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THE INVISIBLE LABOR: NINETEENTH-CENTURY ART, THE UNCONSCIOUS, AND THE ORIGINS OF SURREALISM

by

Allison Miller Phillips

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree
in Art History in
the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2012

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Dorothy Johnson

ABSTRACT

Rebellion against traditional aesthetics to express personal symbols and dreamlike visions connects the nineteenth-century Symbolists with the twentieth-century Surrealists. Yet the techniques of automatic writing and drawing to pursue self-discovery and the unconscious mind's inherent creativity remain primarily associated with Surrealism, and the extent to which this later movement's irrational content was inspired by Symbolist predecessors such as Gustave Moreau and Paul Gauguin remains uncertain. This dissertation explores the nineteenth-century psychological theories and occult beliefs behind automatism and the unconscious from the late Romantic to the Surrealist movements.

The first chapter addresses how Romantic revolutions in art and psychology respond to theories such as mesmerism, spiritism, and the "discovery" of the unconscious, and the later impact of these developments on Symbolism. The second chapter analyzes Victor Hugo's séances and "spirit" drawings in the 1850s as early examples of automatism that influenced Symbolism and Surrealism. The following chapter expands this research to include the impact of psychology and spiritism on the Symbolist movement's esoteric subjects and increasingly abstract style. Sickened by their materialistic society and with Naturalism's attention to the physical world, the Symbolists may have attempted to release conscious control over their designs to pursue a higher reality and express the inner states and emotions that emerge during dreams and hypnosis.

Although current art historical scholarship acknowledges basic connections between the Symbolists' visionary compositions and Surrealist concepts of the

unconscious, the psychological and supernatural aspects of how Symbolist art transitions from dreamlike yet representative imagery towards pure abstraction and automatism merit further investigation, which I address in the final chapter. This research offers new perspectives on how the psychology of dreams and the unconscious evolved from an interest of Romantic and Symbolist artists to the ultimate revelation of individual creativity and expression in Surrealist automatism.

The primary visual sources include nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century paintings; artistic, "spirit," and some scientific photographs, and artist's prints, collages, and drawings. Both consciously-created and allegedly automatic artistic productions, such as Gustave Moreau's abstract oil paintings and watercolors, reveal the development of surreal and automatic techniques and allow insight into the artists' intentions. This study divulges previously overlooked influences of painters, printmakers, photographers, critics, writers, and poets on their own era's cultural and intellectual milieu and on the aesthetic movements that followed. The conclusion offers suggestions for further research beyond the project's current scope, such as analyzing how automatism and mythology in early modern art culminated in the calligraphic, shamanistic imagery of Abstract Expressionism.

Abstract Approved: _____
Thesis Supervisor

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Title and Department

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Date

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Allison Miller Phillips

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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Graduate College
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Iowa City, Iowa

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Allison Miller Phillips

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Art History at the May 2012 graduation.

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Brenda Longfellow

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Wallace Tomasini

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Wendelin Guentner

In loving memory of
Robert Allen Miller (1950-2006)

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation addresses the significance of nineteenth-century transformations in art and psychology responding to the "discovery" of the unconscious, and the later impact of these developments on Surrealist concepts of automatism. My research offers significant contributions to the disciplines of art history, literature, and psychology through my original interpretations of works of art and a new exploration of creative revolutions. This study also divulges the previously overlooked impact of certain painters, printmakers, critics, writers, and poets on their own era's cultural and intellectual milieu and on the aesthetic movements that followed.

To encompass the predominant psychological theories that influenced the concept of the unconscious in nineteenth-century art and society, my research examines the development of mesmerism, or animal magnetism: German physician Franz Anton Mesmer's psychological theory that intrigued the Romantics and Symbolists. Mesmer believed that cosmic forces, such as the mutual attraction of planets, affect a "universal fluid" also present in the human body, and attempted to explain somnambulism and hallucinations in terms of mental illness. Artists whose work and ideology respond to the early stages of the psychological advancements inspired by Mesmer include those associated with late Romanticism and the first generation of Symbolism: Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon, and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes. Puvis's arcadian figures appear lost in trancelike reverie, and images of the dreaming artist and meditative mythological figures abound in Moreau's intricate paintings.

Moreau's somnambulistic figures, including several depictions of the dancing yet dreamlike femme fatale Salomé, possibly influenced by Mesmer, appear to represent

hypnotic trances and unreal worlds—possibilities I examine in my work. Another intention of my Moreau research was to analyze his little-known abstract compositions and watercolors. Some of these are preliminary studies for finished paintings, while others seem entirely non-objective. These non-representational pigment and texture combinations may represent Moreau's exploration of unconscious techniques and dream states, anticipating twentieth-century automatic drawing and painting. Moreau's subjects and style suggest not only the influence of mesmerism and the supernatural on Symbolist art, but also significant examples of the development of automatism and the unconscious in the visual arts.

Art historians often consider the Symbolists the forerunners of Surrealism, since both movements proclaimed the significance of defying traditional aesthetics to express personal symbols and dreamlike visions. However, since exploring automatism to pursue self-discovery and the unconscious mind's inherent creativity is a technique primarily associated with Surrealism, the extent to which this later movement's irrational content was inspired by Symbolists such as Gustave Moreau and Paul Gauguin remains uncertain. While current art historical scholarship acknowledges basic connections between the Symbolists' visionary compositions and Surrealist concepts of the unconscious, the psychological and spiritual aspects of how Symbolist compositions transition from dreamlike yet representative imagery towards pure abstraction and automatism merit further investigation.

Thus in my dissertation I acknowledge the connections between Romanticism, Symbolism, and Surrealism that have been previously mentioned by leading scholars and expand this body of knowledge. I have attempted to contribute new observations and

take an innovative approach to nineteenth-century art, automatism, and the earlier movements' impact on Surrealism. Initially I focus on Romanticism, a movement which escalated during the aftermath of the French Revolution and lasted from the late eighteenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries. Romanticism's reaction to the Enlightenment's logical, scientific nature involved a regression to past fascinations with the bizarre, the unknown, and the supernatural. Individualism and self-exploration emerged from artists' and writers' sense of alienation and disillusionment, and many turned inward to seek inspiration from dreams and hidden desires.

My dissertation also delves into Symbolism. Like a fleeting image from the visions that inspired its devotees, this movement continues to evade precise definition. Most art historians agree that Symbolism dates from the publication of poet Jean Moréas's "Manifeste du symbolisme" (1886) as a counterattack upon Naturalist critics who condemned decadent cultural trends. The Symbolists sought personal symbols within dreams and ancient myths, concentrating on dreamlike, expressive subjects rather than verisimilitude in their quest for an individual ideal, and late Romantic artists such as Moreau, Puvis de Chavannes, and Redon generally are considered Symbolist forerunners whose work inspired the full-fledged movement. Symbolism gradually dispersed as early twentieth-century critics advocated pure form and color rather than emotive content. Yet from Moreau in the 1860s to Gauguin in the 1890s, Symbolism reflects the psychological and moral undercurrents in nineteenth-century France, and represents a generation of creative individuals disenchanted with capitalism and economic depression.

The final chapter links these nineteenth-century movements with Surrealism, which I believe drew more inspiration from Romanticism and Symbolism than critics

previously have acknowledged. Avid followers of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), whose The Interpretation of Dreams directed them towards psychoanalysis and analyzing dream imagery, the Surrealists became fascinated with dreams and the unconscious starting in the 1920s. Originally trained as a medic and psychiatrist, writer André Breton encouraged his circle of disillusioned artists and poets in postwar Europe to experiment with automatic writing and drawing to access the creative unconscious and to render the irrational. Nineteenth-century psychology and its documentation of hypnosis, madness, and hallucinations also had a significant impact on Surrealism.

The methodological approach to this project involves analyzing visual and literary sources from a socio-cultural and psychological perspective. I limited the focus of my dissertation to specific movements of the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century, approximately the 1840s to the 1940s, although I refer to psychological and aesthetic theories related to mesmerism and Romanticism during the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. These parameters concentrate my research on the era of artists' most intense interest in dreams, the occult, and automatism.

The visual sources I primarily observe include nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century paintings; artistic, "spirit," and some scientific photographs, and artist's prints, collages, and drawings. I study both consciously-created and allegedly automatic artistic productions, such as Gustave Moreau's abstract oil paintings and watercolors, to compare the development of surreal and automatic techniques and to gain insight into the artists' intentions. I also use primary source materials such as letters, diaries, personal photographs, literary productions, and critical reviews by and about the artists and writers discussed in the dissertation.

Although Symbolism was an international movement, my research focuses on France, where predominant psychological, occult, and aesthetic movements originated during the nineteenth century. Analyzing the psychology behind automatism and the unconscious in Symbolist art, such as the implications of mesmerism in Moreau's Salomé figures, provides examples of the impact of significant cultural and social changes, and how visual and literary influences inspired imitation or rebellion to forge the new aesthetic forms, theories, and criticism that influenced Surrealism. Visual and literary trends surrounding the development of psychology and mental healing techniques from mesmerism to psychoanalysis provide insight into increasing interest in both the individual psyche and in the universal myths of humanity's past.

This project represents months of original research in museums, libraries, and archives in Paris, France. I visited the Bibliothèque Nationale de France to study Victor Hugo's "spirit" drawings in person, and the Maison Victor Hugo's extensive collection of museum catalogues and original wash drawings. I spent several weeks at the Musée Gustave Moreau studying Moreau's watercolors, original drawings, and experimental abstract paintings while attempting to understand his creative process and techniques. I was able to observe George Sand's watercolors firsthand at the Musée de la Vie Romantique. The collections and archives at additional sites including the Département des Arts Graphiques at the Musée du Louvre, the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, and the Musée d'Orsay, provided opportunities to study additional works and documents.

Primary sources, especially publications by artists, critics, psychologists, and occult figures, offered evidence and insight into the development of psychoanalysis and Surrealism. My research involved studying eighteenth- and nineteenth-century

psychological texts such as Mesmer's original writings that establish the theories of animal magnetism and place somnambulistic trances in a clinical context. Mesmer's texts also suggest his impact on the visual arts, particularly his explanations of mutual attraction resulting from celestial bodies and "universal fluid," a concept that several artists attempt to convey.

Secondary sources published by scholars, especially experts on early psychology, Symbolism, Surrealism, and the history of the unconscious, provide a valuable component of my methodology. Research by contemporary art historians, curators, literary critics, psychologists, and historians who have addressed the cultural, scientific, and occult movements in question provided supporting evidence and alternate perspectives to consider. These resources assisted with my evaluation of ambiguous subjects, such as Victor Hugo's "spirit" messages and Breton's Surrealist automatism. I provide the original text and titles of non-English sources whenever possible.

Sources tracing the evolution of clinical psychology from mesmerism through psychoanalysis discuss the historical background of scientific and intellectual transitions, but rarely mention their influence on the art and culture of each era, which I expand upon in my work. Some art historians have sought psychological roots to artists' motivations. However, these scholars have not expanded upon connections between mesmerism and the occult from Romanticism to Surrealism. For instance, several scholars have acknowledged that Hugo, best known for his prose, was also a prolific artist, but few have discussed his connections with later cultural movements, which I attempt to expand upon in my work.

Regarding Hugo's supernatural beliefs and automatic writing, John Chambers's Conversations with Eternity: The Forgotten Masterpiece of Victor Hugo (1998), contains transcripts of the séances Hugo and his family and friends conducted between 1853-1855, in which Hugo claimed to channel messages and drawings from famous deceased personalities.[1] Sculptor Théophile Bra is another Romanticist whose work may provide further evidence of the supernatural currents that led to automatic writing and drawing. Several of Bra's once-hidden mystical images and texts recently have been reproduced in The Drawing Speaks: Théophile Bra, Works 1826-1855 (1997) by Jacques De Caso.[2] These works are reminiscent of Hugo's "spirit" drawings and messages, and in this project I include them in my analysis of Romantic artists' spiritual and psychological states.

The standard Symbolist texts, such as Robert Goldwater's Symbolism (1979), discuss the mystical, Romantic, and decadent aspects of the style, yet the complexity of Symbolism's influence on automatism remains outside the scope of these publications.[3] A recent Musée de la Vie Romantique catalogue, Gustave Moreau: Mythes & Chimères: Aquarelles et dessins secrets du musée Gustave Moreau (2003), includes Moreau's expressive watercolors; Raphael Rosenberg's chapter discusses Moreau's pliage watercolors, but does not expand on Moreau's possible use of automatic techniques or his

[1] Victor Hugo, Conversations with Eternity: The Forgotten Masterpiece of Victor Hugo, trans. John Chambers (Boca Raton: New Paradigm Books, 1998).

[2] Jacques De Caso, The Drawing Speaks: Théophile Bra, Works 1826-1855, trans. Erika Naginski (Houston: The Menil Collection, 1997).

[3] Robert Goldwater, Symbolism (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

lasting influence on later movements.[4] My evaluation of Moreau's experimentation with abstract painting techniques expands upon these scholars' works and offers my own visual analysis.

In recent years, art historians also have examined the unconscious and dreamlike aspects of paintings and prints by Redon and Puvis de Chavannes. Barbara Larson's scientific approach to Redon's imagery in her book The Dark Side of Nature: Science, Society, and the Fantastic in the Work of Odilon Redon (2005) was particularly helpful in researching Redon's response to psychological developments. Larson believes that Redon's work reflects the mid-nineteenth-century shift from society's belief in supernatural phenomena to psychological theories such as mesmerism and somnambulism.[5] I attempt to analyze similar psychological concepts in various examples of Redon's and Puvis's paintings, such as their figures' somnambulistic appearance and their approach to abstraction.

Many art historical texts and catalogues connect Surrealism with its Romantic and Symbolist origins through basic visual and thematic similarities, which I expand upon in my work. In 1936, the exhibition catalogue for Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism at the Museum of Modern Art featured examples of visual predecessors identified by the Surrealists, including a wash drawing by Hugo, and Breton's own Manifeste du surréalisme (1924) mentions that "Hugo est surréaliste quand il n'est pas bête" ("Hugo is Surrealist when he isn't stupid"), probably referring to Hugo's alleged belief in spiritism,

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[4] Musée de la Vie Romantique, Gustave Moreau: Mythes & Chimères: Aquarelles et dessins secrets du musée Gustave-Moreau, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée de la Vie Romantique, 2003).

[5] Barbara Larson, The Dark Side of Nature: Science, Society, and the Fantastic in the Work of Odilon Redon (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 134.

which Breton found absurd, but inspirational nonetheless.[6] These sources offered important starting points for connecting the art and ideology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Other writings by Breton and his circle indicate possible connections with nineteenth-century spiritism that I explore in my research. For example, Breton's novel Nadja (1920) portrays both himself and Nadja as rather apparitional creatures, which reveals the lingering influence of spiritism, but merges the supernatural with psychology and madness. Breton also claimed that his collaborative novel with Philippe Soupault, Les champs magnétiques (1919), was created through automatic writing. Studying these sources revealed that Surrealist automatism's origins relate to spiritism despite Breton's disdain for any association between Surrealism and the supernatural.

Recent scholars reflect upon the development of Surrealism's psychological narrative. Nadia Choucha's Surrealism & the Occult: Shamanism, Magic, Alchemy, and the Birth of an Artistic Movement (1992) discusses how the Surrealists adopted automatism as a means of self-discovery, pursuing the unconscious mind's inherent creativity, and draws more women artists into the dialogue.[7] Susan L. Aberth continues research on Carrington in her book Leonora Carrington: Surrealism, Alchemy and Art (2004), which proposes that the alchemical references and esoteric diagrams in Carrington's and Max Ernst's paintings fuse the occult with the unconscious in a highly

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[6] Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism" (1924), in Manifestoes of Surrealism, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 27.

[7] Nadia Choucha, Surrealism & the Occult: Shamanism, Magic, Alchemy, and the Birth of an Artistic Movement (Rochester: Destiny Books, 1992).

complex style.[8] M. E. Warlick's book Max Ernst and Alchemy: A Magician in Search of a Myth (2001) discusses examples of alchemical symbols and hermetic knowledge in Ernst's work, inviting comparisons of the artist's technique with the nineteenth-century occult revival.[9]

Several scholars, including Michel Leiris (André Masson, Line Unleashed, 1987) and Clark V. Poling (André Masson and the Surrealist Self, 2008) have recognized André Masson for his early experimentation with automatic drawing and painting, which he began to practice in 1923-24, before he met Breton.[10] Masson himself wrote an introduction for Pierre Georgel's catalogue Dessins de Victor Hugo (1971), arguing that Breton did not give Hugo enough credit as a Surrealist precursor.[11] My dissertation contributes to this knowledge of Hugo in my analysis of both artists: Masson's awareness of Hugo's forms of automatism indicates how artists in both eras expressed the imagery of their unconscious mind, and how automatism allowed artists to become "mediums" for these repressed visions and ideas.

This dissertation is organized as four interrelated chapters of information expanding upon these works of previous scholarship and contributing my original research and interpretations. Chapter I addresses the significance of Romantic revolutions in art and psychology responding to the "discovery" of the unconscious, and the later impact of these developments on Symbolist concepts of automatism. To

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[8] Susan L. Aberth, Leonora Carrington: Surrealism, Alchemy and Art (Burlington, Vermont: Lund Humphries, 2004).

[9] M. E. Warlick, Max Ernst and Alchemy (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).

[10] Michel Leiris, André Masson, Line Unleashed, exh. cat. (London: The South Bank Centre, 1987).

[11] André Masson, "Le Peintre Victor Hugo," in Pierre Georgel, Dessins de Victor Hugo (Villequier: Musée Victor Hugo à Villequier, 1971), 14.

encompass the predominant psychological theories that influenced the concept of the unconscious in nineteenth-century art and society, my work initially examines the development of mesmerism, also known as animal magnetism. Thus I provide a brief explanation of mental healing methods such as German physician Franz Anton Mesmer's animal magnetism and these theories' gradual development towards Freudian psychoanalysis.

I believe that Mesmer's psychological theories intrigued the Romantics and Symbolists more extensively than previous scholarship acknowledges. For example, Moreau's manifestations of Salomé appear to have fallen under unseen magnetic influences, suggesting that Salomé is both a threatening source and a transfixed recipient of forceful energy. This chapter also explores the legacy of these Romantic predecessors on mesmeric imagery in works by Symbolist painters such as Gauguin, who painted somnambulistic figures while observing the visionary capabilities of "primitive" humanity. Overall, this chapter concentrates on nineteenth-century artists' interest in accessing and depicting mesmeric states of mind.

Chapter II addresses the development of spiritism from its mesmeric precedents and its influence on the visual arts and automatic writing, with a particular focus on Victor Hugo's paranormal experimentation. Romanticists reacted to pervading attitudes of materialism and science with an interest in the afterlife and the "other side," and instantly were receptive to spiritism, which began as a séance phenomenon in New York during the late 1840s, and soon spread to England, Germany, and France. The impact of nineteenth-century spiritism on artists' concepts of automatism and the unconscious was a significant consideration in this research, since experimentation with automatic writing

and drawing surfaced during the advent of the spiritist movement in the late 1840s, when two sisters claimed to receive spirit messages from a murder victim communicating via table rapping.

American and European upper classes reacted to pervading scientific attitudes with an interest in the afterlife and the "other side," and instantly were receptive to the séance movement that developed into spiritism, including "spirit" photographs with trancelike and ghostly figures. In this chapter I analyze topics such as Justinus Kerner's Klecksographien, William Blake's "visionary heads," Hugo's séances, and Bra's mystical drawings as possible instances of automatism. Some Parisian salons became dedicated to spirit contact though mediums, who transmitted "spirit" messages through the rapping of a table leg on the floor. The "spirit" messages and drawings of celebrated Romantics such as Hugo and artist Théophile Bra indicate previously untapped methods of exploring psychic states and repressed desires. Symbolist Odilon Redon expressly responds to supernatural phenomena and abstract experimentation such as Hugo's drawings in his own imagery, indicating connections between the Romantics' interest in paranormal alter egos and the Symbolists' concepts of the unconscious.

Romantic literary giant Hugo, who also was a gifted artist, remains an important figure throughout my dissertation. The second chapter expands the research of my Masters thesis, "Victor Hugo and Surrealism: Phantom Drawings, Automatism, and the Occult." This chapter analyzes Hugo's séances and "spirit" drawings as early examples of automatism that influenced Symbolism and Surrealism. In the years 1853-1855, during Victor Hugo's exile on the Channel island of Jersey, he and his family conducted almost two hundred séances in which they allegedly received profound messages from

famous deceased people, animals, and intangible spirits, including the ocean and Death itself. Some "spirits" produced images using a pencil attached to a leg of the turning table, creating abstract designs that foreshadow Masson's experimental, automatic line drawings; thus I studied Hugo as the main example of Surrealism's Romantic precursors.

Chapter III expands my research on late Romanticism to include experimental art and early abstraction from this time, and its impact on the Symbolist movement's increasingly abstract style. To achieve this I carefully examine specific examples of Hugo's mixed media drawings, Moreau's seemingly non-representational works in watercolor and oils, and George Sand's chance-created watercolor designs, which she called her dendrites in reference to mineralogy. I propose that these images, which thus far have received little scholarly attention, may represent prophetic works connecting nineteenth-century art and automatism.

This chapter also expands upon how nineteenth-century Symbolists, sickened by their materialistic society and with the Naturalist movement's attention to the physical world, likely attempted to release conscious control over their designs to pursue a higher reality and express the inner states and emotions that emerge during dreams and hypnosis. For example, I believe that Gauguin's flat, undulating dreamscapes and images of spiritual dreamers surrounded by abstract, undulating lines suggest the Symbolists' desire to override conscious control in their work and thought. One striking example is Paul Sérusier's painting Le Talisman (1888), which, inspired by Gauguin and synthetism, appears to contain no identifiable subject except the pure expression of experimental brush strokes and imaginative color. I conclude this chapter with an evaluation of these works to determine the possibility of automatism in the Symbolists' technique.

Chapter IV of this project discusses whether the Symbolists' interest in dreams, the unconscious, and the occult influenced Surrealism. I propose that particular examples of the Symbolists' increasingly arcane and abstract work represent early forms of the "automatisme psychique pur"—"psychic automatism in its pure state"— encouraged in André Breton's Manifeste du surréalisme (1924).[12] I also add my interpretations of several connections between nineteenth-century and Surrealist references to alchemy in art and literature. Both Hugo and Breton, for instance, were fascinated by the medieval alchemist Nicolas Flamel.

The chapter includes an analysis of how the Surrealists, influenced by both nineteenth-century spiritism and the Symbolists' interest in dreams and madness, developed automatic writing and drawing techniques to access the unconscious mind. While the Romantics such as Hugo attempted to reach a spirit world or the "other side," Breton and the Surrealists turned to their concept of the unconscious and to Freudian interpretations of personal experiences. This chapter advances my dissertation's study of Surrealist automatic phenomena drawn from nineteenth-century occultism.

Analyzing how particular nineteenth-century artists evoke dream states and the unconscious through aspects of their subjective techniques and increasingly abstract style provides a significant contribution to existing knowledge of their oeuvre. In addition, I examine how the Symbolists' interest in mystical phenomena and psychological developments in France foreshadows the Surrealists' response to Freudian psychoanalysis and artists' disillusion with modern society and traditional aesthetics between the World Wars. Let us begin with an exploration of how the creative mind

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[12] André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism" (1924), in Manifestoes of Surrealism, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 24.

mediates between the conscious and the unconscious, the visible and the invisible, and the natural world and the supernatural.

CHAPTER I
MESMERIZED DANCERS AND DREAMING MUSES

> A man is not idle because he is absorbed in thought. There is a visible labor and there is an invisible labor.
>
> — Victor Hugo, Les Misérables[13]

Mesmerism, somnambulism, and dream theory permeated nineteenth-century French visual and literary culture, and particular works of art by Symbolists such as Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon, Puvis de Chavannes, and their followers reveal mesmerism's impact. The figures in these works appear to be under hypnotic influence or exerting mesmeric force themselves, indicating artists' interest in contemplative dream states or supernatural links between human minds by means of unconscious abilities. As we shall see, this rising interest in trancelike figures and dream imagery parallels the gradual development of dynamic psychiatry and the unconscious from mesmerism to Freudian psychoanalysis.

As also reflected in Romantic and Symbolist art, modern psychiatric methods have deeper roots: ancient shamans hypnotized patients using magic incantations—suggestive commands—to expel the hostile magic and evil spirits believed to cause physical and mental ailments.[14] In ancient Egypt and Rome, somnambulists were considered to have medical and prophetic powers, and physicians attempted to heal patients by movements and passes of the hands. Medieval exorcists sought to dispel

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[13] Victor Hugo, Les Misérables, 1862, trans. Lee Fahnestock and Norman MacAfee (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 521. "On n'est pas inoccupé parce qu'on est absorbé. Il y a le labeur visible et le labeur invisible."

[14] Bernard Wolfe, Hypnotism Comes of Age: Its Progress from Mesmer to Psychoanalysis (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1948), 13.

madness, then attributed to demon possession, through similarly hypnotic prayers and incantations. Monarchs were attributed with miraculous healing powers such as the laying on of hands or the touch of the roi thaumaturge. Echoes of this tradition appear as late as Antoine-Jean Gros's painting Bonaparte visitant les pestiférés de Jaffa (Napoleon Bonaparte Visiting the Plague-Stricken in Jaffa), 1804 (Fig. 1.1). General Bonaparte fearlessly touches one of his soldiers' plague sores, earning witnesses' veneration and elevating his exploits to an almost supernatural status.

Insanity and aesthetics were closely linked at the turn of the nineteenth century in the sense that physicians often diagnosed mental illnesses by studying patients' particular physiognomy. Comparative illustrations in medical publications such as Phillipe Pinel's Traité médico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale (A Treatise on Insanity) (1801) juxtaposed the skulls of normal and "idiotic" subjects, while a noticeable divergence from the Apollo Belvedere's ideal classical proportions may have classified a patient as a maniac.[15] These were the traditions into which German physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) brought his own miracle cures. His followers continued to dissociate the unconscious from its supernatural origins, but nineteenth-century artists' phantom-haunted compositions indicate a new fascination with exploring the hidden sides of the self through hypnosis, dream analysis, and somnambulism.

Mesmer earned his physician's diploma in Vienna in 1766 for his "Physical-Medical Treatise on the Influence of the Planets." This work proposed that cosmic forces cause human bodies to gravitate towards each other and maintain a certain equilibrium, a mutual attraction resulting from celestial bodies affecting a "universal fluid" that

[15] Sander L. Gilman, Seeing the Insane (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1982), 72.

maintains one's vital functions.[16] After several years of experimentation using iron magnets in attempts to manipulate this fluid in his patients' bodies, Mesmer came to believe that his own body channeled a superior form of these forces: animal magnetism. While he believed that everyone possessed a certain amount of animal magnetism, his patients' epileptic or catatonic reactions to his personal charisma and to the cosmic energy he believed he could project through his fingers at will indicated his superior talent for magnetic healing.[17]

Mesmer's Mémoire sur la découverte du magnétisme animal (Dissertation on the Discovery of Animal Magnetism) (1779) summarizes his expanded theory in twenty-seven propositions. Most significantly, Mesmer emphasizes animal magnetism as the reciprocal influence of the heavens and animate bodies, and how their influence can be communicated, intensified, reflected, and stored.[18] The principle of shared abilities between animal bodies, magnets, and electricity may be controlled to cure nervous disorders and other ailments; the physician's duty is to master this force to prevent and cure illnesses with no dangerous side effects on the patient, regardless of age, temperament, or gender. These principles, Mesmer claimed, would perfect the medical profession and permanently alleviate humanity's suffering.[19]

Mesmer's practice became fashionable soon after his arrival in Paris in 1778. His treatment rooms in the Hôtel Bullion on Rue Coq-Héron were carefully orchestrated to

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[16] F. A. Mesmer, Mesmerism: A Translation of the Original Scientific and Medical Writings of F. A. Mesmer, trans. George Bloch (Los Altos: William Kaufmann, Inc., 1980), 25.

[17] Crabtree, 9-10.

[18] Mesmer, 67-68. Mesmer believed that the top of the head received astral magnetic fluid, while the feet received terrestrial magnetic fluid.

[19] Ibid, 69.

induce a violent or somnambulistic crisis in each patient: tubs with iron rods conducting "magnetic fluid," bizarre astrological decorations, music by contemporary composers such as Mozart, and heavily drawn curtains triggered the patient's agitated mindset that Mesmer considered necessary to access for the therapeutic process and for recovery towards magnetic equilibrium.[20]

According to Robert Darnton, while some patients experienced epileptic fits, others experienced crises that "developed into deep sleeps, and some sleeps provided communications with dead or distant spirits, who sent messages by way of the fluid directly to the somnambulist's internal sixth sense, which was extraordinarily receptive to what would now be called extrasensory perceptions," foreshadowing the somnambulistic activity of mid-nineteenth century spiritist mediums.[21]

Dorothy Johnson has demonstrated how mesmerism resonates through late eighteenth-century art, particularly in Jacques-Louis David's Neoclassical history paintings. In David's The Oath of the Horatii—originally titled The Oath of the Horatii in the Hands of Their Father—of 1785 (Fig. 1.2), the figures' forceful gestures express a new visual vocabulary for communicating unseen influences between the characters. The father channels his authority through his authoritative right hand to his sons' hands, and to the higher power that witnesses the momentous event. Horatius, in turn, magnetizes the swords through the magnetic fluid he receives from the heavens, indicated by the beam of light descending directly upon him.[22]

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[20] Darnton, 8. Crabtree, 13.

[21] Darnton, 8-10.

[22] Dorothy Johnson, Jacques-Louis David: Art in Metamorphosis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 60-61.

The painting Marius prisonnier à Minturnes (Marius at Minturnae), 1786 (Fig. 1.3) by David's student Jean-Germain Drouais also depicts a reciprocal mesmeric drama, as Marius halts his assassin by the magnetic fluid emanating from his eyes and outstretched hand.[23] His illuminated body indicates the presence of mesmeric force drawn from the stars, causing his attacker to recoil into the shadows to escape Marius's intense gaze. My original research will present how similar spellbound figures and commanding gestures resurface in nineteenth-century works, such as Moreau's Salomé paintings.

Despite its enormous popularity, animal magnetism fell into disrepute as complaints of Mesmer's charlatanry intensified. In 1782 the king's physician, Noël de Rochefort Retz, published a severe critique of animal magnetism and attempted to expose Mesmer as a fraud. Retz claimed that he had discovered Mesmer's secret: his "ability to manipulate weak imaginations" rather than an invisible fluid.[24] The government began to fear Mesmer's influence on France's political imagination as well. After a 1784 police report that some mesmerists were mingling their pseudoscientific theories with radical political ideas, a royal commission of prestigious physicians and scientists, including Benjamin Franklin and A. L. Lavoisier, began to investigate animal magnetism's authenticity.[25] After experimenting with Mesmer's techniques, the committee found no evidence of the existence of magnetic fluid, and concluded that any effects of animal magnetism were strictly a result of the patient's imagination.[26]

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[23] Ibid, 61.

[24] Crabtree, 21.

[25] Darnton, 62.

[26] Crabtree, 23-24.

Nineteenth-century American physician Charles Caldwell also considered Mesmer a "daring impostor" since similar medical arts and ceremonial practices existed since prehistory.[27] Caldwell proposes that mesmerism is rather a

> peculiar influence or general effect, which one person is able to produce on the system of another, by the eyes or the entire countenance and the will, accompanied by given movements of the hands, either in contact with some part of the body of the individual mesmerized, or at a short distance from it, at the option of the mesmeriser.[28]

Yet, despite Mesmer's shamanistic comportment and grandiose delusions—at one point he claimed to have successfully magnetized the sun—his theories have been acknowledged as the genesis of modern psychiatry.[29] His work represents the first exploration of hypnosis (magnetism) as a distinct therapeutic technique, and drew mental healing techniques from their mystical origins into the age of Enlightenment.[30] Furthermore, Mesmer's principle that physical gestures may produce powerful psychosomatic effects, and allow human spirits to directly intermingle by directing one's inherent magnetic will toward others, elevated imaginative states from mere mental phantasms to active experiences.[31]

After Mesmer, the concept of the unconscious generated not only from mental healing theories, but also from a new interest in dreams and somnambulistic states. Mesmer had attempted to explain somnambulism as a dangerous symptom of certain diseases and mental derangement which produces "marvelous apparitions, trances, and

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[27] Charles Caldwell, Facts on Mesmerism, Thoughts on its Causes and Uses (Louisville: Prentice and Weissinger, 1842), 5-6.

[28] Ibid., 6-7.

[29] Ellenberger, 69.

[30] Wolfe, 19.

[31] Ibid., 38.

inexplicable visions," and his treatment was intended to prevent its natural occurrence, which caused victims to be regarded as "incurables" and outcast from society.[32] Mesmer's dissertation on his discoveries explains varying degrees of this crisis state that appears to

> 'intermediate' between wakefulness and perfect sleep… If this state is closer to wakefulness, then it has the characteristics of memory and imagination; it interacts with the effects of the external senses. These impressions become so confused with those of the internal sense—to the point of sometimes dominating them—that, in this case, they can only be looked at as 'day-dreams.' However when this state of crisis is closer to sleep, then the assertions of somnambulists are the result of impressions received directly by the 'internal' sense—the others being excluded—and one can regard them as authentic, the authenticity being proportional to this closeness.[33]

Mesmer's observations of trance states may reflect the development of his disciple the Comte de Puységur's discovery in 1784 of artificial somnambulism, or "magnetic sleep," which the magnetizer could induce for therapy, and thus began to replace the "magnetic fluid" theory with early psychological theory.[34]

Puységur accidentally induced artificial somnambulism while attempting animal magnetism on a young shepherd named Victor. Instead of experiencing convulsions as expected, Victor slipped into a deep trance. While asleep, Victor was oblivious to all except Puységur, to whom he spoke, but he experienced a hypnotic amnesia upon awakening. In the wake of the royal commission's dismissive report on animal magnetism, the scientific community initially did not recognize that Puységur's discovery

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[32] Mesmer, 90.

[33] Ibid., 124.

[34] Ellenberger, 102. Artificial somnambulism also influenced the theatrical "trances" of spiritist mediums.

would allow physicians to access a patient's unconscious mind through hypnosis.[35] Somnambulism did become a popular phenomenon, though; late eighteenth century society became preoccupied with lurid stories of sleepwalkers, devious mesmerists, and the dangers of abandoning one's exterior senses and self-awareness to explore the hidden desires revealed under hypnosis.[36]

Not until the 1820s did French physician and former magnetizer Alexandre Bertrand explain artificial somnambulism in psychological terms. His book Du magnétisme animal en France (1826) stunned mesmerism's followers by denying the existence of magnetic fluid. Observing subjects who fell into a somnambulistic state even when they only believed to have encountered magnetized objects, but in fact did not, Bertrand concluded that animal magnetism relies upon the power of the magnetizer's command over a psychologically cooperative subject.[37] Scientific interest in mesmerism rapidly declined.

However, the fact that nine journals, countless stories, and various societies dedicated to animal magnetism appeared in France between 1815-1850 demonstrates the movement's impact on French culture.[38] "At first," writes Robert Darnton, "mesmerism expressed the Enlightenment's faith in reason taken to an extreme, which later provoked a movement toward the opposite extreme, romanticism. Mesmerism… showed the point at which the two extremes met."[39] Poet Charles Baudelaire's references to magnetism in

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[35] Wolfe, 27.

[36] Ellenberger, 110.

[37] Crabtree, 126.

[38] Ellenberger, 83.

[39] Darnton, 39.

a letter from about 1838 indicates his interest in the phenomenon early on. Edgar Allan Poe's "Magnetic Revelation" (1844), a chilling story in which a somnambulist speaks from beyond the grave, was the first of the American writer's stories Baudelaire translated into French, and mesmeric allusions appear throughout Baudelaire's oeuvre.[40] For example, his poem "La Mort des pauvres" from Les Fleurs du Mal (The Flowers of Evil) (1857) compares death to a benevolent angel with magnetic fingertips: "C'est un Ange qui tient dans ses doigts magnétiques/ Le sommeil et le don des rêves extatiques" ("It's an Angel who holds in his magnetic grip/ Our peace, and the gift of ecstatic dreams").[41]

In the 1840s, English surgeon James Braid dispensed with mesmerism's remaining mystical paraphernalia and invented the science of medical hypnotism through experimenting with the effect of retinal stimulation on the nervous system. Initially used as an anesthetic and a remedy for conditions such as epilepsy and hysteria, Braid attributed his subjects' state of "nervous sleep" to physical stimuli rather than magnetic fluid.[42] His book Neurypnology; or, the Rationale of Nervous Sleep Considered in Relation with Animal Magnetism (1843) defended Mesmer, but concentrated on the magnetizer's influence on individual reactions to physiological stimuli applied to the sensory organs and bodily systems.[43]

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[40] Bernard-Paul Robert, Antécédents du Surréalisme (Ottowa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottowa, 1988), 26-27.

[41] Charles Baudelaire, The Flowers of Evil, 1857, trans. James McGowan (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 276-277. Baudelaire also mentions a "fluide nerveux" in Le Poème du hachisch (1858). Translation mine.

[42] Ibid., 162.

[43] Wolfe, 28.

According to Braid, the more frequently a patient undergoes hypnosis, "from association of ideas and habit, the more susceptible they become; and in this way they are liable to be affected entirely through the imagination."[44] Braid's theory also involves a spectrum of mental states from waking consciousness to profound sleep, which he considers a state of "absolute unconsciousness… and suspension of voluntary motion, and intellectual activity."[45] Between these two extremes, he explains, lies an infinite variety of semi-conscious mental conditions, including natural somnambulism, artificial somnambulism, and dreaming. While natural somnambulism is closest to waking, the dream state approaches complete unconsciousness, yet through subtle external stimuli,

> Erroneous impressions are conveyed to the mind; and, as happens in some cases of insanity, the power of controlling the current of thought being absent, one idea excites another, until the most incongruous combinations are produced in many instances.

Braid also observes that, unlike patients under physician-induced hypnosis, natural somnambulists seem "impelled to certain trains of action by internal impulses," and upon waking have no memory of their activities while asleep, but vividly remember them once they again slip into semi-consciousness.[46]

Known in France as early as 1860, Braid's Neurypnology provided another step towards developing theories of the unconscious in France, where physicians began to replicate his experiments with hypnosis. Braid's work inspired French psychiatrist Jean-Martin Charcot to begin hypnosis experiments at the Salpêtrière Hospital's neurological

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[44] James Braid, Braid on Hypnotism: The Beginnings of Modern Hypnosis, 1843, ed. Arthur Edward Waite (New York: The Julian Press, 1960), 116. Braid also points out that patients have demonstrated effects of animal magnetism without undergoing magnetic manipulations.

[45] Ibid., 122.

[46] Ibid., 122-123.

clinic during the 1870s, which essentially revived mesmerism from its discredited state.[47] In fact, due to Charcot's research, the French Academy of Sciences officially accepted hypnotism as a scientifically valid therapeutic method in 1882.

By 1879, Charcot had become a prominent neurologist and hypnotist due to his famous experiments with hysteria patients at the Salpêtrière. Before Charcot, hysteria was a condition exclusive to women and defined by often intermittent symptoms such as dramatic episodes, paralysis, self-starvation, hallucinations, somnambulism, and seizures. It was Charcot who attempted to classify hysteria as a legitimate neurological disorder rather than a vaguely defined mental illness.[48] His observations revealed hypnotism's association with hysteria and its three stages: lethargic, catatonic, and somnambulistic.

In the tradition of Mesmer's theatrical sessions, Charcot opened his clinic to visitors from the political and cultural spheres of France, who witnessed sensational demonstrations of a hysteria victim—usually young and female—experiencing the phases of hypnotism under Charcot's command. Joris-Karl Huysmans, Gustave Flaubert, Hippolyte Taine, Théophile Gautier, and other writers and artists are known to have attended these weekly gatherings.[49] The event was even documented in an 1887 Salon painting by André Brouillet. Une leçon clinique à la Salpêtrière (A Clinical Lesson at the

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[47] John Warne Monroe, Laboratories of Faith: Mesmerism, Spiritism, and Occultism in Modern France (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008), 200. The first professional organization of psychiatrists was established in 1852; psychiatrists generally were associated with hospitals and treating patients, and psychologists with university research into the mind and its inner workings.

[48] Asti Hustvedt, Medical Muses: Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century Paris (New York and London: Norton & Company, 2011), 19-21.

[49] Larson, 147. Just as Redon was aware of contemporary psychology and theories of the unconscious, Charcot was interested in art, and compared hysteria to medieval depictions of martyrs and the possessed. According to Graham Robb, Victor Hugo (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998), 535, Charcot's son Jean-Baptiste, a polar explorer and scientist, married Hugo's granddaughter Jeanne and named an Antarctic Peninsula island after Victor Hugo.

Salpêtrière) (Fig. 1.4) portrays Charcot hypnotizing his semi-undressed "star" patient, Blanche Wittmann, into somnambulistic lethargy before an attentive male audience, transforming the hysteric into the seductive femme fatale of contemporary Symbolist art such as Gustave Moreau's Salomé paintings.

An artist himself, Charcot drew constantly throughout his life, sometimes under the influence of hashish, which led to pages covered in fantastical dragons and figures in the manner of the automatic drawing later practiced by spiritist mediums and psychologists. In conjunction with his study of hysteria, Charcot analyzed paintings of demon-possessed or spiritually ecstatic figures from the fifth century onward to determine whether their facial expressions or contorted bodies coincided with symptoms of the hysteria condition. He also noted images of the "laying on of hands" in paintings of exorcisms, the success of which he attributed to the priests' touching the victims' hysterogenic zones.[50] Charcot and his art historical connections will be further discussed later in this chapter.

Charcot's controversial hypnosis experiments maintained mesmerism's link to mental illness in the evolving dialogue of early dynamic psychiatry. However, Charcot overlooked the influence of his own suggestive commands upon his subjects, and his theories were soon challenged. One of his rivals, physician Hippolyte Bernheim, insisted that hypnotism was a distinctive psychological state, and that its associated phenomena, such as hallucinations and automatic movements, could be accessed through suggestion alone.[51]

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[50] Hustvedt, 286-287. Some of these images, such as Rubens's drawing of a Demoniac, were included as depictions of hysterics in the Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière (1877).

[51] Crabtree, 164.

Drawing further connections between Mesmer and Charcot, the latter's followers Alfred Binet and Charles Féré published Le magnétisme animal (1887), which praises Charcot for reviving animal magnetism through modern anatomical and scientific research to develop his healing techniques of hypnotism.[52] Both Charcot and Mesmer defined hypnosis as a physiological rather than a psychological state, and considered its related "crisis" (hysteria) a spontaneous, natural occurrence.

Psychologists began to examine similar connections between insanity and dreams during the same era. French philosophers such as Théodore Jouffroy speculated upon the state of the mind during sleep around the turn of the nineteenth century, but did not approach the connections between dreams, somnambulism, and mental illness.[53] In Manet and the Family Romance, Nancy Locke notes that before Freud, psychologists linked dreams to the unconscious as early as the 1860s, attempting to reconcile spiritualism and science. For example, Alfred Maury's influential work Le Sommeil et les rêves: études psychologiques sur ces phénomènes (Sleep and Dreams) (1861) theorizes that "unconscious movement of the brain" produces dreams and characters that reflect one's waking life and yet seem subjective and foreign to the dreamer.[54]

Through nineteenth-century developments in dream research, the word "dream" became associated not only with the bizarre scenarios and nightmares glimpsed during sleep, but also with daydreams, hallucinations, madness, somnambulism, and drug-

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[52] Crabtree, 167.

[53] Tony James, Dream, Creativity, and Madness in Nineteenth-Century France (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 27.

[54] Nancy Locke, Manet and the Family Romance (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 23-24.

induced visions.[55] These elements become inextricable from Romanticism in the following decades, largely initiated by French physician Moreau de Tours's investigations into the irrational aspects of dreams. Through Moreau de Tours's close friendship with Baudelaire, the French Romantic poets' interest intensified in dissolving the boundaries between the conscious and the unconscious, the sane and insane, and the natural and supernatural to seek primal creative origins.

Moreau de Tours's book Du hachisch et de l'aliénation mentale (Hashish and Insanity) (1845) encouraged Romantic poets such as Baudelaire, Théophile Gautier, and possibly Gérard de Nerval to pursue drug-induced illusions and hallucinations to simulate insanity—which, according to Moreau de Tours, was a state identical to dreaming. Moreau de Tours believed that hashish, which he discovered on a "'therapeutic' voyage" to the near East from 1836-1839, allowed one to experience visions and dissociative states while remaining fully conscious to observe them.[56] The Romantics appropriated such explorations of the mind's simultaneously active and passive roles into their concept of dédoublement: the artist's doubled personality as both dynamic creator and entranced spectator.[57]

Mid-century writers increasingly employed mesmeric theory to drive Romantic and even Realist plots. Many Romantics also were inspired by philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg's theory of correspondences, which proposes that everything in the physical

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[55] Stefanie Heraeus, "Artists and the Dream in Nineteenth-Century Paris: Towards a Prehistory of Surrealism," trans. Deborah Laurie Cohen, in Dreams and History: The Interpretation of Dreams from Ancient Greece to Modern Psychoanalysis, ed. Daniel Pick and Lyndal Roper (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 140.

[56] Ibid., 99.

[57] Darnton, 7.

world is a mere reflection of its equivalent in a spiritual one. Instances of accessing the supernatural through magnetism pervade Honoré de Balzac's La Comédie Humaine (1829-1847), a series of novels and stories examining life and society in post-revolutionary France. In one of these novels, Ursule Mirouët (1841), atheist protagonist Dr. Minoret's encounters with animal magnetism convince him to embrace religion. Demonstrating the phenomena with a magnetized old woman, a Swedenborgian explains to Minoret that

> the trance-like state is a delightful existence in which the inner self—freed from all the fetters imposed upon its operations by external nature—moves in the world that we wrongly call invisible. In this condition sight and hearing are more perfect than in the so-called waking state, and perhaps they function without the aid of the physical organs… To anyone who has been put into this condition, distances and material objects do not exist or else they are permeated by that inner life for which our bodies serve as a reservoir, a necessary fulcrum, and outer envelope.[58]

The Swedenborgian continues to explain how magnetism proves the existence of an intangible spirit world, implying that its spiritual function overshadows its medical one. Later in the novel, Minoret posthumously appears in his niece Ursule's dreams to provide instructions and prophecies, with his head and eyes radiating with light as if emanating magnetic fluid. Balzac's work reveals how supernatural elements commingle with early psychology even before the spiritism craze crossed the Atlantic.[59]

In the visual arts, it appears to me that the dreamlike figures appearing in Romantic paintings are manifestations of the ephemeral visions and somnolent aura

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[58] Honoré de Balzac, Ursule Mirouët, 1842, trans. Donald Adamson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 90.

[59] Balzac's chapter titled "A Brief Digression on Magnetism," 83-95, summarizes the history of the movement and compares Mesmer to Christ, since both were "capable of personally curing the cruelest, most deep-rooted diseases from a distance." According to James, 60, Balzac developed an interest in somnambulism around 1820. Other novels in La Comédie Humaine involving magnetism and related phenomena include Maître Cornélius and Le Cousin Pons.

conjured by Baudelaire's poems. After Eugène Delacroix's death in 1863, Baudelaire recalls being astonished by the intense sensation of an intangible and mysterious presence in Delacroix's paintings: "it is the invisible, the impalpable, the dream, the nerves, the soul."[60] Delacroix's scandalous La Mort de Sardanapale (The Death of Sardanapalus), 1827 (Fig. 1.5), for example, exhibits dédoublement in the royal protagonist's detached self-absorption and contemplative observation of his palace's destruction and his own imminent death. The ancient Ninevite king, a character inspired by Lord Byron's 1822 play, passively reclines on his bed (or funeral pyre) as if the surrounding turmoil is a mere hallucination.

While Delacroix's description for the 1827 Salon catalogue emphasized the painting's lurid details and exotic subject, Baudelaire later saw and admired the painting as a magnificent dream with magnetic allure.[61] Although his description of the king's "feminine pose" and luxurious harem reflects contemporary Orientalism's chauvinistic attitudes, Baudelaire's fascination with the painting demonstrates Delacroix's ability to transport the viewer to an ephemeral past and unreal location despite the Romantics' disenchantment with modern life. Besides, as Delacroix, Gautier, Nerval, and later Paul Gauguin realized during their voyages east, their fantasy of a paradisiacal Orient had been nearly effaced by French colonization.[62]

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[60] Henri Dorra, Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 2.

[61] Barthélémy Jobert, Delacroix (Princeton; Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1998), 88. Baudelaire viewed The Death of Sardanapalus at a Galerie Martinet exhibition in 1861-62, and wrote in the Revue anecdotique (January 1862) that his "dreams are often filled with the magnificent forms that move in this vast painting, marvelous as a dream itself."

[62] Roger Benjamin, Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism, and French North Africa, 1880-1930 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 12.

Baudelaire conceived the poem "Correspondances" during the mid-1840s, about the same time he met Delacroix in person. Inspired by Swedenborg, Baudelaire encourages writers to convey their personal visions of this hidden world through subjective poetic language rather than concrete description: "Nature is a temple, where the living/ Columns sometimes breathe confusing speech;/ Man walks within these groves of symbols, each/ Of which regards him as a kindred thing."[63] This work illuminated the creative associations artists must seek between the tangible and the intangible, and thus became an early manifesto of the Symbolist movement.[64]

Victor Hugo likewise investigated the imagination and the supernatural, as exemplified in his explanation of "the surnaturel not as something different from reality but as the reality normally hidden from view."[65] For the celebrated writer, whose poetry and prose dominated nineteenth-century French literature, hallucinatory states and the unconscious were never far beyond the diaphanous borders of the physical world, yet remained frustratingly out of reach. Hugo spent his career dissolving the boundaries between dream and reality, life and death, and sanity and madness in his attempts to channel the unconscious and commune with the infinite.

An essence of somnambulistic delirium permeates even Hugo's most harrowing tales. In the medieval tragedy Notre-Dame de Paris (1831), for instance, penniless philosopher-poet Pierre Gringoire naïvely delves into the nightmarish world of nocturnal Paris, and becomes the novel's primary figure of dédoublement. In the darkly comical

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[63] Baudelaire, The Flowers of Evil, 19. "La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers/ Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;/ L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symbols/ Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers."

[64] Dorra, 10.

[65] William Gaunt, The Surrealists (London: Thames & Hudson, 1972), 7.

opening scene, Gringoire attempts to direct his mystery play to a rowdy peasant audience. Preferring the grotesque to the poetic, the audience interrupts the play to stage the election of the Pope of Fools—Quasimodo—instead.[66] After this fiasco, Gringoire becomes lost in the city and in the frightening visions of his own unconscious, eventually stumbling upon the vagabonds' domain known as the Court of Miracles.

When taken captive by grotesque beggars who seem scarcely human, Gringoire's thoughts reveal his descent into the unconscious. Hugo explains how the distraught poet passively watches his dire situation

> in the incoherent mist of a nightmare, in that darkness of dreams which distorts every outline, and clusters objects together in disproportioned groups, dilating things into chimeras, and men into phantoms. Little by little this hallucination gave way to a less wild and less exaggerated state of mind.[67]

By the time Gringoire survives his "trial" and marries the unearthly beauty Esmeralda in a sham gypsy wedding, Gringoire seems again to slip into a trancelike state, convinced that the night's events are an extended dream of the previous one.[68] In fact, when Gringoire first sees Esmeralda's dance earlier in the novel, she too seems a supernatural illusion; he does not know whether he gazes upon "a young girl, a fairy, or an angel" or

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[66] Hugo, Notre-Dame de Paris, 1831, trans. Walter J. Cobb (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2001), 46.

[67] Victor Hugo, The Hunchback of Notre-Dame, 1831, trans. Walter J. Cobb (New York: Putnam, 2001), Book II, 83. "…dans la brume incohérente du cauchemar, dans ces ténèbres des rêves qui font trembler tous les contours, grimacer toutes les formes, s'agglomérer les objets en groupes démesurés, dilatant les choses en chimères et les hommes en fantômes. Peu à peu à cette hallucination succéda un regard moins égaré et moins grossissant." Gringoire possibly represents Hugo's alter ego in the novel; Hugo indicates that years later, Gringoire becomes a successful dramatist and studies esoteric and philosophical sciences, which also interested Hugo.

[68] Ibid., 95.

"something more than human."[69] As in a dream, Gringoire's familiar surroundings are suddenly and consistently rendered strange.

Also an accomplished visual artist, Hugo rendered countless drawings of fantastical seascapes and decaying gothic ruins that suggest his somnambulistic state in the presence of the sublime (Fig. 1.6). I was unable to find any direct connections between Hugo and mesmerism, but with his interest in the occult it seems likely that he would have been aware of the theory and its psychological significance. As Hugo explains in a letter written during his years of political exile (1852-1870) on the Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey, "I inhabit this vast oceanic dream; bit by bit I am turning into a somnambulist of the sea."[70] The techniques and subjects in Hugo's work have been compared to those in later Symbolist and Surrealist art, including Redon's nightmarish visions and the Surrealists' automatic drawings, which I explore in depth in the following chapters.

While Hugo was living in exile, documenting the overwhelming effect of the ocean in image and text, Gérard de Nerval completed his semi-autobiographical novel Aurélia (1855), which opens with the line, "Our dreams are a second life."[71] Nerval

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[69] Ibid., 63. "Si cette jeune fille était un être humain, ou une fée, ou un ange, c'est ce que Gringoire, tout philosophe sceptique, tout poète ironique qu'il était, ne put décider dans le premier moment, tant il fut fasciné par cette éblouissante vision…c'était une surnaturelle créature."

[70] Roger Cardinal, "Victor Hugo, somnambulist of the sea," Artistic Relations: Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France, ed. Peter Collier and Robert Lethbridge (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 212. From a letter to poet Franz Stevens dated April 10, 1856: "Rendez-vous compte de l'état de mon esprit dans la solitude splendide où je vis, comme perché à la pointe d'une roche, ayant toutes les grandes écumes des vagues et toutes les grandes nuées du ciel sous ma fenêtre. J'habite cet immense rêve de l'océan. Je deviens peu à peu un somnambule de la mer, et, devant tous ces prodigieux spectacles et cette énorme pensée vivante où je m'abîme…"

[71] Gérard de Nerval, "Aurélia" (1855), in Selected Writings, trans. Geoffrey Wagner (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1970), 111. "Le rêve est une seconde vie." James, 196, observes that both Hugo and Nerval were closely acquainted with mental illness; Hugo's brother Eugène, daughter Adèle, and possibly Hugo himself also suffered from deteriorating mental health.

experienced severe episodes of mental illness throughout his life, and committed suicide that same year. Elements of Nerval's Aurélia, such as the quest for an unattainable ideal, stream-of-consciousness writing style, and bizarre or violent dream imagery, become significant aspects of Surrealist art and literature.

In the labyrinthine prose of Aurélia, the reader must decipher Nerval's subjective code of symbols that indicate traversing "those ivory or horned gates which separate us from the invisible world" and which signify the threshold between dream and reality.[72] For example, the sudden appearance of vines, trellises, or stairs lead seamlessly into such visions, and the recurring presence of Nerval's doppelgänger indicates the author's dédoublement as he witnesses his own descent into madness.

Nerval's references to magnetism in Aurélia also reveal the persistence of Mesmer's theories and mystical phenomena in mid-nineteenth-century France. At one point in the novel, Nerval reflects upon how "the magnetism of stars" permits universal communication between all living creatures. He afterwards feels permanently affected by this supernatural "sacred initiation," which leaves him acutely aware of how the magnetic rays emanating from himself and others "cross the limitless chain of created things unimpeded" and commune with astral bodies.[73]

Despite Romanticism's association with extreme emotional states and the tragic sublime, visual artists such as Delacroix and Hugo began to capture the dreamlike compositions, lethargic motion, and otherworldly subjects that become more pronounced as the style approaches the Symbolist period. Also during the nineteenth century, the

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[72] Nerval, 111.

[73] Ibid., 166-167.

authority of academic history painting began to fade. Romantic critics attributed this decline to the public's increasing apathy towards "serious" art, and Gautier remarked with pleasure upon the genre's gradual disappearance in favor of the imaginative modernism exhibited at the Salon of 1863.[74]

As early as 1861, Gautier became the first major critic to appreciate Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, a proto-Symbolist painter whose Salon contributions departed from Naturalism towards somnambulistic, dreamlike imagery. Gautier's Salon review of that year praises Puvis's Bellum and Concordia in his review, admiring his serene, yet "heroic, epic, and monumental" style, and how "rather than represent objects, he gives birth to the idea of them."[75] Puvis, who never associated himself with the Symbolists, received increasingly positive attention from critics and Parisian audiences. His work appealed to the critical eye of Romantic and Symbolist writers, yet intensely conservative critics objected to his lack of formal training at the École des Beaux-Arts and his paintings' "naïve incompetence," which others interpreted as poetic idealism.[76]

In her book Dream States: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism, and the Fantasy of France, Jennifer L. Shaw explains how Puvis slowly replaced academic classicism with dreamlike ambiguity, and how this evolution towards unconscious imagery was a

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[74] Peter Cooke, "Gustave Moreau's 'Oedipus and the sphinx': archaism, temptation, and the nude at the Salon of 1864," in The Burlington Magazine, Vol. 146 (September 2004), 609. "The crowd is visibly bored by serious art, and at the very most it grants those who practise it the cold and banal esteem that cannot be refused to useless dedication," wrote Gautier.

[75] Théophile Gautier, "An Early Appraisal of Puvis de Chavannes," in Abécédaire du Salon de 1861 (Paris: Dentu, 1861), 102-103, in Dorra, Symbolist Art Theories, 38.

