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L'ART DE LA RÊVERIE

FEMALE DAYDREAMS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY PAINTING

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By

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this research is analysing forms and meanings of dream representations in the visual arts of the nineteenth century.

The research has compiled an extensive collection of dreams representations or dream-related images, primarily in painting. Such a heterogeneous collection has allowed to remark how during the nineteenth century the iconographic categories of dream images which were previously to be found are almost not existing anymore. On the contrary, the emergence of a new category has been observed: a new form of dream representation is now the daydream, best defined by the originally French term 'reverie' for reasons of linguistic accuracy.

The thesis, therefore, aims at defining this type of representation in its essential and recurring features, and at questioning its diffusion and meaning. These answers are based on observations of common factors found within this new iconography; predominantly, the fact that the main actors of these represented reveries are almost exclusively women.

To illustrate how this new iconographic category varies during the century and who the artists contributing to its definition are, several artworks have been considered and analysed from an iconographic and stylistic perspective. This artworks analysis has led to the conclusion that the reverie in this century is understood as a primarily feminine activity, and as such it depends on both the societal role concretely attributed to the woman, and on the abstract view of the woman, whether it be idealising or degrading, in the different fields of knowledge, from medicine and psychology to art and literature. Additionally, the thesis intends to illustrate the other possible forms of reveries when they are not images of femininity.

In conclusion the reverie, and above all its representation, will be identified as a specific phenomenon invested with several theoretical and socio-cultural implications, above all concerning the common

understanding of femininity. Being symptomatic of the nineteenth century's mentality, this conception of the reverie, as well as its visual representations, will have a different evolution already from the first decades of the following century.

INTRODUCTION

1. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

“In a circle of men [...] curiosity arose one day concerning those dreams which have never been dreamed, those created by authors, and attributed to fictitious characters in their productions. The proposal to submit this kind of dream to investigation might appear idle and strange; but from one view-point it could be considered justifiable”¹.

My idle and strange investigation commenced from the realisation that dreams are incomprehensively examined phenomena that need to be contemplated more thoroughly. The idea Sigmund Freud exposed to introduce his analysis of the novel *Gradiva* by Wilhelm Jensen (1903) is, indeed, that not only real dreams can be analysed and psychoanalysed, but also fictional dreams that are invented by writers. According to Freud, writers are valuable to psychoanalytic research because in their creation they seem to have

¹ Freud Sigmund, *Delusion and Dream. An Interpretation in the Light of Psychoanalysis of Gradiva, a Novel by Wilhelm Jensen*, New York: Moffat, Yard & Company, 1922, p. 111 (original edition 1907).

A note on translations: most of the documents used for this work were originally in French and their quotes, unless otherwise stated, have been translated by me. In the cases in which an official translation in English existed and was available, the quote has been done by reporting its words. Additionally, in some cases the French phrasing and terms were worth being quoted directly; in these cases they have been inserted in the body of the text, with English translation in the footnotes.

interiorised the way dreams really work on a psychological level: “For, when they cause the people created by their imagination to dream, they follow the common experience that people’s thoughts and feelings continue into sleep, and they seek only to depict the psychic states of their heroes through the dreams of the latter. Story-tellers are valuable allies, and their testimony is to be rated high, for they usually know many things between heaven and earth that our academic wisdom does not even dream of”².

The present research aims at collecting and analysing dreams that have never actually been dreamt and have been imagined instead. While Freud and his colleagues refer to the dreams invented by writers and integrated as part of their novels, my research will push the analysis further and apply the same idea to invented dreams that were instead expressed in visual arts.

This thesis will not go as far as to suggest, as Freud does, a psychological analysis of such images³. In contrast, the approach to this study has been iconographical and sociological, collecting and comparing dream images and investigating their actual meaning. Beyond the basic level of visual description and iconographic analysis, these images might prove highly revealing when collected as a whole and analysed in their similarities and differences.

The first clarification to be made is that the term ‘dream’ (and consequently ‘dream representation’) can be intended in several ways. The first and original definition is the nocturnal dream activity—the images and events that are seen and perceived during sleep. The second meaning derives from the fact that visions seen in dreams often reflect a real aspiration and accomplishment desired by the dreamer; thus the term dream becomes a synonym of wish or desire. This utilization is also very common in our daily life and exists in almost all languages, as well as in idiomatic expressions⁴. Finally the term dream

² Ibid., p. 113.

³ Which is the focus of Ernst Gombrich’s article titled “Freud’s Aesthetics”, in *Encounter*, Jan. 1966, pp. 30-39.

⁴ To be seen in expressions such as “live your dream”, “a dream that comes true”, “I have a dream” etc.

might be understood as a fantasy, a visionary image, a *capriccio*; this definition, despite being infrequently diffused in common language, can be more frequent in visual art, where paintings representing fantastical landscapes or *capriccios* can be defined as ‘dreams’.

In its original intention, this research was concerned exclusively with the first definition of the term ‘dream’ (that of the images seen during sleep). Nonetheless, observations of the sampled artworks has produced a shift towards the second definition—that of a wish or desire. To address the issue of the invented dream, the first step would be to observe different aspects of the actual dream experience.

In describing the main features of the everyday dream phenomenon, two aspects are apparent: its subjective character - always self-referential to the individual - and its ineffability. This second aspect is perhaps its most appealing quality: the fact that images and situations experienced so intensely can disappear in an instant and never be recalled again. This is also the reason why dreamers often try to remember and share their dreams.

In a common experience, the dream is at first “lived” during the night while dreamers watch and participate with the images presented to them: this concerns the individual’s psychological life. In a further level of experience, the dream is remembered and recalled into memory, becoming part of waking life as well. Lastly, the dream is sometimes told to others and shared, incorporating dreaming into a social practice.

The representation of dreams in visual arts, being produced and shared within a (more or less) large community, refers to this third level of experience, and does not involve the self-referential character of the two first levels. Additionally, the fact that represented dreams are fictional adds a fourth layer of experience: the dream is not only dreamt, remembered and retold—it can be also invented.

This ineffability of the dream, its resilience to be re-told, was the first point of interest that initiated this research. For this reason one of the very first questions at the origin of this study was how and through what means a dream, whether invented or not, can be reproduced.

The most common way of recording dreams is undoubtedly through writing. Most people who attempt to remember their dreams utilise dream journals (as does psychological research). Writing, with abundance of details and subjective explanations, can report a dream rather accurately. However, as all people experience, the most common sensorial impression in the dream is the visual stimulation⁵. This would lead to the conclusion that the most effective way to report a dream accurately is by transposing it into images.

The origin of this research questions whether and how the dream can be transposed through a visual representation and, furthermore, whether a dream can be represented in visual arts. The cases in which recalled dreams are represented in images rather than in words are not common, but obviously occur more frequently among artists and people with drawing skills⁶. Although highly interesting, these dream images will not be part of this study, that will examine exclusively fictional dreams.

Once assessed that the more natural—though not more common—way of reporting a dream is through a visual account, we shall consider the idea of dreams that have not actually been dreamt but are fictional. These are by far much more widespread than real ones both in literature and in visual arts; they are worthy of investigation at least as much as actually dreamt dreams because, as anticipated, even invented and represented dreams follow the same mechanisms that are acting in real dreams⁷.

⁵ It has been proven that the dream is a prominently visual experience: though also other sensorial experiences are perceived in the dream, the visual stimuli dominate the senses, with a rate of 80% of the whole sensorial impressions.

⁶ For further explanations, see *infra*, 'subjective dreams'.

⁷ Freud also insists on the fact that authors and artists invent their dreams, which prove to be psychologically realistic, but they do this without being aware of it: "One of the circle who, as was explained at the beginning, was interested in the dreams of *Gradiva* and their possible interpretation, put the direct question to Wilhelm Jensen, whether any such similar theories of science had been known to him. Our author answered, as was to be expected, in the negative, and rather testily". Freud Sigmund, *Delusion and Dream. An*

For general consideration, this study will first attempt to understand the fictional dream image in relation to its implications, artistic approaches, and how it could be perceived by the public.

Throughout art history and until relatively recent times, artists, considered little more than craftsmen, have been mostly bound to the constraints of subjects and patrons' requests in regards to artistic taste and expression; although, this general rule does not apply to fantastical images, like fantasias, *capriccios* or, most importantly, dreams.

The dream, as a fantastical representation *par excellence*, might have provided the artist with much more freedom than any other representation; the artist might have felt more comfortable when depicting a dream, taking more liberties than in a plain, realistic scene. The dream representation, therefore, has often been the place where the artist's personality, wishes, and wills would actualise: it might have been the space in which subconscious thoughts would be more likely expressed⁸.

This observation illustrates that artists expose deeper and more subtle truths, consciously or otherwise, within fictional dream images. For this reason, after individuating the type of dream images to be investigated, their meaning and functions will be analysed. The analysis determined that fictional dream images were more deeply rooted in culture and society of the period than expected .

All considerations made thus far generally refer to dream representations in visual arts.

Interpretation in the Light of Psychoanalysis of Gradiva, a Novel by Wilhelm Jensen, New York: Moffat, Yard & company, 1922, p. 210.

⁸ Being unconscious, the dream can as well be the place to hide something of which the artist does not want to take responsibility; it can be the place for criticism, for satyr, for avoiding censorship. This expedient has been use both in literature and visual arts; one important example on this purpose can be the famous *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* by Francisco de Goya (1799), where the artist represents, in the form of a dream, his dark vision of his epoch, in which barbarism has prevailed over reason.

The analysis of dream representation in early modern art had been the object of my previous research, titled “The Stuff Dreams are Made on”⁹, which considered a significant timespan from the late Middle Ages until the end of the eighteenth century.

The present research was originally conceived as a continuation of this work; its purpose was to investigate dream representations in the period following the one already analysed. However, the present research will focus on a much more limited timeframe – exclusively the nineteenth century—since the specificity of both the artistic and the socio-cultural situations generated unique features and instances to analyse.

To conduct the same type of iconographic analysis for the present study, as utilised in the previous one, similar methodologies and approaches will be adopted.

2. L’ANCIEN RÉGIME DU RÊVE

Reporting the findings of the aforementioned research was necessary to provide an overview of historical precedents and the cultural context in which the new dream representation of the nineteenth century emerges. This historical parenthesis highlights the applied methodology and exposes the reasons why this was relevant to the nineteenth century, though giving wholly different results.

The phrasing “*l’Ancien Régime du rêve*” has been utilised¹⁰ to define the entire epoch preceding Freud’s ‘revolution’ in the psychological understanding of the dream at the beginning of the twentieth century. While the Freudian influence certainly plays a major role in the artistic representations of the dream as well, representations of visual arts observe instead a relevant shift already from the beginning of the nineteenth century. In this case, the expression

⁹ Developed at the University of Pisa, 2010.

¹⁰ Ripa Yannick, *Histoire du rêve. Regards sur l’imaginaire des Français au XIX siècle*, Paris: Fayard, 1988, p. 12.

L'Ancien Régime du rêve, which will be applied to visual arts until the nineteenth century, is even more appropriate as it refers to the period that also in historiography is known as *Ancien Régime*, preceding the French revolution.

Within the previous study's collection of images, dream representations could be grouped in a few typologies depending on the structure and function of each representation. Each of these typologies, referred to as iconographic categories, also appeared in chronological succession along the vast timeframe considered. This implies that throughout history, different conceptions and consequently representations of the dream existed, each prevailing on the others within a given period. The outcome of this observation divided the history of dream representation into four phases, depending on which category was prevailing in each phase.

The first category defined was the 'objective dream'. This terminology was first used in the influential studies of E. R. Dodds¹¹ about the main type of dream observed in ancient culture and the Middle Ages. An objective dream is believed to be a divine message or revelation; this type of dream appears in ancient, epic prose, such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, as well as in biblical and hagiographical narrations.

This type of dream usually consists of a 'dream visitation' in which another person, most likely dead¹², supernatural, or divine, appears next to the dreamer pronouncing his or her revelation. Sometimes the figure dreamt also leaves an object of some sort as testimony of his or her passage, which will be considered proof of the truthfulness of the dream. As Dodds remarks, the objective dream, despite being also a literary codified expedient, was also a real experience that ancient Greeks could have¹³.

¹¹ Dodds Eric Robertson, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Boston: Beacon, 1957, chapter IV "Dream-Pattern and Culture-Pattern".

¹² Even now, the appearing of deceased loved ones in a dream is a phenomenon known, especially to those interested in the paranormal, as 'visitation dream'.

¹³ For instance, it was common to sleep in a temple of Aesculapius in hopes to receive a healing dream visitation by the god.

One of the main features of the objective dream is that the content of the dream is considered to be absolutely truthful and external to the individual; in a religious or mythological context, the episode of the dream is felt as part of reality and its prescription or revelation is undoubtedly to be followed. The fact that it is felt as real is also clear in its representation: unlike the other types of dreams, here the representation is neat, not invested with the mystery and vagueness that characterises actual dreams and their representation: the dream event and its actors are present in all their materiality and reality.

The objective dream was also the largest category to which the highest number of accounts belongs, and from which examples could be found throughout art history. Several are the examples that could be mentioned in art history, as generally all mythological or hagiographic visual narrations are potentially objective dreams. Some of the most famous examples of this type were dreams appearing in the *Legend of Saint Francis* by Giotto in Assisi (1290-95); the *Dream of Constantine* by Piero della Francesca (1452-66), or the *Dream of Saint Helen* by Paolo Veronese (in both versions from 1570-5 and 1580).

The next identified dream image typology was the ‘allegoric dream’, increasingly more common after the Renaissance. Allegoric dreams were defined as a representation in which an allegory, usually a narrative depicting virtue and vice, was presented in the form of a dream.

This is also a narrative mode typical of ancient philosophic treatises, and has in the tale of the “Dream of Scipio” one of its best examples. The *somnium Scipionis* is a famous section at the end of the *De Republica* by Cicero, in which Scipio Aemilianus receives a dream visitation of his adoptive ancestor, Scipio Africanus. While at first this might seem similar to the objective dream, its metaphorical and moral intent reduce it to symbolism, clarifying that this type of dream should not be felt as a real episode, but rather a moral metaphor.

The *somnium Scipionis* was represented by Raphael in a painting commonly called the *Dream of the Knight* (1504 ca.), in which the sleeping knight is confronted with the alternatives of vice or virtue impersonated by two women on either of his sides. Beyond this

obvious example, allegoric dreams are recognisable in the *Dream of the Doctor* by Albrecht Dürer (for which see par. II.1), in *The Maiden's Dream* by Lorenzo Lotto (1505-6) and in the enigmatic drawing commonly known as *The Dream* by Michelangelo (1532-3).

The third category, commenced after Mannerism and normalised during Romanticism, was defined 'visionary dreams', a representation in which the fantastical, disquieting component prevailed above any other narrative or allegoric intention. In these images illustrated that the aim of the painter is not to provide a story (like in the objective dreams) or to give a moral teaching (like in the allegoric dreams), but to create an image that is in overall evocative suggestive, often with a rather dark twist. In such paintings, the elements displayed are often fantastical, with the presence of creatures and monsters. The most famous example is perhaps *The Nightmare* by Johann Heinrich Füssli (1781). However, many other works illustrate visionary dreams such as *La notte* by Battista Dossi (1540 ca.), or the *Dream of Raphael* by Marcantonio Raimondi (1507-8).

Fantastical and visionary components tend to be associated most frequently with female figures rather than males, which is contrary to the previous typologies. Women can be a disturbing element, along with other creatures, or their victim, sexualising the image.

Finally, the last category identified was the 'subjective dreams', defined as such to create a contrast with the objective dreams. This category has the lowest number of accounts in the period considered, and is defined as dreams actually dreamt by artists and then transposed into images. These accounts of dreams reproduced by artists are not seemingly conceived to be shared: they are usually sketches and drawings quickly made, most probably with the purpose of keeping a private memory of the dream. The private use and the improvised support also explain their scarcity. The most known example is the so-called *Dream from 1525* by Albrecht Dürer, in which the painter recorded his vision of an immense flood. This dream was felt as important and worth recording by the artist as he interpreted it as an apocalyptic prediction of some imminent disaster.

As it might be clear, apart from the exception of the subjective dreams (which represent a separate category), the other categories distinguish different typologies of dreams through historical chronology. Roughly, objective dreams prevail during Antiquity and the Middle Ages, allegoric dreams are common during Renaissance and Mannerism, and finally, visionary dreams appear often during Romanticism¹⁴.

In conclusion, the different typologies also represent different conceptions of the dream in time. The objective dream is considered a real prediction or divine message according to the way dreaming was believed to have an external, divine origin in the Antiquity and in the Middle Ages. In contrast, the allegoric dream reflects the Renaissance taste for allegories and moral philosophical content, transposed in the form of a dream. Lastly, the visionary dream is a consequence of Romanticism's fascination with the fantastical, the revival of legends and traditions, as well as a first hint of interest for the dream as a psychological phenomenon.

Considering the aforementioned categories, the subsequent research was to commence from the beginning of the nineteenth century. At first, this study considered that the same categories could be applicable to the nineteenth century and almost all would be retracable in nineteenth century representations.

The new research predicted that objective and allegoric dreams would greatly diminish as consequence of the fact that the belief in these religious or mythological episodes was far lower. And in contrast, the number of visionary dreams - especially during Romanticism - and subjective dreams was predicted to increase significantly, thus forming the main corpus of the study. For what concerns the visionary dreams, most examples are nightmares, many directly inspired to the famous *The Nightmare* by Johann Heinrich Füssli by imitation or parody. Their

¹⁴ One interesting confirmation of my division into categories came from Macrobius's commentary, *The Dream of Scipio*, in which he exposes the main types of dreams to be seen according to a distinction very similar to the one I had applied to dream representations. This account remained one of the most influential categorisation during Antiquity and Middle Ages.

number and relevance, though, was less significant than anticipated; beyond the explanation as Romantic, dark visions, the nightmare's relevance was limited.

As for subjective dreams, several were identified in the following period -the twentieth century- when the psychological interest of the dream became widespread and became a strong attraction for some artistic movements.

While applying the same image collection used in the previous research, I constantly overlooked images referred to as 'dreams', but which did not respect the criteria set for the individuation of a dream image. The presence of such images made me question the reason of their appearance, their frequency, and above all, why they were often titled as dreams. The frequency and specificity of this new category – increasing especially within the second half of the nineteenth century – seemed to highlight a point of interest in the research by presenting a new topic with recurring features within art history, and be a pointer of a new approach to artistic theory and practice. Therefore, this new category was deemed worth of contemplation.

By unifying these alternative images described as 'dreams', a new category of dream representation emerged rather unexpectedly. This category, which had almost no occurrences in the previous centuries, consists of the representation of a character in a dreamy attitude, yet not asleep. This type of image will be referred to with the originally French term 'reverie', meaning a daydream, and defined as it will follow (see chapter I).

It is important to highlight that this research was developed primarily in France, as it is clear from all cultural references and the provided social context. The reverie is, in its visual accounts and in its definition, a theoretical concept intrinsic to French culture and developed within a French context. Therefore, the research, despite considering other cultural and geographical contexts, focuses on French artists, writers, theorists and general socio-cultural context of the nineteenth century.

The interest in the topic was also increased by the observation that almost invariably the daydreaming subject in these images is a woman. This raised questions about the gender characterisation of this image and the way it would be perceived in society at the time.

The discovery of this type of dream representation also shifted the purposes and aims of this research. The original research purpose was to collect and categorise dream representations and understand what they mean and represent during the nineteenth century. However, the new aim became to detect and analyse the typology of the reverie, worthy of a specific and separate investigation.

3. STATE OF THE ART AND ORIGINALITY OF THE RESEARCH

After individuating the reverie as iconographic category, the next step was to retrace studies on this subject in the arts. This inquiry highlighted an interesting gap in the state of the arts and in academic research on this field: surprisingly, the representation of the reverie was not observed extensively thus far. Bibliographic research showed that both the subject of the dream and the reverie have been researched much more extensively in the literary domain than in the visual.

The first reason for this aspect is that the reverie originates as specific literary concept. Furthermore, the reverie, especially in the period preceding the nineteenth century, is intended more often as an intellectual activity or philosophical speculation; this clarifies that its understanding finds expression more in literary accounts than in representations.

On this regard, the well-known *La poétique de la reverie* by Gaston Bachelard¹⁵ is mentionable. This work analyses the reverie on a philosophical and phenomenological level as a creative poetic production, a state of relaxation which favours the development of poetic images and associations. The way Bachelard defines the reverie

¹⁵ Bachelard Gaston, *La poétique de la rêverie*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1968 (first edition 1957).

is rather far from the intentions of this research, which focuses exclusively on visual representations and entails a concept of a lazy fantasy rather than a productive one (as it will be clear further on).

Another work entirely devoted to the literary reverie, *L'invention de la rêverie* by Florence Orwat¹⁶, focuses on a specific literary genre made of poetic fancies and spread during the seventeenth century. Similarly, *Romantisme et rêverie* by Marcel Raymond¹⁷, which might seem closer to our topic, only inspects a collection of philosophical reflections made in the form of reverie by Romantic writers. This work can be considered as one of the many studies dealing with the subject of the dream in Romantic literature - admittedly a rather largely analysed topic.

On the other hand, for what concerns the visual arts domain, a clear individuation of the reverie representation in art history is lacking. In general, the reverie is not an obvious iconography, identified by very clear and specific elements; its uncertain features are also the reason why these images have been often overlooked. After observing some, however, the characters of reverie iconography emerged and became more recognisable, thus individuating its own category.

It was also not easy to retrace a bibliography on the subject since no specific work on the reverie existed: instead, most works referred to the subject of leisure, reading, and womanly activities. The studies most relevant to this subject analyse images of reading: the iconography of reading is indeed one of the closest to that of the reverie, and often images of reading are to be considered also reverie images. On this subject, the bibliography is definitely wider than on the reverie, and there are also studies in which the topic of reading is connected to the gender issues, as these images often incorporate a female subject¹⁸. In consequence, one of the most relevant accounts to

¹⁶ Orwat Florence, *L'invention de la rêverie: une conquête pacifique du Grand Siècle*, Paris: H. Champion 2006.

¹⁷ Raymond Marcel, *Romantisme et rêverie* Paris: J. Corti, 1978.

¹⁸ Such as, Adler Laure and Stefan Bollman, *Les femmes qui lisent sont dangereuses*, Paris: Flammarion, 2006; Finocchi, Anna, *Lettrici: immagini della*

the present research's topic is a short article by François Bessire on the representation of the visual effects of reading letters in paintings of the eighteenth century¹⁹.

Given the individuation of the iconographic typology and observation that the subject has not been well developed in literature yet, it appears that a research on the visual representation of the reverie is an original study. For what concerns visual arts, an extensive research on the reverie has not yet been realised; therefore, the present work aspires to add a tile in research on nineteenth century painting.

The present work therefore initiates as an art history analysis, as the issue of the reverie was first considered by the observation of artworks. Yet, once identified the iconography, the definitions in linguistic and common knowledge became necessary. The observation of the reverie as specific iconography questioned its reality as an activity and its reasons of existence, which lead to a deeper inquiry about the society of the time, and women's conditions. Moreover, as a psychological activity, the reverie's understanding should also be perceived according to relevant medical theories of the time.

While relying on a solid art historical base and approach, this work has attempted to incorporate several issues raised by the reverie in different domains, involving sociology, psychology, and gender studies. The complexity of the concept produced a work that needed to consider different disciplines and resulted in an eclectic, but comprehensive study.

Chapter I of this work is devoted to providing a definition of 'reverie', as this was determined to be the term to most appropriately identify the type of images identified. For this purpose, the etymology of the term will be discussed, as well as its definitions in several languages. Then, to clarify its specificity, an identification of reverie

donna che legge nella pittura dell'ottocento, Nuoro: Ilisso 1992; Inmann Christiane, *Forbidden Fruit: a history of women and books in art*, Munich; London: Prestel 2009. See also par. II.4.

¹⁹ Bessire François, "Votre lettre m'a fait rêver: lettre et rêverie dans la peinture de la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle" in *Revue de l'AIRE* n° 29, hiver 2003, Paris: Champion, p. 123-132.

iconography will be provided with a general description of the main features of its representation.

In Chapter II, similar and preceding iconographies will be illustrated, as for instance those of sloth, meditation, melancholy, and reading. All these precede the development of reverie iconography and present several traits in common with it. Their individuation and analysis in artistic accounts shall favour a clearer individuation of the reverie typology.

Chapter III is devoted to the analysis of the artworks identified as reverie images. Among a large collection of this type of images, the most relevant ones are taken into account. The paintings will be divided by country of origin and subsequently by artists. The division by country of production allows also a rough categorisation into different type of reverie images, depending on their setting and features.

The last part of the research, chapter IV, attempts to approach the subject of the reverie from a socio-cultural perspective. This study traces an explanation of the reverie phenomenon, apparently a widespread activity, with the condition of women at the time, relegated to the private sphere and bound by social constraints.

Also, some space will be devoted to the investigation of psychological studies of the period dealing with the reverie as an intellectual phenomenon, thus taking into account the diffusion of psychological theories which were then developed and became increasingly influential.

Lastly, the Conclusions of the research will determine that the insistence on the subject of the reverie, both in cultural and artistic outcomes, is a phenomenon intrinsic to the nineteenth century mentality, which will not have a continuation during the following century.

CHAPTER I: DEFINING THE REVERIE

*Let me not mar that perfect dream
By an auroral stain,
But so adjust my daily night
That it will come again.*

Emily Dickinson
Complete Poems 1924. Part III: Love, 53

1. DAYDREAMING ARTWORKS

While a more traditional representation of dreams²⁰ continues, though decreasing extensively during the nineteenth century, the emergence of a new type of representation is becoming progressively widespread.

As anticipated in the Introduction, the first phase of this research consisted in a systematic collection of artwork images dealing with the subject of the dream, with a special focus on nineteenth century art²¹. Given the variety of definitions of the term “dream”, the research

²⁰ Especially that of “objective dreams”, defined in the Introduction.

²¹ The collection of such images was composed from several online databases, primarily ARTSTOR, ARC (Art Renewal Center), Bridgemann Library, Wellcome Collection, WikiCommons and online museum collections such as the one of Musée d’Orsay. The research consisted most often in the individuation of artworks having the tag “dream”, “nightmare” or similar, either in the description or in the title. Beyond that, other dream images have been found in different sources such as exhibitions, essays, and catalogues.

resulted in a quite extensive collection of dream artworks, entailing a wide range of meanings from literal to metaphorical or symbolic ones.

Since this research utilised the definition of dream as images seen while asleep, the study had to dismiss images dealing with the representations of wishes, desires, or fantasies and *capriccios*.

To sort images exclusively in the first definition, the same methods were applied as used in my previous research, which distinguished two iconographic conditions necessary to identify a dream image in art: the presence of a figure asleep and the explicit representation of the object of their dream. Clearly, the lack of one of these two conditions would determine an image not to be considered a dream image *stricto sensu*. This selection distinguished also dream images from sleep images, where the dream content is not visible, and images displaying a general “dreaminess”, without implying the presence of a dreaming figure.

Yet, the database composed for the nineteenth century was dissatisfying and uninteresting compared to the preceding centuries. Also, the iconographic categories identified in the previous research were not so easily recognisable, and some seemed to be completely missing.

Observing the artworks simultaneously, I initially dismissed images described as “dreams” in which the dream content was not explicitly represented or in which the main figure was not asleep, but had his or her eyes open. The frequency of this sort representation, though, prompted the consideration of the existence of a new iconographic category—that of the “daydream”.

The identification of this new iconographic category shifted the methodologies and definitions previously relied upon to analyse dream representations. Therefore, the definition for “dream image” needed to be revised.

The two necessary conditions for the new category would therefore be:

1. The presence of a “dreamer”, but not asleep and actually with eyes open; and
2. The absence, in most cases, of the object of the dream.

Therefore, this utilisation would be excluded from a dream representation as defined thus far.

Nonetheless, I argue that this emerging and frequently observed type of picture, can also fall into the category of dream representations, although it fails to meet the initial criteria used to define dream images in previous centuries. Even though in these pictures the dream itself is not explicitly represented, it is the attitude of the subject that makes us understand we are in front of some kind of dream.

The character is depicted in most cases alone, in a circumscribed environment; he or she does not seem to be doing anything specific at first sight. The subjects are not posing like in portraits and, on the contrary, their pose is relaxed, almost abandoned, yet not (or not completely) asleep. With a closer look at their facial expressions, they seem to have some kind of thoughts or fantasies, often pleasant, which make their thoughts wander as if dreaming.

The next step was to define the dreamy condition represented in these artworks: soon the term *rêverie*, found sometimes in the artworks' titles and in the scientific and literary accounts of the time, came at hand. The term, meaning an idle, pleasant fantasy, is derived from the French word for dream, *rêve*. Therefore, it is also linguistically related to the dream phenomenon because of its resemblance, though simultaneously retaining its distinctive features.

It is important to point out that it was only after the individuation of the iconographic category representing a figure clearly daydreaming that the French term *rêverie* proved to be the most appropriate definition of these images. Reverie is a term that has taken different meanings along history, and even now is ambiguous. Therefore a comprehensive, diachronic definition of “reverie” will be provided within this chapter. Through the new criteria of the reverie, a quite specific and rather large class of artworks were identified, a class

which seems to represent a trend in art history in general throughout this specific period.

The first objection to such categorisation might question if these images can be defined as dream representation when the two basic elements of a typical dream representation—a person asleep and the dreamt object—are missing.

The first answer is a very practical one, and it is the fact that these artworks have been defined, either by the author or by his or her contemporaries as “dreams”. This argument, though, is only partially valid since, there are artworks which can be considered reveries without having the title of “dream” or “reverie” and vice-versa. It also might look like a feeble argument to select artworks on the base of their title. However, titles are seldom indicated by the painter himself, and they are instead more often given by others. They can be attributed by contemporary observers, and are then referred to by commentators with what they (seem to) represent, often becoming known by such titles. The other possibility, is that the title is given later by modern art historians or—which results in more inaccuracy—as a “tag” in collections of images or databases like the ones consulted in this study.

Considering that the best circumstances are when the artist titles the artwork, which demonstrates a specific intention, these titles or tags were only used to apply an initial selection of artworks. This allowed a collection of a vast variety of images (including unrelated ones) and the observation of common features that identified points of interest. At the same time, other images which were *not* referred to as reveries were nonetheless included in this collection because they corresponded to the new categorisation.

Relevance is therefore not the titling of these artworks, but what they represent and how. Different pictures can be named or not named “reverie”, but this does not change the fact that they do or do not represent a reverie as previously defined. The artworks considered along this research all have certain common features, which allow for their categorisation according to the same criteria and definition, without necessarily including all artworks with “reverie” as a title.

The main element lacking in these images, comparing with typical dream representations, is the object of the dream, however this occurs for at least two reasons. The first, is that these images are in a way more modern than the ones produced so far, and avoid a simplistic narrative with the dreamt object in a balloon or next to the dreaming character, as found in previous representations. The other, more important explanation for this lack is that the artist meant for the spectator to guess the dreamt object. As we shall see, contemporary viewers would not have had doubts about the content of the reverie: they would be left free to imagine how exactly the dream content was developed and to adjust it to their own expectations and understanding of the reverie activity.

In the first stage of this study, the iconographic category of the reverie will be identified and defined, despite some derivations and parallels, as a new category which developed and flourished in nineteenth century painting. Given the rather large production, the artworks considered are not meant to be exhaustive of the category. Other artworks may be excluded that can be defined as reverie through the definition utilised by this study: the selection of artworks in this study are only meant to be illustrative of the category. The examples taken into account are considered because they are particularly representative and meaningful to illustrate the subject.

Similarly to my previous study on dream representations in artworks, the reveries also have far more occurrences in painting (compared to other media), with some exceptions in graphics and illustration, as dreams and reveries become fashionable subjects of mass culture, especially towards the end of the nineteenth century.

As for the chronology, one first observation is that most artworks with reveries are produced in the second half of the nineteenth century, while much fewer (with meaningful exceptions) are produced during the first half. To start, it is necessary to provide a definition of reverie, and inquire further into its meaning to determine whether and how this definition can be applied to artworks identified within this new category.

2. ETYMOLOGY

First, this study will explore this phenomenon of the mind, mainly through the use of the French term *rêverie*. This term, which also entered the English language, is preferable to all other English terms such as “fantasy”, “dream”, “imagination”, and even its direct correspondent, “daydream”. It was not by coincidence that the term was transposed into English without translation, because it conveys a different nuance in comparison to similar words. From the noun, also the verb ‘to reverie’, meaning “to have reveries”, is attested.

Since the meaning of the English word “reverie” is derived from its French counterpart, then its origin and use should be traced in a francophone context. Also, the concept of reverie will be illustrated in other geo-cultural contexts, and above all, in its evolution in time, as the term is ambiguous and diachronically unstable.

The first reason why the term “reverie” is preferable has to do with the etymology of the original word *rêve*, “dream”, from which reverie derives and which is a singularity that French language does not share with other linguistic branches. Etymologically, the term *rêverie* comes from medieval French word *resverie*, deriving from the verb *resver*, “to wander around”, and therefore connected with the idea of moving purposelessly. A reverie is then an aimless wandering, both in a material (an actual movement) and figurative sense (wandering with the thought).

During the Middle Ages the word *resverie* also came to define a literary genre with precise rules and features. The word described a type of nonsensical, rhyming, and short composition about everyday life and mundane topics. Afterwards, by the end of the Middle Ages, *resverie*, abandoning the domain of literature, becomes mostly a synonym of “fantastical exuberance”. At the same time, in the definition of “dream”, the use of the word *rêve* is rare before the eighteenth century as in general the word *songe*, from the Latin

somnium, is largely preferred²². If on one hand, the term *resverie* is abandoned to define the literary genre, on the other hand the term *songe*, becomes recurrent in literature to define a literary *topos* of a vision seen by a character, as it is common to find especially in novels of initiation like the *Roman de la Rose*.

The French terms *rêvasser* and *rêvasserie*, evidently related to *reverie*, initially appear in the fifteenth century as also having the meanings of “divagate” and “meditate”. Nowadays, they can have either the definition of “having troubled dreams while sleeping” or “getting lost in vague reveries”²³. Another French expression commonly used with the meaning of “having vain fantasies” is “*faire/bâtir des châteaux en Espagne*”: in this case the expression refers more to a fantasy that is impossible or unattainable²⁴.

The first known author using the term *rêverie* is Michel de Montaigne, who in 1580 gives such a justification for his need of writing: “*Une humeur mélancolique produite par le chagrin et la solitude en laquelle, il y quelques années, je m’étais jeté, qui m’a mis premièrement en tête cette rêverie d’écrire*”²⁵. What we can already detect in the way the author makes use of the term is a sort of similarity between the traditional

²² It is not a chance that the classical, biblical and hagiographic dreams are always referred to as *songe*: e.g. ‘*le songe de Penelope*’, ‘*les songes de Daniel*’, ‘*le songe de Constantin*’ etc.

²³ *Grand Larousse de la langue française en sept volumes*, sous la direction de Louis Guilbert, René Lagane, Georges Niobey, Paris: Larousse, 1977, entries “*rêvasser*” and “*rêvasserie*”.

²⁴ The expression is shared by different languages: in English too, beyond the expression “castle in Spain”, there are also “castle in the air” and “castle in the sky”.

²⁵ Montaigne Michel, de, *Essais : texte original de 1580 avec les variantes des éditions de 1582 et 1587*, Bordeaux : Féret et fils, 1870, Ch. XXVII, *De l’affection des pères aux enfants*. “‘Tis a melancholic humour, and consequently a humour very much an enemy to my natural complexion, engendered by the pensiveness of the solitude into which for some years past I have retired myself, that first put into my head this idle fancy of writing book”. Second ch. VIII *Essays of Michel de Montaigne*, transl. by Charles Cotton, ed. by William Carew Hazlitt, 1877.

codification of melancholia and the reverie, apparently ongoing since this age or even earlier²⁶.

This connection implies that the melancholic type has a stronger tendency to dream and consequently also to have reveries. Already by this time the reverie, like the dream itself, is intertwined both with an ability to create and to be inspired, and in contrast, with a sense of self-indulgence and laziness, which will manifest itself in visual representation.

Within the seventeenth century, the term *rêve* registers also a pejorative connotation like “hallucination of a disturbed mind”²⁷.

René Descartes introduced the definition of *rêve* as nocturnal dream by using the expression “*faire des rêves en dormant*”²⁸. It was only during the eighteenth century that the term *rêve* starts rivalling the French word *songe* with the meaning of “dream”: “progressively, in parallel with the semantic evolution of *rêver* during the seventeenth century, it [*rêve*] replaces *songe* in the eighteenth century, but maintains a pejorative connotation, shared with *rêverie*”²⁹. Despite its original negative connotation, *rêve* became widespread and is now the main word used in French for the dream.

At the same time, the meaning assumed by the word *rêverie* during the seventeenth century is instead that of meditation and inventive thinking. In this sense, it is also used by Descartes, when he defines *rêveries* the ideas and discoveries he develops when he is in a state of absent-mindedness and abstraction. Especially in his writings,

²⁶ For the conceptual and visual links between the representation of the reverie and that of melancholy see further, par. II.3.

²⁷ “*Songes des malades qui ont le cerveau aliéné*” is defined in by Furetière, 1690. Source: *Le Robert. Dictionnaire culturel en langue française*, Paris : Dictionnaires Le Robert, DL 2005, entry “*rêve*”, p. 283.

²⁸ Orwat Florence, *L’invention de la rêverie: une conquête pacifique du Grand siècle*, Paris: H. Champion 2006, p. 82. S mentioned in the Introduction, this exhaustive work analyses the reverie as a literary genre during in the seventeenth century, including several examples by different writers.

²⁹ *Le Robert. Dictionnaire culturel en langue française*, Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, DL 2005, entry “*rêve*”, p. 283.

the term *rêverie* is used with a new, productive sense of defining a way to indulge in his or her own thoughts or meditate in an uncontrolled, yet scientifically inspired way. The term *rêverie* therefore, acquires the definition of “meditation” and maintains it during the Grand Siècle, becoming a sort of new literary genre.

The same meaning of meditation is still used by Jean-Jacques Rousseau when he composes the *Rêveries d'un promeneur solitaire*³⁰, in which to the idea of reverie is also wittingly associated the original meaning of wandering: in the form of seven *promenades*, Rousseau transposes his thoughts and meditations. These reveries are then merely his own reflections on life, philosophy, and humankind, reported as if they were spontaneous thoughts elaborated during his walks, but actually transposed in a filtered, codified fashion (unlike the spontaneity which characterises the medieval reveries).

In the English language the use of the French term “reverie” is observed much earlier than the use of the term “daydream”, which is dating back to 1685³¹. This equivalent autochthone term for reverie is composed of dream, which shares the same Germanic origin with the German word *Traum* and other variations of the root in Scandinavian languages. “Daydream” is then fully corresponding to the German word *Tagtraum*, but both terms, in comparison to “reverie”, entail the fallacious connotation that they take place only during the day instead than at night. Even Sigmund Freud remarks the gap in his native language when writing about the phenomenon of the reverie: “our language, then, is acquainted with things that bear the strange name of ‘day dreams’³²”. Freud seems to recognise the inappropriateness of

³⁰ Rousseau Jean-Jacques., *Rêveries d'un promeneur solitaire*, first edition 1782. For this type of reverie see Raymond Marcel, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: la quête de soi et la rêverie*, Paris: J. Corti, 1986.

³¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, prepared by J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, Oxford: Clarendon press, 1989.

³² Freud Sigmund, *The Standard edition of the Complete psychological works*, ed. by James Strachey, London: Hogarth press and the Institute of psycho-analysis, 1966; in *Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (original edition 1917), p. 3198.

Tagtraum, because it gives a specification on the moment of day, which might prove confusing: while reveries can be experienced at night, also real dreams can be seen during a day sleep.

Apart from *Tagtraum*, two more German terms seem to resonate better with the rendering of this idea: *Wachtraum*, literally a “wake dream” and *Träumerei*, which shows the corresponding derivative suffix as *rêverie* from *rêve*³³.

English instead provides also an idiomatic expression, “a brown study”, meaning a meditation accompanied by a gloomy (brown) mood³⁴. This phrasing can be considered particularly interesting because it puts the daydream, meant as meditation, again in parallel with the melancholic state, which has several features in common with the daydream.

Romance languages, such as Italian and Spanish, provide instead words derived from Latin *somnium*, which was the most common of possible names for the dream phenomenon³⁵.

The Italian equivalent of reverie is rendered through the periphrasis *sogno a occhi aperti*, (“dream with eyes open”) which still, though being less synthetic as an expression, is more accurate than simple *daydream* or *Tagtraum*. It stresses indeed that main distinctive feature of reverie, the fact that the subject has open eyes (not

³³ The first rare occurrences of the term are from the mid-eighteenth century, indeed with the meaning of imaginative fantasy (Grimm Jacob, Grimm Wilhelm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verl., 1991, entry “Träumerei”).

³⁴ The use of this expression is attested since the 16th century and it was indeed referring to a dark, overcast musing. See *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. by C. T. Onions, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, entry “brown”.

³⁵ According to the already mentioned influential classification of dreams made by Macrobius in his *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis*, for which, depending on its features and content, a dream can be *somnium*, *visio*, *oraculum*, *insomnium* or *visum*.

necessarily literally, but meaning that he or she is awake) rather than the time of the day in which the dream takes place³⁶.

The Spanish language presents an ambiguity in the word *sueño* meaning both sleep and dream; such ambiguity though, allows also purposefully double meanings as in Francisco de Goya's famous engraving *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos* (*The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, 1799), whose title plays with the possible interpretations as "Sleep of Reason" or "Dream of Reason".

As for the daydream, the Spanish language uses the word *ensueño* which is remarkable since it is a linguistic equivalent to *insomnus*, resulting in other languages and in Spanish itself as *insomnio*, *insomnia*, and meaning the lack of sleep with a privative *en/in* before *somnus*. This renders interestingly the fact that the reverie takes place when there is no sleep, and so literally during insomnia.

Another remarkable word Spanish provides, though not completely equivalent in its meaning, is the term *ensimismamiento*: this is composed by the words *en-sí-mismo* meaning "in one self", and thus rendering very properly, unlike any other language, the solipsistic and self-referential process of the daydream.

To conclude, despite the fact that "daydream" can also be used with the same meaning, I will still give priority to term with French origins, reverie, because it is older and present in both English and French, and because it does not imply the reference to a time of the day which can provide false connotations. The term "reverie", thus, implies

³⁶ Despite this, reverie still remains the most appropriate term, and also the Italian translator of Gaston Bachelard's *La poétique de la rêverie*, for example, justifies the choice of not translating the word *rêverie*: "the French term *rêverie* is hardly translated in Italian. The translator did not consider possible to render it with the Italian words for fantasy, dream, chimera, fantastic imagination. The *rêverie* [...] is for Bachelard the situation in which the I, oblivious of its contingent story, let its spirit wander and enjoys in this way a freedom similar to that of dream (*rêve*), towards which the reverie still indicates a phenomenon of wake and not sleep" (Bachelard Gaston, *La poetica della reverie*, Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 2008, p. 6).

the connection to dream, but at the same time identifies the dreamy activity done while awake, though not necessarily during the day.

Furthermore, “reverie” uniquely renders the original idea of “wandering about”, which is one of the main features of the daydreaming activity and which the equivalent terms in other languages fail to grasp; in this sense it also conveys in one word, without using periphrasis or risking ambiguity, both its derivation *and* distance from the phenomenon of the *rêve*, thus identifying a specific activity.

3. DEFINITION

This study will now try to provide a functional definition of the reverie as understood it in this historical moment, as how it was felt by contemporaries. “Reverie” is a concept that needs a definition; its meaning is quite ineffable and subject to variations depending on epoch and context.

Wanting to trace back the use of the word “reverie” in the English language, the following meanings will be found, attested in this chronological succession by the Oxford English Dictionary³⁷:

- 1- A state of joy or delight (attested in Chaucer - rare)
- 2- A violent or rude language (rare)
- 3- A fantastic, fanciful, unpractical, or purely theoretical idea or notion (accounts between 1653 and 1841)
3a - A fit of abstracted musing; a “brown study” or daydream (accounts between 1657 and 1871)
- 4- The fact, state, or condition of being lost in thought or engaged in musing (from Locke, 1690, to Moll, *Hypnotism*, 1889)

³⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*, prepared by J. A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, Oxford: Clarendon press, 1989, entry ‘reverie’.

Apart from the first two definitions, attested as “rare”, it is clear that among all the definitions, numbers three and four are the ones considered in this study. Especially in the third entry, the word is put in direct equivalence with daydream.

The definition of daydream, instead, readdresses the older term *reverie* as: “a dream indulged in while awake, especially one of happiness or gratified hope or ambition; a reverie, castle in the air”³⁸.

Looking instead at the original meaning in French, we shall find some very useful definitions³⁹:

- 1- *État d'une personne qui délire; idées délirantes.*
- 2- *Activité de l'esprit qui médite, qui réfléchit.*
- 3- *(Rêverie apparaît dans ce sens chez Montaigne, 1580, mais le mot n'a pris sa valeur actuelle qu'avec Rousseau et les Romantiques) Activité mentale normale et consciente, qui n'est pas dirigée par l'attention mais se soumet à des causes subjectives et affectives.*
- 4- *Idee vaine, chimérique, sans rapport avec la réalité. Formation d'images et de représentations involontaires.*

Although the other shades of the term will be considered, the one that indicates the activity considered in this study, as also testified by the mention of the ‘*Romantiques*’, is most definitely the third. This third meaning is tightly connected with the other ones, since the *reverie* as mental activity is not controlled by the attention often implied in a “reflection”, but also results in unreal, fantastical ideas, and the production of mental images.

Returning to an older, but relevant definition, it will be similar to the way, for example, Rousseau or Descartes intended the term, than how it came to be used in the nineteenth century.

³⁸ Ibid., entry “daydream”.

³⁹ *Le Grand Robert de la langue française*, sous la dir. de Paul Robert, Paris : Le Robert, 1989, entry “*rêverie*”.

In the *Encyclopédie* by Diderot and D'Alembert the word *rêverie* does not have an entry on its own, but it is part of the larger entry *rêver*. If on one hand *rêver* "*c'est avoir l'esprit occupé pendant le sommeil*", later it is stated that "*on appelle rêverie toute idée vague, toute conjecture bizarre qui n'a pas un fondement suffisant, toute idée qui nous vient de jour et en veillant, comme nous imaginons que les rêves nous viennent pendant le sommeil, en laissant aller notre entendement comme il lui plait, sans prendre le peine de le conduire*"⁴⁰.

From what has been said in the previous paragraph and in the definition of the *Encyclopédie*, it is clear that up to the end of the eighteenth century the reverie is still considered a "wandering of the mind" in terms of fantasies, rather than in terms of ideas (as will be used in later times). There are bizarre, yet often productive ideas coming to the brain while awake, and these do not imply the use of attention ("*en laissant aller notre entendement*").

If the reverie manifests itself in waking hours and is not guided by attention, then it is less evident that the meaning of the term and the concept itself register a slight shift between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. The term shifts from its previous more productive and intellectual meaning (similar to the idea of meditation, only without a specific focus) to a meaning of pure fantasy or divagation of the mind. This implies less intellectual thinking, but more likely thought about mundane or vain topics, and above all, Romantic longing. The Romantic reverie is more irrational and concerns, in the highest and rarest forms, a sublime longing; in the most trivial and common a love fantasy.

Additionally, in this period, the reverie partially retrieves its original, pejorative meaning as its cause is no longer considered a

⁴⁰ Diderot; D'Alembert, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Faulche & compagnie, 1751-65, tome 14, entry "*rêver*". "Is to have the spirit occupied by every vague idea, every bizarre conjecture that has no sufficient base, every idea coming to us during the day and while awake, as we imagine that the dreams come to us during sleep, while we let our reason wander as it wishes, without caring to direct it".

tendency of the brain to philosophical speculation, but a mental illnesses such as hysteria, or, at the very least, laziness and boredom.

4. RÊVE OR RÊVERIE?

Being also a psychological phenomenon, a psychological definition of the reverie should be provided, too. Although the reverie was observed in psychology already during the nineteenth century, there are no real accounts of a systematic definition and analysis of this activity. Therefore, an illustration of these seldom accounts will be more extensively explored in par. IV.5, in connection to the whole theory on the functions and understanding of the reverie.

As for a modern definition, Alain De Mijolla's *Dictionnaire de Psychologie* states: "The daydream is an imaginary scenario, developed in the waking state in favour of a relaxation of censorship, and analogous in its general features and functions to the nocturnal dream"⁴¹. Psychologically, the reverie is the mental creation of a fictional scenario performed while the subject is awake. Contextually, the fictional scenario represents almost exclusively the accomplishment of a desire⁴² in a more plain and obvious way than in a regular dream.

The reverie is often defined by both its differences and similarities to the "nocturnal dream", the dream everyone experiences while sleeping. The two phenomena of the brain are correlated, given their similar features, but simultaneously presenting meaningful divergences that also need to be emphasised.

In his main writings, Freud seems indecisive whether the reverie is appropriately connected to the nocturnal dream or not. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) he seems, as he often does, to found the

⁴¹ *Dictionnaire international de la psychanalyse: concepts, notions, biographies, œuvres, événements, institutions*, sous la direction de Alain de Mijolla, Paris: Pluriel, impr. 2013, p. 1483, entry "rêverie (rêve diurne)". A more complete account from this dictionary (and its English version) is to be found in the Conclusions.

⁴² In Freudian terms a "wish fulfilment".

argument on the linguistic similarity of the two phenomena, namely the evident derivation of *Tagtraum* from *Traum*: “Closer investigation of the characteristics of these daytime phantasies shows us how right it is that these formations should bear the same name as we give to the products of our thought during the night—the name, that is, of ‘dreams.’ They share a large number of their properties with night-dreams, and their investigation might, in fact, have served as the shortest and best approach to an understanding of night-dreams”⁴³. A few years later he reasserts the importance of this derivation: “They are justly called ‘day-dreams’, for they give us the key to an understanding of night-dreams - in which the nucleus of the dream-formation consists of nothing else than complicated day-time phantasies of this kind that have been distorted and are misunderstood by the conscious psychical agency”⁴⁴.

In the *Lectures on Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (1915-17), he seems to have changed his mind on this issue:

The most remarkable thing about these imaginative structures is that they have been given the name of ‘day-dreams’, for there is no trace in them of the two things that are common to dreams. Their relation to sleep is already contradicted by their name; and, as regards the second thing common to dreams, we do not experience or hallucinate anything in them but imagine something, we know that we are having a phantasy, we do not see but think [...]. It may be that day-dreams bear their name on account of having the same relation to reality - in order to indicate that their content is to be looked on as no less unreal than that of dreams. But perhaps they share this name because of some psychical characteristic of dreams which is still unknown to us, one which we are in search of. It is also

⁴³ Freud Sigmund, *The Interpretation of Dreams. The Complete and Definitive Text*. Transl. and ed. by James Strachey, New York: Basic Books, 2010, p. 497.

⁴⁴ Freud Sigmund, *The Standard edition of the Complete psychological works*, ed. by James Strachey, London: Hogarth press and the Institute of psycho-analysis, 1966, in *Hysterical Phantasies and their Relation to Bisexuality* (original edition 1908) p. 1932.

possible that we are being quite wrong in trying to make use of this similarity of name as something significant ⁴⁵.

Actually, Freud not only questions the similarity of the two activities, but he even appears more doubtful about the reveries than he used at earlier stages of his career. Beyond the psychological implications that will be investigated later (see par. IV.5), Freud's shifting views serves only to remark once more the fact that the reverie is both to be considered like an activity of the mind concerning the dream domain, and not.

The two phenomena have in common the fictitious production of strange images and situations, but they differ from the state in which these visions manifest themselves: the dream occurs when the subject is asleep (and usually but not necessarily at night) and the reverie while he or she is awake (usually during the day).

The lack of attention also characterises both, an idea shared by the definitions analysed thus far. On the contrary, while dreaming is an unconscious activity, which we are normally not aware of and we cannot direct⁴⁶, the reverie implies a certain degree of consciousness and awareness of having a daydream. Nonetheless, not all authors agree on this point as some argue that the daydream might be also unconscious (see also par. IV.5).

For instance, Gaston Bachelard examined the reverie in several of his works⁴⁷, and provides the following definition in *La poétique de la*

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 3198 (in *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*).

⁴⁶ Except of course the case of 'lucid dream'. This is a dream in which not only the dreamer is aware of dreaming, but also he or she is able to control the events of the dream. This, though, is not for everyone to experience, as it requires a predisposition and practice. The lucid dream is the focus of the early work by Leon Hervey de Saint Denys, *Les rêves et les moyens de les diriger*, for which see par. IV.5.

⁴⁷ The works by Gaston Bachelard are often focused on the subject of dream and reverie. In particular *L'Eau et les rêves : essai sur l'imagination de la matière* (1941), *L'Air et les songes : essai sur l'imagination du mouvement* (1943), *La Terre et les rêveries du repos* (1946) and *La Terre et les rêveries de la volonté* (1948) are to be

rêverie: "reverie is commonly classified among the phenomena of the psychic détente. It is lived out in a relaxed time with no linking force. Since it functions with inattention, it is often without memory. It is a flight from out of the real that does not always find a consistent unreal world. By following 'the path of the reverie'- a constantly downhill path- consciousness relaxes and wanders and consequently *becomes clouded*"⁴⁸.

In psychological terms, then, both the dream and the daydream are wish fulfilments. Only, the dream can be a disguised wish fulfilment which, not being controlled by will, is subject to dream-work, censorship, secondary elaboration⁴⁹, and the other modifications that can be superimposed over the pure expression of the wish. The reverie, instead, expresses more directly and overtly a wish fulfilment without superstructures, and real wishes, most often ambition and love realisation, are fully present and accomplished.

The following scheme summarises the content of the last paragraphs, by comparing common characteristics between dreams and reveries, as well as their main differences. The features given here are reduced to the basic elements shared in the understanding of the two phenomena.

mentioned here. Nonetheless, their approach to the subject of the dream and especially the reverie is radically different to the one illustrated in the present research. This difference is given first of all by the way of meaning the term reverie, understood by the philosopher almost exclusively as a poetic skill. Secondly, it is determined by the philosophical-phenomenological approach Bachelard applies, while my vision was always iconographic first and sociological later. Moreover, Bachelard does not take into any account a visual expression of reverie and its artistic representation.

⁴⁸ Bachelard Gaston, *The Poetics of the Reverie*, New York: Orion Press, 1964, p. 5.

⁴⁹ According to the Freudian terminology, these are some of the modifications that the latent dream (the actual content and meaning of the dream) can go through, transforming it into the manifest dream, which is the vision actually seen, and where the real meaning is often disguised.

	RÊVE	RÊVERIE
Terminology in Multiple Languages	Dream, <i>Traum</i> , <i>sogno</i> , <i>sueño</i>	Daydream, brown study, <i>Tagtraum</i> , <i>Traumerei</i> , <i>sogno a occhi</i> <i>aperti</i> , <i>ensueño</i> , <i>ensimismamiento</i>
State	Sleep	Wake
	(Night)	(Day)
Psychology	Unconscious	Conscious/unconscious
	Lack of attention	Lack of attention
	Wish fulfilment	Wish fulfilment
	Dream-work, censorship, secondary revision	No superstructures, direct expression
Visual Representation in Painting	Person asleep	Person awake
	Object of the dream represented	Object of the dream missing

5. ICONOGRAPHY

Having defined how the reverie was manifested thus far and how it was understood, a deeper, visual analysis will be applied.

As previously remarked, if the reverie in literature has been quite extensively studied, the same cannot be said for its visual accounts. Observations demonstrate that there are a number of artworks representing a daydreaming character, but no systematic analysis of this iconography has been conducted yet. The following

paragraph will therefore define some general, common features within these representations, allowing the category to be identified. The specificity of single, relevant artworks will be analysed later, in chapter III.

The visual representation of the reverie as previously defined can be retraced to the eighteenth century, with paintings and images that can already be defined as reverie, though not as clearly as in the nineteenth century. Therefore, to initiate discourse on the visual representation of the reverie, the aforementioned article by François Bessire⁵⁰, which takes into account some paintings that can be considered reveries from the eighteenth century, will be referenced again. These images all repeat the scheme of a character showing a particularly dreamy attitude while reading or writing a letter. As we shall see, the reverie images are indeed derived, among others, from the parallel iconography of the reading or writing of a letter.

5.1. The Gender

While these earlier variations of the reverie images (see par. II.4) will be revisited, the largest concern at the present is observing that the reverie seems to imply a specific gender of the daydreaming subject. Despite the remarkable identification of the iconography, Bessire does not seem to notice that all the examples he proposes as reveries are entailing the presence of woman as daydreaming subject. This is indeed the first and most striking feature when observing such representations, both these mentioned for the eighteenth century, and this study's collection of paintings in the nineteenth century.

By such an extensive prevalence of female characters, it must be acknowledged that the choice of gender of the subject is not fortuitous.

⁵⁰ Bessire François, "Votre lettre m'a fait rêver: lettre et rêverie dans la peinture de la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle" in *Revue de l'AIRe* n° 29, hiver 2003, Paris: Champion, p. 123-132; as this is one of the most relevant bibliographic accounts close to the subject of the present research, it had been already mentioned in the Introduction about the state of the art.

This observation is even more relevant if considering that, as seen in the Introduction, the dream has been so far a largely male prerogative.

For the literary and poetic reveries of this period, the male subject is instead typical (if not even more common than the female one), both intended as the writer who makes his own reverie and as character of a novel who has the habit or tendency to experience reveries⁵¹.

The fact that in visual arts the subject is typically a woman, instead, remains a constant feature all along this period, independently from author or cultural/geographic context. Representations of reveries experienced by male characters do exist, but they are rarer and less univocally identifiable than the female ones. In regards to these few accounts of male reverie, this study will separately review them to distinguish their specificity and their divergence from the female reverie, which is to be considered the more 'proper' one (see further par. IV.2).

For these reasons, all types of iconographies and images largely contain the presence of a female daydreamer. The following analysis shall refer from this point forward to the subject as a woman.

Emily Dickinson's quote at the beginning of the chapter should now be clearer. Her words indirectly seem to describe the activity of the reverie: the "perfect dream" of a woman that should stay intact without being disturbed by the advent of reality ("an auroral stain"). This fantasy is repeated constantly, as the oxymoron "daily night" seems to highlight, which leaves uncertainty if the author refers to a nocturnal dream of every night or if it is a reverie that can be adjusted, according to the will of the dreamer, and be repeated constantly in the same form.

⁵¹ This is true both for the reverie as a literary genre of the seventeenth century in France and during the Romantic period. The literary accounts of the reverie were indeed the focus of the already mentioned F. Orwat's work *L'invention de la rêverie: une conquête pacifique du Grand siècle*, Paris: H. Champion 2006.

5.2. Expression and Pose

Starting from the details of the figure, one of the most distinguishing elements identifying the reverie is the facial expression and the look of the figure depicted. This is commonly absent, blank, distant, not focused on something precise (or at least not something visible to us spectators). Even when the daydreamer is seemingly looking at something, it is clear that the object is not the focus of her attention.

The figure does not appear to be doing anything, she is not busy in any activity nor she is posing; the attitude is quiet, informal, even forgetful of herself; the pose can be from relaxed to completely abandoned: "the reverie images display languid, supported bodies, in different degrees of abandonment"⁵². Unlike many other more conventional iconographies, the one of the reverie does not appear to represent anything. It is a moment of emptiness and idleness in which the main figure is represented doing nothing specific. Its peculiarity is, indeed, the suspension and abandonment represented, like in images of dream and sleep.

To enhance the display of relaxation, the subject is almost invariably sitting or lying on a comfortable piece of furniture. This can be an armchair, *fauteuil*, sofa, sometimes even a bed. The whole attitude of the body, and especially the positioning of the arms, is indicative of such relaxation. In particular, when the character is sitting in front of a table, one arm is often bent to support the head, assuming thus the typical pose of the Melancholy⁵³, which is also associated with thoughtfulness. In other cases, when the woman is lying for example, one arm or both are often stretched out in abandonment, as it is often the case during sleep (and sleep representations).

⁵² Bessire François, "Votre lettre m'a fait rêver : lettre et rêverie dans la peinture de la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle" in *Revue de l'AIRe* n° 29, hiver 2003, Paris: Champion, p. 128.

⁵³ For the iconography and visual accounts see par. II.3.

These details of the figure are noticeable, because in most cases, the painting represents the whole figure by means of a mid-shot or medium close-up. Such representations deliberately avoid the wide shot by that would miss the definition of facial expression of the person as well as the tighter close-up which would prevent the viewer from appreciating the relaxed pose of the figure, and recognising the image as a reverie.

