

# Sleep in the Fine Arts



by  
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## Sleep in the Fine Arts

...and our little life is rounded with a sleep  
Shakespeare, The Tempest (IV i)

### 1. Introduction

From earliest times, both secular and sacred art have drawn on fables and realistic subjects concerning sleep, as well as on sleep-related episodes from mythology and The Bible. Sometimes it was to make of them a primary subject, and at other times to treat them merely as a pretext for something else. Almost always, the aim was to signify, via the mediating force of allegory, spiritual enlightenment, a premonition in dreams, or simply a salutary and indispensable pause for rest.

The most valued sleep is redemptive, the most magical is filled with wonders, and the most feared is that visited by nightmares. Like certain skies that can convey the four seasons in a single day, sleep can blend rosy hues with blackness. It is of no abode, it is approbation; it is the reward of wakefulness. And in art, which it nourishes, it is an additional stillness layered onto that privilege of sleep that is silence.

The world of sleep is more complex than is generally thought. Ever since the existence of an arsenal of machines capable of recording and analyzing its phases, the brain's neuronal connections have been the object of countless studies, especially since the 1960s. "Get some exercise and you'll get a good night's sleep" is a commonly-heard refrain in childhood. What does this suggestion signify? Above all, it implies the restorative function of sleep that action—the spending of muscular and cerebral energy—promotes.

Indeed, the daily cycle of wakefulness and sleep is the very rhythm of our life: It is described as 'circadian' (a cycle of about twenty-four hours). More precisely, adult existence is divided into three successive states: wakefulness, quiet Slow Wave Sleep (SWS, itself divided into stages according to electroencephalographic profile), and paradoxical (REM, with Rapid Eye Movements) sleep. This cycle should be kept in mind, as it is the basis for a number of explanations to come.

Willingly, for the most part, and to a greater or lesser degree, we submit to this cycle throughout our lives. We need to renew our energy, because our muscles and the neurons of our brain undergo a certain "wear and tear" during the day; sleep, directed by an internal biological clock, fulfills this function. In effect, we move from a more or less acute state of wakefulness to a different state, one in which neurochemical activity modifies the circuits of our cerebral neurons, expressing stages of SWS ("recharging our batteries") and REM sleep, called paradoxical or dream sleep because characterized by dreams, hallucinations, etc. At least one third of our lives is spent sleeping. This shows the extent to which fatigue, resulting from an expenditure of energy, induces recovery and rest.

Sleep has never left anyone indifferent. It has occupied, and still occupies to some degree, the imagination of artists, often resulting in the most singular of artistic creations. Out of a natural need and reflex, the wakefulness of each day leads invariably to sleep, with billions of people lying down every night to sleep in a bed, on a mat, in a hammock or directly on the ground. In a ritual that has been repeating itself for millions of years, people submit to

an unchanging biological cycle where sleep has its own life: the triumphant sleep of youth, the intermittent sleep of adulthood and the brief, elusive sleep of old age.

Everywhere the ritual of sleep is the same. Nevertheless, far from being unvarying, sleep occurs in many forms. If we think of sleep as a landscape, art expresses that landscape's enigmatic intelligibility, unfolding its steep, flat or rolling terrain.

Art outlives scornful gazes, appraising looks, and joyful scrutiny, as well as eyes that feel its ideality and dangers, its disappointments and consolations. Paradoxically, sleep-related themes make one lucid: "Let there be light!" is a call to lucidity on the intricate paths sleep takes, paths we will follow as this work unfolds.

## 2. In the Beginning

Since when has sleep inspired creation and given rise—in painting but also in sculpture, drawing, stained-glass window making, printmaking and photography—to haunting images or volumes, phantasmal, often dramatized, of the human body? To images or volumes which highlight sleep’s ambiguous aspects, showing it, if not as a death that has taken on the deceptive traits of everlasting repose, as a supernatural or lethargic state?

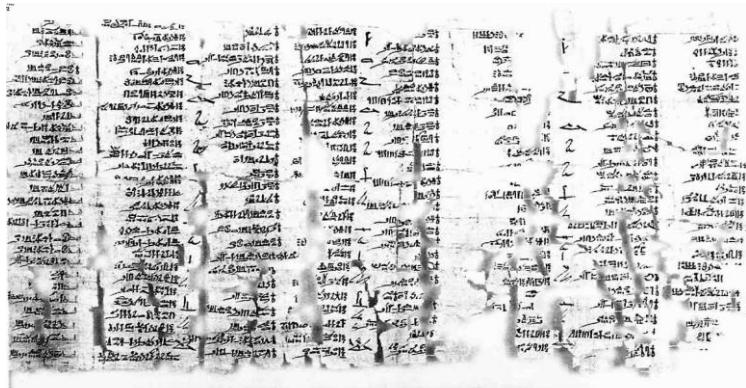
In Archaic cultural expressions sleep, it would seem, is rarely represented, if it is represented at all. Neither Sumerian sculptures (2700-2500 BCE) nor the art of the Cyclades, Babylon or Assyria seem to have included sleep as an idealized object in the arts, whether as a pause in the daily rhythm or an obligatory intercessor between humans and gods.

*Egypt*, in contrast, was greatly interested in sleep, in dreamers (with their protective deity, Bes) and in the content of dreams. Egyptian priests, scribes and nobility believed that sleep exposed one to the machinations of invisible, nefarious agents that could surreptitiously enter one’s body through its natural openings and cause sickness and disease.



*Figure 1.*  
Limestone headrest  
of Qeniherkhepeshef,  
carved with  
protective figures of  
Bes (Egypt, Dynasty  
XIX, 1245-1190  
BCE). Traces of  
polychrome,  
18.8 x 23 x 9.7 cm.  
British Museum,  
London - G.B.

To thwart this danger, headrests used as pillows at night bore protective images, painted or etched, of fabulous deities. The limestone headrest (fig. 1), originally in polychrome, from Qeniherkhepeshef (XIX dynasty, 1245-1190 BCE), represents, on one side, the deity Bes, depicted as a grimacing dwarf wearing a lionskin garment, holding a spear and shaking a snake above his head; on the other side, it shows a griffin and a lioness bearing knives in her paws. A central inscription explicitly mentions, besides the name of the fetishist owner, the purpose of the headrest: “To enjoy a night of restful sleep”.



*Figure 2.*  
Papyrus: "The key to dreams",  
Dynasty XIX, 1245-1190 BCE.  
Papyrus, ink black and red cursive  
hieratic. British Museum,  
London - G.B.

Incidentally, this headrest was paired with a papyrus tract (fig. 2), a kind of handbook on good and bad dreams. This guide, *The Key to Dreams*, is written in cursive hieratic and arranged in columns. It plays on the inversion of meaning: If the dreamer, while sleeping, sees a thing, an object, an unusual or unpleasant phenomenon (excrement, urine, menstrual blood, incest), he links that up with an everyday word or a situation, which gives rise to a positive or negative interpretation of the dream. To dream of white bread, for example, will make bright, joyful faces appear. The ancient Egyptians were thus given to making deductions of a mythological nature, which probably served to maintain their psychic equilibrium. In their art, however, no naturally sleeping subject is represented.



A remarkable idol from Cyprus (fig. 3), dating from the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1600 BCE), is—at least as far as the current state of knowledge can establish—one of the first instances of wakefulness and sleep represented together. Small in size, it consists in a figure representing a mother holding a baby asleep in its cradle. The mother is not looking at the baby. Modelled in terracotta with red slip, the figure is pierced with orifices; a high, rigid collar is engraved around the neck. More than a mere representation, this sculpture attests to the protective role of the idol, endowed, it was believed, with the power to stop death from striking. Indeed, the infant mortality rate, in these ancient times, must have been very high; there can be no doubt, therefore, that the infant's sleep was a constant cause for concern. Sleep, considered salutary, necessary and favorable to the wandering soul, nevertheless harboured dangers that primitive societies strove to mitigate through a variety of observances.

*Figure 3.* -Anonymous (Cyprus, 2000-1600 BCE). Woman holding a child in the cradle.  
Terracotta, 15.5 cm. The Louvre, Paris – France

At the time of the foundries of Lorestan (Iran, 4th-3rd century BCE), the Scythian horsemen of what is now the southern Russian steppes had mastered the techniques of metalworking. A gold brooch (fig. 4) that probably belonged to a nomadic prince shows the goldsmiths' decorative virtuosity; the Scythian craftsmen were influenced, perhaps, by Persian metalworkers. It depicts three horsemen of the steppes, one of them asleep (Is he dreaming of wild rides and the spoils of war?) at the feet of the other two, one of whom is holding the reins of a horse. A quiver is hanging in a stylized tree in which the branches extend into leaves. Concretely observed, this remarkable royal ornament of openwork design shows a considerable degree of abstraction.