[76] Jennifer L. Shaw, Dream States: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism, and the Fantasy of France (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 3. Puvis briefly studied with Delacroix and Thomas Couture, but their influence is less pronounced than that of the late gothic and early Renaissance masters he studied during trips to Italy early in his career.

significant factor in the development of modernism.[77] Shaw demonstrates Puvis's innovation in her comparison of his Jeunes filles au bord de la mer (Young Girls by the Seashore) (Fig. 1.7) with William Bouguereau's La Naissance de Vénus (The Birth of Venus), both exhibited at the Salon of 1879. Bouguereau's academic painting of a sensuous nude goddess presenting herself to the viewer's gaze contrasts sharply with Puvis's composition, in which three meditative, unidealized female figures lounge in the haze of a surreal seascape.[78]

The controversial painting's distorted bodies, flattened forms, and muted colors diverged from academic expectations. Furthermore, the women appear melancholy and detached from one another, each facing a different direction and occupying an isolated space. The foreground figure is sprawled across a rock, her eyes blank as if her mental state wavers between waking and dreaming. In the background, another statuesque woman turns towards the sea, dressing her hair. At an ambiguous distance away, a featureless third figure reclines awkwardly on her elbow, the rest of her body disturbingly incomplete, cropped by the border of the canvas.

Although inaccessible to the voyeuristic gaze of the intended male audience, the painting's hypnotic power struck proto-Symbolist poet Théodore de Banville, who recognized the need for an aesthetic style that could defy modern life's banality through abstraction. Sensing a refuge in "something infinite, in a nothing-at-all that at least is calm and silent," Banville admires how the women "let down their hair and dream" in a

[77] Shaw, 9.

[78] Ibid., 14-18.

fantastical, hermetic space.[79] He also compares the figures to Baudelaire's "Condemned Women" from Les Fleurs du Mal, a poem hinting at unrequited love between women, due to the apprehensive sense of imminent touch between Puvis's figures.[80] According to Shaw, Banville's review best captures the emotional impact of Jeunes filles au bord de la mer and the subjective desires its dreamlike abstraction allows.[81]

In Puvis's painting, the women's expressionless bodies, their classically-inspired drapery, and the lack of narrative context create an uncanny sense of timelessness. Aimee B. Price also notes the painting's "surreal color" and how the absence of any interaction between the figures establishes that they are "figments of the artist's imagination and under his control."[82] Naturalist critics objected to these unidealized women, their empty stares, and the painting's overall lack of focus. However, Symbolist critic Gustave Kahn invented a background story for the painting at a later exhibition: the women, he claimed, are siren-like creatures who have become weary of singing, and wait for a ship that will never return.[83] Like Banville's poetic interpretation, Kahn's review of Jeunes filles au bord de la mer implies how these vague women, possibly

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[79] Théodore de Banville, "Salon de 1879—IV," Le National de 1869 (21 May 1879), 1. Reproduced in Shaw, 26.

[80] Baudelaire, The Flowers of Evil, 244-245. Baudelaire's poem contains the lines, "Comme un bétail pensif sur le sable couchées,/ Elles tournent leurs yeux vers l'horizon des mers,/ Et leurs pieds se cherchant et leurs mains rapprochées/ Ont de douces langueurs des frissons amers." ("Like pensive cattle lying on the sands,/ They gaze upon the endless seas, until/ Feet grope for feet, and hands close over hands,/ In languid sweetness or with quivering chill.")

[81] Shaw, 27.

[82] Aimee B. Price, Puvis de Chavannes: A Study of the Easel Paintings and a Catalogue of the Painted Works (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1972), 84.

[83] Price, 66, refers to Gustave Kahn, "L'Exposition Puvis de Chavannes," La Revue Indépendante VI (Jan. 1888), 145-146.

symbolic projections of Puvis's psyche, permit the viewer subjectively to complete his work and partake in Symbolism's escapism from modern life.[84]

Often to Puvis's dismay, the Symbolists continuously derived such mystical and philosophical inspiration from his hypnotically tranquil imagery. In an interview, Puvis did acknowledge that his art resulted from attaching images to the ideas that surfaced from repressed emotions:

> I meditate on the thought buried in this emotion until it appears lucidly and as distinctly as possible before my eyes. Then I search for an image that translates it with exactitude… This is symbolism if you like.[85]

Henri Dorra points out that Puvis's persistence in denying the Symbolist aspects of his work was actually not far from embracing them. In particular, Puvis usually avoids obvious symbols in favor of complex, subjective interpretations of his subjects.[86]

Symbolist critics such as Félix Fénéon and Jules Laforgue also perceived antediluvian dream images in Puvis's oeuvre. Laforgue, writing for Le Symboliste in 1886, derived an "unchallengeable feeling of the sacred verging on the immortal" from Puvis's paintings, particularly La Famille du Pêcheur (The Fisherman's Family), 1875 (Fig. 1.8). Laforgue was familiar with Eduard von Hartmann's Die Philosophie des Unbewussten (Philosophy of the Unconscious), translated in 1877, which links creativity with the workings of the unconscious mind. According to Laforgue, La Famille du Pecheur depicts a psychologically intricate, "symphonic dream" of a lost Golden Age in

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[84] Shaw, 24.

[85] Dorra, 40. Quoted in Charles Chassé, Le Mouvement symboliste dans l'art du XIXe siècle (Paris: Floury, 1947), 42: "La pensée qui gît dans cette émotion, je la roule, jusqu'à ce qu'elle soit élucidée à mes yeux et qu'elle apparaisse avec toute la netteté possible. Alors, je cherche un spectacle qui la traduise avec exactitude… C'est du symbolisme si vous voulez."

[86] Ibid.

which statuesque figures drift slowly through an ephemeral landscape.[87] Like the Jeunes filles au bord de la mer, the fisherman, his wife, child, and old man appear detached from one another and experiencing varying states of consciousness, from tranquility to daydreaming to deathlike sleep.

Shearer West offers Puvis's similar composition Le Pauvre pêcheur (The Poor Fisherman), 1881 (Fig. 1.9), as an example of Symbolism's principle of correspondences: the painting's simplified figures, distorted scale, and timeless quality render it "more than a straightforward imitation of life" in its rejection of the traditional correlation between signifier and signified.[88] Without the presence of the family and their fishing boat, the painting's flattened landscape and lack of modeling would approach pure abstraction. Even so, the wraithlike figures only contribute to the painting's enigmatic appearance. In my observation, the figures cast no shadows or reflections, which suggests that the mysterious family may be a mere hallucination or apparitions dreamed by the artist. The mysteriously cropped fisherman, his disproportionately tall adolescent daughter, and the disturbingly twisted body of her younger sibling all suggest that Puvis has turned from naturalistic rendering towards the bizarre distortions experienced in dreams.

Puvis resented how his paintings generated Symbolist critics' speculation regarding "the artist's inner life" and dreams, yet his work concerns the unconscious tendencies of the human condition despite his figures' classicized detachment. In fact, Le Pauvre pêcheur became a tableau manifeste for the Symbolists and their followers.

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[87] Jules Laforgue, "A propos de toiles, ça et là," in Le Symboliste I (Oct.-Nov. 1886), in Dorra, Symbolist Art Theories, 43.

[88] Shearer West, Fin de Siècle (Woodstock: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1993), 105. Brian Petrie, Puvis de Chavannes (Hants, England; Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate, 1997), 106, mentions that Puvis wrote a description of Le Pauvre pêcheur as a genre painting—a somber family scene in which the mother has passed away.

Several artists, including Georges Seurat and Gauguin, borrowed its motifs or title, while Nabi artist Maurice Denis praised its melancholy protagonist as a "universal triumph of aesthetic imagination over stupid imitation." Even Puvis's opponents, including Naturalist critic Joris-Karl Huysmans, remarked on the painting's psychological force and memorability.[89]

Puvis also does not seem opposed to portraying the synthesis of reality and the unconscious. In Le rêve (The Dream), 1883 (Fig. 1.10), a composition that resembles a less sinister version of Francisco Goya's El sueño de la razón produce monstruos (The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters), three allegorical apparitions bestow love, glory, and fortune upon a sleeping vagabond.[90] Despite the divine figures' traditional attributes of roses, laurels, and coins, Puvis presents an image of unconscious desires that reveals his subjective interpretation of dreaming. Again, he flattens the picture plane to near-abstraction, and the diaphanous women wear costumes that initially appear classical, but in fact more closely resemble nineteenth-century fashions, thus making both time and space ambiguous.

The reclusive Puvis was dubbed "le fou tranquille" early in his career. His languorous, introspective images diverged from the vibrant Realist canvases of Gustave Courbet—who was considered a "raving madman" in contrast.[91] As Puvis's popularity grew, critics from both avant-garde and traditional circles appreciated the artist's attempts to create eloquent, allegorical visions of French heritage and culture. He received prestigious mural commissions including Le Bois sacré cher aux arts et aux muses (The

[89] Petrie, 105-106.

[90] Price, 518.

[91] Price, 11.

Sacred Grove Dear to the Arts and Muses) for the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyons (1883-1884), an allegory of the Sorbonne for the university's main lecture hall (1888-1889), and the life of St. Geneviève cycle for the Panthéon (1893-1898). Inspired by the tranquility of early Renaissance frescoes, Puvis's murals exemplify his ability to merge the supernatural with the secular and create transcendent versions of reality.[92]

Since the murals' classicized figures appear as dreaming spirits or symbols of nostalgic reverie for an idyllic past, Puvis's murals also may embody the artist's concept of an ideal, arcadian France that was rapidly vanishing to industrialization. Essentially, proposes Shaw, Puvis presents his own "noble and elevated dream" to viewers receptive to mesmeric commands in a visual format. Painted on a grand scale, Le Bois sacré (Fig. 1.11) and its adjacent murals, Vision antique (Ancient Vision) and Inspiration chrétienne (Christian Inspiration), assimilate viewers and render them docile participants in Puvis's vision, allowing them to approach a hypnotic state of mind at the artist's suggestion.[93]

Anonymous critics (possibly Fénéon and Laurent Tailhade) published an article in 1886 praising Le Bois sacré as a dream image, and a bridge between the past and the future that offers an escape from the contemporary world into one of truth and beauty.[94] Intended as an allegory of French creativity, Le Bois sacré features the female personifications of Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting in the center of a muted nocturnal landscape, surrounded by the nine Muses. Puvis identifies the allegorical figures through subtle attributes; for example, Urania (Astronomy) contemplates the

[92] Ibid., 57.

[93] Shaw, 61.

[94] Petrie, 140-141.

moon's reflection in the lake, and a child offers flowers to Painting in reference to the Lyonnais flower painting tradition.

Shaw asserts that Le Bois sacré is far from a conventional allegory. Instead, many critics considered the mural a subversive representation of a semi-conscious state, resisting the viewer's rational attempts to decipher it in favor of turning towards the unconscious mind.[95] The experience of viewing this unreal scene, its serene inaccessibility only inciting one's desire to partake in it, also corresponds to contemporary dream theory such as Maury's Le Sommeil et les rêves. Shaw explains,

> nineteenth-century psychologists generally conceived of dream as an associational chain of image fragments drawn from memory, driven by desire, and not subject to free will. This mural called on each of these elements of the dream state.[96]

Furthermore, it appears to me that many of the painting's nebulous Muses have become disinterested in their mythological attributes. The three arts have set aside their compass, chisel, and palette; Clio (History) looks up from her tablet, and Calliope (Epic Poetry) ceases to write. These figures perhaps represent the transition from conscious activity to an automatic or somnambulistic creative method.

Several critics objected to the possible representation of the unconscious in a public mural, fearing that an introspective or hallucinatory image could not be educational. Some responses to the painting directly refer to developing psychological theory in France, specifically hysteria and the loss of conscious control while under

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[95] Shaw, 45.

[96] Ibid., 46.

hypnosis.[97] "An involuntary respect seizes you, an unexplained charm pins you to the spot," wrote Firmin Javel regarding Le Bois sacré in an 1884 Salon review.[98] His comment reflects the nineteenth-century cultural fascination—and anxiety—towards hypnosis and involuntarily falling under the control of another's will.

Philosopher Paul Souriau was familiar with Puvis's work, and perhaps had works such as Le Bois sacré in mind while speculating upon art's trance-inducing potential. In his book La suggestion dans l'art (1893), Souriau argues that works of art themselves may emanate a hypnotic force. He asks,

> don't we sometimes end up, after contemplating them for a while, falling into a sort of ecstasy that prolongs itself indefinitely unless some outside event calls us back to ourselves? In the illusions produced by painting, aren't there some aspects of hallucination?... Between the hypnotic state and the ecstasy of the beautiful, between the effects of suggestion and those of art, there is a singular resemblance.[99]

Souriau goes on to compare contemplating a sublime work of art—passively fixing one's eyes and consciousness upon the object—to experiencing a hypnotic state.[100] His concept of la fascination visuelle relates back to animal magnetism and the powerful influence of the gaze. Borrowing a concept from Hugo, Souriau explains that intently

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[97] Ibid., 59. A parody of Le Bois sacré by A. Robida, published in La Caricature (May 17, 1884), depicts the women in contorted poses that resemble medical images of women suffering from "hysterical attacks."

[98] Firmin Javel, "Le Salon," L'Evénement (May 4, 1884), 2. Quoted in Shaw, 59.

[99] Paul Souriau, La suggestion dans l'art, 1893 (Paris: Alcan et Guillaumin, 1909), 1-2. "Dans la contemplation du beau, dans l'effet que peut produire sur nous une oeuvre d'art, il y a quelque chose d'étrange, et que l'on n'a pas encore bien expliqué. Il est tout naturel que nous regardions les belles choses avec plaisir. Mais ne nous arrive-t-il pas, après les avoir contemplées quelque temps, de tomber dans une sorte d'extase qui se prolongerait indéfiniment si quelque accident extérieur ne nous rappelait pas à nous-mêmes? Dans les illusions que produit la peinture, n'y a-t-il pas de l'hallucination?… Entre cet état d'hypnose et l'extase du beau, entre ces effets de la suggestion et ceux de l'art, il y a une resemblance singulière, qui donne à penser." Translated in Shaw, 60. For Shaw's extensive analysis of The Sacred Grove and dream imagery, see Dream States, Chapter 2, "Dream's Body," 43-64.

[100] Souriau, 6. "Nous ne réagissons pas contre l'impression que l'objet fait sur nos sens: nous la subissons passivement. Nous n'avons plus à nous demander s'il est beau et pourquoi il l'est: nous nous contentions de tenir notre esprit et nos yeux fixes sur lui… C'est la pure contemplation. N'est-ce pas aussi l'hypnose?"

staring at a captivating image causes one to abandon the "exterior landscape" of the physical world and become lost in the interior one of the imagination, unconsciously replacing the painted subjects with subjective dream images.[101]

At this point in time, modern art and the unconscious had become inextricably linked, partly due to Puvis's ethereal visions. Soon after the inauguration of his Lyons murals, he received the commission to paint an allegory of the Sorbonne as the intellectual foundation of republican France. Installed in the university's Grand Amphithéâtre, the vast mural features the stately, robed figure of "l'antique Sorbonne" at its axis, surrounded by adolescent boys bearing laurels, the Muses, and allegorical figures of academic disciplines. Although the Sorbonne mural glorifies secular knowledge, Puvis's allegory also elevates the role of dream and the imagination in intellectual pursuits. The composition expands upon the theme of Le Bois sacré, and again, viewers could not readily identify its complex iconography.

However, several critics agreed that the somber, white-draped woman, seated among the other Muses at the left, was a personification of dream.[102] Aware of the developing mental health theories promoted by the state, Republican critics leaned towards psychological interpretations of the mural, using the language of hypnotism and the unconscious to explain its aesthetic experience. André Michel, for example, predicted in the Journal des Débats that the mural's presence would have a mesmeric effect on students attending lectures in the amphitheatre, allowing the professor to fill

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[101] Ibid., 27-39. Souriau mentions, "la chose au monde fascinante par excellence, ce sont les yeux eux-mêmes. Les magnétiseurs de profession le savent bien... [L'oeil] a le regard, lumière immatérielle, rayonnement idéal qui le fait briller d'une étrange splendeur," and refers to Hugo's En voyage (1890), 187.

[102] Shaw, 129.

their quasi-hypnotized minds with knowledge—or the students to participate in a collective intellectual fantasy even if they found the lesson uninspiring.[103]

As in works such as Jeunes filles au bord de la mer, Puvis's flattened landscape and unmodeled figures provoke one's imagination to complete the work. Indeed, Maurice Denis valued the painting's "general evocation of mood" over its allegorical meaning. His comment on "the ability of these lines and colors to speak for themselves" refers to the work's divine beauty, but also insinuates its hypnotic allure. Likewise, in the 1890s André Mellerio claimed that "the idea emerges from Puvis's works," which enigmatically suggest concepts "through the breath of emotion that they exhale."[104] Thus the compelling power of the work itself entices viewers to experience Puvis's dream visions vicariously through his somnambulistic figures. The Sorbonne mural demonstrates that throughout his career, Puvis consistently invites the viewer into hallucinatory environments that linger on the unstable and fragile threshold between dream and reality.

Works by other late Romantic artists of Puvis's generation seem more overtly to reflect the influence of animal magnetism, hypnotism, and early dream psychology. In 1864, a mythological history painting by a then little-known artist scandalized the Paris Salon: Gustave Moreau's Œdipe et le Sphinx (Oedipus and the Sphinx) (Fig. 1.12). In contrast to Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's 1808 version of the subject, which hides the mythological creature in shadow and focuses on the figure of Oedipus, Moreau places the hero and the monster in close confrontation on a precipice, engaging each other's

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[103] André Michel, "Le Grand Amphithéâtre de la Nouvelle Sorbonne," Journal des Débats (August 6, 1889), 2. Quoted in Shaw, 135-136.

[104] Petrie, 124.

eyes with what I interpret as a magnetic stare. The sphinx, a monstrous hybrid of a mysteriously ornamental woman with robust wings and a lion's body, leaps upon Oedipus and grasps his torso. The painting's seemingly airless space, paradoxical tranquility, and unnatural weight distribution enhances its theme of an unsolved enigma.

Critics responded to this "thunderclap in the middle of the Palais de l'Industrie" with both laudatory and disparaging reviews, most referring to the painting's mythological subject, innovative figuration, and ascetic depiction of the heroic nude in the style of Italian masters such as Mantegna.[105] Others observed the painting's mystical and religious associations, particularly in the emaciated figure of Oedipus and the theme of female temptation. Most significantly, though, viewers reacted to Moreau with "reluctant amazement, dependent in degree upon the writer's tolerance for hallucination, somnambulism, and the generally bizarre."[106] This enigmatic, anti-Naturalistic, and polemical painting provided the impetus for Symbolist art in the following years, and caused some critics to consider Moreau "a potential savior of le grand art…capable, perhaps, of countering both the decadent frivolity of Salon painting and the rising tide of Realism," explains Peter Cooke, reflecting upon mid-nineteenth-century attitudes towards art and antagonism between critical factions.[107]

In contrast with glowing reviews of Moreau's triumphant innovation, Naturalist critic Jules-Antoine Castagnary ridiculed Moreau's painting as a "poetic hallucination"

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[105] Cooke, 609, quotes an unknown critic at the Salon of 1864.

[106] Elisabeth Puckett, The Symbolist Criticism of Painting: France, 1880-1895, (Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1948), 39.

[107] Cooke, "Gustave Moreau's 'Oedipus and the sphinx,'" 610. According to Philippe Jullian, Dreamers of Decadence: Symbolist Painters of the 1890s, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Praeger, 1971), 190-191, Puvis and Gustave Moreau became close friends, but their relationship faded as their styles diverged towards the fin-de-siècle.

that effaced its own intelligibility and the Oedipal myth's eternal truths for humanity.[108] Castagnary's remarks reveal the distaste shared by Naturalist critics for anything detached from contemporary society and the natural world; the Naturalists, searching for the authenticity of nature in an age of rapid industrial development, also longed for art to provide viewers with rational, universal messages. Naturalist painters including Jean-François Millet and Courbet viewed their style as promoting equality and individualism while banishing superficiality. For these artists, the natural world offered a refuge from urbanization. Thus, for some critics, Moreau's early Symbolist painting provided a mystical and spiritual escape, though others believed that his work ruined the moral integrity of traditional Salon painting and its faithfulness to nature.

Moreau's recurrent combination of literary narrative, impenetrable detail, and arrested motion exemplify his theory of la belle inertie, a pleasing tranquility inspired by Italian Quattrocento painting. José Pierre suggests that la belle inertie recalls Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's Laokoon: Oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie (Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry) (1766). According to Lessing, painting can only project a single instant, so the artist must choose "the one that will communicate most effectively the moment before and the moment after." Whether Moreau read Lessing is uncertain, but his work suggests a similar philosophy of expressive timing and physical tension. Several of Moreau's figural canvases and abstract oil studies exhibit his

[108] Jules-Antoine Castagnary, "Salon de 1864," Salons, Vol. I (Paris: Charpentier, 1892), 199. According to Cooke, 613, the subject of the nude also was controversial in the 1860s due to moral concerns and anxiety towards prostitution—another consequence of dense city life and the problematic spread of disease. In "Appel aux artistes contre le sphinx et Satan pour le Christ, la Madonne, et le Paradis," in Mémorial catholique, 1864, Catholic critic Désiré Laverdant even compares Moreau's tempting sphinx to a venereal infection: a "running sore" that scandalizes the exhibition space.

sense of movement, despite his figures' stiffness in other works, such as the Salomé paintings.

During his travels in Italy from 1857-1859, studying Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel (particularly the Ignudi) and "Night" figure on the Medici tomb in Florence also inspired the transcendent quality of his work and his development of la belle inertie. Besides alternating between sacred and secular allegorical figures, Moreau evokes Michelangelo's meditative mood, and developed his work's quality of spiritual absorption from studying Michelangelo's sculptures and paintings.[109] The artist's notes regarding Oedipus and the Sphinx indicate Michelangelo's influence: "All the figures of Michelangelo appear to be arrested in an ideal state of sleep-walking," and possess the "self-absorption of the individual rapt in dreams… The idea of an otherworldly sphere to which they seem to belong," he explained, and projects Michelangelo's somnambulistic figuration into his own.[110] This dreamlike quality—evoking the sense of myth, mystery, and the unconscious that appealed to later Symbolists—becomes confrontational in the fixed gazes and forceful psychological interaction between Oedipus and the sphinx.

My observations of one of Moreau's preparatory drawings for Oedipus and the Sphinx reinforce the mesmeric exchange between the two mythological characters. This large-scale charcoal drawing, now hanging in the hallway of the Musée Gustave Moreau, shows the artist's particular attention to the figures' eyes and gaze, especially those of the sphinx, which he highlighted in white. Her eye intersects with the center vertical line on

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[109] Peter Cooke, "Gustave Moreau's 'Salome': the poetics and politics of history painting," The Burlington Magazine CXLIX (August 2007): 533. Also discussed in Allen, 161-162. The far right figure in Raphael's The Angels visiting Abraham is another questionable source of Salomé's pose.

[110] Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Gustave Moreau: with a catalogue of the finished paintings, watercolors, and drawings (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1976), 58.

the drawing's grid, and lies between two horizontal grid lines. Thus the sphinx's hypnotic gaze becomes the focal point of the upper half of the composition.

Pierre insists that Moreau's la belle inertie does not represent a reversal of modern art back to Neoclassical restraint, since "the cult of the paroxysm was only one aspect of Romanticism."[111] The author traces similar philosophies through Romantic and Pre-Raphaelite painting; like Caspar David Friedrich's sea-gazing figures and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's entranced women, Moreau's figures convey a contemplative stillness.[112] However, I believe that Moreau's la belle inertie and his passively somnambulistic figures essentially represent the artist's subjective version of Baudelaire's dédoublement. Moreau in particular seems to have modernized David's mesmeric gestures into supernatural gazes and sinister psychological forces emanating from human or inhuman bodies, and in turn initiated a style that would culminate in esoteric Symbolism.

During the 1880s, the close relationship of Symbolist art and literature often led to intersections of ideas between artists and writers. Huysmans had become one of the Symbolist prophets who championed Moreau and essentially discovered Redon before the full-fledged movement emerged.[113] Huysmans began his writing career as a Naturalist and disciple of Zola, but his interest in the occult, mysticism, and pure color in art led him to reject his original style in favor of Impressionism and Symbolism, and to search for the latter movement's origins in Moreau and Redon.[114]

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[111] Paladilhe and Pierre, 80-82.

[112] Ibid.

[113] The Salon of 1880 was Moreau's last Salon exhibition; he was successful receiving commissions, and ceased to exhibit.

[114] Puckett, 38.

Moreau's early Symbolist compositions appealed to Romantic and decadent critics such as Huysmans, who in his 1880 Salon review envisioned Moreau as "an infernal mystic locked away in central Paris, where the noise of contemporary life that beats furiously at the doors of the cloister can no longer penetrate. Lost in ecstasy, he saw the enchanting visions and bloody apotheoses of other ages shine resplendently."[115] Huysmans dedicated several pages of his review to Moreau's past accomplishments, present work, and extraordinary talent that allowed the painter to render dreams visible, in response to the continuing popularity of Naturalism.

In his novel À Rebours (Against Nature) (1884) Huysmans encounters through the eyes of his jaded protagonist Des Esseintes "a lethargy haunted by vague reveries" and watches "a parade of dreams to which he submitted passively, not even attempting to escape from them."[116] Moreau's exotic depictions of Salomé especially haunted Huysmans. Des Esseintes obsesses nightly over the paintings and their exotic details. However, Huysmans' decadent interpretation of Salomé's dance may instill more eroticism into the paintings than Moreau meant to include. As a result, present literature and criticism on Moreau's Salomé paintings usually overlooks the rationale for the dancer's unnatural, rigid poses in favor of identifying her as the ultimate femme fatale of the Decadent movement—a popular interpretation since Huysmans immortalized Salomé dansant devant Hérode (Salomé Dancing Before Herod) and L'Apparition (The

[115] Joris-Karl Huysmans, "Le Salon Officiel de 1880," in L'Art Moderne (Paris: Charpentier, 1883), 135. Huysmans calls Moreau "un artiste extraordinaire, unique. C'est un mystique enfermé, en plein Paris, dans une cellule où ne pénètre même plus le bruit de la vie contemporaine qui bat furieusement pourtant les portes du cloître. Abîmé dans l'extase, il voit resplendir les féeriques visions, les sanglantes apotheoses des autres âges."

[116] Joris-Karl Huysmans, Against Nature (À Rebours), 1884, translated by Margaret Mauldon (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 62. "[La solitude] amenait une torpeur hantée de songeries vagues; elle annihilait ses desseins, brisait ses volontés, guidait un defile de rêves qu'il subissait, passivement, sans même essayer de s'y soustraire." Oeuvres complètes, Vol. VII, 112-113.

Apparition) in À Rebours with erotic descriptions of Salomé's gestures and pose. The Salomé paintings exhibit Moreau's vision of la belle inertie and the significant moment; his opulent detail and distinctive figuration forge a visionary mimesis of dance, iconography, and somnambulism.

Historically, Salomé's dance occurred during the early first century A.D. in Judaea. Encouraged by her mother Herodias, Salomé became infamous as the young princess who danced for her stepfather, the tetrarch Herod, in exchange for the severed head of John the Baptist after the saint condemned Herodias' adulterous marriage to Herod. Moreau painted various contemplative images of Salomé, including Salomé at the Prison (1873-76) musing over a rose during the moment of the execution, and Salomé in the Garden (1878), calmly holding the laden charger. His major Salomé paintings from 1874-76 illustrate her dance or an apparition of its aftermath in Herod's exotic palace, namely Salomé dansant devant Hérode and the watercolor L'Apparition. Moreau created similar versions including Salomé dansant devant Hérode ("Salomé Tattooed") and the unfinished painting L'Apparition.

In my analysis, Moreau's solemn Salomé dansant devant Hérode (Fig. 1.13), Salomé's stiff pose and sense of immobility generate the painting's greatest mystery. The ethereal young dancer seems to float across the palace floor, unnaturally elevated on her toes despite her heavily jeweled costume. Her downcast, shadowy face bears a passive expression, and is juxtaposed with the large, white lotus flower held aloft in her right hand, her arm pulled close to her side. She extends her left arm, reaching into space in her trancelike dance. However, the arrested motion of her figure in space renders any forward movement imperceptible, except in the scarf drifting behind her.

Julius Kaplan observes how Moreau's Salomé seems suspended in mid-air, floating but anchored by her robes, while her arm extends in the painting's single human gesture.[117] In 1912 an anonymous reviewer puzzled over how Salomé, "[f]rozen in contemplation… appears to have an inscrutable secret…, the high priestess of a sensuality that includes but transcends the senses," a statement indicative of critics' enduring fascination with Moreau's mysterious figure.[118]

Moreau frames Salomé with four background figures in similarly immobile postures. Half-hidden in the shadows behind the far left column, Salomé's mother Herodias watches her daughter while cradling a sword. Seated in front of Herodias, a female musician provides music, but her presence does not interrupt the painting's eerie implication of silence. The executioner stands to Herod's left, draped in red and carrying a jagged-bladed sword. Herod sits enthroned in the center, evoking royal dignity, but also physical and moral decay. Pierre-Louis Mathieu describes Herod as an "Oriental mummy" with lifeless features; he resembles a hieratic idol more than a human being.[119]

Besides the black panther lying in the lower right corner, the painting's additional figures are ancient Greek and Eastern mythological statues. A multi-breasted fertility statue of Artemis of Ephesus stands with her arms outstretched at the apex of Herod's throne, flanked by two smaller statues of Mithras or Ahriman, the Persian god of evil.[120]

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[117] Julius Kaplan, The Art of Gustave Moreau: Theory, Style, and Content (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 57-58.

[118] Helen Grace Zagona, The Legend of Salome and the Principle of Art for Art's Sake (Genéve: Librairie E. Droz, 1960), 93; Zagona quotes the anonymous article "The House of Herod in History and Art," in The Edinburgh Review CCXV (April 1912), 309.

[119] Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Gustave Moreau: with a catalogue of the finished paintings, watercolors, and drawings. Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1976), 124.

[120] Kaplan, Art of Gustave Moreau, 65. Both deities were worshipped in the Roman empire in Salomé's lifetime, but otherwise the array of religious symbols from various sources lacks historical accuracy.

The statue of Artemis extends her arms, as if perversely blessing the scene or linking herself with Salomé as the only gesturing figures in the painting, yet the living figure's stylized motion is equally statuesque. Salomé dances across a deep red rose-strewn carpet, foreshadowing the blood spilled on her behalf, in the foreground of an intricate exotic palace with gilded and painted columns, arches, and partitions. "In both Salomé Dancing and the Apparition, the background is composed of repeated horizontals and verticals, which enclose and lock the space into complete stillness," explains Virginia Allen.[121] The impenetrable architecture reinforces the impression of a dream location, particularly a silent hermetic chamber.

A similar painting with the same title, an unfinished work also known as Salomé Tattooed (Fig. 1.14), portrays Salomé in the same elaborate location, but holding a slightly different pose. Her arms remain in the bent or extended positions, but her torso is now frontal, she stands in contrapposto rather than on her toes, and holds a mysterious scepter in her extended left hand. José Pierre interprets the figure as wearing a "transparent, embroidered veil"—perhaps signifying the barrier between dream and reality—that reveals the relationship between Salomé's "physical, psychological and mythological reality on the one hand and, on the other, the forms indicating that reality… [W]hat then… is Salomé but an intoxicating flower of flesh, pure and at the same time poisonous?"[122]

This version emphasizes Salomé's nude body itself as a sort of canvas, although her costume remains ambiguous; she may be wearing sheer veils with linear designs,

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[121] Virginia M. Allen, The Femme Fatale: Erotic Icon (Troy, NY: Whitston Publishing Co., 1983), 159.

[122] Jean Paladilhe and José Pierre, Gustave Moreau, trans. Bettina Wadia (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 84.

have esoteric patterns painted on her nude body, or a combination of both. Although the dancer's eyes are closed, in my interpretation the Orientalist designs and mythological symbols inscribed on her body give this femme fatale the mesmeric power to enthrall her male observers. Despite her interiority and rigid stillness, the pair of wide, staring eyes on her torso and the lewd gorgon's head above her pubic region seem endowed with supernatural abilities to enthrall viewers.

Looking at the linear overlay upon the female body in Salomé Tattooed, I wonder if Moreau was aware of the contemporary "dermagraphic" experiments that occurred at the Salpêtrière from the 1870s onward. In this bizarre practice, doctors literally inscribed text and symbols on patients' bodies with a pin or stylus, creating raised, reddened lines in the skin (Fig. 1.15). At the time, nearly anything could be inscribed on a female patient in the name of scientific experimentation: the doctor's diagnosis; occult symbols; mischievous commands, and even decorative drawings signed and dated by the "artist."[123] The experiments reflect not only the intersection between art and medicine during the late nineteenth century, but also the enduring fear of women and a desire to possess and control their bodies.

Naturally, Moreau's Salomé paintings perpetuate this fear. His oil on canvas version of L'Apparition, ca. 1876 (Fig. 1.16) seems to represent a particularly confrontational mesmeric exchange between the saint and the femme fatale. The thickly encrusted paint designating the light radiating from John the Baptist's disembodied head and the figures' locked gazes is quite evident when observing the painting in person. To

[123] Hustvedt, 55-57. Photographs of these experiments were published in the Nouvelle iconographie de la Salpêtrière and other medical journals. The modern American Medical Association Family Medical Guide defines dermagraphism as "a type of hives usually caused by scratching the skin."

me, the blinding light emanating from the apparition compared to the thin layers of dark coloring and seemingly unfinished black and white drawing in the background suggests the artist's concern with capturing a supernatural battle that is only visible to the entities involved, leaving the rest of the scene in a hermetic stillness.

In this painting, Herod, Herodias, and the executioner seem oblivious to the fact that Salomé has paused in her dance to point at the visionary head, allowing her scarves to fall to the ground. Rather than focusing on her dance, Moreau emphasizes the gestures and expression of her upper body, leaving her feet blurry and indistinct. Clutching a lotus flower in her right hand, she points rigidly at the head with her forefinger. Salomé's expression appears one of anger or wide-eyed determination, and she possibly lashes out with rage in her attempt to prevent the saint's power from dominating her. The terrifying apparition of the Christlike head, dripping gore from its mouth, forehead, and neck onto the floor below, returns her stare with similarly wide eyes and open mouth. Also difficult to discern in reproductions of the painting is the cross of brighter brush strokes within the radiating light of the saint's otherwise golden halo—which falls short of reaching Salomé's outstretched arm.

Considering the prominence of light as mystical energy in L'Apparition, Moreau likely was familiar with poet and occultist Éliphas Lévi (formerly Abbé Alphonse Constant). Lévi's esoteric texts, including Dogme et rituel de la haute magie (Transcendental Magic, Its Doctrine and Ritual) (1854) and La clef des grands mystères (The Key of the Mysteries) (1861), explain clandestine knowledge such as the secrets of universal magnetism and hallucination. In Dogme et rituel de la haute magie, Lévi writes that magical ability is dependent not only upon controlling the unseen magnetic fluid, but

also upon an "astral light" manifested in universal electric currents and natural phenomena. According to Lévi, bending this luminous power to the human will and projecting it gives a courageous man the ability to transfix wild beasts with his voice, a gesture, or "the magnetism of his gaze" alone.[124]

Moreau's watercolor version of L'Apparition (Fig. 1.17) changes both Salomé's pose and the narrative's significant moment, yet this painting also resounds with mesmeric energy and light. Some nineteenth-century art critics, such as Ary Renan, believe that this work depicts Salomé envisioning the future consequences of her dance; others, including Paul Leprieur, explain the scene as Salomé's remorseful nightmare after the execution.[125] Either way, Salomé seems to be the specter's only witness among the painting's motionless figures. She ceases her dance and raises her left arm, paradoxically recoiling from and reaching for the Baptist's apparitional head, which is surrounded by gleaming light. Her intensified gesture and emotion render her more human than supernatural, yet her figure still resists conveying movement.

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[124] Éliphas Lévi, Dogme et rituel de la haute magie (Paris: Germer Ballière, 1856), 63-64. Lévi describes "la puissance magique:" [I]l ne s'agit pas seulement du prétendu fluide magnétique. C'est la lumière astrale tout entière, c'est l'élément de l'électricité et de la foudre, qui peut être mise au service de la volonté humaine... Il n'est pas conforme aux lois de la nature que l'homme puisse être dévoré par les bêtes sauvages. Dieu l'a armé de puissance pour leur résister; il peut les fasciner du regard, les gourmander avec la voix, les arrêter d'un signe,…et nous voyons, en effet, que les animaux les plus féroces redoutent la fixité du regard de l'homme, et semblent tressaillir à sa voix. Les projections de la lumière astrale les paralysent et les frappent de crainte… Un homme intrépide et désarmé ferait certainement reculer un tigre par le magnétisme de son regard." Lévi, The Key of the Mysteries, 1861, trans. Aleister Crowley (London: Rider & Company, 1969), 88, also mentions that our "fluidic bodies" have magnetic properties that attract or repel "the astral light under the pressure of the will" following laws similar to those of electricity. Lévi, 140, later explains that magnetized electricity is "the living and life-giving gold of the philosophers, the universal metallic productive agent" that allows the human body to produce supernatural or miraculous phenomena. Moreau is known to at least have owned a copy of Lévi's Fables et symboles avec leur explication (1862).

[125] Geneviève Lacambre, Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux; Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1999), 167. Renan's review was published in 1886, Leprieur's in 1889.

Helen Grace Zagona attributes Salomé's stillness to an absence of triumph; her "arm is raised, her hand turned up, as though to fend off not merely the terrifying sight but the realization of the enormity of her deed… Salome may also be motionless, but the effect of her static posture is different, in that it is clear that she has been frozen in motion."[126] Although differently posed from the figure in Salomé dansant devant Hérode, Salomé is again balanced on her toes, a seemingly floating entity despite her heavily embellished costume. Perhaps due to this ethereal quality, Marc Bochet recently interpreted the painting as a double apparition that displays both Salomé and the saint to evoke the marriage of Eros and Thanatos. Salomé will soon dance on the martyr's phantom blood, which "seals the union of the dancer and the saint" and unifies death with the realm of dreams.[127]

Moreau expanded his technique and themes in a manner that paralleled literary movements, which at the time also provided an eclectic combination of Romanticism and Orientalism.[128] In fact, interpretations of his Salomé visions are interwoven with contemporary Symbolist and Decadent literature. Moreau was familiar with Heinrich Heine's satirical poem Atta Troll (1842), which revived Salomé's popularity as subject matter for the first time since the Renaissance. Heine's poem fuses Salomé's character with Herodias' cruel desires, such as madly tossing the Baptist's severed head in the air;

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[126] Zagona, 93.

[127] Marc Bochet, Salomé, du voilé au dévoilé: Métamorphoses littéraires et artistiques d'une figure biblique (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2007), 101. Original text: "…le sang du martyre scelle l'union de la danseuse et du saint."

[128] Kaplan, Art of Gustave Moreau, 67.

here Salomé transforms from an obedient daughter into the symbol of immoral and heartless beauty portrayed by Symbolist painters.[129]

Salomé's popularity in late nineteenth-century literature coincided with the decadent theme of the destructive femme fatale, a female manifestation of erotic beauty and deadly temptation. Young women like Salomé were considered intrinsically immoral and perverse, "doing evil involuntarily and unconsciously" upon demand, and were associated with a sensual, earthly nature that prevented male artists from transcending worldly materialism and trivial concerns.[130] Moreau frequently indicated his distaste for women in his notebooks, and painted recurring themes of sinister female characters, portrayed as cold and inaccessible. Salomé, for example, heedlessly dances at her mother's request, and despite her supernatural appearance, her bejeweled garments and sensual form keep the male viewer entrenched in the imperfect, natural world rather than inspiring divine thoughts.

Moreau also admired Gustave Flaubert's novel Salammbô (1862) for its ornate prose and detailed setting. Salammbô also provides an example of Decadent literature about the femme fatale's innate perversity and the idea of woman as an aloof, inaccessible idol. Flaubert published the short story "Herodias" in 1877, narrating the confrontation between Herodias and John the Baptist (Iaokanan), who criticizes her vanity and decadence. Flaubert illustrates Herodias's luxurious costume through

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[129] Françoise Meltzer, Salomé and the Dance of Writing: Portraits of Mimesis in Literature (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 16. In Renaissance art, Salomé was sometimes vilified, and sometimes dignified.

[130] Jean Pierrot, The Decadent Imagination, 1880-1900, trans. Derek Coltman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 126. Pierrot believes that Salome "acted as a catalyst… for a kind of osmosis between literature and the plastic arts." Also discussed in Patricia Mathews, Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender, and French Symbolist Art (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 98; Moreau's Salomés were "characteristic of the more refined images of the destructive woman found in France."

Iaokanan's tirade against her, and describes Salomé's sensuous dance that leaves the Tetrach "lost in a dream." Throughout the dance, Salomé—at first mistaken for an "apparition"—keeps her face entirely motionless and unfeeling, while her poses mime passionate desire.[131]

Following his principle of la belle inertie, Moreau intended Salomé to appear as "architectonic, rigid and richly decorated" as a medieval reliquary.[132] André Breton wrote that "the word 'inertia' is far too passive to be admissible, since the liturgical atmosphere which pervades his work is almost hieratic in its power."[133] The precise detail of Salomé's figure further suppresses any sense of movement; a swiftly dancing woman would appear more indistinct, thus here her performance is frozen at an exact moment. Moreau wrote in his notebooks, "in my Salomé, I wanted to create the figure of a Sibyl and a religious enchantress with a mysterious character. So I conceived the costume, which is like a reliquary."[134] In Certains, Huysmans observes this cataleptic reliquary quality, describing a room filled with Moreau paintings of "silent women…, nude or attired in fabrics adorned with jewels, like old Gospel bindings."[135]

Regarding Salomé dansant devant Hérode, Huysmans's Des Esseintes touches upon the psychological connotations of Salomé's rigid, unorthodox pose: "Salomé, her

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[131] Flaubert, Three Tales, trans. Arthur McDowall (Norfolk: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1924), 155, 173-174.

[132] Kaplan, Art of Gustave Moreau, 66.

[133] André Breton, Surrealism and Painting, 1965, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York: Harper & Row, 2002), 366.

[134] Gustave Moreau, Ecrits sur l'Art, ed. Peter Cooke (Fontfroide: Bibliothèque Artistique & Littéraire, 2002), 99. Original text: "Ainsi, dans ma Salomé, je voulais rendre une figure de sibylle et d'enchanteresse religieuse avec un caractère de mystère. J'ai alors conçu le costume qui est comme une chasse."

[135] Huysmans, Certains (Paris: Tresse & Stock, 1889), 17. "Sur ces fonds d'un fracas terrible, de silencieuses femmes passaient, nues ou accoutrées d'étoffes serties de cabochons comme de vieilles reliures d'évangéliaires."

left arm extended in an imperious gesture and her right arm bent, holding a large lotus blossom in front of her face, moves slowly forward on tiptoe."[136] He also notices her deathlike stiffness; Moreau's version of Salomé becomes "the symbolic deity of indestructible lust, the goddess of immortal Hysteria, of accursed Beauty, distinguished from all others by the catalepsy which stiffens her flesh and hardens her muscles," extending her arm as a Babylonian enchantress fatal to all who behold her.[137]

Huysmans found L'Apparition more disturbing than Salomé dansant devant Hérode, since Salomé "wards off the ghastly vision which keeps her standing there, motionless, on tiptoe; her eyes widen, her hand clutches convulsively at her throat."[138] Huysmans certainly was familiar with hysteria and the sexualized convulsions of its female victims. Although Huysmans' passionate descriptions infuse Salomé with life and motivation, he also emphasizes her stillness as further evidence of perversity, not to mention his use of contemporary medical terms comparing Salomé to a dangerous madwoman whose mesmeric force must be resisted and overpowered.

Moreau's vision of the dancer in Salomé dansant devant Hérode seems to evoke somnambulism. He described his Salomé's movement as une marche ténébreuse—a "gloomy walk" rather than a dance.[139] She represents both a dreamlike vision and a dreaming sleepwalker, suspended in midair; her downcast eyes appear closed, as if she is guided by the ancient Egyptian eye pendant hanging from her raised arm. Huysmans

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[136] Huysmans, 1884, 45. "Salomé, le bras gauche étendu, en un geste de commandement, le bras droit replié, tenant à la hauteur du visage, un grand lotus, s'avance lentement sur les pointes." Oeuvres complètes, Vol. VII, 81.

[137] Ibid., 46.

[138] Ibid., 48.

[139] Kaplan, Art of Gustave Moreau, 58.

interprets Salomé as being so "totally absorbed, with the staring eyes of a sleep-walker," that she notices neither her surroundings nor the numerous gazes upon her body.[140] Admiring Moreau's ability to transport viewers to exotic, imaginary realms, critic Paul Leprieur praised Moreau's paintings in 1889 as a reflection of how modern culture, saturated with realism, "finds itself tormented with regret for things now gone… and is now returning, by every possible means, to the dream."[141]

Beginning in 1872, Moreau drew 120 known studies for the Salomé paintings; seventy depict experiments with the dancer's pose for Salomé dansant devant Hérode, indicating that the oil painting and female figure consumed most of Moreau's time and interest.[142] Moreau's studies and maquettes for Salomé indicate his meticulous process of composing her figure, although the different compositions complicate tracing each painting's genesis. Kaplan suggests that Moreau began by studying nude female models, usually in profile, to experiment with poses (Fig. 1.18). Even at this early stage, the models are portrayed with their eyes shut, foreshadowing Salomé's somnambulistic aura.

Subsequent sketches reveal different positions of her legs and feet, and the increasingly meticulous placement of her hands and arms, outstretched or holding symbolic objects. Several drawings show Moreau's interest in the exact position of her arm, even while sketching other aspects of the painting; in one drawing, Salomé's disembodied, outstretched arm intersects a detailed figural study of Herod enthroned.

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[140] Huysmans, 1884, 45. "Concentrée, les yeux fixes, semblable à une somnambule." Oeuvres complètes, Vol. VII, 82.

[141] Paul Leprieur, Gustave Moreau et son oeuvre (Paris: L'Artiste, 1889), 53. Quoted in Jean Pierrot, The Decadent Imagination, 1880-1900, trans. Derek Coltman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 183.

[142] Kaplan, Art of Gustave Moreau, 56.

Additional sketches determine Salomé's place in the overall composition and setting, in which the artist also painstakingly fused Orientalist detail with his personal iconography.[143]

Studying Moreau's preparatory Salomé drawings reveals that he initially was concerned with Salomé's gaze. In a sketch of two Salomé heads wearing elaborate headdresses (Fig. 1.19), Moreau focuses on the position and direction of her open eye, which appears disproportionately large. Considering this detail, I wonder if Moreau originally intended for Salomé's eye—or that of the Egyptian Uraeus (rearing cobra) on her headdress—to represent the source of her mesmeric power. Furthermore, on the lower face, Salomé's pupil gazes upward and appears diminished within her elongated eye, enhancing her otherworldly, trancelike aura. As we shall see, Moreau incorporates enlarged, expressive eyes into other compositions of femmes fatales besides Salomé.

Comparing Moreau's numerous Salomé studies, it seems to me that the artist was seeking a solution to the challenge of making Salomé appear both somnambulistic and capable of projecting magnetic energy. The finished Salomé works vary in Moreau's approach to this concern. For example, in Salomé dansant devant Hérode, the entranced dancer projects magnetic energy through her gesture and the jeweled eye hanging from her arm; in Salomé Tattooed, her eyes remain closed, while symbols of malevolent eyes adorn her body.

In the preliminary drawings he experiments with her facial expression, the position of her arms, and the symbolic objects she holds, whether a lotus, staff, or

[143] Ibid., 59, suggests this procedure. Ragnar von Holten, "Le développement du personnage de Salomé à travers les dessins de Gustave Moreau," in L'Œil 79/80 (July/August 1961), viewed the drawings as evidence of a specific creative process early on.

talisman. In one sketch of Salomé with her eyes downcast and her arm extended (Fig. 1.20), Moreau drew a second, disembodied hand holding what appears to be an amulet of a wide, staring eye. Below Salomé's arm, Moreau included the notes "anneaux magiques" and "miroir magique," which offer clues to his intent of ascribing supernatural power to the objects as part of Salomé's magnetic manipulation of her audience.

Moreau's manifestations of Salomé seem to fall under such psychological influences as what Mesmer describes as somnambulism's "marvelous apparitions, trances, and inexplicable visions."[144] In Salomé dansant devant Hérode, Salomé possesses the gestural power, as if dangerously concentrating her will upon her audience. L'Apparition renders Salomé both the source and the recipient of forceful energy; she is transfixed by the Baptist's apparition, as if magnetically drawn to its power, but also extends her hand towards it as if attempting to repel it with her own psychic force.

Critics have suggested diverse inspirations for Salomé's mysterious gesture, from the Quattrocento masters to Jacques-Louis David and Eugène Delacroix. Moreau was aware of Salomé paintings from the Renaissance and from contemporary art, but Moreau's technique instilled each figure with a sense of hallucinatory stillness. Moreau admired nineteenth-century predecessors such as Delacroix and other painters of the Orient, but he lacked their travel experience, and was more interested in exotic surface decoration. His vision of the Orient was based on borrowed motifs and colors from their work, travel accounts, and contemporary literature and texts, including Le Magasin pittoresque and Le Tour du Monde, and he visited the print rooms of the Bibliothèque

[144] Mesmer, 90.

Impériale to observe and copy Far East photo albums.[145] Both Moreau and Delacroix evoke ancient Assyria, especially Delacroix in The Death of Sardanapalus, and both were interested in the Louvre's Assyrian collection and illustrated magazines.[146] Although Delacroix's paintings of contemplative sultans and bejeweled women anticipate Moreau's Salomés, Delacroix's history painting contrasts with Moreau's introspective Symbolist style, which inspires a "private vocabulary of forms and historical details" that combines luxurious motifs with solemn, dreamlike figures.[147]

Peter Cooke has recently suggested David's The Oath of the Horatii as a source for Salomé dansant devant Hérode, since both works contain similar meaningful gestures. Like Jacques-Louis David, Moreau does express mental states through the body more than the head, defying the academic "expressive head" conventions. Yet, says Cooke, while David's Neoclassical painting conveys a monumental gesture, Moreau's gesturing Salomé has a "disconcerting lack of semiotic closure" because she points to the unseen and does not communicate evident meaning, but instead forges the artist's own version of the imaginative sublime.[148] Again, the visual correlation seems doubtful, since the works contain few other similarities besides the figures' extended arms, and Salomé's gesture remains an ambiguous signifier that transcends worldly interpretation.

Critics also have drawn parallels between Moreau's belle inertie and his friend Puvis de Chavannes's poetic stillness. At the Salon of 1870, Moreau probably viewed

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[145] Christine Peltre, Orientalism in Art (New York: Abbeville Press, 1998), 230.

[146] Frederick N. Bohrer, Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-Century Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 85.

[147] Ibid., 92.

[148] Cooke, 532.

Puvis's La décollation de Saint Jean-Baptiste (The Execution of Saint John the Baptist), 1869 (Fig. 1.21), which features the saint, swordsman, and modest figure of Salomé, waiting in the background with her charger. Naturalist critics such as Castagnary condemned Puvis's version as grotesque and naïve, but Moreau likely appreciated the hieratic format in which Puvis's figures are frozen. The saint's radiant head and rigid posture also link Puvis's painting with Moreau's L'Apparition. Although John the Baptist's gesture may simply indicate resignation and acceptance of his fate, he also creates the impression of channeling magnetic energy through his intense gaze and upturned hands.[149]

Symbolist Salomé images generally invite the voyeuristic gaze and stimulate the imagination, but Moreau's dancer transcends the femme fatale classification. His mimetic choices represent his personal syncretic iconography and implements his theory of la belle inertie to capture the significant moment. Furthermore, he integrates the female body, pantomimic expression, and multicultural sources to transform Salomé into a powerful erotic symbol, enhanced by a cryptic stillness that associates her with gilded reliquaries and visionary powers. She reaches for the unknown and the apparitional, her gesture commanding eerie silence and mystic energy.

In my personal observation, works by Moreau with similar gestures and confrontational figures also suggest the influence of mesmeric theory. For example, in Les Prétendants (The Suitors), 1852-1896 (Fig. 1.22), the hovering vision of Athena emanates luminous rays, like the Baptist's head in L'Apparition. The composition depicts Odysseus—a shadowy and seemingly apparitional figure himself—receiving

[149] The two artists seem to borrow ideas from each other; Petrie, 75, suggests that Moreau's Thracian Girl recovering the head of Orpheus (1865) influenced Puvis's Saint Mary Magdalen in the Desert (1869).

Athena's assistance in punishing his wife's suitors upon returning to his home in Book 22 of the Odyssey. Athena's "destroying aegis," as this attribute is described in the original text, dominates the scene and assumes the authoritative gaze: the star-crowned goddess extends her arm upward as if drawing magnetic fluid or energy from the cosmos, and channels her destructive vigor towards the hero.[150] Athena's graceful but warlike figure resembles a conflation of Salomé and the phantom head; her features recall Salomé's challenging expression in L'Apparition, but the dancer's simultaneous terror has disappeared.

In his 1961 article "Gustave Moreau l'attardé, précurseur du surréalisme" (Arts magazine), Surrealist Georges Bataille wrote of Les Prétendants:

> A kind of immobility is severely strained in the relative calm of the characters… Without frenzy, a violence of death, a heavy sensuality enchant Moreau's ever-strange compositions.[151]

Indeed, Moreau wrote in his notebooks of his intention for the painting to convey a sense of tranquility despite its violent imagery. Athena's raised hand mirrors that of the dying figure in the far right of Les Prétendants: Odysseus's arrow pierces a young prince in an exotic costume, who extends his arm heavenward in anguish, or to reach towards the next world. He gesticulates wildly, yet, like Salomé, exudes the impression of sleepwalking, or being suspended in time and place by a supernatural force.

Directly below the vision of Athena, a different young man holding what Moreau calls a "divine instrument" reclines on a couch, awaiting his fate. The artist intended for

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[150] Mathieu, 1976, 45. Moreau's largest painting, he worked on this canvas intermittently throughout his career. The painting illustrates a scene from Book 22 of the Odyssey.

[151] Georges Bataille, "Gustave Moreau l'attardé, précurseur du surréalisme," Arts 825 (June 1961): 12-13. In Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Gustave Moreau (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), 39. "Une sorte d'immobilité est lourdement tendue dans le calme relatif des personnages… Sans frénésie, une violence de mort, une pesante sensualité envoûtent les compositions toujours étranges de Moreau." Translation mine.

"the self-absorption of this figure pursuing his dream and rapture amidst this wild movement" to exalt the viewer's mind and spirit.[152] Indeed, the focal point of this monumental painting is not Ulysses himself, but rather this enthralled figure and the goddess within her radiant halo. As the war hero, celebrated for his rational mind and physical strength, disappears into the shadows, the poetic figure and his irrational calm at the center of the massacre become the painting's emphasis. Moreau's arrangement of these somnolent figures creates a theatrical, dreamlike effect in this phantasmagoria of mythological slaughter.

Again, we observe how Moreau's use of radiating light and piercing stares may indicate the exchange of magnetic energy. The figure of Athena and the formidable serpent and gorgon's head on her aegis all have wide, glowering eyes and channel their influence towards Ulysses's rivals below. Moreau's interest in capturing Athena's intensity in this painting is evident in his studies, in which he experiments with the enlarged eyes of the figure and her symbols. For instance, in one drawing of the goddess (Fig. 1.23), she raises her right arm to reveal the enormous eyes and lethal gaze of the gorgon's head on her aegis. Even in the early stages of Les Prétendants, it appears that Moreau meticulously devised how to depict Athena with mesmeric attributes, similar to the eye amulets and "tattoos" in his Salomé paintings.

Moreau's La Vie de l'Humanité (The Life of Mankind) (1886) features a powerful gesture similar to Athena's in Les Prétendants. In this allegorical polyptych resembling a Renaissance altarpiece, Moreau arranges nine panels of identical size below a lunette and reinterprets the universal creative process through mythological and biblical

[152] Mathieu, 1976, 46, quoting pages 12-13 of Moreau's larger black notebook in the Archives of the Musée Gustave Moreau.

narratives. The panels revolve around Orpheus, the mythological musician who represents the divinely inspired poet-artist, and thus the apex and hope of all humanity.[153] In the center panel, "The Silver Age: Song" (Fig. 1.24), Orpheus's Muse infuses him with the power to control nature through music. Haloed and clad in a red robe, he sits before a pedestal bearing a winged sphinx that seems to emanate wisdom and arcane knowledge. Orpheus's mesmeric gesture leads the viewer's gaze heavenward towards his divine inspiration, or to Christ in the lunette. "Song" becomes the axis of the polyptych's syncretic message, with its references to ancient mythology and Orpheus's role in early Christian art as a precursor to King David or Christ.

Since Moreau drew the idea of illustrating La Vie de l'Humanité with golden, silver, and iron ages from Hesiod's Works and Days, he vacillated between identifying the ideal poet-artist as Hesiod or Orpheus.[154] A later composition, Hésiode et la Muse (Hesiod and the Muse), 1891 (Fig. 1.25) depicts the ancient Greek poet as a young man hypnotized by divine inspiration. His winged muse drifts lightly behind him, possibly drawing mesmeric energy from the astral symbol above her head, and extends her arm to project this creative force towards Hesiod's lyre. However, in Le Poête et la Sirène (The Poet and the Siren), 1893 (Fig. 1.26), Moreau depicts a mythical femme fatale influencing a poet to the opposite effect. Rising upon her serpentine tail and shrouded within the dark foliage, the monstrous creature's wide-eyed glare and exaggerated hands

[153] Geneviève Lacambre, Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1999), 216.

[154] Ibid., 216.

emanate an oppressive force upon the diminutive poet. Hypnotized against his will, he collapses in anguish into the eerie primordial mire.[155]

Also in the Musée Gustave Moreau is a painted study for Le Poête et la Sirène in which the mythological creature appears less malevolent than in the finished work, yet in my interpretation, her sinuously curved, relaxed body and wide eye indicate that she controls her somnambulistic victim via a psychological rather than a physical force. Moreau's sketches for the painting emphasize the siren's disproportionately large size compared to the poet, and the intensity and direction of her gaze while she touches his head with her fingertips. In one sketch the poet remains faceless, while the siren's eye is nearly in the center of the composition.

