

Akışkan Ufuklar: Arthur Rimbaud'un Bellek ve Hareket Şiirlerinde Su İmgesi Fluid Horizons: The Symbolism of Water in Arthur Rimbaud's 'Memory' And 'Motion'

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Özet

Bu makale, Arthur Rimbaud'nun "Bellek" ("Mémoire") ve "Hareket" ("Mouvement") şiirlerindeki kültürlerarasılık ve göç temalarını, suyun zengin imgelerini ve mitolojik çağrışımlarını vurgulayarak ele almaktadır. Rimbaud'nun su kullanımı, kültürel ve coğrafi hareketin akışkan ve dönüştürücü doğasının güçlü bir sembolü olarak hizmet eder. "Hafıza" da su, kültürel birleşmeyi ve zamanın geçişini sembolize eder; geçmiş ile bugün, hafıza ile unutuş arasındaki sınırı vurgulamak için Styx nehri gibi mitolojik referanslara başvurur. "Hareket" te ise su, Odysseus ya da Aeneas'inkine benzer epik yolculuk ve arayışlara dair mitolojik imalarla yankılanan bir göç ve sürekli değişim gücü olarak tasvir edilir. Bu analiz, Rimbaud'nun su imgelerinin salt natüralist tasvirin ötesine geçerek, şairin kimlik, yerinden edilme ve insan deneyiminin durmak bilmeyen akışıyla olan derin ilişkisini yansıtan mitolojik ve kültürlerarası motiflerden oluşan karmaşık bir goblen yarattığını göstermektedir. Bu mercekten bakıldığında, Rimbaud'un şiiri, kültürlerarasılık ve göç üzerine çağdaş tartışmaların bir öncüsü olarak ortaya çıkmakta ve bu temaların kalıcı ve evrensel doğasını vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arthur Rimbaud, Su Sembolizmi, "Bellek", "Hareket" Kültürlerarasılık, Göç, Mitolojik İmgeler, Modernist Şiir

Abstract

This paper displays the themes of transculturality and migration in Arthur Rimbaud's poems "Memory" ("Mémoire") and "Motion" ("Mouvement"), emphasizing the rich imagery of water and its mythological connotations. Rimbaud's use of water serves as a powerful symbol of the fluid and transformative nature of cultural and geographical movement. In "Memory," water symbolizes cultural amalgamation and the passage of time, invoking mythological references such as the river Styx to highlight the boundary between past and present, memory and oblivion. In "Motion," water is portrayed as a force of migration and perpetual change, resonating with mythological allusions to epic journeys and quests, akin to those of Odysseus or Aeneas. This analysis demonstrates how Rimbaud's water imagery transcends mere naturalistic depiction, creating a complex tapestry of mythological and transcultural motifs that reflect the poet's deep engagement with identity, displacement, and the ceaseless flow of human experience. Through this lens, Rimbaud's poetry emerges as a precursor to contemporary discussions on transculturality and migration, highlighting the enduring and universal nature of these themes.

Keywords: Arthur Rimbaud, Symbolism of Water, "Memory", "Motion", Transculturality, Migration, Mythological Imagery, Modernist Poetry

INTRODUCTION

Symbolism is a late nineteenth century movement that is a birth of reaction against realism and naturalism. Symbolism is rooted from France and Belgium that was origin in poetry and other forms of art. It is a bridge between Romanticism and Modernism because it has been a transition process that was known as important sources in French poetry beginning in the 1850s and rapidly influenced European, and American literature.

The Symbolist poetry eventually come to be seen as affected from the term decadent in terms of using language and imagery of modernist sensibility. According to Paul Valery, symbolism means “what was called symbolism can be summed up very simply as the intention, common to several families of poets - who, by the way, were enemies - to take back from music what was their own” (Etiemble, 1980:621). This symbolist approach in modernist poetry is quite aesthetic and stimulating that contributes to the modern poetry innovatively. Furthermore, Arthur Rimbaud was impressed by Latin and Greek verse and Romantic literature, specifically Victor Hugo and Baudelaire. “His basic intention was with the language; he wanted to Latin hexameters of Horace and Catulus, and shone at French alexandrines and Greek verse as well. He devoured romantic literature and was particularly smitten with Victor Hugo and Baudelaire” (Merkin, 48). His language expertise is dependent on the combination of Greek and Latin elasticity and Romanticism aptitude. By integrating within the approach of Baudelaire, Rémy de Gourmont explains an influence of Baudelaire in symbolist poetry and his intention is to put symbolism at a right place. Particularly, “the symbolist literature, is Baudelairian, not in its technical form, but in its internal and spiritual form” (Peyre, 134). It seems to me that it is an inspiration, and an aestheticism mainly because it is not only a form of expression but also is a heritage of several poets in French literature.

