From Poe to Rimbaud: A Comparative View of Symbolist Poetry

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Though geographically isolated from each other in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, Walt Whitman, Edgar Allan Poe, and their French contemporaries, Charles Baudelaire, and Arthur Rimbaud, worked analogously to revolutionize poetic representation. Baudelaire and Rimbaud worked in the Symbolist tradition, while Whitman and Poe stood together in the United States as revolutionary poetic thinkers. While French civilization created the social and artistic contexts for Symbolism, French Symbolists probably appropriated much of their formally artistic ideas from Poe and Whitman. Most critics agree Poe was most likely more influential to the formation of Symbolist thought, while Whitman's force is a bit unclear. Aligning Baudelaire and Poe, as analogous artists, and Whitman and Rimbaud, *From Poe to Rimbaud, a Comparative View of Symbolist Poetry* will defend American importance in the formation and development of French Symbolist poetry.

Introduction

Between the 1850's and the 1870's, an early Symbolist aesthetic emerged in the French literary and artistic scenes. Charles Baudelaire, considered by many the father of French Symbolism, defines modern art in "L'Art Philosophique" (1869) as "[Creating] a magic containing at once the object and the subject, the outside world of the artist and the artist himself" (qtd by Erkkila 56). This definition, as indicative of the way Symbolists viewed aesthetics, suggests that Symbolist art takes into account three main factors: the artist's external world, the artist's internal world, and a less tangible but important "magic" which bonds the two. While Symbolism is a French movement, the formal mechanisms that Symbolists used to support their art came largely from Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman in the United States. Although Poe did not actively participate in the French movement –he died in 1849– many critics agree that Pre-Symbolism, and thus Symbolism, would not have evolved as it did without his influence. The case of Walt Whitman, however, is much more precarious for both French and American critics. Most French and American scholars do not know where to place Whitman in the Symbolist tradition and so largely deny his influence in the movement. Linking Poe and Whitman with Symbolist writers Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud, this study will ultimately defend American influence on French Symbolism.

Five Features of Symbolism

As this study concerns the evolution of Symbolism from French and American influence, we will examine five main features common in Symbolist poetry to eventually see how these elements cross cultural boundaries. These five features common to Symbolist texts are: associating various effects, employing symbols,

alluding to exotic locations, evoking human passivity, and ultimately mixing effects to invoke synesthesia.

Symbolist writers connect or link effects, in order to suggest rather than define states of human perception. Symbolist writers achieve effectual linkage by stringing together various series of emotions and evocations to support an associative cognitive process and to also reject one single defined conclusion in their work. For example, in Charles Baudelaire's poem "Parfum Exotique" or "Exotic Perfume" effect unifies the poem as the speaker describes a scene in which he rests upon a lover's body while his mind strays to an exotic marine landscape. Traveling from eroticism to exoticism, the speaker evokes the effect of warmth in such words as "a hot autumn evening" (Baudelaire 71, ln 1) and "your warm breast" (Baudelaire 71, ln 2) as his mind moves from a lover's body to a natural landscape. This warmth mixes with the smell of his lover's breast, drawing him "towards charming climates" (Baudelaire 72, ln 9). The effect of smell and warmth thus mix, as the speaker says, "in my soul with the sailors' song" (Baudelaire 72, ln 14). The end to this effectual chain is thus the contemplation of song and feeling rather than an absolute conclusion as to what that feeling means.

Symbolist artists employ the symbol as a way to suggest rather than define emotion. Explaining the importance of the symbol, Alfred Schinz says of the interaction between thought, words, and the symbol: "…no effort [must] be made to express one's feelings, to define them by words, but in order to be sure not to rob them of the airy something that is in them, one must speak only to the indefinite form of symbols" (Schinz 284). Symbolists thus employ the symbol because the evocative power laden in it has the ability to suggest or allude to a specific emotion while all the while never explaining the emotion itself. In other words, the artist takes care to evoke emotions through symbols which they will never define but which it will instead connect to other symbols and thus other evocations.

