NIGHTMARE—ANXIETY—APOCALYPSE

THE UNCANNY AND CATASTROPHIC IN THE ART OF MODERNISM

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There is an immense variety of possibilities if we wish to gain a conceptual grasp of what should be understood as the "modern" and "modernity." It would not be entirely incorrect to describe the modern as an era of upheaval, discovery, and conquest, an age of—perhaps exaggerated—self-confidence and the belief in feasibility, fearful of nothing secret and subjecting everything to human mastery. One might think of the discovery and conquest of the farthest ends of the earth, the expanses of space, the labyrinthine recesses of the soul, and the depths of the self. And it is part of the dialectic of modernity that these depths are characterized, not only by positive values such as love, constructive desires, and gaiety, but also by the yawning abysses of horror, fear, and destruction. Conquest is always accompanied by destruction, the optimistic mood of discovery by the anxiety of existence.

These developments influence an unmistakably large segment of modern art. In particular, they are responsible for the realm that may be termed the "conquest of the self." It was thus unavoidable that horror would become a subject of modern art. Unavoidable indeed, one could say, that some of modern art's most unforgettable achievements are situated here. Two phases in the history of this modern art are of particular relevance. Firstly, Romanticism, certainly no coincidence, since it is regarded as the original source for the discovery of the immeasurability of the self, and, secondly, Symbolism, which certain observers, not without reason, simply term "Neo-Romanticism." The examples presented here derive largely from the eras around 1800 and around 1900, years in which the aforementioned styles were in full bloom. A few observations on the Surrealism of the twentieth century, itself deeply influenced by Romanticism and Symbolism, will follow.

The Sleep of Reason

Our theme is introduced in perfectly programmatic fashion by Francisco de Goya's famed work of graphic art from the end of the eighteenth century, plate 43 of his series of *Caprichos* (cat. no. 4). The work is doubly programmatic, first as a concept for the *Caprichos,* and second as the theme of Dark Romanticism. In Classic art theory, *capricci* are irregular forms of artistic expression, epitomes of an unleashed artistic fantasy, and thus always viewed ambivalently if not negatively by the Classicists. In his *Caprichos,* comprised of eighty plates, Goya creates a complete succession of visions—ultimately critical of society and religion in their conception—visions that, in presentation, are humorous and nightmarish, droll and cruel, burlesqued and abstruse, but that utterly reject every classicizing and idealistic orientation through extreme characterization and caricatured intensification (cat. nos. 3–6). One could also say: These visions affix to the subject matter and its majestic execution a connection to the self that entrusts the subject entirely to the keeping of creative power directed by fantasy. This is just what is meant in the title *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters.* The monsters always emerge when reason withdraws—granting precedence to what is unclear in the imagination, to the wild leaps of fantasy, to what is uncontrolled in creativity. These are the levels of artistry that are regarded as threatening; the plate leaves no doubt about that. And it shows what Goya drills into every single one of the etchings. What is awful is at once appealing and repulsive, it fascinates and generates disgust, and those who succumb to the awful can only escape it at the price of *ennui,* of boredom.[1]

Horrible experiences characterize all of Goya's work, and it is not least for this reason that he continues today to be considered the quintessential modern painter among the artists at the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. It is no coincidence that, much later, Odilon Redon and Salvador Dalí were to dedicate entire series of graphic art to Goya. The horrible experiences of Goya appear to have been caused, above all, by the all-shattering French Revolution, the after-effects of which caused particularly drastic suffering in Spain. The Spanish population—much more so than populations of other countries—fought back fiercely against Napoleonic occupation, and the guerrilla war against the French and their response were among the most terrible things ever concocted by modern warfare at the time. In such graphic works as his *Disasters of War* (cat. nos. 8–11), Goya reacted to these events with mutilated human corpses. The dead on his two torchlit images against Napoleon, depicting the events of the second and third of May 1808, are shown as clods of flesh, possessing none of the heroic dignity that Classical art granted to fighters in death. One must see the late murals for the Quinta del Sordo, the painter's private house near Madrid in his later years, by which time he had grown deaf, as the excrescences of a broken-down fantasy, works characteristic of the sensitive contemporary of the revolutionary era, a man who had inherently very much understood himself as a friend of the Revolution. Here, the dreadful Saturn eating one of his children (fig. 3, p. 16) stands alongside the solitary dog, the hellish witches' sabbat next to the mighty blows with a cudgel, visions of an antisocial decadence that, for the artist, had become a symbol of a godless age.

