his old poems between his satirical prose passages, as if to ridicule them by taking them out of context.

However, Rimbaud still recognizes the value that Voyance had for him, since it was at least an attempt to achieve a chaotic child-like approach to the world:

> Je finis par trouver sacré le désordre de mon esprit.

Aspects of Voyance such as visionary imagination ("Je devins un opéra fabuleux. . ."), role-playing ("A chaque être, plusieurs autres vies me semblaient dues.") and the energetic expression of happiness ("Le Bonheur était ma fatalité, mon remords, mon ver. . .") are all given credit for providing Rimbaud with the hope of childhood innocence, even while the doctrine itself contributed to creating his hell.

Thus with the rejection of a possible life with Verlaine (Delires I), the rejection of Voyance (Delires II), and the rejection of traditional spiritual aids (Nuit de l'enfer), Rimbaud is relieved of many of the encumbrances of his past, and is ready to take on the uncertain hope of new innocence, as announced in Mauvais Sang, along with new forms of expression to aid him in achieving it, as attempted in Illuminations:

> Cela s'est passé. Je sais aujourd'hui saluer la beauté.

L'Impossible

At this point in Une Saison en enfer, Rimbaud picks up where he left off in Mauvais Sang, showing once again his feelings of distaste for the memories of his actual childhood:

> Ah! cette vie de mon enfance. . .quelle sottise c'était.

Now, however, Rimbaud turns from the concept of the "race

inférieure" as the source of his accursed childhood:

> M'étant retrouvé deux sous de raison--ça passe vite!--je vois que mes malaises viennent de ne m'être pas figuré assez tôt que nous sommes à l'Occident.

It is western society in general which has contributed to Rimbaud's situation, in the past and in the present, as a "damné". What is worse, Rimbaud now realizes how much he has consented to the state of being offered to him by that social structure:

> Bon! voici que mon esprit veut absolument se charger de tous les développements cruels qu'a subis l'esprit depuis la fin de l'Orient...Il en veut, mon esprit!

Rimbaud sees that the primal innocence of the Orient was the source of civilization, including the occidental, and that the latter civilization, with its "développements cruels", has destroyed much of this fundamental, uncomplicated wisdom. The Orient, then, provides Rimbaud with a possible way out, much like the paganism of Mauvais Sang, in order to find once more the purity and the innocence of the child:

> J'envoyais au diable les palmes des martyrs, les rayons de l'art, l'orgueil des inventeurs, l'ardeur des pillards; je retournais à l'Orient et à la sagesse première et éternelle.

The escape, however, is not so easily accomplished. Rimbaud still feels terribly burdened with the moral and social standards of his mother civilization:

> Pourtant, je ne songeais guère au plaisir d'échapper aux souffrances modernes.

He is trapped between two tyrannies, that of materialism

and its close ally the Christian Church: "M. Prudhomme est né avec le Christ." Thus Rimbaud increasingly realizes the difficulties he will have in seeking innocence and purity in "l'Orient, la patrie primitive", when Western tradition closes in on all sides, weakening his resolve: "--Mais je m'aperçois que mon esprit dort."

In the end, after having gained a brief flash of his new hope in the Oriental way of purity, Rimbaud finds himself even more deeply encased in his hell. On the one hand, he has the faint hope of his new vision:

> O pureté! pureté!
> C'est cette minute d'éveil qui m'a donné la vision de la pureté!

On the other hand, he is aware of his real weaknesses:

> [Si mon esprit] avait toujours été bien éveillé, je voguerais en pleine sagesse!...

In spite of what seems to be an impossible moral situation, however, Rimbaud has reached a turning point. He realizes his need for a new form of innocence, but with the awareness that he is still "damné", still spiritually weakened by both his "race inférieure" and "l'Occident". And in spite of the final words of L'Impossible ("Déchirante infortune!"), Rimbaud is beginning to see his way clear in "cette minute d'éveil" which he has experienced.

L'Eclair

As the title implies Rimbaud is carrying on the image of the brief flash, the momentary insight into his vision of

purity which gives him the strength to carry on:

> . . .c'est l'explosion qui éclaire mon abîme
> de temps en temps.

Throughout this prose poem Rimbaud rapidly alternates between widely divergent moods, showing in rapid succession desperation,

> Ah! vite, vite un peu; là-bas, par delà
> la nuit, ces récompenses futures, éternelles...
> les échappons-nous?

impatience,

> --Qu'y puis-je? Je connais le travail; et
> la science est trop lente.

and weariness:

> Ma vie est usée.

