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From Salome and John the Baptist to Orpheus: The severed head and female imagery in the work of Odilon Redon.
(Volume I: Text. Volume II: Plates [Not microfilmed as part of dissertation])

Curtis, Leslie Stewart, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1992

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my appreciation to Dr. Mathew Herban III for his guidance and patience through the course of this research. I thank my dissertation committee members, Drs. Howard Crane and Stanley L. Helgeson, for their comments and suggestions. The thoughtful advice of Dr. Judith Mayne has been of great assistance in the preparation of this study. I am also very grateful to Dr. Ryan Howard for his words of wisdom and encouragement -- it is thanks to him that I decided to follow the path of the art historian. Dr. Willard Misfeldt has also continued to provide very helpful advice. This study would not have been possible without the support and understanding of my life partner Susan Sheaffer Curtis. It is to her that I owe my sincerest gratitude not only for this support, but also for the inspiration which her model of achievement in professional endeavors has presented to me.

Many other people have generously supported my efforts, and I am thankful for their friendship. I thank Dr. Rex Wallace for his advice, professional opinions, and for the many wonderful hours we passed together on the tennis court. I also thank Dr. Maureen Ryan for the many supportive conversations as we went through this process together. Dr. Howard Sirak and Babette Sirak also offered many insights into the joys of the visual arts, and I am very grateful for having had the opportunity to work on the catalogue of their wonderful art collection and to have had access to their library during the time that I was completing this project. Sharon Kokot at the Columbus Museum of Art provided many meaningful work opportunities and many stimulating conversations for which I am grateful. Dr. Matt Senior helped me make contacts in France, and provided advice on literary concepts. The encouragement and insight of Dr. Robert Jiobu and Karen Jiobu have helped me complete this task.

I am also very grateful to those persons who directly supported the research and travel necessary for completion of this project, and for their friendship along the way. Dr. Christine Verzar did everything in her power to help fund this part of my work. Many persons in Europe provided generous assistance. I thank Dr. Robert Coustet at the University of Bordeaux, Yves and Françoise Germain in Bernay, Jacques Thebault in Zürich.

Finally, I thank those persons whose support was always available when needed. This includes Dr. Lee Cohen and members of the "dissertators" group, Tom and Colleen Sheaffer, and the persons who I thank last, but who were there first for me, my parents Leslie B. and Anita E. Curtis.
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Introduction

Many scholars have noted the ubiquity of the severed head in Redon's work. In his book *Symbolists and Symbolism*, Robert Delevoy stated the case as follows:

> The image of the severed head governs Redon's entire works. It is a haunting theme, a remorseless nightmare image which recurs in various forms. It is a constant theme, indicating by turns an obsession with castration, the blindness of sexuality, and the blank dread of death. It may also represent the mind surviving after the death of the body, and conscious of the annihilation of sensory enjoyment. In this perspective, captured within the dramatic structure of the picture, it may be an image of Orpheus, tortured by his unsatisfied passion. The image therefore belongs to certain ideological currents of the century, in which idealism was often associated with visual images of disenchantment, individual exile and loss, and a painfully heightened sensibility. It has parallels in Baudelaire and Poe, and in Moreau, Rops, Puvis de Chavannes, Ensor, Toorop and Delville. It may be associated also with the age-old dream of human flight, and with related images of the sphere of the heavens, in which the celestial bodies appear as eyes. It recalls the mystic representations of the Ascension. Whence: "The eye, like a strange balloon, travels towards Infinity" (Plate I, *To Edgar Poe*). Globe: "Sad Ascent" (Plate IX of the series In the Dream). Together with the severed head, the eye is a dominant nightmare image in Redon's imagination.

In these comments Delevoy, if not explicitly calling for a more detailed study of this imagery in Redon, has defined the limits for such a project.
Unfortunately, this work was never undertaken by Delevoy, nor for that matter has it appeared anywhere else in Redon scholarship. Despite the fact that almost every study on Redon has made some passing references to this imagery -- usually pointing at its significance, but ironically, almost never finding it significant enough for any further elaboration or detailed analysis -- Delevoy's paragraph, quoted here, is the most direct look at Redon's use of the severed head motif that we can find in the literature. In fairness to the other monographic studies on Redon, it must be noted that the numerous "passing references" to the severed head image often contain the germ of ideas which have been developed throughout the present study. This is true of the books by Roseline Bacou,2 Richard Hobbs,3 Dario Gamboni,4 and especially of Sven Sandstrom5 who devoted a whole chapter to the theme of the "Tête--Oeil," which although it was not by any means exclusively focused on a discussion of the severed head has provided a great deal of insight into Redon's use of this image. Specific works including severed head imagery have been discussed in the entries for important exhibition catalogues and especially notable in this regard are those for the exhibitions held in Bordeaux (1984),6 Tokyo (1989),7 and Australia (1991),8 but it is interesting that in none of these is found an essay devoted to the importance of this motif in Redon's oeuvre.

This situation in the scholarship devoted specifically to the work of Redon is made all the more difficult in the fact that a similar situation exists in the study of the imagery in Symbolist art and literature. Indeed, while the
literature on Symbolism refers to the general fascination severed head imagery held for artists and writers of the period, and while almost every monographic study of the movement has made passing references to its significance and ubiquity, the only specific discussion of the imagery or the related subjects dealing with this imagery is usually relegated to treatment in the appendices or in a summary collection of a "dictionary of themes." The only real study of the art and literature of the nineteenth century to make severed head imagery the specific focus of a study is the article by Jean-Pierre Reverseau, "Pour une étude du thème de la tête coupée dans la littérature et la peinture dans la seconde partie du XIX° siècle," which appeared in the Gazette des Beaux-Arts in 1972. Speaking of the fascination for the image of the severed head in the arts, Jean-Pierre Reverseau stated the following:

Les artistes de tous les temps et de toutes les écoles ont été attirés par les scènes de supplices et l'Église n'a cessé d'encourager à la représentation de telles visions. Parmi toutes les scènes de tourments, qu'elles soient profanes ou religieuses, parmi toutes les horreurs des tortures, des arrachements, des mutilations, il en est une qui revient sans cesse: la décollement, et ce thème a frappé si vivement l'imagination des artistes, qu'il se retrouve aussi bien en peinture qu'en littérature. Au XIX° siècle, il sera repris par les peintres <<symbolistes>>, Gustave Moreau, Puvis de Chavannes, Odilon Redon et Gauguin et par les poètes contemporains, Théophile Gautier, Baudelaire, Leconte de Lisle, Théodore de Banville...

Ultimately, Reverseau concluded that the preoccupation with this imagery in the nineteenth century was related to the proliferation of the guillotine in the political life of the times and in the residue of memories of its terror during
the French Revolution. In general, he felt that the artists focused upon the imagery as a means to deal with the idea of the soul transcending the materiality of life in the world. In Reverseau’s study, as in so many of the other studies on the Symbolist movement, the special fascination of the theme for Redon is noted, but it is not discussed in any detail.

Characteristic of this tendency in studies of Redon and Symbolism are the conclusions reached by Robert Pincus-Witten in his article on "Symbolist Iconography." He notes the importance of the imagery for Redon, but concludes that it is primarily manifested in the subject of Orpheus. His only analysis of the occurrence of the theme is to refer us to the artistic source of the imagery in the famous work by Gustave Moreau, *The Thracian Girl*:

*Mourning over the Head of Orpheus* (Plate II):

The decapitated head, to become Redon's theme *par excellence*, must be viewed in the light of this work. That Orpheus's spurning of the Thracian Women should have been the part of the Orphic myth which most appealed to Symbolist sensibility is among the surest indications of sexual ambiguity in the period.

One significant aspect of Pincus-Witten's study, however, is his linkage of the severed head theme to imagery of the *femme fatale* and questions of sexuality, for it is in the recent scholarship outside the traditional art historical and literary studies that some of the richest discussion of severed head are to be found as a result of the renewed interest in the female imagery of the period.
These studies originate from a number of disciplines, but in each case, the emphasis is not the severed head, which is usually male, so much as it is the femme fatale who had often been held responsible for the male’s fate. For example, the historian Peter Gay was one of the first to define the parameters for the study of this theme in the chapter from his *Education of the Senses*, "The Castrating Sisterhood." Calling attention to the changing nature of sexual roles in the nineteenth century, Gay provided an analysis of some of the tensions which manifested themselves between the sexes. Continuing in this vein, Bram Dijkstra in his book *Idols of Perversity; Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*, focused directly upon "a veritable iconography of misogyny" which he found to permeate the non-impressionistic tendencies in the art of the time, and in his chapter "Gold and the Virgin Whores of Babylon; Judith and Salome: The Priestesses of Man’s Severed Head," he provided a fascinating discussion of the women behind the severed head. But while studies such as Dijkstra’s have tended to continue some of the earlier tendencies in feminist studies to single out and focus upon the negative stereotypes of women in art and culture, recent books by Ewa Kuryluk, Elaine Showalter, and Mary Ann Doane have focused upon the more complex and even contradictory aspects of the power held by famous female personages such as Judith and Salome.

Ewa Kuryluk’s discussion of "Salome" in a chapter from her book *Salome and Judas in the Cave of Sex; The Grotesque: Origins, Iconography, Techniques* is extremely original and highly provocative. Kuryluk has examined a wide
range of sources from folklore, popular imagery, and high art. Elaine Showalter also combines a variety of sources in her study, *Sexual Anarchy; Gender and Culture at the Fin-de-Siècle*, especially in her chapter on "The Veiled Woman," where she extended her analysis into the similarities between the end of the nineteenth century and the situation as we approach the end of the current century. Finally, attention should be called to the extremely insightful essays collected by Mary Ann Doane in her book *Femmes Fatales; Feminism, Film, Theory, Psychoanalysis*, for although her book is primarily devoted to the cinema, she discusses the way in which the femme fatale is a figure derived from the culture of the nineteenth century, and it is Doane who has provided the most articulate discussion of why this figure is troubling as an artistic image. In all of these studies, there is a rich examination of the means by which the female image is represented in the art works of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the problematic nature of vision and sexuality which go into the creation and viewing of these works. Doane's study is particularly useful in its combination of ideas from feminism, psychoanalysis, and film theory which might be brought to bear upon these problems, and her writing has opened up some of the more original insights into the theme of the severed head partly because of its origination in areas outside the traditional academic disciplines of art history or literary criticism.

In researching my topic, I must admit to having explored some of these studies simply because of the lack of in depth discussion of the severed head
in the traditional literature, but the result has been that I have begun to recognize that although Redon seemed to primarily focus upon the isolated severed head, there was also a more shadowy figure lurking in the background of some of these images, and although she was rarely the composition's focus and despite the absence of the explicit sensuality and sexuality which characterized the work of so many other artists of the time, many of the issues raised by Kuryluk, Showalter, and Doane have become very relevant. In part, this has suggested a reassessment of the role of the female imagery in Redon's work, but in the present context, it has mainly been my objective to study this imagery in terms of its significance for the meaning of the severed head motif.

The primary purpose here has been to offer a much needed focused study of the severed head image in Redon. A variety of methodologies have been employed, ranging from traditional art historical stylistic and iconographical analyses to methods taken from film theory, feminism, and psychoanalysis. The study is organized the into three main chapters, the first dealing with the subject of John the Baptist and his encounter with Salome. The second chapter focuses upon the mechanism of meaning in these works, by demonstrating the various ways in which the artist and the spectator identify with the imagery contained in the works. The focus upon spectatorship, which is a common thread throughout this study, is an attempt to come to terms with the different types of visions Redon has offered to us as
entrée into his imaginative world, and the ways that the beholder’s gaze is problematic. The third and final chapter focuses upon Redon’s treatment of the myth of Orpheus, which is the other major subject in which images of the severed head are manifested. Throughout each of these chapters a variety of other images of the severed head have been introduced which, although they do not fit specifically into traditional subject categories, add nuances of meaning to the artist’s imagery. In the end, it is hoped that this study will provide a flexible and interdisciplinary approach to the material, which will offer original insights into Redon’s work and will be of benefit to future studies of his imagery.
NOTES TO INTRODUCTION


5Sven Sandstrom, *Le Monde imaginaire d'Odilon Redon; étude iconologique*, Trans. Denise Naert (Lund and New York: CWK Gleerup and George Wittenborn, Inc., 1955). In addition to these sources, it is also important to note an important doctoral dissertation: Trudie Grace, "The Disembodied Head: A Major Theme in European Art from 1885 to 1905," Diss. City University of New York, 1984. 2 vols. At first glance, one might think that Grace would have provided a study of the severed head, but it soon becomes apparent that her interest is much wider, for throughout her study, she makes frequent references to the "allusive head," and in the definition of her problem she makes it clear that her main focus is not the severed head. For example, she is concerned, p. 1, with: "The disembodied head as an allusion to an aspect of the non-physical plane of human existence will henceforth be termed the allusive head." Given this definition of her main focus as the "allusive head," it is a bit surprising to find the general exclusion of the severed head as a principal interest of her study (p. 3): "There is a small body of literature on severed heads, which constitute a type of disembodied head but which are usually not allusive ...." Thus, she is as concerned with portraiture or with any somewhat ambiguous representation of the head which might be read as allusive, and only occasionally does she discuss the severed head as a specific theme. Nevertheless, Grace's study is very rich in its examination of a whole variety of means for approaching studies of the "head" as an image, including physiognomy, phrenology, spiritism, etc. In her discussion of the motif of the "allusive head" she is interested in an idea expressed earlier in studies by Bacou, and others, that such imagery is suggestive of soul transcending the physical death of the body. In her brief mention of severed heads by Redon, she basically reaches the same conclusions as those scholars.


11 Pincus-Witten, p. 62. One feature of Pincus-Witten's article which is also of interest for the present study is his discussion (albeit a very brief one) of the "compartmentalization of the female into distinct roles" in the art of the fin-de-siècle. His two major types are "Baudelaire's 'natural, abominable and vulgar' female" which he sees as being "counterbalanced by ideal creatures, demoiselles élues, blessed damosels -- princesses of the lands of porcelain, impressed upon the public's consciousness by Rosetti, Swinburne, Burne-Jones, Whistler and Armand Point."


16 Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales; Feminism, Film, Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall, Inc., 1991). I am very grateful to Professor Judith Mayne for calling my attention to this text.
CHAPTER I

The Apparition and the Head on a Platter:
Salome and John the Baptist

Redon created many works which are either direct representations of John the Baptist and his martyrdom or are very closely related in theme. In most cases, the biblical story seems to have been simply the artist's point of departure. In this section, these works are discussed as a group, even in the case where the work in question has moved far beyond the biblical point of origin. This approach does raise several questions about the meaning of the John the Baptist theme for Redon. Do his representations of these severed heads on platters and isolated females alongside ghostly apparitions move so far beyond the biblical narrative to indicate that they were created for some more private, personal reasons and, if so, what might these reasons be? Are they based on some less-familiar literary or artistic sources, or has Redon grafted extremely personal imagery onto a well-known biblical source? Indeed, what might be learned by grouping together a series of works whose imagery, despite its origin in common formal and iconographical sources, makes them seem in the end divergent?
These questions take on an even greater immediacy when it is considered that there are only a few specific works in which Redon was unequivocally representing the biblical subject. Indeed, in all of his work, only one example can be cited where he clearly represented together both Salome and the severed head on the platter, a head which is clearly John's. This is a charcoal drawing dating from c.1880-1885, Salomé with the Head of John the Baptist, now in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City (Plate I). In the two other compositional types explicitly derived from the biblical source, Redon has chosen to focus on only one of the two figures, either the isolated image of John's severed head or the figure of Salome who sees a vision of John's head. In this latter case, the head is not represented as being physically present, but appears only as an apparition. This indicates, then, three distinct types of composition dealing with the John the Baptist/Salome theme, and we begin by examining these types in this chapter. Around the primary works exemplary of each type other works will be discussed which are more tenuously connected to the traditional subject matter. At first, the concern will mainly be to identify the works within each group and to discuss the basic formal and iconographical problems within the literature for each work. Later, in Chapter Two, there will be a development of a more synthetic discussion of the possible interpretations of this theme in the artist's œuvre.
i. Salome and John Together

In Redon's charcoal drawing of ca.1880-1885, *Salomé with the Head of John the Baptist* (Plate I) both Salome and John's severed head are physically present within the same composition. Considering the relatively large number of works Redon seems to have devoted to the subject of John the Baptist, it is significant to reiterate that this is the only work in which the two main protagonists of the story appear together. Exactly why this is the case is an issue to be dealt with later, but for now an examination of this unique early composition is appropriate.

Redon's drawing shows a young woman with her torso viewed frontally. Her head is seen in profile and it is inclined slightly towards her left hand, where she holds a platter containing a severed head. Although it has escaped the mention of other scholars, the posture of Redon's Salome is derived, with slight modifications, from Gustave Moreau's *Jeune fille thrace portant la tête d'Orphée* of 1865 (Plate II), even though she faces the opposite direction. The head on the platter is seen in profile, bearded, and has eyes closed. The handling of the female form is completely without sensuality -- something rare in 19th-century treatments of such an exotic subject matter\(^1\) -- for her torso appears to be covered with an armored breast-plate. The style of drawing -- especially in the treatment of the female figure -- suggests the type of geometric simplification taught in the beginning stages of drawing class, a time when a student is struggling simply to capture the solidity of forms, and
not yet capable of revealing the full sensuality and feeling of actual human flesh. Does this reveal Redon's technical weakness or is it more a revelation of a certain hesitation in treating the female figure? Writing much later in his diary, *Confidences d'un artiste*, Redon noted with an air of regret his disinterest in life drawing early in his career:

*S'il m'était permis de recommencer aujourd'hui mon éducation de peintre, je crois que je ferai beaucoup, pour la croissance et le plus grand développement de mes facultés, des copies du corps humain; je le disséquerais, l'analyserais et le modèlerais même, pour le reconstituer aisément de mémoire à profusion.*

It is also possible that the lack of sensuality in this form comes from his practice of working from the male nude in his sketches for works representing Salome (Plates III and IV). But because the drawing's background is void of any details, attention is nonetheless focused on the female figure and her encounter with the obviously male head — an important distinction when it is considered that a severed head does not always display marks of gender. Androgyny has been recognized as one result of decapitation and was especially a fascination for those associated with the Salon de la Rose + Croix. In texts such as "L'Androgyne" (1891) by the group's leader, Joséphin Peladan and in its frontispiece by Alexandre Séon an illustration of this idea can be found (Plate V).

Returning to Redon's drawing, the highlighting on the female figure and on the head creates an atmosphere of starkness and shock, especially as a
result of the juxtaposition against the dark background. What the spectator is permitted to see is shockingly revealed. A pensive mood is pervaded by a feeling of guilt or shame, a mood of utter silence and (dis-) quiet. The lack of eye contact between the figures in the painting, and the lack of eye contact with the viewer despite the fact that the young girl is posed frontally and that the head is obviously on display, adds to this mood. Moreover, this lack of engagement of the gaze between the two protagonists is also somewhat unusual when compared to contemporaneous treatments of the subject by other artists.4

One way to appreciate just how unusual Redon’s work is as compared to the numerous other treatments of the subject in nineteenth-century art and literature, is to consider Ewa Kuryluk’s characterization of the theme and its handling in her fascinating study of 1987, *Salome and Judas in the Cave of Sex*. After identifying Salome as the archetype of “terrible femininity and fin-de-siècle femme fatale,” Kuryluk discusses the general trend in representing Salome in art of the period:

Most of the late-nineteenth-century Salome tales as well as her representations in the visual arts are characterized by an extremely grotesque form: a style heavy with oxymorons and an imagery overburdened by quotations, allusions, parodies, and caricatures. Thus it is all difficult to take quite seriously, particularly the written works. One has to remember, however, that the function of such a style may be to hide what is forbidden. Certain things can be played only on a stage that looks like a worldly theater and not like someone's bedroom. Cruelties and obscenities are crouched at a distance when they are attributed to a goddess, but then they are brought back, by means
of wit, caricature, and parody, to touch and to pinpoint the obscene within the self.®

In support of her argument, any number of examples can be cited, from the complexly detailed compositions of Gustave Moreau (Plates IX a.i.d X), which will be discussed at greater length below, to the flirting and highly sensuous Salome Triumphant by Édouard Toudouze of c.1888 (Plate VII).

Interestingly, almost none of these qualities are found in Redon's work. By contrast, he empties out most of the allusive details shown in other artists' depictions of the theme and, rather than to "hide what is forbidden," Redon's work seems — at least on the surface — to force a confrontation between the viewer and the aftermath of a haunting event. The subject is treated as though it were a reconstruction of some primal scene. Because of this, it is sensed that, while he does not set out to disguise things by using an imagery "overburdened by quotations, allusions, parodies, and caricatures," there may be something still hidden in the mysterious depths of Redon's picture. Thus, it would seem that not only does the viewer confront a "haunted aftermath" but, that the artist himself is using the work of art as the means of confronting something deep and dark within himself or his past -- that is in an attempt to "pinpoint" something within the self. Indeed, speaking of his early work, Redon noted,

"... je préférais tenter la représentation des choses imaginaires qui me hantaient et où j'échouai infructueusement au début. J'en fis cependant beaucoup: paysages, batailles, évocations d'êtres épars
dans des plaines rocheuses, tout un monde de désespérance,
noires fumées du romantisme qui m'embrumaient encore.  

Moreover, if Kuryluk is correct in assuming that what is ultimately at stake in
this theme is "to touch and to pinpoint the obscene within the self", then the
recent observation by Ted Gott that in this drawing "Redon has placed a self-
portrait of his own head on the sacrificial platter" would tend to support the
idea that these works have a deep, personal meaning.

Although this is the only composition in which Redon brings both the
figure of Salome and John's severed head together, his spartan approach to the
imagery as represented here is very similar to the one taken in his other
compositional types for treating the subject. However, the uniqueness of this
work may become clear only after a consideration of those other "types." Thus,
a return to a discussion of this work a bit later, will enable a more useful
interpretation of this imagery, for a study of the other works will raise the
question of whether Redon's preference for dealing with either an isolated
image of the severed head or for dealing with Salome without John or his head
being physically present points to a certain avoidance of a confrontation
between the two protagonists within a single composition. It is also at that
point that a discussion of why this may be the case can be undertaken.
ii. The Apparition

The very difficulty in ascertaining Redon's direct use of John the Baptist as subject in the context of the severed head imagery is both instructive of the artist's own special interest in the theme, as well as an indicator of the strong differences between his treatment and that of other artists of his time. Perhaps the clearest indication of these idiosyncrasies can be found in Redon's charcoal drawing of 1883, *L'Apparition* (Plate VIII) which is now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux.

In this drawing a profile view of a standing female figure is seen at the lower left edge of the composition. She is clad only to the waist, her breasts bare. The woman has a somewhat savage appearance due in part to her broad features and almost muscular physique. She stands on what must be described as a threshold space, for not only is she at the margins of the picture, placed as a sort of sentinel blocking the viewer's physical entry into the realm of the drawing, she stands on the edge of a dark rectangular space which opens up deep into the picture. This black rectangle is bounded on both sides by vertical supports, and floating in the middle of this space as it hovers over the barren floor, there appears a frontal view of a head emitting an aureole of light. These rays of light are broken only by a dark round disk which begins to eclipse the head just to its left. The features of the face can be made out and the eyes are clearly closed. That this is an apparition is made clear not only by the radiating aureole of light, but by the white appearance of the face, which
contains none of the modeling found in the features of the female figure. Except for a few highlights, this mysterious figure remains mostly in the shadows.

The overall effect of the composition is that of an eerie space defined by only a few architectural props with a clear emphasis on simple geometric shapes. None of the shapes contain much detail and, save perhaps the modeling of the female figure, everything is indicated with a simplicity of line. The lack of indication of a specific setting and the inclusion of only a few main shapes within the composition, leaves an open question as to the work's subject. Only the title, L'Apparition, which at most remains ambiguous, suggests the faintest connection with the theme of Salome and John the Baptist, leaving one to wonder if Redon intended anything more than a passing allusion to the biblical story. In order to further confirm the connection with that source, one is forced to consider the formal evolution of the work, a process which reveals not only important visual sources which influenced the artist, but also offers a comparison between Redon’s work and that of his contemporaries which reveals many of its distinguishing features.

The most obvious link between Redon’s charcoal drawing and Salome can be found in its compositional source, an earlier watercolor by Gustave Moreau of the same title, L'Apparition (1876), now in the Cabinet des Dessins du Louvre (Plate IX). This watercolor is related to a larger oil painting by Moreau, Salome Dancing Before Herod (1876), now in the Armand Hammer
Collection (Plate X). Both were exhibited in the 1876 Salon and then again in the 1878 World's Exposition. Ragnar von Holten is correct in his assessment that the watercolor is the work which has been the most often discussed, copied by other artists, and reproduced. Thus, it makes sense that Redon would have been most directly influenced by it. Pierre-Louis Mathieu, in his monograph on Moreau, describes the influence upon Redon as follows:

Like Moreau, Redon was obsessed by the theme of the severed head living its own existence, as in an Apparition of 1883 in which he represented the head of John the Baptist hovering in the air with closed eyes over an erect and abstracted Salome, who seems unaware of it.

Of course the other reason that Redon would have found his source in these works is that the scene depicted in Moreau is not found in the biblical text, and is uniquely that artist's creation. The only possible textual source for the scene, which Ary Renan has suggested as an influence upon Moreau, is Heinrich Heine's poem Atta Troll, in which the poet describes Herodias as being "condemned to carry forever in her hands the martyr's head..." and thus, "every now and then by the odd whim of a woman, she would toss the head in the air, laughing like a child, and deftly catch it again as if playing with a ball."

Mathieu and others (especially von Holten) have described the genesis of Moreau's composition in detail. According to Mathieu, the oil painting was conceived as part of a long process. It began "about 1870, with a Beheading of
John the Baptist" (Plate XI). This early composition, which shows "Salome waiting with a platter for the executioner to finish," is strongly based on Puvis de Chavannes's painting of 1869, *The Beheading of John the Baptist* (Plate XIII) which was shown in the Salon of 1870 (and a work which exits in another larger version in London; Plate XIV) with the main difference being that Moreau has characteristically shifted the point of view about ninety degrees.11 Moreover, Mathieu also notes that in 1874, during the time when Moreau's painting was emerging, Paul Baudry exhibited his sketches for Le Grand Foyer of the Paris Opera (Plate XV), "where his Dance of Salome was to figure in the vault of an arch."12 As the numerous preparatory studies indicate -- Mathieu counts over 70 of the more than 120 drawings as depicting Salome alone --, the figure of Salome became the main focus of Moreau's work.13 It is thought that the subsequent painted versions date from around August 1872 when Moreau was working on a Herodias. Moreau thought about the various poses his dancer might take, and considered the possibility of showing her nude. According to von Holten, her appearance and costume was something that ultimately took on many of the features in Gustave Flaubert's description of the princess Salammbô.14 Finally, Mathieu has noted that the iconography of the severed head "with blood dripping from the neck" derives from Eugène Delacroix and his *Beheading of John the Baptist* (Plate XVII) on a pendentive in the library of the Palais Bourbon.15 As an indication that Redon's familiarity with most of the sources for Moreau's composition should not be
underestimated, even his possible knowledge of the obscure ones, attention is called to the fact that the ultimate source of Moreau's Salome, *The Jewish Wedding in Morocco* (1839) by Delacroix (Plate XVIII) is a composition which Redon had copied (Plate XIX). Moreover, there is a preserved sketch (Plate XX) in which Redon took visual notes from not only Moreau's monumental compositions, but also a variety of other sources.

Redon has clearly taken the two main figures for his own *Apparition* from Moreau's watercolor and placed them in a compositional arrangement which is roughly similar to it in the layout of the main architectural features. Redon's female figure is still seen in profile, but the ghostly head, despite its similar compositional placement, confronts the viewer frontally, as though Redon was more interested in dealing with the viewer's response to the hovering apparition rather than examining Salome's reaction to it, as seems to have been the case with Moreau. Indeed, one is inclined to agree with the conclusions of Mathieu, as quoted above, that Redon's Salome seems to be unaware of the hovering head. In fact, despite the undeniable source Redon's drawing has in Moreau's watercolor, one is struck more by the stark differences between the two works.

Redon is clearly not interested in the descriptive details which might suggest time and place. Details of costume and architectural decoration are absent here, and except for the slightly savage appearance of his Salome, Redon displays no trace of interest in the orientalizing exoticism which had
become a given in treatments of the subject. Once again the lack of sensuality in Redon’s handling of Salome is striking, whereas Moreau has employed a more characteristic approach, as Kuryluk has described above. In fact, Redon’s female figure seems far closer in physique and appearance to the silent executioner at the right of Moreau’s composition. Like that figure in Moreau’s watercolor, she is similarly passive and motionless, and similarly placed in such a way as to blend in with the architectural backdrops of the composition. Also, like the executionner in Moreau, she too is draped from the waist down. Perhaps the most unusual element of this representation of a Salome in Redon is that he even drapes her feet, an element that is so worthy of comment in the critical essays on Moreau’s (and other artists’) treatments of the theme — with comments ranging from analogies between Salome and wild animals (von Holten refers to the feet in one of the preparatory drawings as "... d’énormes pieds d’une forme étrange, ressemblant fort à des pattes d’animal.") to a veritable foot fetish among the writers such as Huysmans who analyze at length the delicate way she is "gliding forward on the tips of her toes." Moreover, if it is accepted that Redon’s Salome derives from Moreau’s executionner, it is also interesting to note that Huysmans, in A Rebours, described Moreau’s figure as "hermaphrodite ou l’eunuque," a characterization which adds further irony to Redon’s apparent disdain for the sensuality of the subject. This transference of the role of executioner to the character of Salome has a number of other interesting features which will be
dealt with a bit later, but at this point it is worth noting that it permits a reading which is consistent with Bram Dijkstra’s analysis of Salome’s role in fin-de-siècle art as "the executioner’s assistant" and as "priestess of man’s severed head."²⁰

Finally, another distinguishing feature of his art is Redon’s deletion of other details which might link his composition more closely with the John the Baptist subject, such as his suppression of the platter which is clearly placed behind the profile head of Moreau’s Baptist, but which in Redon may appear in only the most abstruse way, as a spheroid shape which threatens to eclipse the frontally-viewed head. Interestingly, Redon’s image may indeed refer to an actual eclipse of sorts, taking into consideration Charles Mauron’s reading of Stéphane Mallarmé’s poem on the same theme, his "Herodiade," in which the saint’s "decapitation is analogous to the trajectory of the sun at its summer solstice."²¹ Such a reading of this motif is also interesting in that it suggests Redon’s interest in local folklore traditions, such as those associated with the St. John’s Fire celebrations in southwestern France.²²

Sven Sandstrom, one of Redon’s first monographers, has commented perceptively about Moreau’s influence. He was even willing to attribute Redon’s frequent use of the image of the floating head as something that was in general taken from Moreau’s art. But like other scholars, Sandstrom has commented upon the dissimilarities between the approaches of the two artists. Significantly, he calls attention to the differences between the way in which the
eyes of John’s head in the Moreau watercolor are wide open and fix the girl in fear, whereas in Redon’s composition, the head is presented with eyes closed. Moreover, he suggests that the platter has changed from its position in Moreau’s painting, appearing in front of the face of John’s ghostly head. He observes that the executioner is missing in Redon’s composition and provides the following comparison of the female figure in Moreau’s painting and Redon’s drawing:

Salomé, qui dans le premier tableau est une femme aux membres fins, exprimant sa terreur par les mouvements plastiques d’une habile danseuse de ballet, est remplacée chez Redon par un être sombre, puissant et presque animal, à la lourde poitrine, qui contemple, immobile, cette apparition. Ici, comme dans les paysages suggestifs dont nous avons traité plus haut, règne l’immobilité absolue et visionnaire.  

Sandstrom’s insights are extremely perceptive, and they deserve some further attention and elaboration. This is particularly true of his comments on the differences between how the two artists handle the encounter between the floating image of John’s head and the figure of Salome. For example, in Moreau, "Les yeux sont grands ouverts et fixent la femme effrayée." Interestingly, Ragnar von Holten has interpreted one of Moreau’s drawings (Plate XII) as having switched the point of view so that the spectator is placed in the position of the hovering head, and thus confronts Salome directly in the manner as John’s head in the finished oil version. Huysmans, in his novel A rebours first spoke of the significance of John’s head fixing the glance of Salome
in Moreau’s watercolor, and his description of the painting has influenced subsequent readings. For example, José Pierre has provided the following analysis of Huysmans’s observations:

Herodias-Salome is then the eternal feminine challenging masculine nature manifested as power and lust (Herod) and as spirituality and chastity (John the Baptist). Gustave Moreau was so completely convinced of this that alone of all the poets who handled this theme he tried to invert the terms, or to be more precise, to conjure the castratory curse. The radiant, bloody head of the martyr who, in the watercolour of The Apparition, pierces the pretty, terrified dancer with a look, not unlike Oedipus’s expression confronting the Sphinx, is very different from any image that would inspire remorse. Let us turn again to Huysmans, who fully appreciated this: 'Eroticism and the terror of a human being were manifest in the unfeeling, pitiless statue, in the innocent and dangerous idol; the great lotus had disappeared, the goddess had vanished; an appalling nightmare was now suffocating the comedienne, entranced by the exchange, the courtesan, petrified, hypnotized by terror." The goddess of seduction and castration is no more than a frail, frightened mortal. The look of John the Baptist, like the glance Oedipus had once cast, represented the victory of the spirit over the flesh, of poetry over death. Now began the spiritual reign of Orpheus. 26

Whether one is willing to agree that Moreau’s tendencies in this direction are indeed so unique among the many artists to treat this subject, one must consider why Redon appears not to have embraced such an "inversion" of the theme. Nevertheless, Pierre has identified some of the larger issues at stake in such a confrontation -- or in Redon’s case, a significant "lack" of such a confrontation -- and a number of these issues have not been discussed in the context of Redon’s work. For example, one might ask whether this confrontation between "archetypal male and female forces" held any interest
for Redon, and in yet another context, why his depictions of Salome are so lacking in the usual sensuality, given the sexual import of this theme. Thus, discussion of some of these questions will be taken up again later, in the section on interpretation of this imagery.

Another of Sandstrom's observations about Redon's distinct approach bears comment here, however. This is his argument that this work clearly demonstrates Redon's self-definition as a visionary artist in contrast to those artists, such as Moreau, who remain tied to a dominant narrative. Thus, Sandstrom describes these distinguishing features of Redon's maturing style at the moment where he begins to move away from the influence of Moreau:

Juste à l'époque où ce fusain prit naissance Redon allait entièrement se libérer de l'influence directe de Moreau. Avec cette pièce il a déjà trouvé son style, celui d'un visionnaire, et il en est conscient. Chez Moreau c'est toujours le trait narratif qui domine; l'artiste décrit une vision, il la rend perceptible aux spectateurs, mais d'une manière un peu théâtrale. Redon, lui crée la vision."

Of course, Sandstrom is not alone in emphasizing the visionary character of Redon's art, as will subsequently become clear in this discussion, but using his assertions as a point of departure, an elaboration on those elements in Redon which contribute to a "visionary style" and serve as a distinguishing feature of his art will be undertaken.

There are at least three major ways in which Redon avoids being tied to a "dominant narrative," despite the fact that he is in many ways the most
literate of painters — by which is intended something a little different than to say that he is a "literary artist". The first of these has to do with his tendency towards a simplification of the composition which results in an emptying of details from the work. One of the more obvious ways that this feature of Redon's work can be observed is by comparing his drawing to what was probably Moreau's first preparatory oil sketch for his Salome paintings (ca.1970; Plate XI), a work which Redon probably did not see. Indeed, Redon's drawing is far closer in its overall compositional effect to the oil sketch than it is to Moreau's two Salon paintings, for in the sketch the architectural setting is indicated in only the most simple and suggestive manner, and that the artist has focused only on three main figures. Moreau, in the process of creating his final composition, has elaborated and embellished the basic elements contained in the beginning sketch. Of course, Redon has gone even further in the opposite direction, reducing the composition to two figures -- and as shall subsequently be shown, even to one partial figure -- for his favorite way to present this subject is to show a single, isolated severed head. Redon's charcoal appears even more drastically reductive when compared to Moreau's source for the sketch, The Beheading of John the Baptist (1869) by Puvis de Chavannes (Plates XIII and XIV) which offers an extremely narrative depiction of the execution scene complete with saintly (and other) attributes. Moreover, Sandstrom's identification of a concern with a "dominant narrative", can be seen in both Moreau and Puvis in so much that each work is always
recognizable according to a specific time and place within the narrative. In fact, when viewed together, Moreau's many works on this theme can be arranged sequentially into various episodes from the narrative, leading von Holten to make analogies between the artist's approach and that to later be found in the cinema: "voilà, comme au cinéma, trois plans successifs et complémentaires du déroulement d'une même action."²⁹ Pierre has also commented upon this "episodic" quality in Moreau:

When Huysmans saw *The Apparition* as the sequel to the episode of Salome dancing before Herod, he had discovered one of Moreau's methods, which could modify the limitations of 'succession' as Ragnar von Holten has called it and as it is described in *Laocoon*. When Moreau was obsessed by a subject, he would paint different moments of the story as it developed. Dynamism in the single painting did not interest Moreau, but in a series of paintings on the same subject it is introduced in an original manner, which not only shifts the position of the subject in time but also changes the point of view. The theme of Salome undoubtedly offers the greatest variety of this kind; the tone changes with the different mediums of charcoal, pen and ink, pencil, watercolour and oil ...³⁰

By contrast, Redon's works remain intractable to such an analysis. In placing before his viewer a vision which appears mysteriously to exist in the here and now, and which might haunt the viewer in the same way it seems to have haunted him, Redon places his image out of time, and thus, his work is not confined to a moment within a historical narrative as in the case of Moreau. Thus, the confrontation between the viewer and Redon's apparition always takes place in the present, for even if the image has a history, Redon has
attempted to erase the extraneous details which might allow us to trace this history, and thus, he forces us back into a direct confrontation with the scene before us.

If the first device used by Redon to break away from a "dominant narrative" results from an emptying of secondary details and saintly attributes from the composition, then the second such device is a bi-product of the first. This has to do with a delimitation of the subject matter which is achieved in various ways. In Redon's later works, this delimitation, will often be achieved by a "synthesis" of various sources such as grafting images from Greek mythology onto biblical imagery -- as will be shown in Chapter Three, John the Baptist's severed head will be conflated with that of Orpheus. In the present context, however, Redon's tendency to simplify the settings of his compositions and focus on one or two basic objects or characters results in a stripping away of the religious context, so that the subject is deliberately obscured, making it at once more mystical and suggestive. Françoise Garcia has provided a very articulate description of this process in her analysis of L'Apparition (Plate VIII), in the Bordeaux catalogue of 1985:

A la place de la somptuosité du décor, des costumes et de la beauté ondoyante de Salomé, Redon réduit l'espace architectural à une sorte de temple monumental, austère et froid où seule une femme, figée dans un statisme sculptural, contemple l'apparition silencieuse d'une figure aux yeux clos auréolée d'une gloire aux rayons noirs. Le souvenir du plateau sur lequel Salomé avait recueilli la tête de Saint Jean subsiste, mais prend la forme d'un soleil noir dont la sphère centrale glisse devant le visage du Saint, le découvrant dans sa lumière.
Ironically, while Redon refuses the very type of physical enhancement of the work of art which might come from an addition of the orientalizing decorative details favored by Moreau, Garcia has found a certain Asian spirituality in the metaphysical aspects of Redon’s charcoal drawing. Moreau used secondary details first to set an exotic time and place for his work, and secondly, he used them as a sort of symbolic foil to play against the larger theme. For example, in the large oil, Moreau has included a scene on a panel at the left with a sphinx holding a male victim in its clutches, a dark commentary on Salome’s seduction of Herod, and Salome wears heads around her waist to call attention to her role as femme fatale. The effect of all these elements is to provide a commentary which is much like that found in the medieval use of classical themes as a foil for the predominant Christian iconography. Redon, by contrast creates a more open space, free of these determinate details, which allows for a freer association of meanings and creates an environment for a "suggestive art." This also permits a mingling of themes, the type of place where east and west can meet. But, whereas in Redon it is possible to speak of a synthesis of themes, it is only Moreau’s "successful synthesis of precise delineation and free handling of oil pigment" which the Moreau scholar Julius Kaplan refers to as one of that artist’s most positive achievements, and in fact, it is this very
thing in Moreau which fixes the narrative and which ties visual perception to literary text. By contrast, Redon's choice and handling of medium is one of his major means of subverting a "dominant narrative" rather than using it, as Moreau does, as a means of fixing the narrative in time and place. Thus, his use of medium leads to a discussion of the third device whereby Redon averts the fixed narrative identified by Sandstrom: specifically the way he uses the medium to create a "visionary art."

Despite the fact that Redon's source was a watercolor, a medium lending itself to much spontaneity, just the opposite result has occurred. One of the dominant features of Moreau's use of the medium has been his ability to suggest the scintillating surfaces of the jewels worn by Salome. Just as real jewels admit light into their translucent materials thus heightening their brilliance, the transparency of Moreau's watercolor lends itself to seeing the drawing under the surface, which is the artist's real means of creating his rich details. Moreover, he has added certain details with pen and ink. Even the painting by Puvis, which was the ultimate source for Moreau, while having been created in oil, was handled as though it were a timeless fresco. The preferred medium of Redon was charcoal, which has allowed him to create a dark, suggestive realm in which none of the details are too carefully fixed, and he has exploited the mysterious qualities of this medium to place before the viewer an image which might be read as an actual apparition. Indeed, the phantom-like qualities inherent in the charcoal medium allow Redon to place
before us a scene which is received not as though filtered through the eyes of an exotic princess -- which is the case with Moreau -- but rather which confronts the viewer directly. Specifically, it is the change from the profile placement in Moreau -- directed towards Salome -- to the frontal placement in Redon's apparition. Once again, this is a reminder that Redon wished to reproduce the effect of an apparition which had actually haunted him, while Moreau represents the scene as an account which has been described to him, and as one which is being described to the viewer in all its temporal and topological details. With Moreau, the attention paid to detail, which describes the narrative with as much specificity as possible, suggests that the artist is describing to us something which happened in times past, and is now being reconstructed for the viewer. Redon, by contrast, has presented us with a vision that appears before us in the present and is disturbing beyond the assistance of any text.

Indeed, perhaps this use of the medium of charcoal as much as any thing else, has, to use Sandstrom's expression, provided a self-definition of Redon as a visionary artist not tied to a "dominant narrative." Thus, many writers on Redon have commented upon this "visionary quality". Speaking of the influence of Redon's choice of medium, Roseline Bacou stated that:

Redon est essentiellement un visionnaire; c'est-à-dire que dans le processus de la création artistique le branle est donné pour Redon non par une pensée, mais par une image qui s'impose à lui dans une brusque illumination. Pour garder toute sa vivacité première,
Bacou even attributes Redon's abandonment of etching to the lack of immediacy in the medium, and she also believes that "Pour cet artiste essentiellement visionnaire, le point initiale n'est pas une idée, mais une image. Cette image s'impose à lui avec une extraordinaire intensité, pendant ces moments d'exaltation et de fièvre qui le laisse épuisé ...".37

Breaking from a "dominant narrative" by an emptying out of details, refusing an episodic reference to a moment in time past, creating a suggestive art and deliberately creating ambiguous subject matter, and forcing us to deal with the work of art as a visual phenomena existing in the present, Redon achieves a very sophisticated "decontextualization". In his own writings, Redon makes reference to this general tendency:

Le sens du mystère, c'est d'être tout le temps dans l'équivoque, dans les double, triple aspects, des soupçons d'aspect (images dans images), formes qui vont être, ou qui le seront selon l'état d'esprit du regardeur. Toutes choses plus que suggestives, puisqu'elles apparaissent.

Mais ce sens appliqué à la peinture demande chez l'artiste un tact, une mesure infinie plus que pour tout autre, et le public ne s'en doute pas. C'est un art qui demande, plus que pour tous les autres, un artiste conscient à toutes les minutes de sa gestation.38

This "decontextualization" is an important factor in distinguishing Redon's art from that of many of his contemporaries. In fact, the very idea of
"literary art" and the idea of "artist as illustrator" were issues which not only haunted the criticism of Redon's work in the 1880s and 1890s, but also was of great concern to the artist in his own writings. However, the way that subsequent scholars have approached this aspect of his art, and the artist's guarded comments on it, have been problematic.

For most of these writers on Redon, this emphasis upon the role played by the "mediumistic" development of the image is crucial for another reason: it plays an important role in emphasizing not just the "visionary," but the "visual" element in Redon's art. This distinction between the "literary" and "visual" aspects which has concerned most art historians studying Redon's art in the last century has taken on a significance primarily because of the strong influence of formalism -- and its call for a "purity of medium" as a trademark of quality. Interestingly, even in the studies of Lois Boe Hyslop, which have been the most successful in showing -- starting from an interest in the literature of the period -- the extent to which Redon did use specific literary passages as his source, she is careful to observe these ground rules:

It is important to note that, except upon a few occasions, Redon's imagination was activated not so much by the ideas or concepts in what he read as by its imagery, whether expressed or merely suggested.\textsuperscript{39}

Thus, she qualifies her investigation by quoting from the following art historians. For example, she notes Alfred Werner's assertion (based mainly on Redon's own writings) that "A word or phrase dropped into his mind has
started a train of images which have a life of their own, with only the most tenuous connection with the story, dramatic scene or poem the title refers to. Moreover, she makes use of the passage from Bacou quoted above, and adds that Sandstrom found in Redon's oeuvre a "glissement d'idées qui la caractérise ayant pour effet d'éloigner de toute allusion littéraire trop manifeste. Le point de départ, ainsi que le titre de l'image, est une clef d'ouverture et non la description du sujet." It is really only with the recent scholarship of Dario Gamboni that any direct confrontation with these issues and their implications for the study of Redon can be found.

In his book *La Plume et le pinceau; Odilon Redon et la littérature* (1989), Gamboni has suggested that an understanding of the complex relationships between art and literature in the late nineteenth century is crucial for a more complete understanding of Redon and his work. Gamboni argues that at the same time that artists were breaking away from the official rule of the academies and the annual Salon exhibitions, they were becoming somewhat dependant upon the critics who championed the avant-garde. For this reason, Gamboni has spoken of a certain "subjection of visual arts to written art -- in this case to the system "marchand-critique." Therefore Gamboni's argument is that just as the visual artists began to achieve a certain independence from classical rules, academy, and state, they became increasingly dependent upon critics for legitimation. The result of this, when considering many of these visual artists' movement towards independence, is a number of conflicts
between "la plume et le pinceau." In many ways, Redon's art is at the intersection of these conflicts.

Gamboni's scholarship in this context is very important for several reasons: 1) it questions the way in which Redon's own writings and protestations (most of them appearing later in his life) against certain approaches to his art are inconsistent with historical facts; 2) it questions the extent to which the major monographs on the artist (written in the fifties) have basically respected Redon's demands (and perhaps those of his surviving family members); 3) it suggests the very complex relationship between literary and artistic figures such as Huysmans, Mallarmé and Redon, for example, and the interplay between the "fields" of "visual arts" and "literature" in the fin-de-siècle period. Gamboni's study is also extremely important for anyone interested in further investigating the meaning and possible interpretations of Redon's art, for the view the artist forwarded of himself and the one which his main biographers (with the possible exception being Sandstrom) have followed has tended to limit certain areas of inquiry.

What Gamboni's research reveals is that a careful consideration of the "literary context" of Redon's work, far from devaluing his work and rather than distracting from the artist's contributions, is in fact the only real means to achieve a greater understanding of his visual production. For this reason, before leaving the discussion of the apparition theme, which is intimately involved with the question of creating both a visionary art and with a "visual"
approach to art making, it should be useful to briefly examine the literary background from which Redon's apparition theme emerges.

To begin this examination a comparison, parallel to the one just made between Gustave Moreau's and Redon's varying approaches to Salome, should be made between two of the major literary figures of the period, both of whom had a great impact upon the art of Redon. This comparison would involve Gustave Flaubert, whose short story "Hérodias" was published in 1877, and Stéphane Mallarmé, whose poem "Hérodiade" was still incomplete at the time of his death, but which had appeared in various forms, most notably in the same context as Moreau's and Redon's works, in Huysmans's novel A Rebours of 1884.

Perhaps the best comparison of the differing approaches of Flaubert and Mallarmé is provided by J.D. Hubert in the article "Representations of Decapitation: Mallarmé's 'Hérodiade' and Flaubert's 'Hérodias'." What soon becomes apparent from Hubert's analysis is that the same "decontextualization" that presents difficulties for the recognition of specific subject matter in Redon is similarly problematic in Mallarmé. This is how Hubert presents the comparison, beginning with Mallarmé's text:

In the first two parts of "Hérodiade," which deals essentially with poetic creation, only the title and the identity of the protagonist indicate any close association with the beheading of John the Baptist. Flaubert, whose tale simply teems with biblical places, characters, and actions, never swerves from the crucial event. It would seem that the author has accumulated an
overwhelming amount of detail so as to show how masterfully he can impose order and build up tension.45

Furthermore, Hubert states that "Mallarmé has divested the beheading of all but its plastic homologies" and concludes that "the swish of the scythe, the bounce of the bloody pate lose, through spatial and festive associations, all the emotional aspects that a narrative of martyrdom would normally convey."46

This comparison would appear to parallel the differences between Moreau's very detail-oriented approach, which is closer to Flaubert (Moreau's Salomé painting was probably influenced by Flaubert's Salammbo), and Redon's more "suggestive" approach, which shares a great deal with Mallarmé. Although Redon was very interested in the work of both writers, having dedicated at least three lithographic albums to Flaubert and his Temptation of Saint Anthony and having been a member of Mallarmé's circle of friends, "Les Mardis," Redon's attitude and working method display far more similarities with those of Mallarmé. In fact, the closeness of the two was such that Maurice Denis has been quoted as saying that Redon was "precisely the Mallarmé of painting."47 A consideration of these similarities will provide a number of useful insights into how each artist's means of making art has contributed to the articulation of meaning for the subject matter chosen.

