

This volume examines various manifestations of anguish in art, literature, and philosophy. It demonstrates that the experience of anguish manifested itself in a spectacular way in the arts at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. It makes obvious the extraordinary tension between anguish and art. The works discussed here reflect the magnitude of anguish generated by the historical events, scientific advancements (especially in psychology), and metaphysical inquiries of the time. Through the invention of new artistic languages, those works also illustrate the fecundity of anguish for artists.

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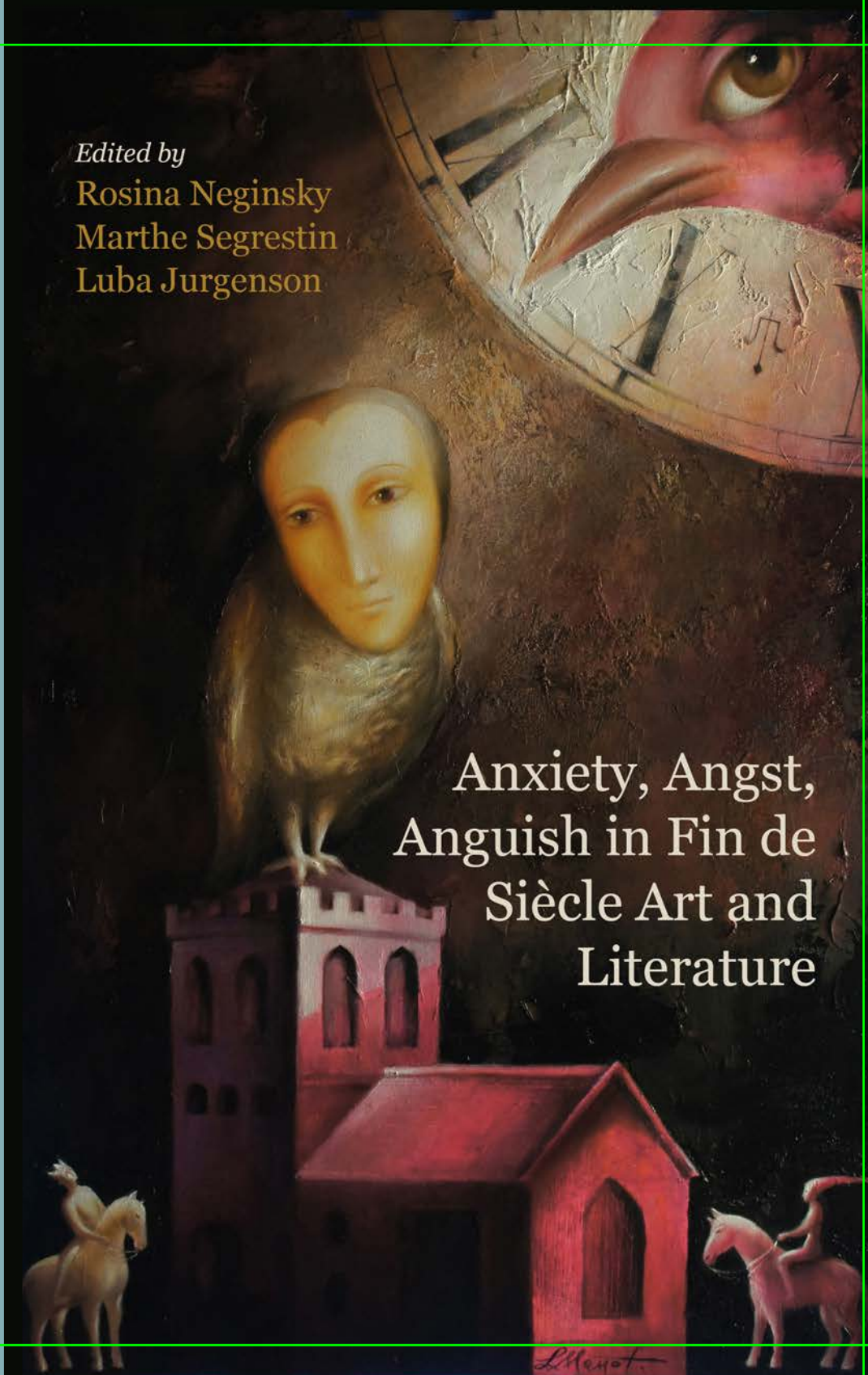


Anxiety, Angst, Anguish in  
Fin de Siècle Art and Literature

Rosina Neginsky  
Marthe Segrestin  
Luba Jurgenson

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

# FIN DE SIÈCLE, ART NOUVEAU, AND ART DÉCO PORTRAYALS OF ANIMAL ANGST: A FEW EUROPEAN, AND ESPECIALLY SOME ITALIAN, EXAMPLES

ANNA MAZZANTI

### Abstract

«Anxiety (Angst) is connected solely to the human condition and not the animal one. Indeed, in mankind, the individual is superior to the species,» writes Soren Kierkegaard in his book, *The Concept of Anxiety*. He also states that «the animal acts mechanically according to fixed characteristics, according to the principle of necessity.» Although one of the most famous philosophers of the Symbolist period seems to disclaim the complex emotion of angst within the animal kingdom, the representation of animals in works of Symbolist art associated with this feeling recurs frequently. Moreover, animals often represent symbolic elements in the visual tradition of the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth to stress the principle of necessity to support the aspirations of the spirit. Thus, in the age of the diffusion of idealist and vitalistic philosophies, we see how animals find fertile expression in the artistic imagination sometimes freed from the cultural categories in which the way of thinking had placed them. The text investigates the expressive value of anguish through the representation of animals and their interaction with humans by Italian and International artists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The essay examines three categories: the relationship between animals and human beings; the vivification of intermediate worlds where beings half-human and half-animal take life; the symbolic interpretation of animals that take the value of specific feelings such as anguish.

1. Often animals have dialogues and symbolic relationships with human beings, they represent the clear metaphorical mirror of sentiments, emotional states and moral behavior of humans. The paragraph is dedicated to some cases such as the frequent coexistence of men and animals as direct and symbolic relationships in Klinger's work where he underlines the conflicting anguishing relationship between philosophical rationality and instinct.

2. Often we witness the representation of mythical and winged figures that indulge vitalistic needs and translate superhuman aspirations or at least metamorphic one, when physical animal parts adjoin to humans: from the fauns of Böcklin to those of Stuck and Klinger to the winged men of Redon and Adolfo De Carolis. In Adolfo De Carolis's illustrations for *Nocturne* by Gabriele d'Annunzio the wings, for example, represent both a fear of existence and a «vertigo of freedom». Sometimes the intensity of inner anguish arises in the representation of figures half-man and half-animal fused into a vitalistic movement. The portentous frieze of the Italian Parliament by G. A. Sartorio is a perfect example.

3. Often assimilated to men and their aspirations, animals reverse the limits that would impose their condition according to artistic creative freedom. The metaphorical use of animals increases the effect of the personifications of human anguish. They «appear like enigma, having come out from behind the shadowy wings of a hidden and remote world» like the metamorphic animals of Redon or Albert Martini, in which «the anxiety to recuperate the forgotten is captured» (Cristiano Spila, *Forme e problemi del simbolismo animale. Il genere del bestiario nel Novecento*, Manziana: Vecchiarelli, 2003, 262).

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Artistic interest in the animal world is extremely vivid in the decades between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>. The shapes, colors, and tempers are often the source of animal decorative transpositions that are common to both Art Nouveau and Art Déco leading artists; one also finds a great deal of this kind of material in the Symbolist repertoires as metaphors of human feelings and values. Our investigation suggests a number of points to take into consideration regarding the relationship between the representation of animals and the sense of anguish pervading the period, without of course feeling that we have dealt with such a complex subject exhaustively.

The Symbolist period moreover adopted a metaphorical “manipulation of animals,” which literature and thought later forsee. Jean Baudrillard and more recently Jean Clair in his *Hubris* (2012) stated, that humankind had

by now tamed animal species and filed them away or sent them to laboratories.<sup>1</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, for instance, in his book *The Concept of Anxiety* writes «Anxiety is connected solely to the human condition and not the animal one. Indeed in mankind, the individual is superior to the species.» He also states «the animal acts mechanically according to fixed characteristics, and the principle of necessity.»<sup>2</sup> Although one of the most famous philosophers of the Symbolist period seems to disclaim the complex emotion of anguish within the animal kingdom, the representation of animals recurs in works of Symbolist art and literature associated with this theme, either illustrating it or deriving from it. Just as one can speak of “animaletterati” [animalitterats] such as Pascoli’s dragonfly or swallow, D’Annunzio’s Pegasus, Huysmans’s salamander, and Kafka’s moon blue mouse, one can also recall “animals artists” such as Arnold Böcklin and his faun, Franz Von Stuck and his snake, Odilon Redon and his spiders or monsters, Giulio Aristide Sartorio and his tigers, Alberto Martini and his butterflies, and so on. The case of Poe and his animals, such as the black cat or the raven, is particularly interesting for our study, because his terrifyingly atmospheric writings had a great impact on various artists. These latter included Odilon Redon and Alberto Martini, who illustrated and dedicated a number of drawings and etchings to the *Extraordinary Tales*, which became well-known in Europe thanks to the illustrious translations by Baudelaire (1849) and Mallarmé (1872, 1888).