Nightmare and Night Terrors

We have before us one of the iconic paintings of early Romanticism in Henry Fuseli's *Nightmare,* painted in 1781 (fig. 2, p. 16). The work caused a sensation when shown in London, and not a positive one, since persons with weak nerves were advised to stay home,[2] but so much the more powerful. Fuseli himself painted a second version of the work, now held in Frankfurt am Main (cat. no. 23), and others took up the motif in dozens of ways, in particular for caricatures. The group of figures depicted has been engraved into the collective visual memory of Europe—not least because, in comparison to the Classicist mainstream of the late eighteenth century, this is highly exciting, providing a strongly spiced mixture of terror and eros that can still excite and disturb us today. This terror is animal in nature: Through the opened curtains of a bed, a horse, neighing forcefully, peers into the bed recess of a sleeping beauty. The painting horrifies through the wide-open eyes, with their electrical radiance and glassy look, which Fuseli later used again to mark the blindness of Milton, one of his favorite poets. On the belly of the beauty sits an evil, hairy little ape man, not to her delight, but instead, to her great distress, expressed in a convulsively contorted body.

The painting seems to have drawn extensively on the medical and psychological investigations of its time. Here, the woman's nightmare is interpreted as sleeping with the devil, with the devaluation of the feminine coming back with a vengeance. In the understanding of the day, nightmares preferred to overtake the dreamer—usually the *female* dreamer—while on her back. The erotic connotations are quite explicitly worked through in this instance, with sexual arousal equated with convulsions of fear. An autobiographical interpretation has been attempted as well. The impetus is a drawing on the reverse of the painting, which has been interpreted as a portrait of Anna Landolt, whom Fuseli had once worshipped in Zurich and who viciously rejected Fuseli's entreaties. The painting would then be a fetishistic revenge on the willful beloved who had shamelessly presumed to favor an upstanding Swiss merchant over the brilliant artist.[3]

Fuseli is known for his general preference for the horrible and the deviant. This contrasts curiously with his theoretical positions as a respectable professor at the Royal Academy in London, where he propounded Classical restraint and nobility of form. He

gave particularly free rein to his preference in his illustrations of literature, for example, in the many oil paintings and works of graphic art that he devoted to the works of William Shakespeare. *Garrick and Mrs. Pritchard* (fig. 1)—among the most famous paintings after Shakespeare—comes very close to working with the means of the modern horror film: The two protagonists come out of the horrific dark as though lit by electricity from within. The terrorized Macbeth, the instruments of murder still in his hands, stands beside his no less striking wife. She is an epitome of scheming malice and a predecessor of the femme fatale of Symbolism, for the typification of which Fuseli, deeply bound to the battle of the sexes, provided a series of additional artistic examples. It should be noted that electricity was a phenomenon in which the painter took a strong interest. The entire late eighteenth century was fascinated by the invisible *fluida* that served as explanations for certain natural phenomena, and in the spheres of influence of which humans were thought to move.

Fuseli was singular in making paintings of this kind in the era around 1800, but he nonetheless took part in tendencies of the epoch that had received their most focused formulation in England. Above all, he participated in the propagation of the sublime, outstanding services to which had already been rendered by Edmund Burke in his 1757 *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful.* For Burke, the sublime and the terrible were to be equated, and they generated the most intense feelings. The fascination of the sublime consists solely in the strength of the feeling generated, never to be matched by its competitor, the beautiful, and thus the sublime exercises an interest of both attraction and repulsion for all those testing artistic and philosophical limits. This included the new champions of the Gothic, including the irrational and the misled, which seemed suppressed in the Classical tradition. The movement, known in England as Gothic Revival, was particularly strong there, where Horace Walpole built his Strawberry Hill and authored the novel *The Castle of Otranto,* and where the eccentric William Beckford constructed an immense pseudo-medieval monastery, Fonthill Abbey, for his personal residential use.[4]

