

THE KLEKSOGRAPH

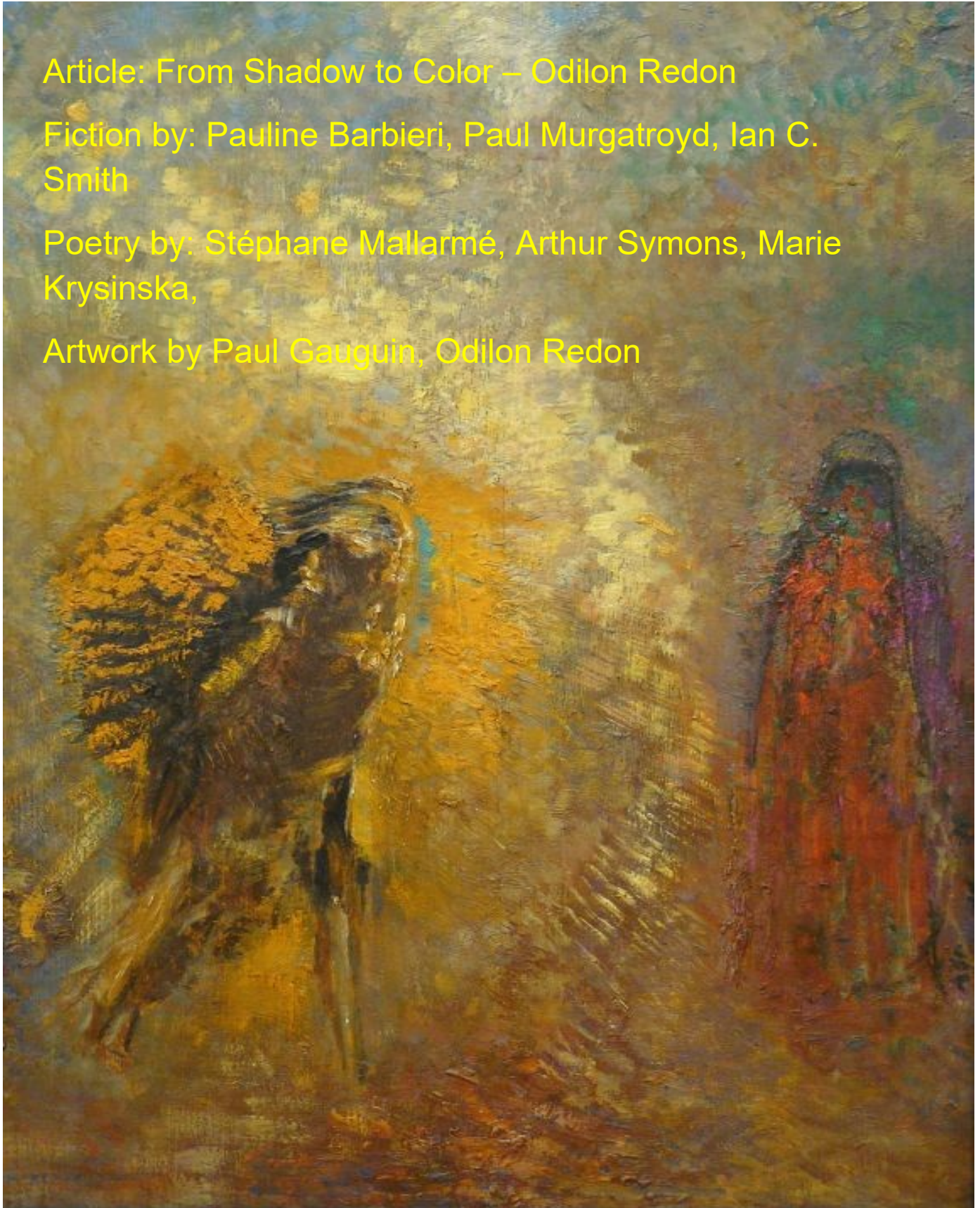
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Article: From Shadow to Color – Odilon Redon

Fiction by: Pauline Barbieri, Paul Murgatroyd, Ian C. Smith

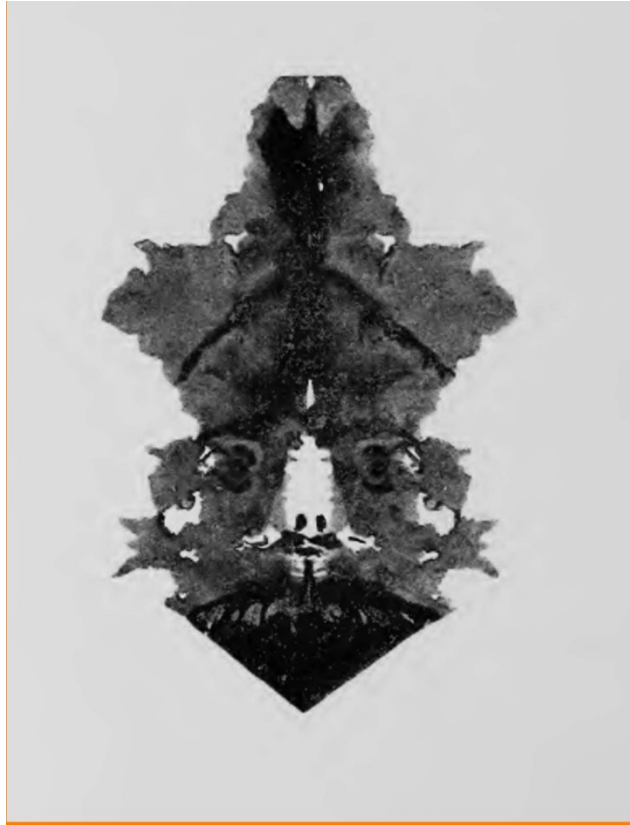
Poetry by: Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Symons, Marie Krysinska,

Artwork by Paul Gauguin, Odilon Redon



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Editor: Peter Van Belle



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In the mid-nineteenth century, Julius Kerner, published his book of “Kleksographien”. Later psychologists used similar ink blots as a means ot access the subconscious of their patients. The Kleksograph (Klecks is the official German spelling) is dedicated to exploring and celebrating the relationship between the subconscious and art.

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Cover: Apparition by Odilon Redon



Gauguin: Madame Ginoux owner of the Night Cafe in Arles – Pushkin Museum of fine Arts

Pauline Barbieri

Man Made

Jane decided to knit herself a man. She'd never tried before but she enjoyed a challenge. She'd been able to knit since she was seven when she found some old wool and needles in a box under the stairs. Jane's mother couldn't knit but after watching Mrs. Walker, their next door neighbour, Jane had some idea how to do it.

One evening she took the wool and needles and persevered until bedtime. Her mother put her to bed and put out the light. But Jane was no sooner under the blanket than she started clicking again.

She didn't have a pattern but by sewing the back and front together she hoped she could somehow gather the waist into a nice hourglass shape. By eleven thirty she'd finished it but forgot she was supposed to be asleep. She ran downstairs to show her mother and father. Her mother was duly impressed but not before she scolded her for knitting by moonlight which she said was bad for her eyes.

