

As in a Dream

# Odilon Redon

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# From Botany to Belief: Odilon Redon and Armand Clavaud

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Around 1860, when he was twenty, Odilon Redon met the botanist Armand Clavaud, who was not only instrumental in shaping the artist's scientific interests but also played a key role in opening Redon's perspective on spiritual matters. Clavaud's taste for pantheism and eastern philosophy attracted the artist's attention as a young man, but it was not until after the botanist's death that Redon integrated these spheres of influence, finding ways to use floral imagery to suggest both the vital principles of life and humankind's potential for enlightened thought.

In his twenties Redon's response to the botanist's attentive interest in plant species was quite literal—he created detailed naturalistic renderings of plants and flowers along with floral still lifes that bear comparison with botanical illustration. Clavaud himself was doubly talented in this area—in addition to being a tireless cataloguer of plant species of the Bordeaux area and elsewhere, he was a gifted draftsman, partially illustrating his own *Flore de la Gironde*, a compendium of flowers of that region eventually published in the early 1880s.<sup>1</sup> His talents in reproducing microscopic observations as well were employed in public courses he taught at the Jardin Botanique beginning in 1877. Clavaud created large placards, occasionally with real vegetal matter affixed to the surfaces, detailing botanical processes for his audience of amateur enthusiasts (fig. p. 13). Nearly fantastic by virtue of their great size in proportion to the invisible processes they represented, Clavaud's renderings must have appealed to Redon's imagination when, as a mature artist, he created a number of charcoals and lithographs that have a basis in microscopic observation.

As a plant physiologist Clavaud first gained some renown in investigating the shared characteristics of the plant and animal kingdoms found in a local marsh plant. For Redon this work, embedded within the overarching discourse of Darwinian evolution, with its notions of the origin of human life in hybridity, development, and the aquatic environment, would be the most memorable of the scientist's endeavors.<sup>2</sup> Portrayals of the material origins of humankind in simple botanical specimens can be found in his marsh flowers with human heads of the early 1880s (cats. 66, 67) or much later in the large decorative panels of the last decade of his life, where plant or floral imagery intersects with aquatic organisms and occasional humanoid forms (cats. 185, 187).

Clavaud's philosophical and spiritual teachings underwent a considerable period of incubation in Redon before he found ways to respond to them in his art. Redon noted that Clavaud loved Indian poems above all and as a young man, under the botanist's direction, he added Hippolyte Fauche's 1864 translation of Viamiki's *Ramayana* to his library.<sup>3</sup> In a letter to the collector Andries Bonger written later in his life, Redon recalled Clavaud's great admiration for Benedict Spinoza. Of the botanist's interest in this seventeenth-century philosopher, accused of heresy for his belief that God was to be found within nature's processes and not as

1 Clavaud's work as an illustrator may have been inspired by distinguished botanist-illustrators of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries like Pierre-Joseph Redouté, Pierre Jean François Turpin or Antoine Poiteau. One of Clavaud's duties at Bordeaux's Jardin Botanique was to head the library, where he had been instrumental in acquiring an important collection of rare botanical books that included Redouté's *Les Liliacées* and *Les Roses*. *Flore de la Gironde* was published in Paris and Bordeaux in two volumes in 1882 and 1884. The post-Linnaean era of botany (after 1780) was characterized by systematic catalogues of flora, especially regional ones, which were popular by the late eighteenth century.

2 Of his recollections Redon commented, "He worked with the infinitely small. He searched... within the imperceptible world for that life which lies between plant and animal... this mysterious element that is animal being a few hours a day and only under the effects of light" (Redon 1922, p. 19). On Clavaud's growing conviction that Darwin's ideas were correct, see Clavaud 1867, pp. 45–48. On Redon and Darwin, see Larson 2005, pp. 49–69.