Catastrophes and Visions of Doom

The motifs of the uncanny and of horror in the work of the French Romantic Théodore Géricault, who died young, are largely clustered around his central work *The Raft of the Medusa* (fig. 6, p. 38; cat. no. 42). That is, however, certainly not their limit. Even Géricault's early portraits have an effect utterly alien to the official tasks of Classical portraiture. If we observe for a time Géricault's portrait of Louise Vernet as a child (fig. 2)—she who was to be painted a mere three decades later lying on her deathbed by her husband Paul Delaroche (cat. no. 67)—we cannot escape sensing a highly peculiar sense of threat.[5] The usual categories applicable to depictions of small children either do not apply at all or are turned into their opposites. Louise is certainly not sweet. Her skeptical head, with its threatening appearance, sits far back on a peculiarly deformed body. She has placed her left arm on a sphinx-like cat, traditionally a harbinger of impending disaster. It is not necessary, in other words, to use ever more spectacular motifs and scenes to make an impression of the uncanny. The Romantic artist, driven by antipathy toward the art of Neoclassicism, now viewed as bloodless, creates the uncanny in well-established genres which had traditionally sought first and foremost to produce innocuous verisimilitude.

We strike gold in our search for the horrible in *The Raft of the Medusa* (fig. 6, p. 38; cat. no. 42), showing the abject remnants of a ship and her crew that had set off from France in 1816 for a settlement in western Africa. The affair was a political scandal of the early Restoration. The incompetent captain, chosen for his Royalist loyalties, proved incapable of steering the ship safely along the coast of West Africa, and it ran aground and sank. Over a hundred persons who had escaped the ship soon died in the blazing sun on the overcrowded raft. The accounts of two survivors who later returned to France describe, with

Fig. 1
Henry Fuseli, *Garrick and Mrs. Pritchard* (Shakespeare, *Macbeth,* Act 2, Scene 2), 1812, Tate, London

Fig. 2
Théodore Géricault, *Portrait of Louise Vernet as a Child,* 1817–18, Musée du Louvre, Paris

horrific eloquence, the appearance of these people after thirteen days starving in extreme heat, surrounded by undrinkable salt water. Only fifteen people were rescued in the end—the subject of the painting being the moment in which someone on the raft sees a ship in the distance and seeks to signal to it. As a work exhibited at the Salon, and thus oriented toward the general public and still subject in part to academic conventions, it omits the most horrifying and scandalous elements, or suggests them only implicitly: in the use of colors to set the mood, for example, with the painter developing the bleak themes out of the black ground, or in the melancholy figure of the old man atop whom a dead younger man is stretched out—an allusion to Ugolino in Dante's *Divine Comedy,* the man who, frenzied with hunger, devoured his own sons. Only Géricault's preliminary studies contain explicit cannibalism; the painting is limited to a chilling allusion.

Géricault devoted himself to the material with exceptional intensity. In addition to his engagement for the cause of the anti-Bourbon liberals, he may have been motivated by his morbid fascination with the smell of decay, which impelled him to go to the Paris Morgue to obtain body parts of executed criminals for the purpose of painting them. Here again, little is to be seen in the finished painting, but so much the more in the preliminary studies. These studies make a frightening impression through the barbarity of their subject matter, intensified by the specific staging: In *Severed Heads* (fig. 3), man and woman lie alongside one another as though in a marriage bed—with the only difference being that nothing is left of them but their heads.

Themes of nightmares, fear, and apocalypse are particularly prevalent in art at the turns of the nineteenth and of the twentieth century. Realism, which dominated art in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, left little space for such themes. Yet, most statements of such generality can be refuted by exceptions, and that is the case here. Worthy of mention are works by two artists from Belgium and England, relatively unknown today but no less impressive for it, who were active in the late Romantic tradition. Antoine Wiertz regarded himself as the reincarnation of Peter Paul Rubens. His paintings are almost always sensational, if at times artistically limited.[6] The brutality and physical presence of his rendition of antiquity from the Trojan War—*Greeks and Trojans Fighting for the Body of Patrocles*—is so outré that children who attended the first exhibition in Rome in 1835 ran away screaming. The facial expression of the child murderess in *The Hunger, the Madness, and the Crime* (cat. no. 69) from 1853 is said to have made viewers' blood run cold, and the little leg cooking in the pot identifies the depiction as a transformed reprise of the story of Ugolino from Dante.