5.3. The Setting

For the same reasons, viewers are not able to see much of the setting around the subject. Usually the scene takes place not only in interiors, but even in private rooms—likely a changing room or a private female studio. The first element distinguishable is the high social provenance of the figure. The subject is clearly depicted in a private space and a private moment, and she does not seem to be aware of the presence of a spectator (both the painter and the observer). For these reasons, it feels to observers as if they are entering a private space, as watching unseen an intimate moment.

The setting is most often minimalistic, with very few objects visible in the scene, and none of them catching the attention, or worse, distracting the viewers from the contemplation of the figure. The space is often characterised by what can be defined a *horror pleni* (or *amor vacui* if you wish). In fact, the peculiarity of this representation is that there is an emptiness and high degree of concentration on the character and her attitude.

The concentration on the subject is also provided by a view which focuses closely on the figure, in contrast to images that are wider to comprehend the whole scene. About the first reverie images of the eighteenth century, Bessire remarked that “these reverie images witness a new shared imagery: taste for comfort, fashion of the Orient, interest in reading and valorisation of the individual and their

feelings"⁵⁴. Still in the eighteenth century, the images display the reading of a letter, a specific attention for the representation of house interiors, and the dreamer's inner feelings. As for the nineteenth century, the real images of reverie tend to have a more minimalistic setting, and the representation of the individual and her interior life, *ses affects*, is the real focus of the image.

On the contrary, during the nineteenth century, the interest for such *goût du confort* can be so strong that a set of pictures can be found in which the attention for this *ante litteram* 'interior design' is prevailing over the focus on the person. Other paintings exist in which a woman is depicted reading in an opulently decorated room or environment; in this ostentation of luxury and descriptive attention to objects, the human figure is only an ornament of the image, completing the setting gracefully [as for instance in fig. 1]. Such images will not be considered as reveries because the focus is directed away from the figure, who is only an accessory, and the aim is to showcase the ensemble of the space. Instead, the images with more concentrated and minimalistic settings will be considered, in which the woman, and above all her feelings, become the focal point; such paintings shift from a material attention of interior design to a more abstract focus on interior life and feelings.

After all, the setting should not distract the observer from focusing on the subject, or guessing her thoughts and her reverie. The minimalism of the setting is concentrated on the reverie: the more limited the elements of the setting, the more focus is on the imaginative side and the content of the reverie.

Apart from informing the viewers about the social origin of the woman represented, the surrounding environment is even less relevant as everything in the attitude of the subject is meant to exactly cross the scene's constraints. The attitude of the subject moves past the present scene, often looking blankly in the wide or towards a point outside of

⁵⁴ Bessire François, "Votre lettre m'a fait rêver : lettre et rêverie dans la peinture de la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle" in *Revue de l'AIRE* n° 29, hiver 2003, Paris: Champion, p. 129.

the scene, and therefore out of the observer's sight. This renders the setting even more deliberately irrelevant, as the subject is clearly moving outside it with her mind.

In this sense, an element is often used to both expand and originate this far view, to be the starting point of the reverie: the presence of a window.

5.4. The Window/Escape

Often the window is used to render even more clearly the crossing of the borders of the room, towards the outside, the nature, or the night.

This is a recurrent *topos* in Romantic poetics, in visual arts as well as in literature. It is a reference to the Romantic concept of the *Sehnsucht*, meaning approximately "search for yearning" or "desire to desire". The window then represents an ideal longing towards something indefinable; it is a metaphor of the 'else'.

Already in 1787, Wolfgang Goethe was depicted by artist Johann Tischbein looking through his window in Rome, the city which already represented the ideal escape from reality for neo-classicists and pre-romantics, both in time and in space [fig. 2]. Later in this period, looking outside of a window becomes a metaphor of every flight from reality, either in time (towards the grand lost antiquity), or in space (towards exotic places and other civilisations).

Even specifically for the reverie, despite the external longing, the window is another expedient (as the closed environment) to bounce the attention of the spectator towards the woman's interior life. Meaningfully, in these representations, both the emptiness of the interiors and the vastness of the outside perceived from the window are means to actually amplify the interior life and feelings of the subject, to highlight her internal depth.

The activity of the reverie is often represented by looking through a window to cross physical constraints, to search for an escape from the boundaries of the limited space in which women were

allowed. It is a desire for evasion, physical (outside from the closed room and the house), temporal (other epochs), geographic (far-away countries, exotic places), and above all, mental (distraction and fantasy).

5.5. Objects and Attitudes

Among the few objects usually depicted in the reverie images, there is at least one type of objects which deserves some attention. Unlike others, these are objects intended to be meaningful and to give the viewer a further key to reading the image; such objects can bare a great deal of information about the subject and her lifestyle and are displayed in the scene exactly to define better the type of subject and representation presented. These objects represent the activity the subject was occupied with until the moment in which the reverie started. These can be either an object of work or leisure, an activity which has been abandoned in favour of the reverie, or, interestingly, can be the object from which the reverie originated.

The case in which the object left aside when the reverie started is a working tool is more likely to be found when the reverie has a country setting. While the bourgeois woman was not ever supposed to be working, fewer images might represent a peasant girl, often with a basket on her side, indicating that she has abandoned the activity of walking/harvesting/carrying something to get lost in a reverie⁵⁵. To this typology which implies the presence of a working object, will be referenced later when dealing with similar iconographies from which this one is probably derived (see par. II.1).

Far more often, the meaningful object of the scene is instead the one from which the reverie originated. This is almost invariably some kind of text, either a letter or a book, which apparently was being read by the subject before she went astray on her reverie. The texts in these

⁵⁵ The existence of a peasant reverie does not contradict the fact that the reverie is a bourgeois activity: as we shall see this representation is only a stereotype of a bourgeois idea.

cases have a different status from any other object that might be present on the scene: they are not accessories, just to testify the status of the character, her occupation, or characterise the setting. On the contrary, they are the main elements that inspired the reverie. By adding the presence of a text, the artist means to convey the idea that is the contents of the text itself, whether real or fictional, that stimulates the reverie. The words of the text influence the character, who initiates her own reverie to get lost in: "the several reverie scenes that are to be found allow to interpret these paintings as reverie images and not only as centred on the epistolary theme"⁵⁶.

For these reasons, the images here considered are not merely images of reading, but rather images in which the reading has been temporarily suspended to start a reverie. The subject is not immersed into reading, but rather she is lost in her own reverie which the text inspired: "the newest and most meaningful is the frequency of representation not anymore of reading or writing of the letter, but of their suspension, of moments of inaction and abandonment, moments of daydream"⁵⁷.

What is interesting for this research is also the dreamy attitude of the character, and the observation of the visual effects of the reverie; in which way this text-inspired reverie is affecting the subject, how she is relaxed and abandoned even in her pose: "the fact that the reading is interrupted to daydream is a sign of the effect it produces, of the feelings it inspires"⁵⁸. The whole attitude of the character exemplifies all gestures and behaviours identifying the reverie: "the meaningful gesture, the typical mark of the reverie, the head resting on the hand"; "the gesture of touching one's own head or to lay it on the hand [...], sign of both abandonment and concentration on thought and on the interior world, is very often depicted"⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ Bessire François, "Votre lettre m'a fait rêver: lettre et rêverie dans la peinture de la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle" in *Revue de l'AIRE* n° 29, hiver 2003, Paris: Champion p. 125.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 124.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 126.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 129.

All attitudes found in the daydreamers with texts explain how and why the subject is not merely a representation of reading: the artist deliberately conveyed a reverie. The next question, then, shall be why and in which ways texts can be considered initiators of the reverie.

Since this study will extensively illustrate different aspects of the topic in par. II.4 and IV.4, then the only observations presented now will indicate that reading and daydreaming seem in this period two activities believed as tightly connected, at least in women's daily life: "the reverie is particularly associated with reading", which, "inspires ideas but has to be interrupted to enjoy fully of the effects it produces"⁶⁰. This connection of the reverie with letters and novels is also supported by the diffusion of the practice, already from the eighteenth century, of both private (female) correspondence and solitary reading: "these frequent literary representations provide the keys allowing the paintings to be read as real reverie representations and not only as portraits with a letter or sentimental scenes"⁶¹.

These images were meant to represent the practice of correspondence, a common subject both in literature and art history since the eighteenth century. To provoke a dreamy suspension and thoughtfulness, it is likely to be a love correspondence, and frequently a secret and illicit one. In this case, though, it is to be observed that the reverie still maintains some relation to reality: it implies the interaction with another real person, the lover, and it consists of possibilities of a passionate affair, a requited love, a blossoming interest, or a flirt.

When the inspiration of the reverie is a novel instead, it may be less obvious to guess what type of novel could be the inspiration of such a reverie. For this purpose, one would try to decipher the signs on the book covers the women hold, but in most cases without success⁶². The title of the book is intentionally undisclosed: the artists meant to leave to the observer to guess what possible readings they are. Unlike the reverie with a letter, which is based on real correspondence among

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 125.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 127.

⁶² One of the few images in which the titles are clearly readable is *The Sentimental Girl* by J. P. Hasenclever (1846), for which see par. III.3.

real people, the reverie with a book is a “pure” reverie: the woman in this case is daydreaming about some kind of thoroughly fictional stories, possibly comparing them to her own fantasy and expectations. Starting from fiction, she continues into her own mental fiction, though we are not able to establish if the character is daydreaming on the same subject as the book or if she is relating the written story to her own fantasies and real or imaginary loves.

One additional consideration can be made about the images of sleep which also include the presence of a text. This study will also consider as reveries the images in which the book is left aside and the character, instead of merely dreaming, is actually sleeping, or at least has her eyes closed⁶³. In these cases, the observer can imagine what happened between the reading and the sleeping, which leads to the next stage of the reverie. The book is the factor that starts a reflection; this leads to a train of dreamy thoughts in the reverie and overflows in a real dream, thus rendering poetically the strong connection between reveries and actual dreams. Therefore, in these images, there is a passage from reading, which entails attention and consciousness, to consciousness only in the reverie, and finally inattention and unconsciousness in the dream; as if the latter was an even more realistic realisation of the reverie.

As for the dreamy and astray attitude of the character, and especially for the connection between this and the presence of texts, the key concept of absorption, as theorised in Michael Fried’s enlightening essay, *Absorption and Theatricality*⁶⁴, is essential for interpreting the images. The scholar analyses several paintings by highlighting the attitude of one of the characters, who seems to be focused and intent on some activity while often abandoning another activity he was previously occupied with.

The paintings considered in Fried’s essay, beyond discussing exclusively French productions from 1750 to 1780, are not entailing an

⁶³ Such as *Le rêve* by Charles Joshua Chaplin, for which see par. III.2.

⁶⁴ Fried Michael, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1980.

idea of reverie as meant in this study, but only that of “absorption”. This attitude can develop, like in the example of a reverie with a text, from a specific object, activity, or even reading itself. After all, in this period, the quality of paintings was evaluated by how the figures express their feelings; they are supposed to display intensity, focus, and depth: collectively described in one word—“absorption”. The search for this intensity, appearing often in moralising works, is widespread in this period as a reaction to Rococo frivolousness, and is best represented by painters like Joseph-Marie Vien and Jean-Baptiste Greuze.

Fried even goes as far as to apply into the concept of absorption to the activity of sleep itself, which is somewhat surprising considering that in other examples “absorption”, like the reverie, still implies a certain degree of consciousness in the person. However, Fried does not simply consider any representation of sleep, since they might also have other meanings and purposes, but specifically a few images intended to represent the phenomenon of sleep. For Fried, sleep is the extreme stage of absorption: “the state of sleep [...] is itself to be understood as another manifestation—an extreme instance or limiting case—of the preoccupation with absorption”⁶⁵.

Fried also describes the state of absorption in paintings like Greuze’s *Un Père de famille qui lit la Bible à ses enfants* (*A Father Reading the Bible to his Children*, 1755) [fig. 4], where “each figure in the painting appeared to exemplify in his or her own way, i.e., the state or condition of rapt attention, of being completely occupied or engrossed or (as I prefer to say) absorbed in what he or she is doing, hearing, thinking, feeling”⁶⁶.

Absorption is then a word used to define a deep concentration into some activity (whether it be reading, playing, hearing or even sleeping) which makes the subject oblivious of himself or herself; he or she does not care to be observed, nor acknowledges the presence of a spectator.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 31. The scholar is referring here to the *Ermite endormi* (1753) by Vien; see par. II.1.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

Starting from this concept, I would like to apply a further reflection to the reverie. Also the representation of the reverie closely relates to absorption, possibly stronger than other activities, as the reverie is a wholly absorptive activity. The subject's attitude can be so relaxed that the character is oblivious of herself, she has let something undone, she is unaware of the spectator, and she might even look neglected in her appearance.

The first distinguishable difference with Fried's concept of absorption is that in the reverie, the object causing the absorption is invisible and ambiguous to the viewer. It might as well be something out of view of the image, like outside of a window or in another corner of a room; but clearly the look is only apparently addressed towards something external, literally *extro-verted*. The attention of the character actually has been captured by something intangible; the daydreamer is absorbed in her own thoughts and fantasies, and observers can only guess their significance. The attitude of the subject is instead literally *intro-verted*, addressed towards her interior life. Relating the idea of absorption to the presence of a book, the character depicted does not withdraw her attention from an object of her own fantasy; on the contrary, it is rather the object that inspires the fantasy.

If in presence of a text which initiates the reverie, the concept of absorption is relevant, the same cannot be said for other objects from which the attention of the character is rather *diverted*, although Fried does not settle such difference⁶⁷. In this case the reverie is not started from the attention and consciousness the subject is putting into what she is doing, but the opposite: while doing some activity and using some objects she is distracted into a reverie.

Another example proposed by Fried is the painting by Carl Van Loo, *St. Augustin disputant contre les Donatistes* (*Saint Augustin arguing against the Donatists*, 1753) [fig. 5], in which one of scribes, in charge of reporting the dispute of Saint Augustin, is represented as having

⁶⁷ The words I have chosen to use to amplify the concept of absorption are all composed of the Latin verb *verto* "to turn, to direct", which in my opinion renders efficaciously how attention is addressed.

suspended his writing, in order to listen to Saint Augustine's moving speech. This is reported by the scholar as an example of absorption. Referring to the aforementioned arguments on absorption, the scribe's attention is *diverted* from writing and *absorbed* into listening.

In all examples made by Fried, as well as in the images of reverie with a text proposed in this study, the pattern very often follows this scheme of diversion from an activity and absorption into another. Additionally, the diversion always comes from a material object and a mechanical activity while the absorption goes towards something more immaterial and mental, such as the reverie.

5.6. Images Outside the Scope of the Study

The presence of a book though should not be understood necessarily as an indicator of the reverie: the text-inspired reverie is only a small part of the visual production about reading, even of the sub-class of women reading. The presence of a text can therefore determine if the picture belongs to other categories of paintings, which will not be taken into account for the present research.

The first category of images not considered by this study is the aforementioned category in which the reading woman is merely a complement to a larger scene focused on the depiction of home interiors.

Iconography of women reading dates back at least to medieval images of the Virgin Mary reading a prayer book, especially common in the iconography of the Annunciation⁶⁸. This iconography can include a whole range of images from women holding a book, sitting next to it or intensively reading. In this last case, the character is indeed absorbed in the book, but it appears as though she is absorbed in the book itself, into its words and stories, rather than using the text as an inspiration of a reverie. While fascinating, these kind of images cannot be considered reveries, and even if there is a certain dreaminess produced by the

⁶⁸ As for example in the beautiful *Madonna Annunciata* by Antonello da Messina (c. 1476).

book, apparently this reverie does not go as far as to cross the boundaries of the book. Most artworks reproduced in the studies on women reading⁶⁹ entail the image of a woman absorbed in her book, and for this reason, they will not be taken into account by the present research. In some cases, the figure is not immersed into reading, but she looks as if she had been surprised by the viewer while she was reading, and so she has interrupted her activity. Also, this typology of representation will not be part of this study: in these images the figure is not diverted from the book to the reverie, but rather from the book to acknowledging the presence of a viewer.

This awareness and “return to reality” the portrayed figure displays are indeed the elements that most significantly distinguish these images of reading from the real images of reverie.

Given the existence of these other typologies, the present study’s field of research will be limited even more by taking into account the images of reveries originated from the text where the character is not only unaware of the spectator, but also unaware of the book and lost in her own thoughts. What is therefore to be considered is not merely pictures representing absorption into reading, but more precisely the introverted attitude mentioned above, which entails an absorption into a daydream as next step after the absorption into the reading. In the reverie inspired by a text, this latter is only the pretext to start an autonomous fantasy.

For reading and in general, any image in which the figure is depicted as absorbed into some activity will not be considered by this study. Despite the fact that in these cases the figure is never looking at the spectator, and she is oblivious of herself, still she is not absorbed into an actual reverie. The figure is absorbed into something, whether it be her work (typically spinning), or writing, playing music, or even sleeping⁷⁰. In these cases, the character demonstrates absorption, like in the reverie, but we can guess that she is actually focused on her task at

⁶⁹ Such as the ones mentioned in the Introduction.

⁷⁰ Beyond the works by Greuze and Vien analysed earlier, the typology of the woman intent in some housework is very typical for instance of seventeenth-century Flemish painting, for which see also par. II.1.

hand. The attitude in this case is likely to be extroverted, in the sense of intent into something material and visible. Considered instead by this study are the images not with tangible sources of absorption, or any source other than the interior life of the subject.

Moving from complete absorption to complete “distraction”, other sets of images disregarded are the ones in which the character is not absorbed at all, and in particular, when she is aware of the presence of the spectator. Even though these images can often entail the presence of a book, this is to be considered nothing more than a simple accessory to characterise the subject. In this sense, the explanation given by Finocchi is to be shared:

I do not refer to books – of prayers, of poetry, of anything – held loosely between the hands and abandoned on the lap, that are very frequent accessories of both male and female portraits. In these cases, of an apparent interrupted reading, the look of the portrayed character, addressed not towards the book but elsewhere outside of the painting, and the general attitude of the subject ‘posing’, always waiting for the viewer’s approval, reveal the accessory and ornamental quality of the object: nothing would change if in the book’s place there was, as in thousands other portraits, a fan, a lace tissue, a flower⁷¹.

In these images, the figure, either a woman or a man, appears to be looking at the spectator, conscious of himself or herself. Alternatively, even when not looking towards the viewer, they appear conscious of being viewed; their attitude is formal and they are not relaxed, but rather posing. Most often, the figure is looking in front of himself or herself, as if caught by the spectator, through the painter’s view, while doing his or her present most typical activity. Often in such images, above all in official portraits with both female and male subjects, objects and elements give indication of the occupation or the status of the subject. Books, a brush and canvas, jewels, a musical

⁷¹ Finocchi Anna, *Lettrici: immagini della donna che legge nella pittura dell’ottocento*, Nuoro: Ilisso 1992, p. 8.

instrument—since the Renaissance, all of these items are utilised to indicate the occupation of the subject, in regards to his or her social status and wealth. One famous example is the *Portrait of Madame de Pompadour* by François Boucher (1756) [fig. 3], in which the book held by the sitter (as well as the writing tools on her side) only have the purpose of indicating her status as an intellectual woman instead of introducing the subject of the reverie.

This is the case in which it is more likely to recognise the title or the content of the book. It is displayed deliberately, because it is meant to indicate the sitter's main activity, or even because he or she is the author of the book. In such "official" paintings, though, the book plays a role that is irrelevant to the reverie: the book is not there because of its dreamy qualities, it is not the inspiration of a reverie.

CHAPTER II: ICONOGRAPHIC PARALLELS

To better understand the iconography of the nineteenth century reverie representation, with the features so far identified, other similar iconographies must be considered first, which undoubtedly contributed to the definition of its representation.

Modern iconography of the reverie, the latest among the iconographies illustrated in this chapter, bears in its features, especially for nineteenth century viewers, a part of the formal expression and semantic intention of these previous iconographies. The depiction of a figure, especially a woman, resting or contemplating is not a novelty in art history; and has already been projected in many variations and meanings.

As the reverie is an untraditional iconography and seldom studied thus far, objections may arise on the legitimacy of the individuation of this new typology. Therefore, to articulate discourse on the reverie, it is crucial to recognise similar iconographies to examine which ways the reverie derives or differentiates from them¹.

1. SLEEP AND SLOTH

Since the reverie consists of the depiction of a character resting and dreaming, the first iconographic parallel shall be the representation of mere sleep, more specifically displaying a female figure.

¹ The iconography of the dream is evidently the closest to that of the reverie. For the history and evolution of this iconography, refer to the Introduction.

As demonstrated by Kultermann², the representation of a woman asleep is a *topos* that remains remarkably stable in its forms and meaning all along art history.

Sleep is a repeated activity that every human being experiences daily and like dreams, has always been perceived as an inexplicable, metaphysical condition apart from reality and consciousness, and always intrigued humankind. Yet, the representation of a man asleep is not nearly as frequent as the representation of the woman. Women have been represented as figures sleeping since prehistoric era (like the *Sleeping Lady* from Malta³) and ancient time (*Sleeping Ariadne*⁴). It is though during the Renaissance that did the iconography of the sleeping woman become widespread. This typology consists of the simple representation of a woman laying asleep, seen as whole figure, and is characterised by universal/abstract nudity, setting in exteriors, allegorical or mythological meaning⁵: these images “most often appear in the context of an erotically charged classical myth or a later derivative thereof”⁶.

This type of picture is probably best represented by Giorgione’s masterpiece *Venere dormiente* (*Sleeping Venus*, 1507-10), which had such a success that it became a model for several later representations of sleeping female nudes, giving rise to a new genre of painting. Other mentionable examples are the engraving *Ninfa dormiente* (*Sleeping Nymph*) by Giulio Campagnola (ca. 1508), considered a direct derivation from Giorgione’s work, but even further references like the beautiful figure sleeping naked in the foreground of *Il baccanale degli Andrii* (*The Bacchanal of the Andrians*, 1523-26) by Titian.

² Kultermann Udo, “Woman Asleep and the Artist” in *Artibus et Historiae*, Vol. 11, No. 22 (1990), pp. 129-161 IRSA s.c.

³ Hypogeum, Malta.

⁴ Conserved in the Vatican Museums.

⁵ See Ruvoldt Maria, *The Italian Renaissance Imagery of Inspiration: Metaphors of Sex, Sleep, and Dreams*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, chapter 4.

⁶ *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography: Themes Depicted in Works of Art*, ed. by Helene E. Roberts Chicago; London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998, entry ‘Sleep’, p. 846.

In the context of Neoplatonic philosophy, namely in the theorisation by Marsilio Ficino, the condition of sleep as a whole, far from being considered a state of inactivity and laziness, was believed to be part of the *vita contemplativa* of philosophers, and regarded as a prolific moment for meditation. Therefore, it is common to find images of philosophers and thinkers of this entourage depicted while sleeping⁷.

In the context of Neoplatonic philosophy, the image of the sleeping woman, too, becomes a common allegory for meditation and philosophical speculation. While the representation of a woman asleep has allegorical purposes, it is also true that the mythological or philosophical intention serves as a pretext for the depiction of a naked female body. The attractive trait of these works, though, is not (or not only) the vision of female nudity, but it is rather the vulnerable condition of sleep. The first acknowledgement to be made in these representations and their diffusion, is the fact that the majority of representations entail the presence of a male viewer, and therefore project an erotic implication. This male figure could be the artist himself, as artists were mostly men, or it could represent the male spectator since art (especially this kind of art) was often made for a male public. This aspect “has been incorporated into symbolic and allegorical images of sleeping goddesses and nymphs, court ladies, and shepherdesses, as well as of women today”⁸. The male presence is so strong and determining that Kultermann believes that “it is necessary to deconstruct the accepted male-dominated biases of the traditional art-historical evaluation of sleep in connection with women, and re-examine the relationship between the male view of a female sleeping figure and the relationship of men and women in society which it

⁷ For instance so is the poet Petrarch represented in codex 509 from the mid-fourteenth century from Biblioteca Trivulziana in Milan. See also Ruvoldt Maria, *The Italian Renaissance Imagery of Inspiration: metaphors of sex, sleep, and dreams*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, chapter 1.

⁸ Kultermann Udo, “Woman Asleep and the Artist” in *Artibus et Historiae*, Vol. 11, No. 22 (1990), pp. 129-161 IRSA s.c., p. 130.

reflects"⁹. Kultermann's observations are particularly relevant to the general purpose of this research, since the individuation and explanation of gendered views are aims of the present discourse on the reverie.

The representation of the sleeping female nudes continues until the Modern Age and relates to the present subject mainly to acknowledge the perpetual male gaze and presence in this kind of representations, as it will be later for the reverie.

To emphasise this gendered approach, this study will also refer to the rare representations of male sleep. The aforementioned iconography of the sleeping male poet, found in a Neoplatonic context, has a decidedly non-erotic and positive character, as sleep was believed to be one of the most productive conditions for thought. While the diffusion of these images might seem to contradict the prevalence of sleeping women in art, the representation of male sleep seems to be 'acceptable' only in the Neoplatonic context for which sleep was an elevated activity. Alternatively, in other contexts where sleep was perceived as an effect of laziness, representations of male sleep are infrequent. Sleep means for men, too, a condition of abandonment, but this does not have any erotic implication. The main meaning of this abandonment is above all the loss of alertness. When not including a dream (which can be a revelation or a divine message), male sleep is represented as a dangerous condition or a lack of virility due to vulnerability (see also par. IV.2). Often, the condition of danger is determined by the fact that the man asleep is at the mercy of a woman who will somehow neutralise him and be the cause of his disgrace. Among the many figures, some mentionable are Samson whose hair, source of his strength, was cut in his sleep by Delilah, and the allegoric (and less negative) imagery of Mars disarmed by Venus in his sleep¹⁰. Interestingly, the representation of male sleep also entails a male

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ A common Renaissance iconography, for instance painted by Botticelli and Piero di Cosimo. Although this iconography positively represents the power of Love over War, still it readdresses the common idea of loss of control and therefore (partial) loss of virility for the man asleep.

spectator, warning him against the 'dangers' of losing his alertness, especially in front of a woman, seen as treacherous.

The other aspect requiring consideration is that sleep has always been perceived as a force (in ancient times even a god) refraining men from maintaining an active life and accomplishing their obligations¹¹.

This is also manifested in the biblical example of Christ's prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, where Peter, James, and John cannot help but fall asleep while praying: "Sleep constitutes a negative force that prevents human beings from performing their highest religious duty, prayer"¹². Sleep, dream (and now reverie), then, also include a less idealised and more negative aspect: "dream and reverie also have ambiguous links with intimacy and secrecy: dreaminess is daughter to sloth, laziness and sensuality [...], and she can divert man from his social or Christian duties"¹³.

Therefore, the representation of sleep most often has a negative acceptance and quickly becomes associated with the sin of Sloth, one of the seven deadly sins. Starting from the Middle Ages representation of sloth (in Latin *acedia*), this subject became widespread, developing into several variations and accounts. The iconography of the reverie partly derives from and resembles to that of sleep, especially when the lazy figure is a woman.

Initially, a sleeping man could also personify the sin of sloth, above all through the image of a peasant asleep in his fallow field, but also like in the engraving *The Dream of the Doctor* by Albrecht Dürer (ca 1498) [fig. 6]. Here the allegory of sloth is symbolised by a sleeping man, likely a doctor or a wise man, depicted in his dressing gown

¹¹ In Antiquity, the god of Sleep himself was often inducing men to give up their alertness; unforgettable is for example the paragraph of the *Aeneid* in which the god of Sleep himself comes to 'seduce' Aeneas' helmsman Palinurus to leave his duty and fall asleep, making him fall into the sea and drown.

¹² *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography: Themes Depicted in Works of Art*, ed.by Helene E. Roberts Chicago; London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998, entry "Sleep", p. 847.

¹³ Orwat Florence, *L'invention de la rêverie: une conquête pacifique du Grand Siècle*, Paris: H. Champion 2006 p. 71.

while dozing off quietly on an armchair next to a big stove. A naked Venus in the foreground is meant to be the personification of his dream and an allegory of temptation, as she is stretching a hand towards him.

The fact that the man is dressed and seating means that this is not a nocturnal sleep: the man has fallen asleep during the day, while he was supposed to be working, studying, or even praying. For his sin of sloth, he becomes victim of another deadly sin, Lust, represented by the Venus¹⁴. A cupid also present in the scene is meant to recall sensuality, and the crutches he is trying to climb on, as well as the ball, represented instead the balance, that should be pursued rather than the doctor's excessive behaviour.

It is not a coincidence that what the doctor sees in his dream is a naked Venus teasing him; the connection of Sloth and Lust have always been perceived since Sloth is believed to procure lusty thoughts and dreams. Also, a slothful person, both woman and man, is deemed to be more prone to sexual immorality.

Finally, the case of the *Dream of the Doctor* is interesting also because it connects Sloth with the topic of dreams; in my previous research I had considered this engraving to be part of the category of the allegoric dreams, in which moral teachings are presented in the form of a dream.

Beyond this example, soon Sloth became more likely represented by a woman sleeping or laying in idleness: "Sleep prevents humans from performing their secular duties as well. [...] Sleeping women as emblem of slothfulness continues to be found in eighteenth and nineteenth-century art [...]. From the discussion above it would appear that sloth is generally represented by sleeping women rather than men. Indeed, men forsaking their duty because of sleep are relatively rare in art"¹⁵.

¹⁴ This also allows Dürer to draw a nude, as at the time he was trying to evolve from a late-medieval style towards a more classic treatment of the naked figure, namely inspired by Jacopo de' Barbari. See Panofsky Erwin, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1955.

¹⁵ *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography: Themes Depicted in Works of Art*, ed.by Helene E. Roberts Chicago ; London : Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998, p. 847

The connection of a deadly sin with the dream reflects the widespread medieval perception of the dream as a dangerous condition, in which even a good Christian can be attacked by lust and temptation. Sin and especially the sin of Lust was one of the major concerns of medieval society, in which the more the sexual impulse was repressed in waking life, the more it was feared to find expression during sleep¹⁶. Already since Roman antiquity, but above all in the Middle Ages, sleep is believed to be the condition in which Lust demons like the *incubus* or the *succubus*¹⁷ can attack and seduce respectively women or men in their sleep.

Despite its quality, Dürer's engraving is a rather isolated case, as the allegory of Sloth is in most cases represented as the figure of a woman dozing off. Sloth has been perceived, like many other sins, rather like a woman prerogative, along the widespread idea that women are inconstant, passive, weak, and lazy.

After the Renaissance, the equivalent of sloth images became more mundane, with realistic settings. Such images depict a woman, often of low social extraction, like a servant or a peasant, asleep on a chair. The activity she was doing until then is left undone and she has apparently fallen asleep while doing it or after abandoning it. Especially during the seventeenth century, such pictures become a recurrent topic. This kind of image, far from being an idealised allegory of meditation like the Renaissance sleeping nude, is again a moralising image on the vice—no longer sin in a strictly religious sense—of sloth. The woman who left her task undone to sleep is characterised as lazy,

¹⁶ "Repressed" is to be intended as literally psychoanalytically. In these cases Freud for instance speaks about the "return of the repressed" as the re-emerging, above all in dreams and in other unconscious processes, of memories and fears that are normally forgotten or unconsciously avoided in waking life. For the analysis of dreams in the Middle Ages see Le Goff Jacques, *The Medieval Imagination*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988, part 5, "Dreams".

¹⁷ Respectively from the Latin "*incumbo*", 'to lay upon' and "*succumbo*", 'to lay under'.

as she abandons her duties to indulge in sleeping. A woman, responsible for the care of the house and the family, who neglects her duties to nap is seen as morally unacceptable.

This iconography is still easily recognisable in Fleming painting of the seventeenth century, like *A Maid Asleep* (1656-57) [fig. 7] by Jan Vermeer¹⁸, or paintings by Nicholas Maes, who apparently went back to the subject several times. *The Account Keeper* by Maes (1656) [fig. 8] shows a woman asleep, head in hand and still holding a pen, while transcribing from a big volume to another. In *The Idle Servant* (1655) [fig. 9], also by Maes, a sleeping servant is displayed to the viewer as negative example by another servant. The girl asleep here has left many dirty plates on the floor while a cat is stealing the food she was supposed to be serving to her dining landlords. In general “sleeping spinners, lace-makers and servant girls abound in the iconography of the seventeenth-century Dutch painting, all with the same implication of weakness of moral fibre, a warning to women about the dangers of sensual abandonment”¹⁹.

Referring again to Michael Fried’s essay and the proposed examples of absorption, some of them are particularly appropriate to the topic of sloth. *La tricoteuse endormie* (*The Sleeping Knitter*, 1759) by Jean-Baptiste Greuze [fig. 10], beyond being mentioned by Fried as an example of absorption, is also to be considered an example of sloth: a girl of low social standing has fallen asleep while knitting, a typical female duty. It is clear she fell asleep while doing this, since she is still holding the knitting needles and wool, which look on the verge of dropping from her hands: the painting presents “une image . . . naïve de la paresse & de l’ennui de travail . . .”²⁰.

¹⁸ For which see Kahr Madlyn Millner, “Vermeer’s Girl Asleep. A Moral Emblem”, in *The Metropolitan Museum Journal*, v. 6 (1972), 115-132.

¹⁹ Nochlin Linda, *Representing women*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1999, p. 88. Also purely abstract and allegoric images can still be found in this period in the Flemish context; see for example the engraving by Philip Galle, *Acedia*, before 1612.

²⁰ “A naïve image...of sloth and boredom for work...” La Porte, *Observations d’une société d’amateurs sur les tableaux exposés au salon cette année 1759*,

Similarly, *L'écolier endormi* or *Le petit paresseux* (1755, *The Sleeping Student* or *The Little Slothful*), also by Greuze [fig. 11], proves also from the title to be deliberately an example of sloth, as showing a child asleep on his book while he was supposed to perform his main duty, studying. While it may be surprising to find a male figure representing sloth; however, this male figure is a child and that children and women are often assimilated, being two weak categories feeble categories in regards to strength and willpower, characterising men. The same consideration applies to *Young Student Sleeping* by Constantyn Verhout²¹ [fig.12], representing a student sleeping in candlelight in front of a pile of books, which on this regard is to be completely assimilated to *L'écolier endormi*.

The images of two young boys, assimilated to women, cannot count as example of male sloth; neither can the abovementioned *Ermite endormi* by Vien [fig. 13], considered instead by Fried as an example of sleep: "there is in the *Ermite endormi* an attempt to evoke, as if from within, the actual experience of sleep in a situation wholly devoid of erotic overtones; and that attempt, although not absolutely without prior example, decidedly strikes a new, non-voyeuristic, intensely empathic note in eighteenth-century French painting"²². The painting has an alternative connotation and it is actually not perceived as an image of sloth: before falling asleep, the hermit was focused on a noble activity (playing the violin), but a leisurely one (he is not neglecting his duty), and poetically "*paraît s'être endormi lui-même au son de son*

Observateur Littéraire (1759), Tome IV, p. 184 quoted in Fried Michael, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, Berkeley ; Los Angeles ; London: University of California press, cop. 1980, p. 33.

²¹ The painting is conserved in the National Gallery of Stockholm. It is proposed by the *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography* as one of the few examples of men sleeping.

²² Fried Michael, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California press, 1980, p. 31.

instrument”²³. Having left an activity undone does not provoke a moralistic reproach (“il a bien l’aire d’un home tranquille qui n’a rien à se reprocher”²⁴), but rather is part of what is believed to be and admired as, like the rest of his attitude, a study on the representation of true sleep.

Returning to female images of Sloth, others examples also reported by Fried clearly reveal the significant correlation between Sloth and Lust. The most remarkable example is *Les oeufs cassés* (*The Broken Eggs*, 1757), also by Greuze²⁵ [fig. 14]. The scene represents a girl sleeping while sitting (or deeply absorbed), with eyes barely open, who has apparently dropped and broken some eggs she was carrying in a basket. On her side, a man and an older woman are talking together, as if not to disturb the girl or be heard, but look towards her. The man, probably of better social standing than the girl, is somehow apologising to the woman (who could be the girl’s landlady or mother) and seemingly promising a kind of compensation. A modern ‘cupid with a bow and arrow on his side has a broken dripping egg in his hands as if trying to save it, while looking towards the viewer. While Fried has interpreted the girl to be sleeping, as a loosening of moral fibre, she might also be understood as deeply thoughtful and regretful. In both cases, anyway, it is the lack of self-control to cause the girl’s ‘reproachable’ behaviour and lack of morality. The painting then represents well how a woman abandonment of her duties is connected to the theme of sexual availability, along a very common pattern²⁶.

²³ “Seems to have fallen asleep by the sound of his instrument”. Hucquier, *Lettre sur l’exposition des tableaux*, pp. 46-47, quoted in Fried, p. 28.

²⁴ “His appearance is truly that of a tranquil man who has nothing for which to reproach himself” Ibid.

²⁵ Greuze took inspiration from the engraving *L’Oeuf cassé* by Pierre Etienne Moitte, on his turn after Mieris.

²⁶ The maliciously moralising topic of the loss of virginity is recurrent and a source of interest during the eighteenth century in ways we cannot fully understand now: “why this tawdry theme should have so obsessed Greuze is beyond imagination for the twentieth-century spectator”. See other accounts by Greuze on the subject, in different variations, from the broken eggs, to *Young Girl Weeping for her Dead Bird* (1759), *The Broken Mirror* (1763) and *Girl With a*

Sloth is also considered part of the southern European and Mediterranean lifestyle, as shown by paintings like *La paresseuse italienne* (*The Italian Slothful*, 1756) [fig. 15] again by Greuze. The image represents a peasant woman sitting, looking bored and sleepy, while the humble interior around her would evidently need some care: empty and untidy bottles of wine are on the shelves, dishes are left on the floor, a chamber pot or basin in the foreground has not been emptied and is dripping on the floor. This plump girl merely sits with a blank look, while a shoe has fallen from her feet and the provokingly neglected dress, showing her décolleté, make the connection between sloth and immoral sexuality more than evident.

Again, despite the quantity of examples reported, Fried fails to remark the meaningful distinction between female and male sleep. The only example reported of a man sleeping is the *Ermite endormi*: but the hermit can still maintain not only his respectability, but also his wisdom; and he is even appreciated for his humbleness²⁷. A woman asleep must have necessarily a guilty conscience: all women represented and children (compared to women for that matter) imply a negative conception of sleep, and often also a connection of Sloth with Lust. The depiction of sloth, sleep, and reverie actually leverages on the representation of sexuality, usually in a moralising, but simultaneously maliciously and condescending form. If on one hand the woman is represented as morally reprimanded, at the same time she also becomes the object of a delighted curiosity and attraction for the male viewer.

The inclination to sloth is deemed even stronger in the Orient. Especially in the Romantic period the interest towards exotic oriental settings is more often than not accompanied by a taste for the representation of idleness, of a relaxation in luxury, believed to be a peculiar oriental feature. So is the king Sardanapalus depicted lazing about in his bed while his palace is being conquered and his many

Dead Canary (1765). They always imply a mistake made by the girl, followed by regret.

²⁷ Again Hucquier comments also "*au bas on voit quelques racines dont il composait sans doute ses repas frugales*" at the bottom one sees a few roots, of which without a doubt his frugal meal consisted" (Fried. p. 28).

wives killed in the *La mort de Sardanapale* (*The Death of Sardanapalus*, 1827, fig. 134) by Eugène Delacroix²⁸. Not dissimilar is the idle sensual atmosphere in harems or Turkish baths where odalisques spend their day, a theme often represented among others by Jean-Dominique Ingres, for example in *L'Odalisque à l'esclave* (*Odalisque with a slave*, 1842) [fig. 16] or in *Le bain turc* (*The Turkish Bath*, 1862).

Another similar work by Delacroix, *Femmes d'Alger* (*Women of Algiers*, 1834) [fig. 17] was commented in a way that well interprets this trend: "Delacroix's picture, inspired by the artist's visit to a Moroccan harem in 1832 [...] is a dream image of 'oriental' indolence. The three harem women and their servant are the embodiment of the European masculinist image of the middle eastern and north African people as sensual and irrational. [...] *Women of Algiers* celebrates social and cultural passivity: the orient is vividly represented by the artist as a land of erotic freedom and languor outside politics, history, and class. [...] For Delacroix and a succession of orientalists culminating in the symbolist Paul Gauguin, 'the East' functioned as an ideal respite from the dispiriting sexual and ideological conflicts that existed in 'the West'. Whereas in Paris women begun articulating demands for the reform of property, child-custody, and divorce laws, in the east women appeared to be chattel slaves"²⁹.

The original iconography of Sloth connecting with a certain immoral sexual behaviour comes back also in other nineteenth century artworks. The highest and latest examples of representation of sleeping women and sloth are recurring in Gustave Courbet's production, and in both cases implying a strong sexual component.

As for the subject of Sleep, we only need mentioning the overtly pornographic but hypocritically titled *Le sommeil* or *Les deux amies*³⁰ (*Sleep* or *The two Friends*, 1866) in which sleep is a pretext for showing

²⁸ See also par. IV.2.

²⁹ Eisenman Stephen; Crow Thomas, *Nineteenth Century Art: a Critical History*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2002, p. 202- 203.

³⁰ Conserved in the Petit Palais, Paris. This work was not supposed to be shown in public, as it was a private commission by the Turk-Egyptian diplomat Khalil Bey, who commissioned also *L'origine du monde*.

an explicit image seen from a male perspective and clearly addressed to a male audience.

Demoiselles au bord de la Seine (Young Women on the Banks of the Seine, 1856-7)³¹ [fig. 18] is instead interestingly in between Sloth, sensuality and partly reverie. The depiction of two women in open air, doing nothing is at the same time an image of leisure - yet void of moralising purposes - and a sensual invitation for the male viewer. The open air colourful setting and the bored attitude of the one of the women lazily inviting the spectator contributes to the atmosphere of languidness and reverie. It has been observed that in both paintings mentioned here "divested of any but sexual power, Courbet's women are reduced to mere passive vehicles of painterly dexterity and authority; relieved from the burden of allegorisation, women are for perhaps the first time in the history of western art shown actually to possess a sexuality"³².

The painting was exposed in the 1857 Salon, causing, as it is predictable, a great deal of scandalised comments. The painting's provocation was clearer to Courbet's contemporaries than to us modern viewers. In the best of cases it was perceived as a satyr of the 'relaxed' habits of the Second Empire, which had spread vulgarity also among respectable women. This aspect is also connected with the title of the painting, defining 'demoiselles' two women who have little to do with a young innocent age. The mocking title, along with the large size of the painting, clearly going against the academic canons³³, contributed in identifying the image as plainly offensive.

Beyond being defined as "ridicule" for the ugliness of the figures and the wrong perspective³⁴, most criticism is addressed to the indecent

³¹ Also in the Petit Palais.

³² Eisenman Stephen; Crow Thomas, *nineteenth century art: critical history*, London : Thames & Hudson, 2002, p. 224.

³³ According to academic painting that was obviously dominating in the Salons, large formats were to be devoted exclusively to history painting, considered the most noble genre of painting.

³⁴ Auvray Louis, *Exposition des Beaux-Arts: Salon de 1857*, Paris: l'Europe artiste, 1857, pp. 66-67.

attitude of the two women: "We sincerely pity Mr. Courbet. He devotes himself to an exceptional genre that can give him justice, since it is hard to place the woman lower than the painter does in *Young Women on the Banks of the Seine*. It is a highly equivocal painting and, though being dressed, these women would have better been naked than in this indecent pose that shocks the gaze"³⁵. As it has been observed, along with their loosened corsets and voluptuous gazes, probably the most disturbing features of the *demoiselles'* attitude is the fact that their behaviour is far from being lady-like. In fact, especially the attitude of the one in the foreground, laying abandoned in the grass, has a peculiarly wild and animalistic character³⁶.

A few years earlier, in 1853, Courbet had already proposed in another Salon his own variation on the theme of Sloth in *La fileuse endormie* (*The Sleeping Spinner*) [fig. 19]. A girl, well-dressed but genuinely low class, is sleeping on a chair: her head reclined on a shoulder and the spindle left on her lap in mid-work are to render her abandonment. In this sense she reminds us of a modern (and non-idealised) 'Sleeping beauty', still holding in her hands the spindle she

³⁵ "Nous plaignons sincèrement M. Courbet. Il s'adonne à un genre exceptionnel qui ne peut lui faire honneur, car il est difficile de placer plus bas la femme que le peintre ne le fait dans les *Demoiselles au bord de la Seine*. C'est un tableau équivoque au premier degré, et si vêtues que soient ces femmes, il vaudrait mieux les voir nues que dans cette pose indécente qui choque le regard" (Gendré et Willems, *L'art et la philosophie au Salon de 1857 : revue critique*, Paris: Dondey-Duprè, 1857, pp. 115-6). This criticism is very interesting as reflecting closely the hypocrisy of some society: while a mythological 'high' nude was accepted, the images of the two dressed women in a non-conventional attitude is considered scandalous.

³⁶ See Raczymov Henry, *Courbet, l'outrance*, Paris: Stock 2004, pp. 150-166. Raczymov makes a whole analysis of the painting on the base that it seems to represent two high rank prostitutes on their 'resting' day, in which they took the liberty of having a walk on the banks of the Seine. According to the scholar, a male figure, likely the women's pimp, has accompanied them as his hat is to be seen on the boat behind in the background. Raczymov continues saying that as viewers we are put into the position of this male figure, looking at the scene and being lasciviously looked at by the woman in the front.

just pricked her finger with³⁷. The setting in interior plays beautifully between the flowers of the woman's dress, those of the wallpaper and the real flowers on a pot next to the girl, creating the impression of an homogenous decorative pattern.

Spinning was considered one of the most typical female duties and actually the very symbol of womanly domestic virtue. Hence, still in the nineteenth century the perfect compendium of Sloth and lack of female virtues was the image of a sleeping spinner. For the very reason of lack of morality a sleeping worker, and particularly a sleeping spinner "conveyed a sense of duty abandoned, womanly virtue along with it. A kind of sluttishness, or at very least sexual availability, has been thought of as a corollary to idleness in the moralizing imagery of northern art since at least the sixteenth century"³⁸.

Though not as provoking as the *Demoiselles*, this painting also raised several comments for the lack of idealisation of the image. It is not an idealised Venus or another abstract character we are looking at in her sleep: it is a realistic peasant woman³⁹. As anticipated, the main aspect in the image of a sleeping woman is the degree of exposure she is subject to: the high-ranking public of the Salon was then entering the private space of an attractive peasant woman, thus resulting in a rather sensually provoking image.

This perception is clear from the contemporaries' comments. Someone even praises Courbet for not being a hypocrite: "we have too many painters of [ancient] Greek women, and we are very glad that someone wants to paint peasant women as the good God made them!⁴⁰".

³⁷ The concept of the Sleeping Beauty will be also analysed more extensively in par. IV.4.

³⁸ Nochlin Linda, *Representing Women*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1999, p. 88.

³⁹ The woman depicted was believed to be Zélie, Courbet's sister, until a reference written by the painter himself was found, identifying the model with a local cowherd.

⁴⁰ "Nous n'en avons que trop de ces peintres de grecques, et nous sommes bien heureux que quelqu'un veuille bien nous peindre les paysannes comme le bon Dieu les a

The best idea of the contemporaries' perception though is conveyed by a satirical drawing, published about the Salon [fig. 20]. The drawing represents a few visitors of the Salon looking at the *Fileuse*: a man is covering his nose with a handkerchief and a woman is breathing from her salt flask not to faint. The comment reads: "*La fraîcheur de cette villageoise tend à nous prouver que la malpropreté n'est pas aussi nuisible à la santé qu'on le croit généralement en société*"⁴¹. While the image is felt as so realistic that it renders the bad smell⁴² of the peasant woman, her sexual attractiveness leads to the conclusion that the lack of hygiene does not produce so bad effects after all.

Courbet's image, derived from the traditional Sloth iconography, has dropped all moralising intention to build an image in which sensuality prevails. The woman asleep is not to be seen as a negative example of laziness: the lack of morality that has made her abandon her duties is actually attractive to the male gaze to which she is exposed. This imagery represented the victory of pleasure over duty: "yet it would be a mistake, and an oversimplification, to see Courbet's sleeping spinner as simply a continuation of the moralizing tradition of the past"; "for Courbet, unlike his seventeenth-century counterparts, the sensual availability, the self-abandonment implied by the motif of work neglected in the image of a young woman who falls asleep at her spinning wheel, is a source of delight, not a cause of reproach"⁴³.

faites !" (De la Madelène Henry, *Le Salon de 1853*, Paris: Librairie Nouvelle, 1853, p. 35).

⁴¹ "The freshness of this villager tends to prove us that the uncleanness is not as harmful to health as it is commonly believed in society", *Revue du Salon de 1853 par Cham (Le Charivari)*, Paris: Imprimerie Louis Grimaux et comp., 1853.

⁴² Remarkably, another controversial famous painting by Courbet also seems to aim at rendering, along all other realistic aspects, the smell of the scene. In *Un enterrement à Ornans (Burial at Ornans, 1849-50)*, the men carrying the coffin are turning their heads away as if to avoid the bad smell of the corpse, traditionally exposed for several days before being buried.

⁴³ Nochlin Linda, *Representing women*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1999, p. 89-90.

I argue then that the image of women reverie is a heritage of the moralising tradition in the representation of Sloth but in an entirely different key. In the reverie, as partly in Courbet's *La fileuse endormie*, the moralising aspect is dropped in favour of two more features: a voyeuristic approach of the view of a woman in defenceless absorption and intimate exposure, and a certain curiosity in this observation.

The image of a woman sleeping or daydreaming, in a relaxed or even abandoned pose, conveyed indeed a strong sensuality, along with the impression of observing, unseen, a very intimate scene. Certainly, there is a negative weight of the society on the lazy (day)dreaming woman, yet the more meaningful component is rather the question of sexual availability and voyeurism of penetrating the female space. In this sense *La fileuse endormie* by Courbet can be considered, also chronologically, a connection between the precedent iconography of sloth and the Romantic reverie, which starts instead showing a real interest towards women's mind and thoughts and also a more scientific attitude for the understanding of the phenomena of sleep and dream.

To conclude, I reckon Sloth in all its variations a close precedent iconography to the reverie. The representation of the reverie, beyond being formally similar, also often entails the presence of another practical activity left undone, and a negative and above all gendered connotation, as an activity typical of women and seen from a man's perspective.

2. MEDITATION, INSPIRATION, VISION

If the iconography of Sloth is the closest one for its visual representation and the gender implications, then the iconographies related to the act of meditation also need to be considered as they entail activities very close to the daydream: "The iconography of meditation, turning into reverie, fantasy, abandoning the book open on the page

that suggested the thought, the dream, the memory, the introspective reflection”⁴⁴.

As previously demonstrated, the term “reverie” is equal to that of “meditation” from the Renaissance to at least the seventeenth century, as testified by the terminology used by Descartes or by Rousseau. Meditation is a deep reflection, usually of the abstract type, most often practiced by saints, hermits, and scholars as it can be utilized as a religious act, a deep study, and mental speculation. Especially before the Renaissance, the religious acceptance of meditation is the most widespread, and specific figures of saints are usually identified by the activity of meditating.

The iconography of meditation is therefore represented simply by a figure absorbed in deep reflection, which is shown from his or her entire attitude. Also, meditation is often connected to the practice of hermitage, since a deep reflection is best practised in conditions of isolation.

In this sense, one of the typical figures of saints meditating in hermitage is that of Mary Magdalen, namely in the iconography of the “penitent”, where the saint is usually depicted while meditating on her sins, her appearance neglected, and often in a natural landscape. Representations of Mary Magdalen in such a fashion are common, with productions by the most relevant artists, such as Titian, Guido Reni, and Caravaggio.

The iconography of meditation is also sometimes assimilated to the iconography of melancholy; for example, the famous *Madeleine* (*Mary Magdalen*) by Georges de la Tour (several versions with varying titles, from 1640-45) [fig. 21], in which the original theme of meditation is correlated with the iconography of melancholy, characterised by the arm bent to hold the head and the candle.

The theologian and Father of the Church Saint Jerome is another famous figure often connected to meditation. The saint is most often represented while reading in his study, like in the famous painting by

⁴⁴ Finocchi Anna, *Lettrici: immagini della donna che legge nella pittura dell’ottocento*, Nuoro: Ilisso 1992, p. 15.

Antonello da Messina, *San Gerolamo nello studio* (*Saint Jerome in his Study*, 1474-75). As a scholar, he is concentrated in the act of studying and meditating in both a religious and a scholarly way. In other works, the saint is instead more clearly depicted while meditating, as for instance in *San Girolamo in meditazione* (*Saint Jerome in Meditation*, c. 1606) by Caravaggio [fig. 22]. Here, the old saint is characterised by his poor hermit clothes and an intense expression of concentration on his face, as shown by his frowning gaze and the hand holding the chin.

In the iconography of meditation, the attitude of concentration is shown above all by the gaze of the figure, that is not blank and lost as it might be in the reverie, but focused. As a general consideration, I would argue that both the conceptual and iconographic difference between meditation and reverie is that the first displays a concentration and the second a dispersion of attention.

In terms of iconography, meditation is also connected to the representation of divine vision, in the sense that in both cases, the character seems somehow inspired and looking usually upwards to receive the inspiration⁴⁵. A vision, not uncommon in Christian narratives, is a supernatural religious apparition coming from God or a messenger of his. Since the divine message also manifests itself often in the form of a dream, in my previous research I had distinguished divine dreams seen by a character while asleep, such as the “Dream of Jacob” or the “Dream of Joseph”, and visions which occur while the character is awake. This was clear in the visual representation (asleep and eyes closed for the dream, and awake and eyes open for the vision), but the distinction is not strongly established in the texts; and even in their visual rendering, some episodes can be represented either as a dream or as a vision.

Apart from the many visions recorded in the Bible, also in the life of saints visions are rather common. For example, one famous episode is the vision of Saint Eustache, also painted by Pisanello (*Visione di Sant'Eustachio* c. 1438-42). According to the legend, the saint, who was

⁴⁵ Apart from the painting by de la Tour, Mary Magdalen “penitent” is most often depicted addressing her gaze upwards.

then a hunter, converted when he had a vision of a deer with a cross on its forehead.

Lastly, related to the same iconographic and semantic sphere, the representation of inspiration is also mentionable. This iconography can also be conceived as a religious act; for instance, when a figure is inspired by God to act or think in a purely intellectually and creative fashion. For religion, the best example is probably the story of Saint Matthew writing the Gospel which, according to the text, had been inspired by an angel. This representation usually depicts the saint attentively listening to the angel (Guido Reni, Rembrandt) or even receiving from the sky a vision of the angel talking to him, thus resembling the iconography of vision, like in Caravaggio's *San Matteo e l'Angelo* (*Saint Matthew and the Angel*, 1602) [fig. 23].

Another character which joins the three similar iconographies of meditation, vision, and inspiration is Saint Augustine. This derives from the account of his conversion, in which he was reading intently in his study, when he heard a voice saying "*tolle, lege*". In Botticelli's interpretation of the subject (1480 ca, fig. 24), the saint seems indeed at the same time inspired (looking upwards) and in meditation (as he was studying until that moment). Also, he is represented interestingly surrounded by books and geometric and mathematical instruments, which also characterises the iconography of melancholy (see *infra*). Saint Augustine was also painted by Vittore Carpaccio (1505) [fig. 25] in a scene even more similar to a vision: Saint Augustine is turning his head towards the window, as if having a vision, and he appears frozen in this moment, pen in mid-air, and enlightened by the light coming from the window.

Of the three similar and interconnected iconographies of meditation, vision, and inspiration, what concerns this study is that, at least until the seventeenth century, they are all typically masculine activities.

In particular, the typology of inspiration is especially considered a male prerogative: to a rather common production of inspired poets or philosophers, almost no account on female inspiration corresponds. As for meditation and vision, there are female accounts, but only women

who are highest and undoubted examples of wisdom and pioussness (essentially only saints) are entitled to meditate in a religious sense or receive visions. The paintings are presented as though women could still be receivers of a divine message, but they would not find a place in the secular intellectual domain: a woman would not be able to attain the same intellectual height of a man⁴⁶.

Even considering meditation simply as an activity (and not only its visual representation), female meditation has an entirely different character from the male one. For instance, in the abovementioned collection of writings on reveries – here meant in the ancient sense of meditation - made by Orwat, the very few cases of female writings reporting on the reverie demonstrate thoroughly different features from the male ones: in these works, “the dreaminess would not be dissociated from the sentimental and emotional sphere of which feminine literature commences now a systematic exploration [...]. It is this [...] what distinguishes the male reverie, perceived more as cogitative flux or a wandering of the spirit, in which reason, despite everything, remains essential”⁴⁷.

Throughout this chapter, Orwat’s observation will be particularly relevant for the conception of the reverie (this time defined in the sense of daydream) during the nineteenth century, which will prove to mainly be a female activity and strictly related to emotions. The female daydream illustrates a strong development of the “inner life”: “the female writing of the reverie is defined by a greater attention on the innermost being, on the retreat on the self, in the ‘inside’. Novelists and poets do not neglect these ‘zones’. But while they favour, it seems, the relation and harmony with nature, the opening to the world and the space, dilatation and expansion, women opt for the retreat and concentration on the self, symbolised by circumscribed, separated or hidden spaces”⁴⁸.

⁴⁶ For the origin and consequences of this idea see par. IV.2 and IV.3.

⁴⁷ Orwat Florence, *L’invention de la rêverie : une conquête pacifique du Grand siècle*, Paris : H. Champion 2006, p. 332.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 351.

The reverie's transformation into a literary genre during the Grand Siècle is indicative of its later development: the roles of men and women and the dichotomies nature/vastness *versus* self/intimacy follow a specific path that will find its theoretical and visual expression in later representations.

In summation, these similar representations are gendered, as women and men do not have the same level of importance nor the same roles: the few female accounts of the iconographies of meditation, inspiration and vision are characterised differently, focusing more on sentiments and fantasies than reason and creativity.

3. MELANCHOLY

Though similar to meditation, the subject of melancholy deserves its own space, given its immense cultural impact on all epochs, and its many derivations and representations. The subject is so vast and intensely studied that certainly it cannot be wholly illustrated in this section.

Deriving from the theory of the four bodily fluids⁴⁹, already current in Antiquity, melancholy, the black mood, comes especially during the Renaissance to characterise the temperament of the artistic genius, along the idea that the black bile also determines a strong inclination towards creativity.

The state of inactivity and mainly the famous, typical pose of bending an arm to lay the head on a hand is the most recognisable and well-known iconography of the melancholy. In the elaboration of this concept, as well as the iconography, other elements and symbols also

⁴⁹ According to this theory in every man one of the four bodily fluids is exceeding, determining his behaviour. The sanguine temperament is determined by excess of blood and results in a positive liveliness; the choleric, when yellow bile is dominant, has an irritable and imposing character; in the melancholic the black bile is exceeding, determining an introverted pessimistic attitude while the phlegmatic type (with dominance of phlegm) tends to stability and quietness.

represent melancholy. According to the capital work *Iconologia* by Cesare Ripa⁵⁰, *malinconia* is described as an old woman, with a shabby look and no ornaments, sitting on a rock “*con gomiti posati sopra le ginocchia e ambe le mani sotto il mento*”⁵¹ [fig. 26]. Despite the fact that melancholic types are deemed hard and difficult to be with, Ripa adds in the end that “*i malenconiosi sono trovati et sperimentati sapientissimi e giuditiosissimi*”⁵².

This idea of the artistic creativity and its iconography is first exploited by Renaissance philosophers and artists, who are proudly portrayed as *melancholici*, head in hand⁵³. Since the connection between melancholy and creative genius had been made, also artists have taken pride in their melancholic moods, as this attitude was supposed to characterise a real genius.

Apart from the famous example of Michelangelo, considered a melancholic by his contemporaries, one of the artists most interested in the affection of melancholy and even claimed to be melancholic himself, was Albrecht Dürer. He provided one of the most famous and fascinating images of melancholy in his engraving titled *Melencolia I* (1514) [fig. 28]. The image is a completely allegorical and abstract representation: a woman sits in the centre, head in hand and with a moody, dark expression. Beyond being a winged genius, the woman presents in her figure other typical allegoric attributes of melancholy, such as the compass (symbolising a studious and creative nature) and a bag of money (symbolising avarice). All around a cupid, a dog, and

⁵⁰ The first version of this work (1593) only has written descriptions; it is in the 1603 reprint that the description are accompanied by some illustrations, but the 1611 edition first displays the illustration of *malinconia*.