Now, after waiting around for nearly thirty years for a man, she'd had enough. Most of the men who had fallen for her were ready to offer her a house, a car, two point four children and a dog but unfortunately they were always the ones she didn't want. Whilst the ones, or rather the only one she had wanted didn't wait around long enough to even buy her a dog. She wondered what was wrong with her but from what she'd heard from other women, young and old, this was not an uncommon dilemma. In desperation, she planned to tailor make a man for herself. Then, at least, she would have some idea of how they really worked.

She started off with the left foot, a size ten or even eleven say, like the rugby players she sometimes watched on tele. Colour to start? Black would be right. How many stitches for a shoe? Around one hundred, she guessed but she supposed it depended on whether this man of hers, was going to be life-sized. She had a secondhand pattern but it had been folded so many times, some of the instructions were missing. But life-size he had to be.

Within half an hour, she'd already finished the foot. This seemed to happen quite naturally, as if she was following a perfect pattern. A glimpse of the powerful ankle sent a slight shiver through her fingers as the needles incessantly.

Soon she was up to the left calf. She needed to increase quite a lot to achieve the garlic shaped muscles she admired so much in sportsmen. Then she remembered Tony, her last lover, whilst working during the summer as a chambermaid in a hotel in Naples. Well, she knew it couldn't last. He was too young and she, well, she was quite a bit older but that

was one good thing about the continentals, they liked older women. Not too old but just enough so that it didn't look like pity!

Tony was good looking with charcoal coloured eyes and lips as soft as marshmallows. She's become addicted to them since she returned. She took one out of the bag and bit gently into it. Just like he'd done to her in that cool cave at the back of a remote Italian beach. Her skin had tanned to the colour and texture of a ripe peach and his was tending towards fresh young olives. And they continued to eat each other through the hot summer, in layers, like Neapolitan ice cream. But as the summer

season drew to a close, the affair started to melt. Before long he was just another photo in an album.

Before long stripes were running into a knee high sock which crept under a smart grey trouser leg which felt like fine silk. She tried to remember where the grey wool had come from. Somewhere on the Silk Road. Ah! yes, Tashkent. Now she remembered the mahogany-eyed Mongol who fell for her. Didn't want her to leave him. Swore he would kill himself if she did. Obviously he didn't because the following Christmas he sent her a yak but it was confiscated by the customs at Dover. She carried on knitting, enjoying the feel of the silk and soon she was finishing the other leg.

Now his waist had to be indented severely to emphasis the shoulder blades which had to be wide and powerful. Working into each stitch a couple of times, Jane managed to make the two shoulder pads mould into perfect lunar-type mounds. It was getting on for one o'clock in the morning and she began to wonder if she would finish in time to take him to bed.

She stared out at the night sky. It was a beautiful shade of dark blue, like Waterman's ink running into parchment and this was exactly the effect she managed to create for his shirt. Then, suddenly, she made a mistake and dropped a load of stitches as she'd forgotten whether she wanted him to be dressed or undressed. Then she remembered. Dressed! The thought of unravelling the wool to reveal his finely contoured body gave her an added incentive.

It was very tricky picking up the lost stitches but after a few tries, she managed. Further down, she cast on ten sets of seven stitches in pink wool to start the fingers. But no sooner had she managed to attach the two hands, to his dangling arms, than they were desperately trying to grab hold of her waist. She pushed them into the sleeves to keep them out of the way until she'd finished him off.

He had to have a large forehead showing intelligence and a pair of cheekbones like carved snow. She'd read a lot about phrenology and the world of the occult. In fact, the pattern she was attempting to use, she'd found between the pages of a book called 'Isis Unveiled' which was written by a Madam Blavatsky at the beginning of the 1900's, soon

after she finished studying ancient metaphysical secrets in the mountains of Tibet. During four years, the old masters had revealed many of their secrets to her. She also learnt a lot about making clothes, including weaving, dying and philosophically speaking, how to knit your heart's desire.

His eyelashes would have to be the colour of liquorice, ready to lick open. She didn't bother casting on the ears. Men never listened anyway. These would appear to be hidden by his mop of dark brown hair, created by thick strands of treacle-coloured wool. His nose, Roman, of course. She couldn't stand small noses.

By the time she reached his crown, her back was beginning to ache. It was then she realized she'd forgotten his neck. With a tired laugh, she slipped the final few stitches at the top of his head onto a safety pin and went back down to his shoulders.

Beginning at the back bone, she knitted in a rib pattern, creating a very strong neck with just a couple of 'knit two together' to create a slight tilt of the head to one side, for that look of vulnerability which she loved. Now you are probably wondering how she managed to keep such a heavyweight of a man on her knees. Well, he had in fact sunk gradually down onto the rug in front of her. It was then she was finally able to cast off the last three stitches of a hair curl on top of his head.

She thought about giving him a tie and was just about to cast on some scarlet wool when she remembered something her mother once said, 'Beware of the man who wears red ties, it's often a wolf in such disguise!' This was enough to stop her in her tracks. No! he was not going to have a tie. Instead she just opened his shirt and allowed a few dark, curly, chest hairs to protrude.

He was almost finished and lay quite relaxed against her chair leg. It was then she noticed his regular breathing pattern moving the cushion which she'd placed behind his head. She looked down into his face and saw a tiny, pink strand of wool hanging from his lips. As she took hold of it and pulled it slightly, his mouth opened. She thought she heard him whisper something...

Then her last task; his eyes had to be opened. She licked his black silk eyelashes very carefully, then pushed each lid open with her little finger. As she did so, she was somewhat surprised to see his eyes were, in fact, her own.



Peter Van Belle

Odilon Redon – from Shadow to Color

The image of the strange balloon floating across an equally mysterious landscape is the only thing I remember about the article in a magazine. I was about twelve when I saw it and the picture reminded me of the engravings found in my Jules Verne books. This was long before the Internet and I had to wait for a chance encounter in a second-hand book store to find the name of the artist: Odilon Redon.

I bought the book on him, and even without reading the text, I noticed an abrupt change in his output. First there were the dark charcoal drawings and lithographs, among them of the Eye-Balloon and the Smiling Spider. Then his works became riots of colors, often with sunny skies and outlandish flowers.

I preferred the earlier works – les noirs, he called them. The things they portrayed were dripping with mystery, often half-hidden in shadows. The latter works at the time, seemed a surrender to Impressionism. I couldn't see how Redon's works were fundamentally different from those of Monet or Renoir.

An Obscure Childhood

Bertrand Jean Redon had left France to make his fortune in New Orleans. There he married a Creole lady (a French-speaking woman not born in the home country). On the voyage back to France she was pregnant with a son. There was a storm on the way, and

Odilon would later write he wished it had delayed the ship so he could be born at sea, "... among the currents I would contemplate from the cliffs of Brittany ...". Instead he was born ashore in 1840 as Bertrand Jean Redon. He bore his father's name, but later changed it to a version of mother's Odile.

He grew up on the family estate of Peyrelebade, in the Medoc region north of Bordeaux. He described it as a silent and lonely landscape of melancholy roads through oceans of dirt. He regretted the influence the landscape had on his life and art.

Melancholy and weak is how he described himself as a child, preferring silence and shadows, often hiding. At times he'd head out into the countryside, lie down and watch the clouds. Though he described his father as harsh, he wrote afterwards he understood he was too prone to the same melancholy as himself. When they were outside together, his father would point out the fantastical shapes clouds made and tell of his travels.