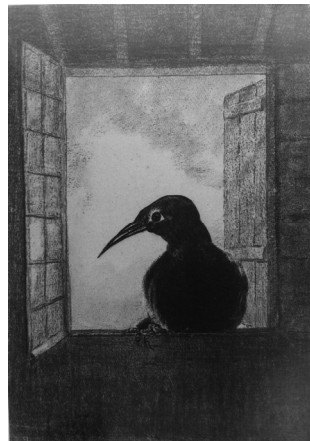
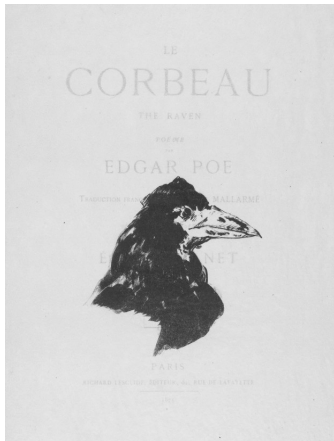


Fig. 23-1. Édouard Manet, *Le Corbeau*, 1872, lithograph

Fig. 23-2. Odilon Redon, *Le Corbeau* 1882, charcoal on laid paper

After Édouard Manet's more realistic and airy illustrations for Mallarmé's translation of *The Raven* (*Le Corbeau*) -- which changed the highly musical verses into non-rhyming prose<sup>3</sup> -- Redon drew *The Raven* / *Le Corbeau* gripping the edge of the window for the cover of Emile Hennequin's translation published in 1882. Manet shows his fluttering bird, which seems to be replacing the absent poetic musicality (becoming «a decisive piece of the puzzle, a key voice in the inter-arts dialogue»<sup>4</sup>), with its talons clutching at the window-sill. In turn, we find in Redon's crisp outline of his raven's abyssal and fixed pupil, "dreaming of demons," one of the tale's greater moments of expressive tension, vividly evoking the mindset of the translator. We must also remember the drawing, which Redon tried to interpret so as not to cheapen it into what he called *un oiseau de réclame* ("a bird for a poster," 1883). In 1899 Amboise Vollard purchased *L'oiseau ou démon*, a denizen of the *Nuit plutonienne*.<sup>5</sup>

More modern engraved interpretations at the beginning of the century, like the Italian graphic artist Alberto Martini's *Le corbeau*, were to achieve further intensity by diluting the shapes of the flying bird amidst swirling graphic lines, providing a disquieting and distorted image as if viewing it through the visual filter of a magnifying glass. Such hypnotic alterations could probably link to the metamorphoses of theosophical sensitivity, so widely spoken of in Europe at the time. In Italy, too, one could recall Romolo Romani's figures, which spilled over into similar evanescent dilutions.

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting—  
 "Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!  
 Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!  
 Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!  
 Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"  
 Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."  
 And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting  
 On the pallid bust of Pallas...<sup>6</sup>

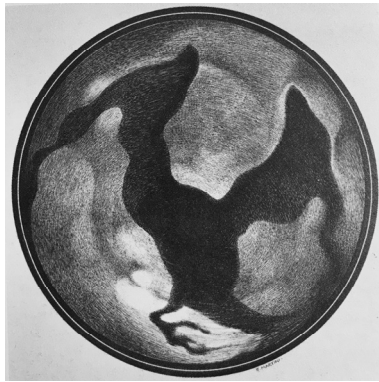
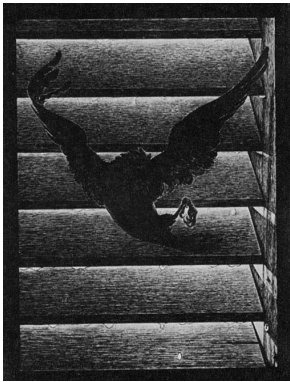


Fig. 13-3. Alberto Martini, Illustration for E. A. Poe, *The Raven*, 1900

Fig. 23-4. Alberto Martini, Illustration for E. A. Poe, *The Raven*, 1900

In 1882 the animal-plant shapes Poe's works partly suggested emerged in Redon's "noir" production, and implying an intermediate life free from the determinism of reason.<sup>7</sup> In his diary, in fact, Redon refers to the microscopic worlds that the biologist Armand Clavaud had introduced him to, writing: «the intermediate life between animals and plants ... that mysterious element that is animal only for a few hours a day and subject to the action of light.»<sup>8</sup> He likewise discovered these mixed beings. They emerge as evocative and suggestive as a graphic line or as the suggestions of the musical words of the Symbolist poets, thanks to Clavaud, who was an avid reader of literature. Redon's chiaroscuro drew on «the mysterious play of shadows and the rhythm of lines conceived in the mind,»<sup>9</sup> and he models dusty effects with dark, shadowy backgrounds recalling the microscopic life he had examined through the magnifying lenses. They are cosmic scenarios, akin to the primeval monsters that tormented St. Anthony (a sort of fore-runner to Odilon Redon), ambiguous creatures on the frontier of the imperceptible world, the world the artist was to depict in his more crowded groupings of intermediate beings linked to anguished feelings—like *Les Origines*, or the several versions of the *Tentation de Saint Antoine*, or *Dans le rêve*.<sup>10</sup> Anguish arises from the confluence of the symbolic value of death and dissolution, attributed to animal forms and their metamorphic artistic interpolation, as well as from their coloring (darkness and gradations of black). It follows the principle of necessity which reflects the belief of almost all idealistic philosophers from Kierkegaard to Heidegger. Fear therefore derives from the overthrow of the categories of the real and rational.

Otherwise, his illustrations often very remotely relate to the text. This is the reason why Mallarmé once called him his ideal (dream) reader, *le lecteur rêvé*, with whom he shared the same *art poétique* and ambition: «all the evocative power, all the charm of the vagueness that lies at the extreme limit of thought.» Redon wrote: «my drawings inspire, they do not define.»<sup>11</sup> His rustling quality is underlined by Mallarmé's famous sentence: «Vous agitez dans nos silences le plumage du rêve et de la nuit.»<sup>12</sup> Among the poetic Symbolist analogies in this sentence, *plumage* emerges as an indeterminate and incongruous reference to the animal world. It was probably not so much poetry as philosophical thought which suggested to Redon the literary analogy of humanised-animal beings.

He was a reader of Spinoza and agreed with Darwin's theories, which some adopted to explain the development of animated nature.<sup>13</sup> According to Spinoza's views as to the absolute complementary quality between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, animals undergo feelings, albeit of a more elementary kind than those of humans.

Thus animals too are subject to perceptions and affection, especially the more intelligent species, whose *natura naturata* structure is closer to those of the more primitive passion structures of humans. Spinoza's theory of knowledge or epistemology—which distances itself from Kierkegaard's rigid dualistic positions as well as from idealist will-dominated principles—recognises human-animal affinities, even as these differ according to the degree and complexity of each individual's awareness and physical appearance. According to Spinoza, in fact, awareness distinguishes human beings, as it enables them to fully express bodily reality.<sup>14</sup> Redon seems to be most interested in the complementary qualities between *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*, where one fuses into the other, according to an animistic pantheism, which the Symbolist artist's creative imagination notices and expresses in fantastic living fusions through evocative draftsmanship.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, while there are many interesting examples in the word-image relationship dealing with the theme of anguish through the depiction of animals at the turn of the century, one might also recall we are nowhere near Medieval bestiaries' codified identification of animals with specific emotions.<sup>16</sup> To quote the Italian literary critic Stefano Lanuzza, as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in literature «the symbolic meaning of the animal is not given, but assumes meaning according to the situations in which it is inserted. Thus, it takes connotations from the story itself and from the reciprocal relationships that develop during the narrative. The context is essential and can affect one or another of the animal symbols.»<sup>17</sup> Such is to say that, while we cannot generalise, it is

still certainly possible to identify tendencies within any given time, period, or cultural climate. We may thus recognise that certain choices of animals and ways of depicting them -- more or less corresponding to complex human psychology -- are not accidental.

For practical reasons, as well as for content, I have thus established three categories: *humans and animals*; *half-human, half-animal*; *animals as humans*.

## Humans and Animals

Animals often exchange dialogues and symbolic relationships with human beings. They represent the clear metaphorical mirror of sentiments, emotional states, and moral behaviour helping to underscore and emphasise the perturbed Symbolist sensitivity, often attributable to feelings of anxiety. From this point of view a particularly fertile field is the German area and the North-eastern part of Italy (the latter being under the former's influence), where idealist philosophical ideas were widespread and the will-dominated principles of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche seemed to tinge the dialectic tension between rational human behaviour and animal instincts at the turn of the century.

Like other master engravers of his *Griffelkunst*, Max Klinger represents animals and humans as symbolic values, metaphors of the struggle between realism and idealism, between matter and spirit; anxiety or angst often arises from this contest. Klinger and his followers revealed a definite draftsman-like skill, by means of which the ambiguous encounters between humans and animals acquire a disquieting, tangible truth. Dreams become reality, in perfect accord with Klinger's theoretical thought, inasmuch as he saw his stylus as the most efficient tool when expressing individual free imagination.<sup>18</sup> One may interpret the asseverating tone of German draftsmanship, most especially in the case of imaginary subjects, as a mark of Dionysiac euphoria.

Let us consider for instance Klinger's follower Richard Müller (1874-1954), who taught engraving at the Academy of Dresden and was George Groez's and Otto Dix's teacher. Because of his analytical drawings he was called an "anatomist." His duels between exotic or fantastic beasts and human beings, often female bodies in all their harmonious classical nakedness, as tributes to inebriating sojourns in Italy and on Mediterranean shores, offer surreal nightmares and mysterious deliria—all angst stimulating situations.<sup>19</sup> The subject of the animal predominates and remains an obsessive presence in his work from the time when he would slip away to draw in the zoological gardens of Dresden. With his

precise and synthetic lines, drawn in the years surrounding the World War<sup>20</sup> and during the following decades, he constructed images that reveal a more palpable, existential anguish—probably linked to the wounds received during the war. This work is already close to Surrealism when compared with his earlier heart-wrenching draftsmanship in which he included animals and throbbing scenes against a dream-like Mediterranean background. His perfect drawings, which Groez recalls seemed to be identical copies of a petrified model, removes—some say—Freud’s “perturbing” life-experience, inasmuch as they propose a tangible fancy that blurs the confines between reality and fantasy.<sup>21</sup>



Fig. 23-5. Richard Müller, *The Archer II*, 1918, etching

Müller emulates Klinger’s engravings where the master had staged a sort of duel between stroke and word, poetry and visual image, through the precision of which he seeks to outdo every poetic jab. In this sense, Klinger’s work becomes more philosophical than literary and often incites anxiety; indeed, the uncertainty born of so much expressive precision in the graphic line leaves the viewer disoriented. This arises from the approach to themes by analogy and with images of his own invention, for example *Siesta II, dolce far niente* from the series *Rescues of Ovidian victims* in *Opus III Eva and the future* from circa 1880. In the second folio *First Future* death is lurking thanks to the symbol of the monumental and solemn tiger, followed by *The Serpent* which charms and reveals Eve’s beauty to her by bringing her a mirror instead of the forbidden apple. This etching underlines Eve’s vanity as the root cause of the Fall and the curse of death. Such images are very dense and angst-ridden and the space grows and becomes intoxicating when Klinger combines the use of aquatint (in the manner of Goya<sup>22</sup>) in the following one (*Second future*), where a nude demon-like male—with a devilish face, ears, and talon-shaped nails—rides a leech in a pool of glassy blood. The meaning of this

latter piece is unclear and very little narrative is provided. The frequent coexistence of men and animals as direct and symbolic relationships in Klinger's works underlines the conflicting anguishing relationship between philosophical rationality and instinct.

