

ODILON REDON

French, 1840–1916

ODILON REDON

A Collection of Black and White

REDON AND HIS INTER- NAL PSYCHE

*My drawings inspire, and are not to be defined.
They place us, as does music, in the ambiguous
realm of the undetermined.*

Redon's work represents an exploration of his internal feelings and psyche. He wanted to "place the visible at the service of the invisible"; thus, although his work seems filled with strange beings and Grotesque Dichotomies, his aim was to represent pictorially the ghosts of his mind.

"Those were the pictures bearing the signature: Odilon Redon. They held, between their gold-edged frames of unpolished pear-wood, undreamed-of images: a Merovingian-type head, resting upon a cup; a bearded man, reminiscent both of a Buddhist priest and a public orator, touching an enormous cannon-ball with his finger; a spider with a human face lodged in the center of its body. Then there were charcoal sketches which delved even deeper into the terrors of fever-ridden dreams. Here, on an enormous die, a melancholy eyelid winked; over there stretched dry and arid landscapes, calcined plains, heaving and quaking ground, where volcano erupted into rebellious clouds,

under foul and murky skies; sometimes the subjects seemed to have been taken from the nightmarish dreams of science, and hark back to prehistoric times; monstrous flora bloomed on the rocks; everywhere, in among the erratic blocks and glacial mud, were figures whose simian appearance—heavy jawbone, protruding brows, receding forehead, and flattened skull top—recalled the ancestral head, the head of the first Quaternary Period, the head of man when he was still fructivorous and without speech, the contemporary of the mammoth, of the rhinoceros with septate nostrils, and of the giant bear. These drawings defied classification; unheeding, for the most part, of the limitations of painting, they ushered in a very special type of the fantastic, one born of sickness and delirium." Redon also describes his work as ambiguous and undefinable.

L'OEUVRE LITHO- GRAPHI- QUE D'ODILON REDON

Jules Destrée

- 1 | The Lost Angel Then Opened Black Winds
- 2 | The Misshapen Polyp Floated on the Shores, a Sort of Smiling and Hideous Cyclops
- 3 | The Marsh Flower, a Sad Human Head
- 4 | There were Also Embryonic Beings
- 5 | It's a Skull Crowned with Roses. It Dominates a Woman's Peraly- White Torso
- 6 | And All Manner of Frightful Creatures Arise
- 7 | A Strange Juggler
- 8 | Light
- 9 | The Reader

Pl. III.

ODILON REDON



Imp. Lemercier 1886 Paris

l'ange perdu ouvrit alors des AILES NOIRES

1 | The Lost Angel Then Opened Black Winds. 1886

Plate III from the portfolio Night

Lithography on the chine appliqué

16¼×12¾" (41×31.5cm)

Publisher: Probably the artist. Printer: Lemercier, Paris

When Redon first start with lithographs, he was virtually without prospects as an artist. He had spent the 1870's developing a highly personal, idiosyncratic art based on fantasy and reverie, but neither the public nor the avant-garde was ready to embrace his subjective visions. After the end of the Franc-Prussian War (1879-71), in which he had fought for the French Republic, Redon sought relief from the trauma of the conflict by retreating to the countryside and indulging his imagination in the creation of brooding, haunted figures. Charcoal, with its deep blacks, subtle gradations of tone and dense, powdery surfaces, had become his preferred medium for rendering these strange subjects. It was less specific more atmospherically ambiguous than the fussy pen-and-ink of breeds.

Understanding the historical role of the print as a medium of communication, Redon initially took up lithography as a means of transferring these charcoal drawing into prints. Recognizing that the reproducibility inherent in printed art meant it could be distributed widely, and acknowledging that the galleries and salons had no interest in exhibiting or selling his drawings, he thought of using printmaking is a means of circulating his imagery himself.

**The Misshapen Polyp Floated on the Shores,
a Sort of Smiling and Hideous Cyclops. 1883**

Plate III from the portfolio *The Origins*

Lithography on the chine appliqué

8¾ x 7¾" (21.3 x 19.9 cm)

Publisher: Probably by the artist. Printer: Lemercier, Paris

*I had earlier tried, in vain, to show
in the official Salons with the
numerous drawings I had completed,
which were lying dormant in my
folios. Fantin-Latour gave me the
excellent advice to reproduce them in
lithographic crayon; he even gave me,
out of kindness, a sheet of transfer
paper to make the tracing. I therefore
made my first Lithographs (in 1878)
In order to multiply my drawings.*



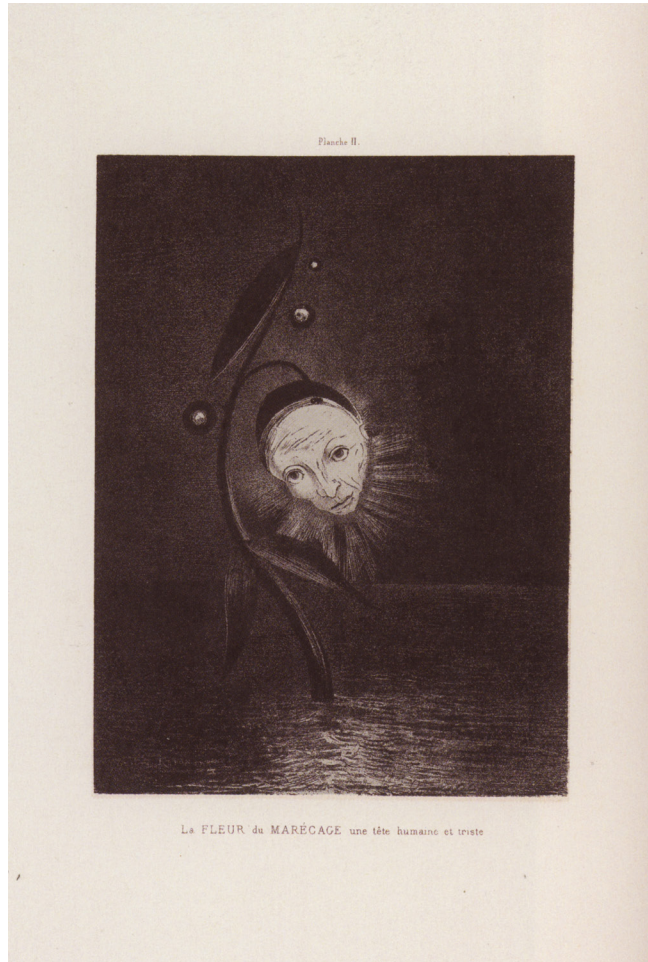
3 | The Marsh Flower, a Sad Human Head. 1885

