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Stillness: The Intersubjective Encounter in Portraits by Odilon Redon and Fernand Khnopff

By

Catharine Mary Telfair

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History of Art

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor T.J. Clark, Chair
Professor Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby
Professor Barbara Spackman

Fall 2014

Stillness: The Intersubjective Encounter in Portraits by Odilon Redon

and Fernand Khnopff

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by

Catharine Mary Telfair

Abstract

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At the heart of the very specific ambitions of the portrait project at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries were a number of interlocking and often anxiety-producing uncertainties. The human subject had come to seem more vulnerable to, and less separate from, his or her environment. Also, debates about the subjectivity of artists themselves, and their duty both to nature and to the goals of art made the portrait an arena for a very focused battle: the occasion of portraiture, it was thought, had the potential to register an intersubjective encounter, with all of its rich, irreducible and subtle meanings. Fernand Khnopff and Odilon Redon demonstrated a determination to mark both the uncertainties about subjectivity and the strangeness of the portrait encounter in many of the portraits they produced. Both artists shifted the conventional relationship between viewer and portrait, Redon by creating portraits whose meaning and emphases change radically in front of an active and mobile viewer, and Khnopff by conjuring an sense that the depicted figure is putting pressure on the membrane of the surface of the painting, and challenging its control over its little empire of represented space. Both of Redon's portraits of the Baroness de Domecy in particular, and the depictions of girls and women by Khnopff have hints within them of the possibility of the subject calcifying into a Symbolist icon, but they also provide consistent and multiple resistances to this eventuality.

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Introduction

In his book *Etats de la peinture française de 1850 à 1920*, Camille Mauclair dedicates a chapter to portraiture in the latter half of the nineteenth century.[1] He examines works by a variety of artists, and finds that, for almost all of them, their portraits are exceptions in their careers, displaying usually hidden facets of their talents. Portraits reveal surprising earnestness from facile academicians (Baudry and Cabanel find "leur réhabilitation dans le portrait"), rare insight beneath surfaces on the parts of otherwise stolid naturalists like Bonnat, and attentive discipline in idealistically-inclined artists like Carrière and Hébert.[2] There is something about the project of portraiture, Mauclair implies, that seems to challenge the formulas, techniques and habits that artists – realists and idealists alike – employ in the other parts of their oeuvres, and to make them vulnerable. Something about the artist as a man (always a man, in Mauclair's chapter) is laid bare in the portraits he paints.

This is a powerful claim for what is often seen as the most straightforwardly commercial genre, in which the artist would seem, initially, to have the least opportunity for self-expression. Indeed, Mauclair recognizes the existence of this possibility in portrait production; the only artist whose portraits have no worth, in his estimation, is Winterhalter, the *career* portraitist, for whom the practice is rote.[3] For other artists though, Mauclair claims, those invested in their subjects as individuals and in their portrait projects as substantial representational challenges rather than just as a source of income, portraiture can be one of the most serious of artistic endeavors. In the way he seeks to express the sitter before him, the artist as individual, and not just as creator, is revealed.

Léon Cladel, writing in the Belgian Journal *L'Art Moderne*, would take this claim even further.[4] To him, portraiture is the crucible of art, "il a toujours été et sera toujours la pierre de touche du talent et du génie."[5] It is a supreme challenge for an artist, because it is a human challenge as well: to encounter and recognize another person, to dedicate oneself to the expression of looking closely at him or her, and thereby to expose one's own depth or shallowness as a human being. If an artist cannot demonstrate such openness and insight, then he is no better than a photographer.

Photography's appearance in Cladel's essay as the enemy of Art, and of its humanity, is far from unusual; it plays this role in the writings of every single nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commentator on art cited throughout this entire dissertation.[6] It is perhaps more surprising that the role of *defender* of art was frequently given to the lowly genre of portraiture. Not everyone in this time period took the stakes of portraiture seriously, and for many it

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[1] Camille Mauclair, *Les Etats de la peinture française de 1850 à 1920* (Paris: Payot & Cie,
[2] Ibid., 63. On the flexibility of naturalism in late nineteenth century France, see Richard Thomson, *The Art of the Actual: Naturalism and Style in Early Third Republic France* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2012).
[3] Mauclair 1921, 59.
[4] Leon Cladel, "Du Portrait I and II," *L'Art Moderne* (May 18 and 25, 1884): 161-163 and 171-172. For more on Cladel and his relations with Belgium, see Judith Cladel and Edmond Picard, *La Vie de Léon Cladel, suivie de Léon Cladel en Belgique* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1905).
[5] Ibid., 161.
[6] The sole exception is Riegl, who focuses on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; even Fromentin, in a study of the old masters, manages to get in a dig: see Eugène Fromentin, *Les Maîtres d'autrefois* (Bâle: Les Editions Holbein, 1947), 204.

remained simply "face painting."[7] However, those who did often deployed it in their arguments specifically because it shared many of its conditions of making with the practice of photography, and, practically and commercially, it was certainly the genre whose economic existence was most threatened by new photographic technologies.[8] The challenge that belongs uniquely to portraiture, its representation of the intersubjective encounter, thrust it onto the frontlines in the rhetorical battle against photography, a battle for the soul, and perhaps existence, of art.[9] To praise painted or drawn portraiture was simultaneously to discredit photography on its *own* terms, the terms of responding to the material world in front of us and representing our experience of it. The non-photographer portraitist did this work in a human, not a mechanical way, and so expounders against photography, and many of the portraitists themselves, emphasized the importance of connection and insight gained during the portrait encounter. Portraiture was not really about physiogniomic replication, they declared, but about representing something beyond, above, beneath that surface – the choice of preposition depending on the writer's preferred metaphor for the origin of the human soul. Portraiture, for defenders of art against photography in the late nineteenth century, could *prove* the superiority of the interpretive gesture and the unfathomable variable of the human mind over any technological image-making. It necessitated connection and insight, openness to the world and an intuitive response to humanity, and always – always – it necessitated *time*: the accumulation of knowledge of a subject gained in an interpersonal encounter was fundamentally different from the accumulation of information left by light on the photographic plate. The greatest portraits were those able to bridge the gap between what we see and what we know, between the visible and the invisible.

One finds variations of this last phrase throughout the writings of Symbolist artists and writers when declaring their aspirations for their art, but portraiture is not a genre usually

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[7] This is the derogatory term used by the Earl of Shaftesbury in the eighteenth century, reprised in and useful to Tamar Garb, *The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France 1814-1914*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 2007). The introduction to this book talks about how this attitude towards portraiture manifested in the latter part of the nineteenth century – especially toward portraits of women.

[8] I am thinking here of all of the aspects of photographic technological advancement, including instantaneity, the flash, portability – every aspect of photographic improvement threatened the painting of individual human beings. On the history of photography in the nineteenth century, particularly on its technological advancement, see for example: Bill Jay, *Cyanide & Spirits: An Inside-Out View of Early Photography* (Munich: Nazareli Press, 1991); Emily Wolff, *Moment and Momentum: Seeing Time in Nineteenth Century Photography* (San Francisco: California Historical Society, 2000); Brian Coe and Mark Haworth-Booth, *A Guide to Early Photographic Processes* (London: V&A Publications, 1983); Elizabeth McCauley, *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848-1871* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994); and Gilles Mora, *PhotoSpeak: A Guide to the Ideas, Movements and Techniques of Photography, 1839 to the Present* (NY: Abbeville Press, 1998).

[9] Baudelaire, for example, in his *Salon of 1859*. I say "belongs to uniquely," rather than "defines": portraiture has many purposes: the preservation of the individual for, hopefully, eternity, or the holding on to a loved one in the face of possible loss, the self-presentation to the world, the possibility of reminding one of one's authority from afar, as in imperial portraiture, etc.

associated with the Symbolist movement. There has been very little written about their forays into it.[10] Always the most circumstantial of the arts, since the Renaissance portraiture has generally involved navigation by both artist and subject toward a product that would showcase the skill and insight of the former through a presentation of the latter that was consistent with his or her understanding and performance of self. Traditionally, strict and consistent delineation of features and surroundings was inflected by the communication of such slippery elements as character, mien and presence, attempting to accomplish the indefinable effect of likeness.[11] There is certainly more to likeness than the description of the sitter, of course, but fidelity to the specifics of face and place, and to the desires of the sitter, is not what we associate with Symbolism as it is usually presented, and represented, in the rhetoric of its time or in the literature of the last few decades.

Symbolism itself is notoriously difficult to define.[12] The word was coined originally, by Jean Moréas in 1886, to define a literary movement, and did not attempt to identify a particular style, but instead an aspiration: "...[S]ymbolist poetry endeavors to clothe the Idea in a form perceptible to the senses that nevertheless does not constitute an ultimate goal in itself, but while helping to convey the Idea, remains subordinate."[13] The word was quickly adopted by a number of the writers it was meant to describe, but equally quickly rejected and contested by others who believed it was too broad and amorphous.[14] In the following few years, it came to be applied not just to literature but to music and the visual arts as well, and to artists outside of France, in Belgium, Italy, Austria, Germany, Russia, and beyond. Writers who would later address how the word could also apply to the visual arts, like Georges-Albert Aurier, Emile Verhaeren, Maurice Denis, and Edvard Munch, were dedicated to specifying what the processes of the visual arts themselves – the acts of seeing, imaging, and realizing that image, and the relationships among these acts – could bring to the project of Symbolism, of representing things in the world to evoke the contemplation of concepts. While their theories varied in particulars, they came together in two ways. Symbolists were antipositivist, and were certain that to reproduce our sensory experience of the world around us is not the purpose of art. They were also dedicated to exploring possible meanings, but not to fixing them – to creating an open-ended experience for

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[10] Most analyses of individual portraits by Symbolist artists are published by the museums that own them; they are few and far between. In many exhibition catalogues, there may be a section devoted to portraiture, but usually limited to reproductions with very little text. *Mysteriosa*, discussed below, is a good example of this; while it is reproduced everywhere, I could not find anything of substance written about it. One exception is Tomàs Llorens Serra and Boye Llorens, *Portraits of the Belle Époque* (Barcelona: Obra Social Fundación "La Caixa", 2011).

[11] There are clear exceptions to these priorities throughout the history of portraiture, as in allegorical or historiated portraiture, for example.

[12] On these difficulties, see especially Anna Balakian, *The Symbolist Movement: A Critical Appraisal* (NY: NYUP, 1967); MaryAnne Stevens, "Towards a Definition of Symbolism," *The Last Romantics: The Romantic Tradition in British Art*, ed. John Christian (London: Lund Humphries, 1989), 33-37; and Reinhold Heller, "Concerning Symbolism and the Structure of Surface," *Art Journal* 45:2 (Summer 1985): 146-153.

[13] Jean Moréas, "The Symbolist Manifesto," *Le Figaro* September 18, 1886.

[14] This debate is particularly well laid-out in Pamela Genova, *Symbolist Journals: A Culture of Correspondence* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002).

the viewer regardless of the subject matter or genre they undertook and to the suggestion of meaning rather than its presentation.

In the past few decades, catalogues and overviews of Symbolism in the visual arts have attempted to define it, and identify its adherents, in different ways. Some include only artists who themselves expressed affinities with the term, who were commonly assigned the designation by writers in their own time, or who were very closely associated with important literary figures who accepted the term to describe their own writings. But this approach can lead to the exclusion of some artists who, for example, were not writers themselves, or who did not have particular advocates speaking for them. Other scholars have cast a wide net, and include any artists that treat some of the many, very varied themes of Symbolist literature, revisitations of ancient myth, mystery, the dreamworld, the imagination, a dizzying array of different occultist beliefs, retreat, isolation or rejection of the world and of modernity, to name just a few. At this point, the categorization begins to become unwieldy and less helpful as a lens to help understand fin-de-siècle culture.

More recent studies that have rejected the delineation of the movement as the driving goal for its examination, and have sought to study it more in the context of the fin-de-siècle urban societies from which it predominantly came, have developed more useful paradigms for understanding Symbolism.[15] "Symbolist" was a title that one could adopt to proclaim allegiance with a network, complex and constantly changing as all communities are, brought together through the shared ideas touched on above, and also by more personal, and constantly fluctuating, investments in friendships, professional connections, and patron affiliations. In the case of Symbolism, this network was organized around a number of journals and publishing houses that provided opportunities to reach an international community both of like minds and of potential patrons. (Symbolist artists widely embraced printmaking, for one reason, because it allowed them to be easily published in these organs of the press, either when they produced their own albums, illustrations for books by sympathetic writers, or when individual plates were published in various journals.) Understood as a movement allied around both practical and broad philosophical ties, with the fluctuations and ambiguities inevitable in any community, rather than a purely ideological category, Symbolism ceases to be an amorphous term giving rise to more confusion than insight.

Symbolist artists who produced portraits, like those in any other movement, varied in the balance they struck between using the individual human face as yet another motif to express their

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[15] Some of the texts that I have found most useful are: Jean-Paul Bouillon, "Le Moment symboliste," *Revue de l'Art* 96 (1992): 5-11, in which he establishes the importance of publication and exhibition opportunities to the Symbolist community; Dario Gamboni, *Potential Images: Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Modern Art* (London: Reaktion, 2002), in which Gamboni puts Symbolism into a longer examination of the uses of indeterminacy in the visual arts; Sharon Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), which attempts a social history of Symbolism; and Claire I. R. O'Mahoney, ed., *Symbolist Objects: Materiality and Subjectivity at the Fin de Siècle*, (High Wycombe: The Rivendale Press, 2009), whose editor has assembled articles treating case studies that push the boundaries of what would ordinarily be considered symbolist works of art. Also, the recent exhibition devoted to Symbolist landscapes explores some ways in which a seemingly more naturalist genre operated for Symbolists: Richard Thomson, Rodolphe Rapetti and Frances Fowle, eds., *Van Gogh to Kandinsky: Symbolist Landscape in Europe, 1880-1910* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012).

broader ideas about art, and investing those broader ideas into the discipline, and very particular project, of portraiture. When portraiture is addressed at all in overviews or catalogues of Symbolism, however, Symbolist artists are usually presented as *always* subordinating the portrait subject to the artists' idealist vision, *always* making the same statement with a portrait figure as they might with a mythological or abstract one. Jean Delville's *Mysteriosa: Portrait of Mme Stuart Merrill* (1892) [fig. 1.1], is one of the most often cited and reproduced of portraits by a Symbolist artist, and for it, these statements seem true.[16] The woman depicted is unreal, impossible to place. Her hair gleams and floats in an energy-inflated halo around her, her eyes roll into the back of her head. If she has a body, it is subliming into the blue field around her, the pastel strokes of which are feathered into the red strokes that create her hair. She is, everywhere, unnaturally thin, unnaturally long, and her tapering fingers seem to infuse the occult book she holds with that strange luminous ether emitted by every part of her. The face, facture and tone of this portrait are the same as one sees in Delville's *Medusa* [fig. 1.2] of the following year, a work with no portrait pretensions whatsoever. *Mysteriosa* seems, with very little variation, to pursue the same artistic goals as the rest of Delville's oeuvre.

Doubtless Mme Stuart Merrill was mystically inclined, though we know almost nothing of her, but depicting her was first and foremost an opportunity for a variation on themes already well-established in Delville's career. Delville is not the only Symbolist artist to have treated portraiture in this way, but neither are his choices universally shared. This generalization about Symbolist portraiture reinforces the myth of the hermetically sealed Symbolist artist, resolutely turning away from the world around and devoting himself entirely to the investigation and representation of the contents of his own mind. Recent research into the lives, processes and intentions of Symbolist artists has shown this idea, in most cases, to be radically overstated. Odilon Redon said that his art put "the logic of the visible at the service of the invisible." This statement, which not long after he wrote it began to be reproduced in all studies of his art, has usually been interpreted as placing the visible and the invisible in opposition to each other.[17] Redon would fight against his interpreters for the rest of his life, trying to get them to see what he had really meant: that the two were inextricable, that the observation of nature was crucial to the suggestion of the idea, and that the importance of the world, in the pursuit of the Symbolist, could not be overstated.

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[16] This portrait is probably also among the most exhibited and reproduced in part because it was acquired in 1998 by the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, which are responsible for and intimately involved with so many exhibitions and publications about symbolism. The object entry for the museum remains, as far as I have found, the only text longer than one or two sentences devoted to providing any background or analysis of the drawing.

[17] Redon's statement was made specifically about how he produced his monstrous figures in a way that would still make them seem to hold life, thereby challenging his viewers' assumptions about nature and its development. For the ways in which Redon wrangled with his commentators, see Dario Gamboni, *The Brush and the Pen,* trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago: U Chicago P, 2011). This book was originally published in French in 1989, but the translation is significantly expanded to take the intervening decades of Redon scholarship into account. On Redon's monsters and nature, see Martha Lucy, "Into the Primeval Slime: Body and Self in Redon's Evolutionary Universe," *RACAR* 34:1 (2009): 18-29.

Redon and Fernand Khnopff were two of the artists most devoted to Symbolism's open-endedness, and this attribute was particularly consonant with the strengths of portraiture that Mauclair and Cladel extol above. In addition to the pressures placed upon it by photography, artistic portraiture at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth was challenged by the fact that classical constructions of subjectivity, presenting a discrete, controlled, and self-sufficient being, were under siege. The contemporary nascent study of psychology was full of discoveries about the permeability of the human mind and its sensitivity to external stimuli, attempts to categorize human mental processes, and investigations into the instinctual origins of human actions. At that moment, no one really knew what a subject *was*, and therefore to represent one became a particularly loaded endeavor. These two Symbolist artists, very open to ambiguity in representation, also proved to be capable of representing the ambiguity of the sitters before them.

Before turning to their work, however, I will first present the theories of portraiture of three authors spanning the time period I am studying here, who chose not to examine the artworks of their own time but turned instead to the works of Rembrandt. Chapter One of this dissertation, "Looking Back to Rembrandt," examines the writings of Eugène Fromentin, Alois Riegl and Georg Simmel. Rembrandt was one of the only figures whom most artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, regardless of ideology, identified as a precursor to modern concerns, and these three analyses particularly of his portraits provide insight into changing ideas about subjectivity in this time period. Each of these authors also investigates, specifically, the role and ethics of the intersubjective encounter in Rembrandt's portraits, and offers portraiture in general as a genre that can aspire to both present and to prove the irreducibility of human individuality.

The second and third chapters present case studies. Chapter 2, "Interiors and Immersions: Odilon Redon's Portraits of the Baroness de Domecy," looks at the two portraits Redon created in 1900-01 of the wife of his patron Robert de Domecy. These portraits were created in tandem with Redon's decorative project for the Domecys' dining room, and the calls and responses among these projects reveal much about Redon's convictions about the relationship between the self and its environment. Redon also reveals a commitment to representing the ambiguity and individual mystery of his sitter, and he uses the temporality of the portrait sitting's intersubjective encounter as a way to create a new relationship between subject and viewer. Chapter 3, "Across the Way: Space and Temporality in Fernand Khnopff's Portraits," starts with an analysis of several of Khnopff's portraits of children, and culminates in a consideration of his *Portrait of Marguerite Khnopff* of 1887. This portrait of the artist's sister is intended to be recognized as a result of that sibling relationship. It also, in its fidelity to marking the passing of time during the subject's experience of posing, is a meditation on the relationship between the process of painting the world before the artist and the process of transforming that world in representation.

I conclude with a consideration of the portraits of Vincent van Gogh, particularly his group of portraits of the Roulin family from 1888. Van Gogh had tremendous ambitions for the portrait, and yet those ambitions were different from those of Redon and Khnopff, or from the possibilities for the portrait mapped out by Fromentin, Riegl and Simmel. His artworks serve as a counterexample that highlights Redon's and Khnopff's dedication to the representation of the open-ended nature of the intersubjective encounter.

Chapter 1. Looking Back to Rembrandt.

In the middle of the nineteenth-century, artists and theorists of the burgeoning avant-gardes in Europe sought artistic precedents for their own experience and beliefs in the long history of art – and as different as each new group was from the one before, almost all of them throughout the second half of the century and into the next hailed Rembrandt as one of these precedents. To the Realists, he was one who had never been blind to the realities of life for all classes and all types of his day. For the Impressionists, he had captured the experience of vision, with its alternating clarity and dissolution, through a mastery of the juxtapositions of color, long before their understanding of vision through modern scientific and neurological inquiry. And to the varied schools of idealists toward the end of the century and into the new, he was a unique and enigmatic genius, persecuted and martyred by his contemporaries, who had portrayed an inner world of tremendous richness and singularity.[18]

These artists and writers looked, in Rembrandt's broad career, for the subjects or genres that displayed the characteristics that best supported their own positions and seemed in accord with their own beliefs. However, it was also specifically the balance between the odd familiarity and seeming anticipation of their own concerns in much of Rembrandt's work – the way it seemed to resonate with contemporary goals – and the ways in which he was nonetheless remote from those goals, that provided the best opportunity to investigate the assumptions, particularities and, potentially, dangers of the art of their own time. This was true for all three of the writers who will be addressed in this chapter: Eugène Fromentin, Alois Riegl, and Georg Simmel. These writers struggled with the way the growing knowledge and conception of the workings of the human mind had altered the ties between the subject and the world around it, and how that change manifested itself in artistic representation.

These authors were not chosen with the intention of showing a clear progression – each one's project is too unique and different from the others, and the decades between them are filled with too much change for such a sparse grouping to be able to trace a development. But they do bookend a period of immense, rapid change in modern history, with the first Impressionist exhibition just behind Fromentin, and with Simmel enduring the first years of WWI. The belief in a distanced, objective and rationally-driven self was already under siege in Fromentin's time, and by Simmel's, the self's integrity was thoroughly doubted, and it was understood often instead to be a conglomeration of irrational impulses and responses, newly investigated within

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[18] On Rembrandt's reception in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see: *Reception: Reflections on Rembrandt: Special One-Topic Issue of Dutch Crossing* (London: Troubador Publishing Ltd, 2001); Helen O. Borowitz, "The Rembrandt and Monet of Marcel Proust," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 70:2 (February 1983): 73-95; Jean Cailleux, "Les artistes français du dix-huitième siècle et Rembrandt," *Etudes d'art français offertes a Charles Sterling*, eds. Albert Châtelet et Nicole Reynaud (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975), 278-305; Anne Chalard-Fillaudeau, *Rembrandt, l'artist au fil des textes* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004); Petra Ten Doesschate Chu, *French Realism and the Dutch Masters* (Utrecht: Hantjens Dekker and Gumbert, 1974); Katerina Horniskoza, "The Rembrandt Battle", *Umeni* 52:5 (2004): 427-434; Sabine Knuppel, "Rembrandt and the Modern: The Dialogue with Rembrandt in German Art around 1900," *Simmel Newsletter* 1997; Benedict Leca, ed., *Rembrandt: Three Faces of the Master* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Art Museum, 2008); and Alison McQueen, *The Rise of the Cult of Rembrandt* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2003).

the structures of psychoanalysis.[19] Eugène Fromentin, writing in 1876, was responding to an emerging understanding of the ambiguity of the self. Alois Riegl, writing in 1903, sought to find an ethical middle ground for a self constantly tempted to dominate or to submit to the outside world. Finally, in 1916, Georg Simmel strongly rejected the growing tendency to reduce concepts of the self to psychoanalytic models, insisting upon the existence of the self as unified and not open to investigation by empirical science.

For each of these authors, it was not Rembrandt in general who allowed them best to analyze the relationship between the self and representation – and to better understand its peculiar modern manifestations – but Rembrandt as a *portraitist*. Portraiture, with its depiction of an intersubjective encounter, provided the opportunity to think about how an individual should be represented in art. How does the artist manifest an understanding of another subject, as well as express himself? This challenge particularly allowed these thinkers to expose and examine the many oppositions that structured contemporary debates around the self and art: interiority and exteriority, the subject and the object, the material and the ideal. Ultimately, these analyses of portraiture created opportunities to defend the existence of the self while insisting that the self is irreducible, and to argue for the necessity of art expressing that the world of ideas and the material world are inextricable.

In all three of these studies, portraiture then will emerge as an enormously powerful genre that, very particularly in these decades, could provide an example of ideal human interaction and simultaneously prove its possibility, without having to pin down the characteristics or content of the interaction involved. Furthermore, if it took seriously its responsibility to the sitter and to intersubjective exchange, it allowed the painter extraordinary freedom in the representation of that experience. But this is a daunting challenge, and to accomplish all this, a portrait must simultaneously present and prove the integrity of a self not one's own, and resist the urge to define, fix or delineate it, leaving that culmination to the experience of the beholder.

Fromentin

Throughout much of their careers, Eugène Fromentin and Gustave Moreau were allies in the fight against Realism and materialism in art. Both of them would prove to be inspirations to the Symbolist generation because of their status as holdouts in this battle. They had been friends as well, even sharing a studio in their youth.[20] Toward the end of Fromentin's life, however, their friendship soured. For Moreau, Fromentin was giving in to pressures of the modern world, wavering in his dedication to the idealist path (and few on either side were more partisan and

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[19] Several texts that explore the development of psychoanalysis and the understanding of the self from the nineteenth century into the twentieth: William R. Woodward and Michael Ash, eds., *The Problematic Science: Psychology in Nineteenth Century Thought* (NY: Praeger, 1982); Judith Ryan, *The Vanishing Subject* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1991); Edward S. Reed, *From Soul to Mind: The Emergence of Psychology, from Erasmus Darwin to William James* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1997); Robert Good, "The Philosophy and Social Thought of Alfred Fouillée" (Diss.: McGill, 1993); and Man Cheung Chung and Michael E. Hyland, *History and Philosophy of Psychology* (NY: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

[20] On Fromentin and Moreau's friendship, see Barbara Wright, "Gustave Moreau and Eugène Fromentin: A Reassessment of their Relationship in the Light of New Documentation," *Connoisseur* 180:725 (July 1972): 191-97.

polar in their understanding of this division between "realist" and "idealist," in 1876, than Gustave Moreau).[21] Any cord of communion between the two artists was irrevocably snapped when Moreau read Fromentin's *Les Maîtres d'Autrefois* and proclaimed him "a positivist bourgeois and mathematician," especially because of his treatment of Rembrandt: "Jamais on n'a moins compris ce qu'est la majesté du génie, son inviolabilité..."[22] Moreau was not alone in his indignation.[23]

In *Les Maîtres d'autrefois*, Fromentin reflected on the weeks he spent in the close contemplation of artworks in major collections throughout Belgium and Holland.[24] He did not intend his work to be a complete study of the history of Dutch art, nor did he pretend to impartiality. He declared that he approached these works primarily as a viewer and admirer and secondarily as a painter, and *not* as an academic. Throughout his book, he prioritizes the evocation of the experience of standing before the paintings, and speaks with the reader as though trying to persuade a friend and peer.[25] He also uses description to stage long interactions with the painters themselves, believing that he can conjure the character of the creator through

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[21] Barbara Wright and, Pierre Moissey eds., *Gustave Moreau et Eugène Fromentin: Documents inédits* (La Rochelle: Quartier Latin, 1972). See also Geneviève Lacambre, *Gustave Moreau: Magic and Symbols* (NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1999) and *Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1999).

[22] For references to the three main texts considered in this chapter, I will use in-text notes. For Fromentin, I will be referring to the following version: *Les Maîtres d'autrefois: Belgique – Hollande* (Bâle: Les Editions Holbein, 1947).

[23] Moreau was not the only reader for whom Fromentin's section on Rembrandt was unacceptable: it did not find many other supporters in France at the time either. And although Fromentin's more than 300-page tome effusively celebrating Dutch and Flemish art devotes only a small number of its pages to Rembrandt, the lack of unalloyed celebration in those pages appears also to have turned an entire generation of Dutchmen against him. On the reception of Fromentin's book, see Alison McQueen, *The Rise of the Cult of Rembrandt* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2003); Anne Chalard-Fillaudeau, *Rembrandt, l'artist au fil des textes* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004); and Petra Ten Doesschate Chu, *French Realism and the Dutch Masters* (Utrecht: Hantjens Dekker and Gumbert, 1974).

[24] Fromentin explains all of this explicitly in his introduction, 9-14. For analyses of *Les Maîtres d'autrefois*, see Anne-Marie Christin, "Fromentin Critique d'art, ou la rhetorique du vide," *Cahiers de l'association internationale des études françaises* 37 (1985): 193-212; Marie-Anne Eckstein, "Le rôle du souvenir dans l'oeuvre d'Eugène Fromentin" (Diss.: Université de Zurich, 1970); Jacques Monge, "Un Précurseur de Proust: Fromentin et la mémoire affective," *Revue d'Histoire Litteraire de la France* (Oct-Dec 1961): 564-88; Meyer Schapiro, "Fromentin as a Critic," *Partisan Review* 16 (January 1949): 25-51; Barbara Wright, *Eugène Fromentin: a Life in Art and Letters* (NY: Peter Lang, 2000); Victor Giraud, *Eugène Fromentin* (Niort: Editions St Denis, 1945); Jan Bialostocki, "Eugene Fromentin, critique de l'art d'autrefois," in Albert Châtelet and Nicole Reynaud, eds., *Etudes d'art français offertes à Charles Sterling* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975), 327-342.

[25] Formal aspects of Fromentin's tone and presentation are most specifically treated in Christin 1985, and in Schapiro 1949.

the examination of his manipulation of his medium.[26] Above all, Fromentin declared his intention to see in these paintings what was truly there to be seen. One of his main criticisms of the study of art was that people allowed themselves to be blinded by a quasi-religious attitude towards works that had been dubbed "masterpieces" – a response to the agonies of the modern life, with science and the reign of reason having left little solid to believe in. This desperation twists the human spirit's innate search for meaning into empty adulation or endless categorization, reducing the modern subject to one "[qui] n'aime pas qu'on l'enchaîne, et il s'enchaîne."(269) Fromentin's many pages devoted to this topic express with passion his disdain for the hysterical blindness that strikes people in their worship, and declare his intention, specifically, to pierce through "the cabalistic glory of [the] fame" of *The Night Watch* [fig. 2.1]. (264) A gleeful orgy of iconoclasm follows, in which Fromentin systematically and enthusiastically demolishes the hyperbolic arguments for the greatness of this work. In his complaints against the false reasoning and unthinking adulation of his generation's writers, Fromentin even recruits Rembrandt himself as an ally. Thus, to the mystifying paeans devoted to the girl in *The Night Watch*, Fromentin's rather curmudgeonly version of the artist deflatingly replies, "J'aime ce qui brille, et c'est pour cela je l'ai vêtue de matières brillantes."(264)

That Fromentin expresses a largely negative opinion of Rembrandt long continued to be a common interpretation.[27] Nevertheless, Fromentin's discussion of the *Night Watch* is something of a red herring.[28] This segment is an important contribution to Fromentin's seemingly realist manifesto, in which he declares that he will be a champion of clear thinking and dispelling pointless mysteries. What follows, however, is comparatively rhetorically subdued but sustained *celebration* of Rembrandt, and a rich, agonized, and ultimately subtle attempt to explain Rembrandt's greatest successes.

In at least one way, Fromentin's discussion of *The Night Watch* does anticipate the rest of his treatment of Rembrandt: Rembrandt, at his worst and especially at his greatest, is best explored through his portraits. For Fromentin, *The Night Watch* failed specifically *as* a portrait. By offering an opportunity to represent the inwardness of the human mind, portraiture could allow Rembrandt to deploy his imaginative reserves. Given that the mind was not his, however, and that there was also a face to which he had to be faithful, he also had to subordinate his own fervid imagination to an outside reality. This made portraiture as a genre Rembrandt's crucible. In the case of *The Night Watch,* as far as Fromentin was concerned, Rembrandt failed to be sensitive to the intersubjective encounter, and to the specifics of the worldly situation he was

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[26] Several authors consider Fromentin's writings to be proto-Proustian and to anticipate some of the kinds of analysis of later psychoanalytic writers, including: Pierre Moreau, "De la *Philosophie de l'art* aux *Maîtres d'autrefois* ou l'école des sensations," Emile Bouvier, ed., *De Jean Lemaire de Belges à Jean Giraudoux: Melanges d'histoire et de critique littéraire offers a Pierre Jourda* (Paris: Editions A.-G. Nizet, 1970), 359-374; Marie-Anne Eckstein, "Le rôle du souvenir dans l'oeuvre d'Eugène Fromentin" (Diss.:, l'Université de Zurich, 1970); and Monge 1961.

[27] Schapiro contrasted Fromentin's ambivalence about Rembrandt with a supposedly boundless admiration for Rubens. As I will explore later in this chapter, Fromentin in fact has some important doubts about Rubens' powers.

[28] Moreau, Henry James, and Meyer Schapiro all felt that Fromentin was dismissive of Rembrandt. James, "Eugène Fromentin: Les Maîtres d-autrefois: Belgique-Holland," *The Nation*, July 13, 1906.

purportedly representing, instead indulging his own fancies. In cases in which Rembrandt rose to the challenges of portraiture however, his results also allowed Fromentin to present, to his contemporaries, the possibility for a reconciliation between devotion to the Idea and to the materiality of the world.

Fromentin's interpretation of Rembrandt reflects the split that he saw around him in the art world. He claims that there are two discrete Rembrandts, each "deeply embarrassed" by the other: "cette nature compliquée a deux faces bien distinctes, l'une intérieure, l'autre extérieure, et celle-ci est rarement la plus belle."(268) It was the conflict of these two selves that capsized *The Night Watch*, as both interior and exterior attention are required in a portrait. Fromentin explains that, while Rembrandt's failed canvasses are products of the conflict between the interior and the exterior, his greatest success is in his final reconciliation of them.[29]

Fromentin starts with the less beautiful, the exterior face. In this aspect we find Rembrandt the "maître supérieur,"(306) a turn of phrase he used also to describe Rubens, Veronese, Titian, and Van Dyck. He is dedicated to "truth," making use of a "palette sage,"(306) "son exécution a la propriété" and "justesse du ton."(309) Fromentin's formal descriptions of the works that demonstrate this strength – all portraits, first of Jan Six, then Martin Daey and his wife – proceed in a sedate and organized manner. The entire surface is catalogued, first its subject's attributes, then clothing, then surroundings, building up a gradual and complete image of the work as extremely competent. The second, "interior" Rembrandt lets go of all of this precision and is instead "chimerical," evocative, and undisciplined. Fromentin's visual description of his example, *The Good Samaritan* [fig. 2.2], reflects these characteristics by shooting around the composition, giving an impression of inspired disorder.[30] This half of Rembrandt is the source of his uniqueness, but also of his weakness.

These two sides clashed in *The Night Watch*, the nadir of Rembrandt's career as far as Fromentin is concerned, because the interior Rembrandt refused to recognize that portraiture requires close attention to the outside world as well. In contrast, Rembrandt achieves synthesis in *The Syndics* [fig. 2.3], and Fromentin ascribes the greatness of the work to Rembrandt's ability to reconcile opposites – to a paradox, in fact: "Il entendait traiter la nature vivante à peu près comme il traitait les fictions, mêler l'idéal au vrai. A travers quelques paradoxes, il y parvient."(325) And then, very abruptly, Fromentin stops. His discussion of one of the greatest works of art that he has seen is extremely short, and the majority of the chapter that bears its name returns to *The Night Watch*.

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[29] While Fromentin is succinct and powerful in his description of this reconciliation, his initial establishment of a Rembrandt divided against himself proves to be nowhere near as neat and clean as he implies it will be; while Rembrandt's creative powers have alternately been used to illustrate both sides of what was in Fromentin's moment conceived as a divide, actually dividing his oeuvre this way proves unmanageable. In Fromentin's structuring of the argument and his declarations of his conclusions he claims to have done so, but the substance of his arguments is not quite that under control. Little about Fromentin's consideration of Rembrandt is straightforward.

[30] This work, in the collection of the Louvre, is no longer attributed to Rembrandt, but to one of his followers instead. For more information, see the "Rembrandt Database" online: Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD), "The Good Samaritan Transports the Wounded Man to the Inn," 30 July 2014: <http://www.rembrandtdatabase.org/Rembrandt/painting/222871/the-good-samaritan-transports-the-wounded-man-to-the-inn> 9 september 2014.

Fromentin's discussion of *the Syndics* seems to veer dangerously close to the adoration of the mystery of Rembrandt he so disapproved in others. His return to *The Night Watch* after his surprisingly brief presentation of *The Syndics* feels almost like a hasty retreat from the panegyric he found himself developing. However, Fromentin's bringing these two works together, as examples of failure and culmination, demonstrates the importance of the portrait genre to his discussion of Rembrandt. While his first use of *The Night Watch* was more generally to reject conventions of description and adulation, Fromentin revisits the failures of the earlier group portrait here to highlight more pointedly the successes of *The Syndics*. What is most extraordinary about *The Syndics*, according to Fromentin, is the sense one has that, in spite of the lack of action within the work, it represents an *exchange*: "les visages, extrêmement vivants, sont animés par de beaux yeux lumineux et directs qui ne regardent pas précisément le spectateur et dont le regard cependant vous suit, vous interroge, vous écoute. ... ils sont occupés sans agir, ils parlent sans remuer les lèvres."(324) These portraits, then, in addition to being "individuels et ressemblants," create an extraordinary sense of communion between the interiority of the sitter (the nature of which, it is important to note, Fromentin has no interest in describing in terms of specific character traits or possible states of mind), and of Rembrandt himself. He fills this space with an atmosphere both his own and seemingly exuded by the sitters, and if there is sound filling this room it is the sound of their voices. *The Night Watch*, in Fromentin's estimation, failed precisely because Rembrandt crowded those voices out – Rembrandt's desire to create a world entirely of his own imagining led him to disallow any contribution by the spirits of the inconvenient "company of men-at-arms"(241) intruding upon his conception.

And yet, even there, Rembrandt was not able completely to suppress his sensitivity to all of his sitters. Certain portrait heads presage "quelle est sa manière nouvelle de traiter la ressemblance par la vie abstraite, par la vie même."(326) Rembrandt appears here as a proto-vitalist, almost, enhancing the representation of specific life not with recourse to the "Ideal" but to an immanent, general, "abstract" life force to which he is receptive. Formally, Fromentin argues, this vitality is accomplished through his deployment of chiaroscuro, which distinguishes him from all other artists, allowing him to establish a presence without fully disclosing it, a balance which Rembrandt strikes better than any other because of his simultaneous openness to presence and power to endow it with inwardness. When he ignores the requirements an intersubjective encounter, he fails magnificently, and his "luminarism" gets confusing. When he heeds it, it brings out the very best in him as an artist. It was Rembrandt's willingness to "subordinate himself to his subject" without shedding the power of his own experience and "acquisitions,"(323) that created the opportunity for him to achieve the effect that defined painting at its highest for Fromentin: "L'art de peindre n'est que l'art d'exprimer l'invisible par le visible."(9)[31] And almost word for word, this is how he sums up the singular gift of Rembrandt, but with an important distinction: "il n'a pas d'égal dans l'art de montrer l'invisible."(300)

The "invisible" is something one experiences directly in the world. Its subject is the mind of the other, and Fromentin explains this more directly in another section of his book. His most thorough elucidation of the goals and the requirements of portraiture comes in the context of his consideration of Rubens, an artist he did *not* consider a good portraitist. Here, Fromentin makes

[31] Note how similar this phrase is to Redon's famous statement about Symbolism. Redon read this book and kept it by him for much of his life, as will be discussed briefly in chapter 2; it is possibly that he adapted this statement for his own purposes.

clear that portraiture above all requires a great sensitivity and attunement to others, and a "naivete" and willingness to let one be subordinate to the world:

> Rubens est-il un grand portraitiste? est-il seulement un bon portraitiste?
> ...Il n'en est rien. Ses portraits sont faibles, peu observés, superficiellement construits, et partant de ressemblance vague.... [O]n s'aperçoit que Rubens manquait de cette naiveté attentive, soumise et forte, qu'exige, pour être parfaite, l'étude du visage humain.
> .... Je croirais qu'il les ... a traités, quel que soit leur sexe ou leur âge, comme les femmes aiment, dit-on, qu'on les peigne, en beau d'abord, ressemblantes ensuite. ... Ils ont le même sang, ils ont surtout le même caractère moral...
> [Of two portraits in Brussels]...l'observateur n'a pas accusé un seul trait qui ressemble bien intimement à son modèle... Au point de vue du physique, on cherche un dessous qui n'a pas été observé; au point de vue du moral, on cherche un dedans qui n'a pas été deviné.
> ...
> L'art de peindre est peut-être plus indiscret qu'aucun autre. C'est le témoignage indubitable de l'état morale du peintre au moment où il tenait la brosse. ...Rubens, à ne le considérer que comme portraitiste, est un homme qui rêvait à sa manière quand il en avait le temps, un oeil admirablement juste, peu profond, un miroir plutôt qu'un unstrument pénétrant, un homme que s'occupait peu des autres, beaucoup de lui-même, ... Voilà pourquoi il convient de distinguer dans Rubens deux observateurs de puissance très inégale, et comme art de valeur à peine comparable: celui qui fait servir la vie des autres aux besoins de ses conceptions, subordonne ses modèles, ne prend d'eux que ce qui lui convient, et celui qui reste au-dessous de sa tâche parce qu'il faudrait et qu'il ne sait pas se subordonner à son modèle... [S]es portraits se ressemblent un peu, lui ressemblent un peu, manquent de vie propre, et par cela manquent de ressemblance morale et de vie profonde, ... et, quant a leur fonds moral, il est visible qu'ils ont tous une âme active, ardente, prompte a jaillir, et, pour ainsi dire, sur les lêvres, celle que Rubens a mise en eux, presque la même pour tous, car c'est la sienne. (83-86)

Throughout, Rubens and Rembrandt are presented as opposites in Fromentin's description of "les maîtres d'autrefois" of Holland and Belgium.[32] Here, Rubens comes out decidedly the lesser of the two. Where Rembrandt is capable of extraordinarily sustained attention and almost supernatural insight, Rubens, for all his powers, sees quickly and superficially. What leads Rembrandt to his very greatest successes is his openness in the face of his subject, an ability simultaneously to demonstrate his own interiority and the claim to such interiority on the part of his subject. Rubens, on the other hand, is completely incapable of doing this, and represents others only on his own terms. Rembrandt can show us the "moral nature" of an individual, whereas Rubens cannot. Rubens emptied his models and filled them with himself. Rembrandt, with a sense of others was too rich to be suppressed, could not impose himself successfully upon them. And, therefore, Fromentin believes, Rembrandt squandered his gifts when he took on projects where "otherness" and empathy were not in delicate balance. For that reason, Fromentin disapproves profoundly of Rembrandt's self-portraits. Since one can see one's own ineffability, self-portraiture is simply onanistic, especially for an artist with Rembrandt's gifts of perception. In facing the human model, Rubens might as well have been looking in a mirror. Rembrandt never should have done so.

From the long quotation about portraiture above, we can tease out a number of words that Fromentin employs to describe aspects of "the invisible" that the portrait seeks to render visible. These words include *sang*, *caractère morale*, *intimité*, *un dedans*, *vie profond*, *fonds morale*, *âme.* Throughout the book, Fromentin also uses *esprit*, *psychologique*, *interiorité* with very little attempt to distinguish among them. I have taken my cue from him in this section, and used these terms somewhat indiscriminately, but with my next two authors I will have to be careful not to do so. Fromentin, writing in 1876, did not have to defend his imprecise use of terms that mixed the philosophical, transcendent and psychological when discussing the representation of intersubjective encounters.[33] We will not see some of these words again in either Riegl or

[32] Sometimes this opposition is presented in racialized or nationalized terms, but mostly just in form and character. Schapiro in particular saw their opposition as Fromentin's projections of his own strengths and weaknesses. For Fromentin's book in the context of different appropriations of Rembrandt, see: Philippe Dagen, "L'influence de Rembrandt sur la peinture contemporaine en France de la fin du XIXe siècle à nos jours" (Diss.: Université Paris Sorbonne, 1982); Chu 1974; Katerina Horniskoza, "The Rembrandt Battle", *Umeni* 52:5 (2004): 427-434; Sabine Knuppel, "Rembrandt and the Modern: The Dialogue with Rembrandt in German Art around 1900," *Simmel Newsletter* 1997; Marc Quaghebeur, "Verhaeren, critique d'Ensor et de Rembrandt," *Emile Verhaeren*, eds. Peter-Eckhard Knabe and Raymond Trousson. (Bruxelles: Editions de l'ULB, 1984), 107-125; and E. de Jongh, "Real Dutch Art and Not-So-Real Dutch Art: Some Nationalistic Views of Seventeenth-Century Netherlandish Painting," *Simiolus* 20:2-3 (1990-1991): 197-206.

[33] Some authors who address the inextricability of philosophy and psychology during the latter's infancy are: Ryan 1991; Woodward and Ash 1982; Olli Pyyhtinen, "Ambiguous Individuality: Georg Simmel in the 'Who' and the 'What' of the Individual," *Human Studies* 31:3 (September

Simmel. These writers will not refer to "blood" as character, or use Fromentin's variations on the term "moral" to mean, "dans l'opposition esprit-matière, celui de 'relatif à l'ame, à l'esprit par opposition au physique.'"[34] And "psychological" in all its permutations will soon be isolated from the description of intangibly spiritual attributes evoked here. For Fromentin, in his time, the interiority of subjects was allowed to be undefinable, to be evoked poetically and metaphorically.

In his original plan for *Les Maîtres d'autrefois*, Fromentin intended to include a chapter explicitly comparing the art of his moment with that of the earlier artists he had been investigating, but his publishers felt this would be out of place.[35] Yet, he managed to insert this theme into a chapter devoted to French landscape, and into his consideration of Rembrandt. Rembrandt, he says, is not *the* greatest artist of those he has considered, he is only *one* of them – others, especially Rubens, shine as brightly in their own domains. But Rembrandt is the most singular, and Fromentin believes that he is the one whose process and whose art seems most attuned, through their central tension, to his own time. Portraiture, the genre in which Rembrandt had no parallel, demanded reconciliation between one's inner world, the inner world of another, and the surrounding physical world. Fromentin described, in Rembrandt, a struggle between the desire to express only one's own vision, or to see the world and express it. It is actually the modern artist's struggle that Fromentin dramatizes through his discussion of Rembrandt, one that he felt keenly himself.

Fromentin's ambivalence towards Realists and Impressionists is well-known. He wrote of them in the chapter devoted to Dutch influence on French landscape painting in *Les Maîtres d'Autrefois*, "Ce que l'esprit imaginait est tenu pour artifice...," and "tout [leurs choix] participe à cette manière impersonelle de voir les choses et de les traiter."(239) This art "a pour but de frapper les yeux des foules par des images saillantes, textuelles..."(240) If art should aim "to express the invisible by the visible," Realism and Impressionism barely qualify as art to Fromentin, though he is enormously sensitive to the power of their effects in presenting the visible. However, he was simultaneously increasingly wary of those more invested in rigid idealism, including Gustave Moreau. Just months before Moreau lambasted *Maîtres d'Autrefois* in his journal, Fromentin had co-written a criticism of Moreau's recent work, published in Switzerland (and probably therefore unseen by Moreau). Fromentin accused his long-time friend and ally of being too abstruse, of being awkward when he descended "du rêve et de l'idéal" to the earth, "sur terre."[36] His eye had become hesitant, and his vision too far removed, capable only of expressing his own understanding. Fromentin feared the Scylla of self-absorption in art as much as he did the Charybdis of Realism. The portrait, if the modern artist would approach it properly, entailed truth to appearance and truth to inwardness, and the necessity of attention to each expressed the nature of the artist's self as it related to the world.