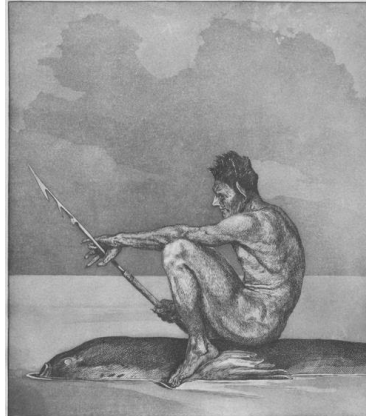
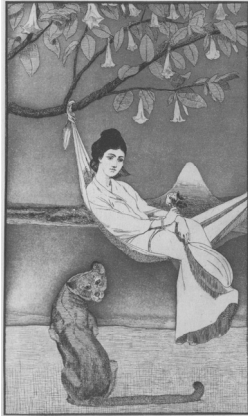


Fig. 23-6. Max Klinger, *Dolce farniente*, 1880 about, etching and aquatint  
 Fig. 23-7. Max Klinger, *The Second Future*, from the series «Eva and the Future», Opus III, 1880, etching and aquatint

Another theme dear to all German artists, who were on the look-out for links between Nordic traditions and classical mythology, was the wild life of centaurs, which for Klinger was an opportunity for visualising angst. Let us consider the *Pursued Centaur* in the *Intermezzos* series (1881). The anguished tension assails the horse in the center, who when wounded to death rears up against the horizontal trend of the scene, as if terrified by the double nature of the centaur who has struck him—maybe as a symbol of the dichotomy between fantasy and reality, as De Chirico wrote.<sup>23</sup>

To the public of the time such incongruities between fantasy and reality could be a source of anguish and feelings of estrangement favoring unconscious fantasies, putting in crisis the idealist categories of rational and irrational attributed to man and animals. At that time, certainly the arts more than philosophy dissolve the categories of necessity to which living beings are allocated. One can consider also Odilon Redon's engraving *The Fear*, 1866, inspired by "Erkönig" (The King of the Elves), a Goethe's ballad that narrates a hasty night ride of a father with his sick child to the nearby village in an attempt to save him<sup>24</sup>. The bare landscape represented

by Redon and the reluctance of the horse induce the call to an agonizing presentiment of death here felt rather by the natural world and animal instinct, which surpass human hope.

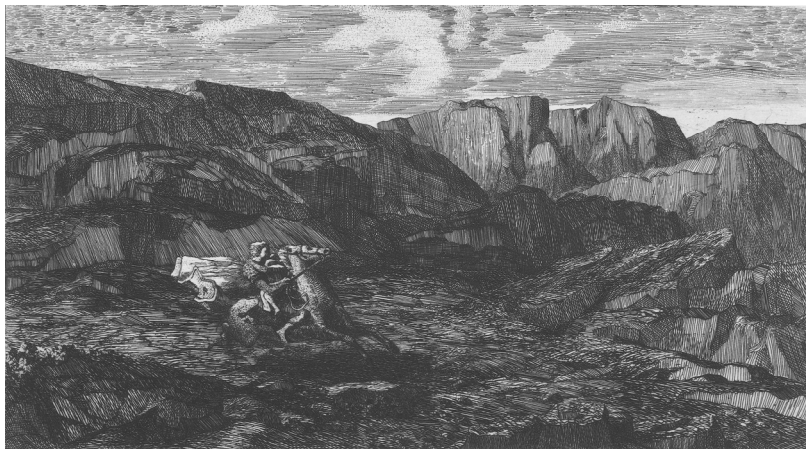


Fig. 23-8. Odilon Redon, *Angst*, 1866, etching



Fig. 23-9. Max Klinger, *Pursued Centaur*, «Intermezzos» series, 1881, etching and aquatint.

Franz Von Stuck was also part of this scenario.<sup>25</sup> He produced paintings with humans and animals, like his bacchanals. His mythological representations end up charged with more modern tensions, sensuality and negation. Let us remember for instance his famous *Sin*, a subject he proposed in multiple variations between 1891 and 1909.

A female figure is wrapped within the coils of a serpent both as a symbol of the original sin and of the sense of immersion in the natural world, in a sort of panicked hedonism one could also interpret as vice, sin, and lust. The sensuality of the female gaze and the sinuous turns that contain it together generate an impression of anguish. Von Stuck passes through various phases of representation in the painting, starting the first version (1891-92) that the Painting Gallery of Munich acquired, where the chiaroscuro and the vague, blurry atmosphere dominates: “a pale female body” enshrouded in “nocturnal darkness, thick with foliage and a serpent,” as those at the 1893 Secession commented.<sup>26</sup> In 1889 Redon, too, had experimented with the subject in his lithograph *Serpent Auréole* (*Serpent halo*), which some critics held bore the influence of von Stuck’s lithograph *Sensuality* of the same year, the German artist’s first work on the subject. Von Stuck at the time revealed remarkable ability by creating variegated, chromatic, chiaroscuro effects, with the sole use of black and white, following Klinger’s conviction that painting could not tolerate fanciful excesses as well as drawing could. Meanwhile Redon also represented his dreams or potential realities by means of the able use of drawing or engraving in black and white. The two contemporary works reveal two temperaments, two different ways of treating the same Biblical subject. Redon is more concerned with the symbolism of fertility—his wife was pregnant at the time—while Stuck with that of sin, otherwise both are able to arouse impressions of anguish and anxiety in recoding femininity in analogy with the snake and consequently with original sin.

The different expressions and attitudes of the two Eves are apparent. One shows her with submissively lowered eyes, full of awareness as she lays her hands on her belly and balances on the platform of a tall pedestal suggesting a crucifixion.”<sup>27</sup> The other has a more provocative regard, deliberately nestling close to the mouth of the serpent with its forked tongue, and offering her body, which she does more obviously, by tightening her arms behind her arched back. Von Stuck presented a second painted version (1908) at the personal exhibition of the 1909 Venice Biennale; the Galleria Restivo, Museum of Palermo, purchased it. The image is lighter and more colourful, highlighting Eve’s resemblance to the snake. In fact, the reviewers in the newspapers noted the “bewitching, fascinating, and irresistible eyes” of the reptile<sup>28</sup> as well as “the way it was the embodiment of corruption and perdition,” which was to inspire Achille Calzi’s 1913 *Donna serpent* (*Snake Woman*), in which the reptile head replaces the woman’s, with obvious symbolic meaning.<sup>29</sup>

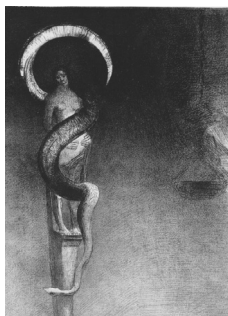
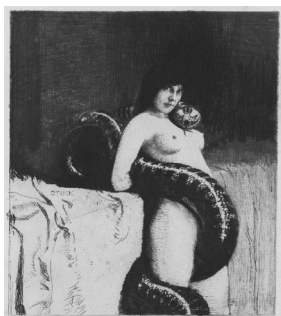


Fig. 23-10. Franz Von Stuck, *Sensuality*, 1889, etching

Fig. 23-11. Odilon Redon, *Serpent-Auréole*, 1889 charcoal on colored paper

Fig. 23-12. Franz Von Stuck, *The sin*, 1908

Champion of European visual symbolism Ferdinand Khnopff proposed a similar disturbing parallelism of gazes, provoker of anxiety in his *The Caress (Art)*, which he exhibited at the first Vienna Secession in 1898. Khnopff declared that he had painted a modern allegory of mankind, who is required to choose between control and pleasure; many have recognised the face of the artist in the androgynous features of the man tempted by a “*sphinx au corps de guépard*,”<sup>30</sup> which resembles his beloved sister Marguerite. Actually the typically Symbolist human/animal dualism dominates this painting, with an androgynous other self, which in the Flemish circles received the warm support of Joséphin Peladan. The subtitle *Art* thus stood for a compound of reason and animal/instinct.<sup>31</sup> When Ludwig Hevesi interviewed him on the singularity of the subjects of his paintings, Khnopff answered: «en fait le tableau du guépard n’est pas aussi mystique que d’autres l’imaginent: l’homme est mis devant le choix à faire entre le plaisir et la puissance» («Actually, the cheetah picture is not as mystical as some imagine; mankind has to choose between pleasure and power»).<sup>32</sup>

Another favourite subject among the Symbolist artists, which implied the presence of both mankind and animals, and which aroused emotional alteration, was the myth of Orpheus.

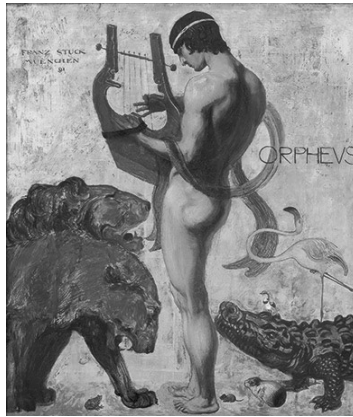


Fig. 23-13. Franz von Stuck, *Orpheus*, 1891

With his cithara, lyre, or lute he is able to tame wild beasts, to soothe agitated feelings that nonetheless reappear continuously in his tormented adventure. The Symbolist sensibility understandably cherished this theme, which represented the ability or aspiration of art to control anxiety. Pictorial production often included wild animals tamed by Apollo's gift: the lyre. Therefore, although there is a very long list of XIX century artists who tried their hand at this subject (Moreau, Redon, Delville, Vallotton, among many others), let us take two examples where the animal presence is more relevant, both of which, not by chance, were by Germanic artists closer to the philosophies of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. The Orpheus of von Stuck, somewhat recalling a Noah's ark, shows congeries of animals standing against a golden background as if painted on a wall or on a neo-antique or Byzantine vase, or rather suspended and isolated as in a Medieval bestiary. The iconography of the animals, hypnotized by Apollo's cithara, has been thought to derive from illustrious artistic traditions, but certainly invite interpretation in a philosophical vein. It represents a juxtaposition of animal appetites with the clear, forced classicism of Orpheus's body, an allusion to the principle of will and need: human superiority over instinct, a central theme in the production of von Stuck. It is almost as if the golden background were an illustration of angst's negation, denying any room to vague instinct. It seems anguishedly constrained within the chromatic turmoil that outlines the fairs.