A more detailed study (Fig. 1.27) portrays the same figuration and prominence of the siren's gaze, although she now rests the palm of her hand on the poet's head. Again, she exerts a psychological, magnetic energy more than a physical or pushing force. Moreau's symbolic exaggerations of her eye, gesture, and scale clearly denote her as an otherworldly creature capable of such supernatural mind control or mesmeric power.

Moreau's unearthly visions culminate in the elaborate spiritual symbolism of Jupiter et Sémélé (Jupiter and Semele), 1894-95 (Fig. 1.28), a work filled with radiantly mesmeric and somnambulistic figures. This painting's mystical symbolism, adapted from Asian, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman traditions, possibly represents Moreau's version of a Last Judgment at the end of his life.[156] Peter Cooke explains that Moreau's Jupiter

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[155] Moreau's Jacob and the Angel (1878) contains a similar exchange between the two figures: the androgynous angel touches its head with one hand and calmly places the other on Jacob's grasping arm, appearing to control him by thought alone.

[156] Lacambre, 1999, 237. Moreau described the subject as "earthly death and apotheosis in immortality… everything savors of Christianity." Lacambre also compares the painting's figural organization recalls Renaissance altarpieces and Michelangelo's Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel.

signifies transcendent divinity, Semele the purified mortal soul, and Bacchus the sensual, earthly nature of man—the defeated conscious mind.[157] While the colossal figure of Jupiter, conflated with God the Father, sits enthroned in a heavenly realm, the lower half of the canvas depicts the realm of Erebus, or Darkness, the Greek mythological "purgatory" of the Underworld in Hesiod's Theogony.[158]

This mysterious realm includes Hecate (the crowned female figure in the lower left), Death (as a somber woman with a bloodstained sword), and Pan. The Moon appears as a hybrid creature and radiates from the lower center of the painting, flanked by androgynous Sphinxes in each lower corner.[159] Rather than triumphing over this night realm traditionally associated with dreams and the unconscious, however, Moreau employs its various deities and guardians to fulfill this encyclopedic portrayal of arcane knowledge.

Moreau also may have painted the work as a self-portrait and a compendium of his personal iconography that fuses East and West, paganism and Christianity, and perhaps also the consciousness and the irrational mind. Cooke suggests that Jupiter et Sémélé represents

> a mythological chart of Moreau's own psyche, in which the transcendent Jupiter/Apollo, the supreme image of the Poet, Moreau's ideal and obsessive persona… is undermined by the somber, haunted realm of

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[157] Peter Cooke, "Text and Image, Allegory and Symbol in Gustave Moreau's Jupiter et Sémélé," in Symbolism, Decadence and the Fin de Siècle: French and European Perspectives, ed. Patrick McGuinness (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 142.

[158] Lacambre, 237.

[159] Julius Kaplan, The Art of Gustave Moreau: Theory, Style, and Content (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 82-83. Publications such as Edouard Schuré's Les Grands Initiés (1889) and Émile Amélineau's Essai sur le gnosticisme egyptien (1887) and an established Gnostic church in France attracted Moreau's interest in Gnostic Manichaeism, a belief system that emphasizes the conflict between light (goodness) and darkness (evil), and advocates the individual's quest to overcome the evil inherent in all matter.

> Erebus and Hecate, a realm which clearly embodies… the densely-populated, demon-haunted penumbra of the mind.[160]

However, in my interpretation, the dark realm of the unconscious mind represents the esoteric knowledge that fulfills rather than undermines the poet-artist's intellect. The metaphysical significance of the painting's myriad divine personages remains indecipherable except to Moreau himself. Longing to escape contemporary reality, Moreau and many of his contemporaries artists turned to dream worlds and the pursuit of the exotic. Moreau's work appropriates Eastern iconography and spiritual beliefs to reflect Orientalism's interest in these alternate realities, but in the world he creates, the artist is received as the enlightened prophet and divine messenger.

Moreau's meticulous, nightmarish scenes simulate a confrontation between the sacred and profane; just as he dresses Salomé in intricate gems, he invites the viewer to gaze into a mimetic prism of images where reality and dream collide, suggesting the existence of aesthetic possibilities beyond mere imitation of the earthly realm. Salomé's mesmeric gesture is esoteric, but not illegible; it is a supernatural sign of a mystic priestess conversing with the unknown.

A third artist considered a proto-Symbolist, Odilon Redon, rose to the forefront of avant-garde art during the 1880s through individual exhibitions, Huysmans' novels, and critic Émile Hennequin's favorable reviews. Hennequin's article "Fine Arts: Odilon Redon" (1882) provided the first analysis of Redon's work as a reflection of the artist's unconscious. Referring to his charcoal drawings such as L'oeil-ballon (Eye-Balloon) (Fig. 1.29), Hennequin explains how Redon traverses

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[160] Cooke, 142.

> the border between the real and the fantastic, which he has peopled with formidable ghosts, monsters, monads, composite beings made up of all human perversities… With a sense of the incubi and the succubi that sleep in the depths of the human soul, he has succeeded, through imperceptible degradations, in creating an awesome ugliness… Odilon Redon deserves as much praise as Baudelaire for having created a new thrill [frisson nouveau].[161]

Hennequin seems to intend "awesome ugliness" ("laideur redoutable") as a powerful compliment to Redon's originality. His comments indicate Redon's revelation of shared interests with Moreau and Puvis de Chavannes—dreams, somnambulism, and the supernatural—that separate these artists from Naturalism and foreshadow the Decadent phase of Symbolism.

Redon's L'oeil-ballon, also featured in print version in the series To Edgar Poe (1882), captures the poet's taste for the macabre and the unexpected. Reminiscent of the popular Salomé theme of the fin-de-siècle, a severed head on a dish ascends from a barren earth by means of an enormous disembodied eye. The lashes radiating from the eye's dark socket emphasize the balloon's upward motion, possibly the artist's journey towards spiritual enlightenment by escaping the mundane world for the realm of the unconscious. The severed head, seemingly suspended between a featureless reality and the transcendent unknown, also may represent a martyr image of the overlooked Symbolist artist in a society that valued Naturalism and Positivism.

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[161] Émile Hennequin, "Beaux-Arts: Odilon Redon," in Revue littéraire et artistique 5 (March 4, 1882): 136-138. "Il a su conquérir sur les confins du réel et du fantastique un domaine désolé, qu'il a peuplé de fantômes formidables, de monstres, de monades, d'êtres composites formés de toutes les terreurs des choses inertes et nuisibles. Possédant le sens des incubes et des succubes qui dorment au fond de l'âme humaine, il est parvenu, par des dégradations imperceptibles, à créer un type de laideur redoutable, un profil rusé, insidieux, au front semé des protubérances de tous les vices, qui roule dans ses yeux ternes l'inconscience méchante de la brute. Autant que Baudelaire, M. Odilon Redon mérite le superbe éloge d'avoir créé un frisson nouveau." Translated in Dorra, 49-51.

Opposing this mainstream preference, Huysmans's À Rebours reveres Redon's "apparitions inconcevables"—"undreamed-of images"—and their mesmeric effect on the viewer.[162] Redon's severed heads and grinning spiders create the effect of fever dreams or primordial fears that reflect Des Esseintes's mental distress. Redon's work "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," and some of the seemingly insane faces "recalled for Des Esseintes memories of typhoid fever, memories that he had somehow never cast off, the delirious nights and terrifying fantasies of his childhood," augmented by Edgar Allan Poe's night terrors and phantasms.[163]

Redon's journal, posthumously published as À soi-même (To Myself) (1922), provides valuable insight into the artist's influences and motivations. In 1910, he describes the artist's daily capitulation to the creative unconscious:

> [T]he artist submits to the fatal rhythm of the impulses of the universal world which envelops him. Continuous center of sensations, ever flexible, hypnotized by the marvels of the nature that he loves, he scrutinizes; his eyes, like his soul, are in constant touch with the most fortuitous phenomena… I believe I have made an art that is expressive, suggestive, undetermined…[that] is the irradiation of divine plastic elements brought together, combined in order to call forth dreams that it illuminates, exalts, and incites to thought.[164]

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[162] Huysmans, 1884, 52; Oeuvres complètes, Vol. VII, 96.

[163] Ibid., 52-53.

[164] Odilon Redon, "Confidances d'artiste," in À soi-même, journal (1867-1915), notes sur la vie l'art et les artistes (Paris: Floury, 1922), 110-111. "L'artiste subit, au jour le jour, le rythme fatal des impulsions du monde universel qui l'entoure. Centre continuel des sensations et toujours souple, hypnotisé par les merveilles de la nature qu'il aime, qu'il scrute, ses yeux, comme son âme, sont en rapport perpétuel avec les phénomènes les plus fortuits… Pour ce qui est de moi, je crois avoir fait un art expressif, suggestif, indéterminé. L'art suggestif est l'irradiation de divins éléments plastiques, rapprochés, combinés en vue de provoquer des rêveries qu'il illumine, qu'il exalte, en incitant à la pensée." Translated in Redon, To Myself: Notes on Life, Art, and Artists, 1922, trans. Mira Jacob and Jeanne L. Wasserman (New York: Braziller, 1986), 96.

Fascinated with contemporary science and psychology, Redon is considered the first artist of his generation to explore dream imagery as creative inspiration.[165] His lithograph series such as Dans le rêve (In the Dream) (1879) and Rêves (Dreams) (1891) illustrate the irrational content and bizarre juxtapositions that emerge while the conscious mind is subdued. Recurring images such as somnambulistic heads and disembodied wings germinate, blossom, and radiate light, suggesting the growth of subjective vision through channeling one's unconscious. Like Puvis de Chavannes's wraithlike figures, Redon's shadowy creatures invite the viewer's imagination to complete his indeterminate visions.

Redon's Dans le rêve series combines Darwinism and dream theory: seed-like heads with staring eyes, hypnotized faces emerging from pods, and disembodied forms seem to express contemporary fears of degeneration and madness. For example, in Plate IX of Dans le rêve, "Vision" (Fig. 1.30), Redon suspends a terrifying luminous eye before two diminished figures in an architectural setting, expressing the dominance of inner vision in its nocturnal realm. In Plate VI, "The Gambler," a male figure carries an immense die through a bleak forest. This print seems to address psychological obsession by depicting the shameful burden with nightmarish scale distortions.

Although Redon represents interior states through disembodied eyes or creatures with impossibly intense gazes, he also expresses the role of the unconscious through the motif of closed eyes. Describing the drawing Head of a Man with Closed Eyes and a Mask (1881), Barbara Larson recognizes "the cessation of the conscious world and the

[165] West, 109.

emergence of the unconscious self."[166] Another work, Les yeux clos (Closed Eyes), 1890 (Fig. 1.31), seems to reflect the inner life of both the subject and the viewer. The sleeping or hypnotized figure seems lost in an interior vision, yet Redon's hazy style renders the strangely immaterial and androgynous figure, in its uncertain space, a distant memory of the viewer's own dreams.

In Lumière, 1893 (Fig. 1.32), the somnambulistic figure becomes sharper, yet more surreal. Touching its hand to its lips, the dreamer becomes a meditative example of inner wisdom. Similar to Vision's composition, Lumière includes two miniscule robed figures in the shadows. In this work, however, they appear to contemplate the colossal apparition as they would a painting, and become creatively and psychologically illuminated by its revelations.

Even several of Redon's portraits emanate psychological and somnambulistic intrigue. His Baronne Robert de Domecy (Portrait of Baroness Robert de Domecy), 1900 (Fig. 1.33), the wife of a friend, places the subject in an odd, ambiguous space. With the frame edge painted along the bottom and the serene, flattened miasma of the background, the viewer is uncertain whether the baroness is seated before a windowsill, in front of another painting by Redon, or even within a nebulous celestial space.

Considering the perspective, it seems likely that the rest of her chair would be visible behind her, but this part of the scene has dissolved into the surrounding abstraction. Upon a close inspection of the painting, the background seems composed of indistinct flowers and vaporous clouds of color. Yet the linear "frame" at the bottom, one of the few aspects that anchor the painting in reality, also is implausibly patterned with

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[166] Barbara Larson, The Dark Side of Nature: Science, Society, and the Fantastic in the Work of Odilon Redon (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 140.

prism-like hues. The baroness herself appears lost in reverie, leading me to wonder if her mysterious environment is in fact a symbolic reflection of her inner state. The iridescent haze completely surrounding her head, and hints of warmer colors and foliage within the otherwise blue and grey-violet palette of the background, reinforce the possibility that in this portrait Redon attempts to depict a dreamer's interior state and thus render his personal vision of the invisible.

Regarding his predecessor Moreau's literary, intricate style, Redon wrote in 1878 that "an admirable logic guides the progress of his imagination."[167] In her recent catalogue Beyond the Visible, Jodi Hauptman compares Redon's drawing L'Apparition, 1883 (Fig. 1.34), to Moreau's painting of the same title. As one of the countless works in which Redon induces "fantastic vision" in the viewer, the drawing includes a somnambulistic Salomé transfixed by the Baptist's phantom head, now radiant and dreamlike rather than bloody and terrifying.[168]

In my interpretation, Redon invites the viewer to experience a shared dream between the two entities, which seem suspended in the obscure, timeless setting in which dream events often occur. In contrast to Moreau's confrontational exchange between the two biblical characters, Redon's version implies magnetic force being projected through the saint's head from an otherworldly origin.

Larson's The Dark Side of Nature, an extensive study of Redon's scientific and psychological influences, traces how the artist formulates his subjective theory of the unconscious. He most likely read Maury's Le Sommeil et les rêves, Eduard von

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[167] Odilon Redon, To Myself: Notes on Life, Art, and Artists, trans. Mira Jacob and Jeanne L. Wasserman (New York: Braziller, 1986), 53.

[168] Jodi Hauptman, ed., Beyond the Visible: The Art of Odilon Redon, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2006), 44.

Hartmann's Die Philosophie des Unbewussten (1869; translated into French in 1877) and owned a copy of Édouard Schuré's mystical text Les grands initiés (1889). According to Schuré's Theosophist principles, the unconscious mind communes with an invisible universe of which most people only catch fleeting, incomprehensible glimpses while the "inner self" lies dormant. Another influential work, Hippolyte Taine's De l'intelligence (On Intelligence) (1870), proposes that all reality becomes a hallucination when interpreted by the sensory distortions of the human eye. These sources, claims Larson, influenced Redon's bizarre conflations and intense chiaroscuro, which creates endless depths of uneasy, ambiguous feelings and signifies the unknown.[169]

Aware of Charcot's renowned but controversial research, Redon created several prints that suggest hypnotic states. Larson suggests that the "Mephistophelean male figure" in Redon's Félinerie (Felineness), 1879 (Fig. 1.35), exerts mesmeric force over the larger female figure.[170] However, considering the scale and confrontational relationship between the figures, Redon does not seem to clarify which figure controls—or hallucinates—the other, or which one assumes the feline aspect mentioned in the title. Leaning forward, the woman imposes her wide-eyed gaze and sharp features upon a diminutive man, whose wicked demeanor and claw-like limbs imply a demonic or supernatural creature that the woman fears or imagines will overtake her. Since she appears to lean over a balcony or parapet, the strangely twisted male figure perhaps represents a gargoyle suddenly animated by the woman's imagination.

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[169] Larson, 142-145; 156.

[170] Larson, 147.

Charcot's series Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière, 1877-1880 (Fig. 1.36), which includes diagrams and photographs of hypnotic techniques and hysteria patients' distorted faces and bodies, intrigued both Symbolist and Surrealist artists. Artists like Redon imitated the seemingly agonized or unintelligible features of these patients, which Huysmans in turn described as "somnambulistic figures having a vague kinship with those of Gustave Moreau, twisted in terror."[171] Charcot's photographs suggested that the judgment of facial expressions could be "an infallible indicator of psychological states."[172] However, since his patients were asked to re-enact their symptoms for the camera, the trancelike figures in the Iconographie photographique embody an element of artificiality that possibly appealed to Huysmans and other anti-naturalist Symbolists attempting to access the unconscious.[173]

In Redon's second La Tentation de Saint-Antoine (The Temptation of Saint Anthony) series (À Gustave Flaubert) of 1889, not only does the twisted form of a nude woman being flogged resemble one of Charcot's hysteria patients,[174] but also the series contains images of illuminated heads, mesmerizing sphinxes, and wide-eyed creatures emerging from the artist's unconscious. Flaubert's text describes Saint Anthony's encounter with "a long blood-colored chrysalis… with a man's head from which light-

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[171] Huysmans, "Le Salon officiel de 1881," 194. He writes of Redon that here "c'est le cauchemar transporté dans l'art. Mêlez dans un milieu macabre, de somnambulesques figures ayant une vague parenté avec celles de Gustave Moreau, tournées à l'effroi, et peut-être vous ferez-vous une idée du bizarre talent de ce singulier artiste."

[172] Mary Warner Marien, Photography: A Cultural History, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 151.

[173] Larson, 143, identifies examples of somnambulist imagery in Naturalist painting as well. For example, Jules Bastien-Lepage's The Haymakers (1877) seems to depict a woman awakening from a dream or nightmare, indicating how dreams impose upon everyday life.

[174] Ibid., 147. The female figure resembles a "religious hysteric." This plate was selected for the 1889 exhibition "Folles de la Salpêtrière," but whether it was included remains unknown.

rays are streaming," a vision Redon illustrates as a luminous, human-headed snake laying his head upon an altar (Fig. 1.37).[175] Although given the appearance of a martyred Christian saint, this serpentine figure represents the Greco-Egyptian god Knouphis. Associated with alchemy and spiritual transmutation, this figure often appears in ancient iconography with light rays surrounding his head.[176] Larson interprets the print as an image not of "light and salvation, but the dark side of matter," that confronts Saint Anthony.[177] Yet considering the god's role as a creative force, this pagan somnambulist in Redon's print also may attempt to influence Saint Anthony through exerting hypnotic energy.

Mesmeric imagery in fin-de-siècle Symbolist art indicates the legacy of these late Romantic predecessors. For example, works such as Alphonse Osbert's Vision, 1892 (Fig. 1.38) continue to reveal intersections between art and contemporary psychology. With its rigidly posed shepherdess who appears to gaze into the next world, the painting may suggest Osbert's awareness of the trancelike hysteria patients in Charcot's Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière.

Furthermore, the painting's subdued palette and indistinct, cadaverous figure recall Puvis de Chavannes's dreaming muses, and the ambiguous identity of the peasant

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[175] Gustave Flaubert, The Temptation of Saint Anthony, trans. Kitty Mrosovsky (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 122.

[176] Ibid., Plate 6, "Gnostic talismans representing the god Knouphis," from Jacques Matter's Histoire critique du gnosticisme (1828).

[177] Larson, "Odilon Redon's Temptation of Saint Anthony Lithographs," in Elizabeth Emery and Laurie Postlewate, eds., Medieval Saints in Late Nineteenth Century French Culture (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004), 73.

girl allows the viewer to seek personal meaning in the work.[178] Her impenetrable stance and golden aura may indicate a saintly image of Geneviève or Joan of Arc experiencing divine visions, or her figure simply may represent the transcendent state of a soul receptive to the unconscious mind.

Symbolist Paul Gauguin was interested not only in dream visions, but also in art's inherent ability to express thought and emotion—a belief adapted from the Romantics' theory of correspondences.[179] He probably met Redon in 1886 at the last Impressionist exhibition, and the artists remained on friendly terms. A few years later, Gauguin wrote an article defending Redon's dreamlike ambiguity, insisting that the grotesque, suffering creatures in his works reveal a highly subjective and sympathetic language rather than a hidden monstrosity. Gauguin's claim that Nature itself selected Redon to continue its "mysterious infinites" and "imaginative power" through his convincing hallucinations further indicates his Symbolist exploration of art's mesmeric force.[180]

Gauguin expressed a strong belief in the artist's mystical responsibility to communicate meaningful visions to the less sensitive remainder of humanity. In a letter to painter Emile Schuffenecker, he explains his doubts regarding his own sanity and his conviction that

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[178] Michelle Facos, Symbolist Art in Context (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 120. At first Osbert deliberately avoided naming the figure in this painting, but later identified her as Saint Geneviève for an 1899 religious art exhibition in Brussels.

[179] Dario Gamboni, Potential Images: Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Modern Art (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 86.

[180] Paul Gauguin, The Writings of a Savage, ed. Daniel Guérin, trans. Eleanor Levieux (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 39-40. In the same unpublished article from late 1889, Gauguin found Moreau's paintings less praiseworthy; he laments that Moreau's "finely tooled work" represents a "language already written by men of letters" that is far from a language of the heart.

> the great artist is the embodiment of the greatest intelligence. The sentiments and renderings which occur to him are the most delicate and, consequently, the most invisible products of the human brain.[181]

In late 1890, Gauguin wrote excitedly to Redon about his decision to escape the "civilized" world of Europe and settle in Tahiti, where he believed his art would flourish once it reached a savage, primordial state.[182] Gauguin left Paris for the South Pacific in 1891. Within a few weeks of arriving in Tahiti, he had observed what he perceived as a tranquil indolence among the native people:

> Always this silence. I understand why those individuals can remain seated for hours, days at a time, without saying a word, and look melancholically at the sky. I feel all of this is going to overwhelm me and I am now wonderfully at rest.[183]

When he began painting again, Gauguin rendered numerous images of somnambulistic island natives, particularly languorous women placed in indistinct and vibrantly colored landscapes. Whether nude or wearing missionary dresses, the women in Gauguin's paintings seem mysteriously intangible, exuding a certain androgyny and monumental stillness that challenge western notions of ideal beauty. Although Gauguin's emphasis on their passivity and exoticism reveals the lingering prejudice of Orientalism, the artist often places his figures in hallucinatory environments with grotesque

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[181] Paul Gauguin, Lettres de Gauguin, à sa femme et à ses amis, ed. Maurice Malingue (Paris: Grasset, 1946), 45. From a letter dated January 14, 1885. "Et pour moi le grand artiste est la formule de la plus grande intelligence, à lui arrivent les sentiments, les traductions les plus délicates et par suite les plus invisibles du cerveau." Dorra, 185, links Gauguin's allusions in this letter to the irrational and frightening sensations caused by seeing a large spider and a large tree trunk in a forest to well-known images by Redon.

[182] Gauguin, The Writings of a Savage, 42. Gauguin stayed in Paris and Brittany from 1893-1894, then returned to Tahiti in 1895.

[183] Gauguin, Lettres de Gauguin, 218. From a letter to Gauguin's wife Mette in July 1891. "Toujours ce silence. Je comprends pourquoi ces individus peuvent rester des heures, des journées assis sans dire un mot et regarder le ciel avec mélancolie. Je sens tout cela qui va m'envahir et je me repose extraordinairement en ce moment. Translated in Gauguin, The Writings of a Savage, 52. His painting of Mette Asleep on a Sofa (1875) perhaps indicates his interest in sleep and dream states early on.

supernatural figures and unnatural coloration, denying the viewer a clear distinction between dream and reality.

Even paintings for which the title suggests intense emotion, such as Aha oe feii? (What! Are You Jealous?), ca. 1892 (Fig. 1.39), depict expressionless female figures.[184] In this work, two women remain immobile by the sea, a seated nude and her semi-nude companion reclining on the ground. The figures' nebulous environment most likely represents Gauguin's abstracted version of a seashore, but in my interpretation the aqueous forms and flattened perspective also seem to emanate from the women's daydreams or signify hallucinations. In the diagonally divided space, the reclining woman's featureless surroundings seem to assimilate her figure and mirror her trancelike mental state.

Meanwhile, the upright woman's vacant gaze seems lost in the watery miasma behind her. Whether it truly exists or not remains ambiguous: although the bright red fabric in the foreground reflects faintly off of the woman's legs and torso, the similarly vibrant hues of the water do not appear to cast any reflection or mirror the dreaming figures. Like the figure in Puvis's Le Pauvre pêcheur who mysteriously casts no shadow or reflection in the water, this discrepancy is significant since it places the scene in the realm of dreams and somnambulistic illusions.

In 1894, Gauguin renders another Tahitian landscape that I believe is abundant with mystical significance and dream content. In Nave Nave Moe (Sacred Spring: Sweet Dreams), 1894 (Fig. 1.40), two seated women—one haloed and dreaming, the other

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[184] Claire Frèches-Thory, "The Paintings of the First Polynesian Sojourn," Gauguin Tahiti, exh. cat. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2004), 28. Gauguin modeled the figures in works such as Aha oe feii? and D'où venons-nous? after a photograph of a bas-relief from the Theater of Dionysos in Athens, enhancing their sculptural and monumental quality.

meditating upon a fruit—rest within a fantasy of mysterious shadows, expressive plants, and colorful spectra of land and water.[185] With their nearly identical clothing, the foreground figures may portray different aspects of the same mystical personage, perhaps a Tahitian Eve. Beneath the two women, the flattened, shadowy area surrounded by rose-colored earth creates a womblike, bottomless chasm above which they seem suspended, possibly a portal to the dream world in which these supernatural beings originated. Directly behind these figures, the rocks and their reflections in the water resemble clouds rather than boulders—their darkness implying the obscurity of the unconscious—and serve to extend the mystical space enveloping the two women.

In the background, a white-draped bather and a woman resembling the seated nude in Aha oe feii? takes no notice of these apparitions, and the latter continues to cultivate her dream visions within the sacred spring. Again, the water is composed of inaccurate reflections and impossible colors, suggesting a representation of the dreamer's personal visions. Meanwhile, in the background, four women engage in a ritualistic dance before two colossal statues. Their abstract figures and the bulbous forms of warmly-colored foliage scattered throughout the background also prevent the scene from being fully anchored in reality.

Other Gauguin paintings from the 1890s place transfixed figures in more concrete settings, documenting the island's beauty or the natives' living conditions, yet several works maintain a sense of hallucinatory abstraction and strange juxtaposition. In Faaturuma (Melancholy), 1891 (Fig. 1.41), a listless woman wearing a coral European-

[185] Naomi E. Maurer, The Pursuit of Spiritual Wisdom: The Thought and Art of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1998), 161, interprets the figures' repose as the weariness following a sexual encounter. Maurer suggests that the haloed woman, in contrast to Christian belief, indicates that "it is not virginity, but rather love and sexuality that are beautiful and holy."

style dress and jewelry sits in a rocking-chair, yet even the slightest movement is imperceptible. Her unseeing gaze, shapeless body, and arrested motion suggest her descent into trancelike reverie. The shifting ground line, collapsed space, and the inscribed painting—or window—within the painting also encumber the viewer's rational comprehension of the scene and the subject's mental state.

In another painting, Te rerioa (The Dream), 1897 (Fig. 1.42), Gauguin deliberately confuses dream and reality. The work depicts two seated women, a sleeping child, and a reclining cat. A clothed woman with plaited hair sits with her passive face in profile, while the other woman wears loose white drapery and turns toward the viewer with a distant, thoughtful expression. The figures rest in an interior space, its walls decorated with pictographs and mythological narratives. A distant mountain vista and a horseman are visible through the open doorway in the background. Gauguin explains in a letter:

> Everything is a dream in this picture; whether it is the child, the mother, the horseman on the path, or the painter's dream! All this is beside the painting, they will say. Who knows? Perhaps not.[186]

George T. M. Shackelford asks whether the mythological mural carved or painted on the dreamer's walls represents the dream mentioned in the title; the decorative characters interact even across the space of the open wall, while the human figures in the room are self-absorbed and immobile.[187] Shackelford also points out that, like the murals, the sleeping infant's "monstrous" cradle is another product of Gauguin's imagination. The

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[186] H. R. Rookmaaker, Gauguin and 19th Century Art Theory (Amsterdam: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1972), 338. From a letter to Daniel de Monfried dated March 12, 1897. "Tout est rêve dans cette toile, que ce soit l'enfant, la mère, la cavalier sur la route, où la rêve du peintre. Tout ça n'a rien à voir avec la peinture, diront-ils. Qui sait? Peut-être pas."

[187] George T. M. Shackelford, "The Return to Paradise: Tahiti, 1895-1897," Gauguin Tahiti, 159.

painting's ambiguity and its contrasting active and passive figures illustrates Gauguin's pronouncement that a "waking dream [is] almost the same thing as a dream in sleep. The dream in sleep is often bolder, sometimes a little more logical."[188]

Yet, in the culture of perceived primitivism, Gauguin was predisposed to comprehend Tahitian and rural French cultures as dreamlike and indolent. After visiting the coastal town of Le Pouldu, in Brittany, he painted La Perte du pucelage (The Loss of Virginity), alternatively titled L'Éveil du printemps (The Awakening of Spring), 1891 (Fig. 1.43) before leaving Paris for the South Pacific. This foreboding image depicts a young Breton girl lying nude on the ground. In one hand she holds the plucked flower signifying her lost innocence, and with the other hand she caresses a sinister-looking fox—a "symbol of perversity"—that places its paw over her heart in a controlling gesture of warning or possessiveness.[189] Her vulnerable figure seems both physically and psychologically alienated from the luminous seascape and procession of respectable Bretons traversing the path in the background, and only her contorted feet hint that she feels any heightened emotion or anxiety.

Along with the female figure's apparently mesmerized state, the painting's abstract horizontal landscape and inclusion of a supernatural, symbolic creature foreshadow Gauguin's unreal images of Tahitian women and their mystically charged surroundings. In La Perte du pucelage, Gauguin's lurid palette includes flattened bands of azure, bright green, and coral, and in her dreamlike stillness the pale supine figure merges with this unreal landscape. Any continuation of a world existing beyond

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[188] Ibid., 337. From Gauguin, Avant et Après, completed in 1903.

[189] Shackelford, "Introduction," Gauguin Tahiti, 13. Shackelford, 312, n. 24, also mentions that Gauguin copied a passage from the Colonial Exhibition of 1889 book describing the South Seas islands as "little Frances scattered across the Oceans, a kind of inventory of our colonial wealth."

Gauguin's vision of the Breton coastline has been reduced to an obscure streak of land and a single elongated cloud, further enhancing the spectator's sensation of being alienated within an image rising from the artist's unconscious.

Despite his efforts to deny any inspiration from his European contemporaries, his work recalls Puvis de Chavannes's contemplative, symbolic figures whose intangibility requires the viewer's unconscious mind to complete the image. Gauguin would have been familiar with Puvis's arcadian works such as the mural Inter Artes et Naturam (1890), painted for the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rouen and exhibited at the Salon of 1890.[190] Stylistic similarities between the two artists' work include somnambulistic figures in natural settings, a sense of slow and tranquil movement, and a tendency towards abstraction and monumental scale. Gauguin also shared Puvis's fear of attaching extensive literary meaning to paintings, and attempted to create suggestive rather than mystical or intellectual art.[191] However, Brian Petrie explains that while both artists' work was considered "mysterious and untranscribable," Puvis intended to represent nature, not pure symbol or "idea."[192]

Gauguin's Mahana No Atua (Day of the God), 1894 (Fig. 1.44) seems an unmistakable reference to Puvis's Jeunes filles au bord de la mer. Like Puvis, Gauguin integrates three women into an ocean landscape who seem psychologically distant from each other and from their surroundings. The figures' poses are similar as well: the

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[190] Price, 202. In fact, Gauguin created two copies of Puvis's Le Pauvre pêcheur, a photograph of which he attached to the wall of his hut in Tahiti. Price also mentions compositional similarities between Puvis's Hope (L'Esperance) (1871-72) and Gauguin's Te aa no Areois (1892), and between Puvis's various murals and Gauguin's Nave Nave Mahana (1896). Gauguin includes a copy of Puvis's work in the background of his Still Life with L'Esperance (1901).

[191] Petrie, 125.

[192] Petrie, 123.

woman on the left reclines languidly on the shore, offering the viewer only a vacant gaze. The woman on the right turns away and shields her face and body from the idol, creating a figure similar to Puvis's faceless and incomplete woman on the far right in his canvas. Despite their nudity, the women's fetal positions and androgyny desexualize their figures, which in turn emphasizes their psychological significance as embodiments of dream.

Gauguin's central figure recalls Puvis's standing woman, also arranging her hair. Yet by turning her towards the viewer and seating her so that her legs disappear into the water, Gauguin accentuates this fantastical and impossibly colorful foreground that has already affected the nearby semi-conscious women and will soon overcome the more realistic scene and the conscious figures beyond them. Gauguin continues the dreamlike abstraction he incorporated into Aha oe feii?, again rendering an ambiguous space that exists only in the artist's imagination. Painting in his Paris studio between voyages to Tahiti, Gauguin may have included the background's juxtaposition of rituals and motifs (including a Javanese idol copied from a photograph of a Buddhist temple at Borobudur) as a subjective vision of his Tahitian experience—a dreamscape in which the figures are merely symbolic phantasms.

Gauguin's comment in a 1901 letter to painter Daniel de Monfried that his D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous? (Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?), 1897 (Fig. 1.45), is "nothing like a canvas by Puvis de Chavannes" only draws attention to Puvis's lingering presence in this monumental work.[193] Its frieze-like, allegorical figures and indistinct landscape seem drawn from Puvis's murals. Yet Gauguin preferred to veil his allegories, and considered Puvis's

[193] Gauguin, The Writings of a Savage, 159. "…ce n'est pas une toile faite comme un Puvis de Chavannes, études d'après nature, puis carton préparatoire, etc."

classicized versions too simple to decipher; instead, he sought a "pictorial language of feelings" that could not be expressed through literary or narrative content, but through sensation and personal symbols. Nevertheless, Gauguin provided an explanation and sketched a diagram identifying the figures in D'où venons-nous? in his letters to friends including Daniel de Monfried in 1898 and critic Charles Morice in 1901.[194]

Again, Gauguin's solemn, dreaming figures exist in their own spheres of semi-consciousness. The alienated, disproportionate figures within their phantasmagorical landscape immediately indicate that this work is more than a tableau of Tahitian life. Overall, the painting represents the Polynesian moon goddess Hina observing humanity's cycles of birth, life, and death. It was intended to be Gauguin's final masterpiece: a culmination of his visual and psychological experience in Tahiti. Upon its completion he intended to commit suicide, believing that his life and accomplishments would be complete.[195]

Gauguin's letter to Monfried briefly describes each figure in D'où venons-nous?, from the sleeping baby on the far right to the "old woman close to death" on the far left. The standing idol of Hina "seems to point to the next world," he writes. In the background, two women in long dresses share their thoughts and "dare to think of their destiny."[196] Shackelford suggests that the mysterious, dark cloud around them serves "to

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[194] Ibid., 159-160; Shackelford, "Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?," Gauguin Tahiti, 183.

[195] Rookmaaker, 231.

[196] Gauguin, The Writings of a Savage, 160. "Deux figures habillées de pourpre se confient leurs réflexions; une figure énorme volontairement et malgré la perspective, accroupie, lève les bras en l'air et regarde étonnée, ces deux personnages qui osent penser à leur destinée. Une figure du milieu cueille un fruit. Deux chats près d'un enfant. Une chèvre blanche. L'idole les deux bras levés mystérieusement et avec rythme, semble indiquer l'au-delà. La figure accroupie semble écouter l'idole; puis enfin une vieille près de la mort semble accepter, se résigner…"

heighten the sense that these beings are appearing from another world."[197] Indeed, I believe this dark aura recalls the shadowy, portal-like form underneath the haloed woman and her meditating companion in Nave Nave Moe. Yet now the strange darkness has become an inviting doorway rather than an abyss, as Gauguin anticipated crossing the threshold into the unconscious.

Balzac's mystical tale Séraphîta (1835) may have inspired the title of Gauguin's D'où venons-nous?. At one point in the novel, the androgynous protagonist emanates magnetic force onto another character and places him under a hypnotic sleep—an effect which Gauguin wished his painting to achieve—and asks him: "Canst thou comprehend through this thought made visible, the destiny of humanity?—Whence it came, whither it goeth?"[198] Possible connections also arise between the trance states in Gauguin's painting and Hippolyte Taine's French adaptation of Thomas Carlyle's Romantic novel Sartor Resartus (1833-34). Gauguin seems to have been familiar with Carlyle's poetic impression of Nature, which the Scottish writer describes as a "boundless Phantasmagoria and Dream-grotto… Then, in that strange Dream, how we clutch at shadows as if they were substances; and sleep deepest while fancying ourselves most awake!"[199]

Dorra attributes the role "imaginative anthropologist" to Gauguin, since the artist combines Polynesian myths and motifs with other ethnographic sources and his own

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[197] Shackelford, "Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?," Gauguin Tahiti, 178.

[198] Shackelford 181, refers to Balzac, Séraphîta, trans. Katharine Prescott Wormeley (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1898), 39. "Comprends-tu par cette pensée visible la destinée de l'humanité? D'où elle vient, où elle va?"

[199] Ibid., 233. Also discussed in Shackelford, 181-182. Carlyle's novel also may have inspired the title of Gauguin's painting; Taine translates Carlyle's lines "O Whence—Oh Heaven, Whither?" as "Mais d'où venons nous? O Dieu, où allons nous?"

symbolic language.[200] For example, Gauguin's Bébé (Baby), also known as Naissance du Christ à la tahitienne (The Nativity), 1896 (Fig. 1.46) casts Tahitian figures as the Virgin Mary, Christ child, nurse, and visiting angel. Unlike Gauguin's Te Tamari No Atua (Nativity) of the same year, this version gains a heightened supernatural aspect from the painting's focus on the nurse, wearing a missionary dress, instead of the mother. Attempting to rationalize the space and proportions in the painting soon leads to the possibility that the image represents a Tahitian woman experiencing a Christian vision while holding her own child, transfixed by the divine being's magnetic gesture.

Gauguin often attempted to capture "primitive" humanity's visionary capabilities. Critics such as Albert Aurier had already remarked on the psychological power of Gauguin's images of rural life and superstition, particularly his La Vision après le sermon (The Vision After the Sermon), 1888 (Fig. 1.47), which depicts a group of Breton women experiencing an intense spiritual vision. The women pray in an unbalanced semicircle and collectively witness Jacob wrestling with the angel in a luminous red field, partly obscured by the tree branch that acts as a barrier between real and imaginary space. Aurier describes the women's fantastical experience in dramatic terms, as the evocator's voice transports them to a distant realm of religious mysticism.[201]

Aurier's approach to Gauguin's painting corresponds to contemporary psychological theory. Symbolist critics identified with the ideas of philosopher Henri Bergson, whose Les Données Immédiates de la Conscience (1888) proposes that art possesses an inherent hypnotic power:

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[200] Dorra, 206.

[201] G.-Albert Aurier, "Le Symboliste en peinture: Paul Gauguin," Mercure de France 2 (March 1891): 155-164. In Dorra, 195-196.

> …the object of art is to lull the active or rather resistant powers of our personality, and thus bring us to a perfectly docile state in which we realize the idea that one suggests to us... In the process of art will be found in attenuated form, refined and somewhat spiritualized, the processes by which one usually obtains a hypnotic state.[202]

Filiz Eda Burhan further explains how La Vision après le sermon relates to late nineteenth-century psychological theory and mesmerism. Gauguin became aware of mesmerism predominantly through Romantic literature, and during his time the phenomenon was associated with trance states and religious beliefs. According to Burhan, La Vision après le sermon particularly demonstrates that "the effect of art is the creation of an ecstatic trance, and that its spectators are merely the credulous subjects of its mesmeric, hypnotic powers."[203]

It seems to me that Gauguin exploits this trance-inducing potential by depicting both the visible Breton world and the biblical hallucination in an indeterminate shared space. In doing so, the painting engages the viewer by appealing to the unconscious, which quickly subverts the conscious mind's rational attempts to comprehend the scene, until the viewer becomes a participant in the ecstatic vision.

Furthermore, I interpret Manao Tupapau (Spirit of the Dead Watching), 1892 (Fig. 1.48), as Gauguin's invitation for the viewer to experience the "primitive" unconscious in Tahiti. The painting portrays Gauguin's Polynesian teenaged companion, Tehamana. Lying nude and prostrate on a bed, she experiences a terrifying nightmare of

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[202] Burhan, 330. "…l'objet de l'art est d'endormir les puissances actives ou plutôt résistantes de notre personnalité, et de nous amener ainsi à un état de docilité parfaite où nous réalisons l'idée qu'on nous suggère… Dans les procédés de l'art on retrouvera sous une forme attenuée, raffinées et en quelque sorte spiritualisées, les procédés par lesquels on obtient ordinairement l'état d'hypnose."

[203] Filiz Eda Burhan, Vision and Visionaries: Nineteenth Century Psychological Theory, the Occult Sciences and the Formation of the Symbolist Aesthetic in France (Princeton: Princeton University, 1979), 309. Gauguin was familiar with Hoffmann, Poe, Balzac, and the mystical novel Méphis, written by his grandmother, Flora Tristan, who considered art a form of communication between God and humankind.

a shrouded dead woman's nocturnal visitation. Gauguin explains in an 1892 letter to his wife Mette that Tehamana, not being familiar with the French spiritist theaters, cannot help seeing the actual deceased person in the image of someone like herself.[204]

Gauguin draws Tehamana's nightmare into the presumed space of reality, evoking fearful sensations through his funereal color scheme and apparitional details. Along with the ancestral phantom, whose petrifying stare seems in my observation to assume magnetic power over Tehamana's body, the shimmering tupapau flowers in the background are also manifestations of the girl's dream and her culture's perceived psychological condition. Intended to represent phosphorescent lights at night—which Tahitians believed to contain souls of the dead—"they mustn't be real, since they are imagined," explains the artist.[205]

Furthermore, the title Manao Tupapau does not distinguish whether the girl is thinking about the spirit or the spirit is thinking of her, which further obscures the viewer's understanding of dream and reality in the work, and renders it even more frightening.[206] Gauguin recalls the scene in his diary Noa Noa; he admires Tehamana's beauty in her fearful state, and notices "the illusion that a phosphorescent light was streaming from her staring eyes," making her terror contagious.[207] However, in the

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[204] Gauguin, Lettres de Gauguin, 238. From a letter dated December 8, 1892. "Enfin pour terminer je fais le revenant tout simplement, une petite bonne femme; parce que la jeune fille ne connaissant pas les théâtres des spirites français ne peut faire autrement que de voir lié à l'esprit du mort, le mort lui-même c'est à dire une personne comme elle." In Gauguin, The Writings of a Savage, 64.

[205] Ibid, 237-238. "Il y a quelques fleurs dans le fond mais elles ne doivent pas être réeles étant imaginatives, je les fais ressemblant à des étincelles."

[206] Philippe Peltier, "Gauguin: Artist and Ethnographer," Gauguin Tahiti, 56.

[207] Paul Gauguin, Noa Noa: The Tahitian Journal, trans. O. F. Theis (New York: Dover, 1985), 33. "Une contagion émanait des terreurs de Tehura, il me semblait qu'une lueur phosphorescente coulât de ses yeux au regard fixe."

painting Gauguin portrays the spirit emanating this powerful magnetic gaze upon Tehamana, who becomes the hypnotized subject of its supernatural force.

Gauguin seemed to become more aware of his own dreams and unconscious mind during his multicultural experiences. He wrote to poet and critic André Fontainas in 1899 about his dreams in Tahiti: "night falls… My eyes close and uncomprehendingly see the dream in the infinite space that stretches away, elusive, before me."[208] In Gauguin's works, the reality of objects and spaces remains unstable and enigmatic. Translating his dreams into his own visual language allowed Gauguin to understand them in terms of both his conscious, everyday observations and their subjective reinterpretations arising from his unconscious mind.

Considering artists' diverse interpretations of the creative unconscious leads to Jeremy Stubbs's question as to whether only one "unconscious" ("l'inconscient") developed in fin-de-siècle France. Instead, Stubbs argues that before psychoanalysis, the concept of the unconscious generated a wide spectrum of interconnected elements, from medical and psychiatric to literary and artistic, with various philosophical, sociological, and occult possibilities in between. The artistic version, however, seems to synthesize psychological research with esoteric beliefs of the time, favoring mythic archetypes, visionary powers, and dream states as part of the creative process.[209] Artists also sought

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[208] Gauguin, Lettres de Gauguin, 288. From a letter dated March 1892. "Et voilà la nuit—tout repose. Mes yeux se ferment pour voir sans comprendre le rêve dans l'espace infini qui fuit devant moi, et j'ai la sensation de la marche dolente de mes espérances." In Gauguin, The Writings of a Savage, 184.

[209] Jeremy Stubbs, "Between Medicine and Hermeticism: 'The' Unconscious in fin-de-siècle France," in Symbolism, Decadence and the Fin de Siècle: French and European Perspectives (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 150-151. Stubbs's schema describes the following aspects of the unconscious during the late nineteenth-century: medical and psychiatric; philosophical and psychological; sociological; metaphysical; spiritualism and psychical research; occult and hermetic, and literary and artistic.

to mediate between welcoming the deluge of images from their unconscious mind, or descending into the madman's complete loss of clarity.[210]

In the 1880s, Hippolyte Bernheim had discovered that hypnotic suggestibility was not limited to the mentally ill or to women, but healthy male subjects were also receptive to trance states. Bernheim's results were controversial, but provided a scientific rationale for "normal" people being influenced by their own unconscious. The new significance of this inner self resounded through both scientific and artistic circles, and raised questions regarding its role in aesthetic taste; individuals may be drawn to particular images by repressed desires, fantasies, and memories rather than by their appeal to the rational mind.[211] In addition to Bernheim's challenges to Charcot, in 1901 psychiatrist Joseph Babinski claimed that the hysteria symptoms Charcot identified actually indicate hypnotic suggestion—an unintentional result of Charcot's "objective" technique.

Growing opposition towards Charcot's concept of hypnosis generated further development of therapeutic techniques involving somnambulistic states.[212] Although Charcot was not the first of Mesmer's followers to research hysteria, his publications and medical iconography made theories and images regarding hypnotic states and their related phenomena more accessible to the public. In particular, his research implied that one could commune with dream states and the unconscious without requiring exterior stimuli or a hypnotist.

Charcot's protégé Sigmund Freud, who studied with Charcot during the mid-1880s, later became renowned as the neurologist who rapidly brought hypnotism and the

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[210] Ibid., 172.

[211] Shaw, 10.

[212] Monroe, 254.

unconscious into the twentieth century. Freud lived in Paris for several months while attending Charcot's lectures and demonstrations, observing his technique of inducing hysteria through hypnosis. Fiercely opposed to the lingering superstitious and irrational beliefs associated with states of insanity, Freud eventually abandoned the practice of hypnosis, with its melodramatic side effects, yet expanded on Charcot's theories of the unconscious. Freud continued to translate and imitate Charcot's work throughout his own career of developing psychoanalysis and studying the relevance of dreams to everyday life.[213]

Nineteenth-century research exploring the hidden inner self's permeation into the rational mind foreshadows the Surrealists' quest to incorporate the unconscious into everyday life. Based on these nineteenth-century psychological, visual, and literary precedents, the Surrealists famously depicted images recalling dreams and nightmares, and experimented with channeling hypnotic states. For example, in 1922 they experimented with a series of trances, "la période des sommeils," or "the season of sleeps," in their attempts to access the unconscious mind. However, these explorations should be discussed in the context of equally significant influences on Surrealist art and theory: nineteenth-century spiritism and automatism.

[213] Celia Rabinovitch, Surrealism and the Sacred: Power, Eros, and the Occult in Modern Art (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2002), 126-127.



Figure 1.1. Antoine-Jean Gros, Bonaparte visitant les pestiférés de Jaffa (Napoleon Bonaparte Visiting the Plague-Stricken in Jaffa), 1804, oil on canvas, 523 x 715 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Source: Digital Image Library, The University of Iowa.



Figure 1.2. Jacques-Louis David, Le Serment des Horaces (The Oath of the Horatii), 1785, oil on canvas, 330 x 425 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Source: Digital Image Library, The University of Iowa.



Figure 1.3. Jean-Germain Drouais, Marius prisonnier à Minturnes (Marius at Minturnae), 1786, oil on canvas, 271 x 365 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Source: Dorothy Johnson, Jacques-Louis David: Art in Metamorphosis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), fig. 36, 63.



Figure 1.4. André Brouillet, Une leçon clinique à la Salpêtrière (A Clinical Lesson at the Salpêtrière), 1877, oil on canvas, 300 x 125 cm, Musée d'Histoire de la Médicine, Paris.

Source: Personal photograph.



Figure 1.5. Eugène Delacroix, La Mort de Sardanapale (The Death of Sardanapalus), 1827-28, oil on canvas, 395 x 495 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Source: Digital Image Library, The University of Iowa.

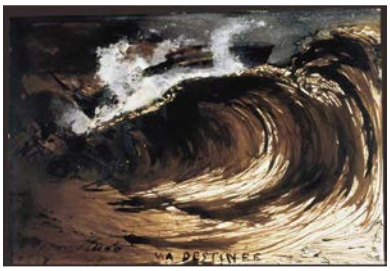


Figure 1.6. Victor Hugo, Ma Destinée, 1867, ink and gouache on paper, 174 x 259 cm, Maison Victor Hugo, Paris, Inv. 927.

Source: Marie-Laure Prévost, Victor Hugo: l'homme océan (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2002), Plate 7, pl. 20-21.



Figure 1.7. Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Jeunes filles au bord de la mer (Young Girls by the Seashore), 1879, oil on canvas, 205 x 154 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Source: Jennifer L. Shaw, Dream States: Puvis de Chavannes, Modernism, and the Fantasy of France (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), Plate 2.



Figure 1.8. Puvis de Chavannes, La Famille du Pêcheur (The Fisherman's Family), 1875, oil on canvas, approx. 82.5 x 72 cm, formerly Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden (destroyed 1945).

Source: Brian Petrie, Puvis de Chavannes (Hants, England; Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate, 1997), 91.



Figure 1.9. Puvis de Chavannes, Le Pauvre pêcheur (The Poor Fisherman), 1881, oil on canvas, 156 x 193 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Source: Shaw, Plate 1.



Figure 1.10. Puvis de Chavannes, Le rêve (The Dream), 1883, oil on canvas, 82 x 102 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Source: Petrie, Plate XII.

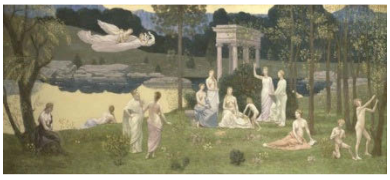


Figure 1.11. Puvis de Chavannes, Le Bois sacré cher aux arts et aux muses (The Sacred Grove Dear to the Arts and Muses) (reduced version), 1884-89, oil on canvas, 92 x 210 cm, Art Institute of Chicago.

Source: Petrie, Plate XVI.



Figure 1.12. Gustave Moreau, Œdipe et le Sphinx (Oedipus and the Sphinx), 1864, oil on canvas, 206.4 x 104.8 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Source: Geneviève Lacambre, Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1999), Plate 28, 78.

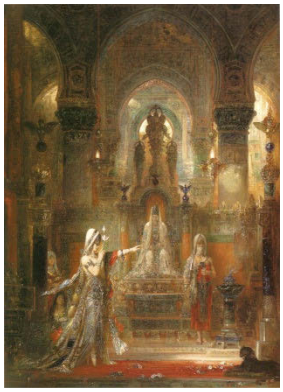


Figure 1.13. Gustave Moreau, Salomé dansant devant Hérode (Salomé Dancing Before Herod), 1876, oil on canvas, 144 x 103.5 cm, Armand Hammer Collection, Los Angeles.

Source: Lacambre, Plate 63, 165.



Figure 1.14. Moreau, Salomé dansant devant Hérode (Salomé Dancing before Herod, or 'Salomé Tattooed'), 1874, oil on canvas, 92 x 60 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Lacambre, Plate 61, 162.



Figure 1.15. A dermagraphic experiment, photograph from Ernst Mesner, "Autographisme et stigmates," Revue de l'hypnotisme experimental et thérapeutique, 1889-1890.

Source: Asti Hustvedt, Medical Muses: Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century Paris (New York and London: Norton & Company, 2011), Figure 6, 56.

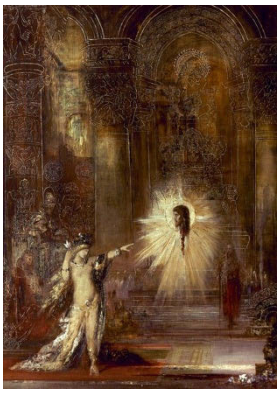


Figure 1.16. Moreau, L'Apparition (The Apparition), ca. 1876, oil on canvas, 142 x 103 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Mathieu, The Gustave Moreau Museum (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1997), 26.



Figure 1.17. Moreau, L'Apparition (The Apparition), 1874-76, watercolor, 106 x 73 cm, Musée du Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins, Paris.

Source: Lacambre, Plate 64, 168.



Figure 1.18. Moreau, Study after a Model for Salomé, ca. 1878, pencil and ink on paper, 44.5 x 26 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Julius Kaplan, The Art of Gustave Moreau: Theory, Style, and Content (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), Plate 35.



Figure 1.19. Moreau, Etudes de têtes de Salomé pour Salomé dansant devant Hérode (Dessin 2712), ca. 1876, pencil drawing, 21.1 x 16.1 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Joconde database, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/pres.htm> (accessed November 2011).



Figure 1.20. Moreau, Study for Salomé dansant devant Hérode (Dessin 2327), ca. 1876, pencil drawing, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Personal photograph.

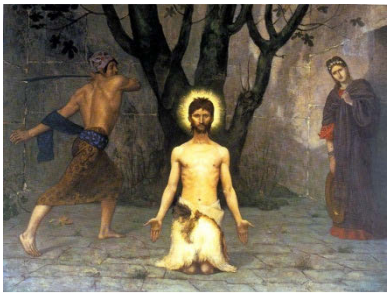


Figure 1.21. Puvis de Chavannes, La décollation de Saint Jean-Baptiste (The Execution of Saint John the Baptist), 1869, oil on canvas, 124.5 x 166 cm, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham.

Source: Petrie, Plate III.

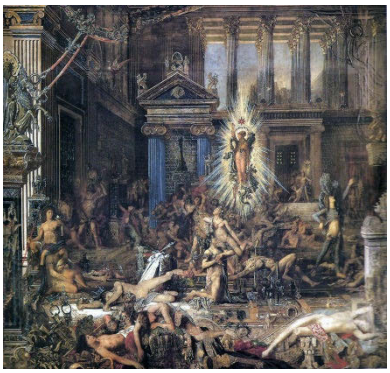


Figure 1.22. Moreau, Les Prétendants (The Suitors), 1852-96, oil on canvas, 385 x 343 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Pierre-Louis Mathieu, The Gustave Moreau Museum (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1997), 24.



Figure 1.23. Moreau, Study for the figure of Minerva in Les Prétendants (Dessin 2399), pencil drawing, 56.8 x 32.5 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Joconde database, <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/joconde/fr/pres.htm> (accessed November 2011).



Figure 1.24. Moreau, La Vie de l'Humanité, "L'Age d'argent: Orphée: Le Chant" (The Life of Mankind, "The Silver Age: Orpheus: Song"), 1886, polyptych on wood, each panel 33 x 25.5 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Mathieu, 1997, 85.



Figure 1.25. Moreau, Hésiode et la Muse (Hesiod and the Muse), 1891, oil on canvas, 59 x 34.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Source: Lacambre, Plate 129, 253.



Figure 1.26. Moreau, Le Poête et la Sirène (The Poet and the Siren), 1893, oil on canvas, 97 x 62 cm, Private Collection, Paris.

Source: Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Gustave Moreau: with a catalogue of the finished paintings, watercolors, and drawings (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1976), 204.



Figure 1.27. Moreau, Study for Le Poête et la Sirène (Dessin 111), pencil drawing, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Personal photograph.

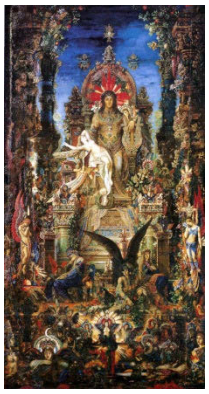


Figure 1.28. Moreau, Jupiter et Sémélé (Jupiter and Semele), 1894-95, oil on canvas, 212 x 118 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Lacambre, Plate 118, 235.



Figure 1.29. Odilon Redon, L'oeil-ballon (Eye-Balloon), 1878, various charcoals, with stumping, erasing, and incising, heightened with traces of white chalk, on yellow-cream wove paper altered to a pale golden tone, 42.2 x 33.3 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Source: Jodi Hauptman, ed., Beyond the Visible: The Art of Odilon Redon, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2006), Plate 19, 118.

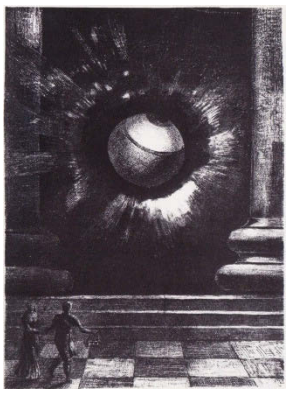


Figure 1.30. Redon, "Vision," Plate 8 of Dans le rêve, 1879, lithograph, 27.4 x 19.8 cm.

Source: Alfred Werner, The Graphic Works of Odilon Redon (New York: Dover, 1969), Pl. 9.



Figure 1.31. Redon, Les yeux clos (Closed Eyes), 1890, lithograph, 31.2 x 24.2 cm.

Source: Alfred Werner, The Graphic Works of Odilon Redon (New York: Dover, 1969), Pl. 82.



Figure 1.32. Redon, Lumière (Light), 1893, lithograph, 39.2 x 27.2 cm.

Source: Alfred Werner, The Graphic Works of Odilon Redon (New York: Dover, 1969), Pl. 98.

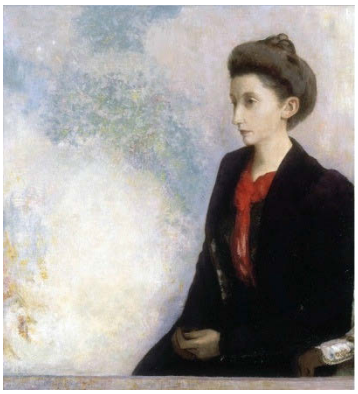


Figure 1.33. Redon, Baronne Robert de Domecy (Portrait of Baroness Robert de Domecy), 1900, oil on canvas, 74.3 x 68.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Source: Musée d'Orsay database, <www.musee-orsay.fr> (accessed November 2011).



Figure 1.34. Redon, L'Apparition, 1883, various charcoals and black chalk, with stumping and erasing, heightened with white gouache, on tan wove paper altered to a dark, golden tone, 58 x 44 cm, Bordeaux Musée des Beaux-Arts.

