

ABSTRACT

The thesis *Arthur Rimbaud and the Broken Ego. From the Identity Crisis to the Internal Coherence of his Work*, structured in two parts, intends to achieve some major objectives, which establish right from the beginning a demarcation line in comparison with the other critical studies about Rimbaud's work. The first part, *The broken Ego*, wants, as a first objective, to pull down the "myth" which has framed the writer and his work, to break up some extremely powerful, resistant and often contradictory clichés imposed by the literary criticism: *Rimbaud the symbolist*, *Rimbaud the incoherent and the unclassifiable*, *Rimbaud the impenetrable and the unintelligible*, *Rimbaud the atheist* or, on the contrary, *Rimbaud the occult and the mystic*.

Secondly, this first part is centered on the psychoanalytical architecture of the lyrical subject, talking about the different facets of the identity and about the hypostases of the *otherness* that Rimbaud's Ego assumes during the difficult process of the crystallization of his identity. The study reveals some facets of the identity which are subordinated to the same personality and which have profoundly influenced the poet's literary work: at first, a *masculine identity*, which shows how the masculine side of the personality gets more and more feeble, sliding toward the femininity; this idea is obvious in a lot of Rimbaud's poems and letters. Then the study talks about a *social identity*, directly related on the poet's status in his family and community; this facet defines an entire scale, formed by all the hypostases / roles assumed by the poet during the social interactions. Thirdly, a *spiritual / religious identity* is highlighted. This is related to the Rimbaud's culture and to his system of values, which are determinant for his religious options and poetic career; the analysis of this crisis explains, from a psychological perspective, the numerous oscillations between the two extremes of the Christian spirituality (*religiosity – counter-theism – mysticism*). Finally, this thesis talks about a *literary identity*, which takes into account Rimbaud's evolution as a poet and all the major transformations that can be spotted on in his poetic discourse during the entire period of his creation, as well as all the elements that mark the uniqueness of his poetics.

The relation between the *identity* and the *otherness* makes the object of a detailed clarification about the origin, the manifestation and the consequences of the identity crisis over the poetic field, as well as about the facets of the *otherness* and about the practical modalities that the poet found to overtake the crisis.

The analysis of the *Ego's* cleavage starts therefore from the close relation between the *empirical (socialized) Ego* and the *poetic (creative) one*, highlighting how the influence between *the work* and *the biography* becomes reversible: how the biography has influenced the work (studying the biographic reverberations into the poetic work) and, in the same time, how the creative writing, thanks to the psychic process (a subconscious one) of the sublimation, became Rimbaud's solution to his identity crisis, having some main consequences over his future life period.

This idea constitutes the basis of the argumentation process which defends the thesis of the internal coherence of Rimbaud's work: the third main objective of this paper, which undermines, step by step, the cliché concerning the heterogeneity of this creation; the study proves the existence of an undertextual thread, which passes through the entire work and represents its cohesion force. This issue makes the object of the second part of this study, *The Coherence of the Work*, which approaches the idea of the coherence from two perspectives: coherence of the poetic expression (*a formal one*), with a special consideration on the metamorphosis of the writing, and coherence of the poetic substance (*coherence of the poetic imagery, a structural one*), which reveals the paradigms of Rimbaud's imagination – all the noematic coordinates which are composing the structure of the work, all the basic elements which are forming the general architecture of the entire poetic imagery. The study highlights six main paradigms of Rimbaud's poetic imagery, three of which are directly related to the physic perception of the universe (the *temporal, spatial* and *material* paradigms), while the other three are correlated to the metaphysic perception of the universe and the human being living in the universe (the *intimacy, the sacredness* and the *totality*). At the level of these paradigms, the paper identifies several archetypal structures, which are governing the dynamic of the poetic imagination and which emphasize a coherent universe, having an articulated mental project, more or less conscious, built during the poet's biography.

A novelty element in comparison with the previous psychoanalytical approaches of Rimbaud's work – Charles Mauron, Étienne or Marie-Joséphine Whitaker – consists into the interpretation of this poetic work from the perspective of Jung's theory about the androgynous psyche, seen as a result of the conjunction between *animus* and *anima* (the *conscious* and the *unconscious*). Focused on the analysis of the archaic structures (*archetypes*) that spring up from the collective unconscious, the paper stresses the crystallization of the symbolic meaning of the words in connection with their emotional load, acquired during the phylogenesis – as a psychological and cultural inheritance of the entire humanity – as well as during the ontogenesis – as an unique particularity of

Rimbaud's poetry, building an imaginary (fictional) universe with a symbolic signification, deeply anchored in the spirituality of the entire humanity. Considering in parallel the depth structures (the archetypes) and the surface structures of the text (recurrent motives, obsessive ideas, free associations, automatic dictation), the paper analyses the connotative signification production by three psychological processes – the transposition, the displacement and the condensation – which are generating three fundamental tropes: the symbol, the metonymy and the metaphor.

The analysis of each paradigm begins from some antonymic terminological and symbolic pairs, which are considered in a complementary relationship, for the reason that a deep comprehension of each term needs the presence of the other one: *descent (fall) / ascension (elevation)*, *night / day*, *past / present*, *old / new*, *profane / sacred (malefic sacred / benefic sacred)*, *Hell / Paradise* – supposed at least, *Satan / God or Genius*, *darkness / light (illumination, guiding light)*, *carnal pleasure / metaphysical ascension*, *symbolic death / spiritual renaissance*. The coherence (the isotopisme) of the poetic imagery appears from the natural polarity of the archetypes, which are organized around the symbolic scheme of the verticality *down / up*, as an axis for Rimbaud's imagery.