Nonetheless, von Stuck's symbolism shares Nietzsche's vitalist tension; modern passions traverse the harmonious shapes of the human bodies. Orpheus's profile, if one looks closely, reveals tension and

shadows rippling between his robe and his back, as if they were an image of the sound that soothes common animal instincts. Some critics have seen this evocation of the classical world as a quest for a stage of harmony and unity with natural instincts.<sup>33</sup>

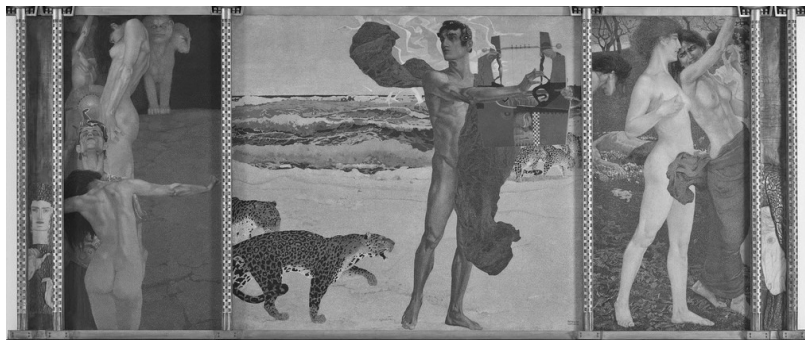


Fig. 23-14. Luigi Bonazza, *The legend of Orfeo*, 1905

The Italian Luigi Bonazza was a Trentine artist educated in Vienna, where he painted his canvas with Orpheus (which he successfully exhibited in Milan in 1906, and in 1907 at the Viennese Secession) depicting his wild animals suspended in an apparently naturalistic space but defined by geometric and deco profiles in the manner of Klimt, whose hanging cluster or *accrochage* style finds clear echoes in the two lateral scenes of the triptych. The tigers, or exotic cheetahs, reveal a kind of French synthetic cubism filtered through his beloved Hodler. Here, however, Déco rhythms abound. The angst of incommunicability becomes even more obvious in the decorative version of the subject he painted in 1928 with the title *Summer Night* (which he had already, however, planned between 1914-15), a sketch for the decoration of the artist's house in the outskirts of Trento, which likewise derived from the Orpheus myth. The blind-folded woman, the closed eyes, the violin without strings—every figure is immured within his/her incommunicability, the wild beasts reduced to a continuum of highly decorative background patterns; a dominating feature is the willow, a symbol of patience and kindness, but also “weeping” as an indication of the pain and suffering rising from the ground.<sup>34</sup>

As regards the gradual affirmation of these animal topics in the Déco period (1920s), the trend moves from Symbolist prototypes towards a codified diffusion which often invades the decorative object and consequently tempers the Symbolist intensity of angst, mutating into a

mysterious and exotically attractive atmosphere. Von Stuck's disturbing *Sin*, and for example the decorative group showing a woman and a beast, *The two proud ones* (1920), by the Piedmontese ceramist Sandro Vacchetti, are emblematic of this trend.



Fig. 23-15. Vittorio Zecchin, *The Three Sons of the King Calendar* 1914, tempera



Fig. 23-16. Duilio Cambellotti, *The Three Calendar Sons of the King plate IV*, tempera

Among the most refined artists in Italy to produce this kind of subject we must recall the Venetian Vittorio Zecchin. This multi-dimensional artist, who applied his talent to every artistic medium from painting to glass and from tapestry to furniture, proposed tigers as a decorative motif in the central panel of the 1914 wall decoration he carried out for the dining room of the Hotel Terminus in Venice and dedicated to *A Thousand and One Nights*. Next to the princess Badr-al-Budur, the Sultan's daughter,

the tigers symbolise an exotic realm. Zecchin, too, was struck by Klimt's works on exhibit at the 1910 Biennale; he combined influences from Byzantine art with leafy motifs he derived from Klimt and from the lovely colour plates that Duilio Cambellotti had produced for the illustrated edition of *A Thousand and One Nights* Umberto Notari published in 1913 for Istituto Editoriale Italiano of Milan (a series for children) together with three other volumes of tales from Sheherazade. In Cambellotti's work, as well as in the princess Badr-al-Budur panel by Zecchin, the continuous decorative flow prevails, introducing animal forms into the formal compositional structure of the human body in a fluid stream of energy that is concentrated and stands out among the animal bodies between tangles of furs and warts of the mantles. Cambellotti—and his fantastic hybrid, mythical or indigenous animals from the Roman countryside, which perfectly reflect his talented experimental temperament and fiery earthy spirit—was subject to the mass of modernist stimuli in Italian culture emerging between the first and second decade of the 20th century, forsaking Liberty-style flexuous motifs and embracing Futurist and Synthetic Déco impulses. While the sense of anxiety now pervades all the set of decorative images, the formal language condenses the value and attenuates the *empfindung*, the energy of the sign, into a more generic and vital one. Let us now examine the second aspect of our subject.

### Half-Human, Half-Animal

In the «great organic project»<sup>35</sup> of Cambellotti's illustrated books, which fed the childhood imagination of a whole generation (figures as diverse as the art historian Giulio Carlo Argan and the film director Pasolini remember his illustrations), his naked contour lines provide an architectural structure to human figures and a human vitality to animals and plants. Combined with the simple alternation of a few recurring colours, this quality homogenizes the human beings in the plates where the protagonists are embedded in a “web of shapes, colours, symbols and allusions»<sup>36</sup>: see Cambellotti's *The Three Calendar Sons of the King* plate IV, *The history of Prince Zein Alasnam and of the King of the Genii* as examples of his «inexhaustible encyclopaedia of the fantastic,»<sup>37</sup> which his series of 20 tempera illustrations for *A Thousand and One Nights* represent. The repetition of sinuous lines of colour, as a counter-chant to—and probably derived from—woodcuts, is common to all the scenes and sometimes enables the anthropomorphism of animals and at times the metamorphoses of shapes in a bi-dimensional decorative continuum of space that unleashes “waves of dreams” generating «disproportionate

forms of vision.»<sup>38</sup> Ettore Cozzani, who contributed to the rebirth of woodcuts in Italy as editor and author of the periodical “Eroica,” glowingly describes the «magnificent vigour of understanding and concord»<sup>39</sup> of Cambellotti’s art with the texts he illustrates; one might add Cambellotti’s own words saying that he was inspired «to draw a form around a thought.»<sup>40</sup> Such harmony leads to an intense fusion between living creatures, as he himself writes, regarding his main source of inspiration—the Roman countryside. He describes the mounted cattle-guard: «his means of locomotion, the Maremman horse with a ragged mane, and the eyes of a serpent ... rather than advancing, it seemed to spring from underground, like some infernal beast, with its rider erect on the high saddle, both seeming to be an inseparable, single creature—part man, part animal.»<sup>41</sup> Cambellotti’s animals and nature evoked a chorus-like, expressive whole, traversed by a singularly synthetic vital surge. One finds such for instance in *I Corvi* (1912) or in *I cavalli* (1912)—whether he uses them in engravings, sculpture, stained glass windows, furniture decoration, or anything else—up to the last instances of his illustrations for *Parvenze* (1929), where the artist created an unusual nature/living being of metamorphic essence. His structural woodcut technique is dynamic as well and spreads its energy throughout the space of the illustration. «I try to express ... a mood, a sensation generated ... by images and visions that have always dominated in my art,» Cambellotti himself explained.<sup>42</sup>



Fig. 23-17. Duilio Cambellotti, *Tree and eagles*, 1929, etching  
 Fig. 23-18. Duilio Cambellotti, *The ravens* 1912, etching

When one reads his considerations on the countryside, where the advancing urbanization of Rome has usurped intense and genuine values, his natural animations strike one as symbolic accusations avenging the anguish of life’s annihilation. His georgic excursions thus transformed into imaginary journeys, during which the use of fabulous analogies and emphatic or multiple combinations of natural forces stimulated observation.<sup>43</sup> He never took paper or colours with him, but a camera, which helped him remember «all those things wrapped so closely around

the clumps of earth, with their lives and their philosophy.» A work of art was the way one could investigate them, revealing their “diabolic” effects.<sup>44</sup>

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century we often witness the representation of mythical and winged figures that pander to vitalistic requirements and translate superhuman aspirations, following Nietzsche’s thoughts, or at least metamorphic ones when physical animal parts are added to humans (i.e. Böcklin’s fauns or those by von Stuck and Klinger, or Redon’s and Adolfo De Carolis’s winged men). Half human/half animal figures thus underlined how the imaginary invaded everyday existence. Mixed figures (satyrs, nymphs, fauns by Böcklin, Klinger, and their followers, like Otto Greiner<sup>45</sup>) transported their viewers to a mythical time where the clear Mediterranean light illuminated nature, renewing a longing for and exaltation of free, intense, and spontaneous life rejecting all social scruples.

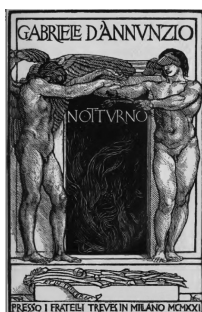


Fig. 23-19. Adolfo De Carolis, front page the *Notturmo* by Gabriele D'Annunzio, 1921, etching

Fig. 23-20. Max Klinger, *Abduction of Prometheus*, 1894, etching and aquatint

Instinct triumphed, with encouragement from idealist philosophies and from Arcadian poetry, and anguish is declined as an anxiety of infinity. Wings generally represented both a fear of existence and a “vertigo of freedom” such as in Adolfo De Carolis’s illustrations for *Nocturne* by Gabriele d’Annunzio,<sup>46</sup> where the Dionysian poetry brimming with metaphors and even with animalistic metonyms becomes even more resonant and visual when the Poet temporarily loses his sight after his airplane crashes. «The horses of action and poetry are beginning once again and even more furiously, to gallop in my veins,» he writes. D’Annunzio sometimes even seems to allude to the vitalist environmental aspect in the beautiful *Abduction of Prometheus* 1894 Opus XII of

*Fantasie on Brahms* by Klinger, a cycle De Chirico also loved and commented on. He writes «What are these Titanic apparitions where architectural backgrounds consist of chiselled and overhanging cliffs?»<sup>47</sup> The myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus is interesting as it draws attention to the distinction between man and animal. Zeus assigns the two brothers to distribute attributes to living creatures; since Epimetheus errs by favoring animals, Prometheus remedies the situation by giving humans fire and wisdom. This myth encapsulates the aspiration of the 19th century to help the human race in an era of transition producing doubts and uncertainty, a time plagued by fears and weakness, such as the love of death. The engraving is part of a series he dedicated to the music of Brahms, which the musician appreciates – considering it a continuation of his own art, thanks to its extraordinary evocative power enabling it to express the same meanings in a different language.