Creating a way for contemporary readers to deal with modernity, Symbolists often combine the loathsome banality of contemporary cities with the idealized dream of an exotic locality. This same preoccupation with exotic localities as a way to both flee society and more fully engage life reflects itself in the lives of proto-Symbolist writer Charles Baudelaire and Symbolist writer Arthur Rimbaud. Baudelaire first traveled to the island of Mauritius in 1841 at the age of twenty. His (in)famous work *Les Fleurs du Mal*, published in 1857 and in an expanded version in 1861, explores at great depth the exotic as an idealized condition for poetic inspiration and personal engagement, as we briefly saw with "Parfum Exotique". Arthur Rimbaud also experienced exoticism at the age of twenty in 1874 when he became disillusioned and moved to Africa, abandoning his life as a poet. One can see Rimbaud's concern with exotic escape in "Le Bateau Ivre" or "The Drunken Boat" when the vessel expresses need to flee the rivers of civilization for the exotic adventures of the raging sea. Within the works of both artists, and for Symbolism at large, one can conclude that exotic locations offer a space where artists can experience pure poetic engagement removed from the confines of contemporary city life.

Being natural thinkers, dreamers and empyreal philosophers (Schinz 280), Symbolist writers find empowerment in passive thought as opposed to active engagement. In attempting to explain Symbolist melancholy, Schinz says, "Joy is found in action, and when man does not act, he feels no joy. So, as joy connected in the mind with the idea of activity, sadness is associated with the thought of passivity. The sadness of the Symbolists is a sort of boredom" (Schinz 280). While Schinz very accurately points to Symbolist passivity as a state of mind which many of our authors inhabit, he too hastily subscribes a pejorative connotation to it. Symbolists passively participate in societies of which they do not see themselves a part; passivity then being how they engage the very modernity to which they cannot relate. They retreat into a more idealized and intellectualized space, like the speaker whose soul mixes with the sailors' song in "Parfum Exotique" to transport himself to a distant land through poetry. It is within these contemplative spaces where Symbolists yearn and languish for the ideals their literature represents, but from which they are always physically distant.

A fifth feature of Symbolism, and the goal of many Symbolist texts, is synesthesia. One can define synesthesia as the involuntary linkage or association of one sensory pathway with another. Symbolists achieve this effect as an end product of linking effects. As the inherent tangibility of each symbol gives way to the actual associations and allusions latent within them, symbols begin to serve as catalysts for the soulful transcendence of the synesthetic experience. One synesthetic reaction occurs in the poem "Correspondences" by Charles Baudelaire. Describing his surroundings as he passes into "forests of symbols" (Baudelaire 55, ln 3) the speaker's senses all mix in the clearness of the night. The speaker thus confuses smells, colors and sounds to invoke synesthetic reaction: "Vast as night and as light, the perfumes, the colors, and the sounds answer each other" (Baudelaire 55, ln 7-8). Ultimately, this synesthetic reaction propels Baudelaire's speaker, and Symbolist artists more largely, into a deeper state of inner awareness. It transcends corporeal limitations and elevates literature from a dialogue between the human subject and words to a conversation between the symbol and soul. As

we will later explore the source of synesthesia through Whitman's practice of metempsychosis, this conversation between human, literature, and soul may have a very specific American root or at least an analogous complement.

Poe's Poetic Function

As one of the most important influences for early Symbolist writers, Edgar Allan Poe inspired French poets through his theoretical representation of art. Poe discusses his preoccupation with "poetry as an exercise of the spirit operating on the plane of the ideal" (Jones, 245-246) in his essay "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846). In this essay Poe specifically addresses one element that also translate into the Symbolist tradition: effect. Poe says of the importance of effect in conversation with Beauty: "When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect – they refer in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of *soul – not* of intellect, or of heart –…" (Poe 433). Poe evokes effect because, like Symbolists, he sees art as the medium through which the human soul can discourse with less tangible, but salient forms of ideal Beauty. Poe takes special care here to note that effect in his literature does not serve to elevate the intellect or the heart to fill readers' spirits with universal well-being. Instead, his "pure elevation of soul" propels readers to an inner disconnect between immortal soul and mortal body in contemplation of effects ultimately linked to Beauty.

