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L'INVITATION AU REVE
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SYMBOLIST LITERARY TENDENCIES
IN FRANCE AND REDON'S GRAPHICS

by
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
(Art History)
at the
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

1964

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PREFACE

The thesis of this paper maintains that certain premises and themes found in the symbolist literary tradition in nineteenth-century France form a significant element in Redon's lithographic work. The decision to investigate this particular aspect of the artist arises from the fact that earlier studies of the man, his life and works, have tentatively suggested or implied this evasive relationship but have failed to approach the problem directly either to confirm or attack. Therefore, the exact nature of Redon's affinities with the symbolists presently stands in need of amplification.

Two qualifications to this undertaking must be made clear at the onset. The biographical approach to Redon has been the one most frequently taken and has been investigated with thoroughness by such authorities as André Mellerio, Sven Sandström, and Roseline Bacou. Because an elaborate chronological outline of this nature is not essential to the development of the thesis, biographical information will be dealt with only in so far as its importance demands consideration in conjunction with the central line of argument. Secondly, this study makes no pretense of offering a literary history or criticism of the symbolist movement per se, but rather accepts the general framework of certain scholars' analyses of French symbolist literature and authors. It is from the vantage point of Redon's

lithographs that the direction will turn to the symbolist writers, with the basic procedure becoming one of comparison. Exactly what traits do Redon and Mallarmé, for one example, have in common which fall into the general aura of symbolist doctrine? At what points in aesthetic theory, iconography, or style do their works significantly coincide? Until such connecting threads can be established, the hesitant labeling of Redon as a "symbolist" artist remains ambiguous. The task of the following chapters will be to relieve in some measure this ambiguity.

The first two chapters form the theoretical support on which the evidence of symbolist correlations in Redon's graphics presented in the third chapter must stand. The introduction to Chapter I is designed to establish a brief historical perspective of the symbolist literary movement in France. The main body of the chapter is devoted to a synopsis of the fundamental tenets of the symbolist aesthetic. The central task of Chapter II will be to determine whether these tenets of the symbolist poets and writers are paralleled in Redon's own writings on the nature and function of art. After a brief introduction suggesting the significance of the artistic medium chosen by Redon, Chapter III will consist of an examination of the first two lithographic albums produced by Redon: Dans le Rêve (1879) and A Edgar Poe (1882). Lithographs from other albums or charcoal drawings will occasionally be included in order to clarify a point of iconography. The object of the investigation will be to isolate, identify, and discuss those elements of iconography and style in each lithograph which have exact parallels or thematic affinities with the works of

the symbolist poets and authors. The magnitude of proto-symbolist and symbolist literature dictates that the majority of literary examples be drawn from a few selected representatives; therefore, the emphasis in this study will be on the writings of Nerval, Poe, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé.

I should like to extend my sincere thanks to Professor William T. Bandy, whose seminar on Poe, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé and whose personal assistance on questions of symbolist literature have been invaluable, and to Professor James S. Watrous under whose guidance the thesis was written.

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CHAPTER I

TOWARD A WORKING DEFINITION OF SYMBOLISM

The titular importance given to Le Rêve suggests the key direction which an answer to the question of Redon's symbolist affinities must take. The primary English definition of "dream" in Webster as "a series of thoughts, images, or emotions occurring during sleep" proves most inadequate to suggest the innumerable connotations and import of this ambiguous word for Redon and for the symbolist writers in general. Reintroduced into the artistic jargon of the mid-nineteenth century by such men as Gérard de Nerval and Baudelaire, le rêve soon took on the property of a slogan hovering before a whole body of thought on the nature of art. Exactly what ideas constituted this aesthetic in its barest outlines and to what degree they are echoed in Redon's own writings on art will be the major task of this and the following chapter. Yet such a comparison may be more profitably drawn by first returning to a brief historical perspective revealing the roots of the symbolist aesthetic.

The most cursory examination of nineteenth-century intellectual trends reveals beneath the intricate complex of actions and reactions a strong current of idealism, assuming various forms but all proclaiming the existence of a subjective reality. Redon was born (1840), however, at a time when the first serious disappointments in what seemed the Romanticists' failure to meet the claims of everyday

existing reality had led to the reaction known as "realism" in the arts or positivism in general outlook. Among the many elements playing into the new materialistic force were Darwinism, serious social and political unrest, and the new authority of the sciences. Positivism challenged the Romantic concepts of the creative individual as a special sort of being, the prime ideal of self-fulfillment, and challenged particularly the allowance for the world of dreams, the mysterious in man and nature, and the supernatural. The materialist view, in opposition to the Romantics' expanded concept of reality, insisted that whatever exists must be tangible, and resulted in an obsession with the objects of man's sensations, a renewed urge to investigate the mechanism of the world and to make an inventory of human society.¹ In the wake of Darwin there emerged on the one hand a temporary resignation to the laws of nature and on the other an exaltation of prosaic reality. Men were seen as creatures of their circumstances, with the "critique of milieu" becoming the trend in prose. Descriptions packed with exhaustive detail filled the pages of naturalist writers such as Zola.

In the plastic arts, naturalism with a bent for social observation also seemed victorious. That Redon himself was hardly exempt from its jurisdiction is amply disclosed by the critical attack he suffered at the hands of Octave Mirbeau, a staunch supporter of the impressionists and close friend of Zola. In 1886 (ironically the same year of Moréas' "Symbolist Manifesto"), this champion of naturalism wrote in an article discussing the coming Independents exhibition:

After innumerable battles, all pacific by the way and in which only ink was spattered, everybody agrees that it is necessary for art to approach nature. . . Among painters there

is hardly anybody except M. Odilon Redon who resists the great naturalist current and who opposes the thing dreamed to the thing experienced, the ideal to the truth. Thus M. Redon draws for you an eye which floats, at the end of a stem, in an amorphous landscape. And the commentators assemble. Some will tell you that this eye exactly represents the eye of Conscience, others the eye of Incertitude; some will explain that this eye synthesizes a setting sun over hyperborean seas, others that it symbolizes universal sorrow, a bizarre water lily about to blossom on the black waters of invisible Acherons. A supreme exegete arrives and concludes: "this eye at the end of a stem is simply a necktie pin." The very essence of the ideal is that it evokes nothing but vague forms which might just as well be magic lakes as sacred elephants, extra-terrestrial flowers as well as necktie pins, unless they are nothing at all. Yet, today we demand that whatever is represented be precise, we want the figures that emanate from an artist's brain to move and think and live.²

Nothing more clearly distinguished naturalism's point of view from that of symbolism than Mirbeau's absolute separation of the dream from experience and from truth.

In poetry, the Parnassians stressed visual description controlled by scientific observation and formal exactitude. An exceptional calm was intended to correct the excessive exuberance of their Romantic predecessors. In criticizing the Parnassian poet Sully-Prudhomme, Andre Beaunier accused him of "studying the delicate mechanism of his emotions and thoughts quite as an entomologist dissects minute and subtle organisms."³ Moreover, the Parnassians' positivistic desire to establish creative work on an absolutely scientific base did not stop with prosody. Beaunier pointed out in 1892 that Sully-Prudhomme had "affected to constitute an entire theory of scientific aspect which rested upon a study of the physiological foundations of versification . . ."⁴ Beaunier's rejection of objectivism comes decades after earlier artist-intellectuals had begun to fear that the advancing tide of matter would drown man's

soul and that the spark of creative genius would be explicable in scientific terms.

The entire cultural phenomenon of intellectual revolt in the nineteenth century is not to be presented here, but one must observe that the symbolist revolution goes far deeper than a simple reaction to Parnassus or to naturalism. The very term "symbolist" is in constant dispute, for intellectual moments defy absolute definition or exact chronological equivalents. A struggle against a materialistic and scientific world-view can clearly be traced back to the not so distant Romantic tradition, which in fact never really ceased to exist. If, therefore, subsequent statements made in reference to symbolism seem legitimately applicable to Romanticism, it is precisely because symbolism can be seen as one of the vague forms taken by Romanticism, without which symbolism could not have come into being. To put it another way, Romanticism went all the way through the nineteenth century, and symbolism, primarily a poetic movement, was one of the manifestations.⁵

One further ingredient in the symbolists' theoretical heritage must be noted before turning to the question of symbolism proper. The theories of German philosophy, which for some time had been slowly filtering into France, were of major significance in forming the background of the growth of symbolism. The French symbolists' discovery of Hegel, Swedenborg, and Schopenhauer greatly precipitated their articulation of a metaphysical idealism already latent in earlier Romantic writings. For example, the great Romantic novelist, Balzac, had proclaimed in his "Seraphita" of 1835 a

"correspondence" of astonishing accord with later symbolist theory:

. . . To know the correspondences of language with the heavens, to know the correspondences which exist between the visible and ponderable things of the terrestrial world and the invisible and imponderable things of the spiritual world--to know this is to have the heavens in one's grasp. All objects of various creations, being emanated from God, necessarily carry a hidden meaning. . . The world is a harmony, and you participate in it.⁵ It is a melody, and you are in concert with it.⁶ In this state, you will feel, you will feel your intelligence developing, growing, and its view attaining prodigious distances. . . Spirit and matter have nothing in common.⁶

Given this kind of intellectual climate, the resurgence of Schopenhauer's The World As Will And Idea (1819) seen in the 1870's was hardly coincidental. The enormous popularity his work enjoyed from the 70's onward attested to the pessimism, the unrest, the fear of science, and particularly the feelings of bourgeois persecution on the part of the newly forming intellectual class.

For Schopenhauer, man's experience of the world as objectified will is ultimately one of sorrow, with art (the only alternative is pure nirvana) becoming the only consolation and sole reality for the thinking man. More significantly, art was distinguished in superiority and kind from any other form of mental activity.⁷ Above all, his assertion of the ideality of the world had a concrete and observable impact on symbolist writers of the younger generation. Stated at the simplest level, the exterior world as "representation" exists only according to the subjective and intuitive Idea which is made of it by the subject, who can reason only on the basis of phenomena (appearances). Since there are as many different worlds as there are conscious beings, the poet's duty is to reveal himself, unveiling to others the sort of world which reflects in his

individual mirror.⁸ The link to the symbolists' stress on intensely personal illuminations and ultimately to a Proustian "stream of consciousness" is apparent.

Although the French translation of Schopenhauer was not published until 1888, the Revue wagnérienne had been instrumental since 1885 in presenting the premises of his philosophy, or at least the general belief that those events or sights truly worthy of attention occur not in the "outside" world but in the interior world. The enthusiasm of those contributing to the newly forming "school" of symbolists was such that Henri de Régnier could exclaim that "this idealism is the metaphysical key for the majority of minds of the generation which composes the symbolist school."⁹ Yet despite such ardent proponents of Schopenhauer's idealism as Remy de Gourmont, who envisioned an aesthetic which seemed to follow the propositions of the German to the letter, most symbolist poets were not attempting to create such a system nor did they produce works which prove to be neat examples of an already vague theory. With the exception of Mallarmé, whose theoretical direction occasionally takes on remarkable similarities with Schopenhauer,¹⁰ those poets involved most insistently with these theories were minor figures, and the influence of Schopenhauer must be seen as one more factor contributing to the development of symbolism.

The significant tendency to be extracted from this background sketch is that objective appearance is being rejected as a superficial shell which must be but a point of departure for the explorer or "visionary" in search of more profound truths unattainable by

positivist limitations. Physical reality is then to be transformed by "le monde intérieur" and the fugitive, the irrational, the dream to be recaptured and communicated. This view of the artist's highest task will be the binding conviction that underlies the symbolist tendencies which can be threaded back through such diverse poets as Gérard de Nerval, a Romantic working in the second quarter of the century and later considered the "saint" of the symbolists; Charles-Pierre Baudelaire, heralded by some as the great "precursor" and by others as the major symbolist figure; Edgar Allan Poe, gallicized by Baudelaire and other French poets who were fascinated by his sense of mystery and dream; Mallarmé, solitary, and yet center of a lively circle of symbolist disciples, artists and musicians such as Valéry, Gide, Redon, or Debussy; Rimbaud, a precocious genius and "decadent" who pre-figured symbolism before the fact of its recognition; Huysmans and Villiers de l'Isle Adam, sometimes associated with the more extreme end of the symbolist spectrum and the fin de siècle aestheticism. These literary figures will hereafter serve as the selected representatives of symbolist tendencies whose preoccupations and values have a bearing on the work of Odilon Redon.

One introductory task remains before turning directly to such a comparison: to establish a working definition of symbolism as it will be used in this paper. The field of study revolving around the symbolist movement is still very much in the process of formation. As with many period nominations, use of the term ranges from extremely narrow to broad definitions. Most scholars today will agree that symbolism has been much more a tendency, or rather an ensemble of

tendencies, than a school properly understood and grouped behind a leader with an explicitly professed doctrine. However, it should be noted that in the narrowest sense, the term is applied only to the union of young intelligentsia associated with Jean Moréas from 1885 to 1890, who used symbolism as a fighting slogan in a campaign against the officials representative of respectable criticism and orthodox art. But Moréas was indeed a minor figure in the larger spectrum of French poets, and his name today rests on little more than the endowment of already existing symbolist tendencies with a capital "S" in his series of manifestoes.

Yet an excerpt from his 1886 Manifesto printed in Le Figaro, granting a heavy dose of Schopenhauerisms, clearly indicates that he had succeeded in isolating at least two basic symbolist tendencies:

Opposed to teaching, declamation, false sensibility, objective description, symbolic poetry seeks to clothe the Idea in a perceptible form which, nevertheless, would not be an end in itself; rather, while serving to express the idea, it would remain subject to it. The Idea, in its turn, must not let itself be deprived of the sumptuous robes of external analogies; for the essential character of symbolic art consists in never going so far as to conceive the Idea in itself. Thus, in this art, the depiction of nature, the actions of men, all the concrete phenomena, could not show themselves as such: to represent their esoteric affinities with primordial Ideas.

The accusation of obscurity hurled at such an aesthetic by readers who take their reading in fits and starts hold nothing surprising. What is one to do with them? The Pythics of Pindarus, the Hamlet of Shakespeare, the Vita Nuova of Dante, the Second Faust of Goethe, Flaubert's Temptation of Saint Anthony, were they not also taxed with ambiguity?¹¹

In a language one would wish were more simple can be seen to emerge two symbolist premises. First to be noted is the assertion of the primary order of the subjective and personal Idea over that of objective appearance. This aspect of symbolism was paralleled by Redon's

insistence on "the prestige of thought" in art. Looking at symbolism more as a state of mind rather than a school, the first element uniting the symbolist poets is that one can discern in all of them the same impatience before the everyday aspect of things, the same feeling that poetry reveals a fundamental mystery or other reality hidden beneath observed reality. The second feature to notice in Moréas' manifesto is the prominent role of such key words as "analogies," "affinities," and thus, "ambiguities."

However, another so-called "manifesto" of symbolist theory--Baudelaire's famous poem, Correspondances--will better serve to introduce this second element in symbolism which follows directly upon the initial assertion of the "Idea." Obviously, "idealism" alone will not suffice to account for the symbolist attitude. For the "idea" is understood as an experience beyond a concrete idea as such and part of logical thought. On the contrary, the symbolist notion of the poetic act as prefigured in Baudelaire rests on analogic thought, that is, the personal resonances that the idea or object suscitates in the poet. The question is then not so much of a platonic world of ideas as of an intimately personal "vie intérieure" which enfolds not only the mysterious correspondences existing among our various sensations but a "ténébreuse et profonde unité" or universal analogy between these sensations and the spiritual world. And as in Baudelaire's poem, Nature is but the starting point:

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
 Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
 L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
 Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
 Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
 Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
 Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se repondent.

Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,
 Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
 --Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants.

Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
 Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,
 Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.¹²

The importance of personal and ever-changing analogies for symbolist style is further emphasized by Stéphane Mallarmé, Baudelaire's greatest follower:

Everything proceeds, from the small to the great, through analogous and reciprocal relations which are repeated to infinity. The movement of the universe around a conscious being and the movement of water around the center of a whirlpool are equal images: at the center of a whirlpool as at that of the universe, there is a still point, a neutralization of counterbalancing forces, a rhythm on which all depends but which remains a pure thought, a law ... All is reciprocal, allusion and allegory, in life and in art. He who would possess the faculty of seizing immediately all the analogies, that man would be the psychologist par excellence: this is so because the âme is but the sign of a same latent truth; there is but one art as there is but one nature. A cipher is a symbol in the same way as is a sound or a woman's perfumed curls. .."¹³

Baudelaire himself perfectly elucidated the significance behind his poem in his Art Romantique in the course of praising Swedenborg:

...all, form, movement, number, color, perfume, in the spiritual as in the natural, is significant, reciprocal, conversant, correspondant. ... Now, what is a poet (I take the word in its largest sense) if he is not a translator, a decipherer? With excellent poets, there is no metaphor, comparison, or epithet which be not a mathematically exact adaption of the present circumstance--because these comparisons, these metaphors, these epithets are drawn from the depths of the inexhaustible well of universal analogy and because they can come from nowhere else.¹⁴

In this light, poetry becomes not merely an art but a more certain means than science to a knowledge of reality.

The emphasis on metaphor and analogy raises a third constant to symbolist theory--the cardinal importance of suggestion. The poet's task of "deciphering" the correspondence of things cannot be communicated to the reader by descriptive representation or literal significations aimed at the intellect. Moreover, the recourse to suggestion rather than presenting a fixed object to the reader demands a collaboration on his part in the poetic work, to which he abandons himself according to his personal aptitudes. The ideal is a suggestive and evocative work which initiates a kind of repercussion or overtones which add a new richness to the poem. When Mallarmé was accused of obscurity in his poetry, he replied that often a poem is termed obscure because of the insufficiency of the reader. "There must always be enigma in poetry, and the goal of literature--there is no other--is to evoke objects."¹⁵

Concomitant with this method of suggestion is the understanding of the "symbol" as something essentially different from the traditional sense of a fairly established or developed comparison or the accepted image of a more or less common feeling. The symbolist usage is distinct from the symbol in Christian iconography, to take an example, in which nature becomes the symbol of a precise transcendental or divine reality. The symbolism of the Divine Comedy or the Ghent Altarpiece is conventional, logical, and definite. But the symbols of symbolism are chosen arbitrarily by the poet to stand for a special and unique awareness or illumination and become a sort of "disguise" for these ideas. With the symbolists, the prime function of the "symbol" is to translate the state of the poet's soul, as

Mallarmé confides: "C'est le parfait usage de ce mystère qui constitue le symbole: évoquer petit à petit un objet pour montrer un état d'âme."¹⁶ The symbol's suggestive power is then never fixed or stable but constantly shifts with infinite possibilities of multiple associations, combinations and stresses. The "symbolical" is thus distinguished from a "symbolism" which is essentially human, lyric and personal and aims above all for intensification and effect.¹⁷

The primary importance of suggestion to symbolist methods and aims leads quite naturally to yet another element which all symbolists had in common--their fascination with that art form most inherently charged with suggestiveness and personal resonances. Music, alone of all the arts, most completely divests itself of literal representation of facts or ideas and most surely attains a harmony which is not material, which can penetrate the flow of la vie intérieure, and which bends its listener's sensibilities toward an emotional state. The symbolists' new way of presenting the poetic experience saw in music the perfect analogy for the fleetingness and elusiveness of a poem which aims above all for a suggestion of a vague emotional state. A further resemblance was drawn concerning the essential function of structural rhythm in suggesting the poetic experience.¹⁸ Wagner's pronouncement in 1860 that "the most perfect creation of the poet must be that which in its final conclusion would be perfect music"¹⁹ was taken to heart by many of the young poets working the 80's and 90's.