2008): 279-298; Todd Cronan, "Georg Simmel's Timeless Impressionism," *New German Critique* 36:1 (2009): 83-101; Michael Gubser, *Time's visible surface: Alois Riegl and the Discourse on History and Temporality in fin-de-siècle* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2006); Reed 1997; Good 1993; Chung and Hyland 2011; and Deborah L. Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Berkeley: U California P, 1989).

[34] This definition was gleaned from the entry on Moral in the *Dictionnaire Historique de la Langue Française*, Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1998.

[35] Wright, Barbara, *Eugène Fromentin: a Life in Art and Letters* (NY: Peter Lang, 2000).

[36] Wright and Moissy 1972, 145.

No one else could be Rembrandt. But artists could aspire to know his road to genius rather than to obscure it with the mists of insubstantial worship. It was Rembrandt's extraordinary perception of others, and his way of flooding the canvas simultaneously with a sense of them and with his own powers, that Fromentin felt made him the artist who opened the doors to the future: neither the look of the world, nor the soul of others, nor his own powers of subjectivity are impoverished as they come together in his best work. And Rembrandt does these things seamlessly, as Fromentin evokes in this beautiful juxtaposition of modifiers: "il y a en dehors de la nature, ou plutôt dans les profondeurs de la nature, des choses que ce pêcheur de perles a seul découvertes."(327)

Riegl

In proceeding from a consideration of Rembrandt by a Fromentin to Alois Riegl's treatment of him in *Group Portraiture of Holland*, and on, after that, to Georg Simmel, I am following athe larger trajectory of fin-de-siècle studies of Rembrandt as a painter.[37] The great nineteenth-century surge in scholarship about his work began in France, but its center moved by the end of the century more firmly into German-speaking countries, as many authors there increasingly focused on Rembrandt as the embodiment of a certain Northern, Germanic spirit. This was true of Riegl, and indeed his book is so thoroughly devoted to defining the cultural specificity of his subject that it is not immediately clear what can be transferred to a discussion of the problems of portraiture being produced by his contemporaries. Many excellent studies have been written about the intriguing and uncomfortably suspect ideas he presented about the inherent nature of peoples, his ideological sources for such ideas, and the conclusions they ominously imply. Questions about the accuracy of his formal interpretations have also made him a very fruitful interlocutor for a number of scholars of sixteenth and seventeenth century Dutch art and group portraiture, but I will not be addressing these issues here.[38]

I will instead focus on a secondary theme in Riegl, a distant second, certainly, but consistently addressed in asides and footnotes – which was to establish through the counterexample of this other period some of the peculiarities and cultural specificity of modern subjectivity, and its manifestations within the art of his own time. He was by no means content to

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[37] Dagen describes this in detail; also see Horniskoza, 2004; Knuppel, 1997; and Jacques le Rider, "Rembrandt de Langbehn à Simmel," *Societés*, 1994. For group portraiture, I will cite parenthetically hereafter from Riegl, *The Group Portraiture of Holland*, trans. Evelyn M. Kain and David Britt (LA: Getty, 1999).

[38] On Riegl's *Group Portraiture*, see: Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993); Margaret Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* (Pennsylvania State UP, 1992); Olin, "Forms of Respect: Alois Riegl's Concept of Attentiveness," *Art Bulletin* 71:2 (1989): 285-299; Harry Berger Jr., *Manhood, Marriage, Mischief: Rembrandt's Night Watch and Other Group Portraits* (NY: Fordham UP, 2007); Michael Gubser, "Time and History on Alois Riegl's Theory of Perception," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66:3 (July 2005): 451-474; Gubser, 2006; Richard Woodfield, ed., *Framing Formalism: Riegl's Work* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 2001); Henri Zerner, "Alois Riegl: Art, Value and Historicism," *Daedalus* 1976; Otto Pächt, "Art Historians and Art Critics, vi: Alois Riegl," *The Burlington Magazine*, 1963; and several articles by Benjamin Binstock: "Postscript: Alois Riegl in the Presence of 'The Nightwatch,'" *October* 1995; "Rembrandt's Paint," *RES* (1999): 138-165; "Seeing Representations; or, The Hidden Master in Rembrandt's Syndics," *Representations* 83 (2003): 1-37.

see contemporary explorations of the nature of perception and its relationship to representation as any more universal than those of other times.[39] He very effectively retools certain of the rhetorically omnipresent keywords used in discussions of modern subjectivity and aesthetics, whose meanings had become over determined. In choosing these terms, he distances himself from their particular burdens by redefining them in the context of his formal method, thus making them into lenses to examine the assumptions behind their common use. Riegl treats one of the developments of modern psychology in particular as neither necessary nor productive: the dangerous solipsism of pragmatist theories, many of whose authors played strong roles in his education, and whose stances clearly helped him to develop his theory of manifestations of subjectivities.[40] Riegl also sought to find a precedent in the art of the past that embodied possibilities that he felt the moderns had largely abandoned. In Dutch group portraiture, and especially in Rembrandt's perfect refinement of its goals, Riegl found a genre that he believed not only demonstrated but actually proved, by its artists' ability to manifest it in representation, the possibility of an intersubjective encounter in which the meaning is not imposed by either party. This is the role of the artist in Riegl's paradigm, rarely explicitly addressed but absolutely necessary to the ambitions of his study.

His theory of manifestations of subjectivities posits that "[three] psychological manifestations ... can be expressed in the pictorial conception of a painting."(74) It is important to note that Riegl and Fromentin use the term "psychological" differently. Fromentin used variations of the word generally and interchangeably to describe inner experience and the nature of the person as an individual. In contrast, in *Group Portraiture of Holland*, it is Riegl's preferred term to signal whenever a subject is actively and consciously negotiating between inner experience and the outer world. The term still remains ambiguous for Riegl, but it clearly serves to mark a moment of tension and exchange.

According to Riegl, the three psychological manifestations that can be present in a portrait are will, emotion and attentiveness. The first two, will and emotion, seem at first to be opposites, as the one is represented in action and the other in *re*action to the world. They are, however, indicative of a similar understanding of the self, as they are two sides of the same coin. Both the willful person and the emotional one understand themselves as in combat with the world. The emotional person has a little more of a sense of his or her own inner experience but does not know how to understand it, and therefore becomes overwhelmed by or lost in the world; while the willful person is not thus distracted and wishes only to suppress everything else. Attentiveness is more complicated than either of these. It is the most subjective, or reflective of "inner experience," as Riegl succinctly defines subjectivity. It is also clearly the preferred state, in that it implies a genuine consideration of the existence of an outside without attempting to subsume it (will) or being overwhelmed by it (emotion): "attentiveness involves a joyful acceptance of external things, a willingness to assimilate them intellectually, as well as a selfless surrendering to the outside world."(75)

The stance of attentiveness belongs to a very particular kind of subjectivity, one shared by the artists and subjects Riegl is analyzing, and by the beholder to come. It arose from the Baroque experience of the self. According to Riegl, the Baroque self had only just come to an

[39] This dedication to historical specificity is characteristic of much of his scholarship – see Gubser, 2005 and 2006, for example.

[40] Olin 1989 and 1992, Iversen 1993, and Gubser 2005 and 2006 all delve deeply into Riegl's intellectual formation and community.

understanding of its own relation to the world as one not of conflict but of interaction. The world was no longer imbued with an antagonistic or dominating force. But this subject had also not reduced its idea of the world entirely to its own perceptions, which the modern subject is in danger of doing. For the Baroque subject, representations – artworks *and* mental constructs – are still attached to, and evidence of interactions with, an exterior world. Attentiveness also implies an awareness and respect for other subjects existing alongside one in the world. Within group portraits (and individual portraits as well, as Riegl makes clear in his one examination), the subjects are eager simultaneously to assert their own consciousness of presence *and* to invite the viewer to interact with them, in order to create an opportunity for an attentive encounter.[41] This coexistence is characterized by a respectful distance that seems to represent an ideal form of human encounter – and one natural, even primary, to the individual who embraces an attentive subjectivity. The possibility of experiencing the other exists in the condition of attentiveness, as one is simultaneously "selfless" and "self-conscious," a seeming contradiction in terms that Riegl resolves only implicitly because he does not perceive it as a contradiction. It would immediately appear as one to many readers of our time, with an idea of the self and of the drama of the ego derived from twentieth century developments of psychoanalytic theory. Our conception disallows the powerful dose of spiritual thought still at the heart of Riegl's idea of the subject and of the intersubjective encounter. Riegl holds strongly to the philosophical and spiritual thread that runs throughout late nineteenth-century theories of the psyche, and allows for an absolute state such as attentiveness – the representation of which proves its own existence, as we will see.[42]

There are two main routes by which a sense of attentiveness can be achieved within a single artwork, and in his exploration of group portraiture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Riegl follows the development of both of them. The first route has to do with relations among viewers and sitters, and the temporalities in the tableau and outside of it. Riegl charts the way in which the subjects of group portraiture can simultaneously show their awareness of and openness to the viewer, while simultaneously being integrated into a composition that makes sense as a gathering of peers. The second is in the convincing display of the movement of "free

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[41] Riegl discusses Dirck Jacobsz.'s *Portrait of a Man* of 1529 on pages 104-106.

[42] In his recent study of Dutch group portraiture, *Manhood, Marriage, Mischief: Rembrandt's Night Watch and Other Group Portraits* – another study intended to further his development of the very important concept of the "fictions of the pose" – Harry Berger Jr. addresses Riegl's work at length. He immediately dismisses the possibility of attentiveness as an autonomous state: the balance of self-consciousness and selflessness within attentiveness seems to him an utter contradiction, and should better be "described as anxiety and suspicion." To Berger, coming from a very different moment, this idea of a subject would just look more like the eternal battle of will and emotion, disallowing any still and certain point in the constant battle of selves, other selves and world, including the painter. See Harry Berger Jr., *Manhood, Marriage, Mischief: Rembrandt's Night Watch and Other Group Portraits* (NY: Fordham UP, 2007). See also his "Fictions of the Pose: Facing the Gaze in Early Modern Portraiture," *Representations* 46 (Spring 1994): 87-120.

Also, on the inextricability of spiritual and psychoanalytical well into twentieth century art, though this time focusing on the American context, see Charles Colbert, *Haunted Visions: Spiritualism and American Art* (Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 2011).

space,"[43] in which the impression of the subjective presence of the sitters can be balanced by evidence of the knowledge that they move within a world of objects, and this world of objects also must be maintained and presented to the beholder. However, the kinds of attentiveness that these two different aspects of a painting communicate are not precisely the same. One is evidence of attentiveness on the part of the subjects and artist together at the time of sitting, while the other indisputably establishes it on the part of the painter, in conscious anticipation of the beholder and openness to his future interpretation.

For Riegl, both ways of inscribing attentiveness in group portraiture culminated in Rembrandt's *The Syndics*. In a key passage, Riegl ventures firmly into the more spiritual vocabulary that has haunted the edges of his discussion all along:

> It is very quiet; the words seem to drop like gentle rain. The longer we, as viewing subjects, study the image, the more acutely we become aware of the inner tensions reverberating within the midst of these four individuals. That touch of self-esteem in each of the heads shines through the general state of selfless attentiveness that forms part of the world soul, and the modern viewer will observe each head intimately and choose the one with the most nuances and the most to say.(286)

Within the world that the painting presents, there is the "general state" that permeates the work, belonging to every bit of it, which attains the status of the ineffable and seems to imbue the very space with presence. Each individual contains his own attentiveness as well. Each has different qualities that belong only to him and to no one else, and these qualities "shine through" the general atmosphere. Riegl says that Rembrandt has also given us yet one more layer here, in the body of the hatless servant at the back. He is less individualized, but he is in a state of "pure attentiveness." In the context of the painting, he symbolizes Riegl's attentiveness rather than embodies it. His also is the figure that, by helping to establish depth of space in the composition, most immediately disallows the *space* of the painting to be completely assimilated as a subjectivized experience by the viewer, marking the artist's goals for representation as fundamentally different from the modern. In Riegl's description of this work, attentiveness is both selfless and self-aware, both open to others and self-conscious at the same time, as all the different parts of the composition have the task of expressing some aspect of this singularly flexible concept of human interaction.

It is often difficult to isolate when Riegl is ascribing attentiveness to a depicted subject and when to the painter. (We know that attentiveness is always ascribed to the viewer, as this was a condition of the planning of such a work for a Baroque audience as Riegl defines it.) The way in which Riegl presents layers of attentiveness playing out within a single work helps us to understand the reason for this: if attentiveness *has* been represented, Riegl believes, it *must* have been there. Such a thing could not be made up by the painter, asserts Riegl. It would then be a flight of fancy or a projection, incompatible with its effect. And, if the painter managed to have seen said attentiveness well enough to have represented it, he can only have been attentive by nature himself, too. And that he has imbued the rest of the work with a sense of general attentiveness is a manifestation of his own sense of world and self in mutual contemplation. The depiction of attentiveness, by Riegl's inspiring but decidedly circular logic, is proof of its very existence.

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[43] Riegl defines this concept most specifically and thoroughly on pages 82-83.

Riegl's logic concerning attentiveness marks his lack of interest in investigating the inner mechanics of the human ego. Inwardness exists, he asserts, and we must be open to its manifestation in the world. In his article "Rembrandt and the Epiphany of the Face," Joseph Leo Koerner draws our attention to this: "Riegl can describe the complex impression that Rembrandt's faces 'contain' something very true and very real, without ever seeking to name what that content is."[44] Such naming is up to individual beholders, who must work, with Rembrandt's paintings, to unveil the inwardness for themselves through contemplation. And they too will not want to put the experience into words. Riegl himself demonstrates his disdain for art that seeks to do this work of identification for the viewer when he compares the work of Rembrandt to that of van der Helst, who in his own painting sought to "correct" the aspects of *The Night Watch* that he felt were too experimental. Riegl's tone changes here. He begins to describe various character traits that one can read from these faces, with their "superior air" or "critical demeanor," concluding that "van der Helst's guardsmen are simply open books, to be read at a glance."(299) Such works demand much less of a viewer than Rembrandt's: "Even modern viewers who spend hours transfixed studying *the Night Watch* will find it something of a relief to come to van der Helst's portrait, because they will not be expected to extricate the figures painstakingly from the spatial shadow or to subject their physiognomy to major character analysis."(299) Everything offers itself easily, but "that is all! Nothing further grabs the viewer's imagination..." and if the painting does not demand protracted interaction, it fails to reproduce for its beholder the experience of the attentive encounter.

The kind of inwardness, then, that Riegl claims Rembrandt offers us is available only because of the shared and mutual nature of attention: awareness that while one depends on one's own perceptions to access the world, it is still *there*, and full of other subjects who look back. Because of this, the attentive portrait as defined by Riegl must always also have a certain fidelity to the depiction of objects in space, and to the optic and haptic experience of their forms. For a modern subject, Riegl fears, this does not matter. Whether something exists in the world or not is a matter of indifference, as the only world we can know is the inner one. If the representation is meant to be entirely subsumed within the experience of the modern observer, then its subject matter becomes a thing of indifference. In fact, it could cease to have any subject matter at all. For Riegl, "The creation of art is a contest with nature with the aim of bringing to expression a harmonious worldview."[45] Should the human subject actually come to believe that nature is fundamentally inaccessible as an object of investigation, art as an activity would simply cease. The modern subject had not yet reached this state, but seemed in its conceptualization of representation to be coming too near to it.

While Fromentin's and Riegl's ideas about portraits are in many ways different, some resonances have emerged here. For Fromentin, the portrait, if the modern artist approached it properly, entailed truth to appearance and truth to inwardness, and the necessity of attention to each would express the nature of the artist's self as it related to the world. For Riegl, this particular stance, the ethically superior one, resulted in works of art that attested to the possibility of such an exchange.

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[44] Joseph Leo Koerner, "Rembrandt and the Epiphany of the Face," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 12 (Autumn 1986): 13.

[45] Alois Riegl, *Historical Grammar of the Visual Arts*, trans. Jacqueline E. Jung (NY: Zone Books, 2004, 299-300).

Simmel

Georg Simmel wrote two long studies devoted to specific artists in his career: *Michelangelo* and *Rodin* were published in 1911, while *Rembrandt* was published five years later.[46] Rembrandt as a character appears as a supporting player in the first work, as a counterpoint to Rodin specifically. For Simmel, great analyzer of modernity that he was, Rodin managed to represent, in his perpetually agonized and writhing bodies, the experience of modern man as no one else could. According to Simmel, "The essence of modernity as such is psychologism, the experiencing and interpretation of the world in terms of the reaction of our inner life and indeed as an inner world, the dissolution of fixed contents in the fluid element of the soul, from which all that is substantive is filtered and whose forms are merely forms of motion."[47] As opposed to figures of the past, whose artists imparted to them a sense of resolved power and autonomy, Rodin's were helpless against the onslaught of stimulation and activity characteristic of their surroundings, unable to maintain any kind of sense of a unified self. They are *all* becoming, they have shed any sense of the fixed self-confidence of more classical subjectivity. Mesmerized by their own processes and torments, these individuals' inner experiences manifested over their entire bodies in relentless movement, through the representation of which Rodin had managed to leave behind

> naturalism and conventionalism [which are] are only the artistic reflections of the XIXth century's two violations: nature and history. Both of these threaten to snuff the free personality, master of itself – the first because its mechanism has submitted the soul to the same blind constraint as the rock that falls or the shoot that grows, and the second because it has reduced this soul to an intersection of social connections, and has dissolved its productivity completely into a management of a generic inheritance.[48]

By dramatizing the modern subject's attempts to gather itself up again, Simmel's Rodin was able to assuage these sufferings within viewers, as sometimes to see one's own inner battles externalized and made concrete can create a release from them, if only temporarily.

Rembrandt serves, briefly, as a counterpoint to Rodin's modernity. Pre-dating the century in which these problems came to a head:

> Rembrandt['s]...ideal of individuality has not yet burned its last bridge to the ideal of Being in its greater generality. For him, the individual as such still has a substance that even while remaining impossible to describe by concepts, is still sheltered by its barriers, remaining always itself in the middle of all the dynamic crashing waves of life. Meanwhile, Rodin's beings are carried from the interior to this dynamic, shaken to their intimate cores by

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[46] Georg Simmel, "Uber künstlerische Persönlichkeiten," in *Philosophische Kultur: Gesammelte Essais* (Potsdam: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1923), 156-206. The essays have not been translated into English, but do exist in French: *Michel-Ange et Rodin*, trans. Sabine Cornille (Paris: Petite Bibliothèque Rivages, 1990). Simmel's essay on Rembrandt was recently translated into English for the first time: Alan Scott and Helmut Staubman, trans., *Rembrandt* (NY: Routledge, 2005). All citations from this book will be in parentheticals.

[47] Simmel, *Michel-Ange et Rodin*, 184: my translation.

[48] Ibid., 93.

> something that one can barely qualify as exterior, as one can barely differentiate the burst of wind from the atom that it carries… [49]

Rembrandt's portraits show a past, alternate subjectivity, and possibly an ideal one, not subject to the overwhelming nature of modernity.

In his later book-length study devoted entirely to Rembrandt, Simmel puts almost no energy into creating a sense of Rembrandt's historical context. He is presented instead as a simultaneously exemplary and exceptional human being, worthy of consideration as the ideal artist of individual human subjectivity and intimate interaction.[50] From the role of foil to Rodin's heroic determination to express *every* modern individual's experience, Rembrandt emerges as one who communicates the essence of *each* individuality itself, simultaneously managing to uphold the integrity of the self and safeguard it from being subject to theories of duality. So, the vestiges of a classical sense of being, no longer available to Rodin, are here revealed as an assertion of the integrity of the person. The only place where this can be represented is, however, in an art devoted to becoming as its subject. This art is thereby non-classical, as it cannot be explained in words, encapsulated in logic, or attached to any other concepts. Rembrandt offers to the viewer an encounter with a living entity, a thing that is inaccessible to other forms of analysis but available to the realm of art. An other can be seen, intuitively known and represented, but it cannot be understood, dissected by logic, or enter into any generalizing system without its unity being compromised. "It belongs to the essence of *art* to do justice to unity. Art in particular represents human appearance in such a way that the duality of the physical and the inner conception – of perception and interpretation, into which the inadequate relationship of the observer to the observed often stretches the observation – vanishes."(18)

To account for the fact that Rembrandt can accomplish this goal is no easy feat, however, and Simmel explains it in several painstaking stages. The first necessary condition for Rembrandt's ability to depict the fullness of human life is that he be able to perceive the unity of the other, something which is not accessible to logic. He also proclaims that this specific other – the "you" – is not, in our perception, a *generalized* "not-I", and we perceive the *specific* uniqueness of each human in the world, as well as their subjectivity. (Here, therefore, Simmel is describing something very different from the theory of the ethics of the face as presented by Levinas, for whom the other's face shocks the viewer with its unassimilability, but not

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[49] Ibid., 99.

[50] Simmel has some lapses into attempts to define the Northern character, but it is more of a secondary theme for him. He does argue that an art of becoming is more suited to what he believes to be the less formal and self-conscious German peoples. A selection of useful works on Georg Simmel and his treatment of Rembrandt: Larry Ray, ed., *Formal Sociology: The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1991); David Frisby, *Sociological Impressionism: a reassessment of Georg Simmel's Social Theory* (London: Heinemann, 1981); Todd Cronan, "Georg Simmel's Timeless Impressionism," *New German Critique*, 2009; Uta Kosser, "Simmel's Rembrandt," *Simmel Studies,* 2003; André Ducret, "L'Art du Portrait selon Georg Simmel," *Sociologia Internationalis* 1990; Felicitas Dörr-Backes, "Analyse culturelle à l'instar de l'art chez Georg Simmel," *Sociétés* 1995; Chalard-Fillaudeau 2004.

immediately with its specificity.[51]) Each of us, claims Simmel, can intuit (he is deeply indebted to Kant's idea of intuition) the inner experience of another human being because of our own.[52] We do not, he insists, gain an understanding of a human being part by part, by perceiving first its external aspect, and only then its inner life. This immediacy sets the experience of the other human subject apart from all the rest of the outer world. The experience of one's own interiority translates into an apprehension – not comprehension – of the other's selfhood. Moreover, we know ourselves to be constantly changing and moving, and therefore know through our own experience that others do the same. This is not just because of our ability to sense another's interiority, but also because sight cannot be separated from this other intuitive sense. "[T]he process of seeing is itself a life process,"(35) and registers becoming wherever it may manifest. Thus any *representation* of another person that presents him or her as stilled or fixed is immediately perceived as artificial. Photography, for example, in Simmel's view, has no possibility of representing human unity.

The great accomplishment of Rembrandt's painting is therefore not that he sees and perceives others in their fullness and flux, because we all have this capacity, but that he managed to *represent* this other in its specific totality. A representation that is true to another, specific subject must somehow share the totality of that person's experience in time. To cut off any aspect of this is to isolate a moment of being, and thereby compromise the whole project. But how can an artist *reproduce* – a word Simmel uses in this context, with all its organic resonance – an interiority other than his own? Here Simmel resists the urge to try to *explain* why this is so, and opts instead to offer a parallel example of this accomplishment. The actor, he says, can convey another subjectivity with his own dynamism as the medium. Thus, Rembrandt's self-portraits are evidence of his ability to represent his own experience as becoming self; they are in fact best understood as practice, as far as Simmel is concerned, for this more ambitious undertaking.[53] Being able to place before us this object that recreates the dynamism of another subject, then, Rembrandt's art "presuppose[s] a viewer who is a whole person: the totality of life in its perceptive function."(41) Absolutely central to the success of his work, and vital to understanding how any portrait must work, is the continuation of the work of perception that Rembrandt began, even as our own encounter with and reaction to this unique being presented to

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[51] Levinas develops his idea of the face and its ethical importance in *Totality and Infinity,* trans. Alphonso Lingi (The Hague: M. Nijhoff Publishers, 1979).

[52] In addition to returning to this in his later essay "The Problem of the Portrait," he also addresses this question in "The Aesthetics of the Face": Georg Simmel, "The Aesthetic Significance of the Face," trans. Lore Ferguson in *Georg Simmel, 1858-1918*. Kurt H. Wolff, ed. (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1959), 276-281; on this essay, see James T. Siegel, "Georg Simmel Reappears: 'The Aesthetic Significance of the Face,'" *Diacritics* 29:2 (Summer, 1999): 100-113. (Note: Siegel has translated the title of Simmel's article differently than Ferguson.)
Georg Simmel, "Das Problem des Portraits," can be accessed from "Georg Simmel Online," hosted by the University of Zurich, at http://socio.ch/sim/verschiedenes/1918/portrait.htm.

[53] Gombrich, in his examination of the beholder's share, also asserts that our own experience of embodiment is key to our interaction with representations of other human beings; he does not, however, make the intuitive leap to the possibility to *channel*, in some respect, that other self from within. Ernst Gombrich, "The Mask and the Face: The Perception of Physiognomic Likeness in Life and in Art." *Art, Perception and Reality* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1972).

us cannot be anticipated. We as viewers are therefore creative, as well as open, beings in ourselves, giving life through our own understanding to the representation before us. Simmel's ideal viewer is, in this way, similar to Riegl's Baroque viewer, attentive to the encounter represented and recognizing the fidelity with which Rembrandt has represented it.

Several times throughout his presentation of this argument, Simmel preempts what he assumes will be an entreaty for some logical proof on the part of his reader. What he is offering us *is* proof, he claims. That Rembrandt's representation exists is itself evidence of this unity: "[The portrait] expresses the unity of the formative perception that corresponds to the unity of being."(18) Like Riegl, therefore, Simmel raises the portrait itself to the level of possible example for understanding encounters outside of the realm of art, not just because they echo the idea of them, but because they prove, by their very existence, that an encounter of this type was made. Nothing else could possibly give rise to such artworks.

Most painting, Simmel believes, has failed to do justice to the individual, as most artists seek to present the human being via a fully conceived and static form. This is a problem on two fronts. First, if an artist delineates the details of a subject's appearance, he or she must analyze and copy them from a fixed moment removed from the endless flowing experience of time shared by all individuals. Immediately, the effigy facing one then changes from living to incomprehensible as living, because the ineffable sense Simmel describes of the "you" is frustrated by this image. The second problem is related. Namely, the more an artist prioritizes the communication of discrete attributes of the sitter, the more the general sense of an other is lost. And, contrary to the logic of the majority of art critics and theorists of his time, Simmel states that "the real individuality is that which reaches us as the most general – transcending all detail – impression of a personality. The more we go into details, the more we find traits that we also encounter in others. … If this conceptual differentiation appears surprising, this is because of our mechanistic habit."(50) Simmel shows that other art theorists and art historians have attempted to attribute the power of a portrait to the fact that it provides a viewer the opportunity to deduce an individual's understanding of a sitter by reading an individual's appearance back onto his inner self. Simmel argues that this way of thinking about the process of perception is a complete fallacy. Anything that interferes with an all-at-once perception of a portrait interferes with its main goal of allowing us an interaction with another self. Too precise a definition of the physical attributes of the face and body of an individual separates the self too completely from the world rather than registering its ability to extend beyond itself, and to imbue the things and people around it.

In addition to the kind of precision of detail that owes its allegiance first and foremost to appearances, portrait painters also make the mistake of trying to interpret their subjects too explicitly, to present an idea of their "character," of their "personality." On the one hand, says Simmel, any act of interpretation on the part of the painter destroys the viewer's opportunity to perceive the unity of the sitter for himself. On the other, the presentation of character details works in the same way that the description of physical details does:

> [One] mode... in which we know a human being ... ascribes general categories to the inner life: a person is clever or stupid, generous or petty, good-natured or malicious, and so on. This is, at a higher level of refinement, the path taken by scientific psychological knowledge. Strictly speaking, though, my knowledge of the mind is not enhanced by it. I must already know all these states and conditions, and what I learn is only that they have manifested themselves yet again in such and such a combination in the case of this

> particular human being. I do not thereby, know this human being from within, but rather my knowledge flows from concepts that I have already brought with me.(66)

Psychology, here, is the ultimate enemy of the unity of the individual, because it purports not only to still or describe, but also to *explain* the individual through general and abstract ideas. It aims to identify the contents of a self, which involves a logical differentiation between causes and effects, imposes abstract ideas on the integrity of the self, and undermines its unity. These other portraits may be trying to give us an understanding of the depicted subject, but they only interfere with our apprehension. Meanwhile, "Rembrandt's manner of viewing and presentation is incomparably vibrant, dispersing into the dusk and, so to speak, the infinite - and lacking in logical transparency. For all that, however, the portrayed human subject is so much more accessible to us: illuminated to its depths, an understandably familiar being."(14)

Simmel's concept of the encroaching effects of psychology upon the individual's unity is further demonstrated in his insistence that, in sitting for a portrait that is true to life, the subject cannot have been thinking of any future viewer. This would inevitably invoke a *self*-fashioning on his or her part, self-analysis that would disallow access to his or her constant flux. Riegl's conception of the possibility of a simultaneous selflessness and self-awareness, so key to attentiveness, is no longer possible within Simmel's understanding of a more besieged individuality. The sense of a living person reproduced is the product of a specific encounter between the sitter and the specific, therefore not ideal, interlocutor that is the painter. While the beholder ultimately brings wholeness to the act of viewing, the sitter must be immersed in the exchange at hand rather than attempting to anticipate any further interactions.

Simmel has demonstrated to us why the details of a person's appearance, or the communication of an analysis – a firm summing up – of their character traits, does nothing to enhance our understanding of the portrait but rather interferes with it. In fact, while the portrait is an emanation of another subjectivity – not the artist's but the sitter's – its goal is not to memorialize that person at all. It does not serve primarily to remind us of them, or to conjure them as they are in life, for if this were the case, we would care only for the portraits of people we knew.

> The view that one explains the animation [*Beseeltheit*] of the portrait via empirical psychological associations is the crudest effort within a common tendency, namely, to seek the workings, the real meaning for the viewer, not in the work of art as it stands within its immediate boundaries, but rather to allow it validity only as a bridge between and indicator of something that, as it were, stands behind it - an image brought forth within the viewer that contains something else.(21)

For Simmel, a portrait may look very little like the person who gave rise to it, and yet be a true representation of his or her life force. But this life force has now grown in the medium of art rather than of life. In his words, "This appears to me to be the real creativity in the art of portraiture: for the artist the examination of the model is only a conceiving, a fertilization, and he procreates the appearance anew. It grows once again on the soil and under the specific categories of artistry...."(29-30) Art preserves the unity of its subject, but makes of it a unity in a new form, an artistic one, for art is the other unknowable thing, like the individual. It has a unity not available to analysis, as does the human subject, and as such no portrait can be reduced, as a work of art, to its origin in an encounter with the sitter. And yet it continues to be proof of that encounter, as it is proof of an interaction between two unique subjects. In this aspect, Simmel

offers an account for the relation of the portrait to life that is very similar to Hans Georg Gadamer's occasionality:[54] both of these concepts provide freedom for form without allowing for a complete separation from experiences in the world.

> The greatest Rembrandt portraits … appear to us as merely the expression of his vision. The observing eye is captured by the appearance as it stands there and does not transpose it back into the category of reality. By this is not meant that solipsism of a particular artistry that renders the human form on the canvas only as an ordering of colored marks, a focus of optical stimuli, a particularly complex ornament. Everything spiritual and extrasensory that inhabits his figures remains, rightly, intact. ... [But] once [the principle of art] has absorbed what it wants from worldly reality and the material has become art, then this form can never again become a bridge across which we return to reality.(21-22)

In this respect, the experience of Simmel's viewer is very different from Riegl's. Riegl's beholder, contemporary with Rembrandt, gains the experience of, and even shares, an attentive interaction through Rembrandt's representation of his own. Simmel's beholder, transhistorical, sees first and foremost the autonomous art object that is, nonetheless, still the evidence of an encounter with an individuality that is no longer accessible in its organically-produced, rather than artistically-produced, form. And the self ideally has a self-sufficiency similar to art's, attached to the world but never reducible to its experience of it. Art is ultimately, for Simmel, a model for an ideal individuality, always Simmel's primary interest.[55]

Perhaps this helps to account for the fact that at almost no point does Simmel draw on any kind of formal analysis to support his points about Rembrandt's art. Art, like the individual, must be an unknowable thing. It also has its inherent unity, and attempting to account for its general affect by analyzing it would compromise it rather because other forms of analysis, as we have seen, compromise the individual. To understand it, one must accept its unity as well. After all, "[c]orrectly understood, a form is only the accidental way in which its essence – that is its becoming – turns outward. As in all great art, in classical as in Rembrandtian, in the last analysis art is about the unity of life and form; about the artistic achievement of that which appears unachievable in mere thought."(54) Simmel is open to the possibility of taking considerable liberty with the lineaments of the figure, as Rembrandt does with his chiaroscuro. Recognition being beside the point in Simmel's idea of portraiture, freer forms therefore run less of a risk of

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[54] Gadamer develops the idea of "occasionality" in *Truth and Method*. He avers that every artwork is inextricably connected to the world it represents because its very existence arose from an occasion, affected and enriched by the act of representation to which it gave rise. Gadamer hereby argues for a connection between artwork and world that is not necessarily reliant on verisimilitude, or on literal reproduction as a goal, to any degree. See *Truth and Method* (NY: Crossroad, 1982), especially pages 119-132.

[55] Simmel's conflation of aesthetics and sociology is widely discussed: see particularly Frisby 1987; Murray S. Davis, "George Simmel and the Aesthetics of Social Reality," *Social Forces* 51:3 (March 1973): 320-329; Stephan Fuchs, "From Theory to Critique of Modernity: The Development of Simmel's Sociology," *Michigan Sociological Review* 5 (1991): 1-18; James T. Siegel, "Georg Simmel Reappears: 'The Aesthetic Significance of the Face'" *Diacritics* 29:2 (Summer, 1999): 100-113; and Eduardo de la Fuente, "The Art of Social Forms and the Social Forms of Art: The Sociology-Aesthetics Nexus in Georg Simmel's Thought," *Sociological Theory* 26:4 (December 2008): 344-362.

compromising the original subject's unity than illusionism. These could allow the fertile medium of art's ability to find a new form for the subject's individuality, and would not threaten the subject's unity by excessive definition. (Simmel was, however, wary of completely non-figurative art. He understood that in young people the force of life can lead to utter indifference to objects, but "when personal life is channeled into such forms, ... it runs the risk of squandering its vitality on something that is no longer alive."[56] This would certainly make the abstract portrait an impossible endeavor, as life here becomes a general force and cannot continue to be the expression of an individuality.)

I have argued, in this chapter, that I am presenting three different authors who are all attempting in some way to escape, undermine, or undo the dualities that trouble the subject and divide the art of their time. One of those is a strict division between art's fidelity to the material of the world, and its pursuit of some greater truth that transcends that material. In his conclusion to the second part of his book on Rembrandt, Simmel defeats this distinction. He comes back around to a comparison of Rodin and Rembrandt, and the role of that last vestige of being that is seen in his portraits:

> [In] Rodin's art … [n]o formation is accorded even the slightest degree of permanence, and all the seeming unity of its contour is nothing other than the vibration and surging movement of the exchange of forces. … Contours and movements of the body are here the symbols of souls that feel themselves being dragged into the infinity of emergence and destruction, and who constantly stand at the point where becoming and demise meet.(105)

The trap here, in its presentation of the individual as absolute becoming, is that "[a]bsolute becoming is just as ahistorical as absolute nonbecoming."(106) This denies the inherent experience of individuality as a unified being, one that becomes the unique thing that it is because it experiences the passage of time and the specificity of its own moment. Such work communicates grand ideas but not the experience of life itself, lived always at the individual level.

Rembrandt's portraits are, on the other hand, in no way transcendent: "There is therefore a dignity and freedom conferred upon the individual, but this comes at the cost of telling any universal story." They sacrifice their ability to "arouse the feeling of the cosmic within us," in order that they may convey "the greatness and depth, the miracle of individuality and the beauty of life remaining within itself."(107) Thus do Rembrandt's portraits accomplish the seemingly impossible: the artist is free to allow for the growth of new, autonomous forms within the realm of art *without* breaking a connection to the embodied individual. "[Rembrandt] has, *if not discovered*, at least represented the synthesis between individualism and the liberation of the immediate impressionistic reality in accordance with the highest principles. He succeeds in this because his individualism is precisely an immanent generalization…"(95)

Two years after *Rembrandt*, Simmel published a short essay entitled "The Problem of the Portrait."[57] In this, he presented in a more compact format many of the ideas that he had developed in his exploration of Rembrandt's portraits. He argues in that work, also, that to make

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[56] From "The Conflict of Modern Culture," in Simmel, *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings,* eds. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: Sage publications, 1997), 83.

[57] "Das Problem des Portraits" has not been translated. It can be accessed online in German from the University of Zurich's "Georg Simmel Online," at http://socio.ch/sim/verschiedenes/1918/portrait.htm - see footnote 52.

portraiture on Rembrandt's level is what artists should aspire to do, and he mentions, perhaps unsurprisingly, another artist who has managed this effect: Rodin, in his portraits, moves away from the representation of the agonies of dissolution of his larger figures, and instead manages the balance that Rembrandt also achieves. To Simmel, Rembrandt himself may have been exceptional, as he was to Fromentin, but his exceptional work created a precedent for the portrait that can help to lead others away from the fallacies that both of these authors attempted to expose.

Simmel's *Rembrandt* is a study both about how a self can be represented in portraiture, and about how a self other than our own can be known to us, in spite of all the barriers to intersubjective encounters that Simmel sees everywhere in the world and within the complications of one's own psyche. The possibility of the portrait proves to us that this can be done. It is therefore a genre of painting of tremendous importance and ambition, giving an opportunity to the artist to combine several powerful potentials of art. In this way, as different as their wrestlings with portraiture are, Fromentin, Riegl and Simmel all agree that the portrait is a singular opportunity for the artist to unify the artistic endeavor, and to champion the integrity of the individual without restricting it, all while allowing the subject, and the artist him or herself, to be expressed freely. In the next two chapters, we will examine how such a balance was attempted by two artists of these writers' own time, Odilon Redon in France and Fernand Khnopff in Belgium.

Chapter 2. Interiors and Immersions: Odilon Redon's Portraits of the Baroness de Domecy.

Introduction

Odilon Redon's last series of lithographs, devoted to the Apocalypse of St. John, was published in 1899. The text seemed to provide perfect material for an artist associated with the monstrous and nightmarish: beasts of land and sea, lion-headed cavalry, a seven-headed dragon, the Whore of Babylon. What Redon produced however was, to those who knew him, puzzlingly restrained. None of these characters appeared in his conception; he focused instead largely on sustained studies of single figures, presented angels more serene than martial, and created a plague of locusts that look considerably more like earthly insects than the supernatural, scorpion-tailed scourge described in the biblical text. His most surprising choices, though, come in the plate in which he presents Satan being flung into the depths: the shoulders and head of a man, almost portrait-like in his physiognomic specificity, emerge from a soft and gently undulating nest of lines that could intimate water[58] [fig. 3.1]. His hair falls straight around his face, with its calm and slightly melancholic mien, and the only aspect of the composition that suggests a body violently hurtling downwards is the angle at which it is placed.[59]

The Apocalypse plates were part of a larger shift in Redon's work, which had begun over the course of the previous decade and would continue for most of the rest of his life.[60] Color

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[58] Redon depicted Satan in a number of guises, from surprisingly sympathetic (*L'Ange perdu ouvrit alors des ailes noires* from the album *La Nuit*, 1886) to uncanny and discomfiting (*Mephistopheles*, charcoal, 1877), to perplexing and horrifying (*C'est le diable, portant sous ses deux ailes les sept péchés capitaux* from *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, 1st series, 1888). This Satan is the least strange in his oeuvre.

[59] For a close analysis of this lithographic series, see Veronique Behaeghel, "L'Apocalypse d'Odilon Redon" (Thesis: Sorbonne, Paris IV, 1983). She refers to the entire project as "intimiste," and argues that the execution of its figures have much in common with Redon's new and softer works in pastel.

[60] A great number of excellent studies on Redon have been published in the last thirty years. Most important for this chapter have been: Stephen Eisenman, *The Temptation of St. Redon* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1992), one of the first works that attempted to place Redon more firmly in his political and cultural milieu; Barbara Larson, *The Dark Side of Nature* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 2005), which has continued this endeavor with close examinations of Redon's ties to the scientific and visual cultures of his day; Dario Gamboni, *La Plume et le pinceau* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1989, translated into English by Mary Whittall and significantly revised and expanded as *The Brush and the Pen*, Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2011), which traces Redon's relationship to the writing of his time and his responses to criticism about his work; Ted Gott, *The Enchanted Stone* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1990), which looks more closely at Redon's lithographic production and at what it tells us about his relationship to his market; the excellent exhibition catalogue from the Art Institute of Chicago, Douglas W. Druick, ed., *Odilon Redon: Prince of Dreams (1840-1916)* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1994); Laurence Madeline et al., *Odilon Redon: le ciel, la terre, la mer* (Paris: RMN, 2007), the catalogue to an exhibition held at the Musée Léon Dierx on La Réunion devoted to investigating Redon's explorations of nature and to his connections with the island where his wife was born; and *Odilon Redon, Prince du Rêve 1840-1916* (Paris: RMN, 2011), both the catalogue and the exhibition at the Grand Palais in 2011.

began to erupt from his canvases while charcoal and lithography, which had been the dominant media in his earlier work, preoccupied him less and less. He seemed to soften the old tenebrous suggestiveness of his style: cyclops, strange landscapes and floating heads did continue to figure among his subjects, but he also produced mythological nudes, floral still lives and portraits in pastel and oil.[61] It has long been argued that this emergence of color was due to several factors in his personal life that contributed to his greater happiness; it was also thanks to his greater economic stability, as several private patrons who would collect Redon's work for the rest of his career came into his life at this time.[62] He lost some admirers, who lamented the *noirs*; however, a number of critics who had previously dismissed his work now praised his new style, often in explicit contrast to what he had done before. A reviewer of his works in the Salon d'Automne of 1904 exhorted viewers not to be afraid: "Approchez-vous... Oubliez tout ce que vous avez lu sur l'apocalyptique, le satanique Redon..." while Louis Vauxcelles wrote, "M. Redon, ex-

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Excellent as the above sources are, the majority of them, and indeed most Redon scholarship, concentrate on Redon's earlier works in black-and-white. For his works in color, see Klaus Berger, *Fantasy and Colour*, trans. Michael Bullock (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965); Roseline Bacou, *Odilon Redon: Pastels* (New York: George Braziller, Inc, 1987); Bacou, "La Décoration d'Odilon Redon pour le chateau de Domecy (1900-01)," *Revue du Louvre* 2 (1992), 42-52; the later chapters in Druick 1994; and the writings of Natalie Adamson, who looks predominantly at Redon's decorative works and his relationships with his patrons, with reference to Pierre Bourdieu: Natalie Adamson, "Japonisme and Odilon Redon's decorative painting: The search for a lost paradise," *Apollo* 146:428 (October 1997): 12-21, and "'Circles of Belief:' Patronage, Taste, and Shared Creativity in Odilon Redon's Decorative Painting," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 3:2 (Spring-Summer 1996): 107-131.

[61] For continuation of old motifs, see, for example, *The Cyclops*, c. 1914, Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo; *Underwater Vision*, c. 1910, Museum of Modern Art, NY; *Head: Homage to Goya*, c. 1895, Hamburger Kunsthalle. For new subjects, see for example *Birth of Venus*, 1912, Musée du Petit Palais, Paris; *Roger and Angelica*, c. 1910, Museum of Modern Art, New York; *Vase de Fleurs: Le Pavot Rouge*, after 1895, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

[62] It was Roseline Bacou who offered most consistently the theory that Redon turned to color because of his increased happiness; there is a lot of evidence for this interpretation in his own writings and those of his contemporaries. However, several recent authors have also pointed out that Redon did occasionally use color in the decades between his early training and the 1890s, but his lithographs and noirs were what made him known and what brought him sales and commissions; as soon as he was sufficiently economically stable and finally had the resources to have a separate studio, he started using color regularly. See for example Druick, 1994; Suzy Levy, *Odilon Redon et le messie féminin* (Paris: Diagonales, 2007); and Dario Gamboni, "Remarques sur la critique d'art, l'histoire de l'art et le champ artistique à propos d'Odilon Redon", *Revue Suisse d'art et d'archeologie* 39 (1982): 104-108.

In addition to Domecy, these patrons include: Andries Bonger, whom he met around 1889, Arthur Fontaine, artist and vintner Gustave Fayet, Marcel Kapferer, Ernest Chausson, whose widow would continue to collect Redon's work after his death, and the Princes Bibesco. For more on Redon's late patrons and his relationships with them, see Adamson 1996 and 1997, Gamboni 1989/2011, and Kevin Sharp, "Redon and the Marketplace Before 1900" and "Redon and the Marketplace After 1900" in Druick, 1994, 237-256 and 258-280.

démoniaque, s'est mué en poète bucolique."[63] Consistently, the portraits especially were greeted as evidence (some claimed, the first in his oeuvre) of his ability to *draw* accurately, and with precision: one writer claimed they "prouve que c'est l'artiste qui fait le procédé et non le procédé l'artiste."[64]

In his review of a 1903 Redon exhibition, artist Maurice Denis wrote that he saw continuity with Redon's older production, but he also reached the most pointed conclusions about the meaning of the changes he saw in Redon's art - specifically, in the portraits. To Denis, the decorative panels and allegorical pastels seemed completely consistent with the spirit of Redon's older work, which Denis had once admired wholeheartedly but about which he had come to feel somewhat ambivalent.[65] His review is worth quoting at length, and I will revisit this text at the end of this chapter as well.

> Dans tel pastel,... le dessin précis, savamment et ingénument déformé se joint par je ne sais quelle harmonie secrète aux fantasmagories, d'un goût parfois tendre, parfois violemment exotique, qui l'entourent, qui l'auréolent et qui l'écrasent comme pour signifient que l'individu est livré, parcelle infime, aux caprices de l'inconscient. C'est pour Redon l'ancienne formule. En voici une autre. Le fond, ou mieux le décor, ces fleurs, ces flamboyantes gemmes, ces lumières, ces scintillements, ces moisissures, se concertent, forment un tout localisé, cette fois, dans un plan, et en arrière de la figure dominante dont le fin profil, le modelé, par contraste apparaît plus précieux plus expressif. Ce sont les portraits ...
>
> ...cet art ornamental [Redon] a compris hors de touts idée de forme, de dessin, de silhouette plastiques. ...pour le rendre expressif, il lui a suffi de combiner mille taches rayonnantes, sans, les troubler d'un geste, d'un seul geste humain. C'est pourquoi il aborde maintenant la figure humaine avec un nouveau respect: il la différencie des fonds: il lui donne un plan, c'est le premier. Il se conforme, enfin, à la hiérarchie de la Nature.