Both artists were very interested in a "suggestive approach" to their respective arts. For example, Mallarmé has been quoted as saying that "Nommer un objet, c'est supprimer les trois quarts de la jouissance du poème
qui est faite de deviner peu à peu: le *suggérer*, voila le rêve..." This is very similar in spirit to Redon’s remark, quoted in its entirety above, that:

> Le sens du mystère, c’est d’être tout le temps dans l’équivoque, dans les double, triple aspects, des soupçons d’aspect (image dans images), formes qui vont être, ou qui le seront selon l’état d’esprit du regardeur. Toutes choses plus que suggestives, puis qu’elles apparaissent.\(^{49}\)

Perhaps because of this aspect of their work, in which one image or one theme could lead to another, both artists’ recorded their private impressions of the difficulty they experienced in starting this process of association at the work’s inception. This difficulty may find its most clearly visible manifestation in both artists’ stated abhorrence in approaching a blank sheet of white paper. For example, Mallarmé has described this approach as having an effect of paralysis.\(^{50}\) And although such information about the creative process was almost impossible to obtain from Redon, despite the many inquiries about it, ultimately he was coerced into an expression of similar sentiments. Displaying a reticence about revealing anything of this nature and preferring to hide behind his belief that "... il est bon d’entourer tout genèse d’un mystère," Redon ultimately responded when pressed on this matter by his friend and first biographer, André Mellerio:

> Voilà trente ans qu’on me pose cette question. Vous ne sauriez croire combien elle effarouche ma pudeur. Je n’y ai jamais répondu. A quoi bon révéler autre chose que le résultat.\(^{51}\)
Finally, bowing to Mellerio’s persistent requests, Redon grudgingly offered a few words about his working methods, but only by way of speaking about the difficulty in starting the creative process:

Je puis vous confier toutefois, si bon vous semble, des particularités invincibles de ma nature. Ainsi j’ai horreur d’une feuille de papier blanc. Elle m’impressionne désagréablement jusqu’à me rendre stérile, jusqu’à m’ôter le goût du travail (sauf le cas ... où je me propose de représenter quelque chose de réel) une feuille de papier me choque tant, que je suis obligé, dès qu’elle est sur le chevalet, de la griffonner de charbon, de crayon, ou de toute autre matière, et cette opération lui donne vie.52

The result of this factor for both artists has been to lead to a production of works in which the both the process of artistic creation as well as the adventure of discovery for the viewer/reader are foregrounded. In Mallarmé’s work, this process has involved a new sense of syntax, and has led to a creation of poetry in which the associative source words, their etymologies, their use of unusual rhymes, homonymic puns, and even a break down of the individual word into its component syllables and phonemes to create new words suggest unexpected meanings and formal combinations. This led to a creative process in which the structure of language itself is constantly brought into question. Mallarmé created poems such as the "Sonnet en yx" with its infamous inclusion of the word "ptyx," a single word provided the point of departure for a whole poem:

... la plus belle page de mon œuvre sera celle qui ne contiendra que ce nom divin Hérodiade. Le peu d’inspiration que j’ai eu, je le
This word was indeed rich with many connotations and endless regenerations, for it has been suggested that "Éros, rose, grenade" are all "sound analogies which suggested love and death to the poet," and that the sound "diade" would have related to the "purity and hardness of gems through and association with the words "diamant" or "diademe". In the generation of his poem "Hérodiade" Mallarmé continuously reinvented new meanings and associations from this word.

For Redon, the process of starting out with a sort of scribbling on the paper (or in the case of charcoal, rubbing it onto the surface in indeterminate shapes), so as to break away from the white, empty page, and then following the suggestive association of the resulting forms, has led to works of art which reveal various layers of imagery. Careful viewing of his drawings and lithographs reveals that subtle traces of floating heads or other fantastic beings suddenly appear under the surface of his works. Dario Gamboni has discussed the proposal by Gert Mattenklott that this approach in Redon's work should be referred to as "archéologique" and he discusses the artist's tendency to:

... faire apparaître dans le noir des parties de corps, d'objets et de figures, comme s'ils s'étaient trouvés depuis longtemps enfouis dans l'obscurité et représentaient les fragments d'une unité désormais impossible à reconstruire.
Ultimately, what is interesting about this approach in the present context is that it is extremely appropriate to treatments of the "Apparition" theme. Certainly one of the reasons that Redon has been able to create the effect that the severed head of John floats before us in these works, suggesting an event taking place in the immediate present as opposed to being presented as the description of a historical moment, is because the serious viewer of his art is constantly engaged in just such an act of discovering the "apparition" of various suggestive shapes under the surface. What this permits for Redon — and the same is basically true for Mallarmé in his poetic creations — is the opportunity to employ the mine of knowledge he has gained from his very rich intellectual life, but to subject these ideas, be they literary or other, to the formal process and limits of his artistic medium. Thus, it seems silly to argue, as have Bacou and others, that Redon's work does not start with an idea, but with an image ("... non par une pensée, mais par une image qui s'impose à lui dans une brusque illumination..."), for in reality, the artist's mind is constantly working through a complex range of suggestions at the same time that he is manipulating his visual forms and creating the final image.

Moreover, Gamboni notes that this approach has important implications for the spectator of Redon's works:

Cette pratique reconduit au niveau de l'oeuvre achevée et pour le spectateur un processus d'"invention" de l'image fondé sur le phénomène de projections inhérent à la perception, tel que Léonard l'a déjà défini dans le concept de *componimento inculto* et
The relationship of this approach to Leonardo's use of views of clouds and walls as "supports de l'imagination" is very interesting when it is considered that Redon had followed a similar approach since infancy:

Mon père me disait souvent: «Vois ces nuages, y discernes-tu, comme moi, des formes changeantes?» Et il me montrait alors, dans le ciel muable, des apparitions d'êtres bizarres, chimériques et merveilleux.®

And Redon tells how his mentor Rodolphe Bresdin, during his early years of artistic development in Bordeaux, suggested a similar source of inspiration could be found in watching the flames in a fireplace:

Il me dit une fois, sur un ton d'autorité douce: "Voyez ce tuyau de cheminée, que vous dit-il? Il me raconte à moi une légende. Si vous avez la force de le bien observer et de le comprendre, imaginez le sujet le plus étrange, le plus bizarre, s'il est basé et s'il rest dans les limites de ce simple pan de mur, votre rêve sera vivant. L'art est là." Bresdin me tenait ce propos en 1864. J'en note la date parce que ce n'est pas ainsi que l'on enseignait en ce moment-là.®

Of course, this process has a number interesting parallels to other developments at the time. For example, during this very period, Freud was laying the framework for his psychoanalytic theories which were to find similar analogies in archeology. In addition, the creative process as Redon describes it is very similar to the way in which Freud "tried to picture the
functioning of the perceptual apparatus of our mind" by calling upon the analogy of the "Mystic Writing-Pad."\textsuperscript{59}

In her analysis of the working process of Mallarmé, Mary Ellen Wolf has noted similar analogies between the poet's "self-analysis" and Freudian ideas. In her discussion of Mallarmé's "Hérodiade", which could possibly have been a source for Redon's own treatments of the John the Baptist theme, she makes frequent use of these concepts borrowed from psycho-analysis. Commenting upon the finale of the poem, the "Cantique de Saint Jean", she analyzes in some length the relationship of the severing of John's head to Freud's "castration complex".\textsuperscript{60} Then, following from Derrida's writings (which could in turn be traced back to Mallarmé's own deliberations), she provides a fascinating breakdown of the very mechanics of writing and reveals the internal "cutting" or "editing" of the text and the interplay of its different versions which are analogous to the decapitation it describes:

Elaborating castration as part of the process of creative dissemination, Derrida (GLAS and Dissemination) shows how writing performs the continual loss/cutting-spacing and dispersal of the Word. The metaphorical system that best illustrates the process is, of course, the language of fruits and flowers.

Thus, she suggests that meaning of the severed head motif in the poem is also analogous to the poet's struggle in its creation, which had brought him face to face with "le Néant" and thus, the blank space of the white page:
What is of interest here is the relationship between the production of poetry and extensive self-analysis. Mallarmé is clearer about this when he informs Renaud that his work requires prolonged hours of "rêverie" and that he is still in the process of locating "certains poèmes intérieurs". Yet, it is precisely the locating of such inner texts that brings the poet face to face with Nothingness: "Malheureusement, en creusant le vers à ce point, j'ai rencontré ... le Néant."\(^6\)

Wolf concludes that the effect of this will be that "Henceforth, all of Mallarmé's metaphors for the creative act will be colored by a sense of impotence, separation and loss." Thus, she sees the theme of "decollation" as having the following effect:

> Tantamount to a clean separation between matter and spirit, the saint's decollation would enable the formation of a transcendent literary space, a divine synthesis between "la beauté pure et l'effrayant génie."\(^6\)

But despite the various dangers of "impotence, separation and loss" which has resulted from Mallarmé's innovative working methods, Wolf also points out that the theme of "castration/decapitation" has also had a regenerative meaning for the poet and his work. This is realized from her analysis of the appearance of the "scythe of Kronos" in Mallarmé's "Cantique de Saint-Jean". Not only is Kronos castrated by his own son Zeus (just as Kronos had gelded his own father Ouranos), "cast into the sea, the genitals of Kronos created a foamy water that gave birth to Aphrodite." Wolf asserts that it was this part of
the myth which appealed to Mallarmé because it revealed a "productive aspect of castration" which would balance the negative effect referred to above.\textsuperscript{63}

Having established the parallel nature of Redon's and Mallarmé's creative processes -- albeit with an acknowledgement of the idiosyncratic differences of their respective arts -- it would be fruitful (no pun intended) to apply a similar analysis to Redon's own preoccupation with the severed head theme. Derrida's elaboration of "castration as part of the process of creative disseminat"ction" could be applied to the visual arts, by a translation of his idea that "writing performs the continual loss/cutting-spacing and dispersal of the Word" to Redon's manner of creating visual images of severed heads and their apparitions. For example, in the execution of such images, is it not true that the artist has indeed re-enacted a sort of "execution" or "loss/cutting-spacing" of the head which is analogous to the act of decapitation? In many of these works, the head appears to be severed or the body missing from the head, only because of Redon's working process (Plate LXXIII), which as was described, begins with the creation of certain images, and then goes through a process of editing or "cutting out" certain parts of these images. Mattenklott has argued, Redon would

\[... \text{faire apparaître dans le noir des parties de corps, d'objets et de figures, comme s'ils s'étaient trouvés depuis longtemps enfouis dans l'obscurité et représentaient les fragments d'une unité désormais impossible à reconstruire.}\textsuperscript{64} \]
In fact, the very way that Redon presents the image to the spectator suggests a cutting off of the picture at the frame which blocks the viewer's entry into the work of art, and thus does not permit any closer access to the apparition which appears before the viewer. Later on, a discussion of this very process will be taken up again in an analysis of the way it relates to the Impressionists' cropping of the picture, which would, at least on the surface, appear to present a nice analogy in painting to Derrida's description of the way that "writing performs the continual loss/cutting/spacing and dispersal of the Word". For now, it should be sufficient to say that, in this process, Redon has created a "transcendent visual space" which is a rough translation of Mallarmé's "transcendent literary space". But before leaving the model offered by Derrida and its interpretation by Wolf, it should be noted that if Redon's act in the "execution" of heads is analogous to the act of writing which the model describes, then perhaps an analogy should be made between the severed head and Redon's presentation of bouquets of flowers so that the cutting of the stem of a flower, or the presentation of a "piece" of fruit on a saucer might take on a connotation very similar to that of the head which is severed. This analogy takes on all the more relevance because of Derrida's assertion that "the metaphorical system that best illustrates the process is, of course, the language of fruits and flowers." Working backwards from such a model, it is possible to suggest that a drawing bearing the title L'Apparition (Plate LXXIV), but which shows a head on the stem of a flower, or a small still life painting of a
pomegranate — the "grenade" from "Hérodiade" on a saucer (Plate LXXV), might be works which provide links between Redon's earlier depictions of the severed head of John the Baptist and the later imagery which is dominated by imagery of flowers (Plate LXXVI and Plate LXXVII)!

If the connections suggested here seem a bit too "learned" at times, they are certainly not out of character for the operations of Mallarmé. Perhaps Redon would have been delighted with the multiplicity of aspects that this comparison with Mallarmé would suggest. It should be remembered that the artist was a regular member of the weekly meetings of friends, "Les Mardis," and that moreover, he was a close personal friend and neighbor of the poet at Valvins, near Fontainbleau. Given the characteristic description of Mallarmé's eloquent talks at these gatherings, perhaps it should be concluded that Redon had access to a great deal of Mallarmé's "work in progress." Thus, it seems inevitable that future studies will further investigate this relationship which has been treated here in only a most summary fashion. Nevertheless, it is clear that Redon was influenced by "Hérodiade", a text which has been noted in the scholarship to have been one of the books forming the artist's "bibliothèque de chevet". Moreover, poems such as the early "Apparition" should not be overlooked as possible sources for Redon. For example, in "Apparition" the words "blancs sanglots" and the phrase "Ma songerie aimant à me martyriser" which refer to a lover's kiss, may suggest the same type of sexual interplay found in John's own martyrdom, despite the fact that in the
poem the martyrdom referred to seems to be figurative and not literal. As for the other complex issues which have come up from Wolf's pairing of Mallarmé's "self-analysis" and the origins of "psycho-analysis," an attempt to provide a similar context for their discussion in relation to Redon's work will be made in Chapter Two. For now, it is possible to add other works to the "catalogue" based on the compositional type of the "apparition."

iii. Other Apparitions

Having discussed the "Apparition" as a basic compositional type in Redon's work and having examined its iconographical development, attention is now turned to other examples related to this type. For unlike the first compositional type encountered, as exemplified by the Kansas City drawing (Plate I) and where there is only one specific work fitting the type, a number of works are related to the "Apparition" scene as it first appeared in Redon's 1883 charcoal. These works show an apparition in a variety of contexts.

Redon's charcoal drawing, L'Apparition, (Plate XXI; Ian Woodner Family Collection) is perhaps the earliest example, after the Bordeaux charcoal of 1883, to treat this theme and it also bears a number of striking similarities with that work in spite of some obvious differences. For example, again a single, solitary figure standing in an empty space is seen. This architectural interior is defined by a single column which is immediately behind the figure, whose cylindrical form in turn echoes its shape. The rest of the surrounding space is filled with
shadows. The actual subject is very enigmatic and it is difficult to be sure who is represented here. Is it a Herod figure, an executioner, a priest? Perhaps the plump features, especially visible in the appearance of the face suggest that the figure should be placed among those other revelers at Herod’s feast, as described in Flaubert’s story (perhaps the gluttonous figure of Herod’s son?). The details of the figure’s dress and even its sex are difficult to distinguish with certainty, but it seems possible that it is a male figure standing in ecclesiastical gown, and wearing what appears to be a bishop’s miter. Interestingly, the top edge of the headdress appears as sharp a blade. Rays of light seem to emanate from the head of the figure. If it were not for the slight, but still significant, discrepancy in size, this work could be a pendant to the slightly larger Bordeaux charcoal. Ultimately, it must be admitted that the ability at present to elaborate upon the work’s subject is very limited, and it must be acknowledged that even the date and title of this work, like so many by Redon, is difficult to verify with any degree of certainty.69

Another Apparition, also in the Ian Woodner Family collection (Plate XXII) is closer to the subject represented in the 1883 charcoal, for it contains what appears to be -- at least at first glance -- a female nude, at least one floating head, and a similar architectural space which would appear to be an interior, indicated without much detail. The most obvious difference here, however, is the direct engagement between the gaze of the nude and the viewer of the work. This is Redon’s only work even remotely related to the
Salome theme which permits this type of direct eye contact. As a matter of fact, such direct eye contact between the viewer and female figures in general is extremely rare in the artist's oeuvre. It is far more common that his female figures are shown, if not with eyes closed -- one of Redon's major themes -- then with head bowed and the eyes turned away from the viewer. There are several examples of this latter tendency, the most famous being of course the oil painting, *Les yeux clos*. It is supposedly based on a portrait of the artist's wife (Plate XXIII), but interestingly has as its compositional source the head of Michelangelo's *Dying Slave* (Plate XXIV) now in the Louvre. There are numerous other subjects, such as his *Pandora* (Plate XXV) where not only the eyes closed but also the head is passively inclined, or *Ophelia* (Plate XXVI), a theme recently analyzed at length by Bram Dijkstra by describing the appeal of the sickly or sleeping woman to male artists of the period. Finally, there is a whole group of works which serve either as portraits or as women placed in an aureole of flowers in which only a profile view of the subject is presented (Plate XXVII). This problematic handling of the gaze in Redon's work will be returned to a bit later, but for now it can also be noted that there are some other disturbing features of this *Apparition*.

Previously noted have been the "mediumistic" quality of Redon's work, and his manner of building up the compositions in such a way that it is often possible for us to read shapes and images drawn underneath the surface of his works -- an approach which, as discussed above, Gert Mattenlock has called
"archéologique". In the present example, which would at first appearance would seem to qualify as an "apparition" very close to the representation of the Salome theme as found in the Bordeaux charcoal, it should be noted that these various layers of image lead one, after closer examination to conclude that where a female nude is expected to be standing in the place of the Salome of the previous composition, a bearded woman is confronted instead. In all fairness it should be acknowledged that this work bears the mark of incompleteness, and that some of its ambiguity might be attributed to this factor. Nevertheless, the sexual interplay between male and female is interesting, for as shall be shown in the subsequent analysis, one of the major issues in recent discussions of the representation of the Salome theme during the fin-de-siècle dealt with the "unveiling" of sexual difference and the manner in which the dynamics of the gaze activates this process.

Another work by Redon, an oil painting bearing the same title, will also be relevant to the discussion of these issues. In this work (Plate XXVIII), now in the Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller in Holland, another bearded figure is found, but, this time, it is clear that the usual sexual roles in the "apparition scene" have changed. In the place of the standing figure of Salome which was first encountered in the 1883 Bordeaux charcoal, now a standing male figure is seen; before him appears an apparition of a partial female figure -- not merely an isolated head, but rather a nude body shown down to just below the waist. Interestingly, in another work of 1883 by the Belgian artist Fernand Khnopff
(Plate XXIX), there is a confrontation between a male figure and a female figure who appears as a sort of an apparition, being surrounded by light. However, Khnopff has cast the female in the role of temptress, for his work is titled *After Flaubert* or *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*. One major difference in Khnopff's composition is that the male and female figures are placed differently with respect to left and right, something which remains remarkably consistent in Redon's various apparitions (leading to the question of whether this placement has some deeper significance). There is, nevertheless, one key variation in this apparition by Redon from his other treatments of the type. The male figure encounters his vision not within the confines of an architectural interior, but in what appears to be the out-of-doors. This too would seem to be a reversal of a sexual nature, especially given the common nineteenth-century equation of "nature and woman" and given the tendency to identify architecture with the "male principle" especially as seen in the discussions of Moreau's paintings (Plates IX and X) which served as Redon's ultimate source. For example, Mathieu analyzed the architecture as follows:

The spectator is disconcerted by this array of symbols taken from so many different religious sources without any concern for historical accuracy, and this in a period which prided itself on careful archaeological reconstruction. The atmosphere of mystery and sensuality is heightened by the rays of diffused light coming down from the vaulting, the withered flowers lying on the reddish floor, the presence of the executioner with his face concealed like that of a harem guardian, holding a long sword in one hand and a short cord in the other, the smoke rising lazily from the incense-burner, and the ornamental columns and colonnettes which stand like so many phallic symbols.
Interestingly, the only architectural element appearing in Redon’s other apparitions which can be said to come from the riches of Moreau’s architectural interiors as described above is the column. Moreover, it appears also in a number of other works as the sole defining principle of the architecture, and significantly in a lithograph from the series *Dans le rêve* which Sandstrom considers to be strongly related in subject to the theme of the apparition: *Vision* (Plate XXX).78

Two other oil paintings bear the title *Apparition*, but in them, the composition has been altered considerably from that of the original charcoal drawing of the theme. In the first (Plate XXXI), now in the Princeton University Art Museum, it would appear that there is not an encounter between male and female, but rather, judging from the garments of two figures, between two women who stand on a threshold space at the top of a stairway. While they are clothed in white and, while the one of them seems to radiate a white light, most of the composition is now filled with an explosion of colorful flowers and butterflies. Thus, despite the air of mystery and the possible suggestion of initiation into some sort of secret rite, there is little here to tie the work specifically to Redon’s other apparitions.

The other example (Plate XXXII), now in the Ian Woodner Family Collection also shows two figures, but it is almost impossible to speak of their sexual identity. While it may bear some resemblance to earlier compositions such as the lithograph *Hantise* (Plate XXXIII), where a demonic male figure
comes upon a female figure, there appears to be a very different emphasis here, as though in his later works, the interest in the brilliant color and the material of the oil paint became more of a focus for the way that he might deal with a golden and yet mysterious light. Of course the operative principle of "decontextualization" should also be kept in mind when dealing with even these very late works, for it is quite possible that they utilize a "vocabulary of images" derived from earlier ones. The difficulty in reading these with any specificity may simply result from the artist's greater refinement of the themes which haunted his imagination in less subtle ways in the earlier work. For example, the relation of this painting to the earlier lithograph mentioned here and that work's depiction of an encounter between a female and a demon which connotes an "Edenic" situation with all of its attendant, but problematic revelations of sexual difference could suggest that even at this later and more poetic moment of Redon's career the apparition is a theme which points towards the problematic nature of the gaze, especially in the context of sexual identity and interplay.

iv. The Head on a Platter: Alone

As has been observed above, in his treatment of the Salome/John the Baptist theme Redon has preferred to focus on very simple, direct images of the subject. In those works where he includes more than one figure in the composition, he tends to empty out the usual narrative details, even when he
is obviously using as his point of departure a work so rich in its embellishments as one of Moreau’s watercolors. More characteristic for Redon, however, is his tendency to focus upon a solitary figure, or as in the instances that will be treated here, to one partial figure: the isolated image of a severed head on a platter. The saint’s head is often shown without attributes and with no other humans present.

A good example of this approach, and in fact one of the only works which can be connected with some specificity to the St. John the Baptist subject is an early pencil drawing. Now in the Ian Woodner Family Collection, it is simply titled, *Tête de Saint Jean* (Plate XXXVIII). In it, an image of a severed head on a platter is found. There is no sign of blood, and the only other details seem to be from a sort of "under (or over?)-sketch". This detail is of two figures, difficult to make out, but with the one at the left reclining and the other perhaps sitting up beside it. They appear before a background of mountains. This scene is similar to Redon’s early drawings showing figures in the Pyrenees. Could they be an Adam and Eve? Are they Salome and John? It is very hard to tell. Perhaps Gott is correct to see it as a "superimposed sketch for a Deposition of Christ design." The head itself, which makes up the main image, has closed eyes and seems to have a sort of aura around it.

Even here, the specific subject of the work has been drawn into question. Anne Guérin, writing in the catalogue for the 1985 Bordeaux Redon exhibition ascribes the source of the work to Moreau’s *L’Apparition*, but
describes the drawing as having only a "lightly religious accent": "cette mine de plomb laisse transparaître un léger accent religieux." But even though she ultimately accepts that Redon followed the traditional Christian iconography, Guérin perceptively notes that Redon has also been influenced very much by personal events, and was willing to use the traditional iconography as a point of departure to deal with these:

Les nouvelles idées du catholicisme qui s’empara de la France dans les années 1890, la foi de certains de ses plus fidèles amis, Huysmans, Jammes, Denis, ne sont sans doute pas étrangères à l’intrusion de ce thème dans la production de cette époque. La perte de proches dut jouer également un rôle prépondérant dans cet élan mystique. Redon ne s’écarte pas du schéma iconographique chrétien traditionnel et représente la tête de Saint Jean-Baptiste, les yeux clos, les traits apaisés et détendus. Ce motif (qu’il reprendra souvent pour des thèmes païens) lui permet de symboliser et d’affirmer la pérénnité de l’âme au-delà même de la mort.83

In seeking to further clarify the question of the painting’s subject, one might turn again to an iconographical source. Both Ted Gott84 and Kunio Motoë85 have identified the immediate source for the Woodner drawing as a painting by the Renaissance artist Andrea Solario. In fact, rather than Solario’s Head of St. John the Baptist, a 16th-century panel painting now in the Louvre (Plate XXXIX) offered by Motoë as the source, Redon may have been more directly influenced by a "painted facsimile of this work" once owned by his friend Jean Dolent, and a work which Gott argues "Redon must have seen frequently."86 This facsimile is now in the Musée Magnin in Dijon (Plate XL).
While this comparison to Solario certainly helps to identify the subject of the Woodner drawing as that of Saint John the Baptist, it is informative to consider the other sources and prototypes for such iconography. In addition to the Renaissance painting, for example, it is possible to suggest another source for the work which derives from the artist’s immediate experience in Bordeaux. This is a stained-glass window (Plate XLI) in the chapel of Saint John the Baptist in the church of Saint-Seurin. This additional source would explain some of the subtle disparities between the Redon drawing and Solario’s composition as noted by Gott:

Redon’s drawing graphically reproduces the subtleties of Solario’s composition — the play of shadows in the hollow under the eyebrow and beneath the eyes, and the saint’s left ear reflected in the salver’s rim. Yet he removes the saint’s beard and the curling locks of hair which flow onto the salver in Solario’s version.67

Indeed, the head in the Saint-Seurin window is very similar in its mood and placement, and the treatment of the hair and mustache (and lack of beard?) are features it shares with Redon’s drawing. In fact, the “play of shadows in the hollow under the eyebrow and beneath the eyes” referred to by Gott is found in all three images! If accepted as a source for the work, this imagery from the church of Saint-Seurin could provide further evidence of Redon’s identification with John the Baptist and to clarify the way he would graft his personal experiences into such traditional subject matter — perhaps to strengthen an autobiographical link between himself and his imagery.
In his excellent essay, "Odilon Redon et Bordeaux," Robert Coustet, asks:

"Quel autre sanctuaire pouvait mieux nourrir ses élans que celui de sa paroisse?" Coustet notes in general the effect the character of the church and its decoration must have had on Redon. Also significant is the fact that Redon's parents lived in a house on the allées Damour, which bordered a vast place, planted with trees, and which faced opposite the southern end of Saint-Seurin. In fact, it is interesting to note that the window mentioned above was on the side of the church nearest to Redon's childhood home. Moreover, as will be discussed in greater detail below, Redon was baptized at this church (quite possibly in this very chapel), and it was at that time that he was given the name "Jean" and thus became "Bertrand Jean 'dit Odilon' Redon." A passage from A Soi-même assures not only the profound effect of Saint-Seurin on his formative experiences, but also suggest the possibility that imagery from other local religious monuments may be counted among his sources:

La grande émotion est à l'heure de ma première Communion, sous les voûtes de l'église de Saint-Seurin; les chants m'exaltent; ils sont vraiment ma première révélation de l'art, outre la bonne musique que j'avais déjà beaucoup entendue en famille.

Ainsi pareillement jusqu'à l'adolescence, la divine adolescence. Etat d'esprit perdu à jamais! Je fus le visiteur radieux des églises, le dimanche, ou bien je m'approchais au dehors des absides, sous l'attirance irrésistible des chants divins. J'allais de préférence dans les pauvres quartiers de la banlieue où les temples sont populeux, la piété plus anturelle et vraie. Ces sont là des heures dont je me souviens comme ayant ressenti une vie à son comble, haute et suprême.
Although such sources are difficult to identify with specificity, two examples should be referred to in this context which would have offered striking imagery for an artist dealing with the theme of John the Baptist. One of these, a head of John the Baptist, is to be found in the church at Carcans, not far from Peyrelebade, and along one of the major pilgrimage routes to Spain (Plate XLII). The other, also located along a pilgrimage route, is the coat of arms of the town of Saint-Jean-d’Angély (Plate XLIII), where a medieval legend had it that the head of John the Baptist had been preserved. Given Redon’s interest for visiting local churches, and also his interest in retracing the steps of the medieval pilgrims, it does not seem out of the question that he would have been familiar with either work.

But beyond the question of Redon’s specific sources, whether they be Solario, the Saint-Seurin window, or taken from some other local religious shrine, one must still consider the iconography of the head on the platter and its traditional meaning. Such a consideration may help to further clarify Redon’s attraction to this theme, and will perhaps help us to better approach the meaning of the imagery in his work.

There is a long tradition of representations of John’s severed head on a platter. This particular type of composition would seem to have its origins in what the Germans called Johannesschüsseln (Les plats de saint Jean to the French; or Caput St Johannis in disco in Latin). In his study of images of Saint John the Baptist throughout the history of art, Saint Jean Baptiste dans l’art, Alexandre
Masseron devotes only the last few pages of his book to this form. He suggests that the earliest types of this sculpture (Plate XLIV) which shows John's severed head, usually bleeding and on a platter, were used as accessories in the medieval Mystery Plays, where, as he states, it would have been indispensable to the final scenes! ("où il était indispensable aux scènes finales"). Another important function of these works was their use by the various confraternities, whose insignias often decorated them — thus, the appellation "emblème des Confréries." Examples of these types would include the Confréries de la Miséricorde et des Pénitents noirs, whose members would attend executions and use these platters to comfort those persons who had been condemned to death. Another function, according to Danièle Devynck, was their use in treating sickness and diseases of the head or the throat. Masseron notes that many of these examples remain, especially dating from the 16th century and after, and he identifies a work in Nuremberg as being one of the most beautiful (Plate XLV). Masseron also notes that the theme was taken up in painting by the likes of Andrea Solario and especially by a group of lesser known Spanish artists.

But this tradition is not just of interest for the artists which come before Solario, for there are many fascinating variations on this type created by artists of the nineteenth-century — even among some of Redon's lesser-known contemporaries. One especially interesting example of such a work can be found in the Musée Municipal at Nevers. Dating from 1893, this marble Saint
Jean-Baptiste by Jean Baffier was commissioned for the Drames sacrés of Armand Silvestre and Eugène Morand (Plate XLVI), thus fulfilling a function roughly similar to that of its medieval prototypes. A bit reminiscent of Géricault earlier in the century, Baffier convinced a physician friend to allow him to study directly from the head of a guillotined victim. It is interesting to note that Auguste Rodin may have even been influenced by this "type" in his Tête de saint Jean-Baptiste of 1887 (Plate XLVII; marble, Châlons, musée Garinet).

Another 19th-century work which remains very much within the earlier tradition of a "St. John's platter" is the terra cotta sculpture by Jean Baptiste (called Auguste) Clésinger (1814-1883). This Tête de saint Jean-Baptiste (Plate XLVIII) carries a dedication to Félix Voisin, who was prefect of the police during 1876 and 1877. Thus, the work is usually dated to 1877. In that same year, Clésinger sculpted the busts of a Salome and a Herodiade. The model for the head in this work was the victim of the guillotine, Albert de saint Jean-Baptiste, who was executed October 25, 1877 for murder. This murderer was especially memorable because he recorded his memoirs before his execution and in them he said that he was driven to commit the crime by his mistress. Thus, his fate was being compared by the artist to that of Saint John the Baptist and the saint's encounter with Herodias/Salomé. This case of Albert was also reminiscent of the memoirs kept before his execution by Lacenaire, and perhaps future studies of the severed head in Redon will make closer
examinations of this literary genre. According to Philippe Sorel, who wrote the entry for the Albi catalogue, Salome dans les collections françaises, the way that the artist signed the work may indicate an autobiographical connection with either the saint or the executed murderer: "La place de la signature de Clésinger sur la section du cou pourrait être symbolique, si l'on considère l'identité de prénoms du sculpteur et du sujet ...,"99 thus suggesting that the theme of the severed head contains both the connotations of the "artiste elu" and the "artiste maudite" or "condamné."

This example by Clésinger is very interesting, for it calls attention to the cultural milieu in which Redon was working in 1877. Is it simply coincidental that Redon was drawn to similar imagery in this same year? For example, in the catalogue for the Orangerie des Tuileries exhibition of 1956, Roseline Bacou mentions two works from 1877 by Redon which seem to treat the same theme. These were his Tête de Martyr sur la plat (Plate L), now in the Kröller-Müller museum, and a charcoal drawing whose whereabouts are now uncertain, Après le Supplice. Speaking of his interest in this theme at that time, Bacou has noted that "A ce moment, l'artiste est hanté par le motif de la tête coupée."100 But while it may be interesting to speculate on the possible connections between this infamous execution of 1877 and Redon's creation of severed heads, it must be noted that there were also many other events in that year which could have served as a catalyst for Redon.
For example, Gustave Flaubert's short story *Hédias* was published that same year in the collection *Trois Contes*. It was discussed widely in the press, and a number of famous critics commented upon it. In fact, it is known that Hippolyte Taine, among those to praise these stories, preferred *Hédias* to the others. Of course it must not be forgotten that Moreau's extremely famous treatments of this theme which were discussed above, were the talk of the Paris art world as a result of their being exhibited at the Salon of 1876. And indeed, while Moreau may have been influenced by Flaubert's heroine *Salammbô*, the painter probably returned the favor by influencing the writer's *Hédias*.

This was also the year of the appearance of Victor Hugo's suppressed *Histoire d'un crime*, which had been written in Belgium. The atrocities discussed in this book as well as Hugo's other writings calling for the abolition of the death penalty and especially his early text, *La dernière Jour d'un condamné* of 1829, should be considered as important possible sources for any artist depicting imagery of the severed head, especially one such as Redon whose formative years were so immersed the tradition of Romanticism. Moreover, Hugo's drawings, such as the famous *Justitia* (Plate XLIX) of 1857, provided powerful imagery arguing for the abolition of the death penalty and the use of the guillotine. This composition, which also appeared as an engraving in 1860, with its "letters of blood on the paving-stones" was created as "a protest against the condemnation to death of a criminal on Guernsey." The subtle
metaphors between the sun setting on the guillotine and specifically taking its place in the hole where the neck would have been placed, and the head rising up into the sky like the moon at dusk, are of the type which might be expected from such an acclaimed poet. However, these associations were probably not lost upon Redon, who seems to have similarly associated the floating head with planetary bodies, and, as has been seen from previous discussion, he may have specifically equated John the Baptist with the sun. Moreover, the same shadowy realm which is encountered later in Redon’s works is found in this composition by Hugo, who like Redon played on the isolation of the severed head from the rest of the physical realm by means of the empty space ("le Néant") surrounding it.

Besides these famous examples, the pioneering research of Mireille Dottin points out that there were a number of lesser known works treating this theme in the same year. There was also a ballet preformed in 1877 which was titled Salomé and was created by R. Saint-Denis. In the painting section of the Salon of 1877 Alexandre Falguière exhibited a work titled La Décollation de Saint Jean, and Dottin has observed that along with Moreau in the Salon of the previous year (in 1876) Auguste Georges Savage exhibited a Décollation de saint Jean-Baptiste.

In returning to the discussion of Redon’s work of this year, it should be noted that it will not always be so easy to make direct connections between these severed head images and the theme of Saint John the Baptist. This
difficulty can be attributed to several tendencies in Redon’s work. For example, Roseline Bacou has noted the absence of the usual sense of "anguish" and "suffering" in Redon’s depictions of John’s severed head, and instead she characterizes another strong tendency in these works as follows:

... les têtes isolées continuent à vivre d’une vie propre, soit bouleversées d’angoisse, soit au contraire curieusement impassibles. ¹⁰⁵

Nevertheless, Bacou does feel that even with the somewhat unusual character of this work in respect to its lack of overt emotional intensity that it is still strongly related to the theme of John the Baptist:

Maître de Blanc et Noir, le visionnaire Redon est devenu un prestigieux créateur de formes; il recrée ici l’ancien thème de la tête de Jean-Baptiste sur le plat de Salomé. ¹⁰⁶

Perhaps the very subtle halo around the head in the Kröller-Müller charcoal of 1877 (Plate L) is enough to permit an identification of this image with John the Baptist, but at the very least, it must be acknowledged that Redon’s tendency after these works of the late seventies and early eighties is to include less and less details which would permit his severed heads to be connected with a specific subject matter. Thus, in a fashion similar to his treatment of the apparition theme, he moves towards a "decontextualization" of the image. For example, despite the saintly attribute of the halo in the Kröller-Müller drawing, Redon emptied the work of other extraneous details. For example, by
removing the hair from the head, one could argue that the image is not gender-specific. But despite the trend towards a lack of specificity in this work which increases in the subsequent related compositions, other aspects do fit into a traditional religious framework. Here, the reference is to the mystical import of the theme and, specifically, to the manner in which the artist has presented the work to the viewer.

Redon places this head on a platter very close to the picture plane and near the viewer, reminding us that one important historical function of this type of image was its devotional context. Historically, such close-up renditions of martyrs were created to aid in the mystical identification between the viewer/believer and the saint, or in the case of those condemned to death as an aid for the non-believer who might make a last-minute conversion. This type of picture is generally identified as the "andachtsbild" and James Snyder has defined this type as:

... a kind of contemplation picture to evoke in the viewer memories of the eternal suffering of Christ for his salvation and the reexperience of it in the daily Mass.107

Although the subject matter for these pictures would not be limited to the life of Christ, but might also be extended to the lives of the saints, Snyder’s specific interest in this type is related to his discussion of Northern Renaissance works of the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. He finds it to be especially relevant to his analysis of the work of Hugo van der Goes and
Geertgen tot Sint Jans for whom he provides a definition of the mystic artist:

Mystic painters will attempt to convey situations that will seem immediate and real, not abstract and artificial, not illustrations but direct confrontations. To convey this very personalized content, Hugo van der Goes employed a number of stylistic devices. First of all, to heighten the emotional experience for the spectator he cast his actors not as Gothic types but as individuals who seem very real and human to us. Secondly, Hugo experimented with ways in which to break down the idea of a framed picture that had a complete unity unto itself closed off from the viewer. In order to open the drama out to us, he sometimes introduced fractional figures about the borders of the painting, implying that these figures are entering the painted world from ours or leaving it to join us. Furthermore, the monumentality of his compositions, the bigness of his figures, the large scale of his altarpieces that seem to enclose us, also heighten the sensation of reality and spectator participation. Thirdly, he emphasized certain poignant motifs or subjects such as the Adoration and the Lamentation.108

The work which Snyder refers to here is the *Nativity* by Hugo van der Goes (Plate LI; c. 1480, oil on panel, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, West Berlin), and a bit later in his text, he applies a similar analysis to works such as the *Night Nativity* by Geertgen tot Sint Jans (Plate LII; c.1480-1485, oil on panel, National Gallery, London). Ultimately, he concludes his discussion of the "mystic artist" by stating:

Perhaps it is enough to point out that the paintings of Hugo van der Goes and those executed by others of mystical persuasion simply share one common and essential goal: to present a very personal and real experience to those who stand before the work of art.109
Clearly, all of the stylistic features mentioned by Snyder do appear in Redon's compositions dealing with the theme of Salome and Saint John the Baptist, and some of the issues raised by Snyder, such as the desire to convey "not illustrations but direct confrontations," are of special relevance to the problems Redon had with being gratuitously identified as an illustrator of literary ideas. Thus far this discussion has focused on only a few of Redon's compositions fitting this type, but it is still easy to identify examples of the devices described by Snyder as they appear in Redon's work. For example, in the Bordeaux charcoal drawing L'Apparition of 1883 Redon's "Salome figure" is placed close to the edge of the composition, and the head hovers very close to the picture plane. Redon also tends to focus on a few major motifs and, especially in his compositions dealing with the isolated head on a platter, the same "monumentality of his compositions" and "bigness of his figures," which Snyder has described for his "mystic artists, are found." Moreover, the manner in which these effects are created in Redon's work does indeed "heighten the sensation of reality and spectator participation." Analogous to Hugo van der Goes's tendency to "cast his actors not as Gothic types but as individuals who seem very real and human to us," Redon, by including what Guérin has described as only a "light religious accent" in these two drawings from around 1877 (Plates XXXVIII and L), and thus, by decontextualizing his imagery, has perhaps attempted to similarly make these works more accessible to his contemporary audience.
Indeed, Guérin has argued that in general such an "élan mystique" existed for Redon. And Bacou, in her description of the visionary aspects of Redon's art, has noted that "la vision" in his work does not consist in a play of lines, but in the expressive contrast of black and white, a view she supports by quoting Redon's stated belief that "L'art suggestif ne peut rien fournir sans recourir uniquement aux jeux mystérieux des ombres...". Furthermore, if Mathieu's description of the effect of all the elaborate details in Moreau's painting ("The spectator is disconcerted by this array of symbols taken from so many different religious sources without any concern for historical accuracy...") is recalled, the conclusion can be drawn that the sensitive viewer of Redon's simple, monumental images would be all the more likely to find a clear means of mystical identification with the plight of the decapitated figure appearing there.

However, several problems remain to be resolved, if indeed Redon's compositions are shown to display exactly the same type of mystical import that Snyder has been able to attribute to works by Hugo van der Goes and Geertgen tot Sant Jans. One of these problems has to do with the manner by which Redon, like Hugo, has been able to allow the viewer entry into the "painted world." Another has to do with describing the ways in which Redon shared in the ultimate "essential goal" of the "mystical painter," which Snyder has defined as being: "to present a very personal and real experience to those who stand before the work of art." Of course, this condition would demand a
demonstration of not only the way in which Redon personally identified with the subject matter, but also a discussion of the means by which he has offered the viewer an identification with the imagery of the severed head, a condition which remains problematic for the female viewers of Redon's art, when it is considered that he seems to have represented primarily the heads of male saints. Is the tendency towards a certain androgyny and sexual ambiguity in his representations a concession to these concerns, or did they have any particular relevance for the artist? Such concessions are not beyond the realm of possibility, but it would seem far more likely that Redon, in a sort of Orphic stance, would have, in his perceived isolation from the public (which it would be possible on one level to read as female), chosen to forsake all women (and thus, the general public) and to have appealed in his art primarily to a few male intellectuals. This stance is partially revealed by the tendency in his later work to transform the Salome/John the Baptist theme into that of the head of Orpheus on the lyre, but it is also indicated by a consideration of his actual patronage of the time. Gamboni has demonstrated the importance of a literary (male) elite for Redon, and Gott has attempted to show the extent to which Redon courted their favors. It should also be mentioned that the first owner of the Kröller-Müller charcoal was the Dutch artist Jan Toorop. In a letter to Toorop of 1893, Redon indicates his appreciation that the work will remain in good hands (as though the head were thus freed from the clutches of Salome?):
I am really most touched by your sympathetic response to me as an artist on the occasion of my exhibition with the 'Etsclub'... It is clear to me that you love the drawing you spoke of, and it is a real joy to know that it is appreciated as ardently as you have declared. So I would be most happy that my Martyr drawing remains, Sir, in hands as good as yours... This drawing that you chose, along with a number of others, formed part of a reserve I selected from my folios after collectors had demanded and taken from me works which I will never make again. The circumstances which led me to make the drawing you saw will never be repeated.114

A bit later, a return to these issues raised in the attempt to reconcile Snyder’s discussion of the "andachtsbild" with Redon’s compositional approach to the severed head is a must.

Subsequent works fitting this same compositional type are far more ambiguous in terms of subject matter, and cannot be clearly related to Christian imagery, nor specifically to John the Baptist. Nevertheless, Redon’s manner of presenting them to the viewer remains remarkably consistent and suggests that a similar mechanism of meaning is at work.

Two works which are especially characteristic of this tendency to move away from the biblical source of John the Baptist and which are yet very close in many ways to the earlier drawings discussed above are the charcoal drawing La Coupe (Plate LIII) and the lithograph Sur la coupe (Plate LIV) from the series Dans le rêve of 1879. In both examples, the tendency identified by Bacou whereby "... les têtes isolées continuent à vivre d’une vie propre ..." is found.
La Coupe, which according to Bacou dates from c.1878-1879 (Plate LIII), can be said to relate compositionally to both the "head on a platter" and the "Apparition" compositional types which has already been discussed. The platter is placed in an architectural space similar to that of Redon's Apparition of 1883, but as in the later work, the architectural details in La Coupe receive summary treatment. The head itself seems to raise up off the platter, and it appears as though rays of light emanate from it. Although there is no narrative script to which it might relate, one could almost locate this scene as appearing temporally somewhere between the head with eyes closed on a platter and the apparition scene created by Moreau and later with variations by Redon. However, the head appears to be draped by a scarf (displaying once again a desire by Redon to "mask" the hair), and as before, a clear identification of the gender of the "figure" remains nearly impossible.  

Also seeming to "live a life of its own" as Bacou has put it, the severed head depicted in the lithograph Sur la coupe (Plate LIV) is somewhat ambiguous as concerns its sexuality. In fact the question of the gender of this head is a good indication of the difficulty scholars have had in identifying the specific subject of the work which was the tenth plate in Redon's first lithographic series of 1879, Dans le rêve. For example, the conclusions of Lois Boe Hyslop, the scholar who has written about the print at greatest length, are problematic in this regard. Hyslop first refers to the image as being the "severed head of a beautiful woman," perhaps in an effort to follow the
interpretation of Sven Sandstrom, who tentatively connected the work with the martyrdom of Joan of Arc:

On y voit une tête de femme — celle de Jeanne d'Arc — qui repose sur un piédestal. La tête est coupée — une petite hache est posée sur le plancher — mais elle vit, insensible à la décapitation.\textsuperscript{117}

However, this description would seem to be at odds with Hyslop's most significant observation that "her head covered with a spiked helmet" is really that of a German helmet of the type worn during the Franco-Prussian War (Plate LV). Thus, she connects the imagery with Redon's memories of his experiences as an infantryman stationed in the Loire during that war, noting the artist's statement that "on ne peut s'abstraire des souvenirs" and reproducing the following description of the experiences from Redon's diary entry:

J'ai vu les événements de 1870 et même j'ai eu l'occasion de participer, avec beaucoup d'émoi et de curiosité, à une action sur la Loire, près de Tours; un jour d'excès, d'où je sortis apitoyé, troublé, endolori d'une heure inexorable et comme subie dans les abus d'une autre humanité ...\textsuperscript{118}

Indeed, there are a number of accounts of such atrocities, including descriptions of the summary executions and hasty erections of the guillotine in small towns throughout France,\textsuperscript{119} but in none of these is found imagery of female German soldiers wearing helmets of the type seen in Redon's picture. Is this work by Redon to be read as a conflation of the martyrdoms of Joan of
Arc and John the Baptist? Or if seen as a Joan of Arc image, is this an example of Redon identifying with the female martyr whose heroic exploits took place in a geographical region close to the one where Redon's own military experiences took place? Of course this is all a bit difficult to reconcile with Joan's death at the stake and not from the blow of the axe.