Poe's "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (1845), or as Baudelaire translated it in 1856, "La Vérité sur le cas de M. Valdemar", serves as one of the best representations of Poe's theoretical discussion of literature. "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" largely concerns the relationship between the formulaic science of death and the inexplicable ambiguity of human mortality. The speaker of the story offers mesmerism "in articulo mortis," or "at the moment of death," as the way to ultimately employ effect to obscure the distinction between objectively tested science and subjectively perceived mortality. Close to death, M. Valdemar calls upon his friend, who is also the tale's narrator, to prolong Valdemar's life through mesmerism. As the narrative develops so does Poe's use of ambiguously haunting effect. He says of Valdemar's inward state as reflected through his outward appearance: "The glassy roll of the eye was changed for that expression of uneasy *inward* examination…" (Poe 53). Valdemar's "glassy role of the eye" serves as an important moment moving Valdemar from a socialized world to one defined by intangibility with "that expression of uneasy inward examination." Logically speaking, the fact that the speaker characterizes Valdemar's inward retreat with uneasiness suggests that Valdemar's insight also gives him reason to be troubled. Whatever this causality may be, however, the speaker does not explore here. Instead, Poe's emphasis is to use effect to evoke haunting unease.

In concluding this tale, Poe again employs effect with the intent to haunt and disgust by fusing Valdemar's mesmeric experience with his inexplicable corporeal dissolution. After summoning Valdemar from the space between sleep and death the narrator formally wakes Valdemar so that he can in fact die. He says of this process: "…his whole frame at once– within the space of a single minute, or even less, shrunk– crumbled, absolutely *rotted* away beneath my hands. Upon the bed, before that whole company, there lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome– of detestable putridity" (Poe 58). Poe's employment of effects such as desperate cries and corporeal rot relate to his theoretical dealing with poetic Beauty as what he calls in *The Philosophy of Composition* "mournful and never-ending remembrance". The release Valdemar finds during his final desperate moments are not akin to peace for either subject or reader, but instead a testament to the effect of troubling unease characteristic of Poe's writing. As Valdemar pleads through "ejaculations of 'dead!' 'dead!'" (Poe 58) to leave his corporeal legacy as "a nearly liquid mass of loathsome– of detestable putridity." The soul's torment manifests independently of corporeal dissolution, and thus adds an intangible and indefinite boundary to the effect of unease and terror Poe carefully structures.

Baudelaire's similar use of effect, imagery, and vocabulary in his poem "Une Charogne" closely links his work to Poe's. In "Une Charogne" or "A Carrion", Baudelaire's speaker recounts coming across a decaying corpse on the side of the road. He describes the scene :"The flies were buzzing on this putrid stomach. / From where were leaving black battalions / Of larva, which ran like a thick liquid / The length of these living rags" "(Baudelaire 17-20, 78). Since he was reading and translating Poe before he published this poem in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, one can conclude that aside from Poe's poetic theory, Baudelaire also could have borrowed specific words and images from the American writer. Baudelaire's use of the words "putrid" and "a thick liquid" in analogously align with Poe's description of Valdemar's as "a nearly liquid mass of loathsome– of detestable putridity." This evidence only continues to strengthen the bond between Baudelaire and Poe and thus between American influence in Symbolism.

Although Baudelaire's artistic plan strongly aligns with that of Poe's, many French critics are still hesitant to give the American poet full credit in the Symbolist project. As Marcel Françon says of Baudelaire's poetic development: "To understand Poe's influence on Baudelaire, it is necessary to take account less of what Baudelaire was before he had known Poe's work than to seek to what degree the ideas and

theories of the latter are original" (Françon 846). Françon's judgment is here incomplete in that he does not say where or how Baudelaire searched for his own poetic theories before he knew of Poe. Instead, he attempts to invalidate the degree of Poe's influence in Baudelaire's art while never fully explaining his argument.

In not giving full credit to Poe's influence on Baudelaire's life, Françon also ignores Baudelaire's own opinion of Poe in relation to French literature. As Jones says: "In 1852, having translated a selection of the tales of Poe, Charles Baudelaire sent a copy of his work to Sainte-Beuve with the injunction: "It's essential, that is to say I desire, that Edgar Poe, who isn't popular in America, become a great man for France" (Jones 236). Compared to Françon's statement, one can perhaps infer that Baudelaire recognized, and more justly treated than contemporary French critics, his artistic relationship with Poe.