It is apparent that Wiertz's bizarre and horrible scenes are ultimately late Romantic in origin. John Martin's apocalyptic mixtures of history and megalomaniacal landscape depiction come from the same tradition (cat. nos. 35, 36, and 38).[7] They are also characterized by a millenarian religiosity that was widespread in England at that time, wholly animated by the expectation of eschatological salvation. What appears in the work of his more famous colleague Joseph Mallord William Turner as the observation of extreme weather situations takes on, in Martin's work, a decidedly catastrophic undertone. The immense dimensions of some of his paintings are, by themselves, enough to take the ideas of the sublime from the late eighteenth century and drive them into the overwhelming. With this "politics of the sensational," he succeeded in gaining a place in the fiercely competitive arena of the English art market. Martin's sublime compositions are marked by calamities of gigantic proportions. In the various end-of-the-world scenarios, humans, painted in tiny, minuscule size, are sucked up by water masses like bread crumbs by a vacuum cleaner.

The excess of *The Great Day of His Wrath* (fig. 4) can be exceeded only in movies. Fittingly, the work dates to 1852, at the end of Martin's career. Here, entire mountains collapse onto the surrounding inhabitants. The Earth opens up, swallowing people in retribution for their godless lives. Martin provided an enthusiastic description for his own work: "The great becomes gigantic, the wonderful swells into the sublime."[8] For Martin, as for so

Fig. 3
Théodore Géricault, *Severed Heads,* 1818–20, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

Fig. 4
John Martin, *The Great Day of His Wrath*, 1852, Tate, London

many artists of incipient modernism, this was connected to a hope for the end times, prophesying or yearning, in a revolutionary and messianic spirit, for the destruction of the corrupt contemporary conditions.

With this conception of the work of art, Martin ran counter to all conventions of academic painting, and was treated accordingly by his colleagues. Edward Bulwer-Lytton, who had created an exact parallel to Martin in the genre of literature with *The Last Days of Pompeii* in 1834, rightly captured the difference from traditional catastrophe paintings when he remarked that Nicolas Poussin, among others, may have shown the grim devastation of a flood, but not the flooding of an entire world.[9] With his paintings, Martin aimed at a new mass audience interested not so much in learning as in visual titillation. In this connection, one must always bear in mind the tremendously unsettling impressions brought on by the Napoleonic age, with its unprecedented upheavals as well as by the revolution of industrialization. Even today, when one stands in front of the painting at the Tate Britain in London, it is as though one can hear the deafening din of the last days of humanity. What could it have been like for an English viewer in the mid-nineteenth century, entirely untouched by the rapidity and force of electronically generated moving images?

A Journey through the Inner Worlds of Artists and Observers

The Symbolist painting of the late nineteenth century was an explicit reaction to what the literati and intellectuals of the time recognized and disdained as an exclusive restriction of realist and, above all, Impressionist art to external reality. Artist such as Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon, Arnold Böcklin, James Ensor, and Max Klinger turned to regions that pointed beyond this external reality, and they understood these to be art's proper sphere of influence. What the artist found there were their own inner worlds. In parallel with the advances in the psychological insight of the time, which then led into the chasms of psychoanalysis around 1900, they took up old Romantic themes and pushed them in a direction that emphasized the uncanny and obsessive even more.

One dominant theme of the art of this period, which was largely produced by men, continued to be woman. Here, the focus was on the demonic, provocative murderess of men, which crystallized in the notion of the femme fatale. All sorts of horrible representatives of the type from the history of humankind were revitalized by the Symbolists, from Messalina

Fig. 5
Franz von Stuck, *Inferno,* 1908,
Mugrabi Collection

of the Roman tradition to Salome of the biblical tradition, from Salambo of Carthage to
Helen of Troy. They enticed men with their maddening beauty and inscrutability; almost as
soon as they had them in their grip, they crushed them like ants beneath their shapely feet.

In the work of Franz von Stuck, even hell is dominated by the precarious relation-
ship between the sexes. In his *Inferno* (fig. 5), the women still seem to be reacting in horror.
Is the woman on the right, whose form derives from the famous Laocoön of antiquity,
being strangled by a monstrous snake? Or is she not rather dancing with it? This was quite
common, especially in the iconography for Salambo from the period. In any case, it is the
men who suffer; they either gaze downward apathetically or are oppressed by the women.
Moreau took up the theme in mythological form and painted various versions of the encoun-
ter between Oedipus and the Sphinx (fig. 2, p. 161; cat. no. 100). Compared to traditional
depictions, the uncanniness of the atmosphere is heightened, though it retains the morbid
reference to the many dead men who were murdered because they were unable to solve the
Sphinx's riddle.