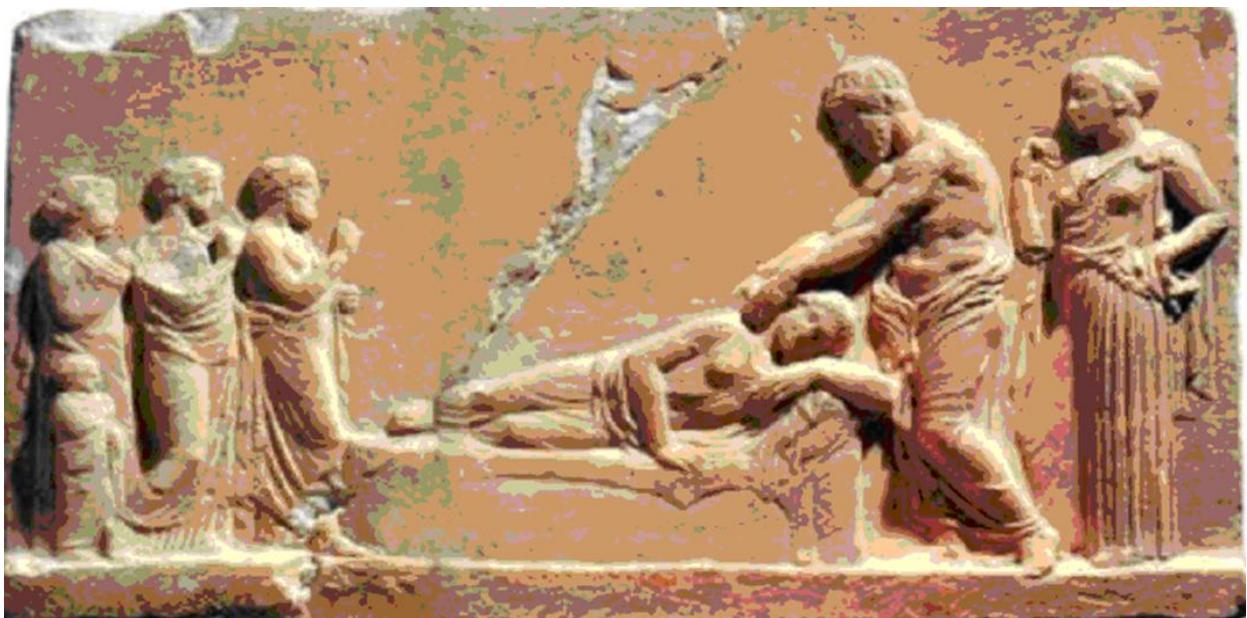
*Figure 4. - Scythe. The rest of the warrior, 4-3th c. BCE. Plate-staple garment. Gold. State Hermitage Museum, Siberian collection, Saint Petersburg – Russia*

Ancient Greece, via Artemidorus of Ephesus (2nd century CE), whose five-volume work, the Oneirocritica, is considered to be the first book on dream interpretation, was familiar with the virtues of sleep. Not that the number of works devoted to it was great, but certain well-known pieces are worthy of the highest interest. In the decoration of an Attic bell-krater (fig. 5; 5th century BCE), the work of the celebrated Athenian potter Euphronios, we recognize the bearded twins Hypnos and Thanatos (Sleep and Death), sons of Nyx (Night), their masks raised, carrying away to his native land of Lycia the body of Zeus' son, Sarpedon.

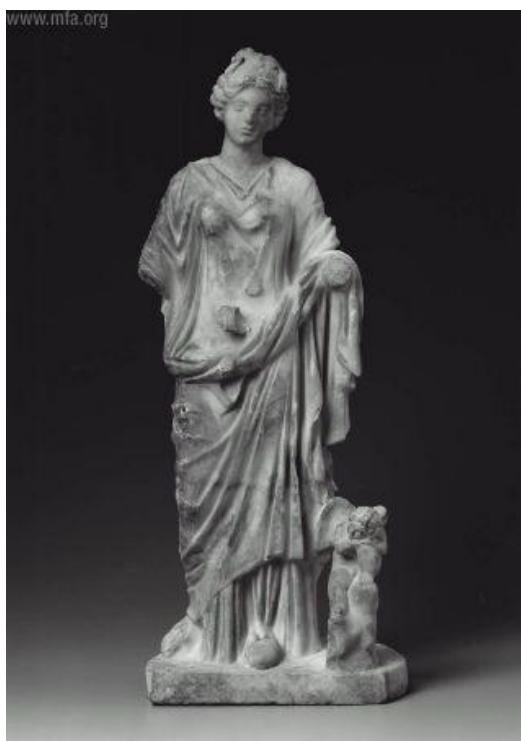


*Figure 5.*  
Euphronios  
(Greece, circa 515 BCE).  
*Tanathos and Hypnos*  
(Sleep and Death, twin  
brothers), carrying away to  
his native land of Lycia the  
body of Zeus' son,  
Sarpedon.  
Calyx krater, terracotta  
45 x 69 cm.  
Metropolitan Museum  
of Art,  
New York - USA

On a captivating bas relief from the archeological museum of Piraeus (fig. 6), Aesculapius (from the Greek god of medicine and healing, Asclepius), a stocky, muscular physician, endeavours to heal, by the laying on of hands, a sleeping patient. (We note, in passing, that the practice has continued into modern times.)



*Figure 6.* - Greece, 5th century BCE. Asclepius heals sleeping patients. Bas-relief.  
Archaeological Museum of Piraeus, Athens - Greece



Another cult in Ancient Greece was that of the goddess of health, Hygieia. A marble statuette (fig. 7) from Roman provincial art (which originated in Docimium, present-day Afyon, in Asia Minor) shows her watching over Hypnos, depicted as a child-god. The slender goddess is dressed in a silk tunic and, draped over it, a pleated cloak which is gathered in a fold over her left hand. She is looking at the little god dozing at her feet, whence the implied maxim: “Peaceful sleep is yours to enjoy, provided you lead a healthy life”.

*Figure 7- Roman Provincial Art  
(circa 140-190).  
Hygieia, goddess of Health and Hypnos, god of  
sleep. Statuette, 64.5 cm.  
Marble from Dokimeion (modern Afyon) in west-  
central Asia Minor.  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA*

Similarly, in its cultural expression Cambodia, fertile womb of the Indochinese peninsula, quite early drew on its extraordinary poetic vein. Part of the sanctuary of Preah Pithu, the Khmer stoneware lintel from the late 12th century (fig. 8), teeming with gods, evokes the advent of the primordial cosmic day. From the navel of Vishnu, sleeping on the primordial Ocean, a lotus grew, and from this lotus Brahma was born. The lotus stalk arising from Vishnu’s navel represents the pillar holding up the sky; from the flower, Brahma, creator of the world, was born.



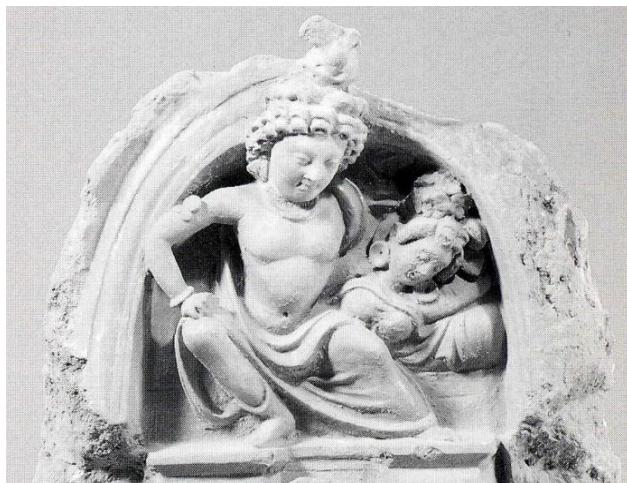
*Figure 8. - Khmer art, Cambodia,  
late 12th century.  
From the navel of Vishnu, sleeping  
on the primordial Ocean, a lotus  
grew, and from this lotus Brahma  
was born.  
Lintel of a sanctuary of Preah  
Pithu, stoneware, 68x215 cm.  
Guimet Museum, Paris - France*

Sleep is a force to which Gautama Buddha (the awakened one) is not subject. Indeed, he is never represented as a real sleeper, but is always shown in his state of perpetual wakefulness. He is even free from any desire for sleep, as can be seen in a schist relief (fig. 9), a version which shows Siddhartha, soon to be metamorphosed into Buddha, in the midst of sleeping

women who are lost in dreams. Tired of their insatiable lust, he resolves to devote his existence to religious life. “Like when someone, who has eaten and drunk far too much”, writes Hermann Hesse in his novel of initiation, *Siddhartha* (Project Gutenberg eBook; translated by Olesch G. et al.) “vomits it back up again with agonizing pain and is nevertheless glad about the relief, thus this sleepless man wished to free himself of these pleasures, these habits and all of this pointless life and himself, in an immense burst of disgust.”



*Figure 9.* - Art of Gandhara, 2nd-3rd century. The sleep of women (and the decision of Siddhartha devote himself to religious life). Schist. Provenance Takht-i Bahi, Pakistan. British Museum, London - G.B.



Eight centuries before the Khmers, a hybrid art appeared from India and Greece: that of Gandhara, the pinnacle of Greco-Buddhist art. Gandhara art glorified, in stucco-and-mud reliefs, an episode in the life of Buddha: Siddhartha's stoical and redemptive act (mentioned earlier) in which, in this version (fig. 10), the Prince gives up the beautiful Yasodhara—asleep in a den, her breasts as firm as bowls—and serenely abandons worldly life. Thus sleeps protects the beloved from the wrenching separation from the divine.

*Figure 10* - Gandhara, 3th-4th c. Renunciation of the world. Part of a relief. Stucco and mud. Collection Hirayama, Kamakura - Japan

In Buddhism, Nirvana, the extinguishment of karma (the totality of an individual's actions), is the profound peace of mind attained after liberation from the cycle of birth and death; it is the state Buddha, a hero still considered exemplary all over India today, finally achieved. This ancient, luxuriant India, then, which has never stopped building temples to its gods, had its origins in the sleep in which, at the dawn of human consciousness, Vishnu the Supreme prospered. His religion spread throughout Asia.