Symbolism is a practice of using an object to represent an abstract idea. According to Laurence Porter, “symbolism is defined as a movement that systemically deploys a strictly limited repertoire of recurring metaphors as the primary materials for poetry and it organized depicted around a central presiding metaphor.” (Porter, 16). The main characteristics of symbolism display metaphor that directed aesthetic vision of poetry. This metaphoric structure of poems highlights the most significant property of French Symbolist Poetry. Unlike the realists, French symbolists reflected their subjects from the past and avoided to be concerned with social problems. They tend to suggest a universal truth independent of place and time that are not dependent on rationalistic expression. They draw attention to the specific moments of experience and perception. The French symbolists emphasize the transient moods and the alienation from the society. They are primarily interested in the expression of personality rather than definition of states of human perception. They express emotional experience with symbolized language.

French symbolists employ common themes such as nostalgia for homeland, inner life of the individual, grumpy eroticism, lure of exoticism, human sense perceptions, and sensual or spiritual love. Charles Baudelaire reflects various journeys, voyages, as metaphors for internal explorations into the inner consciousness of the individual. Modern urban life is crucial, and the central theme of symbolist poetry begins as the transition of modern literature. He focuses on urban life characteristics because the modernization of the world expresses the sense of alienation. He described to the sensual love and the spiritual idealization of women in his work of art, *Flowers of Evil*. Stephane Mallarme prefers choosing topics such as sensuality, passion through the telling of the meditation and the introspection. Furthermore, Jules Laforgue uses themes like consumer culture criticism, moral decay, and degeneration. Symbolist poets do not accept topics such as materialism, conventional religious, social, and moral values. They also give a reaction against the traditional techniques, rigid forms. The symbolist writers are mainly interested in expressing different elements of the internal life of the individual. They concentrate

on subjective mental impressions, internal moods, fragile emotional states. Symbolists react against the nineteenth-century focus on objective; concrete realities as comprehended through rational scientific methods. Their use of imagery represents the states of mind, the imagination, the human psyche, and dreams.

The Symbolist poets are primarily concerned with the expression of individual experience. They use symbols to show layers of meaning, make poems rich and memorable, suggest a certain mood and convey imagination and emotions. Moreover, French poetry contains some characteristics that contains free verse, musicality of language, mood and the usage of traditional folktales. French symbolists prefer free verse because they made verse liberated from traditional verses. They bring musicality into the poetry that reflect a symphony of mood and a harmony of lyrical beauty. The symbolists demonstrate evoking a powerful sense of mood with language. They represent moods such as regret, a sense of loss, anger and they coped with evoking specific moods through the situation of subtle inner states of mind. The poets especially use traditional folktales in an innovative style by creating fairytale settings, characters.

METHOD

Voyance Theory in Modernist Poems

Arthur Rimbaud is one of the significant poets of the symbolist movement and a major influence on French symbolist movement. He has a great mission to give an interpretation of outer reality. What is more, Arthur Rimbaud “was more mystic than ironic” so his talent is beyond his reality, and he is both a seer and a creator of his world within the decoration of images (Leventhal, 54). Needless to say, he reflects passages of life in order to highlight his theory *voyance* as a theory.

Voyance is the obvious authority to perceive ideas which are not present to the senses because “to become a poet, a seer in the sense of a creator, one must engage in mental work, exploring one’s hidden psyche as the provenance of the creative urge” (Paliyenko, 439). He contributes a new poetic sensibility that enabled the poet to visualize the unknown from conscious perspective. The voyant exists while disordering himself because of the derangement of the poet’s ideas. Poetry becomes a mediation to understand outer reality and all sensations of the individual as one goes through the passages of life. Poetry is a vehicle to define a reception power that could not explain with visual or auditory senses for Arthur Rimbaud. The function of the poet includes understanding the universe and the self. The poet displays his imaginative scenery by exploring the psyche of the mind. Last but not least, his *voyance* theory includes some rhythms and musicality which is really crucial for this *voyance* theory. “He retains a lyrical voice” so as to demystify the traditional forms of poetry and create mystic aura within the words through silence (Paliyenko, 436).

WATER IMAGE IN MEMORY

Arthur Rimbaud’s poetry is full of its efficient imagery and complex symbolism with the image of water, often serving as an important symbol. In his poems, “Mémoire” (“Memory”) and “*Mouvement*” (“Motion”), water emerges as a powerful symbol that constitutes the themes of change, memory, and the passage of time. These poems illustrate Rimbaud’s ability to evaluate feelings and states of mind through the fluid image of water. Arthur Rimbaud uses water imagery as a fluidity of memory so as to display a metaphor of his memories. The poem starts with an imagery of water which is known as a common symbol in literature. This water image represents flow of time and escapism of the real world.