The symbolists' part in the growing cult of "Wagnerism" is best seen in the Revue wagnérienne, created by Edouard Dujardin in 1885,

and soon to become one of the leading symbolist journals. Dujardin recalled their goal in a 1923 article concerning the Revue's history:

The object of the Revue wagnérienne was not to propagate Wagner's work, but to penetrate it, to make known its profound significance. To speak more precisely, Chamberlain and I wished to broadcast our discovery: Wagner, a great musician? This was only too evident, but Wagner a great thinker and above all Wagner as the creator of a new form of art.²⁰

The "new form of art" to these men meant Wagner's fusion of the various arts, especially poetry and music, in order to achieve what he considered the goal of a work of art--to exteriorize man's soul (âme) in union with the soul of nature.²¹ The Revue therefore concerned itself with posing the problem of the relations of music to poetry and painting, and in this concern, Redon was by no means overlooked.

Yet the symbolists' debt to Wagnerism reaches back further than the Revue wagnérienne. The first serious attention given to Wagner's music in French letters is to be found in two articles appearing in "La Presse" in 1850, written by Gérard de Nerval. This Romantic author, who was later hailed by the symbolists as one of their great precursors, had seen Lohengrin produced under the direction of Liszt at Weimar. Nerval found in Wagner's art a stimulating response to his personal quest, for Nerval saw in the intimate alliance of music and poetry the very basis of art. In a letter to Anthony Deschamps a month earlier, he had written, "Mes théories que je n'expose pas souvent se rapportant assez à celles de Richard Wagner." Soon after, Baudelaire was equally enthusiastic and would also turn occasionally to music in explaining the nature of poetry. "La poésie touche à la

musique par une prosodie mystérieuse et inconnue. . ."²³ After Baudelaire, Verlaine was to repeat the idea of a "pure poetry" which operates on the reader more as a sensuous incantation quite outside the intellectual content of the poem.²⁴ Accordingly, the symbolist poets thought to borrow from music a method of words or verses chosen solely for the sake of their tone, their evocative sonority, their capacity through some hidden correspondence to suscite the desired reaction by some apparently irrelevant allusion. The idea of "pure poetry" reflects the open schism which the symbolists desired to make between poetry and prose.

Finally, the one word which best conjures up the symbolist tendencies thus far noted, and which appears to form the core of the symbolist aesthetic in its many implications, is le rêve. The frequency with which rêve appears in the critical and creative writings of the period attests to its capacity of implying all those qualities held dear by the symbolists--solitude, mystery, the visionary, the intensely personal, confusion of the various senses, the break from logical and rational order, and above all the priority of imagination. The subjective domain of the dream most insistently asserts an intuitive and imaginative reality which can break through the binding crust of surface reality.

This assertion seemed to take on the tone of a revolutionary battle cry against positivism when Jules Laforgue cried in 1886, "Aux armes, citoyens! Il n'y a plus de raison."²⁵ Less dramatic, but more significant in terms of symbolist method was Mallarmé's, "suggérer un objet, voilà le rêve."²⁶ One notable structural result

of this suggestive, "intuitive" method was of course what was to become known as "free verse." A later symbolist disciple, in discussing this aspect of their poetry, again underlined the importance of le rêve:

Poetry being, above all, a thing of instinct far more than the fruit of reasoning, we need hardly excuse ourselves for having transgressed the customs our predecessors obeyed for the disposition of their verse. If we have emancipated rhythm, it is because our temperament and our turn of mind led us to seek a means of expressing our emotions which the ancient techniques did not furnish us. . . The distinctive feature of free verse is its assurance to each poet the full flowering of his dreams.²⁷

Again, le rêve best signifies the freedom from any restraint on the imagination.

Now, it would be misleading to suggest that le rêve, used in relation to the material and the nature of poetic vision, maintained any consistent meaning or clear function in an organized theory of art from Nerval, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Moréas, Henri de Régnier, and so on, down to the last claimants of symbolist theory. Quite the contrary, after Mallarmé its fate was a degeneration into more of a slogan, plied to conform to each writer's purpose. Nerval's study of dreams seems to have proceeded from a desire to capture the most fleeting of human experiences, and ultimately he believed that the external world is intimately involved with the things that go on in our minds, that even our dreams and hallucinations are somehow bound up with reality.²⁸ For Nerval, the art of the modern poet should consist of "l'épanchement du rêve dans la réalité,"²¹ or in other words, the abandonment of realistic regulations in art.

Yet for Nerval and even more so for Baudelaire and Mallarmé, this by no means precluded an intellectually firm structure or

"architecture" to the poem. The poet should not passively abandon himself to distracted images (as will be attempted later in the "automatic writing" of surrealism) but should fully dominate them with a formally constructive power necessary to imaginative expression. With Baudelaire, le rêve was equivalent to the significant creative experience and thus formed the real test of a poet's art. Imagination, "Queen of the faculties," may be said to have been substituted in terminology for le rêve, both essentially being a world of heightened awareness in which criteria of true and false are abandoned. "Imagination is the queen of the true, and the possible is one of the provinces of the true. [Imagination] is positively connected to the infinite."³⁰ This was however qualified by his following emphasis on the government of the imagination in which he quoted Mrs. Crowe:

By imagination, I do not simply mean to convey the common notion implied by that much abused word, which is only fancy, but the constructive imagination, which is a much higher function, and which, in as much as man is made in the likeness of God, bears a distant relation to that sublime power by which the Creator projects, creates, and upholds his universe.³¹

Imagination also formed the key to his use of the "symbol." In the same sense of Delacroix's famous "la Nature est un dictionnaire" was the statement of Baudelaire that "Tout l'univers visible n'est qu'un magasin d'images et de signes auxquels l'imagination donnera une place et une valeur relative. . ."³² It was the imagination which transformed the poet's sensations into symbols of his "état d'âme" and which guided the poet's perceptions of the relations which are the origin of his metaphors.

For Mallarmé le rêve meant not only exceeding the limits set by the "real" world (which in Mallarmé's thinking was no less "real" than illusory or dream images since any image of the outside world may be a "fiction") but also a heightening or making the image more vivid as it is taken "au-delà" its state as object, "vers ses proportions de rêve."³³ He too stressed the architecture or construction as essential to transforming le rêve into art. In discussing Gustave Kahn's Premiers Poèmes he wrote: "Comme cela se groupe et se construit à la manière des architectures mobiles musicales, toutes les probabilités que contient une riche substance de rêve tout à coup s'érigeant, illuminant et souriant."³⁴

A later use of le rêve can be seen in Jules Laforgue and indicates the current of pessimism which flowed into symbolism on occasion, becoming merely the word which sums up his pessimistic outlook on a world of pure fiction. For example:

Je suis un pessimiste mystique. . . la vie est trop triste, trop sale. L'histoire est un vieux cauchemar bariolé qui ne se doute pas que les meilleures plaisanteries sont les plus courtes. La planète terre était parfaitement inutile. Enfin, peut-être Tout n'est-il que rêve, seulement celui qui nous rêve ferait bien de hâter le cuvage de son opium.³⁵

Somewhat in this category with the emphasis on escape and ultimately non-communication was the use of le rêve by Joris-Karl Huysmans or Villiers de l'Isle Adam, the latter borrowing heavily from Schopenhauer's nihilistic metaphysic. Huysmans' novel, A Rebours, was one of those works which became in the mind of the public a kind of manifesto for the new aestheticism. The hero of the story, Des Esseintes, no longer wished to communicate with the distressing world

at all. Seeking only to titillate his aesthetic sensitivity, he isolated himself in a personal fabrication of extreme refinement and rarity. Even more symptomatic of this fin de siècle coloring of symbolism was Villier's Axël in which the hero pleaded with his beloved to renounce the disappointing reality of life and exalted the unrealized dream:

All the realities, what will they be tomorrow in comparison with the mirages we have just lived? . . . The quality of our hope no longer allows us the earth. What can we ask from this miserable star where our melancholy lingers on save the pale reflections of such moments? . . . It is the Earth, dost thou not see? which has now become the illusion? . . . Oh, the external world! Let us not be made dupes by the old slave, chained to our feet in broad daylight, who promises us the keys to a palace of enchantments when it clutches only a handful of ashes in its clenched black fist? Just now, thou wast speaking of Bagdad, of Palmyra. . . If thou didst but know what a heap of uninhabitable stones, what a sterile and burning soil, what dens of loathsome creatures, those wretched places in reality are— though they appear to thee all glamorous with memories far away in that imaginary Orient which thou carriest within thyself!³⁶

The same general idea of a wonderful voyage in the realm of imagination and its infinite superiority to an actual voyage can also be found in Nerval, Baudelaire and Mallarmé.

Although a list of variants on le rêve could be extended indefinitely, suffice it to note at this point that with Redon le rêve tends toward the positive and constructive purpose as it is found in Poe, Baudelaire, or Mallarmé. Since a detailed analysis of symbolist literature is quite outside the scope of this thesis, only the highlights of the symbolist theoretical fabric have been touched upon. These constants in symbolist literature will be used then, in the following chapters, to illuminate those aspects of Redon's writings or graphic works which may be termed symbolist in character.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

¹Jacques M. Barzun, Classic, Romantic and Modern (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961), p. 84.

²John Rewald, "Odilon Redon," Odilon Redon, Gustave Moreau, Rodolphe Bresdin (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961), pp.33-34.

³Charles Chassé, Le Mouvement symboliste dans l'art du XIX^e siècle (Paris: Librairie Floury, 1947), p. 16.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Lloyd James Austin, L'Univers poétique de Baudelaire, symbolisme et symbolique (Paris: Mercure de France, 1956), pp. 11-12; and

Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle (New York, London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), pp. 10 et seq.

⁶Jacques-Henri Bornecque, "Rêves et réalités du symbolisme", Revue Des Sciences Humaines, LXXVII (January-March, 1955), p. 10.

⁷A. G. Lehmann, The Symbolist Aesthetic in France, 1885-1895 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1950), p. 59.

⁸Chassé, op. cit., p. 46.

⁹Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁰For a detailed comparison of Schopenhauer's and Mallarmé's aesthetic, see Lehman, op. cit., pp. 60-67.

¹¹Guy Michaud, Message poétique du symbolisme; L'aventure poétique, la révolution poétique, la doctrine symboliste (documents) (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1961), p. 725.

¹²Charles Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes; Y.-G. Le Dantec (ed.) and Claude Pichois (rev. ed.), Bibliothèque De La Pléiade (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1961), p. 11.

¹³Bornecque, op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁴Baudelaire, op. cit., p. 705.

¹⁵Stéphane Mallarmé, Oeuvres Complètes: Henry Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (eds.), Bibliothèque De La Pléiade (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1945), p. 869.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷The distinction between "symbolism" and "symbolical" is particularly emphasized in Austin, op. cit., pp. 19-21 et passim.

¹⁸Joseph Chiari, Symbolisme from Poe to Mallarmé: The Growth of A Myth (London: Rockliff Publishing Corporation, 1956), pp. 39, 54.

¹⁹Eugen Weber, Paths To The Present (New York and Toronto: Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc., 1960), p. 190.

²⁰Roseline Bacou, Odilon Redon: La Vie et l'oeuvre: point de vue de la critique au sujet de l'oeuvre, Vol. I (Geneva: Pierre Cailler, Tous les livres, 1956), p. 243.

²¹Ibid., p. 245.

²²Ibid., p. 244.

²³Baudelaire, op. cit., p. 186.

²⁴Alexandre Micha, Verlaine et les poètes symbolistes (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1943), p. 42.

²⁵Michaud, op. cit., p. 773.

²⁶Mallarmé, op. cit., p. 869.

²⁷Michaud, op. cit., p. 795.

²⁸Barzun, op. cit., p. 94; and Wilson, op. cit., p. 11.

²⁹Gérard de Nerval, Oeuvres, Vol. I; Henri Lemaitre (ed.) (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1958), p. 760.

³⁰Baudelaire, op. cit., p. 1038.

³¹Ibid., p. 1040.

³²Austin, op. cit., p. 296.

³³Lehman, op. cit., pp. 89-91.

³⁴Ibid., p. 91.

³⁵Ibid., p. 99.

³⁶Wilson, op. cit., pp. 262-263.

CHAPTER II

SYMBOLIST THEORETICAL AFFINITIES IN REDON'S WRITINGS

During Redon's lifetime and for a surprisingly long time after, the general public's appreciation of the plastic merits of his work was unjustly hampered by an official criticism which saw merely the bizarreness of subject matter and its literary aspect. The typical appraisal saw in Redon either a littérateur manquée or an "illustrator"; the study and admiration of his technical prowess only came after his change to pastels and oils late in a productive career. To correct this serious oversight, twentieth-century critics such as Mellerio or Roger-Marx performed the task of clarifying Redon's spectacular contribution in the art of lithography and of analyzing "coldly and objectively" his stylistic achievements in form, line, and values.¹ In thus limiting themselves uniquely to the plastic domain, these crusaders in behalf of the artist tended to ignore or compromise those aspects of his work or those literary alliances which first brought on the unjust labels.

Much of the criticism of Redon thus seemed to be split between two opposite poles of thought. On the one hand was a view which saw in his art a derivative dependence on literature, while on the other hand was a view which, in its eagerness to make known the technical excellence of his work, tended to avoid a serious confrontation with the literary issue. The obvious solution to a seeming conflict is that

Redon was not a misplaced author whom literature lost, but rather an artist and craftsman in his own right who offered a convincing plastic parallel to symbolist literary tendencies. This was achieved by means of a technique which could indeed reach superb heights. A knowledge of Redon's artistic means enhances rather than constricts an insight into the symbolist characteristics in his work.

A second potentially misleading approach to Redon has been the tendency of critics, who have been inspired to superlatives rather than to criticism, to proclaim him an absolutely unique and isolated phenomenon of his age and "a person apart." Twice Mellerio opened important studies of the artist with the words "Odilon Redon. . . occupies a place apart." Roger-Marx wrote, "Nowhere perhaps in the history of art or literature can one find an example of such a singular creature as Odilon Redon."² Although unquestionably true that Redon's work was situated well outside the researches of such artistic contemporaries as Renoir and Monet, can it really be said with Bacou (the third major Redon scholar) that Redon "occupied a place apart" or that "his message was profoundly inactuel"?³ Decidedly not. From even the meager discussion of developments previously outlined, it can be suspected that Redon's visionary art was very much in concert with major intellectual currents of his epoch. Redon considered himself "fatalement de mon temps."⁴

As a necessary preface to the consideration of Redon's theoretical writings in comparison to symbolist theory, it must be made clear that the major outlines of his theoretical position were assuredly not formed because of contact with poets of symbolist tendencies. If,

for example, Stéphane Mallarmé was to be for Redon not only a personal friend but a firm "allié d'art,"⁵ it is because the background and artistic values of each could find a sympathetic rapport. Certainly by the time Redon captured the admiration of the growing symbolist literary circles in the early 80's, his ideas and his graphic art had already reached the definitive style.

From the very beginning Redon seemed destined to fall within the circumference of the Romantic tradition and a subjective-orientated idealism. The uncommon circumstances of his childhood and formative years played a crucial role in his intellectual and artistic development, as Redon more than once revealed in his intimate Journal. As a child, Redon was separated from his parents in Bordeaux for reasons of frail health, and his seemingly indifferent mother abandoned him to the care of an elderly uncle residing on the old family estate, Peyrelabade (in the Médoc). Thus, as a two-day old enfant, Redon was taken to that desolate country overlooking Les Landes. A description typical of Redon's comments on the environment will reveal the predominance of solitude there: "On est si seul là-bas, aux fins des terres, c'est l'unique impression que vous aurez aussi dans ce pays demi-mort et sauvage, sans vie et sans culture, confiné presque dans l'Océan."⁶ Kept from school, and dependent upon his own resources for over eleven years, Redon's isolation cultivated the qualities of extreme sensitivity, an active and visionary imagination, and a predisposition to disquietude and awareness of suffering. Redon would spend his days in dreaming beneath the changing forms of clouds or in creating fantastic play-images while hidden in some rugged span of brush and rock.

The very characteristics of the place and of the mournful inhabitants, which on the one hand seemed a disadvantage, were turned by a creative spirit into the fruitful influences on a later art. Redon would recollect the desert melancholy only to add its conduciveness to the "esprit libre" and "suggestive contemplation." Above all, it was the silence which was to nurture his art:

I see myself as an observer /regardeur/ taking pleasure in silence. As a child, I would search out the shadows; I remember having found profound and singular joys in hiding beneath the great draperies, in the darkened corners of the house, in the room where I played.⁷

After a visit to Peyrelebade shortly before his death in 1916, he told a friend:

. . . I understood completely the fateful origins of the art, so sad, I have created. It is a site for a monastery, an enclosure wherein one feels oneself alone--such abandon! It was necessary there to fill one's imagination with the unlikely, for into this exile one had to put something. In fact, it is perhaps in the places most completely deprived of features pleasant to the eye that the spirit and the imagination must take their revenge.⁸

Thus, the parallels to be found between Redon's and the symbolists' concept of the artist's necessary solitude, his displacement from normal society, have in part their root in this solitary beginning.

His first formal education came when, at the age of eleven, he was placed in a Bordeaux boarding school; there he was to experience great difficulty in adjusting to the world of his classmates. As one of his biographers explained:

The solitude of Peyrelebade fashioned this child; certain of his faculties had developed uncurbed, while others had remained somnolent. Once in school, the least obligation became painful restriction, the least clash, suffering. . . His art of the solitary and visionary had as its starting point evasion--the passionate need to surpass everyday reality, to surpass himself and reach for something beyond.⁹

The later fin de siècle consciousness of the artist's alienation from society was intensely experienced by Redon.