The paper reveals thereby a double polarity: the polarity of the archetype and the polarity of the poetic imagery itself, viewed as a large mind set which is organized and governed by the psychic rule of the unification of the contraries. In consequence, the coherence of the poetic imagery is fundamentally dialectic, and the difference between the nocturnal and the diurnal regime proposed by Rimbaud's poetics is based onto the psychological dialectics *unconscious / conscious*.

Rimbaud's complex identity crisis is reflected by these principal symbolic schemes: on the one hand *the descent* – having the connotation of a regression on the phylogenesis scale, till the Gaul ancestors (as in the poem *Bad Blood / Mauvais sang*), of a recuperation of the past, as well as the connotation of a psychological regression (*regressus ad uterum*) and a symbolic death - the descent in Hell (as in the poem *Childhood / Enface*, where the archetype of the hygienic and protective grave has, in the same time, the connotation of the death and of the evolution sleep, preparing a rebirth into a superior condition), similar to the death which is described in the initiatory rites, anticipating a spiritual rebirth. On the other hand, it is question about the symbolic scheme of the *ascension*, acquiring the signification of the wisdom, of the spiritual elevation and even of the mysticism.

The study of the paradigms which are describing the poetic imagery proves that Rimbaud's spiritual itinerary draws the sinuous line of an initiation (having the meaning

that it has into the esoteric cults), supposing trials and pains, a death and a rebirth and specially a quest (a mission, a hunt): the quest of himself. The initiation, defined by the paradigm of the verticality (the descent followed by the elevation), covers the entire Rimbaud's work, proving, one more time, that the failure may be converted into a triumph, and that the death may be invested with a positive dimension – the prelude of a rebirth, *a spiritual one*. The *dialectics of the contraries*, which is noticed into all the religions of the world, is appropriated by Rimbaud into the harmony of a coherent synthesis. These symbolic schemes, which are successively contradicting and completing each other, are giving an account of the tensions between the *poetic Ego* and the *Superego* – as an instance of the social (or even religious) ethics – that the poet wants to assimilate and control.

The paper proves in this way that Rimbaud's work contains the succession of all the stages of an ontological route and spiritual itinerary, which, by the fact that they are subordinated to the psychological determinism, have necessarily an origin, a guiding line and a finish.

Correlatively, the paper proves the logics of the psychedelic, hallucinatory writing, which, without being totally subordinated to the hazard – as the Dadaist and the Surrealist writing was (following Tzara's example) – has, on the contrary, a deep, sublimated meaning, governed by the poet's unconscious *anima*, suited to help the writer to recover his psychological equilibrium and interior tranquility.

As a consequence, Rimbaud's creative activity confirms the fact that it is an *iter mentis* (a mental itinerary), having as a result the poet's conciliation with himself and with the others. It describes a kind of "initiation travel" which permits that the painful biographic experiences and the autonomy need to be sublimated and converted into an ecstatic and tumultuous work. The creative writing is presented as an instrument to build a substitution universe, having necessarily a compensatory character. During the creative activity, the poet's mind dreams up some complex symbolic situations possessing a balancing role, as a solution to the painful conflicts and as an adaptation manner. The paper verifies in this way one of its beginning hypothesis: the poetic reverie has not only a literary value, but also a psychological one, by the fact that it is in the same time an instrument to innovate the poetry and a method to balance and liberate the poet's soul.

Giving a summary of all the stages present in Rimbaud's spiritual itinerary, the paper highlights the fact that this work describes an essential quest: the quest of the identity. It answers by that to a fundamental question: who is the real, the authentic Rimbaud? The enthusiast who loved the Parnassian poetry or the great innovator of the

universal poetics, the initiator of the free verse and the main precursor of the avant-garde movement? The great admirer of Verlaine, or the ruthless opponent of his sweetened lyrics? The rebel who has given the finishing blow to the religion, saying that “the time of the Gospel has passed”, or the mystic poet that we can meet during the reading of the *Illuminations*? The shy, the sensible, the intimist teenager who wrote the poem *Sensation* or the deep minded author who wrote the poem *Antique*?

Therefore, the paper proposes to the reader an interpretation of Rimbaud’s work, on one hand, from the perspective of the universal literature and of the literary criticism, capable to solve the theoretical controversies related to the belonging of this creation to a certain literary current, and, on the other hand, from the perspective of the history of the mentalities and specially from the abyssal psychology perspective, able to explain the poet’s strange oscillation between the two extremes of the religious paradigm and also able to reveal the subtleties of Rimbaud’s poetics, highlighting the links between the poetic imagery and the anthropologic structures of the sacred (*the numinous*). It is an original attempt to understand and explain what had happened with the poet’s soul during his destiny, by revealing the emotional reasons which made the creative writing an ontological necessity, and in the same time to understand and elucidate the poet’s spiritual evolution which made him able to create his work.

The paper emphasizes in this way the importance of its double critical approach – psychoanalytical and thematic – pleading in favor of an empathic analysis, capable to put the critic into the poet’s nest, to understand the manner in which the work and the biography are reflecting one another: if we can say that these identity crises have managed the structure of Rimbaud’s poetic work, we can say as well that the creative writing was the therapy by which the poet diminished, in the same time, his interior tension and the conflict which existed between himself and the others. Simultaneously, this study highlights the fact that Rimbaud’s poetic imagery, thanks to its archetypal load, offers a representation of the human soul since the beginning of the civilization, acquiring by that a perennial and universal worth.