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[63] From a review of the exhibition by Gustave Babin in *L'Echo de Paris,* Oct 14, 1904; Louis Vauxcelles, "Salon d'Automne 1905, Salle 1," *Le Gil* (October 1907). Redon had clippings of mentions of his art in newspapers sent to his home by various *coupures*; copies of all those clippings can now be found in the André Mellerio Collection, Ryerson and Burnham Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago. Other contemporary reviews cited in this chapter that lack page numbers or authors have also come from this collection.

[64] From a review of Redon's show at Durand-Ruel in 1906; see Mellerio papers, AIC.

[65] Denis and Redon met in 1890, and Denis was initially very excited by Redon's work, as were all the Nabis. As his own view of art became gradually more strictly informed by his own ardent Catholicism and his belief that art should serve that faith, he became less enthusiastic about Redon and instead favored Cézanne, whom he understood as an artist in the classical tradition; in 1898 Denis would group Redon with the artists whom he considered to have a "goût sémite" (see Denis, *Journal* vol 1 (Paris: La Colombe, 1957), 150). For more on Denis's beliefs and his changing view of Redon's work, see Jean-Paul Bouillon, *Maurice Denis* (Geneva: Skira, 1993); Bouillon, *Maurice Denis: six essais* (Paris: Somogy Ed. d'Art, 2006); Bouillon, *Maurice Denis: Earthly* Paradise (Paris: RMN, 2007); and Maurice Denis, *Théories, 1890-1910: Du Symbolisme et de Gauguin vers un nouvel ordre classique* (Paris: L. Rouart et J. Watelin, 1920).

> Nous écoutons avec ravissement les pures mélodies qu'il fair surgir du fond symphonique et compliqué où son ancien panthéisme agonise.[66]

Equating an ambiguous representational space with the dissolution of the world, and integrity of figure with integrity of psyche, Denis's review synthesized and interpreted the observations of many other authors: in his portraits, Redon was now restoring the natural order, with human figure separate and ascendant. Here was a clear and traditional ordering of people, things and space, the lack of which had always been a part of what caused viewers so much unease when confronted with Redon's work.

Positive as the review undeniably was, Redon responded with a surprising sarcastic consternation to his good friend's statements: "Mais j'avais été surpris moi-même de cette agonie de mon panthéisme.... Avez-vous vu aussi ce qu'il dit de mon 'inconscient' où je me perds: 'parcelle infime.' Ah! Non, et c'est pour cela que je doute que cet article soit de Denis..."[67] Redon resisted Denis's too absolute and too traditional assessment of the relationship between the figures in his portraits to the surroundings in which they sat - and yet neither did he wish to present his subjects as lost there.

This chapter is devoted to the analysis of Redon's two portraits of the same woman, Baroness Cécile-Jeanne-Marie de Domecy (called Jeanne), the wife of one of Redon's most passionate and supportive collectors. Both made around 1900-1901, these portraits coincide with Redon's first major decorative project, a suite of panels for the Domecys' dining room. In combining the ambitious and theoretically resonant project of decoration with a task usually deemed frivolous – commissioned female portraiture – Redon created an opportunity to negotiate a different kind of relationship between portrait subject and surroundings, one that could better express simultaneously his sense of the inextricability of the self from the world that constantly informs it, and his still profound faith in that self's integrity.

Interiors: The First Portrait

Redon made forays into portraiture with pastels of his wife and son in the 1890s, but his first commissioned portrait was of Jeanne de Domecy, for whom he was simultaneously creating the suite of sixteen decorative panels [fig. 3.2].[68] It was M. Domecy who had proposed the idea;

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[66] Denis, 1920, 136-7.

[67] Letter to Andries Bonger, 30 June 1903, in Suzy Levy, ed. *Lettres inédites d'Odilon Redon à Bonger, Jourdain, Viñes...* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1987), 98.

[68] Redon had exhibited portraits of his wife and his child, and self-portraits, before this, and was also doing a couple of non-commissioned portraits of close friends, but had never executed a paid commission. Redon's portrait oeuvre is laid out chronologically in Marie-Pierre Léandri, "Le Portrait dans l'oeuvre d'Odilon Redon" (Thesis: Sorbonne, Paris IV, 1983) - however, when this thesis was written, the whereabouts of neither of the Domecy portraits were known (nor was the portrait of the Marquise de Gonet from 1907). Also useful in tracing the exhibition history of Redon's portraits is the first volume of the catalogue raisonné, which is devoted to portraits and figures: Alec Wildenstein et al., *Odilon Redon: catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre peint et dessiné*: *Volume 1: portraits et figures* (Paris: Wildenstein Institute, 1992).

In his letter to Bonger dated 17 January 1901, describing the project, Redon says there are seventeen panels, but there appear to have been sixteen, the fifteen in the collection of the

Redon had done several larger works in pastel over the previous years but had never before undertaken such a monumental project.[69] The space of the dining room itself dictated the dimensions, and Domecy stipulated that red and yellow should be the dominant colors to match the tapestries in the room; beyond that, he gave Redon a free hand. Redon described his work in a letter to another of his patrons: "Je couvre les murs d'un salle à manger de fleurs, fleurs de rêve, de la faune imaginaire; le tout par grands panneaux, traités avec un peu de tout, la détrempe, l'aoline, l'huile, le pastel même...[70] In the panels, speckled and cloudy fields of grey and very subtle reds and yellows are dotted with forms that range from the identifiably floral to the confounding and vaguely aquatic. Blue, a color Domecy did not want in large quantities, shows up in powerful highlights and unpredictable shadows [figs. 3.7-11].

Redon felt heavily the responsibility of a decorative project. In his letters and journal writing, from very early on, Redon sacralized home, endowing it with strong formative powers - he tied his deepest identity, as an individual and as an artist, to the influence upon him of his intimate spaces. He also expressed a true abhorrence of neutral, unmarked rooms: in one of his few attempts at short fiction, unpublished until 2005 but written in the 1870s, he chose as the setting for his Poe-like psychological horror story a barren hotel room, in which the protagonist spends a night of desolation and fear, plagued by aural hallucinations. He began the story thus:

> Avez-vous connu la tristesse, l'effet particulier des murs nouveaux en qui nous habitons pour la première fois? Connaissez-vous cet abandon suprême, d'exil en l'inconnu, l'abandon de soi-même...? Ces lieux sans souvenirs, où rien de vous n'habite encore...cet

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Musée d'Orsay and a large pastel-on-canvas bouquet that I will be discussing later in this chapter; the pastel is now in the collection of the Mitsubishi Ichigokan Museum, Tokyo.

[69] Domecy and Redon's interactions are described in Bacou 1992. Redon also wrote to Andries Bonger of the physical difficulties of the project; see below, footnote 70.

The question of gender and Redon's patronage is a difficult one, given how little insight we can hope to have into the dynamics between husbands and wives in their collecting practices, and so generally the discussion defaults to attributing agency and decision-making privileges to the husband, as the more public figure and holder of the purse strings. I have so far fallen in with this convention. Redon did correspond directly with the widowed women for whom he created works, and with at least two of the female subjects of his portraits, however: to Mme Gustave Fayet, he wrote explicitly about his portrait of her daughter and works that he was executing for her home, and with Mme Arthur Fontaine he spoke of the kinds of forms and influences that presently held him in their thrall. We also know that Camille Redon corresponded regularly with her husband's male patrons as well as with their wives. Whether Redon ever corresponded with Mme de Domecy we do not know; few enough of his letters even to her husband have come to light. For letters to Mmes Fayet and Fontaine, see Redon 1923.

[70] From a letter to Andries Bonger, 17 January 1901, in Odilon Redon, *Lettres d'Odilon Redon 1878-1916, publiées par sa famille* (Paris et Bruxelles: Librairie Nationale d'Art et d'Histoire, G. Van Oest & Cie, 1923), 43-44. . Redon appears to have made up the word "aoline;" in her article "Beneath the Surface: Redon's Methods and Materials," (Druick, 1994: 353-377), Harriet K. Stratis notes that no one knows what it is. Her theory is that "aoline ... is oil paint that has been mixed with egg" (footnote 63, pg. 376).

> ordre, ce silence, vous ont-ils donné plus que de la mélancolie? Non – C'est l'accent toujours sûr d'une chambre nouvelle, l'alpha d'un inconnu, le refus de l'action de la vie.[71]

This trope of the hotel room as a site of mental stagnation continues throughout his writings - it is a place of superficial experience, of alienation, and in 1898 he wrote, "Je persiste à croire, plus que jamais, que l'écrivain qui fait un livre dans une chambre d'hôtel n'est qu'un dilettante, et que l'artiste qui produit vrai, humainement vrai a besoin, tout comme les autres hommes, d'exercer sa passion sur des choses, fût-ce celles de sa possession."[72] Redon also complained, both in letters to friends and in his journal, about his own experiences of moving: "Nous sommes tenus a certains lieux par des attaches invisibles qui sont comme des organes pour l'homme créateur. ...Je ne saurais vous dire le tourment profond que me donne un simple déplacement, un changement de demeure. Je suis stagnant. Il me faut, pour reprendre vie et goût au labeur au nouveau gîte où je vais être, du temps, beaucoup de temps, des saisons même."[73] In his frequent odes to home, Redon never dwells on the particulars of his beloved spaces, but instead on the way he can be in them; he treasures them, in the words of Gaston Bachelard in his *Poetics of Space*, as "centers of condensation of intimacy, in which daydream accumulates."[74] Home, Bachelard claims, "has been lived in not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination," and one could imagine Redon's writings having appeared in Bachelard's work, with its exploration of the importance of domestic space as a safe place for dreaming. Bachelard believed that the meaning of such a space cannot be explained by its physical characteristics, but instead derives from the accumulation of lived experience - perhaps that "action de la vie" mourned by Redon in a barren hotel. Redon wished to imbue the rooms that he decorated with this feeling of lived presence; he spoke of his decorations ambiguously and evocatively as "surfaces morales."[75]

In his personal writings, Redon seems to have anticipated the fin-de siècle's intertwined faith in and anxieties about individuals' vulnerability to their environment: the idea that it could imprint itself upon someone as much as someone could form and control it was central to developments in the decorative arts of the time.[76] Redon's organic, gently undulating decorative panels even seemed to some contemporary reviewers to be perfectly suited to the task of assuaging the fragile nerves of the day's vulnerable aesthete; one in 1905 wrote somewhat

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[71] Odilon Redon, *Écrits*, ed. Claire Moran (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2005), 65. On Redon's early writings, see Druick 1994 and Claire Moran, "Under the Spell of Nerval? The Writings of Odilon Redon," *Word & Image* 23:4 (Oct-Dec 2007): 414-420.

[72] Redon 1961, 99.

[73] Ibid., 116-17.

[74] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 29.

[75] Redon 1961, 111. Redon uses "morale" much as Fromentin did, as something to invoke both "inner life" generally and the human drive to transcendence or improvement. In this quotation from 1909 specifically, he is suggesting "surface morale" as a replacement for the term "musical painting" to describe a decorative aesthetic.

[76] Deborah Silverman has charted the ways in which the contemporary nascent study of psychology revealed the permeability of the human mind, and its sensitivity to external stimuli, and the broad dissemination of those ideas through articles in both scientific and popular journals. Deborah L. Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Berkeley: U California P, 1989).

contemptuously that one of Redon's painted screens was intended to "isole de la vie active les neuresthénies douloureuses!"[77] Flament, and others, may have felt disdain for this new impressionable modern individuality, but for Redon, the task of creating decorations that would become an integral part of a friend's home was a serious responsibility, for they would have a profound and lasting effect on all those who lived there.

These convictions about the inextricability of individuals and their domestic spaces were also a major part of Redon's theory of portraiture; his most substantial statement about it emphasized the impossibility of creating a successful portrait of anyone whom a painter has not known in his home. He expressed these ideas in the context of a complaint about the portrait of his friend, printmaker Charles Waltner, by Ferdinand Roybet:

> Une tête d'homme d'une vie sans pensée, une vie exaspérée d'acuité, bien que sans âme. Tel qui a vu Waltner chez lui, laissant abandonnément son imagination vous dire ce qu'il croit de sa fin, ses espoirs, sa confiance, sa large vision du réel qu'il agrandit jusqu'aux confins d'outre-tombe, ... Tel qu'il pense et avec la somme d'enthousiasme généreux que sa parole et sa figure fruste, fière et digne exhalent, le peintre qui ne reproduit de sa tête et de ses yeux qu'un relief illusoire un éclat vital neutre et comme animal et incapable de retour sur soi-même, ce portraitiste-là n'a rien fait.[78]

On the whole, Redon's dismissal of this work as a portrait is fairly conventional: it fails to express any depth of insight into his friend's character, and therefore fails to achieve a satisfactory likeness.[79] His emphasis on the role of space adds something more idiosyncratic, however. To Redon, it is in the home that one can truly know an individual, and see his or her individuality manifest, or "exhale," as he puts it: somehow to extend beyond the confines of the body we perceive. Redon would not, as a portraitist, attempt to reproduce the *appearance* of subjects' homes; instead he would attempt to communicate the insights that could be gained from sharing intimate spaces rather than to describe the spaces themselves.[80] True to his proclamation

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[77] A. Flament, "Salon d'Automne," *La Presse*, 18 octobre, 1905. See Mellerio Collection, AIC.

[78] The printmaker Charles Waltner was one of Redon's oldest friends; they had met during Redon's brief and disastrous tenure in Gérôme's studio in 1864.

In 1922, six years after her husband's death, Camille Redon published a collection of Redon's writings, entitled *A soi-même* (Paris: H. Floury, 1922), 103. Many liberties were taken in editing the texts, however, and while it reads like straightforward excerpts from a diary that have been predominantly arranged chronologically, its layout can be extremely misleading; see Druick 1994, especially pp. 16-21 for a quick summary of the inconsistencies and problems with this book.

For the caution that a reader should feel when approaching much of Redon's writings, particularly later in his career, see Gamboni 1989/2011: Redon took exception to the way his critics wrote about him more and more, and attempted to counterbalance with his own writings, and by advancing the writings of those whom he felt described his work in the right terms. His style of writing for publication was at times purposefully obscurantist and rhetorically loaded. However his letters are considerably less guarded, depending of course on the recipient.

[79] On the shades of this conventional sentiment more specific to fin-de-siècle culture, please see introduction.

[80] The only portrait in which he does show an identifiable place around his subject is in his second portrait of Simone Fayet. This portrait is exceptional for him in a number of ways,

about the impossibility of creating successful portraits of people one did not know in their homes, Redon made portraits of his family and close friends. The only patrons he portrayed were also his friends, people with whom he exchanged visits in Paris and passed many of his vacations in the last decades of his life.[81] While he did show in galleries and at the Salons des Indépendants and d'Automne, he insisted upon selling to and working with these dedicated collectors personally – occasionally to the consternation of dealers like Ambroise Vollard, who commented in his memoire on the eccentricity of Redon's business practices.[82] But Redon referred to these

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however; he is showing her at her first communion and therefore shows her in a church, standing in front of a stained glass window. However, that window has been identified as belonging to a church nowhere near her home. See RMN 2011, 370-71.

[81] The patrons members of whose families Redon executed portraits are: Domecy, Gustave Fayet, Arthur Fontaine, Andries Bonger, the Marquis de Gonet, André Mellerio, Marcel Kapferer, and Raymond Sabouraud. There is extensive correspondence from his late years between Redon and Domecy, Fayet, Fontaine, his biographer Mellerio and his doctor Sabouraud, testifying to exchanged visits. Correspondence among these men can be found published in: Gamboni 1989; Redon 1922; Redon, 1923; Levy 1987); and "Lettres d'Odilon Redon au Docteur Sabouraud," *La Vie* (15 June 1920): 145-46. Redon's relations with Domecy, Fayet, Fontaine, Mellerio and Bonger are discussed in many of the sources listed in footnote 60. For more on his relationship with Doctor Sabouraud, see Colta Ives, *Romanticism and the School of Nature: Nineteenth-Century Drawings and Paintings from the Karen B. Cohen Collection* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 230-31.

The Marquis de Gonet, a poet and enthusiast of the occult, would publish a play about Redon, and the two men lived very near each other in Paris. Marcel Kapferer was very close to Edouard Vuillard, whose portrait of Mme. Kapferer prominently displays an *Ophelia* by Redon in the background. Redon created a portrait of Kapferer's niece, Violette Heymann (now in the Cleveland Museum of Art, 1910), which almost perfectly recycles the composition Redon had developed with Yseult Fayet in her portrait two years earlier (on Yseult's contribution to the composition, see Redon's letter to her mother on April 4, 1908 in Redon, 1923, 81; on the portrait, see W.M.M, "*Portrait of Mlle. Violette H.* by Odilon Redon," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 14:3 (March 1927): 41+47.). For more on Redon's relationship with Gonet, see Marie-Pierre Salé's entry on the portrait of his wife in *Raphael to Renoir: Drawings from the Collection of Jean Bonna* (NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009), 263-264. On Kapferer as a collector, see Stephen Brown, *Edouard Vuillard: A Painter and his Muses, 1890-1940* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2012).

Redon corresponded regularly with Robert de Domecy, traveled with him and his family to Italy in 1899 (though in general Redon was reluctant to travel), and maintained this friendship to the end of his life – in fact, Mme Redon remained close to the Domecys even after her husband's death in 1916, vacationing with them and spending the summer of 1921 with them in their chateau. See Bacou 1992, and Camille Redon's correspondence in the papers of the André Mellerio Collection, Ryerson and Burnham Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago.

[82] Ambroise Vollard, *Souvenirs d'un marchand de tableaux (*Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1937), 215-217. Vollard presents Redon as a naïf being taken advantage of by his collectors. However, the work of Ted Gott, examining Redon's gift-giving habits with his lithographs, reveals him to have been a fairly savvy, if idiosyncratic, businessman and self-promoter; see Gott 1990.

collectors as "the friends of my thought;" especially after the financial struggles of his early years, he was deeply grateful to this select group and considered them as collaborators, as they made it possible for him to dedicate himself solely to his art.[83]

In her article "Circles of Belief: Patronage, Taste and Shared Creativity in Odilon Redon's Decorative Painting," Natalie Adamson examines Redon's decorative projects for his late patrons (his folding screens and large single panels as well as his rooms for Domecy and Gustave Fayet) through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu, highlighting the works' role as cultural capital. Patrons gained status within their community by owning these works, and Redon was able largely to avoid the vicissitudes of the dealer/critic system for the last two decades of his life. Adamson emphasizes that the experimental nature of these works – their renunciation of story and subject matter, their complete refusal of illusionistic space – was a large part of what made them testaments to their patrons' discernment. Adamson therefore argues that these works manage to be both collaborative and responsive to patron's needs, and to be examples of their artist's independent vision and constant inventiveness – his genius, to use the term that evokes all of these aspects of art at the turn of the twentieth century.[84]

Adamson's analysis of the importance of commissioned work as cultural capital, and the particular kind of balance Redon's managed to strike, can also be applied to his portraits. The challenge of balancing patron expectations and artist's vision in portraiture was particularly difficult, as it was often a distrusted field of artistic endeavor; in its bounded specificity as a project, it was held to be incompatible with the ideals of freedom and independence of expression that provided an artwork with so much of its status.[85] Symbolist circles in particular prized an artwork's deliberate ambiguity and openness to interpretation over its fidelity to the appearance of nature. However, they also insisted that formal experimentation in artworks be tethered to the expression of an idea through the vocabulary of the visible world; they were distrustful of anything that smacked, to them, of formal experimentation for its own sake. Redon, and other Symbolist portraitists, sought to reconcile these ideals with the still foremost requirement of portraiture: a likeness of the sitter that was on the one hand recognizable and approved, and on the other sought to give access simultaneously to what cannot immediately be seen – the sitter as a whole, or, if we use the term the way Simmel does, his or her

[83] For more on Redon's unique and fruitful relationships with patrons, see Druick 1994; Adamson 1996 and 1997, and Gott 1990.

[84] Adamson, 1996. For the way this dynamic played out for members of the Nabi circle, see Katherine Kuenzli, *The Nabis and Intimate Modernism: Painting and the Decorative at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010); and Groom, *Beyond the Easel: Decorative Painting by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis, and Roussel, 1890-1930* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2001)

[85] The status of the portrait in the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, in the wake of photography, is helpfully discussed in: Heather McPherson, *The Modern Portrait in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001); Colin B. Bailey et al., *Renoir's Portraits: Impressions of an Age* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1997); Tamar Garb, *The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France 1814-1914* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2007); Tomàs and Boye Llorens, *Portraits of the Belle Époque* (Barcelona: Obra Social Fundación "La Caixa", 2011); John Klein, *Matisse Portraits* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001); and Jane Block and Ellen Wardwell Lee, *The Neo-Impressionist Portrait, 1886-1904* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2014).

individuality.[86] Insisting upon personal knowledge of his subject allowed Redon, in addition to expressing a conviction, to defend his endeavors from any accusations of mercenary intentions or compromise, and to use the tensions within the portrait project itself to amplify the challenges of his larger practice: to suggest the privileged knowledge and experience he had of his subject in his own expressive and recognizable way.

In addition to their comprising the very inner circle of Redon's "friends of his thought," many of the subjects in Redon's pastel and oil portraits also shared some kind of investment in the exploration of the alternative spiritualities blossoming in the fin-de-siècle, as did Redon himself.[87] In his introduction to the exhibition catalogue *Odilon Redon: Prince du Rêve*, Rodolphe Rapetti remarks on the challenge that Redon's relationship to the esoteric and occult circles of his time has presented to scholars.[88] Recent studies of the constellation of alternative beliefs (which encompassed spiritism, psychometry, phrenology, esotericism, syncretism, unorthodox strains of mystical catholicism and more) have highlighted their inextricability from contemporary scientific and psychological theories, and the impossibility of defining them as

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[86] Simmel 2005, 47: "Individuality is that structure whose form is absolutely bound to its reality and cannot be abstracted from this reality under the condition of or in order to gain an autonomous meaning."

[87] That Redon belonged to esoteric and occultist circles has long been known, but few scholars have extensively studied the matter. This is due largely to Redon's notorious inconsistency and ambiguity in his expressions of his ideas, especially as he got older (see especially Gamboni 1989/2011). It is also know that Redon declined to exhibit in shows devotedly specifically to a particular religious idea or community: he never showed in any of the exhibitions of the Rose+Croix, despite being on friendly terms with many of its members and having works in many of their collections. (On Redon's absence from these shows, see Druick 1994 and Robert Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism in France: Joséphin Peladan and the Salons de la Rose-Croix* (NY: Garland Publishing, 1976).) He also refused to take part in Maurice Denis's exhibition of Christian artists in 1913 (see letter in the Redon-Denis Correspondence in archives of the Musée Départemental Maurice Denis in Saint Germain-En-Laye). The extent of Redon's allegiances to any particular body of ideas is therefore likely to remain unknown, but that the iconography and visual culture of esoteric circles influenced and inspired him is not in doubt. There are two scholars who have looked more closely at Redon's links to alternative spiritualities and their visual culture: Barbara Larson, who has devoted several works to the analysis of Redon's iconography and its links to popular culture and imagery of the time (See Larson 2005; Larson, "The Franco-Prussian War and Cosmological Symbolism in Odilon Redon's 'Noirs'," *Artibus et Historiae* 25:50 (2004): 127-138; and Larson's essay in *Odilon Redon: As In a Dream* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007) 101). Most consistently, Suzy Levy has devoted her scholarship to exploring Redon's links to various esoteric groups: see Levy 1987, the volume of Redon's correspondence which she edits and annotates extensively (most of her annotations involve showing the connections of all events or individuals mentioned to these circles); and Levy, *Journale inédit de Ricardo Viñes: Odilon Redon et le milieu occultiste, 1897-1915* (Paris: Aux Amateurs de livres, 1987). Levy's work also established links to esoteric groups and interest in its texts and related artists on the part of most of Redon's committed patrons, such as Bonger, Domecy, Fayet and Mellerio. Levy's work has some weaknesses, however; see footnote 89.

[88] Rodolphe Rapetti, "'Le monde obscur de l'*indéterminé*': visages de Redon," *Odilon Redon, Prince du Rêve 1840-1916* (Paris: RMN, 2011), 17-27.

somehow separate and distinct from more mainstream religions and popular culture; it is particularly true in Symbolist theories of aesthetics, which often embrace play and ambiguity as major driving forces, that the influence of symbolic systems and religious theories cannot be understood as confined to either an absolute embrace of or rigid adherence to a stable system of belief. Some of these studies provide potentially very useful models in addressing Redon's undeniable involvement with these ideas and with the visual culture associated with them, without resorting to ungainly and unverifiable assertions of specific beliefs and allegiances on his part.[89] Many of the patrons of whose families Redon made portraits, including the Domecys, also demonstrated serious interest in the ideas, art and literature of syncretism and esotericism, and like most of the individuals investigating these alternative systems of faith, they passionately believed in art as a transmitter, or more extremely a replacement for previous conduits, of sacred

[89] There are a number of excellent studies of the occult and esotericism in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France and of its visual culture, including: Clément Chéroux et al., *The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005); John Warne Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith: Mesmerism, Spiritism and Occultism in Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2008); Lynn L. Sharp, *Secular Spirituality: Reincarnation and Spiritism in 19th Century France* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006); Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and Christine Blondel, eds., *Des Savants face à l'occulte 1870-1940* (Paris: Découverte, 2002) (particularly Pierre Lagrange and Patrizia d'Andréa, "Définitions occultes," 20-39; Nicole Edelman, "Spirites et neurologues face a l'occulte (1870-1890): une particularité française?"; and Patrick Fuentès, "Camille Flammarion et les forces naturelles inconnues," 105-120); and Michel Pierssens, "Novation Astray," *SubStance* 62/63 (1990) 157-67 and Pierssens, "Le Syndrome des Tables Tournantes," *Les temps modernes* 528 (July 1990) 87-111. Though it focuses on American Art, another book that sets a great example for the treatment of relations between art and occultic ideas of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century is Charles Colbert, *Haunted Visions: Spiritualism and American Art* (Philadelphia: U Penn P, 2011).

As a definition of the nature of occult milieux and the part they play in the modern world, Christopher Partridge's theory of occulture (as laid out in *The Re-enchantment of the West* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004) and "Occulture is Ordinary," *Contemporary Esotericism,* eds. Egil Asprem and Kennet Granholm (Sheffield: Equinox, 2013), 113-133) are very helpful, especially as further elaborated and expanded by Nina Kokkinen in "Occulture as an Analytical Tool in the Study of Art," *Aries* 13 (2013): 7-36. Partridge emphasizes the omnipresence of occulture, its indivisibility from mainstream religions and its strong presence in popular culture, and while he writes of contemporary phenomena, this is also most certainly true of nineteenth century occulture as well. According to Kokkinen, "'Occulture' not only allows the possibility of widening the critical perspective beyond various religious traditions and currents, but also distances itself from vague ideas of the 'spirituality' of modern art. Simultaneously, debates about whether a certain artist was an occultist, Teosophist [sic] or Christian are no longer the central focus, since seekership is not primarily based on such memberships." (31) Suzy Levy's book *Odilon Redon et le messie féminin* (Paris: Diagonales, 2007) is an example of an author falling into the common trap of feeling that it is necessary to define an artist as an absolute adherent to a set of ideas associated with an esoteric movement in order to account for the occurrence of its iconography in his work; while the research that she does for the book and some of her connections are thorough and very useful, her clear-cut conclusions seem to me unsupported by the evidence she adduces.

meaning. If we adopt these more flexible definitions of this milieu, it becomes imperative to acknowledge the importance of these shared investments in Redon's understanding of the project of portraiture.[90] In his first portrait of Jeanne de Domecy, Redon tried to create a work that communicates all of these layers of intimacy and experience. The emphasis on the sharing of domestic spaces imbued with the spirit, in some sense, of their occupants simultaneously creates of this work a testament to an important friendship, a statement about his patron's commitment to the sacred realm of Art (to Redon's particularly, and also to its larger spiritual role), and an expression of Redon's particular vision of the exhalation (to use the term he employs when speaking of Charles Waltner) of individuality.[91]

How, then, did Redon attempt to fulfill these ambitions for the humble genre of portraiture?

We have quite a lot of information about Domecy's commission of the decorative panels, but of the specifics of the portrait commission much less is known. From formal evidence, Redon seems to have begun this experiment with a fairly traditional template for a portrait of a society woman in mind: demure pose, texturally contrasting clothing, rich surface. While portraits of both men and women were expected to express the nature as well as look of the sitter, other expectations for them had long been somewhat different: the balance was tipped, for a woman, towards the presentation and enhancement of her physical appearance and its trappings, one of her most important roles in late nineteenth-century culture being a decorative and domestic one. Traditionally, to Camille Mauclair writing in 1899, "A feminine portrait was ... always a decorative work..." and indeed, was expected to be an object of beauty in itself, in addition to, and often utterly surpassing, its role as the depiction of an individual.[92] In this work, Mme de Domecy is presented in half-length, her hands displayed in her lap. Redon has carefully delineated her features and coiffure, and the chair in which she sits suggests her existence in three-dimensional, illusionary space. Redon also chose to execute this portrait in oil, the medium with which he was perhaps least confident, but which carried the most cachet.

But in many respects, in his depiction of the figure Redon did not do what was expected of conventional female portraiture. Mme de Domecy seems at first to be presented in a classic three-quarter-view pose, but her features are a little too lost, her turn away a little too extreme - the angle is strangely executed, as Redon shows slightly more than should be seen of the right side of her face. He rejected both the abundance of information usually available in the three-

[90] Redon believed portraiture to be something one should come to late in life; he claimed, "Je crois que le portrait est une des significations les plus hautes de l'art. Et je me suis toujours efforcé (et l'ai réussi quelquefois) de donner d'un être humain, son caractère seul, son caractère en soi. Faire un bon portrait me parait être le dernier et plus haut effort du peintre." He said this is 1904, in response to an article by Emile Bernard devoted to Redon in the journal *L'Occident*. While Bernard's article was wildly supportive of Redon's work, Redon nevertheless had some serious misgivings about it and made many comments in the margins of his own copy. The article, and Redon's hand-written notes, are published together in: Roseline Bacou, *Odilon Redon* (Genève: P. Cailler, 1956), 274-284.

[91] On the question of gender and Redon's patronage, particularly later in his career, see footnote 69.

[92] As quoted in Silverman 1989, 69. For the way that conventions of female portraiture were deployed and tweaked over the course of the nineteenth century in France, see Garb 2007.

quarter-view pose, then, and also the linear clarity and resonance with tradition that came with the pure profile (an angle with which, in his non-portrait images of women, he had long been associated).[93] Her construction and the blankness of her expression render the sitter simultaneously highly detailed and a little unreal. Her face shares some of the grey and pasty palette of the cloudy ground of the painting, and the touches of pink on her ear and lips, recurring in her blouse, serve only to emphasize the odd pallor of her complexion. The goal of a female portrait would usually require the seamless alliance of surroundings and subject in order to flatter and endow with life the sitter, seemingly effortlessly, through a series of echoes and contrasts. Even Edouard Vuillard, by no means a traditionalist and known for playing with the relationship between figure and ground, shows adherence to this goal in his portrait of Misia and Thadée Natanson of 1897: the greens, golds and blonds of the wallpaper behind Misia, and the corresponding upholstery of her chair, provide a frame for her soft and sinuous form and repeat its curves in dozens of small arabesques [fig. 3.3]. Meanwhile, the burgundy of the embroidered cloth over the piano accentuates the cream and blush of her vibrant complexion. Redon did not organize Baronne de Domecy's background or pose with the purpose of so flattering her; if anything, she is placed at a disadvantage in her relationship to her surroundings. In contrast to the sensuous lassitude of Misia's figure, Jeanne de Domecy is straight as a board, making no

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[93] From his earliest lithographic sequences, the profile had had a very particular symbolism for Redon: it evoked clarity and purity, and was linked to traditions of representation that he associated with logic and order – particularly, the Italian Renaissance. Sometimes this logic and clarity is reassuring in his work, but sometimes it manifests as potentially repressive. Some examples are: *Upon Awakening I saw the Goddess of the Intelligible, with her severe and hard profile*, from his lithographic series *Hommage à Goya* (1885); *Profile of Light* (1882); and his *Beatrice*, one of only two color lithographs he produced, from 1897. These evocative profiles are often, but not always, identifiable as female, and they are sometimes androgynous (see, for example, *Le souffle qui conduit les êtres est aussi dans les sphères*, from *A Edgar Poe*, 1882; *Lumière*, 1893; and *The Reader*, with Bresdin as his model, 1892). In his later works, his deployment of the profile is less ambivalent. He often used it to portray children and men (I will discuss this later in the chapter), as well as for mythological or literary characters. Critics saw the connections between these works and quattrocento Florentine profile portraits, an inspiration strongly associated with and explicitly referred to by the "Painters of the Soul" as well, with whom Redon was sometimes connected in the press but with which he appears to have had little substantial contact. On the Italian Renaissance and the Painters of the Soul, see Cassandra Sciortino, "Armand Point's Eternal Chimera and Saint Cecilia: A French Quattrocento Symbolist Aesthetic," *The Symbolist Movement: Its Origins and its Consequences*, ed. Rosina Neginsky (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 58-93. Sciortino also presented some preliminary thoughts on Redon's evocations of the quattrocento profile portrait at CAA in 2012. For more on florentine quattrocento profile portraits of women, see Patricia Simons, "Women in Frames: The Gaze, The Eye, the Profile in Renaissance Portraiture," *The Expanding Discourse*, eds. Mary Garrard and Norma Broude (NY: Icon Editions, 1992), 38-57.

Gloria Groom in particular has written of Florentine quattrocento portraits as a major influence on Redon's portraiture (see Druick 1994). An uncomplicated example of the manifestation of this influence would be Redon's portrait of Mme. Arthur Fontaine, a work I will discuss briefly later in this chapter. His unambiguous culling in that work of conventions of that time, however, serves to highlight his refusal to turn to them in his portraits of Mme. de Domecy.

move that accommodates the viewer at all. The angle at which she looks down might in another female portrait have connoted an appropriate demureness, but here it fails to do so in part because her stillness could not communicate the gesture that this would imply. She is off to one side, looking into a compositionally surprisingly large space that is, while not any one of the panels specifically, a continuation of the patterns that would soon cover her dining room walls. The decorative aspect of this portrait is not the figure herself: it is her environment.

When Mauclair speaks of the female portrait as decorative, he is using this word slightingly – pretty, rather than profound. His use of the word does not do justice therefore to the extraordinary importance of the idea of the decorative to discussions and practice in Symbolist circles of the time. In 1891 Aurier deemed decoration to be, as a primal declaration of existence and mental molding of the world, the most profound form of art:

> Or, qu'on veuille bien y réfléchir, la peinture décorative c'est, à proprement parler, la vraie peinture. La peinture n'a pu être créé que pour *décorer* de pensées, de rêves et d'idées les murales banalités des édifices humains. Le tableau de chevalet n'est qu'un illogique raffinement inventé pour satisfaire la fantaisie ou l'esprit commercial des civilisations décadentes. Dans les sociétés primitives, les premiers essais picturaux n'ont pu être que décoratifs.[94]

He speaks here of decorative projects literally, but also of a decorative aesthetic, as he defined it: one that reinterpreted and distorted earthly forms to transform them into evocations of ideas. His theories echo in the writings of many writers in the international Symbolist community – Denis, Jan Verkade, Henri van de Velde – and are repeated closely by Redon himself, amplified by his particular emphasis on consistency of space. He wrote to patron and friend Andries Bonger: "la peinture prit naissance sur [les murs]: quand elle s'en détacha pour n'être qu'un tableau déplaçable, quelle part d'inconnu et de hasard s'ouvrait sur sa destinée! Et d'obstacles aussi!"[95] As he himself hated to be displaced, so Redon imagined his work suffering when it ended up in surroundings with which he was unfamiliar and over which he had no control; he wrote of the special power he felt from a work by Rembrandt which, he claimed, had never been moved from the place where Rembrandt himself had once hung it. He also spoke increasingly often of his belief that it was only in mural projects that painting could aspire to its loftiest societal and ideological goals.[96] Formally linking the portrait of his patron's wife, with its potential as an opportunity to explore both individuality and decorative forms, to his decorative panels allowed him to harness some of the power of that ambitious and theoretically resonant project to a new kind of endeavor, one that intended to break with portraiture's traditional goals and expand its potential.

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[94] Georges-Albert Aurier, "Le Symbolisme en Peinture: Paul Gauguin," *Le Mercure de France* 2 (March 1891): 162. In another merging of the primitive and decorative, Adamson also discusses how Redon and others also looked to Japanese decorative forms for inspiration because they were considered also to have a "primitive unity"; see Adamson 1997, 18-20.

[95] From a letter of 23 May 1906; as quoted in Gamboni 1989, 196.

[96] On this painting, see Redon 1961, 57. Redon repeatedly attributes much of Rembrandt's genius to his refusal to travel, and from his intimate knowledge of models and of his surroundings. See Redon 1961, 128. For more on Redon's beliefs about the role that decorative projects should play, see Gamboni 2011, 264-265.

Redon produced all of his commissioned pastel and oil portraits in the decade of the 1900s, and they are all of women and children. Through much of this same decade, he also made a series of images of male friends and patrons in pencil or in sanguine on paper, with figures in profile or three quarters; those of artists, musicians and writers were almost always in profile, and many were reproduced as lithographs and distributed as gifts or tokens to patrons and artistic allies.[97] This social, as opposed to private, purpose explains to some extent why his portraits of men were conservative: these portraits were tributes and meant to memorialize the artists Redon admired.[98] The portraits of patrons were not intended for distribution, but they were usually gifts, often accompanying the paid commission of a portrait of a wife or child. The similarity of the images of his male patrons to the artists, writer and musicians in Redon's circle seems to inscribe them in that community, to present them as figures of standing in the realm of art.[99] He did not present them as icons of the strangeness and spell of domesticity, as geniuses of the homes they lived in: the opportunity to explore the relationship between home and the self, and to stake out a common ground between the decorative and portraiture, was provided to him only in images of women – partly because of the conventions of female portraiture itself, and partly because of his own ideas about women. Redon esteemed women very highly, but he was not one to question the assumption of a difference between women and men, or between female and male characteristics within an individual, that pervaded even the feminism, and hugely the esoteric and occult spiritualities, of his time.[100] This individuality that he explored was therefore mostly a feminine one, but not exclusively – for it was also the individuality of the artist and the artistically

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[97] see Gott 1990, and footnote 60.

[98] These lithographic works include portraits of Maurice Denis, Edouard Vuillard, Ricardo Viñes, Roger Marx, Miguel Llobet, Paul Sérusier, and Pierre Bonnard. All are reproduced in *The Graphic Works of Odilon Redon* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1969).

[99] For more on nineteenth century artistic communities, and the ways in which representation could both create and reinforce them, see Bridget Alsdorf, *Fellow Men: Fantin-Latour and the Problem of the Group in Nineteenth Century French Painting* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2013).

[100] Redon's refusal to sexualize his sitters was, for him, a part of his demonstration of respect for them; he was, in this way, very traditional, in that he conceived of women as falling into the two discrete categories of pure and impure. In his interpersonal relationships he accorded women a great deal of respect, dealing with them regularly in aesthetic and business as well as more personal matters; he also proclaimed that marrying the practical and efficient Camille (one of the great artist's wives of art history) was the best decision he had ever made, better even than deciding to follow his calling to become an artist. His ideas of the female and male sides of an individual, and how they manifested in relation to one's environment, appear to have been very much in line with many esoteric belief systems of the time. Women could attain high and very respected positions within these belief communities, but often less because they challenged traditional ideas of gender roles than because they maintained them but insisted more on the importance of attributes associated with the feminine. On Redon's relationship with his wife, see Redon 1923/1986, pgs 30-31, as well as much of his correspondence later in life. On the role and status of women in fin-de-siècle alternative spiritualities, see: Monroe 2008 (see fn 31); Sharp 2006 (fn 31); and, though they focus more on England (and, for Galvan, America), Jill Nicole Galvan, *The Sympathetic Medium: Feminine Channeling, the Occult, and Communication Technologies, 1859-1919* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2010), and Diana Barsham, *The Trial of Woman: Feminism and the Occult Sciences in Victorian Literature and Society* (NY: NY UP, 1992).

sensitive who, in Redon's estimation, saw and felt the singular currents of hearth and home, and translated them.[101]

Redon was not the only artist seeking a way for his portraiture to relate to his decorative interiors - both Vuillard and Maurice Denis also experimented with folding together portraiture and decorative projects.[102] One way to create these connections was to depict subjects in rooms that prominently displayed decorative works that the artist had created for their houses. In Vuillard's portrait of Misia Natanson and Cipa Godebski, we see the right half of a large panel, entitled *The Album*, which Vuillard had done for Misia's home several years earlier [fig. 3.4].[103] Similarly, Maurice Denis's portrait of his wife and children presents a wall covered by wallpaper

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[101] Symbolism is sometimes considered one of the most virulently and confusedly misogynistic of art movements, simultaneously co-opting for the nature of the artist and poet any positive attributes traditionally associated with the feminine, and utterly vilifying what was left of Woman after she had been thus eviscerated. This is an extreme oversimplification of the movement; while there are ample examples of works that show these tendencies, particularly more ideologically-driven works, there are also many, like the works I study here, that do not. The power of those misogynistic images, and the way in which most of them fall into the categories of works that have somewhat circularly been used in attepts to "define" Symbolism, have led to an emphasis on them. Interpretations of Khnopff, as will be seen later, are an excellent example of how a few seemingly misogynistic works can dominate the presentation of an artist's entire oeuvre; the frontispieces and companion pieces that he produced for works by Sâr Péladan, almost exclusively the only overtly simplistic representations of gender in his entire career, are disproportionately reproduced to represent him in exhibition catalogues and in overviews of the Symbolist movement.

However, many of these artists did claim what would traditionally be considered "feminine" attributes for themselves; Redon, exceptionally *un*focused on the negative image of Woman, also claimed the positive and supposedly female attributes of intuition and sensitivity to surroundings for the male artist. For a general discussion of constructions of gender in cultural production of the latter half of the nineteenth century, see Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986). For a study of gender and Symbolism, see Patricia Mathews, *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender and French Symbolist Art* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1999).

[102] This practice has a long history in both secular and sacred painting, tapestry and other arts; artists of this time were deliberately looking to medieval and Renaissance decorative arts for inspiration. For more on the role of these precedents for Denis and Vuillard, see Gloria Groom, *Edouard Vuillard: Painter-Decorator* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993); Groom 2001; Bouillon 2007; and Laura Morowitz, "Anti-Semitism, Medievalism and Art of the Fin-de-Siècle," *Oxford Art Journal* 20:1 (1997) 35-49.

[103] For more on Vuillard's decorative painting and relationship to his patrons, see Groom 1993; Groom 2001; Kuenzli 2010; and the work of Guy Cogeval on Vuillard, especially: Cogeval and Antoine Salomon, *Vuillard: The Inexhaustible Glance* (Paris: Wildenstein Institute, 2003); Cogeval et al., *Edouard Vuillard* (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 2003); and Susan Sidlauskas, "Contesting Femininity: Vuillard's Family Pictures," *The Art Bulletin* 79:1 (March 1997): 85-111.

designed by Denis himself [fig. 3.5].[104] In both of these cases, the artists took steps to establish the ascendancy of their portrait subjects. The painting behind Misia's head is no perfect reproduction of the original but is distorted as though to underscore its status as a representation of a representation, one degree further away from presence. Vuillard may also have made the painting more amorphous, as he did with the wallpaper around it, to emphasize the musical event depicted in the work.[105] Denis, on the other hand, clearly showed the borders of the wallpaper, and finessed its colors to echo the pinks and blues of the faces and eyes of his wife and children. His wife presides here as she does in so many of his portraits of her, idealized in her sweetness and appearing very much as the angel of the house. Redon, however, presents Baronne de Domecy, not in the room that contains her decoration, but in a space that belongs to the world of the decorations themselves, one that is an extension of that scheme rather than a depiction of it.

We can further investigate this strange relationship between Jeanne de Domecy and the world Redon creates for her by considering the portrait and the panels together, and by comparing them to decorative suites by Vuillard and Denis that incorporate portraits of patrons. In two panels for the Paris home of Jean Schopfer and his wife, Vuillard chose to depict scenes of his friends at the Natanson estate in Villeneuve-sur-Yonne, enjoying their summer revels [fig. 3.6].[106] Misia Natanson presides here, creating the compositional base and setting the tone for the right-hand panel, while Pierre Bonnard and his future wife Marthe are in the foreground of the left.[107] Here Vuillard drew very explicitly on traditions of decorative painting and tapestry, which would often show aristocratic subjects enjoying the leisure activities appropriate to their class and genders.[108] The figures are not conspicuous, however, in their portraithood. Bonnard's back is turned to the viewer, Marthe is engrossed in her fashion magazine, Misia's face is turned away: a viewer would have to know the individuals well to recognize them here. These images are not therefore about showcasing likenesses but instead about making the patrons' perceptual experiences the theme of their room. Vuillard represented their lives back to them by way of evocations, through the gentle massaging of form and the avoidance of any precision that would identify these images as a single, contingent moment.[109]

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[104] For more on this painting, see Jean-Paul Bouillon, *Maurice Denis* (Geneva: Skira, 1993). This work is reproduced on page 106.

[105] See Delphine Grivel, "'Le Murmure des Murs': Musique et Papiers Peints dans l'Oeuvre des Nabis," Michèle Barbe et Marie Lecoustey, eds., *Musique et Arts Plastiques V* (2005): 79-88.

[106] On these works from 1898, see Groom 1993, 99-120; Anne Robbins and Kate Stonor, "Past, Present, Memories: Analyzing Edouard Vuillard's *La Terrasse at Vasouy*," *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 33 (2012): 82-112.

[107] Vuillard executed a third panel, finished in 1901, for the Schopfer residence that featured the Schopfers themselves – particularly Alice Schopfer, Jean's American wife. I have not chosen to analyze this panel here because it was extensively repainted in 1935, to the extent that a number of the characters were changed and others added. On this panel and its repainting, see ibid. 108-119.

[108] See footnote 102.

[109] Vuillard explained that subject matter in a decoration should not be too clearly defined, "for a decoration or an apartment a subject that's objectively too precise could easily become unbearable." See Groom 1993, 119. Of all the Nabis, Redon seemed closest to Vuillard; each artist made a portrait of the other, and they vacationed together with, among others, Gustave Fayet. They were also both dedicated lithographers – it was also as a pioneer in that medium that

If Vuillard's intention was to spin out memories into decorative schemes, Redon's was very different. However, the panels give testimony to the important influence Vuillard's painting style had had on Redon's decorative practice. These artists had a strong friendship and mutual respect: to Vuillard, Redon was a trailblazer and prophet, but to Redon, Vuillard (and others of his generation), thirty years younger than himself, could push the bounds of figurative representation – especially in the evocation of landscape and atmosphere – in a way that he envied, and aspired to incorporate.[110] The Domecy suite is one of the clearest examples of his attempts to do so. Of the fifteen panels now in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay, six are small and quickly painted with variations of sketchy flowers and leaves; placed high, these were intended largely to provide texture and the impression of smoky ambers and roses that would harmonize with the tones of the dominant panels. The three largest of these occupied the two walls with windows looking onto a garden and trees [figs. 3.7 and 8]. They are the most luminous paintings by far: the trees within them are almost dissolved in a golden glow punctuated by floral accents of red, pink and purple. A branch in one panel continues around the corner of the room into the next, seamlessly unifying the two windowed walls. The way in which forms are overwhelmed by a gold background and the continuation of the tree from one panel into the next shows Redon's indebtedness to Japanese screens, as does the manner in which the trees here are cropped at the top and bottom.[111] This framing also creates a resonance between the experience of looking at the flora in the panels and the flora through the windows: in these two panels, Redon was inspired by the nature around the Domecy estate.