3 On Clavaud and Indian poetry, see Odilon Redon, "Notes et Témoignages," in Mellerio 1913, p. 57.

a separate entity, Redon wrote, "He professed for Spinoza an almost religious admiration. He had a way of pronouncing his name with a sweetness and sensitivity that one could not help but be moved by emotionally."<sup>4</sup>

Indian religions like Hinduism and Buddhism have in common with Spinoza's monism notions of divine essence and cosmic unity. In Clavaud's case the connection between the idea of kingdoms in the natural world all responding to Darwin's evolutionary mechanism and that of a common cellular basis to all living organisms may have convinced him of the relevance of philosophies that emphasized oneness. While he left metaphysical speculations out of the majority of his scientific writings, he did bring up the possibility of an underlying "universal harmony" even while cautioning that one must keep in mind the organism's struggle for life.<sup>5</sup> By 1870, however, Redon had concluded that these two arenas were essentially incompatible, finding that in evolution there was no room for spiritual awakening.<sup>6</sup> Instead of applying his developing interest in eastern philosophy to art he turned to literature, inventing a story he entitled "Le Fakir" concerning an eastern mystic who wanders around Paris in search of enlightenment.<sup>7</sup>

In his early mature period Redon's artistic response to spiritual systems was limited. An imaginative work like "Germination," from *In Dreams* (1879), may allude to Spinoza's monism, with its idea of animate particles dispersed throughout the universe (cat. 30), while *The Little Abbot Contemplating the Ramayana* (1883) has been interpreted as Spinoza himself in seventeenth-century costume learning from ancient eastern doctrines (fig.).<sup>8</sup> However, there is little evidence before the 1890s of a concerted effort to explore the ramifications of the spiritual in nature. In part this was a reflection of the era in which the artist came to maturity and established his reputation—the period from the mid-1870s when a new anti-clerical republic came to power until that of the religious revivalist 1890s was characterized by a heady emphasis on scientific pursuits and materialism. The orientation of Redon's art would change not only with the times, but with mitigating personal factors—the suicide of Clavaud in 1890 and the unexpected gift of a second wave of influence from this botanist via a newly found friendship with the Naturist poet Francis Jammes, who, like Redon, had been a protégé of Clavaud's in his youth.<sup>9</sup>

Redon's immediate response to Clavaud's death was to create a lithographic series entitled *Dreams (In Memory of My Friend Armand Clavaud)* (cats. 113–118), which emphasizes the pursuit of enlightenment (1891). The spiritual quest includes references to Christianity as well as to eastern beliefs and botany.<sup>10</sup> His continued interest at the time in Clavaud's spiritual teachings is referred to in notes taken by Redon's biographer, André Mellerio, from the artist's wife Camille long after Redon's death, in which she stated that Redon had regretted the fact that he had not inherited Clavaud's library of books on Indian literature and religion (as well as his library on science). She speculated that if he had inherited the library he would have become so immersed in it that he would not have been nearly so productive as an artist.<sup>11</sup>

Religious syncretism conjoined with science had surfaced as a theme for Redon by 1890 in his lithographic responses to Flaubert's *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (1888 and 1889), but it is in the final plate of the series dedicated to Clavaud that Redon found a way to



Odilon Redon, *The Little Abbot Contemplating the Ramayana*, 1883, charcoal, 50.5 x 37 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago

4 Ibid.

5 See discussion in Schotsman 1971, p. 721.

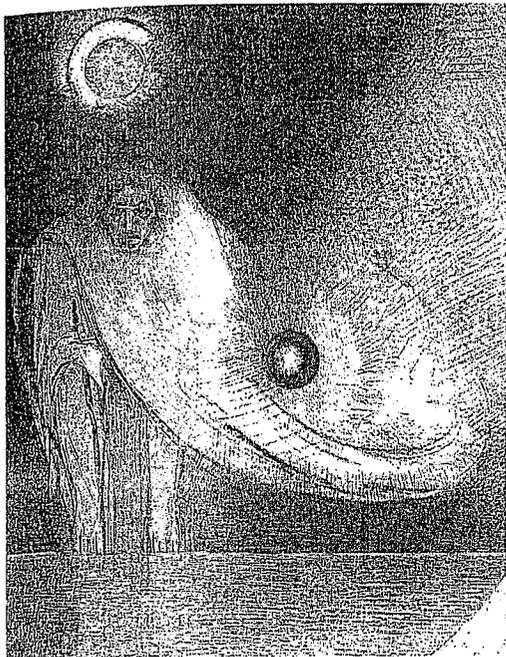
6 Redon commented on this in his manuscript "Le Fakir" of December 1870 (André Mellerio Archive, Art Institute of Chicago).