The water in “Memory” is not tranquility or serene; it is a reflection of lost dreams within the time. Within the image of river, it erodes the landscape of the mind and repeatedly reminds of his clashes from his memory. Memories, like water, are both unstable and transient due to the

gradual change of his state of mind. Throughout the poem, Rimbaud's description of water reflects a nostalgia towards past times within the sense of melancholy and recollection of unforgettable memories. In terms of ceaseless flow, the water becomes a symbol of impossibility of change and fleeting nature of life.

WATER IMAGE IN *MOTION*

In '*Motion*', Arthur Rimbaud uses a water image as an introspective flow of memory which is beginning with dynamic movements such as exploration, and culminating in references to the sea, ships, and journeys which are related to the discovery of exotic lands. The water in '*Motion*' is an illustration of the unknown beyond the horizon. His intention is to rescue from the remnants of the past and discover to the new realms of experiences. This leads to his rejection of traditional norms in his poetry and this rejection brings a desire to the exploration and the demand for the unknown.

Within the aura of the poem, water can be considered as a motif of transformation and escapism from unforgettable memories. The sea image is liminal space between chaos and unpredictability. The tension in Rimbaud's poetry can be analyzed as fluidity between liberating the mundane life and accessing the limitless possibilities of the sublime.

THE INTERSECTION OF MEMORY AND MOTION: WATER AS A UNIFYING SYMBOL

In both '*Memory*' and '*Motion*', water serves as a unifying symbol, so it is a way of intersection of memory and motion. In '*Memory*', water is a medium through which the past is remembered and forgotten, while in '*Motion*', it reflects new experiences and dynamic movements for the future. Despite these differing contexts, the underlying factor remains steady: water represents the fluid and ever-changing nature of life. Rimbaud's use of water in these poems might include his understanding of life as a dynamic process, where memory and motion are intertwined. The poet's memories are not static; they are shaped and reshaped by the passage of time, such as the river that and changes the appearance of the natural landscape.

The elements of pain and pleasure which is involved in within the connection with the water imagery, occurred in Arthur Rimbaud's poems which are known as '*Memory*' and '*Motion*'. '*Memory*' poem is a descriptive poem which is full of colors like an expressionistic painting because the poem set in idyllic topoi. This characteristic of the poem is a reflection of modernist movement and Rimbaud put into words as if he looked upon landscape. The language and the imagery of the poem depict the modernist sensibility. In addition, he uses imagery that connects to the property of modern poetry. The poem combines pleasure and pain that starts with pleasurable memories and ends with artificial life of bourgeois class. 'Clean water' image evolves into 'mud' image because when the poet lost his beloved ones, the aura of the poem was slowly changed from regeneration into degeneration (Rimbaud lines 1-40). First stanzas reflect the tranquility of the poet which is a good remembering of childhood memories such as 'clean water like the salt of childhood tears', 'white flesh' 'silk banners', 'pure lilies', 'play of angels' and 'blue sky' (Rimbaud lines 1-7). The poet takes pleasure from reminiscent things in his life such as whiteness of women bodies and the concepts of pure images harmonize in his nostalgia. There is joy in the scenery of the riverside that combines with the purity of flowers and the flashes of mythical, angelic figures and the guardian nymphs.

The second stanza is not as intriguing as the first stanza because when memories get older, the poet reproach towards the life. The exalted emotion appears with the references to the old French monarchy and angels. In the third stanza, 'Madame' image represents cold and strict that probably refers to the poet's mother. She threads of handwork that falls about her like snow. The

woman is “stepping on the white flower” and it is implication of lethargy image (Rimbaud line19). Arthur Rimbaud used surreal images by combining renouncement image and natural images. There was a man “beyond the mountain” who left from Madame. “White angels separated on the road” depicts an escapism from Madame and after “the departing man” occurred, she was drowning into the darkness (Rimbaud lines 22-23). The feeling of loss changes the poem’s atmosphere into the escape because he has a lot of abandonments and losses in his life such as his father, his close friend. The transformation of joy and liberation turns into the abandonment and the loss.