Another reason for Hyslop's interest in viewing this severed head as female comes from her efforts to specify the sources for Redon's imagery in the poetry of Baudelaire. Following the lead of Terry Streiter, who in his essay, "Odilon Redon and Charles Baudelaire: Some Parallels," suggested such a connection, Hyslop refers to Baudelaire's poem "Une Martyre" as the source for Redon:

La tête, avec l'amas de sa cinière sombre
Et de ses bijoux précieux
Sur la table de nuit, comme une renoncule
Repose; et vide de pensers,
Un regard vague et blanc comme le crépuscule
S'échappe des yeux révulsés.^{121}

Although Hyslop acknowledges that "It is true that the mass of dark hair and the jewels are replaced by a German helmet and that the tool lying on the floor is not mentioned in the poem," she argues that this is because "Redon did not wish to be considered an illustrator and would have deliberately avoided an exact visual reproduction of the poem."^{122} Nevertheless, she is also sure to make reference to the diversity of interpretations available for this lithograph. For example, Jules Destrée has related it to Wagner's Tristan und Isolde.^{123}
while Klaus Berger has seen the subject as a conflation of Saint John the Baptist and Orpheus.\textsuperscript{124}

Ultimately, the main contribution of Hyslop's insights would appear to confirm that Redon has once again grafted any number of traditional iconographical sources onto an extremely personal experience, and that in this work he is already moving away from the specificity of the previous drawings which were more directly related to the John the Baptist theme. What is interesting about the confusion suggested by the varying interpretations of the sex of the figure in Redon's print, is the possibility that the imagery might present a means of identification for a viewer of either sex. This is interesting, for in accounts such as Bram Dijkstra's analysis of the predominance of the theme in fin-de-siècle art, the head is generally assumed to belong to the male domain (an identification which would be the function of one's ability to relate the imagery back to the subject of John the Baptist as well as to see the male as a victim of the "femme fatale"):

Symbolic castration, woman's lust for man's severed head, the seat of the brain, that "great clot of seminal fluid" Ezra Pound would still be talking about in the 1920s, was obviously the supreme act of the male's physical submission to woman's predatory desire. Turn-of-the-century artists searched far and wide to come up with instructive examples of such emasculating feminine perfidy.\textsuperscript{125}

However, Baudelaire's poem offers a famous model which on the surface at least, would present a different possibility. Of course the suggestion of
Baudelaire as a prototype is especially appropriate for Redon, for whether one agrees with the specific connection Hyslop wishes to make between the poem "Une Martyre" and Redon's *Sur la coupe*, it must be acknowledged that Redon had read the poet's works at an early age and that he dedicated a late lithographic series to *Les Fleurs du mal*.¹²₆

The one detail which would remove the work from the realm of the nineteenth-century, and which, as Hyslop has noted, provides a point of departure from the poem, is the axe displayed at the right edge of the picture. This detail would seem to clarify that the head on the pedestal has not resulted from the blade of the guillotine, but that rather would offer to place the image in a more medieval context, and as a result might return the viewer closer to the theme of John the Baptist. This detail would also lend a sacred mood to the picture, in a manner consistent with the "mystical approach" discussed above. This placement of the imagery in a medieval context is also consistent with Huysmans's description of it as "une tête d'un style mérovingien."¹²⁷

There is, however, an even more universal reading for the imagery, and this derives from the way that Redon has rendered the eyes in this work. Here, they appear, not as in the other examples so far encountered in the "head on the platter" compositions with the eyes closed, but rather they are wide open. This detail suggests, of course, Bacou's observation about the head "living a life of its own," but here this is achieved not by the action of the head rising up off of the platter as was the case in *La Coupe*, but by means of the eyes
which appear to see beyond death. Anne Guérin has analyzed the function of this device in *Sur la coupe*:

La tête coupée qui a donné lieu chez d’autres peintres à des visions fantastiques et morbides symbolise pour Redon l’immortalité de l’âme. Cette figure au regard pur et exaltique semble continuer à vivre insensible à la décapitation.\(^\text{128}\)

While it may seem odd to think of a severed head having its eyes wide open and seeming to see, it should be noted that there are even a number of eyewitness accounts from the nineteenth century (and before) which speak about the head retaining certain life-like qualities after being separated from the rest of the body. Reverseau, for example quotes from an 1845 edition of de Cazotte’s *Diable amoureux* which ascribes such qualities to severed heads:

Elles avaient conservé l’action des yeux et de la langue, et surtout un mouvement dans les mâchoires qui les faisaient bâiller presque continuellement.\(^\text{129}\)

For the same edition of this book, Édouard de Beaumont created an illustration which would seem to describe such a scene (Plate LVI). Moreover, Reverseau commented upon the general significance of this idea for many of the nineteenth-century depictions of such images:

Cette propriété d’une vie intrinsèque qui subsiste dans la tête après la mutilation et du courant communicatif qu’elle permet d’établir est essentielle puisque tous les artistes qui nous intéressent ont cherché à la traduire; l’idée de la tête tranchée qui conserve l’usage des sens est en effet le thème d’Orphée et l’histoire de Jean-Baptiste; ainsi, est-ce donc particulièrement sur
Thus, it is in the context of an Orpheus, a John the Baptist, or perhaps some as yet unrecognized saint that one might speak of this head by Redon, with its open eyes symbolizing the immortality of the soul. Although later this specific aspect of the Orphic myth will be discussed as having a particular relevance for Redon, it is noteworthy that the general interpretation of the symbolism of the severed head throughout history has followed along these lines. For example, J.E. Cirlot, in *A Dictionary of Symbols*, writes:

Ritual decapitation arose from the discovery in prehistoric times that the head is the receptacle of the spirit. The preservation of heads, as practiced by certain primitive peoples, holds the same significance as the separate burial of that part of the body. The same symbolic meaning is attached to the decorative use of sculpted heads, points in many mediaeval temples, such as Clonfert Cathedral, in Ireland.

and later on, he refers to Herbert Kühn's *L'Ascension de l'humanité*, where he argues that:

... the decapitation of corpses in prehistoric times marked Man's discovery of the independence of the spiritual principle, residing in the head, as opposed to the vital principle represented by the body as a whole. Kühn adds that Neolithic thought was very close to the Medieval conviction that an eternal and invisible essence underlies all appearances.

As shall be shown, such a universal meaning was also adopted by the Symbolists in general, as indicated in Jean-Pierre Reverseau's study of the
severed head in the nineteenth century. Robert Goldwater has been satisfied with this reading of not just the severed head in Redon’s work, but applies it to the isolated head in general:

Redon found the initial artistic source of one of his most persuasive motifs: the isolated head, a fragment conveying a symbolic meaning. It appears as early as 1869 in a crayon drawing and (usually several times) in every lithographic series beginning with *Dans le rêve* (1879). Characteristically the head carries no specific allegorical or religious reference (a few times it is the head of Christ). Much more generally, it suggests, without being named, the soul or the intelligence, struggling to free itself of its corporeal inheritance and to rise towards union with a pantheistic spirit.

Moreover, Sandstrom has also emphasized this connotation in his conflation of the floating head/eye image:

Il est extrêmement difficile, en partant de la communauté de signification fondamentale entre l’œil et la tête flottante, d’essayer de préciser leur différence. Les exemples que nous avons donnés la montrent cependant dans une certaine mesure: l’œil est un signe plus pur et plus clair de l’âme tandis que la tête représente d’une façon plus vague l’homme libéré d’attributs corporels. Ces deux éléments sont fondamentaux pour l’art ultérieur de Redon, et on peut même dire que ce n’est que lorsqu’il les a conçus qu’il est en mesure de créer un monde original de représentations.

But despite his attempt to distinguish between the varying meanings of the floating of the head or the eye, elsewhere, Sandstrom has concluded that "Quant à l’origine de la tête flottante, il est facile de trouver des raisons de l’interpréter comme une image de l’âme...".
Given the predominance of this interpretation, which would equate the head with the soul, perhaps it has relevance to another variation on this theme in a work which is closely related to the lithograph from *Dans le rêve*. This later pastel, now in the Rijksmuseum Printenkabinett in Amsterdam (Plate LVII) contains a number of interesting features which relate to the discussion of the other works of this type. For example, the sole architectural element appearing here is the column, atop which is found resting a severed head. Rays of light appear to emanate from the head, and although its eyes are closed, it may be significant to note that floating nearby are several winged heads. Sandstrom has analyzed at great length this motif in several other compositions by Redon, taking as his point of departure the early charcoal drawing, *La Marmite* (Plate LVIII). This work shows a sort of demonic figure bent over a cooking-pot which contains a skull and a little winged head. After a fascinating investigation of this work's origins, which he sees as having started out with Dante but soon having become conflated with a local legend, Sandstrom convincingly argues that motif of the little winged head as something to be "considérer comme l'âme qui s'élève dans les airs."\(^{37}\)

Another aspect of the Amsterdam drawing, however, remains problematic within this interpretation. Interestingly, Redon has slowly removed all traces of the platter upon which the head had once rested from his compositions of this type. Here, not even the sort of flat, circular surface atop a column as was present in the print from *Dans le rêve* (Plate LIV) is
found, but rather the head appears to be part of the column -- providing a
strange sort of capital. It is difficult to miss what Freud would have identified
as a combination of two strong phallic symbols. Thus, if one accepts the
equation of the floating head, and by extension the severed head itself, as the
embodiment of the soul, then does one reconcile the equation of the soul with
the phallus and preoccupation with castration? Although a fuller discussion of
such issues will appear below, it is important to note once again the
problematic nature of sexual identity which haunts so many of these works.
Nevertheless, transformations of this particular composition into works such as
_Mercury_ (Plate LXXVIII) and _Germination_ (Plate LXXIX) do reinforce the
interpretations of the severed head as an imagery of "flight" and
"regeneration."

A consideration of these problems should also frame any approach to
other works by Redon for which one might be willing to apply Sandstrom's
interpretation of the winged heads as an indication of the flight of the soul. For
example, in _Génie aile portant la tête d'un décapité_ (Plate LIX) a winged figure is
seen, appearing in a sort of aureole of light which seems to be fleeing with a
head on a platter. The question of whether the winged figure should be read
as an angel or some other fantastic being is complicated by its androgynous
appearance. A similar ambiguity surrounds the charcoal drawing _Démon aillé
tenant un masque_ (Plate LX). On the other hand, a sketch called _Headhunter_
(Plate LXIII) from the Ian Woodner Family Collection appears to depict a male
figure carrying a head (or possibly two heads). To what extent is the sexual identity of the bearer of these severed heads an issue, and how does it relate to the ability to identify the sexuality of the severed head? Do these works contain the same sort of sexual tension which has been seen as a given in the Salome/John encounter?

As further indication of the import of such questions for Redon, it should be noted that the very same type of combination of archetypal male symbols appears in Redon's *A long chrysalis, the color of blood* (Plate LXIV), the second plate from the lithographic series *A Gustave Flaubert* of 1889. This is the second of three sets of lithographs that the artist dedicated to that author's *Temptation of Saint Anthony*. Interestingly, the conflation of the themes of John the Baptist and Saint Anthony's temptations which was suggested above in the comparison of Redon's *Apparition* (Plate XXVIII) with Fernand Khnopff's painting, *After Flaubert or Temptation of Saint Anthony* of 1883 (Plate XXIX). However, it is in Redon's lithograph, which bears a title very similar to Khnopff's painting, that the full consummation of such a conflation is found. The architectural setting for Redon's lithograph is straight out of the "apparition" compositional type which was discussed above. The same sort of summary indication of an architectural setting is shown. However, the main imagery has changed, and the set up is closer to that found in the earlier lithograph *Sur la Coupe* (Plate LIV) and in the Amsterdam pastel (Plate LVII). Very close to the picture plane is seen a head on a columnar shape which
might be described as a sort of chopping block. As in the Amsterdam pastel, rays of light emanate from the head, but in this case it is attached to the "long chrysalis" referred to in the title. Thus, the head, which it would appear is about to be severed, is combined with another obvious phallic symbol: a long serpent-like tail. One way to read this imagery, both as it appears in Flaubert's text and in Redon's lithograph, is to see it as one of those scenes of Anthony's temptation in which he is shown an inversion of a traditional religious event from the life of Christ or some saint. Is it possible that a proper identification of other details within the work might help us to identify which religious scene has been inverted/perverted? If this is the case, it should be noted that the head (a sort of masqueron?) attached to the pilaster in the background is not dissimilar to the immobile figure of Salome which appears at the edge of the 1883 Bordeaux charcoal of L'Apparition (Plate VIII). Given the other elements from the apparition compositional type, is it possible to read this work as a sort of variation — with the point of view shifted à la Moreau another ninety degrees? Perhaps such a deterministic reading goes too far, but it cannot be denied that the imbrication of motifs in such works points once again to a complex riddle of sexual interplay in Redon. Certainly the use of such combinations of motifs and stylistic elements -- especially "the long chrysalis, the color of blood" -- was put to good use in the later renditions the Salome by Aubrey Beardsley (Plates LXV and LXVI) which appeared in 1894 as
illustrations for Oscar Wilde’s play, a text which explicitly explored the ambiguities of sexuality inherent in the Salome theme.

Besides these works which contain a mixture of elements from what has been defined as Redon’s "apparition" and "head on a platter" types, there are several other works which remain closer to the latter category which might be connected to the theme of John the Baptist’s severed head. One of these which Claude Roger-Marx has referred to as *Saint Jean-Baptiste* (Plate LXVII) has been given a number of different titles. For example at an exhibition in Brussels in 1920-21, it was called *Orpheus*. Klaus Berger has preferred to simply catalogue the work as *Head of a Decapitated Man on the Scales*. Despite the common difficulty already mentioned in pining down the specific subjects for Redon’s works, it is difficult to reconcile this imagery with the subject of John the Baptist, and rather, one might tend to agree with Stephen Eisenmann’s suggestion that the composition "plays upon the likeness between the dish belonging to the scales of justice and the platter upon which was placed the head of the martyr." Such an assessment calls further attention to the importance that actual instances of capital punishment may have played a role in the formation of Redon’s imagery (which ironically, Eisenmann’s search for political motivations as the key to Redon’s "noirs" seems to have completely overlooked!), and would lend credence to my suggestions above that the political and cultural events during the time when the head on a platter theme was first appearing in Redon’s work, should be related to a history of the
guillotine and many of the other art works it inspired. Unfortunately, further analysis of this context lies beyond the limits of the present study, but an awareness of its importance for Redon might influence the approach to another work which has not previously been connected to the subject of John the Baptist.

Here, I cite Redon's charcoal, *Le Prisonnier* (Plate LXVIII), whose foreground displays a severed head on a tiled ground plane. In the background is seen three winged heads which float, and just behind the severed head another figure stands with its torso in a three-quarters frontal view and with its head seen in profile. At first one might think of this standing figure as a sort of Salome, a prison guard, perhaps even a priest, for the sexual identity of the figure is once again very ambiguous. However, the melancholic glance of the figure which is directed out into the space between the floating heads and the severed head of the foreground suggests that this may indeed be the prisoner himself, considering on one hand the death of the physical self and on the other the possible immortality of the fleeing soul as suggested in the trinity of winged heads. Given the wide range of motifs reappearing here, ones previously discussed in the context of the John the Baptist subject, it seems appropriate to ask what possible relevance this work might have to that theme. Would it be too far fetched to suggest a possible reading of this work's subject as John the Baptist in prison? If so, perhaps it should also be suggested that this drawing, which would seem to date from
the late 1870s, should possibly be related to a context similar to that developed
by Jean Baptiste (called Auguste) Clésinger in his Tête de saint Jean-Baptiste
(Plate XLVIII) which has been discussed above. Moreover, the re-reading of Le
Prisonnier may suggest that Redon’s charcoal Le Destin (Plate LXIX) should
perhaps be seen in a similar context.

Before leaving this discussion of the head on the platter, one other work
should be connected with the John the Baptist context, although it has usually
been referred to only by the very generic title of Tête de femme de profil au centre
der un disque sombre (Plate LXX). Françoise Garcia has interestingly suggested
that the image behind the figure represented here, which she argues "prend ici
les traits achevés de la femme", is a sort of "soleil noir qui n’est pas sans
evoquer le plateau sur lequel repose la tête lumineuse de Saint Jean-
Baptiste." A closer look at this drawing within the context of this
discussion suggests that there is every reason to read this image as one of the
more specific representations of John the Baptist thus far encountered. If one
compares the drawing to a close-up view of the head in Gustave Moreau’s
famous watercolor (Plate LXXI), it can be noted that a number of the traits of
the head are quite similar, with the important exception that Redon’s head no
longer sports a beard! Perhaps the most convincing support for this argument
is to be found in the rays of light which can be seen radiating out at the very
edges of Redon’s composition. Despite the fact that Redon erased these lines as
they emanated out from the platter, careful examination reveals traces of these
radii connecting to the disk. The observation of this detail and the general agreement of the others such as the exact downward glance of the pupil of the eye which is also found in Moreau’s watercolor would suggest that this drawing may have been a study from the period when Redon was clearly under Moreau’s influence, something analyzed at length in the discussion of the Bordeaux charcoal *L’Apparition* (Plate VIII). Thus, this presentation has come full circle in the discussion of the John the Baptist theme in Redon.

After considering this wide variety of works from the three major compositional types, it must be concluded that although these types represent three distinct points of departure for Redon, they share a vocabulary of motifs. Even more significantly, it must be admitted that the segregation of the sexes which were noticed at the outset of this discussion of these works is one of their distinguishing features. This has not prevented a number of provocative questions of sexuality from hiding beneath the surface of these works. In the next section, these questions and the other issues raised in this chapter will be addressed more directly.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1Consider for example the introduction to the theme given by Pierre-Louis Mathieu in his discussion of the theme's interest for not only Gustave Moreau, but for artists of various time periods: "Artists have often been attracted by the story, and the eroticism implicit in it has inspired many painters and sculptors, from Ghirlandaio, Lippi, Luini, Memling and Cranach down to Henri Regnault and Paul Baudry," in Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Gustave Moreau; with a catalogue of the finished paintings, watercolors and drawings, trans. James Emmons (Boston, Mass.: New York Graphic Society, 1976), p. 122.

2Odilon Redon, A Soi-même, journal (1867-1915); notes sur la vie, l'art et les artistes (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1961), p. 17; hereafter cited as A.S.M.. All translations appearing in these notes, unless otherwise indicated, are from Odilon Redon, To Myself, Notes On Life, Art, and Artists, trans. Mira Jacob and Jeanne L. Wasserman (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1986). "Should I start again today my education as a painter, I believe that for the growth and the largest development of my faculties I would do many drawings of the human body. I would dissect it, analyze it, and even model it, to be able to reconstitute it easily, repeatedly, from memory."; pp. 13-14. Note that his male figures are treated with more confidence, as is indicated by his use of male models to explore his sketches of Salome (Plate III).


4In this context we might name any number of comparative examples, beginning with Henri-Alexandre-Georges Regnault, exhibited in the Salon of 1870 whose smiling Salome peers out of the picture at the viewer (Now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Plate VI). Other examples include the Salome Triumphant of c.1886 by Edouard Toudouze (Plate VII), and the Salome of Aubrey Beardsley (Plate LXV). In Beardsley, the engagement of vision in the two figures becomes a major focus; In Toudouze an analogy is created between the parallel sight lines of the beast's head on the "throne" and Salome's gaze, which confronts the spectator directly.


6Redon, ASM, p. 17. "...I preferred to attempt representations of imaginary things that haunted me and I failed fruitlessly at the beginning. However I made many of them: landscapes, battles, evocations of beings scattered in rocky plains, a whole world of despair, black smoke of the romanticism which still hung over me."; p. 13.


9Mathieu, p.241.

10Ary Renan, "Gustave Moreau," _La Gazette des Beaux-Arts_, 33 (May 1886), pp. 391-392. This is discussed also in Mathieu, and the translation is from his monograph, p. 126. Mathieu notes that Renan and Moreau were friends and that "he may have heard about this source from the artist himself."

11In addition, it is worth noting that there were also two other striking images appearing at the Salon during these years by Henri-Alexandre-Georges Regnault, his Salomé, of 1869-70 which was mentioned above was in the Salon of 1870 (Plate VI); and his _Exécution sans jugement sous les rois maures de Grenade_ (o.c., 1870, Musée d'Orsay, Paris; Plate XVI) which was in the Salon of 1870 and also in the Exposition Universelle of 1878.

12Mathieu, p. 122.

13Mathieu, p. 122.


15Mathieu, p. 126.


17Such an identification was actually made by Jean-Pierre Reverseau, in his article "Pour une étude du thème de la tête coupée dans la littérature et la peinture dans la seconde partie du XIXe siècle," _Gazette des Beaux-Arts_, NS 6, 80 (September 1972), pp. 173-74. This is how he described Redon's painting: "...il offre une curieuse variante de l'aquarelle de G. Moreau: Salomé et Hérode ont disparu, la tête symbolisant l'âme s'échappant de son enveloppe terrestre s'élève flottant au-dessus du bourreau...". Are we to believe that Reverseau has not identified the figure as female or should we believe that he was suggesting that the executioner was actually a woman? This is a very interesting "slip" for it may suggest an intuitive reading of Redon's work which indicates an actual
conflation or condensation of the figure of Salome and the figure of the executionner!


20Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity; Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). This analysis is given in his chapter which focuses on Salome and related themes, "Gold and the Virgin Whores of Babylon; Judith and Salome: The Priestesses of Man’s Severed Head," pp. 352-402.

21Charles Mauron, in Stéphane Mallarmé, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de Pléiade, 1945), p. 1446. Discussed also in Robert Greer Cohn, *Towards the Poems of Mallarmé* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), pp. 52-90; and in J. D. Hubert, "Representations of Decapitation: Mallarmé’s ‘Hérodiade’ and Flaubert’s ‘Hérodias,” *French Forum*, 7, no. 3 (September 1982), pp. 245-251. Interestingly, Hubert says of Mallarmé that "all along he refers to the festivities that used to take place on St. John’s day and that he had no doubt witnessed during his long sojourn in the south of France." There is every reason to believe that Redon’s travels in southwestern France also brought him into many contacts with this tradition, and in another context I intend to further explore the relationship of Redon’s imagery to local legend and lore. Reverseau, p. 178, also related Moreau’s work to this poem: "...l’on songe au commentaire de Mallarmé, à ce ‘chant de la tête coupée volant du coup vers la lumière divine....”.

22This tradition has played an important role in Eva Kuryluk’s analysis, p. 192, of the Salome theme. For example, she notes that Saint John’s birth on June 25 coincides with the summer solstice, while his death on August 29 with the harvest. She says that European folklore seems to "reinforce this notion of John as a symbol for the death and rebirth of nature, associated with the cult of the sun. On the other hand, Herodias and her daughter are linked to demonic forces, to witchcraft and black magic." In this context, she says that the occurrence of John’s death at the time of the harvest indicates an equation of the cutting of grain with the John’s beheading. And continuing, p. 192, she discusses the relation of these traditions to official religion:

The strange popular beliefs and customs which the Church has always fought but never managed to eradicate are all strongly marked by sexuality; they allude to destruction caused by the passion of live, to marriage, defloration, and castration. They link women to severed heads, connect the sexual to the culinary, play
with necrophilia and cannibalism.

Ultimately, Kuryluk attributes the persistence of this theme as follows, p. 192:

But it is certain that the story has survived both in folklore and in literature and art because of its deep mythological *urgrund*, and that it has flourished throughout the centuries because of its complexities, ambiguities, obscenities, and, last but not least, because of the grotesque image of a woman bearing the head of a man on a dish.


24 Sandstrom, p. 48.


27 Sandstrom, p. 49.

28 The problem of Redon's common identification, even during his own lifetime as a "literary artist" has been a source of much chagrin, not only for the artist himself, but for many of his biographers. Most have tended to deny or to at least de-emphasize the literary component in his art. However, the most cogent discussion of this problem, and one which takes into account its true complexity for Redon and his artistic development, is the recent study by Dario Gamboni, *La Plume et le pinceau; Odilon Redon et la littérature* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1989).


30 Paladilhe and Pierre, p. 102.


32 Mathieu, p. 124. The little skulls are discussed by Julius Kaplan, p. 34. Specifically, the little skulls which appear in the large oil painting of 1876 (Plate VIII) are an "Etruscan element: the girdle around her waist in which the
heads of bearded men appear literally chained to her body." Kaplan is able to identify this source because Moreau copied it from the *Magasin Pittoresque* of 1863.

33 Kaplan, p. 34.

34 Théophile Gautier has interestingly commented upon the timeless qualities of Puvis's work: "Si l'on recontrait cette peinture dans quelque vieille église ou au fond d'un couvent abandonné, on l'attribuerait à un Memling inconnu, et l'on admirerait avec raison la profondeur de sentiment de l'artiste et l'ascétique sobriété de l'exécution." See Théophile Gautier, *Journal officiel de l'Empire français*, 16 June 1870 (3rd article); as quoted by Reverseau, p. 184, note 15.

35 Interestingly, Ary Renan in his *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* article of 1886, referred to above, was still speaking of the hallucinatory quality of Moreau's work. Renan, p. 390.

36 Roseline Bacou, *Odilon Redon; La Vie et l’oeuvre, point de vue de la critique au sujet de l’oeuvre*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Pierre Cailler, éditeur, 1956), 1: p. 39. Bacou makes numerous references to Redon as a visionary artist. For example, she speaks, p. 19, vol. 1, of his art growing out of his personality and its development: "Son art de solitaire et de visionnaire a pour point de départ l’évasion, le besoin passionné de dépasser la réalité quotidienne, de se dépasser soi-même et d’aller au-delà." She also notes, p. 41, vol. 1, that "la vision" in his work does not consist in a play of lines, but in the expressive contrast of black and white, once again quoting from Redon's own writings on this: "L'art suggestif ne peut rien fournir sans recourir uniquement aux jeux mystérieux des ombres...". But questioning the more characteristic silence of Redon on such matters, p. 55, vol. 1, she suggests that his work evolves in the same way as such "Voyants" since the time of Novalis up until the time of Rimbaud, in passing by Jean-Paul and Gérard de Nerval. Elsewhere, p. 56, vol. 1, another definition is provided: "Visionnaire, il a su fixer ses visions. Il a donné une expression plastique à ce qui était par essence, inexprimable: il est ainsi devenu un prestigieux créateur de formes neuves et insolites." And she also describes, p. 102, vol. 1, "Le génie visionnaire du lithographe..." of Redon. As a way of suggesting his means of achieving this art, p. 102, vol. 1, she identifies "ses rêveries intensément prolongées sont la source inépuisable où l'artiste vient alimenter son art de visionnaire." In addition to these observations by Bacou, it is worth noting the ideas offered by Trudie Grace concerning the possible relationship between the visionary artist and scenes of the apparition and the Symbolists' interest in spiritism. See Grace, "The Disembodied Head: A Major Theme in European Art from 1885 to 1905," Diss. City University of New York, 1984, 2 vols., pp. 15-32. Grace writes about this work, pp. 186-187: "The head numbers among allusive severed heads. It will be recalled here that such heads still seem to possess life and are allusions to
some aspect of the nonphysical plane of human existence whereas other severed heads are usually gory, lifeless images — macabre results of a story of violence, many of the details of which are normally included with them." She notes that Redon turned away from such gory depictions, and that instead "He must of wanted to allude to the spiritual inward turning of this sage and prophet." She also makes an interesting connection between this work and an Apotheosis of St. John the Baptist by Redon. It could be suggested that this last work of around c.1895 would fit into my discussion in Chapter III of Redon's move in his later career towards images of apotheosis, and in particular the theme of Orpheus.

37Bacou, vol. 1, p. 270.


"The meaning of mystery is to be always in ambiguity, with double, triple aspects; in the hints of aspect (images in images), forms which will be, or which become according to the state of mind of the beholder. All things more than suggestive because they appear."

"But his meaning applied to painting requires that the artist have tact, an infinite sense of measure more than anything else, and the public is not aware of it. It is an art, which, more than any other, demands that an artist be conscious at each moment of its gestation."; p. 84.


41Sandstrom, p. 40.

42This system "marchand-critique" was first discussed, as Gamboni acknowledges, by Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White in Canvases and Careers: Institutional Change in the French Painting World (New York, London, Sydney: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1965).

43Gamboni, p. 13.

44J.D. Hubert, "Representations of Decapitation: Mallarmé's 'Hérodiade' and Flaubert's 'Hérodias,'" French Forum 7, no. 3 (September 1982), pp. 245-251. Mathieu, p. 22, also notes Moreau's affinity for Flaubert.

45Hubert, p. 245.

46Hubert, p. 247.
"Dans cette période d’avant 1900, Odilon Redon, entre Puvis et Gustave Moreau, fut le premier qui orienta le culte de l’idéal dans le sens du symbolisme; il voulait que la réalité fût suggérée plutôt que représentée; il cherchait à exprimer les sentiments ou les idées par la musique du tableau. Nous touchons ici aux origines du mouvement contemporain... Redon a été le Mallarmé de la peinture." This quote by Denis is also discussed in The University of Kansas Museum of Art, *Les Mardis: Stéphane Mallarmé and the artists of his circle* (exh. cat., Lawrence, n.d.), p. 44.


"The meaning of mystery is to be always in ambiguity, with double, triple aspects; in the hints of aspect (images in images), forms which will be, or which become according to the state of mind of the beholder. All things more than suggestive because they appear."
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Redon, letter to André Mellerio of 16 August 1898. Published in Ary-Leblond, ed., p. 33.

Stéphane Mallarmé in a letter to Eugène Lefèbure. Quoted in Mary Ellen Wolf, *Eros Under Glass: Psychoanalysis and Mallarmé’s "Hérodiade"* (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 1987), p. 89. There are infinite plays on this word, and its fusions, such as "Hérode/Hérodias/Hérodiade" as Wolf has pointed out.

Gert Mattenklott, "Zum sozialen Inhalt von Redons "monde obscur de l'indéterminé," in Odilon Redon, Selbstgespräch. Tagebücher und Aufzeichnungen 1867-1915, herausgegeben und übersetzt von Marianne Türoff (German translation of Redon, A.S.M.; Munich: Rogner und Bernhard, 1971), pp. 207-219. This approach also has important implications for Freudian approaches to the interpretation of Redon's work. For example, Freud "likened his procedure of digging into the repressed regions of his patients' minds to archaeology." For a recent discussion of this problem in the context of art history, see Jack Spector, "The State of Psychoanalytic Research in Art History", Art Bulletin, 70, no. 1 (March 1988), p. 52. Mattenklott's approach is discussed in Gamboni, p. 128, and plays an important role in his interpretation of Redon's work.

Gamboni, p. 128.

Redon, A.S.M., p. 10. "My father often used to say to me: 'Look at those clouds, can you see as I can, the changing shapes in them?' And then he would show me strange beings, fantastic and marvelous visions, in the changing sky." p. 7.

Redon, A.S.M., p. 132.

"Once he told me with gentle authority: "Look at this chimney flue. What does it say to you? It tells me a legend. If you have the strength to observe it well and to understand it, imagine the most strange, the most bizarre subject; if it is based and remains within the limits of this simple section of wall, your dream will be alive. Art is there." Bresdin told me this in 1864. I note the date because this was not the manner of teaching at that time."; p. 109.


Wolf, Eros Under Glass; Psychoanalysis and Mallarmé's "Hérodiade". See especially her chapter "Castration and Dissemination," pp. 73-91. A fuller discussion of Freud and the "castration complex" is given below, in my section on the "Head on a Platter: Alone" and in Chapter Two.

Wolf, p. 4. The reference is to a letter of December 1866 to Armand Renaud.

Wolf, p. 74.

Wolf, p. 76-77.
Interestingly, it is exactly this fruit, and its seeds which, according to Wolf, p. 89, play an important role as in Mallarmé's poem: "In his comparison of the signifier 'Hérodiade' to a 'grenade ouverte,' Mallarmé emphasizes the name's generative capacity. A cross-section of a pomegranate offers an image of hundreds of seeds waiting regeneration. Again, what permits the proliferation of the fruit is its ripening, fall, and découpage." If the suggestion that a painter's still life of a pomegranate could be a repressed head seems far-fetched, then I urge the reader to consider the famous article by the extremely well-respected Meyer Schapiro in which a very similar sort of displacement was suggested for the work of Paul Cézanne. See Meyer Schapiro, "The Apples of Cézanne: An Essay on the Meaning of Still-Life," in Modern Art, 19th & 20th Centuries, selected papers (New York: George Braziller, 1978), pp. 1-33. This essay was first published in 1968.

Penny Florence has recently provided a study which would purport to undertake such an investigation, but I would tend to agree with Dario Gamboni's reservations, p. 10, about her book: "C'est ainsi que le travail récemment consacré par Penny Florence à Mallarmé, Manet et Redon, tout en ayant le mérite de souligner l'intérêt des 'signes complexes' et des 'opérations transmutatives' qui mettent en cause la distinction entre visuel et verbal, échoué à rendre compte de la dimension historique de ses objets et ne livre que des résultats spéculatifs." See Penny Florence, Mallarmé, Manet, & Redon: Visual & Aural Signs & The Generation of Meaning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Gamboni, p. 45.

Mallarmé, "Apparition":

La lune s'attristait. Des séraphins en pleurs
Rêvant, l'archet aux doigts, dans le calme des fleurs
Vaporeuses, tiraient de mourantes violes
De blancs sanglots glissant sur l'azur des corolles.
-- C'était le jour béní de ton premier baiser.
Ma songerie aimant à me martyriser
S'enivrait savamment du parfum de tristesse
Que même sans regret et sans déboire laisse
La cueillaison d'un Rêve au coeur qui l'a cueilli.

There has been discussion in the literature of a list of works prepared by Redon during his lifetime, but it has not been published, and is supposedly in the hands of Roseline Bacou.

This "veritable iconography of misogyny" is the general focus of Dijkstra's book. However, the more specific context to which the works I have identified here would belong is to be found in his chapters, "Raptures of Submission: the Shopkeeper's Soul Keeper and the Cult of the Household Nun" and "The Cult of Invalidism; Ophelia and Folly; Dead Ladies and the Fetish of Sleep". Dijkstra, pp. 3-24 and pp. 25-63.

Gert Mattenklott, pp. 207-219.

These issues are discussed by a number of author's whose work I will consider elsewhere. As for specific discussion of the veil in a recent work, see Elaine Showalter's chapter, "The Veiled Woman," in *Sexual Anarchy; Gender and Culture at the Fin-de-siècle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 144-168.

Khnopff's work is also based on Flaubert, and as Richard Hobbs has indicated, it would appear to show the "episode of Saint Anthony being visited by the Queen of Sheba." Hobbs also notes the somewhat complex nature of Redon's involvement with the Saint Anthony subject, and its popularity in Belgium and Holland. Although Redon had been involved with the Les XX since his participation in their exhibition of 1886, Hobbs is correct to assert that it was really after "his involvement in Belgian Symbolism had ended" that Redon became interested in dealing with the Saint Anthony theme. Moreover, Hobbs points to the complexity of the shared influences between the Belgian group and French artists in general. For example, Khnopff's painting is much earlier than Redon's Saint Anthony lithographs, and it dates from 1883 which is the year after Redon had read Flaubert's book. Nevertheless, it was a Belgian, Edmond Deman, who had "commissioned and published in Brussels, the first of the three Haubert albums" executed by Redon. See Richard Hobbs, *Odilon Redon* (Boston; New York Graphic Society, 1977), pp. 66-67.

There is of course a traditional symbolism in European art which associates the right side with good and the left side with evil, a meaning which in Christian tradition can be related to the positions taken by the "saved" and the "condemned" at the time of the Last Judgment, or to the placement of the good and bad thieves in relation to Christ at the crucifixion. In other contexts, the right and left sides may have specific sexual associations or meanings related to which person or group is meant to be seen as dominant over the other. For example, see J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1978), p. 138.
I will return to this idea a bit later, but it is discussed in a variety of sources. For example, see Showalter, pp. 145-146.

Mathieu, p. 124.

Sandstrom, p. 52.

As Gott, National Gallery of Victoria, 1990, pp. 125-127 notes, there are five states of this print (Mellerio had referred only to two states). The final state (Plate XXXIII) shows a clothed woman standing between the floating images of a head and a serpent and a serpent with a human head. The first (Plate XXXIV), second, and third (Plate XXXV) states show the woman overtaken from behind by a winged demon. However, in the third state, the legs of the demon are removed, and as Gott has correctly observed, "the impression of smoke enhanced in the left half of the design." In the fourth state, Gott notes that the background around the female is darkened, showing only the two serpents and the floating head, but "with the figure of the demon still visible as a ghostly shadow" behind the woman. He says that the subject of the early states "seems to have been the confrontation between Marguerite and Mephistopheles from Goethe's Faust," noting that "This explains the strong overtones of sexual temptation in the work."

In addition, there were two related drawings, one of which belonged to Huysmans (possibly Plate XXXVI). Gott says that the "introduction of ... larval forms into the final version ... undoubtedly stems from his [Redon's] reading of Huysman's notorious satanic novel Là-Bas" which was published in 1891. Gott indicates that the author presented Redon with an "inscribed copy" of the book. Gott's analysis of this association is especially fascinating. He refers to the section of the book which treated the "theme of incubi and succubi, the phantasmagoric demons of Catholic mythology who sexually torment their victims at night through arousal, stealing semen from male wet dreams and impregnating unwitting females with it." Gott quotes from two passages in the book which associate these forms revealed by the microscope (a source which Huysmans had said Redon used) and "women afflicted with epileptic hysteria" who "see phantoms hovering near them in broad daylight." Of course such an association would lend another layer of meaning to our analysis of the apparition theme which we have mainly related to the subject of John the Baptist. This text would also be a prime example of the negative views of women and their sexuality which Bram Dijkstra has found to be prevalent during the fin-de-siècle. The other layer of meaning I have suggested, the relation of the theme to the temptation of Eve in the garden of Eden, which although it may not have been Redon's main focus, is still relevant here. The connection seems stronger when we consider the evolution of Hantise out of Redon's early charcoal drawing in Bordeaux, L'ange et le démon (Plate XXXVII), a link suggested by Françoise Garcia in Galerie des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux, 1985, pp. 73-74. The fact that throughout these drawings we have a complete
assortment of Edenic elements: the tree, the demon (in both human and serpent form), and a female figure (despite the fact that she is clothed) suggests a reading of the composition which would allow us to interpret the severed head in the final version as the "fruit" of the tree of wisdom, thus linking sexuality and epistemology. I will discuss this concept further in Chapter Two, following the ideas found in Mary Ann Doane's essay "Deadly Women, Epistemology, and Film Theory," in *Femmes Fatales; Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1991), pp. 1-16.

The date recently proposed by Tedd Gott, National Gallery of Victoria, 1990, p. 72, would seem to be very late. Instead we might propose a date of around 1877. This is suggested by the tendency of Redon to move away from a specific application of a literary source (here a biblical one) towards a less general application of the imagery, what I have preferred to refer to as a "decontextualization."

Gott, National Gallery of Victoria, 1990, p. 72. If the "superimposed sketch" is indeed a *Deposition of Christ*, then this would perhaps link the passion of Christ (and the attendant sorrows of the Virgin) with the viewer's own lamentation over the head of the martyred saint. Certainly, the two subjects are emotionally related, and this may reveal that Redon's mood at the time was a determining factor as he deliberated between two different subjects which might correspond to it.

Anne Guérin, Galerie des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux, 1985, p. 81.

Guérin, Galerie des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux, 1985, p. 81.


Gott, National Gallery of Victoria, 1990, p. 72. It is also interesting to note that even in his use of traditional sources, we must be careful to take into account Redon's special idiosyncrasy of tending to use "local" sources.

Gott, National Gallery of Victoria, 1990, p. 72.


For a discussion of these details, see Robert Mesuret, "La Maison natale d'Odilon Redon," *La Renaissance* (March 1939), pp 26-30.
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"The great emotion is at the time of my first holy communion under the arches of Saint-Seurin's church; the songs exalt me; they are really my first revelation of art, other than the good music I had already often heard at home. Thus, it went till adolescence, divine adolescence. State of mind lost forever! I was the radiant visitor of churches on Sunday, or I approached the outside of apses under the irresistible spell of divine songs.

By preference I went into the poor districts of the suburbs, where the temples are crowded, the piety more natural and true. These are hours when I remember feeling life at its utmost, high and supreme, extraordinary."

According Bernard Hennequin, in 817 Pépin, the Duke of Aquitaine, received the head of John the Baptist from a priest who had been travelling in Egypt. This relic was destroyed, along with the abbey at Saint-Jean-d'Angély where it was kept during the Hundred Years War. See Bernard Hennequin, Poitou, Vendée, Charentes, Les Guides bleus – Hachette (Paris, Hachette, 1980), p. 395. However, in his Iconographie de l'art chrétien, 2, part 1, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958), Louis Réau, pp. 435, says that the head was "retrouvé" there in 1014, and conserved in a magnificent reliquary which attracted many pilgrims to the town. Réau also notes the many other places which have claimed at one time or another to possess the head of John the Baptist: Constantinople, five places in Italy (two churches in Rome, and ones in Florence, Genoa, and Venice), and also ones in Amiens, and Paris. Concerning the last two examples, he notes that the face from the saint's head was said to be brought from Constantinople to Amiens in 1204, with the back part of the head remaining in Constantinople. But supposedly Saint Louis bought this relic from Constantinople for the Sainte-Chapelle. Réau also notes that both the remains claimed by Amiens and Saint-Jean-d'Angély supposedly bore the mark of a knife's cut on the eye, which was caused by Herodias and her attempt to cut out one of John's eyes.

For example, during his travels in the Pyrenees, Redon followed this path through Ronceveaux (Roncevalles), and even other travels, such as his trip to Holland to see the works of Rembrandt, were characterized in his diary as a "pilgrimage." Redon, A.S.M., pp. 68-83.


Danièle Devynck in Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, p. 46. This type is referred to as "emblème des Confréries."
Philippe Comte, Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, p. 67. Comte even suggests some hidden symbolism relating the work to the Massacre of St. Barthélemy.

Comte, Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, p. 111. As Comte notes, Rodin did several works on this theme. He notes a work entitled either Hérodiade or Salomé in the Musée Rodin in Paris, and also in that same collection a drawing with the writing on it: "Salomé." He also notes an oil painting in the Musée Rodin in Paris, Décollation de saint Jean-Baptiste.

Philippe Sorel, Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, p. 77. Sorel mentions that earlier, the artist had achieved "un succès de scandale" at the Salon of 1847 for his Femme piquée par un serpent which was partly based on a plaster cast of the body of Madame Sabatier.


Mireille Dottin, in Université de Toulouse - le Mirail, Centre de promotion de la recherche scientifique, S comme Salomé; Salomé dans le texte et l'image de 1870-1914 (exh. cat., Toulouse, 1983), p. 28.

Dottin, in Université de Toulouse-le Mirail, p. 36.

Bacou, in Musée de l'Orangerie des Tuileries, p. 10.

Bacou, in Musée de l'Orangerie des Tuileries, p. 10.

Snyder, p. 176.

Guérin, in Galerie des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux, 1985, p. 81.

Bacou, vol. 1, p. 41. Redon's statement is from A.S.M., p. 25. Note also that Bacou's connection of Redon with such "voyants" as Novalis, Rimbaud, Jean-Paul and Gérard de Nerval would appear to support the mystical import of these pictures. Bacou, vol. 1, p. 55.

Mathieu, p. 124.

Gamboni, pp. 63-90. Tedd Gott, "Silent Messengers — Odilon Redon's Dedicated Lithographs and the Politics of Gift-Giving," Print Collector's Newsletter, 19, no. 3 (July-August 1988), pp. 92-101. Gott's article is somewhat controversial, and it is difficult to completely agree with his recasting of Redon as such a mercenary (to take the most extreme position suggested in the article). However, a more even-handed reception of the new information in Gott's article might simply recognize the artist's abilities to promote his own work. Regardless of how Gott's revision of Redon is received it must be admitted that he has turned up a great deal of new information, and that along with Gamboni, he has breathed a bit of fresh air into the Redon scholarship.


One way to read this detail would be to relate it to the cap worn by Dante.

Hyslop, p. 311.

Sandstrom, p. 61.

Hyslop, pp. 311-312; Redon, A.S.M., p. 94.

We have far from exhausted the possibilities within the context of capital punishment. Note for example the mood in Redon's own writings in which he uses the following analogy to refer to Mallarmé's feelings (and his own) about "official academic instruction": "Mon ami Stéphane Mallarmé, toujours mu par un esprit de belle indépendance, désirait l'abolition du lycée, autant que celle de la guillotine." Redon, A.S.M., p. 135. As one of a number of examples we might mention referring to the atrocities of the years 1870-1871, I will refer the reader to an example of the hasty erection of the guillotine in small towns in


122Hyslop, p. 311.


125Dijkstra, p. 375.

126It was through Armand Clavaud that Redon was exposed to the writings of Baudelaire at an early age (and specifically to *Les Fleurs du mal*). The lithographic series dedicated to the collection of poems dates from 1890.

127Huysmans, *A rebours*, p. 165 (p. 60 in the translation).

128Guérin, Galerie des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux, 1985, p. 103.

129Reverseau, p. 174.

130Reverseau, p. 174.


133Reverseau, p. 178. Speaking specifically of Redon’s *L’Apparition* of 1883, Reverseau states the following: "... il offre une curieuse variante de l’aquarelle de G. Moreau: Salomé et Hérode ont disparu, la tête symbolisant l’âme s’échappant de son enveloppe terrestre s’élève flottant au-dessus du bourreau."


135Sandstrom, p. 61.
Specifically, the legend to which Sandstrom refers is that of "Le Bécut," a sort of regional variation on the myth of Polyphemus, in which the monster possesses two eyes, but also likes to cook human beings. Interestingly, Gott (National Gallery of Victoria, 1990, p. 82) discusses this work, but he has either overlooked or ignored Sandstrom's interpretation, and instead uses the title Satan Contemplating his Victims. He relates the work to Delacroix's lithographs for Stapfer's 1828 translation of Faust and he also notes that the critic Amédée Pigeon related the work in 1881 to "Goya's scenes of sorcery (see Amédée Pigeon, "Odilon Redon", Le Courrier Républican, 15 May 1881, p. 3).

In the most famous example of Freud's discussion of the severed head and the castration complex, which appears in a discussion of the myth of Medusa's head, he created the clear equation: "To decapitate = to castrate." See Sigmund Freud, "Medusa's Head," in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, 18: p. 273.

Several other works might also bear discussion in this context. For example, one drawing bearing the title L'Apparition (Plate LXXIV) shows a figure standing before a head attached to the end of a stem. This creates a relationship with the theme of the 'fleur marécage" in Redon's work, and suggests that in such works Redon may be in the process of transforming the head motif into a flower or plant motif which would refer to growth or regeneration. We should also note other works containing similar imagery which could be discussed along with the theme of the head on a platter, such as the famous Cactus Man (Plate LXXXI) and the Tête d'homme (Goliath) (Plate LXXXII). Moreover, Redon also introduced the head on a column type into the context of his 1891 series of lithographs, Songes (Plate LXXX). Although they are not discussed in great detail, it should be noted that some of these works are grouped together thematically in Motoé, Odilon Redon: Light and Darkness, pp. 63-80, under the general heading of "Heads/Faces/Head-Flowers".

Another work of the same type is Redon's L'Ange et La Tête de Saint Jean Baptiste (Pencil, heightened with white gouache (oxidized), c.1865-1875; Plate LXXII). Other works from the artist's sketchbooks, now preserved in the Cabinet des dessins at the Musée du Louvre in Paris are related to these works. See, for example, Homme ailé portant un crâne (Plate LXI) and Homme ailé au pied d'un arbre (Plate LXII).

One of the richest areas for discussion of artistic treatments of the theme of the "Temptation of Saint Anthony" is to be found in the literature on Hieronymus Bosch. See for example, Charles Cuttler, "The Lisbon Temptation of St. Anthony by Jerome Bosch," Art Bulletin, 39 (1957), pp. 109-126. The type of
inversion to which I am referring is the idea, discussed by Cuttler and others, that the central scene in the Lisbon triptych represents a "Black Mass."

142 At the Galerie Georges Giroux in Brussels.


144 Stephen Eisenmann, "On the Politics of Dreams: A Study of the 'Noirs' of Odilon Redon," Diss. Princeton University 1984, p. 79. This work was formerly in the collection of Edmond Picard in Brussels and Eisenmann also places it in the collection of Jacques Dubourg in Paris. Eisenmann suggests that the composition has its source in an 1839 lithograph by Daumier, _Suffrage Universel_ (illus. in Delteil as no. 746, lithograph of 1839). I find it more difficult to agree with his decision to stick with the title of _Saint John the Baptist_ and while his attempt to find political motives everywhere in Redon is interesting, many of his conclusions seem a bit far-fetched.

145 Roseline Bacou, in _Cabinet des dessins. Musée du Louvre, Donations Claude Roger-Marx_ (exh. cat., Paris, 1980), p. 70, notes states that Redon provided a description of this work himself (although she does not specify her source): "Une tête coupée placée sur une table carrelée derrière laquelle est un petit moine, tête nue, et trois petits esprit follets, souriants et mutins près de lui." If this figure is indeed a monk, it would not be inconsistent with my suggestion that the work may possibly be a representation of John the Baptist -- thus, a monk-like holy figure, with no hair as in so many of Redon's severed heads -- in prison. Bacou also notes the two other versions of _Prisonnier_ which could also have some relation to this idea. Of course the other possibility the reading of the figure as a monk would present is the idea that this is a visit (a bit too late, which may alas, always be the case in such circumstances) to the condemned person's cell.

CHAPTER II

MECHANISM OF MEANING

To this point, it has been my purpose to develop a selective catalogue of Redon’s severed head imagery related to the subject of John the Baptist. For the most part, these works have been approached by using traditional art historical methodologies of formal and iconographical analysis. The result has been the emergence of new questions, arising partly because of Redon’s departure from the traditional iconography of his subject and also because of his uncharacteristic style in treating it; thus, these questions suggest the need for further study. It may be helpful to begin by listing these questions and observations and use them to start an inquiry into other contexts for examination.¹

The following factors are clearly observable in the works and they are offered here as highly significant visual facts: 1) the head on the platter in one of these works looks very much like a self-portrait of Redon [as Gott has suggested]; 2) there is an interesting lack of engagement between the gaze of Salome and John’s head when the two are shown together [either by means of being both physically present or by means of the apparition of one of them; in
other words, their eyes do not meet]; 3) it is uncommon for the male and female to be physically present within the same composition, rather it is Redon's tendency to focus on either the isolated head of John, or on the solitary figure of Salome who sees an apparition; 4) in Redon's depictions of Salome, the sensuality which is so common in most other treatments of the theme, is absent; 5) there is a lack of the usual proliferation of details in Redon's compositions, and a strong trend towards what has been described above as a "decontextualization"; 6) and finally, it should be asked whether the suggested autobiographical element in Redon's art and its implied identification between the artist and the subject is in some way extended to the viewer, thus, raising the question of the role of the spectator in relation to this imagery and its presentation.

Considering the nature of these questions, which involve the inner emotional life of the artist, issues of gender, and the dynamics of the gaze, it seems appropriate to supplement the traditional art historical analysis with other methodologies which have made these issues the focus of study. Given the issues of "vision and visuality" which surround the present area of inquiry it would seem appropriate that the issue of spectatorship will become central, for not only does it unite all of these diverse questions, it also recurred throughout the discussion of works in Chapter One. Given the centrality of the spectator in recent theoretical work in the areas of psychoanalysis and feminism, it would follow that this section might be begun by briefly
examining the appropriateness of these methods, and the problems of combining them in an art historical context.