The affect of the panels on the other two walls is different, however. There is nothing jarring in the transition: the texture of the panels remains similar, as does their domination by undulating, cloudy masses dotted with plant life. Flowers continue to float through the spaces, but the trees are gone and rather than giving off a golden glow, these panels are sunk in a rosy grey mist [fig. 3.9]. One wall features the fireplace over which hangs, to this day, a pastel Domecy had bought from Redon two years earlier, showing Christ watching over a struggle between angels and a demon.[112] This artwork is flanked on either side by two tall, thin panels, each containing a female figure with head bent as though in prayer [figs. 3.10 and 11]. (These two figures refer to another pastel owned by Domecy, entitled *Mystical Conversation*.[113]) The woman to the right is enshrouded in a seemingly embroidered red cloak that completely obscures the body beneath; its patterns recall those of Indian saris.[114] She stands before a lyre (for Redon, always a reference to Orpheus) whose strings transform into the bars that separate her from the roiling masses of color beyond, and under her feet are the lines of a tiled floor, cursorily

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Redon was admired by the younger generation – and their lithographs were part of the same series published by *La Revue Blanche* in 1895. See also Bacou 1970.

[110] Contemporaries certainly saw this influence; in a review of the 1904 Salon d'Automne François Thiébault-Sisson for example said, "Vuillard ... lui a emprunté quelques-uns des secrets de son métier." For more on Vuillard's influence, see Druick 1994, 306-307; and Groom 1993 and 2001.

[111] See Adamson 1997 about the influence of Japanese art on Redon's decorations.

[112] According to the Getty curators, the Domecy family is notoriously secretive. They do not loan this work and have allowed no reproductions of it.

[113] 1896, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Gifu, Japan.

[114] On the reference to saris, see RMN 2011, 310-11.

executed: they symbolize perspectival space rather than actually creating its illusion.[115] The second figure also wears a red cloak, but this one is diaphanous and the whole of her voluptuous body is clearly visible. Her long golden hair falls around her body; she clasps a large lock of it to her chest in a simultaneously modest and seductive gesture. She is placed within the amorphous fields of color from which the other figure is clearly separated. Some dynamic between restraint and pleasure, between the mind and the body is subtly playing out here in the confrontation of these contrasting feminine forms flanking the Christian scene between them, and that dynamic is echoed in the differences among the walls of the room. Redon's scheme integrates a meditation on nature and light with a spiritually syncretic and ambiguous symbology the specifics of which draw directly on the history of his and Domecy's relationship.

While Redon's formal approach owes a greater debt to Vuillard, in this presentation of the coexistence of the everyday and the sacred his suite has more in common with the work of Denis. In 1897 Denis painted seven panels for the home of Baron Denys Cochin, a prominent Catholic intellectual. These paintings combine hunting stories: portraits of the Baron and his family setting out on horseback, the legend of St Hubert, and Victor Hugo's *Legende du Beau Pécopin* [figs. 3.12 and 13].[116] Cochin suggested the juxtaposition of the latter two, the first as an example of the divine rewards of following the right path, and the other to illustrate the damnation of those who lose their way. The Cochins are unambiguously shown to be in the first camp; the panels conclude with a depiction of nine of them praying before the family chapel, with Saint Hubert himself presiding. Their exemplarily correct bourgeois trappings, so lovingly rendered and so charmingly worn by the Baron's family, create some odd harmonies with the stories of hellfire and miraculous salvation into which they've been inserted; nowhere is this contrast more jarring than in the placing of the figure of St Hubert, gaunt and austere, against the dark-clad and dapper solidity of the Baron himself. Denis was attempting a level of uncomplicated integration of his characters that his unambiguous doctrinal message could not ultimately allow; Redon would make no such mistake. Different as their approaches were, however, Redon's and Denis's series both served to reinforce their relationship and reflect shared beliefs with a patron with whom they collaborated on subject matter.

Vuillard and Denis's decorative series incorporate the portraits of donors directly, of course, while Redon's project is different – he extends the world of his decorations into Jeanne's portrait, but it is not a part of the room and was not intended to be hung there. However, comparing the ways in which Denis and Vuillard's figures relate to their decorative backgrounds to Redon's choices shows how peculiar those choices were. For both Vuillard and Denis, the portraits' stylizations set the tone for and drive the whole rest of the scheme. Their forms echo throughout, and dictate the development of the suites' decorative and formal qualities, just as the portrait subjects in the single artworks that showcased the artists' decorations had always asserted primacy. Vuillard's Misia panel is divided horizontally into thirds: the top is sky and trees, the middle hill and secondary figures, and the bottom belongs to Misia. The grasses around her feet are roseate and blond, resonating with her figure's dominant hues, but those that recede

[115] Redon depicted the head of Orpheus on a lyre at least 5 times, the earliest in 1881. The significance of this character in his work is discussed in most books about his work; also, see Dorothy M. Kosinski, *Orpheus in Nineteenth-Century Symbolism* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1989), especially 199-202.

[116] On the story of these works, see Agnès Delannoy, *Maurice Denis: La Légende de Saint Hubert, 1896-97* (Paris: Somogy Editions d'Art, 2006); and Bouillon 2007, 246-254.

into the second section shift quickly to green, definitely marking off the foreground. The curves of Misia's prominent and languid form are echoed in the lines of the meandering path to her left, and the hill in the background repeats the sweep of the armchair that cradles her. The two brightest figures in the painting, one woman in red and the other in coral, are placed directly behind her and in their flatness seem almost to be emerging from her lap; their bold colors play off the whites and blonds of her dress, framing her form. She is balanced to the left by a small figure also in white and a red only slightly more saturated than Misia's bright hair; the shapes of the red coat and Misia's coiffure are the same. Finally, the textures and tones of other forms throughout the work – the trees, the half-hidden house, the clouds – all reinforce their boldest application in Misia's skirt, where the paint is most thickly applied.[117]

Denis's figures, idealized in their softness and perfection of complexion and feature throughout his *St Hubert* panels, similarly dominate the panels in which they appear, and for him this prominence is intended to reinforce the religious message of the work. Denis incorporated two group portraits of members of Cochin's family: they begin the story as they set off on horseback in the first panel, and conclude it in their positions of prayer in the last. They serve therefore as a frame for the whole set. In the first panel, they march across the whole foreground like a frieze; the whites of their horses spin up in the frame in the bright trunks of the trees, and the blues of their coats repeat in the arabesques of shadows at the bottom. The Baron's figure is particularly dominant: of all the figures his is the only one seen in its entirety, and the black of his riding boot continues in the line of the black horse's leg, connecting his firmly to the ground. In the final panel, the lightness of the chapel and the girls' dresses set the family group off from the darker and fairly uniformly textured woods in the back; the chapel also sits on the edge of a cliff that looks over the bruising riders below. Two intersecting diagonals going from the upper right to the bottom left of the composition reinforce each other: the first connects a branch extending from the tree in the upper corner, to the face of the saint, and down via the profile of the foremost daughter to the neck of the brown horse plunging out of sight below. The second begins with the Baron's face, connects to the hand of the saint and the same daughter's head, and points to the black rider and horse. This double insistence on the contemplation of the damned by the saved summarizes the lesson taught over the course of the panels.

Both Vuillard and Denis's portraits, within these two decorative projects and without, did not present any break with the presentations of form for which each was known: Vuillard's have all the fleetingness of half-caught form and Denis's all the flow and sweetness that distinguish each artist's oeuvre. Faced with the task of painting her portrait, Redon endows Jeanne de Domecy with none of the manipulation of form associated with his own depictions of women. The red-robed figures in the panels can serve as examples: their bodies are simplified and their features indistinct, and they fit seamlessly with the floating shapes and freeform fields of color that permeate the decorative panels. Redon did not attempt to map any of this evocative manipulation of form onto the figure of the baroness, and nor do her pose and form find any physical echo in the world he creates. For all her formal difference from this world, however, Redon emphasizes her presence *within* it: the long, thin ledge at the bottom of the picture establishes her figure as somewhere separate from the realm of the viewer; it is a feature Redon used often for this effect.[118] But her fit here is a little awkward, as though she were some slightly

[117] For a close formal analysis of both panels, see Groom 1993, 100-107.

[118] Some examples of works that use this device: 1) Inside front cover of *A Edgar Poë*, 1882, a series of lithographs that were not illustrations of Poe but rather a dialogue with/homage to his

confusedly solid insertion into the hesitantly existing world of the panels. If Redon has shown her here in the realm of her home as he has helped to create it, her place initially seems an uneasy one – extremely surprising, considering Redon's belief in the inextricability of individual and domestic environment.

This sense of unease is a temporary one, however, as Redon has countered this impression in several ways. Ultimately, he establishes his subject as both belonging to the world he evokes *and* the world of the contingent moment: in this case, very specifically, the moment of the pose. The combination of her perfectly arranged clothing and coiffure, the straightness of her posture in the armchair, the carefully folded hands in her lap: her position here is the essence of the patient and cooperative sitter. No illusions of movement or natural relaxation here: Redon presents us with a figure that in her very stillness implies the presence of the artist, and the moment of the portrait's inception. Redon's refusal to flatter his sitter only reinforces this impression.

The expression on Mme de Domecy's face is, meanwhile, very neutral, and her eyes unfocused; the slight exaggeration of the visibility of her left eye contributes to the sensation created by Redon of her gazing into nothing but rather lost in her own thoughts as she poses. The world before her, the world of the panels in which she is immersed, here becomes also her personal vision, translated.[119] And while it is so different from the depiction of her figure, the flowers embroidered on the arm of her chair are a more solid and condensed version of the forms floating in at the bottom left; the use of the same colors on the bottom ledge underscores this visual rhyming. She is a liminal figure, in and out of a formal world that serves at one and the same time to represent her daydream state and a part of the artist's extended and very personal wrapping together of her home, her presence, and his own knowledge of, influence upon, and interpretation of each.

In his article "Old Master Echoes: Odilon Redon, Photography and 'La Vie Morale'," Ted Gott presents Redon as a "stockpil[er] of ... obsessive visual memories, acquired from extensive study of past artworks."[120] He haunted the Louvre and collected reproductions of artworks whenever possible, often exchanging them by mail with friends and patrons in other parts of the world. Redon travelled rarely (perhaps unsurprising given his abhorrence of new spaces), but he made his first trip to Italy with Robert de Domecy in 1899.[121] His suite for the dining room and most of his portraits, both of Jeanne and after, have therefore often, and rightly, been connected to his recent exposure to the works in the Italian museums and monuments they visited together; Redon himself wrote of the awe he felt before the Benozzo Gozzoli frescoes in

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work; 2) *She shows herself to him* from *Le Juré*, 1887, a work by Edmond Picard for which Redon had supplied illustrations; 3) *Female Saint and Thistle*, 1891, British Museum, London; 4) *Mystical Knight*, 1894, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux; 5) *Christ Crowned with Thorns,* 1895, British Museum, London; 6) *Symbolic Head*, mid-1890s, Cleveland Museum of Art.

[119] The conflation of inner and outer vision is a common theme in Symbolism, with its interest in ambiguity and dream states, and threads through Redon's entire career. Aurier, in discussing this, used Gauguin's *Vision after the Sermon* and it is still a quintessential example.

[120] Ted Gott, "Old Master Echoes: Odilon Redon, Photography and 'La Vie Morale'," *Australian Journal of Art* 5 (1986): 48.

[121] See Bacou 1992.

the Camposanto in Pisa [fig. 3.14].[122] When writing about the decorative aesthetic traditions that impressed him the most, however, he did not mention Italy: he focused instead on what to him were exotic traditions, like the Japanese and the Persian, and on the art of Flanders.[123] To the end of his life, Redon owned a copy of Fromentin's *Les Maîtres d'autrefois* – and given his lack of room for books and his love of reading, that he kept both this and other works by the author with him is a strong statement of his admiration.[124] The last chapter of *Les Maîtres d'autrefois* is dedicated to the art of the van Eycks and Memling. His description of the effect of the latter's work can only have struck a strong chord for Redon: "Imaginez, au milieu des horreurs du siècle, un lieu privilégié, une sorte de retraite angélique idéalement silencieuse et fermée où les passions se taisent, où les troubles cessent, où l'on prie, où l'on adore, où tout se transfigure, laideurs physiques, laideurs morales, où naissent des sentiments nouveaux..." He describes how both Memling and Jan van Eyck (whom he considers somewhat the lesser) depict these privileged worlds with celestial figures face to face with uncompromising portrait likenesses of devotional figures, even referring the reader to van Eyck's *Vierge du Chancellier Rolin* as an example of "ce mélange d'observation méticuleuse et de rêveries."[125] I will here suggest that this devotional portrait, and others like it, also acted upon Redon as he experimented with his first commissioned portrait, not just formally but also in the relationship between donor and faith, and between physical and ideal world, that they present.[126] Jeanne de Domecy is simultaneously a

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[122] Redon mentions it in a letter to Bonger, 31 October 1907; see Redon 1923, 80. Denis was also drawn to the works of Gozzoli; their influence on the St. Hubert cycle is discussed in Bouillon 2007, 254.

[123] Discussing in 1908 where he would look for inspiration for his designs for chairs and tapestries, Redon wrote to Charles Waltner of Persia and of Flanders: "Je crois que le mal du travaux est dans l'abus du naturalisme. Ce que nous connaisons de la Perse, et aussi de la Flandre, nous montre plus d'invention et d'imagination. Je serais bien heureux, vous pouvez me croire, si je pouvais apporter là un correctif, avec quelque peu de fantaisie et d'intuition." See Roseline Bacou, "Odilon Redon à l'Abbaye de Fontfroide," *Chefs d'Oeuvre de l'Art* 9 (1970): 6.

[124] On Redon's library and his admiration for Fromentin as a writer and painter, see Roseline Bacou, "La Bibliothèque d'Odilon Redon," *Festschrift to Erik Fischer*, ed.Villads Villadsen (Copenhagen: Royal Museum of Fine Arts, 1990), 29-37; Redon, *Critiques d'art: Salon de 1868, Rodolphe Bresdin, Paul Gauguin...* (Bordeaux: William Blake and Co. Editions, 1987), 59-66.

[125] Eugène Fromentin, *Les Maîtres d'autrefois* (Bâle: Les Editions Holbein, 1947), 353-54. Fromentin often refers his reader to works in the Louvre, assuming that his audience will have easier access to these examples than to those he saw in Holland and Belgium.

[126] In hazarding this parallel, I have consulted the following texts about devotional portraits: John Oliver Hand and Ron Spronk, eds, *Essays in Context: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2007), especially Reindert Falkenburg, "Hans Memling's Van Niewuenhove Diptych: The Place of Prayer in Early Netherlandish Painting," 92-109; Hugo van der Velden, *The Donor's Image* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), especially the section entitled "The Iconology of the Votive Image," 191-288; Susanna Franke, "Between Status and Spiritual Salvation: The Portinari Triptych and Tommaso Portinari's Concern for his Memoria," *Simiolus* 33:3 (2007-2008): 123-144; Woodall, Joanna, "Painted Immortality: Portraits of Jerusalem Pilgrims by Antonis Mor and Jan van Scorel," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 31 (1989): 149-163; and Laura D. Gelfand and Walter S. Gibson, "The "Rolin Madonna" and the Late-Medieval Devotional Portrait," *Simiolus* 29:3/4 (2002): 119-138.

witness to inner visions, and to the representation of the atmospherics of her home and an evocation of the ideal world to which the art of Redon aspires and to which, his patrons believed, it served as a bridge.

As a portrait, Redon's painting of Jeanne de Domecy is not an unmitigated success. It manifests the pressure of attempting all of these different ambitions in a single work, especially on the part of an artist who was working in the medium with which he was, perhaps, least confident at that point in his career.[127] The portrait is, however, a testament to Redon's ability to create the possibility for multiple and many-layered interpretations of his portraits: while remaining devoted to the creation of physical likeness and intending to testify to the realities of the intersubjective portraitist/sitter encounter, it also attempts to picture a relation between home, subject and artist that obscures none. In a second portrait of the baroness, Redon would soon try again [fig. 3.15].

Immersions: the Second Portrait

In 1903, at the Durand-Ruel show Denis would review, Redon showed several portraits, including those of Mme Arthur Fontaine ("Mme F.") [fig. 3.16], Jeanne Chaîne ("Mlle C."), and his second portrait of Jeanne de Domecy, which was displayed only as "Portrait of Mme X."[128] Redon showed in private galleries in Paris rarely at this point; although this show garnered largely positive reviews they were few in number, and the show was a complete failure commercially. Redon sawthis as more evidence to support the conclusion he had already reached: he would gain more patrons by word of mouth or among the communities of his existing supporters who would see his work in their homes, than he would through gallery shows.[129]

We do not know the exact date of the second portrait, or the conditions of its commission.[130] While it is possible that the baroness was not entirely satisfied with the first attempt, it is equally possible that it was commissioned as a companion to the first, possibly for a different property. The fact that Redon borrowed it to be exhibited in his show demonstrates that he thought it was successful; the first work, on the other hand, was never exhibited.[131] Whatever

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[127] Redon had started out as a painter, but as previously discussed he had not used paint regularly for more than two decades when he took it up again in the late 1890s.

[128] The identities of patrons depicted in portraits were usually hidden, although of course friends and others in their social circle would recognize them. By concealing even her initials, someone took an extra step with the Domecy portrait - perhaps another indication of Domecy's somewhat hermit-like nature and desire for privacy. Mme de Domecy seems to have shared this desire; from my research she would appear to have led a very circumspect and private life – she appeared in the papers, for example, only when she was married and when she died; she is completely absent from any of the common notings of the comings and goings, or social and charitable doings, of the privileged.

[129] He would be exhibited once more by Durand-Ruel in 1906 and his last solo show was at Druet in 1908; after this, he proclaimed, "I shall not exhibit again, in fact. People have said I was very proud; it's much simpler than that. I need tranquility, for myself, for my family, and I'm afraid of being misunderstood." (Gamboni 1989/2011, 264)

[130] According to the Getty Center's object file, evidence shows that Domecy paid for this work in 1902. It was framed (or, possibly, reframed) shortly before the Durand-Ruel exhibition.

[131] Given that the majority of Redon's works were in pastel at this point, he may simply have preferred to showcase that medium.

the case, the two portraits are in many respects very similar. In each, the figure takes up only the right half of the frame, and remains in exactly the same position, with the same (non)-expression. Neither work flatters the baroness's features. The distribution of areas of greater density throughout these compositions has also remained the same: the corners and peripheries have collections of cloudy forms or flowers, while the center of each composition is light and open. Also, both portraits show Jeanne de Domecy in worlds featured in Redon's decorative project, albeit resonating with different panels.

In the first half of this chapter, I described the fifteen panels of the Domecy's suite currently in the Musée d'Orsay; I have not yet discussed the sixteenth panel in the room, known as the *Grand Bouquet* [fig. 3.17].[132] Executed in the spring of 1901, when most of the work on the other panels was finished and the first portrait was complete, this panel is a huge pastel floral still life on canvas (245.5 x 163 cm). In his late years, Redon would become best known to the public as a painter of flower still lifes – his production of these was vast, very often commercial and tremendously uneven.[133] Some of these works fulfill traditional expectations of the genre, presenting at least approximately identifiable species that generally follow the laws of gravity in their relation to the vase in which they sit. Others are wild and scattered, with suspended, free-floating floriforms that belong to no botanical category. *The Grand Bouquet* is one of the more extreme examples of the latter type. Marie-Pierre Salé refers to the work as an "anti-bouquet," where many of the flowers seem to be staging an escape from the vase, and few are even generally identifiable.[134] As the sixteenth panel of the Domecy decoration, the virtuosic *Grand Bouquet* certainly stands out, but not jarringly so. Redon created a background that, though in pastel rather than the oil that was predominant in the decorative suite, continues the muted texture and subdued hues of the other panels, and the hint of something like blue sky peeking through in the right of the *Grand Bouquet* continues into the panel on the next wall, whose floating daisy-like flowers are ringed in a blue similar to that of the vase. In the predominantly golden panel that shares the wall with the bouquet, an anomalous blue form drifts across,

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[132] As mentioned in footnote 68, this work is now in Tokyo. It was sold in 2010, and had previously been unreproduced and still hanging in the Domecy chateau.

[133] Redon executed more than a hundred of these, and of all his easel paintings they sold the best. He felt that they were no example of his true ambitions as an artist, and he occasionally expressed frustration with the necessity of painting them so that he could "gagner mon pain". Of people who admired his flowers overmuch he spoke slightingly: "De jeunes littérateurs autrefois venaient chez moi, admiraient mes fleurs, toujours mes fleurs. Et moi j'écoutais ce qu'ils disaient; je cachais certains de mes tableaux, je crois, a leurs yeux. Je sentais qu'aucun de ceux qui étaient là ne comprenait ma peinture, et je n'allais pas la leur expliquer..." However, not all of his floral still-lives were this kind of production: Redon's more ambitious and less naturalistic flower paintings could also provide him with an opportunity to experiment, sometimes thinking through his relationships with other painters like Vuillard and Gauguin. See Charles Terrasse, *Conversations avec Odilon Redon 1914* (Paris: L'Echoppe,1993), 16-19.

Before the 1956 Redon exhibition at the Orangerie, curated by Roseline Bacou, Redon's flowers were in fact what he was best known for - the exact opposite of today, when his noirs have so dominated scholarship that his later works are now the surprise. See the several articles discussing the opening of the exhibition in *Arts et Spectacles*, Oct-Nov 1956.

[134] RMN 2011, 310.

heralding some of the stranger shapes that characterize the chaos of the explosion of color next to it.

Although we do not know whether the *Grand Bouquet* was painted before, after or even at the same time as the second portrait, the palpable similarities between them evidence their close relationship. As the flowers rise out of the brilliant blue vase in the *Grand Bouquet*, so does Jeanne de Domecy's head emerge from an intensely blue jacket. Vase and coat both are placed against highlights of bright red, orange and coral: flowers floating down and even escaping the canvas in the one, and Mme de Domecy's blouse in the other.[135] The forms that fill the page around Jeanne de Domecy's figure are mostly either blue or a range of golds to blonds very similar to many of the flowers in the bouquet, and some also share a general shape: at the top of the panel a large straw-colored disk-like flower, reminiscent of a *tournesol* seen from the side, is echoed in a slightly wispier shape in the upper left corner of the portrait. Four of the blue flowers behind the baroness's head are, unlike their counterparts on the opposite side of the composition, ringed in black, and we find these black-bound flowers in the *Grand Bouquet* as well. The second portrait is therefore intimately tied to the creations of the decorative suite, as was the first.

Despite the similarities, the second portrait is also dramatically different. While not taking on a completely new project, in revisiting Jeanne de Domecy's portrait, Redon went far beyond simple variation. Among the most dramatic differences between the two works are his choices of medium and palette. Whereas the first portrait was oil on canvas, the second is a provocative arrangement of graphite and pastel on paper. In his charcoals, Redon had long deployed with virtuosity the full dramatic range of blacks of which his medium was capable but only began to emphasize its capacity for the restrained and soft shading of illusionistic form in the late 1880s and 1890s.[136] Here, he transfers this new approach into graphite: the baroness's hair, face and neck are delicately drawn exclusively in pencil on the paper support. The care with which Redon has described her face, and the subtlety and precision of the soft shading sparingly highlighted with dabs of white, are quite new in his work. In arresting contrast to her visage, the rest of the work is covered with riotous forms in saturated and sumptuous pastel color, far more saturated that the muted palette of his first Domecy portrait in oil.

In fact, from a distance, the velvety richness and intensity of color in the baroness's clothing and surrounding floral forms capture the viewer's attention, while her softly drawn face dissolves, washes out and becomes overwhelmed. Jeanne de Domecy's visage seems alien to the colorful and inviting world around her, as though she had been pasted onto the background in some way (it has this effect in reproductions as well).[137] All of Redon's careful pencil work is

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[135] Two of Redon's earlier non-commissioned portraits (c 1900) were of his friend the ceramicist Marie Botkine, who often made vases especially for his bouquets. In both, Botkine's head, adorned with a sumptuous feathered hat, seems to emerge from the vessel of her astrakhan coat; she is perhaps a precedent for this aspect of the second Domecy portrait. These works are now in the Musée d'Orsay and the Kröller-Müller Museum.

[136] Some examples of this new approach: *Songe,* 1898, in the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo; *Une tête surmontée d'épines,* 1887, private collection; *Le Sommeil,* 1889, Musée d'Orsay. There is an exception: a portrait he did of Rodolphe Bresdin in 1869. In lithography, we see an example of this different approach to blacks in the *Apocalypse of St John*; see footnote 58.

[137] This is one of those situations in which not even the best reproduction can be true to the experience of the work itself: The Getty's photo of this work is excellent and true to its colors,

almost indiscernible from afar, and what can be seen of her features and her hair is subtly, naggingly wanting and awkward. Her face is shown from three slightly different angles: we see enough of the figure's right eye for the equivalent of a traditional three-quarter pose, the other eye gazes out of the picture at an approximately forty-five degree angle, and the ear is almost in profile. This distortion does not flatter her, and the overall initial impression from across a room is of a homely woman – and, because her hair reads as grey and mousy from this distance, one significantly older than the baroness's thirty years.

First impressions, however, are misleading and incomplete: Jeanne de Domecy's presence in this portrait reveals itself gradually, with the viewer's engagement, as something vital and powerful. The intriguing and rich surroundings may be what draw the viewer closer to the portrait at first, but upon approaching the figure begins to transform and exert a new influence: the tantalizing delicacy of Redon's rendering of her face starts to emerge, drawing the viewer in very close. The fineness and precision of his pencil work rewards this kind of proximity; no matter how close the viewer comes, the details of this area of the surface do not distort. The gentle manipulations of the baroness's facial structure, the disparate angles difficult to reconcile from afar, are easy to accommodate up close: the viewer's field of vision narrows and begins to focus attention on the specific details of her features, like her almond-shaped eye, the gentle and beautiful curve of her lips, the slightly aquiline line of her nose, her smooth and youthful skin. The different angles now give viewers an increased sense of their own movements, as though they were shifting slightly to explore further a figure in the flesh before them, as the artist must have done in the moments of the portrait's conception. Jeanne de Domecy has shed her extra years, and there is something very intimate about this unusually gradual revelation of her, as the viewer's investment renders her individual features increasingly expressive. Meanwhile, the brilliant pastel forms around her, so expressive and strong from afar, have lost much of their coherence and are reduced to pastel marks creating an ambiguous wash of color.[138]

As much as Redon refused to allow the baroness to be overwhelmed by her powerful surroundings, he also took care to transform the initial strong impression of her being so completely different from them, and instead to integrate her with the world in which she sits. A network of nested and echoing forms throughout the work consistently call to each other across the composition and the different media. Throughout his career, Redon often repeated shapes in his compositions to reinforce an important iconographic element or to communicate the similarity between seemingly dissimilar things.[139] In his *noirs*, the repeating shapes were usually

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but could not simultaneously show the delicacy with which the visage was drawn. It appears much darker and bolder than in the presence of the actual work.

[138] In this part of my analysis, I am drawing most directly on Gombrich's discussion of the physical engagement that viewers have most particularly with portraits, before which they often feel torn between responding to a work of art and to another individual. The essay in which he most explicitly explores this aspect of portraiture is: E. H Gombrich, "The Mask and the Face: The Perception of Physiognomic Likeness in Life and Art." *Art, Perception and Reality* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1972), 3-69.

[139] Examples of this are numerous; here I will name some of the best known prints, all of which are in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago: *Vision,* 1879; *The Eye Like a Strange Balloon,* 1882; *There was perhaps a first vision*, 1883; *A Strange Juggler*, 1885.

neatly bounded circles whose prototype was a figure's often exaggeratedly round eye:[140] everywhere in his earlier work Redon's eyes, whether the eyes of a literal viewer or the abstract eye of the visionary, sought knowledge and patterns in the world that would reveal meaning. In the Poe-inspired short story by Redon quoted earlier, in which the protagonist is plagued in the night by aural hallucinations in an unfamiliar room, he waits in agony for the coming of day, "when everything is visible to us and cedes no ground to the unknown."[141] In his later work, however, those precisely drawn, perfectly round shapes cede their dominance to irregular, organic ones, and the part of Jeanne de Domecy's head that allows him to create connections between her and her surroundings is instead her ear.[142] This formal shift from eye to ear so common in his late work is emblematic of his turn away from the *shock* of loss of order that underlies many of his noirs: the ear is the antithesis of the system-and-structure-seeking eye. Hearing, in Redon's writings, surrounds and pervades a person, and evidences his or her vulnerability to the world; the recurrence of ear-like forms throughout the baroness's second portrait contributes to the sense of these forms being intended to represent some inner experience of hers.[143] Highly volumetric and extremely detailed, her ear is further accentuated by the heavier

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[140] Many scholars have very fruitfully examined the iconography of the eye in Redon's work, revealing a complexity in its role to which I cannot hope to do justice here - it is the most common motif in his pictures and he also refers to vision, in both its literal and metaphysical guises, constantly in his writings. In addition to all of the sources cited throughout this chapter, I would also mention here: Carla Gottlieb, "The Pregnant Woman, the Flag, the Eye: Three new Themes in Twentieth-Century Art," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 21:2 (Winter 1962) 177-187; and Evanghélia Stead, "Odilon Redon dans les textes belges et français de la Décadence: les images invisibles," *Textyles: revue des lettres belges de la langue française* 17-18, (2000): 55-72.

[141] Redon/Moran 2005, 71.

[142] Some examples: *Oannes*, 1910, private collection in Switzerland (this character, a Chaldean water god, first appeared in Redon's 1896 *Temptation of St. Anthony* series); *Oannes*, c. 1900-1910, Kröller-Muller Museum; *Underwater Vision*, c. 1910, Museum of Modern Art, NY; *Birth of Venus*, 1912, Musée du Petit Palais, Paris; *Birth of Venus*, 1912, Woodner Family Collection; *Silence*, 1911, Minneapolis Institute of Art.

[143] The invocation of aural experience, especially music and silence, to communicate the non-representable in visual art is extremely common in the fin-de-siècle, and is more often metaphorical than literally describing synaesthetic experiences; among the voluminous literature that addresses this, see: Paul Smith, *Seurat and the Avant-Garde* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1997); Olivia Mattis, *Visual Music: Synaesthesia in Art and Music since 1900* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2005); Marsha L. Morton and Peter L. Schmunk, eds., *The Arts Entwined: Music and Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Garland, 2000); Pascal Rousseau, "Confusion des sens : le débat évolutionniste sur la synesthésie dans les débuts de l'abstraction en France," *Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* 74 (2000-2001): 4-35; Philippe Junod, "De l'audition colorée ou du bon usage d'un mythe," Philippe Junod and Michel Pastoreau, eds., *La couleur : regards croisés sur la couleur du Moyen Age au XXe siècle : actes du colloque organisé par Philippe Junod et Michel Pastoureau à l'Université de Lausanne, les 25-27 juin 1992* (Lausanne: 1992); Robert Delevoy, *Symbolists and Symbolism* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982). For a study of silence and Symbolism in Belgium, see: Lynne Iris Pudles, "Solitude, Silence and the Inner Life: A Study of Belgian Symbolist Artists" (Diss.: UC

use of shadow and greater concentration of dark striations radiating in the hair directly around it. Her head, from her small, lobe-like chin to her exaggerated, helical chignon, repeats the shape and angle of the ear. Extending the resonance, the texture of the black lines around the ear and in other parts of her coiffure, combined with the white flecks of pastel, create in a muted way the same feathering effect found in the texture of the flowers in the upper right corner. The use of black to define the floral forms around her happens only in this corner, to balance the heft of the black that lends intensity to her body; one fuzzy line defining the bottom of a blue shape level with the ear echoes a slight dip of black in the edge of the jacket beneath it.

What are these forms that surround her, though? I have largely discussed them as flowers, as do most recent authors, yet their identity as such is not at all definite. I have mentioned that many of Redon's still lifes demonstrate a complete disregard for horticultural precision, and the more extreme among them cannot be definitely distinguished from another category of works he made in later life, his aquatic *visions sousmarins.* Marius and Ary Leblond described this fusion of life forms in 1907: Redon's flowers were, "au profond d'une transparence nacrée d'aquarium où les couleurs se dénouent et flottent en grands écharpes d'algues, des fleurs aux stigmates écaillés comme des poissons, avec des ouïes striées et des nageoires qui battent dans l'éspace, des fleurs agglomérées et divergentes comme des bouquets de corails, des fleur hérissées telles que des oursins, vagues, rondes et irisées ainsi que des méduses." [fig. 3.18][144] Redon's contemporaries recognized his bouquets as a continuation of his interest in hybridity and in the aspects of the natural world that resisted or challenged clear categorizations, and his underwater visions as his continued investigation of the origins of life and the primeval beauty of unsettled forms, translated into his new decorative oeuvre.[145] The forms in the second portrait of Mme de Domecy exemplify this ambiguity – particularly the blue and green pads in the lower left corner, which seem almost to lap at the baroness's arm.[146] None of Redon's other portraits would place their sitters in atmospheres quite this aqueous; F. H. de Plancoët, in his review of the 1903 Durand-Ruel show, had no trouble describing the portrait of Mme Arthur Fontaine (née Marie Escudier), seated next to a vase under what reads as a bower, as "cette brodeuse en robe jaune

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Berkeley, 1986). For a more general theory of sound and subjectivity, see: Steven Connor, "Sound and the Self," in *Hearing History: A Reader,* ed. Mark M. Smith (Athens: U Georgia P, 2004, 54-66).

[144] Marius-Ary Leblond was, in fact, a pair of brothers-in-law from the island of Réunion, George Athénas and Aimé Merlo. Their article "Odilon Redon. Le Merveilleux dans la peinture," in *La Revue Illustré* (Feb 20, 1907): 155-160 is reprinted in Madeline 2007, 36-41. This quotation is from page 38.

[145] In addition to the writing of the Leblonds, many of the reviews collected together in the Mellerio collection at the Art Institute of Chicago show Redon's contemporaries' sensitivity to his play with scientific categorization in these works, and recognize it as one of the holdovers from his early career, and from his formative friendship with botanist Armand Clavaud. For more on this, see Larson, 2005; Druick 1994; Madeline 2007; Charles Darwent, "Flower Power: Odilon Redon's Mutant Masterpieces," *Modern Painters* (Dec 2005-Jan 2006) 96-99; and Martha Lucy, "Into the Primeval Slime: Body and Self in Redon's Evolutionary Universe," *RACAR* 34:1 (2009): 18-29.

[146] The shapes here are particularly reminiscent of one of Redon's earliest *visions sousmarins*, 1895, Musée d'Orsay.

clair dans un frais décor de jardin printanier."[147] Mme Fontaine's flowers, admittedly unidentifiable, seem nonetheless tamely comprised of petals, leaves and stems, while Jeanne de Domecy's are more like the *oursins* and *méduses* of which the Leblonds spoke, refusing to settle into any one category. When attempting to describe the effect of Redon's late works, contemporary writers would reach for the aquarium-as-decoration as a comparison for his forms, but also to give a sense of the way that his use of those forms also managed to mesmerize and to communicate *motion*.[148] I have written about the manner in which this work induces the viewer to move towards and engage the emphatically still form of the baroness; her stillness is further emphasized by the deployment of a moving world all around, in which she is immersed, and which the viewer is asked to enter. The portrait of Mme Fontaine is again a useful comparison here, for her form does not create a sense of motionlessness: as she bends over her embroidery, her hand, contours blurred, appears to move over her hoop. Domecy instead maintains perfect stillness among the forms palpitating around her – forms that simultaneously are subtly derived from and influence her own representation.

Throughout the second portrait, then, a tension exists between Redon's efforts to set Mme de Domecy apart and to integrate her formally, to mark her as distinct while preventing her from seeming alien to her surroundings. Surroundings, rather than background: ultimately, as one moves closer to her, the baroness's face appears to be immersed within the field rather than in front of it. This effect is created in part through the interplay of forms described above, but also in the way that the pastel material is laid *over* the paper that constitutes the ground of her skin. Even in the airier sections of the composition, there is a thin dusting of yellow to rosy pink pastels, subtle but consistent. The baroness's skin alone is bare paper, and at the very edges of her form, her hair is often slightly overlapped by the colors of the forms around her.[149] To reach her, the viewer feels that she walks *through* and *among* the uncanny but beautiful forms around the baroness.

In his second depiction of Jeanne de Domecy, Redon certainly marshaled some of the conventions of female portraiture - the incorporation of floral forms, references to domesticity, and beautiful, decorative surfaces - but he reinterpreted and even undercut their traditional significance. We have discussed how the stillness of the first baroness distinguished her from the lissome and inviting forms of many female subjects of portraiture in her time; he accomplishes this differently, and perhaps somewhat more anxiously, with the second.[150] Her body is much

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[147] F. H. de Plancoët, "Galerie Durand-Ruel: Odilon Redon," Mar 15, 1903.

[148] See especially Ursula Harter, "Les jardins océaniques" in Madeline 2007, 128-143 and Larson 2005.

[149] This occurs with the periwinkle flower in the upper right corner just below her bun, a hint of green overlapping the hair to the right of her ear, some white and blue bits that obscure where her neck meets her jacket, and in several small details where her hair meets her neck.

[150] Of all the artists associated with Symbolism, Redon is the one who least often experimented in the field of the femme fatale. In lithography he interpreted many texts that incorporated scenes of woman as temptress, but his noirs very rarely address this theme, and none of the prints he produced as single works of art do, nor the series he developed independent of literary works. Towards the end of his life, when asked about any role sexual desire played in his art, he coldly refused to engage with the question, claiming simply that it did not interest him. See Gamboni 1989/2011, fourth chapter. However, as we have already seen in the seductive figure in diaphanous red incorporated into one of the panels for the Domecy dining room, he was

closer to the facture of the rest of the composition than her head. In the first portrait, body and head were of a piece: both were volumetrically defined, in accordance with their worldly appearance, but her body is more ambiguously conjured here, closer in facture to her environment than her visage. Closer, but not identical: the saturated blue and red of her jacket and shirt have been built up over a base of black, a technique Redon used often in the 1890s as he made his transition from the *noirs* to pastel.[151] This darkness does not contribute to a greater sense of solidity, however; the shapes that comprise her coat and blouse are largely flattening, compromising them as signs of bourgeois propriety, and while the white highlight on the ruffles on her front echo to some extent the light falling on that same shirt in the first portrait, here they do not make sense as being caused by any unified light source – especially as the light that helps to define her face comes from the opposite direction. And where the first baroness's hands lay folded calmly in her lap, there is now a void: a black shape, logically explicable as a skirt but manifesting formally as a gaping hole.[152] The anchoring force of the armchair has also disappeared, reducing that solid sense of her presence that was in the first portrait. Redon wrote often about color's power to evoke sensual responses, and the stark contrast in his career has made of him an interesting case study for a number of scholars investigating the permutations of definitions of line and color in fin-de-siècle French art.[153] Yet, any desire to read his investment of the baroness's body with color as some conscious presentation of her as a site of physical desire is dampened by this simultaneous flattening and eradication.

This refusal to emphasize his female sitters' desirability will not always be the case: in his portrait of Mme Sabouraud of 1907, his sitter half-reclines, giving a soft curve to her shape that is echoed by the soft black and blue form to her right [fig. 3.19]. Both arms are bare and carefully foreshortened as they emerge from her shining white sleeves, the left perfectly placed to lead the eyes to the sitter's slender waist. Her chest leans slightly to the left, while her neck

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beginning to engage with the female body as an opportunity to investigate the pressures of desire in his own ambiguous and open-ended symbology, even as he resists it in his depiction of Jeanne de Domecy. Nevertheless, overall the literature about Redon is much more concerned with his relationship with his mother than it is with women as sexual figures – certainly much more so than it is with his relationship with his wife.

[151] Early pastels were very often built up over works from previous decades that he had kept by him; for an example see *Sita* at the Art Institute of Chicago. This building up over a dark ground becomes less common in the 1900s and 1910s. See Stratis 1994.

[152] This thing that reads as void has many precedents in the noirs, one of the most dramatic and salient examples being in his charcoal of *Caliban* (1870s, Musée d'Orsay) – here it is also the genital area that becomes black hole. Redon had a history of skimming over or displacing male genitalia; see especially Druick 1994, 167-168.

The status of hands as the second-most important conveyor of human emotion in portraiture is well-established; Camille Mauclair proclaimed it even more important at the end of the nineteenth century because of the darkness and thorough coverage of bourgeois clothing: see Camille Mauclair, *Les Etats de la peinture française de 1850 à 1920* (Paris: Payot & Cie, 1921), p. 59.

[153] Throughout his writings, Redon explored the difference between color and line; especially after his reintegration of the former, he sought to articulate the attraction that black, manifesting both as line and as chiaroscuro, had held for him in his youth. See especially his essay "Confessions of an Artist" written for Bonger in 1912; see also Redon 1986.

turns gently toward the viewer at whom she looks; she is by no means a siren of seduction, and yet the grace of her position adds a subtle suppleness to her presentation more in line with the conventions of the day that emphasized the desirability of the depicted female form. The first Baroness de Domecy on the other hand held herself still and passive for her interaction with the painter, and the second is so far removed from this realm of the blush of solid color that her body also manifests as play, with any sensuality invested in the medium rather than in explicitly representing the physicality of the body depicted.

The universes invoked in both of Redon's portraits of Jeanne de Domecy - decoration, ambiguously underwater lands, the possibility of access to a dream realm, the formal zooming in and out from figure to background and back again, and the emphasis, subtle as it is, on aural rather than visual faculties – all have in common their ability to create an *experience of space, and duration of engagement*, while adamantly resisting any urge to define the specific nature of experience being represented, or fix the relationship between disparate parts. And in each of the works, the adamant difference between the sitter and the forms around her insists that they cannot be collapsed or clarified in each other's terms: they are juxtaposed, connected, and even call back and forth between one another, but they can*not* both be evident together in representation. For the viewer to focus on the baroness's face, the clarity of her surroundings must be sacrificed; to explore their richness and textures, the face must be overlooked. An overall and instantaneous apprehension of these portraits is impossible: neither figure nor ground dominates, and neither remains a given while the other is examined. In both of his portraits of the Baroness de Domecy, then, Redon shows his subject immersed within, but not subsumed by, surroundings that hint at internal experiences and draw on his knowledge of the woman's intimate surroundings. He resisted the conventions of female portraiture that rely on the depiction of the female form as a seductress actively calling the viewer to her through strategic presentation of her face and body; instead, he forced the viewer more firmly into the artist's moment of observation in the first portrait, and in the second created an intriguing dynamic in which the viewer moves toward the sitter rather than the other way around – and this sense of movement on the part of the viewer involves her in the uncertain sense of immersion as well. In both works, the sitter's stillness is key: while it allows her to usher viewers between the moment of the intersubjective encounter that gave rise to the portrait, and the evocation of a timeless otherworld that representation allows and to which she is connected, she is never in danger of losing her integrity.

Conclusion

Maurice Denis's review of the 1903 Durand-Ruel exhibition showed insight and sensitivity to Redon's formal play and deep appreciation for his skills, and congratulated him on new challenges embraced and conquered: he loved the portraits. So what did Redon object to? For one thing, his resistant response was the first in a series of growingly belligerent rejections of the writings of certain critics who seemed to want to attribute the power of his work to a lack of control, to a submission to the forces of the unconscious. Redon had himself used this word to describe his process, and yet with a vital distinction from the way it was being deployed by this new generation after 1900: for him, it was an

exterior force, personified: "j'ai vu ce mysterieux agent de l'art."[154] It visited him, this unconscious, and bestowed upon him unpredictable but profound insights into the beauty and the mysterious order of things. To Denis, the unconscious was capricious; he speaks also of the lack of human *gesture* in Redon's backgrounds and in his unpopulated worlds – *taches rayonnantes*, not *gestes humains*, intimating something stunning but will-less, random: not only is any subject in the work dissolved but the artist is as well, who no longer expresses *himself*. Francis Jammes, writing of an interview with Redon in 1907, ended his article with the description of an interchange with one of Redon's gorgeous flowers:

> ...soudain je fus pris de stupeur, voyant s'ouvrir les sombres lèvres d'une rose. Et, avant que je ne l'eusse interrogée:
> "Tu cherches le secret de *son* génie?" demanda-t-elle...
> Et j'inclinai la tête.
> "Je l'ignore et lui-même l'ignore," dit-elle.
> Puis elle se tut.

This implication of a lack of control on his part enraged Redon; he had had a promising friendship with the young poet until the disaster of this review.[155] And in 1912, Redon would actively block the publication of a study by Jeanne Doin, a woman very invested in the study of the newly articulated Freudian concept of the unconscious.[156] We get a hint of what she might have written in a short piece she published a little later, in which she speaks of Redon's art as sometimes "involontaire," that "il faut être singulièrement ignorant des phénomènes de l'inconscient," not to recognize in Redon an "analyste du 'moi profond,'" the equivalent in art of a "psychologue," and she praises his registration of the ways in which "l'activité mentale déforme ceci, accuse cela ..., le contrôle étant absent."[157] Dario Gamboni has written brilliantly about Redon's desire to distance himself from writings about his work, to dissociate himself from those early literary associations and to control the reception of his own art.[158] And his turn away from these earlier writings includes his own, for it was not just that the cultural climate had changed: the words themselves had, and their associations had metamorphosed and become, to his mind, twisted - he found himself associated with ideas of the self's schematization and reduction to material impulses that were anathema to what he wanted to believe of "la vie morale."[159] The

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[154] Levy/Redon 1987, 99.
[155] Francis Jammes, "Odilon Redon, botaniste," *Vers et Prose* 8 (Dec 1906-Feb 1907): 36. For a discussion of this break, see Gamboni 1989/2011, 276-79, and Ary Leblond, "Odilon Redon et Francis Jammes: Histoire d'une amitié et d'une brouille," *Arts et spectacles* (Nov 14-20, 1956): 31.
[156] Redon's interaction with Doin is mentioned several times in his correspondence with Bonger; see Levy/Redon 1987, 219-231.
[157] Jeanne Doin, "Odilon Redon," *Le Mercure de France* (Jul1 1 1914): 5-22; reprinted as *Odilon Redon* (La Rochelle: Rumeurs des Ages, 2011), 18-19.
[158] Especially Gamboni 1989/2011.
[159] Redon's use of this vocabulary is discussed briefly in Gott 1986. He uses this phrase, and slight variations on it, throughout *A soi-même*: see for example pp. 24, 28, 78, & 92, among

unconscious as he understood it was not *that* one, and it may have been his collaborator, but never his master; it inspired, like a muse, but it did not control him.