7 Ibid.

8 Leeman 1994 (2), p. 229.

9 The mystery surrounding Clavaud's suicide is resolved if we are to believe Camille Redon, whose recollection, as stated to André Mellerio, was that Clavaud's family had a form of hereditary paralysis and that when paralysis began to affect Clavaud's writing hand he ended his life. She further intimated that this illness was the reason he never married (André Mellerio Archive, Art Institute of Chicago).

10 For example, the first print in the series *It was a veil, an imprint* appears to be a reference to Veronica's veil. The face has been interpreted by Ariane Durand as a portrait of Clavaud (see Durand 1975, pp. 150–82). In the print *And Beyond, the Astral Idol, the Apotheosis* a priest or seer holds a bow with-



Odilon Redon, *Buddha*, 1895, lithograph, 31.5 x 24.9 cm, Kunstmuseum Winterthur, cat. 182

out an arrow. This may well be Rama, the prince-warrior who was an incarnation of Vishnu (God), whose greatest adventures, including initiation into the attainment of perfect romantic love, began when he was able to pick up the divine bow Shiva Danush. The circular form in which he glides may refer to the Golden Embryo, principle of life and origin of cosmic light.

11 André Mellerio Archive, Art Institute of Chicago.

12 Jammes 1939 (Dec. 1906–Feb. 1907), p. 33.

13 On Francis Jammes's recollections of Clavaud, see Jammes 1971, pp. 126–41.

14 On Jammes's herbaria, see Desgraves 1960. On his lifelong avocation as a botanist, see Labbé 1958, pp. 314–28.

15 These poems were written between September 1888 and June 15, 1890. The carnet is conserved at the municipal library in Pau.

16 Labbé 1958, p. 317.

17 Letter from Jammes to Redon of 1899 reproduced in *Lettres ... à Odilon Redon* 1960, p. 265.

fuse botanical references with spiritual life, initiating an iconographical breakthrough toward a theme that would absorb him for the remainder of his life (cats. 88–98, 99–105, 138–147). In the lithograph *The Day* (cat. 118) one sees two interdependent trees from a darkened interior, their branches expanding. Within the confined space cells drift aimlessly, suggesting biological origins or Spinoza's animated matter; in contrast the trees exist in a detached otherworldly realm under intense light that refers to both the animating power of natural light and spiritual illumination. After 1891 verdant, brilliantly lit or colored botanical blossoms and leaves, often combined with religious figures, would come to stand for enlightenment. The selection of a tree in the case of *The Day* may be a specific reference to Clavaud himself; Redon was already in correspondence with Jammes, who referred to the botanist as "our Lebanese Cedar who continues to cast his shadow over [us]" in his 1906 article "Odilon Redon—botaniste."<sup>12</sup>