It is the state of mind of one who can see through to his goal, but who has been struggling so long to reach it that he begins to doubt whether he can make it. Panic and desperation take strong hold, as Rimbaud returns briefly to the religious traditions as a possible way to the "salut" he seeks;

> Sur mon lit d'hôpital, l'odeur de l'encens m'est
> revenue si puissante. . . .

Yet even in the midst of these images of sickness and despair, Rimbaud knows he has come far enough not to succumb to the old temptations that stained the innocence of his real childhood: "Je reconnais là ma sale éducation d'enfance." Rimbaud is sure of the answers or alternatives that are <u>not</u> suitable to his new and growing vision, but he is still unsure of

where to turn to find a vehicle of expression for it:

> Alors,--oh!--chère pauvre âme, l'éternité serait-elle pas perdue pour nous!

Matin

Here another attractive memory comes forward, and Rimbaud shows that of all the tried methods for the fulfillment of his vision of childhood, writing was the most effective and satisfying:

> N'eus-je pas une fois une jeunesse aimable, héroïque, fabuleuse, à écrire sur des feuilles d'or,--trop de chance!

The last interjected remark implies how artificial that past mode of expression seems to be at present, and how it has really not been able to answer the question of his basic unhappiness:

> Par quel crime, par quelle erreur, ai-je mérité ma faiblesse actuelle?

The problem, as it now stands, has gone beyond words:

> Moi, je ne puis pas plus m'expliquer que le mendiant avec ses continuels Pater et Ave Maria. Je ne sais plus parler!

However, the crisis is past, even when it seems at its worst: "Pourtant, aujourd'hui, je crois avoir fini la relation de mon enfer." Thus at the point of greatest despair there is born the greatest hope. The "étoile d'argent" appears, the three wise men begin their trek, the nativity brings forth life and renewal in the midst of the spiritual desert:

> Quand irons-nous, par delà les grèves et les monts, saluer la naissance du travail nouveau, la sagesse nouvelle, la fuite des tyrans et des démons, la fin de la superstition, adorer--les premiers!--Noël sur la terre!

It seems as if Rimbaud has at last stopped avoiding or deploring his old feelings of impotence. He has transformed them, in fact, into a new expression of innocence, into a new state of childhood which accepts its own limitations and chooses not to fight against the whole world:

> Esclaves, ne maudissons pas la vie.

Adieu

It is here that Rimbaud is ready to start out on a new voyage into the future, as announced at the beginning in Mauvais Sang. Unlike the Voyant style of Le Bateau ivre, however, Rimbaud shows less a sense of directionless wonder and fear than of strength and confidence in a renewed sense of innocence. From "Notre barque élevée dans les brumes immobiles tourne vers le port de la misère. . .", Rimbaud escapes to brighter environs:

> Un grand vaisseau d'or, au-dessus de moi, agite ses pavillons multicolores sous les brises du matin.

He has said his final Adieu to the dark past; now all things are bright and fresh, all things are possible, as they had been before in his childhood:

> J'ai cru acquérir des pouvoirs surnaturels.

Rimbaud has achieved his new innocence, cleansed of all the

old frustrations, all the past artistic ambitions:

> Eh bien! je dois enterrer mon imagination et mes souvenirs! Une belle gloire d'artiste et de conteur emportée!

However, Rimbaud is not ignorant of the struggles and difficulties which still await him as he seeks his "salut":

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

He is able to say with certainty ". . .que la victoire m'est acquise", but he knows and accepts that "Le combat spirituel est aussi brutal que la bataille d'hommes. . ."

At last, armed with his new and aware state of purity, Rimbaud has within his reach the hope of a unified, whole experience of the world that only a child-like mind can know:

> --et il me sera loisible de posséder la vérité dans une âme et un corps.

It is only with the failure of Illuminations to achieve this "salut" (see previous chapter) through the transformation of poetry that Rimbaud abandons all traces of his literary past and sets out on still another voyage, this time a real one, to "posséder la vérité" and to satisfy his primal child-like hunger for the final answer, for the vision of salvation and innocent happiness which has so long eluded him.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages we have attempted to show the development and transformation of the theme of childhood in the poetry of Rimbaud.

The early works reveal the ingenuous confidence of a child who is looking ahead to the day when all his fantastic dreams can come to fruition. Rimbaud, hemmed in on all sides by the dullness of provincial life and the knowledge of his own powerlessness as a child, exults in tales of predestined heroes, romantic poets and innocent children. His fledgling poetic efforts express a child-like confidence in the rightness of the universe, and provide a dreamy protection against the frustrations and fears of his real life. And because of his young years, Rimbaud articulates the visions of his childhood in more or less accepted or standard poetic forms, in imitative practice assignments, and only occasionally in his own ingenuous and amateurish way.