As a youth, his major interests were music and art. By the age of fifteen he began drawing and painting under the guidance of Stanislas Gorin, a capable connoisseur who befriended the lonely boy and helped his acceptance of disciplined study. Gorin's own work was strikingly Romantic, with a preponderance of drama, tumult, and storms. It was Gorin who took Redon to the provincial exhibitions of Millet, Corot, Delacroix, and the early work of Gustave Moreau--describing them with poetic fervor. But the first commitments to Romanticism had occurred before this. Redon related in his memoirs that at seven years he was taken to the Louvre: "My memory was firmly imprinted by the paintings of drama; I had eyes for only the representations of violent life, to excess; that alone struck me."¹⁰ Although given the Romantic origins of Redon's art, its mature character will no more resemble Delacroix's than Mallarmé's poetry resembled that of Victor Hugo.

Another source of enthusiasm for this boy whose temperament thirsted for emotional stimulation was Romantic music, above all the compositions of Beethoven and Schumann. His older brother Ernest was a remarkable musician whose favorite masters were Schumann and Chopin. Referring to his musically inclined family, Redon wrote: "Je suis né sur une onde sonore."¹¹ Easily distracted from his schooling, he would wander through the old and poor districts of Bordeaux, frequenting the churches where he sought instinctively the memories of the medieval age in response to the mysterious beauty of chants or of the vaulted

architecture.

I was the radiant visitor of the churches. . .irresistibly drawn by the divine songs. By preference I would go into the poor districts where the temples are many, the piety more natural and true. There were hours that I remember as having experienced une vie à son comble, haute et suprême, inouïe, ^{italics placed for emphasis} . . .The pouring forth of sacred songs revealed to me in those times an infinity unalloyed, opening up as an absolute reality, the very contact with the beyond.¹²

How similar is Redon's revelation of an emotional experience which attains "unheard-of-heights" to Baudelaire's remark in his Journaux intimes: "There are moments of existence where time and scope are the most profound and the feeling of existence immensely augmented."¹³ Expressed in symbolic language, a similar idea of the inouïe appeared in the first two stanzas of Mallarmé's sonnet, "Petit Air II":

Indomptablement a dû
Comme mon espoir s'y lance
Eclater là-haut perdu
Avec furie et silence,

Voix étrangère au bosquet
Ou par nul écho suivie,
L'oiseau qu'on n'ouït jamais
Une autre fois en la vie.¹⁴

Typically enough, Mallarmé transferred the concept to a comment on the nature of the poet. The poet, speaking in the symbol of the passionate musician-bird, issued a note (a pure thought) which reached such heights that it would never be heard again. Here the theme of Silence was introduced, which would occupy Redon, Poe, Mallarmé and others.

Sometime during the period of study in Bordeaux, about 1861, Redon encountered Professor Arnaud Clavaud who was to have a profound influence on his intellectual development. Through Clavaud, Redon

was introduced to a general cultural education he had not received in his formal studies. A student of botanical sciences and a learned man of letters, Professor Clavaud opened the door for Redon not only to the French classics, Hindu writing, and various pantheistic works, but also to the recently published works of such men as Flaubert, Baudelaire, and of Poe translated by Baudelaire. Redon never ceased to admire his mentor's synthesis of idealism and science, and dedicated to him the album, Songes.

To conclude this brief biographical sketch, it may be suggested that Redon's theory and style emerged from the Romantic tradition and a pervading aura of idealism, as was true of the symbolist movement in general. As previously indicated, symbolism is not readily defined as a specific artistic or literary style but denotes rather a series of attitudes. Although present in varying degrees in the works of "precursors," these attitudes became decisive for an artistic outlook which reached a climax in the 80's and 90's. Whether or not these attitudes and the resultant iconographic and stylistic choices are reflected in Redon's graphics is a question which must rest first of all on a comparison of the theoretical premises underlying these graphics with those premises outlined in the preliminary definition of symbolism. This is necessary in order to make clear that any specific correlation later proposed in reference to any given lithograph is not mere chance but rests upon a concrete theoretical structure which supported both Redon and the symbolists in question. A few selected extracts from Redon's writings should reveal this underlying affinity.

The first significant element of the symbolist attitude introduced in the preceding chapter was their assertion of the priority of the Idea. A similar inclination runs like a leit motif throughout A Soi-Même, Redon's sensitively written account of his viewpoints on "life, art, and artists." The journal is a consistent affirmation of the ideal over the material, of the vie intérieure, of the supreme role of art and poetry--in sum, of a philosophic and human truth which transcends the state of pure object. To return to the opening line of the excerpt from Moréas' Manifesto, it will be remembered that the "idea" is not to be confused with teaching, declamation, or rhetoric. Certainly Redon shared this opinion with the symbolists: "A work conceived in terms of teaching will be in its execution led upon destructive roads. A painting teaches nothing: it invites [It-alics placed for emphasis]; it surprises, it exalts. . .it raises and rectifies the spirit, that is all."¹⁵

When Redon published his memoirs, it was quite probably not by chance that he chose the title A Soi-Même, reminiscent of Schopenhauer.¹⁶ The opening sentence of the journal seems to set the tone: "J'ai fait un art selon moi." From what follows, it is clear that rather than denying any exterior influences whatever from the old masters or from nature, Redon was simply restating the ideal of a subjectively centered art. Redon felt strongly that the realists created a degraded art, for art must be a reflection of the human soul and mind. "Painting is not representation alone. . .it is a human beauty with the prestige of thought. All painting which does not incite us to [thought] is nothing."¹⁷ Countering the skeptical response to

such a statement, he would assert:

There are those who demand what the word spiritualism means. They are those who hear only their sensuous instincts and who take for madness the supreme revelations of poetry. For them the ideal is a chimera: the splendour of truth, the certitudes of conscience are uniquely caused by the nature of our education and milieu. Spiritualism will always be understood as expressing the opposite of materialism. To define it is impossible.¹⁸

Closely related to this ideal was the importance of solitude. The special function of solitude was an element in symbolism which figured strongly in the artistic premises of Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Redon. In 1891, Mallarmé wrote:

At this moment we are assisting at a spectacle which is absolutely unique in the entire history of poetry: each poet going in his own corner, to play upon a flute uniquely his, the airs which please him; for the first time the poets are singing no longer in chorus.

. . . For me, the case of the poet in this society which does not permit him to live, is the case of a man who isolates himself in order to sculpt his own tomb.¹⁹

Thirteen years before, Redon had called the vision of Gustave Moreau "essentially and profoundly modern" because he "ceded above all to the indications of his own nature."²⁰ The following excerpt will give some idea of how essential solitude was to Redon's aesthetic:

The artist is, from day to day, the receptacle of ambient things: he receives from the exterior his sensations which he transforms by a fateful, inexorable and tenacious path according to himself alone.²¹

In addition to an aesthetic expressive of high individualism, one may find the suggestion of an artistic process which is strikingly close to that described in one of Mallarmé's more famous definitions of the new symbolist poetic: "To paint, not the thing, but the effect that it produces."²²

Redon consistently denied belonging to any school of painting:

I am of not one party. It has always seemed to me that an artist is alone and can only be alone. . . The artist knows quite well that of all his works, that one which reflects and reveals him the best has been made in solitude. All genesis keeps a little of shadow and mystery. It is in solitude that the artist feels himself to be living energetically, in profound secret, and that nothing from the outer mundane world solicits him or obliges him to come out of concealment.²³

For Redon, as well as for Mallarmé, the access to the interior world must come through solitude and meditation.

Fundamental to symbolist idealism was the belief in the existence of two worlds or two realities. It was in part the belief that poetry reveals a mystery or other reality hidden beneath observed reality that led to the role of the "poet-priest," who alone had the power to affect its revelation. This nature was only the starting point. Throughout his life, Redon was occupied with finding a satisfactory synthesis of the unseen world to which he sought access and the visual world of nature inherent in the painter's craft. To put it another way, he searched for a synthesis of the unconscious or the dream with scientific truths of nature. The magic that Poe's theories and creative works held for Baudelaire, Mallarmé and the symbolists in general lay precisely in what they saw as his synthesis of a mathematical and analytic rigor with the world of mystery and suggestion. Baudelaire's frequent insistence on the government of the imagination and Mallarmé's obsession with diction beneath apparent obscurity had their counterparts in both Redon's writings and in his lithographs.

Although Redon was to object strenuously to the implication of the poet Francis Jammes that his art sprang completely from an unwilling

subconscious, nevertheless the inconscient held an important place in his aesthetic. He was constantly talking of "surprises" from the subconscious:

[The gifts which nature gave me] have led me to the dream [rêve]; I have undergone the torments of the imagination and the surprises which appear under my crayon. . . 24

And in a letter to Mellerio, he confessed to its supremacy:

. . .fantasy, this sovereign, who suddenly offers us magnificent and surprising seductions, who subjugates us. She has been my guardian angel. . .She is also the messenger of the subconscious, this elevated and mysterious personage. . . Nothing is made into art by will alone. All is made through docile submission to the coming of the inconscient.²⁵

The role of emotion which appeared in Redon's notes on art should be considered together with the role of the subconscious. In the light of the symbolists' attempt to "montrer un état d'âme," what he had to say about emotion is certainly relative. "The work of art is the ferment of an emotion that the artist proposes."²⁶ For Redon, the work of art had but one precise goal—it must present itself to the spectator with the same intensity that the original imagery imposed on him. Furthermore, this passing from imagined fantasies to work necessitated the intercession of all those faculties which justly reside in the creative act. The question becomes one of proper order:

One can analyze only after the [experience of] emotion, which is the initial point of all genesis. The very minute one becomes master of his passion, it is no longer. It has served the embryo. And for all of the organs to appear, it requires dutiful care, protective of the original seed: the most lucid intelligence. . .reason, analysis. The intellectual agents will come to the service of the emotional agent, but it is the latter which gives birth to the former.²⁷

The symbolists proclaimed precisely this order of emotion, then

intellect in the artistic process.

Redon's ideas on the nature of art appear most explicitly in his praise of certain artists and in his criticism of the naturalist painters. Clearly the "priority of the idea" provided the basic axiom for his criticism of naturalism. As an example of what he approved, his appraisal of Cazin is worth a careful examination for, first, the typical vocabulary he chose which is symbolist in its implications and, secondly, the central emphasis on "two worlds." In this essay, Redon was looking back to the debut of the landscape painter in the Salon of 1879. For the most part, Redon's words speak in consistent affinities with symbolist language.

The sweet mystical sentiment with which [Cazin] seems imprinted would have made one think that a primitive had strayed into our midst. It surprised, it gave harmoniously and without artifice the savor of a distant cerebrality, as a melody by Berlioz would do in a concert of military music: the same power of legendary evocation. It was indeed the prelude to other works. . . all marked with the same moral savor. . .²⁸

After this introductory description, he proceeded to a more serious consideration of Cazin's position in regard to contemporary painting.

Those who seek above all visual pleasure will not linger before these works, these canvasses so tempered and prudent. . . where the part of reality, of sensuality is justly released with measure in order to not harm the light ideality that they provoke in us. Those people will go before works of another order to applaud the products of a naturalism which is indeed necessary for art, its first value, but which is actually secondary when it is taken for the goal and not as means: Two faces of truth which will always be opposed and complementary: on the one hand, concrete substances, visible reality, without which all conception remains in a state of abstraction and in some sort of creative palpitation. And on the other hand, the imagination, the vast perspectives opened unforeseen from our dreams, without which the work of art has neither goal nor threshold (portée).²⁹

Redon found in Cazin an example of an artist who was both "conscious" and "visionary," who had managed an equilibrium in the center of these two worlds, never letting himself be absorbed by exterior nature.

Continuing the appraisal, Redon disclosed his sympathies for a "poetic" art:

The trait which characterizes these fine works is that they are outside of place and time, and are yet profoundly true . . . that is, truly elevated art. . . Cazin is a painter-poet: he proceeds as much through sensitivity as through reason. The poetry he reveals is so certain and so favorable toward awaking in us distant and mysterious reminiscences that it has the power to render us henceforth indifferent to those myriad works--we are told they are artistic--which are skillful, but which do not have the supreme and decisive power of the Portée, of the essential transmission.³⁰

Two points have emerged thus far in this essay which require further comment if one is to fully appreciate the relationship between Redon's position and that of symbolism. First, the use of portée which occurs twice in this short essay relates most certainly to that transcendent power of art which concerned such poets as Nerval, Mallarmé, or Baudelaire. Mallarmé was obsessed with the possibility of the Work which would finally succeed in ascending to the realm of the pure poem and the pure idea. The parentage of Redon's "portée" perhaps belongs more accurately with Nerval, whose portée is that which separates the known from the unknown, the dream, the invisible. Nerval's famous Aurélia begins: "Le rêve est une seconde vie. Je n'ai pu percer sans frémir ces portes d'ivoires ou de corne qui nous séparent du monde invisible."³¹ Even more interesting in the Baudelairean context of "government of the imagination" is the fragment from Nerval's notes which states:

"Rêver des choses perdues où elle m'enlève dans ses bras
 [sic] s'entretenir d'idées pures et saines pour avoir des songes
 logiques. . . Quand vos rêves sont logiques ils sont une porte
 ouverte ivoire ou corne sur le monde extérieur. . ."32

This last remark raises the second aspect of the Cazin essay which needs further clarification--that is, the proper relationship of the "two realities."

Nerval's bringing together of "logic" and "dream" may be compared to what is perhaps the most frequently quoted passage from A Soi-Même: "Toute mon originalité consiste donc à faire vivre humainement des êtres invraisemblables selon les lois du vraisemblable, en mettant, autant que possible, la logique du visible au service de l'invisible. [Italics placed for emphasis].³³ Some critics have taken statements in which Redon stressed the importance of a careful study of nature or a fully conscious formal construction to the work, and implied from them that therefore his concern with the laws of the real world prove a dissimilarity with an idealistic literary symbolism. As has already been indicated, a cursory reading of Baudelaire's or Mallarmé's critical writings on the art of poetry would prove this to be not a point well taken. The poet and the artist inherently work with the material necessities of their craft. What united the symbolist poets and Redon was their very conscious assertion of the necessity of the domination of the imaginative faculty over nature, and of a higher function to art than material reality. "In this hour of naturalism," Redon said, "Cazin and Puvis are alone in making us forget the street."³⁴

What Redon felt to be the proper relationship of the "two realities" is best revealed in his sometimes cutting criticism of the

naturalist painters--a criticism often reminiscent of the symbolists' rejection of Parnassus. The essence of his criticism was this: Realism, naturalism, impressionism, etc., were judged to be "par trop bas de plafond"³⁵ (of too low a ceiling), limiting the artist to the strict sensuous reproduction of nature and life, and excluding from him the immense and invisible domain of Thought and the Dream. Redon's commemorative lecture on Bressin related an incident pertinent to this discussion, for Bressin's advice was to be applied to Redon's criticism of the Impressionists. Here are Bressin's words which were of such moment for Redon:

Do you see this chimney-flue--what does it say to you? If you have the force to observe it well and to understand it; if you imagine the strangest and most bizarre subject, and if it is based and remains in the limits of this simple piece of wall, your dream will be living. Art is there.³⁶

This "elevated teaching" confirmed for Redon his belief that the painter's view is opened upon two worlds, and that it is impossible to separate these two realities without impoverishing art and depriving it of what "peut donner de noble et de suprême." The language which followed in a condemnation of his artistic contemporaries is ultimately idealistic and symbolist in its affirmations:

The artists of my generation for the most part assuredly have regarded the chimney-flue. And they have seen only that. All that can be added to the piece of wall through the mirage of our own essence, they have not given to it. All that goes beyond, illuminates, or amplified the object and raises the spirit into the regions of mystery, into the misty shade of the irresolute and its delicious disquiet, has been totally closed to them. All which leads itself to the symbol, all which our art of the unexpected, the imprecise, the indefinable admits and which gives it an aspect bordering on enigma-- they stay away from, and are frightened of. True parasites of the object, they have cultivated art on the uniquely visual field. They have closed it to those ideals which can transcend

and which would be capable of putting into the humblest essays, even in the blacks [lithographs] the light of spirituality. By this I mean an irradiation which takes hold on our mind and escapes all analysis.³⁷

The late date of this lecture, delivered in Holland in 1913 and three years before his death, leaves little doubt that "our art" of the "symbol" and the "imprecise" in fact refers to the theories and works of the symbolist artists and poets.

Yet this lecture showed Redon remaining faithful to the precepts he had put forward in the La Gironde articles as early as 1868. These articles, which gave an account of the official Salon of 1886, were his first communication to the public and presented an eloquent defense of the imagination in art. It will be remembered that Redon, thanks to Clavaud, had read Baudelaire thoroughly, and it is not unreasonable to suspect Baudelaire's influence on the formulation of Redon's own position on art. Redon's attack on the Realist view seemed to echo the words Baudelaire used in writing of the Salon de 1846 and Salon de 1859. The initial statement in the La Gironde series which proposed that "the great art no longer exists" continued Baudelaire's lament that "the great tradition has been lost and the new one has not yet been made."³⁸ A sampling of Baudelaire's critique will suggest its parentage to Redon's theoretical development:

From day to day art diminishes its self-respect, prostrates itself before exterior reality, and the painter becomes more and more inclined to paint not what he dreams but what he sees.

. . .discrediting the imagination, scorn of the great, exclusive practice of technique--these are the principal reasons for the artist's abasement.³⁹

Since space does not permit a more lengthy comparison of Baudelaire's and Redon's criticism, the latter's La Gironde series will now be briefly considered. After acknowledging Manet's originality and harmonies of tone, Redon then turned to what he found to be "narrow in the realist theories."

The weakness of M. Manet and of all those who wish to limit themselves to the literal reproduction of reality, is to sacrifice man and his thought to good brush work, to the brilliant handling of a detail. . .As a result their figures lack a moral life, that intimate vie intérieure when a painter expresses himself with particular intensity, possibly because he has seen and felt with profundity and vividness. . .True artists, although they recognize the necessity for a basis of seen Reality, to them true art lies in a Reality that is felt.⁴⁰

Was this not the crux of the symbolists' criticism against the visual descriptiveness of Parnassian poetry?

When Redon turned to Fromentin in the course of his survey of the Salon, he asked categorically: "What is his crime?--He has remembered the fable. . .he has tried to rejuvenate our ancient centaurs." Then, as if to answer the archtypal realist retort of Courbet, "show me an angel and I will paint one," he replied: "Assuredly M. Fromentin has never seen a centaur. . .admit it, we are here in the presence of a lost right which needs to be reconquered--the right to fantasy."⁴¹ Beyond reality, then, there exists another way, "less precise and yet just as true, less external but more intimate and concentrated."⁴² It is no coincidence that scholars in part distinguish Romanticism from symbolism by the intimacy and concentration of the latter.

The third and last article summed up what should be the true vocation of the artist:

The old masters have proved that the artist, once he has taken from nature the necessary means of expression, is free, legitimately free, to borrow his subjects from history, from the poets, from his own imagination, from the thousand sources of his fantasy. That makes the superior artist: face to face with nature he is a painter, but in his studio he is a poet and a thinker.