Denis disliked these ideological trends as well, but, ardent Catholic and adherent of classicism that he was, he and Redon believed very different things about the formless, the deformed, the coming to form, the becoming, in art: for Denis, it could only mean degeneration and loss, and for Redon it allowed for an expression of some possibility of the unknown as transcendent. That "fond symphonique et compliqué où son ancien panthéisme agonise," as Denis described it in the review with which this chapter opened, did not show the diminishing of Redon's investment in the ambiguous around him. Experiences would bombard boundaries and affinities could cross categories; the mystery of the rest of the world and the power of its sway influenced and strongly afffected but did not ultimately compromise the integrity of the individual, and did not reduce them to powerlessness. Of the artists associated with Symbolism, Redon was one of the most consistently committed to the pursuit of openness at its core – we see that manifesting in his portraits of Jeanne de Domecy. She is immersed in but not overwhelmed by her surroundings, in some ways in harmony and in others in tension with them, and by representing her within them and with them he is refusing to limit her. And perhaps this is even why there are two: together, they are a sustained exploration of her and of the many possibilities of representing the complex network of associations in Redon's experiences of her. To deny the influence of her surroundings (and hers upon them) would, to him, be to deny the fullness of her force and individuality, as these cannot be so completely separated from where she is and what is around her. The suspension he created between the moment of the portrait's conception and the duration of the viewer's experience, and his orchestration of a constantly changing encounter in the viewer's journey toward her, both demonstrate that for Redon there was too much to communicate in an individual to be bounded and presented on that single plane. Creating barriers would limit, not strengthen, the subject. If one believes that the purpose of a portrait is to establish and then preserve a unified overall impression of an individual's truth, then the differences between sitters and surroundings in Redon's portraits wish to remind the viewer that representation would always be insufficient to that task.

Denis's distinction between subject and background, when taken from the literal into the metaphorical, does not hold in Redon's work. The portraits of Mme de Domecy attempt to communicate something about the subject within the special alchemical concurrence of place, sitter and artist. They do not show a dominant and a lesser part, but a suspension and exchange between parts, and one that is constantly developing. A tension exists between the defined and undefined in Redon's works, but it is one intended to remain unresolved, its negotiation constant and necessary. For Denis, a human subject is threatened, and he allegorizes this struggle in his sixth panel for Baron Cochin, the one that shows damned Pécopin [fig. 3.20]: the foreground contains two slashing diagonal forms, each dark and irregular – one comprises three horses and riders (initially difficult to disentangle) and the other a fallen log. The brightness in the panel is in the background, but it pushes forward, flattening the effect of space and threatening to engulf the dark, almost silhouetted figures who are lost in the wood and threaten to become subsumed by its forms. Redon's baroness however is no embattled subject – or rather, any battle would be

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others. The question of the shifting meaning of words used to discuss the psyche is also touched upon in chapter one.

essential *to* her subjectivity – and therefore he does not need to prove her integrity by defining the substance of her experience, or specifying the nature of her emotions. The viewer sees the representation of intimate things about this woman, and Redon deliberately avoids revealing much about what those things are. In presenting this individual woman, he engaged the specific challenges for the portraitist of the fin-de-siècle: how to represent a self described but not delimited and a world interacted with but not reachable, through a perceptual system both vulnerable to the world and yet still committed to its capacity, somehow, to know it.

Chapter 3. Across the Way: Space and Temporality in Fernand Khnopff's portraits.
Introduction

In 1891, Walter Shaw Sparrow introduced the Belgian artist Fernand Khnopff, an artist already associated in Paris and Brussels with evocative and mysterious, to the British public in an article in *The Magazine of Art*. Throughout his essay he relied on musical metaphors to create a sense of his artist's desire to present the ideal, to take appearances of the things of the world and imbue them with much more than their contingent meaning: the artist's Symbolism, in other words. This deployment of music to describe symbolist artworks was a commonplace in 1891; it was particularly predominant in writings about Khnopff, whose idiosyncratic compositions and willingness to depart from traditional narratives made many see him as the creator of abstract, ideal worlds akin to those evoked by the composers of his time.[160] When Sparrow praises Khnopff's portraits, however, the way he speaks of Khnopff as maker of music changes:

> In his portraits, we find the character of his sitters. This, indeed, is a dangerous thing to do. But ... [Fernand Khnopff] paints everything he sees, how complicated soever it may be. A musician cannot shrink from difficulties, being the interpreter of another man's genius; but an artist nearly always scamps the difficulties of nature... [sic][161]

When faced with the task of portraiture, Khnopff changes from composer, that all-powerful creator unshackled from the duties of mimeticism, to *performer*, the close observer, analyzer and interpreter of the given truth of an individual, a truth more demanding than nature (meaning, here, appearance). Sparrow's is an ennobling interpretation of Khnopff's portraiture; it also illustrates that Sparrow understood Khnopff's artistic goals to be flexible. However obscure and idealizing his other major works may be, Khnopff is, to Sparrow, among those portraitists who are disciplined by detail, faithful to their portrait subjects and sensitive to their presence. Sparrow was not alone in distinguishing this facet of Khnopff's production from other aspects of his art, or in praising its success in demonstrating insight into its subjects; in 1888, for example, when Khnopff first showed his portraits of Marie Monnom and of his sister Marguerite, Eugène Demolder hailed them as "pénétrante," and Emile Wauters as "saisissants de vérité et de ressemblance."[162]

That critics should here acknowledge Khnopff's flexibility as an artist should not seem surprising. From the beginning, Khnopff's output is marked by variety and collaboration: he was an illustrator, designer of decorations, poet, set and costume designer, critic, event organizer, lace designer, and educator.[163] Among his paintings and drawings intended for Salons and other

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[160] For more on how artists were described as "musical," see footnote 143 in chapter 2.
[161] Walter Shaw Sparrow, "Fernand Khnopff," *The Magazine of Art* 14 (1891): 41.
[162] Eugène Demolder, "Chronique artistique. L'Exposition des XX," *La Société Nouvelle* 4 (1888): 186-87; Emile Wauters, "L'Exposition des XX," *Feuilleton du Précurseur* (Anvers: 15 février 1888). Sparrow, in his later article connecting Khnopff to British art, expresses the belief that Khnopff's consistent practices of landscape and portraiture allowed him to create powerful symbolist compositions without becoming completely unmoored from audience and society.
[163] For ample evidence of this versatility, see Khnopff's catalogue raisonné: Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque and Catherine de Croës, *Fernand Khnopff* (Bruxelles: Editions Lebeer-Hossmann, 1979). For information on Khnopff's lace designs, see Marguerite Coppens, "Les commandes dentellières de l'union patriotique des femmes belges et du Comité de la dentelle à Fernand Khnopff," *Revue Belge d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art* 64 (1995): 71-83.

major exhibitions, the majority attests openly to inspiration from other works of art, music or literature.[164] He worked closely with editors, publishers, authors and other artists from the very beginning of his career, and was always closely allied with artistic organizations and institutions from his initial membership in L'Essor and his founding role in Les XX, the two most important artistic avant-garde organizations in Belgium, to his decades of work with le Théâtre de La Monnaie, the premier opera of Brussels.[165]

However, from the earliest writings about the artist, Khnopff was often identified primarily as an isolé. His engagement with other artists and their ideas was sidelined in a community of artists for whom such collaboration was the norm and therefore little worthy of note. Critics wrote of him as an inaccessible figure, cold and distant, and of his work as something untouched by the world or by the ideas of others – a construction that he actively encouraged.

Scholars of the last few decades have rescued Khnopff from the utter obscurity into which he sank almost immediately upon his death in 1921. They were faced with a number of challenges in trying to reconstitute what had become a shadowy figure: almost all of his

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[164] Often this attesting comes in the titles themselves, as well as in formal and thematic aspects of the artwork: some early examples include: *D'Après Flaubert: La Tentation de Saint-Antoine*, 1883; *En écoutant du Schumann*, 1883; *D'après Joséphin Péladan: Le Vice Suprême*, 1885, *A Beguiling: Et ses cheveux étaient tout rouges de mon sang...* (Georges Rodenbach), 1888; *Avec Verhaeren: Un ange*, 1889; *Avec Grégoire Le Roy: Mon coeur pleure d'autrefois*, 1889; *Acrasia* and *Britomart*, 1890-94; *Who Shall Deliver Me?,* 1891, and *I Lock my door upon myself*, 1891.

[165] Khnopff's role as an illustrator has received a fair amount of scholarly attention; see especially Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, "Les artistes belges et la 'Rose + Croix,'" *Bulletin des Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* 3 (1989-1991): p. 433-465; Hubert Juin, *Khnopff et le litterature de son temps* (Brussels: Lebeer Hossmann, 1980); Lynn Pudles, "Fernand Khnopff, Georges Rodenbach, and Brugues, the Dead City," *The Art Bulletin* 74:4 (Dec 1992): 637-654; Ladislav Paul Pugel, "Literary Subjects and the Art of Fernand Khnopff," (Thesis, UCSB, 1988); Takagi Yoko, "L'influence du Japon sur les livres d'Emile Verhaeren illustrés par Fernand Khnopff," in *Le Livre illustré européen au tournant des XIXe et XXe siècles*, ed. Helene Védrine (Paris: Editions Kimé, 2005), 85-91; Ray Williams, "Khnopff Responds to Maeterlinck: His Illustrations for *Pelleas and Mélisande*." *Athanor* 6, 1987; and Jeffery Howe, *Symbolist Art of Fernand Khnopff* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1982). His close association with the artistic organizations of L'Essor and Les XX is discussed in every work on the artist; for general books about these associations that substantially discuss Khnopff's role, see for example: *Les XX, la Libre esthétique: honderd jaar later/cent ans après* (Brussels: Musées Royaux de Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1993); Jane Block, *Les XX and Belgian Avant-gardism, 1868-1894* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1984); and Madeleine Octave Maus, *Trente années de lutte pour l'art, 1884-1914* (Bruxelles: Librairie l'Oiseau Bleu, 1926). For more on Khnopff's associations with theatre and le Théâtre de La Monnaie, see Joris van Grieken, "Fernand Khnopff and the 'Théâtre Royal de le Monnaie," in Frederick Leen et al., *Fernand Khnopff: 1858-1921* (Brussels: Musée Royal des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 2004), 65-71; and Michel Draguet, *Fernand Khnopff: L'Ambigu poétique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995); for the impact of theatricality and stage design in Khnopff's work, see Claire Moran, "From Maeterlinck to Masks: Theatre and *Mise-en-scène* in the Art of Fernand Khnopff and James Ensor," in *Au Seuil de la Modernité: Proust, Literature and the Arts*, eds. Nigel Harkness and Marion Schmid (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011).

correspondence was destroyed, his studio had been demolished, few of his many published writings were personal, no complete record of his library remained.[166] Gleaning what they could from the little archival material remaining and from contemporary sources, often dominated by Khnopff's own determined project of self-mystification, scholars have relied often on iconographical and psychoanalytic analysis to fill in the gaps. Seen from these methodological perspectives, the themes that dominate Khnopff's work - isolation, melancholy, and the mysteriousness of the process of artistic creation - and the symbolic vehicle by which he gives expression to these concerns - the female figure – have given rise to an even more extreme figure of isolation and egocentrism than that produced in his own time, and a very different Khnopff from the one I have introduced above.[167] Stubbornly independent, quixotic, antisocial and

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[166] Khnopff wrote regularly for both Belgian and English journals, often exhibition reviews and occasionally longer studies devoted to themes or to specific artists, but he rarely published anything resembling an artist's statement or autobiographical reminiscence. The bulk of his published writings were for the London publication *The Studio* (1893-1964). For a complete list of all of Khnopff's published writings, see Pierre Rannou, "Fernand Khnopff et la photographie," (Thesis, University of Montréal, 1998). The few letters and pieces of personal writing of his that remain are all in the archives of the Musées Royaux de Belgique in Brussels or the Musée de la Litterature. An edition of Khnopff's complete writings is forthcoming from the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique at the end of this year. For a list of extant letters, see the bibliography in Howe 1982.

Khnopff's rediscovery began in the 1960s and 70s with the works of Francine-Claire Legrand, who determinedly dragged Belgian Symbolism back into the public eye (see, for example, *Le Symbolisme en Belgique* (Bruxelles: Laconti, 1971); "Fernand Khnopff: The Perfect Symbolist," *Apollo* 85 (1967): 278-287), Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, who along with Catherine de Croës published the artist's catalogue raisonné with an introduction by Robert Delevoy (*Fernand Khnopff* (Bruxelles: Editions Lebeer-Hossmann, 1979)), Robert Pincus-Witten in his studies on the occult in fin-de-siécle art (see *Occult Symbolism in France: Joséphin Péladan and the Salons de la Rose + Croix* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1976)), and Philippe Roberts-Jones, in his studies on non-realist art in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see especially *Le Peinture irréaliste au XIXe siècle* (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1978), later translated as *Beyond Time and Place: non-realist painting in the nineteenth century* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978)). Also, the exhibition *Fernand Khnopff* that traveled to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris from the Musees Royaux des Beux-Arts de Belgique in Brussels garnered new international attention; see the catalog *Fernand Khnopff: 1858-1921* (Brussels: Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1979). Excellent current scholars with multiple publications about Khnopff's work include: Michel Draguet, Jeffery Howe, Susan Canning, Dorothy Kosinski, and Takagi Yoko, *Japonisme in Fin-de-Siècle Art in Belgium*, Antwerp, Pandora, 2002, 201-248, and "L'influence du Japon sur les livres d'Emile Verhaeren illustrés par Fernand Khnopff." in *Le Livre illustré européen au tournant des XIXe et XXe siècles*, ed. Helene Védrine (Paris: Editions Kimé, 2005), 85-91.

[167] Some writings devoted specifically to the themes of women, isolation, and silence in Khnopff's work: Alex Ross, "On n'a que soi: Introspection and self-absorption as themes in the art of Fernand Khnopff," *The Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies* 19:2 (1998): 8-30; Philippe Roberts-Jones, "Le Symbolisme et les formes du silence" in *Symbolisme en Belgique* (Tokyo: Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1983) ; Frans Boenders, "Mascarade: Khnopff,

obsessive, this Khnopff made a body of work that was hermetically sealed off from the world around him, and whose subject only ever was himself: his own needs, desires, neuroses. His relationship to other artist's work was opportunistic: any inspiration from the outside was bent and twisted to conform to this total unifying goal.[168] The portraits he painted, especially of female children and women, were primarily a field for experimenting with his own concerns, and he ruthlessly plundered his subjects for the parts that could help him to construct, like Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's Hadaly, a perfect female form for his ideals.[169]

My approach here is different. This chapter consists of two parts. In the first, I will closely examine some of his portraits in order to show how Khnopff had different ambitions in these artworks than in the compositions for which he is better known; I will refer to these better-known works throughout this chapter as "ideist," a choice I explain below, to distinguish them from portraits and landscapes, and also from more traditional uses of allegory, history and symbolic painting. In the second half, I focus on Khnopff's most famous portrait, of his sister Marguerite. This work is often treated as a watered-down version of the mysterious women who populate so many of Khnopff's paintings and drawings; I will show instead that the portrait is a purposeful and ambitious exploration of the theme of the artist's isolation, one that highlights the mystery of individuality and investigates the relationship of lived experience to representation in Khnopff's purposefully obscure and provocative art.

Aurier coined the term "ideist" in his article about Symbolism and Paul Gauguin, which was discussed in my first chapter.[170] This term, slightly awkward in both French and English, did not catch on in its own time; perhaps the art world was so flooded with neologisms at that

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Mishima et le narcissisme" in *Symbolisme en Belgique* (Tokyo: Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1983), 33-42; Boenders, "Intimisme en narcisme in het oeuvre van de symbolistische schilder Fernand Khnopff," *Academiae Analecta* (Brussels: Paleis der Academien, 1995), 125-136; Shinya Nishisawa, "La quête du Graal chez Fernand Khnopff," in *Fernand Khnopff* (Tokyo: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bunkamura, 1990) 33-43; Rachel Sloan, "The Archeology of Dreams: Fernand Khnopff, Henri Cros and the Mask," in *Symbolist Objects: Materiality and Subjectivity at the Fin de Siècle*, ed. Claire I. R. O'Mahoney (High Wycombe: The Rivendale Press, 2009), 165-190; Leslie Morrisey, "Fernand Khnopff: The Iconography of Isolation and of the Aesthetic Woman," (Diss.: University of Pittsburgh, 1974); Susan Marie Canning, "Fernand Khnopff and the Iconography of Silence" *Arts Magazine* 54:4 (Dec 1979): 170-6; Draguet 1995; and Howe, 1982.

[168] Though each has a slightly different take on what it is, Michel Draguet, Dorothy Kosinski and Jeffery Howe have all argued for an overarching unified goal for Khnopff's work. Draguet has argued that he should be understood as a predominantly literary painter, using imagery as poets use words, and that all of his work aims to leave the specifics of material experience behind. He believes that in this way, the entirety of Khnopff's output can be understood as one large self-portrait. Kosinski asserts that all of Khnopff's career was devoted to an investigation of the nature of representation, and that his exploration and manipulation of the gaze reflect his constant challenge to the viewer and assertion of the impossibility of their entering into the world he created. Like Draguet, Howe also writes that Khnopff's work was a project of constant and endless self-scrutiny.

[169] Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, *L'Eve future* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993).

[170] Georges-Albert Aurier, "Le Symbolisme en Peinture: Paul Gauguin," *Le Mercure de France* 2 (March 1891): 155-165. Aurier himself apologizes in this article for his rampant neologizing.

moment that it simply could not accommodate another permutation of the word "Idea." I am not suggesting that it should go into any general use now; it is useful to me here, however, because with it Aurier attempted to express the opposite of "realist," while shedding the connotations of the word "idealist" and freeing the word "symbolist" to mean something simultaneously more specific and more ambiguous; I adopt it for the same reasons. Ideist describes art in which everything is depicted as a "disappearing schema" rather than a subject, in Gadamer's terms: it is always to be abstracted from its specific object- or personhood.[171]

Part I

"L'Âme Moderne"

In many of Khnopff's earliest paintings of figures, either portrait or genre, he seems preoccupied first and foremost with precisely setting the human form into its built environment.[172] His two earliest portrait paintings, of his father and mother [figs. 4.1 and 2], each simple in color and filled with deliberate geometry, are fairly conventional but still exemplify his early experiments with scanning a subject's surroundings to create juxtapositions of lines and shapes that could subtly accentuate and monumentalize the figure being depicted. In the portrait of his mother, Khnopff has placed her seated figure squarely between two white doors, whose repeating inset rectangles are emphasized by his use of exaggerated variants in white and by the still visible lines of his underdrawing. Her head is locked into place by the moldings on the wall behind her. What few domestic details there are seem predominantly to serve as reinforcements of the placement of her features within the interlocking lines of white around her – the bell pull's bottom edge corresponds to her right eye, while the line of soil and shadow in the wispy potted plant hits precisely at the bottom of her coiffure. Above her hangs an oval picture, its subject unreadable, echoing the rounded shape of her ear and the smooth line of her forehead and cheek; a round form like this would appear in others of Khnopff's portraits throughout the decade.[173]

As rigorously calculated as Khnopff's framing is, however, we can see in both of the portraits of his parents that he has avoided, for the most part, the ninety degree angles that would result from the painter's setting his canvas at a precise parallel to any wall. These always slightly oblique angles allow, on the one hand, for very precise formal calls and responses: the

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[171] Gadamer uses this phrase to establish the difference between "model" and "sitter" in *Truth and Method* (NY: Crossroad, 1982), p. 128. The specifics of the model were always intended to be subordinated to the needs of the painting's ideas and concepts, whereas an artist represents defining and particular attributes of a sitter, since they constitute the subject of the artwork in the case of a portrait.

[172] Even Khnopff's earliest small studies place figures against windows, frames or curtains that conspicuously dissect the space: see, in the 1979 catalogue raisonné by Ollinger-Zinque et al., cited above in footnote 166 (hereafter referred to as O-Z 1979), nos. 21, 23, 24. His early paintings of cityscapes also place figures in a complex structure of strong verticals and horizontals created by lampposts, tree trunks always cut off before the leaves begin, and streets and sidewalks.

[173] This round form is discussed in Michel Draguet, *Portrait of Jeanne Kéfer* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2004) especially pp. 36-38; he relates it to Khnopff's frequent use of the mirror and the tondo. Other portraits in which it can be found are: *Portrait d'homme*, 1885 (O-Z 1979 no. 89), *Marie Monnom* (O-Z 1979 no. 98), *Marguerite Khnopff* (O-Z 1979 no. 100), and *Germaine Wiener* (O-Z 1979 no. 237).

closing of the distance between the lines of the molding can therefore enclose Mme Khnopff's head, and the line of light at the edge of a frame can continue perfectly into M. Khnopff's high hairline while its bottom edge simultaneously echoes the slight downward slope of his collar. These angles also seem, however, to obscure the objects in the rooms and to mystify their spaces, an effect Khnopff underscores with his selectively loose facture. Does the frame against which M. Khnopff is set contain a mirror, a window or a picture? Its slant obscures its contents. What is in the oval frame over Mme Khnopff's head? And where exactly is she in relation to the wall behind her? The lines of the various doors and moldings do not make dimensions or directions easy to read, and are possibly even slightly inconsistent – are we looking into a corner, or down one long wall? Khnopff's interlocking of characters and space is immensely careful, but his precision of composition does not, even in his earliest exploratory works, lead to clarity.

Listening to Schumann (1883, fig. 4.3), his first painting to meet mostly with approbation from critics, also presents a space rife with frames within frames for its main occupant, but that simultaneously frustrates any desire for rigorous perspectival accuracy. Here again the picture plane is not parallel to the far wall; the central figure is set into the architectural geometry (this time, the fireplace behind her), haunted by golden circles and aligned perfectly with the reflection in the mirror above her of a dark painting, contents obscured. Generally positive reviews hailed the ambition of Khnopff's attempt to represent aesthetic experience and praised the originality of this central figure, but were punctuated with criticism for the depiction of space in the painting; for example, the anonymous reviewer of the 1883 exhibition of Les XX hailed it as the most interesting canvas in the show, but not "la meilleure:" "sans recherche, avec les gaucheries d'une perspective un peu cahotante, et les faiblesses d'un coloris mouillé, trempé, fondant sur les contours...".[174]

Emile Verhaeren, friend as well as admirer of the artist, scoffed at such complaints. In his series of articles devoted to Khnopff and first published in 1886, he embraced the artist's work in general, and *Listening to Schumann* in particular, as an opportunity to develop and examine his own ideas about the nature and representation of the "âme moderne."[175] His attempts to define this entity in the abstract are, perhaps unsurprisingly, not very successful, and he ultimately finds his footing by describing what it is *not* rather than what it *is*, and claims uncertainty as one of its primary attributes. The goal of art is to present just that particular and exceptional uncertainty:

> Aujourd'hui?
>
> Un recul formidable de l'imagination moderne vers le passé une enquête scientifique énorme et des passions inédites vers un surnaturel vague et encore indéfini nous ont poussé à incarner notre rêve et peut-être notre tremblement devant un nouvel inconnu dans un symbolisme étrange qui traduit l'âme contemporaine comme le symbolisme antique interprétait l'âme d'autrefois [lack of punctation in original].

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[174] "Exposition Les XX," *L'Art Moderne* 3 (1883): 127.

[175] These articles were originally published in *L'Art Moderne* in 1886, but were then published all together in 1887. Emile Verhaeren, *Quelques notes sur l'oeuvre de Fernand Khnopff* (Brussels: Editions Veuve Monnom, 1887). They have been reproduced in *Fernand Khnopff et ses rapports avec la Secession viennoise* (Bruxelles: Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1987), pp. 15-32. Page numbers come from the republication.

> Seulement nous n'y mettons point notre foi et nos croyances, nous y mettons, au contraire, nos doutes, nos affres, nos ennuis, nos vices, nos désespoirs et probablement nos agonies.[176]

This article is often remarked as Verhaeren's first definition of Symbolism itself, and as the first article to hail a visual artist as a Symbolist. Verhaeren is less devoted to teasing out the distinctions between aesthetic schools, however, than to using these ideas to pinpoint how one is, and how one can formally represent, the modern subject. To somehow identify the content of doubt, the substance of despair, or the specific form for this "nouvel inconnu" cannot be done, and so it is not in the choice of contemporary subject matter that a work of art aspires to present modern experience (to Verhaeren, the only goal that makes a work of art worthwhile).[177] It is only through fidelity to individual experience and feeling that an artist can do so: "il est impossible de sentir en dehors du temps et de l'époque où l'on vit. Chacun de nous sent *moderne* [his emphasis]..."[178]

To Verhaeren, then, we are modern because we are unavoidably modern beings, confined to the material here and now, and can sense only the modern world, as he goes on to demonstrate in his dismissal of complaints about a lack of conventional perspective in *Listening to Schumann*.[179] In the specificity, peculiarity and ostentation of Khnopff's accentuations and manipulations, Verhaeren sees indications of the present and discerning eye of the painter, and truth to his sensual and particular experience of this space and this scene.[180]

> La perspective architecturale établie d'après des règles et des recettes – c'est la seule que la publice admette – est impossible, quand on peint une scène comme celle du Schumann, sans recul, nez-à-nez avec la scène elle-même. Il est une autre perspective – est-ce perspective qi'il faut dire? – qui résulte de l'observation même et de la peinture sincère des objets tels et comment ils apparaissent au peintre. Celle-ci n'est réglée par aucun livre, aucune leçon, aucune académie, aucun traité – elle est determinée par la vision, par l'oeil: c'est la vraie plutôt c'est la seule qui convienne aux artistes modernes. Certes peut-elle

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[176] Ibid., 21.

[177] Verhaeren offers Khnopff's *Tentation de Saint-Antoine* as an example of a work of art that takes very old subject matter but presents it in a way that can only reflect modern experience and understanding; such an image of this story, insists Verhaeren, could never have existed before. See ibid. 25, 29.

[178] Ibid., 24.

[179] In her article "Verhaeren et la 'chose vivante'", Ana González Salvador argues that Verhaeren's poetics are driven by this idea of the modern as defined by the physical and perceptual experience of the modern world, rather than more abstract intellectual constructs. It is through heightened sensual experience that the artist or poet expresses modernity, rather than through abstract idealizations. Ana González Salvador, "Verhaeren et la 'chose vivante'", *Correspondance* 3 (Oct 1993: "El Simbolismo Belga"): 55-63.

[180] Throughout much of his treatment of Khnopff, Verhaeren stresses his independence of vision and the specificity of his viewpoint, both literally and metaphorically speaking: both in his reconstruction of his own sensory experience, and, in his more ideist works that do not present lived scenes, in his presentation of a highly idiosyncratic symbology.

> paraître étrange et dans certains cas, dès qu'on peint des reflets de meubles et d'objets les uns sur les autres, il est difficile d'éviter un certain déséquilibre. Les lignes s'effaçant et les tons s'affirmant, il en résulte une certaine confusion – mais cette confusion, il faut l'admettre, puisqu'elle apparait ainsi et qu'il faut peindre comme les choses apparaissent.[181]

Modern artists, living in a world of new unknowns as they do, cannot responsibly fall back on conventions; they can rely only on the caprices, limitations and powers of their own senses to communicate anything with a pretension to truth, either in the realm of the material or the ideal.

However, this communication of the artist's individual perspective is only half of the accomplishment of *Listening to Schumann*, in Verhaeren's argument. The painting also successfully takes the modern soul itself as its subject: "elle réflechit une aile de l'âme d'aujourd'hui. Ce n'est que depuis peu d'années que la musique s'écoute ainsi: non pas avec plaisir; avec méditation."[182] Verhaeren again champions the representation of modernity through the close attention to and marking of an individual's sensory experience – in this case, of the music of Schumann, himself a figure symbolic of interiority and intense emotional struggle.[183]

But what is the content of this woman's meditation? We see her *listening*, and so intently, but of her internal response we are not sure: in Khnopff's painting, her figure neither corresponds to music, nor becomes a figure *of* music.[184] We are far from a Whistler-type project here, though other works by Khnopff do demonstrate the influence of the American artist.[185] An unusually extreme example is the slightly later portrait of his friend the violinist Achille Lerminiaux [fig.

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[181] Verhaeren 1887/1987, 25-26.

[182] Ibid., 25.

[183] For associations of Schumann with these themes, and studies of his reception from the nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries, see: Roe-Min Kok and Laura Tunbridge, eds, *Rethinking Schumann* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011); and Laura Tunbridge, *Schumann's Late Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007); Michelle Braunschweig "Biographical Listening: Intimacy, Madness and the Music of Robert Schumann" (Diss.: UC Berkeley, 2013).

[184] The metaphor of inner and outer itself was a particularly powerful one at the time, with the idea of the mind as a citadel, besieged by the forces of the outside world. Clark discusses the way that the terms "inner and outer" can be a linguistic trap for those analyzing, especially, self-portraits, forcing them into dualistic models: more generally in T. J. Clark, "The Look of Self-Portraiture," in Anthony Bond et al., *Self Portrait: Renaissance to Contemporary* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2005), 57-65; and with a focus on the late eighteenth century in "Gross David with the Swoln Cheek: An Essay on Self-Portraiture" in Michael S. Roth, ed., *Rediscovering History: Culture, Politics and the Psyche* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994), 243-307.

[185] Whistler's art was enormously influential in Belgium in the 1880s; he showed regularly at the salons of Les XX, and his work was reproduced widely. His popularity was something of a bone of contention among various members of the group; some believed that he was too well established for a society that prided itself on championing the new and the revolutionary, and others felt that he compromised the Belgian-ness of the group. For more on Whistler and Belgium, see particularly: Joy Newton, "Whistler and La Société des Vingt," *The Burlington Magazine* 143:1181 (Aug 2001): 480-88; Joy Newton and M. Macdonald, "Whistler, Rodin and the International," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 103 (Mar 1984): 115-23; and Francine-Claire Legrand, *Le Groupe des Vingt et son temps* (Brussels: Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1962).

4.4], which would not look amiss hung in a room of Whistler's arrangements and harmonies: the violinist stands, eyes closed, bow at the ready.[186] All parts of his figure, from his skin and hair to his cloak and instrument, are echoed in the colors and textures of the seemingly diaphanous surface behind him. Spectral threads of the lightest blue might seem to emanate from his head and his instrument, but they may also be some part of the material behind him, as are the delicate flowers and wisps that decorate the curtain in Whistler's mother's portrait. The loose strokes, the insubstantial figure, the closed eyes and dissolving surroundings all symbolize the idea of listening to music, all seek to parallel the affect it is supposed to have and aspire to its amorphous expressiveness: for all its diminutive size, as a musical work of art, this portrait telegraphs its punches. It presents as unified the experience of the subject making the music and of the painter listening to it. In *Listening to Schumann*, the listener's posture, on the other hand, communicates only incommunicativeness. She hides her face and turns away. The chair, her dress and the lack of distinction between its blackness and that of the fireplace render what we can see of her body, solid as it is, impossible to read. In terms of facture, her figure is the least eloquent part of the painting in that it is the most restrained and controlled. She is not, as a form, one part of some grand aspiration on the part of the painting to the "condition of music," and she is not subsumed into the aesthetic harmony of the painting as a whole.

We might then look, not to the figure in the painting, but to its background to find some manifestation of musical affect and its effect on her. Verhaeren sounds the right cautionary note, however. He suggests that any expressive manipulation we see even in the space around her should *not* be interpreted as an attempt to describe her feelings or to create some external rendering of her inner experience, as it may be in part in some of Redon's portraits, for example: any manipulation should be attributed instead to the experience of the artist himself, the witness to this intense act of listening. And as a witness, he cannot in fact tell us what this woman's interior experience is, for he cannot see it – he knows only his own. He can see only the manifestations on her body of that inner life, and testify to its effects. The painting is exceptionally aggressive in its refusal to communicate the substance of her interior experience. At the center of this canvas, therefore, is a void, the inaccessible mystery of individual sensation and emotion. Several scholars have seen this painting as Khnopff's answer to, and refutation of, naturalism: he seeks, they claim, to demonstrate the limits of devoting oneself to capturing vision.[187] Here I argue instead that the impossibility of *painting* this other person's interior experience is an equivalent to the impossibility of *knowing* it. Few critics reconciled themselves to this laconicism – reviews of the painting are rife with projections and ornate interpretations, the spinning of stories and explanations.[188] The very variety of their creations, however, attests to

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[186] Achille Lerminiaux was also a close friend of Gustave Kéfer, the portrait of whose daughter I will discuss later in this chapter.

[187] *Listening to Schumann* is one of Khnopff's most written-about paintings, along with *Memories* and *I Lock My Door Upon Myself;* it receives attention in every overview of his career and every exhibition devoted to him. It helps that this painting is owned by the MRBAB, the institution behind so many publications and exhibitions about Khnopff. See sources listed so far, and also: Henry Bounameaux, "Ensor-Khnopff: La querelle d'une image?", *Bulletin des Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* (1992-3): 1-4; 127-147.

[188] Verhaeren is something of an exception to this tendency. Sparrow, for example, hyperbolically attributes to her "such a weight of withering discontent – discontent for

Khnopff's success in presenting a moment of intense interior experience while allowing the content of that experience to belong to the sensing subject alone.

Across the Way

Listening to Schumann is not a portrait in the same sense that most of the other works that I will focus on in this chapter are; it belongs more easily to the category of genre painting, though part of its artist's intention was to challenge the norms of that category.[189] For one thing, the intensity and drama of the scene depicted has no place in Khnopff's portrait situations. Also, the role of place in this painting is very different from its role in Khnopff's portraits: the room in *Listening to Schumann*, despite the formal emphasis on its being viewed and represented by a present and singular mind, is identifiably a drawing room, filled with the knickknacks and furniture typical of such an environment. This fact is part of the force of the painting's statement about powerful inner experience in even the most banal of places.[190] This is not the case with the spaces in Khnopff's portraits, which are more ambiguous and defamiliarized than the listener's disconsonantly comfortable room; we will be exploring these differences a little later in this chapter.

However, there are two very effective similarities between the figures in Khnopff's portraits and the woman in *Listening to Schumann*: like her, they are the most solid parts of their respective paintings, and like her, some detail always disrupts their unity with their environment and keeps them from being seamlessly absorbed and utterly consonant with the rest of the painting. Khnopff's goal is not to illustrate thoughts or resolve uncertainties, but to present the sitter's reception of the world through the senses and/or to draw attention to signs of their physical experience of sitting, and thereby to give a sense of the duration of the encounter between inside and outside, between subject and artist. Many of Khnopff's earliest portraits are of children, both male and female; it was in this category that he first achieved the kind of popular success that led to commissions from patrons outside of his immediate circle.[191] Two paintings from 1885 of young girls, Jeanne Kéfer and Simone Héger [figs. 4.5 and 6], demonstrate some of the ways in which Khnopff, in these less heightened portrait encounters,

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everything that is and must be!" (See Sparrow, 1890). It is not just her sensations but the construction of the story that is left to the viewer.

[189] It is not my purpose here to define portraiture. There are those who have called *Listening to Schumann* one, as it is broadly accepted that the sitter was Khnopff's own mother. It might be fruitful to investigate a parallel between Whistler's portrait of his mother and Khnopff's painting; however, the works that are my focus here fall so squarely in the category of portrait that these questions fall outside my purview here.

[190] Khnopff as an individual rarely published any political statements, with the greatest exception being his essay and contribution of a frontispiece for the publication of the *Annuaire de la section d'art et d'enseignment de la Maison du Peuple* (Brussels: Imprimerie E. Blondiau, 1893), 30. Much later in life, some of his artworks seem to indicate a turn towards a socialist-infused Christianity, like his *Christ des Chômeurs* of 1918. Les XX more generally made no bones about their rejection of bourgeois cultural values and their belief in their bankruptcy. On Les XX's manifesto and intentions, see Block 1984; Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique 1993; and Maus, 1926.

[191] On Khnopff's portraits of children and his relations to patrons, see most specifically Draguet 2004.

continues to balance a sense of the children's physical immediacy and specificity while refusing to illustrate their thoughts or responses.

The girls are not emotive. They are nicely dressed, as one expects on picture day, and very patient and still – there is no sense of interruption of play or the presentation of spontaneous motion. Jeanne Kéfer, daughter of Khnopff's friend the composer and pianist Gustave Kéfer, stands dressed to go outside. The many textures of her ensemble have been represented with evocative attention: the diaphanous crinkles of her hat and the satin of its bow, the softness of her camel coat and its big velvety ribbon, her contrapuntally shiny patent leather shoes all speak to her careful preparation for the portrait sitting. They appeal to the viewer's sense of touch – and they appeal to Jeanne's sense of touch too: in an unexpected gesture, she grasps the velvety bow of her coat with her thumb. She has been standing here a while: her tights have started to slacken and puddle around her ankles. Perhaps she has been fidgeting, while attempting to stay still. She gazes out towards the painter, her expression impressively neutral – more neutral than it is in Khnopff's surviving sketch for this work, which presents a face more smiling and relaxed [fig. 4.7]. Simone Héger has also been carefully prepared for her encounter: her hair is shiny and her bangs sleek, and her dress is fancy and ornate. Unlike Jeanne Kéfer, she gets to sit. This is the more conventional and less ambitious of these two portraits: Heger is more firmly ensconced here, as we see the back of the chair behind her – though it is reduced to a strangely ominous absolute silhouette. In her seated position, her dress bunches strangely and awkwardly around her torso, implying that she has started to slouch, and the outsized and impractical satin bows on her shoulders have slightly disarranged her hair so that it slides forward and tickles the sides of her neck. Between the sketch and the final portrait itself, those intrusive bows have become significantly higher, and the crinkles on her dress more extreme. She looks to the side, her hands folded in a position eloquent of patience, her expression fairly blank. One could describe it as dreamy, as distracted – she sits patiently for the painter but nothing about the direction of her gaze or her expression implies that her mind is focused on him. What is going on in her head at the moment is entirely open to conjecture. She is looking even further to the right in this final product than she does in the sketch for it, and her eyebrows are straighter and less communicative. The changes that Khnopff made between sketch and painting all serve to make her expression less engaged and less defined, while emphasizing both the ostentation of the clothing she's been put in and the physical effects upon them – by extension, upon her - of her time sitting.

These kinds of clothing details might have been sweet and even humorous if paired with girls with more emotive bodies and faces, in narrative situations or moods typical of the representation of a more sentimental idea of childhood.[192] Here, however, they reinforce the sense of the children's stillness, and they create, for the viewer, an awareness of a physical experience on the part of the children themselves – in Jeanne's case, a very specific intimation of the sensory experience of touch as well – paired with an emotional inaccessibility.

In other cases Khnopff activates our awareness of other perceptual experiences in his sitter. In his portrait of Eugénie Verhaeren [fig. 4.8], niece of the author discussed above, the young girl's gaze is penetrating and direct, but her body language, unlike that of Jeanne Kéfer or

[192] Much of the early reception of these portraits was positive, but authors often pointed out that the subjects seemed somehow un-child-like – too still, gazes too piercing. There are very different responses and interpretations of the effect of these paintings from different authors. See Draguet 2004 and Musées Royaux de Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1993, 262-263.

Simone Héger, is informal and relaxed, and she holds a big print on her lap – a fairly conventional portrait setup, though in a jarringly impersonal setting. The portrait situation unfolds clearly: she dangles her legs over the side of the large, regal chair and looks at the picture. She is momentarily asked to look up, which she does, but otherwise she gives her attention to the print – the penetration of her gaze, therefore, seems residual, directed more at the picture of which her contemplation has just been interrupted than at the painter. We cannot make out the image on the page depicted. Like Simone and Jeanne, Eugénie is very patient and cooperative. She is absorbed in some sensory experience of her own, the response to which we cannot know: we have no access to that secret interior world.

Meanwhile, the spaces in all of Khnopff's portraits are full of distortions, odd placements and ambiguities, as we have seen already even in those of his mother and father. It is often difficult to define the nature of the place that the subject occupies. Mme Khnopff is in a room in her home, we assume, because of the potted plant and the little piece of furniture behind her – but which room? What part? In the portrait of M Khnopff, we have even less information.[193] Khnopff seems to choose these spots for their formal structural capacities, and not at all for whatever their nature as utilitarian spaces might add to the mood or meaning of the painting. If the spaces were defined, if the clear representation of characteristic objects defined the different rooms – living room, library, nursery, study – that information would contribute to the iconography of the portrait, and ask us to make further assumptions about the character of the person we see – or at least, about how that person (or that person's parents) wishes to be seen. Khnopff does not avail himself of this source of meaning.

The portraits of Jeanne Kéfer and Simone Héger demonstrate some of Khnopff's different ways of manipulating and defamiliarizing spaces. Jeanne Kefer's space is more extreme in its uncertainty: she stands on a porch, though we see nothing of the outdoor environment around it – or is she in a drawing room?[194] In any case, she stands slightly off center in front of a door that towers above her; beneath her is a dwarfingly large area of floorboards, a succession of lines drawn to the wall that tilts slightly down to the left, causing the viewer a slight sense of disequilibrium. Rather than the rectangular portrait-oriented canvas shape that echoes the verticality of the human form, this painting is a seemingly almost perfect square, containing, in the panel in the door right behind the child's figure, another almost square almost perfectly centered.[195] Above her head is a window panel, the reflection contained within it rendered

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[193] For much of his life, Khnopff lived with parents, and his studio was on the premises of their home early on – it is possible that he painted his father in his studio. In 1888, the family moved to St.-Gilles and Khnopff started working in a separate studio; it wasn't until 1900 that Khnopff acquired the studio about which so much has been written; see footnotes 220 and 221.

[194] The Getty museum staff and Michel Draguet part ways here: he believes that we see the young girl in a drawing room, while the museum, on its website, states that she stands on a porch, a theory supported by the fact that the curtains we see are on the other side of the glass, and the fact that the girl is dressed for cold. In placing a child in an exterior environment, Khnopff is flirting with well-established conventions of child portraiture, which would emphasize the closeness of children to nature, and yet almost perversely refusing them by not allowing any hint of a natural environment to be a part of his setting.

[195] The painting itself is in fact a perfect square, being 31 ½ in x 31 ½ in. However, its frame – one that Khnopff had a hand in designing, and the likes of which he would use for other portraits

entirely abstract in thick, vertical strokes of dark colors – an area of surprising abandon within its strict architectural frame. Unlike Jeanne Kéfer, Simone Héger is firmly inside, and more in scale with her surroundings; she sits in some sort of room with books in it. Yet even here there are discomfiting accents: Some of the books behind her and to her right stand perfectly in their parallel lines, but others lean slightly, the light that hits their thick bindings emphasizing how the order of their spines is just a little disturbed. The wall at the right side of the canvas, appearing at first solid white, in fact has the ghosts of moldings inexactly resuming the lines started by the shelves on the other side of the canvas. Simone's body is slightly left as she gazes to the right; right above her head are unidentifiable forms that create horizontal parallel lines to echo the verticals of the books. Nothing marks Jeanne's or Simone's environments as the usual haunts of children, and however these spots were selected, they have been selected for lines and forms that frame the subject, but have themselves been represented as unstable or insubstantial.[196]

Khnopff's earliest portraits were in domestic environments, but around 1887 he also began to arrange them in his studio. Unlike Jeanne and Simone, Eugénie Verhaeren did her sitting there; her portrait unfolds in a setting that trumpets its impersonality. In most ways, Khnopff used this environment very similarly to the rooms we have seen: he includes a gold circular form; his canvas is not parallel to any surface, so that the curtain and wall at the back slope down to the right; the floor seems to be tilting a little too precipitously toward the viewer as it did in the portrait of Jeanne Kéfer; the chair in which Eugénie sits combines both an odd angle and an unusual construction to create a moment of spatial confusion. Also, though it does not figure prominently in the portraits on which we have focused thus far, the deployment of a curtain in the background was very common in both Khnopff's domestic and studio portraits at the time, and would continue to become even more so.[197] A number of differences, on the other hand, mark the challenges of making the studio work as a portrait space in the same way that the domestic rooms do. The instability and constant wavering between comprehensibility and incomprehensibility in his portrait backgrounds, the subtle blurring and uniformity and repetition of shapes and motifs, give to these forms a symbolic weight, and imbue their slippery space with the air of a statement by the artist – an artist already famous for his creation of evocative, mysterious and personal worlds. This impression of viewing a grouping of unplumbable symbols is intensified when more than one portrait is seen at a time, as they would often have been not

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as well, including his portrait of his sister – is thickest at the bottom, identical on the sides and thinnest on the top, interfering with the canvas's symmetry.

[196] In the sketch for the portrait of Simone Héger, the details of the space that surrounds her are more solid and differ in a few places from what we see in the finished portrait. Her chair, for example, is wider, its back reaching all the way to the right part of the canvases. The white strip of wall on the final canvas, with its barely perceptible horizontal shadings, does not occur in the sketch, in which the shelves behind her cover the background completely. Khnopff therefore appears to have opened that space and made it more ambiguous.

[197] Some early portraits that feature curtains: *Mademoiselle Van der Hecht* (O-Z 1979 no. 54), 1883; Achille Lerminiaux, as discussed; *Gabrielle Braun* and *Maurice Braun* (O-Z 1979 nos. 92, 95), both 1886; Portraits of the two t'Serstevens sisters, both 1885 (not in O-Z 1979); *Marie Monnom, Eugénie Verhaeren* and *Marguerite Khnopff* as discussed; *Portrait of Madeleine Mabille* (O-Z 1979, no. 106), 1888; *Augustinus van Rijckevorsel* (O-Z 1979 no. 119), 1888; *Mademoiselle de Rothmaler* (O-Z 1979 no. 133), 1889.

only at exhibitions but also in the homes of patrons.[198] However, these environments are *not* completely transformed into some otherworldly place. We may remember part of Verhaeren's praise of Khnopff: "Les lignes s'effaçant et les tons s'affirmant, il en résulte une certaine confusion – mais cette confusion, il faut l'admettre, puisqu'elle apparait ainsi et qu'il faut peindre comme les choses apparaissent."[199] This sense on the part of the viewer of seeing a representation of what the artist *sees* remains, alongside the sense of also looking at his interpretation of that world, and his ideas of it – the patterns that emerge for him, the calls and responses of meaning and experience that fundamentally effect what he can and does see (perception in thrall to personal and psychological world-building being central to Symbolist theories – see introductory chapter). These portrait backgrounds oscillate between, to put it extremely and in the terms of the time, objectivity and subjectivity: they neither confine themselves to the cataloguing of objects and surfaces nor retreat entirely from their specificity.[200]

The suspension between these two poles is a little more effortful and overt in the portrait of Eugénie Verhaeren, largely because of the comparative showiness of its objects - and as an extreme case it serves to highlight the determination with which Khnopff maintained both forces.[201] Eugénie sits before the vast blue curtain; a white marble bust looms over her, and the chair on which she sits is regal and unusually constructed. However, Khnopff took several measures to dampen the white bust's powers of symbolic suggestion, while highlighting it as a physical oddity: he chopped it off right around the mouth, thereby excluding any identifying features, and by placing lighter brushstrokes on either side of what appears to be a furry protuberance on the curtain rod he accentuates it, and the fact that, from this angle, the tuft very incongruously appears to emerge from the statue's armpit.[202] Khnopff was careful to include a

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[198] For example, visitors to the exhibition of Les XX in 1886 would have seen the portraits of Achille Lerminiaux, Simone Héger, Gabrielle Philippson and Jeanne Kéfer; in 1888 they would have seen both *Marie Monnom* and *Marguerite Khnopff*, and at the Galerie Georges Petit in the same year, at the "Société des Trente-trois," *Marie Monnom, Marguerite Khnopff, Gabrielle Philippson* and *Madeleine Mabille* were all exhibited. A fair number of Khnopff's portraits were not displayed publicly, but he often portrayed a number of subjects within a household: for example, I have mentioned the portraits of Gustave and Jeanne Kéfer, made in the same year; he made portraits of each of the t'Serstevens sisters; one portrait of Gabrielle Braun and one of Maurice Braun in matching leather frames, both in 1886; and separate portraits of three members of the Philippson family: daughter Gabrielle first in 1885, son Jules in 1890, and mother Mathilde (called *Mme Franz Philippson*) in 1899.