⁵¹ “With her elbows laying on her knees and both hands under the chin”, Ripa Cesare, *Iconologia*, Padova: Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1611, p. 323.

⁵² “Melancholics are found and proved very wise and judicious”, Ibid. p. 325.

⁵³ And often sleeping, along the Neoplatonic conception of Sleep as an intellectual activity mentioned earlier. See Ruvoldt Maria, *The Italian Renaissance Imagery of Inspiration: Metaphors of Sex, Sleep, and Dreams*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, chapter I.

geometric and mathematical objects contribute to define this allegory, rendering the character of the image very abstract and visionary. The legacy of this engraving has been very wide and its derivations numerous. Even, for the dark atmosphere, the presence of a bat, and the pose of the arm, it is considered one of the main precedents of the famous *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* by Goya.

The iconography of this engraving is therefore different to the one of the reverie, apart from the very fact that it represents a woman in such pose and state of inactivity. Otherwise, the rest of the painting is far too allegorical and intentional to be directly correlated with the reverie as previously defined.

However, its derivations and variations and general theme of melancholy, can be represented similarly to the reverie. The reverie, therefore, does not derive from melancholy in a semantic sense, but rather in a formal way, as the visual representation of the reverie might look similar to the one of the melancholy, namely, in the pose of the arm.

The first item of note concerning gender is that, unlike reveries, melancholy is mainly manifested as a male affection. Pictures of melancholy exclusively depict men when they mean to represent real persons, starting from the artists themselves claiming to be melancholic. In contrast, whenever melancholy is depicted as a woman, she is not meant to represent a real character suffering from this affection, but instead, she is to be considered only as an allegorical representation of it. At least until the nineteenth century, there are almost no real women represented as melancholic, since women were deemed too simple to have the complexity of the melancholic mood or any artistic genius (see also par. IV.3).

In some works, as well as in the parallel iconography of sloth, the pose of the bent arm may be found, but this does not always imply the identification of melancholy; it is more like a formal attitude, a “quotation” of its iconography.

The representation of melancholy, from the time of medieval iconography and Durer’s *Melancholia I* until the eighteenth century, first emphasised the allegorical nature of the image with the presence

of symbols and objects readdressing the idea of a dark mood and a tendency towards creative speculation. The same is held true for *Malinconia* by Domenico Fetti (c. 1620) [fig. 27], still highlighting the dark and even disquieting aspects. Here, a female figure is kneeling in profile and apparently in despair, almost hiding her face from view. She is accompanied by typical symbols (mathematic instruments, dog) but with even darker symbolism than in Dürer's engraving, like the presence of ruins in the background and a skull seemingly in conversation with the figure.

Despite being the most widespread, this "dark" melancholy is not the only way of perceiving this affection. On this purpose, an insightful essay by Guillaume Faroult⁵⁴ is relevant, which takes into consideration a specific variation of the subject of melancholia in the last decades of the eighteenth century in France, a country where the topic of melancholia was less dispersed.

The author proves that during the eighteenth century, a new type of melancholy actually had some success in France: a "*douce mélancolie*" (sweet melancholy), a specifically French understanding of this affection. This is a different form of melancholy, which does not imply necessarily a dramatic and sublime mood of sadness and creativity, but a rather milder, more delicate thoughtfulness and blue mood, a "sweet" suffering.

The most appropriate reference to this particular meaning of melancholy is found in an artwork programmatically titled *La douce mélancolie* by Joseph-Marie Vien [fig. 29]. The painting, realised for the Salon of 1756, represents a young lady sitting alone, head in hand like in the typical pose of the melancholy, her eyes low and with an absorbed expression: she seems to be expressing a sweet and dreamy sadness. Related to Vien's interest for antiquity as demonstrated in other artworks (though not very historically accurate), here, the setting

⁵⁴ *Mélancolie : génie et folie en Occident : en hommage à Raymond Klibansky, 1905-2005* : [exposition] Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris, 10 octobre 2005-16 janvier 2006; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 17 février - 7 mai 2006 sous la dir. de Jean Clair, Réunion des musées nationaux Gallimard SMB, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin 2005, p. 274-283.

is also seems ancient, with a steaming brazier on the lady's side, a stylish table, cushion, and armchair; the lady herself is dressed in a peplum with sandals. Also, on the table, a small pot of flowers and some papers⁵⁵ are laying. The most relevant detail, though, is the fact that she is holding a dove in her lap. The background is even more ancient-looking, as half-fluting pillars are on the wall and even a bas-relief in ancient style.

A few years later, another *douce mélancolie* appears in the salon of 1763: a sculpture realised by Étienne Maurice Falconet [fig. 30]. Here, the figure is even more classical as it is a marble white statue of a young girl in a tunic standing against a broken column. Again, she is holding a dove in her hands and she is looking at it with an attitude of deep but quiet sadness.

In both artworks the detail of the dove contributes in the symbolism of the images. The French edition of the *Iconologia* by Ripa (1643) presents different illustrations and even descriptions of allegories in comparison to the Italian editions. Regarding *le mélancolique*, the French edition, beyond grouping it differently⁵⁶, describes and illustrates the melancholic type as a man instead of a woman and standing instead of sitting head in hand. He has the mouth covered by a band, symbolising his scarce loquacity; he holds a closed bag of money, indicating that he is avaricious, and a book, to suggest his tendency towards study and reflection. Finally, he has a "*passereau solitaire*"⁵⁷ (a sparrow detached from his flock) on the head, to represent his solitary personality.

Interestingly, the iconography of a figure sitting with the head laying on the hand is instead to be found in the figure for the *Paresse* (Sloth), and it is represented by a woman. This proves, once again, that these two iconographies have always been intertwined and complementary; and that the most recent reverie cannot be understood

⁵⁵A detail that might prove meaningful (see next paragraph).

⁵⁶ In this case among *Les quatre complexions de l'homme*, "the four temperaments of man".

⁵⁷ Ripa Cesare, *Iconologie*, Paris: Aux amateurs de livres, 1643, seconde partie, p. 55.

without referring to the other iconographies. The presence of the dove in the *douce mélancolie*, then, could represent the *passereau* that was known in France as an attribute of melancholy.

In this sense both Vien's and Falconet's works, despite representing a new variation of the theme of melancholy as the *douce mélancolie*, are still to be considered allegories, because of their abstract character (not representing a specific person), their taste for antiquity, and the presence of the dove.

They do not display, though, the other typical attributes of the genius like geometric instruments and disquieting elements. This is because they do not mean to highlight the inclination towards study or creativity nor the emphasis on a dark mood. In a way, this type of sweet sadness is closer to a modern concept of melancholy as a nostalgic sadness and longing than to the theory of fluids and creativity.

The sculpture by Falconet, though, remains more abstract, classic, and allegorical in this sense, hence less relevant for the subject of the reverie. As for the painting by Vien, it is objectively very similar to the later typology of the reverie, because of the pose, the setting in comfortable interiors, and the whole attitude of the subject.

To better understand this work, it should be considered that the painting was commissioned by Marie Thérèse Geoffrin, a famous patron of artists and writers at the time. It is even possible that the painting represents Madame Geoffrin, herself, as a melancholic, thus making the allegory less abstract and more like an intimate painting.

If this melancholy is not supposed to symbolise the dark mood of a creative genius, and considering it has been commissioned by a woman to possibly represent her own feelings, it can then be supposed that the object of such mood is a different one—maybe a love pain, or at least a desire for love. It can therefore be understood that “the definition that, deliberately, interrogates the notion in philosophical terms coming from the domain of the intellect, and insisting on its reflective and speculative dimension, integrates also a ‘sentimental’

lexical field which owes largely to the 'sweet melancholy': melancholy is by no means enemy of sensual pleasure"⁵⁸.

In this case, as suggested by Faroult, the dove can be interpreted also as the bird representing love, the animal symbol of Venus: "*la douce mélancolie* [...] is a matter of 'heart' instead of mood or reason"⁵⁹. The painting by Vien, therefore, is not entirely an allegory; it also represents a real woman, as a woman would suffer these love affections, while a man would not be depicted in this mood.

According to Faroult, the mood of the *douce mélancolie* can be even better understood by referring to some artworks in the production of Antoine Watteau, an artist recognised by his contemporaries as being a melancholic. The figures of his paintings, generally definable as genre scenes, often present a pensive suspension that might be interpreted as a form of melancholy, but rather in the "sweet" sense.

Two of his works reflecting this vision are particularly important and quite tightly connected to the theme of the reverie. *L'amante inquiète* (*The Worried Lover*, 1715-17) [fig. 32] represents a young girl in open air, apparently a garden, and sitting on a bench. She looks pretty and attractive, though her expression appears partially apprehensive. On her lap, she holds some roses, which are supposed to represent love.

I consider instead *La rêveuse* (*The Dreamer*, 1712-14) [fig. 33], also mentioned by Faroult, rather less appropriate for its title. The image represents a lady, in elegant and rich dress and accessories, including a big fan, simply sitting, and looking towards the spectator. Despite its title, this painting is less interesting for this study than *L'amante inquiète*, as the lady here does not appear to have a true dreamy mood; she is rather posing in a less spontaneous attitude. Both paintings, and especially *L'amante inquiète*, seem to have the pensive character

⁵⁸ *Mélancolie: génie et folie en Occident: en hommage à Raymond Klibansky, 1905-2005*: [exposition] Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris, 10 octobre 2005-16 janvier 2006; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 17 février - 7 mai 2006, sous la dir. de Jean Clair, Réunion des musées nationaux Gallimard SMB, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin 2005, p. 279.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

recognised as *douce mélancolie*; though they do not present this wording in the title, they are both considered by contemporaries as depictions of a certain kind of melancholy, without differing much from this study's typology of the reverie.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the "trend" in melancholy, increasing in relevancy alongside Romanticism, returns to the original, darker, and moodier definition. Above all, and especially starting from the 1801 Salon, a more dramatic vision of melancholy finds expression in *La Mélancolie* by Constance Charpentier (1801) [fig. 31]. In this example, a woman, again in ancient dress, is sitting on the ground with an attitude of deep sadness, almost in despair, her arms abandoned, while in the background even a weeping willow contributes to the dark symbolism. While the pure allegory disappears to create a more "real" image with an attitude partly inherited from the *douce mélancolie*, the insistence on the darker and depressing aspects of it relates more closely to Dürer's *Melencolia I*, but adding a sublime feeling for romantic longing, especially towards the past. This nineteenth century variation of melancholy has been already observed:

Nineteenth-century romanticism, on the contrary, endeavoured to endow the traditional expression of melancholy once more with its original meaning, and in so doing sometimes consciously reverted to Dürer. [...] whereas we saw how literary exegesis, in marked contrast to the conception of Dürer then current, raised the emotion expressed in Melencolia I to the realms of Faustian metaphysics, the pictorial derivations softened it – so to speak – a 'private' feeling of loneliness. In both cases, however, sorrow turns to longing, grief for mankind to a flight from reality; and, independently of their objective significance, the romantic portraits of melancholy move us, accordingly, in an entirely new way. Thanks to this nostalgia, sorrow gains possession of a fresh new range of objects: instead of being, as hitherto, limited to present existence, it embraces all time within the span of imagination. Hence the impression the romantic pictures give us that the longing, whether for a past beyond

*recall or for a future without hope of attainment, now for the first time enables the theme of the melancholy mood*⁶⁰.

This Romantic variation of melancholy, expressed in longing for a lost past, finds a good compendium in the famous painting by Jacques Sablet—almost a manifesto of the epoch of the Grand Tour and the passion for the past—called *Elégie romaine (double portrait au cimetière protestante de Rome)* (*Roman Elegy- Double Portrait at the Protestant Cemetery in Rome*) [fig. 34]. This painting, dating 1791 - full pre-Romantic period- perfectly summarises the new melancholic instances as an abstract (though not allegoric) image, in which the two melancholic figures seem to reflect on death and on the past in the sublime setting of nature and archaeology. Unlike the *douce mélancolie*, this Romantic melancholy of longing for “a past beyond recall” and representation of two real figures (probably the Sablet brothers) is typically masculine.

In some cases, the representation of Romantic melancholy gravitates toward the appearance of a reverie, though not exactly as it will be represented in the following century. For instance, Sablet also produced two other private paintings in which the melancholic attitude is clear, but a more intimate reflection is dominant. One is the *Portrait of Christine Boyer* (1799) standing next to the bust of one of her daughters who passed away after being born. The interest about this painting is also that it is repeated on the background of another painting, the *Portrait of Lucien Bonaparte* [fig. 35]. In 1800, Christine died and Sablet painted the portrait of her husband in the same landscape and with a mournful attitude, while the scene of the previous painting appears in the background. Beyond the complexity of the representation in the representation, the two paintings present more intimate reflection, which is partly similar to the iconography of the reverie. Despite this, still they are to be considered representations of melancholy and not yet of reverie, as they entail strongly the concept of meditation about

⁶⁰ Klibansky Raymond; Panofsky Erwin; Saxl Fritz, *Saturn and Melancholy: studies in the history of natural philosophy, religion and art*, Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1979, p. 392.

death and mourning. This aspect gives each paintings an almost symbolic value as in both cases, the topic of death is subtly presented in the attitudes of the figures, the languid landscape, and the few objects displayed: unlike the real reverie, all elements are meaningful and readdressing the central topic of death⁶¹. In this sense, they resemble more the dark dramatic melancholy, like the painting by Charpentier, rather than a sweet melancholy.

Faroult concludes the essay by stating that, after some of Watteau's production and the two artworks titled *La douce mélancolie*, already in the next decades "the short iconographic career of the sweet melancholy comes to an end in France in the eighteenth century"⁶².

I argue instead that the *douce mélancolie* and its iconography is nothing less than a direct precedent of the reverie, or at least another nuance of the same idea, which starts becoming fashionable by this time. In this sense, the iconography of the *douce mélancolie* is partly inherited by the iconography of the reverie during the nineteenth century. This is strikingly confirmed by considering how melancholy is defined in the turn of those years: "*mélancolie signifie aussi une rêverie agréable, un plaisir qu'on retrouve dans la solitude, pour méditer, pour songer à ses affaires, à ses plaisirs ou à ses déplaisirs. Les poètes, les amants entretiennent leur mélancolie dans la solitude. Des vers plaintifs sont fruits d'une douce mélancolie*"⁶³.

⁶¹ A posthumous portrait of Christine Boyer by Antoine-Jean Gros (1800 ca.), therefore again related to the topic of death, enhances the symbolic aspect. The deceased woman is seen in a melancholic attitude, wearing classical-looking clothes and surrounded by a cascading river, as detaching her from the world of the alive. Her gaze seems to address a rose floating on the water, symbol of an early death.

⁶² *Mélancolie: génie et folie en Occident: en hommage à Raymond Klibansky, 1905-2005*, [exposition] Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris, 10 octobre 2005-16 janvier 2006; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, 17 février - 7 mai 2006 sous la dir. de Jean Clair, Réunion des musées nationaux Gallimard SMB, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin 2005, p. 281.

⁶³ Ibid. "Melancholy means also a pleasant reverie, a pleasure to be found in solitude, to meditate, to dream of one's own things, of one's pleasures or displeasures. Poets, lovers practice their melancholy in solitude. Plaintive

I reckon very remarkable and main proof of this continuity the fact that this phrase is precisely the passage by Furetière (1690) containing the term *reverie* in the modern sense as reported in dictionaries (see par. I.2). This definition, both for its chronology and for its content, fits very well with the artworks by Watteau mentioned earlier, above all with *L'amante inquiète*.

Later in the eighteenth century, another definition insists on the same conception of melancholy, not only illustrating clearly the idea of *douce mélancolie* (programmatically represented around those years), but also using the very term of "reverie": "*il y a une mélancolie douce, que n'est autre chose qu'une rêverie agréable, une délicieuse tristesse, s'il est permis de parler ainsi. C'est la situation d'une âme qui, en refusant aux tentations vives qui la fatiguoient, sait se prêter aux illusions des sens, & trouver du plaisir dans la méditation même de ce qui cause ses peines. Les amants entretiennent leur mélancolie dans la solitude*"⁶⁴.

The fact that both definitions make use of the specific term "reverie" is the best proof that the two concepts, and consequently their visual reproduction, are now conceived as equivalent. However, potential question lies in the second definition, asking if this *douce mélancolie* is not about passion refused in order not to tire the soul, but rather, unaccomplished or fictional love.

To conclude, the reverie is a modern melancholy, and specifically a nineteenth century variant of melancholy, though invested with several different connotations; as melancholy was connoted by a gloomy mood and creativity, the reverie will also be connected with a specific mood and even affections of the body and mind (see par. IV.5).

verses are product of a sweet melancholy" (from Furetière Antoine, *Dictionnaire universel* ..., La Haye et Rotterdam, 1690).

⁶⁴ "There is a sweet melancholy that is none but a pleasant reverie, a delicious sadness, so to say. It is the situation of a soul that, refusing the live temptations that would be tiresome, can lend itself to the illusions of senses and find some pleasure in the same meditation about the causes of its troubles. Lovers practice their melancholy in solitude". From *Dictionnaire universel François et latin vulgairement appelé dictionnaire de Trévoux*, Paris, 1771, reprising closely the definition given by Furetière.

4. READING/WRITING

As previously mentioned, in many cases the reverie includes the presence of a text, namely a letter or a book, which is to be understood as a central element, and as the actual inspiration of the reverie. To analyse this detail, this study shall first refer to the iconography of reading and writing in general, and later investigate its relation to the reverie.

The representation of reading is initially common for saints who are also scholars (like Saint Jerome, mentioned earlier) and, especially later, also for intellectuals and even merchants (accountants and bourgeois in general). These occurrences, though, are in most cases representing men reading.

A different topic is instead the depiction of women reading: until a certain point only a few specific figures of women are entitled to practice reading (not to mention writing, which comes even later). As mentioned, the Virgin Mary is often depicted while reading at the moment of the Annunciation; so is sometimes Mary Magdalen penitent in the iconography of meditation. Again, only women of highest religious stature are allowed to practice the “dangerous” act of reading: for the majority of women, and for centuries, reading is either precluded or implies a negative connotation. The potential of reading and of knowledge in general has often been known and guarded jealously by male culture, and therefore leading to the negligence of women’s education (see par. IV.4). Since the only readings permissible were holy texts and devotional literature, the representations of women reading in iconography in Early Modern Age invariably feature religious texts.

However, a transformation commenced during the seventeenth century in Flanders, as women of all social classes start appearing on paintings while reading books that were not exclusively religious texts. A few decades after Rembrandt van Rijn painted a woman reading a large volume (probably the Old Testament) in *Old Woman Reading* (*The*

Mother of the Artist) (1631), Jan Vermeer illustrated women's progress in *Woman in Blue* (1663-4) [fig. 36] through representing a regular woman apparently reading a simple letter rather than religious text.

Such images do not necessarily entail a negative conception of this reading, but rather a plain observation of what was apparently a common occupation of daily life, similar to other genres that interested Flemish painters. Nonetheless, a literate woman was still often regarded with some suspicion. Another Flemish painter, Pieter Janssens Elinga in his *Woman Reading* (1668-70) [fig. 37] shows a woman, most probably a servant, reading on a chair in a bourgeois interior, facing a window. Since the woman is a servant, who is not supposed to be reading (and probably also took her landlady's book), it is an image that recalls the iconography of sloth: in this case reading is only another activity distracting the woman from accomplishing her duties. This is emphasised by the very evident detail of the cushion and the two shoes, probably also belonging to the landlady, left untidy in the foreground. Moreover, according to Adler⁶⁵, the fact that she turns her back towards the spectator allows the audience to read the title of the book she is reading: it is the Dutch version of the *Quatre fils Aymon*, the most famous chivalry novel at the time. This leads to a double negative judgement of the woman: because she neglected her duties and because she is not readings texts deemed appropriate for women, but rather mundane ones.

Despite this example, the fact the women are more often depicted while reading in the Flanders than in the rest of Europe in this period (and reading not only devotional literature) is a symptom of a better social status, education, and emancipation.

It is in the eighteenth century that the practice of reading (now also writing), became more common and accepted for women, especially with the spreading of correspondence, practised by both men and women. While the subjects of reading and writing became quite

⁶⁵ Adler Laure; Bollman, Stefan, *Les femmes qui lisent sont dangereuses*, Paris: Flammarion 2006, p. 29.

common, a few observations on their modes of representation need to be made.

To illustrate this, the short article by Bessire⁶⁶ will be referenced again, as it is the essay that most fully centres this subject; hence, some examples here will be proposed as early images of dreaminess in presence of a text, and the images will illustrate why they may or may not be considered appropriate. These works already present the visual signs of the reverie: "The representation of the reverie remains one of the recurring motifs of English and French painting of the eighteenth century. One can evoke the works display the suspension of writing as well as that of thinking. The bodies are introverted, the head is leaning on the hand, and the look becomes fleeting and evasive. The reverie is then a fully valorised attitude"⁶⁷.

The first example mentioned by the Bessire is *Portrait de femme* (*Portrait of a Woman*, 1787) by Adelaide Labille-Guiard [fig. 38], a painting representing a lady sitting at her desk who has apparently stopped writing a letter and is looking towards the spectator, still holding the pen in her hand. One first remark could be about the fact that the work represents the practice of writing, so far much less spread than reading itself.

Considering that the woman is elegant and *à la mode* in her dress and hairstyle, but at the same time her identity is not known (she is not a famous literate), the writing of the letter probably does not constitutes meaningful detail in this instance. At this epoch, indeed, writing and reading were only considered attributes of refined and fashionable woman. In this sense, the letter does not have *per se* a particular meaning (namely emancipation) and it is also not the source of inspiration for a reverie, rather, it is more likely to be a mere fashionable accessory. Also, the fact that the lady is turning towards the viewer in such a confident attitude is rather assimilating this work to a

⁶⁶ Bessire François, "Votre lettre m'a fait rêver: lettre et rêverie dans la peinture de la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle" in *Revue de l'AIRe* n° 29, hiver 2003, Paris: Champion, p. 125.

⁶⁷ Orwat Florence, *L'invention de la rêverie: une conquête pacifique du Grand Siècle*, Paris : H. Champion 2006, p. 389, footnote 3.

typical portrait, with no real hint of dreaminess about it. Several other more or less official portraits similar to this one can be mentioned, including the presence of a book, a letter, or any other accessory, but these are not among the images to be considered.

Another similar work by Jeanne-Étienne Liotard, *Portrait de Madame Marc Liotard de la Servette* (1775) [fig. 39], is instead already starting to reflect on the actual process of writing. The sitter is seen in a very similar sitting pose as in the portrait by Labille-Guiard, only here she is not looking towards the viewer, but gazing upwards, as if looking for the right words to start her letter. The letter in this sense is not yet an object which gives start to a reverie, but definitely it is an object that stimulates the thought.

Interestingly enough, this portrait has a male counterpart (not quoted by Bessire) from the same year, *Portrait de Marc Liotard de la Servette* [fig. 40], nephew of the artist, in which a letter is also central: the man is represented here more like in an official portrait, looking directly towards the viewer, but holding a letter, apparently freshly unsealed.

Evidently, the couple requested to be represented while performing both an intellectual and fashionable occupation. Interestingly, while the woman is represented in an active, yet dreamy and more private moment, the man is contrastingly about to read a letter in a more official and solemn attitude.

Other artworks quoted by Bessire are *Femme sur un sofa* (Woman on a Couch, 1743) by François Boucher [fig. 41]; *Portrait of a Lady* by John Singleton Copley (1771) [fig. 42] and a few others all by Jean-Honoré Fragonard, like *La lettre* (The Letter) [fig. 43] and *La petite sultane* (The Little Sultan) [fig. 44]⁶⁸.

Despite being assimilated to the other examples proposed, the letter does not seem to play any important role in *Femme sur un sofa* by Boucher [fig. 41]. There is no other meaning apart from acting as

⁶⁸ The famous *La jeune liseuse* by Fragonard [fig. 45] should also be quoted here as an example of a woman reading from this epoch. It is not mentioned by Bessire because it does not deal with the reading of a letter but that of a small book.

another refined accessory characterising the scene, from the bonnet the lady is wearing to the *chinoiseries* on the shelves in the background. In this sense, this painting is also more like a portrait, only in a private, unofficial setting. This is proven also by the chronology, as the painting by Boucher dates some thirty years earlier than the aforementioned, and is therefore to be included in the typical Rococo frivolous production. Besides, Boucher's production, is more often than not *désengagé* and malicious.

The *Portrait of a Lady* by Copley [fig. 42] is more rightfully to be considered a precedent of the reverie with a text (or even a reverie itself), as it displays a deeper focus on the subject, while the setting and even the appearance of the lady are much less taken care of. The woman portrayed by Copley, whose identity is not certain, shows an absent gaze that only seems to be looking at the spectator while she is actually addressed towards her own thoughts: the letter she is holding loosely on her lap seems to be the object that determined such attitude.

The examples by Fragonard seem to revisit Rococo's more "superficial" understanding of the reading⁶⁹. *La lettre* [fig. 43] is more similar to a proper reverie as the girl is depicted while reading, with a dreamy demeanour, a letter probably received from her lover. The concentration on the medium close-up of the girl and her distracted regard are much more similar to the reverie, as she also does not seem to be aware of the presence of a spectator. *La petite Sultane* [fig. 44] is merely an exotic variation on the subject of reading, though somehow showing more awareness and less dreaminess than *La lettre*⁷⁰.

In general, these images should be distinguished from later reveries because they reflect a different conception of reading in the first place. If reading had been for women in previous centuries an

⁶⁹ On this regard *La lettre d'amour* by Fragonard (1770) [fig. 46] should also be mentioned here. It represents a very well-dressed woman at her desk, with a piece of paper in her hands that was probably accompanying the bouquet of flowers she is holding. She seems to be looking toward us spectators with a mischievous look, as if she wanted to make us accomplices of her love game.

⁷⁰ The same goes for another version of the same painting usually called *La sultane à la perle* (*Sultan with pearls*).

activity almost prohibited, or at the very least negatively regarded, in the eighteenth century the practice of reading and writing are not only encouraged, but considered necessary for high class, mundane women.

These activities, though, in most cases do not reflect a true scholarly interest or a push towards knowledge and emancipation; it is more of a trend or a mundane activity. "The Rococo reader was often a 'frivolous' consumer rather than an earnest scholar. Reading had become a favourite pastime for women of means [...]. Despite the general liberties and frivolities of the era, as well as the fact that it was fashionable for women of status to read, reading by women remained an activity viewed with a certain amount of suspicion"⁷¹. Just as dressing *à la mode* or decorating the houses opulently, reading was also an activity that contributed to the charm of a lady: "As in earlier periods, secular books in a woman's portrait were not an indication of intellectual pursuits but contributed to the overall sensuality of the image and were often intended to flatter the sitter's delicate sensibilities"⁷².

As for under which light women reading truly were seen in the eighteenth century, I shall refer to two artworks fully centred on the subject of reading, which are often put into correlation.

Having been commissioned a diptych of paintings with the subjects '*L'éducation douce et insinuante*' (*The Soft and Condescending Education*) and '*L'éducation sévère*' (*The Strict Education*) in 1745, Jean-Baptiste Simeon Chardin decides instead to paint an antithesis between working life and private leisure. Both paintings have a woman as subject, probably because the commissioner of the paintings was also a woman, Louisa Ulrika of Prussia, Queen of Sweden.

For the first subject, he chose to paint a woman sitting at a desk, writing some papers with a pen in hand. She seems to be intently calculating and noting family expenses, which finally determined the name of *l'Économe* (*The Administrator*) for the painting [fig. 47].

⁷¹ Inmann Christiane *Forbidden Fruit: a history of women and books in art*, Prestel 2009, p. 49.

⁷² Ibid. p. 50.

As for the leisure subject, Chardin painted an intimate setting of an elegant woman sitting on a comfortable armchair, characterised by the objects of woman's works in the house, like a spinning wheel. The woman, who is in a fairly relaxed pose, is turning her look in the direction of the spectator, though with an absorbed and distracted gaze, as if not really looking; and in so doing she has stopped her leisurely activity of reading. Indeed, she holds a small book (not like the large papers of the *Économe*) in her hands, holding a finger between its pages.

This second painting is titled *Les amusements de la vie privée* (*The Entertainments of Private Life*) [fig. 48], thus revealing a peculiar conception of reading as the most entertaining activity of private life, especially for women, which apparently did not have many other possibilities of amusement.

The interpretation given of the painting by Adler is very close to this study's working definition of reverie, due to the effects of reading, and also for the intimacy of the context: "It does not seem like she has been distracted [from the reading]. If this woman has interrupted her reading it is rather freely and according to her own will, in order to reflect on what she just read. Her gaze, not fixing anything- not even the viewer of the painting, who is redressed to himself – testifies a floating attention without constraints, a meditative attention. This lady continues dreaming and thinking of what she has read. Not only she read, but also she seems to be forming her own vision of the world and of things"⁷³. According to the scholar, then, in this painting, a specific aspect of reading is stressed: nurturing the knowledge and the education of the reader by inspiring his or her own reflections and thoughts.

If it is true that this aspect plays an important role, this study needs to examine other layers that were perceived by contemporaries in a more obvious way. It is of particular importance to remember that the title of the painting seems to emphasize, even exaggerate, the

⁷³ Adler Laure; Bollman, Stefan, *Les femmes qui lisent sont dangereuses*, Paris : Flammarion 2006, p. 23.

entertaining effects of reading, under a very peculiar light. Commentaries by the contemporaries suggest that "it represents a woman sitting casually on a couch and holding in one hand a book⁷⁴, laying on her knees. A sort of languor prevails in her eyes, which she fixes on a corner of the scene; we guess she was reading a novel, and that the tender impression she has received from it makes her dream of someone she would like to see coming!"⁷⁵.

What contemporaries perceived in an image like this was not only the dreaminess (in this case quite similar to the reverie), but above all the languidness of this specific pastime. The woman here is seen, not unlike in the reverie, in a private moment, with all the involvement and sentiment that reading was supposed to arouse. Reading was considered for women a truly entertaining activity, almost in an illicit way. Chardin's lady is not reproachable, but reading is defined as the most amusing past time without pretensions of intellectuality and opposed to real duty.

In regards to this aspect, it is central to consider a highly malicious painting that looks almost like a parody of the painting by Chardin, and euphemistically titled *La lecture* (*The Reading*, 1760) by Pierre Antoine Baudouin [fig. 49]. Again a woman is sitting on an armchair, as in *Les amusements*; but in comparison to the latter, everything seems exaggerated. The setting and the space are much more filled up and decorated, with an abundance of objects, papers, and patterns. Moreover, it looks like a much more private space than the one shown in the other painting, as the viewer can even see a poster bed on one side. The viewer can recognise a few objects considered symbols of a woman's entertainment: books and papers above all, a small dog, a lute, and even some maps and a globe. But the most "exaggerated" element is the attitude of the girl herself: the dreaminess and quiet longing here becomes a complete abandonment. Unlike the

⁷⁴ In the original "*brochure*", meaning at the time a book without bindings and with a paper cover.

⁷⁵ *Observation sur les arts et quelques morceaux de peinture exposés au Louvre en 1748*, quoted by *Histoire de la vie privée*, sous la dir. de Philippe Ariès et de Georges Duby, Paris: Seuil 1985.

painting by Chardin, here the sitter is not posing and quietly turning towards us spectators: she lies sinking in the armchair, her arms dropped, in a completely private, almost indecent moment of trance. Baudouin's woman is also much more attractive than Chardin's, with a richly decorated and provoking dress; the most attractive aspect though is exactly this abandonment in sensuality, seen through the voyeuristic gaze of the painter.

Her attitude and her neglected pose and dress are far too explicit not to be felt as purely erotic at the time. Not unlike the reverie later, reading apparently was the inception of the woman's imagination and fantasies, in this case evidently sensual ones, up to a point that she has completely forgotten of herself. Again, the combination of leisure (with reading in this case) and the raise of lustful thoughts is very close, almost like a heritage of the ancient conception of female sloth. Towards such a painting, the attitude of the audience would be twofold: on the one side reproach and criticism to this dangerous and immoral pastime and another of curiosity and voyeurism on the other, along the line of the typical Rococo libertinism.

I recognise in the paintings mentioned along the paragraph possible precedents of the reverie, since they present some interesting features found again in the reverie, above all the presence of a text and a sort of dreaminess.

The difference between these works and the later reveries is that these ones, along with the Rococo malicious taste, in most cases mean only to show frivolous or sensual images. Also they refer, rather than to the practice of reading books, prevailing instead in the nineteenth century, to the practice of correspondence, implying often illicit flirts and libertine love affairs. Though, if in the eighteenth century the representation of reading (and writing for that matter⁷⁶) of the letter

⁷⁶ One more aspect to be noticed is that, although in this period both reading and writing might be equally spread as iconographies, later, and especially for the reverie, there will be a prevalence of reading as this is the more daydream-inspiring activity of the two. The reverie while writing a letter does exist but it is a less common typology, since writing is a more concrete activity and implies

often becomes a pretext for a frivolous speculation on how ladies occupy their free time in their private space, then in the nineteenth century there is instead a certain idea of fantasy and a true interest, either scientific or simply aesthetic, towards the reverie as a phenomenon of the imagination.

an active participation of the subject, not allowing the suspension of attention which characterises the reverie.

CHAPTER III: ARTWORKS ANALYSIS

1. METHODOLOGY

This section represents the core of this study's research on the reverie as it will be dedicated to the identification and analysis of the artworks which can appropriately be considered reveries produced throughout the examined timeframe.

While, for the sake of clarity, a definition of the reverie was provided in chapter I, it should be noted that the collection and observation of the images, which will be analysed in this section, was prior to determining any possible definition or name for such phenomenon. This study's approach on the subject has been empirical and inductive, as the first task was to collect images related to the dream representation. Secondly, I observed them and remarked the emergence of the recurring daydreaming theme. Lastly, by remarking that these paintings were sometimes titled "reveries" and that reveries were an activity somewhat observed and spread during the timeframe considered, this term came as the natural definition of the represented phenomenon.

Thus far, this study has identified the features of the reverie, as well as its recurring and meaningful elements, such as the type of figure, the setting, the presence of certain objects, and partly also the formal attitude of the character represented. This initial observation constitutes the first, purely formal level of understanding of the image.

Since this study lays its foundation strongly on an iconographic analysis, the possible layers of meaning within the artworks will be interpreted according to the approach given by Erwin Panofsky in his seminal *Studies in Iconology* (1939). Panofsky distinguishes three different levels of meaning an image can have, from the most basic, the pure observation of the objects depicted, to the deepest, the understanding of all cultural and historical implications of the image.

In the same fashion, having analysed the basic understanding of the image in chapter I¹, the present chapter will be instead devoted to the second, deeper layer of meaning. It will investigate, by considering several artworks, how the reverie was received at the time, how spectators would perceive this image, whether this perception reflected a common sentiment, and how spectators would share the feelings displayed. The third and deepest layer (which shall be investigated in chapter IV) questions the reasons of such an insistence on the reverie, why artists and public might be interested in this topic, and why it is generally considered relevant.

This section will proceed through the analysis of artworks, determining the significance of the second layer of meaning, understanding how the reverie was represented (in which context, by which artists) and how it was perceived. The following table shall clarify the different layers of meaning as interpreted by this study:

1 st layer	WHAT	is the reverie? are its recurring elements?
2 nd layer	HOW	is it expressed? is it felt and perceived? is it shared?
3 rd layer	WHY	the insistence on this topic? such interest from the contemporaries? is it a relevant topic to analyse?

¹ Chapter II was evidently concerned also with a deeper iconographic level but centred rather not specifically on the reverie, but on similar iconographies.

Initially, one general observation about the reverie's representation is important to identify, which shall extend beyond its visual and formal elements. Bearing in mind the attitude of the subject as "absorbed", the reverie is meant to represent a moment of suspension, of complete abstraction, and of non-reality². Like dreams and sleep, also the reverie represents the depiction of a scene that is apparently the only focus of the painting: the entire image paradoxically readdresses an elsewhere that is not visible to spectators, yet it is present and evident. Like a person truly sleeping, also in the reverie the character is physically present, but mentally absent: he or she can be observed in material appearance but his or her mind is actually elsewhere.

In the case of the reverie, beyond the word "absorption", the word "suspension" is also descriptively relevant. The figures are in another state of mind, separate from both reality and sleep. This suspension between the two states of mind creates an alternative and abstract context around the subject. The reverie is a moment of suspension out of time since the daydreaming figure does not have an awareness of time passing, and she is not bound to time constraints, unlike in reality. For instance, to hear expressions like "I did not realise the time passed" is typical, as in common experience, of a person whose thoughts have wandered to daydreaming.

Along with suspension from time, the figure is also suspended from space; she does not seem to care about space constraints, she does not pay attention, and she is forgetful of her surrounding environment and objects. No matter the richness, exoticness, or beauty of the setting, the attitude of the woman is usually unaware of her surroundings. She crosses the boundaries of the present scene, looking towards a point outside of the frame of the picture, whether it be to her side, below, out of a window or, sometimes, in the same direction of the spectators. This already excludes us viewers from seeing this meta-space towards

² On this regard see also Crary Jonathan, *Suspension of Perception. Attention, Spectacle and the Modern Culture*, Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT press, 1999.

which she is looking; but simultaneously, viewers also perceive that she is not truly looking towards this physical point, but is instead looking somewhere else. She is actually addressing something immaterial and invisible as her imaginative power, another common experience of non-reality or alternative reality, like sleep, which also the spectator can recognise in his own experience.

The observation of this “suspended” condition is the fascination nineteenth-century images of reverie entail. Before analysing more in detail the artworks (and the artists) selected, some methodological considerations will be elaborated.

As for the type of artworks considered and their material support, reveries can be found almost exclusively in painting and drawing as these latter are the most “immaterial” arts. For example, unlike sculptures, they have less constraints due to the material support of the artwork. Representing the reverie, an internal invisible feeling, would be impossible to convey through sculpture, or at least unsuccessful³. Already in painting it is difficult to convey the reverie: “for painting it is a real challenge: one needs to make visible an interior movement. But it is also the opening of a new territory, that of the intimate offered to the look of the spectator/voyeur”⁴.

³ On the other hand the new rising art, photography, seems also to lend itself very well to the aim of representing the dream. Very early experiments in photography aim at rendering the two ‘spaces’ of the dream - that of the dreamer and that of the dream content - in the same image, through the technique of montage. One remarkable example is a photograph by the British Alfred Silvester, titled *The Dream of the Wedding*. The image displays a sleeping woman in the front and the image of the wedding she is dreaming of in the background. The picture, redoubled, would be watched through stereoscopic goggles and produce a three-dimensional effect.

⁴ Bessire François, “Votre lettre m’a fait rêver: lettre et rêverie dans la peinture de la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle” in *Revue de l’AIRE* n° 29, hiver 2003, Paris: Champion, p. 123.

The collection of works compiled was determined partly by a reasoned search through several art databases, and partly by chance⁵. Nonetheless, the frequency and the insistence on this subject in the production of different authors from different countries and artistic milieus was too remarkable to be considered a coincidence. The subject of reverie proved to be a recurring and relevant subject at the time.

Within a wide collection of works representing reveries, this study will select and illustrate a rather large number of artworks; this extensive collection did not narrow the number of artworks cited in order to further support and argue for the individuation of the category. However, the collection presented in the study is not exhaustive, as other works will appear outside the collection that will match this study's working definition of the reverie. Evidently, not all reverie artworks can have a space here; also some reveries are more subtle than others. Therefore, the artworks selected are the most representative and feature the most interesting elements.

Several remarks need to be made when considering the chronology of these artworks. The first and most evident is that despite the fact that this research encompasses the whole nineteenth century, such daydreaming artworks are found almost exclusively in the second part of the century, appearing from the 1850s and increasing in frequencies in the 1860s. The reasons for their absence in the first part of the century, and in contrast, their recurrence in the second part of the century will be here elaborated.

As previously discussed, the most relevant images found in the first part of the century are more closely connected to the iconography of reading. Such iconography, initiating with the reading of letters and then books, can rightfully be considered a predecessor from which the reverie originates. Even in exclusive examination of artworks on literacy, one would be struck by the ratio in which women are depicted

⁵ Also F. Bessire argues in the same fashion his own choice of artworks (though for a much more limited collection) in his article, p. 124: "If their choice is determined partly by chance of findings and possibilities of reproduction, all the same it is meaningful for their abundance and the variety of genres and artists".

while reading in comparison to men participating in the same activity. As earlier remarked, depictions of men reading are present throughout art history, but only in specific iconographies such as the meditation of saints and scholars. Likewise, in this century, a man is represented while reading when he is a specific and recognisable figure of intellectual (such as the *Portrait de Charles Baudelaire* by Courbet, 1848-9 or the *Portrait of Émile Zola* by Édouard Manet, 1868). From these observations, it shall be clear how a regular man, unless being a known intellectual, would rather not be represented while reading, but instead participating in more dynamic (and possibly more virile) activities.

For women instead in this moment it is the exact opposite, meaning that reading was precisely the activity every woman would undertake in daily life. Therefore, and since the eighteenth century, women who were represented in their (more or less) private space are also highly likely to be represented while reading.

However, after the 1850s, the new iconography this study defined as reverie starts spreading and raising interest. While the representation of women reading will continue all along the second part of the century, the representation of women doing reveries will increase in frequency, rivalling with the iconography of reading for the depiction of women in their private space.

As for the type of artists producing images of reveries, one might assume that all painters representing the reverie might originate from the same artistic milieu or artistic movement, or at least from the same country. On the contrary, this study's focus on a specific topic rather than on a group of authors or even an artistic movement, resulted in a variety of different painters with various origins and backgrounds. Most of the painters come from France and the United Kingdom, because these two countries were among the most developed and artistically productive during this period. However, artworks with the reverie as a subject are actually produced in all the relevant western countries at the time: therefore artists also originated from Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, and the United States. This data is very meaningful because it illustrates the effect of reverie's pervasiveness as a subject and a cultural interest in all western societies at the time.

A further remark is that the artists who produced images of reverie are now, in most cases, not considered among the major artists of their time. Very few reveries have been painted by the most popular artists of the period; instead, the artists generally producing reveries are average artists who mainly worked for bourgeoisie customers. Some might have been well appreciated in high society of their time because they closely reflected the taste of those social milieus, but they are now generally forgotten and disregarded. Therefore, their paintings with reveries are not to be found in big museums, but rather, in smaller, and most often, private collections; some of them also appear to have been sold to private owners through major auction houses over the past years. For these reasons, it is rather difficult to retrieve information about the paintings, the date of realisation, and sometimes, even a clear photographic reproduction. Working with such a corpus of images can prove to be very hard when the painting, the author, and the topic in general have not been studied extensively thus far.

The reasons why major artists of the century did not produce any reveries can be explained by tracing different reflections both on the provenance of these artists and on the reverie itself as a genre.

First to underline is that the reverie seems to become at this time, and especially after the 1870s, not only a recurring representation, but also a fashionable one: as anticipated, it seems to be one of the main attitudes in which women, and in particular bourgeois women, were represented.

The sequential question is whether this occurs because women were actually spending a great deal of time in such state of idleness, and the artists were merely depicting (yet in a *à la mode* manner) what they were observing in daily life; or whether it was fashionable and charming (both from the artist and the woman's perspectives) to have reveries and be in this state of contemplation⁶.

As observed from the chronological succession of the works, the reverie has been a real attitude and a real activity women were having, and as such it was reproduced. Later in the century, this attitude, along

⁶ See par IV.3 and IV.4.

with the activity of reading, has been translated into the most common womanly activity and therefore has acquired a specific status and charm, becoming a trendy attitude in both women's and men's visions.

Given the general lack of information on the paintings, it is unknown if they were commissioned by a specific patron or were done by the artist on his own accord. Although, what can be asserted is that in the great majority of cases, they represent a regular, modern, and elegant woman, yet not an identifiable one. If she was a specific, recognisable woman, this would be, as it is the case for more official portraits, made explicit in the title of the painting. This consideration raises the question whether these paintings were generally made for a larger range of possible purchasers. The fact that the women represented are meant to exemplify a regular, charming woman might prove a relevant detail as the reverie possibly identifies an imagery that was appropriate to the high bourgeoisie's lifestyle and taste. Such paintings were probably not made for a specific commission, but rather to meet the general bourgeois taste: both viewers and purchaser, were therefore able to relate to the paintings and recognise their own likeness within it. For this purpose, both the image of the woman and the daydreaming attitude remain very generic and not neatly defined.

Additionally, some artists revisited the subject of reverie or to similar topics and poses several times: all along their production, a recurring insistence on the same subject is observable and sometimes the same image with few elements changed. Others, instead, only produced one image of the reverie, but normally devoted the rest of their production to rather different topics and approaches. Yet, this does not mean that the reverie they produced is less interesting.

All the previous cases explain why the depiction of the reverie is most likely to be a subject represented by average artists; its prevalence among the middle classes also illuminates why it was discarded as a subject by major artists of the time.

For instance, since the phenomena of the reverie most occurs in the second half of the nineteenth century, one would expect to find possibly reveries produced by one of the most known and relevant artistic movement of these decades, the Impressionist group.

Nonetheless, these movements and their exponents are only now reputed major of their time, but were not viewed as such by their contemporaries. They were the *avant-gardes* and therefore often disregarded, while the common taste was reflected by mainstream and academic artists analysed in this study.

The Impressionists did not linger on the subject of the reverie because they were not academics, nor official painters of the bourgeoisie; their lifestyle and production (with due differences between the single personalities) were more oriented towards the representation of what was at the time the alternative lower society. In consequence, they would be less likely to paint a bourgeois woman merely sitting and daydreaming as a by-product of her wealthy lifestyle.

However, it is not a coincidence that the Impressionist painter who produced paintings comparable to reveries is Pierre-Auguste Renoir. He had a more academic approach within the Impressionists, and was the closest to being considered a painter of the bourgeoisie. In the first part of his career, his subjects are most often participating in bourgeois activities, preferably in open air; in later years, he also specialised in simpler scenes with one or two women as main subjects. Also, he was deemed skilful to paint graceful and pretty women, often fitting the depiction of womanly activities such as reading or playing the piano (subjects which he revisits several times). In par. III.4.2 we shall see one painting by Renoir that can arguably be considered a reverie.

All stated thus far about the types of artists and the actual reception of images of reverie shall clarify the main reasons why this specific subject has been represented quite extensively, but seldom theorised and analysed.

The reverie as a subject for painting is first of all a “subtle” iconography, not very precisely recognized as a category and defined by few elements. It can also be mistaken for other similar iconographies such as portraits, sloth, melancholy, lust, dreaming, reading and other pastimes, to all of which the reverie owes some of its features. Having been disregarded as a subject by the major artists or artistic

movements, it has not been identified and studied as a specific topic; its authors are little known and even less studied.

On the other hand, the large number of accounts on this topic prove that it was a fashionable topic at the time, even to the point of standardizing methods of portraying high class women.

Even for contemporaries it was probably not felt as a specific subject or a specifically recognisable iconography. It is only by also investigating other fields of knowledge, above all medicine, sociology, psychology and literature, which the reverie finally appears as a somewhat fashionable subject, whose definition and features are theorised in different domains by this time. Yet, the fact that the several images of reverie were being produced by this time and that it was theorised and analysed as a phenomenon does not imply that this frequency was conscious nor systematic.

2. TYPES OF REVERIES

As anticipated, the same method I had used in my previous research will be applied: first the recurring features of all reveries will be identified and this will determine the difference of reverie typologies.

The main condition necessary to define an image as a reverie is the absorptive and suspended attitude of the figure, as previously described (par. I.5). The second element that proves to be recurrent in almost the totality of cases is that the daydreaming figure is a woman. This condition is definitely not necessary to identify the iconography of the reverie, but it proved empirically the most common case, at least for what concerns the nineteenth century. Despite a thorough search, almost no depiction of reveries could be found in which the main actor is a man. What was discovered instead were images that could be defined “male reveries” but with a thoroughly different setting and purposes, as analysed further on (see par. IV.2).

Having set that the daydreaming attitude of the figure and the presence of a woman are the two constant features of the reverie image,

it can also be assumed that the other elements appearing, mainly the setting and objects within the scene, vary and determine the distinction between the different types of reveries. To identify these variables, the images collected were organised and divided by types of setting: from this organisation, it emerged that almost all reveries represented can be reduced to three main types.

The difference of setting implies also a different appearance and allure of the woman represented and, importantly, determines her social and economic status, with meaningful implications. Nonetheless, the differences between the types of setting and types of women are mainly formal: despite the setting, there are no realistic intentions and the treatment of the scene and main figure is constant for all images, modelled on the same idea of upper class decorum and grace.

The different categories, determined mainly by setting, are exposed here in their description without the reference to specific artworks because they are generally applicable to reverie images.

The artworks analysis that follows (from par. III.3) will instead group the artworks trying to comply with three factors of geographical context, typology of reveries, and chronological order, providing a wide overview of the period and the possible variations of the reverie over time and space.

A rough distinction of artists by country of provenance was utilised because similar issues in the representation can be found within the same country or cultural area. Afterwards, within the same geographic context, the main guiding lines will be the chronological order in which different artists and artworks appear. This shall also clarify how the earliest examples of reverie are not yet completely reveries, and they perpetuate the characteristics of the previous and similar iconographies.

2.1. Bourgeois

The first and by far most common (besides most obvious and natural) setting of the reverie is the high class or bourgeois setting. It

can be defined as the most realistic in the sense that it is less idealised, especially in comparison with the other two types.

The scene is set in most cases in an interior of a house, where there is usually the presence of a beautiful room, sofa, pot of flowers, and few refined objects. The setting is seldom in public places, such as theatres or ballrooms. More rarely, and towards the end of the century, the reverie scene will take place also in open air, but featuring always bourgeois locations and womanly activities, such as boating, walking, resting in a garden.

The default setting of the bourgeois reverie is therefore in interiors as this was the natural environment for higher class women: most of women's life was supposed to be spent in houses and enclosed spaces, with the exception of a few specific and limited public spaces.

The woman appearing in these images is compatible to the context as she is characterised as an upper class, refined woman, in most cases elegantly dressed, even if she is merely sitting in her house.

The image of the reverie, despite entailing a certain degree of idealisation, is meant to represent an activity that truly occurred and that was specifically common among women of certain social milieus. Correspondingly to how the skills of reading and writing were received in the eighteenth century, the evolution of daydreaming was appreciated and deemed appropriate to any high class woman.

As earlier anticipated, one feature of these images is that the woman represented, despite being partly idealised, is meant to impersonate a real, everyday woman. This woman is neither a symbol, an allegory (as for instance the images of melancholy seen in par. II.3), nor an identifiable person (as it is often in portraits, titled with the name of the sitter). The woman does not have a strong connotation: she is a figure with which every other woman, especially of the same social milieu, could possibly identify herself with, in regards to her graceful absorption and dreaminess, a state which women experienced often. Therefore, the image should not be a universal, impersonal image nor a specific, identifiable one, but rather a reflection of a real life situation in a realistic, elegant environment.

Despite the visual differences, the treatment of the woman is homogeneous in the three categories and the different settings and social status do not actually imply almost any realistic intention nor interest for the lower classes, as clarified later on. In this sense, the other two categories represent variations of the bourgeois model, only in a different setting or environment. The treatment of the figure is the same as for the bourgeois type as for the representation of the woman: in all three settings the woman has the same attitude, elegance and grace a wealthy woman was supposed to possess.

Among the objects usually present on the scene, and often natural inspiration of the reverie, the text plays a major role. A large part of bourgeois reveries, indeed, feature a text, a typical bourgeois object. Therefore, in several cases, the bourgeois setting also includes the presence of a text and, vice-versa, most reveries with a text have a bourgeois setting. Nonetheless, it is possible to also find mixed images, which result in a more mannered and artificial scene, such as a peasant woman reading a book (see par. III.4).

However, the images of women absorbed in reading are highly common and already widely researched. The images of reading taken into account by this study, though, are the ones in which to this absorption is followed by another absorption: the absorption of the subject into her own thoughts originated by the reading. As previously mentioned, this is the stage that just precedes the simple absorption, the pure reverie, which does not even need the pretext of a book to start.

On the chronological level, though, it is to be remarked that this subclass of reverie with a text appears earlier than the “pure reverie” (daydreaming without a text), as it derives from the iconography of reading, already widespread in the eighteenth century. For such reasons, although the categories were mentionable, the exposition of this subject will rather follow a geographical and chronological order, as the way the artworks and the subjects are set in time is meaningful in understanding how the subject evolves, from where it commences and where it finishes.

While the image of reverie with a text continues all along the nineteenth century, the same cannot be said for the image of “pure reverie”, which seems to appear only in the last decades of the century. This fact hints that the “pure reverie” is somehow derived from the image of the reverie with a text, as if it represented a higher stage of absorption and abstraction from reality. It can therefore be said that the pure reverie without the text is derived from the reverie with a text, which its turn, is derived from the iconography of reading and writing (as well as from the other iconographic precedents exposed in chapter II).

2.2. Bucolic

The second category, the “bucolic reverie” is not in chronological succession with the previous one as they are intertwined in the first decades of the second half of the century; in this sense, images of both types can be found around the same years.

The “bucolic” reverie is meant as a setting in exteriors, including usually a good view of the country or a natural landscape. In this epoch, the peasant world, as well as the countryside in general, is imagined as the place of a lost innocence, of simple genuine life in contact with nature and thus opposed to industrialisation and overcrowded cities. The countryside becomes, also in this romanticised attitude, the place for a different conception of work and workers, contrary to the exploited and harsh living conditions of the city suburbs, but rather an idyllic context of a genuine work in nature.

This idealisation is very evident, for instance, in almost the entire production of artists like Jean-François Millet and Jules Breton. Especially in Millet, peasant life is seen as hard, but nonetheless, projected under an idealising light of dignity and piousness which makes it almost a refuge in comparison to the depersonalising, modern urban life.

The attitude of the figure represented in the bucolic reverie is in many aspects similar to the bourgeois one, being characterised by deep

absorption as expressed by the lost or far away gaze typical to all reverie images. The pose, instead, is somewhat different, given that the woman is usually sitting on a less comfortable support; sometimes she is even standing as if she has stopped her work only momentarily to indulge in her daydream while contemplating the landscape.

In this typology, the daydreaming woman is meant to belong to lower classes and often has an explicitly peasant provenance. Unlike the self-conscious and codified elegance of the bourgeois woman, the peasant reflects another ideal of spontaneous beauty. The woman is usually dressed in humble, loose clothing which actually enhances an allure of her genuine charm, resulting as a deliberately provoking image for men familiar with more constrained city clothing. A variant of the peasant is also the “regional type”, where the woman is dressed in a regional or typical costume. Beyond adding some colour and exoticism to the image, this feature also suggests the setting in possibly in some southern European countries, like Italy or Greece, where peasant women were wearing (or were believed to wear) these costumes in daily life.

In the bucolic reverie, another idea is hinted: a similarity between the main figure, the woman, and the setting, the natural landscape. Placing a female figure in a natural setting might be a way to establish a connection between women and nature, seen as two similar elements, especially from a masculine perspective. The assimilation is, of course, ancient and applies in the bucolic reverie for at least two aspects: the first and most obvious is “the potent ideological association of the peasant woman with a timeless, nurturing realm of Nature”⁷. Beyond the reverie, in other paintings of the same period with a peasant context, the woman is assimilated to nature in regard to her motherly role. As suggested by Nochlin, evidence of this assimilation can be found in *Woman Feeding Her Child* (1861) by Millet and *The Two Mothers* by Giovanni Segantini (two different versions from 1889 and 1899-1900)⁸.

⁷ Nochlin Linda, *Representing Women*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1999, p. 85.

⁸ Specifically Segantini devoted several paintings to idea of woman as a mother and very often in connection with the natural realm.

A second aspect that might be remarked about these images is that “yet contradictorily [...] at the same time that the peasant-woman was viewed as naturally nurturing and pious, her very naturalness, her proximity to instinct and animality could make her serve as the epitome of untrammelled, unartificial, or ‘healthful’ sexuality, as opposed to the more corrupted, damaged eroticism of the urban working-class girl”⁹. While being celebrated for her motherly qualities, the peasant woman is also assimilated to nature for her wilderness allure: “the peasant-woman’s natural role as a signifier of earthy sexuality is as important an element in nineteenth -century visual ideology as her nurturing or religious roles”¹⁰.

This sensual vision of country life is evidently an idealisation as this charm and freshness are very far from the harshness of actual country life, which would heavily mark men's and women's appearance. The treatment of the woman figure in the reveries with a country setting is possibly even more unrealistic: the women represented are young-looking, well-fed and robust, plus with some innocence in their look that is contrary to worldly metropolitan women¹¹.

Yet another, more latent aspect might be suggested in the assimilation of woman and nature. The fact of setting a reverie in this context seems also to highlight a certain degree of irrationality and ineffableness towards both woman and nature. The reverie is then personified as a female, mysterious, and irrational activity, similar to the whimsical characteristics of nature that confound men in many ways. This element is also partly present in the third typology which also makes a large use of elements representing nature and wilderness (see *infra*).

Another consideration needs to be made about the vision of work in these paintings. These images are somewhat specific as they

⁹ Nochlin Linda, *Representing Women*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1999, p. 86.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ The aspect of idealisation is the reason why this typology has been given the title of “bucolic” instead of simply “peasant”: the term “bucolic” bears a nuance of *idyllic* country life.

represent women in exteriors. Women were not normally allowed to stay in exteriors, except when they were forced to work to sustain their family's needs. Such "mission" is then particularly respected in this century and even idealised, as shown in Millet's production. Yet, simultaneously, the bucolic reverie represents exactly the opposite of work, accomplishing one more step towards abstraction: not only are the peasant women attractive and idealised, but they can even afford to stop their work to indulge in far-away thoughts. And despite the fact that they are represented while neglecting their holy-sanctioned work, there is no negative judgement as there was in the representation of sloth.

This is even more unrealistic since daydreaming is by definition an activity only the wealthier classes can afford, and in general, for all types of persons who do not have more pressing problems at hand: only those who do not need to earn their living wage can afford the luxury of indulging in such a vain activity like daydreaming.

Furthermore, this is evident when images of peasant women are found holding a book and having interrupted their reading, as it usually happens in Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot's production. Not only is less feasible for peasant women to have time to daydream, but above all, lower class women in this time were mostly illiterate, and did not have the means nor the interest to read books.

This reveals a contradiction within the nineteenth century mentality: on one hand, a diligent work ethic was considered and represented a sacred and pure life, and alternatively, the bucolic reverie was frequently attributed the peasant context, suggesting that the luxury of daydreaming (typically found in wealthier classes) was also present in the lower class. For this reason I argue that the bucolic reverie, despite the setting, does not have any realistic intention but it is instead another social construct that celebrates the upper classes lifestyle, transposing it formally into another context. These peasant daydreaming women are appreciated and can represent a poetic image exactly because they are *not* like real peasants, they more closely resemble the bourgeois instead.

2.3. Exotic

The last type of setting for the reverie is defined as an “exotic” typology. “Exotic” is meant here as something unusual, apart from everyday society, spatially far away (above all towards the Orient), and most frequently, temporally distant. This interest and search for exoticism can be traced as one of the main features of Romanticism, as a longing for what is different and far both in space and in time. Already since the eighteenth century Neoclassicism, all other historicist styles (Roman, Egyptian, Etruscan etc.) had been explored and exploited in all their possible variants. The exotic reverie can be considered as part of a very late remainder of the Neoclassic taste revived by a few “academic” artists, just before being swept away by the incoming modern taste of the *avant-gardes*.

Unlike the previous two, which are spread all along the century, this third typology is more precisely defined in time, as it has its appearance and its fashion in the last decades of the century, starting from the 1880s. It is a later and already decadent stage of the reverie type, rising just before the reverie iconology’s decline and obliteration. Also, it is definitely less pervasive than the other two typologies as it comes from one country specifically, England, and in particular from the works of one artist, John William Godward, who revisited the subject the majority of his life.

The paintings of this typology feature an historic (or rather a historically eclectic) setting, mostly in Ancient Greece, with the display of several architectural and sculptural elements, as well as a natural landscape. Here again, only the setting is formally ancient but the attitude of the daydreaming woman is completely similar to bourgeois women, with a blank look towards a point outside the image itself, the abandoned pose, the thoughtful attitude. More specifically, the representation is highly idealising in the sense of a nostalgia for an age of “innocence lost”. As the bucolic reverie was raising the topic of the genuineness of the country life, also here the idealisation is towards an imagined golden age lost in an undefined classical past. Similarly to the bucolic reverie, in this case the exoticism of the setting and costumes is

intended to convey an eclectic idealisation of the classical period without actually taking into account the reality of life in antiquity, here depicted as merely a sweet life of doing nothing.