Source: Hauptman, ed., Fig. 21, 44.



Figure 1.35. Redon, "Félinerie," Plate 8 of Dans le rêve, 1879, lithograph, 26.8 x 20.3 cm.

Source: Alfred Werner, The Graphic Works of Odilon Redon (New York: Dover, 1969), Pl. 8.



Figure 1.36. Photographer Unknown, "Attitudes Passionnelles," Plate 21 from J. M. Charcot's Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière, 1876, paper print.

Source: Mary Warner Marien, Photography: A Cultural History, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), Fig. 3.94, 151.



Figure 1.37. Redon, "Une longue chrysalide couleur de sang" ("A long chrysalis, the color of blood"), Plate 2 of À Gustave Flaubert, 1889, lithograph, 22 x 18.5 cm.

Source: Alfred Werner, The Graphic Works of Odilon Redon (New York: Dover, 1969), Pl. 71.



Figure 1.38. Alphonse Osbert, Vision, 1892, oil on canvas, 235 x 138 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Source: Michelle Facos, Symbolist Art in Context (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), Plate 48, 120.



Figure 1.39. Paul Gauguin, Aha oe feii? (What! Are You Jealous?), ca. 1892, oil on canvas, 68 x 92 cm, State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

Source: Gauguin Tahiti, exh. cat. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2004), 53.

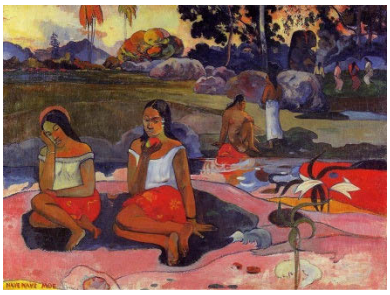


Figure 1.40. Gauguin, Nave Nave Moe (Sacred Spring: Sweet Dreams), 1894, oil on canvas, 74 x 100 cm, The Hermitage, St. Petersburg.

Source: Digital Image Library, The University of Iowa.



Figure 1.41. Gauguin, Faaturuma (Melancholic), 1891, oil on canvas, 116.5 x 91.4 cm, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City.

Source: Digital Image Library, The University of Iowa.

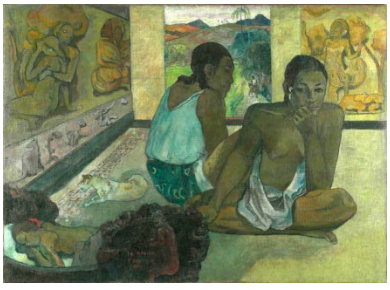


Figure 1.42. Gauguin, Te rerioa (The Dream), 1897, oil on canvas, 95.1 x 130.2 cm, The Courtauld Institute Gallery, London.

Source: Gauguin Tahiti, exh. cat. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2004), 157.



Figure 1.43. Gauguin, La Perte du pucelage (L'Éveil du printemps); The Loss of Virginity (The Awakening of Spring), 1891, oil on canvas, 89.5 x 130.2 cm, The Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia.

Source: Gauguin Tahiti, exh. cat. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2004), 12.

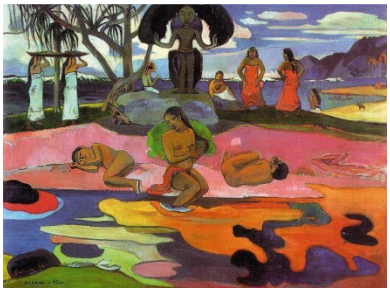


Figure 1.44. Gauguin, Mahana No Atua (Day of the God), 1894, oil (possibly mixed with wax) on canvas, 68.3 x 91.5 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago.

Source: Gauguin Tahiti, exh. cat. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2004), 89.



Figure 1.45. Gauguin, D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous? (Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?), 1897, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Source: Digital Image Library, The University of Iowa.

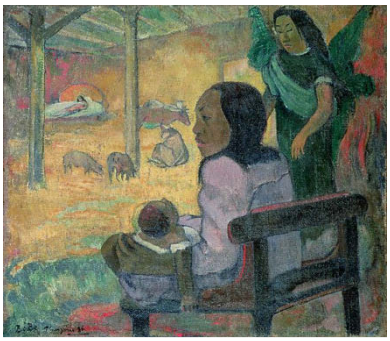


Figure 1.46. Gauguin, Bébé (Naissance du Christ à la tahitienne); Baby (The Nativity), 1896, oil on canvas, 66 x 75 cm, The Hermitage, St. Petersburg.

Source: Digital Image Library, The University of Iowa.



Figure 1.47. Gauguin, La Vision après le sermon (The Vision After the Sermon), 1888, oil on canvas, 73 x 92 cm, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Source: Digital Image Library, The University of Iowa.

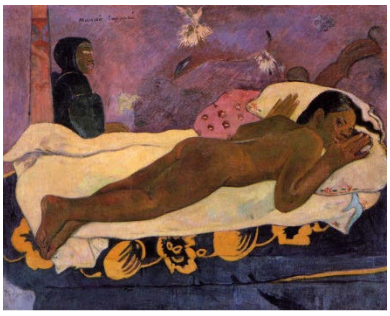


Figure 1.48. Gauguin, Manao Tupapau (Spirit of the Dead Watching), 1892, oil on burlap mounted on canvas, 72.4 x 92.4 cm, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York.

Source: Gauguin Tahiti, exh. cat. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2004), 55.

CHAPTER II
THE TURNING TABLES OF JERSEY: ROMANTICISM AND THE OCCULT

> The dreamer's hand vibrates, trembles...
> On the page, when these characters come out—
> Words, figures, terms of doubtful origin,
> Visage of the invisible, shown by the unknown;
> Made by whom? shaped by whom? sprung from the shadows.
>
> — Victor Hugo, Les Contemplations[214]

Early psychology, somnambulism, and the supernatural remained closely intertwined throughout the nineteenth century. Although few nineteenth-century physicians pursued the "pure" animal magnetism of the 1780s, the mesmerism movement influenced mid-century spiritists and Romantic figures such as Victor Hugo, who turned to experimentation with the supernatural and the unconscious, seeking a higher reality beyond the visible world. With the escalation of spiritism during the latter half of the century, techniques that were used in attempts to communicate with "spirits"—automatic writing, drawing, and speaking—also were recognized as methods of channeling one's unconscious mind.

In the following chapter I aim to trace the development of automatism, in particular automatic drawing, as a process of creative expression and explore how mesmerism continued to permeate visual art of the Romantic era. I concentrate on original research and analysis of Victor Hugo's experimental art and "spirit" drawings, which he created while in exile. We also will examine comparisons between Hugo's

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[214] Victor Hugo, "I.viii. Continuation," Selected Poems of Victor Hugo, trans. E. H. and A. M. Blackmore (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 177. "La main du songeur vibre et tremble en l'écrivant; / La plume, qui d'une aile allongeait l'envergure, / Frémit sur le papier quand sort cette figure, / Le mot, le terme, type on ne sait d'où venu, / Face de l'invisible, aspect de l'inconnu; / Créé, par qui? forgé, par qui? jailli de l'ombre."

drawings and the macabre imagery of Odilon Redon, including motifs which previously have not been identified and investigated.

Two prominent strains of mesmerism, materialist and spiritist, split the movement as it evolved after the French Revolution. The former continued Mesmer's original concepts, yet his ideas fell into disfavor during the 1840s after the Académie des Sciences refused to recognize mesmerism's medical and scientific significance. The spiritist strain, however, only became more prominent during the mid-nineteenth century.

One of Mesmer's disciples, the Marquis de Puységur, drew mesmerism into the realm of the supernatural after Puységur became convinced that a magnetized patient could communicate with the deceased. In Paris, the Baron Jules Dupotet de Sennevoy published the Journal du magnétisme from 1845 to 1860, a work which also promoted the idea of spirit contact. Ultimately, although both branches retained scientific and healing objectives, followers of the spiritist variety sought the key to mesmerism in the human soul, in the possibility of reincarnation, and in otherworldly messages.[215]

According to Robert Darnton, post-revolutionary mesmerists explained somnambulism as "a state in which the inner sense made contact with the spiritual world, freeing the inner man to wander through space and time while his body remained fixed in a trance."[216] For example, mesmerist Antoine Fabre d'Olivet attempted to develop a new religion based on spiritism, including spirit contact and a hierarchy of souls. Establishing himself as a mesmerist healer, Fabre d'Olivet claimed to mediate between humanity's will and its nature—the universal will composed of all individuals. By manipulating

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[215] Lynn L. Sharp, Secular Spirituality: Reincarnation and Spiritism in Nineteenth-Century France (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2006), 33.

[216] Robert Darnton, Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 128.

mesmeric fluid's influence on one's will, he believed he could enter a somnambulistic state to acquire the sacred and scientific knowledge necessary to cure diseases and contact the spirit world. These souls were arranged in a chain of command that Fabre d'Olivet envisioned for the living world: a return to a class society with a monarchy or theocracy, with Napoleon as its leader and himself as its pontiff.[217]

The magnetic spiritism trend extended to theories of good and evil spirits. In 1788, the Swedenborgian Stockholm Exegetic and Philanthropic Society published a "Lettre sur la seule explication satisfaisante des phénomènes du magnétisme animal et du somnambulisme," claiming that malignant supernatural entities caused illness in the human body, and these negative influences must be removed in order for the sick to recover.[218] Through magnetic somnambulism, a benign spirit could overcome the harmful one. Such beliefs fueled the thriving spiritist strain within the mesmerist movement.[219]

The rise of the séance movement during the 1840s coincided with mesmerism's popularity in the United States—a nation generally receptive to epidemic psychic fads. As Henri F. Ellenberger points out, recent inventions such as the telegraph ignited the public imagination, and at the time nothing seemed too far-fetched or impossible.[220] Publications such as Philadelphia physician Charles Caldwell's Facts in Mesmerism and Thoughts on Its Causes and Uses (1842) further heightened the phenomenon's credibility.

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[217] Darnton, 138. Both Napoleon and Joséphine de Beauharnais allegedly consulted mesmerist fortune-tellers after the Revolution.

[218] Adam Crabtree, From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 196.

[219] Crabtree, 197.

[220] Henri F. Ellenberger, The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 83.

Caldwell only attempted to explain and validate the teachings of Mesmer and his followers, rather than offer new ideas of his own, yet his book inspired several treatises supporting mesmeric practices.

Inevitably, spiritists appropriated some of mesmerism's nomenclature to explain supernatural phenomena.[221] In his popular book The Divine Revelations (1846), American clairvoyant Andrew Jackson Davis proposes that the deceased exist in a spiritual world that the living can readily access during episodes of magnetic ecstasy. Davis discovered his alleged talent for clairvoyance after an itinerant mesmerist passed though Poughkeepsie in 1843, offering demonstrations and medical diagnoses. He experimented with mesmeric techniques until he successfully entered a trance state, in which he claimed he could access latent abilities such as diagnosing illnesses and contacting the spirit world. Davis's experience, and the fact that teams of traveling mesmerists began crossing the United States during the 1830s, indicates the widespread fascination with the mesmerist movement during the mid-nineteenth century.[222]

The séance phenomenon began as an American parlor pastime in March of 1848 near Rochester, New York. Two young sisters, Margaret and Katie Fox, claimed to receive spirit messages from a murder victim communicating via rapping noises in their home.[223] The "spirits" seemed to knock on the walls, move furniture, and imitate the girls' clapping sounds. Through developing a yes-or-no question code, they determined that the ghost of a "murdered pedlar" buried in the basement of the house produced the

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[221] Crabtree, 246.

[222] Crabtree, 231.

[223] Ronald Pearsall, The Table-Rappers: The Victorians and the Occult (Sparkford: J. H. Haynes & Co., 2004), 29.

noises. The phenomena, such as household objects flying through the air or instruments played by phantom hands, followed the sisters even when they were separated and had left the house. Eventually a friend of the Fox family, Isaac Post, suggested reciting the alphabet until the "spirit" made a knocking sound at a particular letter, a communication method inspired by the telegraph. The first words received at the Post house—"We are all your dear friends and relatives"—ignited a public fascination with the spirit world and a desire to contact deceased loved ones.[224]

Many mesmerists quickly became fervent spiritism advocates. Spiritists who had previously experimented with mesmerism sought connections between Mesmer's concept of a universal "fluid" and the unseen presence of spirits, or "electric beings" who could communicate with the living through encoded messages.[225] Those who seemed most sensitive to otherworldly messages, such as Mrs. Fox and her daughters, offered their services as mediums—telepathic mediators between the living and the spirit worlds.[226] Spiritist publications and conventions arose by 1850, and mediums relayed messages from the afterlife by allowing the "spirits" to convey messages through the medium's voice or control her hand through automatic writing on a page or slate.[227]

The spiritist craze began sweeping across Europe in early 1852. Initially popular in England and Germany, the movement spread to France and beyond in mid-1853. That same year, German and French newspapers began publishing accounts of spirits communicating with the living through spinning and tapping tables, or "typtology"—

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[224] Crabtree, 232-234.

[225] Ibid., 247.

[226] Ellenberger, 84.

[227] Crabtree, 234.

stories that initiated what would become the clichéd séance procedure: the participants patiently sit around a parlor table waiting approximately a half-hour for a spirit presence to manifest itself by rotating the table or tapping one of its legs on the floor to convey "telegraphic" messages.[228]

Some Parisian salons became dedicated to spirit contact though mediums, who transmitted the "spirit" messages through the rapping table leg. The letters of these messages were determined by the number of taps, which is how Victor Hugo and his family claimed to receive "spirit" messages, which will be discussed in depth later in this chapter.[229] The controversial movement attracted various explanations: genuine spirit contact; the devil's work; fraud and theatrical performances by the mediums; hallucinations; or, the product of electrical or magnetic fluid unconsciously exerted onto the table.[230]

French society's interest in mesmerism did not dissipate after the Revolution, but was intermittently revived throughout the era of the July Monarchy and the Second Empire. The working classes continued to seek mesmerist fortune-tellers, while the wealthy attended fashionable séance gatherings. The participants' position around the table, resting their hands palms-down on its surface, seems directly to emulate Mesmer's magnetic chain.[231]

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[228] Ibid., 236-238.

[229] Jean de Mutigny, Victor Hugo et le spiritisme (Paris: Fernand Nathan, 1981), 20-21. Victor Hugo, Conversations with Eternity: The Forgotten Masterpiece of Victor Hugo, trans. John Chambers (Boca Raton: New Paradigm Books, 1998), 24-25.

[230] Crabtree, 239.

[231] Ibid., 236.

By the 1850s, mesmerist trappings such as galvanized tubs and wands gave way to spiritist summoning techniques.[232] Darnton relates how mid-nineteenth-century mesmerist Charles Fourier explained supernatural messages as a product of the somnambulist's "ultrahuman faculty," which proved the soul's immortality. Fourier hosted séances in which the "spirits" spoke eloquently about mesmerism, and, after his own death, he kept in touch with his disciples through mesmeric communication.[233]

The séance phantoms began to visually manifest themselves in the early 1860s, and nineteenth-century occult phenomena soon merged with the relatively new technology of photography. Photography's inventors aspired to document the intangible—nature's "automatic writing," in a sense—and the medium soon was used to fabricate illusions and images of the supernatural. Boston scientist John Adams Whipple used photography to capture trancelike scenes that foreshadow the "séance" imagery of Surrealist automatism. One of Whipple's daguerreotypes (Fig. 2.1) from about 1845 depicts a mesmerist standing behind four rigidly seated figures, a man and three women with clasped hands, who allegedly have been hypnotized into magnetic sleep. Facing the camera and placing his hand on the male subject's head, the hypnotist not only demonstrates his profession, but also summons the camera's mesmeric ability that some sitters claimed was inherent to that mysterious new invention.[234]

However, society's conviction in the indisputable truth of photographs early on resulted in deceptive images of hypnotists, translucent "spirits," and other occult

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[232] Darnton, 140.

[233] Ibid., 144.

[234] Mary Warner Marien, Photography: A Cultural History, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 75.

apparitions. Beginning with an accidental discovery by New York photographer and charlatan William Mumler in the early 1860s, spiritualist mediums began to present double-exposed photographs of "spirits" appearing before living clients at a séance (often using glass plates coated with a collodion emulsion, pre-exposed to the "spirit" figure) as evidence of summoning the deceased (Fig. 2.2).[235]

Édouard Isidore Buguet's theatrical "spirit" photographs emerged in Paris in the early 1870s. Once Buguet was exposed as a fraud in 1875, public interest in spirit photography sharply declined.[236] However, Buguet continued to offer his services as a "photographer conjurer" or "antispirit photographer." Now for entertainment purposes only, he created double-exposed images of ghostly presences and displays of mesmeric and mediumistic ability, such as a self-portrait with a phantom double or a levitating parlor table (Fig. 2.3). In the decades that followed, inventing illusions of spirit phenomena became a leisure activity for amateur photographers and stage magicians.[237]

Along with such séance phenomena as rapping noises, levitating objects, and phantom hands, automatic writing and drawing became methods of conveying the presence of the spirit world. The spiritists recognized two methods of automatic writing: direct, in which an invisible spirit wrote on a slate or page, or through a medium, who sank into a trance to channel the spirit messages to his or her own hand.[238] Instances of direct spirit painting and drawing were not unheard of, but the use of the planchette with

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[235] Martyn Jolly, Faces of the Living Dead: The Belief in Spirit Photography (London: The British Library; West New York, New Jersey: Mark Batty Publisher, 2006), 16.

[236] Clément Chéroux, Andreas Fischer, Pierre Apraxine, Denis Canguilhem, and Sophie Schmit, The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; distributed by Yale University Press, 2004), 34.

[237] Ibid., 52.

[238] Pearsall, 102.

a pencil on one leg created a balance between spirit contact and the medium's control. In her 1883 book, Anna Mary Howitt Watts relates how her father, William Howitt, gained automatic writing and drawing abilities of a supernatural origin in 1858. Howitt had recently visited his friends Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson in Hampstead to inspect the Mrs. Wilkinson's alleged spirit drawing, which had caused her husband to publish his book Spirit-Drawings: a Personal Narrative that same year.

Wishing to attempt his own spirit contact through drawing, after returning home Howitt sat passively holding a pencil on a sheet of paper, "ere a something resembling an electric shock ran through his arm and hand; whereupon the pencil began to move in circles, the influence becoming stronger and stronger, propelling his arm in a circle for some ten minutes." Then, with violent arm motions, the pencil began to trace prophetic and religious phrases upon the paper, such as "many good things will come," in large, strong letters.[239] Watts also describes how soon afterward her mother was creating an automatic drawing of a flower when a "phantom butterfly" appeared on the page. She claimed that her "vision opened to perceive the spirit picture," and her hand felt magnetically guided to continue her automatic drawing of floral patterns after the butterfly faded.[240]

Automatic writing and drawing were already known to several prominent artists by the mid-nineteenth century. As early as 1819, English watercolor painter and astrologist John Varley encouraged early Romantic artist and poet William Blake to draw "visionary heads" or "spiritual portraits" of historical and biblical figures who appeared

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[239] Anna Mary Howitt Watts, Life and Works of Dr. Justinus Kerner; William Howitt and his Work for Spiritualism (London: The Psychological Press Association, 1883), 261-262.

[240] Ibid., 266.

to him. These drawings, such as Blake's visionary head of King Edward I, ca. 1819 (Fig. 2.4), appear to be rough sketches, yet convey the depth of the deceased figures' emotions and wisdom through their eyes, which have seen the "other side."

Blake's biographer Alexander Gilchrist explains that the artist's "Visionary faculty was so much under control that…he could summon before his abstracted gaze any of the familiar forms and faces he was asked for," such as Moses or Julius Caesar. Blake would begin drawing "with the utmost alacrity and composure, looking up from time to time as though he had a real sitter before him; ingenuous Varley, meanwhile, straining wistful eyes into vacancy and seeing nothing," while hoping to be rewarded with an apparitional vision.[241] Although Blake explained that these spirits existed primarily in his imagination, the same faculty rendered them quite real to him:

> A Spirit and a Vision are not, as the modern philosophy supposes, a cloudy vapour, or a nothing: they are organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce. He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments… than his perishing and mortal eye can see, does not imagine at all. The painter of this work asserts that all his imaginations appear to him infinitely more perfect and more minutely organized than anything seen by his mortal eye.[242]

From October 1819 to August 1820, Blake produced forty to fifty small-scale pencil sketches of phantom portraits seen in his "visions"—which he claimed sometimes would disappear or look displeased with his interpretation. All are "literal portraits of what Blake's imaginative eye beheld" in his attempts to portray the unseen.[243] The

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[241] Alexander Gilchrist, Life of William Blake, Vol. I. (New York: Phaeton Press, 1969), 300.

[242] Mona Wilson, The Life of William Blake (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948), 270-272. Wilson mentions that in certain people "the imagination may be so stimulated by something actually seen that the percipient temporarily loses the power of discriminating between what he sees and what he imagines," but Blake was usually aware of the difference between his spiritual vision and actual sight.

[243] Gilchrist, 302.

drawings were engraved by John Linnell and published in Varley's Zodiacal Physiognomy (1828). Blake did distinguish between "ghosts" and "spirits"; the former only appeared to "common minds" and to the physical eye, while the latter was a vision seen by the mind's inner eye.[244] However, Gilchrist doubts that Blake took the visionary heads completely seriously; the drawings seem incomplete, and may have been created to humor Varley.

Blake's strangest visionary head portrays the human-insect hybrid Ghost of a Flea (Fig. 2.5), who told Blake that "all fleas were inhabited by the souls of such men as were by nature blood-thirsty to excess, and were therefore providentially confined to the size and form of insects."[245] Even in profile, the flea's vicious spirit captivates the beholder with its intense, piercing gaze. Blake conflates the features of a distorted human face and his own concept of the insect, with jagged teeth, lascivious tongue, and scaly exoskeleton. Perhaps Blake, whose work became more widely known after his death in 1827, influenced Hugo's interest in séances and phantom portraits, since Blake's interior world of portrait sitters somewhat parallels the panorama of souls that Hugo extricated in text and images during the Jersey séances.

Spiritism's macabre and introspective aspects appealed to Romanticists in Germany and France as well. In Germany, psychology, somnambulism, and the supernatural were inextricably linked. In Uwe Henrik Peters's study of German Romantic psychology, he explores the "nocturnal side" of human nature: the primal creative origin which the mentally ill can access in an alternate existence denied to the

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[244] Wilson, 270-272.

[245] Gilchrist, 304. Gilchrist quotes John Varley's A Treatise on Zodiacal Physiognomy (1828).

sane, who can only catch fleeting glimpses of this darker side while asleep and dreaming. The Romantics, seeking an ideal cognitive wholeness, attempted to access this nocturnal side and incorporate its aspects of mesmerism, dreams, psychic powers, madness, and death into their "daytime" experience in order to advance their work.[246]

Although best known as a writer and composer, German visionary E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776-1822) was also an artist and psychiatric theorist intrigued with humanity's nocturnal side. Well versed in contemporary psychiatric literature and its practical application, Hoffmann was particularly drawn to mesmerism, somnambulism, insanity, and dream states; his ideas of "chronic dualism" had a great influence on modern schizophrenia theory.[247] In Hoffmann's fiction, the seamless intrusions of the characters' nocturnal side into their "daytime" world create unforgettable and uncanny interactions between reality and illusion.

In The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr (1819-21), for example, Hoffmann mocks foolish figures constrained by Enlightenment philosophy through the complex character of Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler, an ingenious but tormented musician. Constantly on the verge of creative madness, Kreisler represents the author's concept of the "archetypal Romantic genius" and is a projection of Hoffmann's own artistic temperament.[248] Hoffmann achieved some success as a composer, but frustration regarding his unfulfilled ambitions underlies his alter ego's escalating insanity.

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[246] Uwe Henrik Peters, Studies in German Romantic Psychiatry: Justinus Kerner as a Psychiatric Practitioner, E. T. A. Hoffmann as a Psychiatric Theorist (London: The Institute of Germanic Studies, 1988), 5.

[247] Peters, 13, 15.

[248] Frederick Burwick, Poetic Madness and the Romantic Imagination (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 36.

Hoffmann's grotesque self-reflection through Kreisler generates frightening supernatural tales of the artistic temperament driven to madness. His short stories often contain notoriously grotesque and proto-Surrealist elements, such as the macabre automatons of "Der Sandmann."

The French Romantics, already intrigued by mesmerism, admired Hoffmann's grotesque tales. Hoffmann's friend D.-F. Koreff, a German mesmerist doctor, influenced the mid-century vogue for mesmeric literature in Paris, helping Romantics such as Madame de Staël (1766-1817) turn from Enlightenment philosophy to the nocturnal side of existence.[249] With its explorations into automatism and contact with the darker side of human nature, spiritism and automatism had a major impact on psychologists' "discovery" of the unconscious.

Some psychologists sought to expose spiritism and explain its reported phenomena in terms of legitimate medical theory. In 1854, French chemist Michel-Eugène Chevreul, who previously proposed that the divining rod and pendulum are moved by unconscious thought, attempted to debunk spiritism. His experiments revealed that the séance participants' unconscious muscular movements were responsible for rotating the "turning tables," and he also claimed that "spirit" messages were generated by the medium's unconscious thoughts. Thus, according to Chevreul's research, spiritism may have been little more than an elaborate expression of the participants' unconscious mind and repressed ideas.[250]

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[249] Darnton, 149.

[250] Ellenberger, 313.

Foremost among the personalities that Peters deems the "Romantic doctor-poets and poet-doctors" of nineteenth-century Germany was Justinus Kerner (1786-1862), who sought humane treatment for the mentally ill and enhanced connections between mesmerism and psychology. It was Kerner who collected and preserved Mesmer's writings, and became the doctor's first biographer with the publication of his Franz Anton Mesmer aus Schwaben, Entdecker des thierischen Magnetismus (1856). Kerner also founded one of the first psychological journals, Blätter aus Prevorst; Originalien und Lesefrüchte für Freunde des innern Lebens (Leaves from Prevorst; or, Original Literary Fruits for Lovers of the Inner Life), in 1831. This publication was superseded by the mesmeric journal Magikon: Archiv für Beobachtungen aus dem Gebiete der Geisterkunde und des magnetischen und magischen Lebens (Archives for Observations concerning the Realms of the Spirit-World and of Magnetic Life), which Kerner edited from 1840 to 1853.[251]

Throughout his career, Kerner explored mesmeric healing techniques and spirit contact through the psychic abilities he perceived in his patients. His early work Geschichte zweyer Somnambülen (The History of two Somnambules) of 1824 discusses the "magical healing" techniques he implemented on two young women prone to spontaneous somnambulistic trances.[252] Kerner's observations of the patients' experiences suggested the involvement of unseen spirits from the nocturnal side of existence, including one of the girls' visions of her dead brother in the spirit world.[253] Kerner came to believe that everyone enters a somnambulistic state at death and gains the

[251] Peters, 4.

[252] Crabtree, 198.

[253] Watts, 48.

ability to communicate with departed loved ones; however, those who tap into the nocturnal side during their lifetime could receive a "spiritual guide" who revealed ghostly realms and prophecies.[254]

Wishing to disclose these phenomena to those with "daylight" vision, Kerner published his account of Die Seherin von Prevorst: Eröffnungen über das innere Leben der Menschen und über das Hereinragen einer Geisterwelt in die unsere (The Seeress of Prevorst: Revelations regarding the inner life of man and the way a spirit world projects into our own) in 1829. This work relates the somnambulistic experiences of a woman named Frederika Hauffe whom Kerner began treating in Weinsberg in 1826. Hauffe had withdrawn into a "depressive mesmeric state" for seven years after her beloved did, and she claimed to have visions of the spirit world. While treating her with magnetic cures, Kerner seized the chance to prove the truth of her visions regarding a "nerve spirit"—a sort of supernatural electricity allowing communication between the mind's "day" and "night" phases.[255] In his 1853 publication Die somnambülen Tische; zur Geschichte und Erklärung dieser Erscheinung (Somnambulistic Tales; or, the History and Explanation of that Phenomenon), Kerner attributes popular trends such as the turning tables and spirit contact to this unknown fluid.[256]

Séance phenomena also surrounded the Seeress of Prevorst, such as phantom knocking sounds and a portrait she drew of a female spirit: a sixteenth-century canoness wearing an ancient costume and holding a human heart in her hand. The drawing was

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[254] Crabtree, 198-199.

[255] Peters, 8-9.

[256] Watts, 27-28.

lithographed and mentioned in Kerner's 1829 book about the Seeress.[257] According to Kerner, spirit influences guided the Seeress's hand to create automatic drawings of "sun-spheres" and "life-spheres" that "mysteriously contained in spiritual cipher the history of her own life divided into circles." Although the Seeress could quickly draw perfect circles while acting as a medium for a "spirit" presence, she could not do so while consciously attempting to control drawing instruments.[258]

In later years, his eyesight failing, Kerner turned to aleatory art as a pastime. He experimented with drawing grotesque figures out of inkblots, as would Hugo in exile. Kerner interpreted, or asked others to interpret, designs produced by folding paper over inkblots, usually transforming them into wraithlike figures (Fig. 2.6). These blot-graphs, or Klecksographien, "became a source of poetical inspiration to him, he creating out of them whimsical forms, all manner of figures from the spirit-world, and giving to each a poetic description of a grave or humorous turn, according to the bent of his genius," recalls Watts. In 1857 he collected these designs and related poems into a scrapbook, intending to publish them, but they did not appear in print until his son Theobald Kerner had them reproduced with engraved examples in the illustrated paper Uber Land und Meer in mid-1862.[259]

Theobald Kerner also published a posthumous edition of his father's Klecksographien and related poetry in 1890. In this work, the inkblots that Kerner transforms with pen-strokes into fluttering insects, grotesque phantoms, and skeletal

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[257] Ibid., 69, 85-86.

[258] Ibid., 270-271. Watts compares the Seeress's ability to Vasari's account of Giotto drawing a perfect circle for Pope Benedict IX, suggesting that a supernatural being guided the early Renaissance artist's hand.

[259] Ibid., 44. The Klecksographien were published with a paragraph from Theobald Kerner, with several wood-engravings.

figures reflect spiritism's strong influence and the Romantics' tendency towards the unsettling imagery of the mind's nocturnal side. The book opens with a "memento mori" poem, illustrated by a death's-head moth (Fig. 2.7). Subsequent blots create "Todesboten" and "Hadesbilder," wraithlike figures which assume a demonic aspect in the later "Höllenbilder" images (Fig. 2.8), and fill the final page with dark-winged creatures. Kerner's Klecksographien are acknowledged as the precursor of the modern Rorschach Test, published in 1921 (Fig. 2.9). In Swiss psychoanalyst Hermann Rorschach's method, the patient interprets ten symmetrical inkblots based on how the nebulous images stimulate their memories and associations.[260]

Art historian Jacques de Caso recently has illuminated the career of Théophile Bra (1797-1863), another automatist artist and writer. According to de Caso's book The Drawing Speaks: Théophile Bra, Works 1826-1855, French Romantic sculptor Bra suffered a mystical crisis in the spring of 1826 that triggered intense episodes of automatic writing and drawing for over twenty-five years, producing thousands of bizarre sketches and spiritual narratives from a somnambulistic hand.[261] Bra's instances of his agonizing "rupture from reality" occurred both spontaneously and during artificially-induced trances, and the curvilinear trajectories of ink flows and lines in his encoded drawings reflect this mesmeric influence on his aesthetic sensibilities.[262]

De Caso analyzes one of Bra's figural drawings from about 1840 (Fig. 2.10), which, despite its sculptural anthropomorphism, essentially may represent a diagram of

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[260] Peters, 2.

[261] Jacques De Caso, The Drawing Speaks: Théophile Bra, Works 1826-1855, trans. Erika Naginski (Houston: The Menil Collection, 1997), 21.

[262] Ibid., 24.

Bra's vision of a new divine cosmology and the artist's purpose within. The disproportionate drawing concentrates on the male figure's arms—"les bras"—which envelop the faint image of a soul and an arrangement of spheres of wisdom around a suspended heart, indicating Bra's conviction of his name's sacred significance and himself as an extension of the divine.[263] The figure's coarse hands seem to levitate a sphere or eye—a recurring image in Bra's and other mesmeric imagery—that replaces the figure's genitals as the origin of creativity and knowledge.

Bra's archive of autobiographical drawings and notes represent his attempt to comprehend what he considered a mandated spiritual quest, its prophetic purpose glimpsed in recurring hallucinations.[264] I interpret one untitled example from this archive, with text beginning "unite catholicité…" (Fig. 2.11), as an Ossian-esque poet or prophet playing an elaborate one-stringed lyre decorated with animal heads and swirling, heart-shaped, and pointed designs. The poet's windblown hair and widened gaze give the impression that he sits on the cliff of a romantic seascape, hallucinating or receiving messages from an intangible source while experiencing a trance-like state. Bra has scrawled these messages across the drawing, incorporating his mystical text into the design. In addition to his enlarged eye, the ponderous figure's agitated drapery, the cosmic energy radiating from his back, and the surrounding ethereal mist indicate that he represents a supernatural personage.

Most typical of Bra's archive are drawings and reworked inkblots in which the artist rejects mimesis in favor of depicting fantastical creatures, ghoulish faces, and

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[263] Ibid., 31.

[264] Ibid., 24.

abstract shapes, usually commingled with dense lines of text. In one composition across two facing pages (Fig. 2.12), Bra composed several poetic verses around a dome-shaped head with luminous eyes that radiate like two suns within a spiritual realm. Around the drawing, Bra writes that he intended the anguished expression to depict the "torment of the excitation of man's brain," and "two eyes, in the middle of the undulations of the light of a resplendent sun, setting down unceasingly capital truths and translating them by means of drawing, in order to render them perceptible."[265] Again, Bra attempts to convert fleeting imagery and cosmic messages into a visual guide, an autobiography involving his hallucinations.

The artist's mystical compulsions extended to his sculptural designs: responding to a commission for a large statue of a dying Christ in mid-1826, Bra modeled the figure after his own body and facial features, and added a radiating corona around the crown of thorns.[266] By incorporating himself into a mortal icon of divinity, it seems to me that Bra intended to signify the union of the self with the infinite through the spiritual enlightenment he sensed within himself after his psychological crisis.

Spiritism, psychology, and animal magnetism became a significant part of Bra's life from the 1820s onward. In 1826 he met and corresponded with psychiatrist Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol at the Salpêtrière regarding his mystical drawings, although he insisted on his sanity, and later that year he sculpted a plaster bust of Esquirol's

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[265] Ibid., n.p., transcribed by De Caso from Plate 30. "Le supplice de l'énervation du cerveau de l'homme… L'énergie, qu'on se représente deux yeux, au milieu des ondulations de la lumière d'un soleil resplendissant, fixant incesssamment des verities capitales et les traduisant au moyen du dessin, afin de les rendre saisissables."

[266] Ibid., 27. Bra's Christ figure was exhibited at the Salon of 1827, but religious sculpture was generally overlooked by critics that year.

mentor, Philippe Pinel, for the École de Médecine de Paris.[267] His notes describe somnambulistic sessions with magnétiseurs, during which he believed to experience automatist sensations, such as the ability to draw the figure of God and other divine pictures.[268] Furthermore, his second and third wives, Christovalina Favières and Rosina Blum-Winsheim, purportedly were somnambulists themselves.[269]

Bra's tragic life and mental deterioration took place under the public eye, yet De Caso insists that Bra's related drawings were hidden during his lifetime, and thus could not have played a role in the use of automatism or "spirit" drawings and messages during the Romantic age.[270] However, his crisis-induced creations remain a significant example of the intersection between nineteenth-century art and mesmeric psychological theory. Despite the inaccessibility of Bra's mystical archive for inspiration, Victor Hugo's drawings and "spirit" messages during his years in exile imply a similar psychological crisis or somnambulistic absorption after suffering an intense personal tragedy.

French novelist Delphine de Girardin introduced the Hugo family to the turning tables in 1853, early in his years of political exile (1852-1870) on the Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey. Hugo initially acted disinterested in the séances, but eventually participated and read works concerning the spiritualist strain of mesmerism such as Baron Dupotet's La Magie dévoilée, ou Principes de science occulte (1852) and the

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[267] Théophile Bra, L'Évangile rouge, ed. Jacques de Caso (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 295.

[268] Ibid., 158.

[269] Bra married Christovalina in March 1829; she died in June of the same year. He and Rosina were married in 1830 and separated in 1843.

[270] Ibid., 18. Bra's physical illness, the death of his first two wives, and his children's custody trial contributed to his deteriorating mental health. Psychiatrist Étienne-Jean Georget published his conclusions concerning Bra's insanity in 1827.

anonymously published Des esprits et de leurs manifestations fluidiques (1852).[271] Like Blake, Hugo's imagination summoned specific historical personalities. However, Hugo created an elaborate cosmology of punished souls confined to animals, plants, and stones, and interpreted these spirits' words and ideas rather than visualizing their physical features. In Hugo's séances, the invisible "spirits" guided by Hugo's hand produced drawings using a pencil attached to the leg of a small table, which the séance participants held atop a larger table.

Hugo's séance messages became notorious contributions to a much wider trend of literary works and revelations dictated by "spirits." The astronomer Flammarion published messages he claimed to receive from the celebrated dead, including Galileo, and other celebrated French Romantics experimented with spiritism. Like Hugo, playwright Victorien Sardou created a phantom universe and drew "spirit"-transmitted images such as scenes of Mozart, Zoroaster, and Elijah's homes on the planet Jupiter.[272] The séances conducted during the Hugo family's exile on Jersey took place almost daily in their home, Marine-Terrace, from late 1853 through 1855. Hugo, his wife Adèle, and his sons Charles and Victor-François were usually in attendance. Some of Hugo's friends, including journalist and medium Delphine de Girardin, writer Théophile Guérin, and journalist Auguste Vacquerie, were present at certain séances.

Auguste Vacquerie was the brother of Charles Vacquerie, who married Hugo's favorite daughter, Léopoldine, in 1842. Less than a year after their wedding, Charles and Léopoldine, who was three months pregnant, drowned in a boating accident. Hugo never

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[271] Sharp, 32.

[272] Ellenberger, 163.

fully recovered from this tragedy, the most devastating event of his life. Léopoldine's constant presence in his memory manifested itself in her appearance as the first spirit to contact the séance group. Furthermore, "spirit contact" with Léopoldine coincided with the first time Hugo agreed to join the ongoing séances conducted by his family and guests on September 11, 1853. The message of this brief conversation with his lost daughter was the necessity of suffering for "l'autre monde" ("the other world").[273] Hugo immediately became an enthusiastic participant in the séance tables.

In the following years, Charles Hugo usually acted as the medium because he was believed to be the most talented psychic of the group, but the séance messages were undeniably Hugo's.[274] In his study of Hugo's spiritism, French doctor Jean de Mutigny questions the practicality of transmitting complex messages through table-tapping, and the state of Hugo's mental health; he suggests that Hugo temporarily suffered from a rare condition called fantastical paraphrenia, which causes grandiose fantasies, hallucinations, paranoia, and belief in a mandated cosmic mission.[275] The messages were conducted through a small, round table with a single triple-clawed leg placed on top of a larger square table. After the "spirit" messages were transmitted, Hugo transcribed most of them to paper, although sometimes Charles wrote the messages in his father's absence from some séances.

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[273] Hugo, Conversations with Eternity, 27. In Victor Hugo, "Procès-verbaux des séances des tables parlantes à Jersey," Oeuvres complètes, Book IX, Vol. 2, 1187.

[274] Graham Robb, Victor Hugo (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998), 333.

[275] Jean de Mutigny, Victor Hugo et le spiritisme (Paris: Fernand Nathan, 1981), 81-82.

The séance productions originated in Hugo's imagination, affected by his situations of tragic loss and exile in a bleak and haunting environment.[276] In addition to connecting him with his deceased daughter Léopoldine, the tables gave him access to other human and animal personalities of historical or religious significance. Several of these specters produced "spirit" drawings, and he was able to contact intangible entities such as Death, the Shadow of the Sepulcher, Drama, Tragedy, Poetry, the Idea, the Wind of the Sea, and the Ocean—concepts associated with the Romantic interest in mysterious intuition and tumultuous natural forces. The messages relate an entire clandestine universe in which the souls of humans, animals, plants, and minerals exist within different spheres of divine punishment. Each soul hopes to move upward into the next sphere, or fears descending into the lower one—essentially a "ladder of beings" that extends from God to the abyss.[277]

The content and language of the séance messages resulting in mediumistic automatic writing and image-making can be understood as the channeling of the poet's creative mind. The most powerful of the spirits he created was the Shadow of the Sepulcher, which emerged at the next séance held after contacting Léopoldine. This spirit presented itself as the angel of death, wishing to instruct the living to believe in the unknown. "Use your body to search out your soul," ordered the Shadow. "You hold the key to a door that has been closed."[278] Seeking the fulfillment beyond this metaphorical

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[276] Gustave Simon, ed., Chez Victor Hugo: Les tables tournantes de Jersey, Procès-verbaux des séances (Paris: Louis Conard, 1923), 9-15. Simon agrees that Hugo was the main authority at the séance tables (replaced by his son Charles in Hugo's absence).

[277] Hugo, Conversations with Eternity, 61-62.

[278] Ibid., 31-32. In Hugo, Oeuvres complètes, Book IX, Vol. 2, 1200. "Use ton corps à chercher ton âme… Tu as la clef d'une porte du fermé." This séance took place the evening of September 13, 1853.

door, Hugo's experience with the "other world" connected him to an unknown realm rather than a paranormal one. The Shadow of the Sepulcher told Hugo that those in the physical world are "only wearing glasses," suggesting that the concept of optical vision becomes irrelevant in the afterlife.[279]

Surrounded by the ocean, perhaps Hugo came to recognize aspects of himself in this constant reminder of nature's forceful, unfathomable energies. Numerous drawings of the ocean emphasize the destructive power of storms, and Hugo illustrated his 1866 novel Les Travailleurs de la Mer (Toilers of the Sea) with ominous images of crashing waves and sea creatures, including an inkblot octopus bearing Hugo's initials within the shape of its tentacles (Fig. 2.13.).

On April 22, 1854, the spirit of the Ocean itself began to speak through the poet at the séance tables. Hugo requested a musical composition from the Ocean, which the spirit attempted, but the notes were nonsensical when transcribed. The next day, Hugo asked the Ocean how to decipher the music. Yet the "spirit" furiously lashed out at the séance group, criticizing the inadequacy of human musicians and instruments, and demanding that all the sounds of nature be combined into its thundering noise and played on a piano with "only two keys, a white and a black, day and night, the day full of birds, the night full of souls."[280]

The Ocean's grandiose fluidity of speech corresponds to Hugo's literary style; he apparently channeled no less an entity than the ocean itself to express his creative alter

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[279] Ibid, 32. "Sommes-nous sûrs de te voir après la mort?" Hugo asked the "spirit," which responded: "Tu n'as que des lunettes."

[280] Ibid., 136. In Hugo, Oeuvres complètes, Book IX, Vol. 2, 1355. "Le piano qu'il faudrait ne pourrait pas entrer dans votre maison. Il n'a que deux touches, une blanche et une noire, le jour et la nuit; le jour plein d'oiseaux, la nuit pleine d'âmes."

ego or, as some would maintain, his unconscious. He seems to have been frustrated with humanity's failure to recognize the profound intensity of his thought, and, judging by the Ocean's occasional faltering speech and subsequent anger, with his own inability to express himself completely in a confined environment.

On September 19, 1854, Hugo channeled the personality of "Death," an entity through which he explained the double life of the creative genius: the artist who labors to create during the day, and the phantom self who explores dreams and the afterworld during sleep. Hugo realized that geniuses convey the living, terrestrial world through their conscious work, but "into the phantom work they pour that other, celestial world."[281] Hugo's manifestation of Death enticed him to merge with the shadows and storms of nature and be resurrected by night to create his ideal phantom work. However, such fleeting experiences were frustrating: "How quickly they pass, these phantom-ideas! They enter the brain, glitter, terrify and disappear; the eye of the specter-writer catches sight of them hovering there by the light of the phosphorescent whirlwinds of the black spaces of immensity."[282] The ephemeral nature of these phantom ideas perhaps explains the aggravation Hugo expressed through "the Ocean," yet automatic writing in the guise of these séance "spirits" allowed him to grasp them while connecting to hidden psychic mechanisms.

On September 23, 1854, Death requested of Hugo to "make your phantom work come alive; make it complete; compose it with every philter of mystery" until the earth

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[281] Ibid., 169. In Hugo, Oeuvres complètes, Book IX, Vol. 2, 1433. "Dans l'oeuvre du vivant, il jette l'autre monde terrestre; dans l'oeuvre du fantôme il verse l'autre monde celeste."

[282] Ibid., 170-171. In Hugo, Oeuvres complètes, Book IX, Vol. 2, 1433. "Commes elles passent vite les idées-fantômes! Elles entrent dans le cerveau, brillent, épouvantent et disparaissent. L'oeil de l'écrivain-spectre les regarde planer par tourbillons phosphorescents dans les espaces noirs de l'immensité."

and the wind marvel at its tumult and greatness.[283] Death returned a few days later and requested of Hugo to publish his posthumous works at twenty-year intervals in order to release into the world "unknown things which will have had time to ripen in the grave." Death explain that although Christ was resurrected only once, at his deathbed Hugo should tell the next generation, "you will awaken me in 1920, you will awaken me in 1940," and so on until the year 2000.[284] Hugo, preoccupied with death after the loss of his daughter, was seeking immortality through his work. He did not exactly follow Death's instructions—the séance transcripts remained unpublished until 1923—yet the Surrealist movement, which resurrected Hugo's notion of automatic drawing, began to coalesce around 1920.

Experiencing disillusionment and following his doctor's advice, Hugo and his companions ceased conducting séances in 1855. The "spirit" visitors were giving Hugo insomnia, and his family and friends were weary of the morbid atmosphere and disappointed that none of the phantom predictions had come true. However, spiritist overtones remained present in his work.[285] His drawings became more automatic and experimental, and he added the six-hundred-verse poem dictated by the "Shadow of the

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[283] Ibid., 176. In Hugo, Oeuvres complètes, Book IX, Vol. 2, 1437. "Cependant, fais vivant ton oeuvre de fantôme; fais-la complète, compose-la de tous les philtres du mystère."

[284] Ibid., 178-179. This séance was held on September 29, 1854. In Hugo, Oeuvres complètes, Book IX, Vol. 2, 1433. "Death" addressed Hugo directly: "Toi, que le tien soit vivant; qu'à de certains intervalles il se mette à parler à la postérité et à lui dire des choses inconnues, et qui auront eu le temps de mûrir dans la terre!... "Jésus-Christ n'a ressuscité qu'une fois; toi tu peux emplir ta tombe de resurrections; tu peux, si mon conseil te semble bon, avoir une mort inouïe; tu dirais en mourant: vous me réveillerez en dix-neuf cent vingt, vous me réveillerez en dix-neuf cent quarante, vous me réveillerez en dix-neuf cent soixante, vous me réveillerez en dix-neuf cent quatrevingts, vous me réveillerez en l'an deux mille."

[285] Robb, 339.

Sepulcher" to Les Contemplations: Ce que dit la bouche d'ombre (1854), which addresses the séance "spirits" and their messages.[286]

Darnton considers Hugo's poetry the apex of mesmerism's influence on spiritist literature, with its strains of

> transmigrating souls, their hierarchy of invisible spirits, the primitive religions, and the other elements of spiritism. Mesmerism led Hugo beyond science to a vision of 'l'harmonie universelle,' where sun, moon, and stars spun silently in an ocean of fluid. Hugo called it the "vital fluid," the essence of life and of the afterlife; for mesmerism brought him into the supernatural, the world that he longed to enter, not in order to satisfy metaphysical curiosity, but to regain contact with Léopoldine.[287]

Yet Hugo maintained that the "spirit" messages were genuine. In the first edition of his poem "To the Lion of Androcles," which he claimed was dictated by that spirit, Hugo published a description of the séance process as one in which "tappings and stanzas emerge from the obscurity… [N]ever did I mix in with my lines a single line emanating from this mystery, nor with my ideas a single one of those ideas. I always religiously left them to the Unknown, which was their unique author... The work of the human brain must remain apart from, and never borrow from, these phenomena."[288]

However, although Hugo seemed to believe he was transcribing authoritative spirit messages, the writing style is unmistakably his own. Whether he genuinely believed in the séance spirits or not remains unclear. Luc Sante suggests that Hugo was only half convinced in the truth of the phenomena, and was "sufficiently self-aware to

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[286] Discussed in Luc Sante, "The Octopus Bearing the Initials V.H," in Shadows of a Hand: The Drawings of Victor Hugo (London: Merrell Holberton Publishers Ltd., 1998), 12.

[287] Darnton, 157.

[288] Hugo, Conversations with Eternity, 129. The poem, which criticizes the decadence of modern Paris (in the guise of ancient Rome) appeared in The Legend of the Centuries in September 1859.

have known that… the occult folderol was only cosmetic. He had discovered a means of overriding conscious control of his verse."[289]

In my interpretation of Hugo's "spirit" messages, the products of his séances appear to be a mediumistic form of automatic writing and drawing, in which he associates himself with "spirit" personalities. The séances may be a pre-Freudian example of ideal ego formation in an alternate personality, one in which Hugo recognized himself in something he had not been and could not be, like Death or the Ocean. He projected himself onto these "spirits" in a state of need and desire, yet remained fixated on himself, experiencing a generative force of ideas from the "other side."

In particular, Hugo's "spirit" drawings represent an enigmatic phenomenon in the poet's visual oeuvre: performing experiments in automatism to seek the obscure, chaotic side of the human soul and to comprehend the infinite. The convulsive, linear style of these pencil sketches recalls Hugo's consciously-created line drawings of human, animal, and ghostly caricatures, in which he seemed to draw jagged lines or create stains on a page, and then added the grotesque features that emerged from his imagination.

Perhaps the experience of exile on Jersey revealed Hugo to himself; Jacqueline Lafargue considers 1852-55 the years of his "most sublime inspiration," when he was introspectively creating experimental abstract art with various media.[290] In contrast, the séance drawings reveal more macabre and mysterious content based on the table's participants, the spirits they claimed to contact, and Hugo's descent into his own mind—a

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[289] Sante, 11, 26.

[290] Jacqueline Lafargue, Victor Hugo: dessins et lavis (Paris: Éditions Hervas, 1983), 13.

process that presumably leads to exchanging controlled artistic ability for spontaneous, dreamlike imagery.[291]

One of the most prolific spirit personalities was the Lion of Androcles, who dictated poems and challenged Hugo to poetry duels. The lion had reached the next rung on the "ladder of being" in the hierarchy of Hugo's séance universe by refusing to devour the condemned Androcles, who once removed a thorn from the lion's paw. On April 4, 1854, the lion prophesized to the Hugo family, Vacquerie, and Guérin that a comet was coming: "The star with a tail creeps through the celestial grave. The comet is the serpent that appears in those times when humanity is about to reopen the tombs of the dead. Viper on the earth, boa in the sky."[292] When Hugo requested exact details about comets and their paths; the lion replied, "Give me a pencil."

The séance group located a smaller table, placed it on top of the larger one, and attached a pencil to one of its three legs. Observing the original drawings in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France reveals that the table legs were about three inches apart, judging by the indentations on the heavy paper (measuring 29 x 42 cm) that was placed underneath; the indentations also reveal the predominantly circular or haphazard motion used to create the images, probably the easiest method for controlling the table. Some of the pencil lines were drawn with significantly more pressure than others, in the case of heavy outlines or words, which appear in Latin and French and sometimes obscure the pictures.

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[291] Luc Sante, "The Octopus Bearing the Initials V.H," in Shadows of a Hand: The Drawings of Victor Hugo (London: Merrell Holberton Publishers Ltd., 1998), 26.

[292] Hugo, Conversations with Eternity, 139. In Hugo, Oeuvres complètes, Book IX, Vol. 2, 1348. "L'astre à queue rampe dans la tombe celeste. La comète est le serpent qui paraît dans les moments où l'humanité va ouvrir les sépulcres. Vipère sur la terre, boa dans le ciel… Donne-moi un crayon."

Hugo's first recorded "spirit" drawing from April 1854 (Fig. 2.14) presents a diagram of comets, with a rough circle, labeled "pater" with radiating lines, signifying the star of origin. Four longer, winding lines connect to smaller circles, representing the comet heads. Wavy lines along the paths desceding from the heads create the comets' tails. Under the most detailed comet, near the center of the drawing, the moving table wrote "semen astrorum," or "seed of the stars."

Considering these details, Marie-Laure Prévost proposes that the comet drawing illustrates Hugo's family organization, with himself, "pater," as the source and the comets as his family members (perhaps his wife and their surviving children). Prévost also suggests that the tentacle-like forms in this "spirit" sketch foreshadow Hugo's aforementioned Les Travailleurs de la Mer illustration, Pieuvre avec les initiales V.H. (Octopus with the Initials V.H.) (1866).[293] Her interpretation seems likely, yet I would add that the composition of this drawing, with its meandering lines and coarse, simplified shapes, represents Hugo's initial experimentation with automatic drawing techniques.

Next, Hugo asked the lion to draw a self portrait. The table produced a medallion-like image of a regal, winged lion standing on a platform that reads CI GIT HOMO SALVVS, all inscribed in a circle, closely resembling the symbolic lion of St. Mark.[294] Next Adèle Hugo asked the spirit to draw her thoughts. The resulting image shows a square grave topped with a cross (or an altar in an apse) connected to a rough series of concentric circles (or an eye) with the torso and head of a woman in the center,

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[293] Prévost, 2004, 157.

[294] Hugo's earlier sketchbooks reveal that he had practiced drawing lions, including the lion statue at Waterloo, various lion heads and faces, and a lion resting its head on its paws. These images are located at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, n.a.f. 13452.

her face scribbled out. Adèle took this as a portrait of her daughter Léopoldine, of whom she had been thinking.

One of the most intriguing séance drawings is labeled "SPIRITVS MALVS" (evil spirit) in large letters (Fig. 2.15).[295] In my observation, the drawing depicts a grotesque landscape beneath a ghoulish sun; the scene is framed by two barren trees anthropomorphized by skulls emerging from the branches. The skulls embedded in the grassy ground between the trees may be the "seeds" from which grow the four strange skeletal plants. Some yield only skulls; others, the skull, spine, and ribcage, and one has sprouted up to its leg bones. A winged, horned demon with a phallic protrusion from its head crouches in the center of the scene and oversees the plants, which perhaps contain punished souls reincarnated as plants, far down the ladder of being. A close examination of this drawing reveals eraser marks on the demon's wings, indicating that Hugo later changed or added to the drawing. Although some of the séance pictures are cruder than others, the level of detail in certain images suggests that Hugo embellished them afterwards.

The drawings, for which I offer my personal interpretations in the following paragraphs, became more complex and mystifying in following séances. One image (Fig. 2.16) shows a reclining skeleton in a sepulcher reaching up towards a bird—probably a dove or owl—whose wing is attached to a bat outside the tomb, which in turn is connected to one of the coarsely drawn stars above. Free-flowing curved lines form the trees and earth surrounding the composition. At the right, a winged angel inserts an

[295] Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Album spirite, n.a.f. 13353, fol. 4. The French script upside-down along the bottom appears to read, "La bouche qui s'ouvre trop fait fermer les yeux," perhaps a reference to the spirit personality Hugo called the "Shadow of the Sepulcher" ("la bouche d'ombre").

enormous key into the tomb, perhaps to release the soul inside that seems to strive for the heavens.[296]

Another complicated picture (Fig. 2.17) depicts a triple-faced, long-limbed human figure, probably male, sitting astride a turkey. The figure in turn draws five miniscule stick figures with a quill on a piece of paper pressed against its forehead—a gesture reminiscent of prophetic mediums' writing techniques. A torn heart obscures its face and two teardrop-shaped forms with evil faces hang from its ears. The significance of this drawing remains a mystery, although it is interesting to note that Hugo uses one mediumistic technique—automatic drawing—to illustrate another. Furthermore, the fine details in this drawing, especially the two profiles that form the figure's ears, provide another example of post-séance altering of the images.[297]

The first page in Hugo's séance sketchbook at the Bibliothèque Nationale, N.A.F. 13353, provides a multimedia example of his automatism (Fig. 2.18). The composition resembles a bacchanalian scene in pencil and black wash, and appears to depict three satyr-like figures sexually interacting with a rocky landscape. Two other strange characters with grotesque bodies sit below a lively double-headed skull tree, while a winged, leonine female creature, perhaps a sphinx, drawn in jagged lines crouches on the far right. The words "et un pinceau" are written on the back of the page, which may indicate that the controlling "spirit" requested a brush as well as a pencil.[298]

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[296] Ibid., fol. 11.

[297] Ibid., fol. 17. According to Geneviève Picon and Réjane Bargiel, eds., Victor Hugo: Dessins, cat. no. 96 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1985), 233, the writing reads "j'ai peint l'homme omnia sunt in hoc monstro/je ne peux pas/prodige/deux superhommes" (or "Deus superhomines").

[298] Ibid., fol. 1. Discussed in Picon and Bargiel, cat. no. 87, 232.

Alternatively, the text may suggest that Hugo later refined this drawing, wishing to improve upon the drawing beyond the "spirit's" ability while using the turning table.

Hugo's ethereal art and visionary séance experiences were perhaps inspired by his surroundings on the islands of Guernsey and Jersey, locations with distinctive scenery conducive to his temperament. The hallucinatory environment of fierce seas, gloomy skies, and rugged terrain led Hugo to neglect external reality to capture what Pierre Georgel describes as "the ebb and flow of an imaginary world in which shapes could form and dissolve in an instant" in the islands' atmosphere. Hugo's travel drawings, created during trips to the continent each summer from 1861-1870, also affected his experimental work. Hugo observed "picturesque curiosities" such as architectural details, strange rock formations, and rare animals while traveling, and upon returning to Guernsey his intricate drawings of these subjects inspired him to give "new vigour to his imaginary drawings" and blotting experiments.[299]

In an 1856 letter to poet Franz Stevens, Hugo wrote, "I inhabit this immense dream of the ocean and slowly I become a sleepwalker of the sea,"[300] indicating the hypnotic power of the ocean to efface the boundary between Hugo's perceptions of dream and reality. I believe that Hugo's encounters with a dreamlike world and somnambulistic state relate to the spirit world with which he claimed to communicate during séances. According to the séance transcripts, some of the "spirits" fade almost as soon as they make contact, while others linger to deliver elaborate messages and

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[299] Pierre Georgel, Drawings by Victor Hugo (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1974), Chapter III, n.p.