Jammes was a budding poet of twenty when he first contacted Redon at the suggestion of Clavaud and Redon's brother Ernest in 1889; but despite an exchange of poems and lithographs they would not actually meet until 1900. Jammes had taken Clavaud's public botany classes at the Jardin Botanique in the mid-1880s.<sup>13</sup> He was even more of a devotee than Redon had been, creating his own herbaria of pressed plants and becoming in effect a sought-after amateur botanist for the remainder of his life.<sup>14</sup> Many of Jammes's early poems, such as the unpublished works in the carnet *Moi*, initiated while Clavaud was still living, are directly based on his botanical experiences.<sup>15</sup> His background as an amateur botanist was instrumental in his involvement in the literary Naturist movement (so called for its nature-based imagery). His later works often are set in parks and gardens, and botanical references (a specific flower or tree, for example) frequently form points of departure for his poems. Flowers and plants triggered specific recollections for him; indeed, he claimed to have a "vegetal memory."<sup>16</sup> In 1895 Jammes sent Redon his first major work, a series of poems published as *Un Jour*, perhaps a reference to Redon's print *The Day*, which has the French title "Le Jour," an image he may have been familiar with through Ernest Redon. Jammes dedicated the volume with the words, "A Odilon Redon, en souvenir à Clavaud, j'offre cet herbier mélancolique, 30 Dec. 1895." In making a gift of his better known *A l'Angéus de l'aube à l'Angéus du soir* (1898) he inscribed the volume with the words, "A Odilon Redon, avec une immense admiration, et en souvenir de Clavaud." In exchange for *Un Jour* Redon had sent Jammes his print *Buddha* (1895; fig.). That Jammes was equally aware of Clavaud's spiritual leanings as well as his science is reflected in his statement in a letter written to Redon later in the decade regarding this print, "I think of you and our dear Clavaud whenever I contemplate the magnificent Buddha."<sup>17</sup>

During the 1890s, a period in which spiritual life took on greater importance for Redon, the supernatural aspects of flora are referred to only sporadically. For example, there are no flowers or plants in Redon's print *Buddha*; on the other hand, the figure of *John the Baptist* (1892) with his eyes closed is darkened, suggesting the secondary nature of the material body, while spiritual enlightenment is alluded to in the fantastic blossoms that appear beside his head. The charcoal *Profile of a Woman in Shadow* (1895) does not suggest any spe-

cific religion, but supernaturally lit flowers drifting around the figure's visage provide metaphors for enlightened knowledge, while the "shadow" stands for the physical aspect of the head (fig.).

While fresh memories of Clavaud's spiritual interests may have stimulated renewed thoughts about syncretism and the quest for enlightenment common to various religions, these were fed by new friendships in occult circles forged in the 1890s. Redon personally knew Edouard Schuré, the author of *Les grands initiés* (The Great Initiates), the most influential occult text on syncretist beliefs in late nineteenth-century France.<sup>18</sup> Schuré's philosophical brand of theosophy was of interest to a number of younger artists like Sérusier or Ranson, part of the group of Nabis, who were enthusiastic admirers of Redon in the 1890s. Schuré believed that great religious leaders and philosophers, including Christ and Rama, were "initiates" or seers who had perceived universal truths. The Buddha had a place in this pantheon as well. Schuré mentioned Buddha in the preface to *Les grands initiés*, and had already devoted a long article to him in 1885, placing him in his philosophical schema and comparing him with Christ.<sup>19</sup> Using a charcoal of 1892 as a basis, Redon created a pastel of Christ entitled *Sacred Heart* later in that decade, then virtually redid the same image in 1906, adding a lotus, and entitling it *Buddha*. In the preface to *Les grands initiés* Schuré offered Redon a solution to the dilemma between the spiritual and Darwinian evolution that had eluded him in the 1860s, claiming that Darwin had actually renewed theosophical ideas. He pointed out that Pythagoras himself (to whom he devoted an entire chapter) had claimed that man and animal were related.<sup>20</sup> The "divine plan" included not only the interrelatedness of all living things, but the inherent energy within evolution itself. According to Schuré, this energy propelled humans toward spiritual evolution; thus, evolution did not, in fact, end with the material body.

Theosophist syncretism of religious programs along with his embrace of Darwin led Redon to rethink botany. Whereas Clavaud's study of marsh plants might have once represented base origins, these origins were now understood as an initial step on the path toward eventual enlightenment. Flowers and other botanical references could be used symbolically to suggest not just humble life forms, but the potential for a final "blooming" of the highest order in spiritual insight. The eastern symbolism behind the lotus flower represents an interesting affinity with Redon's background and the new artistic path he explored following *The Day*. The lotus flower has a very long stem reaching down into the sediment of a murky body of water. Despite its lowly origins (as with Clavaud's marsh plants) it represents enormous potential. In Buddhist mythology the original lotus appears as an ugly bud that emerges from a swamp, but at the center of the spectacular blooming flower emerges a tiny golden statue of the Buddha himself.