What makes the strength of the artist, what makes his greatness, his supreme superiority, is precisely an anxious timidity, submission, and apprehension attentive to the secret indications of the ideal.⁴³

Appropriate to the above statement is Redon's notation many years later in his personal journal:

As for me, I believe to have created an art which is expressive, suggestive, indeterminate. Suggestive art is the irradiation of divine elements made plastic, brought together in order to provoke dreams which illuminate and exalt the mind.⁴⁴

The symbolist aesthetic which stressed the ideal, the dream, the qualities of suggestion and indeterminacy, the solitary, has clearly found a parallel in the writings of Redon thus far considered. Furthermore, Redon's conception of the artist was quite similar to the symbolists' elevation of the poet to the role of the supreme and sacred revealer, the "poet-priest." For Redon too, art was the "Portée Suprême, elevated, salutary and sacred."⁴⁵ Art is the "divine fruit" and the artist is "born a poet" and the "superior" man "infinitely complete."⁴⁶ Finally, there was the symbolists' preoccupation with music. Although space does not permit a description of Redon's continual involvement in the musical world of Paris, it may be noted that a vocabulary borrowed from musical terminology runs throughout A Soi-Même. "My drawings inspire [*Italics those of the author*] and do not define. They determine nothing. They place us, as with music, in the ambiguous world of the indeterminate."⁴⁷ Just as was true of Mallarmé,

Redon recognized the legitimacy of such borrowings from music and dreamed of at least a partial fusion:

Cet art suggestif est tout entier dans l'art excitateur de la musique, plus librement, radieusement; mais il est aussi le mien par une combinaison de divers éléments rapprochés, de formes transposées ou transformées, sans aucun rapport avec les contingences, mais ayant une logique cependant.⁴⁸

That the Revue wagnérienne admired his art is hardly surprising.

To conclude this correlative study of symbolist theory and that of Redon, it must be noted that the passages selected are but a sample of the tone of Redon's writings, which read like a testament to the fundamental faiths of symbolism. A very real theoretical affinity can no longer be in doubt. More than casual significance then must be attached to Redon's remark on hearing of Mallarmé's death: "He was an artistic alliance of absolute surety."⁴⁹ The younger generation of painters recognized this deeply rooted alliance, and Maurice Denis was to say of Redon, "He was our Mallarmé."⁵⁰

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

¹Claude Roger-Marx, Catalogue of an Exhibition of Paintings, Pastels, Drawings, Water Colors, Lithographs by Odilon Redon; Art Institute of Chicago. . . New York, De Hauke & Co., Inc. (January 1929).

²D.C.R., "Odilon Redon", The Etchings and Lithographs of Odilon Redon (The Art Institute of Chicago, 1929), p. 5.

³Bacou, op. cit., pp. 7, 47.

⁴Odilon Redon, A Soi-Même: Journal (1867-1915), Notes sur la vie, l'art, et les artistes (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1961), p. 22.

⁵Odilon Redon, Lettres D'Odilon Redon (1878-1916); Mauius-Ary Leblond (ed.) (Paris and Brussels: G. Van Oest & Co., Editeurs, 1923), p. 36.

⁶Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 50.

⁷Ibid., p. 13.

⁸Redon, Lettres, p. 117.

⁹Bacou, op. cit., p. 19.

¹⁰Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 14.

¹¹Bacou, op. cit., letter to Edouard Picard (June 15, 1894), p. 18.

¹²Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 15.

¹³Baudelaire, op. cit., p. 1256.

¹⁴Mallarmé, op. cit., p. 66.

¹⁵Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 113.

¹⁶Sven Lovgrén, "The Genesis of Modernism," Figura (Upsala: 1959), p. 67.

¹⁷Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 103.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 36-37.

¹⁹Mallarmé, op. cit., pp. 866, 869.

²⁰Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 65.

²¹Ibid., p. 23.

²²Mallarmé, op. cit., p. 1440.

²³Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 126.

²⁴Ibid., p. 26.

²⁵Redon, Lettres, pp. 33-34.

²⁶Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 104.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 92-93.

²⁸Ibid., p. 148.

²⁹Ibid., p. 149. It may be noted that "portée" is difficult to translate satisfactorily into English. Particularly when capitalized, the word carries the connotation of not only "gestation" or "import," but also a span through which one passes into another realm.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 150-151.

³¹Nerval, op. cit., p. 753.

³²Ibid., n. 1.

³³Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 28.

³⁴Ibid., p. 152.

³⁵ Ary Leblond et al., Odilon Redon, 1840-1916; Pastels and Drawings; Catalogue of an exhibition at the Cleveland Museum of Art, The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, in cooperation with Jacques Seligman & Co., Inc., New York (The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, 1952), p. 13.

³⁶ Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 132.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Rewald, op. cit., p. 17.

³⁹ Baudelaire, op. cit., pp. 1036, 1029.

⁴⁰ Bacou, op. cit., p. 45.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 46.

⁴² Rewald, op. cit., p. 20.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁴ Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 116.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 94.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 26-27.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁹ Redon, Lettres, p. 36.

⁵⁰ Bacou, op. cit., p. 190.

CHAPTER III

THE IDENTITY OF SYMBOLIST ICONOGRAPHY AND STYLE

IN DANS LE RÊVE AND A EDGAR POE

A significant portion of Redon's graphics reveals an art in which an underlying theoretical affinity with literary symbolism has been transformed into observable visual expression. The poet's dream has been transformed into visible images. Admittedly, in the business of dream-making, an artist's task is in one sense considerably more difficult than the poet's. A poem may well suscite dream images and as quickly let them vanish in the development of the theme:

Les formes s'effaçaient et n'étaient plus qu'un rêve
Une ébauche lente à venir,
Sur la toile oubliée, et que l'artiste achève
Seulement par le souvenir.¹

Yet what Baudelaire was able to do with words is outside the means of the artist, who must give that dream a plastic permanence, related to visual experience and capable of maintaining the suggestion of appearance.

As late as 1931, a critic writing in the American publication, Parnassus, intimated that with such artists as Redon "suggestion" was merely the excuse for poor drawing.² Plagued by similar accusations during his lifetime, Redon was forced to repeat the obvious: an artist depends first of all on his eyes, on the observation of

form and light in nature. Of all praises, the one Redon preferred was that pronounced by Pasteur: "Your monsters, Redon, are viable."³

The choice of technique or medium will often confirm an artist's gifts and intentions. Nothing could be more true in respect to Redon, whose "noirs" at once claim a place in that nineteenth-century obsession with the powers of blackness, as seen particularly in Poe, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé. Redon was essentially a poète-voyant, a visionary, and the medium in which he first felt at home--the fusain or charcoal drawing--was particularly well suited to such demands. The two most noticeable features of this technique are its compliancy to a rapidity of execution and to chiaroscuro effects. The necessity of rapid execution must be seen as related to those "surprises" of the "unconscious" which gripped Redon at moments of artistic inspiration. The image which appears in a sudden illumination must be seized at the very moment of its inspiration to retain its original vitality.

As for the second feature, chiaroscuro was to be the very crux of his organizational technique. The bearing which chiaroscuro had on the symbolist ideals of suggestion and the rêve was clearly indicated by Redon:

Suggestive art can yield nothing without sole recourse to the mysterious play of shadows and the rhythm of lines mentally conceived.⁴

. . . [Le fusain] best facilitated my researches into chiaroscuro and the invisible.⁵

This attitude corresponded exactly with the idea expressed by the symbolist poet, Verlaine:

Pas la couleur, mais rien que la nuance.
 Oh! la nuance seule fiancée
 Le rêve au rêve et la flûte au cor.⁶

Redon's discovery of lithography, and hence the door to what would comprise the most impressive aspect of his artistic production, must curiously enough be traced to coincidence rather than a willful decision on the part of the artist. A letter to Mellerio revealed that the instigating cause for the switch to lithography was surprisingly simple:

. . . I began lithography because I had, before, vainly tried to show in the official salon the numerous charcoal drawings I had made, and which were tucked away in my storage boxes. Fantin-Latour gave me the excellent advice of reproducing them by the use of the lithographic crayon and even graciously gave me a sheet of autographic paper for the transfer. I therefore made my first lithographs in order to multiply my drawings.

Although Redon would frequently rework the stone after the transfer, employing the scraper, or wash-tints, to obtain more delicate shadings and phosphorescences, the germ of the work still belonged to the initial charcoal studies and drawings. The "harshness" and "resistant stubbornness" of the stone was always opposed in Redon's mind to the "vital ardor," the sensitiveness, the "âme" of charcoal.

This material motive for his chosen form of expression is, however, overwhelmed in significance by motives more of a spiritual order, and at once more difficult to explain precisely. In the final analysis, his sole occupation with the noirs for over twenty years sprang from a love for the "Shades" which was metaphysical in import. Of the poets included above, only Baudelaire and Mallarmé compare in spirit and intensity to Redon's exploration of human anguish and the black abyss

of the unknown. By the very nature of his mind and his searchings, Redon was prodigiously suited to become a virtuoso of shadows. Concomitant with darkness is traditionally opposed light, and those luminosities which Redon allowed to filter through are endowed with either a touch of the ideal or something strangely sinister. He who revered Rembrandt for giving a "moral value" to light can be said to have spiritualized shadow and given it a troubling attraction.

Unquestionably, the self-imposed abstinence from color was intentional:

However, I do not believe that all which palpitates under the brow of a man who meditates and listens to his inner voices--nor do I believe that thought, taken in itself--can gain much from this tendency of observing only what is happening outside of our walls. The expression of life can appear in no other way than in chiaroscuro. Thinkers love the shade, stroll through it, are at ease in it, as if their brains found in it their natural element. All well considered, these very worthy painters will not sow particularly rich fields in the domain of art. "Man is a thinking being." Man will always be there in time, in lasting duration, and all which is of light will not be able to divert him.⁸

Thus, an essential aspect of Redon's art is seen in his turning to the element of thought as represented by the artistic medium itself. The priority given to ideas seen in the above statement should not be interpreted to infer that Redon was indifferent to matters of sound craftsmanship. Abundant evidence confirms that Redon did not disregard the means of his craft, and that he engaged in technical experiments designed to improve the art of lithography. But the point to which one must always return is his expression of the idea, and thus to the predominant symbolist ideal: the expression of the Idea through form.

A spiritual adventure, a tourment de l'absolu is witnessed in the universe of Redon's lithographs, where the theme of suffering is sovereign and where beings of light and certitude appear only intermittently until the last period in the artist's career. This aspect of Redon's work calls to mind Baudelaire, of whom one critic said: "Baudelaire singularly enlarged the field of lyric poetry by drawing from sorrow and suffering as one of his principle sources of inspiration."⁹ In 1875, Redon noted in his journal:

In his aspirations towards the future and the beyond, man is therefore ill-fated [malheureux] because he is alone: all that he sees, all that he is, makes him suffer--outside of what he loves.¹⁰

Baudelaire's poem, Les Ténèbres, evoked an experience strikingly similar to Redon's:

Dans les caveaux d'insondable tristesse
Où le Destin m'a déjà relégué;
Où jamais n'entre un rayon rose et gai;
Où, seul avec la Nuit, maussade hôtesse,

Je suis comme un peintre qu'un Dieu moquer
Condamne à peindre, hélas! sur les ténèbres;¹¹

Yet these general suggestions can become convincing only after turning to the "noirs," the lithographs themselves.

Although Redon's mature style was in part latent in his early etchings, with their strange mounted riders dwarfed by threatening black mountains, his definitive style commenced with Dans le Réve. This album of ten lithographs was published in 1879. The very title stood as a prelude to the artist's aims and was imminently prophetic of that characteristic which was to persist throughout his work. That the title is openly an invitation to the spectator to partake of

his dream of fantasy, was confirmed in a letter to Mellerio:

The title came to me immediately, easily, and designated the mood or spirit of my personal atmosphere. . . the title of Dans le Rêve being, in some way, but a key of overture. . . to the sole end of producing in the spectator a sort of diffused and dominating allurements in the shadowy world of the indeterminate. And predisposing to thought.¹²

Since the major task in this chapter has been defined as an examination of the lithographs for symbolist affinities from the standpoint of both style and iconography, let there be no misunderstanding as to the character of literary affiliation in this first series. In the same letter as above, Redon remarked that the album was perhaps one of his favorite because it was fashioned "unalloyed" in respect to literature. Yet while this first effort was that part of his work furthest removed from any direct literary inference, the question of affinity is not necessarily pre-empted. The privilege of historical retrospect enables one to see far more resemblances in spirit and form to symbolism than would have occurred to Redon. The title itself immediately establishes rapport with the symbolist connotation of le rêve as has been indicated in the preceding chapters. The more crucial question becomes whether the symbolist character of the title can be carried to the lithographs of the series.

The frontispiece, although of a lesser order than the rest of the series, is hardly disappointing in this respect [fig. 1]. One is first struck by the sense of a displacement from normal reality. The dead tree, although obviously based on a study of nature, is set in an undefined space and emits the sentiment of the past, of something which is no longer. One is reminded of Redon's essay on Cazin:

Il y a là tout le silence de la contrée perdue. . . C'est un poème parce qu'il éveille en nous un monde incalculable de rêveries et de reminiscences, et comme un sentiment de l'autrefois.¹³

The intentional mood of poetry was openly reinforced by the idealized winged-being, half emergent from a tree trunk, who supports a lyre. It was not coincidental that the very first note struck in Redon's lithographic series included an allusion to the poetic muse, which in turn was not unrelated to the symbolists' intense concern with music.

Despite the many subtle variations, the dominating image in Dans le Rêve, and thus the implied overall theme of the group, is that of the detached head. No less than seven of the ten prints contain this iconographic device, which possesses a fairly complex symbolic value. The mood evoked by these heads varies from print to print, but from the outset a few remarks on the general implications of this motif are possible. In the abstract, a head disengaged from the body carries the connotation of mind or spirit disengaged from the corporal, and thus by extension, moves from the material into the realm of the idealized. In this sense, Redon has transformed into visual terms the complex and abstract theories of idealism. On the other hand, to the rational being there is something undeniably disquieting in the notion of a head disassociated from a body—a phenomenon which partakes of the mysterious, the magical, the supernatural, or the nightmare. Both of these general effects were utilized by Redon.

However, a third distinct aspect to the image is revealed upon

examination of the first two lithographs of the series [figs. 2 and 3]. The image of the head has now been transformed by Redon into forms of both a cosmological and evolutionist nature. To be sure, vague overtones of the first two connotations mentioned are present. In "Écllosion," the effect of the primitive-looking face suspended in a cellular sphere is certainly disquieting, while the calm reverie of the face surrounded by a black sphere in "Germination" approaches the abstracted ideal. The major implication, however, is definitely related to cosmological speculations—a pastime rampant in the nineteenth century and ranging from Swedenborgianism to Darwinism. Paradoxically, the very "idealists" who revolted against the consequences of a positivistic science were no less seduced by its discoveries.

Redon's ventures into this domain were paralleled in literature by such works as Poe's Eureka or Baudelaire's essay on Victor Hugo. An amazing echo of Redon's titles for "Écllosion" and "Germination" is to be found in Baudelaire's essay:

Germinations, écolossions, floraisons, éruptions successives, simultanées, lentes ou soudaines, progressives ou complètes, d'astres, d'étoiles, de soleils, de constellations. . .¹⁴

Even more amazing is the similarity between "Germination" and Baudelaire's speculation in the same essay:

Ah! malgré Newton et malgré Laplace, la certitude astronomique n'est pas, aujourd'hui même, si grande que la rêverie ne puisse se loger dans les vastes lacunes pas encore explorées par la science moderne. Très-legitamment, le poète laisse errer sa pensée dans un dédale enivrant de conjectures. Il n'est pas un problème agité ou attaqué. . . qui ne soit venu réclamer fatalement sa place dans les oeuvres du poète. Le monde des astres et le monde des âmes sont-ils finis ou infinis? L'écllosion des êtres est-elle permanente dans l'immensité comme dans la petitesse? Ce que nous sommes tentés de prendre pour la multiplication infinie des êtres

ne serait-il qu'un mouvement de circulation ramenant ces mêmes êtres à la vie vers des époques et dans des conditions marquées par une loi suprême et omnicomprehensive?¹⁵

Needless to say, Redon met Baudelaire's plea for the poet to dare insert his dreams in the vast lacuna yet untouched by science. But more interesting in terms of this particular lithograph is the suggested parallelism between life in the universe and that on earth, or the close relationship in phrase of "astres" and "âmes." In "Germination," the stars or asteroids are slowly transformed, through at least five distinct stages, into the idealized human profile. Careful observation of this head discloses a wing where normally the ear would be found. In Redon's vocabulary, this winged head is clearly an analogy suggesting the soul.

Although the evolutionist theories concerning the development of man from a cell could dubiously be read into "Germination," the work ultimately belongs to another world than a didactic illustration of Darwin. The artistic methods employed in this lithograph are definitively characteristic of Redon and partake of the processes of the dream--that is, the juxtaposition of a deep background or an infinite horizon which is imprecise and a detailed form precisely articulated. Also similar to the laws of the dream is his isolation of an object which in a natural environment would seem familiar but isolated takes on a chimerical or hallucinatory value. Mallarmé's "suggérer, voilà le rêve" is plastically achieved in such details as the barely perceptible wing. No lithographer has been able to match Redon's orchestration of values wherein blacks emerge from blacks with such variety that black becomes "color."

Finally, the dream-like quality to this work and its affinity with poetic idealism is further enhanced by comparing it in mood and content to two excerpts from Nerval's Aurélia:

Everyone knows that, in dreams, one never sees the sun, although one may often perceive a luminosity much more vivid. Objects and bodies are luminous in themselves.¹⁶

This visionary phenomenon matches up exactly with the strangely luminous effects in "Germination," to which must be added that the literary motif of "le Soleil noir" is incipient in the dark sphere surrounding the head. Of the latter element more will be said later.

. . . I thought to see the sky unveiling and opening up into a million things of unheard of magnificence. The destiny of the delivered Soul seemed revealed to me. . . Immense circles were traced out to infinity, as the spheres water forms when disturbed by a falling body; each region, peopled by radiant faces was moving and falling. ¹⁷

While a direct influence is unlikely here, the vision of Nerval and Redon was again strikingly similar. When questioned by Mellerio as to how he began a work, Redon described how a blank sheet of paper horrified him and that he would make vague tracings until a "surprise" would grip his imagination and an image would take form. Barely visible through the illuminated area over the central sphere in "Germination" are the remnants of several "circles traced out to infinity."