Whitman's Poetic Function

Another influential American author, whose presence in Symbolism critics have largely unrecognized, is Walt Whitman. Erkkila says of Whitman's relation to Symbolism: "…no one has yet made an adequate study of Whitman's relationship to the French literary tradition" (Erkkila 58). Erkkila's illumination of the problem that underlies scholarship between Whitman and France, namely that it barely exists, also informs the scholarly piecework with which we will here engage. However one views the scholarly debate about Whitman's relationship to Symbolism, the fact that both French and American critics have concerned themselves, though not fully or adequately with Whitman and Symbolism, suggests that there are connections between the two worth investigating. By challenging both French and American critical opinions we will see that Whitman's revolutionary use of free verse and metempsychosis enriched the Symbolists project through formal style and poetic inspiration.

The connection between Whitman and Symbolism largely hinges upon his creation of free verse or as the French literally translate "vers libre". One can define free verse as "poetry that does not follow a regular metrical pattern or rhyme scheme" (Barton and Hudson 91). Up until this point in literary history poets had largely worked in measured and rhymed verse. As Edward Quinn comments: "Although scattered examples of free verse appear in earlier poetry, the great pioneer of the form was Walt Whitman, whose *Leaves of Grass* (1855) constituted a free verse manifesto" (133). By innovating poetic representation through free verse, Whitman shows a new way to represent the human experience mirrored in poetry. He created a new bond between poetic form and the way people consequently experience poetry through form. As Dondo says of experiencing free verse: "In reality the accents are displaced so freely that the ear loses all consciousness of a pre-established measure. Nevertheless rhythmic divisions are maintained with so much justice that they give the poem its perfect unity" (Dondo 110). As this passage suggests, Whitman's free verse represents a renovation to poetic form: transcendence from classical measure to a new, but always unified, dialogue between literary tools such as rhyme and alliteration, and reader.

Aside from Whitman's use of rhyme and alliteration, his line structure also unifies his poetry. Gay Wilson Allen says of Whitman's line structure, "In his verse the line is the unit…The second line balances the first, completing or supplementing its meaning" (xliii). For example, Whitman says in section three of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry", "It avails not, time nor place□distance avails not, / I am with you…" (Whitman ln 20-21). While the first line establishes temporal and spatial distance between the reader and the speaker, it also structurally and thematically connects the two. The dash in the first line holds "place" and "distance" together, which signify both temporal and spatial separation. The comma at the end of line twenty-one then seamlessly wraps into the next line as the speaker reminds us on a thematic level that "I am with you." Whitman's lines thus exemplify structural and thematic cohesiveness in free verse.

Symbolists may have found Whitman's free verse the formal tool they needed to structurally recreate the poetic theory they earlier derived from Poe. Baudelaire explains of his own search for a new poetic expression: "Who among us has not, in our ambitious days, dreamed of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm and without rhyme, flexible enough and beaten enough to adapt itself to the lyrical movements of the soul, to the undulations of dreams, to the loops of consciousness?" (Baudelaire 73-74). If the poetic form to which Baudelaire refers in this passage is to prose poetry and not free verse, it shares the latter's aim of liberating poetry from the strictures of conventional versification. It is difficult to know if Baudelaire ever knew about Whitman's poetic innovations because he never wrote about the American writer. However, Baudelaire did turn from verse poetry to prose poetry in the collection of fifty-one poems entitled *Le Spleen de Paris: Les Petits Poèmes en Prose (The Spleen of Paris: Small Prose Poems)* before his death in 1867. Quinn defines prose poetry as "a composition that, while printed as prose, displays the rhythms and types of imagery usually found in verse" (262). If Baudelaire did not know about Whitman's innovative free verse, his own original use of prose poetry bonds him to Whitman at least though analogous poetic originality.

Another way Whitman possibly influenced the Symbolist project was through his practice of metempsychosis. Metempsychosis explains the passing of the soul from either the human world to an after life or, in the case of Whitman, from one object or person to another through time and space. Malcolm Cowley believes that "Immortality for Whitman took the form of metempsychosis…" (xxi). As we will see in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry", Whitman relates his immortal soul to his contemporary reader through space and time, using nature as the intermediary connecting the two. He thus renders himself immortal through his soul, which transcends his own corporeal and temporal limitations in an evolutionary-esque process. Just as Symbolists ultimately work to demonstrate synesthesia as a way to elevate human perceptions to the plane of the soul, Whitman achieves similar effect through metempsychosis.