This view of the past connected with the subject of the reverie is one more variant of the escape from reality, so appreciated by Romantics. The exotic typology represents then a double effort of escape: not only the image, the setting and the character is farthest from the painter's reality, towards a dreamy past. Simultaneously, it displays a figure, within the metaphorical dream, also falling into a state of daydreaming away from her reality. It produces an effect of double alienation, like a dream in a dream: both the significant (the image) and the signifier (the content) of the painting are addressing the motif of the escape. This double dream effect is a relevant feature of these images and of their popularity.

It is not a coincidence that this dreamy yearning of the past will be overwhelmed by incoming, novel art forms, renovating the arts and looking at the present, if not even the future, with their subversive means. The aestheticism and extreme care for detail displayed in these images, a true product of the proudly decadent *esprit de fin de siècle*, will be subverted by the distorted, rough images of Cubists and Surrealists.

3. GERMANY AND LATE ROMANTICISM

It is not surprising that the first example of reverie identified is coming from Germany, the leading country in the development of the Romantic movement; the very concept of the reverie owes indeed very much to the Romantic aesthetics of melancholy and fantasy.

The painting chosen to start the artworks analysis is admittedly a painting *sui generis*, having some specific features that completely differentiate it from other reveries. Its early date, going back to the 1840s, accounts it as probably the earliest example of reverie.

As we would expect from an early example, it does not fully meet the criteria that will identify commonly the reveries when the genre will be more developed; specifically, the peculiarity of this

painting is that its purpose is parodic. Nonetheless, this is also the reason why it seems to grasp as a whole, and in order to mock them, some actual common directions of the arts at the moment, thus allowing us to observe all together some relevant motifs that will be common in reveries.

The painting we are dealing with is titled *Die Sentimentale* (*The Sentimental Girl*) [fig. 50], realised in 1846 by a minor German painter, Johann Peter Hasenclever, specialised in caricatures and popular scenes. If we did not know the background of the artist we would not have the impression that *Die Sentimentale* is a parody. At a first look it might seem like a programmatic manifesto of Romantic poetics, as all the typical motifs are displayed, in an exaggerated (yet not bluntly ridiculous) way.

First of all, what startles us in comparison to other reveries, is that the scene takes place at night, the moment of contemplation and reflection for Romantics. The painting displays a young girl sitting, turning partly her back towards us and looking instead through a window from which a wide natural landscape can be seen. The *topos* of looking through the window is amplified by the presence of the full moon, whose light fills the whole room and is reflected on a lake below. As another source of light a candle on the table seems to redouble the soft light effect of the moonlight.

The girl's attitude is in this case of deep sadness and longing, her gaze seems apprehensive, and we can even see tears shining on her cheek; her blouse has dropped and is showing her shoulder. The left hand, barely visible to us, is bent to hold the head, thus quoting once again the pose of the melancholy. The space in general is apparently a private room of the girl, as there are both her bed and her desk, decorated with a bouquet of roses in a vase. What afflicts the girl and makes her 'sentimental' is clearly a love pain and longing. The love topic is not here, like in the regular later reverie, only hinted: it is on the contrary strongly imposing, as everything around the girl seems to be addressing such motif. Surrounding her there are indeed all the very symbols of Romanticism. First of all, three texts are displayed, with their titles clearly readable: these consist of two books, open just on the

frontispiece to let deliberately the title in view, and a letter. One of the books is *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*, 1774) by Goethe, even now considered the masterpiece of early Romanticism and probably the most known novel about pain and death for an unrequited love, leading to the protagonist's suicide. The other text is the novel titled *Mimili* by Heinrich Clauren, about a Swiss farmer girl and German officer falling in love when meeting in the Swiss mountains. While *Werther* became, and still is, the very symbol and manifesto for all Romantics, *Mimili* (now rightfully forgotten), which had also a wide success of public, has been soon after reconsidered a trivial novel full of sentimentalism and clichés with an improbable happy-ending. Therefore, the reference to these two well-known texts, and especially to *Mimili*, seems to confirm the parodic purpose of the painting. The third text, a letter laying open on the table, gives us an insight on the girl's love labour: the letter is addressed to "*Innigst geliebte Fanny*" ("dearly beloved Fanny") and the portrait medal next to it confirms the identity of the sender, most probably the girl's lover. The image of the same man is also appearing on the bigger portrait hanging on the wall above the bed. The girl's love pain is therefore a real one, related to her beloved, and not only produced, as it will be later with the reveries with a text, by reading a love fiction. What we can infer is that the cause of her pain is that her lover is not there, and maybe he will not come back.

The fact that this 'sentimental' reverie takes place at night is in a way the distinctive feature of this one from the later reveries, which will always take place during the day. Reverie is indeed daydreaming, an activity normally done during the day, in leisure time and often while doing some other activity. It is different from the dream experienced during sleep but also from the dramatic thoughts and suffering which are tormenting this girl keeping her awake.

The painting, in its accumulation of Romantic symbolisms, also introduces the motif of the window. As anticipated, this element is often present in reveries because it represents the topic of the escape and of crossing, through fantasy, the constraints of the room. On the case of the *Sentimentale*, the window does not only symbolise

trespassing the limits towards the outside, but it is the pretext also to add other Romantic *topoi* such as the contemplation of the nature, the night and the moon. The landscape seen from the girl's window is not only a wild sublime nature, but it includes also water (a lake) and above all the vision of the full moon, a classic in Romantic poetics.

Until this moment, the whole Romanticism and Romantic painting had given a great importance to the contact with nature and its representation. This is the main feature of what I will define a 'male reverie' (see further par. IV.2), meant as a representation of a man in contemplation in a landscape. If until now these 'male reveries' were inspired by the ecstatic reflection on nature, now looking through the window does not address the idea of nature but in general the idea of escape. For this reason in later reveries we do not need to see through the window, but we only need to acknowledge the presence of an 'outside'.

Some¹² has proposed that *Die Sentimentale* might be modelled on another caricature, a drawing titled *O lune inspire moi* (*Oh moon inspire me*, 1844) by Honoré Daumier. The drawing represents a woman in apprehensive attitude looking from a window from which a big moon can be seen; the target of the satyr is the late Romantic inspiration in connection to the moon. If the derivation is true, and this is likely, this would in the first place prove the parodic intent of Hasenclever towards Romanticism.

While in this painting the window allows the display of the typical Romantic themes, the constant of the later reveries with window is that we will not be able to see the landscape outside. This is also due to the fact that nature stops playing such an important role in the inspiration of the reverie.

To conclude, the *Sentimentale* represents in a way the turning point, the joint in visual arts between the Romantic male longing (often connected to nature) and the later female reverie about love: unlike the

¹² Geppert, Stefan and Soechting, Dirk, *Johann Peter Hasenclever (1810-1853): ein Malerleben zwischen Biedermeier und Revolution*, Mainz: Ph. von Zabern, 2003.

male meditation about nature, melancholy and sublime, it introduces very overtly the female topic of love suffering.

It is also a specific work and product of its cultural and geographic context: it is the work of a German artist who is mocking the very typical expression of German Romanticism.

4. FRANCE AND BELGIUM

In this section, artworks by French and Belgian artists are compiled since the first attempts to represent the reverie can be found in these two countries. Also, their features and intentions are common, given similar socio-cultural conditions.

The presence of these initial reverie representations in France and Belgium is possibly due to two factors: the first is consequence of a well-developed, vibrant, and vital artistic scene in both countries (especially in France). The second is that, simultaneously, the market for paintings expanded through an increase in the upper social class which fuelled the demand for self-representation or artistic models on which they could shape their artistic taste.

It is, therefore, not a coincidence that these first painters approaching the representation of the reverie are painters of the bourgeoisie since daydreaming is a bourgeois activity by definition. The only exception, as well as one of the earliest examples, is the representation of the bucolic reverie pursued by Corot.

4.1. J-B. Camille Corot (1796-1875) and the Peasant Reverie

In order to illustrate the evolution in the reverie representation, it is first necessary to take into account the production of one of the most renowned artists among those to be evaluated in this thesis, Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot. Due to the highly acclaimed reputation of Corot, much importance will be devoted to his production through the illustration of many of his collateral works which precede the evolution of the true reverie.

It might be surprising to find Corot's name as the first of the reveries painters, as his fame is due primarily to his landscape production, for which he has been acclaimed during his time as well as at the current time. With regard to his production, little importance is often given to his representation of the human figure, which occasionally appears in his landscapes in the form of small background silhouettes in the. Lesser known are his works where the human figure is represented as the main subject. Yet it was during the 1850s that Corot started to devote himself to this more progressively. Even his contemporaries, who viewed him a *paysagiste*, underestimated the importance of such research into the human figure. His figures were considered only accessories to the representation of the landscape, a *divertissement* of the painter.

Exactly around the 1850 Corot started focusing above all on the rendering of a pensive attitude in his figures, always placing them in a landscape but giving more space to the figure itself, now larger and occupying the whole scene. Corot's particular aim was to be portray an internal movement in his paintings, akin to the interior life of the subject, producing a more intimate image. In this sense, Corot is a real innovator, especially in comparison to the genre painting in general: his figures in pensive attitudes are considered remarkable and rightfully the first examples of a reverie production. It might sound strange that the very first corpus of reveries analysed belongs to the second of the categories identified, the bucolic reverie, instead of the more obvious type, the bourgeois reverie. Though the images to be analysed can certainly be defined as 'bucolic reveries', the peasant setting here is very far from the intention of the genre painting, that which Corot has mastered in his landscapes. The painter devoted himself to the research of a growing degree of abstraction, eventually detaching these images from a realistic setting. The subsequent setting is merely attached behind the subject as the scenes were produced by Corot in his studio (as shown in the first *Liseuse*, see *infra*), with a study after the model and then adapted to a country landscape. But on the other side it is also obvious that these scenes were not a real life painting as peasant women were very unlikely to be able to read.

Corot has indeed produced a large quantity of artworks representing women in all possible contemplative activities, including reading, resting, or simply in the attitude of the melancholy: “fix on the canvas universal attitudes, those of the woman dreaming, reading, looking at herself, contemplating an object or a painting, seems to Corot the first scope of these sessions with the model”¹³. This seems to be his most common way of representing women, especially in the second part of his career. For instance, in the 1840s, he already started to produce his ‘*liseuses*’, images where the central focus is a young girl reading while surrounded by some part of landscape or country. One important example is the well-known *Liseuse (Girl reading)* [fig. 51] from 1845-50 in which a girl is depicted in mid-close up while reading with a book on her lap. The model is a young girl dressed in a vivid red dress with a regional-looking hairstyle. The painting already shows the attention towards the absorptive condition that starts to now become Corot’s focus. While in this *liseuse* the model is still a recognisable one and the setting is declaredly the atelier, as we can see from the easel behind the girl, already in other images of reading, Corot seems to make an effort towards a progressive abstraction from the specific model.

Such paintings, as centred on the figure of a woman, are not actually made *en plein air*, even when they feature a natural background: they are always produced in the atelier, where Corot portrays his models, possibly with some peasant or regional costumes. It is meaningful that for the depiction of an absorbed figure, Corot alternated the setting in the atelier and the setting in a fantasy landscape, though this is not portrayed from real life.

The *Liseuse couronnée des fleurs (Reading Girl crowned with Flowers)*, also from the same year [fig. 52], already presents all the typical characteristics that the representation of reading will evolve into the reverie. The girl is seen in full figure, sitting (hard to say on what, most probably on a big rock); her head is reclined on her hand, as is often the case in these images, thus giving the painting a more introspective

¹³V. Pomarède Vincent, *Corot*, Paris Flammarion 1996, p. 192.

twist in comparison to the *liseuse* mentioned earlier. Despite this, more than melancholy, her figure emanates an absorptive calm as she is occupied in reading, low-eyed, from a book she is holding on her lap. The landscape around her, including the view of a lake, is realised with simple strokes, and completed with a few more detailed plants in the front of the painting. The girl is wearing a long blue dress decorated by an orange band around her knees. A classic-looking dress reflecting Corot's interest for regional costumes of which he will make wide use later on. Apart from the dress, some other details also enhance the feeling of classicism: the crown of leaves and the nude foot appearing under the long dress contribute highly to this idealisation. These elements reflect the fact that, in such portraits, Corot tries progressively to make his figure more and more idealised and universal.

For this purpose, Corot translates the theme of the reading woman into more classical iconographies, as in the *Madeleine lisant* (*Mary Magdalen Reading*) in which the partial nudity of the figure contributes in identifying it as a classical image instead than a genre scene of real life. Moreover, this painting is relevant as it represents a variation on the topic of the Mary Magdalen, which was one of the similar precedent iconographies of the reverie.

In his search for a more universal image of a woman, Corot seems to be evolving from the replication of a specific female model by rendering personal traits and attitudes progressively less identifiable and more universal, as if to reach an ideal prototype of woman. The titles of his artworks also follow this purpose, aiming more at the personification of an allegoric or mythological figure. Remarkably, Corot follows a path that can be viewed as that of the opposite of the one followed in the iconography of melancholy, which goes from the allegoric to the realistic representation. As illustrated earlier, the theme of melancholy develops from an allegoric representation where the woman depicted is not supposed to be felt as real, to a progressive characterisation of the figure in a more human and realistic sense.

Also the reverie, which it is argued to be considered a 'modern melancholy', then becomes the representation of a real woman, not an idealised one. The reverie aims at representing women not only as

viewed by men, but also in a way in which women, too, would recognise and identify themselves. For this specificity, the reverie is bound to be in between the portrait of an identifiable specific person, and the universal impersonal fantasy image of the allegory. This is also the reason why the reverie painted by Corot, directed towards a progressive idealisation, are instead considered to be specific works and are here treated separately from others.

The interest for the representation of a pensive moment becomes progressively central in Corot, who around the 1860s starts a reflection precisely on this subject: “Corot soon gives to the subject of the reverie, of meditation or melancholy a perfect autonomy from the one of reading. The physical attitude of certain models aimed perfectly to evoke simply an inner feeling”¹⁴.

On this regard, particularly remarkable are two works from the 1860s which, as well as in other authors in the same decade, can be already recognised as reveries. Additionally, in these works the fact that the iconography of the reverie is the result of the previous iconographies can be truly recognised.

The first one, titled *Meditation* (1860 ca.) [fig. 53], displays a woman, seen with her body in profile and her head turned slightly more towards the viewer. Her expression does not directly relate to the idea of meditation: her gaze bears a sort of suspension and dark pensiveness, rather than meditation, enhanced also by her black mantle.

The painting titled *Melancholy* (also 1860 ca.) [fig. 55] is even more representative: the young girl, in a peasant costume, seems to be looking towards the viewer with a completely absent look. Her attitude, beyond sadness and melancholy itself -as testified also by the typical pose- display also others sentiments, especially boredom, as the girl’s jaw half-dropped seems to suggest.

¹⁴Ibid, p. 193. I would like to underline also that finding in this monograph by Pomarède the reference to the very term of ‘reverie’ for this stage of Corot’s production came as a confirmation when I had already observed and recognised as reveries Corot’s efforts to represent an internal sentiment.

These last two works can be rightfully considered already two images of reverie as the two characters, despite being slightly impersonal (especially the *Meditation*) present all the features of the pure reverie. They both display a woman sitting and apparently doing nothing but expressing an internal sentiment that is a quiet absorption. Furthermore, both paintings are particularly relevant to prove that in his effort to move from the particular to the universal, Corot helped to join together the concepts of meditation or melancholy, two specific and ancient iconographies, with the modern idea of reverie. This shall make it clearer also in which way the reverie iconography is literally deriving from these previous more ancient iconographies.

In a way, it looks like the reverie, in its beginnings, and not having yet its own codified imagery, makes use of the imagery and terminology of the two well-known and more classical concepts. This possibly proves that viewing the reverie as a modern form of melancholy is a legitimate idea and can prove fruitful.

In the same line of search for universality and classicism are *La tragédie*, *La Comédie*, *La poésie* [fig. 54] and *La muse pensive* (*Tragedy*, *Comedy*, *Poetry* and *The Pensive Muse*) four paintings probably belonging to a larger cycle. Here the allegories are presented all in a pensive mood, but in these cases the allegoric intention is more obvious, as the images are sometimes completed with allegoric attributes like crowns and other symbols.

Dreaminess or pensiveness become also the central focus of a small group of works realised around the 1860s-1870s in which Corot depicts the female model in his atelier purely lost in thoughts. These paintings are probably the most relevant ones from our point of view as they represent the female model, usually in a regional costume, sitting in the artist's atelier and merely contemplating. This series is conceptually rather different than Corot's works seen so far, in which the country landscape and the idealised model were aspiring to create a classical, universal image. Here instead there is no idealisation, as the artist depicts, without embellishments and without pretention, simply his atelier and his model. These images resemble closely the genre painting as they seem to be depicting a scene of real life: not anymore

an unrealistic reading peasant in an idyllic landscape, but, concretely, the artist's surroundings. Here the setting is, as it will be also in the later reveries, particularly minimalistic; a few, often irrelevant objects contribute to the feeling of immateriality and emptiness of the painting: "the impression of strange emptiness of these scenes [...] is also enhanced by the use of strange accessories – mandolin, colour box, book, dog"¹⁵.

Although these images belong only partly to the category of the bucolic reverie (as there is no representation of the country landscape), they are no less poetic than the other ones for the fact of having a more concrete setting. All of them seem to depict a moment of rest of the female model: as if the woman was caught in a moment of intimate reflection in between one posing session and the next. This is indeed the peculiarity of these works, which pretend to reproduce a spontaneous moment of rest, while they are instead the product of a study session. Two of them (1865-8 and 1868) are titled indeed *L'atelier de l'artiste* (*The artist's studio*) [fig. 56 and 57] and are actually the same image, with small variations. Both leave less space to the reverie as they are displaying the woman from the back (thus not allowing us to see her face) while she is observing attentively one of Corot's paintings, leaning towards the easel.

Equally of the years 1865-66 is *L'atelier* (*The studio* or *Young woman with a mandolin*)¹⁶ [fig. 58], which looks like the moment after the previous two: the woman is still sitting on a chair in front of one of Corot's landscape, but this time she is turning more towards her right, thus also opening the view of herself for the spectator. It is hard to say if she is still obliquely looking at the painting or if her gaze is diverted towards something on the side; this second possibility is more likely as she is laying a finger on her cheek in a typically pensive attitude. It looks like the following moment of the previous two paintings, as if, after the close observation of the painting, the girl got distracted into her own reverie, maybe inspired by the painting itself. Moreover, she is

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 194.

¹⁶ Paris, Musée d'Orsay.

also holding a mandolin, which does not make it very clear what was her activity before getting lost into her day dream, whether she was looking at the painting or playing the mandolin. Otherwise, the scene might want to hint that the mandolin, as an exotic accessory, might have remained in her hands after a posing session for a painting.

In the last one of this type, titled *The Atelier*¹⁷ [fig. 59], the woman is also turning on her side while sitting in front of a painting. Unlike the previous paintings, characterised by vivid colours, above all red, this displays a very plain palette in shades of grey, beige and black. The woman, this time with her head veiled, seems to turn with in the distracted attitude she would have if she had been diverted momentarily from her deep thoughts, as if being 'disturbed' by the presence of the painter (and with him the viewer). The model, like in a proper reverie, is not looking at the viewer -she has "her eye settled into a mysterious reverie"¹⁸- but seems to be lost in her thoughts while her gaze goes outside of the scene.

Again, beyond being distracted into the reverie and sitting in front of the painting, the woman is at the same time holding another object, this time a book. Like in the previous one, we cannot guess whether she was busy in looking at the painting or she was reading merely sitting in front of it.

These last two paintings are for the purpose of this study Corot's most interesting works as he was not trying to represent the perfect prototype of woman, but simply the model. And the reverie as iconography will also refuse the idealisation and will try to pursue the representation of a regular type of woman, seen in a normal moment of daily life and busy with her own thoughts.

Almost in the same years of this series Corot also starts developing another variation of the pensive attitude, with very relevant results for the representation of the reverie. The early motif of reading is transformed into the one of the 'interrupted reading', which is wholly corresponding to the reverie with a text: "one of the most

¹⁷ In the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon

¹⁸ Pomarède Vincent, *Corot*. Paris: Flammarion 1996, p. 194

personal and most poetic variant of this subject is that of the interrupted reading, that is the moment in which the model, diverted from the reverie, is brought back to reality of the exterior world and fixes the spectator, the gaze still charged of moving memories"¹⁹.

One well-known image of this type, painted around 1860-65, bearing already in the title the reference to our topic as it is titled *La rêverie* [fig. 60], introduces the topic of the interrupted reading. The woman has put aside the book she was reading and she is now holding it in her hands while she shows an absorbed expression and a lost gaze as if truly meditating on what she just read. She is holding her head with her hand though not quite in the melancholy pose of sadness, but more in the sort of position of someone deeply reflecting of something. The alternative title of *La jeune grecque* (*The Young Greek Woman*) apparently refers to the traditional costume the woman is wearing. The use of regional costumes becomes indeed another leitmotif of Corot's production: beyond adding colours to an otherwise rather opaque palette used by the painter, this motif is meant to give an exotic allure to the image, letting us infer a setting in some southern countries, such as Greece or Italy. Apart from this, another aspect is to be highlighted regarding the use of regional costumes: like other 'exotic' elements added rather arbitrarily by Corot, especially in his reverie paintings, also traditional costumes play a role in the expression of the pensive attitude; "the different costumes [...] suited his works [...] because they favoured the crystallisation of the reverie, thanks to the typically Romantic sentiment of exotic evasion they suggested"²⁰.

Some years later, in 1870 ca., Corot realises the painting titled precisely *La lecture interrompue* (*The Interrupted Reading*) [fig. 61], which goes back to the setting in interiors, since the girl seems to be leaning on a sort of table, though no other detail is visible in the scene. The woman is seen in a relaxed pose as her back is curve and her hand supports gracefully her head, not exactly in the pose of the melancholy, but in a completely absorptive fashion. She shows her face to the

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 193

²⁰ Ibid, p. 198.

spectator and at a first sight she seems also to be looking directly towards them but actually her gaze is directed slightly lower, as if not looking directly in front of her. The girl has apparently interrupted her reading in order to think on what she just read: "What sentiment agitated then the young girl who had just been disturbed in her reading? What event could interrupt it like this? These works became strange and poetic descriptions of the languid attitude of the female model, whose arm holding the book hanged along the body or rested on her knees, and whose face was turned, the look blank, towards the disturber, that is the spectator. The head was often leaning on one of the two arms, sign of the intensity of the reverie, just stopped, and of a certain nostalgic languor"²¹.

In the last years of Corot's life, the process of progressive abstraction he had been trying to pursue in his whole production seems to find an expression towards a progressive reduction of figurative details and an increased concentration on the single figure and her absorptive condition. In this sense the setting and every other external element becomes superfluous and is avoided. Already in *La reverie – Jeune Grecque* the background, some undefined landscape, made of quick strokes, or the support on which the woman is sitting, seemingly a sort of stone steps, are barely visible. These elements already have completely disappeared in *La lecture interrompue* where a plain background and a not clearly defined support the woman is leaning on, enhance the concentration of the viewer's look on the single figure.

This process of reaching the perfect reverie state seems to be accomplished in the end of Corot's production, in a 1870 famous painting called *La Juive d'Alger (The Jewish from Algiers)* [fig. 62]. At a first look it is not clear if the woman is merely thinking or even effectively sleeping. With a closer look, I would opt to say that her eyes are low but not closed, and the direction of her gaze seems to be going absently towards the small object, deliberately not defined, she is holding with one hand, possibly a flower. This latter, in its meaninglessness has apparently taken the place that should have been

²¹ Ibid, p. 193.

of the book. The *Juive d'Alger*, indeed, has exactly the same pose of body and hands of the *Jeune Grecque*. Apart from the progressive abstraction the *Juive d'Alger* displays, the most meaningful difference between the two paintings is indeed the disappearance of the book. This latter is felt now as an element not needed anymore in order to represent the daydream; it becomes a simple accessory that might distract the viewer from the observation of the mere absorption. Also the background is completely plain and, though we can see some darker shape on the left, the support on which the woman is leaning is almost completely disappeared and her arm gives curiously the impression to be floating in the air, thus completely amplifying the dreaminess of the image.

From the comparison of two very similar paintings like the *Jeune Grecque* and the *Juive d'Alger*, the process of complete abstraction from reality seems to be accomplished through several elements, namely the elimination of the background, of the book, a more exaggerated absorptive condition and the detailed dress. The process of simplification and reduction to the minimum does not affect the definition of the traditional dress the woman is wearing; on the contrary all the attention of the painter seems to have been focused on the accurate representation of the colourful and richly decorated dress. This detail creates a contrast effect both with the undefined, airy background and with the deep pensiveness of the woman, to obtain a now complete feeling of crystallisation and suspension.

The path followed by Corot in his production of pensive woman, as proven, goes from the representation of reading, to the representation of reverie inspired by different objects (painting, instruments, books) and ends, through a progressive polishing and elimination of superfluous elements, in a completely abstract and almost surreal image, in which, despite the eye-catching costume -or maybe even thanks to this latter- the only subject actually displayed is the reverie.

To conclude, Corot has been in this sense an anticipator, being able to detach himself also from the label of landscape painter attributed to him, and investigate a new subject. All the more so if we

consider that his paintings are to be counted among the first reveries, introducing the genre in the very first years in which other reveries start appearing.

The most relevant feature we can detect in Corot painting is that he really accomplishes the passage from the reading to that interrupted reading that is already the representation of the reverie. Also, while we might be less interested in the ideal representations he was pursuing, at the same time the small series representing models in the studio is very relevant to our topic since it aims already at depicting the woman in her absorptive private moment and in a regular realistic context.

Despite this I doubt that Corot's reverie images, little known even now, had any influence in the contemporary production or helped the diffusion of the topic of the reverie. I believe the reflection Corot has made on the absorptive condition was intended as a personal interest of his and has not been remarked by the critic extensively so far. On the other hand if the topic of the reverie spread (and it did) and became around the 1870s, a common, fashionable topic, is not Corot's merit but the topic's itself: as we shall see it was a subject that was raising a growing interest in different domains and contexts.

4.2. The Painters of the Bourgeoisie: Reverie as a Manner

As it was clear from the previous paragraph, the artistic path pursued by Corot shall be considered specific and unique, and thus it deserved a space on its own, for the personal interpretation of the bucolic reverie and for the early chronology in comparison to the iconography of the reverie in general.

Also, despite producing paintings fully to be considered reveries, Corot approaches the subject along his personal purposes. His reverie images have some specific features such as the peasant/regional settings and above all his own pursuit of idealisation and abstraction.

While Corot has his own specific features, the reveries produced by other artists from France and Belgium can be assimilated for common features and shared views on the topic. For this reason I found

it useful to divide them by similar characteristics in the following analysis. As also anticipated, all the following artists belong to the bourgeois context and are to be considered painters of the bourgeoisie: after all, the normal context in which the daydream should take place is among wealthier milieus. Let us then go back to the 1850s again in order to trace history of the very first appearances of reverie scenes, as well as their derivation from similar models. For what concerns the typology of reverie, we will now observe how, apart from the specificity of Corot's bucolic reverie, the main and first typology in which the reverie finds its expression is the bourgeois type, as expressed by less known artists' production.

If Corot developed his interest towards the representation of the reverie by first approaching the subject of reading - soon becoming an 'interrupted reading'- also other authors started their reflection on pensiveness from this iconography. For others, instead, reaching the reverie might be the final point of a process of derivation from other models, like for instance the representation of sleep.

The artists that will be investigated now are the most relevant artists for the topic, who for instance returned to the topic of the reverie several times along their life, or who accomplished an evolution in their representation of the topic along their production. Such artistic paths and developments allow us to have clearer and more evident view on the general evolution of the topic itself.

4.2.1. Alfred Stevens (1823-1906)

Like others of the artists we will analyse, also the Belgian Alfred Stevens seems to fully impersonate the figure of a painter of the bourgeoisie. His production is focused on the representation of the higher-classes activities and lifestyle, with a special attention to the female figure.

Stevens is to be considered, at least for what concerns the representation of the reverie, an innovator since one of the earliest images of reverie is a painting of his, commonly known with the very title of *Reverie*, dates back to 1854 [fig. 63], at least a decade earlier the

appearance of the first reveries images in general, including Corot himself.

The *Reverie* by Stevens features a young girl sitting in front of a table, but at the same time being detached from it. While her body is indeed sitting at the table, her pose is more unstable, as if she has distanced herself from the table, assuming a more relaxed pose, with her hands crossed above her knees. At the same time she is turning her look in the viewer's direction, showing her young face that we would not have fully seen if she was properly sitting at the table. As usual, her gaze is rather absent or maybe even quietly bored. It is this detachment from what she was doing, reading, the very sign of the reverie; this pose again of 'interrupted reading' as of someone who has momentarily and unconsciously stopped what she was doing in order to give space to her own thoughts. The painting's palette is composed of highly contrasting colours, with the background, the table and the girl's corset made in dark colours, while the rest, especially including her hair and gown, are painted in light brilliant colours. Among the light-coloured elements the book is particularly prominent, left on the table as she was reading it when she got distracted by something else. In this case we cannot say if it is her own sentiments or something external the thing that reverted her attention from her reading.

I consider this a first image of reverie although the attitude of the girl is maybe more self-aware than in the later and more evidently dreamy examples. This is because this painting inherits something from the tradition of the portrait in the common attitude in which the character is seen as if turning away, through a torsion of the head and of the body, from his or her activity in order to look towards the painter and consequently towards the spectator.

Apart from this very early example of reverie, Stevens often dedicated himself to images of pensive women in general, and most often in connection with the presence of a text. In particular, and as it is often the case, he focused on the depiction of scenes of reading and writing, and in general of the practice of correspondence, in all possible variations and different situations, whether happy or sad.

In all these works by Stevens the reading of the text is conceived always as the starter of a train of thought, which ends up into a reverie; all figures seem particularly touched, either in a positive or negative way, by what they have been reading. The paintings in general show an interest for the practice of correspondence and its effects on the reader, closely deriving from the typical iconography of reading from the eighteenth century.

Many examples can be mentioned with this topic in Stevens' production. For instance, one of the variation of the iconography can include the image of a woman reading some news, verisimilarly from her lover as in *News from afar* (1868) [fig. 64] in which the woman has just finished reading a letter, that she is leaving on the table. While her facial expression does not seem to be affected, her reaction to the letter seems to be shown in her gesture of bringing a hand to her chest as if in anxiety. This gesture highlights also the wedding ring she is wearing on her left hand, thus confirming the idea that the letter is coming from her lover. Additionally, the globe on the table in front of her seems to address again the idea of a faraway lover, who is sending letters 'from afar'.

Another example of this type is *The farewell note* [fig. 65], in which the woman is lingering on a doorway, holding loosely and resignedly a piece of paper, apparently the farewell note of the title in which maybe her lover has abandoned her. Again, beyond the sad gaze, also the detail of one hand holding the chest returns to express her affection.

What touches the women represented in these two cases is therefore a real conversation or piece of news, but in other paintings, the absorption or the reverie are raised instead by the reading of a book, therefore fictional. This might be also the reason why, unlike other figures, the girl in *Reverie* does not seem to be so deeply affected by what she has read, she looks more absorbed in a quiet contemplation, and in her posture and attitude she does not show signs of her affection like the two previous examples.

This detail might also be taken as a small difference between this reverie and the later ones, in which the figure will be progressively

more involved and affected by what she is reading, all the more so if this is fictional.

Another *Reverie* [fig. 66] is to be found in Steven's later production, precisely in 1878. Despite the title of 'reverie', this painting is in my opinion less interesting (and less well realised) than the 1854 *Reverie*. The woman is seen closely, in profile, as she is sitting turning her torso on her side on a sort of bench, and resting her right hand on the seatback. The scene seems to be set in exteriors as behind the woman some colourful flowers are to be seen and she is holding an umbrella. Though her look is absorbed and low, I think less space is given here (than in the other *Reverie* for example) to the internal sentiment as in this image the face of the girl is not particularly expressive nor well visible. My impression is that this painting was meant to represent one among many moments of quietness and idleness, in this case in open air (so in a way the propitious moment for the daydream) even if how this daydream affects the character is here not particularly developed.

4.2.2. Charles Joshua Chaplin (1825-1891)

A little known French¹ artist, Charles Joshua Chaplin represents another meaningful example of the first reverie attempts, in which it is specifically evident the earlier derivation of its model.

Although his personality and works are almost completely forgotten now, in his times, Chaplin was a well-known painter of higher classes, especially appreciated for the representation of girls and children.

The reputation he reached as a painter made him wealthy, which also allowed him to promote the apprenticeship of painting among women and became himself specialised in this teaching: among his pupils are also to be numbered Mary Cassat and Louise Abbema².

¹ He was of English origins from his father's side but he was born and lived in France all his life.

² The fact that the painter has the same name of the big actor makes it even more difficult to find information on his figure; one of his paintings has even

He has been defined the “*Boucher du second Empire*” both for the style and for the graceful and sometimes sensual subjects. His style was indeed following a sort of eighteenth century revival that became fashionable during the second Empire period. For instance, his figures feature often in clothing and hairstyle the fashion of the previous century. Also his subjects are often focused on this sort of Rococo revival, complete with the representation of young girls and malicious subjects, as in *L’oiseau perdu* (*The lost bird*), or *Jeune fille au nid* (*Young Girl with a Nest*, 1869), recalling fully the sort of paintings Jean-Baptiste Greuze used to produce (as seen in par. II.1).

As early as 1857 Chaplin painted *Le rêve* (*The Dream*) [fig. 67], in which a girl is seen in profile, her eyes closed and apparently having fallen asleep while holding on her knees an open book with both hands. More precisely, her left hand is still keeping the book open, while the other seems instead already relaxed in the abandonment of sleep. She is sitting on a chair, somewhat unnaturally represented next to a background wall, and on which she is leaning with her head.

As proven by the fact that she is sleeping on a chair, fully dressed, and that before falling asleep she was clearly reading a book, what we are looking at is not a nocturnal dream. The activity she was doing until that moment, reading, is left aside, thus rendering this image somewhat similar to the representation of sloth in Flemish tradition. In this case, though, there is no reproach towards the woman. First of all what she was doing before falling asleep, reading, was not her duty but a leisurely activity. Second, the purpose of the painting is not to give a representation of a slothful woman. What starts now attracting the attention and the curious look of the artists is the female attitude, the female mind and, in this case, the observation of what is the woman’s reaction to reading, especially a certain kind of texts. The fact that the painting is titled *Le rêve* helps us focusing on what is really represented: not a lazy woman having fallen asleep out of boredom, but a person who is being inspired into a dream by the book she was

been purchased for a high price by a collector who believed it was a rare pictorial attempt of Charlot.

reading. Though we cannot see it concretely, it is the dream, as lived by the figure represented, the actual subject of the image. The concentration on the figure and her internal emotions is enhanced by the round form of the painting, which focuses on the figure as if it was a target.

As seen in the Introduction, the representations of dreams until the nineteenth century reflect a different style in which the image of the dream itself is represented, with the object of the dream appearing clearly within the scene. In this sense *Le rêve* by Chaplin and other more modern representation of dreams, are less apodictic in comparison to the ones more common before the nineteenth century since they do not give a plain and univocal representation of the dream. On the contrary, they mean to give a representation of what is actually not visible. Despite this, the dream in this case (as well as it will be for the reverie) becomes visible to us even though it is not represented: more space is left to a double game of fantasy, both the fantasy of the girl, whose dream content is not revealed, and the fantasy of the viewer who has to guess what the girl's dream is about.

Comparing this image to Flemish earlier painting, we can argue that this is in a way a connection between the image of a sleeping (slothful) woman and a reading (also slothful) woman. If we remove the negative paradigm of sloth, not present here, we will realise that the sleep and above all the dream as a consequence of reading constitutes a next stage after the pure representation of sleep itself. The interest in the representation of this absorptive condition leads very soon to the next stage of absorption, the reverie.

All this is confirmed by the observation of another painting Chaplin produced twenty-three years after *Le rêve* and which bears precisely the title of *Rêverie* (1880) [fig. 68]. The image is in overall more à la mode and more delicate, with a lighter palette of colours. The girl's style is more modern, with a pale pink veil dress which leaves one of her shoulders uncovered and blends almost her figure with the wall, coloured in a similar pale shade. Quite strikingly though, the pose of the girl has remained exactly the same as in *Le rêve*, as she is sitting on a chair and laying her head on the wall next to her. Only the book is

missing from her hands, now joined, and apparently holding loosely some roses, symbol of love. Unlike the previous one, the girl here is not sleeping, and although her eyes are low, looking towards the ground, they are open and she is fully awake. This is the condition of pure reverie, a deep state of thoughtfulness, even without the pretext of a book inspiring it, while the space remains extremely plain and as little distracting as possible.

Another sketch by Chaplin, to be found under the title of *Portrait of a young woman in profile* [fig. 69], seems to be a study or a precedent of *Rêverie*, for the expression of the woman, her hairstyle and her veiled dress. The main difference is in the position of the woman's arms, as she seems to be hugging and holding to her chest the roses she holds instead on her lap in the other painting. This gesture is meant to signify the affection and the sentiments the woman is feeling in this moment, but maybe the artist considered depicting a more quiet and thoughtful feeling, not the one that would affect her too obviously.

Within Chaplin's production on the dream topic also *Dans les rêves* or *Après le bal masqué* (*In the Dreams* or *After the Masked Ball*, 1886) [fig. 70] should be mentioned. This is an enigmatic painting in which a woman is seen sleeping half-naked over something that is in between silky textiles and a water flow, and which is meant to represent the state of the person who dreams³.

³ Two other paintings by Chaplin figures under the title of '*reverie*', though this time I question the appropriateness of this title. It is in both cases the figure of an half-naked girl in medium close-up. One is looking invitingly to the spectator, the other is apparently sleeping. Both are rather erotic paintings as the woman is in both cases exposing herself. In these two cases I question the definition of reveries since the woman does not display any daydreaming attitude. The title of reverie is more acceptable if we consider it a reverie of the painter who imagines such sensual figures.

4.2.3. Auguste Toulmouche (1829-1890)

Auguste Toulmouche is another, now barely known, author who devoted almost all of his production to the representation of high-class life. Nowadays he is mostly known for two reasons: for being related to Claude Monet after marrying a cousin of this latter and for a line by Émile Zola referring to the “*délicieuses poupées de Toulmouche*”.

His production, indeed, is most often centred on female characters and their activities in interiors, therefore generally idle moments, reflecting largely a sort of emptiness of the wealthy women's lifestyle in this period. His specific accent is often on the vanity but at the same time the extreme grace and elegance of the characters depicted; this charming frivolousness is the central subject of paintings such as *Vanity* (1890), probably one of his most known works. Toulmouche's skill and fame were due especially to his extremely neat and detailed painting technique, especially with a realistic and luscious treatment of all kinds of textiles and a specific taste for fashion and clothing, which was of course appealing to high-class women. It is therefore not surprising that among the images of bourgeois lifestyle, the reverie and pensive moments in general find a large place, as daydreaming was the typical female activity.

As it is often the case, one of his earliest works similar to the reverie is connected to the representation of reading, and indeed is titled *La lettre d'amour* (*The Love Letter*, 1863) [fig. 71]. The protagonist of this painting is a young girl seen in profile sitting in front of a table. Though she is sitting at the table she is not in the attentive pose of someone who is reading or writing and seems instead to have fallen backwards on the seatback of the chair. Some papers lay on her table, but above all the most important detail is that she holds a letter in her hands, which seems to be the object that has started her reflection. The gaze from the girl's reclined head, though, is very determined and focused: it is nowhere near the absent look which characterises many reveries. In this sense it reminds of the main character's gaze in *La fiancée hésitante* (*The Reluctant Bride*, 1866), another of the most famous paintings by Toulmouche. The reason why I do not consider *La lettre d'amour* a reverie is that, more than being lost in daydreams, the girl

seems very focused on some specific thought. Considering the title of the painting, it is very likely that her thought is concerning love, as maybe she is pondering on the letter she has just read. The painting seems also to have a sort of symbolic meaning, as the girl looks not only focused, but more precisely she looks intensely in front of her, in the direction of the flower pot laying on the top of her desk. These flowers she seems to be mutely dialoguing with are lilies, the flower symbol of chastity. This detail sheds a different light on the painting, as the young girl who has just received (or maybe is even writing) a love letter is maybe asking herself whether or not she is committing any mistake with the (possibly compromising) letter she is holding.

The same love topic connected to correspondence is the centre of a painting from the same year and with the same title. The letter the woman is reading was apparently a long awaited one as in the haste of opening it she has dropped the envelop on the floor. The subject is developed as the representation of a woman reading but what she is reading, which produces what seems like a pleased smile on her face, is already anticipating the sweet longing of the reverie.

In Toulmouche's production the topic of high-class lifestyle takes a very specific turn into the representation of idleness, thus rendering the impression of women's life which was actually spent in long hours of resting without any occupation whatsoever. In this sense, in Toulmouche the representation of this idle life, next to boredom, is a very central topic and he is probably the best interpreter of it.

The most remarkable of his painting from this point of view is definitely the one titled *Sweet doing nothing* (1877) [fig. 72]. This beautiful painting features a young woman, in full figure, laying on a couch. The fact that she is lying does not in any case mean that the scene is the anticipation of a nocturnal sleep. Her elegant and frivolously decorated dress contrasts with the fact that its use is apparently only to be worn in the house and to lay on a couch. And in general the girl's whole figure, dressed and styled elegantly, seems somewhat wasted if we considered that all the activity she might be doing is staying in her house. Again, also in this painting a book is held loosely by the woman; though this time the book does not seem the

essential element of the scene. The reverie this woman is absorbed in is already not raised by the book; this seems to be only an accessory as it appears like the activity the woman was doing before this moment but at the same time she seems to have lost any interest in the reading and she is more generally contemplating. The scene is the representation of one more moment of rest on a day definitely not full of many other activities. More than the rest from having done something, this paintings seems to display a languidness that is very close to boredom. We can picture this woman spending hours, even days, in this state, this condition being actually how most of women's life was spent.

For these reasons the woman's gaze seems so intense, like the one of the girl in *La lettre d'amour*, with the difference that she is looking towards us viewers. Definitely there is some daydreaming in her attitude as she has apparently plenty of free time and the chance to indulge into her own phantasy. But I would say that in the magnetic gaze of this woman at least two other aspects are suggested: one is definitely an invitation, as her provocative look is addressing the spectator by whom the woman is being looked at in her private moment. She is not ashamed of being seen in this moment, and even inviting the viewer to join her in the enjoyment of this 'sweet doing nothing', in an attitude not very far from the one found in the iconography of sloth. Yet at the same time this provoking look has something reproachful, as if possibly silently accusing the painter, the viewer or all men in general of her condition of being reduced to a beautiful silent *poupée* without a scope in her life. In the light of these considerations, the title *Sweet doing nothing* acquires an ironic, if not plainly negative, shade. The woman's life is made of a 'sweet doing nothing', yet she is not to be envied because of this condition, which represents more her imprisonment than her freedom.

I think then that the merit and the beauty of this painting resides all in this ambiguous look of the girl, which touches us spectator and makes us reflect on the condition of the woman at this time. And next it is to be noticed the contrast with the beautiful dress that she is wearing in vain.

This very same dress appears also on one of the two figures depicted in another painting relevant for the representation of idleness, titled indeed an *Une idylle d'après-midi* (*Afternoon idyll*, 1874) [fig. 73]. The painting looks like the very definition of high-class elegant and vain life. Two girls, again beautifully dressed, have fallen asleep leaning on one another on a couch. On the background, the detail of a screen in oriental style seems to enhance the overall elegance of the place, beyond being a quotation for the oriental taste that was spreading in the decorative arts. The provocative purpose of the image is here possibly more evident in the representation of two women asleep together in an even more intimate moment because it is a moment of abandonment. The painter seems indeed to have been able to access a private space of woman rest and give us back this view on the private space normally protected by the screen. The provocative topic of the woman asleep seen in exposure is here redoubled by the presence of two women, which also for the fact that they are sleeping together suggest also implicitly the lesbian appeal⁴

As anticipated, from the 1870s we can perceive already that the iconography of the reverie is 'codified'; that it refines its representation in the most evident way, its starts acquiring its own recurring elements such as the close-up view of the subject, the focus on her gaze, the lack of the description of the surrounding environment as if distracting.

4.2.4. Impressionist Reveries?

Going back to Impressionists' relationship to daydream, I would like to mention a painting by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, as anticipated, the only Impressionist of the first generation who went closer to the topic

⁴ This latter had already been exploited, though in much more provocative and explicit way, in *Le sommeil* or *Les deux amies* by Courbet (seen in par. II.5). Even earlier the same appeal is clearly central in *The Nightmare Leaves the Warehouse – Two Sleeping Girls* by Füssli in which two sleeping women are seen as having just been left by the 'nightmare', in the form of a demon on a horse.

of the reverie. I am referring to the painting titled indeed *Rêverie* or *Portrait de Jeanne Samary* (1878)⁵ [fig. 74].

If on one hand the painting is relevant because of its title, we should also take into account its alternative title, defining it as a portrait of a precise character, which also sheds some light on how we should consider this image. In this painting the figure represented not only acknowledges the presence of a spectator, but she is directly looking in front of her with an inviting and confident look. The attitude of the woman is somewhat dreamy but too conscious to be immersed in her own thoughts and rather intent into pleasing the onlooker, whether it be the observer or the painter himself. The title of 'reverie' in fact makes even more sense if we imagine it to be referred to the painter's reverie instead of the subject's. Considering also that Jeanne Samary was one of the favourite models of Renoir's, it becomes even more obvious that is rather the painter's daydreaming to imagine the woman looking sweetly towards him, rather than the woman's reverie⁶.

This example shows once again what I argued earlier, that somewhat surprisingly the Impressionist circle did not really produce images of reverie, not even in Renoir who was the most 'bourgeois' of the Impressionists.

On the other hand I would like to refer also to another painting related to the Impressionism that for its specific features can instead be considered a reverie: the painting titled *Julie daydreaming* [fig. 75] produced by Berthe Morisot in 1894. Its specificity, which makes it quite an exception within the Impressionist production, is that first of all it is a late painting, much later than the well-known first phase of Impressionism. Secondly, its author is a woman. Apparently Berthe Morisot had the sensitivity to capture the discourse on the reverie that was going on in more bourgeois painting since the 1860, transposing it into a familiar intimate image of her own daughter daydreaming.

⁵ Conserved in Hermitage Museum.

⁶ In this sense, taking back the terminology used in my previous research, this should be considered rather a 'subjective reverie', displaying the daydream of the painter, in the same way as the 'subjective dream' was showing a real dream had by the painter .

Again, as in other images seen so far, the girl depicted looks in between daydream and boredom, two apparently common feelings for women.

It is also meaningful that the author is a woman since, as explained earlier, her male colleagues of the same circles, were more interested in depicting that urban underworld (bars, streets, brothels) in which they were spending most of their time, where men were allowed and women were not. As proven by Griselda Pollock⁷, around the Impressionist circle, paintings can be divided by setting in exteriors or in interiors depending if the author was a man or a woman. In particular, the author lists all places in which paintings are set for the main artists like Manet, Degas in comparison to the two women of the circle, Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassat. The analysis results in the distinction of a male production set both in interiors and in exteriors, and a female production set exclusively in interiors, the only space where women were rightfully allowed to stay, defined by Pollock as the “space of femininity” (see also par. IV.3). This is the reason why in the production of Berthe Morisot we find the only Impressionist image of reverie, as one of the typical expressions of female life in interiors.

4.2.5. Fernand Toussaint (1873-1956)

The Belgian painter Fernand Toussaint devoted almost all of his production to the representation of the bourgeoisie of the time, again with a specific focus on the single female figure in interiors.

His production is particularly representative to us since it dates to the very last decades of the century, thus displaying clearly how the topic of the reverie evolves in its later stage. The fact indeed that most of his paintings entail a pensive and dreamy attitude shows to what extent by the time he was painting (mostly around the 1900s) the

⁷ Pollock Griselda, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art*, London: Routledge, cop. 2003, p. 70-127.

reverie has become such a common and trendy representation of the bourgeoisie that his women are in most cases depicted in this attitude⁸.

Looking at Toussaint's production and the almost mechanical, though very graceful and elegant, repetition of all possible variations of a pensive and daydreaming mood, we are tempted to infer that by this time the reverie has become a sort of cliché. Here is perhaps when the daydream, both as a subject and as a specific attitude, loses its original psychological interest and becomes a typical pose, a mannered subject, especially in the representation of bourgeois women. By now we can also guess that the reverie is not anymore a real activity, an actual tendency and pastime for women. Being on a reverie, or even only looking like it, is now not only a common attitude among women, but has become a new contrived manner, even faked, since it is giving women an air of importance and quiet melancholy, so widely spread in the whole self-pleased fin de siècle behaviour.

Portraying women in these moments seems to correspond now to the most charming attitude a woman could assume. Toussaint has been defined indeed by his contemporaries as the "*maître incontesté de la grace et du charme féminine*"⁹, where evidently grace and charm are intended as closely related also to a studied pensiveness. The importance of elegance and grace in Toussaint's production is also testified by the fact that his figures often are dressed in the most fashionable and elegant dresses, and often not to be shown in public but just to be set in a scenario of interiors and pensive solitude¹⁰. The setting is also completed with flowers, frames and other decorative objects. Also the book (or less often the letter) plays a major role in this imagery: books are almost always held by his female dreamers, either wide open, or with a finger through the pages, and simply lying closed next to the sitter.

⁸ Concerning Toussaint's chronology, the fact that most of his artworks are conserved in private collections did not make it easy to retrieve information about their exact dates.

⁹ Berko Patrick and Viviane Berko, *Fernand Toussaint: 1873-1956*, De Snoeck-Ducaju & Fils, Knokke, 1986.

¹⁰ Similarly to what we have seen for Toulmouche's paintings.

Toussaint imagery than reflects all possible attitudes of pensiveness, starting from the more typical image of reading, like in *A quiet moment* [fig. 76], featuring a girl simply sitting and reading, like in the earliest iconography of reading. The same way, in *The love letter and mirror* [fig. 77], Toussaint seems to base on the tradition of the representation of correspondence, by featuring a woman with a beautifully pensive facial expression, her eyes lost in front of her, and holding her head with one hand and a letter with the other. The overall scene, completed with decorative flowers, candle and mirror on the table where the girl is sitting, all render the grace and elegance of the image, effect to which the absorbed gaze of woman contributes highly.

Other paintings of the same type by Toussaint display some more typical features of the author. One of this is that the book, though most often present on the scene, seems to become more and more an accessory rather than the main element of the scene and starter of the reverie. The book is now a decorative element contributing to the elegant allure and setting of the scene. Maybe also for this reason, open books in Toussaint's paintings very often display some large images on their pages, resembling portraits, possibly with the purpose of rendering the book somehow decorative, too. This is already evident in paintings such as *Deep in thought* [fig. 78], where the girl has abandoned the book to look, this time with a rather lively gaze, in front of her. The same consideration applies to a painting precisely called *Reverie* [fig. 79], again representing a woman on a couch, with an attitude in between boredom and sleepiness about the book she is holding on her lap.

The uselessness of the book becomes very clear in a painting such as *Daydreaming* [fig. 80], in which the woman is again sitting on one side of the sofa, while an open book is laying in the other side. If on the one hand it is clear that in this case reading was not the activity immediately preceding the start of the reverie, it seems also that the book is plainly an accessory, with its illustration in view to fill that side of the green couch, together with a small bouquet of flowers. Another painting with the same title [fig. 81] is instead showing a young girl, I would say in the most typical daydreaming attitude, with her hands

joined around her cheek, in an almost too obvious way. This time no book appears in the scene but we can see partly a painting on the background. While the painting (like the book after all) is not meant to have any connection with the reverie, it is still a relevant decorative details, in a way like the images visible in the open books.

The same display of books with a decorative intention is also evident for instance in *La femme accoudée* (*Woman Leaning*) [fig. 82], in which a woman is leaning on a couch, always showing the typical absorptive attitude. A book is open quite strangely under her arm, not quite as if she was previously reading it, but more as if it was simply placed open on the side of the couch, and even about to fall, if it was not for the woman's arm keeping it steady.

It seems like Toussaint cared particularly about always showing the content of the book, which we are able to see in the largest amount of cases. Sometimes even, like in the already mentioned *La femme accoudée* the book is kept in an unnatural position in order to let the viewer see its content; or it most often feels like its is slipping from the hands of the sitter, in order to let it open in view. The books featuring in these paintings are almost invariably showing some large image, often distinguishable as a portrait of a figure. This might be a reference to the typical *feuilleton* novel for women, often complemented with illustrations along the story (see also par. IV.4) .

Again the aim of showing the content of the open book is expressed in *Faraway thoughts* [fig. 83], in which the woman holds a book really as if to put it in foreground in view for the spectator. The rest of the scene, like the book itself, highlights an overall elegance, in the details of flowers and jewelleries, all enhanced by the highly refined and almost superb attitude of the woman.

Though the list of similar paintings by Toussaint is long, as he really devoted himself to such production all along his life, I would only quote another one, found under the title of *Dreamy* [fig. 84]. Beyond the typical elegant woman sitting, in this case two more details are displayed: one is the book, this time appearing closed on a shelf in the foreground. Maybe the usual open book with illustrations would have charged too much the decoration, already filled between a pot a

flowers, the flowery dress of the woman and paintings behind her. Therefore a closed book is sufficient here to add an detail of refinement and cultural status to the image. The second interesting detail here is the presence of the window. Again and as illustrated earlier, the dreamy look of the woman goes towards the element of escape present in the room, in the case well exemplified by the window.

With Fernand Toussaint and the very first decade of the nineteenth century I would close my analysis for what concerns France and Belgium. As I tried to illustrate, the socio-cultural situation in these two countries is very similar and therefore also the types of paintings produced are along the same topics and interests.

From the authors and paintings considered it shall be clearer now how the reverie is in this geographical context identified as a specific activity, or at least a specific fashionable image among the high-classes, becoming, especially for women a cliché of self-representation. I have also tried to prove how the reverie evolves from the representation of other activities, mainly reading/writing and sleeping, towards a growing fascination for the capacity of daydreaming.

Through a process of abstraction, then, the reverie, at first only hinted, becomes the main subject of the image, in which the character shows more and more evident signs of absorption. This process is both completed as a general trend along the period considered and in the production of a single artists, in which is often visible the change towards this progressive abstraction (see Corot, Chaplin).

Finally, towards the end of the century, the process is complete when the reverie becomes 'a manner', as both an attitude women were taking, and a codified way of pictorial representation.

5. UK AND VICTORIAN PAINTING

First of all I would like to remark that for sociological and historical reasons the bourgeois reverie¹¹ is more naturally to be found more in the francophone area. In the UK the arts of this period reflect more an interest towards the fantastic and the exotic, very typical of Victorian painting, that is also evident in their approach to the reverie. It is not a chance indeed that all the first attempts to represent the reverie are done in France by painters who were painting the bourgeois lifestyle and who produced therefore bourgeois reveries. In the UK the same topic of the reverie is approached by giving more space to the fantastic dreamy aspect of it, than to the representation of bourgeois lifestyle, thus producing image that can be defined 'exotic' reveries.

Despite these premises, I would like to start the discourse on the UK with an early representation of a reverie that is actually an example of a bourgeois reverie.

The painting titled *Daydream* by Edward Poynter [fig. 85], dating 1863 and thus being a rather early example in general, represents indeed a scene of a bourgeois interior. A young girl is seated keeping one finger among the pages of a book, while the other hand rests on the keys of a piano. She is looking quietly towards her right; she seems somewhat inspired, as if in between book and music she has chosen to direct her attention to her own reflection. The relationship between the book and the piano is admittedly not very clear and at a first look it seems the girl might be playing the music she is reading from the book. This latter, though, shows on its open pages lines of (not readable) text which do not seem to be like music lines. What we can imagine is that the girl was previously reading and the reading inspired her maybe to play a few notes on the piano. And after this, for the effect of reading and playing music, the girl fell into her own daydream¹². I would say

¹¹ And if we consider Corot also the peasant one, that is a transposition of the bourgeois in a peasant context.

¹² The presence of two objects identifying two possible activities reminds us of the series of painting made in the studio by Corot, interestingly produced only

that for this painting might be valid also what already stated for the *Reverie* by Alfred Stevens: the girl represented seems not yet completely absorbed in her reverie, but rather self-aware, especially in comparison with the later reverie images. Also, the theme of the reading and music playing are somewhat distracting from the real topic of the reverie, as it often happens in the early stage of this representation.

The uniqueness of the bourgeois representation by Poynter in the British context might be though reconsidered if we think that, apart from rare works like the *Daydream*, Poynter was rather a classicist painter, with a focus on ancient revivals, and as such close to the other painters that will be here analysed, and who are reflecting the spirit of British arts at this epoch.

5.1. The Pre-Raphaelites

While, as explained earlier, the Impressionism was not likely to produce images of reverie for the reasons exposed above, another major artistic movement, the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, should have been theoretically instead very prone to produce this kind of images.

For this reason I will linger now on the purposes and the focus of the movement, in order to illustrate how some reveries were produced by the members of the brotherhood. Although they did not produce many reverie images in visual arts, definitely the movement is relevant for their approach to the topic of sleep and daydream. As it is commonly known, the approach to art cultivated by Pre-Raphaelites is programmatically a return to the past, both on the level of style and subjects. Against the progressive corruption of a society oriented to profit and industrialisation, they supported the return to a meticulous way of making art, both as visual and decorative arts, which is closer to craftsmanship than to the mass production processes that were spreading by this time. Their style is inspired by Middle Age and

a couple of years later than this *Daydream*. The similarity resides also in the fact that in between the two artistic activities (book/painting and musical instrument), a third one that is actually preferred to both, the reverie.

Renaissance painting before the corruption of Mannerism (hence the name of Pre-Raphaelites), deemed to have the spontaneity and naïveté that went lost afterwards.

At the same time, concerning the subjects, they gave the highest attention to historical subjects, as well as the revival of myths, fables and legend. Theoretically, therefore, the strong fantastic component and fascination of their production would have made it very likely for them to dedicate a particular attention to the topic of dream representation in general, and possibly the reverie, especially in its 'exotic' version. Nonetheless I could find, in the last decades of the century, only a couple of artworks dedicated to this topic: while most of the brotherhood's depictions of women have definitely a dreamy character, not many of them can be rightfully defined reveries.

5.1.1. Arthur Hughes (1832- 1915)

The most representative of early Pre-Raphaelite images is the painting titled , *The Pained Heart* (1868) by Arthur Hughes [fig. 86], also known under the title of *Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more*. As proven by the title, the love topic has here a melancholic variation, which differentiates it from other reveries. The pensiveness in this case is not a joyful one, but conformingly to Hughes' tendency for moving subjects, the central focus is here on the love suffering. First of all, consistent with the typical Pre-Raphaelite historical interests, the setting is medieval, in a richly decorated and highly romanticised interior. A young red-haired girl, evidently the main character, and reflecting the Pre-Raphaelite ideal of beauty, is sitting on the left side of the scene looking pensively towards the casement window next to her, her fingers crossed over her knees. Surrounding her are some objects representing female activities, such as a lute and a sewing frame. An older woman, likely to be a servant of the girl, is instead trying to engage her, either into conversation or in one of these activities she seems to be pointing at, while the girl is looking in the other direction and does not seem to be noticing the servant.

The figure of the servant indeed might shed some more light on the actual topic of the painting, as also usually Pre-Raphaelites used to depict specific refined narratives. The painting, which had been completed by 1868-9 and exhibited in the Royal Academy without a title, was reworked by Hughes in 1873 by adding the figure of the servant and the current title. *Sigh no more, ladies* is indeed a quotation from Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, when the character of Balthasar sings:

*Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.
Then sigh not so, but let them go,
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey, nonny nonny.
Sing no more ditties, sing no mo
Of dumps so dull and heavy.
The fraud of men was ever so,
Since summer first was leavy.
Then sigh not so, but let them go
And be you blithe and bonny,
Converting all your sounds of woe
Into Hey, nonny nonny.*

The painting, completed with the addition of the servant, bears also the label with the phrase (not in the painter's writing) "Juliet and her nurse", as if it was representing an (unspecified) moment of the story of Romeo and Juliet.

The abstraction shown by the girl is the main feature that assimilates this painting to the iconography of the reverie. The setting is not minimal in this case as the scene is meant to highlight the contrast between the richness of the environment, with all the possible activities that the girl could be doing, and the fact that the love pain

makes her oblivious of all this and not willing to deal with her present reality. Again, the other relevant feature is the window motif. The window always represents the search for an escape, the will to go past the boundaries of the room, in which the girl has no interest whatsoever. While we can imagine that the window represents here the desire to escape, we can also infer that the girl is looking through the window because she is waiting, maybe in vain, for the return of her lover, and that this yearning and missing is the reason of her pain.