The importance and relevance of examining a psychoanalytic approach to these problems is suggested, if for no other reason, by the predisposition of so many of the major studies on Redon — as discussed in the introduction — to make implicit use of some form of psychoanalytic approach. For example, there has been a tendency in both art history and literary criticism to find a bond of identification between the artist and the subject matter of these works. But to forge the grounds for such an interpretation is to inevitably raise the question of the "identity" of the other actors in this drama. For example, in preparation of this research, a commonly raised question was "Who was Redon's Salome?", a query which does not seem so odd when one considers the extent to which both artists and writers of the period based their characters on family members, lovers, or other famous members of the intelligentsia. This sort of "role-playing" was very common during the period when Redon was producing his first fully mature works. It can be seen in a variety of forms ranging from the popularity of the "tableaux vivant" in literary and artistic salons of the time to the numerous artistic and literary cénacles, in which members of the various groups would take on roles such as "Christ" or "John the Baptist, the precursor" (which is equivalent to an identity as forerunner of a major figure of the avant-garde). Moreover, asking the question of just who from Redon's family or circle of friends might have been the proto-type for
various characters appearing in his works should not be unexpected if the psychoanalytic approach, which Redon scholars seem to have favored by applying it only to a limited degree, is carried a bit further to its logical conclusions. The curiosity to know what possible subconscious factors, such as the conditions of Redon's infancy and childhood, his family circumstances, and his sexual maturation, might have influenced the development of his art has already played a major role in the scholarly literature on the artist. It seems worthwhile to expand these tentative attempts even if it leads us occasionally into the troubled waters of "pathography" -- an approach which art historians have often maligned, and yet secretly craved as a means of exploring an artist's biography and the way that biography has been a factor in the formation of the work of art. Of course, it must be clearly stated here that the purpose of forwarding such an investigation is not to attempt to reach deterministic conclusions about either the life or works in question, but rather in order to open the possible ranges of interpretation. If nothing else, such a probing of Redon's biography and deep personal interest in the severed head theme might bring to light as yet unexplored areas which could contribute to the range of interpretation of these works, thus suggesting new meanings which might find further confirmation in more standard methods of interpretation.

The presence of little direct psychoanalytic inquiry into Redon's works, despite the numerous hints of its applicability in the art historical literature is
made all the more pressing by the artist's own frequent references in his writings to the role of subconscious factors in the creation of works of art:

Petit aphorisme banal:
Rien ne se fait en art par la volonté seule.

Tout se fait par la soumission docile à la venue de l'« inconscient ».  

Additionally, it must not be forgotten that Redon began to reach his first maturity as an artist at a time when the earliest research for psychoanalytic theory was being developed by Freud and others, and that Freud himself was studying at the time with Charcot in Paris.

But even outside of scientific circles, there was a strong tendency towards "psychological" studies of artistic and literary figures, as is indicated by a number of works, including one by Redon's childhood friend, Paul Bouget's *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*;

And for the introduction to his very influential book of 1889, *Les Grandes Initiés*, Édouard Schuré chose the following epithet from Claude Bernard:

I am convinced that the day will come when psychologists, poets and philosophers will speak the same language, and will understand one another.

Indeed, this last context deserves a great deal more focused analysis than can be provided in this study, but it does seem to be a factor which suggests the pertinence of exploring the usefulness and the limits of a psychoanalytic approach to Redon's production in the same period. This idea has been
articulated by Michel Hoog in a recent exhibition catalogue entry. Although
the catalogue was mainly devoted to the art of Redon's colleague Henri Fantin-
Latour, Hoog offered the following comments about Redon's own artistic
production of the time:

Precisely in the decade 1870-1880 Redon (who was not overly
fond of Fantin) freed himself in "noirs" (charcoal drawings) that
could be described as a kind of auto-psycho-therapy for this
exceptionally well-balanced man. Moreover Redon, whose inner
world and formal inventiveness were richer than Fantin's, was
certainly able to express himself without literary allusion. It was
in the years 1888-1890 that the young Maurice Barrès wrote his
Trois stations de psychothérapie, all three achieved in the realm of
the visual arts: Leonardo da Vinci, Quentin de La Tour, Marie
Bashkiriseva. In 1884 Huysmans published Against Nature, and in
1887 En Rade. It was doubtless not mere chance that this period
also witnessed the first works of Freud, then living in Paris."

Thus, one might argue that use of such a methodology is not only appropriate
to these works, but in some ways demanded by their nature and the context in
which they were created, especially in their preoccupation with the private
inner life, fantasy, and the realm of dreams. Moreover, such coincidences also
suggest an alternative to the "pathographic" approach which at its worst has
viewed the art work only as a symptom of problems in the creator's
personality, but which even at its best has often been unfairly disparaged. It
seems reasonable to argue, as has Mary Ellen Wolf, in her interesting study of
Mallarmé's "Hérodiade," that Freud and the artist might be "valuable allies,"
and thus, that like Mallarmé, who in the formation of his innovative poetic
techniques was undergoing extensive "self-analysis," Redon's diaries are a fine
example in the same genre. Indeed, such a view of the period might suggest that a psychoanalytic approach to the art of this period need not take merely an extrinsic approach (which the current author finds in no way offensive as might many traditionally minded art historians), but that it is also in many ways intrinsic, thus, being derived from many documents of the artist's own creation which suggest that such works were pre-occupied at their inception with many of the same ideas which formed the basis of Freud's own investigations.

Beyond the issue of the applicability of psychoanalytic inquiry in this context, and the desire to go beyond a simple "psychobiography" which, although it has been something of a norm in art historical analysis, has taken on a pejorative connotation in many other disciplines, lies the question of the compatibility of psychoanalysis with not only art history, but with the other modes of inquiry which the present analysis demands. This issue of compatibility has by no means been completely resolved for theories of art combining psychoanalysis and feminism, for in many cases, Freudian and even Lacanian analysis has been directly challenged from a feminist point of view. Clearly there are many issues which remain to be clarified in a combination of these two areas of inquiry, and yet both seem to offer a great deal to discussions of issues of sexual difference in Redon, to questions of representations of the female figure in his art, and to questions of the meaning of the gaze. Rather than attempt an analysis of the complex interrelationship of
psychoanalysis and feminism, which would take us far from the focus of the present study, it is more useful to point to another discipline which might offer a model for combining methods taken from both — and a combination which has provided some of its richest insights. This is the area of film theory, which is an interesting model for inquiry here, because the object of its study — the institution of the cinema, like the art of Redon — emerged from the same fin-de-siècle milieu as did psychoanalysis. Thus, it may be said that the origins of cinema and the art of Redon are symmetrically related to the phenomena of psychoanalysis. In many ways, the model of film theory will allow us to go beyond the impasse created by the limitations of traditional iconographical analysis. Owing partly to its newness as a distinct field of study, it has been an especially rich breeding ground for interdisciplinary approaches. In her book *Femmes Fatales; Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*, Mary Ann Doane has commented upon film theory’s necessary engagement with a variety of approaches and its positioning within a wide range of academic disciplines:

Struggling to establish its own legitimacy, film studies was confronted with the relentless oppositions between high art and mass culture, single-authored works and collective industrial productions, art and mechanical reproduction. Debates in the field of literature about structuralism and poststructuralism took a specific form precisely because they were waged in the context of well-established departments of English, French, or, to a lesser extent, Comparative Literature, many with lengthy histories and deeply embedded traditions of literary criticism and history which were threatened by the new theory. The institutional positioning of film studies was less stable. Dispersed across a wide variety of departments — Communications, Theater, English,
Speech, Art — film studies was constantly made aware of its own instructional fragility. The result of all of this, according to Doane, is that film theory has become a fertile breeding ground for interdisciplinary studies:

Because film studies lacked the solidly ensconced traditions of literary studies and the institutional values accompanying them, it faced less resistance to the incorporation of these non- and even anti-traditional approaches (which is not to suggest that this resistance was entirely absent).

Moreover, Doane has noted that the same tendency "was true of feminism as well, which very quickly became central to the field of film studies as a whole in the United States." The appropriateness of taking the cue from film theory and its combination of ideas from feminism and psychoanalysis in an analysis of Redon's treatment of the severed head and its relation to female imagery is further suggested by Doane's research, which although it deals primarily with cinema, has taken as one of its focal points the "femme fatale." Moreover, Doane and other film theorists have provided a number of fascinating insights concerning the interplay of this imagery, with the issue of the gaze, and the role of the spectator.

Presented with models for interpretation based in approaches to spectatorship of the visual image which are drawn from psychoanalysis, feminism, and film theory, it is now possible to approach the discussion of the questions raised above in several distinct phases in this chapter. The first
analysis will deal with the issue of the artist's identification with the imagery which has become the object of artistic production, and as a result, will examine the "pathographic" approach to Redon. The second stage of this examination will deal with the issues of sexuality which although latent in Redon’s work, are clearly a distinguishing factor between his and other artist's treatments of the Salome theme. Although the main focus of this inquiry into these issues will remain the artist's means of treating the encounter between Salome and John the Baptist, it is also important to touch upon the issue of female imagery in Redon's work and his attitude toward the female nude. In the final analysis, the issue of the gaze will be discussed both as it relates to the relationship between the characters represented in Redon’s art works and as it relates to the spectator's reception of the image of the severed and floating head. This last discussion will be used as a context for examining Redon's relationship to the Symbolist movement and its quest to create an original vision of the fin-de-siècle world.

i. Artist as Saint:

The Work of Other Artists and Writers

One of the significant observations noted in Chapter One was that the head of John the Baptist in at least one of Redon's works, the early drawing now in Kansas City, appears (at least to Ted Gott who first published this observation) to carry the artist's own features (Plate I). Such a self-portrait
obviously raises the question of the artist's personal identification with the martyred saint. This question is of great significance for Redon's art, especially considering the large extent to which much of the art historical scholarship has flirted with a psychobiographical methodology. Of course, the tendency for scholars to explore the ways artists have identified with characters depicted in their works is hardly unique to studies of Redon. Thus, before looking at this element in his works, it is important to begin by exploring the "iconography" of the "artist as saint" as it appears in the work of several other artists.

In this section, some of the basic parameters for the discussion of artists using an autobiographical approach to their imagery will be provided. However, only a few relevant examples will be examined here so as to establish the range and commonality of such an approach, and there is by no means the intent to provide an all-inclusive survey. This discussion is begun by drawing on a few historical examples of this tendency among visual artists, and then, a few of the artists of Redon's own time period will be mentioned who were drawn to this theme. Afterwards, the tendency towards autobiographical application of the severed head in several key literary examples will be discussed. Ultimately, consideration of these examples will permit an examination of some of the more specific contexts for Redon's own treatment of this imagery in an autobiographical fashion.

An interesting discussion of the theme of the severed head and its application in autobiographical contexts is provided in Laurie Schneider's
interesting article, "Donatello and Caravaggio: The Iconography of Decapitation." Schneider notes that the subjects of John the Baptist and of Judith and Holofernes are both stories in which "a woman takes revenge on a man by arranging his decapitation." But she also discusses the themes of David and Goliath and Perseus and the severed head of Medusa. In agreement with other studies of the Salome/John the Baptist theme, Schneider notes that "artists frequently allude to the erotic overtones inherent in these stories, formally or iconographically or both." Schneider is in general agreement with Donald Posner's article on Caravaggio's early works and the homoerotic nature of their imagery: "The implication that these figures are various reflections of Caravaggio's self-image is clear enough and fairly straightforward." However, in discussing other works, Schneider is fascinated by the artist's inclusion of a self-portrait of his own head in a depiction of Goliath (Plate LXXXIII) and in his willingness to "paint his own image in the face of the Medusa" (LXXXIV). Interestingly, Redon's own variations on the theme of David with the giant head of Goliath (Plates LXXXVI and LXXXVII) may be distantly linked to Caravaggio by the follower Aubin Vouet, whose own David with the Head of Goliath (Plate LXXXV) Redon probably saw in the collection of the Galerie des Beaux-Arts in Bordeaux. In other less well-known works by Caravaggio the use of the "self-image" in representations of John the Baptist can be found.

In her interpretation of Caravaggio's combination of images of self
within the imagery of the severed head, Schneider, who holds advanced degrees in both art history and psychology, draws heavily upon classical Freudian psychoanalysis and thus she provides an interpretation of Caravaggio which is far more concerned with traditional pathography than with more contemporary applications of psychoanalysis to a discussion of the dynamics of the subject/spectator. For example, in discussing the *Head of Medusa*, Schneider begins by quoting from Freud's famous essay on "Medusa's Head": "To decapitate = to castrate." She then provides the following interpretation for the work:

> Chronologically, the Medusa follows the early paintings of seductive, effeminate young men and psychologically, its iconography sums up the artist's preoccupations as expressed by those early paintings. By inserting his self-portrait into the face of the terrifying severed head, Caravaggio indicates an intense castration fear. The characteristic homosexual willingness to give up the oedipal wish for his mother leads to an exaggerated fear of retaliation in the form of castration by an authoritative male figure. At the same time however, since the Medusa's head is also a fearsome female image, Caravaggio's representation reflects the homosexual antipathy for females whom he regards as castrated males, a fate which he fears may be in store for himself.

As further evidence to support her argument, Schneider demonstrates that Caravaggio's treatment of the Gorgon's head deviated from what by the time of the late Renaissance had become a "greatly idealized" representation, and that instead, "the artist chose that type of Gorgon which corresponded most closely to the intense castration fear typical of the homosexual character." In
this context, Schneider emphasizes the special attention the artist has "given
the teeth showing the open mouth." The open mouth, "thus becomes a kind of
visual conflation merging mouth with female genitalia" and ultimately
suggests the "vagina dentata" a feature which she identifies as "a standard
component in the characters of men who fear women." Even Caravaggio's
treatment of David Holding the Head of Goliath, which Friedlaender described as
having a "Medusa-like head of Goliath with its open mouth and blood trickling
down the throat" is noted by Schneider to display the same emphasis of the
teeth which further link the head with the Medusa imagery as does the pose of
the figures which she relates to Renaissance types of Perseus with the head of
Medusa.

A critique of Schneider's approach is found in a rejoinder by Hans J.
Kleinschmidt. Kleinschmidt began by stating that he "admired her courage
in attempting anything as unpopular among scholars devoted to art history as
the application of psychoanalytic theory to their discipline" and then he
continues to attribute much of the disdain for such an approach to the
formalist bias of his time. He also refers to the reservations in E.H. Gombrich's
famous essay of 1953, "Psychoanalysis and the History of Art," which begins
with the bias that "because art derives from art":

... up to a point all art must be ... derivative. It is this fact, I
believe, which explains that art has a history, a style, in contrast to
perception and to dreaming which have not.
But despite the reservations noted in previous scholars’ writings, and in contrast to the distractions of infamous applications of psychoanalysis to the study of artists (he notes Wilhelm Fränger on Bosch for example), Kleinschmidt ends up finding Schneider’s analysis to be "especially convincing" with the one reservation that he would prefer that she avoid reading the "homoerotic" elements as "symptoms" and rather as being among the other important factors influencing the "artist’s makeup." In his discussion of Caravaggio’s interest in the severed head image, he notes that other artists, and especially followers of Caravaggio, found it to be equally fascinating. Kleinschmidt provides a wider context for Schneider’s discussion of Caravaggio’s castration anxiety by referring to a very different example of an artist using "self-imagery" as the source of her painted characters, that is, in the work of Artemisia Gentileschi.

In Artemisia Gentileschi’s case, however, the subject matter comes from the apocryphal Book of Judith, and shows the Jewish heroine Judith cutting off the head of the Assyrian enemy general Holofernes’s head (Plates LXXXVIII and LXXXIX). As Mary D. Garrard has clearly indicated in her recent study of the artist, the "theme of Judith and Holofernes occupies a larger place in Artemisia Gentileschi’s oeuvre than any other subject" and she notes that "at least five autograph Judiths have been preserved". Indeed, Garrard asserts that this subject probably was of "personal importance for the artist, for of all the female characters that she painted, Judith was the most positive and active
figure, whose heroic deed held for Artemisia the greatest potential for self-identification.\textsuperscript{26} Giving credit to Kleinschmidt, among others, for elaborating the artist's process of creating this identification, Garrard summarizes the characteristic way these works have been approached in the scholarship:

Many writers have interpreted the gory decapitation shown in Artemisia's Uffizi \textit{Judith} in psychosexual terms, as an expression of imagined revenge against her rapist Agostino Tassi. The evidence for this interpretation resides simultaneously in the image of the executioner-heroine — for some, a presumed self-portrait of the artist — and in an equation that is both biblical and Freudian, between decapitation and castration: the just punishment for rape in an eye-for-an-eye tradition.\textsuperscript{27}

However, she is also concerned to avoid letting the "facile association of stormy biography with violent pictorial imagery" detract from the "aesthetic complexity of the artist's self-identification with her depicted character", even though she admits that the argument provided above is difficult to ignore. Indeed, she feels that the common tendency to create such "autograph images" among artists of the Renaissance and Baroque period clearly demonstrates "their psychic involvement with their characters."\textsuperscript{28} The fact is that Garrard feels that the positive aspect of Artemisia's identification with Judith needs to be emphasized and not the negative factor of revenge:

For Artemisia, however, identification with the female character Judith had both a different personal meaning and innovative expressive implications. In contrast to many of the masculine examples of the "included self" (in Leo Steinberg's phrase), which frequently center on figures of penitence, remorse, and guilt, the woman painter Artemisia finds in her female
characters -- not only, but especially, Judith -- models of psychic liberation, exempla for an imagined action upon the world, not meditative retreat from it. It is essential that we recognize the positive and healthy elements of the artist's identification with her character, all the more as they have been hidden by the prevailing and almost obsessive interpretations of the painting as savage revenge.29

Ultimately, it would seem that Garrard would tend to see as less relevant Kleinschmidt's analysis of the Naples version (Plate LXXXVIII) which emphasizes the decapitation of Holophernes as an act of castration:

The scene is filled with dramatic action and is pervaded, furthermore, by erotic tension, since the powerful, heavy arms of Holophernes resemble thighs, and his head, partly covered by hair and foreshortened, could well be mistaken for his genital area at first glance. The impression is unavoidable that the iconographic ambiguity -- this, so to say, incomplete displacement of the action from below to above -- is intentional: this is a scene depicting castration.30

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the point of view of the spectator (and perhaps that person's sexual orientation), and the sexuality of the artist might have a strong bearing upon the nature of one's interpretation of the particular subject and the way the artist has represented it. But despite this subjective element (Wittkower used it as one of his main reservations for the application of psychoanalysis in an art historical context)31 which enters into this act of interpretation, it must also be admitted that such themes of decapitation which involve a confrontation between the sexes are hardly ones which pose neutral questions about the nature of sexual identity. Thus, one must keep in mind
Kleinschmidt's own warning that although "a great work of art invites our projections of added meaning and heightened significance if the esthetic resonance is to be generated" and it must be remembered that "a high degree of 'openness' will always remain attached to symbols in art and poetry and we can only guess at the original intentions of creative genius." That all of these factors should enter into the reception of seventeenth-century works should give pause to the way we approach similar imagery in the late nineteenth century when such confrontations between the sexes were becoming a major fact of social life.

Indeed, Ewa Kuryluk, in her study *Salome and Judas in the Cave of Sex; The Grotesque: Origins, Iconography, Techniques*, has discussed the complexities of reading the sexual ambiguity of the severed head image and specifically the theme of Salome in the context of nineteenth-century art and literature:

... one has to realize the psychological aspect of the Salome story, the fact that this female demon of Christian iconography came to be interpreted, particularly in the late nineteenth century, as an indication of women's hidden aggressiveness. At that time "female psychology" was, of course, the product of predominantly male fantasies which for millennia have likened woman to matter -- the earth, the moon -- and men to sources of energy -- the spirit, the sun. Until recently masculinity has been conceived as a force which animates and illuminates passive, dark femininity, while woman was generally described as lacking something -- spirit, mind, intelligence, reason, a name, or a penis. As the norms of female psychology were set and controlled by men, it seems likely that the theories of Freud, Jung, and Lacan illuminate partly or not at all the fabric of the female psyche (if such a thing exists), but instead throw light on the male perception of women. Though these scholars meant to explore female peculiarities and regulate them, they may frequently have
projected their own convictions and fantasies onto women, whose main frustrations were caused by this mixture of male mythologizing and social discrimination. On the other hand, the feminists who rightly fight what they assume to be a false male conception of femininity often come up with unconvincing theories of female psychology seen exclusively as the result of male oppression. Thus the inner life of woman (whether or not it is different from that of man) still remains terra incognita, and the psychology of both sexes still resides in the territory of legend and prejudice where all seems possible.32

Thus, when it comes to the problem of identifying the roles and who is playing them, especially when it comes to "male mythologizing," the work can be quite complex, as follows from the questions Kuryluk’s observations have posed:

For instance, do the figures of goddesses and great literary heroines reflect femininity, the male perception of it, or perhaps masculinity? Are Emma Bovary, Anna Karenina, and Effi Briest the fullest incarnations of the female principle, or are they simply Flaubert, Tolstoy, and Fontane? And who is Herodias or Salome? A historical figure? A fantasy of the Apostles? The mythical Hectate? The mother earth? The moon? The alter ego of the prioress Herrade of Landsberg, who painted Salome dancing on her hands? The anti-Madonna of Heine, a Jew? The real ego of Mallarmé, Wilde, and Beardsley?33

Before taking on the task of suggesting answers for some of these complex questions in the context of Redon’s treatment of the Salome/John the Baptist theme, it might be useful to first establish a few examples of such role playing in works from the artist’s own time period. In may ways these will echo the historical models for the "included self" -- Steinberg’s phrase does
have a certain precision — which were found in the works of Caravaggio and Artemisia Gentileschi.

In his 1897 painting of Salomé (Plate XC), Émile Bernard represented his own head on the platter held by the youthful figure of Salome. Moreover, it would appear that the figure of Salome is a portrayal of the artist’s first wife, Hanenah (Plate XCI). Such images based on self-portraits and portraits of friends or family members were very common in Bernard’s works at the time. For example in his painting of 1898, Salomé et le bourreau (Plate XCII), the severed head of John is really an image of the artist himself. Moreover, following in the manner of Paul Gauguin, who painted himself as Christ in the Yellow Christ of 1889 (Plate XCIII) or in Gauguin’s Christ in Gethsemane (Plate XCIV), where the Christ figure is once again an image of the artist himself, Bernard painted Le Christ au jardin des oliviers of 1889 (Plate XCV) which contains an image of Gauguin as Judas, and which was meant to indicate Bernard’s feelings of betrayal by his friend and supporter.35

There are a number of other nineteenth-century examples of such imagery of the "included self" which draw specifically upon the subject of John the Baptist. One such work by Auguste Clésinger, a "St. John’s platter" (Plate XLVIII), has already been discussed, for it has been linked not just with the artist, but also with the executed criminal, who may have been the direct inspiration for the work, and it is also linked to the prefect of the police, who commissioned it. The criminal, whose name, like that of the artist, was also
"Jean-Baptiste" wrote in the memoirs of his last days in prison that his lover, whom he described as "Salome", was responsible for his fate. Moreover, the famous treatment of the subject by Puvis de Chavannes, *The Execution of John the Baptist* (Plate XIII), referred to above, has been read by Louise d'Argencourt in a similar context:

Finally, one detail is worth a second glance: the date written under the signature -- 14 Xbre 1869 (14 December 1869) -- is the date of Puvis's forty-fifth birthday. Because it was rare for the artist to have dated his work so precisely, one might legitimately conclude that he wished in this way to indicate a parallel between the melancholic feeling of growing older and the tragic irreversibility of Saint John's fate.36

It is a bit more difficult to find specific instances where Gustave Moreau has clearly identified with John the Baptist, although, as Pierre-Louis Mathieu has noted, Moreau shared with Redon an intense interest and was perhaps even "obsessed by the theme of the severed head living its own existence ...”37 It is quite clear, however, that Moreau found in Salome a perfect character to express his negative view of women:

Cette femme ennuyée, fantasque, à nature animale, se donnant le plaisir très peu vif pour elle, de voir son ennemi à terre, tant elle est dégoûtée de toute satisfaction de ses désirs.

Cette femme se promenant nonchalamment d'une façon végétale et bestiale dans les jardins qui viennent d'être souillés par cet horrible meurtre qui effraye le bourreau lui-même, qui se sauve éperdu – tu jouirais vraiment.

Quand je veux rendre ces nuances-là je les trouve, non pas dans mon sujet, mais dans la nature même de la femme dans la vie, qui cherche les émotions malsaines et qui, stupide, ne comprend même pas l'horreur des situations les plus affreuses.
Moreover, Ragnar von Holten has seen in Moreau's attitude a reflection of the general misogynistic sentiments which characterized much of the male-dominated culture of the fin-de-siècle:

In fact, the only exceptions to Moreau's negative feelings about women seem to have been his mother, "to whom he was extraordinarily attached" until her death in 1884, and Adélaïde-Alexandrine Durieux, "his companion of 25 years," who died only six years later in 1890. It is also around the strong bond to these persons that one of Moreau's most potent applications of "the included self" can be found within his works. His subject is not John the Baptist, but Orpheus, for the artist's *Orpheus Lamenting at the Tomb of Eurydice* (Plate XCVI) has been read as a clear example of a "memorial" to them. Thus, Kosinski calls attention to Moreau's own description of this work which he thought of as being the last in a series called "The Cycle of the Poet" and "in which Moreau explores his notion of the priestly function of the poet, the poet as martyr and victim." Moreover, she sees in his conception a linkage of
"pagan and Christian imagery":

Tragic and holy martyrdom is a central and ennobling aspect of Moreau's concept of the poet-artist, enhanced by Moreau's conflation of pagan and Christian imagery, creating a hybrid tragic hero at the center of his imaginative pantheon. The image of Orpheus lamenting, then, is redolent with Christian symbolism.¹³

And although her specific interest in this regard is to identify the way that "the pose of Orpheus' body [is] reminiscent of the martyred Saint Sebastian as presented in the Renaissance" and to Moreau's own image of that saint, it would be just as easy to find prototypes in the literature which would link Orpheus to John the Baptist in a manner which is not unlike what one encounters in Redon's later art, and which will be discussed in Chapter III.¹⁴

In 1983, Theodore Reff published a very interesting and thought-provoking study in which he attempted to find autobiographical meaning in Paul Cézanne's imagery of the severed head. Reff's article draws on a rich variety of sources, ranging from early nineteenth-century imagery by Antoine Wiertz and Géricault to mid-century Parnassian and Spanish poetry. He finds connections in popular imagery and in the archeological museums of Cézanne's native Provence. The focus of Reff's study is a drawing and a poem which were included in an early letter to Emile Zola, the artist's boyhood friend (Plate XCVII). While Reff admits that he is not dealing with one of Cézanne's greatest works, the subject matter dealing with a severed head is still found to be worthy of study, because:
Tracing such themes also helps us define the psychological unity of his art, hidden beneath the stylistic diversity that still tends to dominate discussions of it.46

Moreover, one might presume that the ubiquity of the severed head in the art of the period also played a role in the significance for undertaking the investigation of such a minor work:

The motif, originating in legends surrounding the stories of Orpheus and John the Baptist, had a long history in European art and literature and was especially popular in the nineteenth century. The morbid fascination of the theme, mingled with a perverse eroticism, could not fail to interest Romantic writers like Gautier, Baudelaire, and Théodore de Banville and Symbolist artists like Redon and Gustave Moreau. In addition, the grotesque pathos of the dissected heads of corpses and the guillotined heads of criminals fascinated Realist artists like Géricault and Antoine Wiertz.47

And Reff even suggests that a fascination with the theme could have been "inspired by a campaign against capital punishment."48 Reff's convincing revelation of the drawing's source in a popular print of 1792 by James Gillray (Plate XCVIII) also illustrates how long a memory of the events surrounding the French Revolution survived in the consciousness of the artists of the following century. The immediate point of departure for Cézanne was the Ugolino scene from Dante's Inferno, but in the end, Reff agrees with the ideas advanced by Kurt Badt and Meyer Schapiro that Cézanne identified with Virgil, while Zola was his Dante. Reff also follows,49 and then attempts to further buttress their ideas about how Cézanne's drawing, which was created
"at a time of unresolved conflict with his father, who refused to support him in pursuing an artistic career and forced him instead to study law," which according to Badt's interpretation:

represents Cézanne’s wished-for revenge on his father: the figure at the head of the table is Cézanne himself, relishing his new paternal role; the smaller figures are his true descendants, his future works of art; and the severed head -- that of the former "head" of the house -- is his father, now providing the nourishment he had previously denied all of them.50

and Schapiro's interpretation that the drawing expresses "an unspoken wish for the father's death which will give the young Cézanne the freedom and means for an independent career."51 Reff, beginning by describing Cézanne's transformation of "Dante's Hell into a family dining room," provides an interpretation of the way that the severed head in the drawing is directly related to Cézanne's Oedipal conflict. Reff describes one of Freud's dream interpretations as being "remarkably like Cézanne's image:

... a boy of three and a half, learning that his father will return after a long absence, thus depriving him of his mother's exclusive attention, dreams of his father carrying his head on a plate, that is, imagines through a symbolic displacement from phallus to head the castration he dreads.52

In many ways, Reff's analysis is the ultimate in a "pathographic approach" to art history, but ironically, in a recent overview of "The State of Psychoanalytic Research in Art History," Jack Spector has praised Reff's research.53 Moreover, it might be noted that Cézanne has been the frequent focus of such studies,
among them a significant article by Laurie Schneider, whose research formed
the basis of the discussion of Caravaggio.54

One of the more extreme examples of the "included self" within an
image of the severed head can be found in James Ensor's drawing Les
Cuisiniers Dangereux of 1896 (Plate XCIX). In this work, Ensor included an
image of his head displayed on a platter, but the cooks are, as John Farmer has
described them, "the critics who prepare a selection of artists' heads for more
critics, the waiting dinner guests: Eduard Fétis, Eugène Demolder, Camille
Lemonnier, Max Sulzberger, and Emile Verhaeren...". The critic Octave Maus,
holds Ensor's head on a platter, which also includes a "sour herring" or
"hareng saur," which Farmer says would correspond to the French sounds, "art
Ensor," a "favorite pun and occasional signature" of the artist. The other cook is
Edmond Picard, who was interestingly a patron of Redon, having
commissioned from him a series of lithographs to illustrate the "musical
drama" Le Juré (Plates C and Cl) which deals with the story of a man unjustly
condemned to death by decapitation. In Ensor's picture, Picard is frying the
head of Vogel, and looks "with greedy anticipation" at the heads of the artists
Georges Lemmen, Théo van Rysselberghe, and Anna Boch.55 Thus, it is clear
from this example that the act of criticism could be interpreted as a
condemnation of the artist which could be equated with the act of
decapitation, and thus, vicious critics might be one cause of the artist's
martyrdom. Moreover, such substitutions of the head for fruit on a platter, and
the general association of food with the severed head are quite common, according to Ewa Kuryluk, who notes the nature of this association in the context of the John the Baptist theme which would "link women to severed heads, connect the sexual to the culinary, play with necrophilia and cannibalism" so that:

Herodias and Salome not only defeat the precursor of Christ, they look as if they were ready to devour the head and make love to it. It is crucial to the story that the head is brought in during a banquet, like all the other dishes. The traditional equation between the consumption of food and sex opens wide the door for endless fantasies.56

Even a traditional art historical analysis would note the substitution of the head for fruit on a platter in the two versions of a painting by Titian, which show a portrait of his daughter holding a platter (Plates CII and CIII).

Such instances of the "included self" as given in this brief discussion of visual works of the time, were quite common in literary works at the end of the nineteenth-century, as Kuryluk has suggested by her query of whether Salome might be the "real ego of Mallarmé, Wilde, and Beardsley?" One of the more obvious examples of such identification of the writer with the subject matter can be found in an analysis of Gustave Flaubert’s *Trois Contes* by Shelley Purcell where she argues that there are strong parallels to be found between the life of the writer and the life of the saint being portrayed. For example, she notes that
... critics agree on the sainthood theme as the principal motif, and they have gone on to suggest that the suffering and triumph of the saint are analogous to the creative process of the artist.

She also agrees with Enid Starkie's suggestion that the "arrangement of the three stories may point to an 'ascending order of sainthood,' from the least reflective (Félicité) to the most lucid (Jean-Baptiste)." And discussing the title of the "Hérodias" story, she argues that:

Though it is tempting to regard the sainthood theme as a factor which might elicit Jean-Baptiste's name in the third title, we should direct our attention to its very absence. The third saint has decreased to such a point that the absence of his name from the title is a statement about his function as the greatest martyr and a symbol of the author's self-effacement in his work.

Describing the source of such an attitude in Flaubert, Purcell calls attention to the scholarly literature where the "theme of sainthood has been linked to Flaubert's view that Art is a god who demands suffering ('L'Art, comme le Dieu des Juifs, se repaît d'holocaustes.') And quoting from Flaubert's writings, she argues that the "artist, then, is the saint who sacrifices all for his god. 'Pour un artiste, il n'y en a qu'un [principe]: tout sacrifier à l'Art.' Purcell takes this parallel even further, suggesting that "just as Jean-Baptiste's message (symbolized by his head) will be carried on by his disciples after his death, so the artist's work will transcend temporality." Following her argument, it can be concluded that the severed head would have had several meanings for Flaubert, which would no doubt have been significant for other
artists and writers treating the theme: 1) it suggests that the artist sees himself as a prophet — ignored and rejected by his public which is symbolized by Salome — misunderstood in his own time; 2) in creating images of severed heads in their works the artist sets up a situation whereby "work will transcend temporality" since the followers will carry on the artist's message (as symbolized by the imagery of the head); and 3) it also suggests a link to the theme of Orpheus — which even in Redon's own time was read as classical mythologies equivalent to the theme of John the Baptist⁶¹ — in which the artist's "wish fulfillment" dream of having followers (or disciples) comes true in the episode where the young Thracian girl finds the poet's severed head on his lyre and carries it back to Mount Olympus as a sort of apotheosis. Thus, the proliferation of a production of "objet d'art" which consisted primarily of severed head images, might be read as the result of the artist's desire to produce objects which would be found by such sympathetic followers.

For Purcell, Flaubert's treatment of the theme of John the Baptist "reflects the attitude he holds toward the true artist." Referring specifically to the metaphor of the saint's diminution, she points out that "describing the kind of life one would need to lead in order to attain the artist's goal, Flaubert analogically paints the picture of such a martyr":

Si vous voulez à la fois chercher le Bonheur et le Beau, vous n'atteindrez ni à l'un ni à l'autre, car le second n'arrive que par le sacrifice ... déchire-toi, flagelle-toi, roule-toi dans la cendre, avilis la matière, crache sur ton corps, arrache ton cœur!⁶²
Interestingly, Redon was given somewhat similar advice when his first teacher, Stanislas Gorin, learned that the young man had decided to become an artist and to leave his native Bordeaux for Paris: "Adieu mon cher élève, travaillez et disposez-vous à devenir martyr bienheureux si vous continuez à suivre la carrière artistique...". Nevertheless, Purcell notes that such "martyrdom" or "dimunition," could have positive results, at least for Flaubert. Once again she supports her idea that "as the saint/artist diminishes in his life of sacrifice, the illuminating inspiration of Art is allowed to increase" by referring to the author's own writings:

Mais elle grandira, elle grandira comme un soleil, les rayons d'or t'en couvriront la figure, ils passeront en toi, tu seras éclairée dedans ... L'Art est assez vaste pour occuper tout un homme.

Additionally, it has been noted that Flaubert made at least two specific references in his writings to this famous biblical phrase: "Pour qu'il grandisse, il faut que je diminue!". Purcell says that "Its reference to the sacrificed martyr points to the symbolic self-effacement of the author in the creation of beauty," or in Flaubert's own words: "L'auteur, dans son oeuvre, doit être dans son oeuvre, doit être Dieu dans l'univers, présent partout, et visible nulle part...". Moreover, Flaubert wrote at length about his interest in saints:

Connaissez-vous les Fioretti de Saint François? Je vous en parle parce que je viens de me livrer à cette lecture édifiante. Et, à ce propos, je trouve que, si je continue, j'aurai ma place parmi les lumières de l'Eglise. Je serai une des colonnes du temple. Après saint Antoine, saint Julien; et ensuite Jean-Baptiste; je ne sors pas
It is also very interesting to note Flaubert's identification of sainthood with the column of a temple -- and that he would himself become such a column -- a symbolic use of architecture which was quite well-known in the middle ages, but which could also inform the way Redon's own combination of saintly imagery with the column is approached (see for example Plate LVII which is discussed above)! This statement is also an example of Flaubert's possible linkage between treatments of Saint Anthony and Saint John the Baptist which runs parallel to Redon's and Khnopff's treatment of the Apparition (see Plates XXVIII and XXIX). Elsewhere, Flaubert made explicit his identification with Saint Anthony: "A la place de saint Antoine, par exemple, c'est moi qui y suis. La tentation a été pour moi et non pour le lecteur."68

A similar situation exists in the case of Mallarmé, where as has been seen in the discussion above, imagery of the martyred John is used as an object of identification for the artist. It has been noted in Chapter One that strong similarities and kinships existed between the artistic production and attitudes of both Redon and Mallarmé. Thus, it is worth re-emphasizing here the saintly demeanor which was associated with the great writer: "Cette attitude si noble, cette exigence exaltante et hautaine expliquent la vénération dont il fut entouré, comme un prêtre, un saint et peut-être un martyr de la Poésie."69
ii. The Artist as Saint:

The Severed Head Treated as an Autobiographical Element in Redon’s Work

Following in the spirit of the numerous examples of artists and writers from Redon’s own time period, and considering even historically distanced examples where images of the “included self” appear in subjects containing severed head imagery, it is now possible to turn to the contexts for Redon’s possible identification with such imagery in his own work. This process can be begun by establishing that in Redon’s life there existed many of the same conditions which had favored the development of autobiographical imagery in the works of those artists and writers discussed above.

Redon’s tendency to identify the plight of the artist as being like that of a martyred saint, and more specifically to identify strongly with the plight of John the Baptist, might begin with the fact that his own name — although it is rarely mentioned in the literature — was also Jean, as given to him at the time of his baptism. This fact is discussed in an article by Robert Mesuret, whose primary focus is to correct a number of misconceptions surrounding the artist’s birth and early life, and he quotes from Redon’s “acte de baptême”:

Le vingt-quatre avril mil huit cent quarante, je, soussigné, vicaire de St. Seurin, ai baptisé un garçon né avant hier de Sr. Bertrand Redon et de Marie Guerin, son épouse, auquel enfant a été donné le nom de Bertrand-Jean, le parrain a été Bertrand-Auguste Redon, et la marraine Marguerite Pomet, née Redon.70
And he continues:

Bien que le prénom de Jean ne fût pas celui de son parrain, sa mention sur le seul acte de baptême semble indiquer qu’il lui fut donné à cette occasion. Odilon ne figure sur aucune pièce officielle: ainsi en ordonnait du prénom usuel la coutume familiale.71

The name must have held special significance for Redon and his wife Camille because it was given to their first son, Jean Redon, who was born in 1886.72 However, this name was also to be associated by the Redons with melancholy and a sense of personal loss, for Jean died in infancy only six months after his birth.73 Of course, Redon would have closely identified with his first child’s fragility, for he too was a sickly child, and was not allowed to go to school until rather late in adolescence.74

Above, it has been established that even the conditions and setting for Redon’s baptism may have played an important role in the development of one of his earliest images of John the Baptist (Plate XXXVIII), for it seems to have been based on a stain-glassed window in the chapel of his parish church, Saint-Seurin, which contained a scene showing John’s head on a platter (Plate XLI). Evidence of the effect that such early religious experiences had on the artist, can be found in his own description of another event that took place at Saint-Seurin, his First Communion:

La grande émotion est à l’heure de ma première Communion, sous les voûtes de l’église de Saint-Seurin; les chants m’exaltent; ils sont vraiment ma première révélation de
In fact, one might be attempted to see a later oil painting, *La prière, visage, fleurs* (Plate CIV) as a sort of reconstruction of that event, for the artist certainly drew upon his memories of this experience in his portrait of Simone Fayet in *Holy Communion* (Plate CV). But there is another interesting rite practiced in Bordeaux at the Church of Saint-Seurin which would have created a strong bond between the artist and this church. Participation in this ritual probably also helped to create a strong bond between Redon's own childhood experiences, the fate of his son Jean (whose birth took place only a few days before this event), and memories of the parish church: the celebration of Saint Fort, whose sarcophagus is located in the crypt of Saint-Seurin. Robert Coustet has described this annual event:

> Chaque année, au printemps (16 mai), les mères pieuses conduisaient leurs enfants sur le tombeau du saint qui leur transmettait sa force et garantissait leur santé. Il est impossible que le jeune Odilon qui fit sa première communion à Saint-Seurin ne soit pas descendu dans la crypte. Il ne peut avoir ignoré des rites et un folklore de quartier encore très vivants et bien faits pour alimenter les rêveries d'un enfant impressionnable et imaginatif.

According to Louis Réau, Saint Fort was, for the people of Bordeaux, patron saint of "enfants débile" or of "weak or feeble children" and it is for this reason that mothers would take their children before this saint in order to make them strong (or in the French pun on his name, "fort"). Redon's own admission
that he was "d’ailleurs maladif et débile" suggests that he would have been the type of child whose parents would have especially sought the blessings of Saint Fort.\textsuperscript{78}

In general, it can be said about Redon that until very late in his life there was always something which led to great sorrow, mourning, or suffering. In his letters and in his diary entries he speaks often about the suffering he endured, and there are even numerous descriptions of his visits to cemeteries where he contemplates mournfully the passing of his friends and family members. In short, it is easy to see how identification with the plight of a martyred saint might have been a means of dealing with his own troubles in life.

Redon’s experiences in late adolescence and early adulthood similarly contributed to his association of himself and his artistic profession as that approaching martyrdom or sainthood. For example, upon announcing to his first teacher in Bordeaux, Stanislas Gorin, that he had finally decided to devote himself to becoming an artist, and that he would seek his fortune in the Paris art world, Gorin wrote to him with the following warning:

\textit{Adieu mon cher élève, travaillez et disposez-vous à devenir martyr bienheureux si vous continuez à suivre la carrière artistique...}\textsuperscript{79}

As noted above, this runs very close to Gustave Flaubert’s ideas that the artist must become a veritable saint in devotion to the pursuit of beauty and truth in
art. The wisdom of Gorin’s foresight about the struggles and suffering which awaited the young artist in Paris was soon realized by Redon in his experiences at the studio of Gérôme, where he enrolled shortly after his arrival in the city.

Redon’s experience with Gérôme was a very painful one, as indicated by his description of those times in his diary:

_Ici, à l’Ecole dite des Beaux-Arts, à l’atelier X ..., je fis un grand effort dans l’application à rendre des formes; ces efforts furent vains, inutiles, sans portée ultérieure pour moi. Je puis vous le confier aujourd’hui, après avoir réfléchi sur mes facultés et mes pouvoirs au cours de ma vie entière, j’étais mu, en allant à l’Académie, par le désir sincère de me ranger à la suite des autres peintres, élève comme ils l’avaient été, et attendant des autres l’approbation et la justice. Je comptais sans la formule d’art qui devait me conduire, et j’oubliais aussi mon propre tempérament. Je fus torturé par le professeur. Soit qu’il reconnût la sincérité de ma disposition sérieuse à l’étude, soit qu’il vît un sujet timide de bonne volonté, il cherchait visiblement à m’inculquer sa propre manière de voir et à faire un disciple — ou à me dégoûter de l’art même. Il me surmena, fut sévère; ses corrections étaient véhémentes à tel point que son approche à mon chevalet évaillait chez mes camarades une émotion. Tout fut vain._

In all of this, there is clearly a vocabulary which would have been appropriate to the description of the fate of a medieval martyred saint, with words and phrases such as "torturé par le professeur" and the idea that the teacher would like to make of him "un disciple". Ultimately, Redon concluded that to submit to the will of this teacher would have been like becoming a saint: "... soumission qui eût amené l’élève à être un saint, ce qui était impossible." But out of his reaction to this situation, and his "cutting the ties" from such a
Redon began to formulate an art which was uniquely his own, even if it was only accomplished at the cost of great suffering:

Peu d’artistes on dû souffrir ce que j’ai vraiment souffert dans la suite, doucement, patiemment, sans révolte, pour me ranger, ainsi que les autres, dans la lignée ordinaire. Les envois au Salon qui suivirent cet enseignement, ou plutôt, cet égarement d’atelier eurent, vous le pensez bien, le même sort que mes travaux d’élève. J’ai persévéré dans cette impasse trop long-temps; la conscience d’une conduite ne m’était point encore venue. On m’a fait, par cet éloignement où l’on m’a laissé, distinct des autres et indépendant. J’en suis fort heureux aujourd’hui. Il y a toute une production, toute une sève d’art qui circule maintenant hors des ramures de l’organisme officiel. J’ai été amené à l’isolement où je suis par l’impossibilité absolue de faire autrement l’art que j’ai toujours fait. Je ne comprends rien à ce que l’on appelle des «concessions»; on ne fait pas l’art qu’on veut. L’artiste est, au jour le jour, le réceptacle de choses ambiantes; il reçoit du dehors des sensations qu’il transforme par voie fatale, inexorable et tenace, selon soi seul.⁸⁲

Redon’s isolation, despite having led him to create an independent art, was also the source of much suffering, and it is easy to see that these experiences might have shaken his confidence, for his official training had led only to two failures. His first failure had been in attempting to pass the entrance exam to the École des Beaux-Arts to study architecture, a failure which was perhaps accentuated within his own family by the fact that his younger brother, Gaston, was admitted to study there, and in 1883 won the Prix de Rome in architecture, going on to become a professor there in 1921 after serving as first architect at Versailles.⁸³ This failure was painful for him, and judging from his correspondance with his brother Ernest, he seemed to have been especially
worried about his father's reaction in case he failed -- something which does not seem so surprising when it is considered that Redon seemed to mainly be going through with his architecture studies to please demands upon him: "Comme il fallait pourtant faire quelque chose de sociable, on inclina chez moi pour l'architecture." Even Redon's experiences at Gérôme's studio were filled with similar fears, for Bacou has stated that the master would say to his students scoldingly: "What would your father say?" 

Redon's way of referring to himself in his diaries is also quite interesting in the context of treatments of John the Baptist which show the saint appearing mainly as an "apparition." Writing in 1894 about his earlier years, Redon described himself as having been "un être flottant" and in a letter to Maurice Fabre (25 August 1891) he even made references to himself as being like "un fantôme":

Vous êtes dans vos vignes, tout comme moi. Cependant je ne me promène au vignoble que comme un fantôme, étant irresponsable.

Moreover, in Redon's version of an apparition which shows a male figure confronting the torso of a female figure (Plate XXVIII), the tall, aged, bearded figure may be a representation of the artist.

It is also worth asking what conditions would have existed in Redon's own family situation which would have led to such an identification, and if indeed Redon's letters and diaries were not full of references to the problems
with his family background, one might think of this as a bit of a gratuitous reference. However, the considerable references to childhood reveries and even his acknowledged emphasis of these factors in the creation of his art suggest that they must be taken into account in the discussion of the possible interpretations of his imagery. These factors are made all the more relevant to the present discussion in that each of the artist's biographers has drawn heavily upon these references.

iii. Pathographic Approaches to the Study of Redon

In addition to the conditions discussed above which suggest the various ways that Redon would have identified strongly with the subject matter of John the Baptist, there is a tendency in the general scholarship on the artist to find strong links between Redon the individual and his imagery. In this section, this tendency will be examined by looking at the way the monographic studies of the artist generally approach the artist's life as the source of his imagery, and although it is not explicit in them, the indirect suggestion of the viability of pathographic approaches to the artist's work. In her important monograph on the artist, Roseline Bacou wrote:

L'œuvre d'Odilon Redon est intimement liée à sa vie. Cette affirmation peut surprendre: quelle vie fut plus simple, plus dénuée de ces événements extérieurs qui frappent l'imagination et concentrent l'intérêt.88
She even suggests that

Ce sont les événements de cette vie intérieure qui détiennent les secrets de Redon et peuvent nous permettre de suivre l'évolution chronologique de l'œuvre, en l'éclairant à sa vraie lumière, par l'intérieur.