In the 1890s Redon began to frequent the occult bookshop *Librairie de l'Art indépendant* owned by the theosophist Edmond Bailly and had several exhibitions there.<sup>21</sup> Bailly espoused Indian cosmologies and edited the journal *Le Lotus bleu*, which contained many articles on Buddhism and Hinduism. Among the contributors to the journal were the English theosophists Annie Besant (from 1895) and Charles Leadbeater (from 1896) who also es-



Odilon Redon, *Profile of a Woman in Shadow*, ca. 1895, charcoal, 47.1 x 35.4 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago

18 Redon owned a copy of *Les grands initiés*, which was inscribed by Schuré himself, "in very sympathetic homage." In 1892 Schuré invited Redon to create a stage set for his play *Vercingétorix* at the Théâtre des Arts. Although the project was never executed, Redon did contribute the lithograph *Druïdness* to illustrate the playbill.

19 Schuré 1885, pp. 589–622.

20 Schuré 1953, p. 20.

21 On Redon's presence at the *Librairie de l'Art indépendant*, see Michelet 1937, pp. 65–68 and 78.



Odilon Redon, *Portrait of Madame de Domecy*, 1902, pastel and graphite, 61 x 52.4 cm, Artemis Group; Hazlitt, Gooden and Fox, Ltd., London

poused eastern doctrines. Both Leadbeater and Besant began to develop theories in the late 1890s about fantastic color auras emanating from the body that could be perceived by clairvoyants.<sup>22</sup> The fantastic, brilliantly colored flowers that waft around the head of sitters—many of whom appear to be in a state of deep meditation—in portraits Redon began to create after 1900 may have been inspired by the colorful “thought forms” Besant and Leadbeater popularized. The notion of “auras” radiating from the head as a manifestation of emotional or mental states was generally typical of occult ideas at the turn of the century. Redon acknowledged his familiarity with the idea of potentially visible corporeal energies when in 1899, after attending a particularly fine piano recital, he stated that it was as if the performer “had a fluidium hanging [around himself].”<sup>23</sup> In the spectacular *Portrait of Madame de Domecy* (1902) the head is rendered in dark monochrome graphite while the remainder of the work is in colorful pastels (fig.). Flowers dissolve into vibrating patterns near the face itself, representing the kind of emanating waves of thought that people like Lead-

beater and Besant believed existed.

In 1900 Jammes and Redon finally met through the salon of Arthur Fontaine and they remained especially close for the next five years. During this period floral imagery began to dominate Redon’s work, both in the form of naturalistic still lifes and in fantastic references to spiritual enlightenment. In “Odilon Redon—botaniste” Jammes wrote of the more naturalistic works, “Each flower is a summary of its total being—inner structure, color, and scent. It transforms itself into the messenger of innumerable nuances.”<sup>24</sup> In fact, Redon’s flowers of the early twentieth century are rarely detailed enough to elicit this kind of response; in making this statement, Jammes may have had Clavaud in mind, whose painstaking attention to plant populations and individuals within them was noted even in his official necrology: “Clavaud was not interested in a banal listing of characteristics. He was fascinated by individual attributes of plants—each having its own living personality.”<sup>25</sup>

While the naturalistic flowers in their vases may seem far from the spiritual realm, Redon often played off the primal and rudimentary against the ethereal. Frequently the vases in the still lifes are of simple stoneware or glazed ceramics.<sup>26</sup> These thick, heavy vessels may suggest the material body or “head,” from which spring flowers representing thought or spiritual life. This is quite literally the case in *Flowers* (1903) in which a half-formed humanoid face appears on a dark vase, with brightly colored natural and fantastic flowers spilling forth from the top of the vessel. An impetus for this direction in still-life painting may have come from Redon’s close friend Paul Gauguin. Redon was a great admirer of the raw appearance of Gauguin’s stoneware and clay vessels, and in Gauguin’s 1889 self-portrait on a mug with closed eyes the mug is glazed to appear as if it were dripping blood.<sup>27</sup> The vessel also appears in Gauguin’s *Still Life with Japanese Print* (1889) in which flowers spring from the top as emblems of the artist’s thoughts (fig.). In Redon’s homage to Gauguin after the artist’s death—*Black Profile, Portrait of Gauguin*—the disembodied dark face is a reference to the death of the body or perhaps to the now iconic mug, while the colorful flowers represent artistic or spiritual power (cat. 181).