[300] Graham Robb, Victor Hugo (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998), 330. "J'habite dans cet immense rêve de l'océan, je deviens peu à peu un somnambule de la mer, et, devant tous ces prodigieux spectacles et toute cette énorme pensée vivante où je m'abîme, je finis par ne plus être qu'une espèce de témoin de Dieu."

drawings; their earthly endurance seems dependent on Hugo's perceived connection to the deceased individual or mythic entity. Thus, I propose that the séances provide a conduit for Hugo's automatist writing and drawing by channeling his imagination through alternate personalities.

Some of Hugo's earlier line drawings and caricatures foreshadow the "spirit"-generated drawings of 1855-56. Collaborative drawings by Hugo and his children, now in the collection of the Maison de Victor Hugo, reveal Hugo's predisposition for a naïve, childlike art style. Many of these drawings are similar to an 1831 example by Hugo and his daughter Léopoldine (Fig. 2.19). Hugo's caricatures are recognizable in the lower left, and both father and daughter have contributed to the humorous array of figures parading around the page. Léopoldine has imitated Hugo's sketches of two figures in various poses: a young woman in a gown with puffed sleeves, and a grotesque hunchback—probably Quasimodo from Hugo's novel Notre-Dame de Paris, soon to be published in March of that year.

Pierre Georgel explains such drawings as Hugo's attempts to convey a universal art style, one without concern for social class or academic restrictions, and that lingers "without rupture between innocence and experience."[301] Georgel offers a compelling interpretation, considering Hugo's interest in humanism and social causes. Yet I would expand this theory to include the possibility that, in the drawings Hugo completes with his children, he attempts to release control of rational thought and explore the linear style of automatic drawing. In addition, Hugo annotates the drawing with his daughter's name

[301] Pierre Georgel, "Portrait de l'artiste en griffonneur," in Madeleine Blondel and Pierre Georgel, eds., Victor Hugo et les images (Dijon: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1989), 128-129. In Georgel's words, "un art sans classes et sans interdits, mais aussi sans rupture entre l'innocence et l'expérience, comme s'il entrevoyait l'âge futur."

("Didine") and the date, combining image and text as he later would within his other caricatures and the "spirit" drawings.

Around 1832, Hugo drew a political cartoon of a grotesque male character, "Pista," whose figure is reduced to an elongated head atop a thick pair of legs (Fig. 2.20). "Pista" encounters other sketchily drawn figures, men and women formed from a few lines that suggest their appearance and environment.[302] Hugo also drew caricatures of political figures that attempted to recreate the subjects' appearance and personality using quick, sketchy lines, and he invented hybrid creatures in a similar style.[303] Like the collaborate drawings with his children, these hastily rendered images are often peculiar in subject and inventive in both human and animal representations, anticipating the contour-line faces and figures in Hugo's séance drawings.[304]

I speculate that he also may have esteemed the fantasy worlds of French caricaturist J. J. Grandville, who illustrated Un Autre Monde (1844) with a bizarre menagerie of characters, anthropomorphic plants, celestial landscapes, and intriguing transformations. One well-known example is Les métamorphoses du sommeil, suggesting a dream in which inanimate objects morph into an apparitional woman.

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[302] Ségolène Le Men, "Victor Hugo et la caricature: la 'fantasmagorie farce' d'un écrivain-dessinateur," L'Oeil de Victor Hugo (Paris: Éditions des Cendres, 2004), 86.

[303] Le Men, 92.

[304] Georgel, 1974, Chapter IV, n.p. Also Robb, 390-391, and Christopher W. Thompson, Victor Hugo and the Graphic Arts (1820-1833) (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1970), 64-125, relate Hugo's pictorial sources. His linear quality, emphasis on light and shadow, and dramatic subjects reveal his admiration for etchings by Old Masters such as Dürer, Rembrandt, Callot, Piranesi, and Goya. Furthermore, Hugo's friends in Paris, including Baudelaire, kept him updated regarding contemporary artists such as Doré, Méryon, Bracquemond, and Daumier. Inspired by their cityscapes, literary illustrations, and satirical figures, and by his travels around Europe every summer after 1861, Hugo continued to draw caricatures and imaginative architectural scenes.

Grandville's images such as an interplanetary bridge (Fig. 2.21) from Un Autre Monde may have played a role in Hugo's imaginings of otherworldly realms and creatures in the séance messages.[305] In this illustration, a smoking man leisurely strides from one planet to another on the graceful arc of a bridge illuminated by gaslight. Two eclipsed moons and two other celestial bodies loom in the foreground, the latter possibly radiating with the cosmos' magnetic energy. One of the central planets appears to have an observation deck around its circumference. As in dreams, accurate scale and rational thought are irrelevant in Grandville's universe.

Another example of Grandville's drawings, Le but de ce steeple-chase (Fig. 2.22) from Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux (1842), depicts a comical yet unsettling procession of corkscrew-tailed creatures with gaping maws, enormous eyes, and wild antennae that menace a whimsical garden of multiple-headed anthropomorphic flowers or sea coral—possibly an amalgamation of terrestrial and aquatic life. These tentacled monsters are not unlike Hugo's octopus preternaturally intelligent octopus; furthermore, the childlike vegetation resembles the plants in Hugo's "SPIRITVS MALVS" séance drawing, although Hugo topped his heart-shaped buds with human skulls signifying evil spirits.

Fin-de-siècle spiritists retained the trancelike aspects of mesmerism in their attempts to manipulate invisible forces and ghostly presences. In France, scientific developments in medicine, astronomy, and photography from 1880 to 1900 generated intense interest in how the invisible world of the soul and the unconscious mind affects the visible world. Sensational occult literature inspired a communal fear of being forced

[305] J. J. Grandville, Bizarreries and Fantasies of Grandville (New York: Dover Publications, 1974).

into irrational actions, seduction, or committing crimes while under hypnosis, while psychologists investigated new theories of automatism and the unconscious.[306]

In fact, Charcot and Bernheim's experimentation with hysteria and hypnosis was partially driven by a scientific interest in paranormal and spiritist phenomena. Charcot himself was a prolific artist throughout his life. Late in his life he installed an art studio in his home, and he drew everything from still lifes and landscapes to his patients' physical abnormalities to humorous caricatures of his patients, his colleagues, and himself. One of his students, Henry Meige, recalls a drawing Charcot created while under the influence of hashish:

> The entire page was covered with drawings: prodigious dragons, grimacing monsters, incoherent personages who were superimposed on each other, and who were intertwined and twisted in a fabulous whirlpool.[307]

These drawings, which contain a palimpsest of looping scripts, anthropomorphic animals, male figures with leering faces, and distorted architecture, resemble the horror vacui compositions of Bra's spiritual crisis. By releasing control of his conscious mind, Charcot was able to recreate the somnambulistic mindset necessary to create complex automatist designs and invent grotesque creatures comparable to those of Hugo's and Bra's mystical drawings.

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[306] Barbara Larson, The Dark Side of Nature: Science, Society, and the Fantastic in the Work of Odilon Redon (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 151.

[307] Georges Guillain, J.-M. Charcot, 1825-1893: Sa vie, son oeuvre (Paris: Masson, 1955), 27. Meige writes: "Bientôt, sous l'influence du narcotique, un tumulte de visions fantasmagoriques traversa son esprit. Il se met à écrire en caractères de plus en plus étranges et difficiles à démêler…La page entière se couvre de dessins: dragons monstrueux, chimères grimaçantes, personnages incohérents qui se superposent et s'enchevêtrent dans un tourbillon fabuleux rappelant les conceptions apocalyptiques de Van Bosch et de Jacques Callot." Translated in Hustvedt, 9. Many of Charcot's drawings are now in the collection of the Bibliothèque Charcot at the Hôpital de la Salpêtrière.

Furthermore, spiritist mediums' somnambulistic behavior and their alleged receptiveness to messages from the deceased paralleled the hypnotic state of falling under the hypnotist's suggestive commands.[308] Furthermore, nineteenth-century experiments with hypnotism expose supernatural undercurrents in psychological research of the era: the hysteria patient "was not only a degenerate wretch; he or she was also gifted with supernormal powers to see and responds to a marvelous reality beyond the perception of the doctor," writes Anne Harrington in her study of fin-de-siècle neo-mesmerism.[309]

One of Charcot's "star" patients, Blanche Wittmann, displayed supersensory abilities while under hypnosis. For instance, Wittmann gained the abilities to hear distant conversations occurring elsewhere in the building, to "see" and describe an invisible portrait on a blank card, and then to locate the "portrait" within a deck of identical blank cards. She kept and admired these "portraits," including one of Charcot. However, she claimed that the image faded over time, stating that it must have been "a photograph of poor quality." Charcot did not attribute these phenomena to supernatural abilities, but rather he considered them extraordinary symptoms of hysteria.[310]

To some observers, Charcot himself seemed to possess superhuman abilities. His assistant and successor Pierre Marie described him as "having a second sight" that allowed him to diagnose patients by psychic ability alone. Even one of Charcot's rivals, such as Swedish psychiatrist Axel Munthe, witnessed the neurologist's uncanny

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[308] Jean Pierrot, The Decadent Imagination, 1880-1900, trans. Derek Coltman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 98-99.

[309] Anne Harrington, "Hysteria, hypnosis, and the lure of the invisible: the rise of neo-mesmerism in fin-de-siècle French psychiatry," in The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry, Vol. III, eds. W. F. Bynum, Roy Porter, and Michael Shepherd (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 240.

[310] Asti Hustvedt, Medical Muses: Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century Paris (New York and London: Norton & Company, 2011), 116-118.

diagnostic aptitude, which he described as reaching "straight to the root of the evil, often apparently after a rapid glance at the patient from his cold eagle eyes."[311] Freud himself deemed Charcot "a visuel, a seer"—a reputation Charcot, as the heir of Mesmer's piercing gaze, deliberately cultivated.[312]

Swiss psychologist Theodore Flournoy's 1911 study Esprits et Médiums: Mélanges de Métapsychique et de Psychologie (Spiritism and Psychology) discredits the "fallacy" of spiritism—yet acknowledges the existence of "telepathy, clairvoyance, telekinesis, materialization, and other supernormal phenomena which are not as yet recognized by official science."[313] To conduct a study of alleged mediums, Flournoy widely distributed a questionnaire inquiring into their psychic faculties, séance experiences, and their physical and mental health.[314] After further examining the case of one respondent, Eusapia Palladino (who could even produce clay impressions of "spirit" faces), Flournoy concluded that the medium

> influences her spectators one and all by her hypnotic power… [B]y the action of her "magnetism" on the other sitters she makes passive subjects of them, and they perceive no more than she wishes them to perceive.[315]

Flournoy's work, which also explains Hugo's "spirit" messages and poetry as a product of the writer's subconscious mind,[316] indicates how psychological studies of hypnotism maintained a supernatural strain as well as references to Mesmer.

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[311] Axel Munthe, The Story of San Michele (London: Murray, 1936), 205, in A. R. G. Owen, Hysteria, Hypnosis and Healing: The Work of J.-M. Charcot (New York: Garrett Publications, 1971), 35.

[312] Sigmund Freud, "Charcot," Collected Papers (London, Hogarth Press, 1948), I, 10, in Owen, 36.

[313] Theodore Flournoy, Spiritism and Psychology, trans. Hereward Carrington (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1911), 3. Flournoy became well-known to the public after publishing his sensational book From India to the Planet Mars (1900), which examines mediumship and reincarnation.

[314] Ibid., 32-33.

[315] Ibid., 254.

While Charcot and other psychiatrists did not discover evidence of supernatural phenomena, their research did influence the scientific community's acceptance of mesmerism (hypnotism) as a genuine therapeutic method. In 1889, French psychologist Pierre Janet's Automatisme psychologique elaborated upon Charcot's somnambulism and hypnosis theories, and seized upon the automatic writing craze. Healthy individuals, Janet observed, are most prone to hysteria-like symptoms and hallucinations on the threshold between waking and sleeping. Thus, spiritist mediums actually communicate with the inner self rather than the "other side."[317]

Although spiritism's popularity gradually faded, the Symbolists depicted dreams, madness, and the supernatural in their work throughout the late nineteenth century. Occult writer Jules Bois, a friend of Charcot, believed that spiritist mediums' automatic drawings influenced the Symbolists' attempts to render the unconscious mind's visual emanations. "Spirit" aesthetics, claimed Bois, emerged from the unconscious with "a tendency to asymmetry, abundant and unnecessary details, the replacement of firm lines by 'equivocal' ones, and irregularity in the output."[318] Symbolist works and their precursors, such as Odilon Redon's lithographs, often exemplify Bois's "spirit" characteristics and create an otherworldly impression.

Like many of Hugo's drawings, Redon's dark, uncanny visions often focus on a single object or motif with dreamlike effects. In The Dark Side of Nature, Barbara Larson discusses the increasingly mystical phenomena in Odilon Redon's late work. For

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[316] Ibid., 310. Flournoy also speculates that Charles Hugo may have written some of the "spirit" poems in a "semi-trance condition induced by the process of typtology."

[317] Jennifer Gibson, "Surrealism Before Freud: Dynamic Psychiatry's 'Simple Recording Instrument,'" Art Journal 46 (Spring 1987): 56-59.

[318] Ellenberger, 164.

example, some of Redon's dreaming figures are based on photographs of somnambulists, and Le Bouddha, 1895 (Fig. 2.23), suggests connections between spirit voyages and astronomy's observation of distant planets.[319] I would expand this description to include the possibility of magnetic energy being directed through the picture. A glowing celestial body hovers overhead; the Buddha transfixes the beholder with exaggerated eyes, and the pale swirl of his robes fade into another radiant cosmic sphere. Redon's use of sharp contrast and faint reflections heighten the mystery surrounding the enlightened figure. Furthermore, the strangely crouched Buddha and his robes seem to dissolve into the darkness, reminiscent of a séance "spirit."

Redon never became deeply involved with spiritism, although he and his family maintained an interest in occult practices and theories of the afterlife. In 1896, Redon illustrated René Philipon's translation of Edward Bulwer-Lytton's horror story "The Haunted and the Haunters" (1859) with a series of ghostly lithographs.[320] Yet Redon remained more concerned with communing with the inner self than with the spirit world; contemporary mystical literature such as Édouard Schuré's Les grands initiés (The Great Initiates) (1889) encouraged him to formulate a subjective theory of the unconscious and explore its communication with an unseen spiritual universe.[321] Bois dedicated an issue of his occult periodical Le Coeur to Redon, a "genius of speculative science," and esoteric bookseller Edmond Bailly exhibited Redon's work in his shop in 1893.

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[319] Larson, 130. Le Bouddha also indicates Redon's interest in Oriental philosophy at the time, particularly in metempsychosis and reincarnation.

[320] Douglas Druick, ed., Odilon Redon, Prince of Dreams, 1840-1916, exh. cat. (Chicago: Art Institute; Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum; London: Royal Academy of Arts; distributed by Abrams, 1994), 222.

[321] Larson, 156.

Despite living in an era of positivism, Redon's hallucinatory lithographs of dream images express his belief in working with abstract, spontaneous methods. As he claimed in 1898, "[Fantasy] is the messenger of the 'unconscious,' of that very eminent and mysterious personage… Who arrives in his own time… Everything is done by docilely submitting to the arrival of the 'unconscious.'"[322] Redon was familiar with Leonardo's method of allowing chance-created imagery to rise from the imagination, and printmaking media often allowed him to create palimpsests of successive print states and to rework accidental and abstract forms into new compositions.[323]

Larson and other scholars speculate that the phantasmagorical art of Hugo and his circle inspired Redon's ethereal black and white style. Redon created lithographs of bizarre creatures in the 1880s (Fig. 2.24), one of which art historian Dario Gamboni compares to Hugo's drawing of an elongated spirit figure on a rooftop (Fig. 2.25).[324] I find this convincing in the sense that both artists depict imaginary creatures from dark, unknown realms in a rough, linear style, yet further connections can be made between Hugo and Redon. Redon and the Symbolists may have become familiar with Hugo's art from publications such as Théophile Gautier's 1838 printed album of Hugo's drawings, in which Gautier declared Hugo as much of an artist as he was a poet. These images were reprinted in newspapers or engraved for aesthetic and literary journals until his exile

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[322] Letter from Redon to André Mellerio, August 16, 1898, in Leblond, Lettres d'Odilon Redon, 33-34. Translated in Larson, 135.

[323] Dario Gamboni, "Fabrication of Accidents": Factura and Chance in Nineteenth-Century Art," Anthropology and Aesthetics 36 (Autumn 1999): 214.

[324] Dario Gamboni, "Images potentielles et 'soupçons d'aspect': la contribution d'Odilon Redon à l'histoire de l'ambiguïté visuelle," in Museo Cantonale d'Arte, Odilon Redon: La Natura dell'Invisible, exh. cat. (Milan: Skira, 1996), 104-105.

in 1851.[325]

Redon, whose prints also have been compared to those of Dürer, Callot, and Goya, depicted fatalistic subjects and explored imaginative territory that can be compared to earlier work by Hugo. Thirty years after Hugo's mixed media composition Justitia, 1857 (Fig. 2.26), Redon created the strikingly similar lithograph, Le rêve s'est achevé par la mort (The Dream is Consummated in Death), 1887 (Fig. 2.27). To my knowledge the resemblances between these two images have not yet been explored. In both works, apparitional heads emerge from darkness, with the central motif—the severed head in Hugo's and the skull in Redon's—suspended in midair. Redon replaced Hugo's ominous guillotine with ghostly limbs and the bloodstain spelling "JUSTITIA" in the pavement with a reflective, watery surface and a half-submerged head.

Furthermore, both artists' haunting compositions display their fascination with capital punishment and the afterlife to make a statement about the justice system. In Hugo's drawing, the decapitated head, its mouth open in a silent scream, can no longer protest its innocence. Faint drops of red in the otherwise black and white composition fall from the eerily illuminated guillotine and converge into the letters below. Redon's lithograph refers to Edmond Picard's drama Le Juré, which tells the story of a juror who is cursed with madness and eventually commits suicide after wrongly condemning a prisoner to death. Redon illustrates the following lines: "The sinister command of the spectre is fulfilled. The dream has ended in death."[326]

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[325] Pierre Georgel, Shadows of a Hand: The Drawings of Victor Hugo (London: Merrell Holberton Publishers Ltd., 1998), 14.

[326] "Le commandement sinistre du spectre est accompli. Le rêve s'est achevé par la mort." Quoted in Richard Hobbs, Odilon Redon (London: Studio Vista, 1977), 63.

In my observation, another Hugo motif that emerges in Redon's work is disembodied teeth, which ambiguously appear in one of Hugo's experimental works from about 1856 (Fig. 2.28). Within the aleatory ink stains of this composition, Hugo highlights what appears to be a vicious-looking set of teeth, with the upper row appearing more human and defined than the jagged lower jaw. The remainder of the image disseminates into shadowy, undefined space, continually drawing the viewer's eye back to the apparition of mysterious teeth from an unknown creature.

Perhaps also inspired by Charcot's theories of neuroses and irrational obsessions' origin in the unconscious mind, Redon employs spectral teeth in his 1883 illustration of Edgar Allan Poe's story "Berenice" (Fig. 2.29). In the story, the protagonist cannot erase the ghastly vision of his ailing cousin Berenice's teeth from his mind and, in a somnambulistic moment of madness, rips them from her corpse only to discover that she was buried alive. However, despite the association of Redon's work with Poe's chilling tale, the mystifying space and unknown origin of Hugo's teeth renders his version more inhuman and sinister than Redon's.

Interest in Hugo's life and works intensified after his death; articles and catalogues on his art have been published every few years since the early 1900s. The Maison de Victor Hugo opened in 1902, the centenary of Hugo's birth, and hundreds of Hugo's drawings became available to visitors. In the words of poet Edmond Rostand, the public experienced "une révélation stupéfiante" ("a stupefying revelation") of Hugo's artistic skill.[327] For an audience accustomed to the highly-finished academic paintings

[327] In Les Nouvelles Illustrées (July 2, 1903), 21. Quoted in Pierre Georgel, "Les avatars du 'peintre malgré lui,'" in La Gloire de Victor Hugo, ed. Pierre Georgel, Jean-Paul Boulanger, and Geneviève Renisio, exh. cat. (Paris: Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1985), 489.

exhibited at the Salons, Hugo's previously unknown taches, "spirit" drawings, and experimental art were strikingly bizarre and avant-garde.[328]

Along with the posthumous exhibition of Hugo's art at Galérie Georges Petit in 1888, sculptor Auguste Rodin already was in the process of designing the monument to Victor Hugo (Fig. 2.30). The statue originally was destined for the Pantheon to honor the poet whose incendiary writing against tyranny carried the French Revolution into the nineteenth century. Now located at the Musée Rodin, a marble version of the monument was installed in the Palais-Royal from 1909-1933.[329] Using a theme generally reserved for mythological figures, Rodin's statue of Hugo as a heroic Olympian nude suggests that the poet defies time and mortality. Rodin depicts Hugo on the rocks of Guernsey, deep in thought with one arm outstretched—possibly directing the mesmeric force of his genius towards the ocean or the infinite.

I find it intriguing that Rodin chooses to commemorate Hugo's time in exile, during which the French people considered him "a remote, abstracted presence, a formerly real-world writer who had been transmuted into a timeless, transcendent literary 'voice.'"[330] Familiar with Hugo's poetry and drawings, Rodin sculpts the writer as a

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[328] Georgel, "Les avatars du 'peintre malgré lui,'" 489. Visitors were surprised by the revelation of Hugo's art, which seemed "une frange incertaine, née du hazard, du jeu, de la rêverie, et dont Hugo doutait à juste titre qu'on pût la désigner du nom de "dessin."

[329] Ruth Butler, "Rodin's Victor Hugo Monument," in Rodin's Monument to Victor Hugo (London: Merrell Holberton Publishers, with the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Foundation, 1998), 15, 19. "No commission ever meant more to Rodin" than this one from the fine arts administrators of the Third Republic. The bronze sculpture with muses was not cast until 1996; the bronze and marble statues are now located at the Musée Rodin.

[330] Jane Mayo Roos, "Steichen's Choice," in Rodin's Monument to Victor Hugo, 89. Edward Steichen photographed the shadowy figure of Rodin in front of his Hugo monument and Le Penseur in 1902.

quasi-divine spirit of creativity's turbulent nature using his distinctive agitated style.[331] The monument and its subject represent an ongoing dialogue not only between the visual and literary arts, or between the creator and his psyche, but also between the conscious and the unconscious mind. Rodin's vision of Hugo expresses how the poet's grand delusions and ghostly fascinations foreshadow the psychoanalytic ambitions of Surrealism and the modern age, as the quest for self-enlightenment evolved from a mediumistic pastime to a personal psychic exploration.

[331] Albert E. Elsen, Rodin's Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 168. Claudie Judrin, "Hugo et Rodin: deux dessinateurs," 64-71; see Ch. 1, note 30.



Figure 2.1. John Adams Whipple, Hypnotism, c. 1845, daguerreotype, Gilman Paper Company Collection, New York.

Source: Mary Warner Marien, Photography: A Cultural History, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), Fig. 2.67, 75.



Figure 2.2. William Mumler, Man with Spirit of a Woman Who Holds an Anchor across his Heart, ca. 1865, carte-de-visite albumen print, 9.5 x 5.7 cm, George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film, Rochester, New York.

Source: Alison Ferris, Tom Gunning, and Pamela Thurschwell, The Disembodied Spirit, exh. cat. (Brunswick: Bowdoin College Museum of Art, 2003), 47, cat. no. 36.

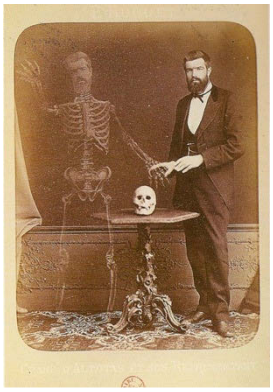


Figure 2.3. Édouard Isidore Buguet, "Skull of Altotas and his representative," late June 1875, albumen silver print, approx. 15 x 10.5 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Source: Clément Chéroux, Andreas Fischer, Pierre Apraxine, Denis Canguilhem, and Sophie Schmit, The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; distributed by Yale University Press, 2004), 59, cat. no. 17b.



Figure 2.3. Édouard Isidore Buguet, "Mediumnic attraction," late June 1875, albumen silver print, approx. 15 x 10.5 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Source: Clément Chéroux, Andreas Fischer, Pierre Apraxine, Denis Canguilhem, and Sophie Schmit, The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; distributed by Yale University Press, 2004), 59, cat. no. 17d.



Figure 2.4. William Blake, "Visionary head" of Edward I, ca. 1819, pencil on paper.

Source: Alexander Gilchrist, Life of William Blake, Vol. I. (New York: Phaeton Press, 1969), 301.



Figure 2.5. Blake, Ghost of a Flea, ca. 1819, pencil on paper.

Source: Alexander Gilchrist, Life of William Blake, Vol. I. (New York: Phaeton Press, 1969), 303.



Figure 2.6. Justinus Kerner, "Todesboten," from Klecksographien, ca. 1857, ink on paper.

Source: Justinus Kerner, Klecksographien, Mit Illustrationen nach den Vorlagen des Verfassers (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1890), 6.

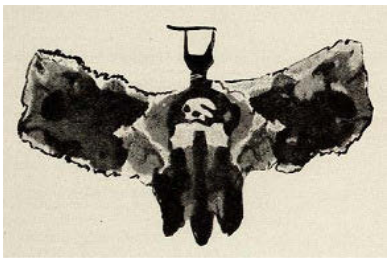


Figure 2.7. Kerner, "Memento mori" image from Klecksographien, ca. 1857, ink on paper.

Source: Justinus Kerner, Klecksographien, Mit Illustrationen nach den Vorlagen des Verfassers (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1890), 3.

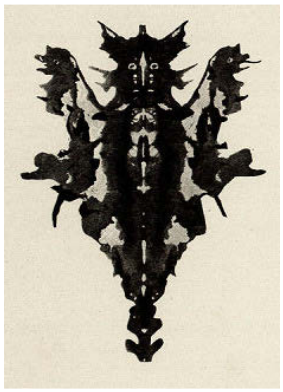


Figure 2.8. Kerner, "Höllenbilder" image from Klecksographien, ca. 1857, ink on paper.

Source: Justinus Kerner, Klecksographien, Mit Illustrationen nach den Vorlagen des Verfassers (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1890), 67.

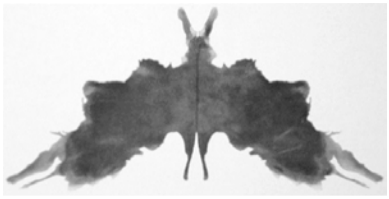


Figure 2.9. Hermann Rorschach, Blot Five from the Rorschach Test, 1921, ink on paper.

Source: Uwe Henrik Peters, Studies in German Romantic Psychiatry (London: The Institute of Germanic Studies, 1988), Plate 3.

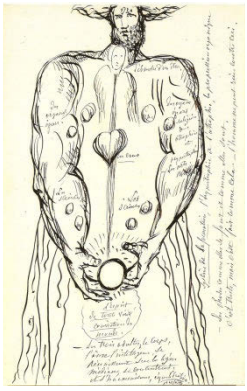


Figure 2.10. Théophile Bra, Sans titre [L'ébauche d'un être…]; Untitled [The first sketch of a being...], iron gall ink on wove paper, 31 x 20 cm, Bibliotheque municipale, Douai, France, Ms. 1674, carton 18.

Source: Jacques De Caso, The Drawing Speaks: Théophile Bra, Works 1826-1855, (Houston: The Menil Collection, 1997), Pl. 2.

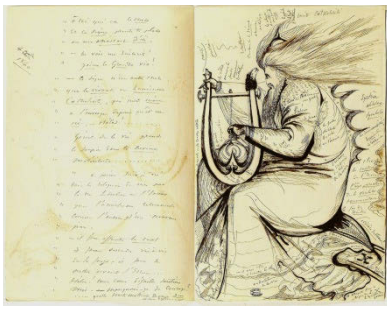


Figure 2.11. Bra, Sans titre [unite catholicité…]; Untitled [unity catholicity...], n.d., iron gall ink on wove paper, 31.5 x 40.5 cm, Bibliotheque municipale, Douai, France, Ms. 1674, carton 19.

Source: Jacques De Caso, The Drawing Speaks: Théophile Bra, Works 1826-1855, (Houston: The Menil Collection, 1997), Pl. 36.

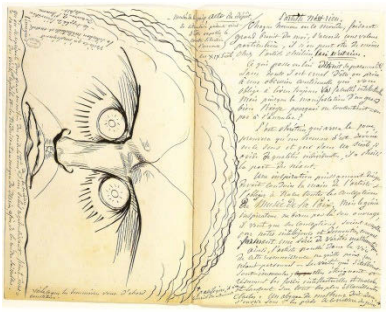


Figure 2.12. Bra, Sans titre [L'artiste n'est rien]; [Untitled [The artist is nothing...], iron gall ink on wove paper, 39.9 x 31 cm, Bibliothèque municipale, Douai, France, Ms. 1674, carton 43.

Source: Jacques De Caso, The Drawing Speaks: Théophile Bra, Works 1826-1855, (Houston: The Menil Collection, 1997), Pl. 30.



Figure 2.13. Hugo, Pieuvre avec les initiales V.H. (Octopus with the Initials V.H.), 1866, ink and wash on paper, 36 x 26 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, NAF 24745, fol. 382.

Source: Florian Rodari, Pierre Georgel, Luc Sante, and Marie-Laure Prévost, Shadows of a Hand: The Drawings of Victor Hugo, exh. cat. (New York: The Drawing Center; distributed by Merrell Holberton, 1998), 58, cat. no. 25.

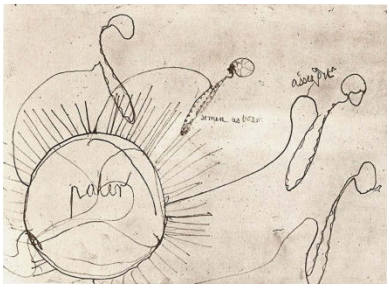


Figure 2.14. Victor Hugo, "Spirit" Drawing with Comets, April 1854, pencil, 29 x 42 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, NAF 13353.

Source: Jean Delalande, Victor Hugo, Dessinateur Génial et Halluciné (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1964), Fig. 93.



Figure 2.15. Hugo, "Spirit" drawing with "Spiritvs Malvs," 1854-55, pencil, 29 x 42 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, NAF 13353.

Source: Marie-Laure Prévost, Victor Hugo: l'homme océan (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2002), 173.



Figure 2.16. Hugo, "Spirit" drawing with skeleton in tomb, April 1854, pencil, 29 x 42 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, NAF 13353.

Source: Marie-Laure Prévost, Victor Hugo: l'homme océan (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2002), 173.

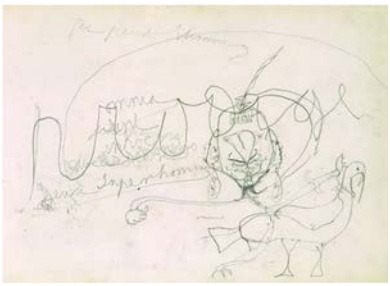


Figure 2.17. Hugo, “Spirit” Drawing with Figure, ca. 1856, pencil, 29 x 42 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, NAF 13353.

Source: Marie-Laure Prévost, Victor Hugo: l’homme océan (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2002), 173.



Figure 2.18. Hugo, “Spirit” Drawing with Grotesque Figures and Landscape, 1854, pencil, 29 x 42 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, NAF 13353.

Source: Marie-Laure Prévost, Victor Hugo: l’homme océan (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2002), 173.



Figure 2.19. Victor and Léopoldine Hugo, unedited drawings, January 1831, Maison de Victor Hugo, Paris.

Source: Pierre Georgel, "Portrait de l'artiste en griffonneur," in Madeleine Blondel and Pierre Georgel, eds., Victor Hugo et les images (Dijon: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1989), 74, Fig. 1.



Figure 2.20. Hugo, Pista cartoons, 1832, ink and wash on paper, 9.5 x 12 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Paris.

Source: Musée D'Orsay, L'Oeil de Victor Hugo (Paris: Éditions des Cendres, 2004), 86.

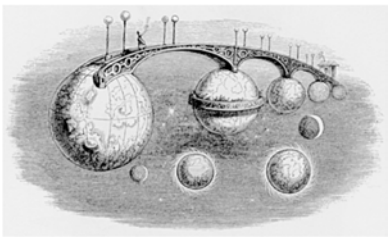


Figure 2.21. J. J. Grandville, Interplanetary bridge from Un Autre Monde, 1844.

Source: J. J. Grandville, Bizarreries and Fantasies of Grandville (New York: Dover Publications, 1974), 49, fig. 66.



Figure 2.22. Grandville, "Le but de ce steeple-chase" from H. de Balzac et. Al., Scènes de la vie privée et publique des animaux, 1842.

Source: Grandville: Caricatures et Illustrations (Nancy: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1975), Cat. No. 215.



Figure 2.23. Redon, Le Bouddha, 1895, lithograph, published in L'Estampe Originale, 32.4 x 24.9 cm.

Source: Alfred Werner, The Graphic Works of Odilon Redon (New York: Dover, 1969), Pl. 107.



Figure 2.24. Odilon Redon, Menu pour le dîner des lithographes français du 1er avril 1887, lithograph, 5 x 11.8 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Source: Museo Cantonale d'Arte, Odilon Redon: La Natura dell'Invisible, exh. cat. (Milan: Skira, 1996), 104-105.

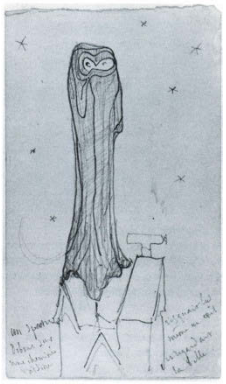


Figure 2.25. Hugo, Un spectre debout sur une cheminée voisine risquait lui-même un oeil et regardait la belle, 1856-1857, ink on paper, 15 x 87 cm, collection of Arturo Schwarz, Milan.

Source: Museo Cantonale d'Arte, Odilon Redon: La Natura dell'Invisible, exh. cat. (Milan: Skira, 1996), 104-105.



Figure 2.26. Hugo, Justitia, 1857, mixed media on paper, 52 x 35 cm, Hauteville House, Guernesey.

Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, "Justitia," <http://expositions.bnf.fr/hugo/grands/011bis.htm> (accessed December 2011).



Figure 2.27. Odilon Redon, Le rêve s'est achevé par la mort (The Dream is Consummated in Death), 1887, lithograph, 23.8 x 18.7 cm, British Museum, London.

Source: Alfred Werner, The Graphic Works of Odilon Redon (New York: Dover, 1969), Pl. 56.



Figure 2.28. Hugo, unidentified subject, ca. 1856, wash and gouache on paper, 24 x 17 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, NAF 13355, fol. 109.

Source: Pierre Georgel, Drawings by Victor Hugo (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1974), fig. 47.



Figure 2.29. Odilon Redon, Les Dents de Bérénice, 1883, lithograph.

Source: Alec Wildenstein, Odilon Redon: Catalogue Raisonné de l'oeuvre peint et dessiné (Paris: Wildenstein Institute, 1992-1998), Vol. II: Cat. No. 1089, "Les Dents de Bérénice," 174.



Figure 2.30. Auguste Rodin, Monument to Victor Hugo in the Palais-Royal, ca. 1901, marble, Musée Rodin, Paris, Ph.1194. Photograph: Adolphe Braun, 1909, carbon print.

Source: Jacques Vilain, ed., At the Musée Rodin (Paris: Scala, 1996), 66.

CHAPTER III
NINETEENTH-CENTURY AUTOMATISM AND ABSTRACTION

> The painter who has found his technique does not interest me…He has not known the sacred torment whose source is in the unconscious and the unknown; he expects nothing of what will come.
>
> — Odilon Redon, À soi-même[332]

Nineteenth-century artists acting as conduits for "spirit" drawings and dream chronicles unleashed new opportunities for automatic discoveries and experimental art that have not thoroughly been brought to light by current art historical literature. In addition to the séance drawings, Victor Hugo used various media and experimental techniques to create thousands of otherworldly and abstract images reminiscent of Alexander Cozens's inkblots and the textural effects that William Blake achieved with watercolor. In the following chapter I contribute new insights into how the dreamlike and supernatural affinities of Symbolism and fin-de-siècle French culture drive artists of the era toward greater experimentation with abstraction—such as Odilon Redon's floral-haze backgrounds surrounding his trancelike figures.

In addition, I offer original interpretations of Gustave Moreau's experimental works in watercolor and oils that may represent the nascent stages of finished paintings—or early attempts at non-representational compositions. My research also examines the watercolors of Romantic writer George Sand, long overlooked as a visual artist, who generated landscape paintings from aleatory designs in gouache. These preparatory or

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[332] Odilon Redon, "Confidances d'artiste," in À soi-même, journal (1867-1915), notes sur la vie l'art et les artistes (Paris: Floury, 1922), 105. "Le peintre qui a trouvé sa technique ne m'intéresse pas…Il n'a pas le tourment sacré dont la source est dans l'inconscient et l'inconnu; il n'attend rien de ce qui sera." Translated in Redon, To Myself: Notes on Life, Art, and Artists, trans. Mira Jacob and Jeanne L. Wasserman (New York: Braziller, 1986), 91.

experimental works represent one facet of nineteenth-century automatism. I also propose that studying the undulating lines and flattened compositions produced by Paul Gauguin and the Nabis, particularly Paul Sérusier, will further illuminate nineteenth-century approaches to releasing conscious control over the creation of avant-garde images.

Before continuing to examine abstract elements in these artists' works, it should be pointed out that the word "abstraction" held a different meaning in the nineteenth century than it does in contemporary art historical terminology. Rather than referring to non-representational compositions, "abstract" in the Symbolist era indicated a divergence from the mundane reality of everyday life—a psychological departure that allowed the artist to have a dreamlike, spiritual experience.

For example, as Ferenc Tóth mentions in a recent Moreau catalogue, when the artist relates his overwhelming "ardor towards abstraction," he refers to his enthusiasm for tracing "inner flashes of insight" toward magical and sublime experiences, rather than indicating a change in his style or tendency toward non-representation.[333] However, for the purposes of this dissertation, the term "abstraction" will be used in its modern sense: to explain the quality of non-objectivity or its apparent presence in works of nineteenth-century art.

Psychiatrists sought to categorize automatic phenomena by the fin-de-siècle. In 1896, psychologist William James defined automatism as "sensory and motor messages" from the subliminal mind that reveal hidden aspects of one's personality. These secondary or repressed traits may emerge during altered states of consciousness. While the "sensory" images or messages appear during hallucinations, the "motor" messages are

[333] Ferenc Tóth, "Vision and Invention, The Studio Experiments of Gustave Moreau," in Museum of Fine Arts, Land of Myths: The Art of Gustave Moreau, exh. cat. (Budapest: Museum of Fine Arts, 2009), 34.

transmitted through automatic writing, drawing, or speaking. Representing a connection between the higher and lower centers of the brain—the creative intellect and the mechanical functions—these motor messages are most relevant to nineteenth-century artists' experiences. James relates his theories of the unconscious to spiritist mediums and mental healers, but mid-century artists such as Hugo and Sand doubtlessly expressed their unconscious through automatic drawing or contemplating an ink or gouache stain until the imagination transformed it into an intriguing, highly personal composition. The actions of creating unpremeditated drawings and embellishing chance-created compositions exemplify late nineteenth-century concepts of automatism as perceived by psychologists such as James.[334]

Studies of visual phenomena and the imagination such as aesthetic philosopher Paul Souriau's La suggestion dans l'art (1893) further clarify nineteenth-century concepts of the link between vision, the imagination, and the unconscious. In his view, the eyes themselves are capable of hallucination and of influencing emotional reactions. "Physically, the eye hardly shines brighter than a steel nail," he writes. "Yet it has the gaze, immaterial light, ideal radiance that makes it gleam with a strange splendor." He continues to explain what professional hypnotists and flirtatious coquettes have in common: their mastery over the eyes' power to exert influence and control.[335]

Souriau theorizes that everyone possesses a "visual imagination" which is most inventive while a somnambulistic state subdues the conscious mind. While on the

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[334] Eugene Taylor, William James on Exceptional Mental States: The 1896 Lowell Lectures (New York: Scribner, 1983), 49.

[335] Paul Souriau, La suggestion dans l'art, 1893 (Paris: Alcan et Guillaumin, 1909), 27. "Les magnétiseurs de profession le savent bien; les coquettes aussi. Physiquement, l'oeil ne brille guère plus qu'un clou d'acier. Mais il a le regard, lumière immatérielle, rayonnement idéal qui le fait briller d'une étrange splendeur." Translation mine.

threshold between waking and sleeping, the imagination reorganizes images and memories, dissolving them into incoherent images and new combinations. The dynamism of the resulting hypnagogic hallucinations, Souriau explains, far outshine the drab visualizations of the lucid and waking mind. This heightened visual state also can be accessed while under hypnosis.[336]

Nineteenth-century philosopher Jean Guyau mentions Hugo in his Les problèmes de l'esthétique contemporaine (Problems of Contemporary Aesthetics) (1884) while discussing how experiencing beauty is generally associated with the Cartesian sense of sight. However, Guyau argues, poets and writers have an innate ability to bypass the vision of the physical eye and entice the imagination, producing "an entire effect upon the mind" that appeals to readers' sentiments and emotions.[337] This theory suggests why literary-minded artists, such as Hugo and George Sand, seem to possess a heightened ability to convey emotions and moods in their works of art without relying on purely visual elements such as color and precise line.

As talented a draftsman as he was a writer, Hugo's visual work of the mid-1850s through the 1860s reveals a persistent concentration on both experimental designs and highly detailed drawings. Romantic images such as gothic ruins, violent seascapes, lighthouses, sea creatures, and grotesque faces appear in Hugo's art, while startlingly original and abstract compositions express otherworldly ideas inspired by his surroundings and presumably his unconscious mind.

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[336] Ibid., 68-69.

[337] Jean M. Guyau, Problems of Contemporary Aesthetics, 1884, trans. Helen Lawrence Mathews (Los Angeles: DeVorss, 1947), 77.

Hugo is not primarily concerned with the beautiful in his "spirit" drawings and séance messages. Rather he expresses suppressed messages from his unconscious and from the "other side" through esoteric enigmas and romantic manifestations of the famous deceased. In the case of his experimental drawings, in which he seeks the hidden images within an ink stain, or tache, the pages are infused with emotion, movement, and, in some works, the romantic sublime. This Hugo accomplishes through heightened contrast and violent turbulence more than by depicting a realistic scene, despite his formidable skill as a draftsman.

Hugo's intentional drawings (i.e. consciously-created) and abstract experiments with various media on paper display elements of automatism and chance that reflect nineteenth-century theories of the unconscious. These experimental techniques include inkblots (taches), wash, folded paper (pliages), lace impressions, and cut-out silhouettes.[338] Hugo claimed to embellish his drawings with household items such as blackberry juice, caramelized onion, burnt paper, soot, toothpaste, and coffee grounds, although many of the pages allegedly created with these unusual materials have not survived.[339]

The otherworldly impact of Hugo's drawings leads to the question of how he viewed the world, both physically and psychologically. How much of Hugo's art created in exile reflects how his eye perceived his surroundings, and how much was embellished with visions welling up from his Romantic imagination and subconscious mind?

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[338] Marie-Laure Prévost, "The Techniques of a Poet-Draftsman," in Shadows of a Hand: The Drawings of Victor Hugo (London: Merrell Holberton Publishers Ltd., 1998), 31.

[339] Robb, 391.

While his drawings often display precise lines and specific subjects, his automatic ink and wash technique assisted his tendencies towards abstract, intangible visions. To create the taches, Hugo placed inkblots or stains on paper, then spread the liquid around the page to develop an image. Les Orientales (Fig. 3.1), a brown wash, colored ink, charcoal, gum, and lace impression drawing from 1855-56, features a foreboding tower with a dark, gaping entrance looming above a precarious flight of steps. Hugo used the lace patterns, which he coated with ink and pressed onto the page, to embellish the sky, stairs, and "V. H." initials stenciled across the bottom, then rendered the rest of the scene in indistinct forms and murky shadows.

Judging from Hugo's detailed drawings of the Channel Islands, the forms within these experimental works were partly derived from his surroundings of crumbling stone buildings and rocky cliffs, although his vast architectural vistas existed only in his mind.[340] The scene seems to exist on the threshold between dream and reality—or between waking and sleeping, creating the visual state later discussed by Souriau. Hugo initially may have considered a deliberate composition, but the placement of certain trancelike elements, such as rhythmic patterns within the abstract, crenellated walls and misty atmospheric forms found in chance ink flows and blots, hint at an automatist approach. He seems to have fashioned the architecture around his lace-impression initials "V" and "H," which hover above the stairs that lead nowhere, suggesting that Hugo was determined not to represent an existing place. The hallucinatory castle, with its dissolving forms, the combination of decaying architectural elements, and the overall

[340] Hugo's architectural drawings also suggest his admiration for Piranesi's etchings of impossible architecture.

dreamlike effect suggest that Hugo infused the work with images and moods from his unconscious.

A closer analysis of the work reveals that the atmospheric lace designs form gloomy clouds above darker streaks of stormy sky and a horizontal flash of azure that runs behind the ruined tower, but whether it represents sky or sea remains uncertain. Hugo has distorted both space and perspective in this dream world; he gives the beholder a place to stand in the foreground, inviting spectators to climb the precarious steps to the foreboding tower in a mythic journey into the unconscious.

The impossible tower, with its claw-like projections and crescent pinnacle, also may represent romantic concepts of the Orientalist "other," inhabiting the elusive "nocturnal" side of the imagination in contrast to seemingly rational European society and its architecture. The drawing's title refers to Hugo's interest in Oriental subjects; he published a book of poems with the same title in 1829, did a series of Oriental drawings in 1837, and continued to explore Orientalism in later poetry. Abandoned to the elements, the tower in this drawing has been allowed to decay and soon will collapse into the ocean or rocky cliffs below. Alternatively, it could represent an aspect of Hugo's unconscious that has not yet been developed to its full potential, and more forays into the unconscious are necessary to lift the storms of the mundane world and the rational mind from the atmosphere shrouding its true form.

Even the more controlled examples of Hugo's aesthetic vision reveal the artist's ability to incorporate accidental patterns and stains into complex compositions. His Gallia (Fig. 3.2), an ink drawing of the French emblem, appears at first glance to have been an entirely conscious creation. However, a closer look at the sky above the cockerel

brings the lighter tones of dashed and curvilinear lines to the surface. When viewed alone, the upper third of the picture plane becomes a purely abstract composition, unrecognizable as part of a sky or landscape. The lines within this space seem created by chance or manipulated by an automatist hand—similar to the meandering lines in many of Hugo's "spirit" drawings. The creature itself, looming above distant trees and a city, exudes a spectral aura. Hugo's loose brush strokes and the uncertain light source highlight its head and feathers, and the darker lines of the background appear to continue through its translucent body. Clearly the cockerel is intended to evoke a mental state and signify French pride rather than offer a realist image of a rural landscape.

In other drawings, Hugo explores the imagery of the ocean itself, long associated with the depths of the unconscious mind and extreme emotions. Pieuvre avec les initiales V.H., 1866 (Fig. 2.13) and Abstract Composition (Monstrous Animal), ca. 1856 (Fig. 3.3) are both ink and wash compositions altered from automatic elements to express Hugo's concept of the ocean as a powerful and treacherous entity. Octopus, perhaps formed from a single ink tache, depicts the villain of Hugo's 1866 novel Les Travailleurs de la Mer submerged in water with a phosphorescent glow.

Hugo incorporated the blotchy pattern of the wash into an undersea vision, with the lighter tones seeming to radiate from the octopus. Its luminous head, intelligent mien, and interlacing tentacles forming the artist's initials at the top of the page imply that the sea creature symbolizes Hugo's unconscious thought. The ink and wash evidently is manipulated into the body and tentacles with controlled conscious lines, but Hugo leaves the evidence of the drawing's automatic origins in the background's water stains and

mysterious foreground textures, which form a ridge upon which the creature seems to rest, or emerge from behind.

Abstract Composition, in which Hugo also manipulated light and dark tones into an animal figure, appears to be the more automatist of the two drawings. Within this dynamic tache of splashed ink and jagged lines, Hugo appears to have formed the body of a sea monster beginning with abstract shapes, meandering lines, and spontaneous brush strokes before rendering the creature's upper body. Hugo's short bursts of darker wash enhance its sense of motion and form its distorted jaw and head. The arrangement of sweeping brush strokes and disappearance of the animal's body, as if hidden beneath the surface of the water, again suggest that Hugo represents ideas surging forth from the unconscious, conveyed by a fantastical ocean creature. Furthermore, its grotesque features recall the "spirit" faces and specters that surfaced in Hugo's séance drawings of the previous year. Hugo's art created in exile represents an ongoing experiment in bringing the visions of his unconscious mind to the surface, intent on seizing his hidden or repressed creative potential.

Hugo created his pliages using a process similar to the taches, but with paper folded symmetrically one or more times—the same process used to create Kerner's Klecksographien and Rorschach's inkblots, firmly placing him in the spectrum of artists experimenting with automatic techniques. In one example, Ink Tache slightly reworked on folded paper, ca. 1856-57 (Fig. 3.4), Hugo used a pen to create caricatures within the brown ink and wash along the vertical axis of the page. Hugo has transformed a columnar stain into a miniature realm of intriguing characters, using both the positive and negative space of the paper. These details suggest how chance arrangements of ink and

other media evoke automatic associations with the human face, and, filtered through Hugo's rich imagination, with individual caricatures and imaginative spirit faces. The caricatures may have been drawn in the same manner as the "spirit" beings in Hugo's séance drawings, recalling William Blake's visionary heads.

Indeed, Blake provides another example of a romantic poet displaying such aesthetic and automatic tendencies. His prints display grainy textures, altered proportions, swirling motion, and spiritual intensity in highly individual renditions of biblical and historical subjects. In Newton, ca. 1795 (Fig. 3.5), a color print finished in ink and watercolor, Blake seizes upon the textures created by the medium to create a lively background and convey how the scientist's intense desire to rationalize the physical world leads from color to darkness, leaving him ignorant of the rich hues and detail of the shifting forms behind him. Rendered in earth tones, the aleatory textures create an uncertain and dreamlike setting. Newton's nude form could be located underwater or in a distant spirit realm that he attempts to rationalize using the laws of the material world. Biomorphic tendrils emerge from the coral-like surface of the background, further animating the scene and drawing the viewer's attention to the wonder of Blake's accidental patterns in contrast to the exact lines drawn by Newton's compass. The textured gold tones of his hair and his mottled skin act as visual mediators between the chance-created forms and the tool-drawn, carefully measured geometric shapes. Newton, intent on his precise diagram, seems unaware of the surrounding presence of the unconscious and the fantastical.

Eighteenth-century British painter Alexander Cozens, who used the blotting technique for the less fantastic purpose of creating landscapes from ink stains, possibly

inspired Hugo's experiments. In his instructional book A New Method (1785), Cozens encourages artists to picture a subject in the imagination, then brush a variety of inkblots on the page as swiftly as possible (Fig. 3.6).[341] The random gradients and flows of black ink may resemble rocky terrain, jagged mountains and valleys, or dense forests. The artist then transforms these stains into a coherent landscape by finishing the drawing with a pencil and brush, while taking care not to destroy the original blot's spontaneous essence.[342]

Cozens traces his automatic landscapes back to Leonardo da Vinci, whose sixteenth-century Treatise on Painting recommended gazing at a dirt-streaked wall to discover patterns resembling "landscapes, battles, clouds, uncommon attitudes, humorous faces, draperies, &c. Out of this confused mass of objects, the mind will be furnished with abundance of designs and subjects perfectly new."[343] Cozens insists that "imagination leads, judgment regulates," when seeking a composition of light and shade within an assemblage of inkblots, resulting in an accidental image.[344]

Not long afterward, German Romantic painters including Caspar David Friedrich experimented with works based on pure color and abstraction that anticipate modernism, yet maintain elements of traditional figuration and landscape. Friedrich's Paysage marin avec capuchin (Seascape with Monk), 1809 (Fig. 3.7) offers an intimate glimpse into the

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[341] Alexander Cozens, A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape (London: J. Dixwell, 1785), 23.

[342] Ibid., 27. Cozens instructs artists to "preserve the spirit of the blot as much as possible, by taking care not to add any thing that is not suggested by it, and to leave out what appears to be unnatural."

[343] Ibid., 5-6.

[344] Ibid., 12. Other British artists' expositions on inkblots and their resulting abstract designs include Mary Gartside's An Essay on Light and Shade, 1805, and George Barnard's The Theory and Practice of Landscape Painting, 1855, which expanded on color contrasts.

realm of the artist's "spiritual eye," which he believed should envision a composition before the "corporeal eye" becomes involved.[345] Although the vast sky, shore, and ocean extending into eternity create the impression of a subjective inner vision, the inclusion of the monk grounds the image in reality and forces the viewer to acknowledge its tangible intensity and depth.

Hugo and later George Sand take subjective vision to an extreme with their interpretations of their unpremeditated wash drawings or watercolors. Several of Hugo's consciously-created marine drawings, such as Clocher droit, mât penchant, ca. 1847-1855 (Fig. 3.8), recall Friedrich's Paysage marin avec capuchin in their deliberate abstraction of the subject and its extension beyond the picture plane. In this example, Hugo reduces the seascape to a long horizontal strip, evenly dividing the composition between the dim sky and murky water. Only a rocky shoreline at the extreme left and the leaning mast of a slightly off-center ship, lend the scene an apprehensive mood and disrupt the flattened space.

Hugo achieves nearly the same abstraction and sense of anxiety in his automatic works. In one monochrome wash drawing known simply as Abstract composition (Fig. 3.9), various tonalities of ink streak dramatically across the page in different directions. The horizontal emphasis of the elongated stains is reminiscent of Hugo's marine images, with vertical and diagonal lines creating visual turmoil. Faint dashes of curving lines on the far left—the only section Hugo may have retouched with a brush—comprise a misty area that resembles the foam of crashing waves. Even in his apparently non-figurative,

[345] Sixten Ringbom, The Sounding Cosmos: A Study in the Spiritualism of Kandinsky and the Genesis of Abstract Painting (Helsingfors: Tilgmanns Tryckeri, 1970), 209.

automatic drawings, Hugo's contrasting streaks of ink convey the impact of experiencing the romantic sublime.

While Hugo's visual art has received scholarly attention in recent years, poet and novelist George Sand has been largely overlooked as an artist and forerunner of experimental techniques and early automatism. What I seek to establish in the following section, through analyzing her techniques and her ability to determine compositions within aleatory designs, is that Sand and her experimental art deserve a place in the canon of Surrealist forerunners. Her graphic works include ink and wash drawings of small figures, architecture, and landscapes in addition to her automatic drawings, although numerous works appear to contain elements of both methods. For example, her wash drawing Ville fortifiée (Fig. 3.10), reminiscent of Hugo's fantastical structures, may have been generated from accidental stains of ink. Sand's image places the viewer in the center of an uneven street, surrounded by the jagged shadows of crumbling medieval architecture silhouetted against a bleak sky, indicating her tendency toward romanticized, picturesque visions of ruins and landscapes.

While living in the commune of Nohant in central France, Sand discovered in 1860 or 1861 that watercolor stains pressed between two pieces of paper yielded feathery and fossil-like patterns that inspired her to transform them into textured elements within small landscape paintings (Fig. 3.11). She uses the same pressed-paper and gouache method that André Breton praises Surrealist painter Oscar Dominguez for "discovering" in the late 1930s and that Max Ernst later applies to oil paint, creating fantastical and alien landscapes. However, while Dominguez worked primarily in black, Sand applied her proto-Surrealist technique to a variety of colors and combinations. Thus Sand

becomes more daring in her experiments with automatism than the twentieth-century Surrealists, whose work will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Fascinated with mineralogy, Sand called her paintings dendrites due to their resemblance to the branching, arborescent formations in minerals and petrified wood.[346] In fact, Sand had a similar visionary experience while studying rocks and minerals. According to Christian Bernadac's study of Sand's art, Sand found that the natural or manmade breakage lines in mineral surfaces offered an infinite variety of multifaceted layers and miniature abstractions, and contemplated them in a semi-hallucinatory state to allow the patterns and designs to rise to the surface.[347]

Regarding her dendrites, Sand claimed that while gazing at her pressed watercolor stains, "I see woods, forests, or lakes, and I accentuate the vague forms produced by chance" by retouching and transforming the stains with a brush.[348] Studying one of Sand's unretouched dendrites (Fig. 3.12) clarifies her method of perceiving designs within the feathery lines of gouache and separating them into landscape components. In this example, the two-toned horizontal composition resolves itself into a petrified, pale brown landscape beneath a bluish-grey sky filled with storm clouds. Another unaltered dendrite (Fig. 3.13) in brown monotone becomes a rocky cliff with fissures and sparse vegetation. The scene emerges from the stain based on a slight variation in the saturation

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[346] Nicole Savy, "La découverte des dendrites," in Marielle Caors, ed., George Sand et les Arts (Clermont-Ferrand, France: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2004), 157.

[347] Christian Bernadac, George Sand: Dessins et Aquarelles, "Les Montagnes Bleues," (Paris: Belfond, 1992), 134.

[348] Quoted in Savy, 161. Sand wrote in a letter to artist Auguste Toulemouche dated December 5, 1874: "Mon imagination aidant, j'y vois des bois, des forêts, ou des lacs, et j'accentue les formes vagues produites par le hazard." Translation mine.

of the color and the spread of the paint across the page, forming the edge of a "cliff" against the empty background.