Bacou discusses the importance of Redon's childhood environment (something emphasized in the artist's own writings) at the family estate of Peyrelebade for his development, and she has even called attention to the music played there during his early years by his older brother Ernest, ultimately, concluding that "La solitude de Peyrelebade a façonné cet enfant....".89 She argues that it would be impossible to know him if his difficult apprenticeship in life was not followed:

Des profondeurs du souvenir se réveille l'écho de lointaines impressions, de ces «sensations premières singulièremment durables» qui attachent Redon à son enfance.89

Bacou even speaks of Redon's visionary art growing out of his personality and its development:

Son art de solitaire et de visionnaire a pour point de départ l'évasion, le besoin passionné de dépasser la réalité quotidienne, de s dépasser soi-même et d'aller au-delà.91

Moreover, she notes that each year he returns to Peyrelebade. She says ".. par un processus normal, la maison d'enfance est devenue le véritable lieu de la création."92 And she reafirms the influence of the environment on him,
stating that "Redon retrouve dans la Lande non seulement la solitude, mais aussi cet état de veille propre à l'enfance qui est justement la condition essentielle de l'acte créateur....".⁹³

In short, her use of a psychoanalytic approach is not explicit, nor perhaps even consistent, but is nonetheless a subtle presence in her discussion of Redon. However, by avoiding any obvious references to Freudian psychoanalysis, Bacou is able to cite contemporaneous sources for such an interest, quoting for example, from Baudelaire's *Curiosités Esthétiques*:

Le génie n'est que l'enfance retrouvée à volonté, l'enfance douée maintenant pour s'exprimer d'organes virils et de l'esprit analytique qui lui permet d'ordonner la somme de matériaux involontairement amassée?⁹⁴

In those instances where Bacou makes even the most fleeting references to psychological elements, as can be found in her discussion of some parallels between Redon and Van Gogh, she concludes that in Redon's case, unlike that of Van Gogh, there are not external influences (such as a move to the South), but rather "L'art de Redon, tout intérieur, se développe hors de toute influence extérieure: le problème est toujours d'ordre psychologique et moral."⁹⁵

Other monographers have also referred to the psychoanalytic project, but have been hesitant to make direct applications of it in their own studies. For example, Sven Sandstrom writes about Redon's relationship with his future
wife Camille Falte and their marriage in the following terms:

Ce n'est certainement pas pousser trop loin la preuve psychologique que de supposer que l'activité subite de Redon pendant les dernières années 70 a principalement sa source dans le soutien et la stimulation qu'il trouva dans sa future femme. Le mariage qui suivit, et qui fut extrêmement heureux, ne fait qu'appuyer une telle supposition. Si peu de bruits qu'ils aient fait, les premiers résultats positifs de son activité artistique renforcèrent sa confiance en lui et lui donnèrent le courage, malgré le mauvais état de ses finances, d'assurer la responsabilité d'un foyer.96

And writing about Redon's own admission that he was not interested in physical activity as a child:

Je ne vivais qu'en moi, avec une répulsion pour tout effort physique...

Sandstrom writes:

Sans lier directement cette étude à des théories psychologiques qui ne trouveraient qu'une base trop fragile dans les matériaux dont nous disposons, on peut sans hésiter présumer que Redon s'est senti, pendant toute son enfance, handicapé par sa faiblesse physique qui l'empêchait de prendre part aux jeux de ses camarades et de se sentir leur égal.97

And following through in this same vein, Sandstrom concludes that the battle scenes Redon created in his early years (Plates CVI and CVII) were an attempt to compensate for the earlier passivity. But despite these observations made on the margins of psychoanalysis, Sandstrom is careful to state that his study is
not based on such methods:

En principe nous abstenons dans ce travail d’appliquer les méthodes de la psychoanalyse pour l’interprétation de l’oeuvre de Redon, quoique le caractère de celle-ci prête dans bien des cas à un tel essai. Une telle recherche, exécutée par un spécialiste capable de mettre en rapport ses points de vue avec le caractère distinctif de la création artistique et avec les faits historiques, serait extrêmement souhaitable. Une première tentative dans cette voie a été faite, mais sur des fondements insuffisants, par WOLFGANG BORN dans Der Traum in der Graphik des Odilon Redon, Graphische Künste, 1929.

All of this, despite the fact that Sandstrom provides what could be considered an explicit (although not acknowledged) Freudian analysis of Redon’s later pastel *Cyclops* (Plate CVIII):


His denouement of the psychoanalytic approach is even odder when it is considered that, despite his reservations, he ultimately agrees with Born’s interpretation of the print *Éclosion* from *Dans le rêve* (Plate CIX) as being a personal image, which shows a sort of an egg left vulnerable and separate from a nourishing mother:

... il ne s’agit pas ici d’une tête coupée, mais d’un être ou d’une idée représentés *pars pro toto* par la tête. Mais il n’est pas douteux que l’analyse de Born n’enrichisse l’image: il est évident qu’il
In attempting to explain the profound changes which began to take place in Redon's art between 1890 and 1900, he says:

Son imagination changea en partie de caractère, devenant moins narrative, moins fébrilement engagée dans les détails de la vision du monde qu'il a fait sienne, et plus lyrique. Cette transformation, qui devait aboutir au renouvellement si remarquable de son art vers 1900, a son origine dans des circonstances que nous allons approfondir dans le chapitre suivant.

Sandstrom finds the need once again to direct us beyond his study to the possibly information a future psychoanalytic approach might tell us about these changes in Redon’s personality:

Seule, une méthode psychiatrique pourrait tirer tout le parti possible de ces remarques. Cependant, les créations fantastiques de Redon avaient de profondes racines dans le cœur même de sa personnalité et il existait une relation entre d'une part ses problèmes les plus intimes, ses inhibitions, et son domaine artistique d'autre part. Il en était, ou il en devint, pleinement conscient.

Then, he quotes Redon on this from a letter written to Andre Bonger in 1903:

... je connus l'inconscient assez tard, à un âge plus avancé que celui de Denis [qui avait alors 33 ans] en ce moment, et quand j'ai vu ce mystérieux agent de l'art, je l'ai traité avec beaucoup d'égards, mais, avec une imperturbable clairvoyance, toujours présente. Et je crois pouvoir penser que, sans ma pleine lucidité de la présence de «l'inconscient», j'eusse passé pour un fou, un niais.
which leads Sandstrom to conclude that it is in such a context that Redon must be seen as a precursor of Surrealism.

One of the few studies to explicitly examine Redon's work from a psychoanalytic perspective has been provided by Frederick Baekeland. Baekeland's study, "Depressive Themes in The Graphic Work of Odilon Redon" began while he was a student of Theodore Reff. Baekeland provides statistical analysis of Redon's oeuvre to indicate the great extent to which the production of the "noirs" were dominated by "depressive themes" and how they formed "the bulk of his production up to 1900, after which they were almost completely replaced by the richly colored oils and pastels for which he is much better known by the average museum-visitor." Considering "Redon's persistent predilection for blacks until he was an established artist in later life" Baekeland convincingly argues that "it is hard to think of another major artist for whom this holds true." His conclusion from all of this, especially considering the possibility of more lucrative sales from a production of oil paintings and pastels, is that "working in black and white rather than color satisfied a special psychological need on the part of Redon, done as it was at the cost of financial security and more rapid recognition as an artist." Moreover, Baekeland notes that after 1900, Redon's artistic output greatly increased, something he sees as suggesting that there was a "driven, compulsive quality" to working in black which fulfilled a hidden need. Thus, Baekeland's views would tend to support the more tentative argument of
Hoog, stated above, that Redon's noirs served as "a kind of auto-psycho-therapy". On another level, it can be argued that Redon's preference for drawing and graphic work suggests a sort of prolonged artistic adolescence, since for most artists, this type of work usually characterizes their earliest studies before they move on to more mature forms of expressions (by means of oil painting, for example). Of course another way to look at this would be to suggest that the relative bias against drawing which favored other means such as oil painting was something that Redon had to overcome in his career, and that this marked him as an outsider. In fact, Baekeland specifically identifies some of Redon's devices which "involve physical or psychological isolation":

1. solitary heads without bodies; 2. head and neck or head and torso only shown; 3. isolated solitary figures; 4. faces in profile, turned away from the viewer, so to speak; 5. prominently featured eyes that fixedly stare out at the viewer, often from a distance or through an aperture of some kind; and 6. compositions with two or more figures where the central character is either physically isolated from the others or is looking away from them.

In the process of compiling a catalogue of severed head images the existence of several of these factors has already been noted. Baekeland attributes the cause of these tendencies in Redon's work to the artist's general depression, and to support his argument, he quotes from research concerning perceptual studies which indicate general audience responses to black as opposed to colors and from studies of the dreams of depressed patients, which have revealed similar imagery and a trend towards a lack of colors. Ultimately, however,
Baekeland argues that these tendencies are an expression of "intimate personality trends" found in the artist, and calls upon the work of "Freud, Kris, Greenacre, and other psychoanalysts" to support his views.¹¹⁹

For Baekeland, the key factors of the artist's life which reveal these tendencies towards depression involve Redon's early separation from his parents and other siblings a few days after his birth and being left to the care of a wet nurse and an old uncle at Peyrelebade, where he stayed until the age of eleven. Thus, Baekeland analyzes the effects of this "maternal separation and deprivation by calling upon the work of a number of psychoanalytic theorists, experimental psychiatrists, and psychiatric epidemiologists all of whom would tend to support the conclusion that:

... individuals subjected to early parental losses or separations (especially maternal) are especially vulnerable to the psychological impact of later object losses. In particular, they are believed to be depression-prone.¹¹¹

Baekeland finds that one result of this in Redon's art is that:

His distant unrequited relationship with his mother seems to have been reflected in his treatment of female figures in his work. They are usually represented in semi-mystical and idealized ways. More often than not, they are shown in profile, as if to emphasize their mysterious and aloof qualities. Men, on the other hand, are shown in profile much less often.¹¹²

The support for this is given in the form of statistical analysis, but it might prove to be useful here to cite a few examples. Perhaps the most obvious
subject to be presented for examination here would be Redon’s treatments of the mother and child theme. Direct representations of this subject are fairly rare in Redon, but when he does treat it, as in a charcoal and pastel drawing, *Woman and Child Against a Stained Glass Background* (Plate CX), the qualities described by Baekeland are indeed present, and the distance between the two is suggested by the very unusual placement of the two figures, with the child placed with his back to the mother with eyes closed. Another example of the mother and child pairing, but one which is also unusual, can be found in the print from the third *Temptation of Saint Anthony* series, *Je suis toujours la grande Isis! Nul n’a encore soulevé mon voile! Mon fruit est le soleil!* (Plate LXXIII). The distancing between mother and child here results from the presence of the veil, but perhaps even more interesting in the context of this discussion is the fact that the mother appears to be headless! Moreover, a treatment of Isis in the role of mother reminds us of that character’s complex role, for on one hand, she married her brother Osiris, and was responsible for cutting him up in little pieces, only to put him back together a bit later so that he might become the god of resurrection -- thus, he is also the Egyptian god who is closest to Orpheus. More typically, when a mother and child is represented in Redon’s work, they are in transit, as in his *Flight into Egypt* (Plate CXI) which would very possibly relate to Redon’s wish to remember the time just before his birth (and thus, before his separation), when his parents were travelling back to France from New Orleans. Indeed, as will be seen from Dario Gamboni’s
discussion below, Redon created a personal mythology around this event, something characteristic of many artists, wherein he proposed to reinvent his own birth. Also interesting in this work is Redon’s treatment of the group as though they were an "apparition" for they are surrounded by an aureole of light.

Baekeland is also willing to extend the problems deriving from Redon’s family situation into the artist’s marriage, finding that the artist’s wife became a sort of replacement for his mother:

Unconscious identification with his absent, feared, and admired father and a need to regain his rejecting mother are suggested by the fact that in 1880, at the age of 40, like his father, he married a Creole. His wife apparently mothered him, took charge of all practical affairs and stood by his side in family disputes over Peyrelebade. It seems that she made it possible for him to experience a kind of maternal love he had never had and to undo in part at least some of his mother’s indifference.\(^\text{113}\)

and he further supports this view by quoting from Redon’s own description of his wife to André Mellerio in 1898:

I found in Madame Redon, like a sacred thread, my goddess of destiny, who enabled me to pass without dying through the most tragic and mysterious hours of my family drama. Without her, and without all the scales of black that I have laid down and poured out on paper, what would have become of me? My art alone, so inward looking, would not have saved me; I should have been done for.\(^\text{114}\)

However, Baekeland also observes that Redon’s "feelings of estrangement and isolation, whose expression we have examined in his blacks, were apparently
not banished by marriage and family life" and that they begin to subside only after other crises experienced in the 1890s. It will prove useful to return to a discussion of this difficult crisis in the next section by examining one of the key works completed at that time which begins to signal a change in Redon's art and personal fortunes, but for now, it is important to note one other important study of the artist which would add some additional support to Baekeland's ideas.

Perhaps the most sophisticated discussion of the significance of Redon's biography for the interpretation of his works is provided by Dario Gamboni, who calls upon a model offered by Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz in their book *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist*, which even bore the stamp of approval of E. H. Gombrich who provided the preface.115 Gamboni devotes a chapter to the "Le Mythe de l'artiste," but rather than seeking exclusively unconscious applications of childhood memories and other factors which might have influenced Redon's work, Gamboni analysis the conscious manner in which Redon, like many artists of the past, was attempting to create his own "myth of self" or what Kris and Kurz have referred to as the "heroization of the artist in biography." Thus, Gamboni defines his project in analyzing Redon's autobiographical writings:

Mais il faut tout d'abord s'interroger sur la fonction de ces textes, et comprendre leur rôle dans le processus d'autoconstruction par lequel l'artiste est parvenu à imposer à ses exégètes sa propre image de sa personne, de sa vie et de son oeuvre.116
Gamboni thus examines the way that Redon’s writings and those of his family members have controlled the view of the artist which is commonly presented. Nevertheless, Gamboni’s efforts might offer a great deal of insight into the way in which the artist -- in the specific ways suggested in this study -- takes on personas ranging from mythological heroes to biblical saints. Gamboni begins his discussion by considering the way that Redon has mythologized the conditions of his birth. In his diary, Redon discusses the fact that he had been conceived in New Orleans, where his father had gone to seek his fortune, and that his mother carried him during the long sea voyage back to Bordeaux, where he was born. Describing this event, Redon expresses his wish that he had been born while out at sea:

Les voyages sur mer étaient alors longs et hasardeux. Il paraît qu’à ce retour le mauvais temps ou des vents contraires risquèrent d’égarer sur l’océan le navire qui portait mes parents; et j’eusse aimé, par ce retard, le hasard ou le destin, naître au milieu de ces flots que j’ai depuis contemplés souvent, du haut des falaises de la Bretagne, avec souffrance, avec tristesse: un lieu sans patrie sur un abîme.¹¹⁷

Around this journey and this desire as expressed by Redon, one of his first biographers, Francis Jammes added to the mythology: "Vous m’avez raconté, Redon que votre mère, avant votre naissance, vit un fantôme sur la mer. Sans doute sentit-elle se lever en elle comme le pressentiment de ces beautés futures qu’elle portait en vous."¹¹⁸
The second major factor Gamboni discusses in Redon’s biography concerns his situation vis-à-vis his family, and the discussion he provides of this factor is appropriately complex. Suffice it to say that one of the major elements of this has to do with the fact that Redon, who was born "maladif et débile," was sent "à deux jours en nourrice à Peyrelebade et y demeure jusqu’à onze ans." The immediate effect was that Redon’s separation from his family, and, as Gamboni has correctly suggested, above all, from his mother, created in Redon a "sentiment d’abandon et d'inadéquation une expérience pour lui fondamental." Ultimately, however, it appears that Gamboni is correct in seeing in this circumstance a "double séparation sociale" -- he was separated not only from his family, but also protected by their fortunate social situation from attending school until very late -- which left Redon in a situation of "doux et bienfaisant loisir" which contributed to a meditative personality and also to a sort of extended adolescence.

Beyond these highly significant early factors in Redon’s life, two events in the years 1870 and 1874 were perhaps the most influential upon the artist’s maturity. Once again, Gamboni notes that Redon was very conscious of these two factors, and he documents Redon’s discussion of them in his letters and diary. In a letter to André Bonger, for example, Redon noted that it was only around the age of "trente ou trente-quatre ans (avant la venue de [s]on originalité)." Of course this would place the date around the years 1870 and 1874, as also confirmed in another letter to Edmond Picard, where Redon
indicated that "Mon originalité n'était pas encore venue. Elle parut plus tard, après trente ans, c'est à dire après la guerre de 1870." The first of these dates coincides with Redon's military service in 1870, during the Franco-Prussian War, and the second has to do with the death of Redon's father in 1874. According to Gamboni, both of these events were liberating factors in the artist's life. Surprisingly, Redon, who had up until that time been completely averse to any sort of physical activity, found the military experience to be exhilarating, and Gamboni suggests that it may have played a key role in breaking though some of his feelings of social isolation:

L'état de "simple soldat" a pu suspendre provisoirement son sentiment d'isolement et d'aliénation sociale, et la défaite nationale accorder sa mélancolie aux rythmes collectifs."

As for the death of his father, in 1874, Gamboni argues that this had something of a similar effect. Gamboni has correctly characterized the double role played by Redon's father in the artist's early life, as described in the diaries. On the one hand, it was Redon's father who was "l'initiateur invitant Odilon à interpréter les formes changeantes des nuages" and who could be seen to have ultimately suggested to Redon the theme of the "apparition":

Mon père me disait souvent: "Vois ces nuages, y discernes-tu, comme moi, des formes changeantes?" Et il me montrait alors, dans le ciel muable, des apparitions d'êtres bizarres, chimériques et merveilleux."
On the other hand, Gamboni points out that Redon's described his father as a severely authoritarian figure who always filled him with fear:

... il m'apparaissait comme un être impérieux, indépendant de caractère et même dur, devant qui j'ai toujours tremblé. Bien qu'aujourd'hui, à lointaine et confuse distance, et avec tout ce qui reste de lui dans s'humectaient aussi de larmes, une sensibilité miséricordieuse et douce que ne réprimaient guère les dehors de sa fermeté.  

and as evidence that this was an accurate description, Gamboni notes the following lines from the only remaining letter sent from father to son: "Ton père qui t'aime toujours, sans le donner à connaître ...".  

concludes by asking the following question about Redon's view of his father:

Redon a-t-il rendu son père responsable de son exil à Peyrelebade et de sa séparation d'avec sa mère? Il semble en tout cas que cet homme "grand, droit et fier" ait représenté pour son second fils un modèle d'activité vitale insurpassable, et que sa disparition ait agi pour lui comme une sorte de libération.  

Although Gamboni's analysis here comes very close to the description provided in Freud's Oedipal complex, he makes no mention of psychoanalytic theory in this context, but it must be admitted that both Redon's and Gamboni's conclusion about the extreme significance of this event would agree with Freud's idea that for a male, the death of the father is the single most significant event in life. However, Freud might have gone a bit further in linking the two events, and suggest that the call to action of 1870 was not
merely a battle of a "simple soldat" fighting for France, but a significant battle in the Oedipal conflict.

iv. Beyond Oedipus: Le Chevalier mystique

In the exploration of pathographic approaches to Redon, the question of the role of the artist’s family life has often come into play, suggesting that an examination of the artist’s own "oedipal conflict" might prove to be a fruitful source of information concerning his work. Indeed, Freud himself has marked the significance of this event in a person’s development, which he first fully introduced in a publication of 1910, but which was already present as a rough idea by 1897, in his famous remark that ".... the beginnings of religion, ethics, society, and art meet in the Oedipus complex." To many of the questions which were raised at the outset of this chapter, the pathographic approach would suggest a resolution by means of an "oedipal" interpretation of Redon’s severed head imagery, which would assign various roles for the characters in the drama to members of his own family. But while the implications of such interpretations should not be ignored, it is one purpose of the present study to move beyond a mere "pathographic approach to Redon" into other issues which may have their source in this conflict, but whose true meaning may never be fully understood.

Thus, although it may be read as a sort of heuristic gesture, it might be useful to introduce into this discussion yet another image of a severed head,
which appears within a composition based on the ancient story of Oedipus, Redon’s *Chevalier mystique* (Plate CXII). The purpose here is to adopt something of the approach suggested by Mary Ellen Wolf in the introduction to her fascinating study, *Eros under Glass: Psychoanalysis and Mallarmé’s "Hérodiade":*

Freud would undoubtedly agree with Mallarmé’s observation that the essence of the poetic lies precisely in "what is not said," for the unconscious cannot be inscribed in intelligible discourse. To perceive the covert forces of desire at work in dreams or poetry, the interpreter must become attuned to the flow of energy through the text. For Freud, this means focusing on the differences between the successive versions of the same dream.  

This is essentially what Freud called locating the "weak spot in the dreamer’s disguise." Of course, it must be noted in this context that there are many analogies to be found between the "dream-work" and the "work of art" and that while these analogies have primarily been associated with the writings of Freud, there are also a number of parallels to be found between the two in the writings of Redon and his contemporaries. Thus, Wolf’s purpose becomes not simply an attempt to psychoanalyze Mallarmé or his works, but rather to see both Freud and Mallarmé as "valuable allies." Thus, in this and the remaining sections of this chapter, it will be interesting to compare not only the changes which have been identified in the various versions of the Salome/John compositions, but also the possible ways that those works might relate to others depicting different subject matter, but employing similar
iconographical motives. The focus at present will be upon the severed head in
Redon’s *Chevalier mystique*, but in the next section, a comparison will be
offered between a work by Redon with a source in a story from Poe, *Berenice*
(Plate CXIII) and the various apparitions discussed above.\(^{134}\)

*Chevalier mystique* is a fascinating work because, in many ways, it
brackets the total production of Redon’s noirs — that is, his predominantly
black and white drawings and lithographs of the decades of the seventies and
eighties. The beginning and ending dates of the work are also very interesting,
for on one hand, the work was begun around the year 1869 when Redon was
still breaking away from the influence of other artists, and just one year before
he was to go off to combat, in what he later described as one of the key
turning points in his life. On the other hand, it was completed in the nineties,
at a time when Redon’s art was undergoing profound changes which resulted
in the predominant inclusion of color in his later works. It might be
worthwhile to briefly consider the nature of these changes.

The two major events of 1870 and 1874, which Redon has emphasized,
have been discussed above — his participation in the Franco-Prussian War, and
the death of his father. Another key period of crisis in Redon’s life and work
comes in the decade of the nineties. Roseline Bacou, who has discussed this
difficult period at length, has convincingly argued that with the beginnings of
the 1890s a transformation began to take place in Redon’s work. Certain new
themes, which had been treated only tentatively before this time, became more
dominant. But perhaps, most significantly, she identifies the tendency for the artist to use color more and more in his works, whereas previously, black and white had dominated:

A partir de 1890 nous assistons à une transformation saisante de l’art de Redon. Certain thèmes, à peine esquissés l’emportent sur les autres. Et surtout, dans le monde de Redon, voué jusqu’ici aux seules ressources du Blanc et du Noir, s’introduit d’abord en intrus, puis en souveraine, la couleur.135

One of the factors in Redon’s life which played a major role in some of these changes was the loss of the family estate, Peyrelebade, in 1897. The most direct result of this loss — which Bacou describes as a "déchirement" — was that Redon ultimately abandoned his "noirs", for they were so tied to this childhood source of inspiration that he was no longer able to work in this manner.136 Thus, Bacou ponders the nature of this link by asking:

... qui dira jamais les liens d’une oeuvre avec un certain paysage? Si ces correspondances mystérieuses pouvaient être définies, beaucoup d’œuvres nous livreraient leurs secrets. Les «Noirs» sont indissolublement liés à Peyrelebade.137

The loss of Peyrelebade was all the more painful, because it was also became the final break between Redon and his family in Bordeaux. For example, in a letter to André Bonger, Redon writes of this time:

Cependant j’ai tant souffert de ces liens horribles, de ces attaches fatales avec une famille qui ne me comprend pas ou ne m’aime pas (c’est tout un, je crois) ......138
Many of these feelings, which Redon described to Bonger as "des duretés subies dans ma famille," were the result of his view of his family's failings to see through his father's efforts, which he described as:

Eux et les créanciers terminant étrangement l'oeuvre de mon père, avec peu de souci des souvenirs et de la durée, en son lieu, de son nom. Je suis le vaincu...\(^\text{139}\)

And they were also the result of a deep seated resentment that his mother and brothers were not more willing to make efforts to save the estate. Ultimately, Redon tried in vain to raise the funds to buy it himself, but was unsuccessful, and the period was a very painful one. Ironically, it turned out that the period after the loss of Peyrelebade -- although it brought about major changes -- was not so difficult as Redon might have expected, and to the contrary, it became a sort of liberating experience for him, so much so that Bacou could speak of the subsequent works in the following terms:

Après 1900, son inspiration, moins angoissée, le conduit à adopter des thèmes qui correspondent à sa détente, et s'opposent aux images hallucinées des «Noirs».\(^\text{140}\)

The ultimate result of all these events for Redon's work was that he began to emphasize new themes, which Bacou has accurately described as being more concerned with "beings of light":

Ses créatures de prédilection sont désormais les êtres de lumière: Pégase, Apollon, Orphée.\(^\text{141}\)
Nous pouvons classer les thèmes d’inspiration après 1900 en trois cycles: un cycle religieux, aboutissement de la crise de 1895, un cycle mythique centré autour d’Apollon et d’Orphée, et un cycle héroïque.¹⁴²

This theme of Orpheus will be taken up in Chapter Three, where it will be shown that Redon deals with severed head imagery but in a very different manner than has been found in the works discussed up unto this point. This preoccupation with "beings of light" was accompanied stylistically by an increased use of brilliant color, and the first step in this process was that Redon began to heighten his charcoal drawings with pastels.¹⁴³

In many ways, then, *Chevalier mystique*, which was begun at a key period in Redon’s life, and was worked on over a long period of time, was completed during a period of crisis so that it brackets not only the artistic production of the noirs, but the middle period in Redon’s life, from just before the time when he gathered enough physical strength to go off to war, and in a sense to live up to his image of his father, who was so strong and full of energy as compared to the sickliness of Redon to that point in his life. It is also one of the first works to combine charcoal with pastel, and in doing so, it offers an example of the "lightening" of Redon’s palette referred to by Bacou. That the period bracketed by this work includes the death of Redon’s father is interesting, especially for anyone with even a passing interest in psychoanalysis, but equally interesting is the fact that this period ends with the
artist's final break with his mother, and there, just as in 1870, Redon finds a
sort of rejuvenation which breaks through the fatigue:

Le pastel, en effet, me soutient, matériellement et moralement, il
me rajeunit. Je le produis sans fatigue. Il m’a conduit à peindre;
selon les essais que je viens de faire je ne désespère pas de mettre
sur la toile, un peu plus tard certains choses. Auquel cas, l’avenir
serait souriant comme un renouveau.144

In fact, given the evidence submitted by Baekeland concerning Redon’s
relationship to his mother, there is every reason to believe that Peyrelebade —
where he was "exiled" as an enfant — became a sort of substitute for her.

Although she does not make this type of link, Bacou writes that "Peyrelebade
fut la nourriture de cet enfant..." Further evidence for this type of
interpretation can be found in Redon’s own words written to the artist Émile
Schuffenecker concerning his leaving Peyrelebade and the return to Paris for
the winter:

Nous sommes là de ce matin, tristement, j’oserai dire. Il faut la
connaître, cette Mère infinie, qui est là-bas, aux champs pour
savoir ce que nous éprouvons, nous, à un retour en ville. Quel
abandon! c’est une vraie mort. Il faut changer de peau, reprendre
la vie fausse que l’on dit être cérébrale, avec cela qu’on ne pense
pas dans la solitude! Hein! ne s’y sent-on pas triplé dans son âme
et dans son cœur?146

But perhaps the most fascinating coincidence of all — and it is certain that for
some, it will remain only this — is the fact that Redon chooses for the subject
of his major work which combines the "noirs" with the new color of the pastels
and thus suggests a resolution to the crisis, the story of Oedipus. Thus, not only a stylistic development of the work and its subject matter, but also a suggestion of some of the complex ways it may relate to Redon’s personal life, will be presented. Indeed, in speaking of his stylistic changes of this time, Redon would often employ metaphors based on his personal relationship with family and friends, so that in referring in his inability to return to the "noirs" after his new found interest in color, he writes that "J'ai épousé la couleur...".147

_Chevalier mystique_, like so many of Redon’s other works of the seventies and early eighties, was based in the art of Gustave Moreau, specifically the famous painting _Oedipus and the Sphinx_ (Plate CXVIII), which was exhibited at the Salon of 1864. Interestingly, the ultimate source of the work, Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres’s _Oedipus and the Sphinx_ of 1808 (Plate CXIX), was a work which was of such fascination to Freud that he continuously had a reproduction of it in his study.148 Redon recorded his impressions upon seeing Gustave Moreau’s _Oedipus and the Sphinx_ at the Salon of 1864:

> How that work beguiled me! For years I retained the memory of that initial impression, and it may have acted so strongly upon me as to give me the strength to pursue a lonely path, one that paralleled his perhaps, because of all that suggestiveness which went with it, and of which literary men are so fond.149

In fact, Sandstrom has said that this work was the first to reveal Moreau’s influence upon Redon.150 Therefore, this work brackets much more than just
the period of the "noirs" and two important periods of crisis for the artist, it brackets in many ways a sort of artistic "oedipal crisis" which begins with Redon strongly under the influence of Moreau, but ends with him having broken from his earlier artistic "patrimony" and sporting a very different attitude towards Moreau in 1900: "Mais combien nous sommes différents, Moreau et moi!". Moreover, this work combines in a single composition some of the basic images which haunted the earlier period of Redon's art, including the "noirs". Thus, there are significant questions to be asked concerning how Redon has brought together the principal motives and themes from his early years and combined them in a single work. These elements might be briefly explored and their meanings defined within the context of Redon's development.

The mystic knight, for example, is clearly related to those early representations of battle scenes, or more specifically, to scenes showing a lonely rider pursued in the mountains as in his Roland à Roncevaux (Plate CVII). Those works probably have a strong autobiographical import, with the lonely battles fought by Redon and at the very least they are based directly in his personal experiences. Such an idea is supported by the fact that as a young man, Redon himself crossed the Pyrenees on horseback, and the mountain scenery which appears in these works was no doubt based on his memories of these experiences. The path he took though the Pyrenees went through Roncevalles, the supposed sight of Roland's ambush by the Moors. Moreover,
Roland's fate was part of the folklore of Bordeaux and the city's strong historical link with this chanson de geste should not be forgotten, not only in the fact that some of the characters in the drama were hidden representations of the Dukes of Aquataine, but also in so much that Roland's oliphant is supposedly preserved in Bordeaux's Cathedral of Saint André. Moreover, Redon's frequent use of the metaphor of the "triste bataille" in referring to his artistic struggles, also suggests the strong possibility for an autobiographical reading of the "mystic knight." For example, his first use of this expression can be found in one of the first positive reviews of his art, when the artist was already forty two years old. This came only after many years of very negative reviews, which were bitterly received by Redon, and thus, he wrote to the author of the review, Émile Hennequin, to thank him for his support and to name him as a compatriot in the struggle:

L'aide que vous m'avez si généreusement et si sympathiquement apportée, dissipe en moi bien des angoisses et je me sens plus noble maintenant d'avoir à travailler encore pour ces jeunes esprits dont vous me parlez. Permettez-moi de vous serrer fortement la main, comme à un bon soldat rencontré dans la triste bataille, et recevez, Monsieur, l'expression de mes sentiments bien reconnaissants.\textsuperscript{152}

The dominance of the severed head in Redon's other works has already been discussed. The appearance of this motif within the context of the story of Oedipus has been given perhaps its most famous interpretation by Freud, who discusses it as a part of his theory of child development, and as a result of the
"castration anxiety" which comes as the adolescent male competes with his father for his mother's affection. A first response to this composition might be to speak of the sort of family grouping it seems to represent, and it would be possible to guess at the identity of the various characters within Redon's own family drama. However, such guessing would be extremely subjective, for there are a number of possibilities, and these would be greatly complicated by the fact that the severed head is based on the features of Camille Faute, Redon's wife, as can be clearly seen from his portrait of her (Plate CXIV). Thus, the field of inquiry as to the identity of the characters here would have to be very wide, and it would not seem out of line to ask whether the riddle of the sphinx in this context could somehow refer to Redon's meeting of his future wife, or even to their matrimonial vows? Thus, in this work which is one of the first to introduce color into the "noirs" might be a sort of decisive step towards the "marrying of color" which resulted from Redon's break with his mother/Peyrelebade. On another level the "marrying of color" might be linked to the marrying of Camille Faute. Indeed, Baekeland has suggested that Camille may have provided for Redon a sort of substitute for the mother he never really had. (On the other hand, Carl Jung saw in the image of the sphinx an archetype of the "angry mother"). Moreover, the timing of Redon's marriage in 1879 coincided with his first mature works, but it was also a period of some conflict, for not everyone approved of the marriage. For example, Madame de Rayssac, who was one of Redon's main supporters.
during the late seventies, and who held an important literary and artistic salon, has written that:

Cet homme si délicat, si susceptible, si harmonieux, si fort intelligent, est la proie d'une jeune personne qu'il ne peut estimer. Les républicains sont fort sujets à ces sortes de maladie morale.¹⁵⁴

Thus, at a time when he is breaking away from some of his early artistic influences, his marriage to his wife was also the source of a break with his only artistic success to that point -- the support he found at Madame de Rayssac's salon. Thus, even Redon's marriage, which by his own testimony was one of the most positive influences in his life, was colored by the fin-de-siècle's generally negative attitude towards women, whereby, as Bram Dijkstra has demonstrated, that society's emphasis upon the importance of the young woman seeking to marry well becomes yet another example of the hidden aggressiveness of women -- just the type of thing which led to a preoccupation with the severed head and the male's fear of castration.¹⁵⁵

However, it must be admitted that there are many possible readings of this severed head in the context of the Oedipal crisis. Perhaps it represents Redon's journeys in wartime as the mystic knight who brings back the head as one of the spoils of war. Or given common reading of Redon's action in the Franco-Prussian War as a sort of finally living up to his father's virile image, perhaps it should also be read in a manner similarly to Reff's interpretation of Cézanne's imagery of the severed head: that is, the artist's "wished-for revenge
on the father." Is this work a sort of conflation of the themes of Oedipus and Salome? Ultimately, however, it must be admitted that despite the appearance of a sort of family grouping within the composition, or despite the implications of the Oedipal theme for Redon's own family drama, the exact nuances of signification present in this unusual combination of images will perhaps never be known. Suffice it to say that the severed head, here as elsewhere in Redon's art, appears as a residue of these conflicts.

The third element which appears here is the image of the sphinx, which throughout the history of art has been viewed as an image of sexual ambiguity, and thus, adds to the complexity for any interpretive approaches to the Chevalier mystique. In Redon's representation of this enigmatic being, the treatment of the breasts which emphasize the feminine identity of the sphinx, suggests that on one level at least, the encounter between the knight and the sphinx represents a conflict between male and female, which is consistent with the way that Moreau and later symbolists approached the theme. However, there are some important differences between the way Redon and other artists have dealt with this encounter. For example, in Moreau, the sphinx is represented as a very aggressive force which clings to the chest of Oedipus in an embrace which is equalled in intensity by the fierce engagement of their interlocking gaze. In Redon, nowhere do the eyes of the characters meet, for although the knight looks directly at the sphinx, its gaze is towards the severed head which has its eyes closed. It is
almost as though the questioning which is taking place is related to this enigmatic motif, or at the very least, it might be suggested that the questions posed by the riddle of the sphinx are framed by the *memento mori* of the severed head.

The sexual aggressiveness of the sphinx can also be seen in other works of the time, such as Franz von Stuck's *The Sphinx's Kiss* of 1895 (Plate CXV), where its handling is far less cerebral than in the case of Moreau, for the strain of the musculature and the fleshiness of both the male figure and the upper body of the sphinx make even clearer the carnality of their embrace. An earlier image by J.W. Waterhouse treating the theme of *La belle Dame sans Merci* (Plate CXVI) may be related to this work, for it is based ultimately on a poem by Keats and it appears, as Philippe Jullian has stated, to illustrate the "very common theme of the knight trapped by the lady's hair." Is this a simple substitution of Waterhouse's "fair maiden" for the sphinx appearing in Redon's work? Such a juxtaposition is made very obvious in a charcoal drawing by Fernand Khnopff, *The Supreme Vice* (Plate CXVII), where the artist attempts to reveal the hidden aggressiveness of the female by employing the image of the sphinx, as can be understood from Bram Dijkstra analysis of it:

In Khnopff's drawing, behind every man's vulnerable, statuesque, nude virgin-sister standing haloed on her pedestal there loomed formidable the evil sphinx of holy motherhood turned barren aggressor, her enticing breasts -- the enlarged echo of the breasts of the virgin standing before her -- guarded by the claws of polyandry and the death's head of bestial passion.
Such a veiled threat, as indicated not only by the sphinx in this image, but by extension coming from possibly any woman, may provide some explanation of Redon’s manner of approaching the theme. This implied threat certainly makes clear why the sphinx in *Chevalier mystique* is approached by a knight in armor, and it may suggest the reasons for Redon’s avoidance of representations of sensual females such as Salome in his art. Perhaps the avoidance of the gaze and the avoidance of sensuality or physical contact are one and the same, and for this reason issues of the gaze will become a primary focus in the next section. At the same time, it is clear that in his attempt to answer the riddles posed by the Sphinx, Oedipus is clearly attempting to assert the power of mind over the flesh, as Henri Dorra has indicated in his analysis of Moreau’s work, so that the theme of Oedipus is very similar to that found in the Apparition scene as treated by Moreau, for example, where the gaze becomes John’s means, after death and beyond the physical realm, of subjugating Salome who is the very embodiment of the evils of the flesh. In this same context, Bram Dijkstra has suggested that such a struggle between the mind and the flesh is the ultimate theme in the battle of the sexes at the end of the nineteenth century:

The war between the sexes, the war between male and female, between Apollo and Dionysus, was a war between the godly future and the earthly past, between science and sorcery. It was ultimately a struggle between woman’s atavistic hunger for blood -- which she regarded as the vital fluid of man’s seminal energies and hence the source of that material strength she craved -- and man’s need to conserve the nourishment that would
allow his brain to evolve. Woman was a perverse instrument of the vampire of reversion, and by giving in to her draining embrace, men thought, they must needs bleed to death.¹⁶³

For the visual artist and for the spectator of this art the main form of embrace is the gaze, and the task now becomes to decipher what is threatening in this gaze. In the context of Redon’s art, it must be asked in what way this gaze becomes linked with sexual desire and the recognition of sexual difference, for in beholding this fascinating image of Mystic Knight it is soon realized that the traditional sexual ambiguity associated with the Sphinx is really something which runs like a thread through all of Redon’s imagery, especially in regards to the representation of the female and to her most threatening manifestation as the femme fatale. The androgyny which is traditionally associated with the figure of the sphinx and which allows for a rather direct confrontation between the male hero and the sphinx, which Oscar Wilde described as being "half woman and half animal,"¹⁶¹ is also something which marks much of Redon’s work. It should not be overlooked that such veiling of sexual difference belies a deeper conflict between the sexes in his art than has previously been acknowledged. By focusing more directly on these issues in the next sections, a better understanding will be gained of not only Redon’s handling of female imagery but also of the fin-de-siècle femme fatale’s most frequent attribute, the severed head.

The role of the androgyne in the struggle between the spirit and the flesh should not be underestimated, however, for the Sâr Peladan, leader of the
Order of the Salon de la Rose + Croix, made this figure the main focus of several texts, finding in it "the human form made whole" because it was "freed from sexual seeking." It must also be remembered that it was specifically in such a context that Redon's Chevalier mystique was critically received when it was first exhibited in 1893. As Bacou has indicated, it was "hailed as a 'manifesto' by the Decadents and inspired a poem by Jules Bois, editor of the journal Le Coeur." Moreover, the work's first owner was Antoine de la Rochefoucauld who in addition to being the "spiritual leader" of Le Coeur was a co-founder of the Order de la Rose + Croix with Peladan. The critic reviewing the work, which also appeared in the journal in a large color reproduction, wrote that "Mr. Odilon Redon is exhibiting a capital work of the very fines, Mystic Knight. This drawing made me pause for a long time, and I felt vibrating within me the whole range of strange sensations from an unknown world." Moreover, Jules Bois published a large poem to accompany the reproduction, which is in part reads:

La Chimère.

«Mystique Chevalier, toi qui tiens dans tes serres
La tête aux grands yeux clos comme une fleur de deuil,
Et t'arrêtes, autoritaire, sur le seuil
D'un Temple noir que garde une calme Chimère.

Mystique Chevalier, d'où viens-tu? Quel forfait
Salutaire et cruel durcit ton âme pure?
Tu vas, O Ténébreux! d'une infaillable allure
Et tu veux frénétiquement ce que tu fais.»
As Richard Hobbs has correctly noted, the poem, which takes on a dialogue between the "knight" and the "chimera," introduces a "dialectic of sin and salvation that is a gratuitous addition to the picture's imagery." Nevertheless, such attention given to Redon's drawing within this context reveals the extent to which the subject matter struck a chord with the main intellectual currents of the time and it further suggests that Redon's obsession with questions of sexual difference and ambiguity were not simply a symptom of his own private fantasies. Even within his interest in the Oedipal theme there are many possible points of departure, such as for example appears in Gustave Flaubert's second of three short stories in the collection *Trois Contes*, "The Legend of St. Julien," in which the saint's life is haunted by the knowledge that he will in the end kill his parents through his interest in hunting.

Ultimately, it can be said that *Chevalier mystique* is a work in which many conflicts come into focus. On the formal level, it is one of the first works to announce the introduction of brilliant color, by means of the new medium
of the pastel, into the dark world of the "noirs." This new sensuality of color is thus introduced into a world previously dominated by the black charcoal, which in his private memoirs, Redon has noted "could not be prostituted." Moreover, into this transitional formal field which combined old and new tendencies, Redon introduced what was perhaps his most direct image of conflict between the sexes, something which is only hinted at in the "noirs," and an element which is often masked by the air of androgyny. The significance of the subject matter of this work being centered upon the encounter between Oedipus and the Sphinx may also be highly significant, whether it is read according to Freud, or according to a more mysterious "pre-psychoanalytic" attitude which was part of the intellectual and cultural milieu in which Redon was working. Whatever the interpretation of the work, it must be admitted that it occupies a pivotal position within the artist's development, and that it offers a veritable mine of information concerning what conflicts might lurk behind the imagery produced before, after, and during its creation.

v. The Femme Fatale and the Gaze

The successful answer given by Oedipus to the riddle of the Sphinx did not prevent him from an ultimate meeting with a tragic fate. Although the people of Thebes made Oedipus king and gave him in marriage their queen Jocasta, unbeknownst to him as his own mother, after a period of "famine and pestilence" a consultation with the Oracle revealed "the double crime of
Oedipus." This resulted in Jocasta taking her own life, and in Oedipus, upon discovering that he had killed his own father and married his mother, tearing out his eyes.\textsuperscript{168} Thus, the blinding of Oedipus is perhaps the most famous among many other examples in which vision becomes intertwined with the problematic nature of sexual desire and knowledge. Within the Freudian schema of sexual development, the gaze of the male child who first recognizes sexual difference, finds its ultimate punishment in the (feared as opposed to actual) threat of castration. Freud argues that in the story of Oedipus, blinding has been substituted for castration,\textsuperscript{169} and thus, by extension one could argue that both an avoidance of the gaze and an avoidance of troublesome imagery in painting could be interpreted from within this complex.

Using a traditional pathographic approach, Frederick Baekeland has applied just such an analysis to Redon, specifically attributing the lack of visual engagement among Redon's characters before 1900 to an unresolved Oedipal conflict. Thus, in speaking of the changes in Redon's production after the turn of the century, Baekeland has suggested their relationship to a resolution of this conflict:

It is as if in his art Redon had turned more and more from a preoccupation with the depiction of inner problems to a greater absorption in the outer world. Another striking change is the increased frequency of full figure male subjects and of female nudes. It is hard to know to what extent this could be a reflection of some kind of change in Redon's inner sexual attitudes toward his mother, his father, and himself. We can fairly assume that his peculiarly isolated childhood promoted fantasies about his parents and made resolution of the oedipal phase
unusually difficult. Suggestive of an unresolved oedipal complex are his statement that he feared his father and the fact that he did not marry until 40, and then to a woman who, like his mother, was a Creole and who in fact mothered him. The high frequency in his lithographs of truncated figures, in which the genital area is necessarily absent, along with pictorial emphasis on the head and eye (looking) could reflect both the defense against and the expression of sexual curiosity. However appealing these formulations are, it is an unfortunate fact that biographical data in this area are rather scanty. Finally, it should be noted that although there was an increased production of nudes, they are always idealized, without pubic hair, occur in mythological settings, and draw on classical models. 

Even if Baekeland's suggestion of direct causality between Redon's psychobiography and his artistic production is found to be unacceptable, it must be admitted that the general description he gives to Redon's manner of representing the nude, and especially the female nude, is accurate. Moreover, it would appear that Redon's avoidance of representations of the nude (both male and female) may have had a strong relationship to the type of avoidance of sensuality, of sexual confrontation, and even of representations showing the two main protagonists together, which has been observed here in Redon's treatment of the subject of Salome and John the Baptist. Such a characterization of Redon's treatment of the female nude -- a subject which returned only after the period of crisis in the 1890s -- suggests that closer examination of how Redon represented the nude might offer insight into Redon's uncharacteristic manner of representing Salome, who in works by other artists of the period was almost always treated as a sensuous, exotic princess and in several instances as a nude temptress. By focusing upon the subject of the nude, a
number of issues of representation and sexuality as well as questions of vision and the gaze will be brought into this discussion. But beyond the questions the lack of direct visual engagement in Redon's work may raise within the context of a more traditional psychological approach, it will also be useful to focus attention upon the issue of spectatorship in these works.

Roseline Bacou has demonstrated, using a more characteristic formalist and iconographic approach, that Redon did indeed return to the nude only in 1903, not having really treated it since his days at Gérôme's atelier. It should be noted that such a lapse would suggest that Redon's original disfavor for the nude must have surely resulted from the young artist's distaste for the practices of that overbearing master, and an examination of Redon's own writings would seem to indicate that the nude had become encoded as a sign of academic practice, for it was the motif par excellence of the academic painter. Moreover, the nude must have seemed unapproachable to Redon and many other avant-garde artists not simply as the result of subconscious psychological complexes, but perhaps in relation to a more widespread "artistic" oedipal conflict having to do with breaking the strangle-hold of the academy, signified in Redon's career in the form of the painful rejection by Gérôme and his paternalistic assertions. Certainly, it was only in the 1890s that Redon began to realize fully success as an artist and to benefit from the confidence that outside recognition would finally bring. Thus, it was only at the beginning of the new century that Redon could begin to voice his
sentiments of regret about having not studied the nude more arduously in his early career, as has been seen from his famous statement, quoted above where he reveals that "s'il m'était permis de recommencer aujourd'hui mon éducation de peintre, je crois que je ferais beaucoup, pour la croissance et le plus grand développement de mes facultés, des copies du corps humain".  

After his period of personal and stylistic crisis, Redon also wrote to his patron André Bonger concerning his new found interest in the nude:

J'ai aussi pris modèle et je trouve que le nu est admirable. Dès les jours plus longs, je fournirai quelques travaux avec son appui. Qu'en sortira-t-il?  

Bacou says the results were the series of nudes done around 1904 and describes them as having "une ampleur" and being "d'une densité" which makes one think of Renoir: "le contour enveloppe, sans les contraindre, des formes puissantes et souples, rayonantes de vie." This comparison with Renoir might act as a corrective to the pathographic approach to the nude in Redon, for it is usually argued that Renoir's return to the nude -- a subject generally banished by the Impressionists, partly because of his its association with "official art" -- came at a time when he was on one hand seeking patronage from more traditional sources via the annual Salon and on the other at a period when he was losing interest in the limitations of Impressionism as a style. This change has almost never been related to Renoir's internal emotional conflicts.
Ultimately, Redon's revival of the nude led, around 1910, to a series of works based on the theme of the Vénus Anadyomène, which Bacou has read as carrying the ultimate artistic message of: "épanouissement et harmonie." But in each of these works, and also in the earlier depictions of "Eve", the general characteristics cited by Baekeland are very evident. For example, in several versions of The Birth of Venus (Plates CXX, CXXI, and CXXII) the characteristic handling which Baekeland describes can be found: "although there was an increased production of nudes, they are always idealized, without pubic hair, occur in mythological settings, and draw on classical models." The theme of the "Venus Anadyomene" with its emphasis upon chaste beauty, coming from the sea, also reminds us of Mallarmé's exploration of this type as one side of the dual nature of artistic creation -- haunted as it was by the threat of decapitation/castration, in this context referred to by the castration of Kronos by Zeus, and his genitals being thrown into the sea, an act which in turn gave birth to Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty. Thus, for Redon, a close friend of Mallarmé and also someone who was extremely aware of mythological subtleties, there would be a clear thematic link between these later Venuses and the earlier severed heads.

Redon's own writings on the nude serve to further reinforce the conclusions already reached in an examination of specific works. For example, in 1888, a long passage is found in the artist's diary about the nude:
14 Mai. — Le peintre n'est pas intellectuel lorsque, ayant peint une femme nue, elle nous laisse dans l'esprit l'idée qu'elle va se réhabiller de suite.

Le peintre intellectuel nous la montre dans une nudité qui nous rassure, parce qu'elle ne la chache pas; elle la laisse ainsi, sans honte, dans un éden, pour des regards qui ne sont pas les nôtres, mais ceux d'un monde cérébral, un monde imaginaire créé par le peintre, où se meut et s'épand la beauté qui jamais n'engendra l'impudeur, mais défère au contraire à toute la nudité un attrait pur qui ne nous abaisse pas. Les femmes nues de Puvis de Chavannes, ne se réhabillent point, ainsi que beaucoup d'autres dans le passé, au gynécée charmant d'un Giorgione, d'un Corrège.

Il en est une, dans le Déjeuner sur l'herbe de Manet, qui se hâtera de se revêtir après l'ennui de son malaise sur l'herbe froide, auprès des messieurs sans idéal qui l'entourent et lui causent. Que disent-ils? Rien de beau, je soupçonne.