In this sense, *The Pained Heart* is very close to the reverie because of the pensive attitude, and the look through the window, yet the topic is slightly different, as this is a representation of pain, not of a love reverie or even just a daydream. The girl's pain is such that the girl does not seem to be interested in anything else surrounding her, and in this case not only because she is absorbed into her thoughts but above all because nothing material seems to touch her and relieve her suffering.

As for the typology of this reverie, as well as most of the others produced in the UK in this period, it is to be considered as belonging to the exotic type because of the setting either historical or fantastic.

Not unlikely, another painting by Hughes, *April Love* (1855-6 - one of the most famous of Hughes' production) [fig. 87] reproduces the same topic of love suffering. The two paintings are also related because they display the same female model, Tryphena Ford, later to become wife of the artist.

Despite the promising title, *April love* also treats the subject of love pain, though in a less obvious way. Actually, at a first look the scene and the girl's expression might appear pleasant because of the very vivid colours and because the girl seems to be rejoicing after a love encounter. Nonetheless, at a better look, the sadness of the topic becomes more evident: we would notice a man kneeling, holding the girl's hand and apparently crying with his head reclined. His figure is barely visible to us, almost completely hidden by the body of the girl herself, hence the first impression that the painting might give. Just like in *The pained heart* the girl is silently refusing the distraction proposed by the servant to indulge with her though in her love labour, here the

girl is also refusing the man kneeling next to her; the main topic is therefore again the love pain and more specifically the short duration of young love. The theme of love suffering is involving both characters as also the girl is crying about the end of her love.

If the Pre-Raphaelites did not linger more, apart from *The Pained Heart*, on the topic of daydreaming, can be maybe explained with the insistence they dedicated instead to the similar topic of sleep. This would suit very well, possibly even better than the daydream, the motif of the escape from reality, so often desired by these artists. Sleep is indeed the perfect metaphor for a flight to another, likely more pleasant, dimension, different from the despised present reality. In this sense sleep becomes also a symbol of their own escape from the industrialised society to a pre-Renaissance world of purity.

On this regard, and in connection with the brotherhood's interest for all sorts of legends and fables, it is relevant that they insisted particularly on the fable of *Briar Rose*, now better known as *The Sleeping Beauty*, which seems to play a major role in the brotherhood's production.

The fable is ancient as Charles Perrault had derived in 1697 his *La belle au bois dormant* from a Medieval fable. The story was taken up by Grimm brothers in 1812 with the title of *Dornröschen*, in English *Briar Rose*. The more modern adaptations (the most known of which is by Disney) have instead used more frequently the name of *Sleeping Beauty*, which also came to be a common idiomatic expression in many languages.

The success of the fable by Grimm brothers was followed by an equally successful poem by Lord Alfred Tennyson (1842), whose relevance for our topic is clear already in its title, *The Daydream*. This is a later and expanded version of his poem called indeed *The Sleeping Beauty* (1830), which was centred on the narration of the famous fable. It is meaningful nonetheless that not only Tennyson expanded later the poem adding the theme of the escape from reality, but above all that by 1842 he changed the title, just when the daydream as a phenomenon and as an activity was starting to raise a great deal of interest. It is this

second version that became widespread and successful and was taken by the Pre-Raphaelites as an inspiration for their future production.

The Sleeping Beauty subject is seemingly to be connected with the one of the daydream as Tennyson assimilates the one-hundred-years sleep of the princess into a daydream, an escape from reality towards a dreamy fabulous dimension, which was exactly what the Pre-Raphaelites were seeking.

The long poem is addressed to "Lady Flora", and describes the whole story of the sleeping beauty, how she gets prickled with the spindle and how her whole court falls asleep with her. Yet the most relevant part, the one that explains the title of reverie is towards the end (always addressing to Lady Flora):

*You shake your head. A random string
Your finer female sense offends.
Well - were it not a pleasant thing
To fall asleep with all one's friends;
To pass with all our social ties
To silence from the paths of men;
And every hundred years to rise
And learn the world, and sleep again;
To sleep thro' terms of mighty wars,
And wake on science grown to more,
On secrets of the brain, the stars,
As wild as aught of fairy lore;
And all that else the years will show,
The Poet-forms of stronger hours,
The vast Republics that may grow,
The Federations and the Powers;
Titanic forces taking birth
In divers seasons, divers climes;
For we are Ancients of the earth,
And in the morning of the times.*

For since the time when Adam first

Embraced his Eve in happy hour,
 And every bird of Eden burst
 In carol, every bud to flower,
 What eyes, like thine, have waken'd hopes?
 What lips, like thine, so sweetly join'd?
 Where on the double rosebud droops
 The fullness of the pensive mind;
 Which all too dearly self-involved,
 Yet sleeps a dreamless sleep to me;
 A sleep by kisses undissolved,
 That lets thee neither hear nor see:
 But break it. In the name of wife,
 And in the rights that name may give,
 Are clasp'd the moral of thy life,
 And that for which I care to live

Only when the princess is awakened a sort of nostalgia for the end of this one-hundred-years sweet sleep is expressed.

The influence of the fable and above all the poem by Tennyson, spread over the century up to the point that Pre-Raphaelites took it as one of their favourite subjects for its capacity to express their own idea of abstraction from reality. Being the Sleeping Beauty theme so popular among them, it has been represented in paintings very often, until the last decades of the century. In particular, towards the 1880s, one of the main exponent of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, Edward Burne-Jones even completed a cycle of paintings on the theme of *The legend of Briar Rose*. The four painted panels are representing *The Briar Wood* (the enchanted wood), *The Council Chamber* (the counsellors of the princess' court asleep), *The Garden Court* (the damsels of the princess also asleep in the garden) and *The Rose Bower* (the princess herself sleeping in her bed).

Beyond the Pre-Raphaelite insistence, the idea of the sleeping beauty, with due differences, remains very relevant to the topic of the reverie. I would even argue that, as the observation and representation

of a woman asleep is (and remains during the nineteenth century for that matter) a *topos* in art history, with both its romantic and voyeuristic implications, also the representation of the woman daydreaming becomes a *topos* and stimulates curiosity and voyeurism¹³.

Apart from the Sleeping Beauty, it is also true that the Pre-Raphaelites returned several times on the representation of sleep in general, also in more realistic scenarios, not necessarily related to fables.

For instance one of the main founders of the brotherhood, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, used to portray Elisabeth Siddal, his wife and favourite model, often asleep. The representation of the model asleep was usually the result of the long tiring modelling sessions, so the painter also adapted to portray her in her sleep. Yet at the same time this was very appropriate to the Pre-Raphaelite attention to sleep and its metaphorical meaning.

After the death of Elisabeth Siddal, in the later years of Rossetti's life, his and the brotherhood's favourite model became the famous Jane Morris, wife of William Morris. It is her indeed who is appearing in the most relevant and well-known series of paintings produced for the topic of the reverie by Rossetti, whom can therefore be accounted as one of the most famous painters among the ones representing reveries, generally not particularly known.

If the interpretation the Pre-Raphaelites gave of the fable of the Sleeping beauty is based on the poem by Tennyson, which sees the princess' sleep as a sort of daydream, this might explain also why they showed some interest in the topic of the daydream itself.

In one first painting titled *Reverie* (1868) [fig. 88], Jane Morris appears dressed in brown, in a somewhat very introverted position, curving her back in order to lay her head on her head. She is looking intensely in the direction of the viewer with piercing blue eyes, contrasting with the dark setting. Because of this very self-aware look, I would say the impression that she is having a daydream is less strong than in later version of the same subject, and in general, as I shall

¹³ For a deeper analysis of the implications of this subject see par. IV.4.

explain, these paintings are more to be intended as daydreams of the painter himself than of the woman.

A photo of Jane Morris taken by Rossetti himself in Chayne Walk, Chelsea in 1865, served as model for this painting. From the comparison between the photo and the painting we can perceive the process of idealisation and sublimation Rossetti was making on the real image, in accordance with the Pre-Raphaelites principles.

Of exactly the same year of Edward Burne-Jones' *Sleeping Beauty* cycle (1880), Rossetti realised *The Daydream*, the most famous version of the very same subject, realised only a couple of years before Rossetti's death and thus last completed work of his [fig. 89]. The painting features Jane Morris in mid close-up completely surrounded by a bush of roses. The woman is seemingly leaning on the branches, as she is holding one with her long fingers. The other hand instead is among the pages of a book she is holding on her knees. The green dress she is wearing in connection with the green of the bushes around her contributes in the impression of dreamy abstraction of the whole scene; she herself has her eyes open and the absent and beautifully cold attitude that is typical both to daydreams and to Pre-Raphaelite beauty.

The fact that all we can see about the setting is the vegetation around does not really allow us to classify the type of reverie as one of the categories illustrated earlier; moreover, the presence of the book in this case renders the image more enigmatic. I would conclude that the image is an example of exotic reverie, as, like the rest of the Pre-Raphaelites' production, it is definitely not set in modern times, or rather it is set in a deliberately non-defined epoch, which contributes to its effect of dreaminess.

I argue that the image seems to be inspired to the abovementioned poem by Tennyson as for transposing the idea of the sleeping beauty into a daydream. Yet the meaning of the enigmatic painting is clear with the aid of a poem written by Rossetti himself in reference to the painting:

THE DAYDREAM

(For a Picture)

*The thronged boughs of the shadowy sycamore
Still bear young leaflets half the summer through;
From when the robin 'gainst the unhidden blue
Perched dark, till now, deep in the leafy core,
The embowered throstle's urgent wood-notes soar
Through summer silence. Still the leaves come new;
Yet never rosy-sheathed as those which drew
Their spiral tongues from spring-buds heretofore.*

*Within the branching shade of Reverie
Dreams even may spring till autumn; yet none be
Like woman's budding daydream spirit-fann'd.
Lo! tow'rd deep skies, not deeper than her look,
She dreams ; till now on her forgotten book
Drops the forgotten blossom from her hand.*

Apart from the description of the scene and the clarification of the setting with the details of the sycamore, the final consideration of the poem reflects the melancholic idea developed by Rossetti in the end of his life about the caducity of love and life ("dreams even may spring till autumn").

The meaning is even clearer if we consider that by this time Rossetti has fallen in love with Jane Morris and he was perceiving her as his unrealised love. In this sense, the title of the painting results in some intentional ambiguity as we would not be able to say if it is the character depicted having a daydream or the artist himself imagining his beloved woman as a superior image of beauty and perfection. For this reason also I do not consider the *Daydream* by Rossetti fully consistent with the definition I have given of reverie, in the same way in which I also do not consider fully consistent with our topic the

Reverie by Renoir (see previous paragraph). Notwithstanding, both images and possibly even more Rossetti's painting are extremely relevant as they represent a variation on the topic of the reverie, both strongly influenced by the painters' personal history and the views of their artistic movements.

5.2. Classicism's Last Strike

Towards the end of the century and especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, a new way of depicting the reverie starts spreading among the last fringes of Neoclassicism, which is registering by this time a new wave of interest, especially among academic Victorian painters. These late antiquity lovers though met the demand of a rather good and wealthy slice of the market and benefitted and success and wealth during their life: "this last burst of interest, though not shared by the socialist intelligentsia, was widespread and deeply rooted, especially by scholars and their opposite, the industrial *nouveaux riches*"¹⁴.

As mentioned above, one of these painters was Edward Poynter. While his *Daydream* (analysed above) is an exception in his production as for subject and style, most of his paintings were instead following this very late Neoclassic revival. Several of Poynter's works, therefore, are more similar to the style that will be analysed in this paragraph, with a setting in antiquity. For instance, in a paintings like *On the terrace* [fig. 90], it is presented already the quiet idleness that will characterise the later 'exotic' reveries. If on one hand we cannot fully define this painting a reverie, as the girl is still busy in doing something (though a completely idle activity), it has already all the daydreaming features that will be developed by these Neoclassic painters.

The ancient style though was for Poynter only a generic inspiration, especially if we look at paintings like *Reading* (1870) [fig. 91]. As usual for the representation of a woman reading, this image,

¹⁴ Swanson Vern G., *John William Godward: the Eclipse of Classicism*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK Wappingers' Falls, NY : Antique Collector's Club, 1997, p. 89.

graceful for the posture and the flowery ancient background, recalls the abstraction of the daydream. Yet, the preoccupation of combining the representation of reading with an ancient setting has pushed the artist into the historical inaccuracy of depicting a book, which was obviously not existing in this form in ancient times.

Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema is probably the most known of this last Neoclassic fringe acting before the end of the century and he was one of the most well-paid painters of his time. Despite his Dutch origins, he lived all his life in the UK and was indeed completely consistent for style and subjects to these last currents of Victorian painting. His almost exclusive setting is antiquity, especially Roman civilisation, from which he depicts famous episodes and recurring activities. His favourite compositions are larger scenes, including several characters and solemn architectures, with the highest attention to details and definition.

Nonetheless, what is relevant to our subject matter is that, beyond the production of these large scenes, Alma-Tadema insists also very often to the topic of young romantic love, especially the not yet accomplished one. Several are the paintings in which he shows the different stages of young love, from courtship to thrill for an encounter to refusal.

The images of courtship often entail the same elements, with the couple in open air, sitting on a high-positioned marble bench. The attitude of the characters is also unvaried in this series: one of the earliest ones, *Pleading* (1876) [fig. 92] and the later *Xanthe and Phaon* (1883) [fig. 93] even have the very same positions of the figure, with the boy lying next to girl in demand and expectation and the girl seemingly closed in herself as if pondering doubtfully the proposal. The woman seems instead more participating in *A Declaration* (also 1883) [fig. 94] and even more conceding in the late *Ask me no more* (1906) [fig. 95].

Among the courtship images also the ones of refusal are interesting, again for the distracted attitude of the woman who pretends to ignore the man, as in *Vain Courtship* (1900), or does not show any reaction like in *An Eloquent Silence* or *Courtship*.

As a general consideration, and beyond the visual similarities, all these images repeat the same idea of the man being the active part of the love relationship in his approaching and offering and the woman being the passive figure, inaccessible in her inactive pensiveness.

Although these scenes are of course not to be considered reveries, they approach the love topic in a way that is really close to the vision of romance and expectation we find in several reveries. Actually, if we were to look exclusively at the female figure of these images, ignoring the man, we would notice that her attitude is most often pensive and daydreaming, as if even in these love moments women were normally to react in a 'dreamy', inactive way¹⁵.

Another relevant topic in Alma-Tadema, though again it does not consist precisely of a daydream, is the motif of waiting and expecting. In paintings indeed like *Expectations* (1885) [fig. 96] this subject takes a rather daydreaming turn, as the waiting (even if in vain) for the beloved to come back from the sea resembles the absorbed inaction of many reverie images. Just like the woman that looks through her window, here these ancient Greek or Roman women look from a balustrade, from a high position to the sea, with the same dreamy attitude.

Beyond this, also in Alma-Tadema some more proper images of reverie are to be found as in *Resting*, also known indeed as *Daydreaming* [fig. 97] and its almost identical reversed counterpart titled *Dolce far niente* [fig. 98], both from 1882. The two paintings are almost the same scene with small variations in the main figure and in the colours. Both images show a woman simply sitting on a marble round bench decorated with an imaginary animal sculpture, and with rocks, sea and temples in the background landscape. This woman is resting with a pleased expression for the enjoyment of that sweet doing nothing that looks like a recurrent feature of the conception of ancient time these artists had.

¹⁵ While also reassessing the common idea that the man should be the dominant active part of the love relationship, as set by the societal view (see par. IV.3).

5.2.1. John William Godward (1861- 1922)

The last reason why Alma-Tadema is relevant to our subject is because he has been very closely followed by John William Godward, both for the style and the choice of setting and subjects.

Godward's production looks very similar to Alma-Tadema's as both chose invariably classic settings, along a completely aesthetic idealising style, with fictional images of a dreamt golden age of ancient civilization. Despite the great similarity, Godward seems to have focused on a more specific range of subjects, not entailing the variety and larger vision that was proper to Alma-Tadema.

It is as if Godward has been taking the inspiration from one element, as if reducing the larger scenes by Alma-Tadema into the most relevant and charming detail: the female figure, especially in a pensive attitude. Godward's production is indeed almost entirely devoted to the representation of women - male figures almost never appear in his paintings – in ancient setting.

The reduction to the sole female figure is also accompanied by the inactivity characterising them, thus rendering these paintings even more abstract and dreamy than Alma-Tadema's ones. The recurrent underlying idea, already seen for example in *On the terrace* by Poynter and *Sweet doing nothing* by Alma-Tadema, is a conception of antiquity as an ideal period of peace and idleness, of time spent in lazy activities and love thrill. To this ideal of sweet life, also the landscape contributes highly, as we can perceive the sweet warmth of the sun, the vivid colours of the sea, the perfume of flowers. The topic of the early golden age of mankind is naturally connected of youth as the golden age of human life: the female characters are very young and characterised by the naïveté and innocence typical of their age.

As for the iconography and style, Goward's production presents very often the same elements. The paintings usually display a scene, often in open air, with a fantasy setting of marble structures where the characters are normally intent in doing all sort of small leisurely activities, from flirts, to small games, to no activity at all. The greatest majority of Godward's production, consists of a simple scene, with one character. They are usually very static as the character is merely sitting

or lying or at best doing some very quiet activity. These figures are almost exclusively women. The only males represented are accompanying a woman, usually through a mute dialogue, and are only meant to illustrate the love topic. Despite being one of the most represented topics by Godward, this is normally not directly represented, like in Alma-Tadema's courtship scenes, but it is in the majority of cases evoked as the main object of the daydreaming. All figures by Godward look alike, along an ideal of Mediterranean young and fresh beauty. One specific feature of the figure that remains similar all along his production is the gaze of the figure. This is most often a low gaze, looking towards the ground in thoughtfulness (in most works) or blank and absent, at the same time lost in sweet thoughts, or again, like other daydreamers, looking in the direction of the (likely male) spectator, thus also inviting him and sharing with him the dreamy feeling displayed. The ethereal beauty, the exotic setting and the absent look all contribute to creating the dreamy atmosphere of these images.

Godward's style is extremely detailed and refined in the rendering all sorts of materials (marble, animal fur, flesh), which has been recognised as one of the main characteristic of his mastery. His paintings display a vast range of colours, usually very vivid for clothing and veils, a variety of marbles, flowers, leaves and the shocking blue of the sea on the background.

As for the other elements present on the scene, marble architecture plays a major role, like in Alma-Tadema's paintings. The characters are most often sitting or lying on marble benches or leaning on marble fences. As decorative elements very often also sculptures, mosaics and ancient objects are to be seen, reflecting a particular attention for archaeology. Despite being highly idealised, the setting of his paintings, with buildings and objects, is indeed most often inspired to real ancient artworks or reconstructions. The fewer scenes set especially in interiors feature also small ancient-like objects such as caskets, amphorae, columns and female objects like mirrors. For this philological accuracy and elegant display of antiquities, Godward's style and subjects were very much appreciated by the cultural elites

who had interests in ancient history and archaeology, which allowed the painter to enjoy a constant demand and lead a wealthy life.

Completing the decoration, often other elements are enriching the scene with decoration and exotic characterisation. This consist first of all of the natural elements, above all flowers, present truly in every single painting, usually surrounding the figures or being held by these latter. Flowers and plants, depicted with high detail, include the whole range of typical Mediterranean products, such as oleander, cyclamen, cypress, grapevine, palm trees, pine trees, roses, poppies, all contributing to the feeling of southern exoticism. The oleander in particular, beyond being a typical Mediterranean plant, is apparently playing a symbolic role: "this scented, beautiful and dangerous flower symbolised Victorian's society's view of the fickleness of women"¹⁶. On the background, always a glimpse of the blue Ionian sea is to be seen, with rocks and islands.

Other exotic elements are also present in most cases: very often some exotic animal decoration appear, above all long feathers (especially peacock feathers) and wild animals' furs, most often a tiger or lion fur, on which the main character is lying. Beyond adding a touch exotic decoration and ancient-like luxury, the detail of the animal fur might suggest subtly, like in the peasant reverie, the association between woman and nature, and thus, just like the oleander, their shared dangerous essence. This connection is particularly appropriate also to the topic of the reverie, perceived by male artists who were representing it as a specific womanly feature.

As for the real content and meaning of Godward's paintings, the striking fact is that almost all of his paintings can be considered reveries, as the characters represented always appear alone, with a pensive attitude, never busy in any real activity. Secondly, he seems to have dedicated almost all his life and production to the repetition and refinement of all possible variations of the reverie. Godward seems then to have been the best interpreter of the 'exotic reverie', by taking

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 91. It is true that the oleander is present in almost every painting.

inspiration from the previous generation of Neo-classicists and developing the single-figure pensiveness.

One first topic recalling closely the reverie and originating from Alma-Tadema is the motif of waiting and expectation. One early painting for instance is dedicated by Godward to this topic and titled indeed *Expectations* (1887). The idea is quite similar to the painting with the same title by Alma-Tadema, in which the woman was sitting in a high marble bench observing the horizon in search for some sign from the sea. The main difference between the two paintings consists in the fact that the woman in the painting by Godward is in a more prompt position and standing, as if ready to welcome the beloved appearing from the nearby staircase, thus rendering more the thrill of the encounter than the hopeless waiting. The very same pose of Alma-Tadema *Expectations* is instead in the painting titled *The Signal* (1899) [fig. 99] in which the woman is again sitting and looking towards the sea while sheltering her eyes from the sun with her hand.

Beyond these early examples strongly influenced by his master, Godward seems to develop the topic of the reverie in all its variations. The amount of his paintings are indeed representing this subject and are titled along this line is such, that it will not be possible to mention all of them here.

Some early paintings titled indeed 'reverie' start introducing more properly the daydreaming topic that will become the central motif of Godward's production. *Grecian reverie* (1889) [fig. 100] is one early example of this, with the concentration on the girl's figure leaning on a pillar and lost in her thoughts. The title though makes us wonder whether the painting is supposed to represent the reverie of the woman or of the painter himself, who dreams about this golden past¹⁷. From *Grecian reverie* Godward seems to have derived *Far away thoughts* (1892) [fig. 101], with a woman also seen in profile but seen only in the torso of the woman, like an ancient sculpture.

¹⁷ Similarly as in the *Daydream* by Rossetti.

Another *Reverie*, is also known as *In the days of Sappho* 1904¹⁸ [fig. 102], as if to add an ancient charming feeling through the historical reference. The female figure who sits holding one of her knees, “like so many of the artist’s painting the female figure engages the viewer by gazing out of the picture”¹⁹. I would say, as I tried to illustrate along this chapter, that this detail of the gaze going out of the scene is one of the most relevant features of the reverie, of which Godward’s paintings are of course a masterful example.

In some cases, the woman looks more self-aware like in *Idle thoughts* (1898) [fig. 103] but still not busy in any activity other than her own contemplation; in some others she looks completely forgetful of herself as if in a sort of trance, like in *An idle hour* (1890), where despite the presence of some figures in the background, the woman seems so absorbed in her own ecstasy that she has assumed a curve distorted position on her marble seat.

Probably the most well-known of this type is *Sweet dreams* (1901) [fig. 104]. Against a marble refined wall a woman is sitting, on a bench covered in the typical tiger fur. Her attitude is slightly unnatural, with her torso and head in frontal position and her legs twisted on the side; even more unnatural are her hands, both totally abandoned at her sides, as if out of exhaustion. As usual in the reverie her opaque gaze lays directly on us viewers but at the same time seems to be looking at something else.

This painting has been elaborated, with a strong enhancement of the daydream feeling from another of Godward’s paintings from the previous year, titled *Idleness* [fig. 105]. The woman’s position is identical and only some visual details change. The girl is here against the typical oleander and sea background and sitting on the typical round marble bench. Only her look, that became so meaningful in *Sweet dreams*, is low and addressed towards a kitten at her feet. With her right hand -completely relinquished in the pendant painting- she is here

¹⁸ The position of the woman with the leg bent reminds closely of the position of *Reading* by Poynter, only without the book.

¹⁹ Swanson Vern G., *John William Godward: the Eclipse of Classicism*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK Wappingers’ Falls, NY: Antique Collector’s Club, 1997, p 79

instead holding loosely and lazily a very long peacock feather, to the kitten's amusement. One might question if *Idleness* is a reverie, since the girl is effectively busy into some activity; but playing with the kitten is done in such a mechanical lazy way, that it is clear that, while the cat is all intent into chasing the feather tip, the girl is immersed into completely different thoughts.

The motif of playing with a small pet returns also, in identical terms in *A quiet pet*, 1906 [fig. 106] and one of the early version of *Dolce far niente* (1897) [fig. 107] in which the lying woman is holding a parrot in her stretched arms. This is indeed one out of seven paintings Godward produced with this title, most of them featuring a woman lying on the floor as the very last stage of abandonment²⁰. They all seem to display an attitude of the characters depicted that is less close to the trance of *Sweet dreams*, and in between the enjoyment of their blessed tranquillity and boredom itself.

While *The betrothed* (1892) [fig. 108] is also lying to enjoy the pleasure of her new status, playing with the ring in her hands, later paintings focus on the very idea of doing nothing and resting, already since *Daydreams* (1893) [fig. 109]. Some of these insist on the idea of rest connected to the warmest hours of the day, like in *Noonday rest* (1910) [fig. 110] where the girl is sheltering her head with a peacock feather fan, or *Midday* [fig. 111], in which the woman is lying on her belly, reminding closely the recurrent pose of the proposing men in Alma-Tadema's paintings. In some cases the motif of rest becomes a pure reference to dream as in *In the Realm of Fancy* (1911) [fig. 112] with a girl seemingly adapting her position to the constraints of the round painting. This painting, unlike all others referring to various states of daydreaming, refers more properly to the condition of being into the realms of sleep and fantasy.

Among this series depicting resting and lying is indeed the most known painting with the title *Dolce far niente* (1904) [fig. 113]. The girl is crouching on the usual animal fur in what looks like a small internal

²⁰ This same motif of 'sweet doing nothing' has been observed also in the painting by Auguste Toulmouche and the one by Alma-Tadema.

garden. Behind the girl, a small artificial pond with waterlilies and decorated with mosaic adds the feeling of a fresh, enclosed space.

The girl is lying on her side, turning towards the spectator, not so much in a completely abandoned pose, but rather with a quiet and even questioning contemplation, which seems almost to form a pleased smile on her face. This results in a very attractive image, of a fascination that is in between innocence and sensuality. The close-up and the girl's direct gaze on us, create a feeling of intimacy, as if we viewers were also lying next to her. I do not find fitting the comment that has been given of the painting, as representing "an exhausted bacchante after a frenzied dance"²¹. As I tried to prove along this paragraph, Godward's paintings seldom display action, and in most cases their aim (and their beauty) is showing no activity whatsoever. If the painting is titled *Dolce far niente*, it does not allude to the 'calm after the storm', it alludes to a rather permanent condition that characterises this girl's (as any other girl in Godward's paintings) life and pastime. She might as well be lying in exhaustion but it is more of a pleased exhaustion precisely for the excess of that 'sweet doing nothing' than for a frenetic activity.

As anticipated, the other topic connected to love is also the topic of youth and innocence. The topic of an innocent age for humankind is also often associated to the topic of young and innocent age in a person's life, as we can perceive for instance from *When the heart is young* (1902) [fig. 114] very similar to *Dolce far niente*, especially for the young female figure. Here again the idea of a sweet doing nothing is associated in particular to a young age of innocence and leisure, but above all of carelessness. The mention of a young heart refers maybe to the fact that youth has not had yet the cares and labours of life and can afford spending time daydreaming about her own idea of a love she has not yet experienced, especially in its bitter aspects.

Along this paragraph I tried to convey that it is indeed this constant dream character the most typical and recurring feature of Godward's production. As mentioned earlier indeed, the main feature

²¹ Swanson Vern G., *John William Godward : the eclipse of classicism*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK Wappingers' Falls, NY : Antique Collector's Club, 1997, p. 78.

of the exotic category of reveries is the fact that they reflect actually a double dream, a dream in the dream. Indeed, if on one hand the image of an idealised golden age is the representation of the painters' dreams and ideals itself, also inside the painting a daydreaming character appears, who on her turn is also, like the painter, escaping from her reality through her phantasy.

The need for an escape from reality, the refusal of the modern world and the desire to be living in another ideal dimension was so strong in Godward that he was overwhelmed by the new orientations and incoming issues in art, imposing themselves shockingly with the Avant-gardes. In the 1920s when the novelty of the Avant-gardes was already spreading and definitively overcoming these latest fringes of Neoclassicism and aestheticism, the clash with Godward's conception of art was such that he committed suicide leaving a note with the words: "the world is not big enough for myself and a Picasso".

In the following decades Victorian painters like Godward have been forgotten and his production, as well as other Neo-classicists and Pre-Raphaelites, has been disregarded as conservative and aesthetically mannered, especially during the 1970s, until the rehabilitation that came in the last decades.

Within Alma-Tadema and above all Godward ends the 'golden age' of the exotic reverie, and possibly of the reverie in general. As Godward himself dreaded, towards the first decades of the new century, the reverie could not be anymore what it had been during the nineteenth century. The Decadent movement, Freudian theories, and the Avant-gardes such as Cubism and Surrealism came into the game and everything start to be looked at from a different point of view.

6. ITALY

In the countries considered so far, the reverie has a specific meaning and role, either in the representation of a developed bourgeoisie, or in the interest towards the fantastic. Beyond France, Belgium and the UK, in which there is the greatest production of

reveries, we will find a much narrower number of examples in other countries. Also, in most cases we would not find the artists devoting their whole production to this type of images as we have seen for some of the artists analysed so far. Despite this and the fact that the very first attempts to represent the reverie belongs exclusively to the francophone or British milieus, the topic registers a spreading also in other western countries.

In general, having tried to draw a chronological succession (within the countries considered), I would argue that the actual images of reverie are starting to appear around the 1870s. Before then we can find hybrid images in which the previous iconographies, above all of the ones of reading and sleeping, start presenting new issues and features that anticipate the reverie representation. Even considering an innovator like Corot, his true images of reverie, like the *Lecture interrompue*, also start appearing around these years, while earlier his images are attempts towards a higher degree of abstraction.

Considering all this, it is meaningful that in Italy, one first image of reverie appears also by the 1870s. Italy in this period was not as developed a country where, like in France or in the UK, there were higher classes with means for financing the arts. Romanticism had invested Italy, too, but, unlike the UK or Germany, the fantastic aspects of the movement had been neglected in favour especially of the interest for history, which is the main form of Italian Romanticism. In painting indeed, the prevalence of historical and social subjects, was also supposed to encourage to take part of the civil life and start the process that would have brought to the unification of Italy in 1861. The Italian variation of Romanticism and history painting in general is indeed less in the side of the fantastic esoteric and reprisal of legends and more in the sense of realism and attention to lower classes.

Therefore, it is to this type of painting with social purposes that Francesco Saverio Altamura (1822-1897), a now little known artist from the South of Italy, devoted most of his production. Nonetheless, it is meaningful also that, beyond such production, he painted *Dopo la lettura* (*After Reading*, 1877-78) [fig. 115], which can be definitely numbered among the reverie paintings. It is remarkable since it

represents a rather early appearance of a reverie image in a country which was not in the first line for the artistic development by this time, like Italy.

In *Dopo la lettura* a woman is sitting frontally, while her gaze is addressed obliquely to the window next to her. This positioning of both the body and the gaze of the figure is though somewhat typical and obvious in images entailing the presence of a window, such as *Dreamy* by Fernand Toussaint.

This expedient, connected with the representation of the window, allows also the painter to represent the figure clearly and entirely but to avoid instead representing what she is looking at through the window, thus leaving complete freedom to imagination.

The first remarkable feature of the woman is that in comparison with the similar images from other countries is the fact that she is not that young anymore. If the reverie is to represent a love fantasy, then in this case its interpretation is rather on the side of love memories or regrets than a young love dream. This aspect is interesting also because an elder woman is also evidently entitled to be touched by her reading and is likely to also have reveries. The woman has laid the book she was reading on her knees in order to take some time to reflect on what she has just read. By doing so, she turns towards the windows, the typical place for escaping which also encourages the tendency to dream. The window, through which again we spectators are not allowed to look, represents the mean through which the reflection is accomplished, the place in which all expectations are expressed. This elder woman probably more than fantasising she is rather thinking back of some old memories or experiencing some regrets.

The second thing that hits us is that the context, judging by the appearance of the woman -nothing else is to be seen around her- is much more humble than the reveries we have been analysing so far from the francophone and British context. The woman is indeed dressed in more humble, home clothes, whose main scope is to keep warm, very far from the elegant refined dresses exhibited for instance by Toulmouche's women. The attention to a lower social milieu might be an indicator of two factors. One that the motif of the reverie, as well

as the practice of reading itself here displayed, registered a spreading also among the lower classes, which, as it is usually the case, follow the 'fashion' of higher classes. The other factor might be a personal interest of Altamura in genre painting and a more realistic and less idealised representation, which was in general a more common style spread among Italian painters now. The title of the painting, just like the 'interrupted reading' by Corot, programmatically aims at reproducing that common moment of indulging in the thoughts produced by was has just been read.

The two details of older age and lower class contribute in characterising the scene somewhat differently from the reveries seen so far, thus introducing a different insight on the topic which apparently does not only concern young and rich women.

Remaining in the Italian context, some years later the reverie finds in Italian Decadentism some interesting accomplishments.

Angelo Morbelli's *S'avanza* (*Rising*, 1894-6) [fig. 116] goes back to a more obvious symbolism which leaves more space to the representation of the landscape and above all the sunset on the horizon, going back to the Romantic idea of the relationship with nature, now already in a Decadent key.

First of all, Morbelli decided to give the painting a round shape inscribed in a square, thus giving the impression of focus on a specific element or looking at it as if looking through a window, enhancing the feeling of dreaminess. Here the main figure not only turns the back towards the viewer but also is depicted in a totally abandoned pose, as we see her deeply sunk in her chaise longue. We do not need to see her face to understand how deep her reverie went: it was so strong that the book has fallen from her hand and is laying on the ground. It is up to us to decide whether the woman has let her book go because she got lost in her day dream or even her phantasies turned into a real dream and she has fallen asleep in the sweetness of a dying day.

The scene in general, though representing a dreamy quietness, has also dark and truly decadent elements to it. Already this is given by the melancholy of the sunset and feeling of solitude of the woman

being isolated from the world which she sees from her privileged position. But some details in the scene complete these feelings with more precise references. The fact that the woman is in open air is already particular as we have seen that women were not normally allowed to stay in open air, unless for specific reasons. At the same time the setting around her does not look like a private garden, with the large staircase and the balustrade visible in front of the woman. The place where she is justifies the fact that she is staying in open air and is maybe explained by the large pillow and the blanket the woman is laying on. She is not just a woman resting in open air but from all these details and her abandonment we can infer she is maybe a patient of a sanatorium, a very widespread practice among higher classes. This would explain also the solemn architecture and the privileged high position of the place, as sanatoria usually were built on the mountains, where air and nature are healthier²².

As it is clear, this interpretation of the paintings gives it a darker twist, introducing the motif of illness, as we shall see so common and almost fashionable by this time. In this sense, this woman would be ill, and her abandonment in the view of the nature, maybe out of sleep or exhaustion, takes another meaning, which relates both to the scientific theory of especially female illnesses, and the artistic fascination of decadent movement towards a self-pleased feeling of decay.

In the very same years, another painting seems instead to revert this point of view, depicting a woman that is not anymore trapped into her own reverie and therefore “victim”, but seems already to be taking her situation and her future in her hands.

Sogni (Dreams, 1896) by Vittorio Matteo Corcos [fig. 117] presents already a new idea both of the modern woman and of the word ‘dream’ itself. Here a young woman is depicted again *en plein air* like Morbelli’s

²² Philippe Daverio hints the same idea of illness: “she is, unconsciously, already a character of *The Magic Mountain*, even if the scene is set in a villa in Lombardy. In front of the sweetness of the sunset the book feels from her hand and she dreams. How many fallen books at the end of the nineteenth century!” (Daverio Philippe, *Il Secolo lungo della modernità*, Milano: Rizzoli 2012, p. 144.

one, but this time she is confidently looking towards the spectator. Her attitude, far from being abandoned, shows confidence and even an almost masculine attitude in the pose of the elbow sitting on the crossed legs, while the other arm extends itself on the seatback. Unlike the woman by Morbelli, this girl is not anymore decadently sunk in reverie and inaction: on the contrary she is self-conscious and presenting a new active attitude. If on one hand the woman in *S'avanza* was allowed to stay in open air because of her illness, the fact that this woman is also in open air has a totally different meaning and seems to claim a new status and independency for women. Not only she is alone and in public, but she dares challenging the rules imposed by the society with her self-confidence and her studies. It is indeed also the fact that next to her sits a small pile of book, which make the painting more daring and sheds more light also on its title. These books are not anymore the objects of woman leisure and entertainment like in the typical home bourgeois reverie: they look more like study books that the usual novels as they are three volumes of the same work. The studies the girl is pursuing will maybe allow her to aim at a better social status and independency, and I believe this is the actual meaning of the title *Sogni*. The meaning of the word 'dreams' is now not anymore as more or less vain phantasies, but as real desires and aspirations. The woman is by now not anymore exclusively capable of imagining a better future for herself, but she has the means now to accomplish this ambition. And this is done through education and study and not anymore through the coronation of romantic love.

As it was foreseeable, the painting, which was exhibited at the 'Festa dell'Arte e dei Fiori' in Florence in 1896, raised a great debate exactly on the daringness of the figure represented, which seems to challenge society's taboos about the woman's condition with her pose, her new status, almost equal to men's, and her ambitions. In this sense the painting is not only opposed to *S'avanza*, but also to *Dopo la lettura*. The character in *Dopo la lettura* represents a woman who has lived her life according to the society's will and not accomplishing her own ambitions and ending up merely daydreaming about what she might have lost or missed. For this reasons she is seen in her old age and in

her humble home as a result of the life she lived according to what the society required her. The woman in *Sogni* instead, emanating an aura of elegance and daringness, plus being depicted in open air, has still her life in front of her and she can afford challenging the society. It remains unclear whether the painter meant to depict a realistic image expressing his support to the woman's aspiration or if he spreads an overall deluded -or even slightly ironic- look towards a woman who aims at attaining a better path than the one society has laid in front of her. On this purpose I consider meaningful also the look of the girl, which somewhat collides with her strong daring pose. Her gaze seems more melancholic and tired as if already deluded and as if already knowing that her ambitions, though strong, will be repressed by the society and maybe she will finally end up also with regrets like the woman in *Dopo la lettura*.

7. OTHER COUNTRIES

As mentioned earlier, while in countries seen so far more examples are easily found, in the countries we will analyse next there are fewer examples of reverie images and usually by artists who were having an otherwise rather different production.

This detail is possibly more interesting, as to see how the idea of the reverie pervaded the society to the point that even artists devoted to other genres, at some point, felt the need to produce a reverie image. Moreover, these *una tantum* images might result in more spontaneity, opposed to the mannerism that identifies for instance some of the painters of the bourgeoisie. In this paragraph then, I will analyse three different paintings that not necessarily have features in common beyond displaying reveries. This assimilation might seem arbitrary but it serves to exemplify the fact that also in other countries reverie images are produced, though with some differences and more sporadically.

In 1877, the same year of *Dopo la lettura*, on the other side of the world the American painter Eastman Johnson also realises a painting

closely connected to the typology of the reverie, and also entailing the presence of the window.

Eastman Johnson's main artistic interest was the painting of genre scenes, with a specific focus on the depiction of the natives and their activities. Admittedly, this is quite far from the image displayed of his painting titled *Daydream* [fig. 118], focused on a white bourgeois woman and her expectations. The painting is a rare image of reverie in which the figure is not sitting nor resting but standing. The protagonist, dressed in a simple yet elegant dress, is simply standing next to a window, slightly leaning on its side and looking through it. The representation of her full figure and a lowered angle of view allow us to appreciate the elegance and solidity of this solitary figure. Also, through the mild light of the window hitting her and the vivid colours of her dress she emerges from the rest of the setting which looks rather dark, as if the day outside was not very sunny (we can almost see ice crystallising on the window-glass). The look and the attitude of the girl is really one trespassing the boundaries of the scene and looking far through the window. What she is looking at though, is not revealed to us as we are not able to see through the window. The fact that she has the more active pose of standing rather than sitting is also readdressing the idea of waiting at the ready for something to happen or someone to come.

Unlike Eastman Johnson, the Spanish painter Rogelio de Egusquiza, was in general closer to the subject of the reverie as he was also a painter of the bourgeoisie whose production was mainly mundane scenes. The proximity to French painters, and possibly even the inspiration in the representation of the reverie, is determined by the fact that, after travelling in Europe, he settled in Paris in 1869. For this reason, his *A Reverie during the Ball* [fig. 119] looks more similar to the French prototypes for the elegant setting and figure. Yet this reverie painting has some very unique characters that distinguish it from other reveries.

First of all, as the title itself explains, it is a reverie happening during a ball, therefore not quite a domestic scene as almost any other

bourgeois reverie seen so far. At the same time it is a private moment as the girl depicted has apparently remained alone in a nearby room. It is therefore one of the few cases in which a bourgeois reverie is set in a space different than the domestic one; in this case being a room for the ball the woman is of course admitted. The young girl is sitting comfortably on the small couch resting one of her feet on a footstool and leaving both her hands abandoned on her side.

The next specific feature is that this painting shows a larger scene than it is normally for reveries; not only we are able to see the woman full figure, lying on a sofa, but also almost the whole room around her, complete with several details. The room is elegantly decorated with exotic elements, among which the most eye-catching is a tiger skin as a carpet at the girl's feet²³. Close to her a small lamp is the only source of light in an otherwise rather dark room. Next to the lamp, on the table covered with a velvet cloth, a bouquet of flowers has been left probably by the girl herself when she came to rest on the sofa. On the other side of the room, a screen in Asiatic style²⁴ completes elegantly the decoration of the room.

It is next to it, at the girl's right, that the most original feature of this painting appears. This painting constitutes quite an exception in the representation of the reverie as this is the only image I have found in which not only the person daydreaming is represented but also the content of the daydream is expressed. This feature renders the painting more similar to the images of the dream that were common before the nineteenth century. At the same time the artist meant to represent not only that she is daydreaming about a love romance, but specifically what situation exactly the woman is dreaming about.

Being a 'reverie during the ball', what the woman is daydreaming is to dance with a man, evidently her beloved or the man she fancies. This image materialises, impalpable like an hologram, above her head and not so evidently visible at a first sight. It is up to us

²³ The presence of the tiger skin might have the same function of highlighting a connection between woman and wilderness, as in Godward's paintings.

²⁴ Similar to the one seen in *Afternoon idyll* by Toulmouche (painted only five years earlier).

observers to judge if her reverie is her own fictional fantasy she wishes to live during the ball, or if, as I would opt, she is re-living a moment she just experienced while dancing with her beloved.

Not only *A Reverie during the Ball* is already very interesting by itself, but it has a pendant realised by Egusquiza many decades later, in 1915 [fig. 120]. In this second painting Egusquiza “accomplished” the daydream by transforming the secondary subject, the dancing scene, into the main subject, almost as if the dream of the previous painting had become real. He paints again the two dancing figures of the girl and the man, in a completely identical pose. Since the scene here is bigger and we are able to see the two full figures, we can even distinguish clearly that the girl dancing here is the same that was daydreaming of this dance thirty-six years earlier in the *A Reverie during the Ball*. She is wearing the exact same pale pink dress she was wearing in the first painting, with the colourful flower decoration, and even the same flowers on the hairstyle and ribbon around the neck. Finally it is remarkable that this second painting is titled *The end of the ball*, as if in a chronological succession with the scene depicted in *A Reverie during the Ball*.

Lastly, I will mention one example of reverie image from the same years by a Russian artist, Fyodor Bronnikov, who again, like the previous artists, was not specialised in the reverie typology.

In his early career Bronnikov was focusing on genre scenes and portraits but soon he would direct his production towards historical scenes, with a specific interest on Italian and Roman history. Therefore, again in Bronnikov’s case, the depiction of a reverie scene is much more remarkable, as it is far from his normal interests.

The painting in question is usually titled *Portrait of a Lady with a Book* [fig. 121] as it is indeed a reverie with a text. Despite the title, it is clear at a first look that this is no ordinary portrait with a book; the subject of the painting is not only the woman with the book, but it is more precisely the thoughts and pensiveness that the reading of the book have inspired. The woman, dressed in an elegant yet austere dress, is sitting on a velvet high armchair and has left a large book to

lay on her knees. Like in *Dopo la lettura*, the most remarkable feature of this woman is that she is not so young, as her grey hair and her tired look reflect. She seems to have stopped her reading as if after being hit by some thought that forms an expression in her face that I would define as melancholy or even regret. I think indeed that the same that has been said for *Dopo la lettura*, can be valid also for this painting: the reading has raised in the mature woman some feeling she had long forgotten, and which makes her nostalgic now.

The fact that these three artists felt the push to realise such images is particularly meaningful to our analysis of the reverie iconography, which is even more to be seen as a recurrent and almost fashionable topic at this time. Apparently even in other cultures in this moment there is a focus of interest in this subject as the cultural debate as the social trend on the reverie was spreading.

CHAPTER IV: A GENDERED REPRESENTATION

1. A PARADIGM SHIFT

The collected dream images and consequent artwork analyses have strongly highlighted how the dream—and all the more so the daydream—are activities attributed almost exclusively to women in the nineteenth century. This phenomena marks a significant evolution considering that until this century, as my previous research illustrated, the dream is instead a male prerogative and its representation displayed a male subject in most cases.

For Paganism and Early Christianity the dream was considered as a divine message, and the recipients could be both men and women, with a large prevalence of the former. In Antiquity in particular, men and women were equally entitled to receive divine messages in the form of dreams. Women were also recipients of revelatory dreams as shown in famous episodes for example in the dream of Penelope¹. These dreams can be either truthful or deceitful for both sexes, according to the myth of the two gates of dream², as exposed with the dream of Penelope.

In Christianity, and especially during the Middle Ages, dreams maintained their role as carriers of a divine message. However, they also started existing as 'biased' by the gender of the dreamer. The dream of a man was normally considered truthful, while those of a

¹ According to the Homeric narration, Penelope dreamt of an eagle killing geese, a prediction of her husband Odysseus chasing away her suitors.

² In Antiquity dreams are believed to originate from two gates, one made of a horn from which truthful dreams are derived, and another made of ivory that produces deceitful dreams.

woman were more likely to be false, and possibly generated by demons³. For this reason, the representation of dream in a religious context commonly entails a male dreamer, usually a biblical character or a saint, like in the dream of Saint Francis, *Sogno del palazzo delle armi* (*Dream of the Palace*⁴) frescoed by Giotto; or in the episode of the 'dream of Jacob', of which several representations are given by different authors.

Examples of women having equivalent dreams do exist but such similar paintings have always included women saints as subjects, like in *Sogno di Sant'Elena* (*Dream of Saint Helen*⁵) by Paolo Veronese and the *Sogno di Sant'Orsola* (*Dream of Saint Ursula*, 1495) by Vittore Carpaccio. The highly religious and moral status of the woman legitimates her capacity for dreaming without having diabolic or fallacious visions.

On the other hand, the Emperor Constantine, despite not being a saint, is also the recipient of a famous dream in a very crucial episode in Christian history (and famously represented by Piero della Francesca⁶). He is the depositary of this dream, not only due to his high ranking status as Emperor, but also because he is male. No female equivalents to Constantine's dream exist, a woman who did not possess the status of a saint was not considered worthy of receiving a divine message⁷.

Such 'dream discrimination' increases even in the Renaissance, when the dream becomes a mean of creative inspiration rather than the carrier of the divine message. Paradoxically, when dreams began to fall under the human domain, after centuries of being under the religious, a renewed gender discrimination also became apparent. The theory of the genius, as will be analysed later (see par. IV.3), is fully gendered. Creativity and the genius, existing from the Renaissance to at least

³ Believed to be one of the four possible sources of dreams.

⁴ The *St. Francis Cycle* in upper church of Assisi is usually dated around 1290-95.

⁵ As seen in the Introduction.

⁶ In the cycle of *The Legend of the True Cross* in Arezzo, 1458-66.

⁷ Helen, Constantine's mother is of course also an Empress, but is most importantly a saint.

Romanticism, are considered completely of a male apanage, and women are not believed to take any part in it.

The representations of dreams concerning the idea of the genius certainly depict a male character. The most relevant example that can be cited is *The Dream* by Michelangelo, but also the *Sogno del cavaliere* (*Dream of the Knight*) by Raphael reflects the same idea. The closest example of a dream of 'inspiration' with a female subject is *Sogno di fanciulla* (*Maiden's Dream*) by Lorenzo Lotto⁸, but again the inspiration of the girl is not in the creativity or virtue sense, but rather concerns a love accomplishment. All these images reflect the belief, also not uncommon nowadays⁹, that sleep may bring some creative suggestion or solution to a problem.

Subsequently, men were then considered subjects worth receiving both the divine direction and the creative inspiration. Throughout history it seems that the dream has been considered as too powerful a tool to be freely attributed to women, whose both moral conduct and intellectual capacities have always been considered inferior to men's.

By this visual evidence it is necessary to highlight the polarisation of the functions and forms of dreams that depend on whether they are initiated by men or women. Whenever a dream is intended as inspiration and creation, it is a male prerogative, whilst when seen in its irrational and visionary aspects, it is a female's. Indeed, by the observation of these kinds of images, we also realise that the gender of the dreamer is not irrelevant, it is instead wholly comprised in the essence of the dream itself.

As a general consideration on the visual representation of the two different genders, what can be observed is, as explained by Tamar Garb, that: "whereas a portrait of a man was a psychological document through which the motivations and actions of the sitter were conveyed, his place in society stipulated, and his relationship to the broader

⁸These last three artworks were mentioned in the Introduction.

⁹ The idea exists in both popular culture and in psychology, with theories arguing that sleep and dream are made for the sleeping mind to refresh and elaborate.

culture communicated, a portrait of a woman was less a portrayal of an individual than a screen for the projected sensibilities and passions of the spectator. [...] Ideally, the portrait of a woman stimulated a response exactly opposite that prompted the portrait of a man"¹⁰. The portrayed woman was supposed mainly to be a pleasant or stimulating image to the male gaze as the spectator was a man; but apart from this, the woman was not supposed to have a personality herself: "a male effigy required the precise inscription of traits, the faithful rendition of features and distinctive characteristic of status and position, while the image of a woman demanded an overall harmonious arrangement of pictorial values [...] portraits of women were pictures first, the imaginative projections of their viewers, and portraits of individual second"¹¹. That is, before examining more deeply the genuine gender issue concerning the images of reveries, already this consideration can be applied to the typology of the representation of reverie as a whole.

Considering this, it is therefore worth demonstrating that only a few representations of dreaming men existed from the nineteenth century, whereas the subject of the new type of dream, the reverie, is largely more often the woman.

Par. IV.2 will analyse the few male dreams and reveries found in the nineteenth century. Some belong to the category of the 'objective' dream representations, repeated with little innovation and with the major purpose of displaying the historical or religious narration. These images, representing more as an illustration of a fact, still continue to appear but in a much smaller number of examples than earlier, and drastically diminishing between the eighteenth and nineteenth century. This is due to the decrease in importance that these stories played in this period, as well as the decrease of the belief in such accounts. Until the nineteenth century, dreams of saints or historical characters were depicted with pedagogic purposes, and they often entailed a strong

¹⁰ Garb Tamar, *The Body in Time: Figures of Femininity in late 19th -Century France*, Lawrence, Kan.: Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas in association with University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2008, p. 44- 45.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 49.

belief in their meaning, as well as in the supernatural origin of the dream.

Another reason why the production of these images was brought to an end is the shift from an art market based on the commission of few wealthy patrons to a new market in which artists produced artworks in order to please the more general public, now mainly constituted by the bourgeoisie. The fact that the Church stopped playing a role as a patron commissioning art with religious subjects - as most of objective dreams were indeed religious ones - and the increased independency of artists, has made the latter address more mundane subjects.

Yet the main reason for the lack of 'objective dreams' paintings is the new attitude towards the dream. The dream is now not considered the vision revealing details about the future and divine signals, even before the elaboration of the Freudian theories, the dream starts to be perceived as something revealing about the individual itself and his past. Also, the dream's darker and subconscious aspects start being investigated. That is another reason why the reverie, with its psychological implications, especially in the female reverie, become the focus of the attention on dreams at this time.

The questions that will be addressed in this section are those of whether there is a dreaming or daydreaming gender at this time and why; why we observe the shift in both the dreamer's gender and dream type; and if the two aspects are related. Lastly, the question of whether some types of dreams are appropriate for a gender and not for the other, and vice-versa will be addressed.

2. *À QUOI RÊVENT LES HOMMES ?*

Having so far recognised the representation of the reverie as a prevalently female activity, we shall now investigate whether a male equivalent is retraceable during the same timeframe, though possibly not with as evident features as for the female one. The questions whether also men dream or daydream at this time will be here

addressed, as well as whether society, with its strict separations and role definitions, 'allows' them to do so.

This paragraph has been titled *À quoi rêvent les hommes?* to quote the title of the comedy by Alfred de Musset *À quoi rêvent les jeunes filles?*: while indeed the 'mysterious' content and meaning of female dreams was devoted large space in literature and medicine, the question whether and how men dream should also be addressed. Though this paragraph might seem deviating from the main topic of this study, it will be clear how the analysis of male dream is functional to understand the gendered perspective of dream-related images by this time.

Given the shift in the dreamer's gender mentioned above, first the general topic of male dream shall be inquired in order to consider the existence of a male reverie. Taking into account again the collection of images made as starting point of this research, very few images of daydream or even dream in general have a man as main subject. As mentioned, the typology of the objective dreams¹² -with male subjects- continues appearing during in the century in a few accounts. These remaining objective dreams are also more concentrated in the first half of the century, as in the second the female reverie is the main dream representation to be found.

One artist who still pursues the representation of objective dreams (with a religious subject) in the first decades of the nineteenth century is William Blake. For instance, in his *Jacob's Dream* (1805) he gives his interpretation of the biblical episode through the powerful image of the ladder representing the ascension to God.

Later during the century it is instead the dream with an epic narration that is prevailing among the representations of objective dreams. Often these are part of the historicist revival of ancient myths raised by Neoclassicism first, and of traditional fables and legends later¹³.

¹² As defined in the Introduction.

¹³ For instance, Edward Burne-Jones represented a *Dream of Lancelot*, consistent with the Pre-Raphaelite interest for British legends.

Beyond these few objective dreams, some other specific images of male dreams can be identified, a few of which will be mentioned here to consider their type of representation and purposes. This analysis shall highlight how - just like the female reverie - the few representations of male dreams are fully connected to men's aspirations and position in society.

As a general consideration, the representation of male dreams by this time can be identified along three or four main subjects. The first and most ancient is the dream as related to the concept of inspiration, either as divine message or as a creative idea, as mentioned already in the Introduction. I argue that this representation of male dream is in a line of continuation from the classical and biblical 'revelatory' dream, and becoming - since the Renaissance theory of the genius revived by Romanticism - a creative revelation. This evolution highlights in any case that man is always the depository of some higher truth allowing him to attain elevation.

In this century, invested by Romanticism, it is clear that the representation of inspiration and genius would be rather common. The dream representations with this subject are all having a male protagonist as the creativity was the male prerogative. One early example, reflecting very closely a Romantic literary 'trend', is the *Songe d'Ossian* (*Dream of Ossian*, 1813) by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres [fig. 122]. The mythic figure of the bard from James Macpherson's poems, (commonly considered one of the starters of Romanticism) is seen asleep while leaning on his lyre. His dream of inspiration appears above his head, presenting him the main heroes of the poems and their stories.

An etching by Francois Joseph Aimé de Lemud for instance represents *Beethoven Inspired* (1864) [fig. 123] to glorify one of the figures believed to best impersonate the Romantic genius. The inspiration is here again infused during sleep as the composer, like a modern Ossian, is asleep leaning on his piano, while the image of his dream is forming above him. The image in overall seems to be modelled on Ingres' *Songe d'Ossian* with the main figure asleep on his instrument (in a very similar, though reversed, pose) and a multitude

of evanescent figures in epic attire: “the Romantic imagery of the genius possessed by inspiration produces throughout the nineteenth century a number of images representing musicians in the grip of the pangs of creation”¹⁴. The very representation of inspiration is to be seen in the *Kiss of the Muse*, by Paul Cezanne, *d’après* Nicholas Frillié (1860) [fig. 124]. The writer at his table has fallen asleep and in his sleep he receives on his forehead the kiss of the muse - in the form of a winged woman- that is, the Inspiration.

Related to the theme of inspiration is by this time another large source of dreams: the use of drugs. This type is evidently more marginal, but the use and abuse of drugs becomes rather ‘fashionable’ especially in this period. The connection between the use of drugs and artistic creation is of course ancient and cannot be here examined¹⁵; it will suffice saying that by this time, it starts playing a very important role in building the image of the *bohémiens*. The outcomes of this connection are spread above all in the literary production (needless mentioning *Les paradis artificiels* by Charles Baudelaire) but also partly in the visual production. Beyond the art produced *under* the effect of drugs, there are also artworks representing more or less explicit scenes of drug consumption.

The other subject and purpose of the representation of dream is the accomplishment of a desire, which is one of the main meanings we attribute even now to the term ‘dream’. One early example of this subject is the *Prisoner’s dream* by Moritz von Schwind (1836) [fig. 125]. This very painting is the example of wish fulfilment *par excellence* since it was commented by Freud himself¹⁶ precisely to illustrate the childish dreams, that is dreams in which the wish fulfilment appears clearly without further superstructures. Freud recognises in the painting the

¹⁴ *L’Invention du sentiment: aux sources du Romantisme*, [exposition], 2 avril-30 juin 2002, Musée de la musique Paris : Musée de la musique, 2002, p. 237.

¹⁵ For a recent exhibition on this topic see for example *Sous influences* (15 February- 19 may 2013) at the Maison Rouge in Paris.

¹⁶ Freud Sigmund, *The Standard edition of the Complete psychological works*, ed. by James Strachey, London: Hogarth press and the Institute of psycho-analysis, 1966, in *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (original edition 1917), p. 3230.

expression of a wish fulfilment as the character's condition (in this case the fact of being imprisoned) is the determining factor that generates the vision seen in the dream. The prisoner's wish cannot be other than being released, thus he dreams of some bizarre gnomes¹⁷ cooperating to cut the metal bars of his window¹⁸. It is also interesting to observe that the prisoner has his eyes open and therefore, rather than a dream, he is perhaps having a daydream.

Le rêve by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1883) [fig. 126] is a clear example of a wish fulfilment realised through an allegory. A sleeping man sees in a dream three allegoric figures appearing above his head in the form of three women in classical clothes. The first is holding roses as to symbolise love, the second is presenting a crown for glory and the last is spreading coins to mean fortune. The fact of being an allegory and not directly a wish fulfilment puts this symbolist dream in a relation with the previous allegoric dreams that were common during the previous centuries.

Apart from the *Prisoner's dream*, the most common wish realised in dreams is (and has to be) glory and ambition. We shall not forget that the nineteenth century has been defined as the 'triumph of virility'¹⁹, the period in which a very strong vision of men and their virile features is imposing in every domain. It is the time in which action, energy, passion, heroism are most deeply considered the qualities a man should pursue: this century is characterised by the duel, the display of power and bravery, the defence of the honour. Considering the few representation of male dreams in comparison to female ones, it seems like men in general are not really supposed to be dreaming. Yet, if a man was to dream and wish of something at all, that shall be glory and similar more or less overt ambitions.

¹⁷ The dream's fantastic component is specific of von Schwind's art, often centred around fables and folklore.

¹⁸ Freud also remarks that the gnome who is cutting the bars resembles the prisoner himself, thus being a sort of alter-ego of his.

¹⁹ This was the definition of the nineteenth century in *Histoire de la virilité*, sous la dir. d'Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine, Georges Vigarello, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, DL 2015.

Even just considering what we can name the 'zero degree of dream' (i.e. simple sleep) and its representation, glory and virility are always present. In particular, as remarked by Linda Nochlin, the representation of sleep has for the two genders a thoroughly different intention and visual outcomes: "although sleep is a *topos* representing both men and women, it is figured differently for each"²⁰.