In China and Japan (Heian period, 12<sup>th</sup> century), Nirvana (sleep, the flowers and perfumes of the garden of earthly delights) is a panacea that only an eccentric mind could put forward (fig. 11).

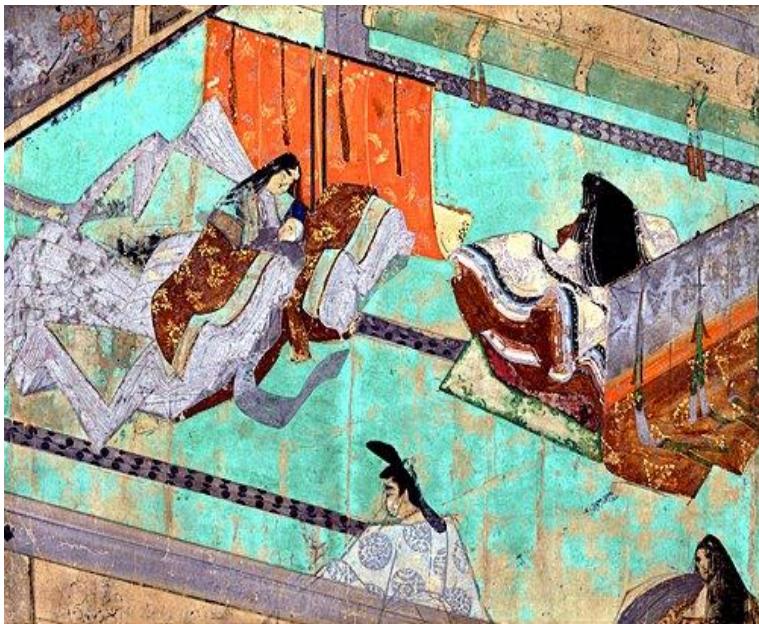
*Figure 11.*  
Japan, Heian Period, 12th c.  
*Nirvana*, 155.1 x 202.8cm..  
National Museum,  
Tokyo - Japan.

There was nothing realistic about it when it appeared in the Middle Kingdom; rather, it was a metaphor, as in this white incised porcelain headrest (fig. 12) from the vibrant Song dynasty (960-1126). A headrest, for women, in the shape of a little boy sleeping under a curved lotus leaf, it is a sculptural theme that was extremely popular in China in the 10th-12th centuries. Why this vogue? This type of “luxury” pillow, the zenith of ceramic art, maintained women’s fashionable hairstyles and was probably considered comfortable. Moreover, it was said to promote the impregnation of women.



*Figure 12.*  
China, Northern Song  
Dynasty, 960 -1126.  
Headrest shaped sleeping boy  
and lotus leaf.  
Porcelain with incisions.  
Asian Art Museum,  
San Francisco - USA

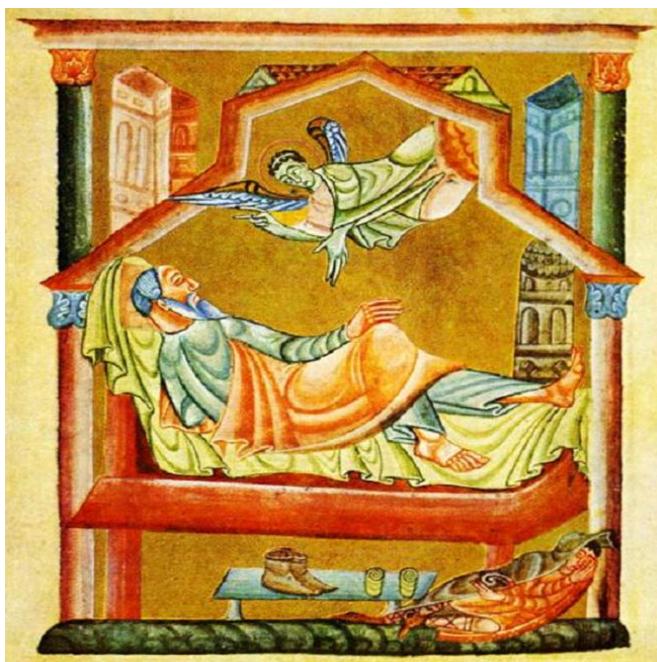
In Japan, the Land of the Rising Sun, the child was more likely to represent sleep when the character derived from classical literature. We see such a case in the extremely rare illumination (fig. 13, Kamakura period, 13<sup>th</sup> century) from the diary of Lady Murasaki Shikibu, author of the classic *Tales of Genji*: A high-angle view of a baby of noble lineage wrapped in silk swaddling clothes; the baby is watched over by its aristocratic mother, dressed in a brocade kimono, in her apartments at the Imperial court.



*Figure 13.*  
Japan, Kamakura period,  
13th century.

Views down with sleeping child.  
Illumination. Segment detached  
from *Murasaki Shikibu Nikki*  
*Emaki* (illustrated diary of Lady  
*Murasaki*),  
20.9 x 79.2cm.  
National Museum,  
Tokyo – Japan

In Europe one must wait, it seems, for the rise of a monotheistic religion, Christianity, to witness the growth and spread in Western culture of the representation of figures associated with sleep. Indeed, little by little, this trend gained ground in Carolingian France, which slowly opened itself to the inspirations of the ineffable.



*Figure 14.*  
Anonymous (Germany, before 1014).  
*The Dream of Joseph.*  
Illumination of *Pericopes of Henry II.*  
Staatliche Bibliothek, Bamberg – Germany

Sleep, however, is as feared as it is beneficial; it belongs to the mysteries of the night, peopled with dream-figures. Life, in sleep so precarious and dispossessed of its natural defences, can be annihilated without our knowing why, and so we invoke divine will to explain it. During the endless and uncertain Middle Ages, which nevertheless favored an extraordinary flowering of the arts, people tended to sleep in a semi-seated position, supported by the cushions in their truncated bed (fig. 14). Why? Because they were wary of falling victim to sickness, or even death. Indeed, it was believed that death could act more effectively on a creature when that creature is in the “lethal”, recumbent position. Asleep, a person’s defences are neutralized, and his breathing is more difficult when lying in the position in which corpses lie, parallel to the ground.

Some time later, Michelangelo (1475-1564)—who, like most of his peers, mainly worked on commission—extracted Night (Tomb of Giuliano de Medici) from a block of marble (fig. 15). It is a Pallas-figure, sculpted in the round, in idealized contours. The proportions are magnificent, leading one to believe that the sculptor, when working on it, felt not impatience or discouragement as Eugène Delacroix implied in his diary entry of 9 May 1853 (The Journal of Eugène Delacroix, Phaidon 1999), but rather joyfulness. Relief and contours are supreme; the smooth finito is brilliant. The humanism of a man enamoured of neo-Platonic ideas is palpable. In the pursuit of shadows, light comes into being. Night, the counterpart of Day, from the same tomb, marks Michelangelo's fiftieth year. It departs from the cliché of blindfolded Night that the Creation cycles found in cathedrals had hitherto depicted. His Night has an incomparable stature of arrested movement. It grounds sleep in a majestic allegory, sculpted as it is in a pose presented as natural. Moreover, it is at once singularly supple and tense. One feels or sees subdued internal forces throbbing beneath the surface and rolling over it; indeed, the figure of the woman, built like an Olympic Venus, is gracefully curled up in the truth of some mechanism where hollow and solid trapezoids and triangles control a formidable *perpetuum mobile*. One finds oneself speaking softly before such a powerful presence, as if disturbing the quiet would dispel the magic.

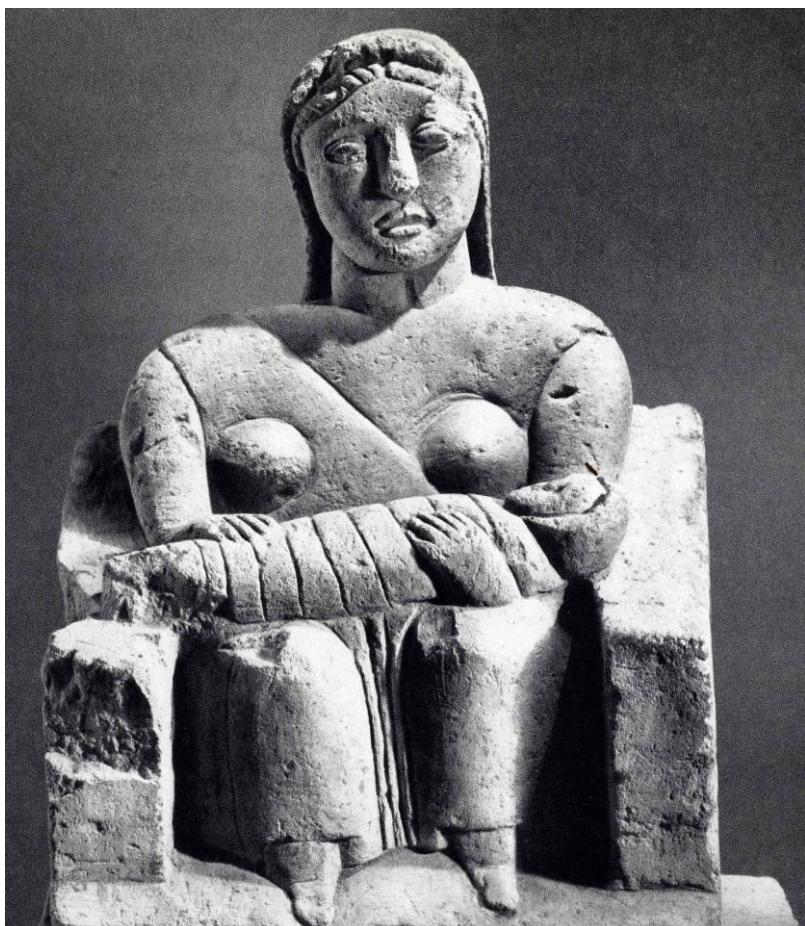


Figure 15 .- Michelangelo (Italian, 1475-1564). *Night*, 1526-1533.  
Detail of the tomb of Giuliano de Medici. Marble.  
Church of San Lorenzo, New Sacristy, Florence - Italy