Quant à ne peindre que des substances, même très bien, avec virtuosité, on en goûtera le plaisir, tout autant à peindre la robe que ce qu'elle cache. Peindre une étoffe, des étoffes, comme c'est plus franc et purement décisif que de nous représenter le nu pour le nu, c'est-à-dire quelque chose de l'être humain sans aucun héroïsme.

Lorsque Michel-Ange affirmait qu'il était niais de préférer les chaussures d'un homme à son pied, c'est qu'il voyait la nature humaine à son cœur même, au centre vital et agissant qui soulevait ces lobes dont il jouait jusqu'à l'excès, pour créer son style, son grand style, dont l'ascendance est une emprise de sa propre pensée sur la nôtre. Sous les yeux clos de son esclave, que d'action cérébrale élevée! Il dort, et le songe soucieux qui passe sous ce front de marbre, met le nôtre dans un monde émouvant et pensant. Sommeil d'esclave éveillant notre dignité.179

This passage is very fascinating not only for its discussion of Puvis, Manet, and Michelangelo, but also because it raises the issue of Redon's avoidance of the sensuality of the female nude. For after a long period where the nude was banished from his art almost completely, when Redon returns to it around 1900, the type of nude he proposes — as is clear from both his visual products —
and his writings -- is one which is shown in a nudity that "reassures."

Moreover, by referring to the example of an "Edenic nude," represented by two specific works of 1904 (Plates CXXIII and CXXIV), Redon seems to long for a sort of "pre-Oedipal" situation in which sexual difference has not yet become apparent. Thus, by placing this nude in a space which is historically situated before humans have partaken of the fruit of the "tree of knowledge," he calls attention to the epistemological concerns suggested by the appearance of the female nude. Ironically, however, he seeks a way in which the viewers of his works might see the nude with "des regards qui ne sont pas les nôtres, mais ceux d'un monde cérébral, un monde imaginaire créé par le peintre, où se meut et s'épand la beauté qui jamais n'engendra l'impudeur, mais défère au contraire à toute la nudité un attrait pur qui ne nous abaisse pas." It can be concluded that this "intellectualization" of the female nude is on one level an attempt to disarm the imagery of some of its threatening power, for the "cerebral world" sought after by the painter is a world which exists before the dangerous ramifications of "carnal knowledge" are fully realized. On the other hand, it might be posited that the point of view Redon suggests is that of an omniscient and all-seeing divinity, thus attempting to place the spectator in a position which is free of the moral judgement of others (indeed it would be a position of supreme judge!), and rather in a position of authority of the subject of the gaze -- a position that might provide some epistemological insight concerning these primordial women? And yet in a different context, Redon
represented a nude Pandora (Plate XXV), the mythological version of the first woman, who like many other female nudes in his art, is shown as "idealized," "without pubic hair," and in a "mythological setting." Nevertheless, her threat is suggested in the form of the box which she carefully clutches in her hands, all the while being sheltered by what could be associated with the tree of knowledge in the background.  

Such observations about Redon's imagery, have been very much influenced by Mary Ann Doane's writings collected in her book *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*. Keeping in mind that Salome had become the great femme fatale of the fin-de-siècle, and that her representations in that period have become the focal point for numerous studies of not only female imagery, but of the role of spectatorship and the gaze in the arts, it is worth briefly examining Doane's framing of the problem:

The femme fatale is the figure of a certain discursive unease, a potential epistemological trauma. For her most striking characteristic, perhaps, is the fact that she never really is what she seems to be. She harbors a threat which is not entirely legible, predictable, or manageable. In thus transforming the threat of the woman into a secret, something which must be aggressively revealed, unmasked, discovered, the figure is fully compatible with the epistemological drive of narrative, the hermeneutic structuration of the classical text. Sexuality becomes the site of questions about what can and cannot be known. This imbrication of knowledge and sexuality, of epistemophilia and scopophilia, has crucial implications for the representation of sexual difference in a variety of discourses -- literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis, the cinema. Both cinematic and theoretical claims to truth about women rely to a striking extent on judgments about vision and its stability or instability. Although her origins are literary and pictorial, the femme fatale has a special relevance in cinematic
representation, particularly that of Hollywood insofar as it appeals to the visible as the ground of its production of truth.\textsuperscript{181}

Although her study is most directly concerned with the cinema, it offers a great deal of insight into the appearance of this theme in nineteenth century art and literature, for Doane makes clear, it is within that particular historical and cultural milieu that the femme fatale finds its origin:

The femme fatale emerges as a central figure in the nineteenth century, in the texts of writers such as Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire and painters such as Gustave Moreau and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. If, as Christine Buci-Glucksmann points out, the archaeology of modernity is "haunted by the feminine," the femme fatale is one of its most persistent incarnations. She is associated with the styles of Decadence, Symbolism, and Art Nouveau as well as with the attention to decoration and excessive detail linked to a persistent and popular Orientalism (in the constant return, for instance, to the figures of Salome and Cleopatra). Her appearance marks the confluence of modernity, urbanization, Freudian psychoanalysis and new technologies of production and reproduction (photography, the cinema) born of the Industrial Revolution. The femme fatale is a clear indication of the extent of the fears and anxieties prompted by shifts in the understanding of sexual difference in the late nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{182}

Thus, Doane's remarks indicate that the "discursive unease" found in Redon's presentation of the female nude and of powerful female characters such as Salome might be just as symptomatic of the socio-economic climate in which his works were formed as of problems in his own psycho-sexual development. Moreover, the common interpretation of the severed head -- one of the victims in this conflict with "femmes fatales" such as Salome -- as a metaphor of the
soul escaping from the corporeality of the body, remains consistent with
Doane's linking of this "discursive unease" with certain "epistemological
traumas."

Doane articulates exactly the question which encountered in studying
Redon's original avoidance and ultimate caution in approaching
representations of the femme fatale when she asks: "In what does the
deadliness of the femme fatale consist and why is she so insistently a figure of
fascination in the texts of modernity?" After discussing the peculiar nature
of this figure's power, Doane offers the following answer:

The femme fatale is an articulation of fears surrounding the loss
of stability and centrality of the self, the "I," the ego. These
anxieties appear quite explicitly in the process of her
representation as castration anxiety.

And as further support for this idea, so common to Freudian psychoanalysis,
she refers to Virignia Allen's association of the "femme fatale with 'that
moment of abandonment in the sex act' and the ensuing 'loss of self-
awarness." Ultimately, Doane introduces an idea suggested by Christine
Buci-Glucksmann that it is specifically during the fin-de-siècle "when the male
seems to lose access to the body, which the woman then comes to
overrepresent." Each of these factors will be considered now as concerns
Redon's representation of Salome and the nude, beginning with the
epsitemological concerns which haunt the artist's writings, and concluding
with an analysis of the way his visual imagery of the severed head as
compared to that of his female nudes provides a clear example of Buci-
Glucksmann's idea about the way in which "the male seems to lose access to
the body, which the woman then comes to overrepresent."

There are numerous examples that can be cited from Redon's writings
which reveal this preoccupation with questions of epistemology, but one of the
clearest may be the artist's references to Pascal, and his famous passage, "Le
cœur a ses raisons" which is also the title of a drawing by Redon (Plate
CXXV):

«Le coeur a ses raisons», il les a, il les poursuit, il délibère
en nous selon des lois secrètes infiniment mystérieuses, si bien
qu'à l'occasion d'une rencontre de femme -- rencontre fortuite --
il s'empare de la personne entière, c'est la domination, un
envahissement, une défaillance obscure, où l'on ne discerne plus
très bien ce que c'est que la conduite, où la notion du bien et du
mal n'est plus, ou n'est plus nécessaire, parce que ce qui est du
cœur à cet instant divin est alors quelque chose de l'éternité.

While Pascal's statement has been interpreted as referring to the writer's "belief
that religious faith cannot be achieved by reason alone but must be
accompanied by the grace of God," Redon has mainly related it to his
feelings of anxiety about meeting women, and he meditates at length on this
problem in the lines that follow:

Déjà, pour me l'être dit à moi-même, je sens comme un
apaisement de ma tristesse; comme si la loi d'aimer devait
incessamment produire et créer partout où elle s'affirme, philtre
delicieux, mirage charmant, verbe, extase et délire où le ciel
même s'ouvre et se crée par elle.
Il ya quelques minutes de sa présence où ce que j'ai ressenti de plus délicat et de plus tendre de la femme et des femmes se répercuta dans mon cœur par la maturité de mon esprit, comme si en elle se résumait ce que j'ai le plus aimé, ce qui me révèle le plus de lumière, ce qui me domina le plus et m'attira vers le beau.

La femme est notre annonciateur suprême.

The tone of the last part of this statement suggests the placing of woman on a pedestal such as was encountered in Fernand Khnopff's *The Supreme Vice* (Plate CXVII) and it might be wondered if lurking behind Redon's elevated view of woman's role there might lurk a darker side along the lines of Khnopff's shadowy sphinx? Throughout Redon's letters to other artists, writers, and collectors, he spoke openly about these "epistemological traumas" and in another context, Roseline Bacou has produced some of her most inspired writing on Redon in a discussion of just these very qualities, which as she argues, tend to set him apart from many of his contemporaries.  

There is also a reference to such concerns at the end of Redon's famous statement on the female nude, when he speaks about Michelangelo's *Dying Slave* (Plate XXIV), for the generally accepted interpretation of this figure, as indicated in the writings of Frederick Hartt, is that it represents the spiritual self, which in earthly existence is a prisoner to the flesh, struggling to free itself from its sin and carnality — a struggle which is described in the following passage from the Mass of St. Peter:
O God, Who made the blessed Apostle Peter to go from his bonds absolutely unharmed, absolve us, we pray, from the bonds of our sins, and graciously keep all evil from us.\textsuperscript{198}

It is interesting to note that it is exactly this triumph of spirit over flesh which has been offered as a general interpretation of the meaning of the confrontation between the apparition of John the Baptist's floating head and the wicked gaze of Salome. In fact, in his book on \textit{Symbolist Art}, which has become the standard reference work, Robert Delevoy has written that "works of art are always a struggle between the body and the imagination..."\textsuperscript{189} and at the end of his poem which reaches its climax with the decapitation of John the Baptist, Mallarmé refers to how "ma tête surgie" like a sort of "rupture franche" of "Les anciens désaccords Avec le corps ...".\textsuperscript{190}

Coupled with Redon's very favorable reading of Michelangelo's treatment of the nude, is his more negative reaction to the nude as represented by Manet and his \textit{Déjeuner sur l'herbe} (Plate CXXVI). It is worth considering briefly Redon's comparison of these two manners of representation of the nude, and the very different types of vision they require of the spectator. In his now famous book, \textit{The Painting of Modern Life; Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers}, T.J. Clark provided the following analysis of Manet's \textit{Olympia} (Plate CXXVII) and of what was expected from the nude in nineteenth-century art:

A nude could hardly be said to do its work as a painting at all if it did not find a way to address the spectator and give him access to the body on display. He had to be offered a place outside the picture, and a way in; and be assured somehow that his way was
the right one, leading to the knowledge he required. This was sometimes done simply by looking: by having the woman's eyes and face, and her whole body, address themselves to the viewer, in the fashion of Ingres's *Vénus Anadyomène* or Titian's *Venus of Urbino*. That candour, that dreamy offering of self, that looking which was not quite looking: those were the nude's most characteristic forms of address. But the outward gaze was not essential; the spectator could be offered instead a pair of eyes within the picture space -- the look of Cupid or the jester's desperate stare, the familiarity of a servant or a lover. In any case, the woman's body had to be arranged in precise and definite relation to the viewer's eye. It had to be placed at a distance, near enough for seeing, far enough for propriety. It had to be put at a determinate height, neither so high that the woman became inaccessible and merely grand, nor so low that she turned into matter for scrutiny of a clinical or prurient kind.

What is most striking about Clark's analysis is the great extent to which Redon's nudes do not correspond to these conventions. In fact, neither do the nudes of Manet, but in the opposite extreme from those of Redon, for while Manet's figures confront the spectator in a gaze which Clark has shown to be a bit too direct for comfort, Redon's nudes (and the figures in his works in general) make no eye contact at all with the spectator, nor with the other figures within the composition. In fact, it would appear that in Redon's representations of nudes as well as in his representations of Salome encountering the head of John the Baptist -- which unlike so many others of his time do not show a direct confrontation between either John and Salome or Salome and the spectator -- the viewer is given no direct entry into the painting/drawing. Instead, the viewer is left to hover, much like the ghostly apparition of the severed head which is shown with its eyes closed, or much in
the manner of Michelangelo's *Dying Slave*. The viewer is "cut off" from the painting, and denied direct access. This very complex role assigned to the spectator is something which will be analyzed more in depth in the next section, but in the present context, it is worth focusing upon the way that Redon introduces a very specialized type of vision which also blocks entry into the painted world.

In place of that "dreamy offering of self, that looking which was not quite looking" which Clark has identified as "the nude's most characteristic forms of address," Redon has offered us something very different, as indicated in the model of inner vision he offers to us in the form of Michelangelo's *Dying Slave*:

_Sous les yeux clos de son esclave, que d'action cérébrale élevée! Il dort, et le songe soucieux qui passe sous ce front de marbre, met le nôtre dans un monde émouvant et pensant._

Thus, in this example, Redon has sought a way to free vision from the constraints of physicality — something all the more notable in this context, because it is usually the nude which serves as the artist's means of putting the body on display, especially bearing in mind Clark's assertion that "a nude could hardly be said to do its work as a painting at all if it did not find a way to address the spectator and give him access to the body on display." For Redon, "that looking which was not quite looking" becomes a task not for the figures which people his composition, but for the spectator of his works,
suggesting that Redon's "self-definition as a visionary artist" and his creation of a "visionary art" have far greater implications than simply permitting a formalist reading which would approve of his purity of visual medium and conception. For example, in Doane's discussion of the femme fatale the assertion is found that "... theoretical claims to truth about women rely to a striking extent on judgments about vision and its stability or instability." Thus, by inviting the viewer into a perception of the art work which is visionary, Redon attempts to create a means of seeing which is either free of the constraints of the body -- a means of seeing which would free the beholder from any of the unpleasant side effects or "discursive unease" to be associated with perceiving the femme fatale from within the normal carnality of vision. The extent to which Redon has attempted to subvert normal modes of vision can be realized from a consideration of the source which he has proposed for his nudes: they do not come from direct observation of the human body in nature so much as from prolonged meditation before a large conche shell which he kept in his studio (Plate CXXVIII), or as Roseline Bacou has put it, from "la mer de l'enfance qui venait battre les dunes de la Lande." Thus, the artist's conception of his nudes -- primarily representations of the mythological goddess of beauty -- which comes from a visionary analysis of a conche shell is as pure as that of Venus, who is carried to shore on a large conche shell.
The other issue which comes into play in the representation of the nude — as suggested by Redon's own writings on the subject — is the issue of the veil. What is of primary importance to Redon is the manner in which the nude is revealed — or unveiled — to the spectator, for he has made clear that he does not approve of the type of display appearing in Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*. Ironically, it was just such a sensuous unveiling of Salome to Herod during her dance which led to John's beheading in the first place. In his study, Clark has referred to a number of nineteenth-century theories of the nude, including the following one by Camille Lemmonier:

... The nude is not the same as the *undressed*, and nothing is less nude than a woman emerging from a pair of drawers or one who has just taken off her chemise. The nude has modesty only if it is not a transitory state. It hides nothing because there is nothing to hide. The moment it hides something it becomes prurient, for in reality it shows it all the better. In order to stay virgin the nude in art must be impersonal and must not particularize; art has no need of a beauty spot upon the neck or a mole on the hindquarter. It hides nothing and shows nothing; it makes itself seen as whole...

The nude has something of the purity of little children who play naked together without minding at all. The *undressed*, on the contrary, always reminds me of the woman who shows herself off for forty sous and specializes in "artistic poses."\(^{194}\)

Redon's statement about the nude is very close to that of Lemmonier, especially in the discussion of the undesirability of creating an "undressed" appearance and of seeking an effect which does not particularize. But Redon's treatment of the nude remains problematic in the context of Lemmonier's assertion that the "nude has nothing to hide", for it has been convincingly
illustrated that in Redon's representations, the obvious signs of sexuality have been masked, and the sexual ambiguities associated with a number of Redon's images have been frequently noted. Once again, Clark provides an informative analysis of this element in his discussion of Manet:

It is as if the painter welcomes disparity and makes a system of it; as if the picture proposes inconsistencies, of a curiously unrelieved kind -- left without excuse or mediation -- as the best sort of truth when the subject is nakedness. This leads to the way the picture treats the particular marks of sex upon the body. The nude has to indicate somehow the false facts of sexual life, and pre-eminently that woman lacks a phallus. This is the issue that lies behind Lemonnier's talk of showing and not showing what woman is. The nude, he says, "hides nothing because there is nothing to hide." That is no doubt what most male viewers wish to believe, but it regularly turns out that nothing is what has to be hidden, and indicated by other conventions. The Vénus Anadyomène shows us one of them, the most perfect: the illusion of simple absence and equally simple completeness, the fiction of a lack which is no lack and does not therefore need to be concealed or shown. Another is the hand placed over genitals in Titian's Venus or Giorgione's: the hand seemingly coinciding with the body, enacting the lack of the phallus and disguising it. In that sense -- in that particular and atrocious detail -- Olympia was certainly scandalous.^^5

Within Clark's analysis, it could be said that Redon's means of representing the female nude falls within the traditional conventions such as Ingres had used in his Vénus Anadyomène (Plate CXXIX). But for all of the conventionality in his manner of veiling the sexual identity of his images of female nudes, Redon's subversion of normal modes of vision have not been considered, especially the way in which he blocks the viewer's entry into the pictorial realm -- one of the other requirements Clark has noted as essential for a
successful painting of the nude. The contention here is that a far more
significant and as yet undiscussed type of veiling takes place in Redon’s work,
which has to do neither with a conventional veiling of female sexuality à la
Ingres nor with the more scandalous process of veiling which Clark identifies
in Manet, but rather with the veiling of vision, and specifically the male gaze.

As one of the more obvious examples of the unveiling of the female
body in nineteenth-century art, Elaine Showalter has referred to the sculpture
by Louis Ernest Barrias, *La Nature se dévoilant devant la science* (Plate CXXX),
which she describes as follows:

... it depicts a beautiful young woman, eyes modestly lowered,
breasts seductively bared, who lifts her hands to remove the veils
that conceal the rest of her body. The statue, identical to the one
that stood in the hall of the Paris medical faculty during the
nineteenth century, suggests the ways that the unveiling of
women’s bodies became associated with medical and scientific
vision.¹⁹⁶

It should not be overlooked that the pose and attitude of this figure of 1895 is
very close to many of the standing female nudes found in Redon’s art of the
following years who seem to emerge from either their surrounding auras or
sea shells, and it has been noted that the "eyes modestly lowered" or seen in
profile appear as a general characteristic of Redon’s representation of female
figures. While it is important to note that such implied submissiveness
certainly makes these figures far more approachable to the gaze than the type
of direct glance encountered in Manet's *Olympia*, it is also interesting to note Showalter's proposed complement to Barrias's representation:

> If there had been a companion piece called *Science Looking at Nature*, it would have depicted a fully clothed man, whose gaze was bold, direct, and keen, the penetrating gaze of intellectual and sexual mastery.  

It is interesting to find that in his treatment of the apparition theme, Redon, who usually represented simply a rather chaste Salome standing before a floating image of a severed head, ultimately chose to create an apparition in which the sexual roles were reversed (Plate XXVIII), in a fashion which contains much of the sense of the sexual reversal suggested above by Showalter. It must be noted, however, that the male figure is also represented as nude in Redon, but perhaps because of this, he does not directly engage the vision of the female appearing in the apparition before him. Of course, this is essentially the same nude female figure Redon places before us after the turn of the century, when he represented mythological deities surrounded by an aura of light. It is significant, however, that in Redon's usual treatment of the apparition, the female figure stands before a vision of the male which includes only his severed head, while in this work Redon has been sure to include enough of the female figure so that her sexual identity is clear. Such a different approach to showing a vision of the female would seem to confirm Buci-Glucksmann's assertion that it is specifically during this time period that "the male seems to lose access to the body, which the woman then comes to
overrepresent." Thus, it is possible to read the proliferation of representations of severed heads by male artists at the end of the century as being on one hand an attempt to come to terms with this perceived loss and on the other as being symptomatic of their attempt to define women in exactly this way. Moreover, the appearance of the "overrepresented" female within the context of an apparition -- a startling, phantom image -- would also support Buci-Blucksmann's idea that "the archaeology of modernity is 'haunted by the feminine.'"

Within the same context, Showalter has defined the dual nature of the male gaze:

The male gaze is thus both self-empowering and self-endangering, for what lies behind the veil is the specter of female sexuality, a silent but terrible mouth that may wound or devour the male spectator. In seeing that the woman has no penis, the boy, according to Freud, experiences the fear of his own possible castration.198

That Redon could associate such horror with the male gaze is made clear by one of his drawings which could also be described as a variation on the apparition theme, but which has a very specific source in a story by Poe: Vision: Les Dents de Bérénice (Plate CXIII).199 The source for this work, the 1835 "Berenicé -- A Tale," is a short story about Egaeus and his cousin Berenice. She was to be his bride, but fell ill from a horrible disease. He describes seeing her in a sort of "horrific vision" as he "sits lost in morbid irritability in the library": 
But uplifting my eyes, I saw that Berenice stood before me ... my burning glances at length fell upon the face ... The eyes were lifeless, and lustreless, and seemingly pupilless, and I shrank involuntarily from their glassy stare to the contemplation of the thin and shrunken lips. They parted; and in a smile of peculiar meaning, the teeth of the changed Berenice disclosed themselves slowly to my view. What to God that I had never beheld them, or that, having done so, I had died! The shutting of a door disturbed me, and looking up, I found that my cousin had departed from the chamber. But from the disordered chamber of my brain, had not alas! departed, and would not be driven away, the white and ghastly spectrum of the teeth. Not a speck on their surface -- not a shade on their enamel -- not an indenture in their edges what the brief period of her smile had sufficed to brand in upon my memory. I saw them now even more unequivocally than I beheld them then. The teeth! -- the teeth! -- they were here, and there, and every where, and visibly and palpably before me; long, narrow, and excessively white with the pale lips writhing about them...

There are a number of things about this literary source which would have directly appealed to Redon. This is significant especially in so much that most scholars have taken at face value the artist's assertion that Poe was not so important to him. However, anyone familiar with Redon's biography and sensibilities as expressed in his writings must also agree that there are a number of shared similarities with the life of the story's main character and narrator, Egaeus. These are found in the assertion by Egaeus that his was a "race of visionaries" and in the circumstances of his early life spent alone in a library in meditation, and even more so in his confession of having "dissipated my youth in revery." Even his mention of time spent "visiting a dear one's grave" is reminiscent of the frequent references to such experiences which were recorded on more than one occasion in Redon's diaries. Egaeus also speaks of
having a sort of "monomania," and of spending a whole afternoon
contemplating the "steady flame of a lamp, or the embers of a fire...," an
activity very close to that suggested to Redon by his mentor Rodolphe Bresdin.
For example, Redon noted in a 1913 lecture on Bresdin delivered in Holland,
following reminiscence of Bresdin's influence:

Il me dit une fois, sur un ton d'autorité douce: «Voyez ce tuyau
de cheminée, que vous dit-il? Il me raconte à moi une légende. Si
vous avez la force de le bien observer et de le comprendre,
imaginez le sujet le plus étrange, le plus simple pan de mur,
Votre rêve sera vivant. L'art est là.» Bresdin me propos en 1864.
J'en note la date parce que ce n'est pas ainsi que l'on enseignait
en ce moment-là.202

The narrator in Poe's story speaks with much guilt about his attraction
to his cousin. He describes how "in an evil moment, I spoke to her of
marriage." But it would seem that his guilt comes back to haunt him in the
obsessive apparition of her teeth. He condenses her to this one image in his
dream. Ultimately, he reveals that he had to do something about this obsession
and in fact at the end of the story he has violently removed her teeth in an
attempt to perform a sort of exorcism on her.

It is interesting that many of the elements in this story relate very
directly to the subject of Salome. For example, Berenice's disease is described
as being a lot like epilepsy, but it left her in a trance-like state, which closely
resembles that often attributed to Salome during her dance. Moreover, the
story contains a similar element of incest which figured strongly in John the
Baptist's condemnation of Salome's mother and her marriage to Herod.203

Anyone with even a passing interest in psychoanalysis will be quick to
recognize in this condensed image of the lover the syndrome of the "vagina
dentata". This image is common in dreams and obsessive visions as a sort of
vehicle for castration.204 That this interpretation is not simply a twentieth-
century invention is made more clear in the analysis of this concept in a
nineteenth-century context by Peter Gay in his book, Education of the Senses,
and also in the text by Showalter mentioned above. In his chapter, "The
Castrating Sisterhood", Gay discusses the prominent fantasy of the role of the
threatening woman as the agent of castration in the nineteenth-century. He
begins by analyzing a dream of Edmond de Goncourt recorded for the date of
July 14, 1883 (Bastille Day) in his journal:

I dreamt last night that I was at a party, in white tie. At that
dady, I saw a woman come in, and recognized her as an actress
in a boulevard theatre, but without being able to put a name to
her face. She was draped in a scarf, and I noticed only that she
was completely naked when she hopped onto the table, where
two or three girls were having tea. Then she started to dance, and
while she was dancing took steps that showed her private parts
armed with the most terrible jaws one could imagine, opening
and closing, exposing a set of teeth. The spectacle had no erotic
effect on me, except to fill me with an atrocious jealousy, and to
give me a ferocious desire to possess myself of her teeth -- just as
I am beginning to lose all my good ones. Where the devil could
such an outlandish dream come from? It's got nothing to do with
the taking of the Bastille.205
As one might expect, however, the interpretation of the dream offered by Gay suggests that indeed, the fact that this dream occurred on Bastille Day was highly significant. He argues that the "vagina dentata" imagery in the dream, while perhaps deriving from Goncourt's current dilemma of losing all his teeth, is actually the manifestation of "castration fears" which are a reflection of his loss of potency. Moreover, he speaks of the "oedipal wish" hidden in the dream, and it is worth exploring his interpretation at length:

This dream like all dreams, is a privileged personal document. Edmond de Goncourt was a connoisseur of art, society, and politics; a lifelong bachelor, in his early days he frequented prostitutes and kept mistresses, but his real love was his brother Jules, with whom he virtually merged. The two brothers wrote books together on eighteenth-century French society, self-conscious and shocking realistic novels, and a much-cited journal, an indiscreet record of the social, political, artistic, and sexual life of their day. The two, it seems also shared a mistress for some years, thus in a way restoring, and markedly improving upon, their first shared childhood love. When Jules died in 1870, a shattering event that his surviving half fixed forever in his journal, at engrossing length and in clinical detail, Edmond carried on alone, wounded, melancholy, more waspish than ever. Sensitive and observant, neurotic and in some ways proud of his neuroticism, Edmond de Goncourt was out of tune with his time, the chronicler of a world invaded by vulgarity, threatened by democracy, and blighted by Jews. The manifest dream displays him as the desolate bon vivant, at a party, in a white tie, alone.

The latent dream thoughts capture even more of him. Goncourt's associations and implicit interpretations are all denials, somewhat forced efforts at devising innocuous explanations for threatening materials: the naked dancer writhing on the table does not excite him sexually, he had dreamt of teeth only because they reminded him of his own dental decay. These denials cannot conceal the castration fears lurking behind Goncourt's panicked vision of the vagina dentata, quite apart from his rueful hint - "just as I am losing all my good ones" - at the
loss of his potency. But his fear was the child of a wish: the
dream, we may conclude from his disclaimer, had everything to
do with Bastille Day. His denial was doubtless overdetermined,
but his wording suggests that "July 14" was the day's residue
from which he constructed his dream. The holiday celebrating the
storming of the Bastille, that looming emblem of paternal power,
is the most meaningful day in the French calendar, no matter
what the Frenchman's politics; it condenses, more than any other,
the decisive rebellion against authority, the son symbolically
slaying the father: a concrete piece of historical material that
illustrates a permanent ingredient in human experience. But this
daring oedipal wish apparently awakened in Goncourt a mortal
fear of retaliation, castration being threatened here not by the
father but by the mother, so that his very wish was compromised
in the wishing: even if the fantasy had been imagined to
completion, the triumphant boy would have encountered the
biting mother.206

In addition to the by now familiar refrain of the "castration complex"
associated with the vagina dentata imagery, Gay's analysis contains a very
fascinating reference to the "political unconscious" of the nineteenth-
century.207 This latter association would lend support to Pierre Reverseau's
view that the severed head persists in the imagination of the nineteenth-
century as a shuddering reminiscence of the Revolution and the Reign of
Terror. A bit later, this seemingly unusual association between the political
realm and the more private one of individual sexuality will be explored.208
For now, it is sufficient to note that Gay's rather traditional psychoanalytic
account would appear to lend additional support to the ideas advanced by
Doane and others about that which is threatening in the femme fatale.

Thus, as a result of all the "discursive unease" associated with the
femme fatale, or simply as a result of the horror associated with the male
spectator's beholding of the female body, or perhaps -- as Baekeland would surely argue -- because of his own repressed anxieties about sexuality, Redon has found it necessary to put a veil over the viewer's vision. The viewer is offered imagery which is to be taken not as normal everyday reality, but rather as a "vision" or as an "apparition," and in his own writings the artist has called upon the metaphor of an "inward vision" as an appropriate means for approaching the nude. In place of the expected visual examination of the female body in preparation for his representation of the nude, Redon has proposed instead prolonged contemplation of a sea-shell. Ironically, this model of vision, which on one hand derives from Redon's study of Michelangelo's *Dying Slave* in the Louvre (Plate XXIV), was most directly used by Redon in his most famous work from the crisis period of the mid-nineties, *Les Yeux clos* (Plate XXIII), a work which was also modeled upon the features of Madame Camille Redon, the wife of the artist. *Les Yeux clos* became one of the main themes which pre-occupied Redon during the years of crisis in the 1890s, and in many ways it became a point of transition between the earlier images of John the Baptist's severed head and the later treatments of the head of Orpheus on his lyre which seems to replace it after the turn of the century -- a theme which will be dealt with at length in Chapter Three.
vi. The Severed Head and the Spectator

The head of the Medusa is probably the most famous example of an image posing a serious threat to the gaze of the spectator. Appearing above temple entrances, emblazoned on shields, and serving a variety of other functions, in classical times this apotropaic image was supposedly capable of turning its unwary male viewer to stone. For Freud, the Medusa became a figure to illustrate his association of the gaze with sexual desire, and it is in his short essay, "Medusa's Head," that is found one of the most concise formulations of this complex in the equation: "to decapitate = to castrate." Study of Redon's treatment of John the Baptist and Salome has revealed that the gaze of the characters enacting the drama and the implied gaze of the artist who presented them to the viewer are similarly linked to Freud's equation. For example, Helen Borowitz has asserted that John was decapitated mainly because he tried to fix the gaze of Salome's mother Herodias with his stare, and as has been noted above, John's decapitation resulted from Herod's unrestrained consumption of Salome during her dance through a gaze of sexual desire. The present section will focus directly upon the issue of spectatorship in relation to this imagery in order to explore more in depth the way the gaze of the spectator who beholds these images plays a significant role in these works and their mechanism of meaning.

An examination of this issue of spectatorship in Redon can be undertaken at several levels. First of all, it must be noted that this issue is one
of the key turning points in an application of psychoanalysis to his art works. Even for the traditional pathographic approach as exemplified by Baekeland's study, the role of the spectator has become one of the major points of contention. For example, in their study *Born Under Saturn; The Character and Conduct of Artists: A Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution*, Margot and Rudolf Wittkower have provided the following warning about the pitfalls of a psychobiographic approach:

> We must add that ambiguity is one of the characteristics of the visual image: what looks chaste to one beholder may appear obscene to the next; and the personality imagined behind the work will obviously change according to the varying visual reactions. Character studies derived from a beholder's subjective response to works of art are therefore of necessity highly suspect. But art historians have given this matter little thought. Sometimes naïvely, sometimes arbitrarily, they have created a pantheon peopled by an imaginary race of artists.²¹

Moreover, Redon himself seems to have been aware of some of these limitations which come from having created a "suggestive art." Redon, like many artists of his generation has spoken about the role of the spectator before his art:

> [My lithographs have] the sole purpose of producing in the spectator a sort of diffuse but powerful attraction to the obscure world of the *indeterminate* and to set him thinking.²¹²

In many ways, this statement reflects another by Redon's hero, Delacroix:

> The principal source of interest comes from the mind, and it goes out irresistibly to the mind of the spectator. Not that every
interesting work strikes the spectators to an equal degree from the sole fact that each of the latter has a mind. Only a person endowed with sensitivity and imagination can be moved by it.213

Following up on this Romantic current running through his art, Roseline Bacou has argued that Redon wants the image to have the same "violent effect" on the spectator as on him, and she suggests that in order to access these realms the viewer of his art needs to have "mediation, passionate concentration, and solitude." Bacou also feels that the role of the inscriptions below some of Redon’s lithographs is to function mainly as a preparation of the spectator’s state of mind in approaching the image.215 Further amplifying these ideas, but starting from a slightly different context, Borowitz has written that:

Redon’s lithographs and drawings moved from Moreau’s sensual world to the ambiguity of the unconscious world in an effort to awaken the spectator’s own "imaginative aptitude to enlarge things or diminish them."216

Given these responses to the role of the spectator in both the writings of the artists and those of the scholars who have studied works, the attitude must be noted which suggests that not every spectator can have the same or as deep an emotional response to the work of art. Thus, the idea is offered here which suggests that not only are the works the result of a special "visionary" insight on the part of the artist, but that the viewer must in some way be initiated and have a similar visionary experience before the work. But beyond the requirement that the viewer must be initiated into a certain type of "visionary"
way of beholding the image, there lies the question of the sexual gender (or perhaps even the sexual orientation) of the viewer. This is especially significant, given these artists' tendencies towards on one hand identifying with their imagery in a very personal way, and on the other for the critics of the work to insist upon a sort of "direct re-experiencing" of the imagery in keeping with the Romantic tendencies inherent in the inception of the works in question. For example, it might be asked whether Redon's imagery is directed to a male gaze, or perhaps to a certain "maleness" of the gaze, or whether the androgynous nature of so many of his images somehow gets around this limitation? It is also significant to inquire as to whether the sexual ambiguity encountered in some of his imagery results from a simple lack of commitment on the part of the artist in defining the sexual gender of his viewer or if it has a more purposeful function? For example, should this androgyny be read against the background of contemporaneous writings such as those of Sar Peladan who championed the appearance of androgyny in art? For example Peladan wrote that "Art has created a supernatural being the Androgyne beside which Venus disappears," with the advantage being that the "androgyne appears as the being freed from sexual seeking, is in a sense, the human form made whole, the union of male and female."^217

Important clues to some of these riddles concerning the role of the spectator are occasionally found in specific works by Redon. For example, in *Le Souffle qui conduit les êtres est aussi dans les sphères* (Plate CXXXI), the fifth
plate from the lithographic series *A Edgar Poë* of 1882, there is an androgynous and angelic figure appearing with head in profile and with the torso turned slightly towards the viewer. In the background of the work, however, somewhat hidden between a series of spherical shapes, a pair of eyes looks out from the other side. The present writer must admit that one immediate response to this situation is to remember the somewhat humorous statement by Paul Klee that not only do we humans look at paintings, but that they also look back at us. The other obvious response to this image is that there is a strong voyeuristic presence in Redon's works, and that while in this specific example such a presence is physically represented by the staring eyes looking out of the picture, it is a role more often fulfilled by the viewer in the process of seeing the works. That such vision is problematic, or that it might even pose a threat to the viewer, is suggested by the first plate and inside front cover from this same series of prints, *A Edgar Poë*, the lithograph entitled *L'Oeil, comme un ballon bizarre se dirige vers l'Inifini* (Plate CXXXII). In this latter example, the eye, which gazes upward and seems to float freely through space, becomes exactly the vehicle for bearing on a platter a severed head. Thus, this image would serve equally well as an example of Doane's idea of the "instability of vision" -- especially when it is considered that most severed heads in the imagery of the fin-de-siècle period resulted from a male encounter with the "femme fatale" -- and of Freud's interest in coupling vision with sexual desire -- here represented by means of an image commonly symbolizing
the punishment of this desire: the "severed head = castration" equation.

Moreover, Redon's use of an inscription to relate the lithograph *Le Souffle qui conduit les êtres est aussi dans les sphères* to the suggestion of a divine presence within the universe suggests a further linking of epistemophilia and scopophilia which Doane has discussed in her essay on the femme fatale.

A consideration of eyewitness accounts about the experience of viewing art during the late nineteenth-century might also be used to help us envision what type of spectatorship would be acceptable in approaching the visionary art of Redon's time. For example, in the following lines, Marcel Proust speaks of his admiration for one of his favorite paintings, *Woman Carrying the Head of Orpheus*, by Gustave Moreau (Plate II):

> We thought the poet dead, we meant to make a pilgrimage to the Luxembourg Museum as one goes and simply stands before a tomb; and like a woman carrying the lifeless head of Orpheus we go and simply stand before the *Woman Carrying the Head of Orpheus*, and we see in that head of Orpheus something looking at us, the mind of Gustave Moreau painted on that canvas which looks at us with fine unseeing eyes in the shape of mind-made colors.²¹⁹

Especially interesting in the present context is the idea that the trip to the museum might be like a pilgrimage in which one would go to visit the relic of a saint. Moreover, given the various interpretations of the severed head image as symbolic of the immortality of the soul beyond the physical death of the material body, Proust's statement that in the severed head of Orpheus one might find represented the "mind of Gustave Moreau" takes on special interest.
The idea that this head looks back out at us with "unseeing eyes" would suggest not only the type of "inner vision" already discussed in Redon's own representation of the severed head theme, but it seems to introduce the idea that the spectator through empathy with the artist (whose mind is represented by the severed head of Orpheus) might behold the painting in much the same disembodied state. Following up on a discussion of Proust's response to this painting Robert Delevoy has been willing to go even further in associating the artist with his image:

Moreau annexes the myth to give body, his body, to the image. What are the origins, what capital is being drawn upon? Is the murder of the primal father being re-lived as the first moment of humanity? Is this a vestige of buried rituals and beliefs? The picture shows a symbolic murder, the image is unctuous, smooth, polished, shining, scintillating. It is ornate, ornamental, flowery. But there is restrained evidence of anguish, an echo of a celibate's anxiety, in which the Oedipus complex vies with castration complex. Is it by chance that the woman's face reminds one of the portrait of Moreau's mother, as we know it from an old photograph? Ernest Chesneau points out that it also resembles "the Salome of the Scriptures, who contemplated, but with what strange looks, the decapitated head of John the Baptist." The mysteries of mythography are certainly based on the labyrinths of our inner life, or a present which has already happened, of a future which is past. Time disintegrates in the elections of space.

Clearly, such views of the spectatorship of these images are somewhat clouded by the traditional pathographic approach they imply, an approach which is also suggested by influences of Romanticism upon the artists and critics of the period and an influence which has been noted to have greatly influenced the
early thinking of Freud. Nevertheless, there are kernels of insight in these interpretations suggesting other questions which lead beyond a mere pathography of Redon and to a far more complex consideration of spectatorship in his images. For example, Delevoy’s comment about Moreau’s annexation of "the myth to give body, his body, to the image" is fascinating once consideration is given to the question of to what extent does a painting representing the severed head correspond to the idea of the painting as body and how does this "body of painting" relate to the body viewing the work of art? Such questions are also raised indirectly by Delevoy in his discussion of the issue of the elaboration of the frame and its function in Symbolist art. Moreover, both of these concerns point to important issues raised in recent theoretical texts on vision and visuality, such as Norman Bryson’s *Vision and Painting*, where he discusses in a somewhat different context the question of on one hand how the body becomes included in the work of art, and on the other how the gaze becomes disembodied in western painting. The location, and in fact the very existence, of a frame around the image becomes a central issue in these questions, for it becomes a point of demarcation between the painted world and the world of the spectator. But this is not to say that in some cases images seemed to extend beyond these limitations.

The complexity of the issue of spectatorship for Redon’s work becomes more obvious upon attempting to consider how some of these conflicting factors come to bear upon the viewer’s experience before actual works. The
complexity is suggested on one hand by the work being presented to a voyeuristic spectator, and on the other hand, by Redon’s exposure of an imagery containing a clear threat to that spectator. In another context, there are reasons to believe that examples of the "included self" are found in these works – if I might be permitted to employ Leo Steinberg’s description of the artist’s autobiographical use of imagery to extend to the viewer’s own identification with the imagery. But this mechanism for meaning in the works becomes problematic, for all too often identifications of such instances of the "included self" have relied solely upon traditional pathographic analysis of Redon’s work. Moreover, Redon’s borrowing of imagery and compositional techniques from traditional "mystical painting," as discussed above according to James Snyder’s definition whereby the viewer is offered a "mystical identification" with the saint depicted within the painted image, remains problematic in that elsewhere in a discussion of the "veil," it has been found that Redon has tended to block the viewer’s entry into the composition by subverting normal modes of vision and in essence by veiling not only his female imagery, but also the male gaze to which it would be offered. All of this is further complicated by the realization that if Redon’s imagery of the severed head is meant to be seen as both "autobiographical" and as being presented in such a way so that the viewer might also identify with it, then it must be understood that the viewer of the work is requested to behold the
work of art not merely with a very special type of vision, but also with a head that has been separated from the body, and thus with a disembodied gaze.

Interestingly, exactly such a description of the dangers of viewing a scene of decapitation was given by a nineteenth-century critic of the work of Puvis de Chavannes. Speaking specifically about Puvis's *The Beheading of John the Baptist* (Plate XIII), Élie Sorin wrote:

> Here we have an executioner who, with a single stroke of his sword, is about to lop off not only a large sycamore tree and the saint’s head but also the head of any viewer who stops to look at it.²³⁴

Such an observation is very fascinating not so much because of its intended criticism of the painter’s deficiency in handling perspective, but because it offers an exact description of the type of thing which appears to be at stake in the viewing of Redon’s isolated images of severed heads. Already, it has been noted that the head is most usually placed very close to the picture plane, even seeming to extend out into the viewer’s space in examples by Caravaggio (Plate LXXXIII) and Artemisia Gentileschi (Plate LXXXVIII). Of course in these examples, it is possible to suggest a clear case of the Baroque artist attempting to bring the work’s message home to the viewer in a very direct way, partly in reaction to the primary reforms called for at the Council of Trent: the use of the work of art as an "emotional stimulus to piety," so that in effect the viewer might directly identify with the sufferings of the represented saint.²²⁵

However, the head is placed close to the edge of the picture frame in a
number of other examples, such as in the pendentive design by Delacroix showing the decapitation of John the Baptist (Plate XVII). Such a consistent placement of the severed head within so many different compositions suggests that the artist is able to use this physical limit at the edge of the picture in order to help the viewer better empathize with the act of the head being severed from the body and in this context, it makes even more sense to speak, as has Delevoy about the artist having given a body to the image. For the illusion created in so many of these works is that the severed head juts out from the picture plane into the space of the viewer, and is thus separated from the "body" of the picture (and from the figure being illusionistically decapitated). Another way to think of this would be to see in the common metaphor of the transparent picture plane also a metaphorical reference to the blade of the guillotine!

It should be noted, however, that this transparent plane has a double function, and that it cuts two ways. On one hand, it helps to suspend the disbelief of the viewers in imagining that they see before them the specter of a severed head separated from the rest of the body. On the other, it helps the artist to realize the purported goal of having the viewer to see with an inward vision -- that is, with a vision separated from the normal constraints of materiality, and thus, to see as with the mind's eye, as though the viewer's head had been severed from the rest of the body and floats before the image (which in Redon is frequently a representation of a floating head or an eye)
and thus, that the disembodied gaze hovers before the image -- for this blade has also effectively severed the head of the viewer. In fact, this last connotation suggests that the transparent "plane/blade" also functions as a mirror, so that in the image of the severed head the spectator beholds an image of self within the image. After all, if, after Delevoy's suggestion, the analogy of the body is applied to the painted image, it must be admitted that in most situations, the picture has been framed and suspended on the wall before the viewer, and thus, it is a body which lacks the support of legs on which to stand. Thus, a full realization of the situation described by Proust in a visit to view the work by Moreau, would indicate such a transference on the part of the spectator to the image of the severed head represented before him/her.

It is possible to further illustrate the situation which Redon and a number of other Symbolist artists achieve in representations of the severed head, and perhaps even call attention to the special appeal of this imagery in their works, by suggesting a very general comparison of this Symbolist theme and its handling to a compositional device commonly used by the Impressionists. In their endless quest to "record the impression of light on objects," and to capture this view of nature with spontaneity and immediacy, the artists associated with Impressionism frequently called upon a special cropping of the composition as a device to provide the viewer with a "slice of life," as discussed by Linda Nochlin, in her analysis of several examples of this
tendency, Manet’s *Ball at the Opera* (Plate CXXXIII), *Nana* (Plate CXXXIV), and *Bar at the Folies Bergère* (Plate CXXXV):

The sense of immediacy in both the *Ball at the Opera* and *Nana* has to do with their being pictorial slices of life, or more literally of ‘sliced-off’ life: in both cases Manet asserted his choice of viewpoint as the controlling element, not by stressing an unusual angle of vision, as Degas tended to do, but rather by cutting off the scene arbitrarily, even if, or especially if, this meant the amputation of a tantalizingly important human figure — in the *Bal*, the polichinelle to the left and, upper right, the charming pair of detached legs (later to reappear, still detached, dangling from a trapeze in the *Bar at the Folies Bergère*); in *Nana*, the soigné figure of the admirer to the right who is permitted only quarter presence, his physical incompleteness emphasizing the more central importance of the mirror in the imagery of provocative narcissism. One is reminded, in these works, of photography where cropping is used to emphasize the seeming fortuitousness of the image, or, at times, to pique our imaginations about the amputated element; and, at the same time, of Roman Jakobson’s assertion that the rhetorical device of the synecdoche, the representation of the whole by the part, is fundamental to Realist imagery.227

Such means of presentation, she argues, were appropriate to the artists’ attempts to capture the fleeting life of the modern city:

The imagery of the hurried, the haphazard and disjunctive, so characteristic of the modern urban milieu and, in Paris, increased by the extensive perspectives and large, open places recently created by Haussmann, was also indigenous to photography, or at any rate admirably suited to it, with its random, significance-destroying cut-offs, blurring of moving figures and oblique compositions. Sudden diminution of scale and radical cropping are equally characteristic of photography and of advanced pictorial representations of city streets, such as Caillebotte’s *Place de l’Europe* where the sudden diminution of scale, as in a close-up photograph, adds to the sense of completely literal confrontation of contemporary reality, as does the brutal cropping of the figure.
at the right; or Degas's *Vicomte Lepic and his Daughters* 'snapped' in the midst of the Place de la Concorde, with a similarly cut-off figure to the left; and perhaps more factitiously, de Nittis's *Place des Pyramides* of 1883 with its accurate and circumstantial portrayal of a specific spot in Paris, in the very process of transformation, under clearly specified circumstances.228

Thus, in each of these examples from Caillebotte (Plate CXXXVI), Degas (Plate CXXXVII), and de Nittis (Plate CXXXVIII), there is found a similar fragmentation of certain forms at the edge of the composition which suggests that the painting is simply a view from nature, which would continue beyond the limitations of the frame were it not for the fact that the artist had run out of canvas, but still reassuring the viewer that the real world offers the same basic view and that what is shown in these Impressionist works is part of a continuum with the external world of nature, or as Nochlin has put it, that they present us with the reality of "segments of experience."229 Another example of this idea that the world continues beyond the frame is also suggested in a landscape painting by Claude Monet, in the collection of the Columbus Museum of Art, *View of Bennecourt* (Plate CXXXIX), which in the foreground shows the shadow of one tree which is not visible within the frame, but must have existed at one time just outside the view chosen by Monet for his painting.

Of course in the years following the high point of Impressionism, the new generation of Post-Impressionist and Symbolist artists, and even some of
the Impressionists themselves began to reject this view, as Robert Goldwater has articulated in the introduction to his book, *Symbolism*:

No longer a segment of nature referred back to the extensive setting from which it has been cut, the picture has been turned into something complete in itself, something which, paradoxically, through becoming in intention more momentarily accurate has become less temporal, suggesting a duration beyond the moment that gave it birth. The exacerbation of the impressionist method has led to a work that stands for rather than represents the object and has arrived at the Mallarméan principle of suggestion through infinite nuance.230

On one level, this distinction between a certain temporality of the gaze, and the fleeting Impressionist view of nature, would appear to be an example of exactly the type of distinction Norman Bryson makes between the "gaze" and the "glance" in his book *Vision and Painting*.231 According to Bryson's comparison, the gaze becomes associated with a certain disembodiment of vision, and thus, it is possible to argue in this same vein that for the Symbolists the theme of the severed head becomes a clear means of suggesting a break from the material world and the dominance of nature in vision. In this sense, then, the Symbolist's rendering of the severed head would offer a "slice from life" along the lines of Mallarmé's severing of the head which cures the "ancient dissacord between body and mind" as opposed to the Impressionist's offering of a "slice of life."