Edvard Munch offered a more modern formulation, though without moving away
from the basic idea of the woman as dangerous. In a painting of which he produced several
versions beginning in the mid-eighteen-nineties (cat. no. 149), he managed to capture
the ambivalence of the theme without recourse to allegorical intellectualism or historical
precedents. It shows a red-headed woman bending over a man and embracing him. Love
and destruction are summed up in both versions of the title: *Love and Pain* and *Vampire.*
One of these paintings was initially exhibited under the first title; the second one proposed
by Munch's friend Stanisław Przybyszewski. "He cannot rid himself of the vampire," one
review read, "cannot rid himself of the pain either and the woman will always sit there biting
forever with a thousand adders' tongues, with a thousand poison fangs."[10] However, the kiss
is also a blood-sucking bite; the color of her hair is also a reference to the flowing blood;
the loving embrace is also a stranglehold. The relationship between the sexes, tense to the
breaking point, in Munch's work, which was surely influenced, in part, by his own experi-
ences, has become a dominant, even the dominant theme here.

The subject of the femme fatale characterizes an important part of the decadent
iconography of Symbolism. Around the turn of the century it intensified into a perverse
urgency in the work of Alfred Kubin. The mountain of female flesh in *Death Leap* of 1901–02
is barely tolerable even for educated eyes (fig. 6). The woman's genitalia are perceived as an
abyss into which the adventurous man who is addicted to misfortune lowers himself. Such
a view was only possible with the overheated imagination of this Austrian man from a strict

family who encountered in fin-de-siècle Munich a scene that was at once permissive and fustian, in which the battle of the sexes played a central role.

Max Klinger created his enigmatic graphic oeuvre during the incubation period of psychoanalysis (cat. nos. 134–38). The artist attributed a very special, intrinsically modern role to the drawn line, since it enabled one to address things less suited to painting, as a more public form of art. In his "Painting and Drawing," published in 1891, he asserted that what mattered for the artist was addressing the impressions "with which the dark side of life floods him"; that the goal was also to depict the "frightfulness of existence," the "unbeautiful and repulsive."[11] An evil dream overwhelms the artist in the print *Fears* (fig. 7) from the cycle *A Glove* of 1881. Horrible figures that almost recall those of Goya point the restlessly sleeping artist to a glove, which, over the course of the cycle, has become a fetish of love and is here transformed into something threatening. A detailed examination of Klinger's oeuvre reveals that his quite modern works find an aesthetically adequate form for the association of dreams, in terms not only of subject matter, but also of structure.

The enigmatic oeuvre of Odilon Redon also unfolds largely in the gloomy severity of colorless prints (cat. nos. 104–08). Only in a later phase, which has been described in the scholarly literature as reflecting a relaxation of his worldview, does one find works in color, usually pastels. Redon repeatedly combined horrifying motifs with visionary display. In his diary *To Myself*—the title alone is quite characteristic—Redon described art's brief as "putting the logic of the visible to the service of the invisible," thus precisely identifying the goals of Symbolism.[12] But the invisible is populated equally by utopias of redemption and dystopias of horror. Bizarre, horrifying visions characterize a series Redon dedicated to Edgar Allan Poe. The incoherence of its motifs heightens the effect of a bizarre effort to unnerve the viewer. Depictions of deformities resemble ideas of the mythical Cyclops modernized in accordance with the biology of evolution. Here again one finds the influence of Charles Darwin, at least on the atmosphere.[13] Redon is known to have collaborated intensely with biologists, especially during his early period. The resulting experiences influenced especially the cycle of lithographs *Les origines*. A critic from the journal *Vie moderne* concisely described the effect of this series of eight plates in 1883 when he spoke of "allying the monstrous with the majestic."[14] In prints such as *We Both Saw a Large Pale Light* (fig. 8)— part of *La maison hantée*, a series of illustrations for "The Haunted and the Haunters," a story by Edward Bulwer-Lytton—the sparseness of the decoration of the space stands in inverse proportion to the atmosphere, which has been pushed toward the horrifying: Nothing is happening, but something bad soon will. This expectation is depicted for eternity in this image.