22 Besant and Leadbeater’s theories are partly based on those of the French occultist Hippolyte Baraduc, whose work Redon may also have known. See, for example, *L’Âme humaine, ses mouvements, ses lumières et l’iconographie de l’invisible fluidique* (Paris, 1896).

23 Noted in the journal of Ricardo Viñes on April 28, 1899. Lévy 1987, p. 14.

24 Jammes 1939, p. 35.

25 Fallot 1890, p. LXVIII.

26 Certain of the vases were hand-crafted drip-glaze stoneware made by his friend Marie Blotkin. See discussion in Groom 1994, pp. 321–22.

27 On Redon’s enthusiasm for Gauguin’s ceramics, see his contribution to Morice 1903, pp. 428–30.

The conversations between Redon and Jammes concerning Clavaud in the early years of the twentieth century must have been significant. Jammes's claims to "vegetal memory" seem to have inspired Redon as well. After 1900 Redon began to go back to the graphite drawings of trees from his youth in Bordeaux, reusing these specific images within the verdant foliage of his later work. In *Homage to Leonardo da Vinci* such a tree appears as an anchoring backdrop that determines the vertical orientation of the panel (cat. 206). The head of St. Mary, based on a copy by Redon after Leonardo's *Madonna with Child and Saint Anne*, presides lovingly not over the Christ child as it did in Leonardo's work, but over flowers and plants—a Spinoza-like celebration of the spiritual energies in nature. Here, as in other late works, trees based on those drawn in his youth may be a specific reference to the continuing presence of Clavaud himself, the "Lebanese Cedar" of Redon's mature years. In *Buddha in His Youth* (1904) a tree similarly based on studies from the 1860s is fused with eastern references. Here a Buddha surrounded by fantastic flowers seems to vaporize into this botanical backdrop (fig. p. 102). In certain works featuring flowers Redon may have had the same idea of "vegetal memory" in mind. In 1912 he commented that his flowers represented "the confluence of two rivers, that of representation and that of memory...the soil of art itself, the good earth of the real, tilled by the spirit."<sup>28</sup>

Many of Redon's late colorful religious works feature a pantheistic vegetal world perceived through the "stained glass" of Gothic windows. Redon was also close to artists and writers in Catholic circles; Jammes himself converted to Catholicism in 1905.<sup>29</sup> As noted by Stephanie Moore-Glaser, references to stained glass acquired floral attributes among Romantic and Symbolist writers in the nineteenth century; metaphors of fresh blooms for stained glass were used to suggest the idea of an eternally captive nature, incorruptible flowers.<sup>30</sup> Joris-Karl Huysmans and Stephane Mallarmé, two writers to whom Redon was close, used floral imagery in works that featured stained glass. Glass illuminated by sunlight (connected to God) was likened to blooming flowers or the flourishing soul. In *The Window* from the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the small figure of a seer meditates over a plant while his illuminated twin "jamb figure" has attained enlightened thought (cat. 180). Flowers and plants fill the space within the window frame. Redon described the work in this way:

"I painted a kind of great Gothic window and, from somewhere within it, an avalanche of fruit and flowers appears mixed with white clouds, about to fall. There are two strange figures on either side, not of ordinary size when compared to the fruits and flowers. Both the flowers and fruits issue from some giant plant. One of the figures has wings, just barely visible. He gazes at a simple flower he holds. The other figure, a wizard or saint or apostle or leader, looks out at the spectator. His entire body, from the top of his head to the tips of his toes, emanates light."<sup>31</sup>