So his feelings towards both his father and the place he grew up in were already ambiguous. He never mentions his mother in his journals, but does tell how his nanny in Paris would take him to the art galleries. He especially liked the dramatic works of Delacroix. What he doesn't mention in his journals is that as a child he suffered from epilepsy, and that his cure was registered as a miracle at a local Catholic shrine.

Because of ill-health he only started school at eleven, where he said he was bored to tears. The only school for him was art school. His first teacher told him to always remain himself, and that expression and effect were everything. He introduced him to the work of Gustave Moreau, among others. His first works were of landscapes, battles, lost beings in rocky landscapes. "A world of despair, dark, steeped in Romanticism that still fogs me today ..."



La peur (fear) by Odilon Redon, 1865

He met the botanist Armand Clavaud, who would become a lifelong friend, and introduced him to the works of Edgar Allan Poe, Baudelaire, Flaubert, as well as Baruch Spinoza and Charles Darwin. He also studied architecture for a while, which he credited with being able to bring a visual logic to his imaginative paintings. He tried his hand at sculpture, but wrote that it “dies under the breath of the Infinite.”

He served in the French army during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, but it didn't seem to have made that much of an impact on him. He wrote that the risk of death elevated the spirit, and saw this as proof of the afterlife. He mentions Jesus here and there, but there's no evidence of a deep spiritual life.

In the Provinces

Though isolated in Paris, he was accepted into the art circles of the south of France. For a while he lived at Barbizon, and met Corot, and he also became a pupil of Bresdin. Corot told him to always place a certainty next to an uncertainty. Bresdin told him: “See that chimney-pipe, what does it say to you? If you have the power to observe it well, and understand it, you imagine the most bizarre and strange subject, and if it is based upon and remains within its limits of this little bit of wall, your dream will be living. Art is there.”

Dürer’s Melancholia was the prime example of the art he strove for, what he called his “art suggestive”. It had to be deliberately enigmatic, with vague titles. He noticed that while trying to faithfully reproduce an object he felt a compulsion to process it through the imagination. At the time, the 1870’s, the art movement most in fashion was Realism, but Redon failed to produce any meaningful work under its influence. Redon understood the flaws of Realism: that it is time-bound, also arising from the same Renaissance desire to study the outer world as did science, it tends to remain on the surface. Instead he “submitted himself to the torments of his imagination and the surprises the chalk presented under his hand.”

He married a woman who was a creole, like his mother. He writes how her love soothed the travails he had suffered before. The birth of his son Jean brought acceptance into the community at Peyrlebade, as the local people saw him as someone who’d settled down. Sadly, the child died, which understandably affected him deeply.



Albrecht Dürer's *Melancolia*

From that time (1878) dates “The Guardian Spirit of the Waters”, part of his first collection “Au Reve” (In the Dream). A giant head with ridiculously small wings hovers over a small sailing boat, the gulls around it suggest it’s a fishing vessel. The light falls differently on the head than on the sea. On the head it highlights the large eye. The expression of the face suggest benevolence, and there’s even a slight halo around it. We know of his love of the sea, which clearly in him also symbolized the subconscious. It presented an escape, a refuge, and an inspiration, hence the wings and the disembodied head. The way he presents it in this picture imparts a surreal quality to the piece. No wonder the Surrealists saw him as one of their predecessors.



Birth of “les noirs”

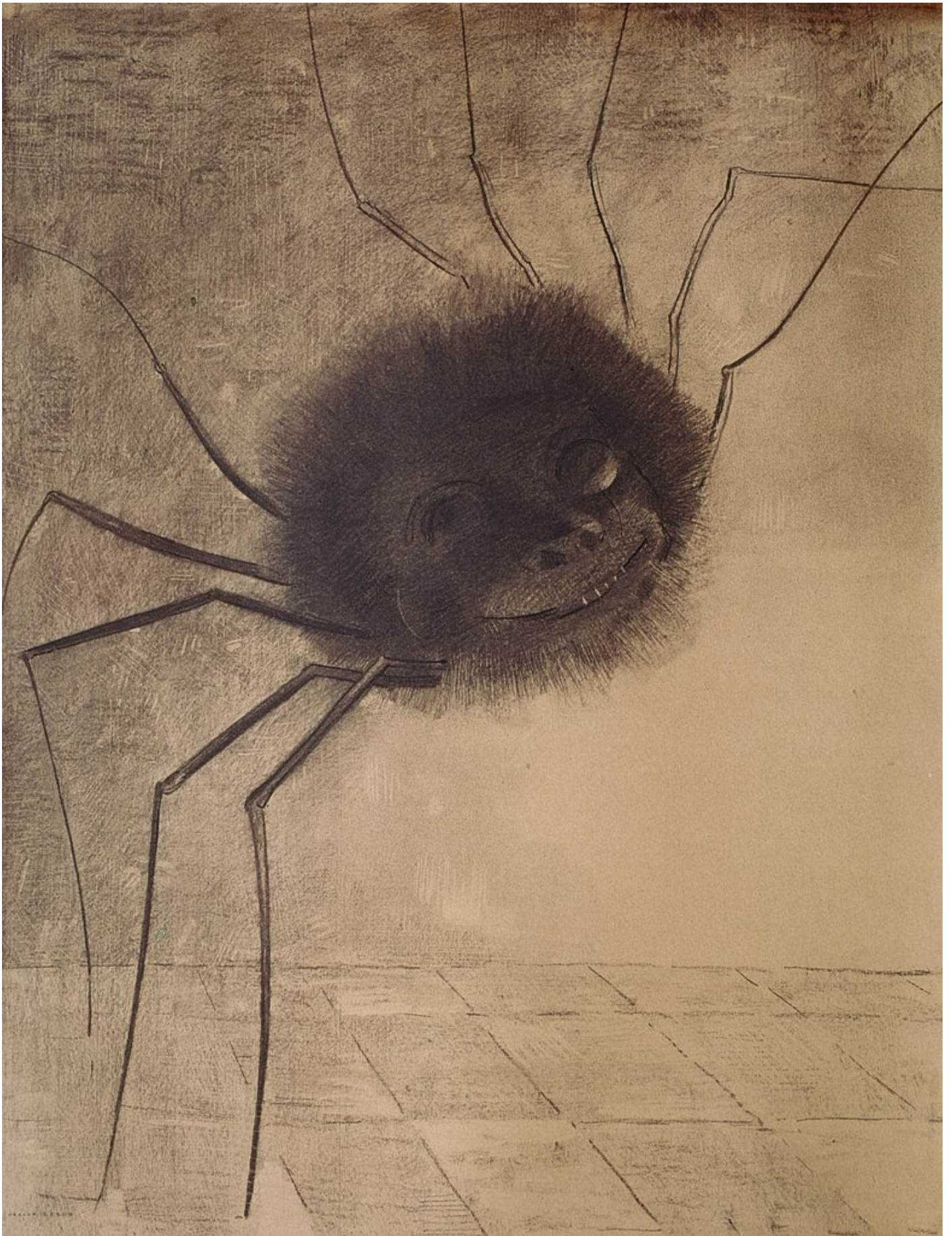
In 1881 he visited an exhibition of the original inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego in Paris. They struck him as “barbares sublimes” – proud, arrogant, cruel, powerful, and grotesque, yet living a life “pure et simple.” From this time dates The Cactus Man. When one looks at the few photographs of the Selnak, the tribe that lived in Tierra del Fuego, it’s clear he based it on a portrait of one of them. That he is covered in spines and is just a head in a pot is sadly prophetic. The tribes in Tierra del Fuego were exterminated in a deliberate genocide started in the 1890’s, ten years after Odilon saw them.