In the arts which serve as reservoirs of emotion and in which stories, news media and knowledge are closely linked, there are always days lived and hours imagined to be read, interpreted and remembered. The illustration of sleep, for its part, is polymorphous, like a shadow cast by the past. To the active being's polygon of forces, it is a foil. Indeed, it is like a pier where, every night, all of us dock for several hours. It is enough to draw the curtains for scenes to appear which suggest that sleep is a lapse of time where variety is woven.

### 3. Watchful mother and sleeping child

The image of a mother leaning over her sleeping child goes back to well before the advent of Christianity. A votive statue (fig. 16) from the town of Santa Maria Capua Vetere in Italy, for example, is a remarkable sculpture of Etruscan origin (5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE). Showing, already, judicious and virtuostic foreshortening, it is a statue in tuff of a woman seated in an armchair, holding in her arms a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes.



*Figure 16.  
Santa Maria Capua  
Vetere. Votive statue of a  
woman with a child,  
5th-4th c. BCE.  
Tuff, 60 cm.  
Museo Campano,  
Capua - Italy*

If it were not for the expressive treatment of the relief elements, the displacement of the shoulders, and the arbitrary foreshortening of the folded legs that allow us to date the work, everything could lead one to see in it the simplified figure of a Fernand Léger sculpture.

The massive face stares impassively into space; the child does not seem to require the mother's attention. It is there, trussed up in its swaddling clothes, asleep. But, despite the supple hands around the child's body, the gaze of this mother expresses no emotion. All signs thus point to the conclusion that this is a symbol or the votive stele of ancient Capua rather than a portrait in stone. It can be seen as a pagan allegory, as rudimentary as it is magnificent, and a symbol of fecundity. The anonymous artist, showing great complicity with the matter he is working with, delights in creating an idol without any apparent model. The role of the Capua Vetere statue is thus to care for the local children, to nourish them and protect them from evil spells.

A little girl asleep with a crown still in her hands, a figure sculpted from a block of porphyry (fig. 17), is a manifestation of Hellenistic Alexandria (3rd century BCE). She is seated, cuddled up into herself, her head resting on her hands, her hands on her knees. From the in-the-round volume, extracted from gross-grained stone, radiates a gentleness that an abrupt chisel, quick and well-judged, has made familiar. The existence of the work, so realistic and intimate, could be due to a patrician who, wishing to capture one of his children in such a natural position, commissioned a sculptor to fix this evanescent instant in eternity. The sculpture is free from sentimentality; it radiates, in all simplicity, what the gaze it captures grants it.



*Figure 17. Alexandria, third century BCE. Little girl asleep with a crown.  
The Louvre, Paris - France*

Another example of the sleeping child in Attic art is the stele of Ilissos, where the little child is shown sitting at the feet of a nude hunter-athlete who is being examined, not without a certain perplexity, by a bearded old man in a loose-fitting great coat (fig. 18; 4th century BCE).

*Figure 18.*  
*Greece, Attic art, 330-320 BCE.*  
*Stele of Ilissos.*  
*Marble, 168 x 80 cm.*  
*National Museum,*  
*Athens - Greece*



A bronze from second-century Rhodes, *Eros Asleep*, his arm hanging over his makeshift bed, is a further example (fig. 19).



*Figure 19.- Greece, Rhodes (?), second half of the 2nd century.*  
*Eros sleeping. Bronze, 43.4 x 78.2 cm.*  
*The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York - USA*

From a much later period, Caravaggio (1573-1610) gives his version of Cupid Asleep (fig. 20), a chubby little boy, his naked body stretched out, drawn out from nocturnal blackness by a glowing light. Lying laterally at the base of the painting, the figure is strangely contorted: The legs turn towards the spectator, one edging out over the other, while head and shoulders are turned in the opposite direction, towards the interior of the painting. This twisted, helical movement is staged with a somewhat brutal realism. It shows the “paradoxical” state of a sleep in which a dreamy restlessness takes hold of the child. The violent, almost caricatural lighting of the subject creates a dramatic chiaroscuro atmosphere. We have here a fine example of the style, so disparaged in its time, of the “Prince of Darkness”, who greatly influenced not only the Neapolitan School, but all Italian painting and beyond. The style, known as tenebrism, was a means for the painter to free himself from convention by deliberately violating the slick devices then fashionable—however worthy and ravishing one may find them—of official painting.



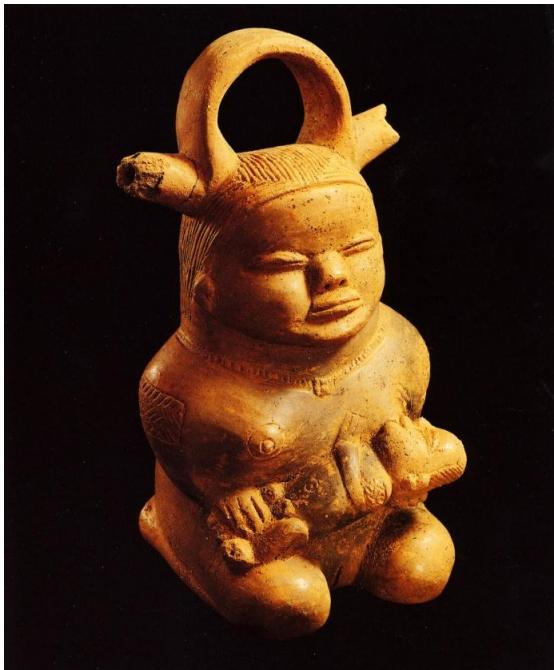
*Figure 20. - Caravaggio (Italy, 1573-1610). The Sleeping Cupid, 1608.  
Oil on canvas. Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina, Florence - Italy*

Caravaggio, perhaps, was familiar with the sumptuous black marble Cupid Asleep (fig. 21) in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. It depicts an angel lying on its wings, one arm resting charmingly behind its head, the other stretched out along the length of his trumpet, its bell visible beyond the fingers.



*Figure 21. - Roman Art, copy of a Hellenistic original. Cupid asleep.  
Black marble. Uffizi Gallery, Florence - Italy*

In pre-Columbian art, sleep is rarely represented. A double-neck, earthenware llama jar (fig. 22) offers one such instance. The mother—seated, her legs folded under her—has a wide, expressive face; her shoulders are inscribed with graphic elements.

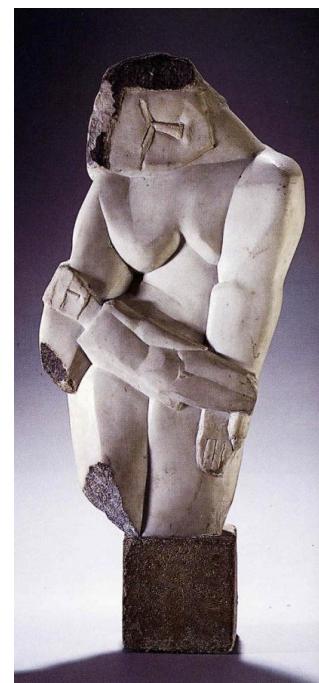


The suckling baby is held snug against her body, suggesting an organic union.

*Figure 22. - Pre-Columbian art.  
Jar Llama double neck.  
Provenance: Tomb Santa Rosa  
Restrepo - Colombia. Private  
Collection*

We can jump ahead to the twentieth century and find, in Ossip Zadkin's Motherhood (fig. 23), sculpted from a slab of marble and partially painted, a piece that shares something of the tenderness one derives from this pre-Columbian work. If these works do not give rise to an identification with the mother, they nevertheless express feeling of love secure in sleep.

*Figure 23.  
Ossip Zadkine (Russia, 1890 - France 1967).  
Motherhood, 1919.  
Marble partially painted, 48.7 x 26 x 20 cm.  
Zadkine Museum of the City of Paris,  
Paris – France  
©ADAGP, Paris, 2012*



The same can be said for a Mintade figure from the Congo, a statuette in steatite from the 19th century (fig. 24). The mother, a headdress crowning her head, sits cross-legged. Her square shoulders slightly rounded, her neck thick, she gazes blankly out of deep-set eyes while the child, its eyes closed, suckles at her breast. The arms and legs of mother and child form a harmonious complex of parallel and diagonal lines. While the child feeds, its hand on the breast, the nipple in its mouth, the mother is all patience.