Plate II from the portfolio Homage to Goya

Lithography on the chine appliqué

10¾×8½" (27.3×20.4 cm)

Publisher: Probably the artist, Paris. Printer: Lemercier, Paris



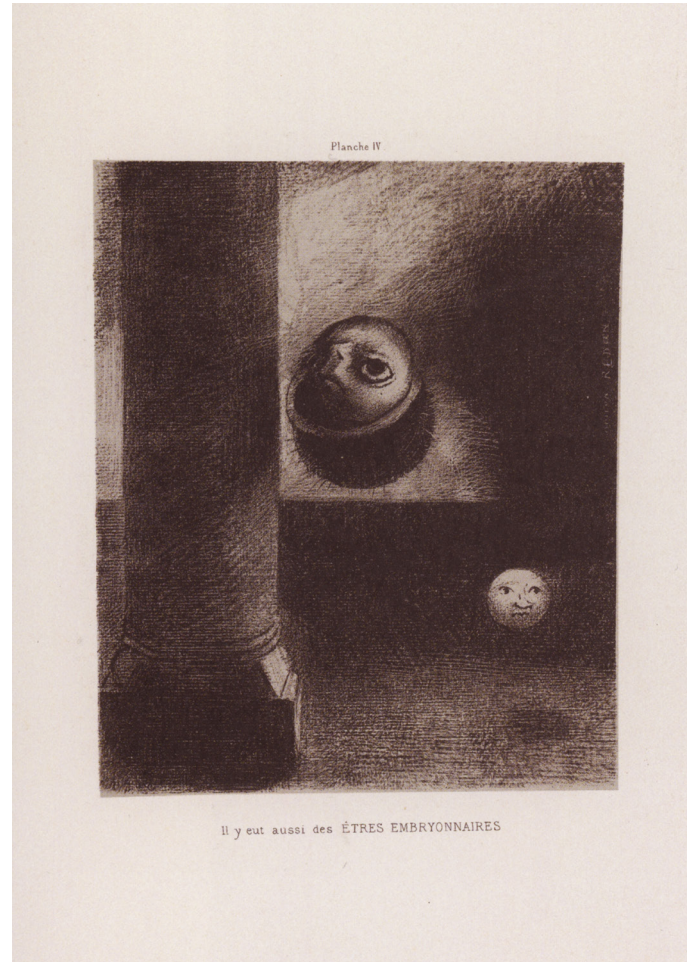
4 | There were Also Embryonic Beings. 1885

Plate IV from the portfolio Homage to Goya

Lithography on the chine appliqué

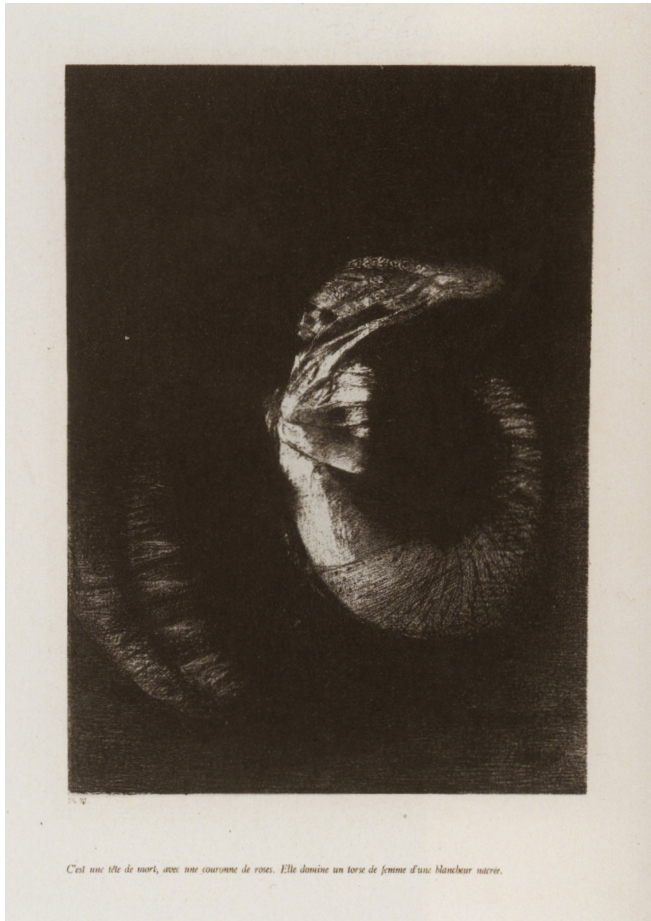
9¼×7½" (24×20 cm)