"Écllosion" contains comparable devices to those found in "Germination." Redon's fascination with the cellular form and the sphere is here manifest. The tiny cell-like dots beneath the larger form add a strange sense of dimension or distance and serve to carry the apparition further from natural experience. In Redon's world

proportions invariably are reversed or modified in some way as to remove the scene from the everyday reality and into the realm of the possible as defined by the imagination. Baudelaire wrote:

In describing what is, the poet degrades himself and descends to the rank of a professor; in relating the possible, he remains faithful to his function; he is a collective soul who questions, who weeps, who hopes, and who sometimes divines.¹⁸

But the vision in "Éclosion" is, as always, in some measure grounded in reality. Just as Poe scrupulously researched geological and navigational facts for his highly imaginative tales, so would Redon make frequent trips to the museums to make osteological studies. The bone formations of this primitive head in "Eclosion" were no doubt related to the current speculations of paleontology. Yet any interpretation of scientific illustration is dispelled by the intensely personal treatment of facial expression. This being which is not yet fully human has already been endowed with the questioning, melancholy mood so typical of Redon's "thinking" creatures. Thus, one can conclude that despite the possible connections to contemporary scientific developments, "Eclosion" and "Germination" remain in a more vague and ideal realm of semi-mystical cosmology and personal visions.

The third print in the series, "La Roue" [Fig. 47], clearly returns to the disengaged head as symbolic of the general realm of the ideal and mystery, and is completely removed from any evolutionist implications. In this instance, the head is that of a woman whose gaze seems caught up in the fateful movement of the wheel which is that of destiny. With writers such as Yeats or Villiers, the wheel

became intricately involved with notions of astrology and magic along the lines of Madame Blavatsky's theosophism. Needless to say, the inexhaustible fascination for magic, the occult, fate, and all the accompanying paraphernalia can be traced from Nerval, Baudelaire, Poe, Mallarmé, Villiers and Huysmans right down to the fin de siècle writers. Redon could not have been more in keeping with these trends when he produced "La Roue."

The ethereal weight of the head itself is easily borne by the typical wing neatly tucked below the base of the skull; while the purely spiritual quality to the apparition is reinforced by the lightly sketched-in aureole and star. Below the head stretches the infinite horizon line of sea and sky--another constant in Redon's iconographic vocabulary. This combination of winged head, sea, and sky can be seen more clearly articulated in the charcoal drawing created at about the same time as "La Roue" [Fig. 57]. The solitary white of the sail in the drawing nicely balances the composition and suggestively responds to the wing. The symbolists fully exploited the centuries-old association of the sea, sky and infinity in their concentrated effort to recapture the ideal. The young Rimbaud exulted:

Elle est retrouvée!
 Quoi? l'éternité.
 C'est la mer allée
 Avec le soleil.¹⁹

Furthermore, with Baudelaire and Mallarmé the image explicitly became bound up with the nature of the poet and his art. A typical example from Les Fleurs du Mal was Baudelaire's first stanza of "L'Homme et

la Mer":

Homme libre, toujours tu chériras la mer.
 La mer est ton miroir; tu contemples ton âme
 Dans le déroulement infini de sa lame,
 Et ton esprit n'est pas un gouffre moins amer.²⁰

A further symbolist correlation suggested in this drawing is that attraction of the Voyage--obviously not an actual voyage to real places but the ideal voyage of the imagination extolled by Villiers in Axël, Nerval in Aurélia, Baudelaire in "L'Invitation au Voyage," and Mallarmé in "Brise Marine." Both Mallarmé and Redon expressed in their personal correspondence a distaste for actual travel, and in A Soi-Même is found the parallel to the position elaborated in the above poetic proclamations: "Voyager, c'est prendre contact avec certains lieux évocateurs de notre propre vie."²¹

A final comment on "La Roue" must be reserved for the enigmatic creature hovering before the wheel. Taking basically the same two elements of head and wing, Redon has achieved just the opposite effect from the spiritual calm seen in the first head. The proportion of wing to head has been drastically reversed, giving the worried little form a decidedly bird-like character. A phrase from Rimbaud's Soleil et chair is appropriate for the description of this second aspect of the lithograph, which is the opposite of certitude:

Nous ne pouvons savoir. Nous sommes accablés
 D'un manteau d'ignorance et d'étroites chimères.
 . . . Notre pâle raison nous cache l'infini.
 . . . Le doute, morne oiseau, nous frappe de son aile
 . . . Et l'horizon s'enfuit d'une fuite éternelle.²²

One is also reminded of the Black Raven complex which hit Paris literary and artistic circles with the current rash of Poe enthusiasts. This is

not to suggest that Redon was thinking specifically of Poe's Raven here, but rather that a certain affinity exists between the Raven's qualities and this black-winged creature in "La Roue." Redon's "bird" is forced to hide his face from the luminosity of the idealized head, whose reflection no doubt explains the one white wing and one black wing. In sum, the black-winged head springs more from the mysterious Shades than from the ideal.²³

In "Limbes" [Fig. 6] and "Gnome" [Fig. 7], the image of the winged head has moved completely to the lower, darker regions of the abyss. Moreover, "Limbes" is an even stronger indication that, in Redon's world, floating heads generally represent the "âme" or soul. Although the title may indicate a Dantesque inspiration, limbo is also highly suggestive of a general state of melancholy and sorrow.²⁴ The somber setting for this head is indeed far removed from any premises of well-being. Suspended before a precipice which seems to plunge into infinite depths, the head in this instance has been endowed with wings resembling more those of a bat than of an angel. Redon's technical powers of suggestion and inference are strongly revealed in the uncanny light which strikes the face as if it were reflecting from some subterrestrial flame.

Redon's descents into the black abyss were somewhat comparable in spirit to many of Poe's works, such as The Maelstrom, Manuscript Found in a Bottle, or The Pit and The Pendulum. Poe was consistently drawn toward the cavernous and the tenebrous. As D. H. Lawrence said: "He was an adventurer into vaults and cellars and horrible underground passages of the human soul."²⁵ For example, the voyage

of Manuscript Found in a Bottle leads through "the blackness of eternal night," terminates in a whirlpool of "immense concentric circles," and the last words of the tale are "--going down!".²⁶

The night world of "Gnome" becomes even more ominous, more disquieting in its strange patterns of light and dark. Barely emergent from the shadows is visible a spherical head whose only truly human feature is the questioning eye. This motif of the "regard interrogateur" frequently occurred in Redon's work and no doubt related to his stated attempt to put "la pensée" back into art. Again, bat-like wings project from the bristling hair of the underworld creature, whose habitat is more the nightmare than the dream.

The nightmare tone to "Gnome" presents that aspect of Redon's graphics which most closely resembled the tone of Maurice Rollinat's poetry. Rollinat was one of the many lesser symbolist poets whose works belonged to the general atmosphere created by such artists as Baudelaire or Poe, but whose poems rarely rose above the quality of the pastiche or paraphrase. Nevertheless, the poems of Les Névroses reveal Redon's affinity with this atmosphere, for they uttered a similar cry of anguish or solitude in the face of profound darkness, and the same kind of nocturnal exploration in the monde intérieur. Take, for example:

Mon rêve est plein d'ombres funèbres,
Et le flambeau de ma raison
Lutte en vain contre les ténèbres
De la folie. . . à l'horizon.²⁷

What the symbolist review La Plume had to say (in sonnet form) of Rollinat could with little reservation be applied to Redon:

Hanté de cauchemars où passent les Génies
 De l'Intense, il s'est fait le poète assombri
 Du Hideux, de l'Atroce, et dans son coeur aigri
 On entend fermenter les Douleurs infinies.

Il est le peintre ardent des sombres gémonies.
 D'amertume et de fiel son esprit tôt nourri,
 N'a d'autre affection que la Mort, sa péri,
 Et de son luth vibrant pleurent les harmonies.

Sondeur mystérieux de l'Abîme du Mal,
 Son rude scalpel va de l'Homme à l'Animal,
 Avide de scruter l'Être jusqu'au Squelette;

Ce, pendant qu'attentif aux rumeurs du cercueil,
 Son esprit plonge au fond de la tombe muette,
 Et que sa plume écrit des poèmes de deuil. . . 28

"Gnome" is one of the "Génies" or demons who pass through nights of infinite sorrows, of evil abysses.

The final version of the disengaged head appears in the last plate of the series, "Sur La Coupe" [Fig. 8]. The shadows and monsters from the underground or the darker regions of the mind have vanished and once more the higher spheres are asserted. This head, androgynous in appearance as with so many of Redon's figures, gazes heavenward in a state which approaches the abstract quality of the ideal. The Romantic poets and artists at the beginning of the century had frequently used the image of the decapitated head in scenes which borrowed heavily from the executions, ghosts, drama, and magic of the popular tales. The treatment of the image in "Sur La Coupe" leaves the Romantic conception and passes over into a style of personal intimacy and intense concentration which is properly that of symbolism. Every line, every object in this lithograph has been simplified, condensed and thrown as an abstract relief against the illuminated face. Here are no uncomfortable reminiscences of the

act of decapitation. The head--mind, spirit, soul, art--has been truly liberated from the material.

The symbolism of "Sur La Coupe" is, however, more complex than simply the liberation from the material. A suggestion of martyrdom is implied by the presence of the axe neatly placed to the right of the pedestal, on which rests the coupe or plate. Sandström has chosen to see in this head that of a female martyr--Joan of Arc.³⁰ As a Frenchman, Redon could hardly have failed to know that Joan of Arc was burned at the stake or that the classic martyrdom by axe was of St. John the Baptist.

Exactly what this theme of martyrdom may imply in a symbolist framework may be seen by turning to Mallarmé's poetic triptych, "Hérodiade." The history of "Hérodiade" is the history of Mallarmé's struggles to create a new poetic, for he worked and reworked this poem up to the very hours before his death. Only the third part, "Cantique de Saint Jean," is pertinent to the present discussion. The date of the lithograph obviously precluded any question of Mallarmé's influence on Redon. If there were a question of "influence" here rather than of affinity, certainly it would be Mallarmé further developing a theme of Baudelaire, Gustave Moreau, or Redon. However that may be, a comparison of the "Cantique" and the lithograph reveals a close affinity. The "Cantique" is given below in its entirety:

Le soleil que sa halte
Surnaturelle exalte
Aussitôt redescend
Incandescent

Je sens comme aux vertèbres
 S'éployer des ténèbres
 Toutes dans un frisson
 A l'unisson

Et ma tête surgie
 Solitaire vigie
 Dans les vols triomphaux
 De cette faux

Comme rupture franche
 Plutôt refoule ou tranche
 Les anciens désaccords
 Avec le corps

Qu'elle de jeûnes ivre
 S'opiniatre à suivre
 En quelque bond hagard
 Son pur regard

Là-haut où la froidure
 Eternelle n'endure
 Que vous le surpassiez
 Tous ô glaciers

Mais selon un baptême
 Illuminée au même
 Principe qui m'élut
 Penche un salut.³⁰

Even a preliminary comparison of the two works will yield certain correlations: the fact of decapitation has cut off all the harassing struggles between mind and body; the severed head, free from "former disagreements" with the corporal, directs a "pure glance" toward the "heights," the realm of absolute Zero, of "eternal" clarity. Remembering the constant symbolist preoccupation with the nature of the poet and his art, what then is the full symbolic significance of this martyrdom? Fowlie's exegesis of the poem is enlightening in this respect:

In the last three stanzas, the saint speaks of his own head in its new state, and formulates a wish concerning it. . . As the physical action of the blade was felt, the head was

thrown upward, and the saint formulates the wish for his glance to continue looking up toward the coldness of the sky, a coldness quite in keeping with the mystic's search for the absolute. The decollation is a second baptism because at that precise moment salvation comes. . . .

The image of the head truncated from the body and rising up into space where it resembles some watcher of the sky (Et ma tête surgie/ Solitaire vigie), is one more example, from innumerable examples in Mallarmé's work, of "angelism," of the strange separation of life from life, of experience liberated from life which is both the martyrdom and the glory of the artist. St. John wins his halo by the action of the assassin's blade, and the poet achieves his poem by severing himself from all facile participation in life. What is finally won or created in this mysterious vocation of loneliness. . . is an experience of the void. . . 31

Redon's martyr seems to have attained just this state of grace (salut), and at the same time this profound sense of isolation and the void. Although not present in "Sur La Coupe," the iconographic device of a "watcher of the sky" occurred countless times in Redon's drawings and finished lithographs, as has already been noted. The similarity between the two artists' emphasis on solitude as essential to artistic creation has also been previously noted.

In the light of Redon's own writings on the nature of art, it is not unreasonable to suspect a secondary intent on his part similar to that of Mallarmé's in regard to the subject of martyrdom. In fact, the strong intellectual attraction to Redon experienced by Mallarmé was based especially on the issue of the sacred and isolated role of the poet-artist. Mallarmé's biographer, H. Mondor, described this attraction as follows:

Certain people, by exception, seemed to Mallarmé to incarnate by their elevation or their retreat, those virtues that he preferred. He saw them, in a hidden glory, as composing an ideal reunion in which the delicious sufferings of elaboration, their exiled search for the sublime, and the withdrawal from common pleasures feverishly compelled them. Redon is one of those persons.³²

Only an awareness of this kind of aesthetic background can help to explain the creation of such an enigmatic work as "Sur la Coupe."

In summary of the series, Dans le Rêve, one could say that from the first overture of the frontispiece to the final lithograph, there has been a thematic fusion of poetry-art-dream. The inference of a poetic art may be concrete as with the lyre or complexly suggested as in "Sur La Coupe." Finally, the "poète-voyant" is seen as an artist who fully exercised his right, as Nerval or Baudelaire demanded, to explore not only the heights, but to venture into the darker fantasies of the imagination.

The second album of lithographs, published by Redon in 1882, created a somewhat different problem in terms of symbolist affinity than did the first. The title A Edgar Poe immediately infers a specific literary reference--that this was not entirely the case shall soon be evident. The topic of Edgar Allan Poe has long seemed to have a special propensity for incurring literary debate, and Redon's album has not escaped falling into this pattern. The "true" quality of Poe's work and the extent of his international influence do not concern us here, but rather the existence of "Poe worship" in France at the time of the album's publication. The public loved Poe's tales, and the symbolist poets elevated him to a rank high in the echelons of poetry--after remaking Poe in their own image, of course. With this in mind, the somewhat thorny problem of Redon's dedication of the album to Poe now may be approached.

A major difficulty lies in determining the source and the significance of the legends which Redon inscribed below each of the six lithographs of the series. The public immediately assumed these poetic

phrases to have been taken directly from Poe. Even Huysmans fell into the trap. Over a decade later, Redon was to write in reference to the album:

I had often been advised to read the American poet as an important support for my art. They were mistaken, I believe; his tales are not my bedside book. However, I put a few words below these new plates, skillfully I believe, and the public was deceived. Obviously, I had thereby created but an ambiguity, certainly permitted, quite legitimate; the album was noticed, that was the essential for me.³³

Two qualifying remarks are necessary in regard to this statement. First, his emphasis on reaching the public is quite understandable in that he desperately needed to gain a living from his art--a need reinforced by his marriage less than two years before (Camille Falte, May 1, 1880). Secondly, his disparagement of Poe's influence must be seen in the context of the date (1898) this letter was written; that is, the comment was surely colored by Redon's defensive reaction to the critic's contention that his art was wholly dependent on literature.

The history of the titles Redon gave to his lithographs is further complicated by Sandström's contention that they are, in fact, attributable to Emile Hennequin. One of the young critics writing for the symbolist journals, Hennequin was in the course of preparing a translation of Poe (Contes grotesques) at the same time Redon was working with him on a project in which Redon would design the cover of Hennequin's text. Sandström first finds that the legends "have a clearly literary character and in several instances take on the proportions of veritable fragments of poems."³⁴ For that matter, one need only turn to certain sections of A Soi-Même to realize that

Redon was perfectly capable of such general poetic suggestions as the titles provide.³⁵ Sandström, however, would disagree:

It is true that Redon possessed a certain literary talent and attained in his reflexions and analyses a remarkable and original mastery; but his non-flexible style was not adaptable to the pastiche. On the other hand, Hennequin had acquired, in translating Poe, the latter's style, and if anyone was capable of succeeding in this innocent deception, it was he. One must in this case suppose that Hennequin had preferred to remain anonymous; and besides, it is not customary to put the author's name to the title of a work of art, even if they have as here an incontestable literary value.³⁶

Even if it were not for the stylistic evidence of A Soi-Même, Redon's assertion in a letter to Mellerio should put in serious doubt Sandström's conclusion. As Redon explained: "The titles of the album, A Edgar Poe, are by me, just as the others are, except when it is a question of Flaubert or Baudelaire."³⁷

A consideration of the titles in themselves may be concluded by seeing what Redon felt their proper function to be. In typically symbolist fashion, Redon turned to musical terminology for the explanation:

. . .I beg you to see as the goal only art, even in the vague words which ornament them, just as a qualification on a sonato would do.³⁸

The designation of my drawings by a title is sometimes superfluous, so to speak. The title is justified only when it is vague, indeterminate, and aims even confusedly toward the ambiguous.³⁹

From the above definition of the title's function, one can conclude that they were created somewhat according to symbolist method. That is, far from beginning with a literary phrase and then "illustrating" it, Redon adorned his lithographs

with ambiguous phrases meant to enhance the suggestive, evocative power of the plastic work.

From the information available in Redon's journal and letters, one must assume that: first, the iconography of the six lithographs will not necessarily relate to a specific work by Poe; secondly, the titles were in fact written by Redon and imply a familiarity with Poe's works; and finally, whether or not Poe was his "favorite" author, Redon had more than once read Poe. Not to be forgotten is the fact that long before Redon began discussing Poe with Hennequin, he had been introduced to Poe's works and to Baudelaire's eulogies on Poe by Clavaud.

Thus far, the relationship between Redon's album and Poe may appear rather tenuous and not worth serious consideration. Quite to the contrary, a cautious approach to any assumption of simple "illustration" need not preclude the very real affinity with Poe that can be found in these lithographs. The very fact that both Huysmans and Hennequin, the first two literary figures to "discover" Redon, found in his work a similarity to Poe must have rested on something more significant than complete misinterpretation on their part. Although the first exhibitions by Redon drew laughter and ridicule from the public, Huysmans and Hennequin immediately grasped the qualities in Redon which were similar in spirit to Poe or Baudelaire. Huysman enthusiastically declared:

. . .we shall find his ancestry only among musicians perhaps, and certainly among poets. It is indeed a genuine transposition of one art into another. The masters of this artist are Baudelaire and especially Edgar Poe, whose consoling aphorism that all certitude lies in dreams he appears to have pondered.⁴⁰

As usual, the concept of le rêve plays a key role in any discussion of Redon's affinity with symbolism.