In Giulio Aristide Sartorio, vitalism creates a relationship between human and animal, fusing together in a continuum of the same material and lines. During his youth in Rome in the 1880s, Sartorio took much influence from D'Annunzio's aspirations. Style is considered the shape of the idea that guides art and life, as images were considered the communicators of feelings. They did so in his *I figli di Caino*, much appreciated in Paris in 1889—his first work—where a pale, bloodless human body has a reclining tiger next to it, a recurring animal in Sartorio's opus from that time. It was a symbol of irrationality, but also of primal will-power and of a nature brimming with vital élan. One can thus see how Sartorio was all too ready to accept influenced from North European culture when teaching at Weimar (1896-99). It was there he finished *Gorgon and the Heroes*, a mixed composition that included humans, animals, and sirens. He met Nietzsche, read Hegel and Schopenhauer, all of whom stimulated his vitalist tendencies and promoted his revival of antique friezes. Nonetheless, like Cambellotti and earlier than the later, Sartorio favoured a vigorous classical tone, never letting Nordic tendencies overcome him. He called gorgons, fauns, and sirens “hybrid, depraved monsters like critics, neither male nor female.”<sup>48</sup>

Constituting a high point in his work, perhaps more important and carried out before the titanic frieze in the Italian Parliament Hall, are the allegorical panels of *Light, Shadow, Love, and Death* he painted for the Italian room in the 1907 Venice Biennale. In the panels, composed as large friezes on two levels, the presence of animals is relevant and is chiefly composed as a symbolic iconographic scheme. «For the panel *Shadows*—the author writes to Fradeletto, secretary of the Biennale—I painted monsters and sirens.» In *Death* he depicts Hypnos (below) and Thanatos, driving a chariot, with accompanying harpies.

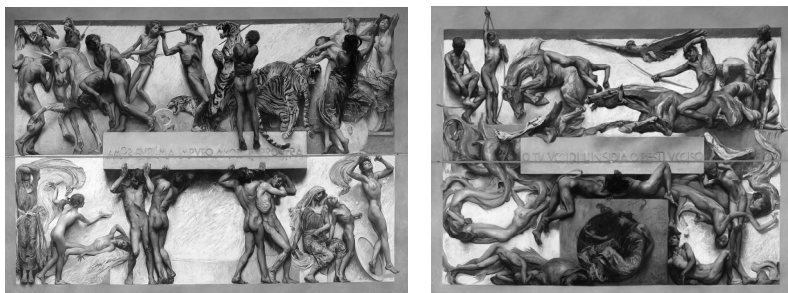


Fig. 23-21. Giulio Aristide Sartorio, *Love*, panel for the Biennale central room decoration 1907 cold wax

Fig. 23-22. Giulio Aristide Sartorio, *Death*, pannel for the Biennale central room decoration 1907 cold wax

It is an Italic decadent emphasis, even if one can interpret the wild beasts as irrational instincts that need taming to allow man to prosper, according to the philosophy of the time, from the principle of necessity to vitalism. This is underlined by the joint presence of monstrous vigorous animals closely connected to the human bodies in tight metamorphic units painted in fluid coloured lines outlining bodies forced into acrobatic positions. Among the symbolic animals we find the serpent of negation, the horse mastered by man, fierce tigers, as well as double monsters such as fauns and sirens, and animals who set up a kind of aggressive dance with man, blocked by extreme gestures possessing the «dramatic quality of primordial encounters, only partly derived from the observation of nature.»<sup>49</sup> Sartorio's large pictorial cycles (of which one of the most famous is the frieze for the Italian Parliament Hall) constitute clear and epic repertoires of modern Italian temperament, revealing a tumultuous existential spirit that is basically anti-classical. The cold wax painting technique Sartorio adopted when executing his decorative cycles consisted of thick layers of chromatic material and gave the impression of sculpture or relief work. The material supports the visibility of the energetic sheaf brushwork accompanying the pathos and energy oozing from the compulsive trend of the scenes, recalling the vital and psychological flow emanating from the sculpture with its mingled bodies and emotions in Rodin's *Gates of Hell*. It was presumably a deliberate choice to exhibit Rodin's plaster model of the *Thinker* in 1907 at the Biennale in Venice alongside Sartorio's allegorical panels.

It is, however, in the processes of mutual metamorphosis of human and animal creatures that the visionary aesthetic is most evident; they often seem

to melt and dissolve into uncertainty, as signals of disorientation generating anguished sensations subject to philosophers' analysis. Heidegger explains anguish as «a kind of anxiety caused by undefined reasons, and thus confusing, since it eliminates the possibility of comprehending one's own identity.» Unlike fear, anguish links to an “inter-world” (not of the world) dimension, prompting one to wonder whether the combined creatures that do not belong to this world, but are products of artistic and poetic fancy, should not be viewed by Heidegger<sup>50</sup> as the most appropriate transpositions of such a philosophical stance. Nietzsche, on the other hand, ends up maintaining that things relate to their negation through anguish. Kierkegaard denies any possibility of anguish in animals, as they are not provided with souls. In a philosophical scenario of this kind, it is understandable that free artistic exploration of an anguish-ridden environment could often produce imaginary figures. Incitement from literary texts together with the attitudes of theoretical thought gave added impetus to artists, as for instance in the case of the theosophical power in Poe's *Tales* (1905-7). One of the many artists they influenced was Alberto Martini from Oderzo (Treviso). Between 1905 and 1910 he produced 136 refined and creative ink drawings. He obtained *sfumato* effects in black and white using fluid, formal, metamorphic motifs, influenced by decadent esoteric trends. Among his works worth recalling, comparable with Redon's, are his visionary illustrations for *The Raven* (1906) [see Fig. 3-4]—a kind of fluid shadow, contrasted with the rhythmic cadence of a slatted shutter, or surrounded by the vortex of a circular frame—or his illustrations for Mallarmé's *Short poems in prose* (1908-9).

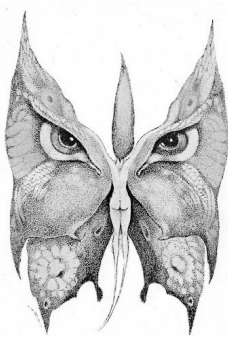


Fig. 23-23. Alberto Martini, *Woman-butterfly*, 1907, coloured etching

Fig. 23-24. Alberto Martini's visiting card, 1915, etching

It was the critic Vittorio Pica who showed the two texts to Martini. In 1909 Martini dedicated a visionary *ex libris* to Pica, his ardent supporter and discoverer; a humanized boat, with an androgynous prow, proceeds on a lagoon. The artist similarly designed his visiting card, containing a metaphoric self-portrait wound about by sinuous human and animal metamorphing shapes emerging from minute dusty hatching beneath the shadow of a wide-spread raven's wing. According to the period's alchemic treatises, the bird symbolized maceration in death, the initial stage of an artist's alchemic process.<sup>51</sup> Also by Martini is the *ex libris* for the Galleria Pesaro, a prominent gallery of the time in Milan, where Martini had a private exhibition in 1918; the image shows pastels and several drawings dedicated to animals.<sup>52</sup> One of his butterfly-women accompanies the frontispiece of the catalogue *My Muse*, which Cozzani in the *Eroica* remembers as «mysterious and experimental conjunctions of plant and animal forms. The most haunting flowers like orchids and the most fragile and dazzling insects such as butterflies,» fruit of the «strange and thoughtful ferments of instinct.»<sup>53</sup> His visionary impetus ventures outside the confines of Symbolism, towards surrealist frontiers, revealing similarities with Apollinaire's transformations, which A. Martini had encountered during his repeated trips to Paris. During this period, as his *Trentuna fantasie bizzarre e crudeli* (Thirty-one bizarre and cruel fantasies) from between 1920 and 1922 proves, his graphic art assumed a new aspect, forsaking decadent evanescence and aiming at more objective representation under inspiration (like Savino's work) from Surrealism. In 1929 he portrayed André Breton and between 1912 and 1934 he painted at least twelve portraits of the eccentric Marchesa Casati (the reason for his French sojourns), at times as a Medusa/butterfly. «You, Marchesa, are the Metamorphosis!», the artist writes to her.<sup>54</sup> As regards underlying disquiet, we should also remember a promising draftsman of Faenza, stricken with tuberculosis at the age of 24—the author of the *Peacock Lady* (1903-4), who transposed the ca. 1400 tale of Cassandra of Ferrara, the mistress of the ruler of Faenza, into haughty modern guise.

The last part of this second section we should certainly dedicate to Odilon Redon: a great visual poet, a creator of beings provoking feelings of anxiety by straddling humanity, animals, and biomorphic elements. These feelings of anxiety arise from the disorientation resulting from the conjunction of embryo life-forms or mythological animals, drawn from symbolic bestiaries with partial or enlarged human faces, eyes, mouths—all of which produce complex emotions and evoke intimate impressions and mental constructs.

If Nietzsche dominates the end of the 19th century from the one side, postulating exaggerated vitalist axioms represented by animal/human/demons, on the other side we find the other great “zoologist” Redon with his fantastically ambiguous humanoid bestiary. These conjunctions in philosophic, literary, or artistic Central Europe appear to be affects of dramatic tension, incapable of synthesis, underlining vitalist anxiety,<sup>55</sup> interpreted by half horse and half man creatures or by centaurs as protagonists of battles, pursuits and Deutsch-römer orgy sessions. The same figures as Redon painted them bathe in a surrounding dreamy atmosphere, immersed in the study of evocative writings or in a pantheist nature, symbolising «art before the advent of science» and thus «a lament over the loss of a distant past, in which reason and intuition had been united.»<sup>56</sup>

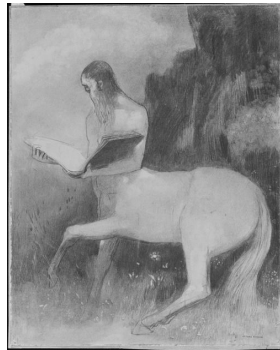
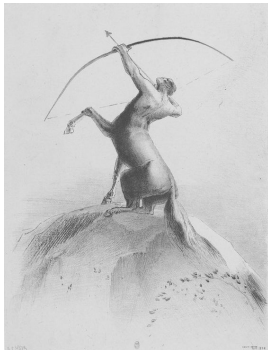


Fig. 23-25 Odilon Redon, *Centaur Aiming at the Clouds* 1875c.

Fig. 23-26 Odilon Redon, *Reading Centaur* 1880c.