One can most fully see Whitman's engagement with free verse and metempsychosis in his work "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry". In this poem the speaker watches ferry passengers and nature, reflecting his soul off the two in time and space.

Reading this poem, one immediately finds that there is neither rhyme nor meter. However, as Dondo explained of free verse, there are still unifying elements to the poetic form. One poetic tool that Whitman characteristically employs is alliteration, or the repeating of like sounds. In the opening lines of this poem, Whitman strongly employs consonance, or the alliteration of consonant sounds. For example, he stresses "F" through "Flood" and "ferry"; "C" through "clouds" and "crowds"; "H" through "hundreds" and "home"; "M" through "me" and "meditations". The flow, musicality, and unification these words create exemplify what Dondo earlier observed in asserting that other elements in free verse, such as Whitman's consonance, can bond the poem as rhyme and meter once did.

On a more thematic level, the first section of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" reveals the speaker's voice as his soul engages humans and nature, establishing the necessary conditions for metempsychosis. The speaker first looks to his natural surrounding as his equal: "Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face! / Clouds of the west- sun there half an hour high- I see you / also face to face." (Whitman ln 1-2). Whitman relates to the water beneath him, and the clouds and sky around him, in order to first suggest that the material form of his body is the same material form as nature. Because human and nature are thus equal, a poem that will eventually address human-to-human relationship as equal, must also engage its natural counterpart. Whitman shifts his connection from nature to his connection with Humankind as he bonds the human subject passing above the same waters and below the same skies as he: "And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose" (Whitman ln 5). He finds this future connection through his meditations, which is to say his process of reflection on both nature and his soul. These soulful meditations are thus what hold him both to nature and his fellow man, and which will always connect him to the two through time and space.

After recognizing, but not dwelling on, the evil Whitman sees inherent in humanity, he shows that his idea of metempsychosis is moreover a connection to a positively bonded space between worldly life and the eternity of the soul. Whitman's speaker concludes "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" much like he began it: by addressing the water beneath, the sky above, and the people between. However, in the conclusion, he connects future men's reflections to the water into which he peers by saying "Receive the summer sky, you water, and faithfully hold it till all downcast eyes have time to take it from you!" (Whitman ln 125). In addition to this future reflection he, nature, and human kind will share, Whitman pushes human understanding of nature towards human understanding of eternity and the soul. Whitman here addresses metempsychosis by saying to nature "You furnish your parts towards eternity, / Great or small, you furnish your parts towards the soul" (Whitman ln 145-146). Just as the mountains stand, the birds fly, the human travels, and the water flows and shows the reflection of all, the interaction between humans, nature, and the underlying force which guides the two thus completes the transmigration of the soul from nature to human and also from human to human. Just as both Poe and Baudelaire bonded human experience to the realm of the soul through ideal, but logically incomprehensible forms of Beauty, Whitman does through metempsychosis.

French and American critics alike engage Whitman's free verse as it relates to Symbolist "vers libre". However, while critics generally recognize a connection between Whitman and Symbolism, they are largely unable to agree on the extent of his importance in the movement. By challenging the contradictions and complications in two critical arguments, those of Thérèse Bentzon and Teodor de Wyzema, we will support Whitman's place as a Symbolist influence.

In 1872 Bentzon published "Un Poète Américain, Walt Whitman: 'Muscle and Pluck Forever" in the literary publication *La Revue des Deux Mondes*. Bentzon's work as a whole invalidates Whitman's poetry without bothering to see how his art reflects Symbolist poetic values of the time. She says of Whitman:

> *One spoke with stupor of a poet whose verses do not have a trace of rhyme, except in very few cases where the rhyme happens by chance; one spoke with disgust of*

a false innovator who expressed in confused, incorrect and crude terms, the most extravagant paradoxes which can inspire the spirit of revolt and materialism; scandal and ridicule attached themselves simultaneously to the name of Walt Whitman (Bentzon 566).