[199] Verhaeren 1886/1987, 25.

[200] This effect may well have been stronger in patron's homes, as presumably environments depicted would simultaneously be known and experienced in their actuality by residents or visitors. Whether these portraits would have been displayed originally in the same spaces as they depicted we cannot know.

[201] The presence of the bust in a portrait may have been a bit of an experiment – we see it only one more time, in the *Portrait of Jules Philippson* painted in 1890. In that painting, it is even more compromised, cut off where the shoulders and neck meet. The bust does make an appearance, however, in several on Khnopff's non-portrait, Symbolist compositions, such as *L'Offrande* (O-Z 1979 no. 187), 1891, and *A travers les âges (*O-Z 1979 no. 243), 1894.

[202] Believe it or not, humor is not completely absent from Khnopff's oeuvre at this time, particularly in some of his illustrative work: his illustrations for *Belle-Maman*! (a comic story in

strip of white wall at the right of the canvas so that the curtain does not completely cover the back of the space and thereby mystify it. The almost throne-like aura of the chair is countered by Eugénie's dangling little legs, and by the slicing off of one of its own. Such details make it impossible to forget that the artist is presenting an environment susceptible to the imperfections, juxtapositions and unpredictable coexistences seen in the lived world, though one also partially transformed by his interpretative powers in the process of representation.

Within these tilting and wavering environments, the children themselves are solid, detailed little nuggets of humanity. The recurrence and repetition of forms and objects, chosen by the artist, may create portentous and uncertain spaces, but that *kind* of uncertainty does not impinge upon the sitters, patiently occupying the space across the way, passing the time. They do not retreat into the symbolic realm; they each have their own, very different, kind of mystery.[203]

Stillness

In his book *L'Enfant Obscur,* Emmanuel Pernoud argues that alongside the sentimental, idealized imagery of childhood that had developed in the eighteenth century and continues often to this day, another way of understanding and representing childhood was also developing in the middle of the nineteenth century: one that emphasized the strangeness and unknowability of children, that saw them as foreign and freshly emerged from the abyss.[204] We could perhaps understand the way that we as viewers are held at bay from Khnopff's little subjects in accordance with this idea – but the children who were his earliest subjects were not the only people whom he presented in this simultaneously detailed and withheld mode, although they are the only portrait subjects who look directly out of the painting.[205] The portraiture of young

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which a man falls in love with his fiancée's mother) , and *Les Merveilles de la Science* (a nice piece of fin-de-siècle misogyny) by Lucien Solvay contain a number of puns on cuckoldry and *les poissons d'Avril* (O-Z 1979 no. 61, 1884), and his illustration for an article by Sparrow entitled "Hirsute Adornments and their Lore" (*The Magazine of Art*) juxtaposes an evocatively blindfolded female with flowing locks against what looks like a wheel of fortune, except with small sketches of exuberantly mustachioed men around it rather than runes (O-Z 1979 no. 238, 1894).

[203] In the introduction I give Delville as an example of a Symbolist portraitist whose ideological intentions do not seem significantly different from those of his other kinds of works. More examples include works by Levy-Dhurmer, Maurice Denis, and, as discussed briefly in my conclusion, Paul Gauguin.

[204] Emmanuel Pernoud, *L'Enfant obscur: peinture, éducation, naturalisme* (Paris: Hazan, 2007). For sources on the changes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries towards the ideas and representation of children, see for example: Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: the History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (NY: Thames & Hudson, 1998); John R. Gillis, "The Birth of the Virtual Child: A Victorian Progeny," *Beyond the Century of the Child*, Willem Koops and Michael Zuckerman, eds. (Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 2012), 82-95; and Lloyd DeMause, ed., *The History of Childhood* (NY: Psychohistory Press, 1974).

[205] There are two exceptions to this, one being his portrait of his mother from 1900, and the other his portrait of Mme Franz Philippson of 1898; both are older women. I will explore some ideas about the significance of the outward-turned gaze in Khnopff's work later in this chapter.

women for which he next became popular continues many of these dynamics.[206] His first, painted in 1887, was of Marie Monnom [fig. 4.9], the twenty-one-year-old daughter of Veuve Monnom, owner and director of the eponymous press so important to the Belgian avant-garde – it was under her aegis that Verhaeren's writings on Khnopff were first published.[207] Marie Monnom sits very straight in the same chair in which Eugénie sat, and has sidled up next to one of its arms and, together with the pillow behind her, is blocking much of its bulk. We see her in an extreme three-quarters pose, almost a profile, not unlike the angle from which we saw the Baroness de Domecy in Redon's portraits. Monnom appears absolutely stony-faced, an extreme stillness consistent only with the tedious necessity of posing, complete internal distraction, or both. Her features are drawn with exquisite precision – areas that are flushed or shiny on her face are not smoothed over. She is attired for visiting, with her modish satin dress and long brown gloves.[208] These gloves are perhaps the least finished part of her figure, with their underdrawing still clearly visible, but nonetheless we see the wrinkles forming around her left wrist, and the way the right glove has begun to slide down and gather on her forearm. The detail which most testifies to the preparation and duration of the sitting is the pillow behind her: placed there for the diminutive sitter's comfort, whether or not she chooses to lean against it, this pillow is also blocking our view of the intriguing construction of her chair and compromising its regality of form.[209] Without this pillow, painted with as much precision as Monnom's dress, her entire

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[206] His portraits of young women include: *Madeleine* Mabille, 1888, *Mademoiselle de Rothmaler*, 1889, and the commissions of posthumous portraits of Marguerite Landhuyt, 1896, and Princess Elisabeth of Austria, 1899. He also began painting portraits of married women around the same time.

[207] Given the crucial role she played in the development of the Belgian avant-garde, surprisingly little has been written about the life of Veuve Monnom. The two best sources are: Maria van Rysselberghe, *Je ne sais si nous avons dit d'impérissables choses: Une anthologie des Cahiers de la Petite Dame*, ed. Peter Schnyder, préf. André Malraux (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), in which we learn that she was already a widow when she bought the Imprimerie Delevingne-Callewaert in Brussels in 1884 (in older scholarship, many claim she inherited it from her husband on his death); and Roger Cardon, *Georges Lemmen, 1865-1916* (Brussels: Pandora, 1997), in which the author includes small descriptions of the careers of a number of people involved in publishing in Brussels in the 1880s and 90s. Also, see Block, *The Neo-Impressionist Portrait, 1886-1904* 2014.

[208] For more on Belgian fashion at the fin-de-siècle, and for details about the proper wearing of gloves, see Marguerite Coppens, *Mode en Belgique au XIXe siècle/Mode in België in de 19de eeuw* (Brussels: Vrienden van de Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis, 1996).

[209] Marie Monnom would soon be married to Théo van Rysselberghe and become Maria van Rysselberghe, best known by her nickname "la petite dame." She is most remembered now for her intimate friendship with André Gide, and the journals she kept for decades recording every interaction she had with him. She also wrote a memoir of her chaste but transformative affair with Emile Verhaeren, entitled *Il y a quarante ans*, forty years after the fact and after the deaths of her husband, Verhaeren himself and Verhaeren's wife, a set of writings for children also based on her memories of Verhaeren called *Strophes pour un rossignol* (intended primarily for her daughter), and a series of "portraits" of the famous authors, artists and characters she had known in fin-de-siècle Belgium and France. The last of all of these is a "self-portrait:" and so we have the very rare opportunity to see how the subject of a portrait describes *herself*. These three works

figure would have been framed within a rectangle of blue material, the curtain matching almost perfectly the upholstery of the chair. With this detail, Khnopff may have been referring to traditional Flemish Marian symbolism, both here and in some other artworks that feature curtains as backdrops.[210] We have here, therefore, another example of the oscillation between possible symbolic readings and the purposeful inclusion and emphasis of mundane and practical details interfering with those readings' potential domination of the space. Monnom's stillness and ramrod posture, in the context of the defamiliarized lines and planes of the space around her, could *mean* something about the subject in the world - but she may simply be uncomfortable. She might be thinking deep thoughts – or woolgathering to stave off boredom: either would pass the time.

I have spoken of the stillness of all of the figures we have been examining as particularly eloquent of the passing of time, and of the endurance of a particular and very specific experience: that of posing for a portrait. What is perhaps most striking, and most important, about Khnopff's decision not only to present but to underscore the duration of these sittings within the paintings is that it was completely unnecessary that he do so: clients would not expect it, it was unusual in late nineteenth-century conventions especially of female portraiture, and in fact the intersubjective portrait encounter to which he is testifying was not, in itself, even necessary.[211] Many portraits of women would seek instead to give a sense of instantaneity to the

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are collected together in *Il y a quarante ans, suivi de Galerie privée et Strophes pour un rossignol*, préf. Marc Quaghebeur (Brussels: Labor, 2005).

[210] Khnopff drew extensively on the Flemish tradition of art in his artworks, and made it an overt theme in his images of Bruges and in, among other works, *Mon Coeur pleure d'autrefois* (1889); *The Hour* (1891), *A Travers les ages* (1894), *L'Encens* (1898), and *D'Autrefois* (1905).

[211] For sources about conventions of late nineteenth century portraiture, particularly women's portraiture, see footnote 92 in Redon chapter. I am also thinking here of Harry Berger's "Fictions of the Pose." In that article, Harry Berger objects to a certain trope in discussing portraiture, especially Renaissance portraiture, which he dubs "physiognomic art history": the tendency to describe a portrait as though it truly did reveal something of the real soul of the sitter, and as though the describer could truly recognize such a thing. Drawing largely on Lacanian theory, he identifies the desire to present an orthopsychic image in the portrait as the true essence of and key to understanding the dynamics of early modern portraiture.

I have several problems with this article, especially its extremely dualistic and overly simplistic conception of performance vs. truth. By establishing the utter impossibility of knowing the Truth as such, Berger reinforces it as an ideal to the extent that to say anything at all becomes an act of hubris. For him the performance is always a rupture, a lie, evidence of the tragedy of psychic break (to some extent inevitable when one adopts the psychoanalytic model), the opposite of the real. Any possibility of engagement with performance, expression through performance, or – to me most glaringly – communication through performance is no part of his understanding of what he seems ultimately to present as the absolute failure of the portrait – or for him perhaps the success of the portrait becomes its ability to reflect the inevitably poignant fracture of every human psyche, including those of people living five hundred years ago. Berger ultimately thereby exposes a deep-seated distrust of the image.

Ultimately, I do not think that the pose as Berger considers it is the key to thinking about portraiture in this period, or to exploring its relations to intersubjectivity. The pose is always important, of course, but the works I am thinking about are the product usually of a radically

scene presented, a sense of movement momentarily caught, a coquettish or in some way sympathetic connection between sitter and viewer, and a feeling of spontaneity associated with the potential of photography, used more and more often as an aide-memoire at the least, and often an explicit model.

Khnopff himself used photography extensively, and in many ways, in his painting practice.[212] Many scholars have analyzed his use of highly staged photographic tableaux as images for his ideist paintings, photographs whose particularities would be thoroughly smoothed over to allow the viewer to regard a completely foreign, often frozen, world of ideas.[213] He also definitely used photographs as models for two of his portraits, but each was in a different way exceptional in his practice: his portrait of Marguerite Landhuyt was posthumous, and his painting of the four Neve children was the only portrait he ever made with more than one subject.[214]

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different relationship among subject, painter and viewer than the culturally specific one Berger maps, and are responding to extremely different *expectations* of the portrait process and product, as I hope I have demonstrated throughout. He has been important to me as an interlocutor, however, albeit as one towards whom I feel quite antagonistic, and his basic desire to draw attention to the complexity of the portrait situation is helpful.

[212] Khnopff's uses of photography have received a lot of scholarly attention, much of it (unusually for him) outside of the usual circles of Symbolist scholars. In addition to occasionally using photographs in at least some of his portrait projects, using photos of Bruges to help him reconstruct the city he refused ever to see in the flesh again, and staging elaborate photo sessions with his sister Marguerite as model, he also commissioned very high quality photographic reproductions of many of his finished works and then highlighted, colored or drew over the photograph itself, selling these *photographies rehaussés* as new works in their own right – an unheard-of artistic practice at the time. Most sources on Khnopff discuss the role or roles of photography in his career, but for more specific studies of Khnopff's uses of photography, see for example: Rannou 1998 (footnote 166); Tom Gunning, "Never Seen this Picture Before: Muybridge in Multiplicity," in *Time Stands Still: Muybridge and the Instantaneous Photography Movement*, ed. Philip Prodger (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), 222-272; Alain d'Hooge, "Peintres et photographes, peintres-photographes: la voie ouverte par Delacroix," in *Autour du Symbolisme: Photographie et peinture au XIXe siècle* (Bruxelles: Bozar Books, 2004), 77-110; Dorothy Kosinski, "The Gaze of Fernand Khnopff," in *The Artist and the Camera: Degas to Picasso* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2000), 142-156; Anne Adriaens-Pannier, "Fernand Khnopff and Photography" in Leen, 2004, 249-262; Pudles 1992; "Khnopff et la Photographie," *Fernand Khnopff* (Tokyo: Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bunkamura, 1990), 194-199.

[213] The best-known example of this type is *Memories* of 1888, an image of seven identical women. The photographs that Khnopff used for this particular image were discovered in 1964 by Charles de Maeyer; see "Fernand Khnopff et ses modèles," *Bulletin des Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique* 3: 1-2 (1964): 43-56.

[214] In his study of the portrait of Jeanne Kéfer (2004), Draguet assumes that Khnopff relied on photography as part of his process for all of his portraits of children and young women, based on the many studies of his sister Marguerite for other compositions, photographs found of the Neve children posing on the stairs, and his well-known use of a photograph to make his posthumous portrait of Marguerite Landhuyt. I do not believe that we can make this assumption – partly because, as I mention above, each of these portraits was an exception for Khnopff, but also because these two works differ in execution from the portraits I am examining here. This chapter

Whether photography played any part in the creation of the majority of his portraits we will probably never know; in his only remaining statement about his portrait process, he certainly implied that it would be counter to the kinds of effects that interested him (though it was the norm for artists to distance themselves from photography even when it was integral to their art): "Pour l'execution d'une oeuvre je fais peu d'esquisses mais un grand nombre d'études. Je rêve l'existence continue de mes personnages dans leur milieu jusqu'au moment venu de la représenter dans une oeuvre d'art. Ce sont des détails antérieurs qui font la complexité de l'oeuvre."[215] It is a personal and sustained experience of the sitters and of their milieu, and a commitment to thinking about his sitters in time (both the shorter time of the sitting and the longer time of their living), that Khnopff deems necessary to his portraits. The stillness of his models is not, then, the stillness of instantaneity – but neither is it the frozen stillness of eternity that we see in his non-portrait compositions: the stillness of the idol, the icon, the ideal. In their kind of stillness, his portraits are very similar to Redon's of Mme de Domecy – the sitters are patient, waiting, perhaps a touch awkward, evidencing thereby in every part of their bodies the presence and activity of the painter. Unlike those works, however, the surroundings in Khnopff's portraits do *not* serve to provide a potential key to their thoughts or characters. The viewer is left recognizing the fact of the intersubjective experience, and that that experience belongs to the cooperative, living and breathing individual depicted, in all her mundane mystery and indefinable specificity – and to the artist himself.

Part 2
Siblings

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is not the place to fully explore the differences in Khnopff's uses of photography, but in the non-portrait works of art that he creates with his photographs of Marguerite as a springboard, the manipulations and distortions of the medium of photography themselves (what some may have called its shortcomings) help to create the sense of *un*reality that Khnopff produces: the hardening and concretizing of a face, the disproportionate darkness of a strangely cast shadow, the indistinctness of a form in the distance, the desaturation. Kosinski (1992) articulates this idea as well, based more in theories of photography than on formal evidence; she says Khnopff's use of photography plays the vital role of removing even his models from reality, of encapsulating them in abstraction that he can then exaggerate.) In the portrait of the Neve children, however, Khnopff seems to be correcting *for* these very manipulations and distortions in the photograph, working *against* the tendencies of the image to fall into hardening, desaturation and an abstraction in order to restore specificity and mundane structure to the children and to their space. Meanwhile, the compositional implication of spontaneity and motion that we see in the portrait of the Neve children is very different, as I argue here, from the effect of many of his other early and most successful portraits, for many of which we have sketches but for none of which we have photos. Ultimately, of course, we cannot know for certain whether photography was involved – and even if it was, Khnopff's decision to work against its ability to present instantaneity in his final products still supports the argument made here – but I think we should hesitate before assuming that it was a necessary and consistent part of his process.

[215] Khnopff wrote this to his friend Paul Schultze-Naumberg in 1899; quoted in Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, *6 Symbolist Works* (Brussels and New York: Patrick Derom Gallery, 2005), unpaginated.

Khnopff's second portrait of a young woman was of his sister Marguerite, a painting that has already been haunting the footnotes of this chapter [fig. 4.10]. In every article or book section devoted to Khnopff's portraiture, his sister's is presented as archetypal: all other portraits seem a lesser version of this one, and it is deemed simultaneously his ultimate portrait statement and the painting that shows how his intentions for his portraits and his other compositions were always the same.[216] I will be arguing against this interpretation. While it shares many of the attributes of the portraits we have discussed so far, the picture of Marguerite is not typical of Khnopff's portraiture: it was in fact a very specific and unique project in his career, one that sheds light on some of his most inscrutable works, and on the nature of the theme of self-isolation they so often explore. *Portrait of Marguerite Khnopff* does not make a portrait into an ideist composition, but instead draws on the strengths of both kinds of art, and investigates the relationship between them – in part by invoking the significance, and the singular flexibility, of the sibling romance.

Khnopff's portrait of his sister was shown alongside *Marie Monnom* at the exhibition of Les XX in 1888, and at the Georges Petit Gallery that same year. Both paintings were identified by the initials of their subjects, as was the convention. After these shows, the portrait of Monnom would retreat into Veuve Monnom's house for the rest of her life – this was common for portraits, which were of course ultimately meant for whatever purpose their commissioners intended.[217] By contrast, Khnopff continued to exhibit his portrait of Marguerite regularly for the next couple of years. After that, it became his most often published portrait, and one of his most discussed works during his lifetime.[218] When included in articles or books about the artist, the portrait would bear the title either of *Portrait de Mlle Khnopff* or, more often, *Portrait de ma soeur,* or *Portrait of the Artist's Sister* - in a handful of different languages.[219] This portrait was also the highlight for many visitors to Khnopff's famous studio later in his life, taking pride of

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[216] The most explicit and influential of the critics proclaiming this idea is Michel Draguet, whose writings about Khnopff, and about Belgian Symbolism as a whole, are generally strong and deeply insightful; he especially takes seriously the social commitments of idealist artists on the Belgian fin-de-siècle. See Draguet 1997, Draguet 2004 and Draguet, *Splendeurs de l'Idéal: Rops, Khnopff, Delville et leur temps* (Gent: Snoeck, Ducaju and Zoon, 1996).

[217] As was true for other artists as well, some of Khnopff's portraits would remain available to him for exhibition for years, particularly those that belonged to friends; his portrait of Jeanne Kéfer, for example, was shown in 1885, 86 and 87, and again in 1892, 96 and 97. Others were never shown, like the portraits of the Braun siblings, and others only once: *Madeleine Mabille* showed in Paris in 1889, *Madeleine Lejeune* in 1890 in London, *Madame Robert Reyntiens* in Munich in 1890, etc. Khnopff painted portraits throughout much of his career, and as they retreated into homes new ones would take their places, and invite new commissions.

[218] *Portrait of Marguerite Khnopff* was discussed in at least 17 articles and reviews in Khnopff's lifetime – see Sotheby's auction catalogue for references: Nineteenth Century Paintings, Drawings and Watercolors, 1991.

[219] The portrait was named this way, for example, in "Profili d'Artisti: Fernand Khnopff," *Il Rinascimento* 10-16 (1906): 64, in Edmond-Louis de Taeye, *Artistes Belges contemporains* (Bruxelles: Alfred Castaigne, 1894), 742, in Dumont-Wilden 1906, and in Shaw-Sparrow, 1891. Also, Marguerite was known to all of their friends and did on at least one occasion accompany her brothers to events; her presence at the party for the closing of the Théâtre de la Monnaie's season in 1887 is recorded in *L'art Moderne.*

place in the Blue Room and presented in a shrine-like niche.[220] The artwork, then, was a showpiece: one intended to speak for Khnopff, as a portraitist and as an artist, and to demonstrate his skills in as many forums as possible.[221] Khnopff's consistent insistence that the portrait be identified as being of his sister implies that he felt that his relationship to the subject was important to impress upon his audience: it was as a portrait of his *sister* that this painting was doing its work.

The portrait is his most austere to date. [222] His sister stands before a wall that is entirely made up of whites: ice-like blue-hinted white on the door directly behind her, creamier white on the border of the silk panel hanging on it and lavender-tinged on its interior, and a flat white on

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[220] Khnopff began to design his studio in 1900 and moved into it in 1902. It is now one of the most oft-written-about parts of his career, though the building was destroyed in 1936. Many writers visited and reported about this studio, among them: Hélène Laillet, "The Home of an Artist: M. Fernand Khnopff's Villa at Brussels," *The Studio* 57:237 (December 1912): 206; Maria Biermé, "Fernand Khnopff," *La Belgique artistique et littéraire* (July-September 1907): 96-113; Louis Dumont-Wilden, *Fernand Khnopff*, (Brussels, 2007); Wolfram Waldschmidt, "Das Heim eines Symbolisten," *Die Kunst* 14 (1906): 158-166; Josef Engelhart, "En Visite chez Khnopff," republished in *Fernand Khnopff et Vienne* (Brussels: Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1987). Khnopff's studio is one of the aspects of his career that attracts the most scholarly attention; a selection of works are: Howe 1982, 143-44; Jean-Louis Gaillemin, "Les Chimères Bleus de Fernand Khnopff," *Oeil* 555 (Feb 2004): 56-63; Philip Norton Clay, *The Villa Khnopff and the Theme of the Artist's House* (Binghamton: SUNY, 1986); Van Loo, Anne, "Passé-Futur: La Maison-atelier de Fernand Khnopff," *Archives d'Architecture Moderne* hors-série (1987): 59-72; Clément Dessy, "La maison d'artiste en portrait, manifeste et sanctuaire: l'exemple de Fernand Khnopff," *The Aesthetics of Matter*, eds. Sarah Posman, Anne Reverseau et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2013), 235-248. The shrine-likeness of his placing of Marguerite's portrait is often mentioned, but in fact photographs indicate that most of his artworks were presented in little arrangements that seems like shrines: *Les Caresses*, *Memories*, and certainly his portrait of his mother.

[221] This interpretation is not typical. Most scholars have interpreted Khnopff's keeping of his portrait of Marguerite, and especially his display of it in his studio, as intensely personal, and as evidence of his strong and, perhaps, not entirely healthy psychological connection with her. Seen from a pragmatic rather than a psychoanalytic perspective, however, this painting did a lot of work for Khnopff. Also, for a space that was presented as an example of his isolation and retreat from the world, there are a disproportionate number of articles written by visitors who were given tours of his studio. It was also photographed several times, and those photographs were also reproduced with different articles. Pierre Rannou also speaks of the photographs taken of Khnopff "painting" in his studio, and then published: several contemporary authors marveled at how well-dressed and clean he managed to be while working, seeing this as yet another example of his extraordinary care and self-containment. Rannou has demonstrated, however, that it was physically impossible for Khnopff to actually be *painting* in these shots.

[222] There are other later example of his work that would be as austere, and perhaps more so: *Madeleine Mabille* (1888)*, Isabel Errera* (1893) – and perhaps Gustave Kéfer had been, but it is hard to say because the only remaining photograph is of very poor quality and the work's current location is unknown.

the expanses of the wall itself.[223] She herself wears a white dress that covers her from chin to the bottom of the canvas, as the painting ends before her skirt does; off-white gloves, seemingly of kid, are a closer match to the creamy hint behind her. Aside from Marguerite's head, the only non-white form in the top three-quarters of the composition is the golden circle we saw in *Marie Monnom*.

The effect of all this white is to pull the scene strongly toward the fantastical, more strongly that any other portraits discussed so far. This pull is intensified by the uncertainty of the placement of Marguerite's figure within this space: cut off in the middle of her full skirt, she appears to hover there, to be partially in and partially floating out from the canvas, as though she might proceed through its surface. Her lean to the right accentuates a discrepancy between the two halves of the door we see behind her, the right side being noticeably and incomprehensibly lower than the left. This detail is one of several that gradually make the viewer relinquish any initial impression of the background's presenting a reliably coherent space, in spite of its details being so naturalistically presented in themselves: the background can coalesce one moment, then break down into intersecting horizontal and vertical details the next, then reassert itself. The exclusion of the top of the door and its lintel allows for its panel and jambs to seem strangely unconnected to each other; the slight height difference of the strip of ornamental wallpaper and molding on either side of Marguerite's monumentalized figure – emphasized by the different facture of the two sides – makes them corresponding accents as readily as they are a continuous architectural feature of a room; and the floor has a slant that is vertiginous when understood specifically as a surface on which to stand. Marguerite, solid but unconnected to the ground, in no way helps to settle the situation. For viewers, the attempt to reconcile all of these parts, with their alternating cooperation with and alienation from each other, is disorienting – and his contemporaries had come to expect such disorientation from the majority of Khnopff's artworks.

There is certainly much of the "symphony in white" about such a painting, a parallel that struck contemporaries quickly – after all, Whistler's paintings were highly admired by the fin-de-siècle Belgian avant-garde. However, while Whistler sought to distance his viewer from an artwork's subject matter to help them see and appreciate the play of the painter and his paint [fig. 4.11], Khnopff's formal technique is meant to immerse the viewer even further in another world (an experience that he both manipulated and complicated in his portrait works, as I am arguing), rather than to draw attention to the painting as a material object. We see this in his handling of the whites in this portrait: his facture testifies to restraint rather than expressivity or expansiveness, and the space disorients more in its oscillation between convincingness and portentousness, rather than through a potential reduction to the collision of paint and canvas. In this respect, it can stand as an example of Khnopff's Symbolist strategies, because of the pull towards an indecipherable world of fancy that his work often seeks to inspire in viewers.[224]

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[223] Emile Wauters complained about the incorrectness of perspective in this portrait in his review of the exhibition of Les XX in 1888: "Le premier [of the two portraits, meaning the portrait of Marguerite] est peut-être discutable au point de vue de la perspective, la partie inférieure du portrait ne paraissant être au même plan que la partie supérieure..."

[224] Reinhold Heller, in his article "Concerning Symbolism and the Structure of Surface" (*Art Journal* 45:2 (Summer 1985): 146-153, attempts to establish some patterns in Symbolist treatments of surface and materiality. "The physical, sensual object or construction is ... spiritualized," and to do this the physical existence of the art object must be emphasized in a way that distances the viewer from its implied content. Heller presents Khnopff's portrait of

In the portrait of his sister Marguerite, however – as in the other portraits we have discussed - that strong tug meets with resistance from Marguerite herself: from her head and from the figure ensconced in that white dress. She looks out to the right of the canvas. The coloration of her face has not been idealized: surrounded as she is by all that white, she appears slightly brown and subdued. There is no rush of pink to the cheeks or blush of the lip here, and the slightly dark circle under her right eye has not been painted out. There is less of the stony in her expression than there was in Marie Monnom's, or of the blank in Jeanne Kefer's. Her lips appear to be curving up at the corner, which initially seems to hint at a smile – but the sense of demonstrativeness that would come with such an expression fades with closer proximity to the canvas. That curve appears simply to be a feature of her face, and is not echoed in her eyes or cheeks.[225] Her eyes appear to be looking in a uniform direction, further to her left than the angle of her neck would neutrally steer them, giving them more of a feeling of directedness than Héger's or Monnom's: it is not that her expression is more clear than theirs, but that it seems more comfortable, as though she were more settled into her situation here and that it was not so foreign and exceptional to her as it was to them. The hair on top of her head is undecoratively frizzy, and an awkward looping kink juts out from the braid whose beginning we see on her nape before it disappears to an unknown length down her back. Her glove wrinkles and collects around her wrist, her dress pulls at her shoulder and near her neck as she stands not stiffly but informally, one arm sneaking around behind her back, with its hand crooked around the opposite elbow. The comfort and openness evinced by such a posture is both physical and psychological: her arm would rest comfortably against the curve of her lower back, anchored on the other elbow, and yet there is none of the defensiveness that would be implied by a similar configuration on the front of the body – no crossing, no obscuring. This posture accentuates her torso and makes her body visually accessible, and makes her hand appear oddly floating - and yet there is nothing either in her face or figure that communicates discomfort or a consciousness of vulnerability with such an open pose.[226]

While Marguerite's stance and expression operate to bring us a sense of the moment of her pose through her settled and patient body and occupied - or preoccupied – mind, her dress initially stretches credulity. Its structure is extreme, almost armorial, like the stuff of pure symbol: an avenging virgin perhaps, or some contained feminine ideal. But the closer we look, the more we see the amount of work, the awkwardness and patching that was necessary to create such an effect. She appears to be sewn into the dress, with large, uneven stitches going from her neck to her waist. Extra material has been wrapped around the top of her neck to bring its line up to her chin, which causes the stitches closing it there to pucker and pull. They do this as well around the top of her sternum, where the arm around her back has forced the material to stretch.

Marguerite as an example of this, not because of the way that it was painted, but in how it was presented: unusually, and unnecessarily, under glass. See especially pp. 150-152.

[225] In "The Mask and the Face: The Perception of Physiognomic Likeness in Life and Art," Gombrich discusses how, by presenting seemingly incompatible expressions on the same face, an artist can imply inaccessible or indecipherable thoughts. In *Art, Perception and Reality* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1972), 3-69.

[226] The explicitness of her body is a thing rarely seen in Khnopff's non-portrait works – bodies are more likely to be swathed in loose fabric, reduced to columns, literally excluded, etc. And as I will argue later, even the works so closely related to this portrait temper the presentation of Marguerite's body in several ways.

We can also see the structure beneath the material of the dress: a horizontal line runs from underarm to underarm where the stiffness of the corset begins. We can make out four of its ribs: one close to the right side of her body, the angle it makes under the dress marked by a dark line, the second its shadow, midway to the center seam. The last two are on her other side, one shown more with shading than with a line as her body curves away from us, the fourth disappearing around the side. I describe what we can see of the corset with obsessive care, but by doing so I do not mean to reproduce its effect in the painting – its impact is not stronger than the precision of blue and cream shadows in the fall of Marguerite's skirt, or the vividly observed creases on her one visible glove, and is somewhat less striking than the imperfection of the loop of her hair escaping against the cloth at her neck.[227] Khnopff's careful communication of the awkwardness of the dress's construction and the obviousness of the work necessary to make it what it is operate as did his presentation of the slowly drooping bows on Simone Héger's shoulders, or the tuft disrupting the serenity of the bust above Eugénie Verhaeren: this is picture day, its background chosen and organized, the subject cooperative and still and dressed for the occasion. But the preparation here could be for a different kind of picture as well, and not just the picture we see: her dress is not fancy but unlikely. This is a portrait of a model: Khnopff paints the woman modeling before him *as* the woman modeling before him, rather than as whatever character, personification, symbol for which she is posing. And the woman is, we know, his sister: a woman he not only sees often but knows intimately. This portrait is also an encapsulation of Khnopff's process, a demonstration of the overlap between world and idea, and the path from intimacy to abstraction; like Vermeer's *Painter in his Studio*, it presents process as philosophy of representation.

To illustrate the distinctions I am trying to make between the portrait of Marguerite and Khnopff's non-portrait, ambitiously ideist compositions, I will compare it to one of his most obstreperously ambiguous works, *I Lock My Door Upon Myself* of 1891 [fig. 4.12]. Its title, never translated to French, is taken from "Who Shall Deliver Me?", a lesser known devotional poem by Christina Rossetti.[228] It completely enfolds its figure into the world created by the setting of the painting, in a way that does not occur in Khnopff's portraits. Its background is a confusion of blocked inroads and exits, windows or canvases, mirrors or pictures, far more confounding than anything in his portraits and, unlike those, unconnected to maneuverable, real spaces. The figure, placed behind a large and dominant obstacle between the painting's world and the viewer's, is built up from the colors and shapes that surround her: what little we see of her dress is flecked with the orange of the lilies; her hair is the russet of the flower tucked next to the bust of Hypnos and the dull gold of the panel above her to the left, and it flows down her left arm in the same curve as the strange blue fabric beneath it; her uncannily pale and almost pupil-less eyes, facing out toward the viewer, are echoes of the misty blue worlds in the circular frames above her. She utterly belongs to this place.

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[227] I am avoiding a discussion of whether or not Marguerite is sexualized or non-sexualized here, the reasons for which I hope will become clear soon. Both have been argued fervently and often elsewhere, often much less than helpfully – and this is not the only question one can ask of this painting.

[228] Khnopff's decision to use this obscure poem by Christina Rossetti has not been explored before. Khnopff would have read this poem in the 1876 collection of her poems, as it had previously been published only once in 1866 in *Argosy* – highly unlikely that Khnopff would have had access.

I have referred to the woman in *I Lock My Door Upon Myself* as a figure, but in fact most of her body is not seen. In his non-portrait works, Khnopff usually neutralizes or avoids including women's bodies in some way: they are reduced to columns, shrouded in fabric, occluded by objects or simply excluded altogether. The character in *I Lock My Door Upon Myself* cannot move from this world, or have any independent existence; there is nothing in her that would encourage viewers to connect with a lived experience outside of the painting they contemplate. In her brother's portrait of her, on the other hand, Marguerite is a corporeal and sensing woman, presented as passing through time.[229] When the time of the pose is over, she seems more likely to walk out of the painting than to stay within it, or to change out of her strange ensemble than to take up other potential props.

There is some debate about whether or not Marguerite was a model for the figure in *I Lock My Door Upon Myself*; regardless, as we know from extensive photographic evidence, she certainly was for many other artworks in which she underwent a complete change from flesh and blood woman to resident of an abstract world.[230] Khnopff's use of his sister as a model, and his transformation of her in non-portrait works like *Memories (Les joueuses de tennis)* and *Le Secret* [fig. 4.13], has long been a focus of studies of his oeuvre. With the lack of information about his life and of any correspondence among any members of his family, scholars have drawn both on psychoanalytic and on some historically contemporary literary and artistic constructions of opposite-siblinghood to glean insight from this pattern.[231] The contemporary writings most often employed are those of Joséphin Péladan – unsurprisingly, as Khnopff illustrated some of his books and showed in four of the six Salons de la Rose+Croix in Paris.[232] In his usually strongly allegorical writings, Péladan deploys a brother-sister relationship often to present a story of androgynous fusion and wholeness, one that is superior to all other cross-gender relationships in its transcendence of sexuality.[233] Khnopff's own preoccupation with an ideal androgyny is

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[229] Many scholars have made the exact opposite argument about this painting, claiming that it is absolutely iconic and timeless: Legrand, Kosinski, and Draguet are all great Khnopff scholars, but in this case I believe that they have allowed general theories of his oeuvre to obscure the specificities of this portrait.

[230] Others have argued that the model here was one of the Macquet sisters, two English girls who became Khnopff's favorite models after his sister got married. The artwork was consistently received by its contemporaries, as depicting an exotic, English type, and therefore decidedly exogamous – as is so often the case, where we look everywhere for the shadow of Khnopff's sister, his contemporaries did not. For evidence of Marguerite's acting as a model for other works, please return to footnote 212 of this chapter.

[231] Many psychoanalysts recently believe the sibling relationship to be one that psychoanalysis is insufficient to and has until recently comparatively neglected, because it doesn't lend itself to catgorization in the same way the parental relationships do: see for example Abraham and Torok 1994, Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker than Water: Siblings and Their Relations, 1780-1920* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012); Elsa Albert, ed., *Freud's Blind Spot* (New York: Free Press, 2010); Didier Lett, *Histoire des Frères et Soeurs* (Paris: Editions de La Martinière, 2004); and Marcel Rufo, *Frères et Soeurs, une maladie d'amour* (Paris: Fayard, 2002).

[232] Among these: *Le Vice Suprême*, 1885; *Istar*, 1888; *Femmes Honnêtes*, 1888.

[233] *Mélusine,* 1895; *Modestie et vanité*, 1902; *Pomone*, 1913, etc. For more on the widespread idealization of androgyny, and its symbolization in sibling relationships, throughout the esoteric and rosicrucian communities in fin-de-siècle Paris and Brussels, see Brendan Cole, "Nature and

undeniable, and certainly it was strongly influenced by Péladan's influence in his early years.[234] Authors drawing on psychoanalytic theories of the twentieth century more often interpret Khnopff's consistent use of his sister as a sign of an unhealthy obsession and unconscious misplaced desire for her, possibly related to an arrested development they believe is demonstrated by his living with his parents until his mid-forties, and marrying only very briefly and very late in life.[235]

Before leaping to such interpretations, however, there were some *conscious* strategic reasons for Khnopff to assert his sister as his model that should be considered, ones that are specific to his milieu. She was, first, not his wife or his mistress: she was not among the ranks of muses with whom artists had sexual relations. Romantic love and intimacy, one of the fin-de-siècle private realm's strongest symbolic associations, was not a theme Khnopff wished his viewers to explore in front of his paintings – unlike Maurice Denis, for example, whose paintings exalt his wife as a source of comfort and gender-binary bliss.[236] By making it clear that his sister was the model for his artworks, Khnopff could forestall some of this interpretation. He also showed that he had not *hired* models. Detecting the signs that what one was looking at was a hired model (lower-class, worldly, morally suspect creature that she would be) was a pastime for viewers and critics of the late nineteenth century, and a common way to dismiss an ambitious composition was to claim to see the taint of a real, working-class girl in its figures.[237] People also

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the Ideal in Khnopff's *Avec Verhaeren: Un Ange* and *Art, or the Caresses*," *Art Bulletin* 91:3 (September 2009): 325-342. Péladan's writings are also sometimes interpreted as being disguised or unacknowledged incestuous fantasies, while in fact the threat of sexual desire is usually averted by this relationship, or by the sudden discovery of two attracted individuals that they are *actually* brother and sister – their attraction thus explained and purified, they rise above. Unpopular as he is now, it is sometimes easy to dismiss Péladan's work rather than to read it *with* the grain.

In her introduction, Valerie Sanders traces representations of the cross-gender relationship into the late twentieth century, at which point the theme of incest is overt and its allegorical and symbolic import transformed. She remarks on the way that scholars often project these more recent meanings, so common in the later twentieth century, *onto* the fin-de-siècle works, and that the changing rhetoric is insufficiently taken into account, in addition to the understanding of sexual maturation and subject development. Also, there is a PhD student at Essex, Sasha Chaitow, working on Péladan now. She has some articles forthcoming.

[234] Lately several sources have questioned the extent of Péladan's influence, especially after around 1885 and the Caron incident. They posit that it was as much a relationship of opportunity as of any shared beliefs. Also, though it is not written about, Khnopff explored androgyny in his few male subjects as well, especially *Mythological Figure*, 1890, *Sire Halewyn*, 1903, and his Christs later in his career. These works need more attention – but not in this chapter. For Khnopff's relationship with Péladan, see: Pincus-Witten 1976, Nishisawa 1990, and Cole 2009.

[235] In 1908, the year he turned 50, Khnopff married a younger widow who was already the mother of two; they divorced in 1911. Almost nothing is known of their relationship, except that she apparently spent very little time in his studio.

[236] See chapter 2 for Denis sources, footnotes 65 and 102.

[237] For examples of critics writing in this mode, see T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984); Anne Wagner, *Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux: Sculptor of the Second*

enjoyed speculating about the artist himself and his relations with the female body that had been in his studio.[238] Many scholars of the last several decades have seen Khnopff's repeated use of his sister as model as evidence of a misplaced libidinal attraction (and have made little distinction between his portrait of her and his ideist works in this regard); for a Victorian and fin-de-siècle audience his assertion of her presence would *dissuade* viewers from reading his artworks as sexual.[239]

Furthermore, to apply either purely allegorical or psychoanalytic interpretations to demarcate the field of meaning in which the painting of Marguerite was intended to operate overlooks the complexity of the portrait itself. Unlike his ideist compositions, after all, *Portrait of the Artist's Sister* tells of a relationship between a flesh-and-blood sister and brother, and we will therefore also look at this work through the lenses of some of the extensive literature devoted to the complex realities and symbologies of fin-de-siècle siblinghood.

The brother-sister relationship is undeniably important in all eras and cultures, but always differently so – and among the different relationships involved in the family romance, psychoanalysis has been hardest to apply to it in a systematic way.[240] In late nineteenth-century Europe and America, each country had its own tradition of roles and stories, as well as cultural figures, influencing the way that the brother-sister experience was represented; nonetheless, they shared certain conditions that, together, gave the sibling relationship a greater symbolic power and an unusually central role in cultural understanding of an individual's subject formation.[241]

Empire (New Haven: Yale UP, 1986); David Getsy, *Body Doubles: Sculpture in Britain 1877-1905* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004).

[238] This was certainly true for Rossetti himself, whose affair with Elisabeth Siddall and desire for Jane Morris were the stuff of much gossip. See Suzanne M. Waldman, *The Demon and the Damozel: Dynamics of Desire in the Works of Christina Rossetti and Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (Athens: Ohio UP, 2008).

[239] After all, effusive expressions of devotion and attachment to a sibling of the opposite gender were rhetorically very differently inflected in the nineteenth century. See especially Sanders 2001. Also, the history of the reception of Lewis Carroll's photographs of children, especially those of young Alice Liddell, has an interesting parallel history. In fact, Carroll's endless picture-taking of those children was in part intended to be a cover for his pursuit of a woman in the household, and neither he nor his contemporaries saw them as sexualized. Twentieth century audiences often have, without taking context sufficiently into account, read them as child pornography. For more on this, see Douglas R. Nickel, *Dreaming in Pictures: The Photography of Lewis Carroll*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 2002). For different period's ideas about childhood, and the problems this has occasionally caused for photographers of children, see Higonnet 1998.

[240] See footnote 231.

[241] Some examples of the differences from country to country: in France, stories of siblings, both same gender and not, often play on the political idea of *Fraternité* in some way (see introduction and essays in: Florence Godeau and Wladimir Troubetzkoy, eds., *Fratries: Frères et Soeurs dans la litterature et les arts de l'antiquité à nos jours* (Paris: Editions Kimé, 2003)), while in England the development of the children of the royal family was keenly watched and held up as representative of what children should be (see Sanders 2001). In American fiction, siblings would often be used to allegorize the national split during the Civil War, and its painful aftermath (see Emily E. Van Dette, *Sibling Romance in American Fiction, 1835-1900* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013)). For other studies of the representation of sibling relations in

Importantly, the extreme separation and policing of adult gender roles and anxiety about their transgression created cultures in which the possibility of easy social intercourse with a person of the opposite sex was remote – making a man's sister perhaps the *only* female with whom he would ever attain a high level of intimacy and openness of intellectual exchange. Studying the realities *and* the representation of the sibling relationship thereby provides an opportunity to explore the history of gender in a way that does not, as so often happens, separate the study of masculinities and femininities, but looks closely at their inextricability.[242] Such studies engage the psychological complexity and specificity of sibling bonds, and do not deny the possibility of the libidinal or of sexual desire in the sibling relationship. They also do not consign the understanding of the sibling relationship to some absolute or transhistorical model of subject formation or family relations.[243]

In her book *The Brother-Sister Culture in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Valerie Sanders explores the way that artists and writers with siblings of the opposite sex often demonstrate more

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the nineteenth century that look at cross-gender siblinghood, see also: Anne Ducrey, "Fratries: miroir de la dissolution dans le théâtre de Tchekhov et de Maeterlinck," in Godeau and Troubetskoy, 2003, 333-342; Florence Fix, "Le frère et la soeur dans le théâtre d'Ibsen et de Maeterlinck, 'Car tu avais honté de ne pas avoir de frère. Seulement une soeur,'" in Godeau and Troubetskoy, 2003, 343-351; Joëlle Prungnaud, "Frère et soeurs dans le roman gothique anglais," in Godeau and Troubetskoy, 2003, 431-442; Leila Silvana May, *Disorderly Sisters: Sibling Relations and Sororal Resistance in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (London: Associated U Presses, 2001); Teddi Chichester Bonca, *Shelley's Mirrors of Love: Narcissism, Sacrifice and Sorority* (New York: State U of NY P, 1999); Houria Bouchenafa, *Mon Amour, Ma soeur: L'Imaginaire de l'inceste frère-soeur dans la litterature européenne à la fin di XIXe siècle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004); Michael Cohen, *Sisters: Relation and Rescue in Nineteenth-Century British Novels and Paintings* (Madison: Fairleigh-Dickinson UP, 1995); Valerie Sanders, *The Brother-Sister Culture in Nineteenth Century Literature: From Austen to Woolf* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); and Claudie Bernard, Chantal Massol and Jean-Marie Roulin, eds, *Adelphiques: Soeurs et frères dans la littérature francaise du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Editions Kimé, 2010).

Rapid changes in cultural expectations and roles resulted more consistently in dramatic generational misunderstandings, often leading siblings to feel a greater sense of solidarity in opposition to parents – particularly in fairly traditional families that produced children who pursued artistic careers, the expectations for and institutions around which were transforming. On intergenerational tensions and sibling relations, see in addition to sources cited in note 74: Steven Mintz, *A Prison of Expectations: the Family in Victorian Culture* (New York: NYUP, 1983).

[242] See Sanders 2001, introduction, and Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds., *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (New York: Rutledge, 1991): these authors proclaim that male and female gender identities should not be studied separately, and that the tendency to do has led to some distorted and excessively dualistic approaches especially to fin-de-siècle culture.