It is with his escape from both Charleville in 1870 and from regular poetic forms that Rimbaud seems to find the innocence and freedom which his own childhood lacked, except in dream. His sonnets, in their brevity and lightness, give Rimbaud's poetic voice a new flair and a new freshness

which coincide with his happy exploration of the romantic world he could only look forward to in his earlier years. The stultifying effects of personal weakness and poetic imitation seem to have been abandoned.

At the same time, however, as we have noticed, the frustration of Rimbaud's happiness soon returns with renewed strength. Sedentary and decadent bourgeois life, parental interference, the moral code of the Church and the disappointment experienced in his relations with women drive Rimbaud back into a defensive state of mind, and the invective tone of his poetry emphasizes the bitterness he feels at not being able to "hold back the world" in order to let his internal dreams have time to grow.

This defensive retreat from reality soon turns Rimbaud to the visionary once more, and he tries, through his doctrine of Voyance, and through the poetic motif of the "voyage", to regain his often frustrated state of childhood. However, neither the "dérèglement de tous les sens" nor the attempt to refurbish the illogical chaos of the child is successful in defending him against the real world. The irony of this stage in Rimbaud's career is that even with the acquisition of a new poetic doctrine and the development of a very personal and strong poetic voice, his is unable to achieve a child-like state.

Thus, the paradox between Rimbaud's power of poetic

vision-making and his actual impotence creates the elements for the final drama in his career. The Illuminations and Une Saison en enfer, most likely written almost simultaneously[1], are simply recording the chronicle of a faded dream of childhood which returns only momentarily in brief flashes (as in "Aube" of Illuminations) or in different forms (as in his dabbling in paganism and Eastern philosophy), but which is forever lost in its original form and strength.

In the end, Rimbaud's writing reveals a resignation and a new maturity that were never evident in the emergetic and often raging verses of his earlier days. As Rimbaud's career draws to a close, then, he reveals the anguish typical of the adolescent--and it is perhaps then that we realize that Rimbaud, in his confident visions, in his nostalgic momories, and in his final resolution to abandon poetry for an unsure future, is really only expressing the universal anxiety of growing up.

---

[1] See Y. Bonnefoy, Rimbaud par lui-même, p. 153.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Rimbaud, Jean-Arthur. Oeuvres. Edited by Suzanne Bernard. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, [1960].

--------. Oeuvres Complètes. Edited by Rolland de Renéville and Jules Mouquet. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Editions Gallimard, [1963].

Reference Works

Books and Articles

Bachelard, Gaston. La Poétique de l'espace. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961.

--------. La Poétique de la rêverie. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965.

Baudelaire, Charles. 'Le Hachish' and 'Le Poëme du haschisch' from "Les Paradis Artificiels" in the Oeuvres Complètes. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Editions Gallimard, [1961].

Bonnefoy, Yves. Rimbaud par lui-même. Paris: Editions du Seuil, [1961].

Bouillane de Lacoste, Henry de. Rimbaud et le problème des Illuminations. Paris: Mercure de France, [1949].

Cattaui, G. "Rimbaud Kabbaliste", Orphisme et Prophétie chez les poètes français, 1850-1950. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1965.

Etiemble, René. Le Mythe de Rimbaud. Paris: N.R.F., Editions Gallimard, [1952-].

Faurisson, Robert. "A-t-on lu Rimbaud?", Bizarre, XXI and XXII (1961).

Fowlie, Wallace. Rimbaud. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

--------. Rimbaud: The Myth of Childhood. London: Dennis Dobson, 1946.

Frohock, W. M. Rimbaud's Poetic Practice: Image and Theme in the Major Poems. Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 1963.

Hackett, Charles A. Rimbaud l'enfant. Paris: José Corti, [1947].

Houston, John Porter. The Design of Rimbaud's Poetry. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1963.

Hugo, Victor. La Légende des Siècles. Edited by Jacques Truchet. Paris: Editions Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1950.

Laing, Ronald D. The Politics of Experience. Aylesbury: Hazell, Watson and Viney, 1967.

Paillou, Paul Henri. Arthur Rimbaud, Père de l'existentialisme. Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1947.

Rimbaud, Jean Arthur. Oeuvres. Edited by P. Berrichon. Preface by Paul Claudel. Paris: Mercure de France, 1929.

St. Aubyn, F. C. "Rimbaud: The doctors' dilemma", Modern Language Notes, LXXII (1957), 113-120.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. "Bad Faith", Being and Nothingness. Translated by H. E. Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press, 1966.

Starkie, Enid. Arthur Rimbaud. London: Faber and Faber, [1961].