The result of all of this would suggest that the Symbolists might carry in their consciousness a very different feeling about modern Paris. In place of the
Impressionist’s attempt to come to terms with the new open spaces of Haussmann’s modern Paris, or to represent contemporary life in public places such as is seen in the cropping and fragmentation Degas uses in his depiction of several people in the Place de la Concorde (Plate CXXXVII), the open space of the Symbolists is the encounter with "le Néant" described by Mallarmé. The infinite, open, mysterious spaces which appear in the background of so many of Redon’s compositions are more related to the type of signification of the open spaces of the Place de la Concorde that Michel Hollier has found envisioned in the thinking of Georges Bataille:

Bataille’s Place de la Concorde, on the contrary, is the place where loss is incarnate — embodied in a man who identifies himself by his lack. The headless man, Acephalus, rises up where the guillotine let in the freezing gales of empty space.232

or in the writings of Chateaubriand:

For Chateaubriand, the merry making of fairs and festivals which set themselves up on this space is meaningful as follows: "When they go to dance on the Champs-Élysées, when they shoot off firecrackers on the place sprinkled with the blood of the Just, they will have to remember the Martyr-King’s scaffold."233

Thus, this space is one which remained problematic, and the negative connotations it carried during the first half of the century, might have conditioned the response to similar feelings about such spaces at the turn of the century:
For the first half of the nineteenth century, this esplanade was a source of uneasiness for developers and city planners. Should it be made into a place of memory and expiation or one of laughter and forgetting?^224

Of course the implications of this type of comparison between Symbolism and Impressionism is that the latter is occupied only with a simple recording of nature, while the former is far more complex in its relationship to representation of the real world. Redon has certainly contributed to this characterization of Impressionism by means of his statement to Maurice Denis that "I refused to set out on the Impressionist track for I found its ceiling too low."^235 In the same vein, Redon recorded in his diaries a personal credo concerning the flaws of the realist tendencies of his generation, by comparing them with the model of the chimney flue which Bresdin had offered to him as a model for artistic contemplation:

Les artistes de ma génération, pour la plupart, ont assurément regardé le tuyau de cheminée. Et ils n'ont vu que lui. Tout ce qui peut s'ajouter au pan de mur par le mirage de notre propre essence, ils ne l'ont pas donné. Tout ce qui dépasse, illumine ou amplifie l'objet et suélève l'esprit dans la région du mystère, dans le trouble de l'irrésolu et de sa délicieuse inquiétude, leur a été totalement fermé. Tout ce qui prête au symbole, tout ce que comporte notre art d'inattendu, d'imprécis, d'indéfinissable et lui donne un aspect qui confine à l'énigme, ils s'en sont garés, ils en ont eu peur. Vrais parasites de l'objet, ils ont cultivé l'art sur le champ uniquement visuel, et l'ont fermé en quelque sorte à ce qui le dépasse et qui serait capable de mettre dans les humbles essais, même en des noirs, la lumière de la spiritualité. J'entends une irradiation qui s'empare de notre esprit, -- et qui échappe à toute analyse.^236
Of course the most famous example of a "true parasite of the object" would be found in the example of the arch-Impressionist Claude Monet, at least in the way that he is portrayed in Paul Cézanne's well-known statement that "Monet was only an eye, but what an eye!". Of course the implication of this positioning of the artist, as suggested by Redon's statement, is one which would leave the spectator with the prospect of viewing the work of art with an eye untroubled by issues of politics, epistemology, or sexuality, and this must surely be part of the wide appeal of Impressionism for contemporary audiences, who are also offered the chance to consume the beauty of the landscape, which is in increasingly short supply. Cézanne's description of the artist as "only an eye" might ironically be a more apt description of several of the works by Redon, such as his L'Oeil, comme un ballon bizarre se dirige vers l'Infini (Plate CXXXII) or his Cyclops (Plate CVIII), where the viewer is presented with "only an eye," but also with a "vision" that is troubled by questions of fate and sexuality. Thus, in critical approaches to issues of the gaze or issues of gender in Impressionism, one is never quite sure to what extent the artist is fully aware of these elements that might complicate the act of seeing or recording "impressions" of the modern world, while there are indications everywhere that Symbolism is very self-conscious in its preoccupation with various types of vision and the complex meanings, "symbolisms," and "enigmas" associated with them. Ultimately, such characterizations of these two movements have led to a dichotomous view of
"nature" vs. "mind," with Impressionism's interest in capturing "nature" on the canvas being contrasted with Symbolism's fascination for themes such as the severed head, which deal with the triumph of the spirit over the flesh. At least one recent study of Impressionism has explored this problematic relationship of the two movements, and has suggested that another way of stating these differences would be to speak of the contrast between a feminization and a masculinization of vision.

In her recent study of Impressionism, Impressionism; A Feminist Reading: The Gendering of Art, Science, and Nature in the Nineteenth Century, Norma Broude discusses this aspect of the two movements in exactly these terms. She begins by showing the ways in which

The art of the Impressionist landscape painters was regarded as a feminized art, because it was thought that the Impressionists were merely receptive to nature, that they attended passively to their immediate physical and emotional experiences before "her."237

Of course, a famous example of this equation has already been encountered in Louis Ernest Barrias's allegorical linking of the female nude with "nature" in his statue La Nature se dévoilant devant la science (CXXX). Broude further buttresses this idea by quoting at length from a number of different critics of the time. For example, Roger Fry and Desmond MacCarthy provided the following analysis of this situation:
The impressionists were artists and their imaginations of appearances were modified, consciously or unconsciously, in the direction of unity and harmony; being artists they were forced to select and arrange. but the receptive, passive attitude towards the appearances of things often hindered them from rendering their real significance.238

Such a linking of Impressionism with "the receptive" and the "passive attitude towards the appearance of things," reveals, according to Broude a bias which was also frequently applied to female personality traits. She also quotes Camille Mauclair, and his description of Impressionism in 1896 as "feminine art" which he supported with the following argument:

Having accomplished by the sheer force of its instinctive genius, the undeniable progress of killing the old belief in academic beauty and replacing it with the individual temperament (caractère), Impressionism has killed itself by failing to take into account that temperament must be susceptible to generalization, and through realism they have accomplished only the brilliant reporting of anecdote, only illustration.239

Broude argues that the real issue in this criticism thus became whether one were to take a passive or active role vis-a-vis nature, and that in an emphasis upon the element of intellectual control or processing of nature -- what Redon might have been referring to in his diary as "en mettant, autant que possible, la logique du visible au service de l'invisible."240 -- the succeeding generation of artists created a masculinization of Impressionism into Symbolism, which ultimately came down to this:
The underlying issue is that of control, or to put it in terms of yet another of the gendered dualisms of patriarchal discourse, domination/submission — male art controlling female nature. When seen in these terms, Symbolism is not a continuation of Impressionist subjectivity, but rather a masculinization of it.\(^{241}\)

Broude also quotes from Claude Roger-Marx, writing in 1907, who interestingly was a personal friend of Redon and a collector of his art, and even the author of an early monograph on Redon's drawings:

> The term impressionism announces a manner of perception in noting what is beautiful which corresponds so well to the hyperaesthesia and sensitivity of women.\(^{242}\)

Broude even invokes the partnership between Symbolism and science to describe the subjugation of nature and the feminine which is the ultimate goal of Symbolist art, returning to an example which is fairly close to Barrias's statue discussed above, by referring to Bacon, "who envisioned a scientific enterprise as a chaste and lawful marriage between Mind and nature." Even the ideas of Redon's close friend and artistic colleague Paul Gauguin are invoked to illustrate the desired suppression of nature:

> [the Symbolist painters believed that] the impression of nature must be wedded to the esthetic sentiment which chooses, arranges, simplifies, synthesizes. The painter ought not to rest until he has given birth to the child of his imagination...begotten by the union of his mind with reality.\(^{243}\)

Moreover, Camille Paglia would seem to support Broude's viewpoint in her discussion of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and the following
lines from *The Decay of Lying*, where she notes Wilde's query:

> For what is Nature? Nature is no great mother who has borne us. She is our creation. It is in our brain that she quickens to life.\textsuperscript{244}

And she argues that "Wilde's nature is like Aeschylus' Athena, born of a male god. Taking Baudelaire's tone, Wilde declares, 'Art is our spirited protest, our gallant attempt to teach Nature her proper place.'\textsuperscript{245}

The approaches of Broude and Paglia are interesting in the context of the present discussion of spectatorship, if for no other reason than the fact that they introduce in a new light questions about the possible sexual gender (or orientation) of the gaze in Redon's works. Although these views are prone towards an overgeneralization of the problem, they do suggest that in his fascination for the theme of the severed head, and its generally accepted meaning as a symbol of the triumph of the spirit over the flesh, Redon may have found a very subtle means for deflecting the "discursive unease" associated with Salome/Herodias who were ultimately responsible for the fate of John the Baptist. Whereas most artists of the time tended to focus upon the figure of Salome and her troubling sexuality, in Redon's art, she remains more of a shadowy figure, with the focus falling instead upon the male's severed head. As Ewa Kuryluk has accurately noted:

> The renaissance of Salome was especially significant. Helen Grace Zagona has dedicated an entire book to the legend of Salome as the great theme of art for art's sake -- and more than a theme.
The Jewish princess was the symbol of *l'art pour l'art*, an icon set against the utility and positivism of modern times.\textsuperscript{246}

so that even in the direct focus on Salome, there is found a strong movement away from the naturalism of Impressionism. In both tendencies, it is possible to speak about a "masculinization" of art, but they both remain problematic for different reasons. The direct focus upon the figure of Salome has revealed a powerful female discourse beneath the otherwise (and in despite of the) negative view generally offered, especially as exemplified in the writing of Nina Auerbach.\textsuperscript{247} On the other hand, it would seem that Redon's approach, because of its focus upon the haunting specter of the severed head, would tend to present a locus for questions about identity (even sexual identity) and fate, which force the spectator to consider questions about relationships between the self and the world, even though it would appear that these considerations are primarily offered to a "maleness of the gaze."

Such considerations of the relationship between the self and the world return us once again to the issue of the metaphor of the transparent "plane/blade" which cuts across the surface of these works. While one of the primary functions of this picture plane is its action as a sort of guillotine blade which serves to cut off not only the head of the martyred saint represented in the work, but also the head of the spectator, and thus, to serve as a means of separating the "self" and "nature," the other function of this plane is its action as a mirror. This latter function of the picture surface recalls the narcissistic
function of art, which could be compared to Baudry's analysis of the screen in the cinema, for part of the realistic effect achieved in both the realm of painting and in the cinema is owed to the spectator's ability to identify with the image that is presented. In actuality it is this "mirror" function of the picture surface which causes the viewer to wish to read "autobiographical meaning" into the work of art, because it permits the seeing of one's self in it, for even in the most basic perceptualist account of painting, as Norman Bryson has indicated, the viewer takes the place of the artist, and sees what the artist sees. That Redon presents the viewer with a severed head, and suggests that an ideal way of beholding the image might be to see with the vision of such a head calls attention to another example which might serve to further illuminate the concern with issues of epistemology and sexuality in these works. This example comes from Lacan's famous essay on the "Mirror Stage," which Baudry links to "specular identification" of cinema, in his reference to the "fragmented body" which is an important component of that stage:

The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation -- and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic -- and, lastly, to the assumption of the armor of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development. Thus, to break out of the circle of the Innenwelt into the Umwelt generates the inexhaustible quadrature of the ego's verification.
This image of the "fragmented body" is explained by Lacan in relation to dream images, and he even draws upon the artistic example of "the visionary Hieronymus Bosch." It is my contention that Redon's representation of the severed head is involved with an equally complex consideration of issues of self identity and that in his handling of an "inner vision" and a "logic of the visible" he fluctuates between a similarly complex "Innenwelt" and "Umwelt." In fact, even his linking of such seemingly private, mystical imagery with the "political unconscious" recalls Lacan's mirror stage in its "deflection of the specular I into the social I." 

In his early representations of the theme of John the Baptist and Salome, Redon's accounting of the sexual tensions inherent in the subject, were usually veiled, and it is only rarely that actual confrontations along these lines can be found. But as has been demonstrated in the analysis of the relationship between the "male head" and its counterpart in the fin-de-siècle of the "female body," there are many more tensions under the surface of these works than would at first seem to be the case. The "discursive unease" which has been discovered in Redon's treatment of this theme, and which pervades to a large extent the artist's "noirs" can be attributed in large part to the complexities of this undercurrent of sexuality in Redon's works, and to the uneasy gaze of the spectator who is asked to behold these works from a most delicate position. On the surface of Redon's work, there often appears the soothing appeal of androgyny, which suggests that he never completely suppresses the feminine
in favor of the masculine or vice versa, and certainly this effect must be one of the components which has been most attractive to the contemporary eye. However, it is clear that in the works created before 1890, and even in the works created during those years of transition in the last decade of the century, for all their power of expression the opposing forces of masculine and feminine or of nature and mind are never completely harmonized, and they often remain in conflict. A more comfortable fusion of these elements comes only later, in the translation of the severed head of John the Baptist into a representation of the figure of Orpheus on his lyre.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II

In one sense, this inquiry, which draws upon psychoanalysis and other methodologies, might be referred to as a "catalogue déraisonné" as opposed to the type of work towards a "catalogue raisonné" suggested in Chapter I -- which still does not exist for Redon at the time of this writing. Thus, my approach is open to much of the criticism directed at non-traditional art historical methodologies as suggested in a recent article by Jack Spector, "The State of Psychoanalytic Research in Art History" from which the terminology above is derived. Spector, in The Art Bulletin, 70, no. 1 (March 1988), p. 63. On the other hand, I have turned to these other methodologies as a way to get beyond some of the limitations imposed upon our discipline which have resulted in a number of negative results. One of the more articulate critiques of these limitations in traditional art history can be found in the writings of Norman Bryson, in Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. xi, where he has recently described this perplexing situation:

It is a sad fact: art history lags behind the study of the other arts. Whether this unfortunate state of affairs is to be attributed to the lethargy of the custodians of art, too caught up in administration and the preparation of exhibitions and catalogues to channel their remaining energies into analytical writing, and too preoccupied with the archive to think long and hard about what painting actually is, or to the peculiar history of the institutions devoted in this century to the study of art, a history which from the beginning has tended to isolate that study from the other humanities, or to some less elaborate reason, such as the plain stasis, conservatism and inertia fostered by the sociology of the profession of art history, I cannot say.

But although he does not attempt to provide a more specific reason for this "sad fact," a close look at our profession forces us to agree with his ultimate assertion that:

What is certain is that while the last three or so decades have witnessed extraordinary and fertile change in the study of literature, of history, of anthropology, in the discipline of art history there has reigned a stagnant peace; a peace in which -- certainly -- a profession of art history has continued to exist, in which monographs have been written, and more and more catalogues produced: but produced at an increasingly remote margin of the humanities, and almost in the leisure sector of intellectual life.

Thus, what I hope to offer in this chapter, while it may contain none of the elegance and polish of some of the leading innovative thinkers in our field to break beyond these boundaries, is at least an attempt, however crude and
humble it may be, to break from the traditional limitations imposed upon the
way of looking at Redon and his art, and to pose questions and suggest
contexts for interpretation which have not previously been put forward.

²The problems of this approach for art history has been discussed at length in
Spector. See also the very insightful article by Ellen Handler Spitz, "A Critique

³The strong tendency for art historical studies to ignore specific psychoanalytic
concepts, despite the implications contained in many such studies, Jack
Spector. See especially pages 63 and the following pages.

⁴Redon, in a letter to André Mellerio of 16 August 1898. Reproduced in Marius
Ary-Leblond, ed., Lettres d'Odilon Redon, 1878-1916 (Paris and Brussels:
34.

⁵For a thorough history of the origins of psychology, see Henri F. Ellenberger,
The Discovery of the Unconscious; The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry
study of the relationship between Symbolism, Psychology, and the Occult, is
the dissertation by Filiz Eda Burhan, "Vision and Visionaries: Nineteenth-
Century Psychological Theory. The Occult Sciences and the Formation of the

⁶Paul Bourget, Essais de psychologie contemporaine, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Plon,
Plon-Nourrit et Cie, imprimeurs-éditeurs, 1899; originally published, Paris:
Lemerre, 1883). This work is discussed in the context of Redon's development
in Dario Gamboni, La Plume et le pinceau; Odilon Redon et la littérature (Paris:
discussion of Baudelaire, Flaubert, etc., Bourget attributes the "mal du siècle,"
which lingers on from Romanticism to the end of the nineteenth-century and
results in a general pessimism in the works of art of the time, to "l'atmosphère
morale issue de la défaite de 1870."

⁷Édouard Schuré, The Great Initiates; A Study of the Secret History of Religions,
originally published in 1889, as Les Grands Initiés.). This is mentioned in the
introduction by Paul M. Allen.

⁸Michel Hoog, in National Gallery of Canada, Fantin-Latour (exh. cat., 1983,
Ottawa), p. 28.
Especially interesting in this context are the writings of Christian Metz. In particular, the reader is referred to his "The Fiction Film and Its Spectator: A Metapsychological Study," in *Apparatus; Cinematographic Apparatus: Selected Writings*, ed. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (New York: Tanam Press, 1980), pp. 373-409. His essay is translated by Alfred Guzzetti.


One of her original insights is the assertion that: "Not all portrayals of these events contain allusions to their erotic associations but, when they do, they usually emphasize the heterosexual nature of the episode." By contrast, Schneider would seem to argue that the story of David and Goliath -- "a story in which one man decapitates another" -- would tend to emphasize the "homosexual nature" of the episode more. For example, she discusses the Neoplatonic context of David as a "symbolic liberator of Florence and defender of democracy," but also finds that Donatello "had represented David as a 'beautiful boy' protected by Plato's 'celestial Eros' and therefore a defender not only of democracy, but also of Plato's ideal love between men." Note also that she provides an interesting analysis of the iconography of wings (the winged head, the winged helmet) and its relationship to the idea of erection or sexual arousal. She supports this with examples ranging from Plato to Freud.


first published in 1940.

17Schneider, pp. 84-85.

18Schneider, p. 88.

19Schneider, p. 89.

20Friedlaender, p. 203; and Schneider, pp. 89-90.

21Kleinschmidt, pp. 92-97.


23Kleinschmidt, p. 94.


26Garrard, p. 278.

27Garrard, p. 278.

28Garrard, p. 278. "Giorgione, Titian, Michelangelo, and Caravaggio are known to have united their own literal self-images with the characters of their art: Giorgione painted himself as David, Titian as St. Jerome; and Michelangelo included himself as vanquished victim of his sculptural Victory, as the flayed skin of Bartholomew in the Last Judgment, and as Nicodemus in the Florentine Pietà. The youthful Caravaggio may have portrayed himself as Bacchus and Medusa; and in the Borghese David, one of his final pictures, he unquestionably conceived the suspended head of the stunned Goliath in the image of his own mature physiognomy." The difference, of course, is that those artists found their "mythic characters" to be "spiritual role models for modern men." Thus, she argues "It is not surprising, then, that Artemisia Gentileschi, who had already demonstrated her sense of artistic connection with Michelangelo and Caravaggio, would now approach the Judith theme in a similar participatory spirit, recognizing the value of her iconographic character as a spiritual model."
29Garrard, p. 279. It is also interesting to note that Redon seems to identify with his characters in just the opposite way, looking instead for an "exempla" for a "meditative retreat from it" rather than one for "an imagined action upon the world."

30Kleinschmidt, p. 95.


33Kuryluk, p. 191.

34This is illustrated in Petit Palais, Gustave Moreau et le Symbolisme (exh. cat., Geneva, 1977), no. 5. The date given there is 1897. The same work appears in Luthi's catalogue raisonné of 1982, but the date is given there as 1910, without any indication as to the change of date. See Jean-Jacques Luthi, Emile Bernard; Catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint (Paris: Éditions Side, 1982), pp. 121-122, cat. no. 793. Because it is very possible that the figure of Salome in the work is a portrait of Bernard's first wife, Hanenah, as she appears in a portrait of 1895 (Luthi, cat. no. 484, pp. 74-75), I tend to agree with the earlier date. This also seems to be supported by the fact that Hanenah left Bernard in 1903.


Kosinski, pp. 151-152. Kosinski states that "He himself described this work as a fitting memorial to those people dear to him who had been cruelly snatched away." These sentiments are recorded in a letter to Henri Rupp which is reproduced both in Kosinski, pp. 152 and 333 note 3, and in Jean Paladilhe and José Pierre, Gustave Moreau, trans. Bettina Wadia (New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. 50.

Kosinski, p. 152.

Kosinski, p. 152.

Kosinski, p. 152.

For example, writing about Gustave Moreau's Jeune fille thrace, Ernest Chesneau wrote that it was also close to "the Salome of the Scriptures, who contemplated, but with what strange looks, the decapitated head of John the Baptist." Ernest Chesneau, as quoted by Robert Delevoy, Symbolists and Symbolism, trans. Barbara Bray, Elizabeth Wrightson, and Bernard C. Swift (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1978), p. 23. For other conflations of Christian and pagan myths see Édouard Schuré, Les grands initiés.


Reff, p. 87.


As discussed in Reff, p. 88.

Schapiro also notes that in the accompanying poem, "'crâne' is rhymed with 'Cézanne,'" and that "many years afterwards the painter, transposing his boyhood concern, represented a young man, perhaps his own son, sitting at table before a skull.

Reff refers to the 1919 addendum.

Speaking first of Roger Fry's (unexpected) psychoanalytic tendencies in approaching Paul Cézanne, Spector then praises Reff: "No scholar has more powerfully expanded on the pioneering observations of Fry than Theodore Reff; and in a series of important articles on Cézanne he has treated most of the topics presented by the earlier critic: the 'enigma of the nude' (1959), ‘Cézanne, Flaubert, St. Anthony, and the Queen of Sheba’ (1962), and ‘Cézanne -- The Severed Head and the Skull’ (1983). In his article on the 'Bather with the Outstretched Arms' (1962), he broke new ground speculating about the expression of onanistic fantasy in Cézanne's art." For a full reference to these articles, see the bibliography given below.

Laurie Schneider, "Art and Psychoanalysis: The Case of Paul Cézanne," The Arts in Psychotherapy, 13, no. 3 (Fall 1986), pp. 121-228.


Kuryluk, p. 192.


Purcell, p. 542.

Purcell, p. 542.


This general sort of linking of Christian figures with mythological ones is found throughout the writings of Édouard Schuré. See, for example, The Great Initiates; A Study of the Secret History of Religions, trans. Gloria Rasberry, intr. Paul M. Allen (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1961; originally published as Les Grands Initiés, Paris, 1889). Below, in Chapter Three, I have discussed specific examples of a critical linkage of the two themes. See for


65Purcell, p. 544; Flaubert, *Oeuvres Complètes*, 6: p. 142.


67This is discussed and quoted by Purcell, p. 545; Flaubert, *Oeuvres Complètes*, 7: pp. 308-309.


70Robert Mesuret, "La Maison natale d'Odilon Redon", *La Renaissance*, no. 1 (March 1939), p. 26. This is taken from information at the Archdiosès de Bordeaux, Paroisse Saint-Seurin, année 1840, no. 138. Furthermore, Mesuret notes that many of Redon's biographers follow the artist's own incorrect indication of the date of his birth as April 20, when in fact the birth certificate clearly states:

Le 22 avril 1840, à dix heures du matin, est né chez ses père et mère, rue Neuve-Saint-Seurin, no.24, Bertrand, du sexe masculin, fils de Bertrand Redon, propriétaire et de Marie Guérin, son
As an indication of the need for further study of this artist, even as concerns some of the basic primary sources, we should note that there is also some discrepancy about the actual date of birth of the couple's first son (at Peyrelebade). The date is usually given as May 6, 1886, but Roseline Bacou, in *Odilon Redon: Pastels*, trans. Beatrice Rehl (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1987), p. 184, says it was May 11.

Jean Redon died November 27, 1886.

"If I question those memories, as far as it is possible to bring back to life distant states of an awarness now dead, and by the altering of its survival, I see myself in those days as sad and weak. I see myself as a watcher taking pleasure in silence... Moreover I was unhealthy and weak, always attended to; it had been recommended that I avoid cerebral fatigue... I had a sickly childhood, and that is the reason why I was put into school late, at the age of eleven I think."

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"The great emotion is at the time of my first holy communion under the arches of Saint-Seurin's church; the songs exalt me; they are really my first revelation of art, other than the good music I had already often heard at home."; p. 12.


79 Stanislas Gorin, letter to Redon of 12 April 1861 published in *Lettres de Gauguin, Gide, Huysmans, Jammes, Mallarmé, Verhaeren ... à Odilon Redon*, pp. 51-52.

80 Redon, *A.S.M.*, p. 21. "Here, at the so-called, School of Fine Arts, at the atelier of X... I tried my best to render shapes; those endeavors were vain, useless, without ulterior reach for me. I can confess to you now, in confidence, after having reflected during my entire life upon my faculties and my gifts, that I was motivated, when I went to the Academy, by the sincere desire to place myself among the other painters, pupils as they had been hoping for approval and justice from others. I did not take into account the formula of Art which was supposed to lead me, and I also forgot my own temperament. I was tortured by the teacher. Whether he recognized the sincerity of my serious disposition to study, or he saw a timid subject of good will, he visibly tried to impose his own manner of seeing and make me a disciple, or to make me disgusted with art itself. He overworked me, was severe; his corrections were vehement to the point that his very approach to my easel upset my comrades. All was in vain."; pp. 17-18.

81 Redon, *A.S.M.*, p. 22. "... submission that would lead the pupil to become a saint, which was impossible."; p. 18.

82 Redon, *A.S.M.*, pp. 22-23. "Few artists have had to suffer what I really suffered afterward, softly, patiently without rebellion, to take my place along with the others, in the common line. The consignments to the Salon which followed this teaching, or rather this aberration of an atelier, have had, you can well imagine, the same fate as my student works. I persevered in that blind alley much too long; the awareness of a specific direction had not yet come to my mind. In this distance in which I was left apart from the world I became different from the others and independent. I am, today, quite happy about it. There is a whole production, a sap of art which circulates now out of the branches of the official structures. I was brought to an isolation where I am in the absolute impossibility of making art differently from the way I always made it. I understand nothing of what are called 'concessions'; you don't make the art you want. The artist is from day to day the receptacle for his surroundings; he receives from outside sensations and he inevitably transforms them, inexorably and tenaciously, according to himself alone." pp. 18-19.

83 Discussed in Sandstrom, p. xi.
244

84Odilon Redon, "Confidences d'artiste," in Robert Coustet, ed., Odilon Redon, 
Critiques d'art; Salon de 1868, Rodolphe Bresdin, Paul Gauguin (William Blake & 

85Roseline Bacou, Odilon Redon; La Vie et l'oeuvre, point de vue de la critique au 


87Letter from Redon to Maurice Fabre of 25 August 1891. Published in Maurius 

88Bacou, vol. 1, p. 9.

89Bacou, vol. 1, p. 19.

90Bacou, vol. 1, p. 57.


92Bacou, vol. 1, p. 57.

93Bacou, vol. 1, p. 58.

94Bacou, vol. 1, p. 50.

95Bacou, vol. 1, p. 118. Ironically, this conclusion seems to be in contradiction 
with her earlier emphasis upon Peyrelebade as "le véritable lieu de la création." 
Moreover, this view would contradict evidence offered by Redon himself 
which indicates that many of his old anxieties associated with Peyrelebade and 
the creation of his charcoal drawings or "noirs" returned upon his visit to the 
monastery at Fontfroide.

96Sven Sandstrom, Le Monde imaginaire d'Odilon Redon; étude iconologique, trans. 
Denise Naert (Lund and New York: CWK Gleerup and George Wittenborn, 

97Sandstrom, p. 29.

98Sandstrom, pp. 32 and 196 note 61. The full reference for Born is: Wolfgang 
Born, "Der Traum in der Graphik des Odilon Redon," Graphische Künste (1929), 
pp. 83-90. A bit later, pp. 75 and 200 note 22, Sandstrom once again refers to 
Born's article: "Cette étude a le mérite d'être la première à voir indiqué les 
problèmes psychanalytiques qui se cachent derrière les conceptions de motifs 
de Redon. Mais tout appui biographique fait défaut, de même qu'un examen 
des matériaux exécuté au point de vue de l'histoire de l'art, ce qui fait que
l'interprétation est trop souvent uniquement influencée par les exemples typiquement psychanalytiques qui ont servi de point de départ à l'auteur."

Sandstrom, p. 67. And a bit later, p. 151, Sandstrom discusses the waning of this tendency in Redon: "Dans ses premières oeuvres, nous avons pu discerner une forte inhibition sexuelle perceptible par des allusions cachées, pas toujours pleinement conscientes. Il semble cependant que cette inhibition soit en train de disparaître après 1890, ce qui peut contribuer à expliquer le sensualisme libéré et sain de ses dernières oeuvres."

Sandstrom, pp. 75, 108-109 and 200 note 24, also mentions the "psychoanalytic" element in the criticism of Huysmans: "Huysmans cherche de nouvelles formes de vie humaine dans les anomalies de la vie psychique, mais il les conçoit comme des réalités à la façon d'un psychiatre. — Redon de son côté partait dans son art de certains faits scientifiques, mais il les voyait comme un masque de la réalité intérieure."

Sandstrom, p. 148.

Sandstrom, p. 149.

Sandstrom, p. 149.

Frederick Baekeland, "Depressive Themes in the Graphic Work of Odilon Redon," The Psychoanalytic Study of Society, 5 (1972), pp. 185-211.

Baekeland, pp. 186-187. It should be noted here that in their recent writings Dario Gamboni and Tedd Gott have tended to disagree with this view, suggesting instead that Redon's decision to focus on graphic work was more part of a conscious decision to engage with members of the literary avant-garde, and especially for Gott, this engagement was part of Redon's very subtle calculations to find financial success by means of dedicating special editions of his lithographic series to powerful critics. See Gott, "Silent Messengers -- Odilon Redon's Dedicated Lithographs and the Politics of Gift-Giving," Print Collector's Newsletter, 19, no. 3 (July-August 1988), pp. 92-101. It should also be noted, however, that Gamboni, p. 40, does discuss the research of Janine Cophignon who also provided psychoanalytic evidence to support the idea that the negative associations of black were related to Redon's internal conflicts and that there was a sort of "inhibition à couleur" in Redon's work because of these. In addition to the psychological arguments forwarded by Baekeland and others, it should be noted within the context of the present study that Redon's attraction to black was related to his "avoidance of sensuality" as can be seen from his own statements on the subject: "Il faut respecter le noir. Rien ne le prostitue. Il ne plaît aux yeux et n'éveille aucune sensualité. Il est agent de l'esprit bien plus que la belle couleur de la


Baekeland, p. 192-193.

Baekeland, p. 195. He quotes from the studies of W. H. Winch "indicating that black is the least popular color among children and adults", from ones by E. Bullough and M. Monroe which suggest that black "is felt to be the 'heaviest' color" and from the research by T. F. Karwowski and H. S. Odbert which indicate that black is "consistently associated with sadness". And in reference to a study by E. G. Schachtel, he reports that "when patients are asked to interpret Rorschach cards, some of which are in black and white and others in color, 'the prototype of those on whom color makes little impression and does not register as a significant experience is to be found among the depressed'. I have provided complete references for each of these studies in the bibliography.

Baekeland, p. 196. He quotes from studies by Van de Castle and Holloway which "reported that depressed patients had less color in their dreams, more adjectives describing wrongness and unattractiveness, more dead persons, less personal good fortune and fewer indoor settings" and from those of Beck and Hurvich and Beck and Ward which "have stressed situations in which the dreamer is the recipient of painful experiences." I have included complete references to these studies in the bibliography.


Baekeland, p. 200. It is also interesting to note Sven Sandstrom's discussion, p. xi, of Odilon's brother Ernest: "Il assura, au contraire, la tâche de plus en plus ingrate de faire valoir Peyrelebade. Il paraît, malgré la richesse de ses dons naturels, avoir eu un caractère passif; de plus il souffrait d'un fort complexe maternel. Un trait commun à tous les enfants semble avoir été leur passivité et leur repliement sur eux-mêmes."

Odilon Redon in a letter of 1898 to André Mellerio, translated by Baekeland. The original French version is published in Ary-Leblond, ed., p. 37.

Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist; A Historical Experiment.

Gamboni, p. 19.

Redon, A.S.M., p. 11. "Travel by sea was at that time a long and dangerous adventure. It seems that, on this return, bad weather or winds made the boat which carried my parents run the risk of being lost at sea, and I would have loved, thanks to this delay, to have had the chance or to destiny, to have been born in the middle of those waves which, since then, I have often contemplated with pain and sadness from the high cliffs of Brittany, a place without a homeland over an abyss.;" p. 8.

Francis Jammes, letter to Redon dating from February 1902. Published in Lettres de Gauguin, Gide, Huysmans, Jammes, Mallarmé, Verhaeren ... à Odilon Redon, pp. 269-270.

Gamboni, p. 22.

Gamboni, p. 23.
Gamboni, pp. 25 and 25 note 1. Gamboni points out that Suzy Lévy’s recent "partial edition" of Redon's letters and those of his wife, Camille Redon, are problematic to the point of being unusable. Thus, Gamboni refers us to the original source of the letters themselves which are conserved in the Rijksprentenkabinet in Amsterdam.


"My father used to say to me: 'Look at those clouds, can you see as I can, the changing shapes in them?' And then he would show me strange beings, fantastic and marvelous visions, in the changing sky."; p. 7.

"... he appeared to me an imperious being, independent, even hard, before whom I always trembled. although today, at a long and confused distance, and with all that remains of him in my eyes, I see in the depths of his own, which easily moistened with tears, a merciful and sweet sensitivity that his outer harshness could scarcely conceal."; p. 8.

Gamboni, p. 27. The letter, of 13 April 1868, is published in Lettres de Gauguin, Gide, Huysmans, Jammes, Mallarmé, Verhaeren ... à Odilon Redon, p. 43.

Sigmund Freud, as quoted by Peter Gay, in Freud: A Life For Our Time (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 89. The quote is taken from the second edition of Freud's Interpretation of Dreams, which was published in 1908. Speaking about Freud's introduction, Gay writes: "he commented that for him the book had a powerful 'subjective' meaning which he had 'been able to understand only after its completion.' He had come to see it as 'a piece of my self-analysis, my reaction to my father's death, that is, the most significant event, the most decisive loss, of a man's life.'"


Mary Ellen Wolf, Eros under Glass: Psychoanalysis and Mallarmé's "Hérodiade" (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 1987), p. xi.

Wolf, p. 97, note 4.

Wolf, pp. x-xi.

This type of approach could have many implications for the study of Redon's work. For example, Flaubert did three different versions of his *Tentation de Saint-Antoine* and Redon did three lithographic series on the theme.

Bacou, vol. 1, p. 117.

Bacou, vol. 1, p. 137.

Bacou, vol. 1, p. 132.

Odilon Redon in a letter of April 24, 1897 to André Bonger, as quoted in Bacou, vol. 1, p. 136. This letter had not previously been published.

Bacou, vol. 1, p. 138. She also discusses other aspects of this. She notes, p. 141, that he refers to the family economic matters to be taken care of as: "ce poids inchassable de mes horribles affaires de Bordeaux, interminables." Bacou also speaks of the significance of the letters written to Bonger for Redon:

"La complexité des sentiments qui s'expriment dans les lettres écrites en 1897 nous permet de souligner la dualité essentielle de la nature de Redon: il y a en lui un homme calme et raisonnable, d'une culture et d'une urbanité exquises, un artiste épris de beauté et de bonheur, d'ordre et de mesure. Son double est le visionnaire des «Noirs», solitaire hanté par la souffrance du monde, s'engageant en toute conscience dans une aventure spirituelle d'une extraordinaire et dangereuse ampleur."

Sandstrom also discusses these problems. For example, about Redon's brother Ernest, he writes, p. xi: "Il assura, au contraire, la tâche de plus en plus ingrate de faire valoir Peyrelebade. Il paraît, malgré la richesse de ses dons naturels, avoir eu un caractère passif; de plus il souffrait d'un fort complexe maternel. Un trait commun à tous les enfants semble avoir été leur passivité et leur repliement sur eux-mêmes."

Bacou, vol. 1, p. 155.

Bacou, vol. 1, p. 155.

Bacou, vol. 1, p. 156.

14Odilon Redon in a letter of 29 May 1897 to André Bonger, published in Bacou, vol. 1, p. 137.

14Bacou, vol. 1, p. 132.

14Odilon Redon in a letter of October 1892 to Émile Schuffenecker. This fragment is reproduced in Bacou, vol. 1, p. 131, and she indicates that it was shown to her by Mlle. Schuffenecker.

14Odilon Redon in a letter of July 1902 to Maurice Fabre, as quoted in Bacou, vol. 1, p. 145. For the complete letter, see Ary-Leblond, ed., p. 50.

14Spector, p. 53.

14Odilon Redon, in a letter to Mme. Holstein, published in Mathieu, p. 241. "...lorsque je vis, pour la première fois, l'Oedipe et le Sphinx, alors que j'étais jeune; on était en plein naturalisme alors, et combien l'oeuvre me berça! j'ai gardé le souvenir longtemps de cette impression première, elle a eu peut-être sur moi le pouvoir de me donner la force de poursuivre une voie seule, qui côtoyait la sienne peut-être, à cause de toute la part suggestive, chère aux littératures."

14Sandstrom, p. 47.

14Odilon Redon in a letter of 29 January 1900 to Madame de Holstein, as quoted in Bacou, vol. 1, p. 257; For the complete letter, see Ary-Leblond, p. 38.

14Odilon Redon in a letter of 5 March 1882 to Émile Hennequin. This is reproduced in Bacou, vol. 1, p. 76. She gives the original place of publication as Auriant, "Des lettres inédites d'Odilon Redon," Beaux-Arts (June 7 and 14, 1935).

14"The word 'sphinx' suggests 'riddle,' an enigmatic creature who propounds riddles, like the Sphinx of Oedipus, and stands on the threshold of one's fate as though symbolically announcing the inevitable. The Sphinx is a semi-theriomorphic representation of the mother-imago, or rather of the Terrible Mother, who has left numerous traces in mythology." C. W. Jung, Symbols of Transformation; An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Pantheon Books, 1956), p. 179.

14Madame Berthe de Rayssac, as quoted by Gamboni, p. 28. This January 1880 entry in her diary was originally published in Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier, "Odilon Redon et Janmot: «Dans le Rêve» et «Le Poème de l'Ame»," La Gazette des Beaux-Arts, no. 1331 (1979), p. 228.


Dijkstra, p. 331.


Dijkstra, pp. 331-332.

This is discussed by Dijkstra, p. 331.


As quoted by Bacou, in *Odilon Redon, Pastels*, p. 44.


As quoted in *Galerie des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux, Odilon Redon, 1840-1916*, p. 191.

Hobbs, p. 87.


Freud, *Standard Edition*, 17: p. 231. This analysis is provided within the context of a discussion of E.T.A. Hoffman's "Sand-Man": "A study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that anxiety about one's eyes, the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated. The self-blinding of the mythical criminal, Oedipus, was simply a mitigated form of the punishment of castration — the only punishment that was adequate for him by the lex talionis. We may try on rationalistic grounds to deny that fears about the eye are derived from the fear of castration, and may argue that it is very natural that so precious an organ as the eye should be guarded by a proportionate dread. Indeed, we might go further and say that the fear of castration itself contains no other significance and no deeper secret than a justifiable dread of this rational kind. But this view does not account adequately for the substitutive relation between the eye and the male organ which is seen to exist in dreams and myths and phantasies; nor can it dispel the impression that the threat of being castrated in especial excites a peculiarly violent and obscure emotion, and that this emotion is what first gives the idea of losing other organs its intense colouring. All further doubts are removed when we learn the details of their 'castration complex' from the analysis of neurotic patients, and realize its immense importance in their mental life."

Within the context of the story of John the Baptist, there is also a clear indication of the threat to vision and John's decapitation. This threat finds its most tangible manifestation in the imagery which shows Salome after the decapitation, cutting out John's eye.

Baekeland, p. 204.

Bacou, vol. 1, p. 150.

Redon, *A.S.M.*, pp. 18-19. It is interesting that Redon calls upon the example of Delacroix at age 60 in this statement, for at the time when he wrote these words, Redon was 64 years old.

Odilon Redon in a letter to André Bonger of 5 February 1904, Bacou, p. 151. The letter was published in Ary-Leblond, ed., p. 55.

Bacou, vol. 1, p. 151.

For a discussion of the changes in Renoir's art at the time, see, for example, The University of Michigan, *The Crisis of Impressionism, 1878-1882* (exh. cat., Ann Arbor, 1979), text by Joel Isaacson, p. 23; For a discussion of the Renoir's treatment of the nude, see, for example, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *Renoir*
A SM., pp. 94-95. "The painter is not intellectual when, having painted a nude woman, she leaves in our mind the idea that she will immediately get dressed again. The intellectual painter shows her to us in a nudity that reassures us, because it does not hide her; it leaves her as she is without shame, in an Eden, for glances that are not ours, but those of a thinking world; an imaginary world created by the painter, where moving and expanding beauty never give rise to indecency but, on the contrary confer on all nudity a pure charm which does not diminish us. The naked women of Puvis de Chavannes do not put their clothes back on, nor do many others from the past, in the charming women's quarters of a Giorgione or a Correggio.

There is one of them in the Luncheon on the Grass by Manet who will hurry to dress herself after the boredom of her discomfort on the cold grass, next to the unidealistic gentlemen who surround her and converse with her. What are they saying? Nothing beautiful I suspect.

As for painting only substances, even very well, with virtuosity, one will taste the pleasure of painting the dress as much as what it is hiding. To paint fabric, fabrics, how much more frank it is and purely decisive, than to represent the nude for the nude, in other words, something of the human being without any heroism.

When Michelangelo affirmed that it was foolish to prefer the shoes of a man to his foot it is because he saw human nature in his very heart, in the vital and active center which swells its lobes, and with which he played to excess to create his style, his great style, of which the ascent is the control of his thought over ours. Under the closed eyes of his slave what elevated intellectual activity! He sleeps, and the anxious dream which unfolds behind this marble brow puts ours in a feeling, thinking world. The sleep of a slave awakens our dignity.; pp. 78-79.

Pandora's threat to the male is made obvious in the following account of the myth: "Woman was not yet made. The story is that Jupiter made her, and sent her to Prometheus and his brother, to punish them for their presumption in stealing fire from heaven; and man for accepting the gift. The first woman was named Pandora. She was made in heaven, every god contributing something to perfect her. Venus gave her beauty, Mercury persuasion, Apollo music, etc. Thus equipped, she was conveyed to earth, and presented to Epimetheus, who gladly accepted her, though cautioned by his brother to beware of Jupiter and
his gifts. Epimetheus had in his house a jar, in which were kept certain noxious articles for which, in fitting man for his new abode, he had no occasion. Pandora was seized with an eager curiosity to know what this jar contained; and one day she slipped off the cover and looked in. Forthwith there escaped a multitude of plagues for hapless man, — such as gout, rheumatism, and colic for his body, and envy, spite, and revenge for his mind, — and scattered themselves far and wide. Pandora hastened to replace the lid! but, alas! the whole contents of the jar had escaped, one thing only excepted, which lay at the bottom, and that was hope. So we see at this day, whatever evils are abroad, hope never entirely leaves us; and while we have that, no amount of other ills can make us completely wretched."

"Another story is that Pandora was sent in good faith, by Jupiter, to bless man; that she was furnished with a box containing her marriage presents, into which every god had put some blessing. She opened the box incautiously, and the blessings all escaped, hope only excepted. This story seems more probable than the former; for how could hope, so precious a jewel as it is, have been kept in a jar full of all manner of evils, as in the former statement?"


181Doane, p. 1.
182Doane, p. 1.
183Doane, p. 2.
184Doane, p. 2.
187Bacou recognizes these qualities throughout her discussion of Redon's work, but she is particularly cogent in her chapter called "Vers de Sombres Clartés" and especially in its concluding section, pp. 55-61, where she begins by noting: "Redon a tenté une exploration dans les profondeurs de l'âme humaine." She concludes by stating that: "... le miracle pour Redon n'est pas tant d'avoir vécu une des plus hautes aventures spirituelles que d'avoir su l'exprimer par des moyens plastiques, et de nous l'avoir transmise."
189 Delevoy, p. 12.


192 Redon, *A.S.M.*, pp. 94-95.

193 Bacou, vol. 1, p. 162.

194 Lemmonier, as quoted by T. J. Clark, pp. 128-129.

195 Clark, p. 135.


197 Showalter, p. 145.

198 Showalter, p. 146.

199 The association of the work with Poe’s story has been made by Kunio Motoé, in *National Museum of Western Art*, Tokyo, p. 83. It is also discussed by Maciejunes in *The Dixon Gallery and Gardens*, p. 26.


201 For these brief quotes, and the ones that follow, see Poe, pp. 155-156.

202 Redon, *A.S.M.*, p. 132. "Once he told me with gentle authority: ‘Look at this chimney flue. What does it say to you? To me it tells a legend. If you have the strength to observe it well and to understand it, imagine the most strange, the most bizarre subject; if it is based and remains within the limits of this simple section of wall, your dream will be alive Art is there.’ Bresdin told me this in 1864. I note the date because it was not the manner of teaching at the time.”; p. 109.

203 The incestual relationship is made particularly clear in the discussion of the theme by Ewa Kuryluk. She notes the extent to which the Salome/John the Baptist theme focuses on sexual politics and factor’s such as the incestual relationship between Herod and Herodias as being at the root of the conflict
and she speaks of these characters' ultimate feelings of guilt as being related derived from this. See Kuryluk, pp. 189-258.

204 For example, in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, there are frequent references to the role played by the imagery of teeth, and for the most part they carry sexual connotations and usually ones related to castration anxiety. For example, he writes, p. 37, that such imagery is quiet common in dreams involving "... falling from a height,... of flying and of embarrassment at being naked...." concluding that on one level the general causes of these dreams may be related to "organic stimuli" as in the latter example which has to do with "the sleeper's perceiving that he has thrown off his bedclothes in his sleep and is lying exposed to the air." Specifically, he notes that "The dream of teeth falling out is traced back to a 'dental stimulus,' though this does not necessarily imply that the excitation of the teeth is a pathological one." He also notes, p. 86, that "a dream 'with a dental stimulus' usually ends by the dreamer picturing himself pulling a tooth out of his mouth," and, p. 225, that "In 'dreams with a dental stimulus,' an entrance-hall with a high, vaulted roof corresponds to the oral cavity and a staircase to the descent from the throat to the oesophagus." Ultimately he concludes that "To represent castration symbolically, the dream-work makes use of baldness, hair-cutting, falling out of teeth and decapitation." And he reiterates, pp. 420-428, in an analysis of several specific dreams, that dental imagery is related mainly to masturbation, but in a footnote he emphasizes that, when in dreams, a tooth is pulled out by someone else it is related to castration. Thus, he consistently calls upon his idea about the way in "which sexual repression makes use of transpositions from a lower to an upper part of the body." See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1955; originally published in 1900).


208 A bit later I will suggest that we might consider not only Jameson's idea of the "political unconscious" but also a somewhat similar concept of the meeting of the social, political, and individual as found in the ideas of Georges Bataille.

209 Freud, "Medusa's Head."
Ironically, in his own treatment of the female nude and of Salome, Redon tends towards a marmorialization of the gaze/nude. For a discussion of this concept of "marmorialization of the gaze," see Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," in Vision and Visuality, ed. Hal Foster, no. 2 of Dia Art Foundation: Discussions in Contemporary Culture (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), pp. 3-23. It is once again worth remembering in this context those painted representations of Salome before the head of John on a platter, as she prepares to cut out his eye.

Wittkower and Wittkower, p. 282.


Bacou, vol. 1, pp. 56 and 271.

Bacou, vol. 1, p. 69. And in the same context, she vehemently denies that these inscriptions are in any way illustrated in the image above.

Borowitz, p. 21. It might be noted that the spectator was being asked to do in a mental context a task which was already being demanded of the spectator in a physical way in approaching the paintings of the Impressionists and especially those of the Neo-Impressionists and Georges Seurat. In this latter example, we find that the painting was only completed in the eye of the spectator by means of an optical mixture of hues.

Peladan, as quoted by Milner, pp. 73-74. For the original text, see Peladan, Amphithéâtre des sciences mortes, II. Comment on devient fée (Érotique), avec une couverture symbolique d'Alexandre Séon et portrait gravé inédit du Sâr. It might also be asked to what extent a female artist's representation of such imagery would suggest a different reading. For example, Roseline Bacou notes that the overlooked, and still obscure, artist Jeanne Jacquemin made frequent references in her works to the "Dolentes têtes exsangues de reines décapitées...". See Bacou, vol 1, p. 236 note 4, and p. 237. In a different context, Philippe Jullian relates the work of Jacquemin to Peladan's text mentioned above; Philippe Jullian, Dreamers of Decadence; Symbolist Painters of the 1890s, p. 61.

See Arthur Coleman Danto, "Paul Klee," in Encounters and Reflections; Art in the Historical Present (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, c.1990), pp. 81-86. Danto reports, p. 85, that "Klee signaled the fact that a picture was beginning to be finished by saying 'Now it is looking at me.'" Also, he notes that in the famous Jena lecture of 1924, Klee said: "The objects in a picture look out at us."