Unquestionably, certain general traits were common to both Redon and Poe. For example, Redon's attempt to "put the laws of the visible at the service of the invisible" and Poe's method have previously been noted for their closeness in spirit. Just as Redon studied animal skeletons on which to build his imaginative monsters, so Poe knew how to make fantastic occurrences seem plausible or verisimilar by relating them to such facts as he managed to dig out of logbooks, geographical reports and mariners chronicles. Particularly in Poe's poems can be found the sense of solitude, the temperament of dreamer and visionary, which have a counterpart in Redon. Strongly reminiscent of Redon's own experience was Poe's youthful poem, Alone:

From childhood's hour I have not been
 As others were--I have not seen
 As others saw--I could not bring
 My passions from a common spring.
 From the same source I have not taken
 My sorrow; I could not awaken
 My heart to joy at the same tone;
 And all I lov'd, I lov'd alone.
 Then--in my childhood--in the dawn
 Of a most stormy life--was drawn
 From ev'ry depth of good and ill
 The mystery which bind me still:
 From the torrent, or the fountain,
 From the red cliff of the mountain,
 From the sun that 'round me roll'd
 In its autumn tint of gold--
 From the lightning in the sky
 As it pass'd me flying by--
 From the thunder and the storm,
 And the cloud that took the form
 (When the rest of Heaven was blue)
 Of a demon in my view.⁴¹

The obvious mediocrity of the poem need not obscure the very real similarity to Redon's early experience of solitude, a similarity extending to the imaginative outlet of the clouds.

Just as with Redon, Poe's works ranged from the ideal universe where "the music of the spheres" reigns to the densest blacks of a haunted universe, uniting the themes of death, madness, melancholy, anguish, and the occult.⁴² As a final example of affinity, the resemblance in theory is significant. To give only a sample:

I need scarcely observe that a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites, by elevating the soul.⁴³

It is in Music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the Poetic Sentiment, it struggles---the creation of supernal Beauty.⁴⁴

Nearly exact parallels to the above statements of Poe may be found in A Soi-Même.

To conclude these introductory remarks, the nature of the correlations with Poe to be sought in Redon's album dedicated to Poe will be most frequently that of affinity rather than textual illustration; moreover, this affinity will understandably overlap with certain aspects of French symbolist and proto-symbolist literature. Due to the complexities of iconography and possible literary references, the following discussion of the lithographs will follow the sequential order of the album, bringing in additional lithographs or drawings wherever appropriate.

The frontispiece for the album was not given a title, with the result that an attempt to find specific correlations is

compounded in difficulty. A survey of Poe's tales indicates that the scene could not possibly relate to any single story or poem by Poe. On the other hand, the "Verso" [Fig. 9] is a fitting cover to the album in terms of evoking a complex mood reminiscent of general qualities in Poe's tales--perversity, madness, dissipation, and impending doom. The motif of the wheel (first seen in "La Roue") again introduces the notion of fate, but which in combination with the other forms in the print implies a Poe-like fate more terrifying than ideal. This wheel is associated in tone more with the torture rack than with the sky-borne wheel of "La Roue." The disturbing quality is crystallized in the appearance of the two figures, one male and one female. A pervading "House of Usher" atmosphere seems to cling to these dissipated beings, clearly touched by madness.

Mallarmé's dictum that the spectator should be forced to take a part in the imaginative experience certainly holds true in this lithograph. Certain details in the lower left portion of the composition are impossible to define absolutely. However, the figure with the haunted expression does seem to be imprisoned in some strange kind of straight-jacket. Yet in the final analysis, all one can say with certainty regarding the print's relationship to Poe is that Redon has created an enigmatic grouping of forms which function as a kind of overture designed to set a "Poe-like" mood.

The sources and iconographic significance of the first lithograph of the series [Fig. 10] are somewhat less obscure than was true of the frontispiece. The title, "L'Oeil, comme un ballon bizarre se dirige vers l'infini," contains two words which could

not fail to spark the memory of a Poe enthusiast--"eye" and "balloon." The balloon theme figured in several of Poe's tales, including The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall, The Balloon-Hoax, and The Angel of the Odd. In terms of descriptive detail, Poe's texts and the lithograph have little in common. Typically of Poe, the first of these tales originated as a journalist hoax in The New York Sun, and must be seen as primarily a satire on bourgeois culture. Hans Pfaall's balloon may ascend to the planets, but the story's intent descends into the realm of the burlesque. Interesting in this respect is that an etymological breakdown of "Pfaall" suggests both "fall" and "fool."⁴⁵ Moreover, the tale falls into the group of Poe's pseudo-scientific narrations which were heavily dependent on material description.

While it is possible that Redon had in mind Poe's balloon episodes when choosing this motif for the first lithograph of the series, the final result was a work which transcended material objectivity in its suggestiveness and became at once more visionary and metaphysical in import. The effect of the enormous and detached eye which looms over the somber horizon is conducive to any number of imaginative speculations on its significance. For example, Destrée mused in his catalogue on Redon:

Explanations are made and then taken apart as forms in clouds. Is it a symbol? Has not Redon wanted to speak of the sorrowful nothingness of things, on this earth so sadly dark and vacant; or has he wished to speak of man's eternal and vain aspiration to break the problem of the philosophies, to see into the infinite; and of the atrophies, the degeneration, the loss of reason in this hopeless searching?⁴⁶

A more systematic approach to the iconographic significance of

the eye may be gained by first returning to Dans le Rêve, Plate IX, for comparison. Although "Triste montée" [Fig. 11] could justly have been included in the discussion of the "detached head" theme of the first series, its particular variation on the theme bears an evident relationship to "L'œil, comme un ballon bizarre. . ." In the former, Redon has transformed the dreaming head into a balloon which is lifting a little winged creature over the city. The symbolic implications of the detached head, the winged head, and the head on a plate, which were previously discussed, will hold true for the two plates now under consideration. Again, the theme of "detachment," of aspiration toward the ideal, is not unrelated to the mystical and "divine" function of art. Mallarmé once said to Redon: "You are above the art of painting." The latter answered that: "It is rather the case that the painters too often humiliate their art. Art today is on earth. Formerly it wanted to detach itself from the earth."⁴⁷

A comparison of the two lithographs indicates that, in Redon's vocabulary, the eye seemed to play an analogous role to the motif of the winged and detached head. The correlation of eye and soul is not uncommon to many languages, and is retained in the English expression, the eye as "window of the soul." The distinctions which might be drawn between the two versions of the balloon theme are necessarily subtle and somewhat elusive. The atmosphere of "Triste montée" is one of hushed ascension, of nocturnal reverie, of passive melancholic expression. While "Triste montée" seems to be more a general statement of the contemplative ideal, the second version carries a mood at once more active and more specific. The intense expression of the eye sets

up a tension between the earth and the strain of the eye's visual pull toward the infinite. From this distinction, it could be inferred that the isolated eye carries the connotation of consciousness, while the gently rising head with its winged passenger refers more generally to the soul and to a state of reverie. The different distribution of values in each version would seem to lend support to M. Destrée's proposal that in "L'Œil..." Redon has suggested a terrestrial state of bleak desolation and ruin. The felicitous winged head being borne aloft in "Triste montée" is shown in white against pervading nocturnal shadings, which are relieved only by the three elements of "balloon," "passenger" and "town." In contrast, the second version takes place in the light of day, while the earth and the "ballast" carried by the eye take on the somber tones. Particularly the macabre quality to the severed, wingless head on a platter in the latter version serves to set the distinction in mood between the two interpretations. While both versions have the general idea of a detached head on a platter, the haggard visage and the absence of wings to the head in "L'Œil..." offers a distinct contrast to the "passenger" head of the first version. The head of the latter version seems to add to the burden of the eye's strain for the infinite.

The literary affiliation of "L'Œil..." need not be restricted only to Poe. The drama of a spiritual dialectic of ascension and descent was a theme of capital importance to both Baudelaire and Redon. The spirit of Redon's "Triste montée" and "L'Œil..." or his "Cheval ailée" and "Centaur Visant les Nues," or any one of the idealized detached heads, is similar in its intent to such a poem as

Baudelaire's "Élévation":

Au-dessus des étangs, au-dessus des vallées,
Des montagnes, des bois, des nuages, des mers,
Par delà le soleil, par delà les éthers,
Par delà les confins des sphères étoilées,

Mon esprit, tu te meus avec agilité,
Et, comme un bon nageur qui se pâme dans l'onde,
Tu sillonnes gaiement l'immensité profonde
Avec une indicible et mâle volupté.

Envole-toi bien loin de ces miasmes morbides;
Va te purifier dans l'air supérieur,
Et bois, comme une pure et divine liqueur,
Le feu clair qui remplit les espaces limpides.

Derrière les ennuis et les vastes chagrins
Qui chargent de leur poids l'existence brumeuse,
Heureux celui qui peut d'une aile vigoureuse
S'élançer vers les champs lumineux et sereins;

Celui dont les pensers, comme des alouettes,
Vers les cieux le matin prennent un libre essor,
--Qui plane sur le vie, et comprend sans effort
Le Langage des fleurs et des chose muettes.⁴⁸

The opposite image, fall or descent, can be found in equal frequency in the works of both: typical of Baudelaire are "L'Irrémédiable" and "Le Goût du Néant"; representative of Redon are the drawings of "L'Ange déchû," the "L'Ange perdu" of the lithographic series, La Nuit, or his many versions of a falling chariot and overturned horses. A similar spiritual experience of ascension to the skies and descension into the abyss can be found in Nerval's Aurélia.

Finally, the balloon motif bears a clear affiliation with the symbolist theme of the visionary voyage and the correlative theme of escape. This aspect of the balloon certainly applies to Poe's Hans Pfaall, who fled the annoying banality of bourgeois Rotterdam and its material demands. The corresponding poetic expression of this theme occurred in Baudelaire, particularly in "le Voyage":

Mais les vrais voyageurs sont ceux-là seuls qui partent
 Pour partir; coeurs légers, semblables aux ballons,
 De leur fatalité jamais ils ne s'écarterent,
 Et, sans savoir pourquoi, disent toujours: Allons! 49

.....

O Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps! levons l'ancre!
 Ce pays nous ennuie, ô Mort! Appareillons!
 Si le ciel et la mer sont noirs comme de l'encre,
 Nos coeurs que tu commais sont remplis de rayons!

Verse-nous ton poison pour qu'il nous reconforte!
 Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau,
 Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, qu'importe?
 Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau! 50

The iconography and mood of these three stanzas have a sympathetic compliment in both "Triste montée" and "L'Œil. . ."

In conclusion, one could say of this first lithograph of the series dedicated to Poe that, despite evident differences in form between the tale of Pfaall and Redon's lithograph, certain general parallels in theme may be drawn. From the initial motif of the balloon emerges the intellectual theme of man's efforts to escape the earth and to reach the stars, the miraculous, the "Unknown." More importantly, the visual effect of "L'Œil. . ." and its suggestive implications recall the vocabulary and aims common to the French symbolist poets.

Redon's fascination with the eye reappears in the second lithograph of the series, "Devant le noir soleil de la mélancolie, Lénor apparaît" [Fig. 127]. In this instance, however, Redon has placed the eye in its proper context, rather than following that technique of the dream where a part is mysteriously separated from the whole and its proportion to the real world is fantastically enlarged.

None the less, the woman's eye is enormous in relation to her other features and, fringed by heavy shadow, exercises an almost hypnotic function in the lithograph.

At first glance, the title of this lithograph would appear to offer the most positive and specific correlation between Poe and Redon to be found in the series. Most Americans have read Poe's famous The Raven, whose stanzas constantly echo the name, "Lenore?". Yet the Lenore of The Raven was never actually described in the poem, and exists only as a name invoking the memory of a departed love. Therefore, it would seem that Redon utilized this well-known name from Poe's work merely to cast a vague reference to Poe.

A closer examination reveals that a considerably more interesting affinity exists between Redon's Lénor and Poe's concept of feminine beauty than simply the superficial adoption of the name "Lenore." Poe's favorite maxim, "There is no exquisite beauty without some strangeness in the proportions,"⁵¹ has found a plastic counterpart in the haunting, exotic beauty of Redon's Lénor. The conformation of the woman's features in profile indicates that Redon deliberately sought to endow her with the greatest degree of the unusual and still retain a certain kind of beauty. It is not to The Raven but to Ligeia where one must turn to discover the striking similarity between Redon's and Poe's expression of the strange, but beautiful, woman.⁵² Perhaps one of Poe's most evocative tales, Ligeia, offers a generously descriptive portrayal of its "rare," "singular" heroine. The following extract should indicate above all the consuming fascination with the eye common to both men:

I examined the contour of the pale and lofty forehead. . . , the commanding extent and repose, the gentle prominence of the regions above the temples; and then the raven-black, the glossy tresses... And then I peered into the large eyes of Ligeia. . . They were, I must believe, far larger than the ordinary eyes of our own race. . . Her beauty was the beauty of beings either above or apart from the earth. The hue of the orbs was the most brilliant of black, and, far over them, hung jetty lashes of great length. The brows, slightly irregular in outline, had the same tint. The "strangeness," however, which I found in the eyes was of a nature distinct from the formation, or the color, or the brilliancy of the features, and must, after all, be referred to the expression. Ah, word of no meaning! behind whose vast latitude of mere sound we in-trench our ignorance of so much of the spiritual.⁵³

Clearly Redon's Lenor was a spiritual sister of Poe's Ligeia, and in both works the descriptive aspect was overpowered by the emphasis on expression--the intense concentration on one feature.

The mingling of strangeness and beauty leads to the second important aspect of both title and work, that is, the combination of beauty and melancholy. The symbolist poets revived and intensified this theme of the Romantic poets and artists, for whom the beauty of woman was real only when threatened with dissolution. The proximity of beauty and death, sadness, or melancholy was another significant theme which Redon shared with Poe, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé. In their writings, including Redon's A Soi-Même, a knowledge of the beautiful was considered to be deepened by the knowledge of suffering.

A representative excerpt from the writings of Redon, Poe, and Baudelaire will serve to underline the importance of "melancholy" in their work. In A Soi-Même, Redon wrote:

I esteem more highly certain of my works, particularly those I produced during times of sadness or extreme sorrow, and which therefore were undoubtedly more expressive. Melancholy, when it is causeless, is perhaps a secret fervor, a kind of orison one would say, confusedly, for some service in the unknown.⁵⁴

Poe expressed a similar idea in his essay, The Philosophy of Composition:

Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the tone of its highest manifestation--and all experience has shown that this tone is one of sadness. Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all poetical tones.⁵⁵

Baudelaire described a similar "aesthetic of melancholy" in his Journaux Intimes:

I have found the definition of Beauty--of my Beauty. It is something ardent and sad, something a little vague, leaving room for conjecture. . . . A seducingly beautiful female head is one which dreams both--but confusedly--of voluptuousness and of sorrow; which suggests an idea of melancholy. . . . Mystery and regret are also characteristics of the Beautiful. . . . Finally, (since I have the courage to admit the degree to which I feel modern in my aesthetic), Beauty demands the idea of misfortune.--I do not pretend that Joy cannot be associated with Beauty, but I say that Joy is one of its most vulgar ornaments;--while Melancholy is, so to speak, its illustrious companion. . . .⁵⁶

Closely related to the theme of melancholy is the third and final feature to be noted in "Devant le noir soleil de la mélancolie, Lenor apparaît"--that is, the motif of the Soleil noir. Behind the profile of Lénor rises a series of vaulted rays, similar to those of a sun except that the nucleus suggests more the arched entrance to a cavernous darkness. The appearance of this image in Redon's lithograph is highly indicative of the intricacy and depth of the literary sources which so often are embedded in his works.

The Soleil noir as a complex poetic symbol made its entrance into French literature with Romanticism, reached full-bloom in the works of Victor Hugo, and with varying emphases appeared in works spanning the entire nineteenth century. Yet in a more general sense, the image is

a primordial one, that is, as old as man's intuitive speculations on the Cosmos. The Chaldeans, for example, held the idea of a dark star which presided over night, as the sun presided over day. The question was then of a "prince of darkness," and in dualist metaphysics the image became identified with the Shades and the spirit of evil, or death. Furthermore, in medieval astrology and alchemy the concept of the planet Saturn--a maleficent planet engendering melancholy--was also bound up with the notion of a Feu noir, a star holding captive dark and secret flames in preparation for a new creation.⁵⁷ The symbolist poet, Verlaine, utilized the theme of a saturnine melancholy when he wrote the series, Poèmes Saturniens.

Another version of the Soleil noir created by Redon was the charcoal drawing of about 1885, "Le Noyé--Soleil Noir" [Fig. 13]. This second version is a far more powerful interpretation than the one in "Léonor" and much closer in its impact to the literary interpretations of a Feu noir. The lower portion of the lithograph presents a darkened sea, in which floats the pale, half-submerged head of a drowned man. The undisputed conqueror of this mournful domain is the exploding image of the eclipsed sun, the "Soleil enténébré" of the Romantic poets. The intense, enormous sun, whose light can barely be seen behind the powerful black rays, reigns in the sky as some eternal cosmic force of death and yet inevitable regeneration.

Redon's interpretations may be compared to the image of the Soleil noir as it appeared in Nerval's writings. The first stanza from Nerval's poem, El Desdichado (The Disinherited), is identical

in phraseology to the title of Redon's first version:

Je suis le ténébreux,--le veuf,--l'inconsolé,
Le prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie:
Ma seule étoile est morte,--et mon luth constellé
Porte le soleil noir de la Mélancolie.⁵⁹ *[Italics are Nerval's].*

An apocalyptic vision from Nerval's Aurélia approaches the spirit of Redon's second version:

Je croyais voir un soleil noir dans le ciel désert
. . . Je me dis: "La nuit éternelle commence, et elle va être
terrible. Que va-t-il arriver quand les hommes s'apercevront
qu'il n'y a plus de soleil?"⁵⁹

Furthermore, the dualist nature of the image was asserted in both Nerval's Aurélia and in Redon's lithographs. In Aurélia, the stars, which seem extinguished, in reality contain the seeds of regeneration: ". . . et le chœur des astres se déroule dans l'infini, il s'écarte et revient sur lui-même, se resserre et s'épanouit, et sème au loin les germes des créations nouvelles."⁶⁰ The Soleil noir of Redon's drawing could easily be given the Nervalian interpretation: "règne éphémère du Mal, absence mystique, nuit de la souffrance qui prépare une aube ineffable."⁶¹

The association of the Soleil noir with death in Redon's lithograph may also be compared to one of the verses by Leon Dierx, another "poet of night." Dierx, a generation younger than Mallarmé, was fascinated with Baudelaire's poetry and was to be hailed by Mallarmé as being one of the poets to continue the symbolist poetic. The following stanza is from Rêve de la mort:

Et maintenant, au bord de l'Erèbe immobile,
Sous l'oeil démesuré d'un fixe et noir soleil,
Je reposais enfin dans l'éternel sommeil. . .
. . . Toujours, toujours plus noirs, dans l'Erèbe immobile
Tombaient les longs rayons d'un fixe et noir Soleil.⁶²

In addition to the elements of the falling, black rays of a sun and a murky realm where lost souls float, Dierx's association of "eye" and "black sun" is interesting to compare to Redon's iconography. In a preliminary drawing for the fifth lithograph of the Poe series, executed sometime before 1882, Redon clearly drew an eyeball with a black iris and lightly sketched-in lashes. In the final version [Fig. 14], the original eye has been transformed into the Soleil noir, thus demonstrating the iconographic relationship of the two images in Redon's vocabulary.⁶³

The speculations in Aurélia which echoed the cosmological theories of rejuvenated suns---seeds of new life---have a certain affinity in such a work as "Germination" [Fig. 2]. This "creative" aspect of the dark stars or suns gives a new insight into the cell-like forms of the lithograph previously discussed. To the poetic conception of the Soleil noir must be added the "scientific" theories which broke loose in Europe in the third quarter of the century. Flammarion's Fin du Monde (1894) warned the public of its destiny: "La Terre, boulet noir, cimetière glacé, continuera de tourner autour du Soleil noir."⁶⁴ To be sure, these theories also were balanced by the idea of the inalterable "Spore," the indestructible seed of eternal life.