For instance, in Courbet's sleep representation women are most often naked, sometimes clothed but still implying the sexual availability seen in the *Sleeping spinner* (see again par. II.1). Men are instead always clothed, "protected from the prying and possessive gaze of women as well as of other men; male vulnerability is posited as momentary and conditional on a general state of potency"²¹. Since the image is conceived for a male viewer, the vulnerability in sleep never suggests the sexual availability; rather it encourages identification of the viewer with the subject represented. Male sleep suggests more the idea of the *repos du Guerrier*, a well-deserved sleep of a man who has fought, who has already given proof of his virility, as in Courbet's self-portrait as *The Wounded Man* (1844-45) [fig. 127].

Glory is obviously connected in most cases with military glory, therefore another typology of dreams is the one with a military setting. The most relevant example in this sense is a very large painting by Édouard Detaille, titled *Le rêve* and dated 1888²² [fig. 128]. A large camp of French soldiers asleep is laid on a battlefield. With the first lights of dawn an image materialises above their heads, as if it was a dream all soldiers are having simultaneously: carried by the clouds are the figures of a large army representing the previous battles won by France. The sleeping soldiers are the conscripts of the Third Republic, dreaming of the glory of their predecessors: through this allegoric dream Detaille meant to encourage the French army and show his support to the Boulangist movement. Beyond the centrality of the topic of glory, the striking feature of this dream is the fact that it is apparently a collective dream.

²⁰ Linda Nochlin, *Representing Women*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1999, p. 133.

²¹ Ibid. p. 134.

²² Conserved in Musée d'Orsay.

On this purpose I would like to elaborate some considerations on the military dream as the most common typology of male dream represented. The military dream is not only rather spread, but also it presents some specific features which require to be devoted some space on their own.

The condition of being in war, or being under a despotic regime is a specific experience and definitely an extreme one. As it is known, dream content is determined mostly by the context in which the dreamer lives: the more extreme the context the more this will be appearing in the dreams of those living under these conditions. This has been brilliantly exemplified by Charlotte Beradt in *The Third Reich of Dreams*, based on reports of dreams dreamt by Germans under the Nazi regime. In the report it is clear that dreams made by people living under extreme conditions will be pervaded with the characteristics of their subverted reality. Additionally, those features will be shared among the whole community: a constrictive socio-political situation can indeed determine common features in the dreams of members of a society, as it could happen in the case of collective dreams about catastrophes, apocalypses and so on, which will be more frequent and spread in periods of crisis and uncertainty²³.

In such cases it is indeed possible speaking of 'shared dreams', in the sense dreams sharing similar features among members of the same community, or even collective dreams as dreams dreamt almost identically by a whole community. It has been proven indeed that the dream can be analysed not only as a psychological phenomenon, shedding light about the individual, but also as a sociological one, expressing the issues of several people belonging to the same context. Studies in sociology²⁴ argue indeed that the dream has been too often

²³ Some studies have been made also in recent years for instance about dreams had by war refugees communities and people who had undergone violence.

²⁴ One of the first accounts is R. Bastide in his work "The Sociology of the Dream", in *The Dream and Human Societies* ed. by Von Grunebaum, G. E. and Caillois, R., Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966. More recently the issue was raised by Fine, G. A.; Fischer Leighton, L., "Nocturnal Omissions: Steps Toward a Sociology of Dreams" in *Symbolic Interaction*, Vol. 16, Issue 2

overlooked as a sociological phenomenon, being the psychological and self-centric character considered the main aspect. A sociology of dreaming is indeed possible, and especially evident in these dreams shared by a community living in a war situation. This is the idea contained *in nuce* in *The Third Reich of Dreams*: "this kind of dreams, real nocturne diaries, although coming from an unwilling psychic activity, seemed to record with the precision of a seismograph the effects caused by the external politic events in people's inner life"²⁵.

These considerations are applicable also to the representation of the military dream, which was a common subject also in the artistic representation, apparently registering the phenomenon of dream in military context as a common experience shared by many men.

On the same line, also the representation of the military dream, set in a war context, has its flourishing in the diffusion of postcards with the same subject during wartime. A few older illustrations date back to American civil war, such as *The Soldier's Dream of Home* (1861-65 ca) [fig. 129] ²⁶. Yet the largest production of this type of cards, either with drawings or photographic montage, started during World War I in the main European countries involved.

These postcards naturally responded to the need of communication between the soldiers at the frontline and the families at home. Although their setting is the war situation, they do not explicitly display the seek for glory and ambition but, interestingly, they are meant to express reciprocal affection between the soldier and his relatives and loved ones. Despite being inspired to regular wish-cards,

(1993), pp. 95–104 and Vester, H.-G., *Sex, Sacredness and Structure: Contributions to the Sociology of Collective Dreams*, Symbolic Interaction, Vol. 16, Issue 2 (1993).

²⁵ Beradt Charlotte, *Das Dritte Reich des Traums*. München: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1966.

²⁶ The inscription below the picture reads: "Stretched on the ground the war-worn soldier sleeps,/Beside the lurid watch fire's fitful glare;/And dreams that on the field of fame he reaps/ Renown and honors which he hastes to share/ With those beloved ones who gathering come,/ To bid their hero husband father "wellcome home"./ Fond dreamer, may thy blissful vision be/ A true foreshadowing of the fates to thee."

these ones dedicated to war very often recur to the dream or daydream device in their visual imagery, in order to represent both the home and the frontline sides, connected by memory and the image seen in the dream.

These postcards can be of two types: the ones sent from the families and lovers to the soldier and the ones sent from soldiers to families. Among the first ones, the most common type is displaying the lover, often seen remembering her beloved soldier in a sort of dream, or seeing him as a vision. From the other side, the soldier would send images of a soldier dreaming or most often daydreaming of home, of his wife or lover [fig. 130], sometimes also of the kids; in some other pictures the soldier dreams instead of the mother and the rest of the family. Especially in the ones made by photo-montage reveries are prevailing as if daydreaming about home was a frequent occupation for the soldier: "in this largely dominant iconography, based on photo-montage, it is the reverie which prevails over more proper dreams"²⁷. It is also interesting to observe that these cards always show the dream and the daydream in the form of a full accomplishment of the desire, without further superstructures: "they validate the idea that the dream realises or satisfies a desire directly and clearly, and that it is not incoherent nor enigmatic"²⁸.

Beyond the fact that to this sort of production a wider research should be devoted, what I shall remark now is that in this context men are evidently 'allowed' to dream about love and lovers, thus being partially assimilated to how women in the nineteenth century were represented while daydreaming of their perfect romance. The difference that completely reverts the dream's meaning is the fact that the man's dreaming of love can be here endorsed by the society

²⁷ Carroy Jacqueline, *Nuits savantes. Une histoire des rêves (1800-1945)*, Paris, Édition EHESS, 2012, p. 351. In some cases these cards take a more erotic connotation, as in the much more virile and amusing representation of what the soldier really wants, not necessarily in terms of romantic love. This latter type was more conceived for the personal use among soldiers rather than to be sent.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

exceptionally because he is already in the most virile situation of all, war. In this sense a man who daydreams of his love is not less manly: he is actually allowed to indulge in such a weakness since he is already heroically fighting for his country. This consideration is enhanced by the observation that among the postcards to be sent from families to soldiers, almost uniquely female figures are appearing while dreaming of the faraway soldier: "the fathers of the soldiers and the male figure left behind are little present in this iconography as if the dream topic was a prerogative of women and children"²⁹. If males at home were daydreaming of the soldier at war, that would not be appropriate nor acceptable. Therefore, military postcards represent only partially an exception to the tacit rule that it is not virile for men in this period to dream of love: in this case they are justified by the fact itself that they are making the highest sacrifice, so their virility is not compromised.

The negative counterpart of the soldier's positive daydreaming is the man that in war-time does not accomplish his duty and indulges in daydreams. An American postcard from the World War II (produced around 1942-3) [fig.131] displays in two scenes a man first distracted in his work in a factory, and later waking up in panic during a bombing; the inscription reads: "Daydreams at work means nightmares later". While the war propaganda was encouraging the positive, virile daydream of home as an incentive to fight bravely, the daydream is unacceptable at the workplace, especially in the moment of collective effort for the war.

If we consider the types of subjects involved in the representation of male dreams (creative dream, use of drugs and military glory) we would realise that they are not shared with women as at this time women are not entitled to have dreams about any of the three subjects. As for the wish fulfilment in general, this is for women is to be fully expressed in marriage and love realisation.

Having had an overview on male dreams, we shall now investigate whether also male reveries exists and what their features

²⁹ Ibid. p. 350.

are. Surely, from the collection of artworks operated at the beginning of this work, no real account of male reverie resulted, at least not according to the definition given of reverie thus far. Yet we can take into account some images which can be more or less appropriately defined reveries and which entail a male subject.

In his *La rêverie opportune*³⁰, Claude Jaiglé analyses a few paintings by Géricault and Delacroix having in common the fact that one of the main characters, in the middle of a rather dramatic scene, seems to be distracted, or rather absorbed, in his own thoughts. Since this study is also dealing with a male variation on the subject of the reverie, its analysis seemed necessary in this section.

The first example mentioned is Théodore Géricault's painting *Le chasseur de la garde* (*The Charging Chasseur*, 1812) [fig. 132]. The painting represents an army officer on his skittish horse, about to throw himself in the middle of the battle. Despite the urgency of the moment, though, the protagonist of the scene is characterised by an attitude that is hardly appropriate to the present situation: he looks somewhat melancholic or better distracted, as if going astray from the present condition. This produces a very anomalous effect on the whole scene, defined a reverie '*opportune*' since the character is in a way escaping the present drama to find some refuge into himself, in his own reflections and feelings. This attitude, and the way it is described by Jaiglé are indeed very close to the female reverie: the chasseur has the chance to "be free, at any moment, including the worst ones, to revert towards himself and free himself of the world's pressure by accepting an unexpected flux of a dreamy thoughtfulness"³¹.

The next examples analysed as images of reveries *opportunes* are the *Radeau de la Méduse* (*The Raft of the Medusa*, 1818-19) [fig. 133] also by Géricault, and the *Mort de Sardanapale* (*The Death of Sardanapalus*, 1827³²) by Eugène Delacroix [fig. 134], respectively in the figures of the old man leaning on his son's corpse and the figure of Sardanapalus himself. I find both examples less convincing than the one of the

³⁰ Jaiglé Claude, *Géricault, Delacroix, la rêverie opportune*, Paris: l'Épure, 1997.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³² Already mentioned about the Oriental sloth in par. II.1.

Chasseur de la garde. First of all, the definition of '*pensivité distraite*' for the old man's expression in the *Radeau* does not seem very fitting. He has more an expression of profound bitterness and disillusion about life: more than being in a reverie, he seems to have lost any interest to live after his son's death, to the point that unlike the other castaways he does not care to turn towards the ship appearing in the horizon which is their only chance of rescue.

All the same, also the figure of Sardanapalus displays in his expression something different from a reverie. As recognised by Jaiglé, the quietness and impassibility of this figure within the scene of massacre is probably the most striking detail of the painting, and this is done on purpose to create a contrast between the terrifying chaos surrounding him and the quiet cruelty of the king determined to die with all his human and animal possessions. Indeed, while we could define his pose languid and dreamy, we could not say the same for his facial expression, determined and firm to pursue murder and suicide. His unnatural calm shows more than a reverie, but rather a high example of both cruelty and the oriental languidness (seen in par. II.1) which seems in a way to reassert that even in his death the king will be a hedonist like he was during his life.

Two more examples briefly quoted as reveries *opportunes* are the figure of Baoudouin in *Entrée des Croisés à Constantinople* (*Entry of the Crusaders in Constantinople*) and two figures in the *Scènes des massacres de Scio* (*The Massacre at Chios*, respectively 1840 and 1824 and both by Delacroix). Again I believe that rather than a dreaminess the attitude of the figures is a sort of quiet preceding or following the climax of tension, and thus conferring a dramatic character to the image.

One last example is one of the women in the already-mentioned *Femmes d'Alger* by Delacroix [fig. 17]. This is the only reverie *opportune* with a female subject quoted by Jaiglé, and indeed it has features totally differing from the other ones, being set in the calm idleness of the harem, instead than in the middle of the action. While this image is obviously closer to the female reverie so far described, again it seems to me that the insistence in the oriental wantonness,

sloth and relaxedness is the main subject, without necessarily implying the reference to a reverie: the figure said to be having a reverie is actually in my opinion looking invitingly at the spectator (see again par. II.1). However, it is possible to define the attitude of the character a reverie but definitely not as clearly as in the female reveries illustrated in the previous chapter.

Since *Femmes d'Alger* is a very anomalous type of reverie *opportune* (also by admission of Jaiglé himself) for the fact of not taking place in the middle of the action like the other examples, the following argument will consider all the other *rêveries opportunes* excluding *Femmes d'Alger*.

The examples illustrated by Jaiglé, whether or not rightfully considered reveries, still support the discourse on the reverie exposed in the present study. The concept of reverie *opportune* particularly suits my own thesis, for Jaiglé -probably inadvertently- has taken into account exclusively images of men (with the exception of the anomalous *Femmes d'Alger*) caught in a daydreaming attitude, and recognised under specific conditions and characters. Beyond the figure's gender, the next differentiating feature is that they are set in exteriors or in large scenes, thus specified by the public character of the space where men were normally interacting. In most of the paintings, the daydreaming subject is not alone, he is a detail in a larger scene in which other gestures and actions catch our attention: there is no concentration on the daydreaming subject as in the female reverie. Even the *Chasseur*, despite being the centre of the image, is clearly not alone; he is among other soldiers although they are not to be seen in the scene.

Secondly, all reveries *opportunes* are frantic scenes, at the apogee of the dramatic tension. They imply an idea of heroism and glory for the situation in which the characters are finding themselves in. Clearly, this is all very far from the female reverie, set in interiors, with the figure seen alone and in a moment in which the quietness is such that the woman can easily fall in her fantasy.

Lastly, Jaiglé observes how the fact that these men are doing reverie makes them somewhat less virile, and more 'human', as

implied in the description of the *Chasseur*: “and since Romanticism was the cult of energy, action, sentiment led to the extreme of their expression [...], this horseman who, in loss of energy, detaching himself from action and drowning into the soul’s divagation instead of impersonating war’s pathos, seemed a bad disciple of the pictorial movement he should have embodied”³³. In this sense it is again clearer how the reverie has more of a female connotation, and a man who does it, despite having the sympathy and the interest of the artist, results less virile and action-oriented than he is supposed to be.

This proves that if a few male reveries do exist in this period, they have features radically different from the female ones. This consideration reassesses the argument on the specificity of female reverie as a whole typology and of the reverie in general as a female activity.

In the only images that can be considered male reverie, then, a specific conception emerges. Man is never represented as lost in his own thoughts during his daily life, as women were usually. On the contrary, men are in way seen to be living always some kind of heroic situation. Daydreaming women are always seen in a relaxed pose, often lying in bed or in a sofa, lazily dropping a hand or looking blankly towards a point not visible to the spectator; whilst men tend to stand or sit rigidly, even precariously (see the *Chasseur*), as if, despite the absorption in their thoughts, they had anyway a virile promptness for action. In particular, I would argue the existence of a strong reluctance to represent men intent in doing nothing else than daydreaming. As I tried to prove, whenever it seems like a man is having a reverie, the image entails always deeper meanings and purposes that justify that pensive attitude with great thoughts and reflections, much unlike the petty mundane ones animating women’s reveries.

To conclude, the reverie in general is now connoted as a lazy vain activity and as such is felt as a womanly activity and men are normally not allowed to daydream: the male reverie does exist but it is accepted only if reassessing the man’s heroic and virile nature.

³³ Ibid. p. 6.

3. ROLES OF SEXES

The reasons for the gender shift as the subject of dreams reside in a strong polarisation between the two genders in this epoch. In the countries considered, by the nineteenth century the roles of sexes are indeed very well defined and separated. The conception at the base of this strict separation lies mainly in the different biological and natural characters attributed to men and women, and on the two opposite male and female principles is polarised the mentality of the whole society.

On a very basic level this separation is already stressed in the very appearance of the two genders, as they are defined by the current fashion. Male and female clothes are now differentiated as never before. Men's clothes are made for action and comfort, while the moustaches and the display of corporal hair contribute to the expression of virility. Women's clothes are as constricting as ever, with the amplest gowns and stretch corsets, not allowing freedom of movement. Already from the clothing it is clear that men are believed to be action-oriented, while women are made for inaction. But fashion is only an indicator of a whole bigger conception: each sex covers a different sphere and has different functions.

One first distinction, as also already anticipated, is between the public and private sphere. Men are considered public and social beings; women are allowed to act only in the private sphere, namely in the care of the house and the children. While lower-class working women or peasants are still allowed to stay outside of the house as they are forced to work, higher-classes women, not in need to work, are allowed in limited occasions to go outside of the house, like a few public spaces of high society such as theatres or gardens, but in any case never by themselves: "the general rule was that any women in a public space of leisure, and unaccompanied by husband or other suitable male, was a prostitute"³⁴.

³⁴ Cunningham H., *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, c. 1780-c. 1880 London: Croom Helm, cop. 1980, p. 130.

Men instead are not only allowed in all public spaces, but also encouraged to act socially and publicly. Also, they have the freedom to visit all public places, including the lowest ones, such as bars, brothels, cabarets, and this right is reassessed constantly and supported by the society. In this sense they have access to the whole world of both high and low entertainment, with activities that are wholly prohibited (and punishable) for women, such as drinking or committing adultery. Men are also free to be normally in streets, or walk, even aimlessly, around the city. The *flânerie* indeed, that has been given so much space in literature³⁵, “symbolizes the privilege or freedom to move about the public arenas of the city”³⁶.

This separation of spheres and functions is clearly stated for example in the political views of the time: as a moderate republican senator, Jules Simon, put it in an 1892 speech: “What’s a man’s vocation? To be a good citizen. And a woman’s? To be a good wife and a good mother. One is in some way called to the outside world, the other is retained for the interior”³⁷.

The woman is supposed to be entirely devoted to the care of the family and the house. The family is indeed considered the core of the society and every individual is directed to having one. Those remaining outside the family system are considered rejected and are isolated, such as unmarried women, dandies and bachelors. This is particularly true for lonely women or widows who are left to sustain themselves and, not having a husband, are almost not allowed at all to go outside their domestic space.

Societies have become particularly restrictive and puritan in the period of the Restoration for France and Victorian age for England and fearful of sexuality as a force potentially destructive of the order established. The family is then the institution that guarantees the ruling of the sexual impulse in an acceptable way.

³⁵ See above all Baudelaire’s description in *Le peintre de la vie moderne*, 1863.

³⁶ Pollock Griselda, *Vision and difference: feminism, femininity and the histories of art*, London: Routledge, cop. 2003, p. 94.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 95.

However, while female sexual expression is seen as disruptive and illicit, male sexuality, even including infidelity, is not only deemed natural but encouraged. Adultery perpetrated by man is tolerated and allowed as a mean to protect the family, which does not really contemplate a sexual life beyond the mere reproduction purposes. Female adultery instead was considered the biggest sin as symptom of a lack of ethics and sense of duty.

Female sexuality is in general denied and repressed with a negative propaganda, especially by the society and the Church. This condemnation has also the practical purpose of discouraging as bad and abnormal female sexual intercourse before the wedding. After the wedding, though, female desire is again denied and subjected to men's. On this purpose, the current biological and medical theories of the time seem to confirm the active-creative part of the man and the passive-imitative character of the woman: "energy, imagination, production appear as the values connected to male sexuality and opposed to passivity, imitation, reproduction, indissociably linked to female sexuality. Men create original artworks, women recreate themselves in their children"³⁸.

In general then whatever concerns action, activity, creation, rationality, ambition is considered a masculine domain, while everything connected to inaction, passivity, emotiveness, irrationality, softness is feminine. The dichotomy between the male instance seen as creative and the female one seen as repetitive has a long history and is partially still rooted in our culture.

Female sexual impulse therefore has to be sublimated in the house duties and especially the care for children. In wealthy contexts, though, the woman does not even have even the task of taking care of the house nor of the children as this is done mostly by servants and attendants.

Also in her own domestic sphere the woman does not have any real right and chance of decision; women's life spent mostly under the

³⁸ *Histoire des femmes en occident*, sous la dir. de Georges Duby et Michelle Perrot, Paris : Plon 1992, p. 254-5.

control and the authority of male figures. Until the marriage the woman is under the paternal authority, which has absolute powers; after the marriage, she is under the control and protection of the husband. The underlying idea of this condition is that the woman cannot manage her life by herself: she is considered similar to an underage kid, not able to dispose of her goods or salary nor take decisions on her life by herself: "If there is something that nature teaches us with evidence, is that the woman is made to be protected, to live as a maid with her mother, as a wife, under the guard and authority of her husband [...] women are made to live privately"³⁹. The authority imposed on women finds an expression in theories in which the husband has even the right to kill the wife when she does not respect the family⁴⁰.

At the legal level too, after the French Revolution, in the Civil Code of 1804, women rights start falling under the authority of the father or the husband, considered sole judges for them, while earlier in case of injustice they could appeal to some special tribunals for these matters⁴¹.

Within the compulsion to control women, society also tends to understand the female character by reducing it to two main prototypes. Beyond the polarisation man/woman, also within the woman category there is a strong Manichean separation between what are believed to be the two prototypes of women, positive and negative. This polarisation becomes clear in both high and popular representations of women, which "are intended to reinforce patriarchy by keeping women categorized as 'good' or 'bad' but never a combination of both, and never 'human'".⁴²

The good prototype of woman is naturally represented by the nurturing, domestic angel-woman type. The 'good' woman was supposed to be devoted to the family, obliterate her personality and

³⁹ Jules Simon, *L'ouvrière*, 1861.

⁴⁰ This is argued in *La pornocratie* by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1875).

⁴¹ *Histoire de la virilité*, sous la dir. d'Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine, Georges Vigarello, Paris : Éditions du Seuil, DL 2015, p. 92.

⁴² E. Menon, *Evil by Design*, p. 11.

aspirations for her husband and her children, be modest and chaste. To this unrealistic model soon another is opposed as the disturbing, immoral, yet somewhat attractive one: the prototype of the sinful woman, the *femme fatale*.

Both prototypes are of course not actually corresponding to real women and are rather projections of the male view and perception, at the same time scared and attracted by femininity in general. More precisely, it has been said that the prototype of the angel-woman is the product of the aspiration and worries of the dominating bourgeois society, while the prototype of the *femme fatale* is part of the imaginary of the decadent artistic aesthetic that starts spreading in the last decades of the century⁴³.

This polarisation and above all the negative *fatale* type has also its roots in early Romantic imagery. A highly fitting *ante litteram* description of the *femme fatale* can be found in Friedrich Schlegel's unfinished novel *Lucinde* (1799) whose protagonist meets indeed a woman of this kin, described as such: "She stayed often alone in this *boudoir*, sitting the Turkish way, her lazy hands on her knees, since she abhorred feminine works"⁴⁴. Already in this short description of the negative female protagonist, Schlegel, providing short details about the habits of this woman, builds an image of what was then felt like a compendium of vices. The *femme fatale* is indeed alone, in her private space that, like in the activity of reading and in the reverie, is a source of anxiety for the man who cannot control what is actually being carried on in it, as if it was the very hut of the sorceress. Her way of sitting evokes the oriental combination of sensuality and immorality (seen in par. II.1), while the most suiting definition of her, that of *oisive*, is here referred not to the whole person but by synecdoche to her hands. And lastly, the very proof of her evil nature, is the fact that she abhors female activities, as if denying her own womanly essence and the occupation to which both nature and nurture oblige her to.

⁴³ For an important reference on the subject see Dijkstra Bram, *Les idoles de la perversité: figures de la femme fatale dans la culture fin de siècle*, Paris: Seuil, 1992

⁴⁴ Schlegel Friedrich, *Lucinde*, 1799.

All women can therefore be sorted according to the two prototypes, either positive or negative: "about the first reigned domestic virtue; in the second were prostitutes, women having a job, female activists and most labourers and non-white women. This two universes were not on the same level: 'normal' women were pictured as admirable, virtuous, happy and rewarded, while those who displayed a deviant femininity were represented as ridiculous, deprived, miserable or punished"⁴⁵.

Curiously enough then, while Lucinde is considered a negative type of woman because she despises womanly works, also the woman who works is seen as negative. The working woman and the woman even only aspiring to work indeed represent an anomaly, a degeneration from the real duties and roles of women.

The perception of the working woman as losing her womanhood creates a sort of paradox with the conception of the inactive woman, as in the images of sloth, also entailing a lack of womanhood. In this sense, women were both pointed at as prone to sloth *and* heavily discouraged to enterprise any activity other than the household or the typical female activities. Basically, the condemnation of the society weights on women both if they work and if they do not, thus creating a very tight brim on which women had to stand in order not to fall in an excess or another.

Also the figure of the prostitute impersonates the typical example of the negative type, as well as the best proof of these societies' hypocrisy. The prostitute is indeed considered a degenerated woman and as such object of disdain by men and pity by women⁴⁶. At the same time, prostitution is considered a natural institution and men's frequentation of prostitutes seen as a physiological need and a mean to preserve the family institution.

⁴⁵ *Histoire des femmes en occident*, sous la dir. de Georges Duby et Michelle Perrot, Paris: Plon 1992, p. 250.

⁴⁶ On this purpose see also Lombroso Cesare, *La donna delinquente, la prostituta, la donna normale*, Torino: Fratelli Bocca Editori, 1903.

Towards the peasant woman instead there is a sort of indulgence along the line of the idealisation of country life illustrated for the 'bucolic reverie', as work in the fields is considered a higher, or at least less corrupted occupation. As explained earlier, though, this is only an idealisation done by wealthier classes, who had no real perception of the peasant life's reality. The genuine peasant woman "insofar as she was poor, passive, natural and understood to be content with her God-given role as mother and nurturer, served as an ideal vehicle not only for ideological definition of femininity but for those of the good worker as well. [...]: the urban worker, male or female, was both more problematic as amoral being, and ultimately far more suspect"⁴⁷. Again, also concerning the reverie there is a disproportion and inequality: the peasant woman is allowed to have reveries and represented in this state as a genuine and graceful image.

While the woman who needs to work to support the family is somehow accepted, the woman who works for her own aspiration and self-realisation is seen as even more immoral.

In their early life wealthy women are pushed to learn and practice all female activities such as sewing, painting, playing the piano, not as to provide them real useful skills but to make them more desirable as wives. No real knowledge of use for a job is provided to them and aspirations are discouraged as unnatural and worrisome: the only aspiration a woman is entitled to is accomplishing her romantic idea of love in the marriage. On the woman who has different aspirations than this one, weighs the criticism of the society, and she is often ridiculed; for instance, a wealthy woman who has aspirations to work without needing it for her sustainment is seen as an anomaly.

Particularly harsh is the attitude towards women having artistic aspirations, especially for literature; they are pointed at with sarcasm and emarginated for their supposed pretention to be equalled to men. Writing was indeed considered a high expression of the creative genius and as such an exclusively male prerogative. Women themselves were in many cases convinced that at a biological level they did not stand

⁴⁷ Nochlin Linda, *Representing women*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1999, p. 84.

any chance at rivalling with men on the creative domain: “in the specific domain of arts, the most effective idea was that the genius is exclusively masculine. Developed progressively after the Renaissance, in parallel with the elaboration of an hierarchy among forms of art, the concept of the genius is supposed to explain artistic creation and its quality [...] Women whose work showed some creative genius were considered abnormal or, at least, asexual. The attributes of femininity were diametrically opposed to those of the genius; insofar as a woman aspired to have a great artistic career, she was blamed for betraying her domestic vocation”⁴⁸.

The few women who pursued their artistic career despite everything, had to do it by refusing their womanhood and claiming instead their manliness⁴⁹. Most female authors who hoped to publish had to do it at least under male pseudonyms⁵⁰: so did for instance all the three Brontë sisters. Already in the works by these women, produced in the first half of the century, sporadic yet courageous claims for women’s status are made, like in this passage from Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847): “Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts, as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex”⁵¹.

⁴⁸ *Histoire des femmes en occident*, sous la dir. de Georges Duby et Michelle Perrot, Paris : Plon 1992, p. 254.

⁴⁹ For further reference see *The New Woman in Fiction and Fact. Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*, ed. by Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, Basingstoke and New York : Palgrave, 2002.

⁵⁰ It is oddly still common for women to use male names or only initials when publishing to prevent the reader being biased by the author’s sex.

⁵¹ Brontë Charlotte, *Jane Eyre*, London: Collector’s Library, 2003, p. 162.

It is in the end of nineteenth century that women start claiming first a larger freedom, and soon more rights. This process, culminating in obtaining equal rights only in the second half of the twentieth century, is characterised by the constant attempt by women to be likened to men, both in their appearance and in their intellectual capacities.

The most well-known figure on this regard is naturally that of George Sand, the female writer who in order to be recognised and accepted had not only to assume a male name, but even to wear man's clothes and practice manly activities, such as smoking. She started being noticed and accepted, and for this reason became allowed in places that were normally not allowed to women; at the same time she was also object of a very harsh criticism by some of her contemporaries such as Charles Baudelaire. One lithography by Alcide Lorentz (1842) [fig. 135] depicts her as ugly and in manly clothes, with her works flying around as loose pages, while an inscription ironically states: "*si de Georges Sand ce portrait/ laisse l'esprit un peu perplexe/ c'est que le génie est abstrait,/ et comme on sait n'a pas de sexe*"⁵². Figures like George Sand are indeed the target of a harsh satire, ridiculing at the same time their desire to be equalled to men in their unpleasant and unnatural appearance, and their artistic aspiration.

Similar illustrations target systematically all women's claims and ambitions: the most known series are the ones by Honoré Daumier, *Les bas-bleus* (*The Blue Stockings*, 1844), *Les divorcées* (*The Divorced*, 1848) and *Les femmes socialistes* (*The Socialist Women*, 1849). The artist satirise all new female claims and attitudes, depicting a sort of upside-down world, where women refuse to do their housework and their husbands' rightful requests. More specifically, Daumier's women with artistic ambitions "are invariably shown as skinny and unattractive, their philosophical pretention and intellectual endeavours deemed incompatible with physical beauty or health. Denatured by their aspirations, they appear aberrant, sexless and foolish. Reneging on

⁵² "If this portrait of Georges Sand leaves the spirit a bit perplexed, it is because genius is abstract and has no sex".

domestic duties, such as mending their emasculated husband's trousers or tending to the needs of their children, they selfishly pursue their intellectual goals, appearing as unnatural usurpers of masculine roles who have become desexualised in the process"⁵³. In these scenes Daumier never fails to represent the man as deprived of his virility and the children mistreated and in danger as their mother neglects them.

On the same line another illustration titled *Revendications féminines* (*Feminine Claims*)⁵⁴ by Édouard Guillaumin Pepin [fig. 136] shows in the main scene a woman, wearing culottes and smoking, about to leave on her bike saying "*Je vais au congrès féministe! Tu prépareras le diner pour huit heures précises, tu m'entends?*"⁵⁵. Her husband, discharged of his masculine power, is in distress washing the dishes and wearing an apron while the children around are crying and evidently need care. Emancipated women are indeed accused of selfishness as they do not respond to the call of duty made to them by the society; these illustrations have evident intents of paternalistically diminishing and denigrating women's capacities.

The object of the satire is indeed the pretension of this inversion of roles feminists had, which creates the irony effect. The striking thing is that although the woman's requests that are not different from what a normal husband would have requested from his woman, yet these are seen as unnatural and humiliating for the man.

On the other hand, society imposes constrictions on men, too. As mentioned, this is the century men are constantly forced to prove virile, heroic and fearless. Since childhood, males are pushed to become stronger and endure suffering; they are soon separated from their mothers and habituated not to get sentimentally attached. Their education and the features attributed to them by the society create also frustrations and unaccomplished desires. For instance, men presenting

⁵³ Garb, T., *The body in time, figures of femininity in late nineteenth -century France*, Lawrence, Kan. : Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas in association with University of Washington Press, Seattle, c2008 p. 65.

⁵⁴ Published in *Le Grelot*, 19 April 1896.

⁵⁵ "I am going to the feminist congress! You will prepare dinner at eight sharp, is that clear?"

features considered generally feminine, such as being hysteric or daydreaming are seen as effeminate and abnormal; in general homosexuals, cowards, slothful men are object of despise now more than ever. Virility is often expressed through the domination of what is different and what is weaker, through an idea of superiority that finds expression both in the relation with the other sex and in the ideas animating colonialism and expansionism practised in this period.

Men feel evidently threatened by the women's claims and aspirations. The more virility is presented as expansion and oppression, the more men will try to control and constrict women who otherwise might put into question their virility, as in the upside-down world represented in the etchings seen above. A larger freedom for women would inevitably question and erode men's privileges: "the disclosure of the prohibition weighing on women, the new permissions given to them to circulate, to exhibit themselves in cafés terraces, to go to theatre shows alone, to practice sport, to stay without their husband or family in thermal baths and seaside resorts, to look at bodies in an anatomy museum, to attend course at the university, push back men's privileges, disturb the occurrence of scenes of collective virility"⁵⁶.

Though in a much less pronounced and negative key, this is exactly the attitude we can find also towards the reverie. It is possible that in the representation of the reverie a moralising component is also present, as the activity is considered lazy and vain.

If on one hand the glorious and inspirational dream is appropriate to man as he should only think of heroism and ambition, the love fantasy is convenient to women, since supposedly they should not aim at nothing more than having a beautiful romance and becoming good wives.

The great limitations imposed are defining a very enclosed space of action for women, which, following the already mentioned terminology by Griselda Pollock, can be defined as the 'space of femininity' (see par. III.2.4). Pollock's definition of this space, which

⁵⁶ *Histoire de la virilité*, sous la direction d'Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine, Georges Vigarello, Paris : Éditions du Seuil, DL 2015, tome II, p. 10.

existed both in real life and in artistic representations, are based on the observation of subjects and settings of paintings by the main Impressionist artists who were men: their paintings are set in a very wide range of spaces, both private and public, high or low, as men had access to all sets of spaces.

On the contrary, Pollock remarks that female artists of the same height, such as Mary Cassat and Berthe Morisot, depict a much more limited range of spaces -mostly interiors- which were the spaces in which both the artist herself and the women depicted were allowed: "they do not represent the territory which their colleagues who were men so freely occupied, and made use in their works, for instance bars, cafés, back-stages"⁵⁷. With these considerations Pollock identifies the type of spaces in which respectable woman are supposed to find themselves, as the 'space of femininity'.

Paintings done by women are set instead in dining rooms, drawing rooms, bedrooms, balconies or verandas, private gardens, "but there are paintings located in the public domain, scenes for instance of promenading, driving in the park, being at the theatre, boating. They are the spaces of bourgeois recreation, display and those social rituals which constituted polite society, or Society, le Monde"⁵⁸. Therefore in general "we cannot ignore the fact that the terrains of artistic practice and of art history are structured in and structuring of gender power relations"⁵⁹.

This implies that respectable women during the nineteenth century are always represented in interiors, that is in the space of femininity, whilst prostitutes, working women and other lower categories can be represented in exteriors, but are naturally defined by a negative connotation. Therefore, women represented in the lower environments, as well as in any other public space are most often women of the street, *filles publiques*, and are therefore represented in all

⁵⁷ Pollock Griselda, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 79.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 78.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 76.

the range of places that were conceived for male entertainment and where respectable women were not allowed⁶⁰.

The discourse made by Pollock is not only useful to define the space of representation but also the same theory of the genius mentioned earlier, which has influenced also the whole art history: “we have to refute the lies that there were no women artists, or that the women artists who are admitted are second-rate and that the reason for their indifference lies in the all-pervasive submission to an indelible femininity – always proposed as unquestionably a disability in making art”⁶¹.

Let us now come to the activity of the reverie. As mentioned, this scheme is fully applicable and productive for reverie images, too: most images are set in private spaces and exactly the places here mentioned, especially private rooms.

To explain further the representation of the reverie I would like to use another consideration made in Pollock’s essay. She remarks that the paintings by these female artists, especially by Berthe Morisot, seem very often to present a sort of division between two “compartments of space often obviously boundaried by some device such as a balustrade, balcony, veranda or embankment, whose presence is underscored by fracture”⁶². The author argues that this division identifies the difference between the space in which female could act, the space of femininity indeed, and any other spaces “what Morisot’s balustrades demarcate is not the boundary between public and private but between the spaces of masculinity and of femininity”⁶³.

Starting from this reflection, I would like to apply the concept to the reverie images. As illustrated earlier, all elements in the images of reverie, from the restricted vision to the look of the figure, seem to constantly address another space, that is evidently not visible in the

⁶⁰ Such as for instance the women appearing in *Un bar aux Folies Bergère* or in *Olympia*, both by Édouard Manet.

⁶¹ Pollock Griselda, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art*, London : Routledge, 2003, p. 77.

⁶² Ibid. p. 81.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 86-7.

scene. Like the space of masculinity is perceivable in Morisot's paintings, also in the reveries another space is addressed: while what we see in the picture is an even reduced version of the space of femininity, the alternative space is also perceived in the images sometimes more vividly as it is represented by the window – through which the viewers is never allowed to see- that symbolises everything that is not in the space of femininity, the 'everywhere else' women do not have familiarity nor experience with.

The reverie therefore is to be identified mainly as a mental escape from a material space. As it is clear, all these pushes towards the reverie apply mostly to high-class women. Despite their harsh life conditions, women of lower classes, forced to work to survive, had maybe some more freedoms in terms of evading from the space of femininity. They also had more power in the managing of the house and did not have completely separated domains in comparison to their male counterparts. Without making any sort of comparison between the harshness and injustice of high-class or low-class women life, what we need to point out now is that the environment naturally producing the activity of daydreaming is definitely the higher class context. As pointed out also in the classification of images, daydreaming is by definition an activity for people who have plenty of free time and do not have to worry about earning their life. We can hardly imagine a working woman or a peasant indulging into a romantic daydream while working in the factory or in the fields.

For this reason also especially the peasant reverie seems unrealistic and I opted to identify it rather as a transposition of a bourgeois concept and pastime in a different context, felt as pure and genuine. In fact all reveries, even the ones that have a bucolic or exotic setting, have a 'respectable' woman as subject. This allows us to understand that the reverie is considered as a normal outcome of womanhood.

If artists were to represent a working woman who does a reverie while she is working, this would be twice as negative: in the first place because she is a worker and this implies already a negative conception of the society, and secondly because she is neglecting her work in order

to indulge in her fantasies, which makes it even more morally unacceptable. Prostitutes or women of the street were not believed to have reveries (as also they were not believed to have hysteria). Therefore no accounts of women of this type doing a reverie are to be found (the closest example is the peasant, but the prostitute represents the degenerated type, while the peasant is rather referring to a supposed 'innocence lost').

For all these reason, the activity of reverie is attributed by society and medical theory almost exclusively to the *femme honnête*, the respectable type of woman who would stay in the house and would lead a modest life. This shows also a dualistic conception of the reverie, both as something that distinguishes respectable woman, but also to be condemned.

4. READING AND ENNUI

From the division of roles and the functions attributed to woman by the society it is clear that, especially for wealthier women who did not even need to work or do the housework, the main condition to define a woman's time is inaction.

In this sense the fable of the Sleeping beauty, so central in the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics, comes again at hand as particularly representative of the condition of higher-class women in this period. The fable of the Sleeping Beauty is the epitome of this situation in which a girl has to wait one hundred year sleeping with her whole court until a prince charming comes to rescue her.

These daydreaming women are often also, like the original Sleeping Beauty, living their lives in inaction ad passivity, in a perpetual daydreaming about their perfect love. This renders them unable to be the true actors of their own life and strive to accomplish their dreams, whereas only a male active force is able to intervene creating a real love relationship, shaping their lives and bringing them back from the passivity they are forced into.

Women living in the conditions illustrated so far are naturally pushed to live their life in inaction and rely on a male intervention (the

father's or more likely the husband's) for all their needs. These women were actually spending a great deal of time daydreaming, which is to be considered truly a common pastime and not only a mannered representation. When we come to see the reverie images analysed in the previous chapter, the similarity with the idea of the fable is such that we can define them 'daydreaming beauties' instead of 'sleeping beauties'. They are indeed observed in their typical inactivity and they result in an attractive image because of both the contemplation of a woman in an intimate moment and a certain curiosity towards the supposed capacity of women to fantasise.

I argue that the fable of the Sleeping beauty is particularly appreciated and represented in this period also because in a way it represents well the situation of women at the time, condemned to a life of inaction and waiting until a male force, the only one able to unlock a situation they cannot unlock by themselves, comes into their life - which was not often the case in real life, considering the frequency of unhappy marriages.

An even more representative figure for the woman's condition is that of Mariana, originally from William Shakespeare's play *Measure for Measure*. During the whole play her character is pursuing her beloved Angelo, who, after her dowry goes lost at sea, has refused her. Still in Shakespeare her figure is more actively seeking for the accomplishment of her love, and she even has a happy ending as Angelo is forced to marry her and act as a good husband.

Afterwards, and especially during the nineteenth century her character became understood mostly for her features of expectation and passivity. Mariana became commonly represented as the figure of a woman who stands hopefully and permanently next to her window, waiting to see her lover appear, in a permanent condition of inaction and isolation.

Also this figure of this waiting woman inspired several pre-Raphaelite artworks, not only because of their fondness for Shakespeare but above all because, as for the Sleeping beauty, the brotherhood was interested and attracted by these women's condition.

Mariana impersonated the ideal of a devoted woman sacrificing her own life and time for her love ideal. The most well-known example is the 1851 painting by John Everett Millais (1850-51) [fig. 137], but there are others by Hughes and Waterhouse. In Millais' painting Mariana stands in front of the window and all in her attitude shows the tiredness and boredom of the waiting in vain.

To this understanding of the character, like in the case of the Sleeping beauty, Tennyson's poem *Mariana* contributed highly. Furthermore, the poem is again from 1830, the very same year of his *Sleeping beauty* poem (see par. III.5). The poem is elaborated around all the sensations the woman is feeling in her waiting, with the refrain repeating that she is weary and she would rather die:

*She only said, "My life is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"*

The poem insists particularly indeed in the condition of a passivity in her love expectations unaccomplished and disgust for the present condition up to the point that death is seen as an escape.

From our point of view Mariana is, and even more than the Sleeping beauty, the paradigm of the woman's condition, both as it was actually, and partly also as the male society wished it to be: a quiet house woman that has accepted her imprisonment and sees the male intervention as the only active force in her flat life.

The figure of Mariana is also connected with the already mentioned theme of the window, on whose implications it is worth investigating further. The meaning of the window has been illustrated already as a mean for (even only mental) escape, but also for a mean for the contemplation of the outside and of nature⁶⁴. The figure of Mariana addresses the fact that the motif of standing by a window entails another human event: the idea of waiting, connected to the motif of the

⁶⁴ Respectively in par. I. 5 and III. 3 about *Die Sentimentale* by Hasenclever.

return, in this case of the beloved. In some paintings, as we shall see, we can guess that the girl is not only looking through the window but she is (maybe vainly) hoping to see her beloved come back, or even romantically waiting to see her prince charming pass by (and hopefully rescue her from her flat daily life).

Some of the reveries seem indeed (also in the title sometimes) to strongly entail the idea of waiting and namely waiting at the window. In a moment in which female life was made of inaction and passivity and entirely depended on men, it is not unlikely that women, having their fantasies nurtured by romantic readings, would be waiting for them to be realised.

One last important theme that the window introduces is distraction. Looking through a window is also a way to avoid seeing always the usual familiar elements of the house, to see movement, to get distracted by what is passing by. It is also a way to observe the 'others' –men and children- who, unlike women, are allowed to stay outside of the house.

Coming back to women's real condition, a regular woman's life was spent between small house activities and ephemeral entertainments, including certainly several empty hours of rest. How to fill such an unbearably empty life was one of the preoccupation of the society. The set of skills a woman was supposed to learn were not necessarily thought for her own good, but rather to fill her routine.

The feeling of *ennui*, a permanent state of boredom, has been object of some studies specifically concerning the last decades of the nineteenth century⁶⁵. This feeling of meaninglessness has been observed as a generalised and felt even by contemporaries as a typical malaise of the century. It is connected both to the ancient idea of melancholy and to the modern concept of spleen. It has been observed that "in the end of the century the *ennui* is democratised, generalised, or at least perceived as such by contemporaries"; there is an

⁶⁵ I will use here the French term "*ennui*", which entered also in English, entailing a broader meaning than that of "boredom".

“awareness of an illness specific of the 1900s. This epoch, which is synonym of a festive, jovial and magical ambience, registers also the spawn of a depressive symptoms and the propagation of a series of psychological pathologies”⁶⁶.

This feeling is to be found in several categories of the society and different types, as proven, that go from the travellers, to the soldiers, to the typical feeling of Sundays ennui. By the end of the century, along with the spleen and the sentiment of *fin de siècle*, also the ennui has become almost a trend: its definition recurs in talks and texts, as a commonly widespread sentiment.

It must have been the most generalised feeling for women, especially wealthy women. Men were not only allowed to have a public life but also leisurely activities: it is to be remarked that by this time drinking, smoking, clubs, all constitutes manly leisure; plus, depending on the social status, in the period after the industrial revolution also sport and collective activities, such as the circus, are invented.

Not only women’s duties but also women’s leisure are bound to be fully enclosed in the care of the house: “Leisure for women, it was assumed, posed little problem, for the solution to it lay in the home [...]. In any minutes spared from this almost unending task women might possibly engage in some self-improving occupation or join in a family excursion, but generally the leisure was confined within the bound of home, family and class”⁶⁷.

Despite being a generalised feeling, the ennui is condemned as a danger. In men it might prevent them for the action that should be their constant feature, and in women, like sloth, it might avert them from their duty in the house. The more the life of a woman is in danger of falling into the ennui, the more it is ruled and filled with small activities considered useful or appropriate to elevate the woman’s naturally trivial essence. For instance, the life of a catholic woman

⁶⁶ *L’ennui: histoire d’un état d’âme, XIXe-XXe siècle*, sous la direction de Pascale Goetschel, Christophe Granger, Nathalie Richard [et al.] Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2012, p. 90.

⁶⁷ Cunningham Hugh, *Leisure in the industrial revolution*, c. 1780-c. 1880 London : Croom Helm, cop. 1980, p. 129.

“does not leave any empty space, this vertiginous ‘emptiness’ frequently invoked [...] to characterise her *ennui*. Through the accomplishment of daily labour, the maiden escapes the dangers of laziness and reverie”⁶⁸.

More mundane events, such as balls and theatre shows acquire an unnatural importance and are invested with great expectations beforehand and long-lasting memories afterwards. Yet the most important event and self-accomplishment of a woman’s life is expected in the marriage. This becomes the aim of an entire life and is charged with enormous expectations, nurtured by the idea of romantic love the woman builds during her youth, based on both her readings and her own fantasies.

Society is based also on this contradiction, that while fantasy and reading are discouraged, at the same time an idea of romantic love accomplished in the marriage is strongly proposed, in order to maintain the order established and direct all girls to marriage, while discouraging them from having other pre-conjugal and extra-conjugal experiences.

It shall be clearer now how, with all the restrictions imposed to women’s life, it came natural for them to look for an escape, an evasion, though only fictional, from the enclosed physical and mental space attributed to them. This fictional escape shall pass at first through the reading, especially of fiction, and consequently evolves into the daydreaming.

The phenomenon of reading is to be intended as a wide diffusion, almost a mania for reading that starts spreading especially among women during the second half of the eighteenth century. To highlight the development of this phenomenon we shall go back and retrace the privatisation of the reading practice that became common along the eighteenth century.

Until then, the practice of reading was accepted among women as long as it was devotional readings exclusively. This was the only

⁶⁸ *L’ennui: histoire d’un état d’âme, XIXe-XXe siècle*, sous la direction de Pascale Goetschel, Christophe Granger, Nathalie Richard [et al.] Paris : Publications de la Sorbonne, 2012, p. 128.

type of reading commonly considered appropriate to women and encouraged: through these readings women were deemed to improve their status and fulfil their duties towards the society: "traditionally the reading woman was considered the guardian of costumes, traditions and rituals of the family"⁶⁹. The devotional reading was the perfect activity for a woman that was supposed to be oriented solely to accomplish her role of mother and nurturer: "it was the traditional image of the female reader, addressed towards religion and family, very far from the great concerns of public life"⁷⁰.

Considering again the iconography of reading women, already rather spread before the eighteenth century, we would find almost exclusively images of women doing devotional readings.

Nonetheless, while reading was still deemed an activity a woman should do, starting from the 1770s some new and less reassuring types of texts start appearing and rapidly spreading. This is a consequence of a progressive privatisation of the reading practice, that starts along the eighteenth century: reading stops being an activity done in public, even aloud; it starts withdrawing towards a progressively more intimate domain. To this contribute both the practice of silent reading and the very type of texts that are now read.

The older practice of reading aloud, both collectively and individually, was considered healthy and encouraged, to the point of being prescribed as a remedy for some types of illnesses. On the contrary, the practice of silent reading spreading now, fosters the reflection and interiorising of what is being read, also with negative and dangerous consequences. Reading becomes more and more a personal leisure practised in enclosed spaces. The wide and fast diffusion of this pastime determines also the appearance of all sorts of accessories made from this purpose. The space of the house itself starts including a private room, in which a woman can isolate herself from the world in order to be immersed completely into her reading: "silent

⁶⁹ Cavallo Guglielmo, Chartier Roger, *Histoire de la lecture dans le monde occidental*, Paris: Éd. du Seuil, DL 1997, p. 368.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 369.

reading, interiorising all emotions, allowed the reader to withdraw herself even more in the word of imagination"⁷¹.

Specific pieces of furniture are now conceived for reading, especially *chaises longues*, or special tables transformable for the different purposes of reading, eating, writing. There are several variations of the chairs for reading, such as the *bergère au dossier droit* and the *duchesse brisée ou non*, all to be part of the equipment of these small intimate rooms made for this purpose. Fashion also follows the new trend, with the invention of the *liseuse*, a light feminine vest conceived for comfort and intimacy while reading⁷².

As anticipated about iconography, the practice of reading derives partly from the practice of correspondence, becoming so widespread and common during the eighteenth century. In this period correspondence usually implied a much larger freedom for women to flirt and entertain more or less illicit relationships.

During the eighteenth century then, the practice of reading, and especially a reading that affects feelings, is done through both the letter and the novel. In this century the practice of private reading is both cause and consequence, especially for women, of the diffusion of more libertine readings, sometimes even plainly erotic: "read in silence, for herself, suffice to create an air of intimacy that separates the reader from the external world; even in the middle of the city, in presence of others, one can be alone with her book. And her thoughts. But certain readings require more secrecy"⁷³. This was already clear in the painting by Chardin and even more in the one by Baudouin (seen in par. II.4). In this type of paintings the most common attitude displayed is the '*langueur*', as to indicate both a sentimental and erotic involvement in what is being read: "all the signs characterise the reading of a novel

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 348.

⁷² Ibid., p. 349.

⁷³ *Histoire de la vie privée*, sous la dir. de Philippe Ariès et de Georges Duby, Paris: Seuil 1985, p. 143-4.

which nurtures seductive dreams, nourish sentimental expectations, excites the senses”⁷⁴.

The reading attitude now is the ‘sentimental reading’, whose aim is not learning or reciting moral or devotional passages, but to raise feelings, to affect the reader. This involvement into what is being read and its consequent reaction are naturally encouraged by the condition of isolation and intimacy. The sentimental reading is also the reason of the new mania of reading that starts around the 1770s.

As anticipated, during the nineteenth century women lose progressively this space for illicitness or even privacy that was proper of the correspondence: the woman’s privacy was not guaranteed as the husband or another male member of the family had the right to control her frequentations and correspondence⁷⁵. It is now novels centred on love stories that start producing the same excitement and thrill that was previously found in the practice of correspondence. The novel then, being completely fictional, “risked to excite passions, elate the female imagination. It could raise unreasonable sentimental expectations, erotic emotions that threatened chastity and good habits”⁷⁶.

The new literature is conceived for the female slice of the market, including magazines, handbooks and above all novels. While the diffusion of the devotional readings continues, also other type of texts, such as cookbooks and fashion magazines start benefitting of a large and growing audience. This phenomenon is also facilitated by three factors: the privatisation of reading; the diffusion of small book formats (also easily hidden when needed), and the flourishing of a whole range of entertainment literature, such as histories of voyages, love novels, and such kind of mass literature, without any cultural pretension, but simply conceived to entertain.

The most widespread type of reading though is the sentimental novel, especially in its subgenre of the ‘domestic novel’, set in a

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 146.

⁷⁵ *Histoire de la vie privée*, sous la dir. de Philippe Ariès et de Georges Duby, Paris: Seuil 1985, p. 125.

⁷⁶ Cavallo Guglielmo, Chartier Roger, *Histoire de la lecture dans le monde occidental*, Paris: Éd. du Seuil, DL 1997, p. 372.

domestic environment with every-day situations. This type of novel follows a predictable scheme with a female protagonist who has to face several difficulties, including other characters bullying her in all possible ways, but who eventually will find her true love. It has been recognised how the structure of these novels, spreading mostly from England from the 1860s, is the prototypes of modern soap opera⁷⁷. The serial novels especially now dominate the market, being both cause and effect of an increased reading activity by women.

This particular kind of readings are so successful also because they depict women that are exactly like their target market, so the reader would easily identify herself with the protagonist. The women in these novels are also often unsatisfied women who find a refuge in their daydreams and illusions, thus encouraging even more the practice of reverie in the reader.

Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert is the most known and striking example of this kind. The interest of the novel from our point of view is that it is addressing the type of the daydreaming woman both in its content and in its target audience. *Madame Bovary* was indeed a *feuilleton* published in the *Revue de Paris* in episodes in 1856, like all this sort of sentimental novels were published in episodes. It depicts the prototypical woman who does reveries about her love accomplishment, and at the same time it is conceived for the women readers who could identify themselves with the main character.

The character of Emma Bovary, indeed, bases all her understanding of life and love relationships in what she has been reading in novels : "Before her marriage, she had believed that she was in love; but since the happiness she had expected this love to bring her had not come, she supposed she must have been mistaken. And Emma tried to find out what exactly was meant, in real life, by the words 'bliss', 'passion', and 'ecstasy', words that she had found so beautiful in books"⁷⁸. And about the type of readings she makes, of adventures and

⁷⁷ Modleski Tania, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women*, New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 12.

⁷⁸ Flaubert Gustave, *Madame Bovary*, transl. by Margaret Mauldon, Oxford: Oxford University press, 2004, p. 32.

idealised love: "She would have liked to live in some old manor house, like those ladies in long-waisted gowns who, leaning chin in hand on the stone ledge of a window, spent their days gazing from beneath its trefoil arch at a white-plumed cavalier, mounted on a black steed, riding towards them from the distant horizon"⁷⁹. While wishing for her own life to be different, she invests also her husband Charles of the idea of manliness and virility she has created in her mind, thus finding him constantly disappointing and different from what he is supposed to be.

The cause of her daydreams and her misery is in the fact that reality, and above all her marriage do not correspond in any way to the image society has pushed her to believe about love and marriage⁸⁰. In a conversation in which she compares her case to another unhappy woman, she is told: "'Then, after she got married, it went away, they say.' 'But with me,' replied Emma, 'it was after I got married that it began'"⁸¹.

At the same time, despite being characterised by her womanly dreaminess, Emma also perceives the difference of freedom and status between men and women, developing a sort of 'envy' for men. When she gets pregnant, she is wishing for a boy with this motivation: "this idea of bearing a male child was like an anticipated revenge for all the powerlessness of her past life. A man, at least, is free, free to explore all passions and all countries, to surmount obstacles, to indulge in the most exotic pleasures. But a woman is constantly thwarted. At once passive and compliant, she has to contend with both the weakness of her body and the subjection imposed by the law. Her will, like the veil attached to her hat, flutters with every breeze; always there is desire

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 34. The description is very close again to the fable of the Sleeping Beauty or the figure of Mariana and their meanings, as seen earlier.

⁸⁰ On this purpose also Émile Zola's short novel *Le rêve* (1888), part of the Rougon-Macquart series, is to be mentioned. Here also the female protagonist, Angelique, spends her life in her house reading and daydreaming about her perfect love, but dies eventually when her long-awaited dream is about to be realised.

⁸¹ Ibid. p. 98.

inviting her on, and, always, convention holding her back ⁸². In her perception of a woman's life Emma believes in a mixture of nurture and nature conspiring against women, which was both what society wanted of women and what women thought of themselves.

In other cases, the character of the novel, despite having daydreams, is aware of their dangers.

About the reveries found in *Jane Eyre*, I believe Charlotte Brontë has transposed, from her female viewpoint, the sense of guilt that may accompany the practice of daydreaming:

Daydreams, for Brontë, could be nightmarish: not the idle activity to which young women in nineteenth-century conduct books appear prone, but a frightful sensation of being pinned down by a beast, much as in the nightmare, Henry Fuseli's 1781 painting [...] Charlotte Brontë was invested in a dialectic that is crucial both within the nineteenth-century fiction and to reading it: a tension between the engrossing pleasure of reverie and the necessary protection against its alleged liability to disruptive excess [...] like many of her contemporaries she acknowledges the perceived dangers of private reverie, which, if indulged in to excess, was alleged to put individual sanity in peril ⁸³

The belief on the feeble quality of women's intellect is only strengthened by this sort of readings: "this feminisation of the novel readers seems to confirm the prejudices on the role of women and their intelligence: if novels were considered as female literature, it is because women were seen as made for imagination, having limited intellectual capacities, both frivolous and victims of their own emotions" ⁸⁴.

Therefore, if on one side a female literature market is developed and encouraged, at the same time reading for women is seen as a lazy and distracting activity, liable of exciting and confusing the senses and

⁸² Ibid. p. 80.

⁸³ Gettelman Debra, "'Making out' Jane Eyre" in *ELH*, Vol. 74, No. 3 (Fall, 2007), pp. 557-581, p. 558.

⁸⁴ Cavallo Guglielmo, Chartier Roger, *Histoire de la lecture dans le monde occidental*, Paris: Éd. du Seuil, DL 1997, p. 372.

as such even worrisome. This pastime is seen with suspicion by men, and bridled as much as it is possible. For instance, the male authority could control the type of readings that were done by the woman, and demand of her to do only the allowed and edifying ones. Also for the reading of newspapers in many families women were not allowed to read by themselves but it was the man reading to them aloud, thus being able to select the information deemed appropriate and censor the rest.

Reading is then an activity often done by women in spaces that are as private as possible, even hidden and accompanied often with a sense of guiltiness and prohibition. It is not surprising that women started accompanying and substituting the controversial activity of reading with the development of their own and less controllable fiction, their daydreams.

All the previous considerations explain why reading is now represented as a completely female activity, and such a common and recurring subject in visual arts. In some artworks about reading the subject is indeed showing this character of illicitness of the reading; in some others is the character of absorption: "beyond the excitement of this or that impression, female and male readers were eager for this sentiment of valorisation of the self that reading arose. What they claimed was the pleasure to savour their own emotional excitement, since this experience produced in them an unknown and satisfying self-awareness"⁸⁵.

The main reason why the activity of daydreaming existed and was accepted by the society, as it shall be clear from what said above, is a sort of regulation of female desire. Women's sexuality, repressed and condemned, is sublimated into an idea of romantic love that is also, like the repression of sexuality itself, inculcated by the society. At the same time the lack of aspiration and ambition for the future and the belief that women are not made for work or creativity, pushes women to invest all their energy and aspirations into the realisation of a good

⁸⁵Adler Laure and Bollman Stefan, *Les femmes qui lisent sont dangereuses*, Paris: Flammarion 2006, p. 30.

marriage. After this, they found themselves under the same male authority as before, only having maybe acquired the right to go out accompanied by their husband. The activity of daydreaming continues all the more so; while in the young age the reverie might be about the future romantic love realisation, later it can become about regrets and, like in the case of Madame Bovary, about adultery: "the nineteenth century novel was then associated to the supposed irrationality of the woman, her sentimental vulnerability, and it is not a chance that female adultery became the novel archetype of social transgression"⁸⁶.

The fact that these women are spending their lives into reveries is seen and tolerated as a by-product of the supposed intellectual features of women's brain, characterised by emotiveness, irrationality and lazy (opposed to creative) fantasy. But these features, above all the fantasising capacity, are also observed with concern and start being studied and analysed in medical theory.

5. MEDICAL THEORY

The medical and psychological understanding of the reverie seems to follow the evolution of the concept as we have observed it in par. I. 3.