Publisher: Probably the artist, Paris. Printer: Lemercier, Paris



*In my dream,
I saw in the sky a face of mystery.
The marsh flower,
a sad human head.
A madman in a dismal landscape
There were also embryonic beings,
a strange juggler
Upon waking,
I saw the goddess of the intelligible,
with her severe and hard profile.*

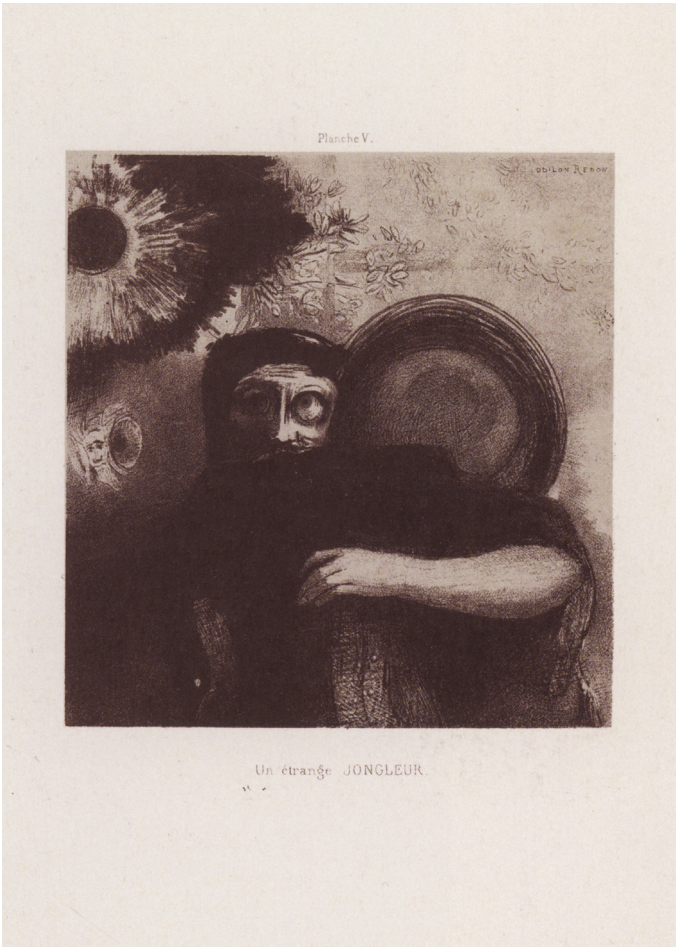
5 | **It's a Skull Crowned with Roses. It Dominates a Woman's Peraly- White Torso.** 1888
Plate VI from the portfolio The Temptation of Sain Anthony
Lithography on the chine appliqué
10¾×6¾" (27.2 × 17 cm)
Publisher: Edmond Deman, Brussels. Printer: Becquet, Paris



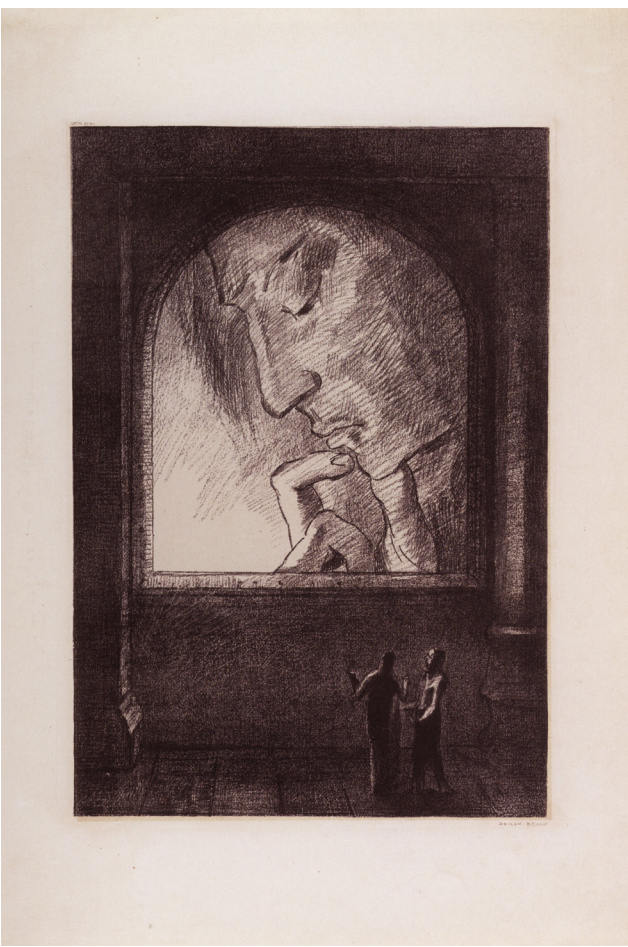
6 | **And All Manner of Frightful Creatures Arise.** 1888
Plate VIII from the portfolio The Temptation of Sain Anthony
Lithography on the chine appliqué
12¾×9¼" (31.4 × 23 cm)
Publisher: Edmond Deman, Brussels. Printer: Becquet, Paris



7 | **A Strange Juggler.** 1885
Lithography on the chine appliqué
7¾×7½" (19.8×19 cm)
Publisher: Probably the artist, Paris. Printer: Lemer cier, Paris



8 | **Light.** 1893
Lithography on the chine appliqué
21¼×15¼" (54×38.5 cm)
Publisher: Probably the artist, Paris. Printer: Becquet, Paris