Like Hugo's artistic collaborations with his children and grandchildren, the creation of Sand's dendrites often involved her son Maurice and her two granddaughters, Aurore ("Lolo") and Gabrielle ("Titite"), who prepared the taches.[349] The two young girls and their dog Fadet regularly appear as diminished figures in Sand's landscapes as a sort of signature. While somewhat sentimental, the abstract figures and ruined castles that Sand often adds to her compositions provide a sense of scale and emphasize the picturesque qualities of her imaginary terrain. The children's implied sense of wonder as they discover the landscape draws the viewer into the scene, inviting observers to marvel along with them at Sand's miniature worlds of strange vegetation and rock formations.

Sand seems to prefer the results of green watercolor for altering her dendrites into mountainous and verdant landscapes. Although Bernadac claims that Sand's Rochers découpés (Fig. 3.14) is unretouched,[350] a closer look reveals that Sand rendered the grassy foliage with short brush strokes and emphasized low "hills" with long horizontal lines of green. In the upper half of the image, the textured surface and branch-like paint tendrils of the original dendrite form a background of petrified wood or shattered rocks, creating sections of a primordial forest that Sand merges together with a wash of pale brown on the left side. Also on the left, two spots of red appear out-of-place and suggest the form of a standing figure, possibly one of Sand's granddaughters, who always wore blue or red dresses in her compositions. She may have added the figure to create

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[349] Ibid., 162.

[350] Bernadac, 160. Reproduced as a "dendrite sans retouche."

perspective and depth in the composition, and transform the scene into a more welcoming than foreboding one.

A small collection of Sand's dendrites recently exhibited at the Musée de la Vie Romantique presents various examples of Sand's skill in turning chance-created designs into both existing and imaginary places. She uses the branching dendrite forms, predominantly in green, to create the effect of grassy fields or moss on rocks in the foreground, and for clusters of trees in the background. She usually places her granddaughters and their dog slightly off-center within the landscape, curiously exploring or observing the scene unfolding before them.

The previously seen example, titled Lolo, Titite, et Fadet dans un paysage de fantaisie avec montagnes et marais (Fig. 3.11), features a tranquil lake with small lush islands and a distant mountain. Sand uses the dendrite stain both for the trees and their reflection in the water. She completed the effect of trees with thin lines of grey paint for their slender trunks. The richly textured foreground required little modification from the original dendrite to become a grassy riverbank where Sand added the abstract figures of the two girls and dashes of white paint to represent their dog drinking from a pool of water. She also added the background of low green hills, a sky filled with wispy clouds, and the faint shadow of the mountain on the right. All this she was able to obtain from contemplating a chance-created arrangement of green gouache pressed between two sheets of paper.

Another dendrite, titled Paysage imaginaire (Fig. 3.15), is remarkable in how Sand incorporated accidental effects of the gouache stain into landscape elements. Areas of pale blue with subtle flecks of black wash become sparkling reflections of light on the

waterfall and on the winding river in the center of the image. Another textured blue streak is incorporated into the elongated clouds at the top of the page. Sand seems to arrange the landscape around these central blue stains to seize upon the glimmering effect of the speckled paint. In the foreground, a brown dendrite riverbank recedes back to green land, retouched with brush strokes of green and brown to create foliage. The two trees on the left appear to be an addition by Sand's brush to balance the composition rather than created from the original dendrite stain. Slight traces of the dendrite texture are visible in the grey cliffs, which Sand extended into the background using a paler grey wash to create aerial perspective. Aurore and Gabrielle stand side by side on the central green riverbank, their miniscule scale transforming the mountainous landscape into a picturesque scene which appears accessible, yet remains romantically untamed.

Sand generally kept her visual art to herself or between her family, occasionally referring to watercolors or gouaches in her letters. Not until much later did she mention "l'art des dendrites," which she describes in a letter to journalist Edmond Plauchut dated February 7, 1874. "Je m'amuse beaucoup," she writes casually of her creations in the same letter, and explains her granddaughter Aurore's role in preparing the stains.[351] Like Hugo, Sand did not take her experiments as a serious aspect of her career. Visual art was something to pass the time, a creative outlet in which the poet could seek alternate worlds and escapes from reality.

Regarding her creative process, Sand wrote that in order to create landscapes from her dendrites, "several attempts are necessary before obtaining a result that allows interpretation, because we see everything we want, such as in the clouds, in these results

[351] Ibid., 136.

of chance."[352] However, Sand's imagination saw more than this in her dendrites, and she did not limit her compositions only to landscapes. She also saw figures and animals in the gouache stains. She does not create the monstrous beasts that Hugo perceived in his taches, but she, too, had an eye for caricatures and fantasy creatures.

Her dendrite titled Face à face (Fig. 3.16) may be compared to Hugo's Ink Tache slightly reworked on folded paper in its symmetry and strange faces added with a brush. Yet, according to Bernadac, Sand did not obtain the mirror effect through pliage. Instead, she used a third piece of Bristol paper and reapplied the brown gouache "stamp" to form a nearly symmetrical dendrite.[353] That Sand perceived the faces of two squat, stony creatures or mountains with human profiles within the stain, rather than the typical winged creature that pliage designs tend to evoke, indicates her originality and her fascination with the mineral world. She retouched the gouache to add the heads, their pointed lock of hair or headdress, and the bases and outer borders of the otherwise formless creatures to enhance their symmetry, making them resemble pawns on a bizarre chessboard.

Other dendrites become spiny caterpillars or imaginary birds, which required little retouching other than the addition of eyes, feet, a beak, and a few lines to indicate feathers. One of Sand's most striking figural dendrites is a Déesse Guerrière (Fig. 3.17) from the mid-1870s. From the gouache stains that became the crest of the helmet, the left hand, the drapery around the waist, and the lower folds of the tunic, Sand obtained the

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[352] Ibid., 157. From a letter to Pauline Villot dated March 15, 1874: "...Pour le paysage il faut beaucoup d'essais avant d'obtenir un résultat qui permette l'interprétation car on voit tout ce qu'on veut, comme dans les nuages, dans ces résultats du hasard."

[353] Ibid., 169.

graceful figure of a warrior goddess. The figure stands in contrapposto and faces away from the viewer, carefully balanced by Sand's addition of the goddess's lance.

Sand also perceived more familiar figures in her taches. Her smallest dendrite, which contains no visible traces of retouching, represents for Sand a Vierge (ou mère) à l'enfant (Fig. 3.18). The aleatory areas of paint easily resolve themselves into the silhouette of a seated female figure holding a child. The moss-green woman looms over an austere, pale brown landscape, giving her an imposing and dignified appearance, and she fluidly merges with the surrounding rocks. Perhaps in this stain Sand perceived a nineteenth-century version of the Madonna—an icon of the modern woman as both nurturing and scientifically curious, and inseparable from the natural world.

Sand's dendrites that involve little retouching remain open to interpretation and invite the viewer to participate in the hallucinatory process of seeking hidden images within the chance-generated arrangement of textured gouache. One of the most intriguing of these abstract compositions is Sand's enigmatic Le Secret de la chaumière (Fig. 3.19). At first the vertically oriented image appears to be a non-representational array of grey, blue, and gold splatters. Upon a closer look, the blue shadow of what is presumably the cottage mentioned in the title emerges from the left side of the background. The scattered blue gouache converges into elongated trees or hills through which the negative space of the page creates a curving path into the distance.

The only visible traces of Sand's brush are the elaborations on the dark grey vegetation in the foreground. The plants cover the bottom edge and climb the right side of the page, creating the impression that the viewer is peering through a mysterious forest into a clandestine scene. The pale blue areas within the dark foliage suggest the effect of

dappled light shining through an unseen wood from which the viewer is emerging. Although the scene invites the viewer to follow the bright path, one feels as if intruding upon the shadowy cottage. Sand's precise intent for the scene remains uncertain, and her hidden cottage retains the secrets of her unconscious mind.

Perhaps the most remarkable about Sand's dendrites are the dozen gouache stains she intentionally left untouched, yet kept and placed in memory albums for her granddaughters. Although Bernadac considers these original taches completed works due to their inclusion in the albums,[354] other possibilities remain. Sand may have wished to document the steps of her artistic process in achieving her watercolor compositions, or intended for Aurore and Gabrielle to complete the watercolors or dendrites and use them to develop the potential of their own creative unconscious—similar to collaborative Surrealist games such as exquisite corpse. Since the pages remain in their original state, observing the dendrite and tache selection that Sand chose to leave unaltered suggests that she appreciated the accidental effects of the watercolor stains as aesthetically pleasing in their own right.

However, one example of Sand's dendrites (Fig. 3.20) seems an unusual addition to an album she assembled in 1873. The page contains the green and sienna pigments she incorporated into her most successful landscapes, but the sparse arrangement of the stains presents a challenging image in which to seek landscape elements. A large moss-green stain occupies the upper left corner and extends across the top of the page, encountering a smaller sienna stain in the upper right, textured with dendrite effects. A faint horizontal

[354] Ibid., 135. "Ayant été classées dans les albums, nous devons considerer ces taches comme un projet accompli et abouti," he writes.

stretch of pale violet extends across the vast negative space of the lower half of the page, directly below a larger water-stained area.

The viewer easily can become lost in contemplating Sand's untouched taches while attempting to replicate the unconscious reverie that she may have experienced when seeking potential images in her automatic creations. By keeping this image for a family album, Sand both chronicles her dendrite method and implies that she appreciated this example of her gouache experiments as aesthetically pleasing in its unfinished state. The particular arrangement of form and color possibly presents a challenge, but nevertheless has the potential to become one of her picturesque landscapes.

Another tache (Fig. 3.21) from the same album of 1873 shows no dendrite effects, but the watercolor is an outstanding abstract composition of luminous color and vaporous forms. Sand possibly valued this work as a potential color palette or experiment with wash and color effects. The composition is balanced by a concentration of green and sienna originating in the top left corner and extending across the top of the page. From the upper left an ochre stain cascades down toward the center of the image, curving around an ultramarine or violet stain in the lower left. The right side of the composition is sparse save for two rounded sienna spots and the repetition of the faint ochre shade toward the center. Accidental splatters and water droplets in the upper left only enhance the painting's ethereal appearance and sense of balance. Again, the viewer may wonder what Sand's semi-hallucinatory state allowed her to identify in these works—whether natural phenomena such as dappled light or mineralogical patterns, or more conceptual subjects such as the hazy impression of a dream or memory welling up from the unconscious.

Several taches in Sand's albums are even more enigmatically abstract, while others seem to be incomplete landscapes or studies of atmospheric color. An album dated 1875-76 contains examples of both types of taches. Some of these works, such as a predominantly green tache (Fig. 3.22), are similar to the non-figurative images of the 1873 album, but appear purely intended to provide examples of Sand's dendrite technique and her automatic experimentation with color and texture.

While some of her unfinished dendrites or taches appear that they would need very little retouching to become recognizable as landscapes or crumbling architecture, this seems another tache that would challenge an artist attempting to transform it into a familiar subject or landscape. Again, its preservation in the album suggests that Sand considered some of her dendrites evocative of a mood—or possibly a hallucinatory experience—in their original, abstract state. If she considered these gouache stains to be completed works of art, her aleatory arrangements of color represent a remarkable predecessor of twentieth-century phenomena, including Surrealist automatism and Abstract Expressionism.

Hugo and Sand were not the only nineteenth-century artists to cross the threshold of automatist abstraction. In the 1870s, Gustave Moreau began painting colorful, abstract compositions in oil on canvas. He preserved these works in his collection and left them for his museum, which was organized by Moreau's friend and legatee Henri Rupp and opened in January 1903. Some of these paintings were intended as studies for larger ones, but others may be considered purely abstract according to twentieth-century concepts of art (Fig. 3.23).[355]

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[355] Geneviève Lacambre, Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1999), 175-177.

By the 1880s, Moreau was creating pliage images with watercolor, leaving the design to chance (Fig. 3.24). Primarily he produced myriad color and texture combinations connected by brush strokes of various shapes and thicknesses. Although Moreau's watercolor experiments resemble Hugo's ink creations, the painter seems less interested than Hugo in extracting imaginary figures and locations from the pigment patterns, and more concerned with exploring color combinations and rich textures.

These oil studies and watercolors have received little attention in current art historical scholarship, and therefore I would like to offer original interpretations of several of these paintings and examine them as possible examples of early automatism and abstraction. In fact, these works were unknown to the general public until a Moreau retrospective exhibition at the Louvre in 1961, which included examples of his nearly two hundred unfinished works and abstract sketches along with his major paintings from the Musée Gustave Moreau.

Most of Moreau's meticulously composed mythological or history paintings eschew the chance compositions that characterize Surrealist automatism, but his creative process involved channeling dream imagery and abstraction. He claimed that

> [o]ne thing is dominant in my art—the greatest enthusiasm and ardor towards abstraction. The expression of human feelings, of man's passions interests me deeply, without a doubt, but I am prompted less to express these movements of the soul and spirit than to render visible, so to speak, the interior intimations that do not seem to connect to anything, that have something of the divine in their apparent insignificance and that, translated by the marvellous effects of pure plasticity, open truly magical, I shall even say divine, vistas.[356]

[356] Julius Kaplan, The Art of Gustave Moreau: Theory, Style, and Content (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 12, quoting pages 41-44 (dated 10 October 1897) of Moreau's Holland-bound notebook in the Archives of the Musée Gustave Moreau.

As noted earlier, "abstraction" held a different meaning during the nineteenth century than it does today. In a recent Moreau exhibition catalogue, Ferenc Tóth explains that to a nineteenth-century artist, "abstraction" indicated any divergence from what one experiences in reality. In an era in which non-representational art already was associated with psychological studies and therapy, he claims, Moreau's intentions in creating these works remain uncertain.[357] Regarding Moreau specifically, Julius Kaplan believes that the artist, striving for a state of spiritual transfiguration, turned to abstraction as a "means of communicating the ideal" through the formal elements of art. Thus Moreau's abstraction is apparent in his subdued, expressive forms that suggest spiritual, immaterial realms or dreams.[358]

However, some of Moreau's experiments and studies that he preserved for decades suggest that, like Hugo and Sand, he appreciated the aesthetic value of non-figurative works and chance-created designs. He even may have considered them manifestations analogous to the expressive color amalgamations with which he experimented in his oil paintings. By analyzing specific Moreau paintings and sketches in the collection of the Musée Gustave Moreau, I intend to prove that Moreau experimented with automatism in his attempts to access an unconscious realm or mesmeric state through his art.

As early as the 1890s, critics remarked upon the abstract quality of Moreau's work and its divergence from traditional history painting. In Le Mouvement Idéaliste en Peinture (1896), André Mellerio explains Moreau's contempt for his own epoch, which

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[357] Ferenc Tóth, "Vision and Invention. The Studio Experiments of Gustave Moreau," in Museum of Fine Arts, Land of Myths: The Art of Gustave Moreau, exh. cat. (Budapest: Museum of Fine Arts, 2009), 34.

[358] Ibid., 12-13.

he considered vulgar and tasteless, and his desire to emulate antiquity and commune with exotic worlds. In his search for escapism, by the fin-de-siècle Moreau's work shuns not only reality but also nature itself. His paintings become bizarrely decorative and enigmatic, as if the isolated artist envisioned them as opium dreams.[359] Mellerio goes on to discuss Moreau's work in the context of Joris-Karl Huysmans's decadent novel À Rebours, discussed in Chapter I, and how Moreau's Orientalist Salomé painting inspired lascivious, hallucinatory thoughts.

An 1899 article in La Revue de l'Art ancient et moderne by Léonce Bénédite, curator of the Musée du Luxembourg reveals that some fin-de-siècle spectators were intrigued by Moreau's apparently abstract compositions, which Rupp had framed for the museum. Describing these experimental sketches and watercolors, Bénédite writes that the artist's

> imagination was fired by tones whose suggestive combinations…aroused sensations which immediately revealed themselves in the concrete aspects of a rich symbol… [A] few tones brought together by chance on the palette and juxtaposed on a panel are enough for him to convey in this contrast or harmony the expressive meaning of a peculiar language of his own. He carefully recorded these deliberate or unexpected notations, enlarging on them in the realm of feeling they evoked, and seeing with his clear eyes the shape of his dream slowly emerging.[360]

Bénédite focuses on the psychological effect of color itself, in its aleatory contrasts and combinations, on Moreau's imagination. He realizes that the images, whether consciously created or not, spiritually transported the artist into an altered state of reality,

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[359] André Mellerio, Le Mouvement Idéaliste en Peinture (Paris: Floury, 1896), 14. "Cette fois, ce n'est plus la réalité, même purifiée et surélevée, moreau en a fait abstraction quasi-totale," he writes.

[360] Léonce Bénédite, "Gustave Moreau et Burne-Jones," La Revue de l'Art ancien et moderne (Paris, July 1899): 285. Translated by Pierre-Louis Mathieu in Gustave Moreau: with a catalogue of the finished paintings, watercolors, and drawings (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1976), 186-188.

approaching a connection with his unconscious mind as unexpected forms arose during his dreamlike contemplation of the painted surfaces.

The idea of Moreau as an abstract artist and possible forerunner of movements such as Abstract Expressionism has raised controversy among Moreau scholars since the 1961 Louvre retrospective and the global Moreau exhibitions that followed. These events inspired new endeavors to critically analyze Moreau's abstraction. "Gustave Moreau: Moot Grandfather of Abstraction," proclaims the title of an article by Abstract Expressionist painter Paul Jenkins in the December 1961 issue of Art News. Jenkins takes the standpoint that Moreau's "bits of reality disguised as paint" were intentional compositions. Although the paintings may have originated as studies, Moreau transformed them into original, unexpected images in his attempts to break free from nineteenth-century aesthetic conventions descending from Neoclassicism and Romanticism. This analysis, viewed through the lens of modernism, overlooks the dreamlike idealism and spiritual meaning of Moreau's creative process. Yet Jenkins offers insight into how mid-twentieth-century artists understood Moreau's work, and firmly placed his experimental work in the evolution of abstract art.[361]

The Louvre catalogue remains silent on Moreau's studies, but at the 1962 exhibition "Odilon Redon, Gustave Moreau, Rodolphe Bresdin" at the Museum of Modern Art, sixteen out of thirty-nine Moreau works were small sketches and unfinished paintings. Dore Ashton's exhibition catalogue essay on the Moreau collection remarks upon Abstract Expressionists' "discovery" of Moreau's technical experiments. These artists were particularly drawn to Moreau's textured surfaces, unusually intermingled

[361] Paul Jenkins, "Gustave Moreau: Moot Grandfather of Abstraction," Art News (Dec. 1961): 68-69.

colors, and gestural lines. From Ashton's perspective, Moreau used abstraction to escape the constraints of nineteenth-century styles and "relinquish his lexicon of assigned symbols in favour of floating cosmic visions like those of abstract painters."[362] Although Ashton mistakenly believes that Moreau framed the abstract works himself, he is the first modern critic to discuss them as possible evidence of a spiritual journey toward a unrealized dream.

Pierre-Louis Mathieu attributes Moreau's abstraction to "reasoned thought" rather than results of chance. As an extension of his Symbolist thought, Moreau ventured into abstraction in an attempt to sever his art from nature and the physical world, yet it is unlikely that Moreau, an academic painter, completely could have effaced all traces of figuration and objectivity from his canvases. Mathieu compares Moreau to Wassily Kandinsky, the artist attributed with producing the first entirely abstract painting in 1910. Both artists sought spiritual elevation through their work, yet Kandinsky methodically documented his progress toward absolute abstraction by gradually removing figurative elements from his paintings.

In contrast, Moreau did not turn to abstraction until later in his career, rarely recorded his working methods, and remained firmly entrenched in academic styles.[363] It is unlikely, but not impossible, that Moreau influenced Kandinsky's development of nonobjective art. The Russian artist may have visited the Musée Gustave Moreau during

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[362] Dore Ashton, "Gustave Moreau," in Odilon Redon, Gustave Moreau, Rodolphe Bresdin, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1962), 129.

[363] Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Gustave Moreau: The Watercolors (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1985), 98.

a 1906 visit to Paris, but he never mentions Moreau as one of his inspirations.[364] Yet Moreau may be considered a forerunner of Kandinsky in that he, too, sought to convey the mystical quality and emotional resonance of color arrangements as the artist's hand unconsciously endeavors to replicate his dreams and visions.

Raphael Rosenberg, studying Moreau's seemingly abstract watercolors, concludes that the pages are the results of color mixing and pigment tests. He acknowledges, though, that Moreau's keeping them for over two decades is exceptional, and believes that it is "chance that drives the 'creation' of these palettes. Moreau is at best driven by his subconscious."[365] He also compares Moreau's watercolor palettes and sketches to Rorschach tests, considering the associations they inspire as Moreau transforms them into nebulous compositions. Rosenberg briefly mentions Moreau's use of watercolor pliage and taches as examples of his abstract explorations, in which he associated the shapes of stains with figures or animals and occasionally embellished them, as did Hugo and Sand. Thus in 1910, as Rosenberg points out, Kandinsky and the avant-garde did not actually invent a new style and technique, but instead established that non-figurative works offer aesthetic value and spiritual presence.[366]

Moreau's oil sketches and preparatory studies reveal his tendency to incorporate accidental designs into his works. In the Botticelli-inspired canvas La naissance de Vénus (The Birth of Venus), ca. 1870 (Fig. 3.25) the goddess rises from a strange grotto

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[364] Mathieu, Gustave Moreau (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), 215. Furthermore, Kandinsky's wife Nina never heard him mention Moreau. Nineteenth-century artists he does consider precursors to abstraction include Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, Arnold Böcklin, and Franz von Stuck.

[365] Raphael Rosenberg, "Hasard et abstraction. Les palettes d'aquarelle de Gustave Moreau," in Musée de la Vie Romantique, Gustave Moreau: Mythes & Chimères: Aquarelles et dessins secrets du musée Gustave Moreau, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée de la Vie Romantique, 2003), 95. "C'est le hasard qui conduit la "création" de ces palettes. Moreau étant tout au plus dirigé par son subconscient." Translation mine.

[366] Ibid., 105.

of abstract rock formations and diminished, faceless figures. Although signed in the lower right, the composition appears unfinished, especially the background. In fact, the right half of the painting seems almost completely abstract, painted in thick brush strokes that leave some of the blank canvas showing through. The grotto—if indeed this section is intended to depict a grotto—also is reminiscent of Leonardo da Vinci in its arrangement of rock formations and rough textures. Moreau is known to have admired Leonardo, and possibly evokes his fantastical landscape vistas in this work.

Moreau incorporates accidental effects and textures into the composition, such as the jagged effect of dark paint around the goddess' hair, creating a sense of movement. An arc of rough, dark brush strokes connects the two halves of the painting, linking Venus with the abstract grotto that Cupid indicates with his open-armed gesture. Pierre-Louis Mathieu describes this work as being in an "incomplete state,"[367] yet Moreau possibly wished to preserve the hallucinatory effect of the goddess within the rocky seascape. The viewer follows Venus's gaze into the unknown world into which she is born, as intangible and hazy as if viewed through a curtain of sea foam.

In Près des Eaux (By the Water's Edge), 1896 (Fig. 3.26) only the defined faces assist the beholder in identifying the image of a semi-reclining, androgynous figure approached by a diminished ethereal being. Moreau appears to have drawn this creature out of an existing background, since its facial contours are drawn over the myriad colors. It possesses no defined form, but rather manifests itself as a colorful apparition, at first difficult to discern within the textured brush strokes of the background. Mathieu perceives two tiny figures drifting in the air, but I would argue that the watercolor

[367] Mathieu, The Gustave Moreau Museum (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1997), n.p.

contains only one supernatural figure whose form dissolves into sinuous drapery and long hair, suggested by undulating strokes of red and green shades. Similarly, the reclining figure's body appears formless beneath its flowing drapery of the same colors, with more emphasis placed on the jewel-toned shade of red. Intricately detailed areas of blue, pale brown, green, and red evoke an Orientalist headdress.

The rest of the image seems composed of experimental color combinations and loose brush strokes, and the landscape surrounding the figure appears unfinished, although partly defined by the rough texture of the sketchy brush strokes. The dark trees and water framing the scene enhance the illusion of gazing into an intimate, spiritual world, and recall automatic drawing in their apparently rapid application. Diagonal streaks of red animate the scene, and the reclining figure is balanced by the muse's robes and faint red flowers dashed on the right side of the composition. Furthermore, Moreau included a title and signature, indicating that he may have considered the painting complete in its abstract state.

Peter Cooke speculates that the fairylike figure represents the voice of inspiration manifested before a contemplative poet. Cooke points out that Moreau's images of solitary figures in nature often include bodies of water as a symbol of creative origins and the "unconscious strata of the personality," providing an element for the poet's self-reflective meditation.[368] Yet the psychological interaction in Près des Eaux (By the Water's Edge) also should be considered. The calligraphic lines of the indistinct drapery and landscape surrounding the figures leads the viewer's eye to the exchange of intense gazes between the seated figure and the supernatural creature or muse.

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[368] Geneviève Lacambre, Peter Cooke, and Luisa Capodieci, Gustave Moreau: Les Aquarelles (Somogy: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1998), 139.

Returning to the concept of mesmerism discussed in Chapter I, the figures appear entranced by one another, or the human figure receives spiritual instructions and guidance from the floating muse. If indeed the creature represents a muse, it seems to only have just descended to hypnotize the alleged poet with its stare. It merges with the atmosphere just as the immaterial reclining figure melds with its surroundings. With this connection between the abstract image and the gaze exchanged to spark inspiration, perhaps Moreau depicts his desire to transfix the fleeting, primordial flashes of creativity that surge forth from the unconscious.

One unsigned work that seems particularly experimental is La parque et l'ange de la mort (Fate and the Angel of Death), 1890 (Fig. 3.27). The figures' faces are undefined, and the composition concentrates on color effects. The vertically oriented canvas, over a meter tall, depicts the crimson-winged Angel of Death holding a sword aloft and riding a horse painted in myriad dark tones. The robed personification of Fate, her head bowed, strides next to the horse. The figures seem suspended on the summit of a hill in a rocky landscape extending beneath a murky sky at dusk.

Among Moreau's studies or experimental works, this painting stands out for its unusually thick application of paint and its eccentric palette. The colors are built in the thickest layers on the setting sun and on the angel's sword and wings, which visibly protrude from the canvas. The horse's head is rendered in dark brown and blue, with teal streaks in its thickly painted mane, a blood-red nostril, and a red and yellow eye, all details which appear to have been added with quick or automatic brush strokes. The figure of Fate is formed from broad strokes of blue, violet, and brown. Moreau has scratched through and scraped off the paint to clarify the figure, and he possibly also

intended to suggest her tattered garment or the strings of human lives that she prepares to sever.

The thickly encrusted surface of this somber painting foreshadows the bold brush strokes of the Fauves—including Moreau's student Henri Matisse—and another of his celebrated protégés, Georges Rouault. Painted soon after the death of Moreau's close friend Alexandrine Dureux, the darkened textures of the sky and the gouged lines defining the figures bear an emotional resonance. Moreau may have wished to perpetuate the painting's sorrowful mood by leaving the surface in its raw, unfinished state.

Another watercolor, Combat de centaures (Battle of the Centaurs), ca. 1890 (Fig. 3.28) is one of the most demonstrative examples of Moreau's experimentation with automatic line and gestures. The mythological figures are barely visible within a maelstrom of loose brush strokes, mostly in shades of deep brown and red. As in Moreau's The Birth of Venus, the right half of the painting appears to be completely non-objective, yet the thick lines and stains may signify a dappled forest landscape populated with flitting supernatural creatures. On the left side, the faceless heads and upper bodies of the centaurs engaged in combat emerge from the nebulous chaos of brush strokes, and a rounded stain of dark brown in the lower left forms the hindquarters of the centaur with his back and shoulder turned toward the observer.

The fact that Moreau gave the watercolor a title and signature suggests that he considered this work complete despite its frenzied abstraction. Considering the formless blotches and gestural lines, the painting appears to have begun as a testing page for a watercolor palette which Moreau then contemplated, finding a subject within the chance-created design. Yet he hardly defines the grappling figures within the violent storm of

brush strokes, leaving the majority of the page to form a nightmarish background. Combat de centaures is a remarkable reminder that Moreau, an artist known for his linear style and precision, not only explored automatism, but also signed and kept the works in which he observed automatic compositions such as mythological creatures and biblical narratives.

The most hallucinatory of these experimental works is La Tentation de Saint Antoine (The Temptation of Saint Anthony) (Fig. 3.29), from the mid-1890s. Inspired by the conclusion of Gustave Flaubert's La Tentation de saint Antoine, in which the saint confronts fantastical visions, Moreau adds countless apparitional figures emerging from the frightful whirlwind enveloping the saint. His haloed, standing figure is visible to the left of the center. His bearded, anguished face is slightly upturned, and his body is swathed in the dark brown stain that depicts his robe. He lifts his hands in prayer and kneels on a rough, jagged landscape that appears suspended within the supernatural torrent of flashing colors and monstrous faces.

Again, like Hugo and Sand, Moreau most likely created a purely abstract work, then imagined the subject within the chance-created color and texture, in the tradition of Leonardo or Cozens. Translucent faces and creatures surround Saint Anthony: a robed Orientalist figure frames the scene on the far left, and nearby shadowy stains have been transformed into a sinister bull and skull-headed creature. The faint figure of a pale temptress levitates within the saint's vision while he perhaps attempts to dispel her with his prayers and challenging gaze. Bright red, green, and yellow drapery hang down from the woman's body, or possibly form another indistinct standing figure. In the right side of the painting lurk two hybrid creatures—bearded male faces on birdlike bodies with

cruel talons; a serpentine form above a leering face, and the grim shape of an enormous head with a wide, staring eye and grimacing mouth. These are the most readily visible of the saint's tormentors, but others may be well-hidden within the watercolor stains.

With no distinction between the earth and sky, the subterranean and aerial worlds, or reality and dream, the image relentlessly draws the viewer into the saint's nightmarish visions. In fact, Moreau's watercolor potentially both depicts and generates a hallucinatory mental state. While attempting to locate Moreau's vaguely defined monstrosities within the maelstrom, spectators may experience a creative process similar to the artist's. An infinite array of creatures may materialize as different viewers associate Moreau's automatic forms with imagery surging forth from the imagination or the unconscious.

Currently the Musée Gustave Moreau exhibits several examples of Moreau's studies and unfinished works, in which visitors can observe the artist's experimental tendencies. One particularly arresting ébauche (Fig. 3.23) is a large canvas with canted edges that initially appears completely non-figurative. A closer look reveals thin, dark lines of an indeterminate drawing in the center of the painting, possibly the outline of a figure on horseback with a second standing figure on the left. Yet this incomplete sketch was added after the canvas was covered in what appears to be an otherwise formless abstraction. Upon contemplating the painting's muted colors, applied in distorted streaks of mauve, red, teal, and dark grey, it slowly resolves into a balanced composition, as if the viewer gazes into an unknown landscape through a dreamlike veil.

Another étude de composition (Fig. 3.30) on display at the museum contains multiple sketches on the same canvas. Vague figures are visible in the four variously

sized rectangular spaces that Moreau defines on the left. The largest sketch, in the center of the canvas, depicts a woman in red drapery standing on a flight of stairs. Below her, another figure collapses into a bloody pool at the foot of the steps, suggesting a sketch of Salomé and Saint John the Baptist. The figures themselves are loosely rendered, but between them are painted a series of dark, meandering lines reminiscent of automatic drawing.

Most intriguing in this combination of studies is the vertical mass of oil paint at the far right side of the painting: strokes of red, blue, white, ochre, and brown intermingle in a thickly textured column. This section of the canvas does not appear to be connected to any of the small sketches to the left. In other works, similar effects with layered brush strokes become part of the composition, forming textured background elements such as curtains or cliffs, but most do not appear so mysteriously out of place as does the dense column of paint in this sketch, and the colors seem too carefully blended to indicate that Moreau was merely testing his palette. Yet, as in several of his ébauches, any subject Moreau may have intended for this section has disappeared into the abstract streaks of paint.

Studying Moreau's experimental and semi-automatic works clarifies the link between his Symbolist idealism and subsequent movements toward abstraction. The expressive Fauvism of his students, particularly that of Henri Matisse and Georges Rouault, perpetuates his gestural style and conveyance of emotion through color. Moreau remained an academic painter throughout his career, often lamenting the younger Symbolist generation's infatuation with dreams and the invisible. However, several of

his contemporaries chose to embrace the pursuit of these themes, actively assimilating automatic forms and designs into their compositions.

Odilon Redon went further than Moreau or his predecessors in eschewing narrative and figuration in favor of technical experimentation and automatism. In an 1898 letter to André Mellerio, Redon explained that his technique involved giving form to the "charming and unexpected paths of fancy," producing visions that surprised even himself. His master Rodolphe Bresdin initiated him into Leonardo's method of perceiving accidental images, and he often incorporated accidental designs into his finished works, or turned lithographic stones upside-down to extract new compositions.[369] His claim in 1902 that his images materialized "according to the beholder's state of mind" suggests the psychological impact of his increasingly abstract style.[370]

An undated pastel drawing titled Fantaisie (Fig. 3.31) contains no apparent subject other than a dreamlike miasma of muted colors. A violet and coral amoeba-like form seems to drift into the picture plane from the left and mingle with hastily dashed lines of violet and rose. These cross-hatched forms appear to replicate and overlap, creating an allover abstract pattern that lends the image a sense of motion and limitless

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[369] Redon, Lettres d'Odilon Redon 1878-1916 (Paris and Brussels: Librairie nationale d'art et d'histoire and G. van Oest, 1923), 33. "…comme une entreprise de départ que l'on abandonna au cours du chemin pour suivre les sentiers charmants et imprévus de la fantaisie, cette souveraine, qui nous ouvre soudain des séductions magnifiques, suprenantes, et qui nous subjugue." Translated in Dario Gamboni, "'Fabrication of Accidents': Factura and Chance in Nineteenth-Century Art," Anthropology and Aesthetics 36 (Autumn 1999): 214.

[370] Odilon Redon, "Confidances d'artiste," in À soi-même, 97. "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." Translated in Gamboni, 1999, 214.

expansion, as if the viewer gazes into a microscope to observe the strange organisms that populate Redon's imagination. Darker pastel shades descend like a mist from the upper right, perhaps pulling a veil over this part of the artist's dream that will soon shift to another inexplicable vision, fueled by his fascination with botany and evolution.

In Chimère (Fig. 3.32), a charcoal drawing from 1902, Redon's hatched lines appear to have begun as chance-generated patterns and automatic drawing that gradually interlaced and took the form of an impossible creature. Rather than the mythological Chimera, composed of a lioness' body with a snake-headed tail and goat's head rising from her back, Redon's rendition springs from giving form to aleatory lines. A hollow-eyed, bearded human face emerges near the center of the composition, amid a tangle of serpentine appendages resembling hybrid plant and animal forms in the lower half of the drawing. Although the image's upper half also seems to represent projections of the chimerical body, the jagged charcoal lines and formless darkened areas are doubtless the result of automatic drawing. Gradually these unpremeditated meandering lines and shapes converged until Redon recognized the potential image of a human face surrounded by tentacles.

Another possibility is that the human head, its hypnotic eyes blind to the physical world, portrays the dreamer himself: a visionary tormented by a monstrous creature or personal demon. The curved and radiating lines around the head lend it a saintly demeanor, and although its severed appearance recalls the martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist, the barbed and sinister projections surrounding it are more reminiscent of Saint Anthony's demonic hallucinations. Like the saint, the artist must slip into a trancelike

spiritual state, yet the artist attempts to dispel figuration and tradition to allow unpremeditated imagery to surface from his unconscious.

Fascinated by primordial creatures and the origins of life, Redon often includes bizarre and formless creatures in his works. These strange organisms often resemble microscopic protozoa or marine creatures that drift eerily across the indeterminate space of Redon's visions or through alternate underwater realms. Works featuring these organisms seem to relate closely to the unconscious or correspond with Redon's releasing conscious control over his imagery in favor of technical experimentation and abstract textural combinations.

Based on Renaissance portraiture, Profil sur méandres rouges (Profile with Red Meanders) (formerly known as Jeanne d'Arc), ca. 1903 (Fig. 3.33) is nevertheless a strikingly modern image that incorporates abstraction to enhance its psychological impact. The profile of the young woman dressed in viridian green merges with the lively background of thick red and violet pastel strokes. Although her countenance appears passive, the atmosphere surrounding her suggests a tumultuous inner state. The abstract crimson background is most intense at the crown of the young woman's head, creating a flamelike projection that leads the spectator's eye to the tail of the enigmatic green organism suspended at the top of the page. This bulbous, biomorphic form seems to glow with a mysterious light of its own and float upward into what may be a darkened sky illuminated by a single star, visible in the upper left. Alternately, it may commingle with a shadowy mental space populated with other luminescent creatures and hallucinations.

Furthermore, looking closely at the woman's headdress reveals what appears to be a supernatural humanoid creature perched on her shoulder. This faceless apparition seems to merge with the rounded coils behind it, giving the figure a serpentine aspect that brings to mind Redon's vision of Death in À Gustave Flaubert, the second lithograph series of La Tentation de Saint Antoine from 1889 (Fig. 3.34). Yet in Profil sur méandres rouges, the significance of this diminished figure and its possible connection to death in the subject's mind remain a mystery. Dario Gamboni considers the drawing's background "a representation of the figure's inner mental space."[371] Indeed, by including these mystical elements, perhaps Redon provides a complete portrait of an imagined individual—both her physical appearance and the psychological experience normally hidden and repressed. Redon conveys this secret interior world through abstraction and personal symbols.

Redon's Roger et Angelica, ca. 1910 (Fig. 3.35) offers another example of how the artist defies mimesis to transmute his compositions into sublime hallucinatory visions. Without the mythological figures, the drawing would dissolve into a haze of subdued colors. Based on Ludovico Ariosto's sixteenth-century epic poem Orlando Furioso, the drawing illustrates the heroic knight Roger soaring on his winged steed above the submerged dragon to rescue the agitated nude figure of Angelica. The cliff holding her captive is distinguished by a rougher texture of the pastel medium, a darker outline, and dashes of vegetation, but otherwise the rocky landscape merges with the indigo sky. The dragon's head is barely distinguishable from the murky ocean in the lower left, where the creature coalesces with the element most associated with the unconscious.

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[371] Dario Gamboni, Potential Images: Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Modern Art (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 52.

In a recent Redon exhibition catalogue, Jodi Hauptman discusses the artist's enthrallment with water and its transformative properties, which he expressed through his images of dramatic seascapes, fantastical submarine life, and drowning Ophelias. According to Hauptman, the ocean's "unceasing transmutations" and formless, shifting imagery signify its correspondence with the unconscious. "The dematerialization of body into liquid…and the dissolution of organism into foam in his works beneath the sea stand for a broader metamorphosis in his colored pictures: from representation to abstraction," she writes.[372] Regarding Roger and Angelica, Redon uses amorphous elements such as the mysterious white spume and the dissolving atmosphere, rendered in unreal colors, to firmly place the scene in a phantasmagorical world. Like Hugo, he recognized the ocean's potential to evoke sublime images and commune with the unknown, and creatures real and imagined both emerge from and vanish into the seas he creates. In Roger and Angelica, the faceless characters disappear into their surroundings of water, stone, and mist, as does the narrative content while the viewer contemplates the surreal impact of Redon's abstraction.

Redon kept detailed drawings of nature that he incorporated into this iconography of dream states. John Rewald has identified recurring instances of Redon's images of certain trees, such as an intricate pencil study from about 1892 and a fantastical version of the same tree in his 1904 decorative panel, Bouddha dans sa jeunesse (Buddha in his Youth) (Fig. 3.36). In this large work, the golden tones of the tree merge with the meditating teacher's seated figure. A mist filled with amorphous creatures and symbols, possibly generated by the Buddha's enlightened thought, surrounds both entities. While

[372] Jodi Hauptman, ed., Beyond the Visible: The Art of Odilon Redon, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2006), 41.

the tree becomes a mystical presence in the panel, it dissolves into an otherworldly environment that suggests Redon's increasing tendency towards abstraction. According to Rewald, Redon's initial interpretations of reality could induce "the state of mind required for the exploration of the invisible and… establish a ready frame of reference for his concern with the visible."[373] However, the trees also seem to represent points on Redon's spectrum of imagery from the reality seen with the physical eye to its hallucinatory transformation when contemplated by the inner eye.

Redon's painting Le cyclope (The Cyclops), ca. 1914 (Fig. 3.37) provides an example of his continued experimentation with abstraction and automatism toward the end of his career. The thickly textured paint and improbable color combinations of Redon's technique make the scene otherworldly and anticipate Surrealist decalcomania compositions. Rather than illustrating the scene from Homer's Odyssey, Redon creates a highly personal rendition of the mythological monster, which appears more curious than malevolent. Save for its characteristic enormous eye, the features of its humanoid face are hardly defined, and perhaps the Cyclops only exists in a vague dream of the androgynous reclining figure embedded in the foreground vegetation. In fact, commingling in this flattened illusory landscape, the creature and the human may represent two aspects of one psyche. The figure sinks into the abstract environment, its eyes shut and its face concealed—the slumber of the rational, conscious mind—while the Cyclops—signifying the primordial creative urge and the visions of the unconscious—emerges from its depths to watch the dream unfold.

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[373] John Rewald, "Odilon Redon," in Odilon Redon, Gustave Moreau, Rodolphe Bresdin, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1962), 26.

While Redon explored automatism and ethereal apparitions, Paul Gauguin looked to primitive forms of representation, deviated from conventional figuration and chiaroscuro techniques, and searched for individual utopias and liberation from the rising industrial and consumer culture of Paris.[374] During the years before his voyage to the South Seas, Gauguin struggled to break free of Impressionist realism. His letters indicate his sense of triumph at defying traditional coloration in his Autoportrait avec portrait de Bernard (Les Misérables), 1888 (Fig. 3.38). In this expressive double portrait, Gauguin has conflated himself with Jean Valjean, the noble and persecuted protagonist of Hugo's novel, and included a profile of his friend and fellow painter Émile Bernard in the upper right of the vivid floral-patterned wallpaper.

Painted from memory, Bernard's portrait represents Gauguin's individual concept of abstraction.[375] He portrays the artist in the narrow space of a solid green background, reducing his features to their simplest components and outlines. Bold red contours filled with minimal shading form Bernard's head, and his body is reduced to two dark brush strokes indicating his shoulder and an irregularly-placed thumb holding the artist's palette, signified by a cropped, flat oval. This image of Bernard appears to hang on the wall behind Gauguin's own portrait, yet due to the abrupt contrast in Gauguin's color scheme and style, the possibility remains that Bernard exists in the picture plane of a completely different reality. Despite the variegated hues of Gauguin's self-portrait, his features nevertheless retain their realism in contrast to Bernard's flattened image, and

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[374] Ibid., 141.

[375] Paul Gauguin, Lettres de Gauguin, à sa femme et à ses amis, ed. Maurice Malingue (Paris: Grasset, 1946), 140-141. From a letter to Émile Schuffenecker dated October 8, 1888. "Translated in Gauguin, The Writings of a Savage, ed. Daniel Guérin, trans. Eleanor Levieux (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 23.

perhaps this diminished portrait represents an otherworldly glimpse into Gauguin's elusive, abstract ideal.

Gauguin's letter describing Autoportrait avec portrait de Bernard (Les Misérables) to artist Émile Schuffenecker conveys his concept of abstraction and the difficulty of defying academic conventions:

> I think it's one of my best things: thoroughly incomprehensible—it is so abstract! A bandit's head at first glance, a Jean Valjean, also personifying an Impressionist painter who is frowned upon and, in the eyes of the world, always carries a [ball and] chain. The way it's drawn is altogether special, complete abstraction… The colors are colors remote from nature; just picture a vague memory of pottery twisted by a fierce fire! All the reds, the purples, streaked by flashes of fire, like a furnace blazing before the painter's eyes, where the struggle among his thoughts takes place.[376]

Gauguin's slightly confrontational expression in his self-portrait challenges the viewer to interpret his technique and personality through his radical coloration. The crimson tones outlining Bernard's portrait are rhythmically repeated in the floral wallpaper pattern, and more subtly in Gauguin's own image. He renders himself in shadowy blue and green shades that highlight the fiery aspect of his flesh, particularly the skin of his ear, his neck, and the illuminated planes of his face, possibly expressing the inner torment concealed by his otherwise calm exterior.

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[376] Paul Gauguin, Lettres de Gauguin, à sa femme et à ses amis, ed. Maurice Malingue (Paris: Grasset, 1946), 140-141. From a letter to Schuffenecker dated October 8, 1888. "J'ai fait un portrait de moi pour Vincent [Van Gogh] qui me l'avait demandé. C'est je crois une de mes meilleures choses: absolument incomprehensible (par exemple) tellement il est abstrait. Tête de bandit au premier abord, un Jean Valjean, (les Misérables), personnifiant aussi un peintre impressionniste déconsidéré et portant toujours une chaine pour le monde. Le dessin en est tout à fait special, abstraction complète… La couleur est une couleur loin de la nature; figurez-vous un vague souvenir de la poterie tordue par le grand feu! Tous les rouges, les violets, rayés par les éclats de feu comme une fournaise rayonnant aux yeux, siège des luttes de la pensée du peintre." Translated in Gauguin, The Writings of a Savage, ed. Daniel Guérin, trans. Eleanor Levieux (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 23.

For Gauguin, color was the "deep and mysterious language, the language of dreams," that he believed held the key to abstraction.[377] In a March 1899 letter to Symbolist poet and critic André Fontainas, Gauguin encourages him to think of

> the musical role color will henceforth assume in modern painting. Color, which, like music, is vibration, can reach what is most general and consequently most vague in nature: its inner power.[378]

George T. M. Shackelford likens Gauguin's color theory to the artist's personal concept of synesthesia—associating the visual perception of color with stimuli normally experienced by the other senses.[379] In particular, Gauguin affiliates the eye's response to color combinations with the ear's abstract reception of music. Gauguin believed that color held a hypnotic power, an enigmatic force that appeals to both the physical and the inner eye, and flows from the canvas with the impact of a harmonious melody.

Also from 1888, Gauguin's Femme bretonne et oie près de l'eau (Breton Woman and Goose by the Water) (Fig. 3.39) creates a testament to his synesthesia. The symphonic and vibrant color arrangement, rather than the young woman and the white bird, are the apparent focus of this painting. Both woman and goose stare out of the picture plane, and the viewer's gaze instead becomes captivated by the collapsed space of the abstract landscape. Gauguin's short, agitated brush strokes and layering of color in

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[377] George T. M. Shackelford, "The Return to Paradise: Tahiti, 1895-1897," Gauguin Tahiti, exh. cat. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2004), 162, translating Gauguin's phrase from Diverses choses, "une langue profonde et mystérieuse, la langue du rêve." Furthermore, in Avant et Après, dated May 8, 1903, Gauguin writes, "Je n'ai jamais su faire un dessin proprement, manier un tortillon et une boulette de pain. Il me semble qu'il manque toujours quelque chose: la couleur." ("I have never been able to do a drawing properly, never learned how to handle a stump and a piece of dough. I always feel that something is missing: color.") Translated in Gauguin, The Writings of a Savage, 266.

[378] Gauguin, Lettres de Gauguin, 287-288. "Pensez aussi à la part musicale que prendra désormais la couleur dans la peinture moderne. La couleur qui est vibration de même que la musique est à même d'atteindre ce qu'il y a de plus général et partant de plus vague dans la nature: sa force intérieure." Translated in Henri Dorra, ed., Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 209.

[379] Shackelford, 162.

certain sections, such as the combined green and vermillion in the upper right, seem almost experimental despite the composition's meticulous sense of balance. The amorphous vermillion patches drift across the azure shades of the water like notes on a musical staff, creating a harmonious yet phantasmagorical composition—especially considering the landscape's hazy uncertainty. The absence of a horizon line obscures the source of reflections in the water—if indeed the warm orange, teal, and green areas are intended to signify reflections. While Gauguin captures a tranquil moment of a Breton woman's absorption with an unseen subject, the true theme of this abstract painting is the blazing intensity of Gauguin's red-orange tones harmonizing with complementary blues and greens.

Gauguin scholarship predominantly focuses on his innovative use of color to achieve his abstraction, but he also may have been drawn to experimentation with automatism. Gamboni mentions that Gauguin likely encountered Hugo's atmospheric drawings, which were first exhibited at the Galerie Georges Petit in 1888. Gamboni speculates that Gauguin admired how Hugo's art captures the impression of a sublime landscape constantly disintegrating and recomposing itself, and he attempted to emulate this effect in his own images of the Brittany coast.[380] However, Gauguin's seascapes seem to combine experimental techniques with colorful, subjective visions.

Gauguin's watercolor Aux roches noires (At the Black Rocks), 1889 (Fig. 3.40) mainly is composed of meandering dark lines, subdued shades of blue, and grey tones that fade to black. Studying the drawing suggests that he began with the swirling black contours—possibly chance-generated lines—then added the shading and color. Gauguin

[380] Gamboni, 2002, 89. Gamboni offers Gauguin's Flageolet Player on the Cliff, 1889, as an example of his attempts to capture the sea's metamorphosis.

uses undulating lines to depict a dream of a seascape, abandoning verisimilitude as waves morph into turbulent clouds and mist around the foreboding black rocks. The rock metamorphosing into a female figure may have been an addition to the work once Gauguin identified the potential image of human features in the grey shadows. Between the restless abstraction of the sea and the dark figure's ominous presence, the painting achieves an uncanny, disquieting aspect.

Gauguin's meandering lines and ambiguous forms carry over into his Tahitian paintings. In Mahana No Atua (Day of the God) (Fig. 1.44), for instance, improbable reflections and organic contours fill the lower third of the composition. Any instance of automatism in Gauguin's work is difficult to determine, since the more abstract sections of his finished works appear carefully formulated despite their ambiguity. Possibly signifying the immateriality of a spirit world, the enigmatic pool contains outlines of plants, rocks, and unidentified shapes in vibrant colors that distinguish it from the solid blue of the ocean in the background. Multihued ectoplasmic forms encroach upon a rose-colored shore that seems naturalistic in contrast to the water. Orange and vermillion on the painting's right edge fade to bright yellow and pale green once the water swirls past the young woman's feet at the center, while blue and violet darken the water on the right and appear in brighter shades on the left, making the pool's depth mysterious and indeterminate.

None of these cosmic hues and formations appear strange to the transfixed nude figures on the shore, as if such apparitions are part of everyday existence in this exotic world or in the "irrational" mind of the Polynesian Other. Perhaps Gauguin considered the Breton and Tahitian natives closer to a mystical existence than adherents to European

culture and realism, and thus surrounds these more "primitive" people with corresponding abstraction. Gamboni interprets the mysterious water in Mahana No Atua as an entity isolated from the context of the painting, something "primordial, a world of germination, fecundity and nourishment where life appears, passes itself on, and regenerates itself" in cyclical patterns.[381] However, the generative force of the painting's unearthly pool seems intimately linked to the somnolent figures and the standing idol behind them. The idol's ritualistic gesture heralds the supernatural phenomena visible in the water, possibly personal visions in the minds of the festival's participants and observers. Ultimately, the abstraction Gauguin projects onto the exotic world of the Other leaves the viewer uncertain which of the painting's components are intended to exist in reality and which are mere illusion.

The abstract experimentation of artists such as Gauguin formed a rift between Symbolist artists and critics. The two most illustrious critics representing this antagonism were Félix Fénéon, who began to praise Puvis de Chavannes and the Impressionists in the 1860s, and Albert Aurier, who closely allied himself with Gauguin.[382] Fénéon published an article on Gauguin in the satirical journal Le Chat Noir in 1891. While he appreciates the "mysterious, hostile, and primitive nature" of Gauguin's work, Fénéon feared that the artist was leading Symbolism too far down a religious and literary path.[383]

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[381] Gamboni, 95.

[382] Joan Ungersma Halperin, Félix Fénéon: Aesthete & Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle Paris (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 40.

[383] Halperin, 213-216.

For Fénéon, works such as Vision after the Sermon seemed to be a mere translation of an existing text rather than a search for a personal and symbolic pictorial language. Yet in this painting, Gauguin's vivid red landscape more powerfully conveys an unreal space that exists only in the mesmerized minds of the sermon's audience.[384] The painting may be interpreted as the artist's struggle to grasp an ideal vision through abstraction—an explanation the critic seems to overlook. Fénéon also criticized Gauguin's primitive style as containing "deformations [that] always resolve themselves in an increase of ugliness."[385] Fénéon's language, rooted in his original Naturalist style, uses careful, scientific description, indicating his preference for art that imitates nature and reflects the predominant Post-Naturalist and Post-Impressionist mood of art critics of the 1880s.[386]

In contrast, Fénéon's rival Aurier took the side of what he called synthetist-symbolist art such as Gauguin's. Gauguin's linearity and flat planes of color define his work as synthetist, while his expressiveness, harmony, aura of mystery, and trancelike figures suggest the Symbolist style. Unlike Fénéon, Aurier did not object to literary associations or simplification of form, which he believed created a rich interplay of hieroglyphs, or signs, which he saw infused with spiritual ecstasy in Gauguin's work.

Aurier opens his 1891 review of Gauguin's Vision after the Sermon with a quote from Plato's allegory of the cave, asking the reader what a man confined to the cave would think upon learning that his world until now has been naught but shadows and

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[384] Dorra, ed., 192, mentions that the red background is based on the color of varech, a red seaweed the villagers spread on their fields, and also is indebted to Japanese decorative objects painted with red lacquer.

[385] Michael Marlais, "In 1891: Observations on the Nature of Symbolist Art Criticism," in Arts Magazine, Vol. 61, No. 5 (January 1987): 90.

[386] Ibid., 93.

illusion.[387] Aurier emphasizes that Gauguin's "marvelous canvas…truly highlights the enigma of the biblical poem of the paradisiacal hours of primitive humanity; which reveals the inexpressible charms of the dream and of mystery and lifts the symbolic veils that the hands of simple souls only manage to half-raise."[388] In other words, only those able to reach a highly spiritual state of existence can absorb the artist's sublime message.

In a famous passage from the same review, Aurier distinguishes Vision after the Sermon's achievement of perfection by listing how the painting encompasses five things a work of art must be: Ideist (expressing the artist's idea), Symbolist (expressing the idea through forms), Synthetic (presenting generally comprehensible forms and signs), subjective (as the sign of an idea), and decorative.[389] By 'decorative', Aurier refers to how basic approaches to art, antique and primitive, already exemplify the first four qualities he advocates: a combination of scientific analysis and mystical idealism necessary to express subjective visions.[390]

Gauguin never completely relinquishes recognizable subjects for pure decoration, but some of his paintings verge on nonobjectivity. Marine avec vache (Au bord du gouffre); Seascape with Cow (At the Edge of the Cliff), 1888 (Fig. 3.41) initially appears almost surreal with its distorted space, indeterminate proportions, and acidic colors.

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[387] Albert Aurier, "Le Symbolisme en Peinture: Paul Gauguin," in Mercure de France, Vol. II (March 1891), 155.

[388] Aurier, "Le Symbolisme en Peinture: Paul Gauguin," 156.

[389] Ibid., 162-163.

[390] Patricia Townley Mathews, Aurier's Symbolist Art Criticism and Theory (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986), 19, 45. Aurier was also the critic who designated Moreau, Puvis de Chavannes, and Redon as Symbolism's predecessors. He found their work mystical, mysterious, and expressive, but too closely associated with literature and lacking in articulate doctrine to belong to the true Symbolist movement. He credits both Puvis de Chavannes and Moreau for "reclaiming the right to dream, and revitalizing the primitive tradition." As for Redon, in "Les Symbolistes," Revue Encyclopédique (1892), Aurier lauds the artist as a poet, a philosopher who "tears away the 'veil of mysteries'" which imprisons human reality and conceals its terrors.

Again, Gauguin eliminates the horizon line to collapse the space and capture an unusual perspective, viewing the steep cliffs from an elevated angle. The lone black cow in the foreground and the distant sailboat assist the spectator in resolving Gauguin's composition into a rugged seascape. Without these elements, the painting nearly becomes a study in orange, umber, green, red, and violet, and even the atmospheric effect of rushing waves breaking against the cliffs is achieved through thick, choppy brush strokes and flat areas of white mist.[391] The painting's disorienting perspective and coloration exemplify Gauguin's synthetism. Exuding a primitive energy, Gauguin's kaleidoscopic "deformation," as Fénéon would deem this convention-defying rendition of a seascape, achieves what may be considered an abstract sublime.

Although Gauguin's work becomes expressive and gestural, he rarely seems to experiment with automatism in the manner of Hugo, Sand, or Moreau. Yet Gauguin's images of spiritual dreamers surrounded by undulating lines and ectoplasmic forms suggest the Symbolists' desire to override conscious control in their work and thought. In 1888 Gauguin played a significant role in the creation of one of the first nearly non-objective paintings: Paul Sérusier's Le Talisman (Fig. 3.42), which spearheaded the Nabi movement later that year that continued through the mid-1890s. This group of young Symbolists studying at the Académie Julian, including Sérusier, Denis, Pierre Bonnard, and Édouard Vuillard, united to emulate Gauguin's color theory and synthetism. Sérusier selected the term "Nabis," meaning "prophet," from Edouard Schuré's Les grands inities

[391] Gamboni, 86, speculates that the painting even may contain a hidden self-portrait, with the water forming a right-facing profile.

(1889) as a reference to the Nebiim brotherhood who mastered divination and visionary thought.[392]

Le Talisman may represent a particularly significant link between Symbolist ideals and abstraction. While studying in Pont-Aven in October 1888, Sérusier discussed his work with Émile Bernard, who encouraged him to seek Gauguin's advice. Gauguin agreed to meet Sérusier in the Bois d'Amour along the Aven River for a painting lesson, the result of which was Le Talisman.[393] Executed under Gauguin's direction, this small painting on a cigar box lid gained a mystical significance among the Nabis as a visual expression of personal sensation and a symbol of wisdom passed down from Gauguin to Sérusier.[394]

Although Le Talisman initially appears to contain no identifiable subject except the pure expression of experimental brush strokes and imaginative color, the painting in fact presents Sérusier's rendition of the Bois d'Amour in Pont-Aven. Maurice Denis relates Gauguin's life-changing instructions to Sérusier in a "L'Occident" article published in 1903. While Sérusier studied the scene before him in the Bois d'Amour, Gauguin asked:

> How do you see those trees? . . . They are yellow: well then, use yellow; that rather blue shadow, paint it with pure ultramarine; these red leaves? Use vermillion.[395]

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[392] Ibid., 97.