The depiction of a dream by Fuseli mentioned at the beginning of this essay is modern in that it presents the dreamer as obsessed by the dream. Redon—of whose works Joris-Karl Huysmans, the author of decadent Symbolist novels, rightly said "Here is the nightmare transported into art"[15]—goes a step further. He shows not the dreamer, but the content of the dream. Not only its elements, but also its structure of interest, for which the artist offers enormously impressive equivalents, as, for example, in his lithograph *"Saint Anthony: . . . Through the Long Hair Half Hiding Her Face, I Thought that I Could Recognize Ammonaria . . ."* (fig. 9). It alludes to a scene from Gustave Flaubert's book *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* to which Redon also dedicated an entire cycle. In it, the hermit recalls an old childhood friend as he witnesses a scene of torture in Alexandria, in which a woman who resembles this friend is being whipped by soldiers. In the illustration—though the term is misleading, since Redon never makes illustrations proper, but only autonomous products that refer more to the atmosphere of the text—this point of departure is evoked, but, at the same time, crucially obscured. This is because the effect is based at least as much on details that are at odds with the source as on those that could be described as visual explanations. The soldier is swinging the whip, not toward the woman, but clearly behind her. The woman is bound to a column. Strictly speaking, however, the rope does not surround her body, but

Fig. 6
Alfred Kubin, *Death Leap*, ca. 1901–02, private collection

Fig. 7
Max Klinger, *Fears* from *Opus VI*, *A Glove*, plate 7, 1881, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

lies close to the column. The woman herself seems not only to be tortured by the lash, but almost appears to be blissfully anticipating it. The Freudian parallelism of Eros and Thanatos comes to mind. The structural affinity to dreams, however, is probably more important: The elements of a coherent narrative have been assembled in such a way that the coherence is lost. Their deeply perplexing qualities for the viewer result more from this disparity than from the darkness of Flaubert's tale itself.

Some art critics called Alfred Kubin, Goya reborn—not without reason, since the work of both is dominated by themes of the antihumane—albeit in ways that are ultimately very different. If Goya's "drifting" into the aesthetic of *horreur* had a lot to do with a disappointed hope for freedom, caused precisely by the French Enlightenment thinkers he admired, Kubin was a thoroughly apolitical person. Visions of animals whose death is awaited by carrion-eating vultures, zombielike anatomies that could not have been invented even by the shattered imagination of the likes of Goya: such depictions mark Kubin's abnormal imagination (cat. nos. 151–56).[16] Art historians have interpreted them as an anticipation of the destructive power of the approaching world war, which would annihilate everything. The same claim was made for Arnold Böcklin's late visions of war, which probably should indeed be related to the growing tensions between European powers in the late eighteeneighties and eighteen-nineties. It would probably be more accurate if we were to see Kubin's hallucinations as the spawn of a decadent imagination stimulated by the hothouse that Munich was around the turn of the century, which had broken, once and for all, with the self-confident of the sated Wilhelmine years. With its visions of horror, in particular, nineteenth-century art, in the industrial frenzy of general fantasies of feasibility, tended to recall a human condition whose night sides and imperfections were fundamentally impenetrable.

Nightmares and apocalypses were by no means obsolete as subjects for painterly fantasies in the art of the twentieth century. In particular, the experience of wars of a destructive force never seen before offers a simple explanation. Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* is the quintessential painting of a war, and it is fair to speak of it as an apocalyptic vision as well. Paul Klee, who was himself a soldier in World War I, though he was not deployed on the front, took up the motif only later, whereas he had avoided it during wartime. His *Destroyed Place* of 1920 (cat. no. 186) show a ghostly landscape of death, not a place of martial actions, but of one that is a memento mori, intended for the long term. Starting from an enthusiastic reception of psychoanalysis, Surrealism cultivated hallucinatory fantasies of violence and horror that can be understood based on individual histories or a diagnosis of the era. Max Ernst granted crucial significance to the role of chance, for example, when he employed frottage, rubbing through the surface structure with objects placed behind the painting's support and taking the result as the point of departure for calculated activities of imaginative painting. *Vision Induced by the Nocturnal Aspect of the Porte St. Denis* (cat. no. 200) thus turns into an impenetrable, threatening forest landscape, whose motifs link this Surrealist's work to Romanticism, which was also the point of departure for the present discussion. The Surrealist program of finding the miraculous in the real is also alluded to by an artist like Brassaï who, from the early nineteen-thirties, made countless forays through Paris at night photographing visages and faces, which he took over from wall graffiti in order to explore their threatening potential by means of this appropriation (fig. 10; cat. nos. 166–68). In the primitivism of these frightening artistic experiences, modernism arrives at a paradoxical end by striving to reach the earliest origins of humanity once again from a very remote time.
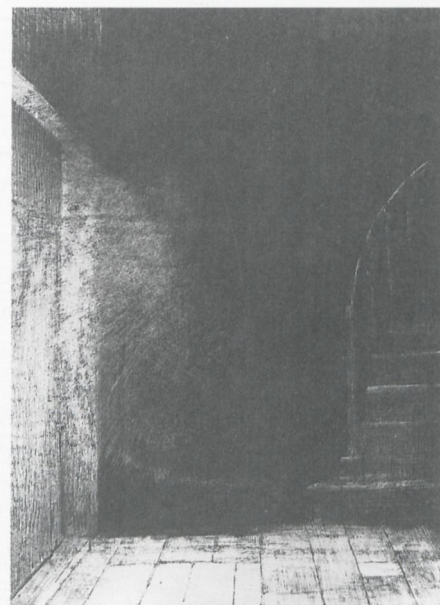