9 | **The Reader.** 1892

Lithography on the chine appliqué

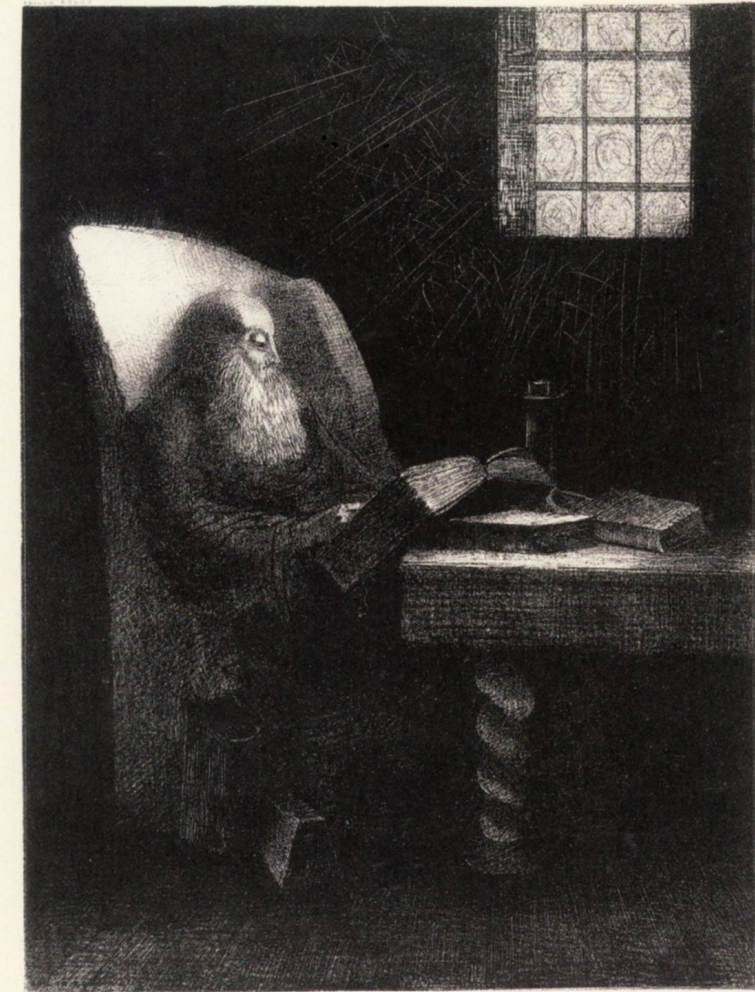
21 ¼ × 15 ¾ (53.6 × 40 cm)

Publisher: Probably the artist, Paris. Printer: Becquet, Paris

Redon appreciated the ability of the lithographic crayon to emulate charcoal drawing, and his first lithographs were, as he admitted, “mostly repetitions or variation of drawings I had made long before , for myself alone, in the full isolation of the country.” He soon began to make lithographs conceived expressly for the stone, but he never completely abandoned the practice of using lithography to create printed versions of his drawings, either as a way of capitalizing on a popular image or in order to revisit favorite themes through new variations. At the same time, although he first looked to lithography as a special

kind of reproduction, he quickly leaned to exploit its particular aesthetic possibilities. His first lithographs were made using transfer lithography, a process that allowed him simply to draw with a lithographic crayon on a special paper. then subsequently transfer the image mechanically to a lithographic stone. But he soon began to use the transfer drawing only as a starting point for images that he worked and reworked on the stone, employing the lithographic crayon to improvise freely-enriching the blacks, bringing forth texture, and then using a scraper to uncover passages of luminous white.

Sometime the character of white in a sinister painting is similar to that of a drum struck in a full orchestra.



LE LISEUR
- 10 copies -

MANIFESTO OF ODILON, IN THE DREAM, FIRST PRINT PORTFOLIO

Jodi Hauptman

- 0 | Cover-frontispiece
- 1 | Blossoming
- 2 | Germination
- 3 | The Wheel
- 4 | Limbo
- 5 | The Gambler
- 6 | Gnome
- 7 | Felineness
- 8 | Vision
- 9 | Sad Ascent
- 10 | On the Dish

1 | In the Dream. 1879

Album with cover-frontispiece and ten plates:
Lithographs mounted on ivory China paper
Each sheet approx. 22¼×14½" (53.5×36.8 cm)
The Stickney Collection, The Art Institution of Chicago

In 1879 Redon published his first print portfolio, an album of ten lithographs in an edition of twenty-five. **In the dream** can be seen as a public announcement—a manifesto even—of the artist’s own subject matter and particular working methods as well as a kind of primer dictating what Art write large should be. Redon had begun to express his aesthetic ideals more than ten years earlier. In one of three reviews of the 1868 Paris Salon, for example, he argued that Gustave Courbet is “a great colorist” but that his work is limited by the “narrowness of the realist theories which confine art and refuse it access to its most fertile sources: thought, inspiration, genius—in a word—and all that it reveals to us.

By 1879, when this portfolio appeared, what did “dream” mean to Redon? We know that, on occasion, Redon signed

his texts “Il rêve,” or “He dreams,” as if the writing had emerged out of a very personal oneiric state. Redon articulated the importance of the personal and subjective in an easy presented to the members of Madame Berthe de Rayssac’s salon, which he attended for about five years beginning in 1874. In the company of painter, writers, and composers who “championed the spiritual values of Romanticism” and scorned “mundane reality,” by these fellow inheritors of Romanticism, Redon wrote that:

Original intuition that summarizes everything, seeking support in [both] the past and present in order to make of contemporary work a new entity.