The pot itself shows an Amazon killing a man, which implies the Cactus Man was killed by a woman who then planted his head in a pot. To me the face bears an expression of irritation and torpor. The composition itself is strangely asymmetrical, with the right edge of the pot cut off. As in the Guardian of the Waters, the shadows don't quite make sense. Like that picture it features a disembodied head, but here it is confined, no escape is possible. Because of what is depicted on the pot, and the phallic shape of the neck and head, as well as the suggestion of decapitation, the image also suggests castration.

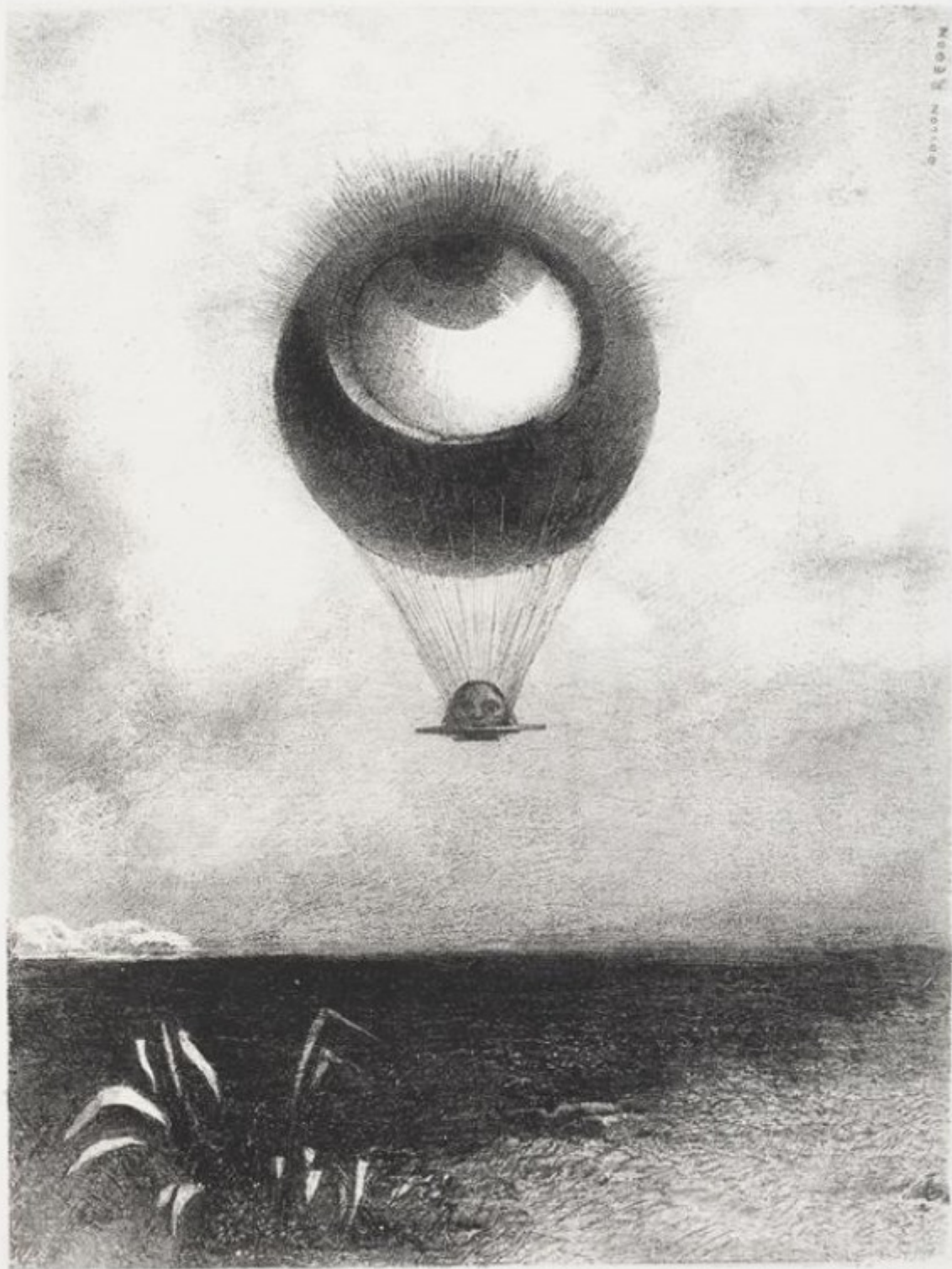
That year he held the first exhibition of his work, which drew little notice, except from the writer Joris-Karel Huysmans. Huysmans also opposed the Naturalist movement and in his novel *à Rebours* he has his hero, exhausted by debauchery, withdraw from society and collect depraved works of art, among them Redon's Smiling Spider, which is described in the novel.

The image is of a giant spider, three legs resting on the floor, three touching the ceiling, in a room with floor tiles. The body is one big head with sharp teeth. From its dark eyes, the shape of the mouth, and the hair, I interpret it as the head of a grinning monkey. Now we're far removed from the serenity of the Guardian Spirit of the Waters. This is a true portrayal of a nightmare. It should be noted that the spider in many systems of dream interpretation is a symbol for the devouring mother figure, who won't let go of her child.



The next year he published a collection of prints dedicated to Edgar Allen Poe. This contained a print of the Eye-Balloon. The image itself is not connected to any story, and he would later claim he wasn't interested in the American author. Yet Poe always had a greater reputation in France than in the English-speaking world. His works were translated by two of the most important French poets of the age: Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé. The latter practically worshipped Poe.

The serenity of the image is offset by the fact that the balloon carries a platter with a severed head. This suggests the story of John the Baptist. The image of the balloon, and the title, suggest a spirituality, yet that way he represents it adds a sinister touch to it.



Imp. Lemercier à Paris de la Seine 37.

l'œil, comme un ballon bizarre se dirige vers L'INFINI.

The Eye-balloon, as printed in à Poe

Among writers he became known as a creator of monsters, which offended him. Bristling at interpretations of his works, he called them purely artistic, and claimed he deliberately chose vague titles to confuse the public. His creations, he said, were based on observations of nature. At other times, he claimed the medium dictated what was portrayed. This ties in with what Jung said about artistic patients: that their hands often solve the riddles their minds couldn't. One wonders why he felt such a strong urge to conceal what his works were about. It seems to hark back to his childhood, when he liked to hide. No wonder then that eyes play such a prominent role in his works.