Fig. 8
Odilon Redon, *We Both Saw a Large Pale Light* from *La maison hantée*, plate 2, 1896, private collection

Fig. 9
Odilon Redon, *"Saint Anthony: . . . Through the Long Hair Half Hiding Her Face, I Thought that I Could Recognize Ammonaria . . .,"* from *To Gustave Flaubert, The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, second series, plate 1, 1889, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main

Fig. 10
Brassaï, *Untitled* (Graffiti from the series *The Magic*), 1933–56, courtesy Galerie Kicken Berlin

Notes

1 See Fred Licht, *Goya, the Origins of the Modern Temper in Art* (New York, 1979), pp. 92ff.

2 See Christoph Becker, *Johann Heinrich Füssli: Das verlorene Paradies,* exh. cat. Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (Ostfildern-Ruit, 1997), p. 132.

3 See Werner Hofmann, *Das entzweite Jahrhundert: Kunst zwischen 1750 und 1830* (Munich, 1995), pp. 184ff.

4 See Elke Heinemann, *Babylonische Spiele: William Beckford und das Erwachen der modernen Imagination,* Ph.D. diss. (Berlin, 1997; Munich, 2000).

5 See Stefan Germer, "Géricault and Uncanny Trends at the Opening of the Nineteenth Century," in *Art History* 22 (1999), pp. 158–83.

6 See *Antoine Wiertz au coeur de son siècle,* ed. Michel Draguet (Namur, 2007).

7 See Hubertus Kohle, "Katastrophe als Strategie und Wunsch: Englische und deutsche Landschaftsmalerei des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts," in *AngstBilderSchauLust: Katastrophenerfahrungen in Kunst, Musik und Theater,* eds. Jürgen Schläder and Regina Wohlfahrt (Leipzig, 2007), pp. 125–46.

8 Quoted in William Feaver, *The Art of John Martin* (Oxford, 1975), p. 16.

9 Ibid., p. 94.

10 Quoted in *Edvard Munch: Theme and Variation,* eds. Klaus Albrecht Schröder and Antonia Hoerschelmann, exh. cat. Albertina, Vienna (Ostfildern-Ruit , 2003), p. 68.

11 Quoted in *Max Klinger (1857–1920): Ein Handschuh,* exh. cat. Städtische Galerie im Städelschen Kunstinstitut (Frankfurt am Main, 1992), p. 41.

12 Odilon Redon, *Selbstgespräch: Tagebücher und Aufzeichnungen 1867–1915,* ed. and trans. Marianne Türoff (Munich, 1972), p. 25. English taken from *To Myself: Notes on Life, Art, and Artists* (New York, 1986).

13 See *Endless Forms: Charles Darwin, Natural Science and the Visual Arts,* ed. Diana Donald, exh. cat. Yale Center for British Art, New Haven; Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge (New Haven, Conn., 2009).

14 See *Odilon Redon: Prince of Dreams, 1840–1916,* exh. cat. The Art Institute of Chicago et al. (Chicago, 1994), p. 158.

15 Quoted in Stephen Eisenman, *The Temptation of Saint Redon: Biography, Ideology, and Style in the "Noirs" of Odilon Redon* (Chicago, 1992), p. 102.

16 See *Alfred Kubin, 1877–1959,* ed. Annegret Hoberg, exh. cat. Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich; Hamburger Kunsthalle (Munich, 1990).