In 1889 Redon produced the album of six engravings he dedicated to Flaubert's *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* (*Temptation of Saint Antony*), one of the literary works that was most suggestive of parallel worlds to artists; it is a masterpiece and perfectly fits this theme. The quality of the blacks (more intense and atmospheric than earlier ones, Redon using them to create a greater sense of angst-ridden mystery) prompted Mallarmé, who was aware of the masterpiece, to encourage its display at Duran-Ruel at the first exhibition of *Peintres-graveurs* (painter-engravers).

Redon fully understood the importance of Flaubert's “literary marvel,” perceiving its imaginative potential and the elicitations it exercised upon the unconscious to materialise the invisible, as he recorded more than once in his *A soi même*. The resulting lithograph series (three between 1888 and

1896) were glowing repertoires of visionary images and conjoined beings, the artistic aspects of which were attuned to Redon's multiple interests in science-fiction and science. He showed interest towards exceptional natural manifestations, such as teratology,<sup>57</sup> the science of monsters justified according to the laws of compensation, as well as reading the writings of Camille Flammarion or Jules Verne.<sup>58</sup>

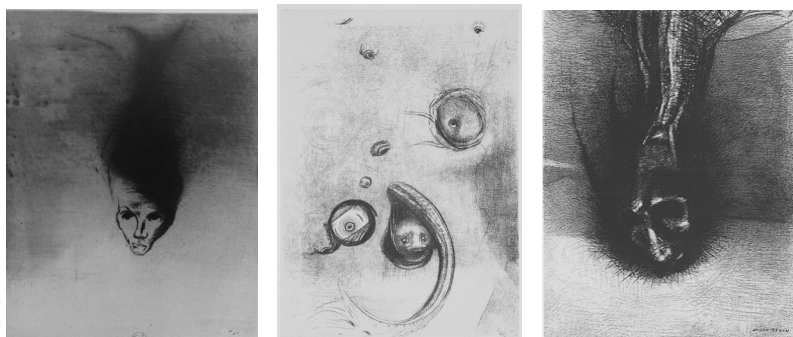


Fig. 23-27 Odilon Redon, *Les sciapodes* in *À Gustave Flaubert*, Album of lithographic engravings, 1894

Let's take for example *Les Sciapodes*: a legendary figure ancient Ethiopians and Indians described, but also present in Greek literature and later in Medieval bestiaries. It features a human face and a body in the form of a large foot. Redon interprets Flaubert's descriptions,<sup>59</sup> causing the body to resemble a tree trunk. Whereas, however the allusions to «la tête le plus bas possible,» «le secret du bonheur,» above which «les cuisses levées ressemblant à des troncs d'arbres,» are details that seem to refer to the enlargement of biological organisms under a microscope, the fantastic animal Redon depicted in a 1889 lithograph in the series dedicated *À Gustave Flaubert* emerges with half human head and half fish from an evanescent fluid space, admirably rendered in aqua-forte<sup>60</sup> wherein fantasy darts around freely in the shape of aquatic life-forms. It is still a matter of debate whether these uncertain creatures belong more to the human or the animal sphere.

## Animals as Humans

We still have to consider when animals rise to being the main subject in painting and decoration at the turn of the century, separated from any human presence but implying some kind of reference—due to expressions,

attitudes, and situations—to human complexity. Subjects include nocturnal animals that refer to the enchantment of darkness, as heralds of death or distressing fancies (ravens, owls, or bats). Subjects likewise include tamed beasts or animals in the midst of aggressive action, along with dangerous animals identifiable with vices, like the serpent of the original sin. When any of these are the absolute subjects of artists in the Symbolist period, they can however represent allusions, disguises, projections of human sentiments. Angst in its various forms often dictates these, they becoming its metaphors, relating to the philosophy of Kierkegaard or to idealism.

In Nietzsche's *Thus spoke Zarathustra* the serpent in the speech *About the three metamorphoses* (1883-85) represents the subjection of animal nihilism.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, there is still an echo of Medieval bestiaries with their link to moral states; animals, as Levi-Strauss wrote, are not only for eating but also “for thinking.”<sup>62</sup>

As this trend towards empathy progresses, so too writers go in for anthropomorphic interpretation of animals. For example, in Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1911) the insect-Samsa plays an allegorical role—as the vehicle of an inner image. Likewise, giant insects and a herd of mastodons in Jules Verne's fantastic novels become a way of measuring human imagination and expressive capacities. The mysterious or terrible creatures become disquieting, seductive apparitions, which Flaubert reviews in his description of St. Anthony's temptation: from the unicorn to the chimera to the *sciapode* he has within his soul a herd of ferocious animals, nightmares, and psychological fetishes.

Let us first consider a few Italian examples, where the faithful representation of primordial animal aspects assumes a symbolic value. There was the divisionist Gaetano Previati, from whose skein of impressive strokes in black and white charcoal (Redon does it too) come those mice, hippopotami, monkeys, and spiders inspired by his reading of Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque* in Baudelaire's translation (1883) and then rereading in the first Italian edition of Sonzogno (1885). Then there is Sartorio, who feeds his talent as an animalist as well as a great decorator. Animal subjects had been some of the first Sartorio practiced on as a young man following his grandfather's and father's commercial activities as an animal painter; he kept animals in his repertory during his Symbolist season. In 1914 he carried out a series of drawings and paintings that are a sort of modern bestiary, which he collected in a book Luigi Serra introduced. The art historian, then inspector of the Venetian galleries, recognised the difference between Sartorio's expressive and heroic animals from Giuseppe Palizzi's well-known and widely appreciated animalistic realism. Sartorio's work derived

from Symbolist intentions, preferring to portray the veracity of an animal's temperament, «the peculiar character» nevertheless emphasized and «separated from any relationship to man and nature as a dynamic expression of the vitality and personality»<sup>63</sup> of the animal as a life governed by instincts, although tamed. Serra thus recognised a psychological gift in an animal portrait painter, similar to the gifts of a painter of human portraits.<sup>64</sup> Likewise at the beginning of the 20th century, the Symbolist painter Mario De Maria drew exotic and ferocious animals in the Berne zoo with a fresh and curious eye, in an effort to stifle his hysterical anguish resulting from the deep pain due to the loss of his daughter. In this way the artist or poet chooses animals as symbols to express a feeling of identification; sometimes anxiety or human anguish, or heroic vitalism, or Kant's principle of necessity can find reflection in the temperament of a wild or ferocious animal. Likewise, at times during a life in captivity one can capture the urge to dominate emotions.

There are many artists, not only in Italy, such as the already mentioned Müller<sup>65</sup> or Klinger for instance, who were assiduous visitors of zoos' fantastic and exotic repertoires, serving their Symbolist interpretations as we have already seen.



Fig. 23-28 Giulio Aristide Sartorio, *Notte d'estate, lotta di animali*, 1900, etching  
 Fig. 23-29 Mario De Maria, animals from the Bern zoo, 1907. Ink drawings

On the other hand, the most characteristic Symbolist animal representations «seem enigmatic, having come out from behind the shadowy wings of a hidden and remote world», like the metamorphic

animals of Redon or Albert Martini in which «the anxiety to recuperate the forgotten is captured.»<sup>66</sup> Many of them take inspiration from highly evocative literary texts, which offer an imaginary bestiary.

Huysmans describes Redon's famous 1889 album, composed of «figures that go back through the centuries, with their profound and unique expressive traits, to the troubling works of the Middle Ages; it links M. Redon to the chain, interrupted since the Renaissance, of fantastic bestiaries, of visionaries besotted by monsters».<sup>67</sup> But these monsters are predominantly animal-like, in the sense that principles of necessity and will do not govern their instincts, which gives their authors the freedom to invent their own creative combining processes.

Redon is a master of the process of “suggestive art,” which every Symbolist artist undertakes, adopting to a greater or lesser degree evolutions of “abstraction”<sup>68</sup> in order to bring improbable beings to life in a human fashion, causing them to live according to the laws of probability. It is thus that organic fantasies often take on animal traits, so as to better resemble creatures with instincts unfettered by reason, albeit often placed in attitudes similar to human ones. Remember, for instance, Martini's various nocturnal moths and his feline or kneeling butterflies, or Redon's famous *L'Araignée souriante* (*Smiling Spider*) in two separate versions in 1881 and in 1887, so difficult to interpret. This latter is balanced out by *L'araignée qui pleure*, anchored to the earth by its numerous legs and almost more human, as if it were a chopped-off head offered like the Baptist's on a body/plate. Perhaps one may, according to the theories of Charles Blanc, compare the companion piece to the interpretations of feelings and sensations of happiness or sadness, depending on whether the compositional lines go up or downwards, with a reference to the guiding principles that Seurat and Signac assigned to color at the time. Huysmans in *À rebours* speaks of «inconceivable apparitions...like the spider, whose body in the centre was a human face.» It remains a rather unpleasant and repulsive animal. Redon however causes it to smile, introducing a streak of awkward sympathy, which Mellerio in 1893 appreciated and understood. When observing Redon's anthropomorphised animals, one should certainly bear in mind how widespread Darwin's theories on the evolution of the species had become, influencing writers and artists, as well as scientists, and of course arachnologists. The works of the French caricaturist Jean-Ignace-Isidore Gérard, known by his pseudonym Grandville, were among Redon's favorite reading matter; Gérard was the author of satirical texts and illustrations, dedicated to the mysterious world of visions, metamorphosis, cosmogony, and incarnations—like *Un Autre*

*monde* and *Fleurs Animées*, which can certainly be considered among Redon's possible inspirations.<sup>69</sup>

Real fauna, however, was still a wide repertory from which artists could draw metaphorical symbols of angst between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In certain cases, like that of the original and versatile Duilio Cambellotti, implied human anxiety involves all nature. Cambellotti's style of bare lines moreover makes him a forerunner of Futurism. Witness his close-knit metamorphic links to trees with talons, or his eagle-like trees in the woodcut series of *Parvenze*. This subject seems linked to a superhuman desire to contain anxiety associated with violence or animal vitality through sleep, enchantment, or the domination of plant forms as a balancing out of man's physical and spiritual power.

In 1940 he recalls in an autobiographical note—as knife-edged as the fantastic and visionary images that flash similarly from the woodcut, ceramics, and glassware he designed—how nature had directly inspired him. Guiding him is a «rare capacity for synthesis between concrete analysis and transfiguring fantasy,» perhaps urged by anguish of the desire of movement, and born from his friendship with Futurist Giacomo Balla and from a kind of expressionist intensity.<sup>70</sup>

It is no longer the time for an undefined, Symbolist inner world to release subtle anguished impressions by means of strokes of evanescent shadowy charcoal or through mythological and emphatic dreams, nor for the sinuous animal coils of Art Nouveau. The ciphered primitive rigor of Medieval bestiaries once again supplies inspiration to the new formal horizons of the fractured, fragmentary vanguard artists.