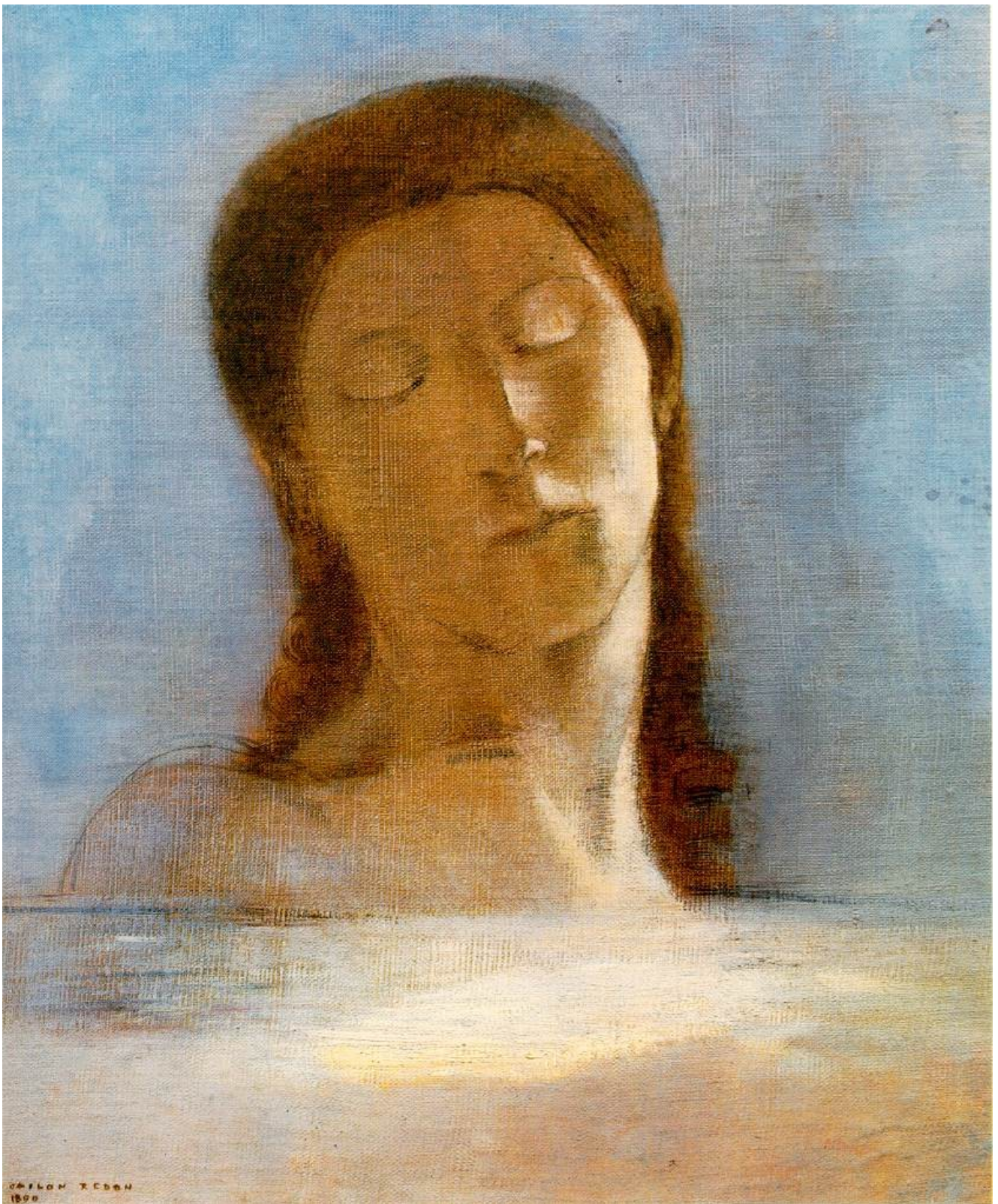
In 1898, after the death of his father and a lawsuit with his mother, he loses the estate of Peyrlebade. He feels uprooted by this, but is relieved at the same time. He notes that this will have an effect on his art, but at the same time feels art and happiness don't go together.

Flight into color

In 1890 he paints *Closed Eyes*. It has muted, shimmering colors, achieved by scraping off the applied paint so the texture of the canvas shows through. As in later works, and in contrast to the eyes in his previous monochrome works, the figure has its eyes closed. It suggests a turning to the inner world and shutting out the outer. The picture is full of ambiguities, which the technique reinforces. It is not clear if it's a man or a woman, we can't tell whether the figure sticks out of water or sand, the low viewpoint gives a figure a monumentality, as if we're looking at a buried giant.

The decade saw a rejection of Realism and Impressionism, and attempts at a renewed spirituality. It saw the birth of many occult organizations like The Golden Dawn and the Theosophic Society. In France one of the most famous one was Rose + Croix, which organized exhibitions and recitals of spiritually minded artists. One of its members was Eric Satie, who wrote piano music for their ceremonies. Redon, however, never seemed interested in such organized manifestations of spirituality.

Redon had always been a critic of Impressionism, of which he said "its ceiling was too low". Now he became part of the main art movement of the decade, Symbolism. He got the opportunity to work with its main poet Stéphane Mallarmé, who stressed the importance of ambiguity in art. Referring to his poems, he said naming an object was to suppress three-quarters of the enjoyment. To him, suggestion was the key.



Closed Eyes – Musée d'Orsay

In 1903 Redon paints Flower Clouds. The same year he received the Légion d'Honneur and the state purchased his Closed Eyes. His status as an artist was now official and he was invited to exhibit in Vienna, then one of the art centers of the world.

Ophelia Among the Flowers from 1905 is a particularly interesting work, as it gives a glimpse into the conceptual process. There's always an interplay between the practice, the technique of art, and the artist's intention, his or her goal. Artists may start with a set goal, but the creative process often steers the artist in another direction. This is in evidence in this work, as, when rotated to one side, it clearly shows a vase with flowers on a small table. Here too the female figure has her eyes closed. She is enclosed inside the landscape, facing what seems a being made of flowers.