[243] Sanders, in particular, traces the symbolism of cross-gender siblinghood into the latter half of the twentieth century, when incest becomes an overt and common theme. It is from this perspective that we often read it, as a necessary subtext, back onto the elegies of Victorian sibling devotion, but study of the histories of concepts of childhood and sexual development, rhetoric, and symbolism warn us against this.

elasticity in their depiction of gender.[244] She draws particular attention to the experiences of brothers and sisters either voyaging into or, for most girls, recognizing their permanent exclusion from the masculine adult (public) world.[245] Male authors and artists who were close to their sisters, or lived with them into adulthood, often showed greater respect for and insight into the lives lived in the female sphere, and recognized the skills, types of learning, and richness of domestic experiences available to sisters in that realm. At the same time, they witnessed those sisters' permanent exile from the public world, the sphere that provided any kind of recognition for artistic creation.[246] Still, they showed signs of longing for the different kind of freedom experienced by the sister who is not forced to face the rigors of public life. Sanders gives several examples of sisters who, while maintaining consistent correspondence and close day-to-day relationships with brothers, also became for those men idealized spiritual other selves, appearing as what they could have been under different circumstances. Both flesh and spirit, both abstract symbols and life-long companions (who may nonetheless so often be taken away), sisters provided a field for fantasies about a unity of self to be found in the domestic realm: linked to childhood, this realm was denied the adult male, but he could still believe it to be attainable in some alternate, female life.[247]

Khnopff treated this dreamed-of private realm undisturbed by pressures of the public life; especially throughout the early years of his career, he would take up the themes of isolation,

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[244] The male figure largely disappeared from Khnopff's artwork around 1891, with the exception of portraits, and reappeared in the emergence of Christian imagery in his late career. The rare exceptions, however, show Khnopff deploying very similar devices as those he uses in his depiction of women: a hard, square-jawed and staring face sometimes compositionally cut off in the middle of the forehead, androgynous bodies that are often obscured. He also depicts figures that fall into some male-equivalent of virgins and femmes fatales: St Amand and Jesus vs. several iterations of the legend of Sire Halewyn, a Bluebeard-type character who lures young virgins with his enchanted song and then cuts off their heads (a definite homme fatal), and a drawing of a young Bacchus.

[245] Sanders speaks of women as being forced into "a state of prolonged childhood." Sanders 2001, 36.

[246] Marguerite Khnopff, according to her brother Georges's biographer, apparently also had literary aspirations. These siblings were all the offspring of a quite conservative lawyer. He accepted Fernand's decision to go into painting partly because he was able to make money from portraiture, and began receiving positive attention quite early. When the second son wanted to go into the even less practical pursuit of poetry, their father had apparently had enough. As for Marguerite, she was expected very much to conform to bourgeois expectations for a young woman. See manuscript for unpublished biography of Georges Khnopff, found in the archives of the Université Libre de Bruxelles.

[247] Marguerite married in 1890, before either of her brothers. Meanwhile, of course, sibling relationships are often not simply those between two people but among several, making an already complex relationship that much less predictable. Sisters could marry, brothers could leave, animosities could arise among multiple siblings - the sibling bond is often the longest and simultaneously one of the most resilient and one of the most fragile in a person's life, and one open to tremendous change both in its actuality and its symbolic inflection over the course of an artist's or writer's career – another reason to be wary of generalizations. Here see especially Ducrey 2003, and particularly her discussion of Maeterlinck's *La Mort de Tintagiles*, 335-337.

solitude and silence (these are in fact all titles of artworks).[248] He painted two street scenes in the early 1880s, never to be repeated; after that, it was the Dead City, or abandoned, eerily well-ordered landscapes, scenes in the domestic realm, or ambiguous, strangely cloistered dreamworlds. The correspondence of his that survives, his few poems, his extensive prose writings about art all indicate a distinct distaste for the spaces and activities associated with the public realm, and he rarely depicted men.[249] But we know that he was actually very involved in several kinds of art organizations, and much of his self-presentation (and, in the case of his studio, self-curation) and profession of beliefs adopted the fin-de-siècle rhetoric of The Artist vs. The World.[250] More importantly, many of his most ambitious artworks do not present the absolute duality of Idealist polemics. *I Lock My Door Upon Myself*, for example, with its purposefully muddled cluster of symbols of sleep, isolation, purity, transcendence and interiority, is no simple or grandiose celebration. Its figure is inaccessible and her features purified, but her entrapment is also palpable, and all of the symbols that individually might evoke a certain Romantic ideal of melancholy contemplation are here an incomprehensible accretion, and come together to make this strange occupant seem besieged and weighted down.[251] Such a confounding and discomfiting painting is a proper response to Rossetti's "Who Shall Deliver Me?", however: it is as much a poem of self-excoriation, about the fear of drowning in one's self and one's desires, as it is about a devotional retreat from the world:

> God strengthen me to bear myself;
> That heaviest weight of all to bear,
> Inalienable weight of care.
>
> All others are outside myself;
> I lock my door and bar them out
> The turmoil, tedium, gad-about.
>
> I lock my door upon myself,
> And bar them out; but who shall wall
> Self from myself, most loathed of all?
>
> If I could once lay down myself,
> And start self-purged upon the race
> That all must run! Death runs apace.

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[248] *Isolation* (1890-94), *Solitude* (1891), *Silence* (1890).

[249] Khnopff, in his early years, depicted men more often than some give him credit for – he made many portraits of men (we have discussed some briefly), both commissioned and of friends, and occasionally used male figures in more allegorical contexts as well, as in *Sire Halewyn* (1903), *Une Crise* (1881), *A Fosset: Le garde qui attend,* and his *Tentation de St. Antoine* (both 1883).

[250] For a focused study of this rhetoric, see Françoise Lucbert, "La Mise en lumière des indépendants. Le mythe de l'artiste isolé chez les écrivains symbolistes français," *RACAR* 26:1/2 (1999): 59-68.

[251] For iconographically-driven analyses of this painting, see: Leslie Dixon Morrissey, "Isolation and the Imagination: Fernand Khnopff's *I Lock My Door Upon Myself*," *Arts Magazine* 53:4 (Dec 1978) 94-97; and Sarah Burns, "A Symbolist Soulscape: Fernand Khnopff's *I Lock My Door Upon Myself*," *Arts Magazine* 55:5 (Jan 1981): 80-90.

If I could set aside myself,
And start with lightened heart upon
The road by all men overgone!

God harden me against myself,
This coward with pathetic voice
Who craves for ease and rest and joys

Myself, arch-traitor to myself;
My hollowest friend, my deadliest foe,
My clog whatever road I go.

Yet One there is can curb myself,
Can roll the strangling load from me
Break off the yoke and set me free [252]

It was by no means one of Christina Rossetti's best known or most popular poems, and yet Khnopff devoted not one but two compositions to it.[253] Christina was, in fin-de-siècle Belgium, still best known as the sister of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and she was, from the outside, a seeming crystallization of The Sister of Victorian poem and song: forever at home, forever pure, and never claimed by another man. That Khnopff associated her with her brother is certain. Also, the only collection in which "Who Shall Deliver Me?" was published, and the one in which Khnopff must therefore have read it, contained five illustrations by Dante Gabriel.[254] From this collection, Khnopff chose one of the poems in which she, in her own voice, most powerfully makes uncomfortable that ideal of the calm, cloistered, sisterly life, and evokes the suffering, as well as the virtue, that comes with purposeful self-isolation – a far cry from her more popular poems, because of which she was more commonly associated with a crystalline faith and almost child-like purity of expression. In fact, her brother William discouraged her from including "Who

[252] On this poem, see Joel Westerholm, "Christina Rossetti's 'Wounded Speech,'" *Literature and Theology* 24:4 (December 2010): 345-359. On Rossetti's devotional poetry, see Dinah Roe, *Christina Rossetti's Faithful Imagination: The Devotional Poetry and Prose* (NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

[253] The second is entitled "Who Shall Deliver Me?", from 1891. This painting is less studied, and usually ancillarily to *I Lock My Door*: see Morrissey 1978. Both are discussed in Lorraine Janzen Kooistra's study of the history of visual accompaniments to Rossetti's poetry, *Christina Rossetti and Illustration: A Publishing History* (Athens: Ohio UP, 2002).

[254] "Who Shall Deliver Me?" was first published in the February 1866 edition of *Argosy*, on p. 288, and not again in Rossetti's lifetime except for the 1876 collection. The collection of her poems of 1876 also had the illustrations by her brother for "The Prince's Progress" and "Goblin Market" – which bear some intriguing similarities with aspects of *I Lock My Door Upon Myself*, which I will not attempt to explore here. However, Khnopff's admiration for Rossetti is generally known and commented upon, and no specific study of Khnopff's influence by him exists.

Shall Deliver Me?" in her collection of 1879 because it was too dark.[255] In his painting, Khnopff certainly presents a vision whose bundle of symbols would already have been closely associated with his oeuvre. It was intended more than anything else as a statement – a surprisingly ambivalent statement in many ways – about *his own* experience and idea of solitude, and not Rossetti's. I am certainly not suggesting that he considered himself as an advocate for women. And yet, his decision never to translate the title (in addition to further cementing his reputation as an Anglophile) also ensures that the trace of that other mind –female, sororal – will not completely fade.

When we look at it in the symbolic mode, the portrait of Marguerite involves the same themes as *I Lock My Door*. It is in this way, after all, that the portrait becomes a demonstration of Khnopff's ambitions as an artist, the way he looks at the world around him, and the beginning of his process of transformation. The symbolic mode is, however, as I have argued, only one of those available to us. The everyday and philosophical, the pragmatic and aspirational, and the abstracting and strategic meanings and implications of siblinghood all overlap and intertwine in the rich specificity of Khnopff's portrait of his sister. And there remains one other level to explore. I have pointed out Khnopff's ambivalent attitude toward the isolated world so often seen in his works, and related it to his relationship with his sister, to the symbolic force of The Sister, and to the inextricability of the two. Its meaning was also mitigated, complicated and brought down to earth by Fernand's witnessing his younger brother Georges's tragedy. In 1887 (the year the portrait was painted), Georges, a promising and prolific poet, was accused of plagiarizing Verlaine. This claim destroyed the young man's career completely, and Georges, who had never been a hearty soul, went into years of isolation and exile, and did not publish his own work again.[256] Fernand therefore saw his brother, to whom he was so close as to be almost

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[255] For the publishing history of Christina's works, and her brothers' influence on them, see introduction in Edna Kotin Charles, *Christina Rossetti: Critical Perspectives, 1862-1982* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna UP, 1985).

[256] Khnopff may well have been particularly frightened by what happened to his brother; he had, two years earlier, had his own brush with accusations of copying and negative public exposure. Théâtre de la Monnaie performer Rose Caron publicly claimed that Fernand had used her features for *Le Vice Suprême*, inspired by the book about Leonora d'Este by Péladan. Fernand had responded by immediately, in the gallery, destroying the drawing, but Péladan had seen an opportunity for publicity and had written about the incident broadly. He thereby pulled Fernand more thoroughly into the public eye than he had been before, but did so by widely spreading the story of an encounter that Fernand would have preferred to have seen forgotten. Draguet believes that this incident is key to understanding Khnopff's approach to portraiture, but very differently that I do.

The publicity stoked by Péladan may have served Khnopff well in the long run. Khnopff had also had another brush with accusations of plagiarism by Ensor, but Octave Maus had strongly supported Khnopff. Georges had no such voices defending him from French accusations; his situation developed in the context of a larger French-Belgian animosity, and he became something of a victim of French resentment against what they felt were incursions onto their language. This larger set of conflicts has been a focus for fin-de-siècle Belgian literary studies especially. French writers believed that Belgians were ruining their language and taking far too many liberties with traditional form, while Belgians claimed that French French was like an old painted courtesan while Belgian French was a young, rosy-cheeked milkmaid. See especially

permanently linked in the press of the time, thrust against his will out of the public sphere and back into the domestic state.[257] He was faced, inescapably, with the infantilization, powerlessness and silencing that were its other side and its effects upon a *male* sibling.

In my earlier discussion of Fernand's portrait of Marguerite, I implied two ways of understanding the armorial clothing she is wearing. As an element of the painting that Khnopff may yet paint, after the portrait is done, of some idealized figure who would wear such clothes or present such a silhouette, this dress could be transformed into a symbol of strength, power and self-sufficiency – similar perhaps to the figures in *Solitude* (1894) [fig. 4.14] or *Avec Verhaeren: Un Ange* (1889). But in the reality we also see represented here, the dress is confining and jerry-rigged, the effort of its construction clearly showing, and indicates the lack of actual mobility of the person *posing*, at home and always behind the scenes. We cannot know Marguerite's thoughts – Khnopff has made that clear – but sisters had their own symbologies too: for sisters, brothers also could be proxy selves in the world, acting as they would wish to act, accomplishing things they would wish to accomplish but would never be allowed to do.[258]

Conclusion

For the poster announcing the 1891 Les XX exhibition, Khnopff adapted the figure in the portrait of his sister into a symbol of Art [figs. 4.15a and b]. The portrait itself had hung three years earlier in the same exhibition, and had since been shown in other international exhibitions and discussed in several articles and reviews. To anyone associated with Les XX or familiar with its core artists, the image on the poster would have been recognizable as a permutation of the portrait of Marguerite, with some very important changes.[259] The figure stands now in a column

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Marc Quaghebeur, "Verhaeren, critique d'Ensor et de Rembrandt," in *Emile Verhaeren*, eds. Peter-Eckhard Knabe and Raymond Trousson (Bruxelles: Editions de l'ULB, 1984) 107-125; Nathalie Aubert, Pierre-Philippe Fraiture and Patrick McGuinness, eds., *From Art Nouveau to Surrealism: Belgian Modernity in the Making* (Oxford: MHRA/Maney Publishing, 2007); Paul Gorceix, *Le Symbolisme en Belgique: Etude de Textes* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1982); and Mary Lydon, "Skirting the Issue: Mallarmé, Proust and Symbolism," *Yale French Studies* 74 (1988): 157-181.

[257] Because the brothers lived together throughout their youths and into middle age, we have no correspondence between them at all – one reason why Georges has largely disappeared from the accounts of Fernand's career and art.

[258] Of the three siblings, it is Marguerite's contribution that is hardest to explore. Georges's biographer, having interviewed his and Marguerite's children, asserts that she had her own unfulfilled desires to be an artist. We know that, before her marriage in 1890, she accompanied her brothers to some of the art world events they attended, and Verhaeren's letters to the struggling and disconsolate Georges, in the aftermath of his public disgrace, urge him to turn to Marguerite especially for insight and for comfort. The biography, and other unpublished resources on Georges, can be found in the archives of the Université Libre de Bruxelles.

[259] It would be typical of Khnopff's approach to self-promotion to ensure the immediate recognizability of his hand behind such a piece of publicity. As a poster for Les XX, it is unusual; no other poster had any figurative element. All others comprised the symbol of the group, designed by Khnopff in 1883 and consisting of two overlapping x's with "les" vertically written in front of it, the names of participants organized by country, and the logistical information.

of darkness to the side of the text, her body slightly cropped on her left. The woman's arm is no longer wrapped around the back of her body, though some of the creases that in the portrait were the result of her stance remain; together, these choices transform what was a comfortable and legible position to one of artificial straightness. The face of the woman on the poster is not Marguerite's; it is instead one that had begun to occur often in Khnopff's artworks, with a hard lantern jaw, straighter nose, and full upper lip. Her body is also now firmly gathered into the composition by the leaves that overlap her skirt and torso. She holds a lance whose point is the "A" in Art, and, in the most immediately striking change in the composition, she looks out toward the viewer, with unnaturally light eyes radically unlike those of Marguerite in her portrait. These are the eyes of *I Lock My Door Upon Myself*, or of *Les Caresses* and *At the Seaside*. But the adult women in his portraits do not gaze out of the paintings: they look away.

In her article "The Gaze of Fernand Khnopff," Dorothy Kosinski claims that it is this gaze – empty, light, both mirror and window – "that is the essence of [Khnopff's] Symbolism."[260] The human figure around the gaze, emptied as she believes it to be of any remnant of connection to a lived experience of the outside world, serves simultaneously as the personification of the artist himself and as the symbol of his separateness: "This figure's staring but inward-turned gaze is that of the artist-Narcissus, transformed and absorbed in the reflection that is representation in a world of images of his own making."[261] If we adopt Kosinski's reading, this gaze makes Khnopff the most complete distillation of the fin-de-siècle artist's ability to make of the representation of the female figure simultaneously the viewed object and the projection of the isolation of the artist himself: she is its motif, but never truly its subject.[262]

This reading of Khnopff's symbolist artworks is predicated on the idea that the figure is emptied of anything that might communicate a connection to an individual known to the artist outside of the artwork, and that the artist might wish, not to make impossible a connection between the person and the artwork, but to forge one. In Khnopff's portrait of his sister, Marguerite is subject to interpretation, and it would be blind to deny some degree of the projection so common among artists of the fin-de-siècle onto their sisters. But we have another term here. The very immanent mystery of the presence in time, and physical experience, of the woman posing, so carefully represented by Khnopff himself, further complicates the already complex significance of this particular female figure.[263] Perhaps this explains in part why

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[260] Kosinski 1992, 26.

[261] Ibid., 29.

[262] There are excellent considerations of these issues in the scholarship surrounding Pre-Raphaelite painting and Victorian poetry, especially around discussions of the character of the Lady of Shalott; see, for example: Joseph Chadwick, "A Blessing and a Curse: The Poetics of Privacy in Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott,'" *Victorian Poetry* 24:1 (Spring 1986): 13-3; Carol T. Christ, *Victorian and Modern Poetics* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984); and Carl Plasa, "'Cracked From Side to Side:' Sexual Politics in 'The Lady of Shalott,'" *Victorian Poetry* 31:3/4 (Autumn-Winter 1992): 247-263.

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[263] Khnopff was a dealer in all kinds of mystery, many of them transcendent or abstract. I speak here of the immanent mystery of the individual to distinguish his portrait subjects from his ideist

Khnopff so consistently presented his adult women sitters looking away and off to the side: if the gazes of his females so thoroughly petrify and personify simultaneously, then looking away is necessary for the frustration of that simultaneous subsumption and projection, and leaves room for the possibility of imagining the subjectivity of an unknown and unknowable foreign self.[264] Khnopff's portraits resist ricocheting back and forth between extremes of projection and objectification, not through the rejection of these possibilities, but by the addition of the opportunity for other possibilities as well: among others, of identification. Khnopff communicates the intimacy of the portrait encounter – most overtly in the portrait of his sister, but also in his other portraits – while maintaining the immanent mystery that is the sitter's experience of it.[265]

Fernand Khnopff's career was varied and, admittedly, uneven. At his best, Khnopff rose to one of Symbolism's most challenging goals: he created artworks that genuinely, confoundingly present no defined path of interpretation, and that do not flinch away from representing the discomfiting contemporary uncertainty about the relationship of inherited knowledge to modern experience and discoveries. His portraits, in their willingness to present the specificity and the mystery of the selves and experiences of other individuals, encouraged questioning of the possibilities and the goals of portraiture. The dominant insistence upon reducing all of the artist's works to the endless repetition of hollowed signs, filled always, only, with the artist's own inaccessible meaning, presents them as repelling, rather than inviting, an individual viewer's interpretation. Close analysis of Khnopff's portraits, and particularly that of his sister, demonstrates that these artworks aspired to different goals than are attributed to his oeuvre. These paintings should not be treated as watered-down versions of the non-portrait paintings to which they sometimes bear a compositional resemblance. In part, I have demonstrated this difference by refusing to take at face value Khnopff's famous declaration "On

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subjects, whose inaccessibility was not related to their own experience of interiority but to the ambiguity of their symbolism.

[264] The children in Khnopff's paintings do look out – the complex symbolizations of the female figure do not impinge on the possible meanings of these portraits in the same way they do those of the young women. Their own symbolism is to engage the viewer and to confound their assumptions about humanity, and as they are not meant to be read as fully formed, projections onto them mean very different things.

[265] I am not arguing for feminism on Khnopff's part here. The question of Khnopff's engagement with any contemporary political issues is a difficult one to take on, with the dearth of material about his life. He was associated with a number of women who were prominant in feminist circles in Brussels, like Isabel Errera and Mme Philippson, but each of these women were also deeply involved with the art world in general, the former as a collector and later curator and the latter as an artist herself. See Coppens 1995; and Mieka Raemdonck et al., "Isabelle Errera and the origin of the collection," *The Ottoman Silk Textiles of the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 5-9; Patricia Penn Hilden, *Women, Work and Politics, Belgium, 1830-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). On Khnopff and politics, see Leah Boston, "Symbolism and 'Social Art:' The Utility of the Sensual in Fernand Khnopff's *After Flaubert*" in *Symbolism, Its Origins and Its Consequences*, ed. Rosina Neginsky (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 147-158.

ne a que soi [sic]"[266] – and with its bizarre, defamiliarizing, vaguely and inaccurately medievalized syntax, Khnopff seems to demand that it *be* questioned. Close examination of his works, his life, his goals and his collaborations shows that whatever he meant by that provocative statement, it was ambivalent, and not indicative of an intention to turn away from the community in which he played such a central role.

[266] This phrase was a personal motto, and was on his ex libris and inscribed on the wall of his home. Its strange syntax is largely overlooked as an affectation or flight of fancy in Khnopff's avowal of his philosophy of the isolation of the artist. See especially Ross 1998, Lucbert 1999, and Dessy, 2013.

Conclusion: Van Gogh's Temporalities

At the heart of the very specific ambitions of the portrait project at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries were a number of interlocking and often anxiety-producing uncertainties. The human subject had come to seem more vulnerable to, and less separate from, his or her environment. A concomitant growing sense of the power of art intended to decorate the home changed the stakes for female portraiture, as did transformations in the understanding of women's importance and their experience of individuality. Also, debates about the subjectivity of artists themselves, and their duty both to nature and to the goals of art made the portrait an arena for a very focused battle: the occasion of portraiture, it was thought, had the potential to register an intersubjective encounter, with all of its rich, irreducible and subtle meanings. With their surfeit of information, balancing between the world and its interpretation, portraits, for many art writers, highlighted the insufficiency of photography and by extension of any form of straightforward Realism; but also of any extreme idealism which would tend to shy away from the portrait encounter's complexity and specificity.[267] That for the artist this experience could not be defined outside of the moment itself, and was specific to the people involved in it, was unquestionably the salient point in the defense against photography: for the photographer's role seemed a formulaic, easily stepped into by any available technician and identically deployed for any client. The portraitist, on the other hand, open and present, adapts, intuits, and processes. The portraitist, we might say, lines up alongside Baudelaire's painter of modern life – unsurprising given the poet's take on photography – but with one vitally important difference: Constantin Guys immersed himself utterly in the hustle, bustle and action of the world, and then headed home to the separate place and moment of representation, with all the distance and interpretation that involved.[268] Neither is the portraitist an anonymous prince, all-seeing and invisible, for his or her experience *is* of the moment, of the process, and of a subject who is aware and staying still. The concerns and action of life have been suspended for this encounter devoted to the production of its own representation.

Fernand Khnopff and Odilon Redon demonstrated a determination to mark both the uncertainties about subjectivity and the strangeness of the portrait encounter in many of the portraits they produced. Both artists shifted the conventional relationship between viewer and portrait, Redon by creating a portrait whose meaning and emphases change radically in front of an active and mobile viewer, and Khnopff by conjuring an ominous sense that the depicted figure is putting pressure on the membrane of the surface of the painting, and challenging its control over its little empire of represented space.[269] Both of these artists' works warp the conventions of balancing female sitter with domestic setting: Redon gives this relationship conceptual weight through his formal rhymings and disharmonies, his echoing forms and his jarring juxtapositions. Khnopff on the other hand encourages a viewer to be aware of the artist's manipulation and

[267] I am again drawing on Gadamer's idea of occasionality, especially as it relates to portraiture. See Gadamer 1982, 119-132, and footnote 54.
[268] Charles Baudelaire, "Le Peintre de la vie moderne," *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* (Paris: Sandre, 2009).
[269] The idea of the mobile viewer, and a paradigm for understanding how artworks of this time changed the relationship between viewer and object, can be found in Jill Devonyar and Richard Kendall, *Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2011.)

directorial power over the setting of the sitter in the space.[270] Both the portraits of Mme de Domecy and the depictions of girls and women by Khnopff have hints within them of the possibility of the subject calcifying into an icon, but they also provide consistent and multiple resistances to this eventuality. And for each of these artists, the formal treatment of portrait subjects deviates from their modus operandi for figures in other kinds of painting: Redon, most prominently, exercises a precision that is unknown anywhere else in his work, and Khnopff allows these portrait subjects a physicality and physiognomic specificity not seen in his columnar, lantern-jawed androgynes.[271] The temporality each artist has chosen to create in his artworks is vital to creating these effects. It is the temporality of the *encounter* and its stillness, the agreed-upon roles of artist and sitter and their genuine artificiality, if I may put it this way: the collaborative suspension of worldly concerns in order to create a situation *for* representation. That suspension becomes one of these portraits' prime subjects. The erasure of the stillness of this encounter, awkward as it may be – the substitution instead of the illusion of movement, spontaneity, activity – and the suppression of its space would be, so these portraits seem to propose, a deceitful piece of prestidigitation, the false representation of some merely imagined reality.

All of these aims and attributes can certainly not be claimed for symbolist portraiture as a whole, and not even for all portraits produced by Redon and Khnopff.[272] In this vast, varied and international movement, there are other artists for whom this gaping uncertainty about the nature of the subject and the goals of its representation enriched their portrait projects: Ferdinand Hodler, for example, took as a specific and conceptual challenge the marking of moments of stillness in some of his portraits of his lover Valentine Godé-Darel – many of these, poignantly, as he watched the progression of her fatal illness.[273] Jan Toorop, an artist who experimented

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[270] I am thinking here of "directorial" in the way that A. D. Coleman used it about photography, because it challenges assumptions about the naturalness or givenness of resonances in representations; see "The Directorial Mode: Notes towards a definition," *Photographic Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Andrew E. Hershberger (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014).

[271] In Redon's case, his early career may have had some forays into more precise illusionism, but this was certainly not true of any of his later work, or anything, ever, that he considered to be more than a sketch. For early Redon, see Druick 1994; Miller 2004.

[272] For Redon especially I have pointed out that many of his portraits hedge on these matters, and that a couple of them are quite phoned-in. While the Domecys are the most conceptually resonant, however, the portraits of, for example, Jeanne Chaine (1903), Marie Botkin (1900), a young Yseult Fayet (1908), and Paule Gobillard (1900) are also challenging and attempt some of these effects, all in different ways – as is/does the portrait of his wife, called *The Yellow Scarf*, of 1899. Khnopff is more consistent in his way of presenting that portrait-specific stillness, but exceptions exist for him too, particularly later in his career. His portrait of Isabel Errera (1893), for example, makes her look more like marble than flesh.

[273] Hodler's portraits are an interesting comparison to Monet's portrait of a dying Camille, for example, where in his impressionist way he seems to be facturally battling against the time passing, painting Camille's stillness as though it were that of a fleeting instant, rather than that of death. On Hodler, see Katharine Schmidt, ed., *Ferdinand Hodler: A Symbolist Vision* (Ostfildern: Hatke Catz, 2008) and Sharon L. Hirsh, *Ferdinand Hodler,* (NY: Braziller, 1982). On Monet's deathbed portrait of Camille, see for example *Claude Monet, 1840-1926* (Paris:

wildly with portraiture, produced multiple portraits of the same model that, taken together, challenge the independence of any one of her representations.[274] And a young Gustav Klimt, before he developed the technique of formulaically petrifying his sitters in gold and cobalt, showed how Khnopff's works affected him: for example, in his portrait of Sonja Knips, her intense and concentrated head emerges, rosy yet vulnerable, above its frothy sea of a pink dress [fig. 5.1].[275] Occasionally even in his portrait confections he preserves a conflict between the sitter and the aesthetic to which she has been subjected, notably in his portrait of young Mada Primavesi [fig. 5.2].[276] And Eugène Carrière made a career out of portraits that seemed to metaphorize the emergence, and threat of dissolution, of the subject in the very way he conjured them in the medium of either oil paint or lithography [fig. 5.3].[277] But all of these works would seem, in many ways, to be exceptions. The trajectory of portraiture, in most accounts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was towards obsolescence, or towards suspension in the category of genre painting or the personal projects of abstraction and stylistic avowal of selfhood in which the individual human face was just another motif to transform.[278] Portraiture persisted,

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RMN, 2010), 156-7, and Ruth Butler, *Hidden in the Shadow of the Master: The Model-Wives of Cezanne, Monet and Rodin* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2008).

[274] On Toorop, see *Jan Toorop: impressioniste, symboliste, pointilliste* (Paris: Institute Néerlandais, 1977), and Harry J. Kraaij and William Rothuizen, *Jan Toorop: Het Late Symbolisme* (Amsterdam: Jan Toorop Kabinet, Kunsthandel, 2001).

[275] For sources about Khnopff and Vienna, see Roberts-Jones 1988; Gemma Blackshaw, *Facing the Modern: The Portrait in Vienna 1900* (London: National Gallery Company, 2013); Agnes Husslein-Arco, *Gustave Klimt-Josef Hoffmann: Pioneers of Modernism* (Vienna: Belvedere, 2011). Also, see the edition of *Ver Sacrum* dedicated to Khnopff in 1898; on this publication, see Geoffrey Simmins, "Fernand Khnopff and *Ver Sacrum*," *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies* 9:2 (1988): 33-51.

[276] On the portrait of Primavesi specifically, see Katharine Baetjer, "About Mada," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 40 (2005): 131-150.

[277] On the way that Carrière thematizes the vulnerability of the self, see Jane R. Becker, "The Space/Form Continuum: Rodin, Rosso, Carrière," *Cantor Arts Center Journal* 3 (2002): 162-171; Serge Lemoine, ed. *Auguste Rodin, Eugène Carrière* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006); and Eldon N. Van Liere, "Blurred Distinctions: Carrière, de Goncourt, Rodin, and Bracquemond," *Kresge Art Museum Bulletin* 5 (1990): 1-15.

[278] This trajectory is spelled out most succinctly and effectively in Heather McPherson's introduction (Heather McPherson, *The Modern Portrait in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 1-13). Brilliant, in his overview of portraiture, suggests the same, as do the organizers of the exhibition *The Mirror and the Mask: Portraiture in the Age of Picasso* (Madrid: Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, 2007). John Klein's *Matisse Portraits* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001) argues that the works it considers cease to qualify as portraits because they become so completely about the artist rather than the subject, as does the last chapter, Matisse again, in Garb 2007. People have in fact theorized the "death of the portrait," as in William A. Ewing, *About Face: The Death of the Portrait* (London: Hayward Gallery Publishing, 2004). As recently as 2011, when Lucien Freud died, Mark Lawson in *The Guardian* once again declared the death of the painted portrait. But then, we also have "The Death of the Death of the Portrait," Richard Wright's review of *The Death of the Portrait*: such proclamations are meant as hyperbole.

of course, but for any ambitious artist it did not seem to have a purpose unique to itself, or play an important role in the explorations of the new potentials and purposes open to modern art.

The portraits on which I have focused reflect a powerful ambition for portraiture in itself, but success in any given case – the strategies employed to face the challenge – were, given the very nature of portraiture, rarely transferable to the project that followed. Each artist had his own approach, but it would be detrimental should that approach ever preclude sensitivity to the specifics of each portrait encounter. The kind of portraiture these artists created demanded that each work be a rumination on the interpretation involved in representing an irreducible and unique human creature, experienced and depicted as such, with an identity and an environment whose power needed always to be examined, and questioned, differently.

The painter's opportunity here to assert his genius, his moral presence (to use the terms of the age), did not predominantly task his ability to bend nature to his particular vision, but rather his ability as an individual to attend to and take in the person in front of him and the space and moment around him, and then to represent his experience of them. This was the ideal that the writers on portraiture – Fromentin, Riegl and Simmel, prominntly – regularly insisted upon, and this paradigm for understanding the humanity of the artist, and testing it, became less and less vital as the threat of the photographic machine ceased to be so prominent in the debates about the status and purposes of art.[279] By the early twentieth century, after all, formal evidence within even straight photography of the *subjectivity* of the camera's operator was acknowledged, and the rapidly improving technologies of photography made the increasingly tiny moment of the photographic encounter seem more and more equipped to aspire to being evidence of a genuine and shared encounter between two people – rather as painted portraiture, when acknowledging stillness, asserted itself in the works I have examined here. And photography was able to reconcile all the instantaneity and spontaneity, which had previously been the conventional portrait painters most prized illusion (and which Redon and Khnopff eschewed), with a commitment to the controlled faithfulness of rendition that for the artists I have discussed had necessitated the communication of the stillness of the pose.

I would like to conclude by exploring the portraiture of another artist who had immense ambitions for portraiture, whose individual portraits were also often attached to larger, significant decorative works, and whose portrait subjects and poses sometimes found themselves transposed into symbolic compositions – but whose paintings nonetheless are a complete and illuminating counterexample to the portraits I have been exploring so far: Vincent van Gogh.

The months after his arrival in Arles in 1888 may have been some of the most hopeful in van Gogh's life, and they coincided with his newly reinforced determination to devote himself to portraiture. Unlike so many of the artists Camille Mauclair described in his *États de la peinture française de 1850 à 1920*, a discussion of which text opened my introduction, van Gogh's portraiture was not an exception in his oeuvre either in theory or in practice.[280] He himself claimed it was a sort of crystallization of his aspirations for, and beliefs about, art's role in society, and he pursued it just as determinedly and experimentally as he did other genres; in his

[279] See Garb 2007; McPherson 2004; Robert A. Sobieszek, *Ghost in the Shell: Photography and the Human Soul, 1850-2000: Essays on Camera Portraiture* (LA: LACMA, 1999); Dorothy Kosinski, ed., *The Artist and the Camera: Degas to Picasso* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2000).

[280] Mauclair 1921.

Arles period especially, after his recent exposure to the many art movements in Paris, he attempted to work through the different *isms* to arrive at his own approach.[281] Gauguin's arrival signalled both the beginning of his desire for an artistic community's actualization and its destruction; it also coincided with van Gogh's commencement of his series of portraits of the Roulins. In November of 1888 – before the troubles really began – with Gauguin working beside him, van Gogh painted his portrait of the Roulin matriarch, Augustine, by gaslight, sitting in the corner of a room in the Yellow House [fig. 5.4].[282]

Superficially, this painting has much in common both with the portraits of Mme de Domecy and with Khnopff's portrait of his sister. It was part of a set, all of which were intended to resonate together as a decorative series and possibly to join the works of "La Décoration," his name for the works covering the walls of the Yellow House, which already included the portraits of Eugène Boch, and Paul Milliet. Redon's paintings similarly overlapped with his decorations for the Domecys, as discussed, and Khnopff's portrait would eventually take up residence in his own home, part of a carefully curated installation.[283] Mme Roulin's bust would also, much like Marguerite's figure, migrate into an iconic composition: *La Berceuse* [fig. 5.9], a composition of which he made five different versions, and each of which was to have been flanked by paintings of sunflowers to create triptychs of domesticity and comfort. There is some debate about how completely the portrait served as the basis for *La Berceuse*, but van Gogh regularly used one

[281] The literature on van Gogh's life and artistic philosophy is extensive; here are some of the works in which his portraits specifically are analyzed: Griselda Pollock, "Vincent van Gogh and Dutch Art: A Critical Study of van Gogh's Notion of the Modern" (Diss.: Courtauld Institute, 1981); Aimée Brown Price, "Two Portraits by Vincent van Gogh and Two Portraits by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes," *The Burlington Magazine* 117:872 (November 1975): 714-718; Deborah Silverman. *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Search for Sacred Art* (NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000); Lauren Soth, "Van Gogh's Images of Women Sewing," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 57:1 (1994): 105-110; Evert van Uitert, "Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin in Competition: Vincent's Original Contribution," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 11:2 (1980): 81-106, and "Van Gogh's Concept of his Oeuvre," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 12:4 (1981-82): 223-244; Ingo F. Walther and Rainer Metzger*, Van Gogh: The Complete Paintings* (London: Taschen, 2001); Carol Zemel, *Van Gogh's Progress: Utopia, Modernity and Late Nineteenth-Century Art* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997); Cat Exh. Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Studio of the South* (2001); and George Keyes et al., *Van Gogh Face to Face: The Portraits* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000). Specifically on his time in Paris, see Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov, *Vincent van Gogh: His Paris Period, 1886-1888* (Utrecht: Editions Victrine, 1976); and *Van Gogh à Paris* (Paris: Musée d'Orsay, 1988).

[282] The time spent together by Gauguin and van Gogh is thoroughly explored in the sources in footnote 281, most particularly Silverman 2005, van Uitert 1980 and AIC 2001; see also and Martin Gayford, *The Yellow House: Van Gogh, Gauguin and Nine Turbulent Weeks in Arles* (NY: Fig Tree, 2006).

[283] For more about van Gogh's Decoration, see Roland Dorn, "The Arles Period: Symbolic Means, Decorative Ends," in Keyes 2000, and also Hans Belting, *The Invisible Masterpiece* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 177-192.

painting as the model for a repetition or variation, and the correspondences between the heads and shoulders are so strong that its influence is undeniable.[284]

Mme Roulin was also, during these months in particular, an important figure in van Gogh's life, and therefore someone to whom he felt connected – as, importantly, Redon and Khnopff did to their subjects.[285] His strongest friendship was of course with Joseph Roulin, the family patriarch, but in his opinion, Joseph's extraordinary largeness of life was in part due to his being a great and affectionate family man - as van Gogh would have wished to be himself. Van Gogh was a generous soul, and was consoled, rather than disheartened, by others' having the things he himself longed for and lacked. He spent much time with the whole family, and felt a fondness for them all. Mme Roulin's feeling are, unsurprisingly, less known to us; as with both Jeanne de Domecy and Marguerite Khnopff, we have no direct evidence of her thoughts and ideas. Augustine's daughter Marcelle (the infant in the series) would recall, sixty-some years later, that her mother had been uncomfortable with van Gogh's intensity: specifically for this portrait sitting, she had looked instead, consistently, at the charming Gauguin.[286] We also know, however, that she visited van Gogh in the hospital even when her husband was away in Marseilles.[287] Regardless of her stance, van Gogh admired her, and some of his most comfortable time was spent in her family circle

The portraits of these three women – Jeanne de Domecy, Marguerite Khnopff, and Augustine Roulin – also share many of the attributes considered to distinguish the modern portrait. In addition to their emphasis on the decorative potential of portraiture, they also all experiment with the relationship, and the hierarchy, of subject and background – though each very differently. Mme Roulin's resonances with her surroundings are unusually strong, to the point of being very flattening and a bit intrusive: her eyes are the exact shade of the path in the window to the left; each and every tone of her skin corresponds exactly to some patch of pigment making up the wall behind her or the dress she wears - making this work, among other things, a rather disconcerting symphony in yellow and green; the contour lines of her body are uncompromisingly done in the exact shade of the contours of the mahogany chair in which she sits and the earthenware pots behind her.[288] Van Gogh also shared with his contemporaries a conscious attention to the experience of surface, though again very differently. Redon's interest

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[284] There is much literature dedicated to *La Berceuse*, much of it attempting to figure out which order in which the five paintings were executed. See for example Jan Hulsker, "Van Gogh, Gauguin, and the Two Arlésiennes: Parts I and II," *The Burlington Magazine* 134:1074 (September and November 1992): 570-577 & 707-715; and Silverman, "Van Gogh's Berceuse," in Silverman 2000, 313-369. On repetitions as well, see Eliza E. Rathbone et al., *Van Gogh: Repetitions* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2013); Marije Vellekoop, *Van Gogh at Work* (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 2013).

[285] Van Gogh's relationship with Roulin and his family is discussed in all books dedicated to his portraits and his time in Arles; see sources in footnote 281. See especially Silverman 2000.

[286] Marcelle was interviewed in 1955 by J.-N. Priou; this interview was published in a journal about La Poste: *Revue des PTT de France*, 2 May-June, 1955.

[287] Dorn provides this detail, and a description of van Gogh's response to Roulin's departure for Marseilles; see Dorn 2000, 164-171.

[288] Elsewhere in the painting, like around the window, the paths, the tops of pots, contours are painted in black – and her contours will become so in all of the *Berceuse* paintings. Van Gogh did write that he intended to paint the whole family again, if he could: see Dorn 2000, 164.

manifests most strongly in the second portrait with his extreme contrast of media; Khnopff's, according to the analysis of Reinhold Heller, shows in his presentation and orchestration of the experience of his painting rather than in his manipulation of the paint on the canvas pasted on panel.[289] For van Gogh, the obviousness and heft of each brushstroke is as discernable here as in any of his artworks of this time, from *Gauguin's Chair* to the paths through *Les Alyscamps*. His very distinctive way of painting, with its simultaneous expressivity and deliberation, demonstrates his desire to create on canvas the order and meaning that he believed the world should also have, but which he rarely experienced. It also introduces a temporality of experience for the viewer, which has nothing to do with the sitter: following the strokes, seeing their overlap and interaction, allows the viewer to enter into the time of van Gogh's *production* of this painting, a kind of experience not immediately available to the beholders of Khnopff's or Redon's portraits.

Van Gogh's portrait also has remnants of convention that mark it as transitional, in Heather McPherson's terms, in the process of modernism's transformation and, for a while at least, virtual annihilation of the portrait.[290] This is an *old* composition, with its three-quarters bust-length subject to one side and its suggestive view to the other: Ghirlandaio's 1490 portrait *Old Man with a Young Boy* comes to mind, as does Christoph Amberger's portrait of Matthaüs Schwarz. And there are two small gestures towards the recognition of Mme Roulin's awareness of the pose as a specific encounter, and a formal one: the directness of her gaze registers this awareness for van Gogh, as does her earring, whose gold and green so conveniently conform to the color scheme.[291] To accompany these, there is also a single accidental detail dutifully registered by both van Gogh and Gauguin: the unruly curl of hair coming out from the nape of her neck.

Many similarities then – but in several illuminating ways, the intentions behind van Gogh's choices, the purpose destined for his portrait, and the way he considered that it should be read are radically different.

Van Gogh's series of the Roulin family fixes the roles and symbolic import of each of its members [figs. 5.5-8].[292] Every choice that he made when portraying Mme Roulin makes *sense*

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[289] Heller, Reinhold. "Concerning Symbolism and the Structure of Surface." *Art Journal* 45:2 (Summer 1985): 146-153: Heller misidentifies the work as being directly on panel. However, his argument is about the way the portrait was hung, and that it was covered with glass: unusual at the time, unnecessary in the protected space, and done presumably therefore to give more separation from the object, and more interference to the surface.

[290] McPherson 2001, 1-13.

[291] The outward gaze can communicate many things in portraiture, as we have already seen, and status, age, gender, class, all inflect its meaning – so I do not want to generalize here. In van Gogh's portraits of adults, regardless of gender, subjects almost always gaze out. In *La Berceuse*, on the other hand, an iconic image of a genre scene, she looks away.

[292] This is true for most of his portrait subjects, although his strategies change throughout his career. See Pollock 1981, Silverman 2000, Dorn 2000, and van Uitert 1988. The best study of van Gogh's portraiture remains Pollock's dissertation, which has never been published. It can be an uncomfortable read for anyone with an unqualified admiration for van Gogh, as while it never challenges the fact that he was a generous soul, it problematizes the way in which he appeared to expect individuals in the world to conform to his expectations. Soth and Zemel's studies of his relationships particularly with Sien and with his sister Wil also imply that this was at least

according to van Gogh's ways of ordering the human world. The greens and yellows that dominate her portrait symbolically link her to calm, to the earth and nature, to happiness and contentment and sunlight.[293] Within the structure of the color theories so important to the artist, these colors also made her the complement of her husband, in blue. Her eldest son is also in blue, like his father, but against a green background that connects him also to his mother.[294] The green of her dress is a complement to the red behind Camille, her younger son, who wears a little blue soldier's cap so similar to his father's official postman's hat – and the same greens and yellows also dominate the portrait of baby Marcelle, whom Augustine is holding in the painting. Marcelle's white corresponds to another detail in the portrait devoted to her mother: the bulbs growing on the other side of the window, placed to the left of the woman's figure – as was the baby. This journey of color associations through the five portraits wends its way back to a symbolic establishment of meaning operating here. The mother, cultivator of her family, is here shown with her crop: tender young shoots like Marcelle, better established bulbs starting to fatten up, and fully developed onions. Purely imaginary, these plants, and they in no way conform to the way that onions actually grow – but as a plant of which both the shoots and the bulbs are good to eat, and one which can sprout multiple times, it is a very neat symbol both for the mother's nurturing and for the different ages of her children.[295] Of the portraits, Augustine's alone has a motif in the background – it is hard to say why. Was this a response to the artwork Gauguin was producing beside him?[296] Was it a compositional necessity in what is his lone

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occasionally true in his lived relationships as well as in his portraits; see Pollock; Zemel 1987 and 1997; Lauren Soth,"Van Gogh's Images of Women Sewing," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 57:1 (1994): 105-110.

[293] On Van Gogh and color symbolism, see more or less everything ever published about him and an incalculable number of his letters. Specifically, see Kurt Badt, *Die Farbenlehre Van Goghs* (Köln: Dumont Schauburg, 1961); Florence de Mèredieu, *Van Gogh: l'argent, l'or, le cuivre, la couleur* (Paris: Blusson, 2011); and Lauren Soth, "Van Gogh's Agony," *Art Bulletin* 68:2 (June 1986): 301-313 especially for how van Gogh related his use of color to Delacroix as a precedent and its deployment in *Starry Night*.

[294] On these portraits and the ways their color use and symbolism links them together, as well as on their connection to van Gogh's decorative practice, see Dorn 2000.

[295] The larger the onion, the more greens it will have produced – so the very large bulbs with almost no sprout make no sense. Also, bulbs would never be this visible in pots, not even with tulips or other bulb flowers. When we remember that many of the works created alongside Gauguin constitute van Gogh's most concentrated attempts to leave his naturalist roots behind and experiment with the world of imagination, the symbolic deployment and manipulation of the onions makes more sense for an artist who was generally much more attentive to natural details in the world around him. See especially Silverman 2000 on Gauguin's effect on van Gogh.