The third lithograph of the Poe album, "Un masque sonne le glas funèbre" [Fig. 15], presents little difficulty in relating it to a corresponding work by Poe or to one of the favorite themes of the symbolist poets---death. The ease with which a theme could move from the "ténébreux" abyss or the lofty heights of the poetic dream

to the theme of death, Hades, and eternal damnation or salvation is self-evident. At least a fourth of Les Fleurs du Mal was structured around the themes of the Fall, Hades, Satan, and Death. In Redon's works too, one finds that the night-world of the dream would be transformed into the distinctly ominous realm of death, demons, and monsters. The word "funèbre" of Redon's title was firmly entrenched in symbolist vocabulary and appeared with uncommon frequency in the poems of Baudelaire and Mallarmé, not to mention the many lesser poets. Again, the idea of a "mask" or "veil" was another constant in symbolist vocabulary, with its evident relationship to the symbolist theoretical ideals of ambiguity, hidden meaning, analogy, mysterious revelation, and so forth.

This lithograph and a charcoal drawing produced two years later (1884), "La Masque de la Mort rouge," together offer what is undoubtedly the most direct correlation to a work by Poe to be found in the series. Indeed, the later drawing nearly approaches being an "illustration" of the climactic event in Poe's tale, The Masque of the Red Death. In his drawing, Redon seems to have chosen that moment of the costume ball when the Prince and his guests ("an assembly of phantasms") have walked into the room of "black velvet" with its ebony clock" about to toll the midnight hour--the same moment when the masked mystery guest reveals himself to be none other than the Red Death itself. The drawing skillfully suggests the transformation of the costume masks into the pale image of death's heads.

The correlation of Redon's image with Poe's text is not as exact in the lithograph, but the analogy clearly is present. For

"Un masque sonne. . .", Redon has substituted the more general image of a bell for the clock, and the spectral image of a masked skeleton is tolling the Death-Knell with his spidery fingers. This particular lithograph is a good example of the technique referred to at the beginning of the chapter: Redon's many ranges of blacks were frequently relieved by a light effect which, far from lessening the atmosphere of fathomless night, would reinforce the quality of strangeness by the unnatural, sinister, spectral character of its appearance. This method was perhaps most successfully employed in the three Temptation of Saint Anthony series. In "Un masque sonne. . .," Redon has apparently employed the scraper on the stone to obtain the wispy, ghostly phosphorescences which swirl around the bell. Redon's phantom, ghost-like interpretation of death in this instance was particularly well-suited for the album dedicated to Poe.

However, the more horrifying aspects of Poe's tales were strange to Redon's art and understandably, many of them were not the "favorite bedside book" for a man who preferred Flaubert and Baudelaire. In the years following the production of the Poe album, Redon's interpretations of death and satan were to gravitate more and more away from Poe-like imagery and toward the concept of the "Baudelairean Satan" of virile beauty and philosophic profundity, or the Mallarmean equation of Death and Beauty. The problem of the various interpretations in Redon's graphics of satan, evil, death and lust--particularly as seen in the three Temptation of Saint Anthony series--and their iconographic relationship to the works of Baudelaire, Flaubert and others of the period must remain for a later study.

The final lithograph from the Poe album to be considered is "Le Souffle qui conduit les êtres est aussi dans les sphères" [Fig. 14]. As has already been indicated in the discussion of the Soleil noir, the lithograph's iconography is related to the idealistic theories of the cosmos also reflected in "Germination" or "Le Noyé--Soleil noir." Given the established relationship between the Soleil noir and the eye which the preliminary drawing revealed, it may be further assumed that a somewhat similar relationship holds for the enigmatic pair of eyes peeping out from behind the darkened spheres. Undoubtedly the "pair of eyes" together with the rather androgynous angel (drawn as an adolescent boy in the preliminary study) were meant by Redon to invoke some kind of mysterious presence or Life in the universe.⁶⁵ The flux of darkened spheres which are whirling around the vibrant sun again are highly reminiscent of Nerval. Not unlike his vision in Aurélia, the spheres of Redon's lithograph resemble dead asteroids which are falling one upon the other in order to reconstitute the Unity from which will surge forth rejuvenated suns. Furthermore, the key word of "souffle" (figurative for haleine) seems to echo Nerval's words from the poem, "Le Christ aux Oliviers":

Un souffle vague émeut les sphères vagabondes,

.....

"Immobile Destin, muette sentinelle,
Froide Nécessité! . . . Hasard qui, t'avançant
Parmi les mondes morts sous la neige éternelle,
Refroidis, par degrés, l'univers pâlisant,

Sais-tu que tu fais, puissance originelle,
De tes soleils éteints, l'un l'autre se froissant. . .
Es-tu sûr de transmettre une haleine immortelle,
Entre un monde qui meurt et l'autre renaissant? . . .⁶⁶

Literary parallels such as the above tend to confirm Huysmans' assertion that Redon's "ancestry" is to be found more among poets than painters.

A cursory reading of Poe's Eureka would indicate that this lithograph was not inappropriately placed in the Poe album. Given the subtitle, "An Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe," Eureka records Poe's attempt to establish a place for "poetic truth" in a rapidly expanding cosmos. Particularly the preface would have found a most sympathetic reader in Redon, for it offers Eureka as a "Poem" to "those who feel rather than to those who think--to the dreamers and those who put faith in dreams. ."⁶⁷ Out of the complexities of Poe's argument emerged a similar idea of the "Particle" (germe), the association of soul and stars (astres), and the important role of a large "non-luminous sun."

One final feature of "Le Souffle. . ." remains to be noted for its affiliation with symbolist iconography and method. The visionary, dream-like appearance of the rolling spheres and miraculous beings is considerably enhanced by the compositional device of a frame or window enclosing the scene and separating it from the remainder of the compositional space. The window seems to serve as a constant reminder that this vision is of another world, of an imaginative world, which is "on the other side of" our world. Also conducive to this interpretation are the typical little floating heads barely emerging from the shadow, for the floating head will be remembered as being one of Redon's most frequent means of introducing the spectator into the realm of the idea and the dream.

The iconographic significance of the window is clearly related to the symbolists' concept of the threshold (le rêve) which separates the visible from the invisible, and of art as the "Portée Suprême." For the symbolists, art or poetry or music was the "essential transmission," the supreme access, the "window" to this other world. Mallarmé was unusually clear as to the identity of the "window" in the poem, "Les Fenêtres":

Je me mire et me vois ange: et je meurs, et j'aime
 --Que la vitre soit l'art, soit la mysticité--
 A renaître, portant mon rêve en diadème
 Au ciel antérieur où fleurit la Beauté:68

The many drawings, lithographs, paintings and pastels in which Redon used this device of a window or opening of some kind leading to another "depth" of the composition would be impossible to enumerate. Invariably, the "window" operates as a kind of introductory chord, a signal of intent, an open invitation to explore the dream and to venture into the "absolute." Redon's method of leading the eye through an aperture from dark into light can be found in terms of verbal description in Baudelaire's poetry. As Baudelaire explained:

. . . a bit of sky perceived through a hole, or between two chimneys, two rocks, or through an arched passageway, will give a more profound idea of infinity than the great panorama viewed from a mountain's height. 69

On the other hand, Redon, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé would reverse the image of passing from dark into the light, presenting the opening as a black hole or void into which one is fatefully drawn. The previously discussed themes of the fallen angel or descent into the abyss belong in this category. This reversal of the image suggested the inevitable failure of man or art to cross, so to speak, the

forbidden threshold of the pure ideal or the absolute. To take again "Les Fenêtres" as an example:

Mais, hélas! Ici-bas est maître: sa hantise
 Vient m'écoeurer parfois jusqu'en cet abri sûr,
 Et le vomissement impur de la Bêtise
 Me force à me boucher le nez devant l'azur.⁷⁰

Man was thus a prisoner of earth-bound reality, and the Ideal would never really be attained, for as Mallarmé confessed, "ce pays n'exista pas."⁷¹

Two selected examples of Redon's works, although not part of the Poe album, will further clarify the significance of the window theme seen in "Le Souffle. . ." and at the same time should serve as a kind of summary of the symbolist duality in the "spiritual drama" of Redon's noirs. These two interpretations of the window theme affirm the dual connotations of the motif given in "Les Fenêtres." The "window" as either the threshold to the radiant beauty of the ideal or as the reminder to "prisoners of reality" of the haunting inaccessibility of the dream is seen in the last lithograph of the album, Songes (Dreams), published in 1891 and in the charcoal drawing "Le Prisonnier au Fenêtre," executed in 1886 [Figs. 16 and 17].

The lithograph from Songes, "Le Jour," is a condensed and intensified statement of the window theme only suggested in "Le Souffle. . .", and it will be noted that the same familiar little heads are spiraling up the left-hand side of the darkened interior. From this dark and "haunted" room, the eye is drawn out into the enveloping light of day, into an idyllic world of reverie and quiet lyricism.

One is reminded again of Mallarmé's "Les Fenêtres," in which he looks through the glass of the window and sees the infinity of morning light:

Je fais et je m'accroche à toutes les croisées [windows]
 D'où l'on tourne l'épaule à la vie, et, béni,
 Dans leur verre, lavé d'éternelles rosées,
 Que dore le matin chaste de l'Infini 72

By about 1895, Redon abandoned permanently the expressions of suffering and a "tourment de l'Absolu" which dominated the noirs. In the pastels and oils of his late years, the idyllic mood suggested in "le Jours" was to triumph in an art of pure lyricism, melodious color harmonies, and personal optimism.

The second connotation given to the "window" in "Les Fenêtres," so ominously introduced in the phrase, "Mais, hélas! Ici-bas est maître," finds a powerful counterpart in Redon's drawing, "Le Prisonnier au Fenêtre." The last stanza of the poem finds the poet hopelessly aware that the dream is constricted by reality, and he longs to "break the glass" and escape:

Est-il moyen, ô Moi qui connais l'amertume,
 D'enfoncer le cristal par le monstre insulté
 Et de m'enfuir, avec mes deux ailes sans plume
 --Au risque de tomber pendant l'éternité? 73

Redon has created a powerfully dramatic image of this intense desire to escape and the vain attempt to achieve liberation. Redon's "prisoner," knotted into a position expressive of an acute inner disturbance, is pressed against the window which separates him from the state of liberation. For its date, the drawing is astonishingly modern in both its "existentialist" anguish and its expressionistic distortion of form. The eyes, in their haunted expression and deformation, are little different from scores of similar creations by the artist, dating

back as far as his earliest sketches of the unfortunate inhabitants of Les Landes. The expressionistic lines and the value patterns of the drawing culminate in the feeble hand tapping at the window, which in its **very** impotency seems to crystallize the symbolic theme of man's incapability to escape the prison of reality. Not surprisingly, the night theme previously discussed in reference to Poe, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Redon was often combined with the theme of a prison and alienation. Redon's tormented figure may be compared to Baudelaire's "Spleen: Quand le ciel bas et lourd" or to Mallarmé's character, Igitur, who pressed his face against the window glass and, listening to the clock's striking, experienced the "angoisse consciente" of death.⁷⁴

The essential duality of "Le Jour" and "Le Prisonnier" and their intimate affiliation with the basic tenets of the symbolist poetic may be extended in application to the style and iconography examined in Dans le Rêve, A Edgar Poe, and the related works. Redon's consistent strivings to express in visual terms the Infinite, the Unknown, the Dream, remains the key to his work and to his aesthetic. Baudelaire wrote in L'Art Romantique, "Tout cerveau bien conformé porte en lui deux infinis, le ciel et l'enfer. . ."⁷⁵ The first two albums produced by Redon, with their visionary imagery constantly shifting from the sky-borne aspirations of the ideal to the murky realms of the abyss, have been seen as ample witness to this spiritual conflict and to the aesthetic which could best favor its expression.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

- ¹Baudelaire, op. cit., p. 30.
- ²Katherine Grant Sterne, "Odilon Redon Viewed Again; With Notes," Parnassus, III (March, 1931), p. 11.
- ³Roger-Marx, op. cit., n.p.
- ⁴Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 25.
- ⁵Bacou, op. cit., letter to Edouard Picard (June 15, 1894), p. 39.
- ⁶Paul Verlaine, "Jadis et Naguère," Mercure de France, II (April, 1891), p. 229.
- ⁷Redon, Lettres, p. 30.
- ⁸Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 163.
- ⁹Austin, op. cit., p. 341-2.
- ¹⁰Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 54.
- ¹¹Baudelaire, op. cit., p. 36.
- ¹²Redon, Lettres, p. 30.
- ¹³Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 153.
- ¹⁴Baudelaire, op. cit., p. 710.
- ¹⁵Ibid.
- ¹⁶Nerval, op. cit., p. 772.
- ¹⁷Ibid., p. 761.
- ¹⁸Baudelaire, op. cit., 711.

- ¹⁹Louis Barjon, De Baudelaire à Mauriac: L'inquiétude contemporaine (Tournai, Belgium: Casterman, 1962), p. 50.
- ²⁰Baudelaire, op. cit., p. 18.
- ²¹Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 93.
- ²²Barjon, op. cit., p. 59.
- ²³It may be noted that the symbol of the bird in Mallarmé's poetry evolved into a monstrous creature of spiritual doubt and of death, and was often endowed with an "aile noire."
- ²⁴Sven Sandström, Le Monde Imaginaire D'Odilon Redon, trans. Denise Naert (Lund, Sweden: CWK Gleerup, 1955), p. 61.
- ²⁵Harry Levin, The Power of Blackness: Hawthorne, Poe, Melville (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1958), p. 154.
- ²⁶Edgar Allan Poe, The Complete Tales And Poems of Edgar Allan Poe, with an introduction by Hervey Allen (The Modern Library edition; New York: Random House, Inc., 1938), p. 125-126.
- ²⁷Maurice Rollinat, Les Névroses; Les âmes--Les luxures--Les refuges--Les spectres--Les ténèbres (Paris: Bibliothèque Charpentier, 1910), p. 364.
- ²⁸Alphonse Boubert, "Maurice Rollinat," La Plume, II (August 1, 1890), p. 131.
- ²⁹Sandström, op. cit., p. 61.
- ³⁰Mallarmé, op. cit., p. 49.
- ³¹Wallace Fowlie, Mallarmé (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 141-142.
- ³²Ari Redon (comp.), Lettres à Odilon Redon, textes et notes par Roseline Bacou (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1960), 131.
- ³³Redon, Lettres D'Odilon Redon, p. 31.
- ³⁴Sandström, op. cit., p. 111.

³⁵For examples of Redon's poèmes en prose see pages 74 and 87 of A Soi-Même.

³⁶Sandström, loc. cit.

³⁷Redon, Lettres D'Odilon Redon, p. 35.

³⁸Ibid., p. 31.

³⁹Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 26.

⁴⁰Rewald, op. cit., p. 30.

⁴¹Poe, op. cit., p. 1026.

⁴²Michaud, op. cit., p. 31.

⁴³Poe, op. cit., p. 889.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 894.

⁴⁵Levin, op. cit., p. 105.

⁴⁶Jules Destrée, L'Oeuvre lithographique de Odilon Redon: Catalogue descriptif (No. 59 of 75 copies printed, courtesy of the New York Public Library, Print Collection; Bruxelles: Edmond Deman, 1891), p. 24.

⁴⁷Roger-Marx, op. cit., n.p.

⁴⁸Baudelaire, op. cit., p. 10.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 122.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 127.

⁵¹Poe, "Ligeia," op. cit., p. 655.

⁵²Libby Tannenbaum, "The Raven Abroad," Magazine of Art, XXXVII (April, 1944), p. 126

- 53 Poe, op. cit., pp. 655-656.
- 54 Redon, A Soi-Même, p. 124.
- 55 Edgar Allan Poe, The Philosophy of Composition (in Essays And Miscellanies, Vol. XIV of The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. James A. Harrison, 17 vols: New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1902), p. 198.
- 56 Baudelaire, op. cit., p. 1255.
- 57 Hélène Tuzet, "L'Image du Soleil Noir," Revue Des Sciences Humaines, LXXXVIII (October-December, 1957), pp. 479-481.
- 58 Nerval, op. cit., p. 693.
- 59 Ibid., pp. 802-803.
- 60 Ibid., p. 819.
- 61 Tuzet, op. cit., p. 502.
- 62 Ibid., p. 495.
- 63 Sandström, op. cit., p. 54.
- 64 Tuzet, op. cit., p. 493.
- 65 Sandström, op. cit., p. 88.
- 66 Nerval, op. cit., p. 706.
- 67 Edgar Allan Poe, Eureka (Vol. IX of The Works of Edgar Allan Poe, eds. Edmund C. Stedman and George E. Woodberry. 10 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), p. 4.
- 68 Mallarmé, op. cit., p. 33.
- 69 Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature (revised enlarged edition; New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1919), p. 117.
- 70 Mallarmé, loc. cit.

⁷¹Mallarmé, op. cit., p. 57.

⁷²Mallarmé, op. cit., p. 33.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Adile Ayda, Le Drame intérieur de Mallarmé (Istanbul: Editions "La Turquie Moderne," 1955), pp. 191-192.

⁷⁵Michaud, op. cit., p. 66.

CONCLUSION

During Redon's career, his affinity with the tendencies of French literary symbolism was recognized by a small circle of contemporary writers and poets. Most subsequent critics failed to perceive this relationship, and those recent critics who acknowledge Redon's tie with the symbolist poets have not substantiated the threads of connection. The purpose of this study has been to evaluate in depth the relationship, which thus far has been only casually designated, of Redon and symbolism. Consequently, the study has been an identification of those elements in Redon's work which have a parallel or affinity with symbolist writings. As background for this comparison, the essential tenets of the symbolist aesthetic were explicated. For every significant point relevant to symbolism, an exact parallel was revealed by Redon in his written theories on the nature and function of art. Indeed, Redon's vocabulary corresponded to that of the symbolists, and when he referred to "our art" of the "symbol," the "indefinable," he was openly acknowledging his allegiance to the symbolist aesthetic.