In *The Cathedral* of 1914 Redon seems to recall the material references and grotesques of his early mature period (cat. 179). This is the shadowy cathedral of earthly suffering and homunculi of Victor Hugo rather than the transcendental cathedral of Huysmans (*The Cathedral*, 1898). Instead of the brilliant diaphanous colors, this work is characterized by dark green and brown tonalities; the cool, dank color of interior walls is carried through into the stained glass. The "rose" window is transformed into a large dark flower with petals as if one were looking up through the interior of a stem. Inside the cathedral/ plant on the left, a

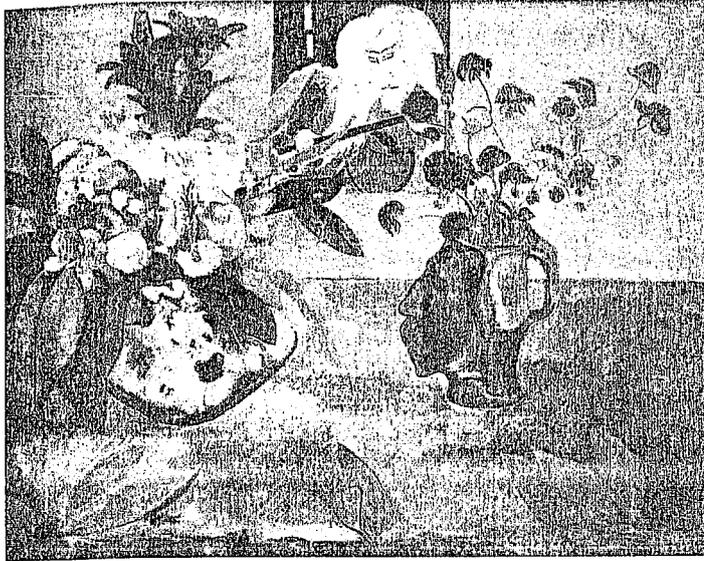
28 Redon 1922, p. 120.

29 On Redon's involvement in Catholic circles, see Stevens 1994, pp. 208–14.

30 Moore-Glaser 2001, pp. 215–28.

31 See letter from Redon to Frizeau, Jan. 8, 1908, translation in Tokyo, Kobe 1989.

32 Letter to Maurice Denis, July 4, 1911. Quoted in Leeman 1994 (2), p. 408, note 61.



Paul Gauguin,  
*Still Life with Japanese Print*,  
Museum of Modern and  
Contemporary Art, Teheran, Iran

pietà recalls the physical origins of Christ and the unobtrusive envelop of the body; on the right, a gremlin form of the sort that can be found in the artist's earlier macabre works crouches. The emphasis on the body that dies, grief, the base origins of humanity, and natural causes is an early, lowly point on the path toward eventual transcendence symbolized in the petals/rose window. Redon's material references remind us of primal origins once again, but the rose window dominates the work in terms of size and placement.

From the nineteenth to the twentieth century Redon's work appears to divide into two parts: dark-spirited charcoals and lithographs of the early years—often with scientific references—and the joyous colorful pastels and oils of his later years. Yet in many ways

Redon continued to explore the physical side of the natural world after the turn of the century, bringing earlier concerns into a broader framework that now validated religious life, playing the material off against the spiritual as in *Flowers* of 1903 or fully integrating them as in the pantheistic *Buddha in His Youth*, work that ironically brought him closer to the full spirit of Clavaud's teachings than anything he had done while his mentor was still a living presence in his work and life.

Toward the end of his own life Redon remarked upon his attitude to all religions as equal: "... above all [I do not want] people to forget the total neutrality I have always maintained as far as the meaning and implication of my work are concerned.... Art can never support the propaganda of a belief or cult.... I have...represented Buddha; and that image, and its symbol still move the hearts of an innumerable part of mankind, and such subjects (if one can call them subjects) are as sacred to me as others."<sup>32</sup> Botanical images are generally used as neutral references in Redon's work pertaining to various kinds of religious belief; the supernatural implications of unfurling leaves and blooming buds fuse Spinoza's vision of a pantheistic world with metaphors of enlightened thought that have a universal religious significance.