



Rimbaud and Jim Morrison: The Rebel as Poet

Wallace Fowlie

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"The poet makes himself into a visionary by a long derangement of all the senses."—Rimbaud

In 1968 Jim Morrison, founder and lead singer of the rock band the Doors, wrote to Wallace Fowlie, a scholar of French literature and a professor at Duke University. Morrison thanked Fowlie for producing an English translation of the complete poems of Rimbaud. He needed the translation, he said, because, "I don't read French that easily. . . . I am a rock singer and your book travels around with me." Fourteen years later, when Fowlie first heard the music of the Doors, he recognized the influence of Rimbaud in Morrison's lyrics.

In *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison* Fowlie, a master of the form of the memoir, reconstructs the lives of the two youthful poets from a personal perspective. In their twinned stories he discovers an uncanny symmetry, a pattern far richer than the simple truth that both led lives full of adventure and both made poetry of their thirst for the liberation of the self. The result is an engaging account of the connections between an exceptional French symbolist who gave up writing poetry at the age of twenty, died young, and whose poems are still avidly read to this day, and an American rock musician whose brief career ignited an entire generation and has continued to fascinate millions around the world in the twenty years since his death in Paris. In this dual portrait, Fowlie gives us a glimpse of the affinities and resemblances between European literary traditions and American rock music and youth culture in the late twentieth century.

A personal meditation on two unusual, yet emblematic, cultural figures, this book also stands as a summary of a noted scholar's lifelong reflections on creative artists.

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