This is discussed by Norman Bryson in *Vision and Painting*. See especially his chapter, pp. 87-131, "The Gaze and the Glance." This analogy between the body and a painting is also discussed, but in a different context in the study by Arnold Berleant, *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), pp. 60-61. Berleant refers us to the ideas of Merleau-Ponty:

In "Eye and Mind," Merleau-Ponty directs these ideas to the perceptual experience of painting. Things are an elongation of the body, "they are encrusted into its flesh." Thus a blending takes place between the seeing and the seen. I do not look at a painting as I look at a thing; "I do not fix it in its place...It is more accurate to say that I see according to it, or with it, than that I see it."


This is discussed by Robert Delevoy, pp. 153-154, in his section of *Symbolists and Symbolism* called "The charm of the frame." He discusses the development of the concept of the frame from the Albertian idea of the picture being "a window opening onto nature" ("una fenestra aperta per donde io miri quello che quivi sarà dipinto") to Manet who mentions how the dimensions of the frame determine "the relations between subject and surrounding atmosphere." He also quotes Mallarmé on the frame:

"... [art of] limiting the canvas in such a way as to produce the illusion of perspective has never been fully exploited. The whole charm of a frame consists in its being a limit, and not really a fanciful one, as if the scene can be taken in at a glance, or if not all the scene, at least that which makes it worth preserving. The picture is that, and the function of the frame is to isolate it, even though I know this runs counter to all our prejudices... A spectator who is used to isolating, in nature or in the midst of other people, the thing which pleases him... should find in a work of art all his customary pleasures and, though he knows he is standing in front of a picture, should have the illusion of looking at a mirage of some natural spectacle."

Ultimately, he argues that "The frame, become the instrument of the prevailing irrealism, acts as a prolongation of dream" and he notes that many artists of the generation "were concerned with the dialectic between frame and image."
It is in another small way that I hope to partially rise in this study to the challenge of Delevoy, who states in the end:

"The study of the different relationships between frame and field has not yet begun. When it does, it will no doubt reveal how and why the image, as text of a text, super-text or sub-ensemble ... was always set up with solemnity; and why, at a time when a new approach was tending to shatter Alberti's window, the image sought to increase the attractions of illusion behind the protection of a simulated frame. But the pretence reassures the spectator, because it belongs to his own space, and in their proper place signs always operate in favour of illusion."


226 In addition to Delevoy's discussion of the frame, noted above, I might refer also to the views of Berleant mentioned above and to those of the artist, Paul Klee. In his diary entry of 1908, Klee wrote:

> Pictures have their skeleton, muscles, and skin like human beings. One may speak of the specific anatomy of the picture. A picture representing "a naked person" must not be created by the laws of human anatomy, but only by those of compositional anatomy. First one builds an armature on which the picture is to be constructed. How far one goes beyond this armature is a matter of choice; an artistic effect can proceed from the armature, a deeper one than from the surface alone."


228 Nochlin, p. 167.

229 Nochlin, p. 177.


233 Hollier, p. xxii.

234 Hollier, p. xxii.

235 Statement by Redon to Maurice Denis, as recorded by Charles Chassé, Le Nabis et leur temps (Lausanne and Paris: La Bibliothèque des arts, 1960), p. 28. This is also discussed in Hobbs, p. 84.

236 Redon, A.S.M., pp. 132-133. Actually this is from his notes for a lecture on Bresdin which was delivered in Holland in January of 1913.

"The artists of my generation for the most part have surely looked at the chimney flue. And they saw nothing but it. They have not offered all that could be added to the wall panel through the mirage of our very nature. All that surpasses, illuminates or amplifies the object and elevates the mind into the realm of mystery, to the confusion of the irresolute and of its delicious restlessness, has been totally closed to them. They kept away, they feared everything pertaining to the symbolic, all that our art contains of the unexpected, the imprecise, the undefinable, and that gives it an appearance bordering on enigma. True parasites of the object, they cultivated art on a uniquely visual field, and in a certain way, closed it off from that which goes beyond it, and which might bring the light of spirituality into the most modest trials, even in the blacks. I mean an illumination that seizes our spirit and escapes all analysis."; p. 110.


238 Broude, p. 162.

239 Camille Mauclair, as quoted by Broude, p. 163.
"Redon, A.S.M., p. 28. "while, as much as possible, putting the logic of the
visible at the service of the invisible."; p. 23.

Broude, p. 164.

"Broude, p. 164.

Paul Gauguin, as quoted by Broude, p. 164.

"Broude, p. 164.

Oscar Wilde as quoted by Camille Paglia, in Sexual Personae; Art and
Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson (New Haven: Yale University Press,

Wilde, as quoted in Camille Paglia, p. 565.

Kuryluk, p. 189.

Nina Auerbach, Woman and the Demon; The Life of a Victorian Myth
Although she is not specifically speaking of the figure of Salome, in her
discussion of the "Victorian imagination" Auerbach attempts to show an
alternative reading to the general tendency in the scholarly literature to only
demonstrate the way in which the "femme fatale" and other female characters
have been the object of male negative stereotyping. By contrast she attempts
the following:

My aim in this book is to become the Frankenstein of this
seeming monster, reconstructing her outcast grandeur from
paintings, from essays, from the buried structures of literary texts,
and from the letters and memoirs that hint at the shapes of past
lives. From the unity shaping these seemingly disparate genres
and materials I want to resurrect the central female paradigms
that presided over the Victorian imagination and structured its
apprehensions, abandoning domestic confinement to unfurl their
awesome capacity for self-creation. Seen together, these
interdependent and mutually sustaining character types infuse
restrictive social categories with the energy of the uncanny. Once
we restore the integrity of these types, we see that they intensify
power rather than limiting it. The very rigidity of the categories
of victim and queen, domestic angel and demonic outcast, old
maid and fallen woman, concentrates itself into a myth of
transfiguration that glorified the women it seemed to suppress.

Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic
Apparatus," in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, ed., Apparatus; Cinematographic
Apparatus: Selected Writings, pp. 25-37. Baudry's essay was translated by Alan
Williams. The specific section where he discusses this idea of the cinematic screen as mirror is called "The Screen-Mirror: Specularization and Double Identification," pp. 32-35. Baudry's ideas are important for a number of reasons. In the first place, he offers the identification of the term "subject" which differs a bit from the way it is traditionally used in art history, which represents a shift that would focus more attention on the spectator, as is suggested by Cha, p. 25: "The term 'subject' is used by Baudry and others not to mean the topic of discourse, but rather the perceiving and ordering self, as in our term 'subjective.'" Another important link which is established in Baudry's essay is that between the "screen-mirror" and "double identification" and Jacques Lacan's "mirror stage" which is discussed below. Moreover, in this essay's discussion of "The Transcendental Subject," Baudry presents an important model for the type of "mechanism of meaning" which I read in Redon's manner of placing the spectator before the severed head image and requiring of that spectator a means of beholding the work of art with a head that has also been metaphorically severed. In this context, it is fascinating to note the similarity between Baudry's discussion of the situation in viewing a film, p. 30, and certain of Redon's works which show floating eyes (see for example Plate CXXXII): "And if the eye which moves is no longer fettered by a body, by the laws of matter and time, if there are no more assignable limits to its displacement -- conditions fulfilled by the possibilities of shooting and of film -- the world will not only be constituted by this eye but for it." Or his description, p. 34, of the spectator's situation in viewing the film which is very much like that of the viewer trying to view one of Redon's works without the benefit of a head: "Everything happens as if, the subject himself being unable -- and for a reason -- to account for his own situation, it was necessary to substitute secondary organs, grafted on to replace his own defective ones, instruments or ideological formations capable of filling his function as subject."

\(^{249}\)Bryson, *Vision and Painting*. For example, see pp. 29-30 and the discussion of the "The Essential Copy."


\(^{251}\)Lacan, pp. 4-5.

\(^{252}\)Lacan, p. 5. See also Jameson, *The Political Unconscious; Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. 
CHAPTER III

ORPHEUS

After the turn of the century, John the Baptist and Salome began to disappear as characters in Redon's art. The severed head image did not disappear, however, and one of the most its familiar contexts was in the representation of Orpheus. In approaching this subject, Redon was still directly concerned with issues of the gaze, for in the Orphic theme the full range of visual modes which have been explored in the previous sections are still found, from the visionary "inward gaze," represented by the protagonist shown with eyes closed, to the new issue of the "Orphic glance backwards." Thus, vision is once again problematic and the source of all sorts of traumas -- epistemological and other. As with the subject of John and Salome, the treatment of Orpheus involves complex relationships between male and female, and once again, the male's severed head is attributable to female aggressiveness, but just as with the earlier works, Redon tends to avoid representations showing a direct confrontation between male and female. The one observable difference in these later works, however, is that the previous conflict between "mind" and "nature" which, as has been demonstrated above,
can also be read as a manifestation of sexual conflict, has been softened so that the male severed head ("mind") begins to find a reconciliation with ("female") nature. This is in part due to the more positive role attributed to several of the female characters in the Orpheus myth, and my argument, in part, is that the greater tranquility in these later works can largely be attributed to this factor.

Of course, the subject of Orpheus is not unique to Redon's work in the period, and it was a source of fascination for many of the artists of the Symbolist generation. The most comprehensive study of this tendency is found in Dorothy Kosinski's book, *Orpheus in Nineteenth-Century Symbolism*, where she provides a general interpretation of the theme's meaning in Symbolist art and literature:

> For the Symbolists, Orpheus has a very specific meaning: he is priest, initiate, martyr, ideal artist whose work magically summons the Orphic voice in the world; a set of meanings which embody essential aspects of the Symbolist aesthetic -- art as religion, the artist as priest, the art object as revelation. The Symbolists' interest in Orpheus, as well as their preoccupation with myth and religion are, moreover, part of a broader intellectual current in the nineteenth century.¹

From Kosinski's remarks, it can be noted that there was also a clear pattern of interest in this theme because of the generation's interest in identifying the "artist as saint" (or in her terms priest) in a manner similar to that discussed above. It should be further noted, however, in following Kosinski's discussion, that there are certain episodes of the myth which were of special interest to these artists.² Whereas earlier periods had been primarily attracted to the
episodes showing Orpheus’s new bride, Eurydice, being bitten by the serpent, Orpheus mourning by her tomb, or Orpheus shown later among the animals having forsaken all other humans, the Symbolists were drawn more to several other aspects of the myth. Certainly the Maenad’s bitter attack and brutal murder of poor Orpheus while he was in isolation is an episode which served to illustrate the period’s affinity for subjects seeming to reveal the hidden aggressiveness of women and the general misogynistic tendencies of the time. Even the episode where Orpheus attempts to rescue his fallen wife from death by using his musical and poetic charms to strike a deal with the gods so that he could make a journey to the underworld, held a wide fascination in the period, for this idea of "descent and return" was a clear illustration of the artistic "inward journey" which so many artists, including Redon, often spoke about. But what truly struck the fancy of this generation, and the one which was clearly of most interest to Redon, as Sven Sandstrom has suggested, was the severed head episode. It was not enough that the Maenads killed Orpheus because he would not participate in the sensuous Dionysiac rites, they chopped off his head, and placing it upon his lyre, threw it into the Hebrus River. Eventually the lyre carried the head, still singing, to the island of Lesbos, and its inhabitants (or perhaps the Muses), upon discovering the head, went and gathered up the poet’s other remains and returned them to Mount Olympus. Thus, the most appealing metaphor in this myth was the one
of artistic apotheosis, which was represented in its most condensed form by the head floating along the waters on its lyre.

Bram Dijkstra has further defined the specific attraction of this myth for those interested in representations of this head, while at the same time indicating the commonality of the Orpheus myth with other such stories:

The Orpheus myth had, for all practical purposes, been the late nineteenth century's perfect entry into the realm of the fantasy of the severed head. Armand Silvestre made this link obvious when he commented on a sculpture of Judith and Holofernes by Tony Noël in his *Le Nu au Salon; Champ de Mars* for 1984. The 'haughty disdain with which the murderess pushes the bleeding head of her victim away with her foot' reminded him of the ferocity of 'one of those maenads who, in a similar fashion, used their white feet to batter the decapitated head of the divine Orpheus.'

Dijkstra also discusses the attractive identification that the mythological character presented for the artist of the fin-de-siècle period:

As the most famous poet of classical myth, Orpheus was a perfect role model for the artists and intellectuals of the later nineteenth century. Could he not tame the beasts of the fields simply through the power of song? He was the ideal symbol of mind over matter, of the evolving male brain's triumph over the animal self.

It is in the context of this last analysis by Dijkstra, that it is possible to speak of the triumph of the mind over various aspects of "nature" or "the feminine" which was discussed in a slightly different context above. Moreover, the subject was perhaps of interest to Redon, for Orpheus's refusal to participate in the sexual rites of Dionysus and his followers can be seen as being parallel to
Redon’s frequent avoidance of sensuality in his art work. Thus, the very conflict between the sexes which Redon confronted only indirectly in his representations of John and Salome, but which were at the very root of other artists’ treatments, were also present in the subject of Orpheus. It is interesting to remember the way that one scholar, José Pierre, characterized these conflicts in his analysis of Gustave Moreau’s *Apparition* (Plate X), for Pierre was also following closely the reading given by Redon’s friend and contemporary, the writer Joris-Karl Huysmans, of the roles played by Salome/Herodias who he saw as:

... the eternal feminine challenging masculine nature manifested as power and lust (Herod) and as spirituality and chastity (John the Baptist). Gustave Moreau was so completely convinced of this that alone of all the poets who handled this theme he tried to invert the terms, or to be more precise, to conjure the castratory curse.

By means of the gaze, Pierre saw John the Baptist triumphing over Salome in a victory which led to a new theme:

The goddess of seduction and castration is no more than a frail, frightened mortal. The look of John the Baptist, like the glance Oedipus had once cast, represented the victory of the spirit over the flesh, of poetry over death. Now began the spiritual reign of Orpheus.

Although he was writing about Moreau’s treatment of the theme, and did not mention Redon, the dialectical transformation Pierre suggests is exactly the
type of thing found in Redon's replacement of John the Baptist's martyrdom
with the Apotheosis of Orpheus.

As was the case with his representation of the subject of John the
Baptist, Redon's earliest interest in the theme of Orpheus is probably traceable
to its source in a work by Gustave Moreau. Moreau's *Jeune Fille Thrace tenant le
tête d'Orphée* (Plate II) shows Orpheus's head being recovered by one of the
young girls who ultimately helps to re-unite it with the poet's body, and helps
to return both to a final resting place at Mount Olympus. Just as will later be
the case with Redon, Moreau's work gives the female character a much more
benevolent role than had often been the case in his art, something which
Ragnar von Holten attributed to the fact that the young woman's features are
probably based on those of the artist's mother:

La jeune femme exprime tendresse et pitié — sentiments
rares chez les visages féminins de Moreau. On est tenté de croire
que c'est un trait de sa mère que le peintre a voulu reproduire ici.
En effet, la forme de la tête de la jeune femme ainsi que la ligne
du menton font penser aux portraits de Mme. Moreau, se
trouvant dans l'appartement du peintre.\(^9\)

Ironically, some of the critics also tended to see this figure as being reminiscent
of representations of Salome, as is clearly seen observed in the review of the
work by Ernest Chesneau:

Elle rapelle la Salomé des livres saints qui contemplait, elle aussi,
mais de quel regard, la tête coupée de saint Jean-Baptiste.\(^10\)
This issue of the gaze -- the "quel regard" referred to by Chesneau -- was also mentioned by the Surrealist André Breton, who in his text on Moreau's painting wrote that he was "moved" by the way the artist showed the "priestess exchanging with Orpheus the unutterable gaze of Hegelian 'death' and a human being to which it transmits its secret." And Pierre-Louis Mathieu has noted that the "head of Moreau's dead Orpheus evokes that of Michelangelo's famous Dying Slave in the Louvre," a connection which is further substantiated by the fact that Moreau had made of sketch of this sculpture in side view. This last point is fascinating, considering Moreau's work as a source for Redon, when it is recalled that in a famous statement on the nude, Redon referred to Michelangelo's work as the perfect model of an "inward vision."

Before beginning an analysis of Redon's specific treatment of the Orphic myth proper, it is necessary to return briefly to his early drawing showing Salome with the severed head of John the Baptist (Plate I) and to draw some further comparisons between this work and Moreau's famous representation of Orpheus (Plate II). As was noted above, the attitude and posture of Redon's Salome is very close to that of the young girl in Moreau's picture, but she is turned and facing the opposite direction. There are, however, some very great differences in the way the artists have handled the disposition between the two actors in this drama. For one thing, Moreau's work is far more "site-specific" and located within the full context of the narrative, whereas Redon's work is
characteristically placed in an empty space which allows a greater range of associations. This "suggestive" approach to art in Redon has already been discussed above, but in the present context, it allows for the full association of John the Baptist with Orpheus, or the Thracian Girl with Salome, as though Redon's work is a realization of the intermingling of narratives suggested in the critical responses to Moreau's painting mentioned above. There are other very notable differences, but perhaps the most significant is the lack of engagement between the two figures in Redon's composition. Whereas André Breton was able to speak of a sort of "visual" engagement between Moreau's characters -- the "priestess exchanging with Orpheus the unutterable gaze of Hegelian 'death' and a human being to which it transmits its secret" -- Redon's severed head remains upright and is not at all directed towards Salome. At the same time, there is a far colder atmosphere in Redon's encounter between the two figures, for there is none of the comforting feeling of the female gently cradling the severed head, as is the case in Moreau's painting, but rather the head is presented to the viewer in a somewhat awkward gesture, as Salome holds it out away from her body and projects it out into the viewer's space. Perhaps the element which most clearly distinguishes the opposing moods in these two works is nature of supports for the two heads, for whereas in Moreau's painting, Orpheus rests comfortably upon the lyre which is not only the instrument but also the attribute of his artistic accomplishments, the severed head in Redon's composition remains upright, in a position which is
hardly restful, and is placed upon a cold platter. Most of these differences in handling are attributable to the differences in the themes of Orpheus and John the Baptist, and yet such a shift in how the severed head is presented would appear to represent for Redon a change in emotional mood, as much as a concession to the demands of narrative. For while it is true that in his later representations of Orpheus, Redon shifts to a far gentler treatment of the martyred poet, in his earliest treatment of the severed head of Orpheus, the mood is far closer to his handling of the John the Baptist scene than it is to Moreau's treatment of Orpheus.

Redon's first major treatment of the theme of Orpheus is found in a powerful charcoal drawing now preserved in the Kröller-Müller museum in Otterlo, his *Head of Orpheus Floating on the Waters* of 1881 (Plate CXL). Like the head of John in the Kansas City drawing discussed above, the head shown here is represented as upright. It does not yet rest peacefully upon the lyre, as was the case with Moreau's Orpheus, or as will be the case in Redon's later representations. The head is also shown with its eyes closed. Perhaps one of the most significant deviations from the standard treatment of this episode of the myth is the absence of the lyre. Certainly, one function of this missing attribute, is to open up the interpretive field to allow, as Redon has suggested in his own writings, "the spectator a sort of diffuse but powerful attraction to the obscure world of the indeterminate and to set him thinking," thus suggesting an association with other narratives beyond the context of the
Orpheus myth. For example, Richard Hobbs has found close associations between this work and the *Tête de martyr sur la plat*, also in the Kröller-Müller museum (Plate L). But the empty spaces and the simple triangular shape in the background could suggest other associations as well. Should this triangle be associated with the Egyptian pyramids, and thus seen as a conflation of the myth of Orpheus with that of Osiris, the Egyptian god of resurrection who was also "reborn" after having his head severed, or should it simply be associated with a generic mountain and perhaps Mount Olympus? In Redon's work, both associations are probably encouraged. The absence of the attribute of the lyre may also have another important connotation in this early treatment of the Orphic theme, for it would seem that although the head of Orpheus is a bit more tranquil than some of the heads of John the Baptist around the same time, its appearance without the sign of artistic accomplishment and achievement would seem to suggest that Redon chose to depict the artist/poet or seer of inner visions as one who had not yet fully found his means. Thus, the severed head of the young artist is shown as being especially vulnerable and exposed to the elemental forces of nature, without the cushioning support of his lyre. Such a reading would call attention to the fact that in the later treatments of the Orpheus theme which presented a sort of apotheosis of the artist, the lyre played an important role as a sign of artistic achievement which assisted in the attainment of immortality. Certainly, from the context of 1881, Redon related far more sympathetically to the sufferings of the artist as a
lonely figure, rather than to the idea of artistic immortality. Moreover, by the

time he turns to the later treatments, he had also received his own laurel
wreath in 1903: "the Legion of Honor."

After this work of 1881, there is a long lag in Redon's direct
representations of Orpheus's severed head, so that it reappears only much later
after the turn of the century. Such a lag would suggest that the severed head
image was more meaningful to him in other contexts, especially as it appeared
in the story of John the Baptist and Salome, and thus, his rare early treatments
of Orpheus, suggest that perhaps what was of interest to him in those years
was very different than what interested him later when the representation of
Orpheus blossomed in his art. Such an argument is supported by the fact that
Redon often chose slightly different episodes from the myth in his earlier
treatments than the "dismemberment theme" seen in the 1881 drawing and in
the later works. For example, there is a unique oil painting from around 1885
which has recently been identified as an Orpheus, and it seems to focus more
upon the element of isolation and loneliness, as it shows the poet wandering
through a landscape (Plate CXLI). Almost all of the landscapes shown in these
early oil sketches were made at Peyrelebade, and it is not at all far-fetched to
see in this work a parallel between the mythological theme and the early
childhood of Redon, spent in isolation at the family estate. Another work,
which has been dated around 1900, but which may be dated earlier, based on
the handling of the human figure, reveals a similar interest in the anguish of
Orpheus as he experiences loneliness and isolation. This drawing, *Le Désespoir d'Orphée* (Plate CXLII) is based upon a scene from the opera by Gluck, and contains a notation of the musical score and the lines "J'ai perdu ma Eurydice" along the bottom of the page.

But beyond the scattered works before 1900 which are directly related to the Orpheus myth, there are a number of others which contain elements suggesting at the very least an associative connection with it. In such works a transition is found towards the later handling of Orpheus. One of the most striking early works which could reveal such a link has usually been associated not with the subject of Orpheus, but rather with the apparition theme. This is the eighth plate from Redon's first lithograph series, *Dans le rêve* (Plate XXX), which Sven Sandstrom has seen as being closely related to Redon's *Apparition* (Plate VIII) and thus he suggests that the vision of the severed head of John the Baptist has been replaced by a floating eye. What he finds to be unusual about this composition, however, is the theatrical reaction of the two figures who behold the scene at the lower left of the composition. Drawing upon the idea also forwarded by Sandstrom that the architectural props of the background may be a sort of altar, R. Miedema has been willing to go further, and has suggested that the male and female figure may be entering into a sort of sanctuary, thus, relating the image to Redon's impending marriage of 1880. While the autobiographical context Miedema suggests is interesting in the context of the present study, it must be admitted
that the scene has always suggested to the current author not so much the theme of Salome and John but rather the subject of Orpheus. Thus, the large floating eye might be read not so much as the "eye of God" as Sandstrom would suggest, but rather as an enlarged symbol of the "Orphic glance backwards" which ultimately causes Orpheus to lose Eurydice forever, just at the moment when he has almost successfully returned her to the land of the living. In such a context, the connotation of the architecture as a sanctuary would not seem inappropriate, but the two large columns and the steps leading up between them might suggest the threshold or gateway between the realm of "light" and the underworld. Of course in this context the matrimonial theme suggested by Miedema would not be out of place, but rather the Orphic theme might indicate a certain anxiety on the part of Redon as he was looking forward to his marriage to Camille Faule. One small detail, which has generally been overlooked, might add support to such an interpretation, for although it is not absolutely clear, it seems possible that the male figure walking in front of the female or Eurydice (?) is carrying in front of himself a lyre, and it would also appear that he has just glanced back over his shoulder to glance at his companion! [This work is also similar to the 1893 lithograph *Lumière*].

Another work from before 1900 which carries connotations related to the Orpheus myth also involves a reference to the artist's wife, the composition which is known as *Les Yeux clos* and which appeared as an oil painting (Plate
XXIII), as a charcoal drawing (Plate CXLIII) and as a lithograph (Plate CXLIV). As many scholars have indicated, this composition was one of the key works created during the transitional years of the 1890s and it is based on a portrait of the artist's wife. In terms of what is physically represented in this work, it is almost identical to the 1881 drawing *Head of Orpheus Floating on the Waters* of (Plate CXL), for it shows a close up of a head floating on the waters with its eyes closed. Of course in the later work, in addition to the head, it is possible to distinguish that it is attached to the shoulders, even though the overall treatment is one which leaves the sexual identification of the figure a bit ambiguous, for despite the figure's long hair — which could just as well be male or female since the artist does nothing to place the work in a historical context -- it is very androgynous in appearance. In his excellent article on this work, Brooks Adams has suggested a number of possible interpretations, which include seeing the work as the artist's attempt to give "form to a new self-image" and as a possible homage to his "wife on their tenth wedding anniversary" suggesting that:

An emblem of the artist who closes his eyes to find imagery in his own imagination, *Closed Eyes* is also a reflection of Redon's need for love.\(^{18}\)

Adams makes a several other very significant links of this painting to events in the artist's life. On one hand, he relates the work to the signification of water, as indicated in the artist's writings -- a signification which Dario
Gamboni has recently explored as a manifestation of the "myth of the artist's birth":

Les voyages sur mer étaient alors longs et hasardeux. Il paraît qu'à ce retour le mauvais temps ou des vents contraires risquèrent d'égarer sur l'océan le navire qui portait mes parents; et j'eusse aimé, par ce retard, le hasard ou le destin, naître au milieu de ces flots que j'ai depuis contemplés souvent, du haut des falaises de la Bretagne, avec souffrance, avec tristesse: un lieu sans patrie sur un abîme.

and which he has seen as revolving around a common analogy in French between the "words for sea and mother, mer and mère." Moreover, Adams suggests a very tentative connection between this work and the accidental drowning of the artist's friend, the poet and critic Émile Hennequin in 1888, an event which took place while the friends were swimming in the river that ran behind the houses of Mallarmé and Redon near Samois. But while this work is clearly related to images such as the later Ophelia (Plate XXVI) -- an ironic connection of imagery involving his wife with the character from Shakespeare which could indicate Redon's own anxiety (in the role of Hamlet) about being perceived as something of a madman because of his strange imagery -- it seems necessary to disagree with Adam's ultimate disassociation of Hennequin with such images because, as he argues, "in later subjects involving death by water like Ophelia avoid the depiction of drowning."

Instead it is possible to support the idea that not only is Ophelia a sort of female counterpart to Orpheus, and that both themes, and especially the latter,
can be related to a sort of Apotheosis of his artistic friends who had joined in
the artistic struggle Redon liked to refer to as the "triste bataille."

More interesting are Adams's views that this work should be
interpreted within the context of Redon's familial situation and that it contains
undertones of sexual desire, ideas have been forwarded above in relation to
other works. For example, Adams refers to the interest in the "aqueous element
in Closed Eyes" as being suggestive of the "birth ritual." He also suggests the
further association that:

In deference to Redon's first sea voyage in his mother's womb, there are no depictions of shipwrecks in the artist's work.
Inasmuch as the figure in Closed Eyes represents Redon himself the emergence from the water takes on the meaning of emergence from his depression and corresponding "black" subject matter through a second birth, the birth of his true self.\(^{23}\)

While this analysis is directly related to the pathographic approach provided by Baekeland, which was discussed above, Adams's reference to an
undercurrent of sexuality is a bit more subtle, and would tend to support the
thesis that:

Already in 1890 the closed eyes in Redon's painting avoid vulgar sights and concentrate on a purer vision; to this extent, Closed Eyes is hermetic. Yet the painter's eyes must be open if he sees that the model's eyes are closed and he paints her. The artist and model cannot become one in any total sense. No matter how pure his intention, the artist's vision is grounded in desire. Redon felt the difficulty of trying to transcend the sensuality and literalness of painting. Beyond its fading colors and isolation in the museum, Closed Eyes is vulnerable insofar as it expresses Redon's guilt about sex. Like Puvis de Chavanne's blighted Orpheus of
1883, who wails in anguish at having looked back at Eurydice and lost her, the subject of Redon's *Closed Eyes* excludes all that the artist cannot deal with and embraces a limited range of choices as regards color. By radical self-limitation the artist continues to function and create. This self-limitation is one way of reading the myth of the modern artist-as-Orpheus.  

The comparison of Redon's work to the anguished image of Orpheus as represented by Puvis (Plate CXLV) is fascinating, for it suggests that although Redon is not interested in such literal interpretations of the narrative of the myth, his art is equally pre-occupied with the anguish of this "glance backwards." In works such as *Les Yeux clos, Vision*, and the various other treatments of Orpheus, Redon tends to centralize this problematic "gaze" which ultimately becomes linked with sexual desire. Nevertheless, for all of the insight offered in this article by Adams, it is impossible to accept his final denouement of part of what his research has brought to light, specifically the idea that:

> Far from pandering to Symbolist preferences for androgynous beauty, love from afar, and avoidance of even eye contact as being too direct a sexual intercourse, Redon viewed his wife and Michelangelo's sculpture with such sympathy that he felt no compunction to dwell upon their sex.  

Although he is correct to insist that Redon did not pander to the Rosicrucian circle of Peladan, it cannot be denied that what appears in Redon's actual visual products is sometimes in conflict with the idealism of his writings. What has been found in Redon's treatment of the subject of Salome and John the
Baptist is exactly such an "avoidance of the gaze" and everywhere in these works one is constantly returned to an "androgynous beauty," elements which may not be absolutely consistent in Redon's work with the ideas presented by Peladan, but ones whose existence cannot be denied. Moreover, if Adams is correct in asserting that for Redon in 1890 "this painting is his baptism of a new self," it must also be carefully noted that the new self which emerges after 1900 turns to the theme of Orpheus and his severed head on a lyre, partly because of the residue of sexual conflict which still remains in his work, but also partly because of the "epistemological traumas" it tends to resolve in the earlier periods. Thus, the later representations of Orpheus do not represent a "self-limitation" as regards the "choices of color" but rather a blossoming of the full range of the palette in works which tend to represents a reconciliation between the sensuality and intellectuality. They represent not the isolation and "self-limitation" of Orpheus, but rather the death of the old self and its resurrection into a more harmonious relationship between "nature" and "mind."

There are many examples of Redon's treatment of Orpheus as a sort of an artistic apotheosis, most of which are dated well after 1900, such as can be seen in the Cleveland pastel (Plate CXLVI), the oil painting now in Gifu, The Death of Orpheus (Plate CXLVII), and an oil painting sometimes identified as Orpheus Under the Spotlight which forms part of the collection of the Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco (Plate CXLVIII). Also dating from this later period is an oil painting in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris (Plate CL), and
Orpheus, sometimes referred to as Allegorie, now in the Fogg Art Museum (Plate CLI) and a Tête d'Orphée (CLII) which was recently sold at auction in Paris. Perhaps a bit earlier in date, or possibly a sketch for one of these other painted versions is a charcoal drawing now in the Ian Woodner Family Collection (Plate CXLIX). In all of these, Orpheus is shown with his head on the lyre, usually floating along on the waters, and with the exception of the charcoal drawing, he is depicted with his eyes closed. The incident shown is clearly that of the poet's severed head after his physical death, but in general each work is a representation of apotheosis. It is, however, worth exploring the subtle nuances of meaning in the various versions.

For example, in the charcoal drawing (Plate CXLIX), the head raising up from the lyre, would appear to be more closely related to the spirit of earlier treatments of the severed head image, such as in the lithograph Sur la coupe from Dans le rêve (Plate LIV). Here, it is possible to refer to the idea, discussed above, of the "head living a life of its own" and thus, it would be meant as a more dramatic illustration of the idea that the head of Orpheus continued to sing after death. Far from contradicting the interpretation of this work as an image of apotheosis, this "active interpretation" of the scene would simply indicate that Redon wanted to be sure to emphasize the idea of Orpheus's life beyond death, although in other versions he was far more subtle in his treatment of this idea. Thus, this would appear to be an earlier work, not only because it was executed in charcoal, a medium Redon gave up before the end
of the nineteenth century, but also because it could provide a possible stylistic link between the earlier imagery of John the Baptist and the later treatments of Orpheus. Moreover, in this drawing of Orpheus, he is crowned with a laurel wreath as a sort of emphasis of his artistic accomplishment, an attribute which tends to disappear in other treatments of this scene suggesting that in those works the head’s reconciliation with the natural setting is a more subtle means of indicating the triumph of Orpheus. This drawing also shows the head with its lips parted and actively singing, as though it were more important to illustrate the idea that the head was still singing after death, as opposed to the way this idea is suggested by the musicality of the rich colors in later versions. Nevertheless, this is a very pleasing and accomplished drawing which looks forward to much of what will be found in the other variations on the theme.

A similar link to earlier imagery can be found in a painted version of Orpheus, as seen in a comparison between the San Francisco Orpheus Under the Spotlight (Plate CXLVIII) and the earlier charcoal, La Coupe, (Plate LIll). Although the orientation of the head has been reversed, the later work still contains something of the upright quality and the halo of light which suggests not merely the spirituality of the martyred figure, but also its transcendence of the world of the living for an after life. In the San Francisco work, however, a more peaceful treatment of the severed head is already found, for it treats the lyre as though it were a soft cushion for the poet’s eternal rest.
The fullest realization of this theme of apotheosis and tranquility is found in the Cleveland pastel, *Orpheus* (Plate CXLVI) and in the Gifu oil painting, *The Death of Orpheus* (Plate CXLVII). In the Cleveland work for example, the head appears to float along very peacefully, and the reconciliation between "mind" and "nature" is suggested in the way that the head almost floats along, finding its own way towards Mount Olympus, which may be suggested by the mountainous shape in the background. The ambiguity of the spatial setting, however, adds to the feeling of a synthesis between the human head, the air, earth, and water, which become the poet's ultimate resting place, with the softness of the handling of the pastel further emphasizing the overall feeling of calm and harmony. Moreover, the rich violet hues which dominate the composition create a strong mood of spirituality, and may even contribute to a synaesthetic effect suggesting beautiful music and the scent of the surrounding flora. The lyric poet, whose head is very simply indicated reclines peacefully on the lyre, with the eyes closed in eternal peacefulness. Much the same mood pervades the oil version of the *Death of Orpheus*, where the atmosphere is once again one of harmony between the various elements of earth, air, and water, and where the head reclines on the "pillow" of the lyre with eyes closed. Once again the surrounding flora adds a feeling of softness and beauty to the scene. Another oil painting, now in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay, but deposited in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Limoges (Plate CL) is an image with much the same feeling of these two works, but in the
detail of the laurel wreath crowning the head, it is a bit closer to the earlier charcoal drawing, but Orpheus is shown with eyes closed. It is a bit less realized than the Cleveland and Gifu works, but similar to the Cleveland pastel, it is bathed in tones of violet.

The compositions found in the Fogg Art Museum version (Plate CLI) and in the work recently sold at auction in Paris, the Tête d'Orphée (Plate CLII) are a bit different in mood. As might be suggested by the date of c.1904 assigned to the Fogg painting, these may be slightly earlier treatments of the theme, having been created somewhere between the Woodner charcoal drawing and the Musée d'Orsay version. This seems especially true of the Fogg work, for the head is somewhat dwarfed by the mountainous shape of the background and the wide expanse of water suggesting a somewhat more romantic reading of the myth. In this context, the head seems far more vulnerable to the forces of nature, in much the way that Romantic painters liked to call upon the metaphor of the "storm-tossed boat" to suggest this effect. Moreover, in both works, the paint surface seems to create a sort of torment and excitement which is a bit different from the soothing qualities of especially the Cleveland pastel and the Gifu oil painting. In the former works, the anguish of death is a bit more present, while in the latter examples, a more soothing mood prevails.

In these last two examples, the spectator is left a bit farther away from the isolated head of Orpheus on the lyre, with the result being that the
Cleveland and Gifu works create a stronger bond with the viewer. But rather than suggesting an abrupt break between the world of the spectator and the realm of the painting, as was suggested in the treatment of the John the Baptist theme, it would appear that a different mechanism is at work in these pictures. One of the keys to this is the way that these works tend to place the image a bit more within a natural context, which is at once pleasing to the eye, and indicative of a sort of continuum beyond the realm of the picture. Another key to this difference is to be found in the closed eyes of Orpheus, for in this context, the lack of the engagement between the viewer and the gaze of Orpheus is reassuring. On one level, the handling of these works tends to reaffirm the dreaminess of the inward gaze, while at the same time soothing the senses of the gaze which beholds the picture, suggesting that rather than the "dreamy offering of the self" which T.J. Clark found to be the nude's required means of presenting itself to a painting's viewer, these images suggest a "dreamy offering of the self" to the work of art. But the lack of visual engagement with Orpheus is reassuring on another level, for just as making eye contact with the image of the Medusa would be threatening, it would not be so good to be the object of the "Orpheus glance backwards," and it is significant that in his analysis of Moreau's image of Orpheus on the lyre, Proust referred to "that head of Orpheus looking at us ... with fine unseeing eyes in the shape of mind-made colors." Thus, the fact that the viewer is not "seen" by Orpheus is reassuring to the viewer that he/she is not at the present
moment condemned to death (as was Eurydice) while at the same time setting up a profound contemplation with one’s ultimate fate. Thus, while the function of the earlier imagery of the severed head of John the Baptist may have been to act as a sort of memento mori and to force the spectator into an identification with the work of art which required a type of "disembodied" vision for beholding the work, in these later works dealing with Orpheus, vision becomes once again reconstituted and just as Orpheus’s remains are gathered up and returned to their sources in nature, the viewer is given to behold a work of art which reintroduces sensuality back into vision so as to allow for participation in the celebration of an artistic apotheosis.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III


2Walter Strauss has also analyzed the basic episodes in the myth of Orpheus. We might list these stages as follows:

1) Orpheus as a singer-prophet, as a means of establishing harmony with the cosmos.
2) The descent into Hades, after losing Eurydice to death, and then the second loss of Eurydice on the return from Hades.
3) The dismemberment theme.

Strauss also identifies three distinct historical periods in the development of the myth of Orpheus, which he describes as the myth's "metamorphosis":

1) The period of Antiquity, from the sixth century B.C. to the Hellenistic period. Here Orpheus appears to arise as the figure of a cult in conjunction with the cult of Dionysus. In the decline of antiquity, the myth is put to many uses, including parallel development with the Neoplatonists and the Gnostics.
2) The Renaissance Period — The uses of the myth are described in this period as being "derivative from the themes of antiquity, but in a special way," providing new forms for a new art. Drawing upon Virgil and Ovid, they see Orpheus as the archetypal poet. It was during the end of this period that Orpheus became patron saint of the opera.
3) Modern phase in the Orpheus myth. "Here Orpheus becomes the most powerful embodiment of metamorphosis, a theme of extreme importance in modern art.


3Strauss, pp. 1-6. This analogy between sleep, death, and dream is discussed, but in the context of Redon's lithograph *Limbo* from *Dans le rêve* by Trudie Grace. She says that it "may very well have been inspired by the parallel between the freedom of the soul after death and that of the unconscious self during sleep." See Trudie Grace, "The Disembodied Head: A Major Theme in European Art from 1885 to 1905," Diss. City University of New York, 1984. 2 vols., 1: p. 206. She also calls attention to John Senior's discussion of the idea that "since death is after all a kind of sleep, the dead were thought [in ancient times] to have disembodied selves, like dream selves." See John Senior, *The Way Down and Out; The Occult in Symbolist Literature* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 3.


Ernest Chesneau in a review of 1866, as quoted by Ragnar von Holten, p. 12. Théophile Gautier made a similar observation, in noting that the head of Orpheus was "still crowned with laurels and lying, on an elaborate lyre, 'like John the Baptist's head on a silver platter in the hands of Herodias.'" This is discussed by Pierre-Louis Mathieu, *Gustave Moreau; with a catalogue of the finished paintings, watercolors and drawings*, trans. James Emmons (Boston, Massachusetts: New York Graphic Society, 1976), p. 98.

This is discussed in Mathieu, p. 98.

Mathieu, pp. 98 and 272 note 399.


The connection of this work with the theme of Orpheus may be a bit tentative. Like so many of Redon's works, the title and date for this one is problematic. It was recently exhibited under the title of *Orpheus*. See: Kunstmuseum Winterthur, *Odilon Redon* (exh. cat., Winterthur, 1983), p. 170.

Sandstrom, pp. 52 and 198 note 37.

R. Miedema, *Odilon Redon und Albrecht Dürer* (Amsterdam: Van Holkema & Warendorf's Uitgevers-Mij., 1928), p. 38. This is also discussed by Sandstrom, p. 52, who has reproduced a translation of Miedema's argument: "Est-il trop osé de voir dans la lithographie de cette scène qui porte le nom de «Vision», une concordance profonde avec la vision de Isaïe, ou bien la signification de
l'image est-elle toute différent et l'homme et la femme (Redon se maria en 1880) se trouvent-ils à l'entrée du sanctuaire?" Sandstrom, however, does not necessarily see Miedema's two readings as being mutually exclusive.

17That the "gender ... remains ambiguous" is asserted in an article by Brooks Adams, "The Poetics of Odilon Redon's 'Closed Eyes,'" *Arts Magazine*, 4, no. 5 (January 1980), p. 130. Adams also discusses the relationship of this work to Michelangelo's *Dying Slave* and the way this latter is "bound by his own physicality and struggles with it."

18Adams, p. 132. Adams also makes some wonderful links between Redon's image and the poetry of Baudelaire, especially in the connection to the poem "Fountain":

Your beautiful eyes are tired, beloved!
Stay for a long time, without opening them
In that relaxed pose
Where pleasure left you.
In the courtyard the chattering fountain
Which does not stop night or day,
Sweetly sustains the ecstasy
Into which love this evening plunged me.


20Redon, *A.S.M.*, p. 11. "Travel by sea was at that time a long and dangerous adventure. It seems that, on this return, bad weather or winds made the boat which carried my parents run the risk of being lost at sea, and I would have loved, thanks to this delay, to have had the chance or to destiny, to have been born in the middle of those waves which, since then, I have often contemplated with pain and sadness from the high cliffs of Brittany, a place without a homeland over an abyss."; p. 8.

21Adams, p. 132. As Adams also indicates, the most famous source for the "maternal symbolism of water" is to be found in Gaston Bachelard, *L'Eau et les rêves; essai sur l'imagination de la matière* (Paris: José Corti, 1942), p. 142.

22Adams, p. 132.

23Adams, p. 132.


25Adams, p. 132.
CONCLUSION

The severed head image in Redon's work was usually meant as a representation of either John the Baptist or Orpheus. Although there are a number of other works showing severed heads which do not clearly belong to either of these two subjects, this study has shown that even those works often carry connotations related to either the biblical source or the classical myth. The immediate impulse for the artist to create these works, however, came from a variety of contexts including political events, religious experiences, regional folklore, popular imagery, literary texts, and other artistic productions of the time. Moreover, by comparing these works with each other and with their sources, the range of interpretation for the severed head image has been greatly expanded, for it has been demonstrated that the artist himself was intimately concerned with creating a "suggestive art." While it has not been the aim of this study to develop deterministic interpretations of this imagery, some important tendencies in its use have been noted.

Generally, it has been argued that the severed head image presents a strong source of identification for both the artist and spectator. This identification has taken several forms, and the methodological instruments used in its analysis have included traditional formal and iconographical
approaches as well as ones based in psychoanalysis. In the latter context, the approach has ranged from pathographic analysis of the artist's life and works to a more contemporary application of theories deriving from feminism and film studies which have focused more upon the linking of the gaze with sexual desire and issues of spectatorship. On the one hand, the artist's identification with the severed head image has been seen as a reflection of inner psychological conflicts, as growing out of medieval traditions of mysticism and mystical identification with saints, and as also a conscious reflection of the "psychological concerns" of the "pre-psychoanalytic" period of the fin-de-siècle. These concerns have indicated that there are numerous issues of sex and sexuality under the surface of Redon's pictures. On the other hand, the spectator's approach to the image has been analyzed according to the "mechanism of meaning" residing in the construction of these works. This "mechanism" has to do with the way that the head image is placed very close to the picture plane, and often jutted out into the viewer's space, so that ultimately the picture plane is seen as having a sort of dual role, serving at once to severe the head of both the (severed head) image and the viewer in its role as a guillotine-like transparent blade, and at the same to functioning as a sort of mirror which re-emphasizes the viewer's identification with the artist's imagery. The result in each case is the birth of a problematic type of vision which not only adds depth and meaning to the pictures by artists like Redon who use this mechanism, but also serves to define some of the major
differences between Impressionism's embrace of the natural world, and Symbolism's interest in severing us from it.

Along with this study's compilation of a catalogue of severed head images there has also emerged a catalogue of various types of vision. An analysis of the problems associated with each has provided some of the greatest insights into these art works. For example, from the outset, it was noted that there was only a single work by Redon in which both Salome and John (or at least his head) appear as physically present. But in that drawing and in the highly significant Le Chevalier mystique which shows another type of encounter between male and female characters, there is curiously no eye contact between the various figures, nor is there a direct visual engagement between any of the figures and the viewer. This is true despite the demonstration offered here that such visual engagement was extremely common in treatments of such themes by other artists of the Symbolist generation. On one level this called attention to the general problematic approach to female imagery in Redon's work, which was seen as resulting partly from the artist's avoidance of the "discursive unease" produced by the appearance of the femme fatale.

In place of this avoidance of vision that might be directly linked to overt sexual desire, Redon has offered an "inner vision" which has been related to his "self-definition as a visionary artist." Thus, he calls for a look inward, away from the external world, and into the realm of dream and imagination,
suggesting the need for the student of his work to turn to methods of interpretation based in Freudian analysis, which was similarly a product of the intellectual and cultural milieu of the late nineteenth century. Such looking has also been linked, by scholars such as Mary Ann Doane, "to epistemophilia and scopophilia" and it has been part of the project of this study to not become overly distracted on one hand by the common interpretation of the severed head as an image of the soul continuing beyond the death of the physical body -- or the epistemological side of this phenomenon of decapitation -- so that a perspective is lost on the extent to which such an image of decapitation, as a result of its implied concern with castration, may indicate a gendering (or even a sexual orientation) of the gaze. In this last context, a great awareness of the androgynous quality of Redon's work has been achieved, and there is reason to believe that his imagery is on one hand a fulfillment of the desire expressed in Peladan's idea of the "Androgyne" being "free from sexual seeking." At the same time, one of the important issues in studies of "vision" and "visuality" as concerns visual art, has been the idea of the disembodiment of the gaze -- something which is clearly realized in the situation of the spectator before the image of the severed head in Redon's work, especially to the extent that a strong bond of identification is formed between the viewer and the work of art. The idea of the disembodiment of the gaze is also a means of analyzing crucial differences between the approaches to representation found in the works of the Impressionists and the Symbolists, which have been discussed
here in the context of Norman Bryson's distinction between "the gaze and the
glance." Although, such a development has not been pursued in the present
study, it would seem to follow that the movement from the Impressionistic
"slice of life" to the Symbolist "slice from life" as figured in the idea of
decapitation would also lead into the fragmentation of the object found in
twentieth century movements such as Cubism, and in the development of
abstraction and non-representation. Ultimately, however, Redon settled upon a
type of vision which was centered around the "Orphic glance backwards," a
type of vision which is at once self-reflexive and dreamy, and yet more
reassuring to the viewer. Whereas the split between the "flesh" and the "spirit"
which has been often seen to characterize the moment of decapitation, and
which has also been analyzed here as a split involving sexual conflict as well,
in the representation of Orpheus, Redon offered an image of apotheosis which
returns the viewer to a more harmonious relationship with nature, and also
suggests a more peaceful relationship between male and female. The lack of
direct visual engagement found in the earlier works, which was the source of
discomfort, is reassuring in the Orpheus cycle, for by not becoming the object
of Orpheus's gaze, one is not put into the position of his lost Eurydice, being
lost to the underworld and to death. Thus, in these later works, the viewer is
offered a contemplation of epistemological concerns associated with death, and
yet this reverie is placed in a setting which suggests not only apotheosis, but a
return to nature. At the same time, the connotation of the severed head, still
suggests to the viewer a contemplation which is free of the constraints of the body and the anxiety associated with an awareness of scopophilia.

Redon's choice of the severed head clearly indicates an interest in coming to terms with the anxieties and uncertainties of life in the world, especially from the point of view of the artist who struggles on the margins of society. Vulnerable to being seen not only as a social outcast but also subject to bitter criticism within his own chosen profession, the artist is truly "damned," and an identification with an imagery associated with the punishment of extreme social outcasts -- those guilty of committing capital crimes -- should not be so surprising. Such an association, reveals the full extent of the anguish and suffering which are easily a part of the artist's lonely struggle, and it is an association which, as has been demonstrated, is consistent with Redon's response to this struggle as indicated in his autobiographical writings. Artistic identification with sainthood was a common theme especially at the end of the nineteenth century, and the choice of such a difficult profession must certainly be tantamount to accepting martyrdom. For the spectator, such an association permits one to experience the horrors which only the artists and the saints must know first hand, and yet through a special mechanism of meaning in these works, the viewer becomes momentarily suspended in the state of decapitation and views the world from within the void. The momentary loss of identity, both sexual and otherwise, which is experienced as one stands dreamily before the Symbolist art work, is part of the special "frisson" which
makes it, when successful, so powerful. It is also this very mechanism which permits one to transcend everyday reality and gaze briefly at the other side.
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HEAD AND FEMALE IMAGERY IN THE WORK OF ODILON REDON
VOLUME II

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By
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1992

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