[296] Van Gogh's vast writings about his artwork and his relationship and rivalry with Gauguin, give us information about his paintings so far beyond what we have on other artists as to make comparative analysis at times difficult. About the paintings created alongside Gauguin, Hollis Clayson has said that the only meaning reliably gleaned is about the two artists themselves, and that there is no other subject than their exchange. This is overstated, I think, but points out an undeniably important element that exists only much more abstractly for other artists in less intimate situations. Hollis Clayson, "'Some Things Bear Fruit'? Witnessing the Bonds Between van Gogh and Gauguin," *The Art Bulletin* 84:4 (December 2002): 670-684.

landscape-oriented portrait? Regardless, it places the symbolization of cultivation squarely in the purview of the mother; Joseph's relations to his children manifest in the boys' direct emulation of his clothing and imply a future in which they will become more like him. Van Gogh was an extremely dualistic thinker, perhaps especially about gender. His world was a complex of opposites – complementary rather than combative, given van Gogh's constantly beleaguered optimism, but opposites nonetheless.[297] As a woman, as a mother, Augustine's meaning is locked down, and she can stand for the idea of Mother here as well. The decorative series of portraits van Gogh executed, and intended to continue, aligns powerfully with Aurier's definition of the decorative as the soul of art. Art was the greatest product, Aurier believed, of humans' desire to mark themselves onto their environment, to see manifest all around themselves the signs of the world as they would *will* it to be, as their intellect can make it. This becomes poignant when we consider van Gogh's struggles. He may have taken issue with Aurier's interpretations of his own work, and the two men may have had radically different visions about the *ways* in which the human intellect should be impressed onto an environment, but that the impress happened, in van Gogh's paintings at least, is not in doubt.[298] Whatever else van Gogh's portraits were intended to do for others, they were also intended for *him*. They were a vision of a world in which he wanted to live, and which he wanted others to see when they looked at the society around him.[299]

The painting of Augustine Roulin *is* a portrait though, intended as a record of a specific human being; and the little details that mark an accident, like the muss of her hair, as well as those that indicate the portrait situation – her gaze, her earring – assure us that whatever symbolic scheme is dictating much of the picture's appearance, we should not forget its origin in the individual. These subtle choices are placed in relief when we compare this portrait to Gauguin's outcome from the same sitting [fig. 5.10].[300] In his composition, Augustine's gaze is

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[297] As with van Gogh and color, there are an overwhelming number of sources about this. Many of them tend toward the psychoanalytic; those sources are not cited here or in my bibliography because I do not find them useful, although there are some interesting articles on the *history* of pathologizing van Gogh. Most moving on this issue is Silverman 2005. Also, on the power of dualisms in nineteenth century thought, see Cole 2010 and Dijkstra 1974 and 1986.

[298] Aurier 1890, and "Les Isolés: Vincent van Gogh," *Mercure de France* 1 (January 1890): 24-29. Aurier's article about van Gogh celebrated him, but also described him as isolated and singular, as having the visions of a madman. While van Gogh was very polite in his response to Aurier, the depths to which Aurier's analysis of his work disturbed him is revealed. Van Gogh both disagrees with what the antinaturalist Aurier believes that art should be, and also is afraid of Aurier's intimation that his painting reveals him to be unstable – for Aurier, this is evocation and hyperbole, but for van Gogh it of course threatens to be real. See Van Gogh's letter to Theo of February 12, 1890; and Patricia Mathews, "Aurier and van Gogh: Criticism and Response," *The Art Bulletin* 68:1 (March 1986): 94-104.

[299] Van Gogh's vision is called "spiritual" by Silverman and "utopian" by Zemel, Uitert speaks of its being first and foremost a dream of a community that might surround him.

[300] Gauguin's portraits, from early ones of his children to those made in Tahiti, were never about the intersubjective encounter or any of the other challenges I have described as informing Khnopff's or Redon's. This is true not only of his portraits of women and others, like the Bretons and the Tahitians and Marquesans he took as models, but also of his family and friends: his portraits of van Gogh and, especially, Meyer de Haan are particularly distorted and border on cruel, and his portrait of the cellist Upaupa Schneklud looks uncannily like a self-portrait. On

ambiguous, eyes pointed in slightly different directions; she has no jewelry; her hair is austere and smoothed into a *cloisonniste* shape (that one tiny rebellious lock almost disappears into the painting by Gauguin that he imposed on the wall behind her). In contrast to van Gogh's depiction of the comparatively low décolletage of Augustine's dress, Gauguin covers her to the neck and even adds a hint of white for even greater modesty, making her bosom an even more enormous, round, solid mass. Van Gogh adopted all of these details from Gauguin when he transformed his figure into *La Berceuse*: it was an intensification of the symbolic meanings he had woven previously into the portrait, and though *La Berceuse* left behind its specificities, its emotional and ideological terms have not changed. As we have seen, Khnopff's portrait of Marguerite also thematized a family relationship, but it identified her *as a participant*, exploring and questioning the limits of her role. Marguerite's symbolic transmutations do not symbolize her gender, nor do they simplify objectify her role as sitter; their meaning expands and oscillates in meaning constantly. *La Berceuse* has changed from the portrait of Augustine Roulin only in that it has simply ceased to be the portrait of *a* mother, and become *everyman*'s mother.

All of the members of the Roulin family slot together, each one playing a well-defined and harmonious part in a larger representational scheme that presents an alternate, ideal and more *satidfactory* world in which everything is woven together – a world that promises coherence and sense. This group has been called van Gogh's equivalent of Emile Zola's Rougon-Macquarts – without the excoriating bitterness and anger, of course.[301] I have spoken here mainly of gender, but van Gogh's ideas of Augustine as a type of woman were inextricable from convictions he held also about ethnicity and class; he had written of her as an ideal sitter for a portrait and model for *La Berceuse* because she embodied the ultimate Arlesian good woman (she looked warm, open, simple, un-urban – Arles is his Japan, after all), and was a working-class woman into the bargain.[302] All of van Gogh's subjects in his Arles period portraits were selected this way: as epitomes of types that were preconceived and delineated, conjured up by van Gogh's convictions and simply waiting to take on concrete form. *The Zouave*, *The Poet: Eugène Boch*, *The Lover: Paul Milliet*: this is true of each of them.[303] Art, for van Gogh, should

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Gauguin's portraits, particularly of de Haan, see Eric M. Zafran, ed, *Gauguin's Nirvana: Painter at Le Pouldu, 1889-1890* (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 2001) and Jelka Krüger et al, *Meijer de Haan: le maitre caché*, Paris: Musée d'Orsay, 2010.

[301] Dorn 2000, and also see Judy Sund, *True to Temperament: Van Gogh and French Naturalist Literature* (NY: Cambridge UP, 1992).

[302] Van Gogh's romanticization of the rural or "primitive" echoes many utopian ideals of the late nineteenth century often most concentrated in the theories of the anarcho-communists – see the writings of Peter Kropotkin, as quoted in Annemarie Springer , "Terrorism and Anarchy: Late nineteenth-century Images of a Political Phenomenon in France," *Art Journal* 38:4 (Summer 1979): 61-66, and two articles by Robyn S. Roslak: "Organicism and the Construction of a Utopian Geography: The Role of the Landscape in Anarcho-communism and Neo-Impressionism," *Utopian Studies* 1:2 (1990): 96-114; and "The Politics of Aesthetic Harmony: Neo-Impressionism, Science and Anarchism," *The Art Bulletin* 73:3 (September 1991): 381-390. See also Tsukasa Kodera, "Japan as primitivistic utopia: van Gogh's *japonisme* portraits," *Simiolus* 14:3 (1984): 189-208.

[303] Eugène Boch was an artist rather than a poet, of course – something that would have seemed close enough to a number of late nineteenth century individuals – but van Gogh had been looking for a poet-type for a while, and had listed most of Boch's characteristics before he met him.

weave the social world together, present it with the order and sense – and thereby, beauty – that he believed it should have. And such an art required that van Gogh believe in the kind of viewer who would immediately grasp these paintings' universal, wholly obvious, transparently communicated meaning: "I'd like to paint in such a way that if it comes to it," he wrote, "everyone who has eyes could understand it."[304] Such a desire is the diametrical opposite of the ideal relationship to the viewer of Symbolist works. Van Gogh rarely encountered this insightful everyman, open to the absolute and obvious truth of his paintings, and for his portraits especially he believed that the perfect viewer, the world *full* of perfect viewers, belonged to the future.[305]

What does it mean to conceive of the portrait project primarily in historical terms? Portraits of the past become *types* to a later audience, their meanings seemingly fixed by time: there is almost no way around this. Part of Simmel's argument about Rembrandt's exceptionality was that he created portraits *so* dedicated to the specificity of the intersubjective encounter that his subjects remained "un-typable," even some two hundred-odd years later – no one else, Simmel believed, had ever managed this. Van Gogh was himself a great lover of the portraits of the past, particularly those by Hals and other seventeenth century Dutch painters: all together, they showed him a world of equality and open, everyday contentment, the Holland written of by so many late nineteenth century Republican idealists.[306] Approached for their documentary potential, as contributions to a historical narrative, portraits from the past may seem to have tremendous didactic power, which they claim *because* of their status as portraits, because they originated in the observation of a specific individual (remember that van Gogh, for all of his

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What did not already fit, van Gogh massaged: Boch is far gaunter in the portrait than in reality, his eyes emphasized; he, in fact, looks much more like van Gogh himself in his portrait than he did in the flesh. We don't know the name of the young man who modeled for *The Zouave*, but van Gogh's description of him to Theo also slices him up into characteristic parts. *La Mousmé*, *Paul Milliet* – much has been written on this theme in many of van Gogh's portraits; see sepecially McPherson 2001; Dorn 2000; Cornelia Homburg, "Affirming Modernity: Van Gogh's *Arlesienne*," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 21:3 (1992): 127-138; Naifeh 2011, Silverman 2000; Sund 1992; van Uitert 1981.

With all of these portraits, and especially the Roulins, van Gogh also wanted to attract commissions, and how he would have responded to the commissioned portrait position we cannot know.

[304] To Theo, August 21st or 22nd, 1888.

[305] Griselda Pollock brings together many quotations in her very convincing arguments about this; see especially pp. 453-496. Pollock also argues that van Gogh retreated into a conception of the future in order to avoid any uncertainty about his political and class beliefs concerning his own milieu.

[306] Van Gogh also saw Joseph Roulin as the perfect embodiment of the working-class Republican – although his understanding of Roulin's actual politics, as Pollock has demonstrated, were based on some generalizations and faulty assumptions, influenced by his desire to see his own ideas in all people. For more on van Gogh's relationship with Joseph Roulin particularly, and his many pictures of him, see Kurt Varnedoe, "Joseph Roulin," *MOMA* 4:2 (2001): 10-13, and Hulsker I and II, 1992. For more on seventeenth century Holland in the fin-de-siècle imaginary, see Chalard-Fillaudeau 2004, Chu 1974, and McQueen 2003.

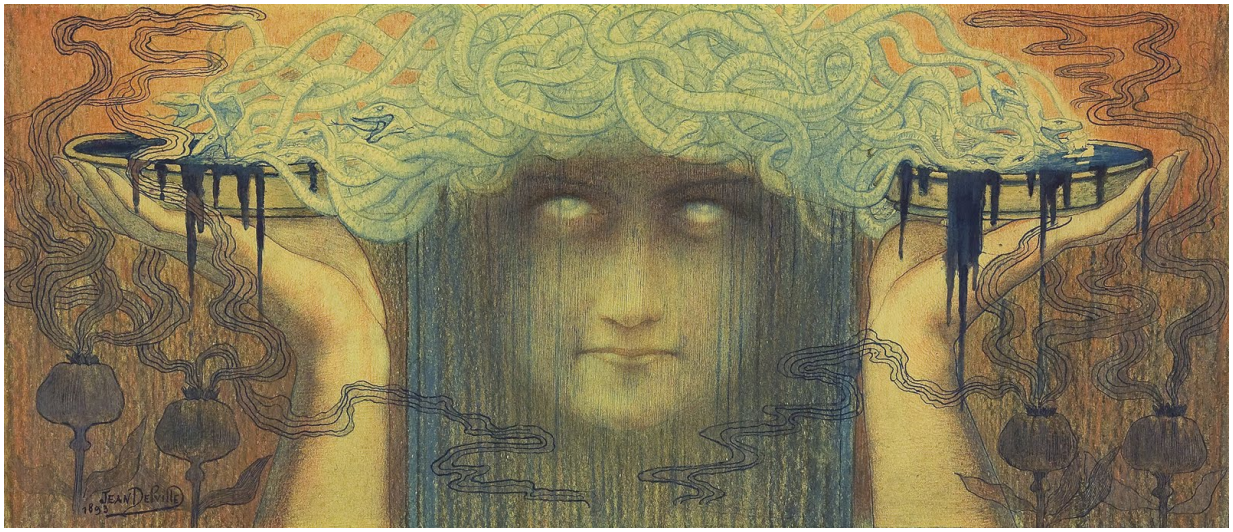
simplifications, left deliberate clues to indicate that initial individuality).[307] Van Gogh thought of and painted his own portraits similarly: he wished to construct a future past for a future viewer. Looking with the historian's eye at his own surroundings, he sought their salient features – not the flux and chaos of the specific, but the coherence of the general, to give the order that historical narrative and distance could impose onto his own time and place – an order he himself yearned for. And this is a different kind of stillness altogether.

Simmel argued that Rembrandt, devoting himself, in his portraits, so completely to the problem of representing the individual and the intersubjective encounter, sacrificed the possibility of making any general, larger transcendental statements. This sacrifice was necessary, however: if he had not let go of other goals, he would never have been able to explore and represent individuality in the depth that he did. The irreducibility of the individual, for Simmel, *should* make her portrait's meaning impossible to transfer to anyone or anything else. The portraits discussed in this dissertation, by both Redon and Khnopff, also delve deep into the mysteries of their subjects, and show sustained and open-ended investigation into the relationship between individuals, the world, and their representation. These conceptually rich portraits offer viewers the opportunity to continue that investigation on their own.

[307] Pollock's dissertation is again the best source here, though both Zemel 1997 and Silverman 2005 also consider van Gogh's faith in future viewers.
Temporality of viewing plays a key role in Rosalind Krauss's analysis of the way that Rodin's sculpture disrupts the order and comfort of narrative – although to extremely different ends from the one I discuss here. See "Narrative Time: The Question of *The Gates of Hell*," *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge: MIT P, 1989), 7-37. On historical value and age value in the late nineetenth century, see Riegl, "The Modern Cult Of Monuments: Its Character And Its Origins," *Oppositions* 25 (1982): 21-51. Simmel also, as mentioned briefly in the first chapter, considered the construction of historical narrative one of the premier obsessions, and crimes, of the nineteenth century.

Figures.

1.1) Jean Delville, *Mysteriosa: Portrait of Mme Stuart Merrill*, 1893, pencil and pastel on paper, 40x32 cm.



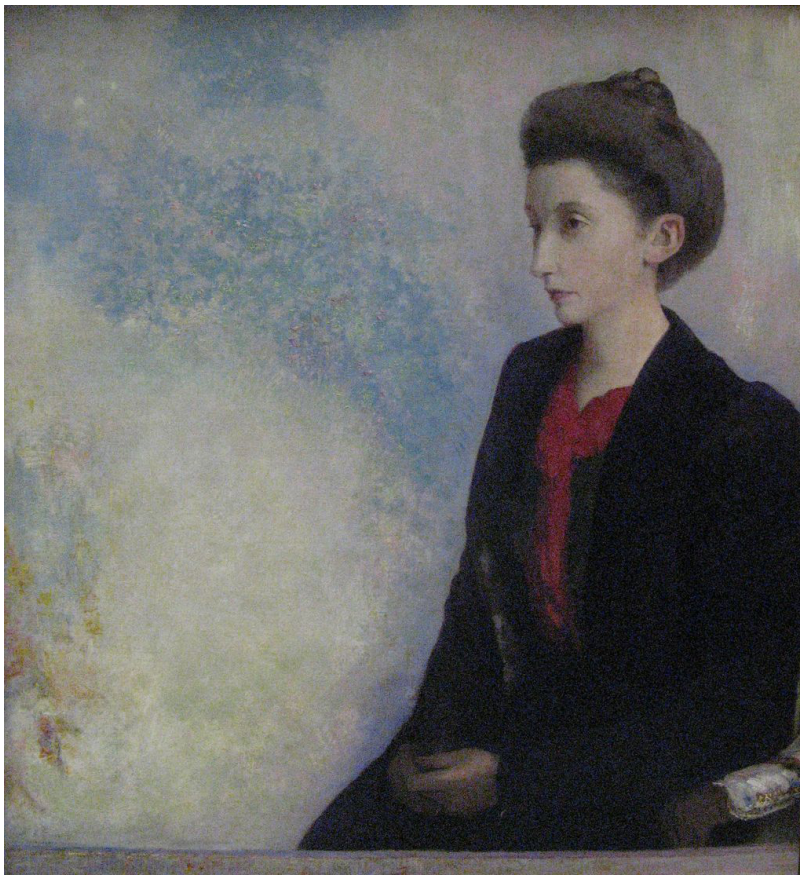
1.2) Delville, *Medusa*, location unknown, same media as above.

2.1) Rembrandt, *The Night Watch,* 1642, oil on canvas, 363x437 cm.

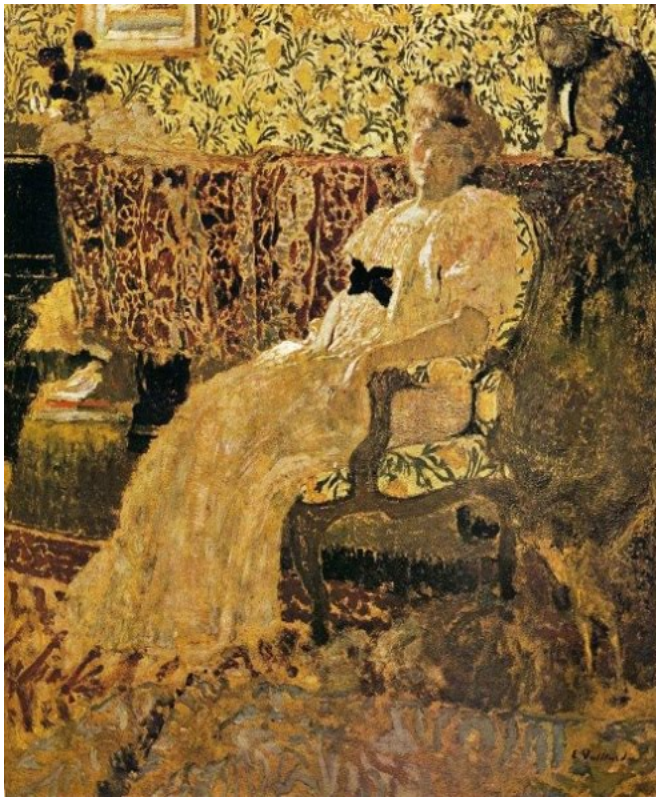
2.2) School of Rembrandt, *The Good Samaritan*, c 1650, oil on canvas, 114x135 cm.

2.3) Rembrandt, *The Syndics of the Draper's Guild*, 1662, oil on canvas, 191x279 cm.

3.1) Odilon Redon, Plate 10 of *L'Apocalypse de Saint-Jean*: "Et le diable qui les séduisait, fut jeté dans l'étang de feu et de soufre, où est la bête et le faux prophète," 1899, lithograph.

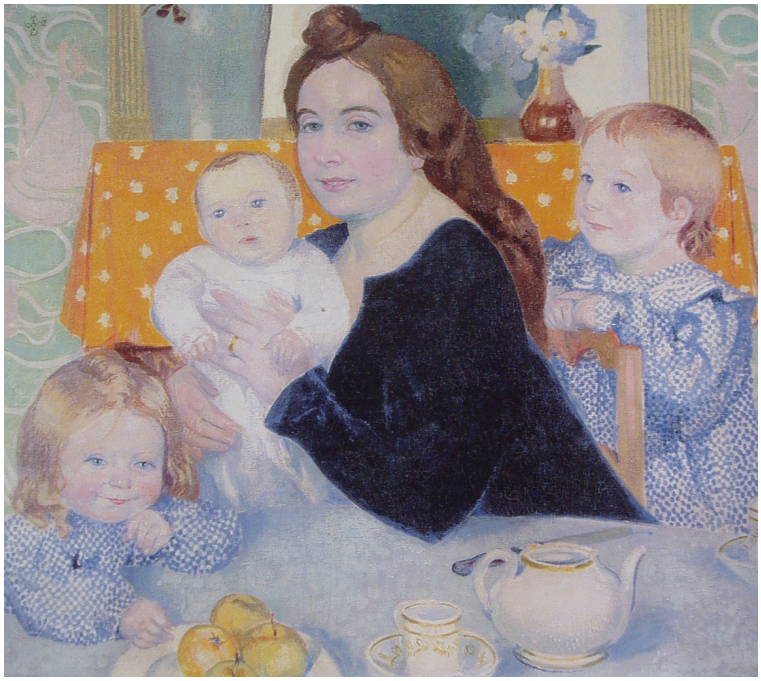


3.2) Redon, *Portrait of the Baroness de Domecy*, 1900, oil on canvas, 74.3 x 68.5 cm.



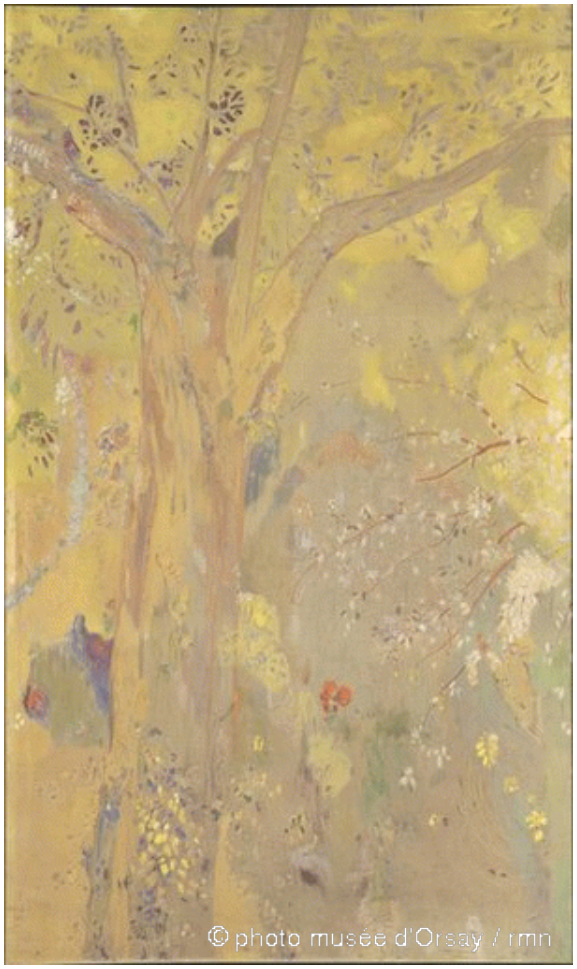
3.3) Edouard Vuillard, *Misia and Thadée Natanson*, c.1897, oil on paper mounted on canvas, 104 x 71.1 cm.

3.4) Vuillard, *Misia at the Piano with Cipa Godebski*, c. 1897, oil on cardboard, 63.5 x 56 cm.



3.5) Maurice Denis, *Family Portrait*, 1902, oil on canvas, 82 x 94 cm.

3.6) Vuillard, Schopfer panel: *Woman Seated in a Garden*, 1898, distemper on canvas, 214x161 cm.



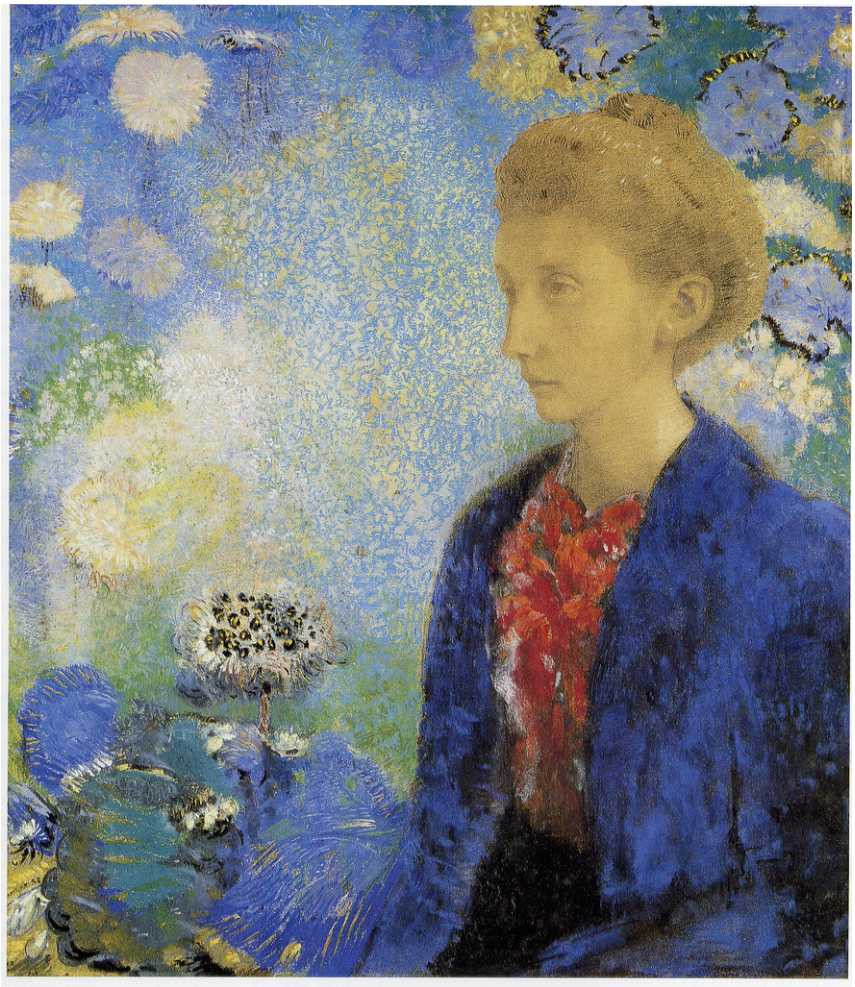
3.7 and 8) Redon, Two decorative panels from the Domecy dining room, oil, pastel, and “aoline” on canvas, 249.5 x 185 cm and 241.5 x 163 cm.

3.9) Decorative panel, 250.7 x 89.5 cm. 3.10) Figure I, 244.5 x 58.5. 3.11) Figure II, 243.5 x 58.

3.12) Denis, *The Legend of St Hubert*, Panel 1: "The Departure," 1897, oil on canvas, 225 x 175 cm.

3.13) Denis, *The Legend of St Hubert*, Panel 7: "The Arrival at the Hermitage," 1897, 225 x 175 cm.

3.14) Benozzo Gozzoli, Detail of the Camposanto frescoes, Pisa, c.1470.



3.15) Redon, *Portrait of Baroness de Domecy*, c1901, pastel and graphite on paper, 61 x 42.4 cm.

3.16) Redon, *Portrait of Mme Arthur Fontaine*, 1901, pastel on paper, 72.4 x 57.2 cm.

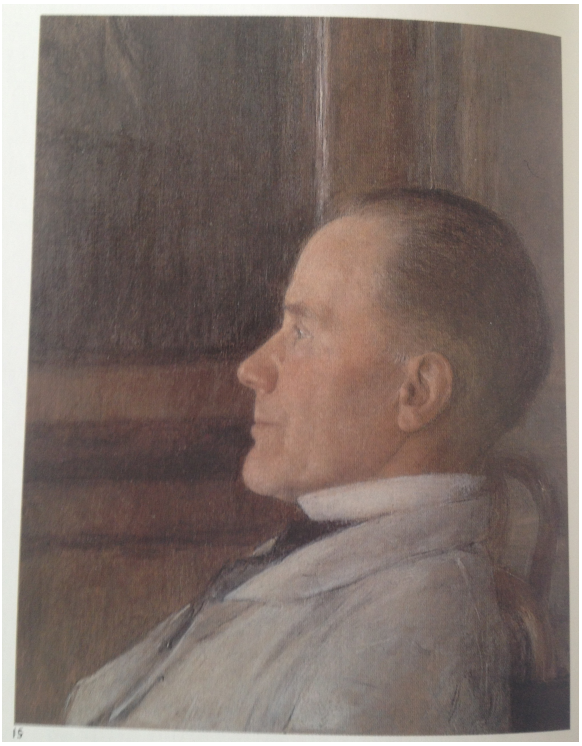
3.17) Redon, *Grand Bouquet* from the Domecy dining room, 245.5 x 163 cm.

3.18) Redon, *Vision sous-marine*, c1900, pastel on paper, 65.8 x 54 cm.

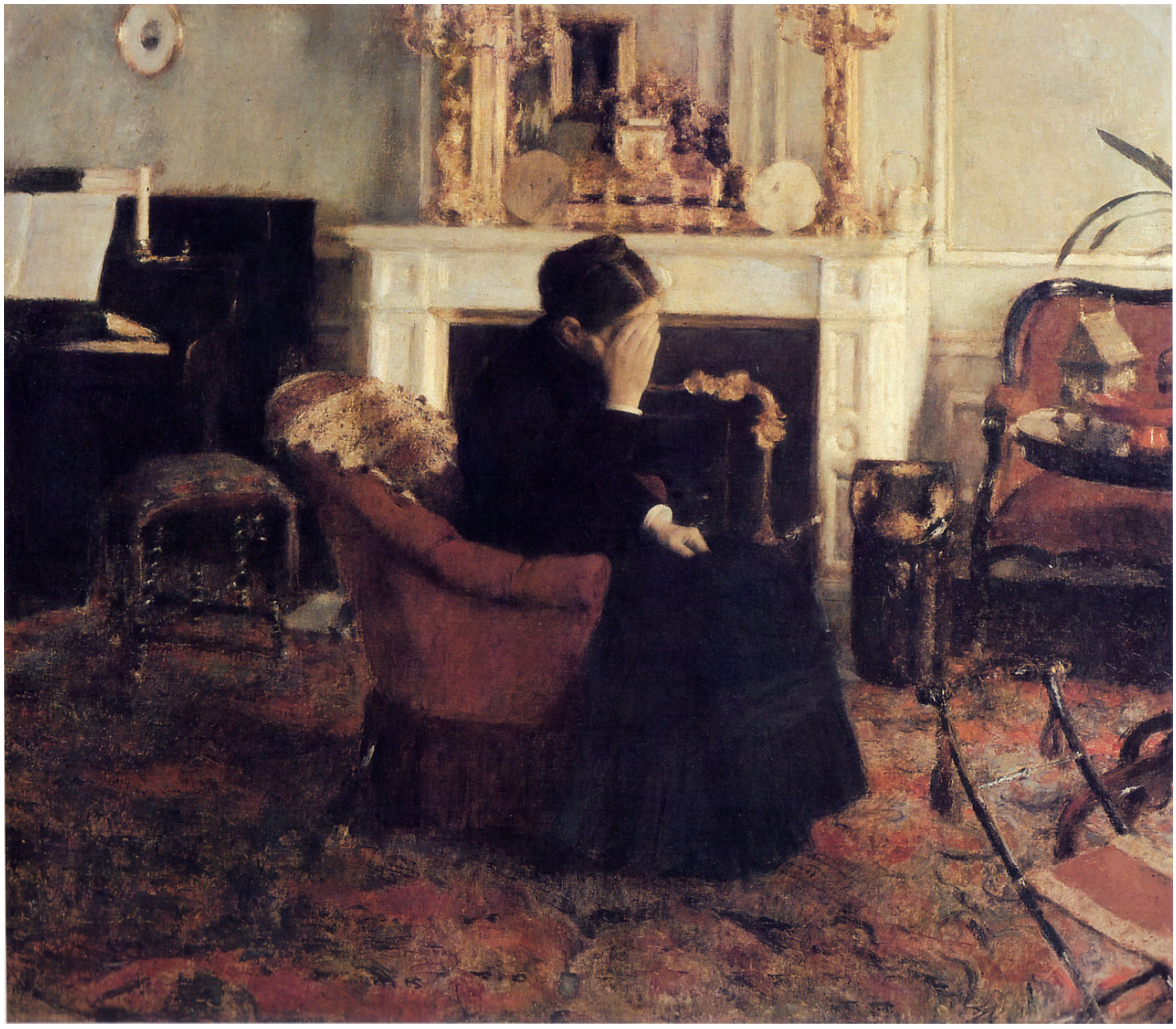
3.19) Redon, *Portrait of Mme Sabouraud*, 1907, pastel on paper, 78 x 91.4 cm.

3.20) Denis, *The Legend of St Hubert*, Panel 6: “The Devil’s Hunt,” 1897, 225 x 175 cm.

4.1) Fernand Khnopff, *Portrait of the Artist's Mother,* 1882, oil on canvas, 36x28 cm.



4.2) Khnopff, *Portrait of the Artist's Father*, 1882, oil on canvas, 36x28 cm.



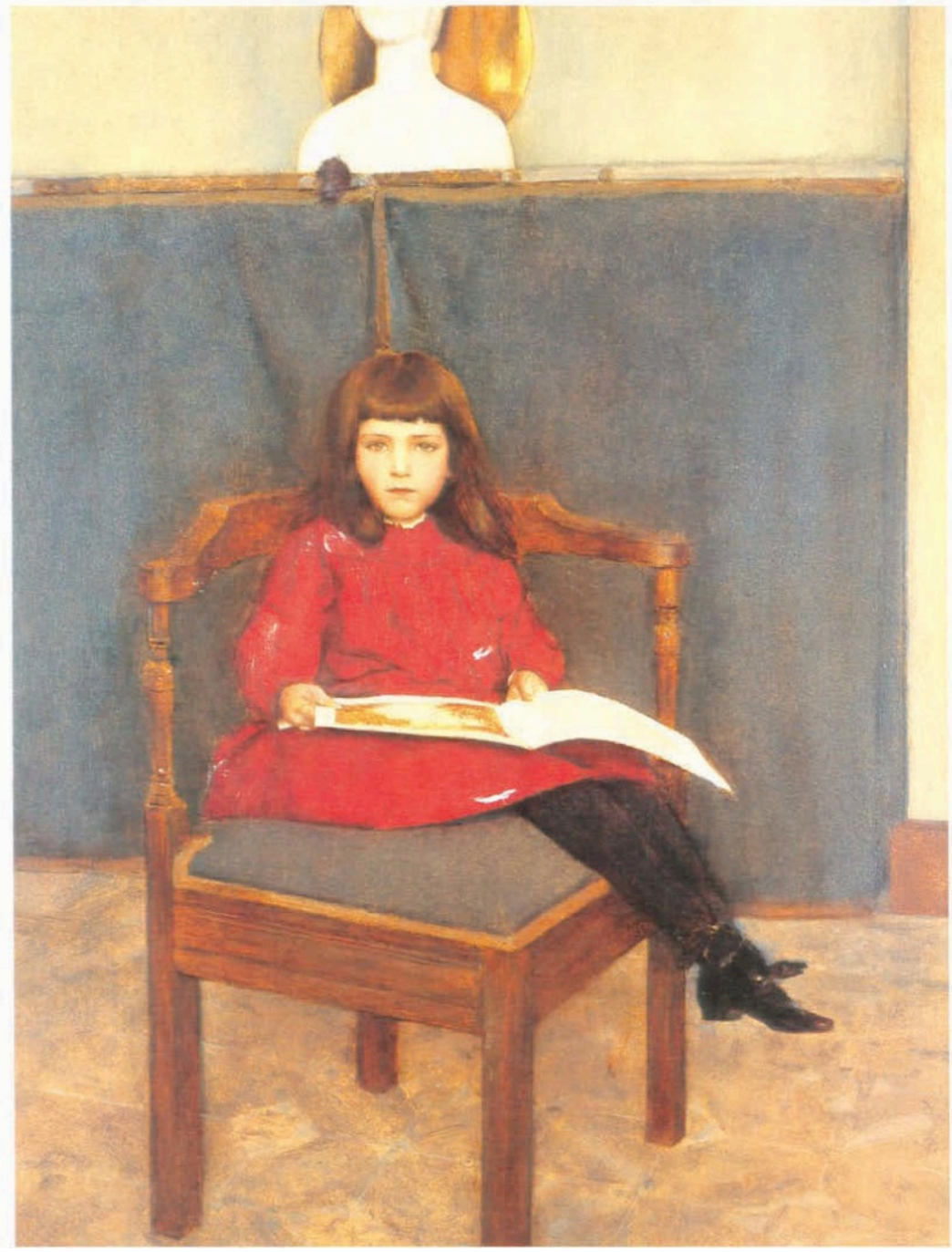
4.3) Khnopff, *Listening to Schumann*, 1883, oil on canvas, 101.5x116.5 cm

4.4) Khnopff, *Achille Lerminiaux*, 1885, oil on canvas, 16x16 cm.

4.5) Khnopff, *Jeanne Kéfer*, 1885, oil on canvas, 31.5x31.5 cm.

4.6) Khnopff, *Simone Héger*, 1885, oil on panel, 32x24 cm.

4.7) Khnopff, sketch for *Simone Héger*.



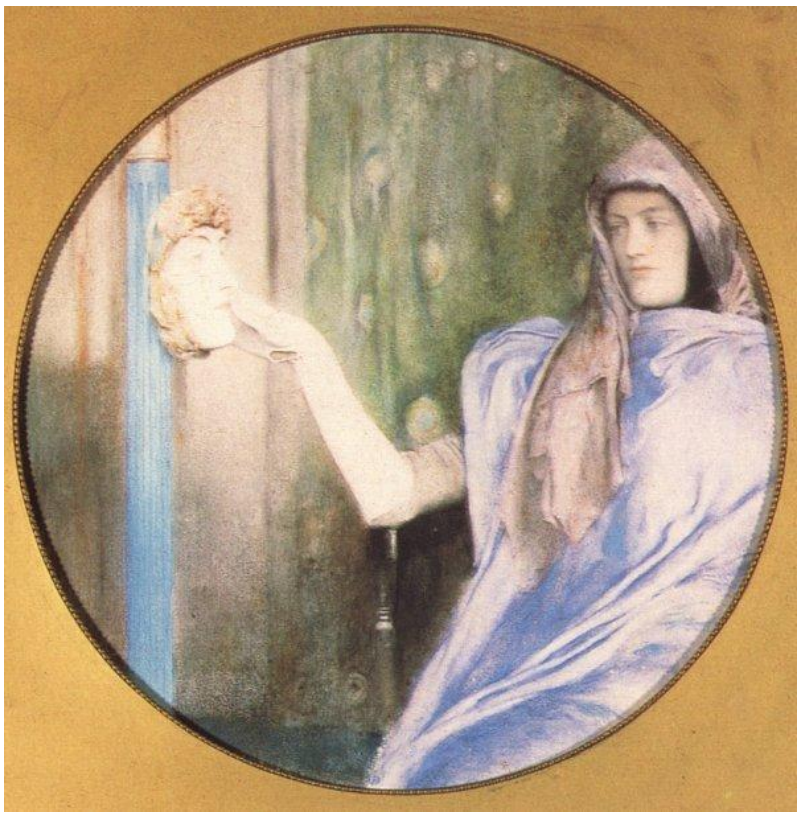
4.8) Khnopff, *Eugénie Verhaeren*, 1888, oil on canvas, 41x32.5 cm.

4.9) Khnopff, *Marie Monnom*, 1887, oil on canvas, 49.5x50 cm.

4.10) Khnopff, *Portrait de ma soeur*, 1887, oil on canvas on board, 96x74.5 cm.

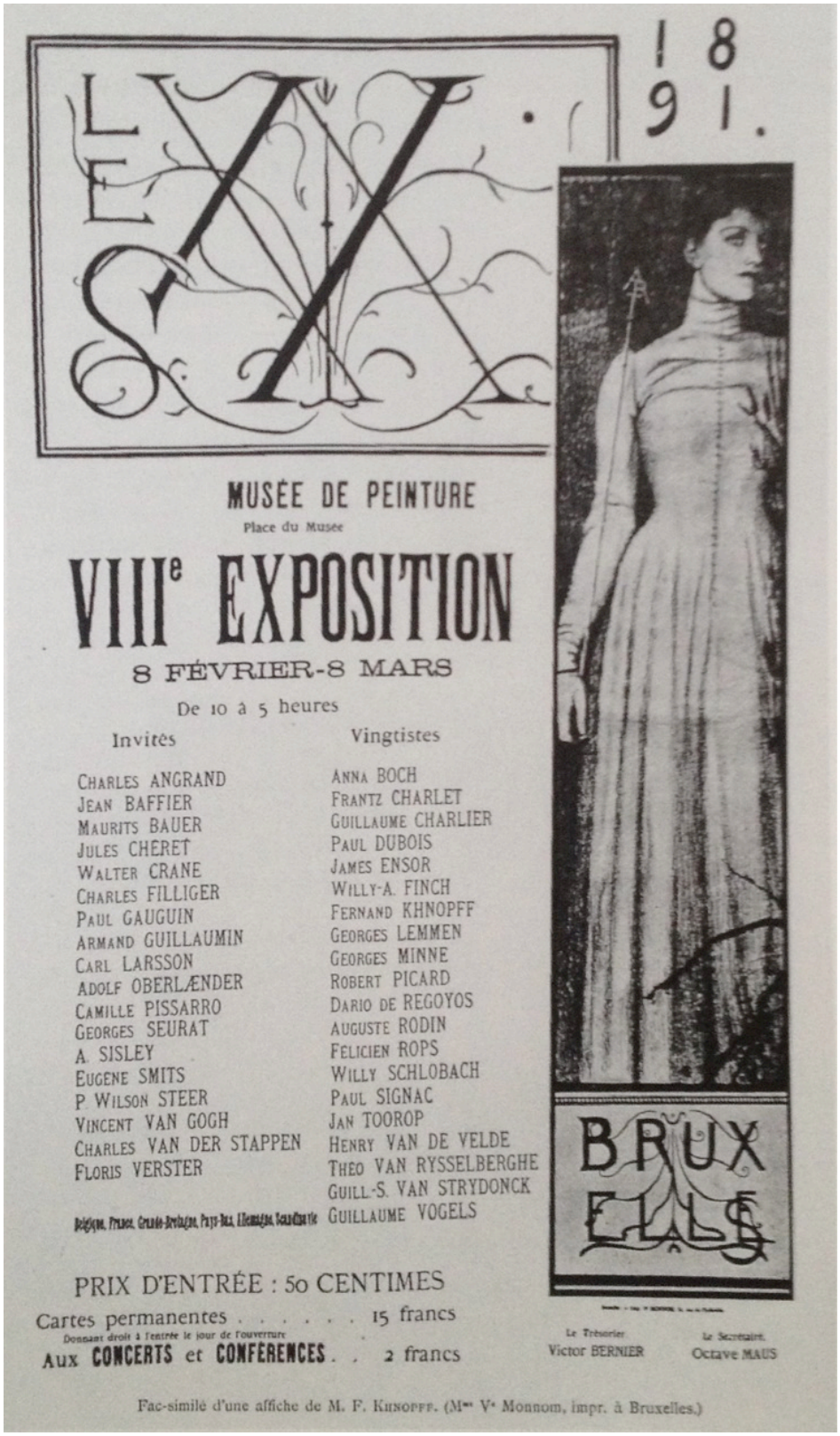
4.11) James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Symphony in White #1: The White Girl*, 1861-2, oil on canvas, 84.5x42.4 in.

4.12) Khnopff, *I Lock My Door Upon Myself*, 1891, oil on canvas, 72x140 cm.



4.13) Khnopff, *The Secret*, 1902, pastel and charcoal on paper, diameter 30 cm.

4.14) *Solitude*, 1894, pastel over photograph taken of original painting.



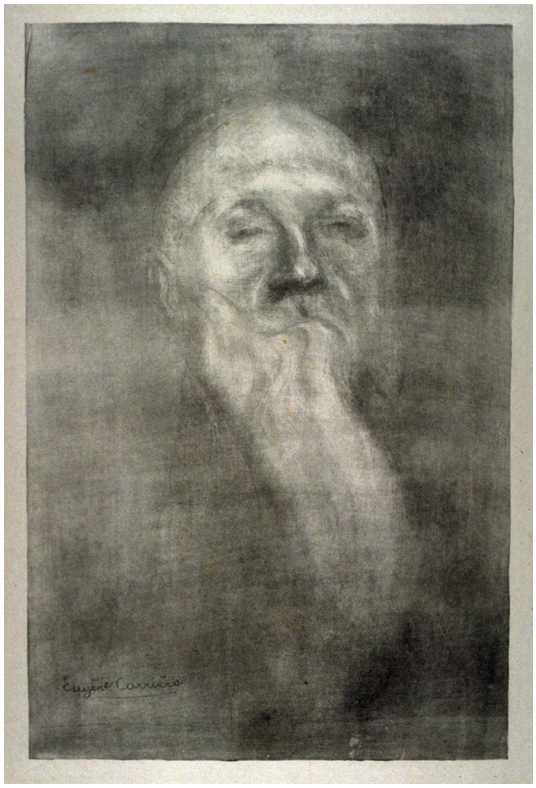
Fac-similé d'une affiche de M. F. Khnopff. (Mme Ve Monnom, impr. à Bruxelles.)

4.15a) Khnopff, Poster for Les XX exhibition, 1891

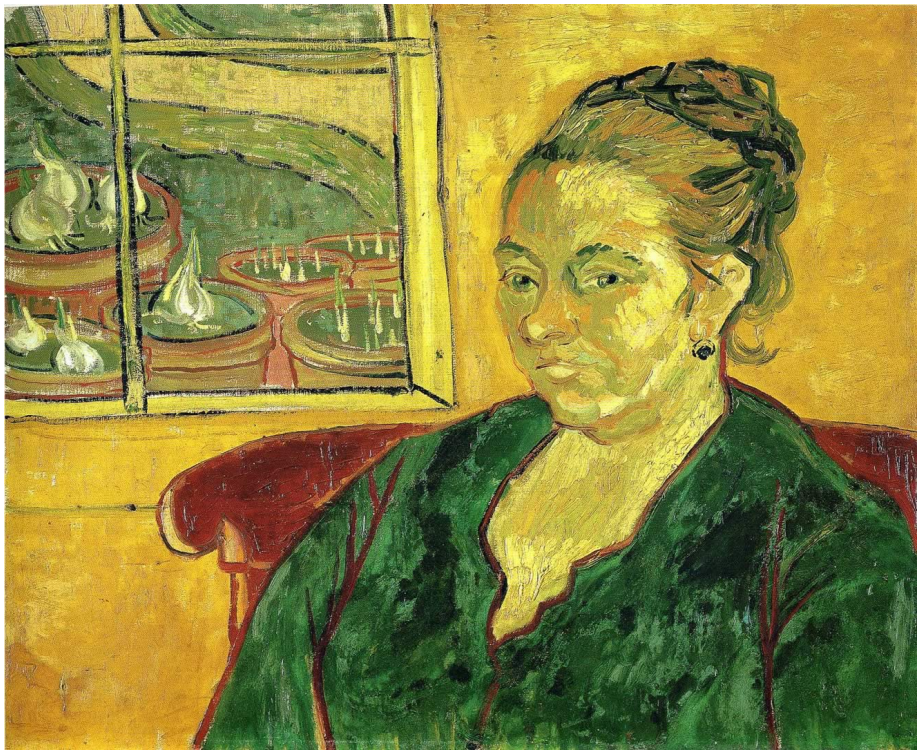
4.15b) Drawing for poster, photo taken from a photo in the archives of Les Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique.

5.1) Gustav Klimt, *Portrait of Sonja Knips*, 1898, oil on canvas, 141 x 141 cm.

5.2) Klimt, *Mada Primavesi*, 1912, oil on canvas, 150 x 111 cm.



5.3) Eugène Carrière, *Auguste Rodin*, 1897, lithograph.



5.4) Vincent van Gogh, *Portrait of Mme Roulin*, 1888, oil on canvas, 55x65 cm.

5.5-8) van Gogh, *The family Roulin: Joseph, Armand, Camille and Marcelle*, each 1888, oil on canvas, 55x65 cm.

5.9) Van Gogh, *La Berceuse*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, oil on canvas, 36.5x29 inches.

5.10) Paul Gauguin, *Portrait of Mme Roulin*, 1888, oil on canvas, 50.5x63.5 cm.

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