Bentzon too quickly devalues Whitman without seeing either the cultural or the poetic significance of his poetry. As we just saw in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry", Whitman's use of consonance and perfect balance of line structure internally hold his poetry together, creating the "perfect unity" which Dondo attributes to free verse. This same perfect unity is the manifestation of what Baudelaire seems to have foreseen in his own vision of "a poetic prose". Although Baudelaire largely wrote with measured rhyme and meter, as his speaker describes in one poem, "La Vie Antérieure", "Les houles, en roulant…" (Baudelaire 63, ln 5) one can see his experimentation with assonance as a bonding poetic element.

In addition to Bentzon's superficial and unfounded analysis of Whitman's verse, her quickness to attribute his poetry to that which inspires materialism and revolt is likewise unjust. As we saw before in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry", Whitman's connection to his fellow man and their natural surroundings through the vastness of time and space inspire unity rather than revolt or materialism. It furthermore seems impossible to limit a man who claims to be "the poet of the Body and… the poet of the Soul" (Whitman 41) to such principles as revolt or materialism when his true intention, like Symbolists, is to eternally connect human and soulful experience through poetry.

Another prominent critic who attacked Whitman not for his poetic form but rather for his degree of influence on Symbolism is M. Teodor de Wyzewa. In 1892, the year of Whitman's death, M. de Wyzewa published a contradictory article in *La Revue Bleue*. In this article de Wyzewa first expounds upon Whitman's importance in Symbolism only to then discredit the writer. He begins:

When, in a few years, we will be rid of the 19th century, critics responsible for carrying out its liquidation will be shocked to have to take note of Walt Whitman's enormous influence on our contemporary literary movement. For they will have to truly recognize that of all innovations attempted in the last twenty-five years in our literature, and of those that touch form, and of those that touch ideas and feelings, there is not one that is indicated, realized, maybe even exaggerated in Walt Whitman's first volume of poetry, Leaves of Grass, published in 1855 (qtd by Jones 23).

De Wyzewa does not however sustain this flattering assessment of Whitman's poetic influence. He contradicts himself by soon after saying:

Twentieth century critics will have there an excellent occasion to be mistaken. For despite the fact that Walt Whitman's poems date from 1855 and that they already present in appearance all the characteristics which appear in the works of today's writers, the truth is that they have exerted little or no influence on our contemporary literary movement (qtd by Jones 24).

Much like Bentzon attacked Whitman's specific poetic function without any true base for her criticism, de Wyzewa's claim equally falls apart for its contradiction in saying Whitman is both invaluable and useless in Symbolism. However, as Erkkila says of de Wyzewa's claim: "Although Wyzewa's conclusions are not justified by the evidence, his words of caution to the twentieth-century critic indicate some of the difficulty in studying Whitman's relation to the French Symbolists" (Erkkila 52). One such problem is to know just how much Symbolists knew of the specifics of Whitman's writing since the vast majority of his poetry appeared in scant translation. While we will more closely approach the issue of translation in our examination of Whitman and Arthur Rimbaud, it is essential to understand at this point that even though these two French critics attackWhitman's influence in Symbolism, their attacks hinge on superficial analyses and contradictory claims.

Whitman and Rimbaud

One such artist who may have taken special interest in Whitman's work was famous Symbolist writer Arthur Rimbaud. While it is impossible to know if Whitman had an unequivocal influence for Rimbaud, since he and Whitman did not have a literary relationship like Baudelaire and Poe, there are signs that suggest that the American author may have been more than a passing interest to the French poet. By examining Rimbaud's letter to Paul Demeny, speculating about how Whitman's works could have reached the French poet, and juxtaposing Rimbaud's free verse poem "Marine" to Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" I will suggest Whitman's importance in Rimbaud's art.

A letter Rimbaud wrote to his friend Paul Demeny in 1871 aligns him with Whitman's efforts to stretch the parameters of poetic form and meaning. Rimbaud says of the poet's general relation to the soul: "He searches his soul, he inspects it, he tempts it, he learns it. As soon as he knows it, he cultivates it…" (Rimbaud 44). His concern with the poet as an individual who passes and transfers knowledge between man and the soul aligns him most