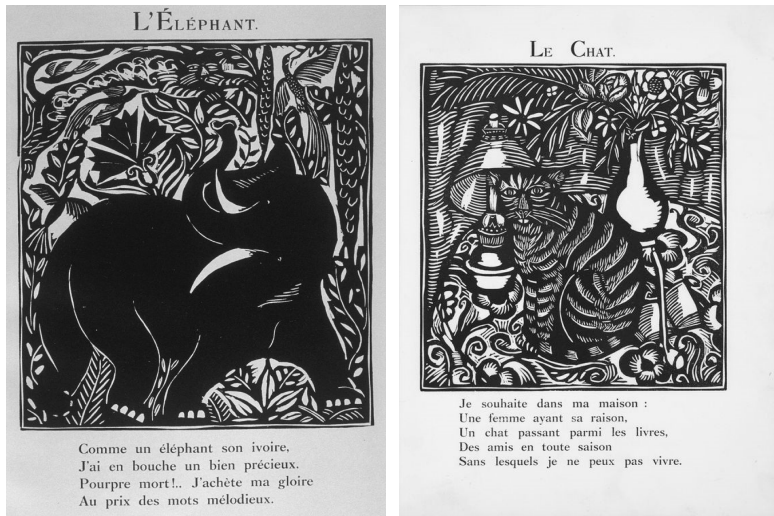


Fig. 23-30 Raul Dufy, *L'éléphant*, «Le Bestiaire ou cortège d'Orphée» by Guillaume Apollinaire (Paris, Deplanche, Éditeur d'Art, 1911), etching

Fig. 23-31s Raul Dufy, *Le Chat*, «Le Bestiaire ou cortège d'Orphée» by Guillaume Apollinaire (Paris, Deplanche, Éditeur d'Art, 1911), etchings

Guillaume Apollinaire's *Bestiaire* or *Cortège d'Orphée* constitutes a watershed leading to the introduction of the new languages. Apollinaire's first collection of poems in 1911 was a series of quatrains in which the poet causes the animals to speak. Like Raoul Dufy's illustrations, in which geometric reductions of space and sliding planes slither between descriptive elegant touches, Apollinaire's verses start from realistic aspects and then slide into nonsense, decomposing the generated image into cubist-like fragments. Every poem conceals a human metaphor, an analogy with the narrating self, no longer however in the Symbolist sense, but rather in a Surrealist and associational dimension. It introduces a new existential season.

In conclusion, the investigation of the expressive value of anguish through the representation of animals among Symbolist artists has led to distinguish three categories: the relationship between animals and humans; the vivification of intermediate worlds where beings half human and half animal have an active role; the symbolic interpretation of animals that take the value of specific feelings such as anguish.

In the age of the diffusion of idealistic philosophies, in which the animals are bound to instincts and to the principle of necessity, at last we

can see that the representation of animals finds fertile expression in the artistic imagination, sometimes freed from the cultural categories, placed there by the way of thinking.

On the other hand, the feeling of anguish and dismay is frequent in individuals in an era in which the aspiration to penetrate the infinite in the meanders of the mind and the universe grows. Thus, the attempts to represent this aspiration full of the unknown multiply. The marginalization of the animal condition by reason makes the symbolic presence of animals even more distressing. Often assimilated to men and their aspirations, according to artistic creative freedom, the animal representations reverse the limits that would impose their condition. Thus, fantastic and ambiguous animals, personifications of human anguish, or complex iconographies come to life. In these images, animals with their instinctual force contribute to the creation of situations and atmospheres, expressions of intense feelings of anxiety or situations which cause the appearance of those images.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See: Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra e imposture*, Italian Ed. Bologna, Cappelli, 1980, 96-97; Jean Clair, *Hubris. La fabrique du monstre dans l'art moderne. Homoncles, Géants et Acéphales*, Gallimard, Paris, 2012. Italian Ed. Johan & Levi, Milano, 2015 see also: Stefano Lanuzza, *Bestiario del Nihilismo. Scrittura e animali*, Book Editore, Castel Maggiore (Bologna), 1993, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread* translated with Introduction by Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1944, 39. For this and the preceding quotation.

<sup>3</sup> The editorial adventure of *Le Corbeau* commenced in 1875; it was a single poem, published by Lesclide in Paris as a deluxe translation illustrated by Edouard Manet.

<sup>4</sup> Dominique Jullien, «Translation as illustration: the visual paradigm, in Mallarmé's translations of Poe» in *Word&Image*, v.30, N.3, July-September 2014, (249-260) 253.

<sup>5</sup> Ambroise Vollard, a print-collector, dealer and publisher. See: Ambroise Vollard, *Memorie di un mercante di quadri* It.trans. by Ximena Rodriguez Bradford, Johan&Levi, Milano, 2012; Ralph Jentsch, *Ambroise Vollard éditeur*, Stuttgart, Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1994. Redon used to say that he appreciated the purchasers of his prints who preferred his ideas rather than his style.

<sup>6</sup> «Que cette parole soit le signal de notre séparation, oiseau ou démon! — hurlei-je en me redressant. — Rentre dans la tempête, retourne au rivage de la Nuit plutonienne; ne laisse pas ici une seule plume noire comme souvenir du mensonge que ton âme a proféré; laisse ma solitude inviolée; quitte ce buste au-dessus de ma porte; arrache ton bec de mon cœur et précipite ton spectre loin de ma porte!» Le corbeau dit : «Jamais plus!».

Et le corbeau, immuable, est toujours installé, toujours installé sur le buste pâle de Pallas». Edgard Allan Poe, *The Raven*, 97.

<sup>7</sup> According to Gamboni, indeterminism affected Redon's youth and education. See: Dario Gamboni, *La plume et le pinceau. Odilon Redon et la littérature*, Les Éditions de minuit, Paris, 1989, 22-30.

<sup>8</sup> «Cette vie intermédiaire entre l'animalité et la plante, [...] ce mystérieux élément qui est animal durant quelques heures du jour et seulement sous l'action de la lumière», Odilon Redon, *À Soi-Même. Journal (1867-1915). Notes sur la vie, l'art et les artistes*, Floury, Paris, 1922, 19.

<sup>9</sup> «Aux jeux mystérieux des ombres et du rythme des lignes mentalement conçues» *ibid.*, 27.

<sup>10</sup> See his extensive repertory in *Odilon Redon prince du rêve 1840-1916*, catalogue of the exhib. (Paris March 23- June 20, Montpellier July 7 luglio-October 16, 2011). Edited by Rodolphe Rapetti, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Odilon Redon, *À soi-même, Journal (1867-1915)*, *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>12</sup> *Lettres de Gauguin, Gide, Huysmans, Jammes, Mallarmé, Verhaeren...à Odilon Redon*, edited by A. Redon and R. Bacou, Paris, 1960, (p. 239-254).

<sup>13</sup> See Alfred Werner, *Introduction* to «The Graphic Work of Odilon Redon», New York: 1969, I-XIV; Dario Gamboni, «Des livres au livre. Les bibliothèques d'Odilon Redon», *Les bibliothèques d'artistes* edited by F. Levaillant, Pups, Paris, 2010, 171-191.

<sup>14</sup> See: Andrea Sangiacomo, «Gli strani confini della coscienza: Spinoza e gli animali», *GCSI. Giornale Critico di Storia delle Idee*, A. 2, n. 4, 145-162.

<sup>15</sup> Nancy Davenport, «Odilon Redon, Armand Clavaud, and Benedict Spinoza: Nature as God», *Religion and the Arts*, V. 10, Issue 1, 2006, 26, 1-38; Giuseppina Dal Canton, «Redon e la malinconia», *Artibus et Historiae* Vol. 7, No. 14 (1986), 125-152. Here a life full of vital divine sense, a sense of Spinozian pantheism, becomes apparent and is discernable between the lines of his autobiography: «l'artista subisce il ritmo fatale degli impulsi del mondo universale che incontra», («the artist is subject to the fatal rhythm of the universal world's impulses that he encounters»), 26-29.

<sup>16</sup> Although they represent fantastic inspirational repertoires for Symbolist imaginings, which recall the mysterious Middle Ages, Huysmans is thinking of, when commenting on Redon's prints: «En dépit de sa structure toute moderne, cette figure ramène à travers les siècles, par l'expression profonde, unique des traits, aux œuvres dolentes du Moyen Âge; elle relie avec M. Redon la chaîne interrompue depuis la Renaissance des Bestiaires fantastiques, des Voyants épris du monstre», J.-K. Huysmans, *Certains*, Tresse & Stock Éditeurs, Paris, 1889, 153-154.

<sup>17</sup> Stefano Lanuzza, *Bestiario del Nihilismo: scrittura e animali*, Book, Castel Maggiore, 1993, 7.

<sup>18</sup> If drawing enjoyed recognition as a decidedly subjective activity towards the end of the 19th century (See: Michele Dantini, 54-55), fantastic themes received

perfect formal organisation in German and Klinger circles and among the followers of Dürer and Rembrandt.

<sup>19</sup> See: Emanuele Bardazzi, *Incubi nordici e miti mediterranei: Max Klinger e l'incisione simbolista mitteleuropea*, catalogue of the exhib. Sesto Fiorentino (Florence) November 30 2014-January 18 2015, Polistampa, Firenze, 2014, 39-40, 172. The sense of angst increases in the Kierkegaard-inspired incompatibility between different natures that have been un-naturally linked.

<sup>20</sup> When the First World War began, Müller enrolled as a non-commissioned officer in France, where he was assigned the duties of war-painter. After the war, he returned to teach at the Dresden Academy. In his autobiography, Grosz recalls him as a «committed supporter of military discipline and punctuality,» which emerges from his impeccably precise lines. (See: Valerio Terraroli, *Richard Müller*, Galleria dell'Incisione, Brescia, 1999, 96).

<sup>21</sup> See: Paola Golinelli, «*Vissi d'arte...*» *Richard Müller tra nuovi incubi e vecchie accademie*, La lente di Freud, Milano, 2008, 266.

<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth Sahling, *Technical Note in Graphic Works of Max Klinger*, by J.Kirk T. Varnedoe, Dover Publications, New York, 93-98.

<sup>23</sup> Giorgio De Chirico, «Max Klinger», *Il Convegno*, X, 1920 reproduced in Max Klinger, *Pittura e Disegno* (1891), edited by Michele Dantini, Nike, Segrate, 96.

<sup>24</sup> André Mellerio, *Odilon Redon*, Paris [1913], 87, cat.nr.6; *Beyond the visible: the art of Odilon Redon*, edited by Jodi Hauptman New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2005, 284.