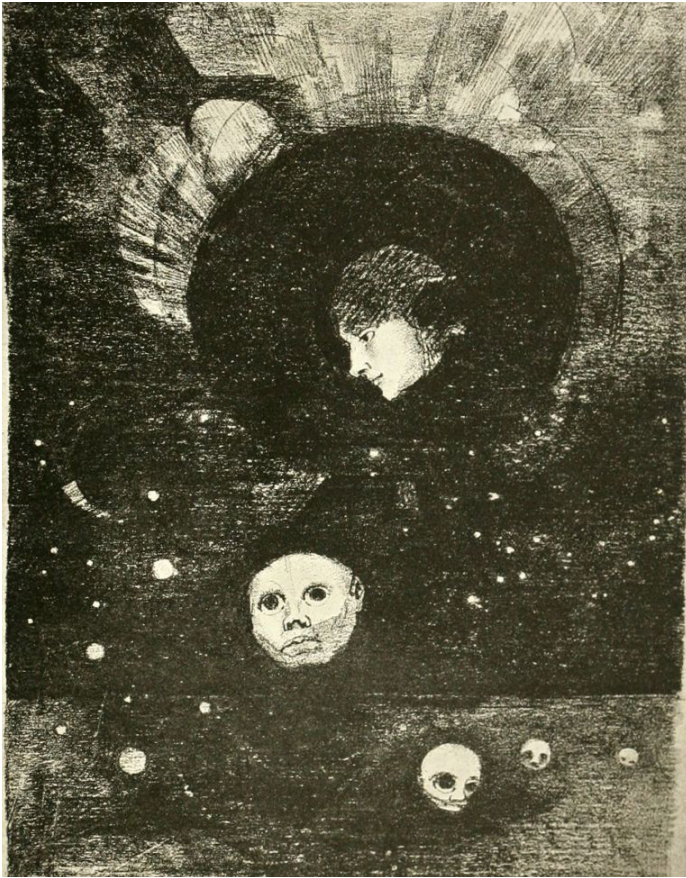
1 | **Plate I: Blossoming**

Album with cover-frontispiece and ten plates:
Lithographs mounted on ivory China paper
Each sheet approx. 22¼×14½" (53.5×36.8 cm)
The Stickney Collection, The Art Institution of Chicago



2 | **Plate II: Germination**

Album with cover-frontispiece and ten plates:
Lithographs mounted on ivory China paper
Each sheet approx. 22¼×14½" (53.5×36.8 cm)
The Stickney Collection, The Art Institution of Chicago



3 | **Plate III: The wheel**

Album with cover-frontispiece and ten plates:
Lithographs mounted on ivory China paper
Each sheet approx. 22¼×14½" (53.5×36.8 cm)
The Stickney Collection, The Art Institution of Chicago



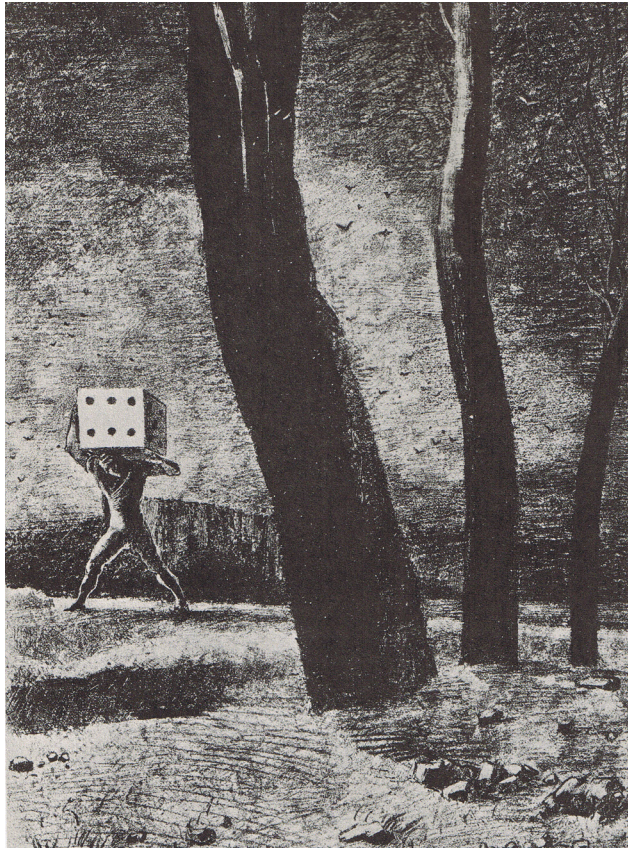
4 | **Plate IV: Limbo**

Album with cover-frontispiece and ten plates:
Lithographs mounted on ivory China paper
Each sheet approx. 22¼×14½" (53.5×36.8 cm)
The Stickney Collection, The Art Institution of Chicago



5 | **Plate V: The Gambler**

Album with cover-frontispiece and ten plates:
Lithographs mounted on ivory China paper
Each sheet approx. 22¼×14½" (53.5×36.8 cm)
The Stickney Collection, The Art Institution of Chicago



6 | **Plate VI: Gnome**

Album with cover-frontispiece and ten plates:
Lithographs mounted on ivory China paper
Each sheet approx. 22¼×14½" (53.5×36.8 cm)
The Stickney Collection, The Art Institution of Chicago



*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...
True parasites of the object, they
cultivated art on a uniquely
visual field...*