[393] Caroline Boyle-Turner, Paul Sérusier (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 14.

[394] Mathieu, The Symbolist Generation, 1870-1910 (New York: Skira, 1990), 86.

[395] Translated in Robert Goldwater, Symbolism (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 104. "Comment voyez-vous ces arbres? Ils sont jaunes. Eh bien, mettez du jaune; cette ombre, plutôt bleue, peignez-la avec de l'outremer pur; ces feuilles rouges? Mettez du vermillon." To explain his rejection of naturalism, Denis began his article "Définition du néo-traditionnisme" in Art et critique (1890) with the axiom: "Se rappeler qu'un tableau, avant d'être un cheval de bataille, une femme nue ou une quelconque anecdote, est essentiellement une surface plane recouverte de couleurs en un certain ordre assemblées." ("One must

Sérusier essentially learns a new working method from Gauguin: taking his mentor's advice, he creates a remarkable study that predominantly relies on his instinctive vision of the landscape and how his eye perceives light and color effects. Animated by the diagonal streak of green representing the riverbank, the fall scene of a row of trees and a building reflected in water is rendered as a flattened tapestry of green, golden yellow, vermillion, umber, blue, and traces of white.

Like Gauguin's Marine avec vache (Au bord du gouffre), the space in Le Talisman becomes disorienting since the large areas of solid color offer little indication of depth, and the reflected portion of the image is only slightly more distorted than the forest it mirrors. The small building in the upper right has been reduced to two planes of pale blue, while the fall trees are indicated by flat clouds of golden leaves upon slender blue trunks. Uniform vertical and horizontal brush strokes are visible upon a closer look, suggesting that Sérusier was primarily concerned with the purity of the colors. In the lower half of the panel, the thicker lines indicating watery reflections foreshadow the expressive brush strokes and spatial tension of early Abstract Expressionism.

Never again will Sérusier paint anything so radically abstract, and most art historians consider Le Talisman an anomaly in his career. Since all but one of his early works have disappeared, his initial style and influences are uncertain. Sérusier initially studied at the Académie Julien, taking sporadic training sessions with academic painter Jules Lefèvre, but this artist's influence on his mature style seems to be minimal. His remaining early work, Le Tisserand, 1888, is a naturalist rendition of a peasant weaver in

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remember that before it is a war-horse, a nude woman, or whatever anecdote, a painting is essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order.")

his sparse workshop, rendered in neutral tones with careful attention to lighting effects. The painting's success at the Salon of 1888, where it received an honorable mention, inspired Sérusier later that year to travel and paint in Brittany and Pont-Aven, where he joined a gathering of academic painters already exploring the region's peaceful landscape and mystical aura of its peasant population.[396]

Caroline Boyle-Turner's argument that Le Talisman always was considered an unfinished sketch demonstrating Gauguin's technique and a new method of starting an abstract painting is convincing: the painting was never exhibited during Sérusier's lifetime, nor after his death while it was in Denis's collection.[397] Yet Gauguin's tutelage and the subjective exploration that created Le Talisman resurface in Sérusier's paintings as he continues to diverge from realism and attempt to capture pure sensations.

For example, Sérusier refines the techniques recently learned from Gauguin in his Ève Bretonne (Mélancolie), ca. 1890 (Fig. 3.43), which depicts a nude young woman grieving in a desolate landscape. The painting synthesizes areas of short, expressive brush strokes—forming the sparse vegetation in shades of green, orange, and vermillion—with flat shades of green, yellow, blue, and grey rendering the bleak sky and lurid terrain that slopes toward the figure at a severe angle. Sérusier's intentionally contorted, featureless Eve clearly does not represent a specific individual, or even the biblical figure herself, but rather a universal symbol of melancholy and shame. Furthermore, between the labyrinthine coils of lichen and shadow on the boulders and the

[396] Boyle-Turner, 8-9.

[397] Ibid., 15.

mysteriously alien plant life, this Symbolist allegory constantly transmutes the familiar Breton landscape into a primeval, illusory world.

The last major Symbolist exhibition occurred in 1896, after which the last generation of Symbolist artists began to disperse. This "Artists of the Soul" exhibition took place in the Théâtre de la Bodinière in Paris, and most notably featured the work of Alexandre Séon, Armand Point, Carloz Schwabe, and Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer—Symbolists who looked to Botticelli and the Pre-Raphaelites to forge a decorative, somnambulant, and diaphanous style in contrast to the Nabis' primitivism. Despite favorable critics' efforts, several detractors responded to the Artists of the Soul with stinging harshness, opposing the "excesses of refinement, the erotic allusions, and the often facile mysticism" of the late Symbolists.[398]

Among these critics of the Artists of the Soul, Naturalist journalist and novelist Octave Mirbeau, who frequently directed angry outbursts towards the group, was the most relentless. One of his most vehement responses to the Bodinière exhibition was a fictional dialogue in which two men express their disbelief at the barbarism of the Artists of the Soul exhibition, comparing Symbolist art to an infectious disease.[399] Mirbeau's loathing for the newer generation of Symbolists indicate that the movement in general was passing out of fashion, but his defense of Gauguin and Van Gogh suggest that painting was approaching an abstraction that critics could appreciate.[400] Mirbeau's constant assaults on the Artists of the Soul, including his 1899 novel The Torture

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[398] Dorra, "The Artists of the Soul," in Symbolist Art Theories, 252-254.

[399] Octave Mirbeau, "Les Artistes de l'âme," in Le Journal (23 Feb 1896). In Dorra, ed., Symbolist Art Theories, 278-279.

[400] Mirbeau also supported Impressionism and Post-Impressionism.

Garden—a scornful parody of Decadence—caused critics and the public to detach themselves from Symbolism and its aesthetic principles in general, paving the way for twentieth-century formalism and abstraction.

Edward Lucie-Smith considers Symbolism the bridge between Romanticism and modern art. By the turn of the century, audiences grew weary of Symbolism's visual and cerebral over-embellishment.[401] Critics discredited Symbolism and instead embraced Gauguin and Picasso's dreamlike primitivism. The advent of Formalism in the early twentieth century dramatically changed critical attitudes towards art, and English critics Roger Fry and Clive Bell were among the first to advocate the aesthetics of pure form and color over narrative or expressive content.

In Vision and Design (1912), Fry explained that as long as "the artist relies on the associated ideas of the objects which he represents, his work is not completely free and pure."[402] Fry envisioned artists such as Gauguin and Van Gogh as the harbingers of Formalism, since in their work art began "to recover once more the language of design"[403] through communicating the artists' concern with universal forms rather than with emotional impact, mental states, and mimesis.[404] Fry conceived the "language of design" as a separate entity from written language, the two of which must not intermingle, for art must speak only through form and color.

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[401] Edward Lucie-Smith, Symbolist Art (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), 206.

[402] Roger Fry, Vision and Design (London: Chatto & Windus, 1928), 242. Fry specifically refers to the French Post-Impressionists' ability to refuse outside associations.

[403] Ibid., 289.

[404] Ibid., 295-6. Fry calls Nature "the greatest stumbling-block to the understanding of the graphic arts."

Clive Bell's Art (1914) served as a Formalist manifesto in which Bell proposes that "significant form" is the necessary element of an aesthetic experience. Bell defines significant form as the "relations and combinations of lines and colours" that evoke particular emotions, independent of the artist's state of mind.[405] Following Bell's argument, Symbolist works of art are mere "Descriptive Paintings," which may "interest us and excite our admiration, but do not move us as works of art," since they convey human emotion and extraneous representations rather than being individual emotive objects.[406] Not until the Surrealist movement gained momentum would scholars and the public again recognize and admire the nineteenth-century Symbolists and their hallucinatory narratives.

The eloquent Redon wrote what may be a response to Formalism in his journal around 1915: "I invest my most unreal creations with the illusion of life. My whole originality therefore consists of making the most implausible beings live human lives according to the laws of the plausible, placing the logic of the visible, insofar as is possible, at the service of the invisible."[407] Redon's abstract illusions, and those of his similarly inspired contemporaries, convey that Symbolism is an expression of the artist's personality, subjectivity, emotion, mysticism, and idealism—qualities that earned contemporary critical admiration despite mainstream preferences, and that carried their own creative and psychological significance.

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[405] Clive Bell, "The Aesthetic Hypothesis," 1914, in Art (New York: Chatto & Windus, 1981): 17-19.

[406] Ibid., 22.

[407] Redon, "Confidances d'artiste," in À soi-même, 29-30. "On ne peut m'enlever le mérite de donner l'illusion de la vie à mes créations les plus irréelles. Toute mon originalité consiste donc à faire vivre humainement des êtres invraisemblables selon les lois du vraisemblable, en mettant, autant que possible, la logique du visible au service de l'invisible." Translated in Dorra, ed., Symbolist Art Theories, 56.



Figure 3.1. Victor Hugo, Les Orientales, 1855-56, ink and gouache on paper, 18 x 11 cm, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, NAF 13351, f. 8.

Source: Marie-Laure Prévost, Victor Hugo: l'homme océan (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2002), 47.



Figure 3.2. Hugo, Gallia, n.d., ink and wash on paper, 63 x 48 cm, Maison de Victor Hugo, Paris, No. 329.

Source: Gaëtan Picon, Roger Corneille, and Georges Herscher, Victor Hugo, dessinateur (Paris: Éditions du Minotaure, 1963), 167, Fig. 233.



Figure 3.3. Hugo, Abstract Composition (Monstrous Animal), ca. 1856, pen, wash, and gouache on paper, 11.6 x 19.7 cm, private collection.

Source: Florian Rodari, Pierre Georgel, Luc Sante, and Marie-Laure Prévost, Shadows of a Hand: The Drawings of Victor Hugo, exh. cat. (New York: The Drawing Center; distributed by Merrell Holberton, 1998), 46, cat. no. 14.



Figure 3.4. Hugo, Ink Tache slightly reworked on folded paper, ca. 1856-57, pen, ink, and wash on paper, 20 x 14 cm, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, NAF 13351, fol. 28.

Source: Florian Rodari, Pierre Georgel, Luc Sante, and Marie-Laure Prévost, Shadows of a Hand: The Drawings of Victor Hugo, exh. cat. (New York: The Drawing Center; distributed by Merrell Holberton, 1998), 66, cat. no. 32.



Figure 3.5. William Blake, Newton, ca. 1795, color print with ink and watercolor, 46 x 60 cm, Tate Gallery, London.

Source: David Blayney Brown, Romanticism (London: Phaidon, 2001), 323, Fig. 191.



Figure 3.6. Alexander Cozens, Plate 11 of A New Method, 1785, ink on paper, 24 x 32 cm.

Source: Alexander Cozens, A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape (London: J. Dixwell, 1785), Pl. 11.



Figure 3.7. Caspar David Friedrich, Paysage marin avec capuchin (Seascape with Monk), 1809, oil on canvas, 110 x 171.5 cm, Nationalgalerie, Berlin.

Source: David Blayney Brown, Romanticism (London: Phaidon, 2001), 139, Fig. 73.



Figure 3.8. Hugo, Clocher droit, mât penchant, ca. 1847-1855, ink on paper, 2.2 x 13.7 cm, Maison de Victor Hugo, Paris.

Source: Pierre Georgel, "Cet immense rêve de l'océan—": Paysages de mer et autres sujets marins par Victor Hugo, exh. cat. (Maison de Victor Hugo, Paris, 2005), 29, Cat. 10.



Figure 3.9. Hugo, Abstract composition, n.d., brown ink and wash on vellum, 15.7 x 24.3 cm, Maison de Victor Hugo, Paris.

Source: Rodari, Georgel, Sante, and Prévost, 1998, 49, cat. no. 16.



Figure 3.10. George Sand, Ville fortifiée, wash drawing, 5.9 x 8.5 cm, private collection, Paris.

Source: Christian Bernadac, George Sand: Dessins et Aquarelles, "Les Montagnes Bleues," (Paris: Belfond, 1992), 178, No. 267.



Figure 3.11. Sand, Lolo, Titite, et Fadet dans un paysage de fantaisie avec montagnes et marais, dendrite and watercolor, 15 x 23 cm, Musée de la Vie Romantique, Paris.

Source: Bernadac, 182, No. 285.



Figure 3.12. Sand, Pétrification, dendrite, 5.7 x 10.3 cm, private collection, Paris.

Source: Bernadac, 160, No. 222.

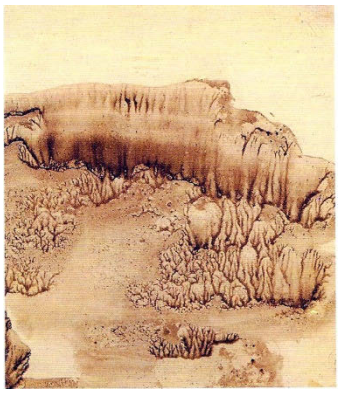


Figure 3.13. Sand, Paysage mineral à la falaise, dendrite, 7.7 x 6.7 cm, private collection, Paris.

Source: Bernadac, 160, No. 223.



Figure 3.14. Sand, Rochers découpés, dendrite, 5.3 x 9.3 cm, private collection, Paris.

Source: Bernadac, 160, No. 224.



Figure 3.15. Sand, Paysage imaginaire, dendrite and watercolor, Musée de la Vie Romantique, Paris.

Source: Personal photograph.

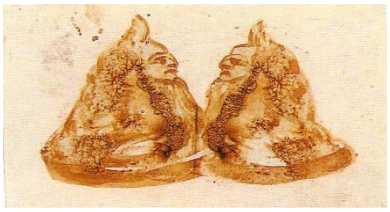


Figure 3.16. Sand, Face à face, dendrite, 4.1 x 7.4 cm, private collection, Paris.

Source: Bernadac, 169, No. 245.



Figure 3.17. Sand, Déesse Guerrière, dendrite and watercolor, 9.7 x 5.7 cm, private collection, Paris.

Source: Bernadac, 169, No. 246.



Figure 3.18. Sand, Vierge (ou mère) à l'enfant, dendrite, 3.4 x 2.2 cm, private collection, Paris.

Source: Bernadac, 162, No. 228.



Figure 3.19. Sand, Le Secret de la chaumière, dendrite, 7.3 x 5 cm, private collection, Paris.

Source: Bernadac, 161, No. 227.

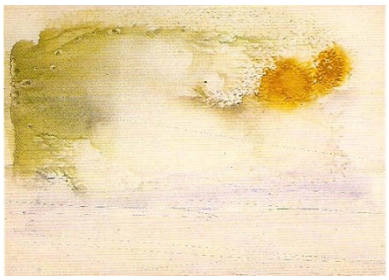


Figure 3.20. Sand, Taches I, dendrite and watercolor, 11.5 x 15.5, private collection, Paris.

Source: Bernadac, 176, No. 261.



Figure 3.21. Sand, Taches II, dendrite and watercolor, 11.5 x 15.5, private collection, Paris.

Source: Bernadac, 176, No. 262.



Figure 3.22. Sand, Taches III, dendrite and watercolor, 8.9 x 12, private collection, Paris.

Source: Bernadac, 176, No. 263.



Figure 3.23. Moreau, ébauche, after 1875, oil on canvas, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris, Rouleau 20, No. 3.

Source: Personal photograph.

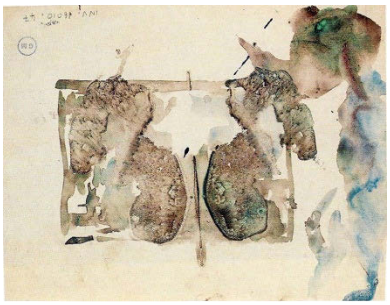


Figure 3.24. Moreau, Femmes-chat "pliage," n.d., watercolor, 16 x 20.7 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris, Inv. 16010-47.

Source: Raphael Rosenberg, "Hasard et abstraction. Les palettes d'aquarelle de Gustave Moreau," in Musée de la Vie Romantique, Gustave Moreau: Mythes & Chimères: Aquarelles et dessins secrets du musée Gustave Moreau, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée de la Vie Romantique, 2003), 103, no. 91.



Figure 3.25. Moreau, La naissance de Vénus (The Birth of Venus), ca. 1870, oil on canvas, 40 x 61 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris, Cat. 41.

Source: Pierre-Louis Mathieu, The Gustave Moreau Museum (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1997), 66.



Figure 3.26. Moreau, Près des Eaux (By the Water's Edge), 1896, watercolor, 27 x 37 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Gustave Moreau: The Watercolors (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1985), 96, Fig. 45.

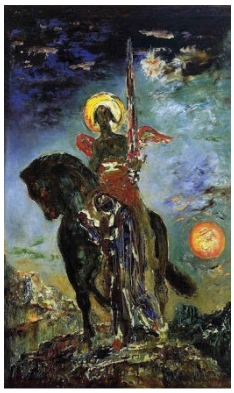


Figure 3.27. Moreau, La parque et l'ange de la mort (Fate and the Angel of Death), 1890, oil on canvas, 110 x 67 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Mathieu, 1997, 30.



Figure 3.28. Moreau, Combat de centaures (Battle of the Centaurs), ca. 1890, watercolor, 15 x 28 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Mathieu, 1985, 94, Fig. 44.



Figure 3.29. Moreau, La Tentation de Saint Antoine (The Temptation of Saint Anthony), ca. 1890, watercolor with gouache highlights, 13.5 x 24 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Mathieu, 1985, Fig. 43.



Figure 3.30. Moreau, étude de composition, oil on canvas, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Source: Personal photograph.



Figure 3.31. Odilon Redon, Fantaisie, n.d., pastel on papier chamois, 36 x 27.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Source: Musée d'Orsay / Réunion des musées nationaux.

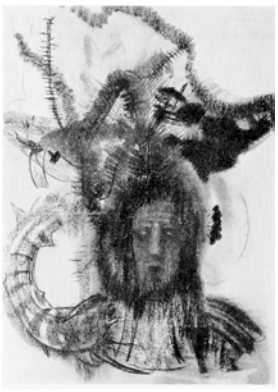


Figure 3.32. Redon, Chimère (Chimera), 1902, charcoal, 55 x 38.7, private collection.

Source: John Rewald, "Odilon Redon," in Odilon Redon, Gustave Moreau, Rodolphe Bresdin, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1962), 25.

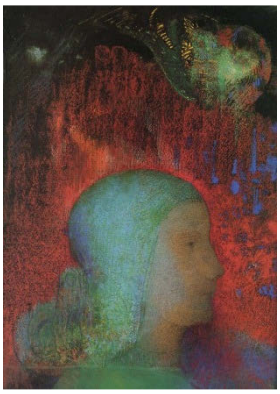


Figure 3.33. Redon, Profil sur méandres rouges (Profile with Red Meanders), ca. 1903, pastel, 52 x 36 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Source: Gamboni, 2002, 74, Fig. 52.



Figure 3.34. Redon, La Mort: Mon ironie dépasse toutes les autres! (Death: My irony surpasses all others!), Plate 3 of À Gustave Flaubert, 26.2 x 19.7 cm.

Source: Alfred Werner, The Graphic Works of Odilon Redon (New York: Dover, 1969), 72.



Figure 3.35. Redon, Roger et Angelica, ca. 1910, pastel on paper on canvas, 92.7 x 73 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 111.1934.

Source: Gamboni, 2002, 75, Fig. 53.



Figure 3.36. Redon, Bouddha dans sa jeunesse (Buddha in his Youth), ca. 1904, distemper on canvas, 161.5 x 122.5 cm, private collection, the Netherlands.

Source: Rewald, 26.

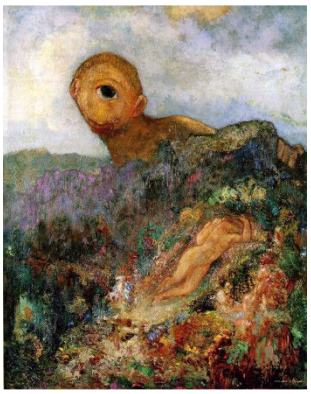


Figure 3.37. Redon, Le cyclope (The Cyclops), ca. 1914, oil on canvas, 64 x 51, Museum Kroller-Muller, Otterlo, the Netherlands.

Source: Michael Gibson, Symbolism (Cologne: Taschen, 2003), 2.



Figure 3.38. Paul Gauguin, Autoportrait avec portrait de Bernard (Les Misérables), 1888, oil on canvas, 71.4 x 90.5 cm, Vincent Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

Source: Daniel Wildenstein, Gauguin: A Savage in the Making: Catalogue raisonné of the Paintings (1873-1888) (Milan: Skira, 2002), 478, No. 309.



Figure 3.39. Gauguin, Femme bretonne et oie près de l'eau (Breton Woman and Goose by the Water), 1888, oil on canvas, 25 x 39.5 cm, private collection.

Source: Wildenstein, 2002, 454, No. 307.

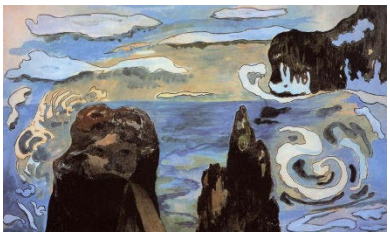


Figure 3.40. Gauguin, Aux roches noires (At the Black Rocks), 1889, watercolor and gouache with ink and metallic paint on paper, 25.3 x 40.6 cm, private collection.

Source: Eric M. Zafran, ed., Gauguin's Nirvana: Painters at Le Pouldu, 1889-90, exh. cat. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press; Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2001), 18, Fig. 10.

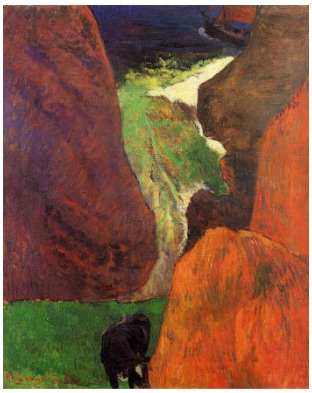


Figure 3.41. Gauguin, Marine avec vache (Au bord du gouffre); Seascape with Cow (At the Edge of the Cliff), 1888, oil on canvas, 73 x 60 cm, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris.

Source: Wildenstein, 2002, 486, No. 310.

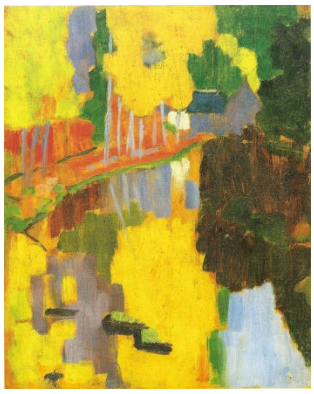


Figure 3.42. Paul Sérusier, Le Talisman, 1888, oil on panel, 27 x 21.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Source: Gibson, 2003, 43.



Figure 3.43. Sérusier, Ève Bretonne (Mélancolie), ca. 1890, oil on canvas, 72.3 x 58.4 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, RF 1981 5.

Source: Musée d'Orsay / Réunion des musées nationaux.

CHAPTER IV
ROMANTIC AND SYMBOLIST TRENDS IN SURREALISM

> The common denominator uniting the sorcerer, the poet and the madman can be none other than magic. It is the flesh and blood of poetry.
>
> — Benjamin Péret, La Parole est à Péret[408]

The nineteenth-century psychology, occultism, and automatic techniques discussed in the previous chapters provide the foundation for the Surrealist movement instigated by André Breton during the early 1920s. In fact, art historian Pierre-Louis Mathieu claims that "Georges-Albert Aurier might have been the André Breton of Symbolism had he not died at the age of 27 in 1892."[409] However, the extent of nineteenth-century artists' influence on their work remains to be determined. Uncovering the multifaceted connections between the Symbolist and Surrealist movements is a main objective of my research and of the following chapter.

Breton and his associates, including Robert Desnos, Max Ernst, and André Masson, explored automatism, dream states, and the unconscious as paths of creative self-discovery, and these artists are credited with eventually reintroducing Symbolism into art historical criticism by the 1960s.[410] Drawn to Symbolism's irrational and dreamlike facets in the aftermath of World War I, which challenged the concept of the

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[408] Benjamin Péret, La Parole est à Péret, in Déshonneur des Poètes, J.-J. Pauvert, collection "Libertés," 1945, 51. "Il faut donc admettre qu'un commun dénominateur unit le sorcier, le poète et le fou. Mais ce dernier, ayant rompu toutes relations avec le monde extérieur, erre à la dérive sur l'océan déchaîné de son imagination et il ne nous est guère donné de voir ce que contemplent ses yeux. Le commun dénominateur unissant le sorcier, le poète et le fou ne peut être que la magie. Elle est la chair et le sang de la poésie."

[409] Pierre-Louis Mathieu, The Symbolist Generation, 1870-1910 (New York: Skira, 1990), 13.

[410] Mathieu, 1990, 29.

world as a rational place, Surrealist artists and writers fused Romantic and Symbolist themes with modern psychology and post-war disillusionment.

This chapter also will trace artists' alchemical and occult influences from Romanticism through Surrealism, exploring how pseudoscience affected some of the dreamlike, automatic aspects of their art and theory, and the connections between Surrealist automatism and its manifestations in preceding centuries. Additionally, automatic writing and drawing became methods of self-discovery as artists sought to uncover prophetic truths within the self and interpret dreams as windows into an absolute reality.

Another significant link between Surrealism and the movements discussed in the previous chapters is alchemy. Following the mid-nineteenth century occult revival, alchemical texts and information on famous French practitioners, particularly Nicolas Flamel (1370-1417), became available for the curious to study and decipher, and alchemical references appear in works such as Gérard de Nerval's play Nicolas Flamel (1831), perpetuating the Romantic stereotype of the alchemist as an ingenious yet persecuted creator. Hugo's novel Notre-Dame de Paris (1831) and his "spirit" messages also contain references to esoteric knowledge, and I also will address the previously unexplored alchemical connections between Hugo and Surrealism.

Surrealist automatism is generally described as writing without conscious control or preconceived ideas to express the hidden thoughts and desires in the writer's unconscious mind. In the first Manifeste du surréalisme (1924), Breton defines the movement as "Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of

thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern."[411] Such automatic writing is the first of the manifesto's "Secrets of the Magical Surrealist Art." Breton instructs:

> Write quickly, without any preconceived subject, fast enough so that you will not remember what you're writing and be tempted to reread what you have written. The first sentence will come spontaneously, so compelling is the truth that with every passing second there is a sentence unknown to our consciousness which is only crying out to be heard.[412]

Although automatism has its roots in nineteenth-century spiritism, Breton insisted that artists and writers should attempt to harness their unconscious energy without relying on supernatural beliefs and rituals. For example, he claimed that his collaborative novel with poet Philippe Soupault, Les champs magnétiques (1919), was created through automatic writing that employed the free association of words that surfaced from the unconscious. Soon afterward, allegedly automatic productions such as Ernst's collage techniques and Masson's drawings became reflections of personal experiences and memories that emerged through associative interpretations during the creative process.

Nineteenth-century French psychology and its research into hypnosis, madness, delusions, and hysteria had a significant impact on Surrealism. The Romantic concept of the "nocturnal side" of the mind foreshadows the Surrealists' desire to unify the split personality through accessing the Freudian unconscious. The Surrealists maintained an analogous belief in the full realization of one's personality, seeking to rediscover lost or

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[411] André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism" (1924), in Manifestoes of Surrealism, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1972), 26. "Automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée. Dictée de la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale."

[412] Ibid., 29-30. "Écrivez vite sans sujet préconçu, assez vite pour ne pas retenir et ne pas être tenté de vous relire. La première phrase viendra toute seule, tant il est vrai qu'à chaque seconde il est une phrase, étrangère à notre pensée consciente, qui ne demande qu'à s'extérioriser."

hidden creative abilities through automatic writing, drawing, and speaking.[413] Breton believed that dream and reality would resolve into "a kind of absolute reality, a surreality,"[414] in which one's personality was complete upon the unification of the rational mind and the unconscious.

Soupault particularly admired nineteenth-century psychologist and hypnotist Pierre Janet. He was intrigued by Janet's research into the split consciousness during automatic activities of both the mentally ill and the sane, and adopted his method of automatic writing.[415] Janet provided the impetus for Breton and Soupault to mediumistically allow the mind and pen to wander while crafting their "automatic" novel Les champs magnétiques.[416] To create this work—considered the first true example of Surrealist automatic writing—Breton and Soupault recorded the phrases that rose from their inner voice, or unconscious, while they attempted to remain in a passive state. Janet, in turn inspired by mesmerism, was possibly as influential on Surrealism as was Freud.

While the Surrealists delved into nineteenth-century poetry and psychological theory exploring dreams, insanity, decadence, and the occult, they came across J.-M. Charcot's studies of hysteria. Indeed, Freud studied with Charcot for several months in 1885-86 and witnessed hysteria demonstrations at the Salpêtrière, which likely instigated

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[413] Nadia Choucha, Surrealism & the Occult: Shamanism, Magic, Alchemy, and the Birth of an Artistic Movement (Rochester: Destiny Books, 1992), 53.

[414] Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 1924, 14. "…une sorte de réalité absolue, de surréalité."

[415] Jennifer Gibson, "Surrealism Before Freud: Dynamic Psychiatry's 'Simple Recording Instrument,'" Art Journal 46 (Spring 1987): 56-59.

[416] Anna Balakian, André Breton, Magus of Surrealism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 28-30.

Freud's interest in the workings of the unconscious mind.[417] For Breton, who treated psychiatric patients while working as a medical assistant in Nantes during World War I, Charcot's scientific yet poetically expressive publications provided a compelling link between art and psychology.[418]

In 1928 the Surrealists celebrated "La Cinquantenaire de l'Hysterie" ("Fiftieth Anniversary of Hysteria"), based on the 1878 publication of Iconographie de la Salpêtrière, and proclaimed Charcot's work "the greatest poetic discovery of the late nineteenth century."[419] After studying diagrams and photographs of patients in the Iconographie de la Salpêtrière, they realized that the hysteria once attributed to religious fanatics and the demon-possessed "is not a pathological phenomenon and may in all respects be considered as a supreme means of expression," wrote Breton and Louis Aragon in La Révolution surréaliste that same year. By attempting to access the unconscious and imitate states of insanity, the Surrealists believed they could attain hallucinatory, creative insights akin to those experienced by admired Symbolist writers such as Gérard de Nerval and Joris-Karl Huysmans.[420]

Breton initially became aware of pseudoscience extending back to Mesmer due to his interest in nineteenth-century occult scholar Éliphas Lévi, whose philosophical texts merge magnetism with arcane knowledge. In Dogme et rituel de la haute magie (Transcendental Magic, Its Doctrine and Ritual) (1854), Lévi describes three levels of

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[417] Christopher G. Goetz, Michel Bonduelle, and Toby Gelfand, Charcot: Constructing Neurology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 210.

[418] Anna Balakian, Literary Origins of Surrealism: A New Mysticism in French Poetry (New York: King's Crown Press, 1947), 14.

[419] André Breton, "Le Cinquantenaire de l'hystérie, 1878-1928," La Révolution surréaliste 11 (March 15, 1928): 20-22, "la plus grande découverte poétique de la fin du XIX siècle."

[420] Balakian, 1947, 16.

magnetism: self-magnetism; the attraction of one entity to another; and, most dangerously, inducing sleep in another. Although the Surrealists experimented with all three levels, Breton most strongly favored self-magnetism, which according to Lévi constituted putting oneself in a trance: a technique only attainable by select initiates into magnetic teachings.[421] Breton's conviction that his own will was empowered in this manner guided his self-stylization as the "magus" of Surrealism—one entitled to exert his mesmeric influence onto the movement's other members, whose intercommunications in turn created the group's magnetic unity.[422]

In my opinion, a 1933 photocollage by Salvador Dalí indicates the Surrealists' persistent interest in hysteria—and in the eroticism of the convulsive patients in Charcot's Salpêtrière photographs. Titled Le Phénomène de l'extase (The Phenomenon of Ecstasy) (Fig. 4.1), Dalí's work does not reproduce Iconographie de la Salpêtrière images as did Breton and Aragon in their own publications, but instead compiles photographs of women expressing similar "attitudes passionnelles" poses alongside photographs of works of art, household objects, and late nineteenth-century criminal physiognomy. Carefully arranged in filmstrip-like rows and neat configurations, the photographs create a more blatantly erotic presentation of hysterical woman than the suggestive postures seen in Charcot's Iconographie photographs. Thus the Symbolists' mesmerized femme fatales resurface as the fetishized madwoman of Surrealism,

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[421] Éliphas Lévi, Dogme et rituel de la haute magie (Paris: Germer Ballière, 1856), 74. Lévi writes: "Il faut remarquer…la description complète des phénomènes du somnambulisme lucide mêlée à une théorie complète de magnétisme solitaire. C'est l'art de se mettre en extase par la tension de la volonté et la fatigue du système nerveux."

[422] Balakian, 1971, 37-38.

symbolic of a new quest for the elusive wisdom once thought accessible only to the insane.

Ideas from Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams (published as Die Traumdeutung in Leipzig and Vienna in 1899; translated into French in 1913), provided the Surrealists with the concepts of psychoanalysis and the personal interpretation of dream imagery. The Surrealists generally abandoned the mystical facets of nineteenth-century dream theory, but Romantic and Symbolist writers' poetic accounts of unexpected, involuntary dream imagery appealed to their interest in automatism and irrational juxtapositions. Breton was influenced by Romantic and Symbolist literature, particularly Baudelaire, Nerval, and Huysmans. Breton acknowledges Surrealism's debt to Baudelaire in his first Manifeste du surréalisme (1924). Besides mentioning that "Baudelaire is Surrealist in morality [dans la morale]," Breton also includes a quotation from Baudelaire's Les Paradis artificiels (1860):

> It is true of Surrealist images as it is of opium images that man does not evoke them; rather they "come to him spontaneously, despotically. He cannot chase them away; for the will is powerless now and no longer controls the faculties." (Baudelaire).[423]

Like Symbolism, Surrealism proclaimed the significance of subverting traditions and visually expressing personal symbols, world mythology, and the arcane world of dreams. Breton's Manifeste du surréalisme acknowledges Nerval as one of the movement's direct inspirations:

> In homage to Guillaume Apollinaire... [Philippe] Soupault and I baptized the new mode of pure expression... by the name of SURREALISM... To be even fairer, we could probably have taken over the word

[423] Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 1924, 36. "Il en va des images surréalistes comme de ces images de l'opium que l'homme n'évoque plus, mais qui 's'offrent à lui, spontanément, despotiquement. Il ne peut pas les congédier ; car la volonté n'a plus de force et ne gouverne plus les facultés.'"

> SUPERNATURALISM employed by Gérard de Nerval in his dedication to the Filles de feu. It appears, in fact, that Nerval possessed to a tee the spirit with which we claim a kinship.[424]

By accepting his hallucinations as "the overflowing of the dream into real life,"[425] Nerval seems to attain the trancelike state between sleeping and waking sought during the Surrealists' attempts to access the unconscious.

For the Surrealists the creative unconscious was feminine, and contact with this inner Muse or Other could release the poetry within themselves. Breton's novel Nadja (1928) conjures such phantoms surrounding and within the self. The story describes Breton's chance meetings in Paris with a young woman named Nadja, whom he considers "a free genius, something like one of those spirits of the air which certain magical practices momentarily permit us to entertain but which we can never overcome."[426] As Breton encounters Nadja throughout Paris, she is so elusive and her mind is such a miasma that her presence emulates spirit contact. Nadja, who is ultimately lost to an asylum, easily could be seen to parallel Hugo's relationships with the mournful female ghosts of Jersey or "spirit" presences such as that of his daughter Léopoldine.

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[424] Breton, 1924, 24-25. "En hommage à Guillaume Apollinaire, qui venait de mourir et qui, à plusieurs reprises, nous paraissait avoir obéi à un entraînement de ce genre, sans toutefois y avoir sacrifié de médiocres moyens littéraires, Soupault et moi nous désignâmes sous le nom de SURRÉALISME le nouveau mode d'expression pure que nous tenions à notre disposition et dont il nous tardait de faire bénéficier nos amis... À plus juste titre encore, sans doute aurions-nous pu nous emparer du mot SUPERNATURALISME, employé par Gérard de Nerval dans la dédicace des Filles du feu. Il semble, en effet, que Nerval posséda à merveille l'esprit dont nous nous réclamons, Apollinaire n'ayant possédé, par contre, que la lettre, encore imparfaite, du surréalisme et s'étant montré impuissant à en donner un aperçu théorique qui nous retienne." French poet Guillaume Apollinaire coined the term "surrealism" in a program note for the ballet Parade in 1917, describing it as "a kind of super-realism [sur-réalisme]."

[425] Ibid., 120.

[426] Breton, Nadja, 1920 (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 89. "J'ai pris, du premier au dernier jour, Nadja pour un génie libre, quelque chose comme un de ces esprits de l'air que certaines pratiques de magie permettent momentanément de s'attacher, mais qu'il ne saurait être question de se soumettre." Translated by Richard Howard (New York: Grove, 1960), 111.

Breton opens Nadja with the passage, "Who am I? If this once I were to rely on a proverb, then perhaps everything would amount to knowing whom I 'haunt.' …Such a word means much more than it says, makes me, still alive, play a ghostly part, evidently referring to what I must have ceased to be in order to be who I am."[427] Next, Breton expresses his concern that he may be a ghost doomed to eternally retrace his own steps trying to rediscover what he has forgotten from his lifetime. He sees himself as a living phantom, sensing the power of his unconscious to haunt his everyday life. I believe that Breton's portrayal of both himself and Nadja as apparitional creatures between the worlds of reason and madness reveals the lingering influence of spiritism, in which the Surrealists professed disbelief yet with which they remained intrigued.

Another artist associated with Surrealism, Leonora Carrington (1917-2011), preferred a magic realist style for her depictions of mysterious portraits and alchemical symbolism. Women Surrealists turned to the occult and mythology seeking more powerful female roles and goddesses to emulate; women also were more traditionally spiritualist mediums, and were considered to have greater powers of extrasensory perception and access to the unconscious—like Breton's clairvoyant Nadja. Breton called Carrington, who became Ernst's muse in 1937, one of "the boldest and most lucid" modern minds,[428] although her autobiography, Down Below, rewrites Nadja from a visionary woman's point of view, and criticizes Breton for losing Nadja to an asylum.

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[427] Ibid. "Qui suis-je? Si par exception je m'en rapportais à un adage: en effet pourquoi tout ne reviendrait-il pas à savoir qui je 'hante'? Je dois avouer que ce dernier mot m'égare, tendant à établir entre certains êtres et moi des rapports plus singuliers, moins évitables, plus troublants que je ne pensais. Il dit beaucoup plus qu'il ne veut dire, il me fait jouer de mon vivant le rôle d'un fantôme, évidemment il fait allusion à ce qu'il a fallu que je cessasse d'être, pour être qui je suis." Translated by Howard (1960), 11.

[428] Penelope Rosemont, ed., "Leonora Carrington," in Surrealist Women: An International Anthology (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 102.

Like Breton, Carrington's writing uses labyrinthine mirroring of worlds to investigate self-identity.[429] Later in her difficult life, she expressed her perception of being a kind of seed that will split into other beings unlike her, "but once the split is complete the absolute Other will take over in this field of doubting multitude I call myself and take a step further in evolution."[430] In contrast to Breton's theory of the necessary unification of the conscious and unconscious mind to complete one's personality, I propose that Carrington developed an opposing model of a fractured one, possibly due not only to her hardships but also the pressure of the Surrealists' expectations for her as a Muse while striving to become an artist herself.

Influenced by the nineteenth-century spiritists' use of trancelike séance communication and the Symbolists' interest in dreams and madness, the Surrealists examined the workings of the human mind and the creative energy that could result from states of hypnosis. In the autumn of 1922, the Surrealists conducted a series of trances, the "season of sleeps": literary and verbal automatic experiments to release the hidden prophecies and knowledge within the unconscious and dreams without interference from the rational mind. Many of these experiments took the form of séances, but their purpose was to explore the unconscious mind rather than communicate with the dead. Breton, his wife Simone, Robert Desnos, Francis Picabia, Max Ernst, and René Crevel (who learned

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[429] Renée Riese Hubert, "Beyond Initiation: Leonora Carrington and Max Ernst," in Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism, and Partnership (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 117-18.

[430] Leonora Carrington, "What is a Woman?" (1970), in Surrealist Women, ed. Rosemont, 373. Carrington suffered a nervous breakdown and abusive treatment in a Spanish mental hospital after Ernst's imprisonment during World War II.

séance procedures from a medium), were among the participants.[431] The messages resulting from hypnotic states suggest an internal dialogue between the sleeper and himself, hermetically sealed with personal symbols that prevent others from understanding its significance.

Desnos, the most celebrated of the Surrealist "mediums," allegedly fell into a trance at will and spoke eloquently of incredible prophecies and revolutions, essentially speaking his dreams in a waking state.[432] He also composed poems and drawings under hypnosis. Breton discusses Desnos and the period of sleeps in Nadja, including photographs of Desnos awakening from his trance, which resemble the clinical images of patients in Iconographie de la Salpêtrière. Breton remarks that, in a fashion similar to a spiritist medium, Desnos

> 'dozes' but he writes, he talks… Those who have not seen his pencil set on paper—without the slightest hesitation and with an astonishing speed—those amazing poetic equations, and have not ascertained, as I have, that they could not have been prepared a long time before…cannot conceive of everything involved in their creation at the time, of the absolutely oracular value they assumed.[433]

With Desnos's talent for self-magnetism, Breton considered him the Surrealist who best manifested the movement's ideals. In Manifeste du surréalisme, Breton maintains that

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[431] Katharine Conley, Robert Desnos, Surrealism, and the Marvelous in Everyday Life (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 16-18. Also discussed in M. E. Warlick, Max Ernst and Alchemy: A Magician in Search of Myth (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 63-66.

[432] Maurice Nadeau, The History of Surrealism, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 83-84.

[433] Breton, Nadja, 25-27. "Il 'dort,' mais il écrit… Qui n'a pas vu son crayon poser sur le papier, sans la moindre hesitation et avec une rapidité prodigieuse, ces étonnantes equations poétiques, et n'a pu s'assurer comme moi qu'elles ne pouvaient avoir été prepares de plus longue main, même s'il est capable d'apprécier leur perfection technique et de juger du merveilleux coup d'aile, ne peut se faire une idée de tout ce que cela engageait alors, de la valeur absolue d'oracle que cela prenait." Translated by Howard (1960), 31-32.

"Robert Desnos speaks Surrealist at will" because he could reach his unconscious mind through automatic writing, drawing, and speaking.

Compared to the spiritist séances, the Surrealist trances can be considered a form of death: the demise of the conscious self while communing with the unconscious. Desnos's 1924 article "Le Génie sans miroir" explores the "power of madmen to access other worlds through a sense of vision focused on 'infinity'"—yet the drawings he analyzes by "madmen" are his own.[434] This tactic in his article also seems consistent with Hugo's séance activity, especially if Jean de Mutigny's theory of the poet's deteriorating mental health into fantastical paraphrenia was accurate, as discussed in Chapter II. Breton ended the period of sleeps due to the participants' increasing fear of the psychological and physical dangers of excessive automatic experimentation—especially since Desnos chased Eluard with a knife while under hypnosis, and experienced increasing difficulty awakening from his trances.[435]

As a result of the Surrealists' attempts to obtain self-knowledge through automatic techniques similar to those of spiritist mediums, Breton asserted in 1934 that the movement "has provoked new states of consciousness… and taken a decisive step towards the unification of the personality, which it found threatened by an ever more profound dissociation," in postwar Europe.[436] In both Hugo's séances and the Surrealists' trances, the artist acts as the gifted medium whose creative force drives the prophetic messages. Hugo's séances stand out from most other examples of "spirit

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[434] Conley, 2003, 19. The article appeared in Les Feuilles Libres under Paul Eluard's name in February 1924.

[435] Ibid., 23.

[436] André Breton, What is Surrealism? (1934), ed. Franklin Rosemont (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 138.

contact" because of the prolific, poetic messages and illustrious personalities he claimed to channel from the "other side." Using poetry, prose, and visual art, Hugo released the revelations of which the creative mind is capable. In my view, Breton, Desnos, and many other Surrealists who participated in the "season of sleeps" replicated Hugo's efforts from the vantage point of Freudian psychology and its understanding of the unconscious mind.

The principle of automatic writing was essential to Surrealism. Breton's declaration that dreamlike automatism was the source of poetic inspiration resulted in the movement's foundation. In 1919, he began to observe his hypnagogic hallucinations while falling asleep, and to seek similar words and phrases from his unconscious mind during waking hours.[437] Like Hugo with the séance messages, Breton believed he could receive cosmic revelations and discover marvelous realities. For Breton, these hallucinations at the edge of dreaming represented a duality of consciousness and the irrational side of the mind that could be explored through automatic writing.

The evolution of séances from a spiritist pastime to a method of self-exploration under hypnosis also links Hugo with Surrealism. Automatic writing and drawing evolved from mediumistic to psychoanalytic purposes as artists sought to escape the rational, known world to access creative truths. They used séance techniques to convey messages not from the "other side," but from the unconscious, which they considered the source of hidden genius. The messages and drawings created by Hugo's prolific séance "spirits" suggest imaginative processes released from rational self-censorship. These phantom encounters opened new creative pathways and connected Hugo's unconscious with the

[437] Carrouges, 7-8.

marvelous and unknown. Surrealists searched for similar messages and prophecies in dreams, trying to rediscover the former glory from which humanity fell.

Unlike nineteenth-century spiritists, who claimed that their automatic messages channeled souls of the deceased, the Surrealists saw "spirit" messages as productions of the medium's unconscious through the dissociation of the personality. The Surrealists believed they could achieve self-knowledge and unify the disparate halves of the personality through automatic writing by continuing to access pure thought and hidden truths in the unknown, but they sought this entity within the self. They considered people in general to be strangers to themselves and ignorant of the creative depths of the human spirit, which unconsciously directed their actions and personality; by using automatic writing, one could release this repressed creative energy.[438]

Philosopher Maurice Blanchot wrote that the collective experience of Surrealism lay in Breton's ability to make Surrealism "each one's Other…making the Surrealist affirmation, in other words, a presence or a work of friendship."[439] Hugo created a vast array of spirit personalities, or "Others," to reflect himself and his surroundings; he readily seemed able to access his Muse, and composed many lyrical verses at will through these "spirit" personalities at the séance tables. Breton refined this concept into a movement that replaced the belief in mediums and ghosts with the belief in one's unconscious, encouraging the union of the present and the lost abilities. If Hugo believed in genuine spirit contact, his strict separation of consciously created verses and those

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[438] Sarane Alexandrian, Le surréalisme et le rêve (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 97-98. Also discussed in Katharine Conley, Automatic Woman: The Representation of Woman in Surrealism (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 8-9.

[439] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation (1983), trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 408.

emanating from another source underscores a major point of difference with the Surrealists. In The Automatic Message, for instance, Breton asserted that "in contrast with the spiritist's aim of dissociating the medium's psychological personality, the Surrealists' aim is nothing less than to unify that personality" and incorporate the marvelous aspects of the unconscious into their own work.[440]

Katharine Conley explains that "[a]utomatic writing and the unconscious are alternately metaphorized as night, death, an exotic voyage by water or by train, and also as Woman."[441] These identities recall Hugo's connection to "spirit" personalities such as the Shadow of the Sepulcher, Death, the Ocean, and the mysterious "Lady in White" who haunted the island of Jersey. When Breton wrote that "Hugo est surréaliste quand il n'est pas bête" ("Hugo is Surrealist when he isn't stupid") in the Manifeste du Surréalisme, he was probably referring to the turning tables and Hugo's religious inclinations. As Mark Polizzotti remarks, the Surrealists' most striking poetic images were not produced during a conscious creative process but from a "more universal mental substrata—were not, in other words, dictated by the voice of reason, but whispered by what Hugo had called the 'mouth of shadows.'"[442]

Fascinated with but disdainful of the occult, the Surrealists intended to detach their method of automatic writing from spiritist mediums' ghostly messages. According to Breton, mediumistic automatic writing was far less interesting than drawings of the same origin, as a result of the "pathetic spiritist literature with which they have usually

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[440] André Breton, The Automatic Message, 1933, trans. Antony Melville (London: Atlas Press, 1977), 25.

[441] Conley, 1996, 15.

[442] Mark Polizzotti, ed., Conversations: The Autobiography of Surrealism, (New York: Paragon House, 1969), 103.

been contaminated from the outset." Breton laments that the Hugo family succumbed to spiritism, which they "thoughtlessly supported… with their story of the 'table turnings of Guernsey [sic]" and criticizes Hugo's grandiloquence and naïveté.[443]

Although the surviving séance messages were not widely known until Gustave Simon published them in Les tables tournantes de Jersey, Procès-verbaux des séances (1923),[444] Breton indicated his prior awareness of the séances in a 1922 interview with journalist André Parinaud. He stated that the Surrealists' attitude toward spiritism was "midway between the attitudes held respectively, circa 1855, by Victor Hugo… and Robert Browning, as expressed in his poem "Mr. Sludge, 'the Medium'" and marked by an interest in "what remained of mediumistic communication once we had freed it from the insane metaphysical implications it otherwise entailed."[445] The Surrealists' spiritual beliefs generally seemed to drift between skepticism and elements of the supernatural; Breton was an atheist, but admitted a superior source of reality and man's fall from former glory. Inspired by Hugo's La Fin de Satan and the occult, he developed a view of a vengeful God symbolizing Fate and an interest in regaining humanity's lost powers.[446]

Despite their spiritual pretenses, Hugo's séances and related drawings are experiments in automatism; Hugo captured proto-surreal essences by allowing "spirits" to guide his hand. Prévost claims that "The period of spiritism in Jersey effectively evokes

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[443] Breton, 1933, 24-25.

[444] Gustave Simon, ed., Chez Victor Hugo: Les tables tournantes de Jersey, Procès-verbaux des séances (Paris: Louis Conard, 1923).

[445] André Breton, radio interview with André Parinaud, 1922, in Conversations: The Autobiography of Surrealism, ed. Polizzotti, 64.

[446] Carrouges, 30.

the 'season of sleeps,' the automatic writing of the Surrealists."[447] In addition to general similarities between the Jersey séances and the "season of sleeps," examples of Desnos's mediumistic art from this period (Fig. 4.2; Fig. 4.3), although done without a table, display as cryptic and diagrammatic a style as Hugo's séance drawings.[448] Desnos's work was characterized by a constant theme of death, which may have led him to Hugo's eloquent messages from "Death" and to séances in general.[449] The Surrealist's use of symbolic objects, segmented faces, simplified plant, animal, and star forms, horizon lines, and inclusion of text all point to his appreciation of Hugo's séance productions.

Regarding nineteenth-century aesthetic influences on Surrealism, Hugo's intricate drawings that began as chance formations of liquid media are now generally accepted as precursors to Surrealist techniques. Desnos was known to have greatly admired Hugo, for which Breton sometimes ridiculed him.[450] In her catalogue of Hugo's art, Victor Hugo: l'homme océan, Marie-Laure Prévost juxtaposes Hugo's experimental art with later artists' work, including a comparison of one of his pliages (Fig. 4.4) with Desnos's l'Amour des homonymes (Fig. 4.5) from 1922. Hugo's murky pliage contains his own initials; Desnos's colorful album page with a similar ink design contains his name and those of fifteen Surrealist associates, including Breton, Ernst, Crevel, Picabia, and

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[447] Marie-Laure Prévost, Du chaos dans le pinceau: Victor Hugo, Dessins (Paris: Maison de Victor Hugo, 2000), 188. "La période spirite à Jersey, en effet évoque l''époque des sommeils,' l'écriture automatique des surréalistes." Translation mine.

[448] Marie-Laure Prévost, "Donne-moi un crayon," in Musée D'Orsay, L'Oeil de Victor Hugo (Paris: Éditions des Cendres, 2004), 164-65.

[449] Prévost, 2004, 165.

[450] Conley, 2003, 60, 212. Desnos mentions "Hugo's legacy as 'liberty'" in his poem "The Legacy" (1943).

Duchamp.[451] Desnos's use of pliage and his image and text combination suggest his interest in Hugo's experiments and grandiose fixation with his own name and initials, a recurring motif in his drawings.

Hugo's fantastical art allowed him to extend his vivid literary imagination into the visual realm. Expressing desolate feelings, macabre sensations, and esoteric curiosity, his work renders him a predecessor of both Symbolist and Surrealist artists caught in the rising interest in Hugo's art after the posthumous exhibition of his work at the Galérie Georges Petit in 1888.

Studying Hugo's art and séances has enhanced existing concepts of his role in Surrealism's roots, which Breton mentioned in the first Manifeste du surréalisme. Once the religious and supernatural aspects are stripped away from Hugo's work, the messages and drawings present a framework for automatist experimentation. The 1936 "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" exhibition, which revealed Surrealism's nineteenth-century foundations, included an Hugo wash drawing created by the manipulation of random ink flows. The Surrealists undoubtedly recognized the desired "omnipotence of dream," one of Breton's basic tenets of the movement, in such works, observing the bizarre subjects that emerged from Hugo's imagination.[452]

Masson wrote the introduction for the "Dessins de Victor Hugo" exhibition at the Musée Villequier in 1971. In his text he argues that although Breton mentioned Hugo in

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[451] Marie-Laure Prévost, Victor Hugo: l'homme océan (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2002), 346.

[452] Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 1924, 26. Breton writes, "Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of association heretofore neglected, in the omnipotence of the dream, and in the disinterested play of thought." ["Le surréalisme repose sur la croyance à la réalité supérieure de certaines formes d'associations négligées jusqu'à lui, à la toute-puissance du rêve, au jeu désintéressé de la pensée."]

his writings and was aware of his proto-surreal art in the 1920s, the Surrealist leader did not give Hugo enough credit as one of the movement's precursors. Masson also indicated his familiarity with Hugo's experimental drawings and illustrations for his 1866 novel La Pieuvre (Les Travailleurs de la Mer)—including the octopus whose tentacles form the author's initials—in the Villequier text. "Automatic writing and drawing were for the Surrealists the key that permitted the opening of the invisible world and the secret currents that traverse our spirit," writes Masson. For this reason, he claims, works such as Hugo's Tête de Diable were included in the "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" exhibition as precursors of Surrealism.[453]

Masson began to practice automatic drawing in the winter of 1923-24, before he met Breton. According to František Šmejkal, Masson "seized graphic automatism as naturally as Robert Desnos assimilated verbal automatism," and both created their work in a type of mediumistic frenzy.[454] Automatism allowed Masson to become a medium for his unconscious: he claimed that automatic drawing required liberating the mind from all associations, entering a trance-like state, abandoning oneself to "interior tumult," and rapid speed.[455]

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[453] André Masson, "Le Peintre Victor Hugo," in Pierre Georgel, Dessins de Victor Hugo (Villequier: Musée Victor Hugo à Villequier, 1971), 14. "L'écriture et le dessin automatiques étant pour les surréalistes la clé permettant l'ouverture sur le monde invisible et les courants secrets qui traversent notre esprit, il était donc fatal que la Tête de démon, 'tache d'encre prolongée,' nous apparaisse comme le joyau de la salle consacrée au précurseurs." Translation mine. According to William Rubin and Carolyn Lanchner, André Masson (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1976), Masson said that "Hugo was, like David's Marat, wonderful and intriguing, but without the incandescent power that fired his imagination in the Rubens, the Delacroix, and Chateaubriand."

[454] František Šmejkal, Le dessin surréaliste (Paris: Éditions Cercle d'Art, 1974), 24. "Masson s'empara de l'automatisme graphique aussi naturellement que Robert Desnos assimila l'automatisme verbal." Translation mine.

[455] André Masson, André Masson, Line Unleashed: A retrospective exhibition of drawings at the Hayward Gallery, London (London: The South Bank Centre, 1987), 33.

According to Clark V. Poling, the Surrealists also were fascinated with Pierre Janet's Automatisme psychologique and his concept of the dual self, or "other" voice that emerges from the unconscious during creative acts. Masson seemed to pursue this fragmented state while drawing, yet his works possess a strange sense of cosmic unity.[456] He explained that in his particular automatic process, "the first graphic apparitions on the paper are pure gesture, rhythm, incantation, and as a result pure doodles," in which he then sought human or animal forms.[457] Images of male and female anatomy, animals (especially fish), mythology, and the ocean were then interpreted in Freudian terms. Themes of birth, death, sexuality, and war connect his images, many of which resemble battle scenes, Daedalian architecture, or dissected chimerical forms.

Similar depictions of the violent conflict inherent in nature and humanity appear in Hugo's drawings, which, like Masson's, express the artists' unconscious but remain under a representational structure imposed by the conscious mind. In Masson's The Portico, 1925 (Fig. 4.6), for example, flowing biomorphic lines metamorphose into human figures or viscera. These figures are transparent against the rectilinear lines wrought into an architectural landscape in the background.[458] Hugo's séance drawings and later work, such as Il était là caressant sa chimère, 1864-65 (Fig. 4.7) also display humanoid entities formed by semi-automatic lines: a winged, misshapen creature and the "chimère" he caresses. Examples of Masson's work, such as an aquatic figural drawing

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[456] Clark V. Poling, André Masson and the Surrealist Self (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 43. Masson was also influenced by (and diverged from) Cubism.

[457] André Masson, Le Rebelle du Surréalisme: Écrits, ed. Françoise Will-Levaillant (Paris: Hermann, 1976), 21. Translated by David Lomas in "'Modest recording instruments': Science, Surrealism and Visuality," Art History 27 (Sept. 2004), 644.

[458] Choucha, 54.

from 1924-25 (Fig. 4.8), have an unmistakable resemblance to Il était là caressant sa chimère. Masson's more fluid style successfully projects the freedom of mind and release of repressed tension that automatic drawing was expected to provide.