In this century the dream, such a fascinating phenomenon from all humanistic points of view, becomes progressively also a major concern of the medical psychologic analysis: "During the nineteenth century, the study of the dream, this banal and intriguing phenomenon that affects humans, and of which everyone can experience, constitutes an intermediate domain approached by philosophers, doctors, amateurs, sometimes famous and prestigious. During the first half of the nineteenth century, sleep and dreams become a topic of investigation considered laic and positive, beyond every religious or marvellous approach. Nocturnal life is not potentially a carrier of

⁸⁶ Cavallo Guglielmo, Chartier Roger, *Histoire de la lecture dans le monde occidental*, Paris: Éd. du Seuil, DL 1997, p. 372.

supernatural messages, whether divine, like prophetic dreams, or diabolic, like nightmares⁸⁷. Nocturnal life does not bring premonitory messages, like in the popular *clefs des songes*. It is neither a superior world from reality, as in a Romantic perspective. Sleep and dream have to become the object of a 'science'⁸⁸.

If on one hand the dream had been subject to a process of re-appropriation from the divine to the human domain during the Renaissance⁸⁹, in the nineteenth century it seems that the everlasting fascination mankind had with the dream starts being expressed in the numerous attempts to understand this phenomenon scientifically. For these reasons the relevant scientific accounts on dreams during this period are numerous and still increasing in comparison with the previous centuries. Similarly, the reverie is also starting now to be described in scientific terms: its features and origins are now investigated, especially towards the end of the century, also in their medical implications.

Evidently, it is not possible here to consider even briefly all important writings on the subject of dream in the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, considering exclusively the subject of the reverie, it is possible to trace the development of its scientific and medical understanding. Along this paragraph we shall see then how, also according to a more specialised definition of it, the scientific investigation on the reverie focuses on the very same issues we have been observing along the whole study. Moreover, in the accounts considered we shall also see how in general the 'biased' conception of the woman which has been highlighted along this chapter used to prevail also in scientific and medical theorisations.

Concerning the scientific observation of the reverie, in general we can observe that there are no real accounts of a comprehensive definition and analysis of this activity. Longer or shorter mentions of

⁸⁷ Even though the nightmare and its representation benefit of a rather large space especially during Romanticism.

⁸⁸ Carroy Jacqueline, Annick Ohayon, Régine Plas, *Histoire de la psychologie en France: XIXe-XXe siècles*, Paris: la Découverte, DL 2006, p. 48.

⁸⁹ Mentioned in the Introduction.

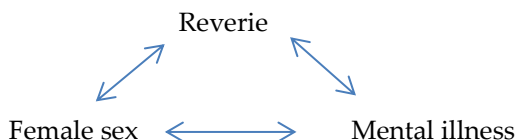
the reverie can be found in different works, in general dealing with psychology, either from a philosophical or medical point of view, but usually, especially until the end of the century, not systematically.

For these reasons the number of works here quoted only constitutes an exemplification of definitions provided in the psychological domain at the time. The accounts chosen mean more to show how the concept evolves in time and how this evolution fully fits the same development of the idea that is observable especially between the eighteenth and the nineteenth century artistic representation of the reverie.

The first nineteenth century accounts mentioning the reverie in a more analytic fashion are indeed often philosophical essays, namely the ones focusing on the brain and the intellectual faculties; this is also a consequence of the fact that psychology as we know it does not exist yet, and what concerns the intellect is considered domain of philosophy and physiology.

In these early accounts, the reverie is identified and explained as a phenomenon of the brain in general. Towards the last decades of the century, also more specific medical works are concerned with the topic, usually making an attempt to provide a description of symptoms and causes of the reverie activity. In particular, in medical theories the phenomenon of the reverie starts being observed not, or not only, as an intellectual faculty, but often in relation to other somewhat 'uncanny' phenomena of the brain, such as the hallucination. Soon also the medical theory on the reverie, losing its original meaning as philosophical speculation, came to be identified mainly with a vain fantasy and as such is invested with a negative judgment. For this reason, by the end of the century the tendency to reverie is often indicated as one of the activities accompanying, if not even being a symptom of, specific illnesses and mental problems.

In the examples reported here we shall see then how the connection between at least two terms of this trinomial is constantly proposed:



The connection between female character and the possibility of developing mental illnesses is constantly proposed due to the female unstable emotional character. In all cases women are considered easily and naturally affected by hysteria, the typical female illness.

While hysteria was known since ancient times as the female disease by definition⁹⁰, a more complete study of this phenomenon develops precisely during the nineteenth century. Also in common knowledge hysteria becomes known as typical of the female condition, and as such it appears constantly as a common inevitable female character, being the main medical issue or complicating the clinical situation of a female patient.

The same way, the connection between reverie and mental disease is also evident in the idea that the habit of daydreaming is most often considered harmful and, if indulged in too often, liable to lead to major mental issues. Beyond being considered a symptom of other

⁹⁰ The very word 'hysteria' comes from the ancient Greek term for uterus, *hystera*. The theory is attested in Hippocrates' writings and explained as a supposed capacity of the female uterus to move around the body, thus causing humoral instability and excesses. Afterwards, hysteria has always been considered the typical female malady, and an explanation for women's unstable character. It is though since the beginning of the nineteenth century that it becomes extremely widespread and studied becoming the most common psychosomatic disease and comprising several diseases whose causes have been explained differently later on. The spread of what was called hysteria at this time is later explained largely as a sexual disease, but partly also as a simulation of a disease often put into place by women and encouraged by doctors. For the fascinating story of this illness and its visual accounts refer to Didi-Huberman Georges, *Invention de l'hystérie: Charcot et l'iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, Paris: Macula, 1982.

illnesses, especially in the latest theorisations, hysteria and daydream are referred to as closely related, in a relation of interchangeable cause and effect.

Finally, the last link of two terms, that between female gender and reverie is emerging both in the medical treatises and even more clearly in the artworks considered along this study: the female sex is the one deemed to have a natural tendency to reverie, for its supposed uncontainable imagination and impressionability.

The first accounts on the reverie often involve a general discussion on sleep and dreams, namely the controversy, ongoing among scientists and amateurs, about whether or not the intellectual faculties of the brain are alert and acting during sleep.

As anticipated the discourse is put into these terms because it is philosophers and physiologists who are dealing with the understanding of the intellect capacities. The category concerned with the closest field to modern psychology is that of alienists, that is doctors dealing with mental problems, at the time primarily concerned with mental alienation.

Alienism as a discipline is born during the French Revolution with the highly influential figure of Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), considered the initiator of the modern psychiatric method based on the observation and conversation with the patients. He became in 1795 the chief physician of the famous Salpêtrière hospital in Paris, later to become one of the most advanced centres for the research on psychophysiological diseases⁹¹.

In his important *Nosographie philosophique ou méthode de l'analyse appliquée à la médecine*⁹² (1797-8), Pinel attempts to map causes and symptoms of various illnesses, with a specific focus on alienism. Though not focused on the reverie, this account serves as illustration of the general idea of the female character, both as it was understood in common sense and by science; this is all the more relevant considering

⁹¹ A statue of Pinel is displayed now at the Salpêtrière. He also appears while ordering to unchain the patients in the painting *Philippe Pinel à la Salpêtrière* by Tony Robert Fleury (1795).

⁹² Translated by D.D. Davis as *A Treatise on Insanity* in 1801.

that the *Nosographie* became at its time a very influential work, undergoing six editions, and determining also the direction of nineteenth century medicine.

The part concerning our subject matter is evidently the one about neuroses⁹³, where Pinel provides a very detailed synthesis of what was by this time and will be during most of the nineteenth century the understanding of the female character. On the general conditions producing the neurosis, after having referred to the children's and adolescents' predisposition, Pinel remarks: "women too, for their extreme sensitivity and the strength of their emotions, are the most exposed to neuroses, often complicated by hysteria in a more or less pronounced way. It seems that after the census of insane of the two sexes in public hospitals, that the number of insane women is almost double as that of men, or even more"⁹⁴.

This passage only acknowledges, in scientific terms, what was already the known essence of the female sex, with the typical features of a dominant sensitivity and uncontrollable imagination which favour dramatically, along with the complication given by the typical female hysteria, the development of neuroses.

Further on, the section on catalepsy provides an insightful description of a phenomenon that in his symptoms, though not in its deeper effects, appears like strictly related to the suspension produced by the reverie; particularly similar to the reverie, though much more intense, is the case of the mystic catalepsy⁹⁵: "Long contemplation, and repeated efforts of imagination, to elevate to this high degree of intellectual abstraction [...] First, attention focused on a devotional reading; then deep concentration, or sort of calm, with the feeling of an overwhelming joy"⁹⁶, followed by increasingly high degrees of

⁹³ Tome II, "classe quatrième".

⁹⁴ Pinel Philippe, *Nosographie philosophique ou méthode de l'analyse appliquée à la médecine*, Paris: Maradan, 1797, tome II, p. 10.

⁹⁵ Pinel bases his description on what written in the autobiography of Saint Teresa, describing her religious ecstasies.

⁹⁶ Pinel Philippe, *Nosographie philosophique ou méthode de l'analyse appliquée à la médecine*, Paris: Maradan, 1797, pp. 157-8.

abstraction and ecstasy. While the state of reverie cannot evidently be compared to mystic catalepsy, it is also true that the first 'symptoms' of falling into such state - such as stopping still in the preceding activity - are very similar to the suspension and absorption produced by the reverie, especially in this case the one inspired by a reading. From the description, the state of reverie can be intended as a first, lowest degree of catalepsy, producing a sudden absorption but without the consequent physical and mental symptoms.

By the first decades of the nineteenth century, the problem of mental illness especially connected to dreaming activities appear already in the well-known *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*, published by Panckoucke between 1820 and 1825. In this work, point of reference in medicine and alienism for the nineteenth century, the entry "*rêve*", mostly dealing with causes and conditions generating the dream, dedicates some space also to the idea of reverie. At first the *rêvasserie* is considered and described as something close to what will be later called hypnagogic images⁹⁷: "when one falls asleep lightly, during the day, standing or sitting, on a boat or on a horse, in a coach, and above all during a difficult digestion, this situation is not a true sleep, it is its commencement, its first degree; it is a tiring and difficult drowsiness. Then there is no dream, no reverie, but a laborious *rêvasserie*"⁹⁸.

The most proper idea of reverie is here attributed to some excited states: "the abuse of tea or coffee, of liquors and above all of opium, excites the brain at the point of transforming sleep in a sort of reverie, becoming sometimes sweet and pleasant"⁹⁹. The definition of reverie here provided, beyond the connection with excited states that, as seen

⁹⁷ Hypnagogic images is the term for the uncontrolled images seen in the moments of transition between wake and sleep. The origin of the word 'hypnagogic' is to be referred to the article '*Des hallucinations hypnagogiques, ou des erreurs des sens dans l'état intermédiaire entre la veille et le sommeil*' in *Annales Médico-Psychologiques du système nerveux*, 11, (1848) pp. 26-40 by Alfred Maury (1817-1892, physician and amateur, author of *Le sommeil et les rêves*).

⁹⁸ *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales par une société des médecins et de chirurgiens*, Paris : Panckoucke 1820-25, tome 48, entry "*rêve*", p. 250.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

in par. IV.2, is not new, seems still to concern more the domain of creation and intuition.

The reverie starts instead being described much more closely to the way we have meant it along this research in the main work by the philosopher Théodore Jouffroy (1796-1842). He presents his ideas on sleep at first in an article appeared in *Le Globe* in 1827 and then republished among his *Mélanges philosophiques*, a collection of philosophical speculations written in different periods. In this work, among other considerations, the author dedicates one chapter to psychology, and within this latter a paragraph on sleep¹⁰⁰.

His discussion on the reverie is introduced by his proclaimed conviction that the soul keeps existing during sleep, against the theories claiming a sort of temporary death of the soul. While assessing the persistence of the spirit in sleep, proved even by the very occurrence of dreams, Jouffroy also observes that the sleeping state implies a relaxation of the spirit (and of attention) that is abandoning itself to its own associations of ideas. His idea is supported by the evident similarity between real dreams what he refers to with the French expression "*châteaux en Espagne*" (translated here with 'castles in the air'):

I believe that if one studied the state of the soul during sleep [...] one would come to the conclusion that there is no big difference between this state and those reveries and castles in the air during wake. When we are young and lively, we indulge gladly into these fascinating dreams where imagination adjusts the world as we would like it to be. Who does not remember having rejoiced of his dreams as if they were reality, and having forgotten in the abandonment, their fantastical nature of the company of which we have surrounded ourselves? [...] And, if some circumstance interrupted these dreams, would we not remain surprised for a moment, as if awoken in the middle of a dream, when the spirit cannot return so fast from its illusion and distinguish shadow from reality? Would we not be disappointed as we are when we

¹⁰⁰ Chapter 2, *Du sommeil*, dated 1827.

*are awoken during a pleasant dream? In these circumstances, produced also by an interesting novel, and those of the dream state, there is one difference. In the castles in the air, the spirit is artist, it directs and controls its imaginations, because it has an aim; which does not happen in the dream. Moreover, in the castles in the air, the illusion is only rarely, maybe never, so complete*¹⁰¹.

Jouffroy distinguishes the ‘*château en Espagne*’, which is a more controlled realisation of a desire, from the reverie, described instead as a stream of thought :

*Often we abandon during wake the direction of our thought, and this happens during the reverie state, which differs in this from the state in which we do castles in the air. In the pure reverie state, we let the spirit wander to its own accord: it starts from an idea occupying him at the moment in which we let the rein go, and this recalls another, and this a third one [...] and he follows a series of thoughts that have no link between each other but the whimsical associations that brought them to memory*¹⁰².

Further on, Jouffroy presents the activity of reverie, as well as that of dream as two states of rest for the brain, that, like the body, is deemed to get tired too: “[the spirit] sometimes goes astray during the day, and if it is aware of these two states, one called dream, the other reverie”¹⁰³.

Then Jouffroy adds one more clarification of the two states of dream and reverie; if sleep represents the maximum abstraction, then the reverie represents a lower degree of it : “this is the state of dream or sleep (since sleeping is dreaming), which is nothing more than inertia

¹⁰¹ Jouffroy Théodore, *Mélanges philosophiques*, Paris: Paulin Libraire Editeur, 1833, p. 237.

¹⁰² Ibid. p. 240.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 242.

of personal power with all its consequences. The dream state is nothing else than the reverie state only more pronounced"¹⁰⁴.

In another article titled *Des facultés de l'âme humaine* published in 1828 in *L'encyclopédie moderne*, Jouffroy uses indeed the example of the reverie to argue that will, while directing some functions of the body, can even completely be lacking in others: "it is in these states in which the body is in a perfect rest, sensitivity is hardly touched by light sensations, we let go our memory, our imagination and our thought to their own accord and we fall in what is called a state of reverie"¹⁰⁵.

The idea that the reverie comes in a condition of perfect relaxation and when conscience is not active will be indeed a common one; in this and in further works the reverie is often referred to as a sort of sleep or dream in a lower degree, where we still have some remainder of awareness and some capacity of recalling ourselves from the reverie we are immersed in. In this sense, as mentioned, the reverie is often associated to the hypnagogic images intervening in a state of complete relaxation and specifically before falling asleep.

For what concerns the more specifically medical theorisation, Pinel's most prominent pupil, Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol (1772-1840), examines how the sex of the individual, among other factors, can play a role in the development of mental illnesses. By comparing the data of different countries on the ratio of mentally ill males and females, he concludes that in France these latter exceed because of their education. In this sense his approach is not biological but rather 'cultural': the blame lays not in the gender itself but in the education that is traditionally given to the female sex, especially in France. In this analysis Esquirol differentiate himself from many others and from Pinel, too, who was attributing some biological characters to women (sensitivity, tendency to imagination etc.) favouring the development of mental illness. Esquirol instead suggests for women an education as controlled and conservative as possible, indicating in the habit of being in the society and watching shows some of the causes of the mental

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 253.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 251-2.

degeneration. He asserts that while in Mediterranean countries men are more subject to madness,

*In norther France it is the contrary, that the number of insane women is higher than that of men. In England, the number of insane men is close to that of women...we find the reason of this difference in the comparison between habits. Vices of education adopted by our young girls, the preference given to exclusively entertaining arts, the reading of novel which gives young people a precocious activity, premature desires, an idea of perfection they can find nowhere; the frequentation of shows, associations, the abuse of music, inoccupation are sufficient reasons for the higher frequency of insanity among women*¹⁰⁶.

After providing some data on the number of men and women in different countries since 1745, Esquirol concludes that, given the different data between France and England “women can succumb to reasons of insanity that are proper of their sex: the physical causes act more often among them than among men; they are more often insane before the age of twenty, they are more subject to dementia; their delirium is religious or erotic. Almost all their diseases are complicated by hysteria. Women maintain, during their illness, a more private character than men”¹⁰⁷. In this last passage a whole socio-clinical situation is described: women’s education and habits are apparently favouring a mental degeneration, striking a larger number of women and of younger age than men, and causing women’s madness to be of erotic or religious nature. Moreover, their clinical situation, complicated by the omnipresent hysteria, is even more difficult to detect and to cure since women – again because of their education - speak less openly and try to hide their disease.

Apparently, by the mid-nineteenth century, the reverie as a psychological phenomenon and activity was already known at a rather

¹⁰⁶ Esquirol Étienne, *Des maladies mentales: considérées sous les rapports médical, hygiénique et médico-légal*, Paris: Baillière, 1838, p. 34-35.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 38.

popular level¹⁰⁸. Its understanding, though, is still susceptible of being defined as both its two forms: either the eighteenth century inventive speculation or the more modern vain phantasy. Some authors, especially, imply that the gap between the two types depends on the greatness of the spirit who does this activity. As such is for instance defined by the writer Alfred de Vigny (1797-1863) "There are two types of reverie, that of the weak people and that of thinkers. Yes, the reverie leads to the stream of ideas the poor souls who wish to think [...] surely, [the reverie's] labyrinth is dangerous to those who do not have a confident eye and a firm foot to find their way into the reverie. But the reverie is the prelude to great creations for those who pursuit the spiritual retreat"¹⁰⁹.

This passage by De Vigny is the first reference to the reverie appearing in the work of the French psychiatrist Alexandre Brierre de Boismont (1797-1881), and namely in his *Des hallucinations, ou histoire raisonnée des apparitions, des visions, des songes, de l'extase, de magnetisme et du somnambulisme* (1845), reporting different intellectuals' opinions on the reverie. The long quotation of De Vigny clearly reflects also De Boismont's support on the matter; the passage is particularly interesting first of all from the initial division into reverie of the weak (*faibles*) and of thinkers (*penseurs*). In this conception we can recognise

¹⁰⁸ For instance by 1847 the protagonist of Jane Eyre, pictured as a ten-years old orphan, when observing a fellow student in an absent-minded attitude could say (p. 80): "she looks as if she were thinking of something beyond her punishment – beyond her situation: of something not round her nor before her. I have heard of daydreams – is she in a daydream now? Her eyes are fixed on the floor, but I am sure they do not see it- her sight seems turned in, gone down into her heart: she is looking at what she can remember, I believe; not at what is really present". Later on, this daydreaming girl explains to the protagonist (p. 86): "your thoughts never seemed to wander [...]. Now, mine continually rove away [...] I fall into a sort of dream" (Brontë Charlotte, *Jane Eyre*, London: Collector's Library, 2003).

¹⁰⁹ The words reported were appearing in a private letter from De Vigny to De Boismont (Brierre de Boismont, Alexandre, *Des hallucinations, ou Histoire raisonnée des apparitions, des visions, des songes, de l'extase, du magnétisme et du somnambulisme*, Paris : Germer Ballière Editeur, 1862, p. 22).

both the reverie of creative scientific tradition, continuing from Rousseau's philosophical one, and the idle phantasy that is to be connected to sloth.

Afterwards, De Boismont adds another quotation by Jacques-Henri Meister, who defines the reverie as "this intermediate state between wake and sleep, in which external senses are calm and inactive"¹¹⁰. Meister's conception of the reverie is indeed very similar to an hallucination, but that of a good kind, as if considering it an useful creative tool, as well as the source of very extravagant yet productive ideas. While not lingering on De Vigny's idea of the *rêverie des faibles*, Meister insists on the creative function of the reverie, at the same time attributing to it a function of expression of the genius that is still quite close to the Romantic idea, without really underlining the gap between sexes: "I would daresay that it is rather in the same condition that brilliant men have conceived the most original beauties of their works; [...] the metaphysic, the first intuition of the most ingenious of his systems; a poet, the beautiful verse that was eluding him; a musician, the most expressive and brilliant of his themes"¹¹¹.

While supporting Meister's view, De Boismont adds that "reverie like hallucination is the source of great accomplishments or foolish endeavours"¹¹². Although he does not mention the difference between sexes, speaking of the reverie only for its creative power, he implies the whole conception of the genius that was commonly 'gendered'.

It is also interesting that the reverie is put into correlation with the hallucination, the focus of De Boismont work: exposing about the reverie serves him to provide an example of a commonly known experience of a sort of hallucination compatible with reason, which is also, as he states in the first lines of the book, the most controversial idea of his work. Shortly after, he adds an important detail on the content of the reverie as a wish fulfilment: "in these castles in the air, so

¹¹⁰ Ibid. The quotation is from Jacques-Henri Meister, *Lettres sur l'imagination*, p. 19 et suiv., in-8°. Paris, an VII.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 23.

familiar to us, our thoughts are enlightened, the ideal materialise, and we see before us, in concrete shapes, all the objects of our desire. Who has not contemplated a thousand times the figure of the woman he cherished, or, if he desired glory, who has not perceived clearly the sound of the bugles, the screams of the soldiers?"¹¹³. Therefore already in this writing is appearing the typical idea that the wish fulfilment is about the realisation of love and glory.

Interestingly, and somewhat contradictorily, a few pages later De Boismont reports also an insight on the reverie as a practice typical of the Orientals, thus following very closely the idea of oriental sloth we have been exposing earlier (see par. II.1), reporting the words of M. Combes fils:

An Arab who could not do his keff during the day is a very unhappy man. You would ask: what is the keff ?this term has no equivalent in our language, and Italians, translating it in far niente, give a very incomplete idea of its real meaning. Keff is the reverie, is the well-being in rest; it is a sort of beatitude in which one plunges and of which one would never want to be drawn. Orientals rarely think; thinking would tire them too much. During the keff [...] their imagination has no scope and no object; it can get lost in a fantasy world [...] In these hours of ecstasy the Orientals are all poets, but selfish poets who do not produce anything¹¹⁴.

This sort of lazy reverie is in this case seen as one of the main features of the oriental character. At the same time its description, far from being the creative productive speculation that can be for higher minds, is for the Orientals a necessity of their idle life. The consideration above exposed allow De Boismont to conclude, along with his own thesis, that "the reverie is then mainly favourable to the production of psychologic hallucinations, and this explains how, for thinkers, the reverie is at the origin of admirable masterpieces"¹¹⁵.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 24.

¹¹⁴ Combes fils, *Voyage en Egypte et en Nubie*, quoted by De Boismont on p. 25-26.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 26.

On the other hand, according to other authors, and especially according to medical theory, the activity of reverie, as well as that of reading, starts being referred to as harmful. Often they appear in medical prescriptions as activities to avoid: reading, daydreaming and all other activities liable to excite female senses are to be avoided in order to prevent the development of dangerous thoughts and inappropriate appetites. A common medical prescription was to avoid the reading of novels: as reported for instance in the thesis by J-L. Brachet (who won the contest for a thesis on hysteria *ex aequo* with Landouzy); according to this account reading is to be avoided to remind the woman “that the woman’s reign is that of virtue”¹¹⁶.

By this time hysteria has progressively become one of the main focus of alienists’ attention, acquiring an unprecedented relevance in women’s life, up to being identified as the most typical expression of femininity:

*the treatises on hysteria [...] argue about what the woman is, her nature, her essence, her ‘éternel féminin’. They develop general considerations on the quality of her soul and her maternal sensitivity, on her sufferings, to conclude that the hysteric is nothing but the quintessence of femininity, a woman who is excessively woman [...] the existence of a male hysteric seems then incompatible with the masculine ideal of virility, of solidity, of self-control...this ideal of virility had been redesigned more clearly at the end of the eighteenth century, at the same time as the ideal of femininity*¹¹⁷.

In general, considering the gendered approach to such mental disease, we should underline that, while female hysteria is largely observed and given space to, male hysteria is most simply denied; as Edelman remarks, the adjective ‘*hystérique*’ in French exists only in the female form.

¹¹⁶ Edelman Nicole, *Les métamorphoses de l’hystérique: du début du XIXe siècle à la Grande guerre*, Paris: Éd. la Découverte, 2003, p. 47.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 336 -337.

The habit of unconscious daydreaming is most often connected with hysteria: it is likely to be recognised as a symptom of the illness, as it manifests itself also through an important daydreaming activity. At the same time the practice of daydreaming can be also seen as a co-cause of the development of hysteria as indulging into daydream is deemed harmful and liable to degenerate into worse mental issues.

The debate on how 'gendered' mental diseases are continues along the century with contrasting opinions on the role played by either nature, as an intrinsic biologic disposition to illness for women, or nurture, as in the role society give them.

Bénédict-Auguste Morel (1809-1873), another French psychiatrist who worked also at the Salpêtrière, like Esquirol does not blame biology by itself : the production of mental problems leading to suicide, for instance, can be as well developed by men. He stresses though the harmful influence some readings might have, by producing processes of imitation: "the fruits of a first education go lost irremediably [...] nothing is left but an appetite for readings which achieve to corrupt them, for shows in which sensuality will be nurtured. On this regard we should blame a literary epoch that poetised sickly, passionate or immoral types [...] the frequency of suicide is related to the level of education"¹¹⁸. In this sense Morel refers more to the romantic literary unaccomplished love, a model for men, than to the dangerous reading for women. Further on along this work, though, he also observes that melancholy can be often found in unmarried women or women having unhappy marriages, thus acknowledging clearly the problem of unaccomplished or unsatisfied love as the source of such mental problems.

One would maybe expect more precise references to the reverie in a capital and influent work like *De l'intelligence* by Hippolyte Taine, published in 1870. The work, which would benefit of international success, aims at building a new "general psychology" based on

¹¹⁸ Morel, Bénédict-Auguste, *Traité des maladies mentales*, Paris: Victor Masson, 1860, p. 91-92.

medicine and physiology. Taine refers indeed several times to the reverie but without really adding anything new to the debate.

In the first reference Taine compares indeed as anticipated reverie to hypnagogic images and hallucination, as Brierre de Boismont had done, too. Later on, he mentions again the reverie but mostly in connection to the supposed capacity of the brain to build images and then to the consequent awareness of being in a dream; similarly in the reverie, despite letting our spirit wander, we can be easily distracted from our absorption and become aware that we are in a sort of imaginative creation.

In the second half of the century, as it was already clear from the artwork analysis (part III), the conception of mental diseases, as well as that of reverie become progressively more gendered.

For instance a mention of how the gender of the daydreamer influences the content is in *Les rêves et les moyens de les diriger. Observations pratiques* (1867) by Léon le Coq, baron of Hervey and then marquis of Saint Denis (1822-1892). The conception here presented shows a gendered view: to prove unreliability of women, Hervey sarcastically comments on the fact that women do not tell directly and clearly what they dream about, thus becoming very suspicious to men: “there is, on the other side, a great number of people, above all ladies, whose inclinations it would be easier to discover through their dreams, than through their way of acting in reality [...] we would find interesting material, but the difficulty would be to find the data, since these people tell more gladly all they did during the day than all they dream at night”¹¹⁹. In such an incidental, short comment closing the chapter we can definitely detect a sort of bias on women’s intellectual faculties and lifestyle, entailing the idea that women constantly hide their private and possibly scandalous activities, including dreaming. In this period it is also from short comments like this one, that a whole conception of women as something mysterious and disquieting

¹¹⁹ Hervey de Saint Denys, Leon, *Les rêves et les moyens de les diriger*, Paris: Aymot, 1867, p. 350.

emerges in popular culture. This is not surprising if we consider also that this is the period in which the conception of women as evil and tempting starts spreading with the image of the *femme fatale*. It is about by this time, at the second half of the century, that women start being seen as something ineffable: the disquieting mystery that women represent to men start being constantly proposed in literature, psychology, medicine.

By the end of the century the conception of the reverie seems to have lost all the creative and imaginative power it used to have in the first medical-philosophical accounts, in order to assume a more and more negative conception. Being often referred to as a lazy fantasy and harmful habit, it is put into correlation with the other acceptance already seen in the description of the oriental habit to daydream. More specifically, by the last decades of the century, as we can see also in art, the reverie comes to be associated with other two factors: women and mental disease, thus assuming a decidedly negative meaning.

The connection with illness is the aspect recurring most often in medical theories. The reverie is not necessarily seen as completely negative by itself, but in as much as it is often a symptom of a more general pathologic situation. While to daydream is recognised as an venial activity commonly practised and experienced by anyone, at the same time it is definitely not encouraged: especially indulging into it is considered a very harmful habit that might lead to worse psychological situations.

Towards the 1870 the French psychiatrist and neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893) acquires fame an eminent figure of psychiatry, becoming soon chief physician at the Salpêtrière. Being interested in psychic phenomena, he realised that the patients of the Salpêtrière presented several unknown illnesses, creating therefore an unprecedented range of case studies. Charcot also became interested in hypnosis, until then a practice totally rejected within the scientific world, now rehabilitated by him and central in his medical approach. His interest focused on the study of hysteria, which he analysed in its different phases and types of attacks. From our point of view one of the

most interesting features of Charcot's method was that the analytic observation of the different hysteric symptoms and 'attitudes' was constantly associated by visual accounts, both done through his own skilful drawings and through photographic documentation¹²⁰. In this sense he developed a whole 'iconography' of hysteria; his interest in visual arts lead him also to recognise in some Renaissance artworks representations of the hysteric muscular contractions in the images of the people believed to be possessed by demons¹²¹.

The visual accounts produced by Charcot most often represent the 'big hysterical attack', the peak in the phenomenology of hysteria, thus showing the figures in unnatural contracted poses. Interestingly enough though, while these images do not resemble the reverie attitude, they can be put into correlation with the iconography of the nightmare, characterised by the agitated and contracted posture. This is evident for instance in the famous *The Nightmare* by Füssli (1781).

Here the pose of the woman, seemingly fainted more than asleep, resembles in general the pose of hysteric convulsions, while the unnatural position of the bent neck, leaving the head hanging on the edge of the bed, reminds closely of the *cou serré*, the contraction of the neck observed in hysterics.

Apart from this more obvious comparison, we can also find images of hysterics displaying an attitude partly similar to one of the reverie: it is the case of the photos representing the patient Augustine¹²² in the so-called *attitudes passionnelles*. Among these attitudes the one of *erotisme*, and in part also the one of *extase* can be associated to the reverie attitude.

¹²⁰ For this use of photography see Didi-Huberman Georges, *Invention de l'hystérie: Charcot et l'iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, Paris: Macula, 1982 and Gilman Sander L., *Seeing the Insane. A Visual and Cultural History of Our Attitudes Toward the Mentally Ill*, Brattleboro: EPBM, 1982.

¹²¹ Charcot Jean-Martin, Richer Paul, *Les démoniaques dans l'art. La foi qui guérit*, Paris : Macula, 1984 (original edition 1887).

¹²² She had entered the Salpêtrière in very young age and the photos of her in hysteric attitudes are among the most known.

Also the state of hypnosis, on which Charcot's method relies largely, has many points in common with the state of reverie, which is often considered as a sort of a much less intense self-hypnosis.

Concerning Charcot's 'iconography' of hysteria, it is relevant to open here a parenthesis concerning the observation of visual features of the insane person. Though almost completely obsolete now, this doctrine has been largely practised throughout history and the visual accounts of it are numerous. As illustrated by Gilman¹²³, the first representations of insanity are to be found in art, rather than in science. Since the Middle Ages there has been a tendency to identify the specific traits characterising personalities and inclinations, as also in the 'iconography' of the temperaments determined by the four bodily fluids¹²⁴.

Johann Caspar Lavater is one of the first initiators of a scientific analysis of physiognomy to identify insanity and degeneration. These first scientific study attempt to classify, through large visual collections, the 'types' of men determined by the type of physiognomy¹²⁵.

Philippe Pinel also adds visual comparative tables in his *Traité medico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale* (1801); his successor Esquirol in his *Dictionnaire des Sciences médicales* compiles also a large sampling of drawings of the attitude for different diseases.

In the nineteenth century then the observation of ill type is particularly relevant and fashionable and among the known current theories. Madness becomes a popular theme of Romantic arts, and is investigated in painting above all by William Blake and Johann Heinrich Füssli. Importantly, Füssli gave some influential interpretations of the theme of madness in painting, as in the well-known *Crazy Kate* (1806) inspired by a tale about a woman becoming mad for love.

¹²³ Gilman Sander L., *Seeing the Insane. A Visual and Cultural History of Our Attitudes Toward the Mentally Ill*, Brattleboro: EPBM, 1982.

¹²⁴ Seen already about melancholia, especially in Ripa's *Iconologia*.

¹²⁵ See also Delaporte François, *Anatomy of Passions*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.

The real innovation on the field happens with the advent of photography which made possible providing the most faithful reproduction of insane. Charles Darwin also contributed to the subject with his *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), with a large photographic apparatus.

In the first decades of the twentieth century Cesare Lombroso devoted all his study to the identification of the recurrent physiognomy, by analysing both visually and through size measurements, the somatic traits of criminals and other 'degenerated' types¹²⁶.

Given this premise it shall be clearer how in this period the representation of the reverie must have reminded, to the informed viewer, partly that of madness. The contemporaries would have attributed more importance than we would to the specific facial attitude and positioning of the body while looking at a reverie image. The connection between reverie and mental disease, especially in some paintings, would have been much more evident as an allusion than it is to the modern view in which the physiognomic theories have been largely reconsidered.

On this purpose, I would like here to linger on a detail that might prove interesting in the comparison between the representation of the artworks and these images of the Salpêtrière. One of Charcot's findings was about the hysterical paralysis of the limbs, in particular of the hands. His studies on this particular are also reproduced in several drawing of the contractures of the hands in unnatural poses that were typical of the hysterics.

The contracture of the hand is also visible in the famous *Un Leçon Clinique à la Salpêtrière*" (1887) by André Brouillet, now still exposed in the Salpêtrière hospital [fig. 138]. The scene represents a typical lesson

¹²⁶ Cesare Lombroso's influential writings, in the first decades of the twentieth century, are mostly devoted to the identification of criminals according to their somatic traits. Some of his studies are also focused on female criminal degeneration, namely *La donna delinquente, la prostituta, la donna normale* (1903), in which Lombroso identifies in female prostitute the equivalent degeneration as in the male criminal.

on hysteria at the Salpêtrière: Charcot is standing in the front illustrating in vivo the result of an hysterical attack resulting in paralysis of the patient Blanche Wittman. While the woman is supported by doctor Joseph Babinski, also all the other men attending the lesson and raptly attentive to the Charcot's words are recognisable doctors and students of the Salpêtrière. The woman's left hand displays the contraction that had been observed and reproduced by Charcot several times, also in his drawings [fig. 139].

It is maybe unnecessary to point out the erotic charge of the painting, romanticising hysteria in the image of an attractive young woman collapsed and exposed to the observation of a crowd of exclusively male doctors, and under the justification of scientific research. The aesthetic and often erotic vision of hysteria is indeed a relevant part in Charcot's analysis, and of the understanding of the disease in overall¹²⁷. This aspect is evidently central also to the view of the reverie, connected to hysteria, as charming and romanticised in this period.

Considering these symptoms, I would like to establish a correlation between the hand's contracture observed by Charcot and some of the representations of reverie both already seen and not. For some of these images we might linger in considering the very position of one of the hands. Sometimes the figures shown in the painting analysed along this research display a specific pose of the hands: in some cases one of the hands is abandoned in a sort of unnatural contraction. This abandonment can be interpreted as similar to the one produced during sleep; yet it can also be partly compared to the peculiar hysteric contracture.

For instance this reference seems to be proposed in *A Daydream* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (the version in green from 1880, fig. 89), as well as in its preparatory drawing. In this case the hand laying on the book and holding loosely a rose is very evident, and its abandonment has provoked indeed a contracted pose, with the wrist bent. The same

¹²⁷ For this see aspect see De Marneffe, Daphne, *Looking and Listening: The Construction of Clinical Knowledge in Charcot and Freud* in "Signs", Vol. 17, No. 1 (Autumn, 1991), pp. 71-111.

detail seems to be highlighted again in *Julie Daydreaming* by Berthe Morisot [fig. 75]: while one hand is holding the girl's head, the other has assumed a peculiar pose. Also in *Sweet Dreams* by Godward [fig. 104] the woman's absorption is producing the bending of her hand laying at her side. It is not unlikely that such artists meant to hint the idea that the girl depicted, in her daydreaming pose, might present some of the typically hypnotic or even hysterical symptoms.

In order to support this idea I would also like to refer to some other artworks not analysed in this study but which are also to be accounted among reveries representations and are part of the images I have collected at the beginning of this research. For most of these little known paintings it is again difficult to retrieve information about the date in which they were produced and their current location. However, it can be easily guessed that most of them date to the very first decade of the twentieth century; additionally this later date makes more probable a direct reference to the spreading theories on hysteria and a more explicit intention of the artists to refer to the hysteric symptom.

The most striking of this works for the representation of the reverie is *Daydream* by Conrad Kiesel¹²⁸ (1846-1921) [fig. 140]: the girl depicted has interrupted her reading to fall into such an intense reverie that her eyes are fixed and her expression rapt and blank at the same time. Her involvement has caused her to grab, with the hand not holding the book, the top of her armchair, in a sort of spasm. In this case we can still imagine that the position of the hand is determined by the intensity of the feeling which causes the girl to even look for something to hold herself to during her flight of fantasy. It is meaningful then, that the painter has chosen this type of representation of the hand to render the involvement of the woman in her fantasy.

In later examples, less intense than the painting by Kiesel, the detail of an unusual position of the hand really stands out. Such is for instance in *Portrait of a lady* by Edmund Tarbell [fig. 141] where the

¹²⁸ The dates of production of this and the following works could not be retrieved.

portrait of a relaxed lady in open air bears the detail of a hand contracted somewhat unnaturally on the woman's lap.

Similarly, in the Russian Ivan Kulikov's *Daydreaming* [fig. 142], a pensive woman in a traditional costume (reminding similar paintings by Corot) again is leaving one of her hand laying in abandonment but in the unnatural pose with the palm on top, thus contrasting with the general elegance of the image.

In *Distant thoughts* [fig. 143] by Janet C. Fisher, the silhouette of the pensive woman in profile against a colourful field of flowers is characterised by a hand in which the wrist is twisted in a way that too evident not to be noticed by the viewer.

In general we can assess that in some of these painting the hand's position is often not fortuitous. Looking more closely at the positions of the hand at least in the cases considered, it seems clear that, the hand is represented in a peculiar, eye-catching pose. This hand is not simply resting in a regular pose, it is meant to attract the attention and, up to some point, give a sort of abnormal twist to the image, either by conveying a complete relaxation and abandonment, either by hinting the idea of mental disease and hysteria in the yet so charming woman represented.

As it is known, the young Sigmund Freud spent four months at the Salpêtrière in 1885-6, studying Charcot's methods and findings and developing a strong interest for the method of dialoguing with the patients, which he will later develop for his own psychoanalytic approach.

The connection of reverie and hysteria is stated clearly by Freud in his *Studies on hysteria* (1895), co-authored with Joseph Breuer. Particularly relevant is the famous case of the patient Anna O.¹²⁹, analysed by Breuer: Anna O. is described indeed as an intellectually active young woman from a wealthy family, whose main pastime is indulging into what is defined "the habit of harmful daydreaming"¹³⁰.

¹²⁹ The real name of this famous patient was Bertha Pappenheim.

¹³⁰ Freud Sigmund, *The Standard edition of the Complete psychological works*, ed. by James Strachey, London: Hogarth press and the Institute of psycho-analysis,

While starting to expose her case, as a general consideration Breuer observes: “we have nothing new to say on the question of the origin of these dispositional hypnoid states. They often, it would seem, grow out of the daydreams which are so common even in healthy people and to which needlework and similar occupations render women especially prone”¹³¹. Daydream is then first off characterised as a female activity since it is favoured by typical idle female activities. What Breuer states is that activities such as needlework are making women particularly prone to daydream since they do not really involve any intellectual faculty, being repetitive and mechanical. As the psychologist mentions one of the very typical womanly (and only womanly) activity, we should consider that he would rather not refer to a male activity as generating daydreams: male activities are instead dealing with creation and action, thus not really encouraging the daydream, which is developed by a monotonous activity.

At the same time, daydreaming is seen, as I have tried to highlight earlier, as the by-product of ennui and a flat lifestyle. It is seen as the outburst of an overgrown intellectual capacity not addressed to more stimulating activities:

This girl, who was bubbling over with intellectual vitality, led an extremely monotonous existence in her puritanically-minded family. She embellished her life in a manner which probably influenced her decisively in the direction of her illness, by indulging in systematic daydreaming, which she described as her ‘private theatre’. While everyone thought she was attending, she was living through fairy tales in her imagination; but she was always on the spot when she was spoken to, so that no one was aware of it. She pursued this activity almost continuously while she was engaged on her household duties, which she discharged unexceptionably. I shall presently have to describe the way in

1966, in *Studies in hysteria* (1893-1895), New York : Basic books inc. publishers (first edition 1895), p. 236.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 15.

*which this habitual daydreaming while she was well passed over into illness without a break*¹³².

This passage contains all the relevant conceptions on the reverie. First of all, as mentioned, it is the product of a lively mind repressed by the context around her (which was the case for several women at the time). Secondly, daydreaming is defined by the patient herself as her private theatre, an expression that not only came to identify this case, but that became a commonly quoted definition of the daydream activity. Afterwards, Breuer provides a sort of description of the function of this private theatre, as a constant unrealistic embellishment of a dull life. Such daydreaming appears as an activity that is easily hidden by the patient¹³³, as she could pretend to be participating to the present situation, while she was instead being absorbed into her own fantasy. Lastly, this habit, together with her lifestyle, is deemed a decisive factor in the later development of her illness:

There were two psychical characteristics present in the girl while she was still completely healthy which acted as predisposing causes for her subsequent hysterical illness: (1) her monotonous family life and the absence of adequate intellectual occupation left her with an unemployed surplus of mental liveliness and energy, and this found an outlet in the constant activity of her imagination. (2) This led to a habit of daydreaming (her 'private theatre'), which laid the foundations for a dissociation of her mental personality" [...] "Reveries and reflections during a more or less mechanical occupation do not in themselves imply a pathological splitting of consciousness, since if they are interrupted - if, for instance, the subject is spoken to - the normal unity of consciousness is restored; nor, presumably, is any amnesia present. In the case of Anna O., however, this habit prepared the ground upon which the affect of anxiety and dread was able to establish itself in the way I have described, when once

¹³² Ibid., p. 22.

¹³³ In its illicitness and necessity to be hidden, daydreaming resembles also a certain type of reading, which required also secrecy and hiding.

*that affect had transformed the patient's habitual daydreaming into a hallucinatory absence*¹³⁴.

The daydreaming is not pathogenic *per se*; it is when related to strong emotions, producing a mental flight from reality:

*Thus neither 'absence of mind' during energetic work nor unemotional twilight states are pathogenic; on the other hand, reveries that are filled with emotion and states of fatigue arising from protracted affects are pathogenic. The broodings of a care-ridden man, the anxiety of a person watching at the sick-bed of someone dear to him, the daydreams of a lover, these are states of this second kind. Concentration on the affective group of ideas begins by producing 'absence of mind'. The flow of ideas grows gradually slower and at last almost stagnates; but the affective idea and its affect remain active, and so consequently does the great quantity of excitation which is not being used up functionally. The similarity between this situation and the determinants of hypnosis seems unmistakable. This is the way in which pathogenic auto-hypnosis would seem to come about in some people by affect being introduced into a habitual reverie. This is perhaps one of the reasons why in the anamnesis of hysteria we so often come across the two great pathogenic factors of being in love and sick-nursing. In the former, the subject's longing thoughts about his absent loved one create in him a 'rapt' state of mind, cause his real environment to grow dim, and then bring his thinking to a standstill charged with affect*¹³⁵.

The cause of the pathogenic reverie is found explicitly in love-sickness and sexuality in general: "We cannot tell how far and in what cases the tendency to auto-hypnosis is an innate property of the organism. I have expressed the view above that it develops from

¹³⁴ Freud Sigmund, *The Standard edition of the Complete psychological works*, ed. by James Strachey, London: Hogarth press and the Institute of psycho-analysis, 1966, p. 40.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

reveries that are charged with affect. But there can be no doubt that innate disposition plays a part in this as well. If this view is correct, it will be clear here once again how great an influence on the development of hysteria is to be ascribed to sexuality. For, apart from sick-nursing, no psychical factor is so well-calculated to produce reveries charged with affect as are the longings of a person in love"¹³⁶.

The idea that the tendency to reverie is related to sexual and romantic imagination, is to be found also in the *Essai sur l'imagination créatrice* (1900) by Théodule Ribot (1839-1916): "the well-known influence of puberty on the imagination of the two sexes is expressed in reveries, in aspirations towards an unattainable ideal: the capacity of invention that love provides to the less gifted people [...] Adolescence coincides with a first blossoming of fantasy that, coming out of childhood, is not yet wise and rational"¹³⁷. In this short mention, Ribot traces back to origin of the tendency to reverie to adolescence and the fantasy on the other sex, favouring the development of mental problems.

Beyond Breuer's analysis, obviously shared by Freud, the conception of daydream as hysterical symptoms is also referred to by Freud in several other occasions. A more complete definition is attempted in his capital work, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) again in relation with hysteria:

The frequent occurrence of conscious daytime phantasies brings these structures to our knowledge; but just as there are phantasies of this kind which are conscious, so, too, there are unconscious ones in great numbers, which have to remain unconscious on account of their content and of their origin from repressed material. [...] Like dreams, they are wish-fulfillments; like dreams, they are based to a great extent on impressions of infantile experiences; like dreams, they benefit by a certain degree of relaxation of censorship. If we examine their structure, we shall perceive the way in which the wishful purpose that is at

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 223.

¹³⁷ Ribot Théodule, *Essai sur l'imagination créatrice*, Paris: Felix Alcan Editeur, 1900, p. 64.

*work in their production has mixed up the material of which they are built, has re-arranged it and has formed it into a new whole*¹³⁸.

We shall not forget how influential, especially starting with the *Interpretation of dreams*, Freud's thought and theories became, so that the relation between daydream and hysteria, already before the beginning of the twentieth century had spread also in popular culture.

In the essay *Hysterical Fancies and Their Relations to Bisexuality* (1908) Freud goes as far as to assert that the daydream is always at the origin of an hysterical attack:

Every hysterical attack which I have been able to investigate up to the present has proved to be an involuntary irruption of day-dreams of this kind. For our observations no longer leave any room for doubt that such phantasies may be unconscious just as well as conscious; and as soon as the latter have become unconscious they may also become pathogenic - that is, they may express themselves in symptoms and attacks. In favourable circumstances, the subject can still capture an unconscious phantasy of this sort in consciousness. [...]

Unconscious phantasies have either been unconscious all along and have been formed in the unconscious; or - as is more often the case - they were once conscious phantasies, day-dreams, and have since been purposely forgotten and have become unconscious through 'repression'. Their content may afterwards either have remained the same or have undergone alterations, so that the present unconscious phantasies are derivatives of the once conscious ones. Now an unconscious phantasy has a very important connection with the subject's sexual life; for it is identical with the phantasy which served to give him sexual satisfaction during a period of masturbation. [...] If no other mode of sexual satisfaction supervenes, the subject remains

¹³⁸ Freud Sigmund, *The Interpretation of Dreams. The Complete and Definitive Text*. Transl. and ed. by James Strachey, New York: Basic Books, 2010, p. 497.

abstinent; and if he does not succeed in sublimating his libido - that is, in deflecting his sexual excitation to higher aims -, the condition is now fulfilled for his unconscious phantasy to be revived and to proliferate, and, at least as regards some part of its content, to put itself into effect, with the whole force of his need for love, in the form of a pathological symptom. In this way, unconscious phantasies are the immediate psychical precursors of a whole number of hysterical symptoms. Hysterical symptoms are nothing other than unconscious phantasies brought into view through 'conversion'; and in so far as the symptoms are somatic ones, they are often enough taken from the circle of the same sexual sensations and motor innervations as those which had originally accompanied the phantasy when it was still conscious¹³⁹.

The daydream becomes in this writing identified with the sexual rather than the love fantasy; Freud also seems to go back to the idea of adolescent fantasy, as in the mention made by Ribot:

A common source and normal prototype of all these creations of phantasy is to be found in what are called the day-dreams of youth. These have already received some, though as yet insufficient, notice in the literature of the subject. They occur with perhaps equal frequency in both sexes, though it seems that while in girls and women they are invariably of an erotic nature, in men they may be either erotic or ambitious. Nevertheless the importance of the erotic factor in men, too, should not be given a secondary rating; a closer investigation of a man's day-dreams generally shows that all his heroic exploits are carried out and all his successes achieved only in order to please a woman and to be preferred by her to other men. These phantasies are satisfactions of wishes proceeding from deprivation and longing [...]

These day-dreams are cathected with a large amount of interest; they are carefully cherished by the subject and usually concealed

¹³⁹ Ibid. in *Hysterical Fancies and Their Relations to Bisexuality*. p. 1933-35.

*with a great deal of sensitivity, as though they were among the most intimate possessions of his personality. It is easy to recognize a person who is absorbed in day-dreaming in the street, however, by his sudden, as it were absent-minded smile, his way of talking to himself, or by the hastening of his steps which marks the climax of the imagined situation*¹⁴⁰.

This passage is crucial since it makes explicit the nature of these daydreams, distinguishing them by the daydreamer's gender; they are then more of romantic nature for women and about glory and ambition for men. Besides, while confirming the love topic we have identified for the representation of reveries, Freud also establishes ambition as the focus of male reverie, as I attempted to prove for the representations defined 'male reveries' (see par. IV.2). When Freud refers to the importance of love reverie in men, too, he seems more to refer rather to the erotic fantasies developed indeed since adolescence, and on which the previous passage was centred.

Lastly, the identification of the visual symptoms of the reverie is very relevant to us, as it resembles very closely its visual representation in art. Though Freud refers more to seeing a daydreamer passing by on a street, still he mentions the "absent-minded smile", that I would indeed agree to identify as one of the typical features of the images of (pleasant) reverie seen along this research. Additionally, Freud seems also to imply that, at least to his expert eye, a daydreamer cannot really hide his internal activity (as Anna O. was able to do with the people surrounding her).

A few years later, in *Lectures on Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (1915-17) Freud defines the daydreams as a phenomenon that can manifest itself both in presence of mental illnesses, and in normal individuals: "Day-dreams are phantasies (products of the imagination); they are very general phenomena, observable, once more, in healthy as well as in sick people, and are easily accessible to study in our own

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

mind”¹⁴¹. Also in this work, Freud describes the phenomenology of these reveries, when they occur and what is their content, recognising their origins during puberty:

*These day-dreams appear in the pre-pubertal period, often in the later part of childhood even; they persist until maturity is reached and are then either given up or maintained till the end of life. The content of these phantasies is dominated by a very transparent motive. They are scenes and events in which the subject's egoistic needs of ambition and power or his erotic wishes and satisfaction.*¹⁴².

Here Freud also introduces the idea, central to my research, for which the two genders have different types of reveries:

*In young men the ambitious phantasies are the most prominent, in women, whose ambition is directed to success in love, the erotic ones. But in men, too, erotic needs are often enough present in the background: all their heroic deeds and successes seem only to aim at courting the admiration and favour of women. In other respects these day-dreams are of many different kinds and pass through changing vicissitudes. They are either, each one of them, dropped after a short time and replaced by a fresh one, or they are retained, spun out into long stories and adapted to the changes in the circumstances of the subject's life. They go along with the times, so to speak, and receive a 'date stamp' which bears witness to the influence of the new situation*¹⁴³.

To conclude, I would also argue that while the term reverie registers a shift in its meaning between the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century uses, on the contrary, along the nineteenth century up to now it maintains its meaning; as a general idea even now the reverie is a phantasy, a daydream, an uncontrolled dreamy thought. As we shall

¹⁴¹ Ibid., in *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, p. 3198.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

see in the Conclusions, indeed, the reverie as an activity, its study and its function are truly a product of the nineteenth-century mentality, science and lifestyle, which will not find a real equivalent and continuation during the following century.

CONCLUSIONS

1. FINDINGS: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO THE REVERIE

The present research has identified the reverie as a specific iconographic representation often recurring in paintings during the nineteenth century. It has investigated all layers of meaning of this historical and artistic 'object' by providing a complete definition of it and distinguishing it from similar iconographies. A large collection of artworks presenting the theme of the reverie has been analysed to provide samples of all of its variations according to type of representation, country of production, and chronology. Lastly, this study has proposed a socio-cultural interpretation of the phenomenon of the reverie as an activity actually practiced by women at the time. To conclude this work, the deepest implications of this type of representation will be summarised here.

Observing a painting that represents a reverie often gives the impression of entering, unseen, an intimate scene. The private space that is undisclosed on canvas is both the place for womanly activities and for womanly fantasies: it is simultaneously a physical and a mental space. The image of the reverie therefore seems to aim at penetrating the women's privacy, while addressing unanswered questions about the female mystery: what do women really think? What do women really want and feel?

À quoi rêvent les jeunes filles? is more than the title of a comedy: the phrase seems to represent an actual societal concern in the second part of the century. The question is so common and unresolved that

medical diagnoses are rationalised to explain the female intellect through theories of mental illnesses, mainly hysteria, attributed to women.

Femininity is in general a condition creating both curiosity and anxiety in men at this time. The woman's role is settled and limited to the private, domestic sphere, while women are often dichotomised between the angelic-woman and the *femme fatale*. This categorisation reduces women and femininity to a comfortable, oversimplified—and above all controllable—principle. At least until the last decades of the century women are never understood *per se*, but they are reduced to what society believes of them and expects from them.

Among the many “mysteries” of femininity, how women spend their free time is often elusive for males. Most typical feminine activities, such as sewing, drawing, and playing the piano are perceived as uninteresting and mechanical, a natural expression of the female ordinary intellect and capacities. Reading, the other common female activity, provokes instead a preoccupied curiosity from men, as a potentially dangerous and corrupting activity, liable to make women develop wishes and claims that are certainly inappropriate, if not plainly scandalous. Therefore, reading is practised in private, thus contributing to create an aura of mystery and illicitness.

The need for mental escape from societal constraints was expressed through the practice of the reverie as a common pastime. Though men considered the female fantasy unproductive and only addressed to futile ideas, the activity of daydreaming is perceived with even more suspicion and anxiety than reading. Like reading, daydreaming was considered capable of inciting inappropriate feelings and ideas in women and it becomes the most immediate expression of female wishes and thoughts; but unlike reading, it cannot be controlled or constrained, and can easily be dissimulated by women at any moment¹. The danger of reading or daydreaming arises from the supposed impressionability, irrationality and excitability of the woman,

¹ As confirmed by the case of Anna O., in *Studies in Hysteria* by Breuer and Freud, for which see par IV.5.

who might not appropriately rationalise the impressions left by these flights of fancy.

As the reverie represents the very essence of femininity, there is no such thing as a male reverie. It is not acceptable for a man to have reveries, since dreaming and daydreaming are indolent activities, and product of a vain fantasy, appropriated to the weak female intellect. Male daydreams are only accepted when men prove their virility elsewhere, such as in a military context.

During the nineteenth century, the preoccupying occupation of female daydreaming becomes the object of a suspicious, yet attracted male gaze. It seems that men endeavoured to understand and restrain this womanly capacity as much as possible: this has produced various attempts to grasp the phenomenon of the reverie in different domains, from literature to art to science. Science, in particular, provides explanations of this pastime, describes its symptoms and aims at making it understandable by reducing it to the realm of reason. The “causal correlation” frequently proposed between reverie and mental disease can, therefore, be understood as an attempt to diminish the reverie’s functions and relevance by reducing it to an activity of a deranged mind.

On the other hand, the mystery of the daydreaming female is also undoubtedly the factor that attributes this pastime an evident charm; this is proven also by the fact that the women represented while daydreaming are in the largest number of cases² young and beautiful. The woman who daydreams is not only feminine by definition, but additionally, she acquires an attractiveness originating from her absorptive condition, her dreamy look, and her overexcited features. She is graceful, elegant, beautiful, and above all beautifully absorbed.

The spreading of this pastime, especially within certain social milieus, increases the attractiveness of this representation, which, especially towards the end of the century, seems to become very

² One exception was *Dopo la lettura* by Altamura, in which the representation of an older woman doing a reverie, addresses more the topics of memory and regret than expectation.

fashionable, increasingly mannered and elegant, a charming attitude in the way of representing high-class women. The reverie representation becomes an attractive image both for the on-looking man and for the woman, who sees in the image a model of grace to aspire to.

This very mixture of charm and anxiety engendered by the activity of daydreaming, is actually reflecting the way femininity in general was felt.

Given all the previous analyses, some possible readings of the reverie's diffusion in visual artistic representations will be proposed here.

The first and most basic reason for such a representation is a voyeuristic intention. The activity of daydreaming, as often remarked, is one of the most private pastimes. It is most often conducted in solitude and private, when the lack of other occupations and the condition of isolation best favour the expression of unleashed imagination. Its secrecy contributes to the inspiration of certain voyeuristic attitudes towards an activity often practised but rarely shown.

Connected to voyeurism is the idea of sexual availability, as seeing the woman in an abandoned condition would present her as more accessible and more vulnerable. This is also related to the representation of sloth, in which surely the aspect of voyeurism is present and connected to the lack of morality (the woman is abandoning her duties)³.

The viewer is permitted to share the same space as the figure depicted; yet the female figure is presented frontally, and in an attitude that is detached both from the viewer and from her own surroundings. The woman appears reachable yet ineffable, while she is absorbed in her distant thoughts a men cannot even imagine: the representation gives the impression the viewer can have the woman, but not quite possess her, as her fantasy provides her a tool for escaping.

³ The voyeuristic aspect finally are shared by iconographies of the sleeping woman, of the slothful, of the reverie and also of the sleeping beauty.

The female reverie image is defined for the viewer not by identification but rather by alterity: the viewer is not invited to empathise with the woman, but only observe her: “the viewer is forced into a confrontation or conversation with the painted figure while the dominance and familiarity are denied by the device of the averted head of concentration on an activity by the depicted personage. What are the conditions for this awkward but pointed relation of the figure to the world?”⁴.

Both voyeurism and the supposed sexual availability are consequences of another implied aspect that requires acknowledgement—the male gaze. The woman depicted is always represented from a male point of view, that of the painter, in the greatest majority of cases a man⁵, and secondly, that of the onlooker, imagined by default as a man. Not only the painter and the spectator were likely to be men, but also other types of users, such as critics or purchasers⁶.

The aforementioned aspects are only a basic trait of the reverie representation: there are other deeper reasons for its interest. What should now be addressed is the question whether the artists’ perspective may have been considerably different from the observations made thus far. Artists’ approaches to these representations must be considered in regards to what they would try to convey and what is the reason of their interest.

From what emerges from the reverie representation, the painter seems to observe with curiosity this activity; he renders the whole

⁴ Pollock Griselda, *Vision and difference: feminism, femininity and the histories of art*, London: Routledge, cop. 2003, p. 89.

⁵ The only female painter of reverie mentioned along this research was Berthe Morisot.

⁶ Despite this consideration, I believe that some artists in particular aimed also at attracting a female public. I am referring mostly to painters analysed such as Stevens and above all Toussaint in which the sexual aspect is less pronounced in favour of general allure of elegance and richness of the image. In particular Toussaint’s elegant women could appeal to both a man, for attraction, and a woman, for identification.

phenomenology of it in the representation of its symptoms: the blank gaze, the contracted hand, the relaxed pose. The painter's attitude towards this activity is never negative. There is no irony for instance, nor the diminishing look common towards other womanly activities.

In this observation a specific importance must have been attributed by the artist to women's supposed capacity to fantasise—a very important skill for artists. In this sense, beyond curiosity, the artists' interest could have been also a sort of admiration. Surely, men are given skills of creativity, genius and rationality, but apparently women were also accorded by their sex a vivacious and highly productive imagination.

Lastly, the artist might have been more sensitive in perceiving the contrasts of the crystal cage of the woman's condition. An example of the artist's sensitivity towards the women's condition is provided in literature: in *A Doll's House* (1879) Henrik Ibsen heavily criticises the male society in which a woman cannot be herself and could only feel imprisoned. The themes of women's role in society and their relegation, as well as those of ennui and meaninglessness of life, are central to the play, which provoked a large controversy for the offense to public moral as it was criticising the society's established order.