closely with Whitman's concern with being "the poet of the Body and … the poet of the Soul." Both men see poetry as both the bonding element between the body and the soul. In further developing his relation to the poet and the soul Rimbaud says: "I mean that it is necessary to be a seer, to make yourself a seer. The poet makes himself a seer by a long, immense and reasoned disordering of all the senses. Every form of love, of suffering, of insanity; he searches for himself, he exhausts each of their poisons in himself to keep only their quintessences" (Rimbaud 45). This process of disordering the senses aligns Rimbaud's understanding of sensory perception with both Baudelaire's and Whitman's. As we briefly saw how Baudelaire creates a synesthetic reaction in "Correspondences" to elevate human poetic experience to the plane of the soul, and how Whitman practices metempsychosis in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" as a way to transfer his soul over the vastness of time and space, Rimbaud approaches his soulful dealings by taking pieces from both. As we will soon see in his free verse poem, "Marine," Rimbaud disconnects and rejoins sensory perception both thematically through language and literally through free verse to fill in a space between Baudelaire's synesthesia and Whitman's metempsychosis.

Aside from Rimbaud's desire to create a poetic form bonding human to soul, another poetic feature Rimbaud shares with Whitman is free verse. While Rimbaud was searching for a way to experiment with poetic form, he turned away from traditionally measured rhyme and verse. As he says to Demeny about Baudelaire's poetic form: "…he had lived in a society too artistic; and the form so vaunted in him is petty-minded. The inventions of the unknown call for new forms" (Rimbaud 51). One such form for Rimbaud was free verse. In defending Whitman's importance in Rimbaud's discovery of free verse, it is essential to understand how the revolutionary poetic form could have reached Rimbaud. About a year after he wrote his letter to Demeny, Thérèse Bentzon published the critical review of Whitman we earlier examined. While Bentzon certainly hoped to defame the American poet in the eyes of the French literary public, she perhaps did the inverse for Rimbaud. As Erkkila says of the relation between Bentzon's article and Rimbaud: "The Whitman article by… Thérèse Bentzon, which Rimbaud probably read in 1872, included translations of passages from such poems as 'Starting from Paumanok,' 'Salut Au Monde,' and 'There was a Child Went Forth'… In such lines, Rimbaud would have recognized many of his own ideas on the new poetry…" (Erkkila 62). These translations would have at least demonstrated to Rimbaud that Whitman was also searching and successfully employing "new forms" in his poetry. I assert that from here, Rimbaud would have especially been able to implement the poetic innovations he saw already alive and well on the other side of the Atlantic.

By more closely examining "Marine" in relation to "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." firstly as a structural representation of both Whitman's and Rimbaud's analogous use of free verse and secondly as an example of metempsychosis and synesthesia we will further defend Whitman's possible influence in Rimbaud's artistic plan.

In employing his version of free verse, Rimbaud's punctuation largely holds his poetry together, much like we saw Whitman's punctuation in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" bond the speaker and reader through time and space. Rimbaud uses dashes to hold together related clauses and images as the poem moves from line to line. Through punctuation, Rimbaud thus creates structural unity and cohesiveness in the poem. The first line, for example, seems to spatially orientate the reader in the richness of a chariot on land. However, the second line, which Rimbaud bonds to the first through enjambment, orientates the reader to textural richness on the sea. While the two clauses seem to be in apparent contradiction with one another, the third line, which joins to the following and preceding lines alike, clarifies a verbal action the two share: beating the sea's foam. While it still does not make logical sense at this time on a thematic level as to how chariots and ships could situate themselves on, respectively, land and sea, the poem's punctuation and internal structure bonds the images and carries the reader through the following clauses.

Rimbaud's speaker, like Whitman's, situates the poetic subject in natural context to ultimately blur the distinction between wild natural space and habitable human space. Yet whereas Whitman more specifically orientates his poetic subject over a body of water and beneath a sea of clouds by specifically saying, "Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face! / Clouds of the west…I see you also face to face" (Whitman ln 1-2), Rimbaud employs seemingly contradictory language with "Les courants de la lande" and "les ornières immenses du reflux" (Rimbaud 142) to mark his spatial orientation. Although it may seem contradictory for Rimbaud to describe land as having currents, a feature unique to water, and the tide as having ruts, a feature unique to land, this type of linguistic crossing serves to cast two contrasting spaces of land and water as identifiable with each other. By crossing terrestrial and aqueous forms, Rimbaud thus poetically achieves the same bond as Whitman by unifying the natural spaces with human spaces.