I believe that, compared to Hugo's spirit drawings, Masson's work seems less mediumistic and more therapeutic, intended for exploring the darker aspects of the self. Perhaps Masson recognized himself in Hugo's bizarre universe of spirits, punishment, and rebirth. Masson also created mysterious and prophetic worlds like Hugo's spirit universe, yet his images convey restless, nightmarish compositions. Masson's work contains far more sexual imagery, from nude figures to penetrative struggles, although there are sexual elements in Hugo's spirit drawings, such as the nude "bacchanalian" figures and the phallic forms in the "SPIRITVS MALVS" picture (Fig. 2.17). In the drawings attributed to "spirits," Hugo may have felt more freedom to express sexual desire. Although some of the séance pictures also are technically cruder than others, the level of detail and erasure marks in certain images such as "SPIRITVS MALVS" suggests that Hugo embellished them afterwards—as did many Surrealist artists, including Masson, with their automatic drawings.

During the 1850s, violence and a fascination with death appeared in Hugo's drawings, expressed through recurring images of skulls, decapitations, ghosts, demons, battles, and shipwrecks. While Masson focuses on brutal actions, Hugo's macabre scenes merely imply a struggle or depict its aftermath. These images range from a confrontation between a monstrous figure and a succubus (Fig. 4.9) to a scene titled "Torquemada," after the fifteenth-century Spanish Inquisitor—who became the subject of Hugo's play Torquemada (1869), which criticizes Catholic fanaticism. Hugo's drawing contains

skeletal figures embedded in rock within a vast, ambiguous space (Fig. 4.10). Possible automatic splashes and gradients of ink on the left side of this diagonally divided composition create a tumultuous atmosphere that could represent crashing waves or a dire sky.

Prévost speculates that this image was the basis for a scene in Salvador Dali's and Louis Buñuel's controversial film L'Âge d'Or, 1930 (Fig. 4.11), also created to criticize the Catholic church.[459] In this film still, the Surrealists appear to imitate Hugo's composition, yet the skeletal remains, including a skull wearing a bishop's miter, have emerged further from the jagged cliff. I also would add that the conglomeration of decaying bones and textured rocks resembles the decalcomania effect of Hugo's drawing—a Surrealist homage to their automatist origins.

I believe that Masson's use of imaginary, ominous architecture in drawings such as Ville crânienne (Skull City), 1939 (Fig. 4.12) reveals the influence of Hugo's fantastical vistas and travel drawings of cities, castles, and towers, such as Le Phare d'Eddystone, 1866 (Fig. 4.13). Hugo's architectural images often emphasize shadowy, surreal aspects of material and space, land and water, creating dreamlike and often ominous environments. In Le Phare d'Eddystone, for example, the architecture seems to display simultaneous construction and decay, a jumble of precarious structures that appears unable to withstand the approaching tempest. Masson lends his Ville crânienne a similarly perilous structural design. The exposed labyrinthine corridors of the skull-shaped building converge at impossible angles; protruding vines further undermine the building's crumbling foundation, and wind and lightning assault its façade.

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[459] Prévost, 2002, 347.

In the Musée Villequier catalogue, Masson refers to Hugo's discourse with the sea in his intentional drawings which "[push] the combat between light and shadow to its extremities" in terrifying, sublime visions.[460] The destructive power of the ocean and the concept of man against the elements appealed to the Romantics and to Masson. Pierre Georgel views Hugo's obsession with the sea as expressions of primordial archetypes, danger, obscurity, and immensity, a fantastic bestiary of sea monsters that "reawaken the primitive age of powerlessness and enslavement to nature, abolished by the march of progress."[461] Few of Hugo's drawings express these concepts as well as his illustrations for La Pieuvre (Les Travailleurs de la Mer).

In 1944, Masson illustrated Hugo's novel with striking images such as Gilliatt battling the octopus (Fig. 4.14), a strangely sexual composition reminiscent of Leonardo's "Vitruvian Man," fuses the story's climax with Masson's 1937 figure of Acéphale (Fig. 4.15). The headless, nude male holds a flaming heart in one hand and a dagger-shaped flower in the other; his skull covers his genitals and his visible, serpentine entrails symbolize a labyrinth. This drawing was the cover for the first issue of the political review Acéphale, Masson's collaborative project with Georges Bataille. Bataille wrote in the initial essay that Acéphale is "not me, he's more me than me, his belly is the labyrinth in which I find myself, being him—that is, a monster."[462] In mirroring

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[460] Masson, 1971, 16-17. Translation mine.

[461] Pierre Georgel, Cet immense rêve de l'océan: sujets marins par Victor Hugo (Paris: Maison de Victor Hugo, 2006), 56-58.

[462] Rubin and Lanchner, 141-142. Original essay in Georges Bataille, "La Conjuration Sacrée," in Acéphale: Religion, Sociologie, Philosophie, 1936-1939 (Paris: Éditions Jean-Michel Place, 1995), n.p. "Il n'est pas moi mais il est plus moi que moi: son ventre est le dédale dans lequel il s'est égaré lui-même, m'égare avec lui et dans lequel je me retrouve étant lui, c'est-à-dire monstre."

Acéphale and Gilliatt in these drawings, Masson implied that Gilliatt must battle the repressed aspects of his unconscious mind.

Among the Surrealists, the ocean became a symbol of the unconscious mind and its limitless, hidden depths. Michael Carrouges, writing about the Surrealists, uses the ocean as a metaphor for the mind, which ebbs and flows as intuition and imagination direct words and ideas into one's consciousness:

> [T]he poets of the past and even of the present waited in their sheltered countryside for the tide to flow toward them up the deltas and estuaries of the imagination, at irregular intervals, while the surrealists went down to the water's edge and immersed themselves directly in the ocean of automatism where they could listen to that vast unending sound, the permanent oracle of the waves.[463]

Hugo seemed to become impatient waiting for the tide of ideas, so he turned to automatic writing to release alternative personalities and commune with universal ideas by means of entities such as the sea.

Although Masson was interested in the séance worlds Hugo created, he did not require alter egos to express himself in his work. He presented his intense compositions as extensions of himself, giving rise to those repressed parts of the human psyche that hold a strangely universal appeal. In contrast, Hugo denied that he consciously created the "spirit" drawings, messages, prose, and poems during the séances. Perhaps anticipating how both spiritists and skeptics would receive his accounts of the séances, his personal disavowal of the material ensuing from them was calculated to generate curiosity about their origins. Nevertheless, Hugo's mediumistic activities provided a

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[463] Michel Carrouges, André Breton and the Basic Concepts of Surrealism, trans. Maura Prendergast (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1974), 119.

precedent for the Surrealists' "season of sleeps," although they insistently proclaimed that the individual's unconscious provided automatism's foundation.

In the 1930s, new figures emerged within the Surrealist movement, including Valentine Hugo, Oscar Dominguez, and Leonora Carrington. These artists "invented" automatist techniques, such as Dominguez's decalcomania, following Ernst's discoveries of frottage and grattage in the mid-1920s. Artist Valentine Hugo (née Gross) provides an important Surrealist link to Victor Hugo. She married the writer's great-grandson, artist Jean Hugo, in 1919 and became active in Surrealist circles in 1928-36. Valentine became a close friend of Eluard and was very devoted to Breton, with whom she had a turbulent affair in 1931-32.[464]

Through his relationship with Valentine Hugo, Breton gained access to Victor Hugo's taches and developed a further interest in his work. Surrealist artists of Breton's circle, including Max Ernst and André Masson, were enthralled by the visionary nature of Hugo's art, although the power of suggestion in Hugo's chance-created ink drawings particularly intrigued Breton. In fact, he framed a non-objective tache, one of several Hugo drawings gifted to him by Valentine, and kept it for the remainder of his life.[465] It was Valentine who in 1936 loaned Hugo's abstract wash drawing Tête de Diable, 1860-70 (Fig. 4.16) to the momentous "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Hugo's brief biography in the exhibition

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[464] Jean-Pierre Cauvin, "Valentine, André, Paul et les autres, or, the Surrealization of Valentine Hugo," in Surrealism and Women, eds. Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf E. Kuenzli, and Gwen Raaberg (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990), 182-84. Valentine separated from Jean Hugo in 1929.

[465] Pierre Georgel, "Les avatars du 'peintre malgré lui,'" in La Gloire de Victor Hugo, ed. Pierre Georgel, Jean-Paul Boulanger, and Geneviève Renisio, exh. cat. (Paris: Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1985), 489. Furthermore, according to Georgel, Surrealist artist and filmmaker Jean Cocteau owned two of Hugo's drawings, given to him by Jean Hugo.

catalogue mentions his "landscape and architectural sketches; archaeological interest combined with romantic; mystic symbolism," and calls him "the Piranesi of the Gothic."[466] Tête de Diable, in which a rather droll demonic head materializes within a vaporous array of abstract stains, also demonstrates the chance flows of ink that appealed to the Surrealists.

Valentine Hugo exhibited some of her paintings at the MOMA exhibition,[467] although she is most renowned for her graphic design, her "exquisite corpse" drawings for which she collaborated with Breton and others, and her oneiric illustrations of Surrealist texts. Her 1933 cover design for Contes Bizarres (Fig. 4.17), a book written by Achim d'Arnim and introduced by Breton, depicts a woman overwhelmed—or possibly mesmerized like the incubus' victim in Henry Fuseli's The Nightmare—by an archangel whose features resemble Breton's, bearing a flaming sword and accompanied by a supernatural bird. The image exemplifies the flowing lines, dizzying movement, and sharp contrasts of light and color that characterize her style. Jean-Pierre Cauvin writes that "it is Valentine, the spouse of a direct descendant of Victor Hugo, who evinces the greater kinship with the imaginative powers and Romantic sensibility of the seer-poet… For hers is the creativity and temper of a visionary Romantic… turned surrealist."[468]

Unaware of George Sand's dendrite experiments the previous century—with her imagination and use of color being even more daring than their own—Surrealists such as

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[466] Alfred H. Barr, Jr., ed., Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1936), 256.

[467] Valentine Hugo's biography in the catalogue mentions her marriage to Hugo's great-grandson. She contributed three dreamlike paintings: Dream of January 17, 1934; Gules with four mouths or, two, one and one, and The Surrealist poets, Paul Eluard, André Breton, Tristan Tzara, René Crevel, Benjamin Péret, and René Char.

[468] Cauvin, 190.

Ernst and Dominguez instigated "decalcomania" in 1937. This technique evokes unconscious imagery through creating random patterns of paint on folded paper. Breton experimented with abstract decalcomania paintings that resemble black-and-white versions of Sand's unfinished watercolor dendrites. In my observations, Breton's decalcomania works appear to involve little retouching, and emanate a sense of dreamlike fragmentation. In one untitled example (Fig. 4.18), the chaos of the branch-like formations similar to those that intrigued Sand and the ubiquitous shapeless masses creates a fantastical microcosm, a dreamscape that could be interpreted as anything from a cosmic vision to a microscopic ecosystem.

In an essay written the same year as the "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism" exhibition, Breton compared Dominguez's automatist decalcomania images to Hugo's abstract work, stating that "the wash-drawings by Victor Hugo seem to provide evidence of systematic explorations in the direction which concerns us here." Using Dominguez's untitled decalcomania of 1936 (Fig. 4.19) as an example, Breton notes how Hugo's automatist experiments emulated "an extraordinary power of suggestion" that inspired the Surrealists to explore the same procedures and search for hidden meaning in similar creations.[469] Breton relates the random patterns created by Dominguez's technique, which, like Sand's dendrites, involved the transfer of gouache stains from one page to another, to the fantastical, expressive landscapes Hugo also found in ink patterns.

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[469] André Breton, "D'une décalcomanie sans objet préconçu (décalcomanie du désir)," 1936, in Le surréalisme et la peinture (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 129. "Certains lavis de Victor Hugo paraissent témoigner de recherches systématiques dans le sens qui nous intéresse: des données mécaniques tout involontaires qui président, est manifestement attendu une puissance de suggestion sans égale." Translated by Simon Watson Taylor in Surrealism and Painting (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 129.

Max Ernst adopted decalcomania using oil on canvas in the 1940s, combining this technique with a magic realist style to create hallucinatory, biomorphic forms.[470] Decalcomania offered Ernst endless possibilities as he covered his canvases with dramatic landscapes of alien and desolate worlds. For example, in L'Oeil du silence (The Eye of Silence), 1943-44 (Fig. 4.20), Ernst manipulated the decalcomania forms of green and ochre paint against a Romantic sky to resemble fantastical rock formations, spiraling fossils, and hidden prehistoric creatures. A lone female figure with a masklike face and red gown emerges from the shadows in the lower right corner; this otherworldly creature wears a verdant decalcomania headdress and rests her wraithlike arms upon the architectural cliffs. The unsettling effect of Ernst's automatism combined with the realism of his ominous sky and clouds renders the image impossible to place in reality.

On a deeper level, the dream visions, chimerical creatures, and esoteric references that surface in Romantic and Symbolist art parallel Surrealist motifs. In Surrealism and the Book, Renée Riese Hubert compares Caspar David Friedrich's painting Paysage marin avec capuchin (Seascape with Monk) (Fig. 3.7) to Surrealist Max Ernst's 1972 lithograph of the same title (Fig. 4.21). In this print, Friedrich's isolated monk has been absorbed into the natural elements, until only sky and sea are visible in the aleatory layers of texture, divided into two sections by a thick, dark line. As an heir of German Romanticism, the Surrealist artist both reveres and parodies his predecessors in works such as his own Seascape with Monk that allow the viewer to discern the Romantic sublime through the chance-created textures' effect on the spiritual inner eye.[471]

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[470] Choucha, 121.

[471] Renée Riese Hubert, Surrealism and the Book (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 164-170.

Hubert briefly mentions Ernst's painting Quasi feu le romantisme (Almost Late Romanticism), 1960 (Fig. 4.22) as an example of the artist's Romantic origins,[472] yet I believe the work also reveals his awareness of nineteenth-century abstraction such as Gustave Moreau's oil sketches discussed in the previous chapter. Ernst is known to have studied works at the Musée Gustave Moreau, and Moreau's techniques recur in Ernst's work after 1940.[473] Beyond the indicative title, Ernst's thickly textured paint and barely discernable subject recall Moreau's tumultuous brush strokes in his studies and watercolor palettes. The wraithlike foliage and agitated motion in Ernst's midnight-blue, moss-green, and pale yellow brush strokes also appear to pay homage to Romanticism and its increasing abstraction as the movement advanced toward Symbolism. The shattered effect in Ernst's painting, however, also seems to signify deteriorating sanity or an obliterated landscape only possible to conceive in the Surrealists' postwar reality.

Robert McNab connects Moreau and Ernst through comparing Moreau's La Vie de l'Humantié (The Life of Mankind), 1886 (Fig. 4.23), to Ernst's Vox Angelica, 1943 (Fig. 4.24).[474] Both works are inspired by medieval altarpieces and present a chronology of an artist's life commingled with biblical symbolism: in Ernst's case, his own creative journey, and in Moreau's polyptych, that of the ideal artist-poet. Ernst's sequential images feature his techniques and his influences from Angkor to New York, framed by

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[472] Hubert, 175. According to Hubert, Ernst's Quasi feu le romantisme (Almost Late Romanticism) "clearly states that for him Romanticism never really died. Indeed, it kindled new creations throughout his career." However, she also mentions that Ernst's relationship with Romanticism only can be traced to this painting and to his Seascape with Monk.

[473] Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Gustave Moreau: with a catalogue of the finished paintings, watercolors, and drawings. Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1976), 246. As Mathieu explains, which of Moreau's works influenced Ernst is uncertain, since many of Moreau's experimental works were unavailable to the public until the Louvre exhibition of 1961.

[474] Robert McNab, Ghost Ships: A Surrealist Love Triangle (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 186.

flat panels, cosmic backgrounds, or altered narratives such as an image of Eve and the serpent conflated with a caged bird. Ernst's atmospheric effects and symbolic narratives also are seen in the Moreau's lunette of Christ surrounded by angels and Old Testament scenes. Both essentially are encoded narratives for the viewer to decipher in order to understand the artist's values and motivations.

In my opinion, Moreau and Ernst are linked more intensely by their automatic techniques than the visual similarities between their subjects. Moreau's thickly textured paintings such as Le Poête et la Sirène (The Poet and the Siren) (Fig. 1.26), contain areas of dense abstraction that foreshadow Surrealist decalcomania. Moreau's sirens and Galateas emerge from cocoons of encrusted paint like the creatures in Ernst's The Eye of Silence or L'habillement de l'épousée (The Robing of the Bride), 1940 (Fig. 4.25). In The Poet and the Siren, the murky, Leonardo-inspired background, the siren's seaweed headdress, and the blood-red veins of coral create an entire biomorphic habitat that reinforces the association of women with nature and the unconscious—a theme repeated in Ernst's paintings.

The painting in the background of The Robing of the Bride provides one example of Ernst portraying women embedded in richly textured landscapes. Perhaps the contorted nude on the right, with her decalcomania crown, has just stepped out of this architectural terrain, while the stately foreground figure seems to have transmuted its coarse surface into a feathered cloak. Looking closely at the rougher texture of the cloak's trailing hem, it appears that the garment has not quite completed this metamorphosis, while the misshapen homunculus carries a deep red decalcomania cape of its own, linking it with the other supernatural figures. In addition, Ernst's Almost Late

Romanticism focuses on the abstract technique itself to render a nearly nonobjective and possibly automatist composition.

Surrealists including Max Ernst, André Masson, and Salvador Dali also are known to have admired Moreau for his bizarre mythological creatures, exotic ornamentation, and ability to convey hypnotic dream states.[475] By the time Moreau created such complex symbolic works as Jupiter et Sémélé, 1894-95 (Fig. 1.28), the artist was "engrossed in his own dream-world and yielded to the dictates of the unconscious mind, to an extent that makes him… one of the forerunners of Surrealism," explains Pierre-Louis Mathieu.[476] In fact, Breton refers to Gauguin's and Moreau's work as "the two great modern syntheses of magic art."[477] Breton recalls being enraptured by the Musée Gustave Moreau during his first visit at age seventeen, and afterward dreamed of breaking in at night "to intercept the messages fluttering from the Suitors to the [Apparition], exactly half-way between the outer eye and the white-hot inner eye."[478] This hallucinatory effect of Moreau's paintings caused Breton to recognize him as a

[475] Mathieu, 1976, 246-248.

[476] Ibid., 182.

[477] Mathieu, 1990, 29.

[478] Breton, "Gustave Moreau," 1961, in Le surréalisme et la peinture, 363. "La découverte du musée Gustave Moreau, quand j'avais seize ans, a conditionné pour toujours ma façon d'aimer. La beauté, l'amour, c'est là que j'en ai eu la révélation à travers quelques visages, quelques poses de femmes. Le "type" de ces femmes m'a probablement caché tous les autres: ç'a été l'envoûtement complet. Les mythes, ici réattisés comme nulle part ailleurs ont dû jouer. Cette femme qui, presque sans changer d'aspect, est tour à tour Salomé, Hélène, Dalila, la Chimère, Sémélé, s'impose comme leur incarnation indistincte. Elle tire d'eux son prestige et fixe ainsi ses traits dans l'éternel… Ce musée, rien pour moi ne procède plus à la fois du temple tel qu'il devrait être et du "mauvais lieu" tel... qu'il pourrait être aussi. J'ai toujours rêvé d'y entrer la nuit par effraction, avec une lanterne. Surprendre ainsi la Fée au griffon dans l'ombre, canter les intersignes qui volettent des Prétendants à l'Apparition, à mi-distance de l'œil extérieur et de l'œil intérieur porté à l'incandescence." Translated by Taylor (2002), 363.

proto-Surrealist in his first manifesto, listing him among artists who unconsciously created Surrealist work before the movement's inception.[479]

Ernst was particularly interested in channeling the pure psychic automatism Breton proposed in the Manifeste du surréalisme by allowing imagery to surface from chance-created designs. He also is known for his earlier frottage images, which he began around 1925. These pictures, formed by pencil or pigment rubbed on paper placed over textured surfaces such as floorboards, leaves, or twine, recall Hugo's lace impressions. Ernst also developed grattage, a method in which canvas is covered with layers of paint, placed on textured surfaces, and then scraped to remove layers of paint.

Using these techniques, Ernst allowed his unconscious mind to interpret the patterns as fantastical plants, animals, insects, and otherworldly landscapes. For example, in Les diamants conjugaux (The Conjugal Diamonds) (Fig. 4.26) from the print series Histoire naturelle (1925), Ernst perceived bird-like forms within the frottage wood-grain textures that suggest his alter ego Loplop, the superior bird. Ernst considered frottage the visual equivalent of automatic writing as described by Breton, since the artist witnesses and assists the inception and development of each design, without preconceived ideas. However, Ernst considered André Breton's and André Masson's automatism too unrestrained, and preferred to maintain more control over his work and ideas using the semi-automatic collage process.[480]

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[479] Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," 1924, 27. Breton also includes Uccello, Seurat, Matisse, Derain, Picasso, Braque, Duchamp, Picabia, De Chirico, Klee, Man Ray, Ernst, and Masson.

[480] Robert Rainwater, ed., Max Ernst: Beyond Surrealism: A Retrospective of the Artist's Books and Prints (New York: New York Public Library and Oxford University Press, 1986), 14. Also discussed in Werner Spies, Max Ernst, Loplop: The Artist in the Third Person, (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1983), 72.

Although current art historical scholarship has not established specific connections between Surrealism and seventeenth-century printmaker Hercules Seghers, similarities between the two artists' work suggest that Ernst was aware of both Hugo and Seghers as experimental predecessors and drew upon their legacy of experimental techniques. For instance, Seghers's Piles of Books, an etching from 1620-30 (Fig. 4.27), contains a stark composition of textured objects and indeterminate space that resembles some of Ernst's frottage prints. Ernst's Les moeurs des feuilles (The habits of leaves), 1925 (Fig. 4.28), Plate XVIII from Histoire naturelle, encompasses the same quality of a sparse but elegantly balanced still life, and both artists' use of texture allows forms to emerge from or dissolve into the background. Judging from Seghers's trials with superimposed images, his lift-ground technique, and altering his etching plates, whether Piles of Books is a premeditated composition remains uncertain. Centuries after Seghers's time, Ernst continues such inventive experimentation, leading to new technical discoveries including reproductive printmaking processes for frottage and collage.

British artist Stanley William Hayter's Parisian workshop, Atelier 17, was renowned for experimental Surrealist printmaking during the late 1920s-1930s. Hayter worked with printmakers associated with the movement including Ernst, Joan Miró, and André Masson. Hayter acknowledged Ernst's innovative contributions to the medium in his book New Ways of Gravure (1949), praising Ernst's brilliant method of assembling different textures on a plate essentially to create a soft-ground collage.[481] According to Hayter, Ernst established the fusion of automatic drawing, collage, and etching. Using free-hand drawing as well as his soft-ground collage technique, Ernst made five etchings

[481] Stanley William Hayter, New Ways of Gravure, 1st ed. 1949 (New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1981), 200.

in 1934, each as a frontispiece for the five volumes of his collage novel Une semaine de bonté. Synthesizing semi-automatic collage and frottage processes with traditional soft-ground etching, Ernst's technique and Hayter's encouragement indicate the permeation of automatism into the established art historical canon.

In addition to fostering new chemical techniques, Hayter often encouraged the fusion of automatic drawing and printmaking. For newcomers to the medium, he believed that automatic drawing on the plate was more useful for dismissing preconceived notions about printmaking than for channeling the artist's unconscious mind, since printmaking remained a complex and indirect image-making process.[482] For many Surrealists, though, automatic drawing in drypoint or etching offered opportunities to explore spontaneous, intuitive techniques and recurring personal symbols for creative or even therapeutic purposes.

Along with revealing his Northern European roots, Ernst's work also reveals the influence of nineteenth-century Symbolism. Some plates in his collage novel La femme 100 têtes (1929) resemble Symbolist printmaker Max Klinger's Glove Cycle (1881), a series of ten etchings based on chance encounters and a mundane object turned monumental. Ernst's irrational juxtapositions of nineteenth-century wood engravings evoke Klinger's unsettling dream-narrative about the adventures of a lady's lost glove, and a threatening mood and recurring natural disasters characterize the impossible realms of both Klinger's Glove Cycle and Ernst's collage novel.[483] In Anxieties (Fig. 4.29), Plate 7 of Klinger's series, an enormous glove and disembodied pair of hands disorient

[482] Joann Moser, "The Impact of Stanley William Hayter on Post-War American Art," Archives of American Art Journal 17 (1978), 9.

[483] Christiane Hertel, "Irony, Dream, and Kitsch: Max Klinger's Paraphrase of the Finding of a Glove and German Modernism," Art Bulletin 74 (March 1992), 111.

the viewer's sense of scale and reality as Goya-esque phantoms torment a sleeping man. A half-century later, Ernst's collages capture similarly menacing amalgamations of possible fetish objects and uncertain relationships, such as the combination of sleeping women with lively inanimate objects (Fig. 4.30). While Klinger is more concerned with portraying a dream world, his trancelike figures influenced Ernst's propensity for recombining prints into fantastical collage images through automatism.

Florian Rodari directly compares Ernst to Hugo in the sense that both artists had an extraordinary visionary power and imagination to create microcosms within abstract patterns and details. Rodari observes that Ernst's creations "often oscillate between two planes, the real and imaginary, unsure of the threshold separating them, engendering in the viewer a sense of déjà vu, of a country that is known but cannot be reached."[484] His description also could apply to Hugo's Romantic visions of land, sea, and architecture that relocate familiar places into unknown worlds.

While Hugo's "spirit" drawings can provide revelations of his internal universe, Ernst's esoteric symbolism conceals and encodes his meaning, which sometimes relates to the alchemical principles that captivated the Surrealists. Fascination with alchemy is another example of the Surrealists' drawing upon the Romantic past and applying arcane practices to their quest for absolute reality; thus Hugo's alchemical references in his writing and séances certainly would have attracted them. In Notre-Dame de Paris, for example, the corrupt priest Claude Frollo, covers the walls of his tower cell with hermetic

[484] Florian Rodari, "Victor Hugo, a Precursor a posteriori," in Shadows of a Hand: The Drawings of Victor Hugo (London: Merrell Holberton Publishers Ltd., 1998), 26.

phrases, attempts alchemical experiments, and refers to legendary alchemists such as Nicolas Flamel.[485]

Alchemy surfaces in Hugo's séance messages in July 1854. Using the phantom identity of Flamel, Hugo drew a series of diagrams accompanied by Latin phrases about the planet Mercury and its inhabitants. One of the "Flamel" drawings (Fig. 4.31) depicts a creature with a rhombus-shaped sorcerer's head (wearing a pointed cap) on what is probably a lion's body. Hugo asked "Flamel" its meaning, then wrote a list of Latin words on the creature; some describe it as "half-matter" and "half-spirit," but the words petasus insani refer to Mercury, the unique alchemical metal. "Flamel" went on to draw a diagram of the hydra-like beings that inhabit the planet.[486]

Furthermore, aforementioned occultist Éliphas Lévi discussed alchemy and practitioners including Nicolas Flamel in his L'Alchimie et les alchimistes (1854), and influential Symbolists such as Huysmans, Jules Bois, Edouard Schuré, Joséphin Péladan, and Odilon Redon were involved in the fin-de-siècle occult revival that converged at Edmond Bailly's occult bookshop in Paris.[487] Several Surrealist artists, including Breton, Ernst, and Carrington, delved into medieval pseudoscience, which offered them another alternative to rationalism and provided a source of personal symbols and clandestine knowledge. The Surrealists also associated alchemy with the transmutation of thought,

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[485] Hugo, Notre-Dame de Paris (The Hunchback of Notre-Dame), 1831, trans. Walter J. Cobb (New York: Putnam, 2001). In Book VII, Chapter IV, "Fate." According to Yvonne Duplessis, L'aspect expérimentale du surréalisme (Agnieres: JMG editions, 1998), 36, Hugo conducted specific occult and alchemical research on the fifteenth century for Notre Dame de Paris.

[486] Victor Hugo, in Conversations with Eternity: The Forgotten Masterpiece of Victor Hugo, trans. and commentary by John Chambers (Boca Raton: New Paradigm Books, 1998), 151. "Petasus insani" could translate to "insane traveler," a reference to the speed which Mercury travels around the sun.

[487] Warlick, 2001, 23. The Surrealists even toured medieval, alchemically significant locations in Paris such as Notre-Dame cathedral, inspired by Fulcanelli's Le Mystère des cathédrales, 1926.

dreams, and reality. Their explorations in paint and collage represent symbolic journeys to transmute base material and opposing concepts, such as male and female, into a superior art that embodies the ideal, unified state of being.

Breton referred to alchemy in his writings, including the Second Manifeste du surréalisme (1930), which recounts the great influence of Flamel's hermeticism, offering the modern artists hope towards discovering the Philosopher's Stone, "that which was to enable man's imagination to take a stunning revenge on all things, which brings us once again, after centuries of the mind's domestication and insane resignation, to the attempt to liberate once and for all the imagination by the 'long, immense, reasoned derangement of the senses.'"[488] The Surrealists were drawn to alchemy's associations not only with transmutation, but also with the discovery of lost knowledge and the restoration of man's creative psychic powers.

Alchemical concepts sometimes arose under hypnosis during the "season of sleeps," particularly in Crevel's short stories and Desnos's drawings. In 1923 Ernst drew a double portrait of fellow "season of sleeps" participant Max Morise (Fig. 4.32), representing two faces or a dual personality with fused profiles like the mythological Janus. Morise expels birds, branches, and animal parts from his body and open mouths. The double faces, fused as if melded together in an alchemist's furnace, symbolize the astrological sign of Gemini, an allusion to another esoteric science.[489]

Like Desnos's drawings, the diagrammatic quality, use of symbols connected by lines, and central third eye in Ernst's image are reminiscent of Hugo's "spirit" drawings.

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[488] Breton, Second Manifesto of Surrealism, 1930, in Manifestoes of Surrealism, 174-74.

[489] Warlick, 2001, 72. In Ernst's painting Rendezvous of Friends, 1922, Morise appears holding a sphere or celestial globe.

Similar motifs appear in Hugo's picture of the skeleton in the tomb and of a godlike figure with an eye in his torso (Fig. 4.33). The "third eye" represents inner sight and clairvoyance, and also corresponds with cosmic diagrams of the sun and moon—alternate symbols of male and female in alchemical diagrams.[490] In Hugo's drawing, a strange celestial form with closed eyes ascends behind the imposing spirit. Both Hugo and Ernst emphasize hidden knowledge and wisdom through personal symbols of secret phenomena.

M. E. Warlick's extensive study of Ernst and alchemy contends that automatist methods such as frottage involve another type of transmutation: "The frottage process was inherently alchemical, because it transformed base matter—floorboards, leaves, or twine—into works of revelation."[491] According to Warlick, the collage method also can be related to alchemy in its transformation of ordinary materials into artistic gold. A collage such as Loplop présente une jeune fille (Loplop Introduces a Young Girl) (Fig. 4.34) can be seen as specifically alchemical, combining elemental objects and male and female symbols in one "vessel" of composition.[492] In medieval alchemy, diagrams of the androgyne symbolized the primal matter of the Sun ("King") and Moon ("Queen"), presented as a half-male, half-female figure or as lovers to indicate the harmonious chemical "marriage" of sulphur and mercury.[493]

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[490] Ibid., 191. The eye motif recurs in Ernst's Histoire naturelle in cosmic forms of "ringed suns" and "the deep black hole in the depths of the sea." Phallic and vaginal forms also emerged in alchemical works.

[491] Ibid., 84.

[492] Ibid., 122-3, 127.

[493] Fred Gettings, Secret Symbolism in Occult Art (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1987), 154.

Warlick has convincingly demonstrated that Ernst's collage novel, Une Semaine de bonté (1934), is structured on the alchemical process. Une Semaine de bonté contains seven chapters, each assigned a different weekday, protagonist, and element relating to alchemical ingredients and processes: mud (earth), water, fire, blood (air), and the quintessence (the last three chapters).[494] Each chapter explores the relationship between the elements, but the novel's lack of logical sequence encodes it, not unlike an alchemical manuscript which only those worthy of its secrets can unlock. The color sequence of black to white to red in the first three chapters parallels the stages of alchemical operations: putrefaction, ablution, and conjunction—the chemical wedding that produces the Philosopher's Stone.[495] The protagonist, or exemple, in each chapter is also symbolic; for instance, the first chapter (Sunday) features the Lion of Belfort. Lions traditionally represent primal matter, and in some images the male lion's head is fused with a female body to create the androgyne. Recurring images of lions in Hugo's séance drawings suggests his knowledge of alchemical symbols, especially in the "Flamel" image of a magus' head on a lion's body.

Ernst's dynamic La Cour du dragon (Fig. 4.35), named after an ancient alchemical district of Paris, is the frontispiece for Volume III of Une semaine de bonté. The etching employs contour drawing and sinuous figures that suggest the influence of Masson's grotesque creatures and restless curvilinear style. The dragon's flamelike claws and torso correspond to the alchemical elements of primal matter and fire (feu), the

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[494] Warlick, 2001, 121. Seven relates to "the seven ancient planets and to their oversight of the seven metals, progressing from lead to gold."

[495] Warlick, "Max Ernst's Alchemical Novel: 'Une Semaine de bonté'," Art Journal, Vol. 46 (Spring 1987), 63. She also discusses the collage novel in Max Ernst and Alchemy, 121-127.

subject of Volume III.[496] Ernst's image, transmuting a dragon from the base matter of line and texture, provides an appropriate introduction to his collage novel chapter containing nineteenth-century images of candlelit parlors and volatile lovers fused into strange new conjunctions.

In 1931, Ernst created the collage series A l'intérieur de la vue for Valentine Hugo. Some of these collages, featuring solar and lunar fusion in concentric circular diagrams, refer to her Objet surréaliste à fonctionnement symbolique of the same year (Fig. 4.36). This work consists of a "red hand and a white hand on a carpet of fire," that had appeared to Breton in a dream. Valentine Hugo's alchemical composition represents the fusion of "masculine red sulphur" and "feminine white mercury,"[497] indicating her awareness of hermetic concepts. Both hands are placed on a gaming table, and the white hand holds a pair of dice, adding connotations of chance and fate to her object's interpretation.

Using alchemical symbolism to recover from her mental breakdown and reconstruct her identity, Carrington assumed different personalities in her paintings, which often contain bizarre creatures, esoteric diagrams, astrological references, and vessel-shaped symbols. In Self-Portrait (Inn of the Dawn Horse) from 1936-37 (Fig. 4.37), she sought to channel the magical aspects of painting by representing herself as an androgynous, entranced figure situated between a chimerical hyena and two horses—a vortex of figures around a "psychic center."[498]

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[496] Warlick, 2001, 124. Rainwater, 23, suggests that the freehand style of this drawing may reveal that Ernst traced the design around the contours of found objects.

[497] Ibid., 2001, 117.

[498] Susan L. Aberth, Leonora Carrington: Surrealism, Alchemy and Art (Burlington, Vermont: Lund Humphries, 2004), 30. Carringon expressed that everybody has an "inner bestiary," and was drawn to

Just as Hugo aligned himself with animals such as the Lion of Androcles, and Ernst with birds, Carrington identified with horses, which reminded her of Celtic mythology, the Greek winged horse Pegasus, and liberation.[499] While the painting may be interpreted as the transition to adulthood, or an alchemical journey to create a new self, its inclusion of symbolic animals reveals Carrington's "powers as a femme sorcière, challenging the traditional role of Muse prescribed by the Surrealists"[500] and reclaiming mediumistic feminine abilities. As she transforms into an adult with both human and animal characteristics, the horse flees into the forest—the shaman's domain—on a psychic and spiritual journey.

Carrington's shamanistic portrait of Ernst (Fig. 4.38) portrays him as a birdlike, cloaked figure carrying an "alchemical vessel" containing a horse.[501] In the background of the fantasy landscape, a large, frozen horse represents the artist herself; perhaps she intends to further reverse gender roles by presenting Ernst as her "Muse." Like Valentine Hugo, she fuses symbolic red and white, and gives Ernst a mermaid's tail in order to transact the merger of male and female elements that was central to both alchemy and Surrealism.[502]

Susan L. Aberth interprets the painting as a companion to her self-portrait, and the figure's amalgamation of marine, animal, and human characteristics as a reference to

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hyenas for their curiosity and wildness. The arcane subtitle refers to the modern horse's prehistoric ancestor.

[499] Hubert, 120. Carrington learned Celtic myths at an early age from her Irish mother.

[500] Aberth, 35.

[501] Warlick, 2001, 162. The representation of Ernst recalls a shaman figure or the Tarot card of the Hermit carrying a lantern. Also discussed in Hubert, 122.

[502] Ernst's portrait of Carrington titled Leonora in the Morning Light, n.d., depicts her body entwined with animals and plants, giving her mythical identities.

Ernst's hybrid creatures. Carrington's short story, "Fly, Pigeon," may provide another source of imagery; the description of the main character, Célestin, who is turning into a bird, parallels Ernst's appearance in her portrait of him.[503] Her combination of her esoteric style with Ernst's symbolism represents another method of transmuting male and female creative material into an alchemical emblem.

Ernst's and Carrington's fusion of alchemy and art led to Ernst's highly complex The Robing of the Bride in 1940. The work contains decalcomania, which alludes to primal matter, but the painting abounds with specific alchemical symbolism. Ernst depicts a human female with a red male owl's head bearing a third eye, a woman with a birdlike head turned from the viewer, another bird-human androgyne, and a demonic green hermaphrodite. This painting embodies the fulfillment of a medieval alchemical journey that artists such as Hugo pursued through Romanticism, transmuting ink and paint through automatism and attempting to discover the secrets of visual art through both investigative and spiritual methods. Drawing imagery from alchemy and his imagination to portray the "chemical wedding" of sulphur (red) and mercury (white), Ernst finally represented the unions of body, spirit, and knowledge which will produce the Philosopher's Stone and attain the final stages of esoteric Surrealism.

Although Hugo denied his authorship of the séance poems and unique visions of the afterlife, the "spirits'" language undeniably echoes his own. In contrast, the Surrealists considered automatic messages fascinating self-revelations. The esoteric elements that artists carried through the Romantic era and beyond encouraged the Surrealists to encode their work with the personalized references and symbols of

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[503] Aberth, 42.

somnambulistic introspection. One wonders what perplexing secrets remain concealed in Hugo's epic poems and Masson's labyrinthine drawings; as "Death" told Hugo, "Be the Oedipus of your own life and the Sphinx of your own grave."[504]

[504] Hugo, Conversations with Eternity, 172. "Voici seulement ce que j'ai à te dire: sois l'Œdipe de ta vie et le Sphinx de ta tombe." From a séance of September 19, 1854. In Hugo, "Procès-verbaux des séances des tables parlantes à Jersey," Oeuvres complètes, Book IX, Vol. 2, 1434.



Figure 4.1. Salvador Dalí, Le Phénomène de l'extase, 1933, photocollage, 27 x 18.5 cm, Minotaure 3-4 (December 14, 1933): 77.

Source: David Lomas, The Haunted Self: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 54.

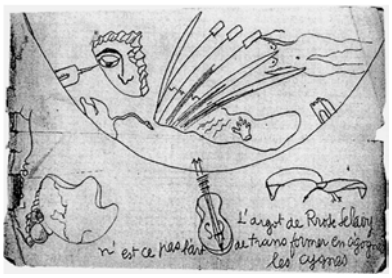


Figure 4.2. Desnos, Untitled, Autumn 1922, drawing, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris.

Source: Musée d'Orsay, L'Oeil de Victor Hugo (Paris: Éditions des Cendres, 2004), 164.

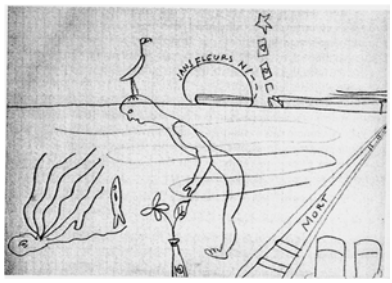


Figure 4.3. Desnos, Untitled, 1 November 1922, drawing, collection of Jacques Fraenkel.

Source: Musée d'Orsay, L'Oeil de Victor Hugo (Paris: Éditions des Cendres, 2004), 164.



Figure 4.4. Hugo, tache pliage, 1856-57, wash and ink on paper, 20 x 16 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, N.A.F. 19011, f. A.

Source: Marie-Laure Prévost, Victor Hugo: l'homme océan (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2002), 346, fig. 359.

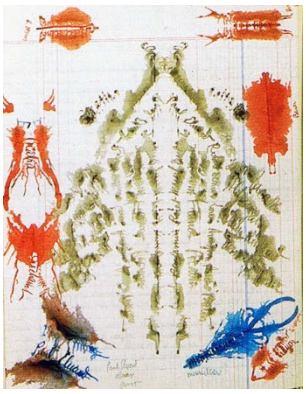


Figure 4.5. Robert Desnos, l'Amour des homonymes, 1922, ink on paper, 27 x 21 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, N.A.F. 25096, f. 35.

Source: Prévost, 2002, 346, fig. 360.



Figure 4.6. André Masson, The Portico, 1925, ink on paper, 35.5 x 29.9 cm, Ertegun Collection.

Source: Nadia Choucha, Surrealism & the Occult: Shamanism, Magic, Alchemy, and the Birth of an Artistic Movement (Rochester: Destiny Books, 1992), 55, Ill. 3.



Figure 4.7. Hugo, Il était là caressant sa chimère, 1864-65, ink on paper, 23 x 18 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, NAF 13355.



Figure 4.8. André Masson, Automatic Drawing, 1924-25, pen, 24 x 32 cm, Collection of Maurice Jardot.

Source: Michel Leiris, André Masson, Line Unleashed: A retrospective exhibition of drawings at the Hayward Gallery, London, exh. cat. (London: South Bank Centre, 1987), Pl. 10.

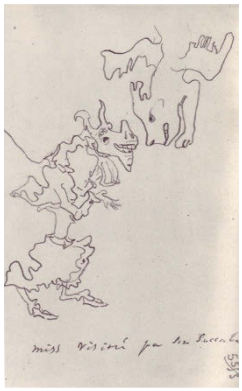


Figure 4.9. Hugo, Miss visitée par son succube, 1856, 15 x 9.3 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Source: Prévost, 2002, 192.



Figure 4.10. Hugo, Torquemada, ca. 1853-54, mixed media on paper, 28.8 x 45.8 cm, Maison de Victor Hugo, Paris, Inv. 809.

Source: Prévost, 2002, 347.



Figure 4.11. Salvador Dali and Louis Buñuel, film still from L'Âge d'Or, 1930, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, ICO-CIN 00079.

Source: Prévost, 2002, 347.

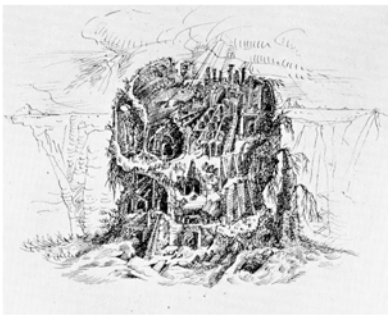


Figure 4.12. Masson, Ville crânienne (Skull City), 1939, ink, 62 x 47 cm, private collection.

Source: Clark V. Poling, André Masson and the Surrealist Self (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 132.



Figure 4.13. Hugo, Le Phare d'Eddystone, 1866, ink on paper, Maison de Victor Hugo, Paris, Inv. 181.

Source: Prévost, 2002, 301.

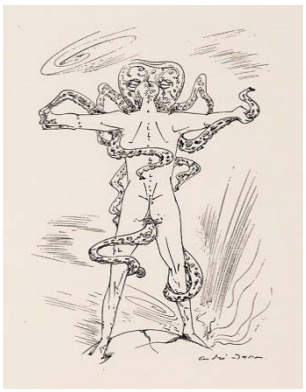


Figure 4.14. Masson, Untitled drawing illustrating "La Pieuvre" from Les Travailleurs de la Mer, 1944, Collection of Roger Caillois.

Source: Victor Hugo, La Pieuvre (Les Travailleurs de la Mer) (Buenos Aires, Éditions des Lettres françaises, 1944), 7.



Figure 4.15. Masson, Cover for Acéphale 2, 21 January 1937.

Source: Poling, 2008, 88.



Figure 4.16. Hugo, Tête de Diable, 1860-70, ink on paper, 24 x 15 cm, collection of Bernard Picasso.

Source: Alfred H. Barr, Jr., ed., Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1936), Pl. 133.



Figure 4.17. Valentine Hugo, Cover of Contes Bizarres by Achim d'Arnim, 1933, private collection.

Source: Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf E. Kuenzli, and Gwen Raaberg, eds., Surrealism and Women (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990), 198.



Figure 4.18. André Breton, Untitled, n. d., diameter: 11.5 cm, Collection of Jean Schuster, Paris.

Source: André Breton, Je vois, j'imagine. Poèmes-objets (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), 76, Fig. 46.



Figure 4.19. Oscar Dominguez, Untitled, 1936, decalcomania (gouache transfer) on paper, 35.9 x 29.2 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Source: André Breton, "Oscar Dominguez: Concerning Decalcomania without Preconceived Object (Decalcomania of Desire)," 1936, in Surrealism and Painting, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 128.



Figure 4.20. Max Ernst, L'Oeil du silence (The Eye of Silence), 1943-44, oil on canvas, 108 x 141 cm, Washington University Gallery of Art, Acquisition, St. Louis University, Kendale Sale Fund, 1946.

Source: Werner Spies, Max Ernst: Rétrospective (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1991), 256, Fig. 226.



Figure 4.21. Ernst, lithograph from Heinrich von Kleist, Clemens Brentano, and Achim von Arnim, Paysage marin avec capuchin, Zurich: Bolliger, 1972.

Source: Renée Riese Hubert, Surrealism and the Book (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 165, Fig. 51.

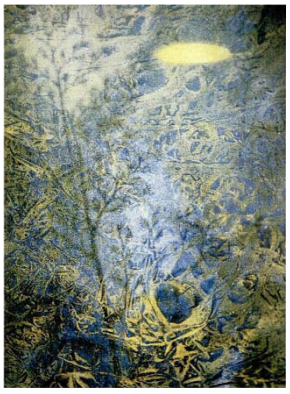


Figure 4.22. Ernst, Quasi feu le romantisme (Almost Late Romanticism), 1960.

Source: Hubert, 1988, 188, Plate 14.



Figure 4.23. Gustave Moreau, La Vie de l'Humantié (The Life of Mankind), 1886, oil on wood, 290 x 150 cm, Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris, Cat. 216.

Source: Pierre-Louis Mathieu, The Gustave Moreau Museum (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1997), 84.



Figure 4.24. Ernst, Vox Angelica, 1943, oil on canvas, 152.4 x 203 cm, private collection.

Source: Robert McNab, Ghost Ships: A Surrealist Love Triangle (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 184, Fig. 100.



Figure 4.25. Ernst, L'habillement de l'épousée (The Robing of the Bride), 1940, oil on canvas, 130 x 96 cm, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice.

Source: Werner Spies and Sabine Rewald, eds., Max Ernst: A Retrospective (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 235, cat. no. 132.



Figure 4.26. Ernst, Les diamants conjugaux (The Conjugal Diamonds), 1925, collotype after a frottage drawing, from Histoire naturelle, Plate XXV.

Source: Werner Spies, Max Ernst: Rétrospective, exh. cat. (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1991), 129, cat. no. 84.

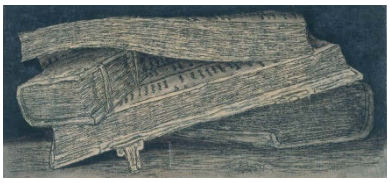


Figure 4.27. Hercules Seghers, Piles of Books, 1620-30, etching printed in green with grey and black brush work, 9.3 x 20.5 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Source: Rijksmuseum, "Piles of Books," <www.rijksmusuem.nl> (October 2011).

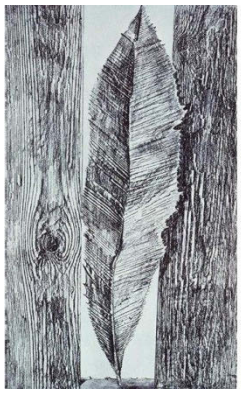


Figure 4.28. Ernst, Les moeurs des feuilles (The habits of leaves), 1925, collotype after a frottage drawing, from Histoire naturelle, Plate XVIII.

Source: Max Ernst, Max Ernst: Beyond Painting, and other Writings by the Artist and fhis Friends (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc., 1948), 143.



Figure 4.29. Max Klinger, Paraphrase on the Finding of a Glove, Plate 7: Anxieties, 1881, etching, 14.4 cm x 26.9 cm.

Source: Christiane Hertel, "Irony, Dream, and Kitsch: Max Klinger's Paraphrase of the Finding of a Glove and German Modernism," Art Bulletin 74 (March 1992), 99, Fig. 13.

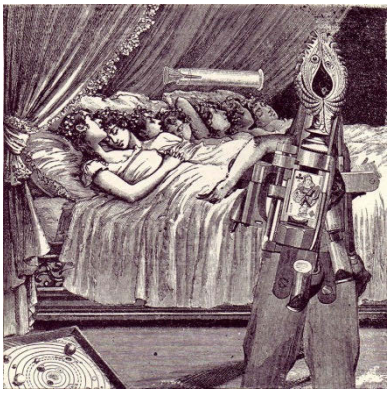


Figure 4.30. Max Ernst, "Here all together are my seven sisters, often living on liquid dreams and perfectly resembling sleeping leaves," 1929, photo-engraving from the collage novel La Femme 100 Têtes, 20 cm x 20 cm.

Source: Max Ernst, La Femme 100 Têtes (Paris: Editions du Carrefour, 1929), n.p.



Figure 4.31. Hugo, "Spirit" drawing of alchemical creature, July 1854, pencil, 34 x 50 cm, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Source: Musée d'Orsay, L'Oeil de Victor Hugo, 2004, 154, Plate XXXI.



Figure 4.32. Ernst, Portrait of Max Morise, 1923, pencil, 23 x 14 cm, Sprengel Collection, Hanover.

Source: William A. Camfield, Max Ernst: Dada and the Dawn of Surrealism, exh. cat. (Munich: Prestel, 1993), 140, cat. No. 106.



Figure 4.33. Hugo, “Spirit” drawing with figures, 1854-55, pencil, 29 x 42 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Source: Musée d’Orsay, L’Oeil de Victor Hugo, 2004, 156, Plate XXXIII.



Figure 4.34. Ernst, Loplop présente une jeune fille (Loplop Introduces a Young Girl), 1930, painted plaster on wood with dangling objects, 195 x 89 cm, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Source: Spies and Rewald, eds., 2005, 221, cat. no. 119.



Figure 4.35. Ernst, frontispiece to La Cour du dragon, Vol. III of Une Semaine de Bonté, 1934, soft ground etching, 18 x 13 cm, Editions Jeanne Bucher, Paris.

Source: Robert Rainwater, ed., Max Ernst: Beyond Surrealism: A Retrospective of the Artist's Books and Prints (New York: New York Public Library and Oxford University Press, 1986), 14, 25, Fig. 15.



Figure 4.36. Valentine Hugo, Objet surréaliste à fonctionnement symbolique, 1931, mixed media, 32.5 x 23 x 9.5 cm, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Source: Centre Georges Pompidou, "Objet," <http://collection.centrepompidou.fr> (accessed October 2011).



Figure 4.37. Leonora Carrington, Self-Portrait (Inn of the Dawn Horse), 1936-37, oil on canvas, 65 x 81.2 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Collection.

Source: Susan L. Aberth, Leonora Carrington: Surrealism, Alchemy and Art (Burlington, Vermont: Lund Humphries, 2004), 31, Fig. 18.

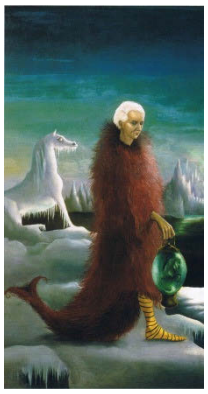


Figure 4.38. Carrington, Portrait of Max Ernst, 1939, oil on canvas, 50.2 x 26.7 cm, private collection.

Source: Aberth, 2004, 43, Fig. 26.

CONCLUSION

Throughout its years as a coherent movement, Symbolism remained closely associated with literature and criticism, leading the visual arts away from strict academic standards towards new theoretical formulas and forging a conduit between Romanticism and the modern era. Although Symbolist artists may have sacrificed their work's verisimilitude in favor of expressing individual principles and the intangible, their extraordinary visions assert their desire for an innovative ideal beyond nineteenth-century industrialization and the established tastes for naturalism and realism. Critics who responded positively to Symbolism, as in Huysmans's opulent prose or Aurier's sublime judgments, guide modern audiences in understanding the psychological and mesmeric impact of the Symbolist aesthetic on contemporary Parisian society and on later movements such as Surrealism.

In this dissertation I have attempted to unveil new creative, esoteric, and psychological links between Symbolist and Surrealist art, and to expand upon existing connections between these and earlier movements. First we examined the rise of psychology and how theories of magnetism and the unconscious may have affected Romantic and Symbolist art in previously unexplored ways, concentrating on the possible expression of the unconscious and automatism. Then we took a closer look at Victor Hugo in his lesser known personas as automatic writer and visionary artist. Hugo's "spirit" drawings and messages are fascinating in their own right, and had what I believe to be a greater impact on Surrealism than previously acknowledged. Studying nineteenth-century experimental art and automatism, we analyzed little-known works of visual art by Hugo, George Sand, and Gustave Moreau, and looked at how Symbolist

artists may have incorporated automatist ideas. Finally we studied the Surrealists in their roles of modern alchemists and reluctant heirs of spiritism, and the influence of nineteenth-century physicians, artists, and writers on their work and principles.

I have presented what I believe to be a thorough investigation of the topics at hand. Yet several issues remain to be addressed, offering opportunities for further research beyond this project's current scope. To expand on Surrealism's nineteenth-century origins, for example, I intend to study psychology and magnetism in the context of early photography. Prior to the Dada and Surrealist movements, surreal threads of spiritism and the uncanny extended through the history of photography and its controversial development as an art form. Despite initial debate over photography's purpose as an art or a science, nineteenth-century photographers soon realized the camera's potential to capture illogical artistic scenes, supernatural occurrences, or objects imperceptible to the human eye. Photographers' early attempts to express their imagination created images both receptive to psychological interpretation and challenging to the ingrained notion of photography as truth, and nineteenth-century photographers created bizarre illusions in their efforts to render the invisible.

Additional avenues of research include studying the depiction of mythology and Orientalism as artists' attempts to access alternate realities and the unconscious. Moreau, for example, often envisioned mythological poets as symbols of the artist-self, such as Orpheus and Apollo, yet he was equally fascinated with infusing his romanticized notions of Indian poets and Eastern religious practitioners into Christian philosophy. Although influenced by Orientalism's patriarchal ideas, Moreau's paintings exemplify artists' ideal syncretic vision of East and West through a combination of European Orientalism,

Greco-Roman mythology, and Asian spiritualism. In his late work, Moreau represents the ideal artist-poet by envisioning the Orient as an enticing dream, and using world mythology in a Christian context as he strives for spiritual enlightenment.

Romantic poets' fantastical exoticism, such as in Hugo's Les Orientales, reinforced Moreau's imaginative concept of the Orient. While Moreau's paintings often involve somnambulistic figures and mythical apparitions, his use of Eastern religious motifs expands his paintings' mythological associations towards his universal ideal of spiritual knowledge and transcendence beyond the mesmeric effect of his work. Interest in mythology and world religions also connects late nineteenth-century art with Surrealism: Freudian interpretations of global mythology became a significant aspect of the Surrealist movement, as artists such as André Masson and Max Ernst sought a universal language for expressing psychological, violent, or sexual themes through therapeutic and automatic techniques.

Another next step will be to carry my research on the history of abstraction and automatism further into the twentieth century, while continuing to look back to its nineteenth-century influences and forerunners. A study of the history of abstraction inevitably leads to Wassily Kandinksy and his work during the 1910s, often considered the first examples of non-objective art. Rather than reiterating the well-documented path to Kandinsky's abstraction—the outcome of a long intellectual process outlined in his book Über das Geistige in der Kunst (On the Spiritual in Art) (1912)—the psychological influence of Kandinsky and other transitional artists on Dada principles and Surrealist automatism merits further investigation. For instance, one of Marcel Duchamp's

mentors, Czech painter František Kupka, was not only a pioneer of abstraction, but also a spiritist medium and Theosophist.[505]

Beyond Kandinsky and his circle, another possible avenue for further research is analyzing how automatism and mythology in nineteenth-century and early modern art culminated in the cryptic, shamanistic imagery of Abstract Expressionism. For instance, Jackson Pollock's drip paintings of the 1940s defy precise interpretation and veil the artist's intent beneath a palimpsest of calligraphic paint. A mythical art historical figure himself, Pollock derived his arcane subject matter and techniques from a variety of mythological and cultural sources that gradually dissolve into his unified, autographic compositions and create compelling insights into the creative anguish of the artist's psyche.

Strongly influenced by Surrealism, Jungian theory, and world mythology, Abstract Expressionists such as Pollock also sought a higher reality through ritualistic and gestural creative processes. Pollock himself felt a keen affinity with the Native American shaman, who assumed the roles of tribal artist, healer, and medium with the ability to travel through spirit worlds. Possibly seeking access to his unconscious mind, Pollock attempted to balance conscious and unconscious energy and allow arcane gestures and symbols to merge into trancelike skeins of paint, adopting the enlightened status of artist-shaman similar to Moreau's intent to embody the ideal artist-poet.

The enigmas of artists' hidden desires and the inspiration surging from the unconscious remain encrypted. In this dissertation I have attempted to unlock some of these mysteries through analyzing works of art in terms of possible influences from

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[505] Linda Henderson, Duchamp in Context (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 3.

animal magnetism, nineteenth-century psychology, and occult beliefs. Other works leave us to ponder how artists initially approached experimental and chance-created designs. Such intensely personal dream images and symbolic messages only can be understood in the mind of the artist acting as a medium for his or her unconscious, or behind an entranced Surrealist's closed eyes. Moreau's somnambulist Salomés and Gauguin's dreaming natives offer us clues, yet in the end the Symbolists' sphinxes keep their secrets.

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