Ophelia among the Flowers – pastel on paper



Ophelia tilted 90 degrees

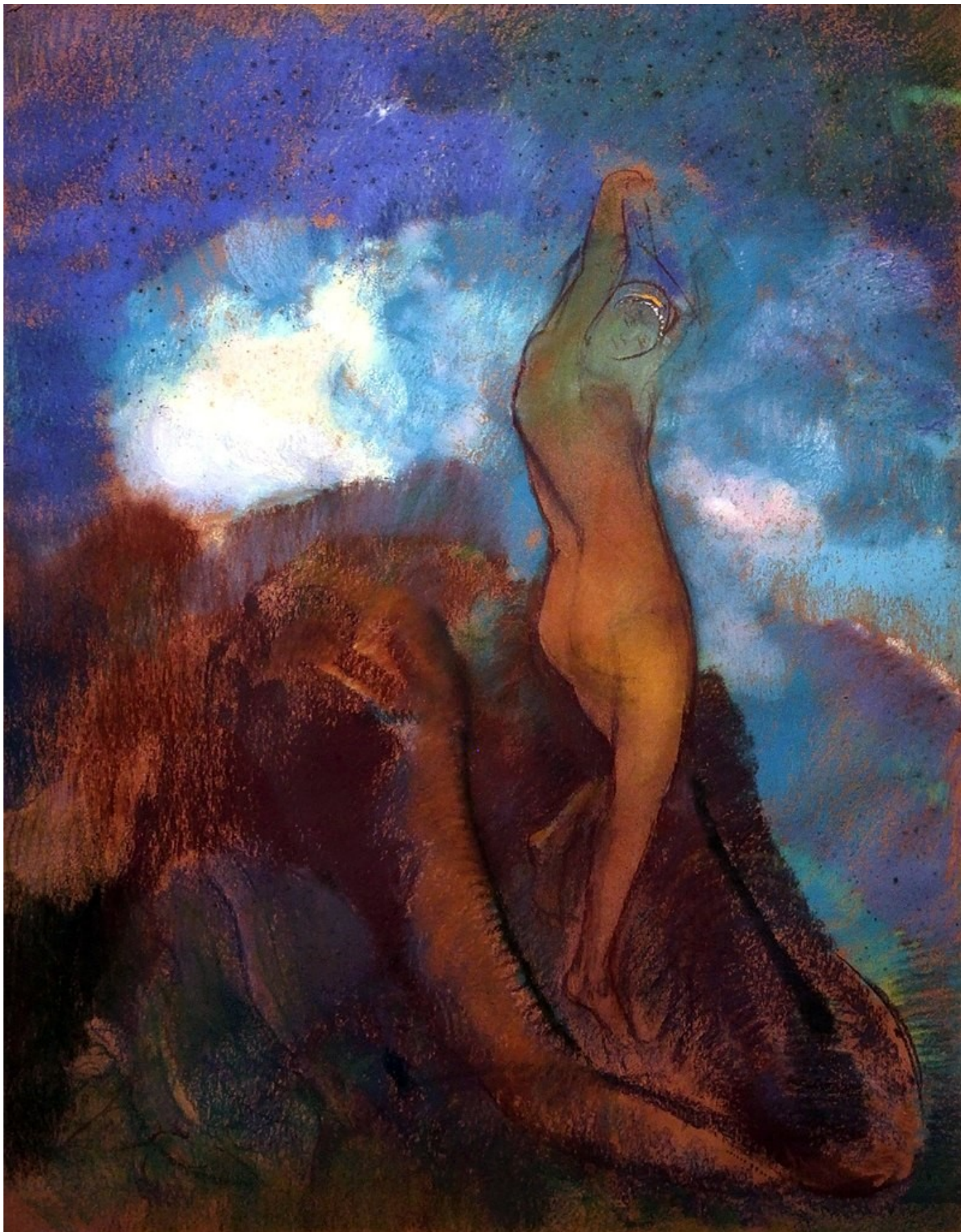
In 1910 he paints *Roger & Angelica*. Inspiration was the Renaissance poem *Orlando Furioso* which contains the story of an Asian princess, Angelica, being chained to a rock and saved from a sea-monster by an African prince Ruggiero. Obviously it's based on the Greek legend of Andromeda. The only distinct figure in the painting is Angelica, the other figures are engulfed by the colors that symbolize their battle. He reduces the stimulus, the story of the battle, to color. The three figures are each in their own world. The sea monster is only hinted at in the bowl of green, yellows and blues. Roger is practically invisible in an earthy cloud. Angelica, like Ophelia, is surrounded by flowers. Beneath her is a dark blue that lightens into the lighter color of the rock and the sky above her. As in *Ophelia*, this shape suggests a flower pot.

The same year, he painted the *Birth of Venus*, another picture where the woman plays a central role. Though the female body is portrayed extensively, the head and face are only rendered sketchily. Though he painted portraits, in his other works he could never portray people as individuals, which suggests that at its core, his abstractions were caused by emotional inhibitions. It should be remembered that Venus was born from the severed genitals of the god Uranus. The picture shows Venus emerging from a shell, according to the established iconography. The shell in this case resembles a vagina.

In his later years, after 1912, he became reluctant to talk about his long struggle for recognition. He blamed himself for being too timid. At a conference in Holland in 1913 he did mention that many people drew religious inspiration from his early works, his "noirs". He called them expressions of misery without cause, which sounds like depression. He said he'd drawn them for himself and that they were inspired by an invisible world around him.



Roger and Angelica – pastel on paper



The Birth of Venus – pastel on paper – Musée des Beaux-Art de la Ville de Paris

The Cyclops is a work from 1914 and shows his habitual merging of the enchanting and disturbing. Based on the legend of Acis and Galatea, it has the Cyclops Polyphemus spying on the nymph. The legend goes like this: the mortal Acis falls in love with the nymph Galatea. The jealous cyclops then kills Acis, but Galatea turns him into a river spirit.

In the painting we seem to have caught Polyphemus in the act of spying on Galatea. The Cyclops is presented as far bigger than is traditional. Yet the menace of his size is offset by the embarrassed and bashful expression on his face. The face itself is the most disturbing part of the painting. It is hardly human: there's no nose and the mouth is on the chin. As in other paintings the woman looks away from the male figure and the viewer, and is surrounded by flowers. The Cyclops of Greek antiquity is a symbol of brutality, yet at the same time they were descendants of the god Poseidon. In this legend he stands for raw male sexuality, while Acis represents the civilized, tender side of the male. It is also telling that even though the brutal side of masculinity triumphs, the female is able resurrect the tender male, and turn him into something the Cyclops cannot kill.

In this period, he also made paintings of flowers and butterflies. This was through the influence of his friend Fantin-Latour. The fantastical quality of these pictures varies between the abstract and realistic.



The Cyclops – oil on canvas - Kröller-Müller Museum

Odilon Redon died at home in Paris in 1916. His reputation among Modernists is mainly based on his earlier works, especially the demonic ones like the Cactus Man and the Smiling Spider. This often represents an attempt to exorcise these dark thoughts, but at the same time the artist seeks to master, to gain dominion over, them, and so increase his own powers. The same idea underpins the representations of dangerous animals in prehistoric paintings, or in the portrayal and worship of malevolent gods like Set or Sebek in Ancient Egypt.

The flight from reality would then not correspond to the prevailing idea of it at the time. This idea came from the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, who stated that art was a way to escape the suffering of life, a way “not to die of reality.”

His artistic transformation points to a desire to engage with the outside world. He’s ascended from the subconscious. Matured as man and artist, he emerges into the light. His attempt to unite his inner world with the outer is an impulse of art in general. This comes from a desire for what Wilhelm Worringer called *selbstbestätigung* (an assertion of the self), a desire for recognition of one’s place in the world. By reducing reference points to reality, Redon made his art timeless.

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Flowers – pastel on paper – 1914 - MOMA



The Green Death - Odilon Redon

Stéphane Mallarmé

Les Fenêtres

Mallarmé was the quintessential Symbolist poet, a template for others across the world, among them William Butler Yeats, and The Windows is a quintessentially Symbolist poem, full of world-weariness and disgust at the physical world.