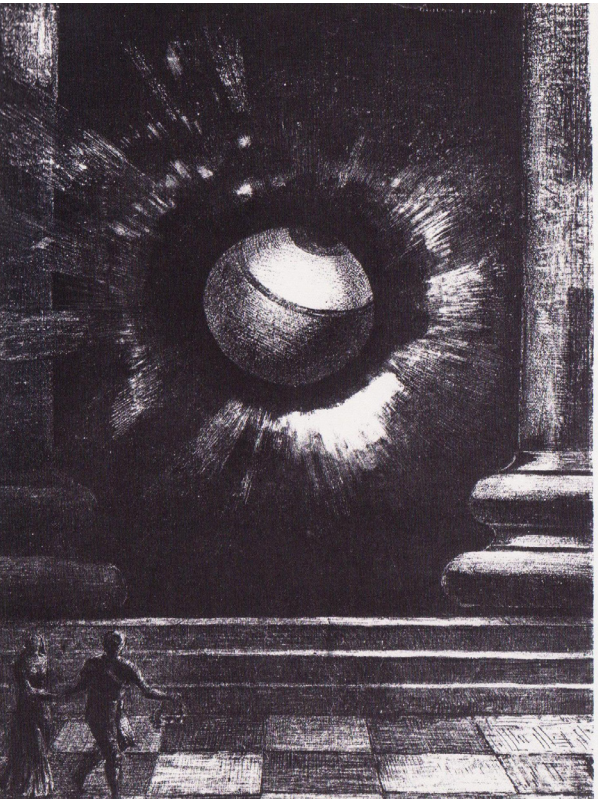
7 | **Plate VII: Felineness**

Album with cover-frontispiece and ten plates:
Lithographs mounted on ivory China paper
Each sheet approx. 22¼×14½" (53.5×36.8 cm)
The Stickney Collection, The Art Institution of Chicago



8 | **Plate VIII: Vision**

Album with cover-frontispiece and ten plates:
Lithographs mounted on ivory China paper
Each sheet approx. 22¼×14½" (53.5×36.8 cm)
The Stickney Collection, The Art Institution of Chicago



9 | **Plate IX: Sad Ascent**

Album with cover-frontispiece and ten plates:
Lithographs mounted on ivory China paper.
Each sheet approx. 22¼×14½" (53.5×36.8 cm)
The Stickney Collection, The Art Institution of Chicago



10 | **Plate X: On the Dish**

Album with cover-frontispiece and ten plates:
Lithographs mounted on ivory China paper.
Each sheet approx. 22¼×14½" (53.5×36.8 cm)
The Stickney Collection, The Art Institution of Chicago



BEYOND THE VISIBLE, A UNIVERSE IN BLACK AND WHITE

Jodi Hauptman

- 1 | The Eye like a Strange Balloon Mounts toward Infinity
- 2 | ... And Eyes without Heads Were Floating like Mollusks
- 3 | Everywhere Eyeballs Are Ablaze
- 4 | The Teeth (Les Dents)
- 5 | Then There Appears a Singular Being, Having the head of a Man on the Body of a Fish
- 6 | Spider
- 7 | Art
- 8 | The Chimera Regarded All Things with Terror
- 9 | The Egg



Odilon Redon

**1 | The Eye like a Strange Balloon
Mounts toward Infinity 1882**

Plate 1 from the portfolio To Edgar Poe. 1882

Lithography on the chine appliqué

17¼×12½" (45×31.4 cm)

Publisher: G. Fishbacher, Paris. Printer: Lemerancier, Paris

For Redon, Lithography's magic lay in its magnificent black, which provided the mysterious, suggestive atmosphere, for his shadowy visions. Redon thus identified black with introspection, and limiting his palette to black and white was a way of abstracting and distilling both the formal aspects of the composition and the essence of its theme or subject. The flatness of the lithograph (a quality that many of Redon's contemporaries found objectionable), and the tarlike density of its black, combine to give Redon's prints their almost paradoxical sense of depth and sonorousness.

*One of the utmost precious resources
is the insertion of black and white...*

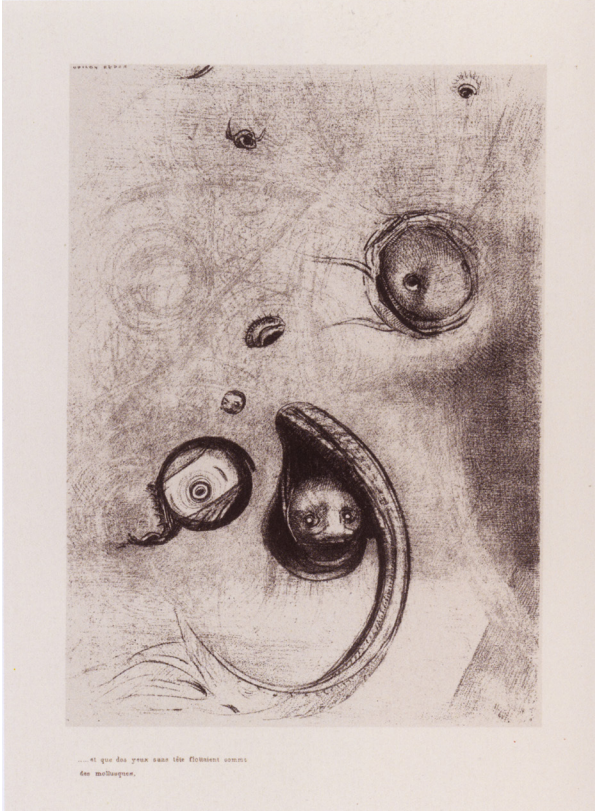
Redon appreciated the ability of the lithographic crayon to emulate charcoal drawing, and his first lithographs were, as he admitted, “mostly repetitions or variation of drawings I had made long before , for myself alone, in the full isolation of the country.” He soon began to make lithographs conceived expressly for the stone, but he never completely abandoned the practice of using lithography to create printed versions of his drawings, either as a way of capitalizing on a popular image or in order to revisit favorite themes through new variations. At the same time, although he first looked to lithography as a special kind of reproduction, he quickly leaned to exploit its particular aesthetic possibilities. His first lithographs were made using transfer lithography, a

process that allowed him simply to draw with a lithographic crayon on a special paper. then subsequently transfer the image mechanically to a lithographic stone. But he soon began to use the transfer drawing only as a starting point for images that he worked and reworked on the stone, employing the lithographic crayon to improvise freely- enriching the blacks, bringing forth texture, and then using a scraper to uncover passages of luminous white.