Developing the notion of spatial orientation, both Rimbaud and Whitman ultimately demonstrate that human relation to natural space provides a way in which to communicate the soul through nature and time. As we earlier saw, Whitman achieves this unity between man, nature, and soul, by speaking directly to the surrounding nature, and to

the people to which he sees himself eternally bonded in the space of nature. He holds the realm of the soul as humanity's unifying space between man and nature. Rimbaud handles his soulful unity in a more abstract, even surreal fashion. The speaker uses light to bind the land and the sea in the eternal space of the soul. He achieves this effect through movement. The four main participatory actors in the poem are two objects of human transportation, chariots and prows, and two natural features of land and sea, the currents of the moor and the ruts of the ebb tide. As the speaker describes, the chariots and the prows disrupt both the waters on which they travel and the naturally growing stumps of bramble. This human movement however, pulses much the same as the natural tide, which washes through land and sea in like energy. These two similar paths do not ravage the space of which they are both destructive and constituent parts. The energy that manifests in both instead provides a surface off of which light refracts, sending their now equally bonded forces back into the eternity of space and time. I suggest here that this rebounding light, which thus refracts off the metallic sides of the silver and copper chariots, the steel and silver prows, and the tides and moors of the land and sea serves as an element independent of but complementary to the already existent human and natural energy in the poem. This light thus represents the same potential Whitman's soul has to extend between generations of human and natural life, bonding forms of the corporeal and natural world to those extending beyond our mortal beings.

While I suggest Whitman's importance for Rimbaud in both his dealings with free verse and his ideas of communication with the soul, this view is limited. Rimbaud did not date many of his poems, so it is nearly impossible to say with absolute certainty when he wrote that which seems to align with Whitman's poetic project. However, since Rimbaud became disillusioned with his own art and stopped writing all together around 1873 or 1874, not long after the time he wrote to Demeny and probably read Bentzon's article, we can at the latest date his poetry in the earlier 1870s, fifteen years after Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* came into print. As demonstrated earlier, it seems that there is more than coincidence that connects the poetry of these two innovative giants. Both men, as Erkkila says, "represented a new and revolutionary departure, a revolt of the basically illogical flux and flow of things against the orderly, artistic constructs of the past" (Erkkila 69). At this time in the scholarship between the two, scholars must challenge the confines holding Rimbaud's poetry to France and Whitman's to America to more comprehensively understand how they complement and work from each other as innovative giants.

Conclusion

Between the 1850s and 1870s while the Symbolist movement reacted against its own set of social and artistic confines in France, early Symbolists looked to American writers for the formal and theoretical tools they needed to practice their art. Edgar Allan Poe's poetic plan served Symbolist progenitor Charles Baudelaire with the theoretical ideas of ideal Beauty and haunting effect. Walt Whitman's use of free verse and metempsychosis on the other hand perhaps served as an analogous inspiration for early Symbolist innovator Arthur Rimbaud.

While this study has been particularly focused in scope, it has responded to and developed previous scholarship concerned with tracing American influence in French literary Symbolism. As we have seen, most scholars agree that Poe's poetic plan was necessary for Baudelaire as he developed what would become Symbolism. We have especially connected the two writers through their analogous use of poetic effect to channel ideal Beauty and thus demonstrate what Poe calls "mournful and never-ending remembrance." We have also linked Whitman to France, challenging much of previous scholarship on Symbolism. We aligned Whitman's invention of free verse and practice of metempsychosis to those Arthur Rimbaud later employed. In linking these four innovative writers, I have ultimately suggested the importance of American influence on French Symbolism.

Although this study has brought together American and French poetics through Symbolism, there still remains much for scholars to explore. One area of study that still lies dormant concerns Rimbaud's *Illuminations*. Visually, this work has the same fluid quality as Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Thematically, it often provides introspective ponderings relating the soul to quotidian life, like in *Leaves of Grass*. However, since Rimbaud did not date much of his work, it is difficult to assert beyond speculation if he had Whitman in mind while writing. Another area, which scholars have yet to exhaust, is the larger bond between Poe, Whitman, and later Symbolist writers. By joining American influence to later Symbolist texts, scholars can continue to challenge and build new links between French and American writers. For as both groups sought deeper poetic understanding, the analogous artistic innovations in Symbolism and nineteenth-century American writings eternally bond French and American poetics through Poe, Baudelaire, Whitman, and Rimbaud.

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