Las du triste hôpital et de l'encens fétide
Qui monte en la blancheur banale des rideaux
Vers le grand crucifix ennuyé du mur vide,
Le moribond, parfois, redresse son vieux dos,
Se traîne et va, moins pour chauffer sa pourriture
Que pour voir du soleil sur les pierres, coller
Les poils blancs et les os de sa maigre figure
Aux fenêtres qu'un beau rayon clair veut hâler,
Et sa bouche, fiévreuse et d'azur bleu vorace,
Telle, jeune, elle alla respirer son trésor,
Une peau virginale et de jadis ! encrasse
D'un long baiser amer les tièdes carreaux d'or.
Ivre, il vit, oubliant l'horreur des saintes huiles,
Les tisanes, l'horloge et le lit infligé,
La toux ; et quand le soir saigne parmi les tuiles,
Son œil, à l'horizon de lumière gorgé,
Voit des galères d'or, belles comme des cygnes,
Sur un fleuve de pourpre et de parfums dormir
En berçant l'éclair fauve et riche de leurs lignes
Dans un grand nonchaloir chargé de souvenir !
Ainsi, pris du dégoût de l'homme à l'âme dure
Vautré dans le bonheur, où ses seuls appétits
Mangent, et qui s'entête à chercher cette ordure
Pour l'offrir à la femme allaitant ses petits,
Je fuis et je m'accroche à toutes les croisées
D'où l'on tourne le dos à la vie, et, béni,
Dans leur verre, lavé d'éternelles rosées,
Que dore la main chaste de l'Infini
Je me mire et me vois ange ! et je meurs, et j'aime

— Que la vitre soit l'art, soit la mysticité —
À renaître, portant mon rêve en diadème,
Au ciel antérieur où fleurit la Beauté !
Mais, hélas ! Ici-bas est maître : sa hantise
Vient m'écœurer parfois jusqu'en cet abri sûr,
Et le vomissement impur de la Bêtise
Me force à me boucher le nez devant l'azur.
Est-il moyen, ô Moi qui connais l'amertume,
D'enfoncer le cristal par le monstre insulté,
Et de m'enfuir, avec mes deux ailes sans plume
— Au risque de tomber pendant l'éternité ?

WINDOWS

Tired of the sad hospital and fetid incense
Rising in the banal pallid of the curtains
To the large boring crucifix on the empty wall,
The dying man, at times, straightens his old back
Drags himself off, not to warm his puss
But to watch the sun on the stones, glues
the white hairs and bones of his thin face
To the window that a beautiful bright ray wants to warm
And his feverish mouth hungering voracious for the azure blue
As he, when young, breathed his treasures,
A virginal skin of yore! now fouls with
Long bitter kiss the warm gold panes

Drunk, alive, forgetting the horrors of sainted oils
The tinctures, the clock, and imposed bed,
the coughing; and when the evening bleeds among on the roof-tiles,
His eye seeks the horizon engorged with light,
Sees golden galleys, beautiful like swans,
Dreaming on a purple flow of perfumes
Undulating the wild and rich shine of their lines
In grand lassitude rich with memories!
Thus, seized by disgust for the hard-hearted man
Wallowing in happiness, his only appetites
To eat, and stubbornly seeking filth
To offer it to a woman suckling the little ones
I flee and cling to all window stiles
Where one turns one's back on life and blessed,
In their glass, washed with eternal dews,
Which gilds the chaste aurora of the Infinite

Mirrored, I see an angel! I die and love -
As if the glass were art, or the mystic
I'm reborn, wearing my dream as diadem,
To the ancient sky where Beauty flowers!

But, alas, what is down here is king: its spirit
Comes to disgust me at times in this safe shelter,
And the impure vomit of Stupidity
Forces me to hold my nose before the azure
Is there a way, oh me, who knows of bitterness
To ram the crystal into the insulted monster,
And to flee on featherless wings -
To risk falling forever?

Translated by Peter Van Belle

Paul Murgatroyd

Anytown, UK

Late one morning the Nymphs of the North shimmer into being and weep tears of starshine in Whitley Bay. Keening for their dying trees, wild-eyed Dryads line The Promenade. Naked Naiads rage through the town, foretelling the end of their rivers and streams and springs, and cursing the plastic signs for Morrisons Petrol Station, Iron Hand Tattoo, Valentinos Liqueure Coffee, Kwikfit Exhausts Tyres Servicing, Betfred, Subway and Pantrinis Fish and Chips Est 1920.

However, the town is blindly dreaming of the glory days of deckchairs and donkeys, of beach huts and hundreds of Glaswegian ship-workers down there on their holidays with their families.

And now the Nymphs are gone,
and only their wails remain,
again and again
splintering the air,
unheard.

In the afternoon the Green Man suddenly appears, pacing the scarred and sagging pavements. His leafy lips speak of portents, and He raises a branching arm to point them out: on the roofs of all the charity shops rows of carrion crows with glittering green eyes; Styx-black horses slowly drawing massive hearses across the Mini Golf and Foot Golf course; rivulets of blood flowing up the snow-white dome of Spanish City.

The passers-by refuse to see anything strange in all that
or in a walking, talking tree.

Bursting into beauty parlours, He cries: 'You who have known only surpassing vanity, know now that humanity is murdering true beauty – nature's beauty.' But the women are only interested in botox and vampire facials and chromes, holographic five pounds.

In B & M Bargains He rampages along the aisles, shouting out: 'Savage shopping! You're snapping up extinction. Consumerism kills.' And the shoppers carry on consuming.

That night the great god Pan looms over the dull buildings.

A crimson phrase flares from His reed-pipes, forces everyone outdoors, to hear the iron of His words: 'Wound the world no more! Or the oceans will overflow, the heavens will flame, and Earth will writhe; then death and decay will hold illimitable sway, and only silence will sound over the land.'

He points upwards and paints the future on the clouds:

their town drowned;
and beyond it
a desolate immensity,
lanced by sullen suns.

Then someone yells: 'Piss off, man! Not fucking climate change again! I'm fucking sick of that shite.'

People agree, and jeer, hostile, angry.

A few stay, taking selfies or looking up fearfully at the sky. The rest rush back inside, to watch Corrie, to get back on TikTok and Twitter and Instagram, to get pissed.

Meanwhile the swollen sea creeps further than ever up the beach, reaching out avid acid fingers for The Promenade.



Leon Spilliaert - Black Marine - 1900

Arthur Symons

At Dieppe

An English art critic who followed the French scene during the Symbolist era, he also wrote poems. This one shows a marked contrast to the one by Mallarmé in that it stays close to the real world. It ends on an intellectual coda, almost an apology for the descriptive poems that went before.

AFTER SUNSET.

THE sea lies quieted beneath

The after-sunset flush

That leaves upon the heaped grey clouds

The grape's faint purple blush.

Pale, from a little space in heaven

Of delicate ivory,

The sickle-moon and one gold star

Look down upon the sea.

ON THE BEACH.

NIGHT, a grey sky, a ghostly sea,

The soft beginning of the rain:

Black on the horizon, sails that wane

Into the distance mistily.

The tide is rising, I can hear

The soft roar broadening far along;

It cries and murmurs in my car

A sleepy old forgotten song.

Softly the stealthy night descends,

The black sails fade into the sky:

Is this not, where the sea-line ends,

The shore-line of infinity?

I cannot think or dream: the grey

Unending waste of sea and night,

Dull, impotently infinite,

Blots out the very hope of day.

RAIN ON THE DOWN.

NIGHT, and the down by the sea,

And the veil of rain on the down;

And she came through the mist and the rain to me

From the safe warm lights of the town.

The rain shone in her hair,

And her face gleamed in the rain;

And only the night and the rain were there

As she came to me out of the rain.