<sup>25</sup> He wrote to Klinger on the day of his 60th birthday: «Per me Max Klinger è sempre stato il più rilevante ed il più interessante tra gli artisti tedeschi e non potrei citare alcun lavoro di un altro artista, incluso Böcklin, che abbia avuto un effetto così forte su di me come, ad esempio, alcune delle sue incisioni migliori», Max Klinger, *Briefe von Max Klinger aus den Jahren 1874 bis 1919* (*Letters from Max Klinger 1874-1919*). Edited by Hans Wolfgang Singer, Verlag E. A. Seemann, Lipsia, 1924, letter to Von Stuck n. 108, 160-162.

<sup>26</sup> Alessandra Tiddia, «Il peccato», (1908), *Franz Von Stuck: Lucifero moderno*, catalogue of the exhib. Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto (October 2006-March 2007). Edited by Sergio Marinelli, Skira, Milano, 2006, n.32, 141-142; n.77, 148.

<sup>27</sup> *Witches and wicked bodies* by Giulia Bartrum, British Museum, London, 2014 see: <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/tag/odilon-redon/>

<sup>28</sup> G. Batelli, «Franz Von Stuck», *Vita d'arte*, III, vol.III, May 1909, 231.

<sup>29</sup> *Liberty. Uno stile per l'Italia moderna*, catalogue of the exhib. Forlì, Musei San Domenico (February-June 2014). Edited by Fernando Mazzocca, Silvana Editoriale, Cinisello Balsamo, Milano, 2014.

<sup>30</sup> G. M. Stevans, «Chez Fernand Khnopff», in *La Jeune Belgique*, 18 avril 1898, 118.

<sup>31</sup> Robert L. Delevoy, Catherine de Croës, Gisele Olliger-Zinque, *Fernand Khnopff*, Lausanne Paris, La Bibliothèque des arts, 1979, 178-179.

<sup>32</sup> L. Hevesi, *Acht Jahre Secession*, Vienna, 1906, 30.

<sup>33</sup> Claudio Risé, «Il maestro e le sue passioni», *Franz Von Stuck: Lucifero moderno, ibid.*, 123.

<sup>34</sup> Giorgio e Marco Perilli, *Luigi Bonazza*, Publiprint, Trento, 1992; *Mito e allegoria nell'opera di Bonazza, Ratini, Disertori*, catalogue of the exhib. (Trento, January- March 2004). Edited by Alessandra Tiddia, Mart, Rovereto, 2004.

<sup>35</sup> Paola Pallottino, «Rubino versus Cambellotti. Vicende iconografiche della bibliotechina de “la lampada” e della “Biblioteca dei ragazzi”», *Fra fate e folletti il liberty nell'editoria per l'infanzia 1898 – 1915*, Piazza, Torino, 1995, 36-45.

<sup>36</sup> Paola Pallottino, *Le Mille e una Notte. Tempere originali di Duilio Cambellotti*, Little Nemo Art Gallery, Torino, 2010, 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Idem*, 14.

<sup>38</sup> Giulio Carlo Argan, «Introduzione», *Il buttero cavalca Ippogrifo. Duilio Cambellotti*, edited by P.Pallottino, Cappelli, Bologna, 1978, 15.

<sup>39</sup> Ettore Cozzani, Franco Oliva, [*Presentazione*], «L'Eroica», Luglio 1911, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Duilio Cambellotti, «Note autobiografiche», *Il buttero cavalca Ippogrifo, idem*, 15.

<sup>41</sup> *Natura e forma. la campagna romana e la palude pontina nell'opera di Duilio Cambellotti (1876 – 1960)*, edited by Mario Quesada, Latina, 1982, 151.

<sup>42</sup> Duilio Cambellotti, «Sono un autodidatta», *Duilio Cambellotti. L'officina dell'ambiente* edited by P.G.Castagnoli, F. D'Amico, F. Gualdoni, Electa, Milano, 1990, 60.

<sup>43</sup> See Mario Quesada, *Duilio Cambellotti. Catalogo delle incisioni*, NER Nuova Editrice Romana, Roma, 1982, 14.

<sup>44</sup> Duilio Cambellotti, «Note biografiche inedite», *ibidem*.

<sup>45</sup> Emanuele Bardazzi, *Il fauno biondo. Otto Greiner. Incisioni e disegni*, Officine Veneraia, Roma, 2010, 20. Greiner was appreciated by Italian artists. Cambellotti, Boccioni, and Severini recall him as an excellent draftsman. See: «*Bianco e nero» alle mostre degli Amatori e Cultori 1902-1929* edited by Emanuele Bardazzi, Nuova Galleria Campo dei Fiori, Roma, 2001; Emanuele Bardazzi, «Verità naturali e valori ideali nell'opera grafica di Otto Greiner», *Grafica d'arte*, XXI, 81, January-March 2010, 25; n.8 27.

<sup>46</sup> This topic was presented by the author at the ALMSD Second International Symposium *Symbolism, Its Origins and Its Consequences*, University of Illinois, Allerton Park, Springfield, Illinois 2012; and published «From “Fuoco” to “Notturmo” The Interpretation of Light and Shade in D'Annunzio's Work by his Friends Among Italian Symbolist Illustrators,» *Light and Obscurity in Symbolism*, edited by Rosina Neginsky and Deborah Cibelli, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Cambridge, 2016, 270-293.

<sup>47</sup> Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Notturmo*, Fratelli Treves, Milano, 1921, 418. The English translation is by the author.

<sup>48</sup> Giulio Aristide Sartorio, «Le confessioni e le battaglie di un artista», *Il Secolo XX*, August 1907, 619-634. The English translation is by the author.

<sup>49</sup> Francesco Maria Romani, «Sartorio animalier», *Sartorio mito e modernità*, edited by Gianluca Berardi, Galleria Berardi, Roma, 2013, 30.

<sup>50</sup> See: Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen, 1927, trad. it. Edited by P. Chiodi, *Essere e tempo*, Longanesi, Milano, 1976, 230, and Gennaro Imbriano, «Paura» e «Angoscia» nel pensiero di Martin Heidegger. *Dall'analisi esistenziale al pensiero della «svolta»*, 8.

<https://governarelapaura.unibo.it/article/download/2497/18688>.

<sup>51</sup> Marco Lonardi, *Alberto Martini*, Milan, Electa, 96.

<sup>52</sup> *Mostra individuale di Alberto Martini*, edited by Vittorio Pica, Galleria Pesaro, Milano 1918. Among pastels mention is made of the snake, the elephant, the chimpanzee, the jellyfish, a hamadryad, butterflies. The same exhibition also displayed his illustrations for *Petits poèmes en prose* by Mallarmé, for *Novels and lyrics* by Poe.

<sup>53</sup> Ettore Cozzani, *Alberto Martini*, in «L'Eroica», November-December 1927, XXIV-XXV, 26.

<sup>54</sup> A.Martini, *autobiografia inedita*, in *Mostra di disegni incisioni pastelli e dipinti di Alberto Martini* edited by Giuseppe Marchiori, Oderzo 1967, p.48; Marco Lonardi, *La voluttà dell'essere e la mitomania trasformativa nelle metamorfosi martiniane della Galleria Casati* in ID., *Alberto Martini*, Milan, Electa, 218-223.

<sup>55</sup> Regarding the often tense dialogue between humans and animals in modern or contemporary art history, see: *Il Bello e le bestie. Metamorfosi, artigiani e ibridi dal mito all'immaginario scientifico*, catalogue of the exhib. (December 2004-May 2005, MART, Rovereto). Edited by Lea Vergine and Giorgio Verzotti, Skira, Milano, 2004.

<sup>56</sup> See Anna Maria Damigella, *La natura, l'uomo, il mito nell'immaginario dei simbolisti*, Lithos, Roma, 2004, 33-34.

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem, 41; Dario Gamboni, *La plume et le pinceau...cit*, 137.

<sup>58</sup> The French astronomer and populariser Flammarion was the author of many texts, which were not always rigorously instructive, as well as of novels that could be considered as harbingers of science fiction. Some of the many published at the time of Redon's engraved visions include *l'Astronomie populaire*, in 1880, Italian Ed. Sonzogno, Milano, 1885; *Le Monde avant la création de l'homme*, 1886, Italian Ed. edited by Diego Sant'Ambrogio, Sonzogno, Milano, 1886. Verne, on the other hand, was one of the most imaginative narrators of fantastic travels.

<sup>59</sup> «Les sciapodes. Retenus à la terre par nos chevelures, longues comme des lianes, nous végétons à l'abri de nos pieds, larges comme des parasols; et la lumière nous arrive à travers l'épaisseur de nos talons. Point de dérangement et point de travail! La tête le plus bas possible, c'est le secret du bonheur!», Gustave Flaubert, *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, Charpentier, Paris, 1874, 284. See Rosina Neginsky's essay in this book for some new interpretive hypotheses.

<sup>60</sup> *Odilon Redon prince du rêve 1840-1916, op.cit.*, 222-223, 240.

<sup>61</sup> See: Stefano Lanuzza, *Bestiario del Nihilismo, op.cit.*, 250-251.

<sup>62</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage* (1962), It.transl. Club degli editori, Milano 1964.

<sup>63</sup> Luigi Serra, *Giulio Aristide Sartorio. Pittore animalista*, Edizioni d'arte Celanza, Torino, 1914, 272.

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<sup>64</sup> Francesco Maria Romani, «Sartorio animalier», *Sartorio mito e modernità op.cit.*, 28.

<sup>65</sup> Paola Golinelli, *Vissi d'arte: Richard Müller op.cit.*, 267.

<sup>66</sup> Cristiano Spila, «Forme e problemi del simbolismo animale. Il genere del bestiario nel Novecento», *Simbolismo animale e letteratura*, edited by Dora Faraci, Vecchiarelli, Manziana, 2003, 262.

<sup>67</sup> K. Huysmans, *Certains*, *op.cit.*

<sup>68</sup> Odilon Redon, *À Soi-Même op. cit.*, 25. By abstraction he meant the indeterminate environmental quality resulting from the shading he obtained with charcoal and pencil, as well as the life-forms that emerged from both pencil and engraving tool.

<sup>69</sup> Odilon Redon, *Prince du Rêve op. cit.*, 160. Regarding the new interpretational horizons this famous charcoal piece by Redon introduced, see Rosina Neginsky's essay in this volume.

<sup>70</sup> Mario Quesada, *Duilio Cambellotti. Catalogo delle incisioni cit.*

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