The pleasure is a form of degeneration, which changes into the pain in the fourth and fifth stanzas gradually. Everything gradually transforms because of the lack of the motion. There are “weep”, “abandoned boatyards”, “rotting things”, “gray surfaces”, “ash-colored river”, “dust of willows” and “motionless boats” (Rimbaud lines 27-37). Everything is a state of decay and decomposition. While the poem reflects deterioration of everything, surreal images contribute to the disfigurement. For instance, “ I cannot pluck, o! Motionless boat! O! ... arms too short! neither this, nor the other flower” (Rimbaud lines 33-35). The speaker describes himself as a toy with arms too short to hold the flowers. As the poem ends, the speaker laments to the willows and the roses of the past and his own weakness in pain. The last phrase, “ in what mud?” transferred to the sense of hopelessness, pain of his memories. The image of clean water degenerates into the mud due to the ridiculed behaviors of bourgeois class. The real situation of creature defines as mud instead of clean water because the mud uses as both a symbol of his rejection of the bourgeois class of cleanliness and his choice for the natural environment. They pretend to be clean under the artificial states of their preferences.

Arthur Rimbaud combines pleasure and pain in his work of art, *Motion*. The poet prefers choosing dynamic vocabularies in order to highlight mobility and motion such as “swaying”, “current”, “dizziness”, “fleeing” and “rolling” (Rimbaud 1-19 lines). The poet emphasizes a group of travelers who are from bourgeois leisure class. They look around the panorama of life and criticizes about social classes inside the boat. The boat symbolizes microcosmic modern society of travelers. When voyagers are on the boat, they watch an eye-catching scenery of wilderness carelessly upon a security place. They feel satisfied when they are in motion and took pleasure of traveling on a river in a valley “surrounded by waterspouts” (Rimbaud line 7). They enter the attraction of the exotic world without leaving the comfort of the West as if they are “the conquerors of the world” (Rimbaud line 9). The implication of optimism consists of the pleasurable life because the colonial implications reflect fashionable image with the emergence of glorious images of Industrial Revolution. The poet uses imageries which are known as “unimaginable lights”, “chemical newness”, “conquerors of the world” and “ecstasy” (Rimbaud lines 5-9). It implies that they make a travel to the exotic lands for “seeking a personal chemical fortune” easily. Travelers pretend to be conquered to the exotic lands from white man’s perspective because voyagers had “ the education of races, classes, and animals, on this Boat” (Rimbaud lines 12-13). They move away from their comfort zone to know the condition of primitive topoi. The advantage of Industrial Revolution functions as an opportunity to discover primitive landscapes that gave pleasure and joy to the educated man.

The motif of pain combines with the difference between people in the boat and people outside the boat. The reflection of the dark side of the industrial revolution is directly proportional to mechanization. Arthur Rimbaud uses his poetic diction with the harmony of mechanical vocabulary. The “hydraulic motor” phrase is a representation of mechanical name of poetic diction. The Industrial Revolution affects the environment, which led to the depletion of natural resources. The use of chemicals, fuel in factories, and the usage of machines result in increasing air pollution. This negative impact depicts “hydraulic motor road” as “monstrous” and

“atmospheric happenings” make the life unbalanced due to the demolition of the nature. The poet wants to emphasize that the rusty and the rotten monster state of the industrial revolution brings pain to people. People, who are outside of the boat, make their life sorrowful due to the negative effects of revolution. This kind of derangement is like mediation that liberated the poet feel pleasure and pain at the same time.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, French Symbolists depict influential linkage by connecting various series of emotions and evocations to promote an associative cognitive process. They do not define one conclusion in their work. French Symbolists employ the symbol because they take care of evoking emotions through symbols. French poetry has some characteristics that includes free verse, musicality, mood, and usage of traditional folktales. Arthur Rimbaud occupies as unique situation with his theory of poetry in the history of French literature. He greatly influences not only the Symbolist movement of which he is one of the main initiators, but all contemporary poetry. He does not use traditionally measured rhyme and verse. He shares to feel same sentiments that he experienced himself. His images are mainly visual to depict a sense of scene. Arthur Rimbaud demonstrates that human relation to natural landscape contributes a way in which to keep in touch with the soul through nature and time.

Rimbaud’s use of water in these poems highlights his understanding of existence as a dynamic process, where memory and motion are intertwined. The poet’s memories are not static; they are reshaped by the fluidity of time, like the river that reforms the landscape. In “Memory” and “Movement”, Arthur Rimbaud examines the water image as a motif of to the fluidity of horizons, memory and will to explore the outer world. Through both his splendid imagery and striking symbols such as sea, river, Arthur Rimbaud tries to reshape his own journey through breaking the boundaries between past and present, memory and motion. In Rimbaud’s poetry, it is not only just an element, but also it is a mystic journey towards future as a form of the flux of time and the fluidity of life.

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