*Figure 24.*  
Kongo (Zaire), 19th century or earlier.  
Mother and child. Mintadi statuette.  
Steatite, 35.56 cm.  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston – USA

India offers another such example, a bas-relief in red sandstone from the 3rd century, showing a mother wearing an embroidered headdress, her hair falling in plaits on either side of her head (fig. 25). She is squeezing her milk-laden breast while a baby sleeps in the hollow of her bangled arm. This mother, or mother-goddess, is smiling; she holds her head slightly tilted, and bears a gentle, understanding expression. She seems to be more of an earthly being than divinity revealed.



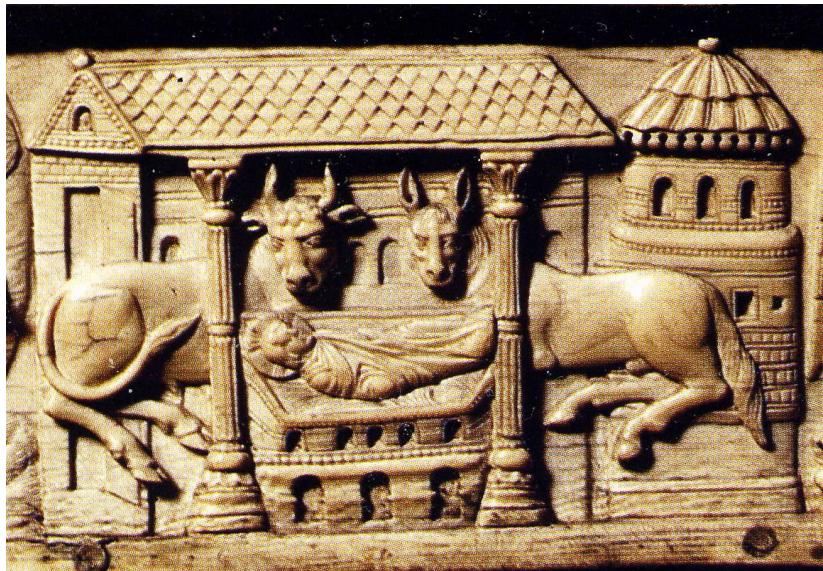
*Figure 25.*  
India, Mathura,  
Woman and Child 2nd-3rd c.  
Mottled red sandstone.  
27.5 x 22.3 cm.  
Museum für Indische Kunst,  
Berlin - Germany

These mother-and-child works induce reverie. They remind us of Saint Augustine's maxim, "The measure of love is to love without measure".

A set of themes celebrating the Christian Nativity occupies a central place when it comes to mother-and-child works: The Virgin with Sleeping Child, the Adoration of the Shepherds, the Flight into Egypt, and the Virgin Adoring the Child. These sacred themes expressed, and no doubt continue to express, in Europe and everywhere else where Christian values hold sway, the inexhaustible theme of the gift. Adopting singularly diverse approaches to the celebration of maternal love, they can be read as codified preludes to the Passion.

Since the High Middle Ages, the Nativity has been the theme of countless works of art. A Nativity scene (fig. 26) decorates the binding of the Lorsch Gospels, realized around 810 by the great craftsmen at the celebrated Aix-la-Chapelle court. Perfect in its form, the work, which Charlemagne himself must have held in his hands, binds together the four Gospels of the New Testament.

*Figure 26.*  
Anonymous  
(France, 9th century).  
*Binding of the Lorsch Gospels (detail).*  
*The Nativity, c. 810.*  
Ivory.  
Victoria and Albert Museum,  
London - G.B.



In his Adoration of the Shepherds (fig. 27), Georges de la Tour (1593-1652) composes an exquisite devotional scene.



*Figure 27.*  
Georges de La Tour  
(France, 1593-1652).  
*Adoration of the Shepherds,*  
1644.  
Oil on canvas, 107 x 137 cm.  
The Louvre, Paris - France

The new-born child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, is the luminous focus of the painting; the other characters, enraptured, keep watch over him as he lies sleeping in his humble wicker crib. They are very gently lit, as much, it would seem, by the glowing infant they are worshipping as from the candle flame one of them cups in his hand. A lamb advances its snout to smell Jesus and, as it were, breathe in his aura. The scene is depicted up close, so much so that, for the believer, a feeling of participating in a mystical event is provoked. The infant, his arms and legs imprisoned in strips of fine cloth, is lying on his back (as he invariably is in such scenes). This convention has been codified since Antiquity: On his back, the baby can breathe freely. Indeed, sudden infant death syndrome was not a concern prior to the latter part of the 20th century when, in the West, against reason and tradition, the practice of having babies sleep on their abdomen was introduced. The technique of wrapping the whole body in a flannel blanket tied with strips of cloth is a classic one; it prevents the baby from moving about restlessly and makes for a more tranquil sleep. This practice goes back as far as, for example, the Cypriot statuette from 2000-1600 BCE (chapter 2, fig. 3), the Etruscan Santa Maria Capua Vetere statue from the 5th-4th century BCE (fig. 16), the Lorsch Gospels of 810 (fig. 26) and, finally, the fresco by Giotto in the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi (fig. 28). The body-wrapping technique remained common in Europe until the 1960s.



*Figure 28.*  
*Giotto di Bondone*  
*(Italian, 1266/67-1337).*  
*The Nativity (detail),*  
*1315. Fresco.*  
*Basilica of San*  
*Francesco,*  
*Assisi - Italy*

Nicolas Poussin's (1594-1665) Adoration contrasts with the ones just examined in that it displays an atmosphere of greater confidence. Inserted in a strict architectural framework of verticals, horizontals and curves, the subject—a rather hackneyed one when all is said and done—here takes on an air of surprise and wonder, thanks largely to the gesture of the smiling Virgin presenting the baby, lying on a corporale (a white linen cloth that echoes the winding sheet the crucified Christ will later wear), to the tender regard of the shepherds (fig. 29).



*Figure 29.*  
*Nicolas Poussin*  
*(France, 1594-1665).*  
*Adoration of the Shepherds, 1633?*  
*Canvas, 96.5 x 73.7 cm.*  
*The Trustees of the National Gallery,*  
*London – G.B.*

For Correggio (1489 -1534), before Poussin, the Adoration is above all a scene wherein an intimate nocturnal atmosphere prevails. Here the Virgin, her face radiating happiness, holds the divine infant in her arms (fig. 30). She is depicted as a mother like any other mother.



*Figure 30.*  
*Correggio (Italian, 1498-1534).*  
*The Night (The Adoration of the*  
*Shepherds), detail, ca 1530.*  
*Oil on canvas.*  
*Gemäldegalerie,*  
*Dresden - Germany*

The same applies to Rembrandt's (1606-1669) *Virgin Rocking the Infant Jesus* (fig. 31). Like any other watchful mother, Mary leans over the rustic cradle, lit by the flames from an invisible hearth. The fireplace, casting its glow from outside the picture frame, creates a spiralling spatial depth. Lifting the blanket that screens the sleeper from the light, the protective Virgin tenderly checks on the child, snug under its bedding.



*Figure 31.*  
Rembrandt (Dutch, 1606-1669).  
*Virgin Rocking the Infant Jesus*  
(detail of the *Holy Family*).  
Hermitage Museum,  
Saint Petersburg – Russia

An eternal theme, mother-watching-over-child is interpreted in a “primitive” fashion by contemporary painter Georg Baselitz (b. 1938), whose saturated brush strokes of strident colors roughly depict a child in restorative sleep (fig. 32).

*Figure 32.*  
Georg Baselitz (German, 1938).  
1897 Eighteenhundredninetyseven,  
1987.  
Oil on canvas, 290 x 290 cm.  
Boymans-van Beuningen,  
Rotterdam – Holland  
©Georg Baselitz.



Four centuries before scientists described the infant's phases of sleep, they were already observed by the alert eyes of the painters of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The baby, as we have seen in the various Nativity scenes and will see again in the profane works which

follow, was usually depicted at rest, passive, either naked or wrapped in swaddling clothes. In such cases, the spirit of the painting is absorbed in a circle of silence; it becomes concentrated and condenses into something durable. The child is represented in quiet, restorative sleep: It hardly moves, it is sleeping soundly.

In contrast, the child is sometimes captured in painting while it is caught in the snare of active sleep. Antoon van Dyck's (1599-1641) Rest on the Flight into Egypt (fig. 33) offers an example of the restlessness typical of this stage of sleep.



Figure 33.  
Anthony van Dyck (Flemish, 1599-1641).  
*Rest on the Flight into Egypt, circa 1630.*  
Oil on canvas, 134.7 x 114.8 cm.  
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen,  
Alte Pinakothek, Munich - Germany

It is drawn from a scene in the apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew. The text evokes the Holy Family's miraculous rest on their journey. This was a very popular theme, supported by the theologians of the Counter-Reformation; indeed, they saw in it a model of the family they could offer for imitation. It is a devotional work in which van Dyck weaves a harmony of infinitely delicate colors within a perfectly balanced scenography. A finely nuanced relationship between the characters and the landscape comes into being. Everything, in this rest on the journey, is worthy of comment: the loveliness of the Virgin's oval face, upon which one can read both gentleness and a certain anxiety; the clinging of the child to the mother; Joseph's severe expression as his hand opens in a tentative gesture.