BEFORE THE SQUALL.

THE wind is rising on the sea,

White flashes dance along the deep,

That moans as if uneasily

It turned in an unquiet sleep.

Ridge after rocky ridge upheaves

A toppling crest that falls in spray

Where the tormented beach receives

The buffets of the sea's wild play.

On the horizon's nearing line,

Where the sky rests, a visible wall.

Grey in the offing, I divine

The sails that fly before the squall.

UNDER THE CLIFFS.

BRIGHT light to windward on the horizon's verge;

To leeward, stormy shadows, violet-black,

And the wide sea between

A vast unfurrowed field of windless green;

The stormy shadows flicker on the track

Of phantom sails that vanish and emerge.

I gaze across the sea, remembering her.

I watch the white sun walk across the sea,

This pallid afternoon,

With feet that tread as whitely as the moon,

And in his fleet and shining feet I see

The footsteps of another voyager.

REQUIES.

O IS it death or life

That sounds like something strangely known

In this subsiding out of strife,

This slow sea-monotone?

A sound, scarce heard through sleep,

Murmurous as the August bees

That fill the forest hollows deep

About the roots of trees.

O is it life or death,

O is it hope or memory,

That quiets all things with this breath

Of the eternal sea?

Ian C. Smith

Cork, screwed

Driving an Australian highway's lengthy stretches alone after visiting our growing children, I drum to Radiohead's ethereal swarm. A truck's headlights fixate on my mirror. Seeking stimulation from these nothing happening days I detour to an irresponsible time when we stood in the room where I first drew breath, and then in my first classroom, before travelling on after hibernation in our attic above an English village of time-weathered masonry perfection. Together, we crisscrossed latitude and longitude's grid, entered the brick bowels of the world's entrepots, viewed phosphorescence below harbour lights from a belvedere, cities clinging to coasts, our backpacked odysseys anticipating bliss around every bend.

When I arrive home to the leafy lair where we settled, those years heavy with silence now, I shall bank the wood stove, escape into sleep to dream of exotica, awaken to currawongs' chorus, these crows different from the ominous rooks of memory. Thom Yorke's voice resounds from gaps in roadside trees, this blundering through waning days, miles I cover, repeating like poor Oscar Wilde's on his treadmill. Oh how he must have remembered more salubrious days. My selfish desire to arrest sight, smell, and sound, something obliquely akin to the carnal, exposed me as promiscuous.

Vehicles come, pass, wan glow from the same old houses alongside this too-familiar long haul. Music invoking the snowlight of that stone village, windscreen rain appears like unexpected tears. A memory of my rigid English mother's hopelessly high expectations alights. A cork seduced by chaos, the poetry of place, I triggered her quick wrath, bobbing off again, forgetting my raincoat at Sunday school, soaking my best clothes. That truck's searching lights flood my buffeted pod like a biblical comeuppance.



The Dream-Polyp - Odilon Redon

Berceuse Macabre

Marie Krysinska

Perhaps not surprisingly, I have an affinity with artists who try to bridge cultures or languages. The following poem is by a Polish woman who wrote in French. Here too there is a world-weariness, but to her characters there is no solace beyond the grave.

À Maurice Vaucaire.

Qu'elles sont cruelles et lentes, les heures !

Et qu'il est lourd — l'ennui de la mort !

Les heures silencieuses et froides, qui tombent dans
l'Éternité, comme des gouttes de pluie dans la mer.

Donne-moi la main, ô ma sœur, et viens sous la Lune calmante, parler de ceux que nous
avons laissés seuls quand nous sommes descendues dans la tombe.

— Un sommeil très lourd m'engourdit, et je fais un rêve qui durera toujours ; — rendors-toi,
ma sœur, — nos aimés nous ont oubliées,

— J'ai mis mon cœur dans son cœur et je suis sienne à travers la Mort.

— Ces murs sont hauts, et la terre des vivants est loin ; — rendors toi, ma sœur.

— J'ai senti des diamants humides tomber sur ma bouche desséchée, — c'est mon ami qui
pleurait.

— Rendors-toi, pauvre sœur ; — c'est la pluie qui violait ton cercueil.

— Ô Souvent j'entends des sanglots lointains ; — c'est mon aimé qui gémit, hanté par nos
chers souvenirs.

— Non, c'est le hibou qui jette un cri dans la nuit profonde ; — profonde comme nos
tombeaux, et comme l'oubli de ceux qui nous avaient aimées ; — rendors-toi, ma sœur.

Macabre Lullaby

The hours, how cruel and long

How heavy, the boredom of death

The hours silent and cold, that drop into

Eternity, like raindrops in the sea

Take my hand, sister, come with me under the calming moon, lets talk about those who left us now we've descended into the grave.

A very heavy sleep engulfs me, I had a dream that lasted forever; return to sleep, sister, our loved ones have forgotten us.

I put my heart into his, and I'm his beyond death.

Its walls are high, and the land of the living is far away: go to sleep again, sister

I felt wet diamonds fall on my dried-out mouth; it was my lover crying.

Return to sleep, sister, it was the rain violating your coffin.

Often I heard distant sobs, it's my lover whimpering, haunted by dear memories.

No, it's the owl crying into the deep night, deep as our graves, and the forgetfulness of our loved ones; go back to sleep, sister.

Translated by Peter Van Belle

CONTRIBUTORS

Pauline Barbieri was shortlisted for the Bridport Poetry Prize by the poet laureate, Sir Andrew Motion and twice for the Exeter Poetry Prize by Jo Shapcott and Lawrence Sail, respectively. She has had six collections of poetry published and was shortlisted for the Cinnamon Press Novel Awards for her book, 'Smoke and Gold'.

Peter Van Belle is the editor of The Klecksograph and has published poems and short stories in Great Britain, Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, the US, and Belgium. As a child he lived in the US, but now he lives in Belgium.

Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) influenced by Charles Baudelaire, lived in England in his twenties and later became an English teacher in France. Throughout his artistic career he was plagued by crises which led to years of silence. The poem Windows is from his first collection.

After a long career as a professor of Classics (specialising in Latin literature) **Paul Murgatroyd** retired four years ago and started writing novels and short stories. Seventeen of the latter have been published or accepted for publication, along with three poems in English and over fifty of his Latin poems.

Arthur Symons (1865-1945) born in Wales. In 1889 he moved to Paris with Havelock Ellis. In 1891 joined the Rhymers Club, founded by Yeats. In 1899 he published The Symbolist Movement in Literature.

Ian C Smith's work has been published in BBC Radio 4 Sounds, The Dalhousie Review, Ginosko Literary Journal, Griffith Review, San Pedro River Review, Southword, The Stony Thursday Book, & Two Thirds North. His seventh book is wonder sadness madness joy, Ginninderra (Port Adelaide). He writes in the Gippsland Lakes area of Victoria, and on Flinders Island.

Marie Kryszewska (Warsaw 1857-Paris 1908) left Warsaw to study music at the Paris conservatory. Became a pianist at a cabaret where she would recite her poems. She was one of the pioneers of free verse in French poetry, but received little credit or attention.

END OF ISSUE NINE OF THE KLEKSOGRAPH



Butterflies - Odilon Redon