The artists of my generation for the most part have surely looked at the chimney flue. And they saw nothing but it...

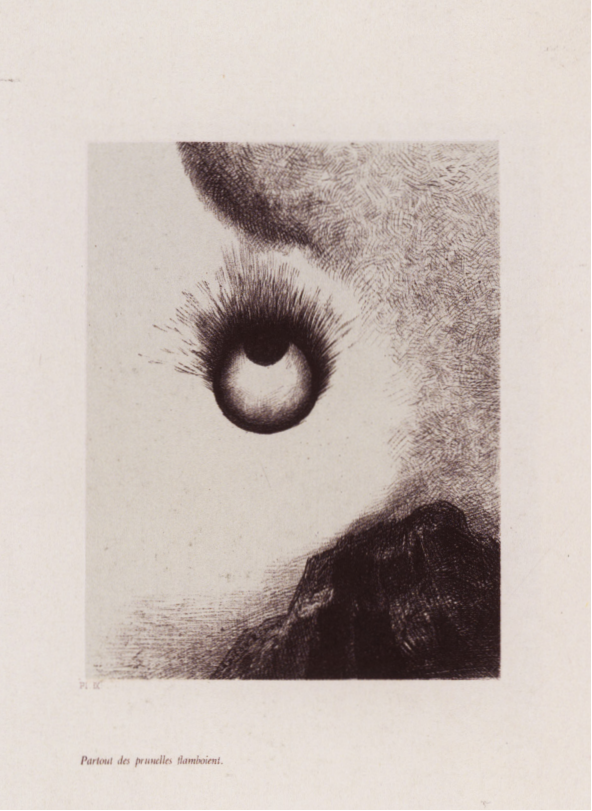
2 | **... And Eyes without Heads Were Floating like Mollusks.** 1896

Plate XIII from the portfolio The Temptation of Saint Anthony
Lithography on chine appliqué
12½×8¾" (30.9×22.2 cm)
Publisher: Ambroise Vollard, Paris. Printer: Blanchard, Paris



3 | **Everywhere Eyeballs Are Ablaze.** 1888

Plate IX from the portfolio The Temptation of Saint Anthony
Lithography on the chine appliqué
8×6¼" (20.3×15.7 cm)
Publisher: Edmond Deman, Brussels. Printer: Becquet, Paris





4 | The Teeth (Les Dents). 1883

Various Charcoals and black chalk, with stumping, erasing, and incising

On cream wove paper altered to a golden tone

20¼×14½" (51.1×36.8 cm)

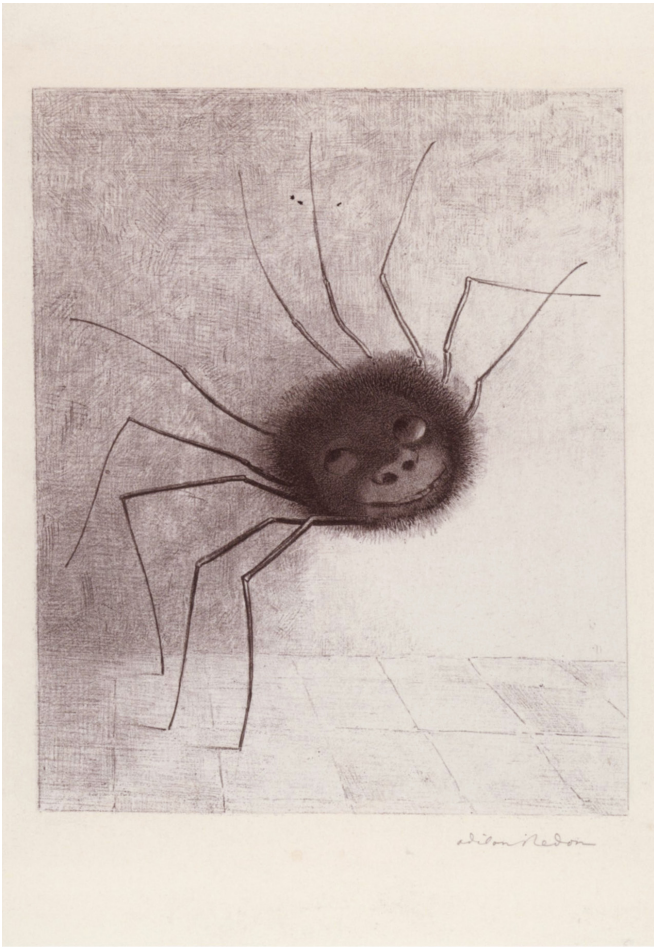
It was around 1862 that Odilon Redon began to paint. Still extant are Flower (1865), a Self-portrait (1867), and a few slightly later studies of Medoc landscapes. But there were only the timid first stages in an apprenticeship the necessity of which was no to force itself upon him until much later. at this time color did not in truth appear to him to be a satisfactory means of expressing what he had to say. His vision of the world acquired the plenitude of its mysterious power only when cloaked in those twilight shadows evoked by black and white. This is why, for him, unlike many other painter, drawing was to represent for Redon the principal achievement of his creative power.