Figure 34.  
Paolo Veronese (Italian, 1528-1588).  
*Holy Family with St. Barbara and the Little St. John.*  
Oil on wood, 86 x 122 cm.  
Uffizi Gallery, Florence - Italy



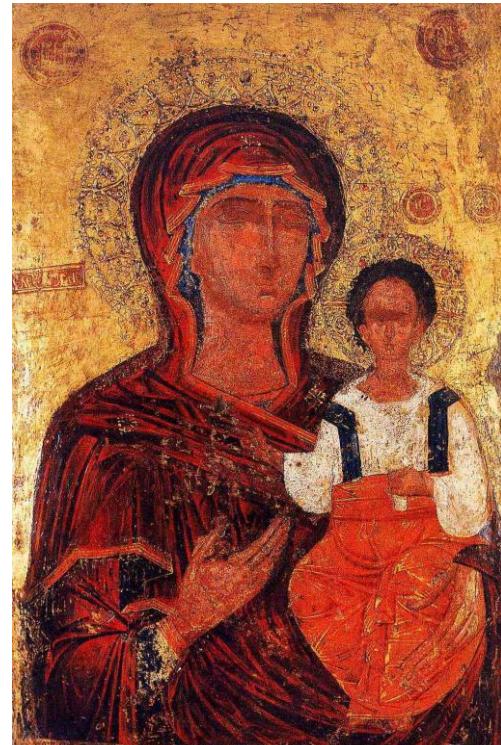
One of the most amazing representations of active sleep is Veronese's (1528-1588) Holy Family with St. Barbara and the Little St. John (fig. 34). In his disturbed naked-baby sleep, Jesus, his eyes half-closed (probably undergoing rapid eye movements), with his left hand fondles what lies between his legs while his right hand and leg seem to be moving simultaneously. All the symptomatology of active sleep is depicted here (detail, fig. 35). This stage will evolve into the paradoxical sleep of the adult, the stage where dreams occur.



Figure 35.  
Paolo Veronese (Italian, 1528-1588).  
*Holy Family with St. Barbara and the Little St. John (detail).*  
Oil on wood, 86 x 122 cm.  
Uffizi Gallery, Florence - Italy

It is not everywhere in the Christian world, however, that the Infant Jesus is represented sleeping. In Greece and Russia, Bulgaria and Serbia, and other countries where the Eastern Orthodox Church is dominant and the heritage of the Byzantine Empire remains present, the Infant is always depicted in a state of wakefulness (fig. 36).

Figure 36.  
Anonymous.  
*The Virgin Hodigitria, 1518.*  
Wood, tempera, 113.5 x 70 cm.  
National Gallery –  
Old Bulgarian Art Section,  
Sofia - Bulgaria



Icons constitute the vast repertory of this tradition; Eusebius of Caesarea, in the 4th century, traced their origin to the Fayum portraits. Here, it is customary for the Infant to never be caught unawares. As in this example, he is an active being who is occasionally depicted as an older child, usually face forward in the arms of his mother who, for her part, is represented as a solemn empress. In this Madonna painting, Jesus, half-gesturing the sacramental sign of benediction, acquires the stature of a supernatural being, one placed above the human condition.



**Figure 37.**  
Anonymous  
(France, 12th-13th century).  
*Virgin and Child (detail).*  
*Stone.*  
*Cathedral of Rouen - France*

This elevated portrayal contrasts with the profane image offered by the baby, naked as the day he was born, found in Rouen Cathedral, France, and dating from the 13th century (fig. 37). Here the little boy, chubby-cheeked and plump, the very picture of health, sleeps in the arms of comfort, sucking his finger.

The same contrast is seen in the podgy, golden putto with the wide forehead crowned in curls, complete unto himself, that Guido Reni (1575-1642) portrayed in fresco against an azure ground (fig. 38). This time the child is seen at an angle, half-sitting, half-lying-down, as if supported by the skillfully draped sheets, similar in structure to a rock that might have been moulded around the body of the baby, a semi-circle under the arc of his out-stretched arms.



**Figure 38.- Guido Reni (Italy, 1575-1642). Putto asleep, 1627. Fresco, 57 x 56 cm.**  
*Museo Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Barberini, Rome – Italy*

Art is unalloyed joy when it delights in the dreams of innocence. Claude Monet (1840-1926), in his bold portrait of his sleeping son (fig. 39), offers us a vibrant illustration of this.

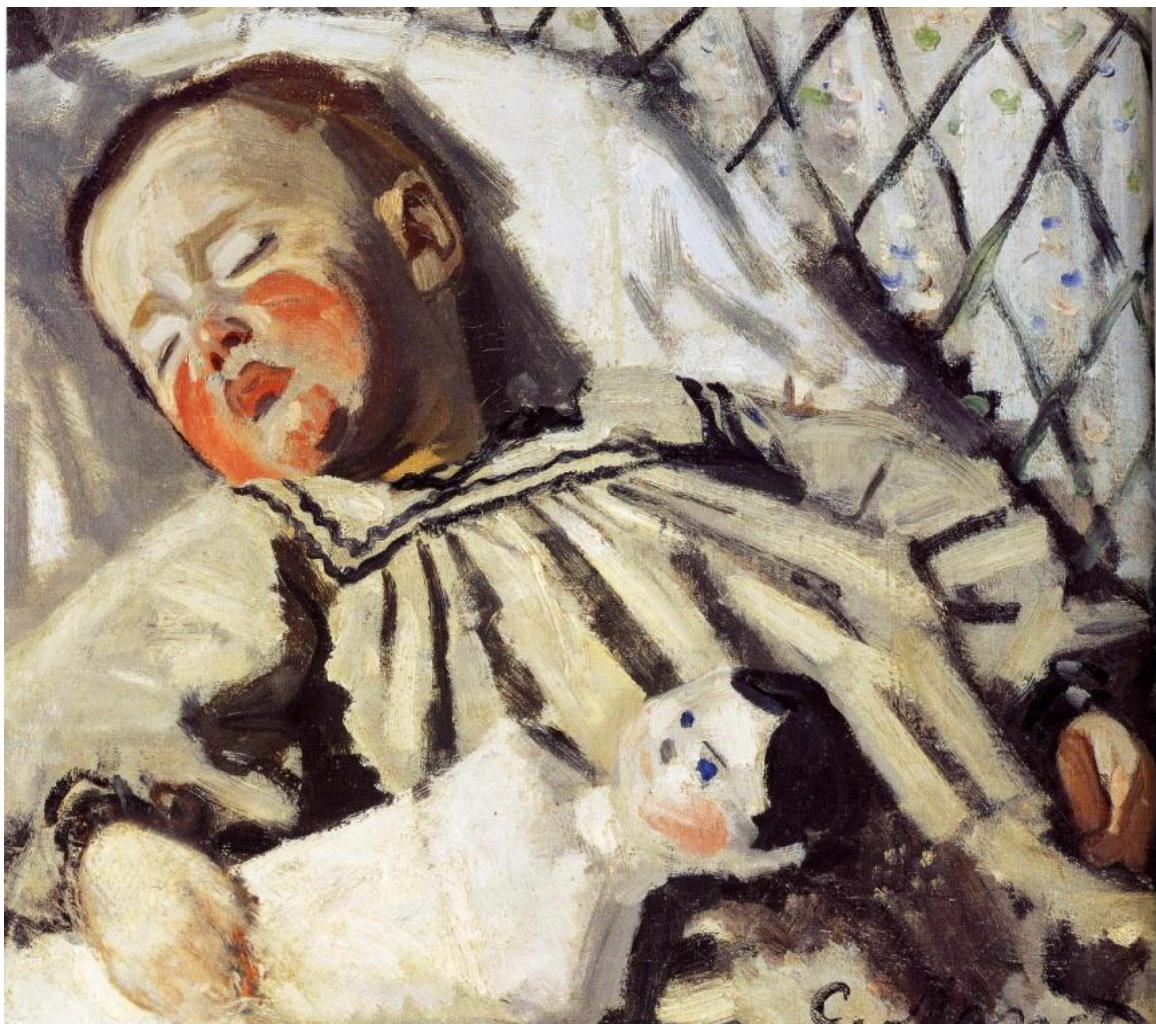


Figure 39.- Claude Monet (France, 1840-1926).  
*The son of the artist asleep. Oil on canvas.*  
*Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen - Denmark*

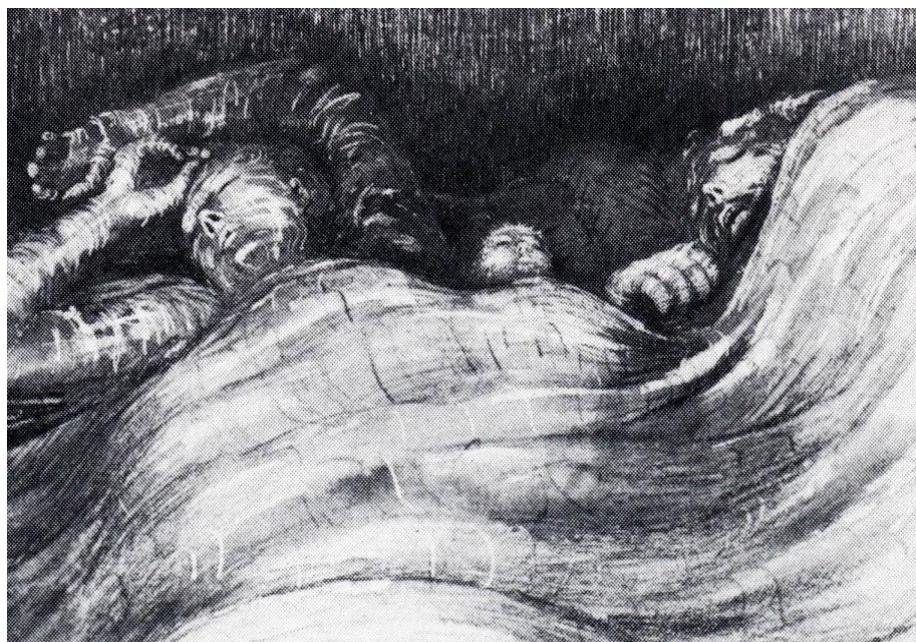
The child, lying in a cot, reflects the violent light shining in from the side that turns the shadows into powerful structures. Monet accentuates the rosy tones of the cheeks, nose and mouth and the pale, green-tinted yellows of the nightshirt, forehead and pillow. He establishes sumptuous contrasts, contrasts which the clever framing reinforces. Even the doll with its wide-open eyes seems alive and ready to sit up as soon as the hand holding it relaxes its grip. In this work of black lines and pale hues, stamped with the seal of spontaneity, everything vibrates.