The evidence of a theoretical affinity served as the basis for the subsequent identification of symbolist style and iconography in Redon's graphic art. The early lithographic series Dans le Rêve and A Edgar Poe were chosen because they indicated the extent and complexity symbolist correlations present in Redon's graphics. The implications of the findings in these first two series leave little doubt

that a similar study of the remaining series would reaffirm and expand the range of symbolist themes in Redon's graphic iconography. The symbolists' style was notably economical and sought to communicate la vie intérieure by an emphasis on intensification and effect, achieving its ends more by suggestion and evocation than by description. Unquestionably, Redon's evocative powers reached a height in the velvety blacks and abstracted arabesques disclosed in the three Temptation of Saint Anthony series. Yet the very ambiguity inherent in the symbolists' analogic style intimates that the full "meaning" of Redon's iconography, as with that of Mallarmé's poetry, will never be exhausted if by meaning one refers to the totality of their suggestive implications and resonance.

Mallarmé was perhaps the symbolist poet who most resembled Redon in his art, his theory, and the attraction he held for the next generation of artists and poets. In one of many personal letters written to Redon, Mallarmé extolled:

Vous agitez dans nos silences le plumage du Rêve et de la Nuit. Tout dans cet album me fascine, et d'abord qu'il vous soit tout personnel, issue de vos seuls songes. L'invention a des profondeurs à l'égal de certains noirs, ô lithographe et démon; et, vous le savez, Redon, je jalouse vos légendes. . .¹

The symbolists' enthusiasm for Redon was by no means shared by the general public of his own generation. Dans le Rêve produced so little effect that it took ten years to sell twenty-four of the twenty-five albums. However, the nature of the symbolists' search for a "pure poetry" was echoed later in the aims of the young post-impressionist painters. Redon then became their ideal, for they saw in him a precursor of an art which was ready to throw off the yoke of naturalism,

an art of "subjective deformation" which demanded above all that the artist follow the personal resources of his own conscience. With different antecedents and different methods, Marcel Duchamp could still say in complete sincerity that his art owed more to Redon than to Cezanne.²

Redon's late works in painting reflect a peace of mind not present in the graphics, but his journal and letters reveal that he never changed the fundamental premises of his aesthetic. A letter written two years before his death to a young admirer was both an affirmation of le Rêve and an indication of what his art represented to the next generation of painters:

[My art] fait partie d'une époque qui se ferme, assurément, mais je voudrais bien avoir concouru à ouvrir celle qui s'annonce et qui sera la vôtre. Place aux jeunes et pour les jeunes. Place à l'émotion, à la sensibilité, à l'imagination, le rêve: place à l'Inconnu.³

FOOTNOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

¹Claude Roger-Marx, Les Peintres Français Nouveaux, No. 21 (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1924), p. 17.

²Walter Pach, "The Etchings and Lithographs of Odilon Redon," The Print Connoisseur, I (October, 1920), p. 57.

³G. Jean Aubry, "La Renommé d'Odilon Redon," La Renaissance de l'art français (August, 1920), p. 334.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The abbreviation "Mell." followed by a number refers to the catalogue established by Andre Mellerio: Catalogue de L'oeuvre gravé et Lithographié, Paris, 1913.

FIGURE

1. Frontispiece (Dans le Rêve, 1879). Lithograph (Mell. no. 26).
2. "Écllosion" (Dans le Rêve I, 1879). Lithograph (Mell. no. 27).
3. "Germination" (Dans le Rêve II, 1879). Lithograph (Mell. no. 28).
4. "La Roue" (Dans le Rêve III, 1879). Lithograph (Mell. no. 29).
5. "Tête ailée survolant la mer." Charcoal Drawing, before 1879. David Adler Coll., The Art Institute of Chicago.
6. "Limbes" (Dans le Rêve IV, 1879). Lithograph (Mell. no. 30).
7. "Gnome" (Dans le Rêve VI, 1879). Lithograph (Mell. no. 32).
8. "Sur la coupe" (Dans le Rêve X, 1879). Lithograph (Mell. no. 36).
9. Frontispiece (A Edgar Poe, 1882). Lithograph (Mell. no. 37).
10. "L'Oeil, comme un ballon bizarre se dirige vers l'infini" (A Edgar Poe I, 1882). Lithograph. (Mell. no. 38).
11. "Triste montée" (Dans le Rêve IX, 1879). Lithograph (Mell. no. 35).
12. "Devant le noir soleil de la mélancolie, Léonor apparaît" (A Edgar Poe II, 1882). Lithograph (Mell. no. 39).
13. "Le Noyé--Soleil Noir." Charcoal Drawing, before 1887. Prentenkabinett, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
14. "Le Souffle qui conduit les êtres est aussi dans les sphères" (A Edgar Poe V, 1882). Lithograph (Mell. no. 42).

15. "Un masque sonne le glas funèbre" (A Edgar Poe III, 1882). Lithograph (Mell. no. 40).
16. "Le Jour" (Songes VI, 1891). Lithograph (Mell. no. 115).
17. "Le Prisonnier au Fenêtre." Charcoal Drawing, 1886. Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.



Fig. 1 Frontispiece (Dans le Rêve, 1879).

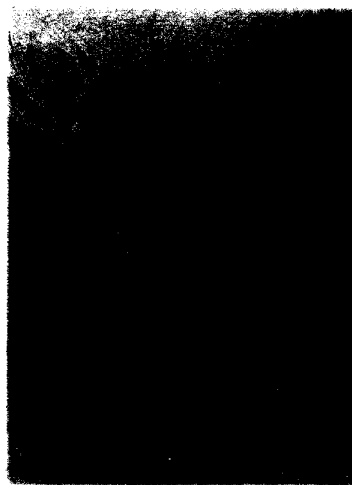


Fig. 2 "Ecllosion" (Dans le Rêve I, 1879).



Fig. 1 Frontispiece (Dans le Rêve, 1879).



Fig. 2 "Ecllosion" (Dans le Rêve I, 1879).



Fig. 3 "Germination" (Dans le Rêve II, 1879).



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Fig. 4 "La Roue" (Dans le Rêve III, 1879).

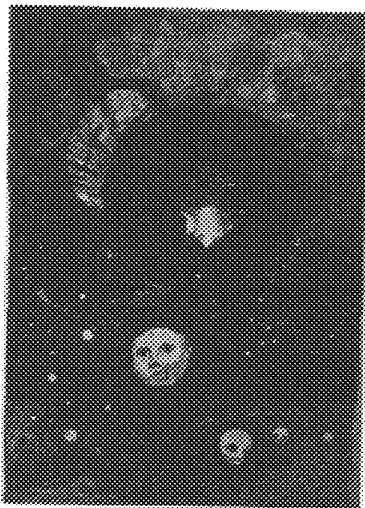


Fig. 3 "Germination" (Dans le Rêve II, 1879).



Fig. 4 "La Roue" (Dans le Rêve III, 1879).

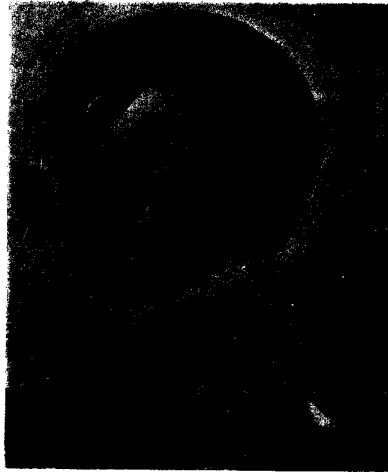


Fig. 5 "Tête ailée survolant la mer," before 1879.



Fig. 6 "Limbes" (Dans le Rêve IV, 1879).

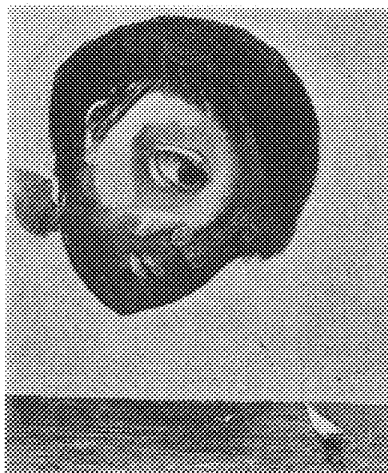


Fig. 5 "Tête ailée survolant la mer," before 1879.

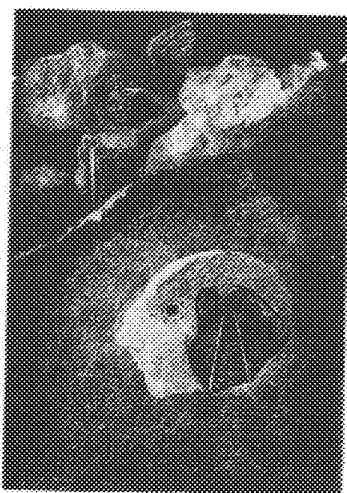


Fig. 6 "Limbes" (Dans le Rêve IV, 1879).

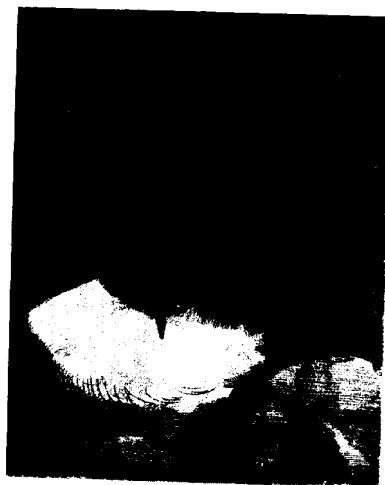


Fig. 7 "Gnome" (Dans le Rêve VI, 1879).



Fig. 8 "Sur la coupe" (Dans le Rêve X, 1879).



Fig. 7 "Onnes" (Dans le Rêve VI, 1879).

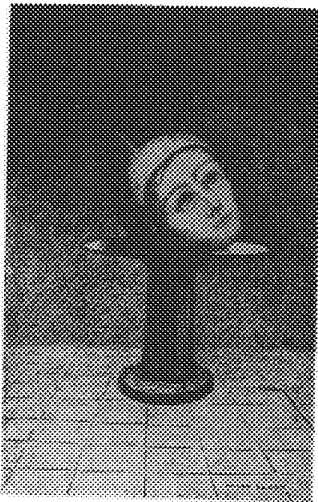


Fig. 8 "Sur la coupe" (Dans le Rêve X, 1879).



Fig. 9 Frontispiece (A Edgar Poe, 1842)

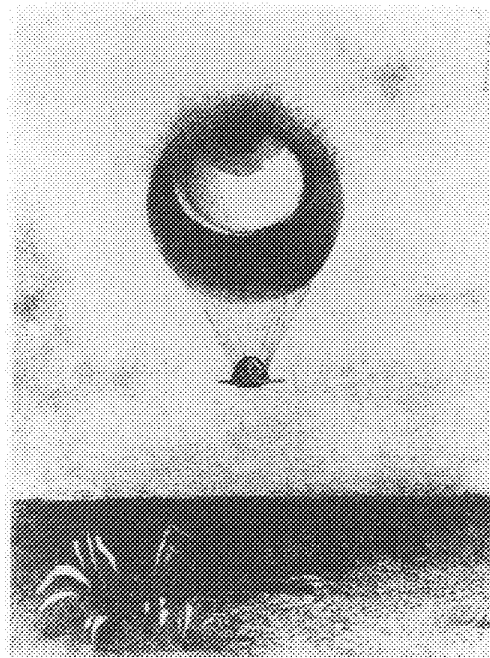


Fig. 10 "L'Oeil, comme un ballon bizarre se dirige vers l'infini" (A Edgar Poe I, 1882).



Fig. 11 "Triste montée" (Dans le Rêve IX, 1879).



Fig. 12 "Devant le noir soleil de la mélancolie,
L'Éon apparaît" (A Edgar Poe II, 1882).

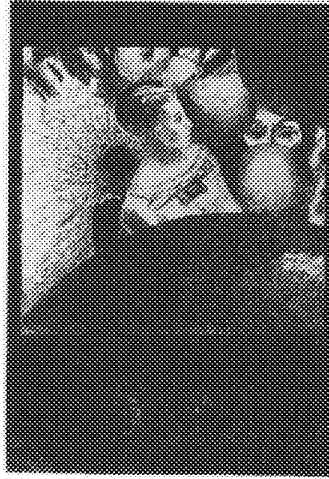


Fig. 14 "Le Souffle qui conduit les Étres est aussi dans les sphères" (A Edgar Poe V, 1882).

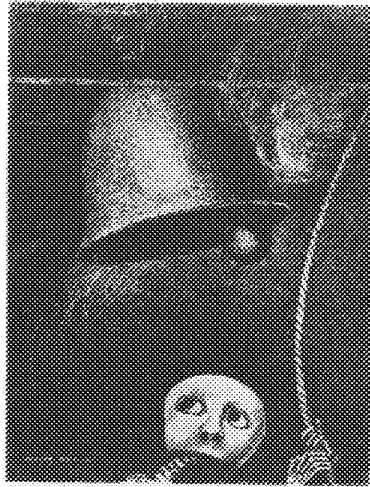


Fig. 15 "Un masque sonne le glas funèbre" (A Edgar Poe III).

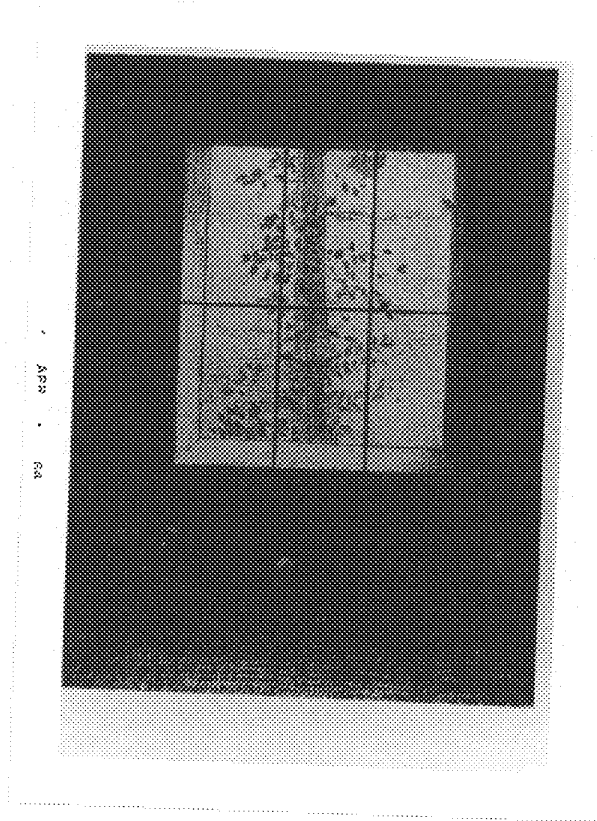


Fig. 16 "Le Jour" (Seurat VI, 1891).

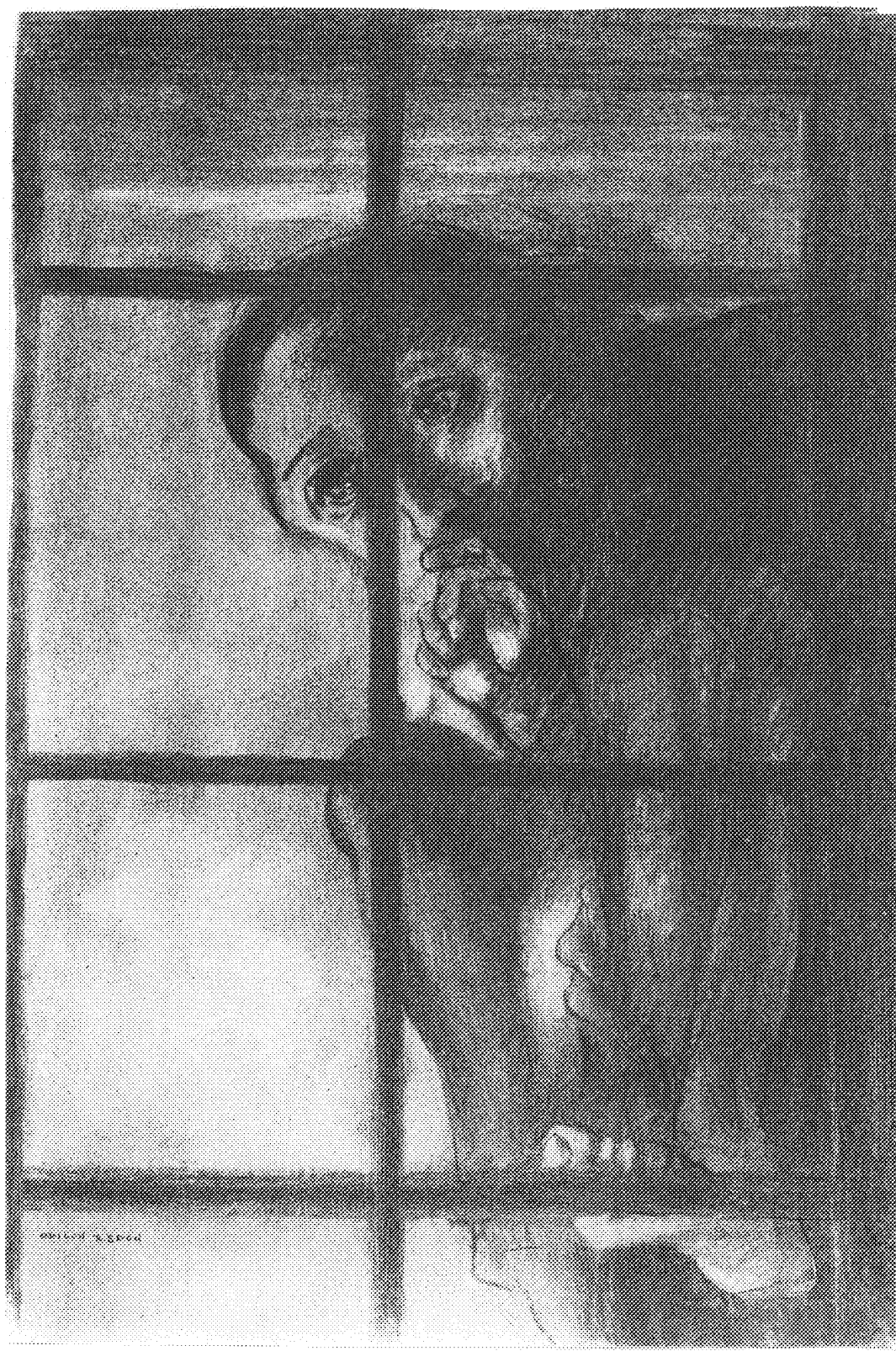


Fig. 17 "Le Prisonnier au Fenêtre," 1866.

Approved *[Signature]*

Date *May 27, 1964*