Some of the painters analysed earlier also show a sensitivity on the issue of the female reverie that goes beyond the society's generally negative judgement: they seem to be aware that women's pitiful condition is determined by the society's superstructures imposed to them. I proposed this type of interpretation for instance about the painting *Sweet Doing Nothing* by Auguste Toulmouche, in which the elegance and beauty of the woman clash with her state of boredom and helplessness⁷.

It is also arguable that, while the viewer would rather perceive its 'alterity' from the daydreaming woman represented, at the same time, the artist might have felt instead a sort of identification.

⁷ By the way painted only two years before the publication of *A Doll's House*. I argue that the painting and the play show the very same understanding of the female condition from the artist's point of view, with the insistence on boredom generating a feeling of compassion from the audience.

Again in literature, a remarkable example of artist's mixture of compassion and identification appears in the attitude Gustave Flaubert had towards his *Madame Bovary*. While telling the story of Emma Bovary's unhappy marriage and life with the realism of an objective neutral narrative tone, Flaubert clearly presents her as pitiful. Her story shows how she is a 'victim' of an unhappy marriage; of the small town's habits and rumours; and above all victim of the romantic ideals about love and marriage upon which she has formed her idea of the world. The example of Emma Bovary is particularly appropriate also because her illusion is based on the reading of novels and her dissatisfaction is expressed through an intense daydreaming of another reality.

Nonetheless, Flaubert's look on Emma Bovary was not only the one of analytical observation and pity: Flaubert is known to have declared "*Madame Bovary c'est moi*", thus stating—rather shockingly—that a man could share the irrationality and volubility that were considered only typical of women.

With the due differences, it is arguable that the painters of the reverie images might have had a similar attitude as Ibsen and Flaubert. Especially considering that the images of reverie were probably not commissioned and were made by the painter on his own accord. The choice of the subject might have been determined by the actual observation of a real female activity; curiosity, and perhaps also a sort of admiration, compassion and an overall identification might have inspired the painter.

At the light of these considerations, I would like to propose an interpretation of the reverie image as invested with a double-faceted meaning. On one side there is the negative judgement of the society and common sense in which the reverie is seen as typically feminine, rather charming but possibly also a manifestation of worse illnesses. On the other hand, the perspectives of the artists imply a more condescending judgement, mainly based on curiosity towards a more developed fantasy, and at the same time suggesting in some cases an admiration, if not even self-identification.

To conclude, the research on the representation of the reverie has been productive. From seldom observations of reverie representations, the subject of the reverie productively expanded, having several sociological and cultural implications beyond the mere iconographic observation.

As the first iconographic analysis on the topic, this study was based on the display of several artworks, in different countries and periods. In a further study, focusing on a fewer number of images could be envisaged; their production, the occasions of purchase and the current location could be further investigated⁸. Additionally, more biographical elements about the artists could be retrieved, as well as the information about their social milieus and the purchasers of their works.

Given the multiple implications in different domains, this study should be considered as a first, solid ground of research on a topic that proved to be wide and unexplored.

2. THE FUTURE OF THE REVERIE

The conclusion of this research, like its commencement, shall at first go back to the general reflection on dream and its representations.

The dream, already central in Romantic aesthetics, raises during the nineteenth century a growing interest, resulting in a more specialised knowledge and scientific investigation. The first decades of the twentieth century, the period immediately following the one so far analysed, can be considered a peak for the dream topic. To provide an idea on the centrality of the dream topic in this moment, corresponding to a very large production in all fields, only a few of the most influential outcomes will be mentioned here.

The century literally opens with the publication of *Die Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*) by Sigmund Freud, marked

⁸ As hypothesised earlier, these artworks were made for a private market and were mostly not exposed to the public. Thus far they have been sold within the privates and for many of them the main documentation is to be found in the auction houses' website entries of transactions from the last decades.

with the solemn date of the year 1900. It is meaningful though that the epoch-making book was actually published in the last months of 1899: anticipating the date of the new century the book was presented as a true novelty, a study so innovative that was foreseeing the future.

The double dating of the book—the official and the real one—actually represents very well both the historical origin and the future implication of such a study. *The Interpretation of Dreams* both lays strongly its roots in the development of psychology and medical understanding of the nineteenth century⁹, and projects its influence all along the twentieth century, not exclusively in the psychological domain. Freud's study, gaining a fast popularity, spread some of what are now established features of the dream: its self-referential character, its origin from memories and day residue, its content as a wish fulfilment and its expression disguised by a number of mental processes hiding the latent content¹⁰.

Beyond Freud, another influential account for psychology is the essay *Le rêve* by Henri Bergson¹¹ in which the source and functions of the dream are illustrated. According to Bergson, in the dream all faculties and senses are alert like in wake, while only attention is lacking, as proven for instance by the external stimuli that are perceived and often integrated in the dream. He identifies the dream as a state in which reason does not act, for instance in the connection between the sensorial input and the recognition of its source, operated by memory. For what concerns the content of the dream, this is completely determined by memories, often insignificant and unconscious.

⁹ On this purpose see also Carroy Jacqueline, *Dreaming Scientists and Scientific Dreamers: Freud as a Reader of French Dream Literature*, in «Science in context», vol. 19, n. 1, 2006, pp. 15-35.

¹⁰ Evidently while many are retained, several of Freud's theories are considered obsolete by modern psychology. Nonetheless, the cultural influence *The Interpretation of Dreams*, especially in the first part of the new century, is undeniable.

¹¹ Chapter IV in the collection titled *L'énergie spirituelle: essais et conférences*, published in 1919.

However, the dream is not only investigated in psychological terms. In particular, some artistic movements will take the phenomenon of the dream as a constant point of reference on which they will focus their production. Above all, the Surrealist movement made the most relevant attempt to investigate the dream state through its artistic production. The condition of the dream for Surrealists not only represented a fascinating state of the mind, but was actually the main and most productive one, possibly more than wake. This was obviously consistent with the Surrealist purpose of creating a 'surreality' as a point of junction between dream and wake, night and day.

The Surrealists' interest for dream can be considered, more than just an aesthetic suggestion, a method, as much as psychoanalysis, for the knowledge of reality. It is relevant, in this regard, that the main initiators of the movement, André Breton and Louis Aragon, had an education in medicine, and were deeply acquainted with the Freudian methods of free association and dream interpretation. Since its very beginning, indeed, Surrealists clearly professed their inspiration to the Freudian discoveries, as also stated in the first Surrealist Manifest of 1924. Here the idea of dream state as another reality found indeed its systematization:

It would appear that it is by sheer chance that an aspect of intellectual life - and by far the most important in my opinion — about which no one was supposed to be concerned any longer has, recently, been brought back to light. Credit for this must go to Freud [...] the sum of dreaming moments - even taking into consideration pure dream alone, that of sleep - is from the point of view of time no less than the sum of moments of reality, which we shall confine to waking moments. I have always been astounded by the extreme disproportion in the importance and seriousness assigned to events of waking moments and to those of sleep by the ordinary observer. The manifest states the dimension of dream as alternative reality against rationality: the

*dream, according to all outward appearances, is continuous and bears traces of organization*¹².

The artist who accomplished most properly the surrealist exploration on dream is probably Salvador Dalí, whose paintings make large and conscious use of the typical superstructures of the dream, such as displacement, symbolisation, distortion, double meaning, as defined by the Freud.

While Surrealism remains the artistic movement that exploited - with the highest accuracy - the new science of the dream, the first decades of the century register a diffusion of scientific theories, applications in art, and a general fascination with the dream topic. Such interest seems to diminish greatly after the two world wars and in the second half of the century the dream seems to stop arising the interest it had thus far.

In psychology, some theories greatly reconsidered the meaning and utility of the dream in understanding the self. Specifically, the theories by Hobson and McCarley¹³ seriously questioned the Freudian theories, reducing the dream as merely a physiological phenomenon by observing that the dream appears exclusively during the REM¹⁴ phase of sleep. This implies a whole reconsideration of the dream in terms of a 'mechanical' phenomenon of the brain, thus opposing it to the relevance of 'royal road for the unconscious' that had been given by Freud.

While on one side the Freudian (and not only) discoveries had highlighted a fascination for sleeping and dreaming life, also other societal facts contribute to the progressive devaluation of these states. As proven by Crary¹⁵, it is already during the nineteenth century that a

¹² Patrick Waldberg, *Surrealism*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971, pp. 66-75.

¹³ Hobson J. Allan and Robert W. McCarley, "The Brain as A dream State Generator: An Activation-Synthesis Hypothesis of the Dream Process" in *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 134:12, December 1977.

¹⁴ The phase of deepest sleep, characterised by Rapid Eye Movement.

¹⁵ *24/7 Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, London; New York: Verso 2013.

process of erosion of the time dedicated to sleep—and therefore to dream—commences. Industrialisation and the need for productivity start spreading the feeling that sleeping time is a ‘wasted’ time, as non-productive by definition: the rhythm of life should not follow human needs such as sleep, but production’s needs. This idea, along with the dramatic technological progress of the twentieth century, produces a continuous reduction of the sleeping time in favour of a time spent in a more productive way.

Simultaneously, the rapid and wide spreading of electric lighting in cities and houses has irremediably changed the perception of night-time. Thanks to electricity, night-time stops being the space naturally devoted to sleep and starts being a more intriguing counterpart of the day, also characterised by activity and, importantly, entertainment. As illustrated by Schivelbusch¹⁶, turning the night into day is certainly one of the nineteenth century’s ambitions: many are the project and attempts, after the discovery of electricity, to reproduce the intensity of daylight in whole cities during night.

While this has (luckily) never been accomplished, still in contemporary societies, and especially during the last decade, the conception of sleep as a negative, unproductive activity is spread. The average number of sleep hours has decreased meaningfully and modern technologies, with social networks and continuous notifications, have induced the necessity of being available at all times, including night-time. According to Crary, our hyper-productive world is going towards the ideal of a 24/7 activity: society is going towards the end of sleep.

The interest towards the reverie seems to follow a partly similar process of the one the dreams registers during the twentieth century.

For what concerns the psychology, while during the nineteenth century no systematic studies on the reverie were to be found, the very first years of the twentieth century see a flourishing of psychological

¹⁶ Schivelbusch Wolfgang, *Disenchanted Night. The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century*, Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: The University of California Press, 1995.

studies, to which certainly the diffusion of the Freudian approach (already seen since *Studies in Hysteria*) gives a strong impulse. In 1904 a first scientific article by Theodate Smith is devoted to the *Psychology of Day-Dream* on a scientific journal. The Belgian Julian Varendonck bases instead his study, also titled *Psychology of Daydreams* on the collection of his own daydreams reports, done while he is fighting in World War I. The study will be published in 1921 – importantly, with an introduction by Sigmund Freud – and is still an interesting document above all as a ‘daydreams journal’. Baia Baitch elaborates his *Psychologie de la rêverie* in 1927 as his doctoral thesis at the University of Paris and in 1932 another article by Edwin G. Flemming appears on the Scientific Monthly with the title of *Daydreams*.

After this moment of great interest about the daydream, the phenomenon, like that of the dream, starts losing appeal at least after the Second World War.

Apart from psychology, the terms and concepts of reverie and daydream remained current in languages and expressions. They are used simply to define a wandering of the brain and have lost the negative connotation of vain and potentially dangerous fantasy. Above all, the expressions have lost all socio-cultural implications they were invested with during the nineteenth century. First off, they do not have an exclusively feminine connotation: modern studies acknowledge that both women and men can be daydreaming subjects.

The only connotation that remained partly similar is about the content of the daydream. Interestingly, studies on modern psychologies have confirmed the gendered character of dream content: in 1972 Singer states in the article titled *Daydreaming and Stream of Thought*: “women tend toward personal, passive and body-centred experiences, while men’s fantasies centre on more active roles and on athletic or heroic achievement”¹⁷. Not only the concept, but also the wording is particularly striking because it still concretely refers to passive and active characters for female and male, in a conception very similar to

¹⁷ Singer Jerome L., “Daydreaming and the Stream of Thought” in *American Scientist*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (July-August 1974), pp. 417-425.

those found in the nineteenth century. Moreover, the use of the word 'heroic' seems also particularly outdated for the historical context of the article.

At the same time, Singer suggests that the daydream remains a topic hardly grasped by psychological knowledge; he seems to admit that its understanding is still limited:

If psychology is eventually to generate a comprehensive grasp of behaviours, it will have to come to an understanding of this ongoing stream of thought; yet the elusiveness of private experiences and our inevitable dependence on subjects' verbal reports have held us back from systematic research into the nature of daydreams and related private experiences.

Definitions in modern psychology confirm the almost complete identity of understanding of the reverie now and then. The English edition of the Mijolla dictionary, mentioned earlier¹⁸, adds also an explanation about the content of the reverie. Here the analysis is so similar to the Freudian one that it actually seems to be closely related to Freud's words (letting aside symptoms and cures he proposes):

The term reverie refers to an imaginary representation created to help realize a desire [...] Daydreams, which everyone experiences, are the clearest example of conscious or preconscious reveries. In general they explicitly satisfy a desire, providing some form of imaginary satisfaction, whether it be erotic, aggressive, ambitious, self-aggrandizing or uplifting. It is not even unusual for people to visualize painful or humiliating experiences to their own advantage. In all these cases the narcissistic dimension of the process is obvious¹⁹.

In this sense, the conception and understanding of the reverie as a psychological phenomenon does not seem to have changed or

¹⁸ Par. I. 4.

¹⁹ *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Alain de Mijolla, Thomson Gale, p. 1493, 4, entry "Reverie".

improved during the last century; on the contrary it seems that its definition, even in modern psychology, is based more on the way this activity had been seen during the nineteenth century, and in particular by Freud.

Even recent researches on the daydream²⁰ still refer to the famous expression of daydream as a “private theatre”²¹, and still mention studies from the first decades of the twentieth century, when the activity was at its climax of interest.

Nowadays it seems that reverie and daydream have linguistically remained as mere expression of a state of abstraction, but void of the all the previous implications of content, gender and lifestyle.

Similarly to psychology and common understanding, if not even more, also the artistic representation of the reverie have diminished greatly in number. Certainly, reverie images can be found also in the second part of the century, but they entail a radically different conception. First, they are not ‘gendered’ anymore, as they can represent either a woman or a man. Secondly, they are definitely deprived of all nineteenth century connotations. To go back to Panofsky’s understanding of an artistic image²², we can affirm that the image of the daydream remains in the second part of the twentieth century to be read in its most basic meaning: the representation of a person having a reverie. It would not be understood through the reference to previous iconographies, it would no longer imply the gender theory on masculinity and femininity, and it would not recall the figure’s positioning in the society nor his or her mental health.

The image of the reverie as analysed in this research stops existing as such. And this fact identifies this iconography as a true

²⁰ Ehn Billy; Löfgren Orvar, “A Private Theatre? Daydreaming as a Cultural Practice” in *Nätverket* nr 15, 2008 p. 38-48 and Löfgren Orvar and Billy Ehn, *The Secret World of Doing Nothing* Bekeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2010.

²¹ The expression was again in used in the case of Anna O., see footnote 1.

²² Seen in par. III.1.

product of the nineteenth-century mentality, deeply rooted in its culture and society.

The last images of reverie produced, above all by Godward and Toussaint, were painted during the first years of the twentieth century. The charming images of daydreaming women, with the mixture of elegance and allusion to illness, progressively stop appearing in paintings. After a few years, images like the ones forming the large corpus of analysis in this research become progressively infrequent.

It is not a coincidence that Godward—the conservative painter—still produced reverie representations during the twentieth century. His idealised vision of the past and of painting in general has given a very aesthetic twist to his works, still based on an ideal of beauty and of art already completely obsolete. His daydreaming women are truly from another era. The actual women of his period start impersonating the prototype that is already referred to as “the new woman”²³. These women are actually busy in activities very different from daydreaming. They start going out by themselves²⁴, studying at the university, working, cycling; they start claiming the same rights that were accorded to men by nature. These women eradicated the bias of hysteria as normal female condition and gained autonomy over their own life.

These historical changes in the women’s condition are causally correlated to the very reason of the disappearance of the reverie iconography so spread in the previous century. Daydreaming was no longer a charming activity; probably it was not an ‘activity’ anymore at all. In this sense Godward’s women could not be more far from reality. Women are no longer beautiful dolls daydreaming their life away, hoping for something to rescue them.

²³ *The New Woman in Fiction and Fact. Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*, ed. by Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002.

²⁴ It was the main novelty presented in *Sogni* by Corcos (see par. III.6).

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Fig. 2: Johann Tischbein, *Goethe at the Window*, 1787



Fig. 3: François Boucher, *Portrait of Madame de Pompadour*, 1756



Fig. 4 : Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *Un Père de famille qui lit la Bible à ses enfants* (A Father Reading the Bible to his Children, 1755



Fig. 5: Carl Van Loo, *St. Augustin disputant contre les Donatistes* (Saint Augustin arguing against the Donatists), 1753

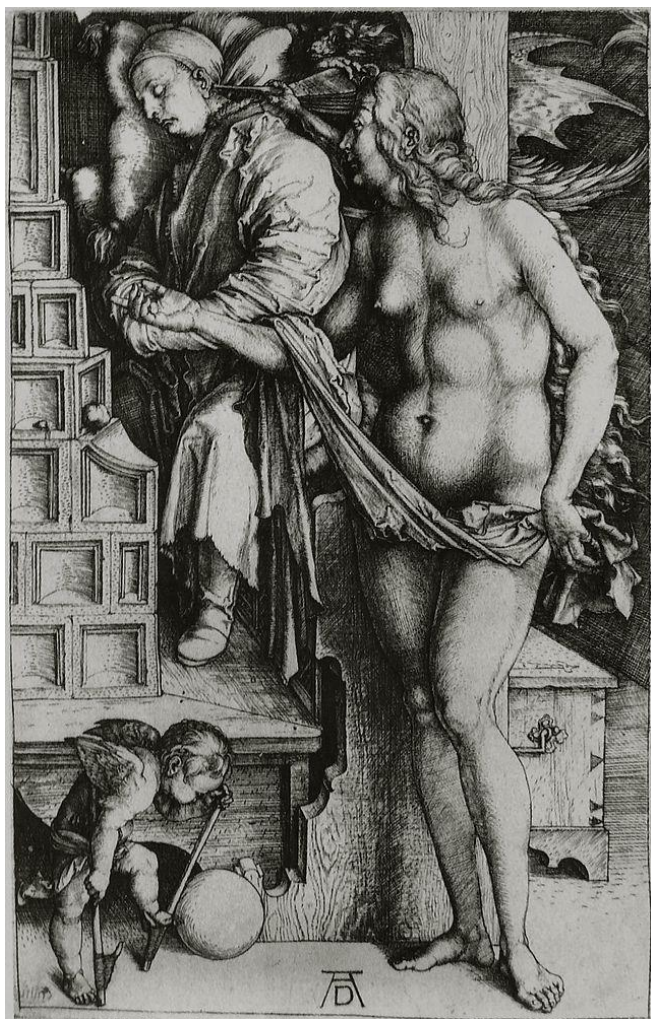


Fig. 6: Albrecht Dürer, *The Dream of the Doctor*, ca. 1498



Fig. 7: Jan Vermeer, *A Maid Asleep*, 1656-57



Fig. 8: Nicholas Maes, *The Account Keeper*, 1656



Fig. 9: Nicholas Maes, *The Idle Servant*, 1655



Fig. 10: Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *La tricoteuse endormie* (*The Sleeping Knitter*), 1759



Fig. 11: Jean-Baptiste Greuze *L'écolier endormi* or *Le petit paresseux* (*The Sleeping Student* or *The Little Slothful*), 1755



Fig. 12: Constantyn Verhout, *Young student sleeping*



Fig. 13: Joseph-Marie Vien, *Ermite endormi* (Sleeping Hermit), 1753



Fig. 14 : Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *Les oeufs cassés* (*The Broken Eggs*) 1757



Fig. 15 : Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *La paresseuse italienne* (*The Italian Slothful*), 1756



Fig. 16 : Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres, *L'Odalisque à l'esclave* (*Odalisque with a Slave*), 1842



Fig. 17: Eugène Delacroix, *Femmes d'Alger* (*Women of Algiers*), 1834



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Fig. 19: Gustave Courbet, *La fileuse endormie* (*The Sleeping Spinner*) 1853



Fig. 20 : *Revue du Salon de 1853* par Cham, 1853

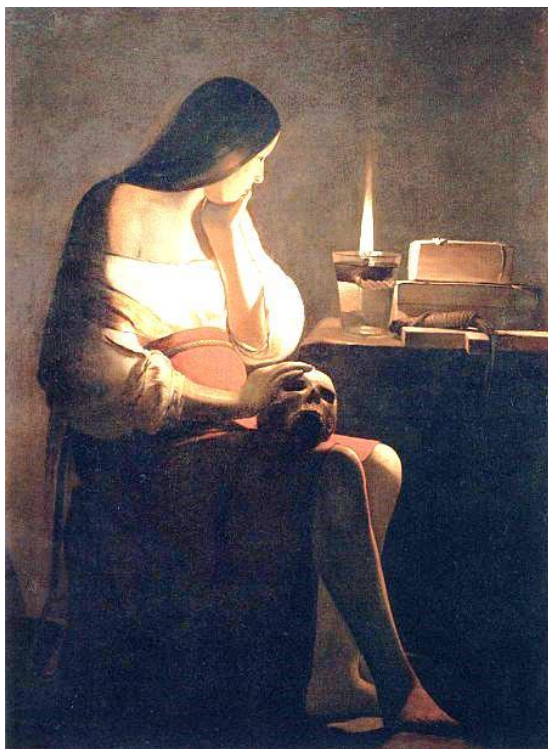


Fig. 21: Georges de la Tour, *Madeleine (Mary Magdalen)* 1640-45

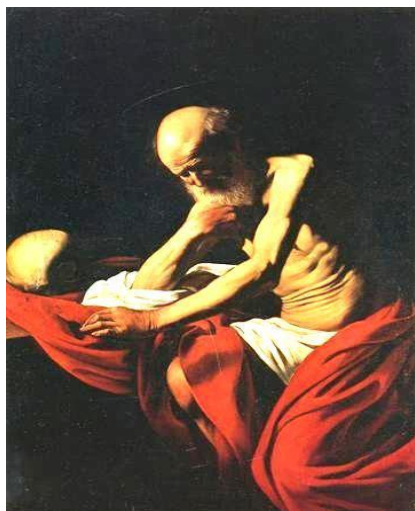


Fig. 22: Caravaggio, *Saint Jerome in Meditation*, c. 1606

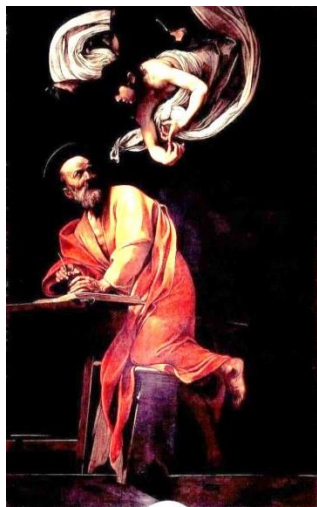


Fig. 23: Caravaggio, *Saint Matthew and the Angel*, 1602

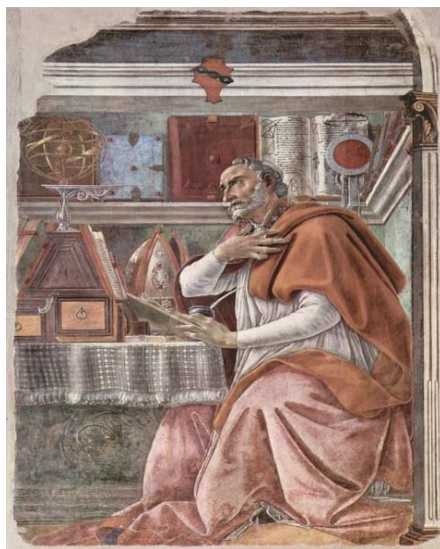


Fig. 24: Sandro Botticelli, *Saint Augustin in Meditation*, 1480 ca.



Fig. 25: Vittore Carpaccio, *Saint Augustine*, 1505



Fig. 26: Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia* , illustration for “*malinconia*”



Fig. 27: Domenico Fetti, *Malinconia*, c. 1620



Fig. 28: Albrecht Dürer, *Melencolia I*, 1514



Fig. 29 : Joseph-Marie Vien, *La douce mélancolie*, 1756



Fig. 30: Étienne Maurice Falconet, *La douce mélancolie*, 1763



Fig. 31: Constance Charpentier, *La Mélancolie*, 1801



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Fig. 33: Antoine Watteau, *La rêveuse* (*The Dreamer*) 1712-14



Fig. 34 : Jacques Sablet, *Elégie romaine* (Double portrait au cimetière protestante de Rome) 1791

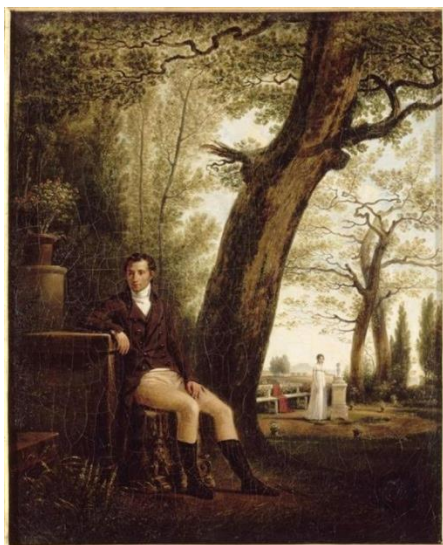


Fig. 35 : Jacques Sablet, *Portrait of Lucien Bonaparte* 1800



Fig. 36: Jan Vermeer, *Woman in blue*, 1663-4

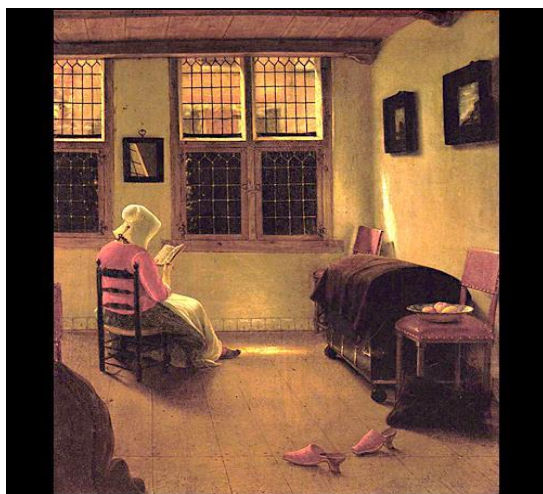


Fig. 37: Pieter Janssens Elinga, *Woman reading*, 1668-70



Fig. 38 : Adelaide Labille-Guiard, *Portrait de femme* (*Portrait of a Woman*) 1787



Fig. 39: Jeanne-Étienne Liotard *Portrait de Madame Marc Liotard de la Servette*, 1775



Fig. 40: Jeanne-Étienne Liotard, *Portrait de Marc Liotard de la Servette*, 1775



Fig. 41: François Boucher, *Femme sur un sofa* (Woman on a Couch) 1743



Fig. 42: John Singleton Copley, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1771



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Fig. 44 : Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *La petite sultane* (*The little Sultan*)



Fig. 45: Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *La jeune liseuse* (*The Reader*)



Fig. 46: Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *La lettre d'amour* (*The Love Letter*), 1770



Fig. 47: Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin, *L'Économe* (*The Administrator*), 1745



Fig. 48: Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin, *Les amusements de la vie privée* (*The Entertainments of Private Life*) 1745



Fig. 49: Pierre Antoine Baudouin, *La lecture* (*The Reading*) 1760



Fig. 50: Johann Peter Hasenclever, *Die Sentimentale* (*The Sentimental Girl*) 1846



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Fig. 52: Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot *Liseuse couronnée des fleurs* (Reading Girl Crowned with Flowers) 1850



Fig. 53: Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *Meditation*, 1860 ca.



Fig. 54: Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *La poésie*



Fig. 55 : Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *Melancholy*, 1860 ca.



Fig. 56 : Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *L'atelier de l'artiste* (*The artist's studio*)
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Fig. 57 : Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *L'atelier de l'artiste* (*The Artist's Studio*) 1868



Fig. 58: Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *L'atelier* (*The Studio or Young Woman with a Mandolin*) 1865-66



Fig. 59: Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *L'atelier*



Fig. 60: Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *La rêverie* or *Jeune Grecque* (*The Reverie* or *Young Greek Woman*) 1860-5



Fig. 61: Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *La lecture interrompue* (*The Interrupted Reading*), 1870 ca.



Fig. 62: Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *La Juive d'Alger* (*The Jewish from Algiers*)
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Fig. 63: Alfred Stevens, *Reverie*, 1854



Fig. 65: Alfred Stevens, *The Farewell Note*



Fig. 64: Alfred Stevens *News from Afar*, 1868



Fig. 66: Alfred Stevens *Reverie*, 1878



Fig. 67: Charles Joshua Chaplin, *Le rêve (The Dream)*, 1857



Fig. 68: Charles Joshua Chaplin, *Rêverie*, 1880

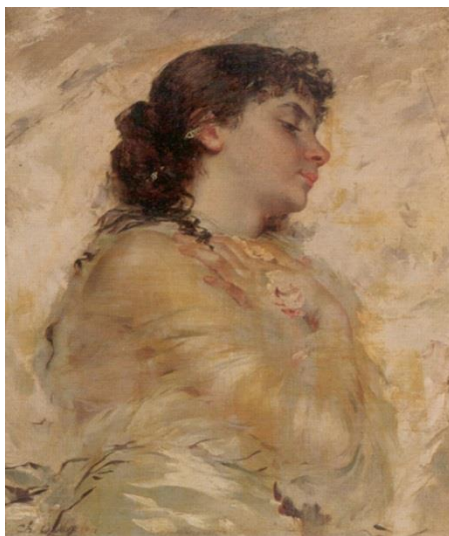


Fig. 69: Charles Joshua Chaplin *Portrait of a Young Woman in Profile*



Fig. 70: Charles Joshua Chaplin, *Dans les rêves or Après le bal masqué (In the Dreams or After the Masked Ball, 1886)*



Fig. 71 : Auguste Toulmouche, *La lettre d'amour* (*The Love Letter*) 1863



Fig. 72: Auguste Toulmouche, *Sweet Doing Nothing*, 1877



Fig. 73 : Auguste Toulmouche, *Une idylle d'après-midi* (Afternoon Idyll) 1874



Fig.74 : Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Rêverie* or *Portrait de Jeanne Samary*, 1878

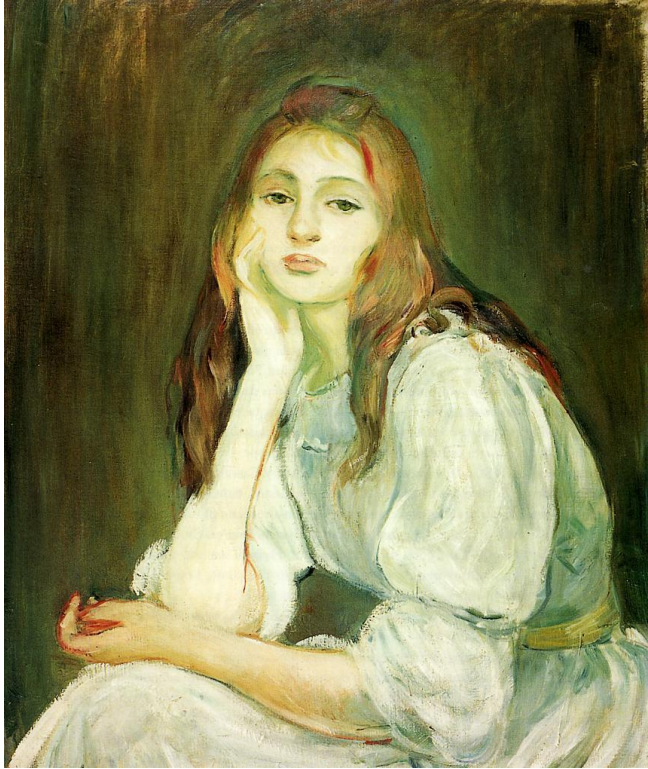


Fig. 75: Berthe Morisot, *Julie Daydreaming*, 1894



Fig. 76 : Fernand Toussaint, *A Quiet Moment*



Fig. 77: Fernand Toussaint, *The Love Letter and Mirror*



Fig. 78: Fernand Toussaint, *Deep in Thought*



Fig. 79: Fernand Toussaint, *Reverie*



Fig. 80: Fernand Toussaint, *Daydreaming*

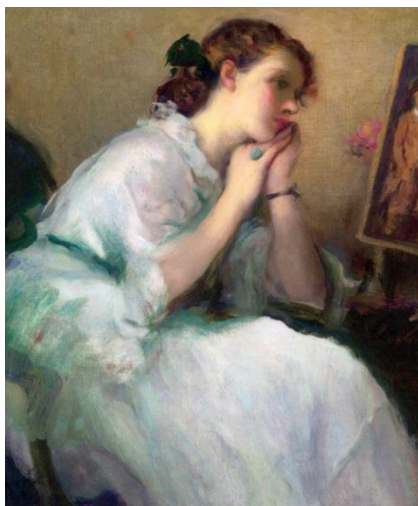


Fig. 81: Fernand Toussaint, *Daydreaming*



Fig. 82: Fernand Toussaint, *La femme accoudée* (Woman Leaning)



Fig. 83: Fernand Toussaint, *Faraway Thoughts*



Fig. 84: Fernand Toussaint, *Dreamy*

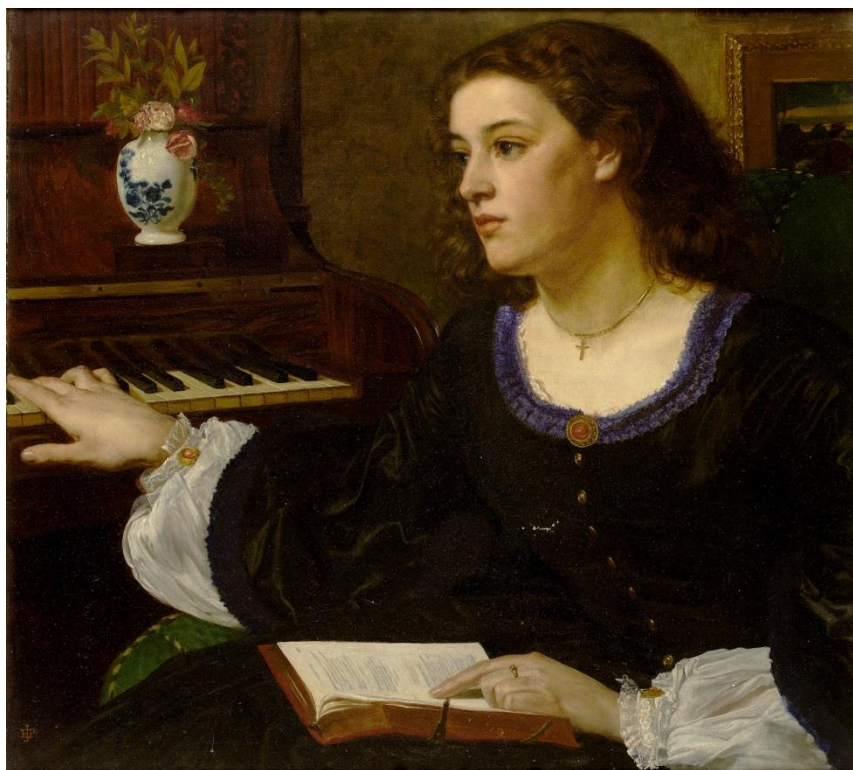


Fig. 85: Edward Poynter, *Daydream*



Fig. 86: Arthur Hughes, *The Pained Heart*, 1868



Fig. 87: Arthur Hughes, *April Love*, 1855-6



Fig. 88: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Reverie*, 1868



Fig. 89: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Daydream*, 1880



Fig. 90: Edward Poynter, *On the Terrace*



Fig. 91: Edward Poynter, *Reading*, 1870



Fig. 92: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Pleading*, 1876

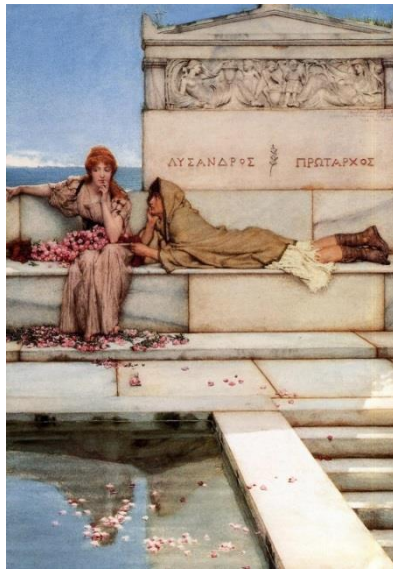


Fig. 93: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Xanthe and Phaon*, 1883



Fig. 94: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *A Declaration*, 1883



Fig. 95 Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Ask me no more* 1906



Fig. 96: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Expectations*, 1885

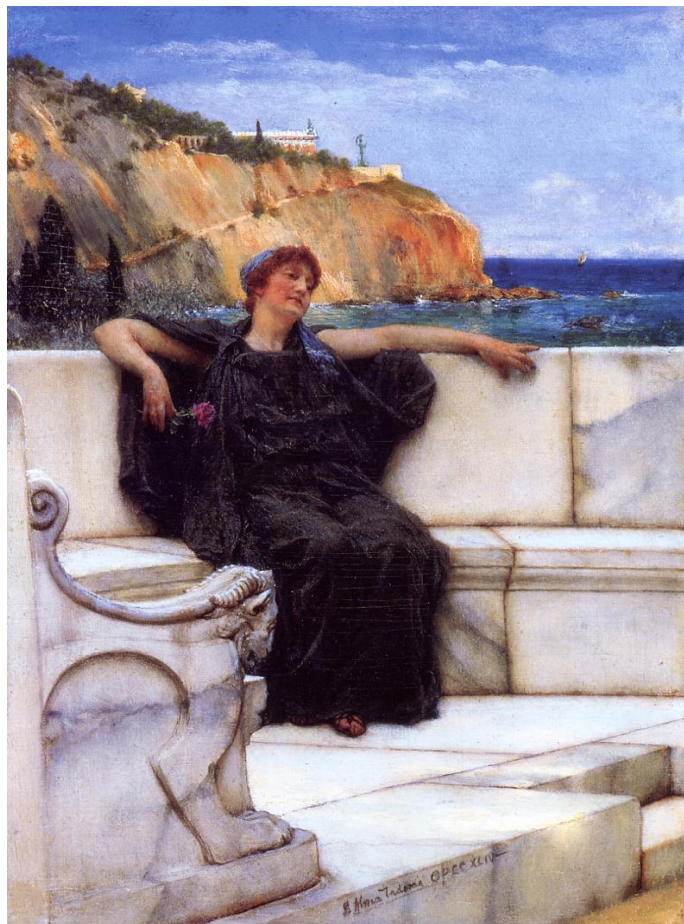


Fig. 97: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Daydreaming*

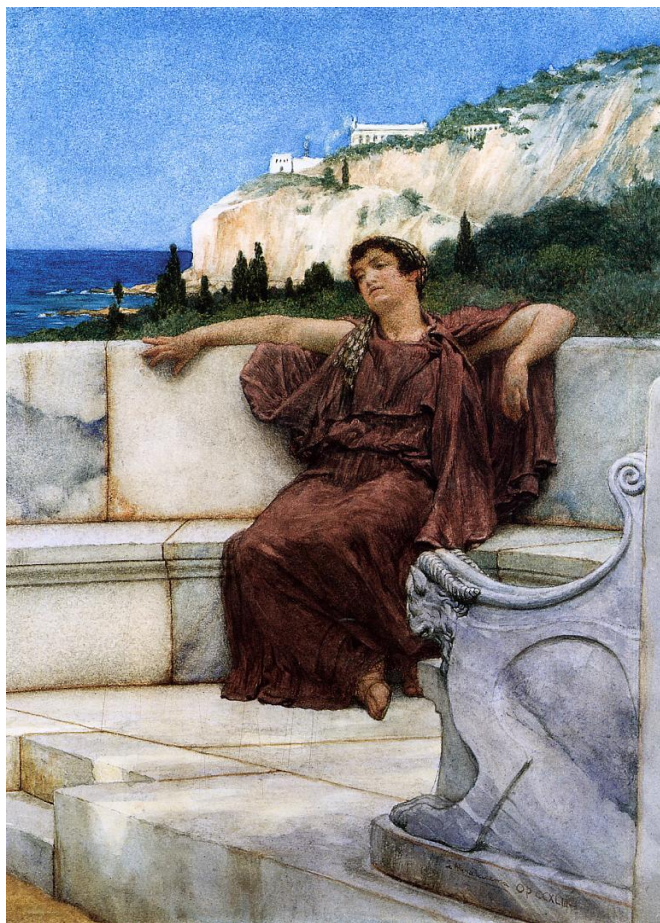


Fig. 98: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Dolce Far Niente*

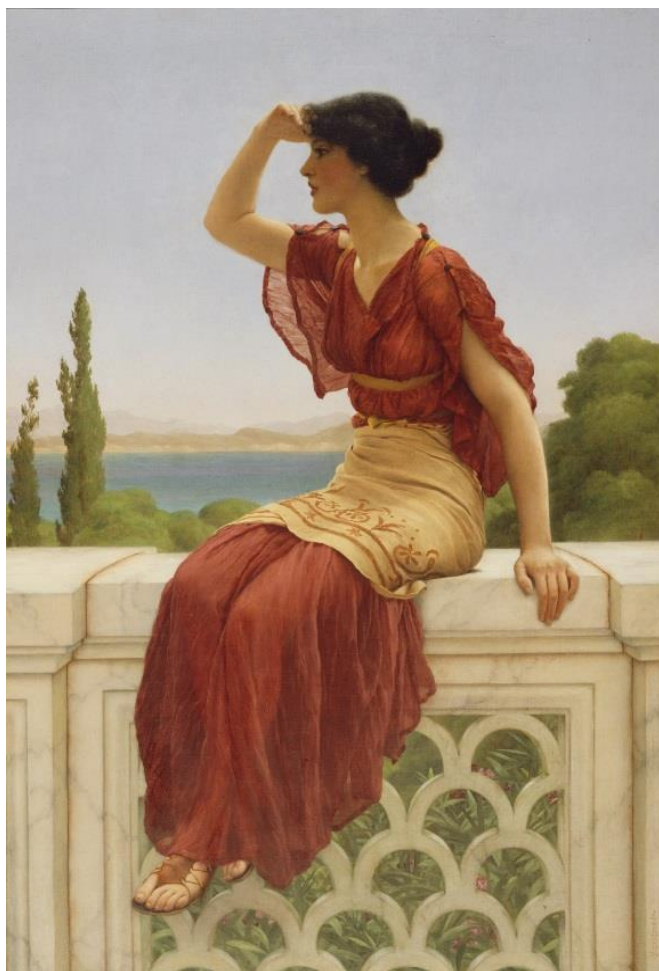


Fig. 99: John William Godward, *The Signal*, 1899

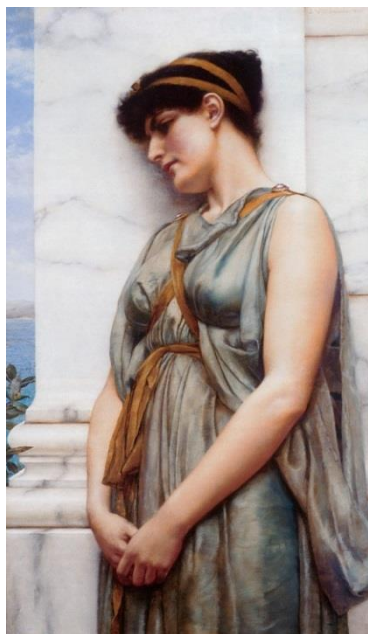


Fig. 100: John William Godward, *Grecian Reverie*, 1889



Fig. 101: John William Godward, *Faraway Thoughts*, 1892



Fig. 102: John William Godward, *In the Days of Sappho*, 1904



Fig. 103: John William Godward, *Idle Thoughts*, 1898



Fig. 104: John William Godward, *Sweet Dreams*, 1901



Fig. 105: John William Godward, *Idleness*



Fig. 106: John William Godward, *A Quiet Pet*, 1906



Fig. 107: John William Godward, *Dolce Far Niente*, 1897



Fig. 108: John William Godward, *The Betrothed*, 1892



Fig. 109: John William Godward, *Daydreams*, 1893



Fig. 110: John William Godward, *Noonday Rest*, 1910



Fig. 111: John William Godward, *Midday*



Fig. 112: John William Godward, *In the Realm of Fancy*, 1911

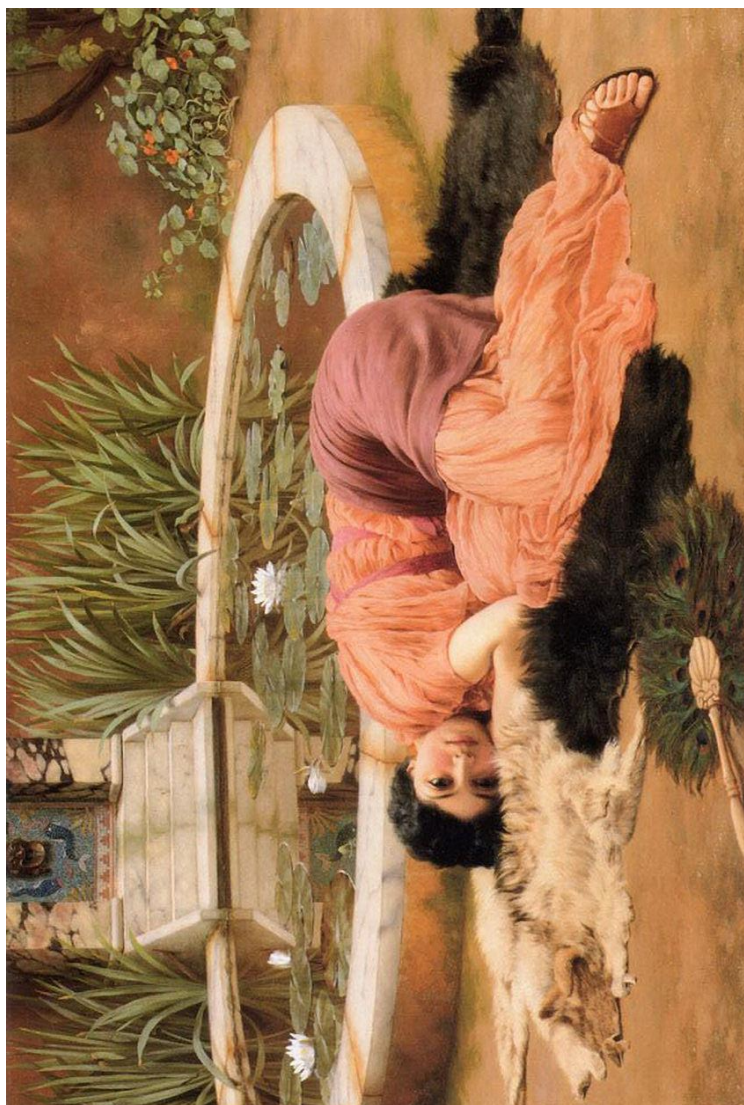


Fig. 113: John William Godward, *Dolce Far Niente*, 1904

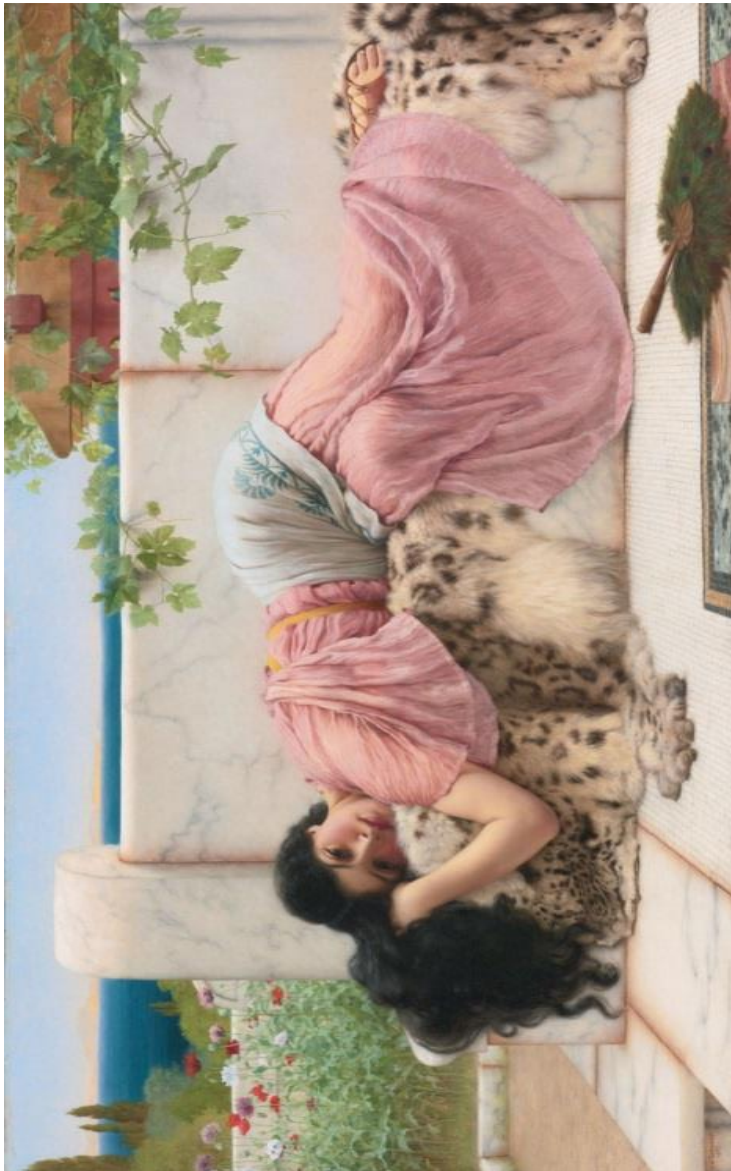


Fig. 114: John William Godward, *When the Heart is Young*, 1902



Fig. 115: Francesco Saverio Altamura, *Dopo la lettura* (*After Reading*) 1877-78

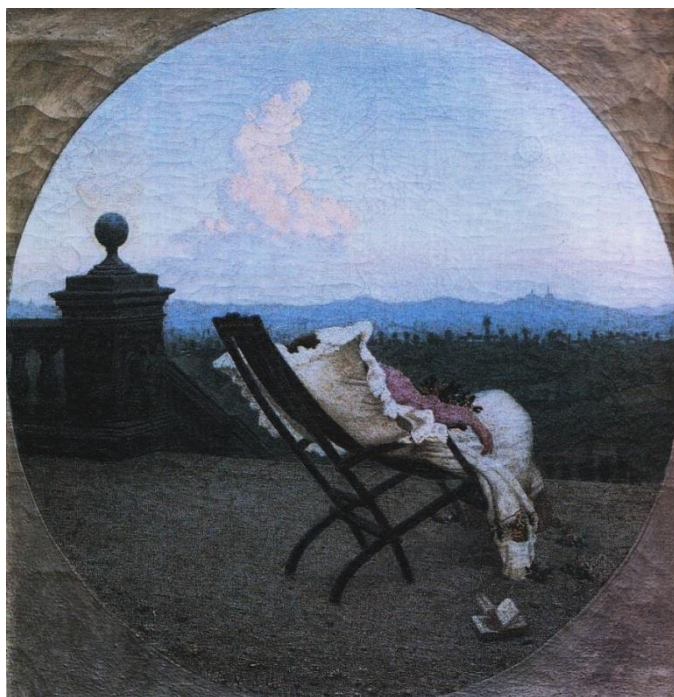


Fig. 116: Angelo Morbelli, *S'avanza (Rising)* 1894-6



Fig.117: Vittorio Matteo Corcos, *Sogni (Dreams)*, 1896

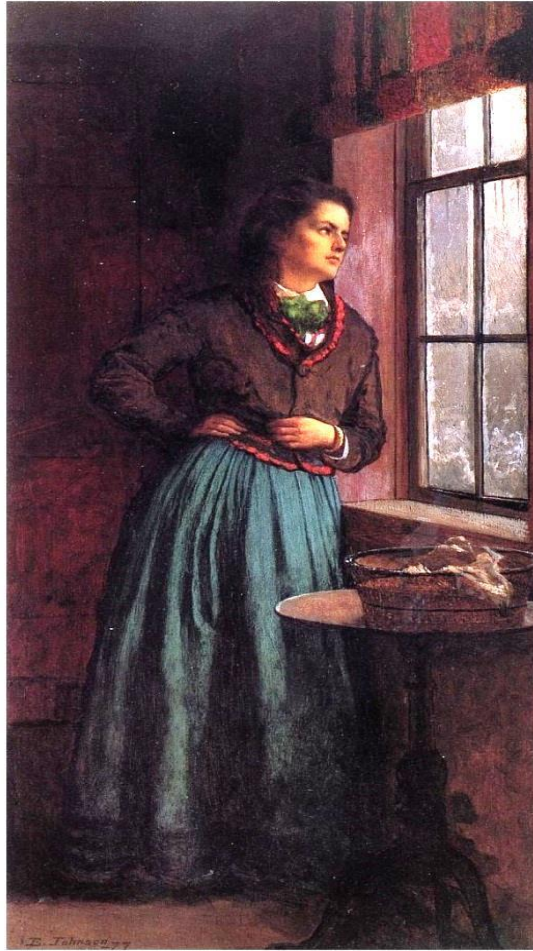


Fig. 118: Eastman Johnson, *Daydream*, 1877



Fig. 119: Rogelio de Egusquiza, *A Reverie during the Ball*, 1879



Fig. 120: Rogelio de Egusquiza, *The End of the Ball*, 1915

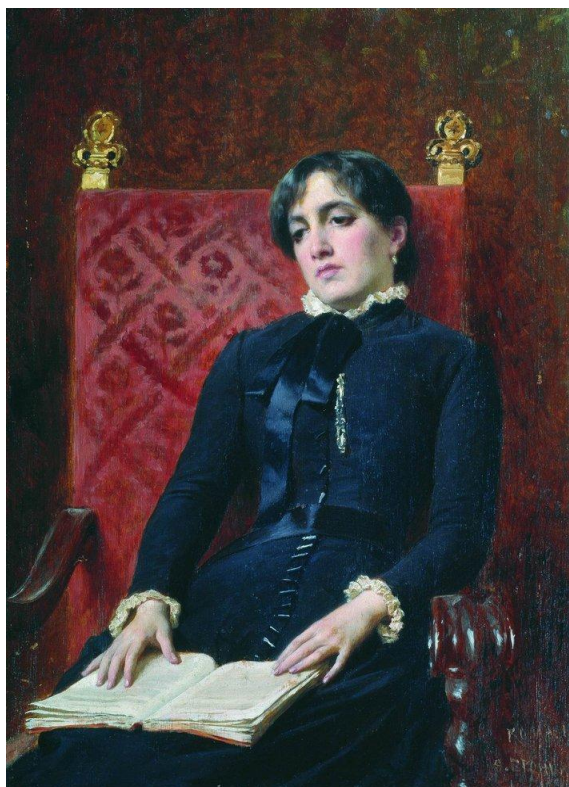


Fig. 121: Fyodor Bronnikov, *Portrait of a Lady with a Book*

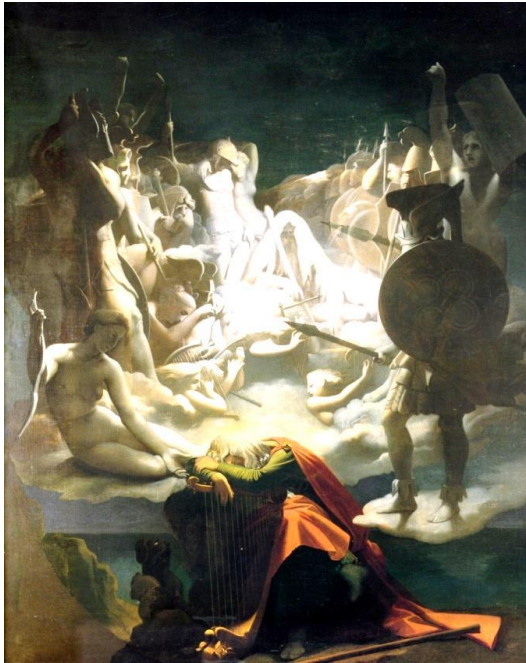


Fig. 122: Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Songe d'Ossian (Dream of Ossian)* 1813



Fig. 123: François Joseph Aimé de Lemud, *Beethoven Inspired*, 1864

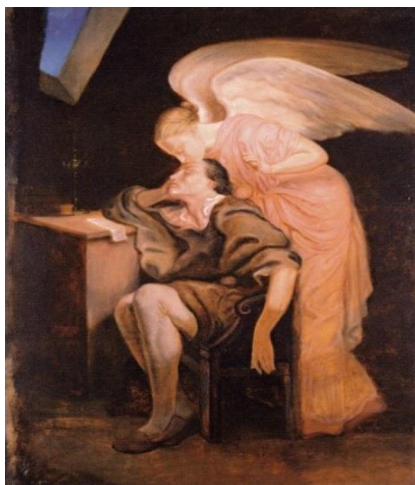


Fig. 124: Paul Cezanne, *d'après* Nicholas Frillié, *The Kiss of the Muse*, 1860



Fig. 125: Moritz von Schwind, *The Prisoner's Dream*, 1836



Fig. 126 : Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, *Le rêve*, 1883

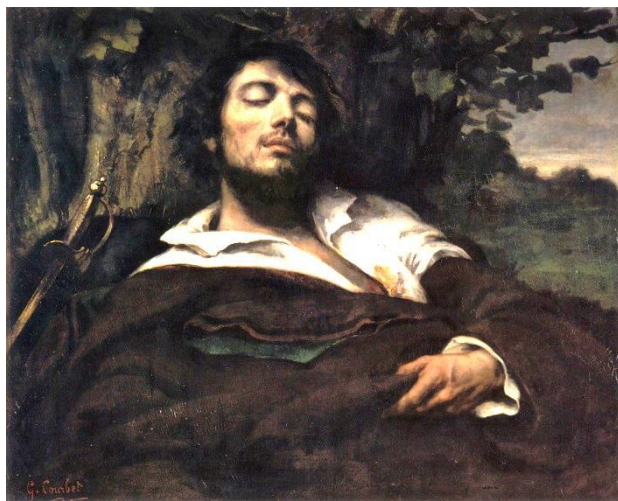


Fig. 127: Gustave Courbet, *Self-portrait or The Wounded Man*, 1844-45



Fig. 128: Édouard Detaille, *Le rêve*, 1888



Fig. 129: *The Soldier's Dream of Home*, 1861-65 ca.



Fig. 130: E. M. *Is Dream*, 1916 ca.



Fig. 131: American postcard, 1942-3 ca.



Fig. 132: Théodore Géricault, *Le chasseur de la garde* (*The Charging Chasseur*) 1812



Fig. 133: Théodore Géricault, *Radeau de la Méduse* (*The Raft of the Medusa*)
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Fig. 134: Eugène Delacroix, *La Mort de Sardanapale* (*The Death of Sardanapalus*)
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Fig. 135: *Miroir drolatique*, Lithography by Alcide Lorentz, 1842



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Fig. 138 : André Brouillet, *Un Leçon Clinique à la Salpêtrière*, 1887



Fig. 139 : Jean-Martin Charcot's drawings, from the exhibition *Charcot, une vie avec l'image* (12 May - 9 July 2014, Église Saint-Louis, Pitié-Salpêtrière, Paris)



Fig. 140: Conrad Kiesel, *Daydream*

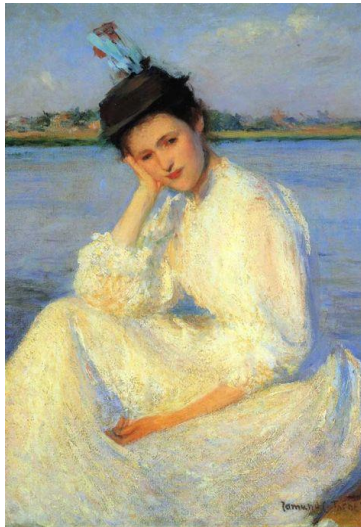


Fig. 141: Edmund Tarbell, *Portrait of a Lady*



Fig. 142: Ivan Kulikov, *Daydreaming*



Fig. 143: Janet C. Fisher, *Distant Thoughts*

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