The same atmosphere of happiness and serenity is found in the watercolor Mother with her Sleeping Child (fig. 40), with its intimidating greys and aura of empathy, by the Finnish artist Knut Magnus Enckell (1870-1925).



*Figure 40.* Knut Magnus Enckell  
 (Finland, 1870-1925).  
*Mother and her Sleeping Child*, after 1890.  
 Watercolor and gouache, 56.5 x 39.5 cm.  
 Hermitage Museum,  
 Saint Petersburg – Russia

When the light of love is overwhelmed by the darkness of trauma, however, sleep becomes infiltrated with disturbing dreams. It then incarnates the feverishness that triggers—in brutal collages, insistent flashes and horrific visions—fear, anxiety and terror, as we see in Henry Moore’s (1898-1986) electrifying Londoners Sheltering in the Underground series (1941). These drawings (fig. 41 is one from the series), showing Londoners huddled in the bowels of the Underground seeking shelter from the Nazi bombs, were sketched quickly with a dry and nervous pen. Intense electrical discharges seem to furrow the field of these ink and watercolor images, the hatched lines remaining as stigmata of the maelstrom that has passed through.



*Figure 41.* -Henry Moore (British, 1898-1986). *Refugees sleeping: two women and a child*, 1941. Pen and watercolor, 28.1 x 46 cm. University of East Anglia at Norwich - G.B.  
 ©The Henry Moore Foundation-All rights reserved / DACS, London / ADAGP, Paris, 2012

In marked contrast to Henry Moore's drawing, Georges Rouault (1871-1958) conceived his colour etching *Sleep, My Love* as an image of frontal immediacy, achieved via frank, thick contours (fig. 42). Everything is in the foreground; there is nothing extraneous. It shows a young mother standing in her acrobat's make-up and costume. The slender body of this flying Madonna is seen from behind while her head, crowned in a circus headdress, is shown in profile, emphasizing its pivoting movement relative to the bust. What's going on? A moment ago she had heard the baby stirring. She rushed in on tiptoe to see if it was all right. A single look was enough to reassure her. Her protective arm reaches out. How different, and yet how similar, is this painting to those of the Virgin adoring the Child!

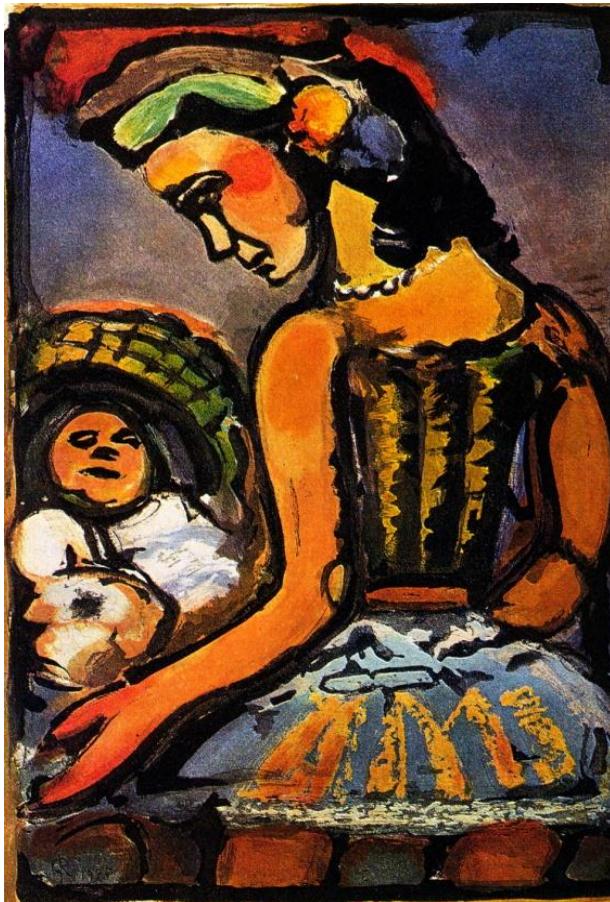


Figure 42.  
Georges Rouault (France, 1871 - 1958).  
*Sleep, My Love*, 1938.  
Illustration of the book "Circus of the  
Shooting Star.".   
Etching in color.  
France  
©ADAGP, Paris, 2012

Art enables strange connivances in which different sensibilities confront each other, are attracted to each other, and join together to stage ambivalent scenes. Within its purview, art associates tradition and modernity, youth and old age, cheerfulness and melancholy, contemplation and indifference—in short, a whole panoply of humanity where contrasts and coincidences are deployed in variegated harmonies or grating hymns. From these festive celebrations and secret cross-fertilizations, these joyous weddings and doleful reminiscences, emerges consent or regret for what, sooner or later, must be abandoned. Now, what can link, across an interval of three and half centuries, Titian's (1488-1576) *The Three Ages of Man* (Fig. 43) and Klimt's (1862-1918) *The Three Ages of Woman* (fig. 44)?

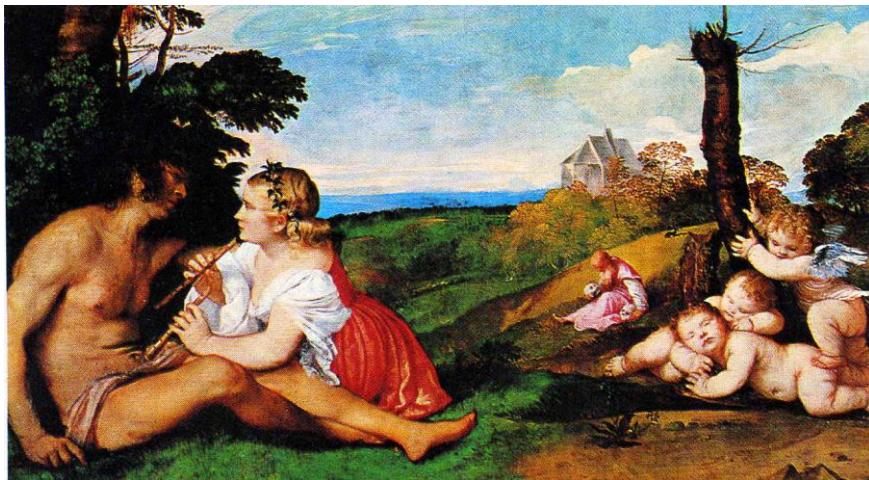


Figure 43.  
Titian (Italian,  
1488/89-1576).  
*The three ages of man.*  
Oil on canvas,  
106 x 182 cm.  
National Galleries of  
Scotland,  
Edinburgh - G.B.

Klimt's delicate, florid evanescence, his rose-tinted optimism, lies on one single plane, and it echoes the realism of Titian's allegorical register. In both cases, it is through the sleep of children that life seems to fortify the earthly voyage: In Titian, it is a happy languor depicting spring and winter brought together in the same countryside that fortifies; in Klimt, it is an eternal, heavenly beauty. Titian, here, evades nothing. He hurries slowly, as if he were moving to the rhythms of a madrigal. He adopts one single colour register and, with great skill, harmonizes the figures with the landscape. He composes in perspective the young, the mature and the old. If the drawing (as always with Titian, very refined in its forms), is supple and flowing, it is in the vigour of the colours that it arouses the strongest emotions.

With Klimt, the impression of freshness predominates. It seems to burst and vaporize before the viewer, who breathes it as much as he sees it, with its heady perfumes and preciousity. Klimt is immersed in a nature entirely of his own making, a nature he respects and feels in all the fibres of his being. He even strives to make himself one with it. Titian, for his part, is content to evaluate that nature.