*Light material that a breath could take away.
allowed me the rapidity of gestation amenable to
the docile and easy expression of feeling.*

5 | Then There Appears a Singular Being, Having the head of a Man on the Body of a Fish. 1888
Plate V from the portfolio The Temptation of Sain Anthony
Lithography on the chine appliqué
10¾×6¾" (27.2 × 17 cm)
Publisher: Edmond Deman, Brussels. Printer: Becquet, Paris



6 | Spider. 1887
Lithography on the chine appliqué.
11×8½" (28×21.7 cm)
Publisher: Probably the artist, Paris. Printer: Furstein, Paris



7 | Celestial Art. 1894
Lithography on the chine appliqué
12¾×10¼" (31.6×25.8 cm)
Publisher: Probably the artist, Paris. Printer: Furstein, Paris



8 | The Chimera Regarded All Things with Terror. 1886
Plate IV from the portfolio Night.
Lithograph on chine appliqué
16¼×12¼" (40.9×31.2 cm)
Publisher: probably the artist, Printer: Lemer cier, Paris



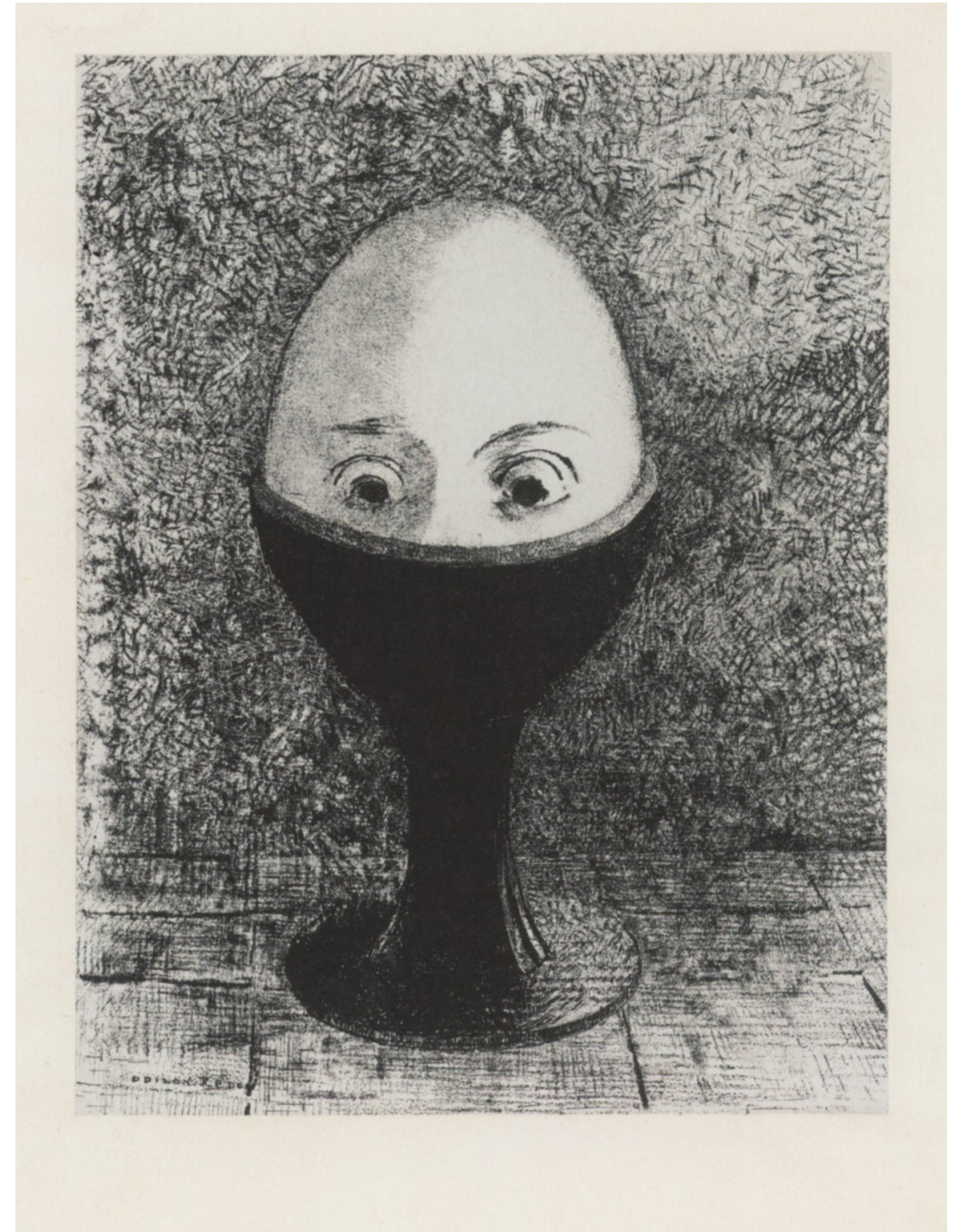
9 | The Egg. 1885

Lithography on the chine appliqué.

11¼×8¾ (29.3×22.6 cm)

Publisher: unpublished. Printer: Lemer cier, Paris

*Black should be respected, Nothing prostitutes
it. It does not awaken sensuality, It is the
agent of the spirit much more than the
splendid color of the palette or of the prism.*



Reference

Odilon Redon Lithographien, 1840 –1916 , Ausstellung der Galerie
im Taxispalais Innsbruck.

Odilon Redon, Jean Seiz

Beyond the Visible, The Art of Odilon Redon, Jodi Hauptman

Designed by

Tianyi Xie

Special Thanks to

Ben Shaykin

Lisa Maione

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