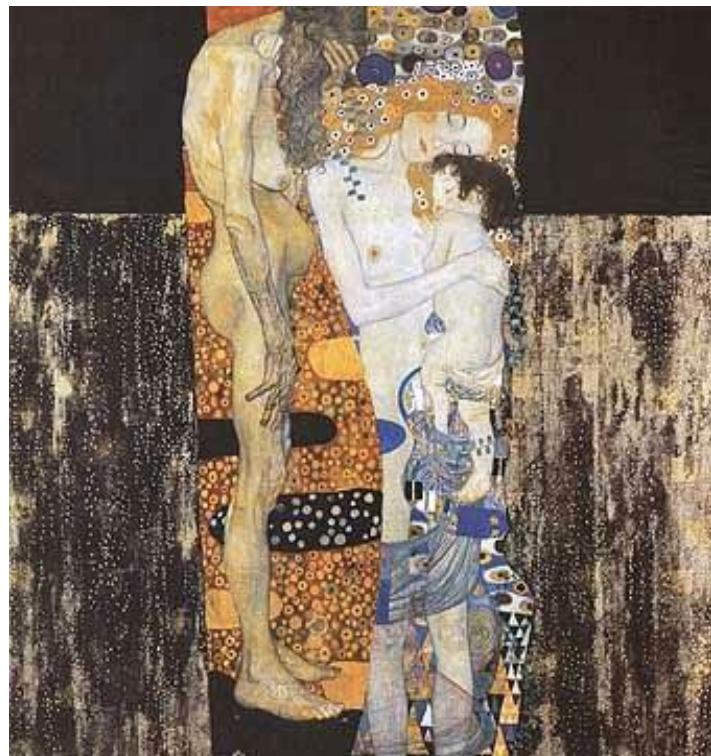


Figure 44.  
Gustav Klimt  
(Austrian, 1862-1918).  
*The Three Ages of Woman*, 1905.  
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna,  
Rome - Italy.

The world of dreams, so rich in childhood, is very rarely represented in painting. Pink striations on a speckled blue sky in which objects and animals fly: This is the troubled dream of a Sleeping Child (fig. 45) by Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), future exile-by-choice to Tahiti and the Iles Marquises. Conceiving of the whole on one single plane, he seated the little girl, her head resting on her arm, at a table. Her hand, like a good little creature, lies still on the table, much more serene than the storm that, at this moment, is raging in her brain. The framing captures the upper body, roughly equivalent to a cinema close-up, and brings into focus the child and her dream-objects. This was the period when Gauguin was about to accompany, at least for a stretch of their journey, the Impressionists.



*Figure 45.* - Paul Gauguin (France, 1848-1903). *Sleeping Child*, 1884.  
Oil on canvas, 46 x 55.5 cm. Josefowitz Collection, Indianapolis Museum, USA

## 4. Sacred and profane sleep

In the history of art, nothing separates the sacred and the profane in any definitive fashion. Over the centuries, as political systems evolve, their relative weight varies: One sees itself in the mirror of the other; they fade out to reappear in new guises, according to changes in ideology, belief and economic fortune.

A Cypriot idol dedicated to maternity (chapter 2, fig. 3), a Khmer stele dedicated to the creation of the World (chapter 2, fig. 8), Indian reliefs of a Buddha who breaks off his pleasures to withdraw from the world (chapter 2, fig. 9, 10)—all these works show that sleep figures in the founding religions, be they archaic or secular. Only its meanings and its modalities in the media that express it change. Regarding motifs related to beliefs, it is rarely represented in China and Japan, and it almost never appears in the figurative representations of ancient Egypt, pre-Columbian America, and even in the lands where Islam reigns. Very early, the fantastic element in the sacred texts inspired, in generations of artists, recurrent themes. Malleable to multiple variations, these themes were drawn from both the canonic and apocryphal Gospels, as well as from the vast repertoire of Oriental, Greek and Latin religion and mythology. The themes intersect and interpenetrate each other (see also chapter 3, fig. 16-37; chapter 6).

From legend, an anonymous artist in the twelfth-century drew a touching bronze panel, *The Creation of Eve*, in which we see Eve emerging from the side of Adam, sleeping under a tree (fig. 46). God himself reaches across from his isolation to take Eve's hand, while below the naked couple stands off against the serpent wound around the Tree of Knowledge, tempting them.



*Figure 46.- Anonymous (Italy, 12th century). The Creation of Eve. Bronze panel, portal of San Zeno Maggiore Church, Verona - Italy*

Adam sleeping during the creation of Eve is one of the rare representations of sleep in the Orthodox Church (fig. 47). This theme has been taken up by painters right up to the

present time. According to the Quran, God created *Hawwa* (Eve) from Adam's lowermost rib on his left side, but no image of this event is known to exist.



Figure 48.  
School of Samokov and Bansko  
(Bulgaria, 19th century).  
*The Creation of Eve.*  
Mural painting.  
Church of the Rila Monastery -  
Bulgaria

The birth amongst men of representatives of God, in the great monotheistic religions, is associated with more or less fantastic legends, but only representations from the Buddhist tradition are linked to sleep. Similar to that of Christ, the birth of Siddhartha, the future Buddha, was made possible by a sacred being, a white elephant that, in an act of Immaculate Conception, penetrated Queen Maya through her side while she was sleeping (fig. 48).



Figure 48. - Anonymous (India, Gandhara, 2nd-3rd centuries). *The Dream of Queen Maya: the conception.* Stupa Pane, schist, 19.3 x 32.4 x 6.5 cm.  
British Museum, Oriental Art, London - G.B.

This, as those familiar with Buddhism will know, is a Bodhisattva preparing his supreme reincarnation, leading him to Buddhahood and ultimate deliverance through the attainment of Nirvana. Maya, wearing a diadem of flowers, is lying on her left side. The Bodhisattva, in the guise of an elephant, is enclosed within an aureole, the tip of his trunk sticking out at the bottom. Outside, the woman standing guard raises her right hand, perhaps in a sign of astonishment; above her, wearing a turban, floats a celestial spectator, and on either side of the scene stands a plump attendant. This stupa panel represents the quintessence

of Gandhara art, an art which, thanks to Alexander the Great's expedition to Asia during the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, happily married Indian and Hellenistic influences.

*The Annunciation to the Virgin Mary that she would conceive and become the mother of the son of God is the subject of many admirable works. Both Mary and the Archangel Gabriel, who made the announcement, were wide awake. Divine intervention, however, furnished clarification of the circumstances of the conception. In crucial circumstances, Joseph, Mary's husband, was visited by angels at least three times during his sleep. The scene represented by Georges de la Tour, in its depiction of light from a candle flame, is a real marvel (fig. 49). But what exactly is the scene shown here? Is it the one in which the angel announces that Mary is pregnant by the agency of the Holy Ghost? Or the one where the angel charges Joseph to flee into Egypt to escape Herod's murderous scheme? Or the one where the angel, after Herod's death, commands Joseph to return to Israel?*



Figure 49.

*Georges de La Tour  
(France, 1593-1652).*

*Appearance of the angel to St.  
Joseph, also called The Dream  
of Saint Joseph, circa 1640.*

*Oil on canvas, 93 x 81 cm.*

*Museum of Fine Arts,  
Nantes – France*

The unity of the two figures is striking: the supernatural presence of the child, an angel without wings whose luminous face lights the darkness; the old man in the depths of sleep, less real than the miraculous apparition.

In the Bible, according to an American study, sleep is mentioned 113 times in 105 verses. Guided by our fancy and the hand of chance, let us examine a few of the masterpieces inspired by these Biblical scenes.

In his time, Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) immersed himself in a dramatic event dear to the Romantics, an event related in the Gospel of Mark (4:35-41) that he took up time and again:

*Christ on the Sea of Galilee (fig. 50). The painting is an exalted account of this famous episode in which Christ, asleep in the boat while a storm rages, is awakened by the worried disciples. He orders the wind and sea to calm down: Wind and sea obey immediately.*

It is a small-format painting, and it perfectly expresses the strong, quick-tempered character of the painter. Echoing Géricault's note of tragedy and reflecting the Venetians' intense colours, he executes a gesture as violent as it is vivid. Look again: Into the trough of a wave of dark, turbulent green, the crowded boat is hurled. One of the characters, trying to keep his balance, stands with his arms raised in terror; another holds on to his whirling white robe, while a third reaches forward as if preparing for a fall. Jesus, his blue-tinted toga open, a bluish-white froth at his feet, sleeps peacefully. Delacroix, whose every brush stroke speaks of a tormented spirit, generates a powerful lyricism that leaves itself open to improvisation. The lines of the drawing (the "daring contours" in Delacroix's own words) are nevertheless preserved: The colours remain confined within them.



*Figure 50. - Eugene Delacroix (France, 1798-1863). Christ on the Sea of Galilee, circa 1840-1845. Oil on canvas, 45.7 x 54.6 cm. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City (Missouri) - USA*

A less lugubrious version of this scene was painted some years later (fig. 51). This time, under a mass of dark, low-lying clouds that black out the sky, the waves are a silvery green and a black mountain rises on the horizon. A scintillating halo circles Christ's head in gold; as in the first version of the scene, here too Jesus rests his head on his hand. But, unlike in the first version, here salvation, in the form of a mountain, is in sight.



*Figure 51.*  
Eugene Delacroix  
(France, 1798-1863).  
*Christ Asleep during the Tempest*, circa 1853.  
Oil on canvas,  
50.8 x 61cm.  
The Metropolitan  
Museum of Art,  
New York - USA

*While the disciples, overcome by sleep, sprawl out at the foot of a fence, the angel informs Jesus of the Passion he will soon undergo.*

Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510), a Medici protégé who once portrayed himself among the men of this famous lineage, painted the episode of Christ in the Garden of Olives (fig. 52), a mythical scene that has echoed through the centuries. The fence is painted with striking realism, the disciples meticulously drawn. Wearing a red robe, Christ is depicted on his knees, praying on an elliptical platform of rock. The symbolism of sleep is here renewed: The scene, with its underlying anguish, is set in framework of idealized nature. Familiar to the Tuscan painter, olive trees, a symbol of peace and concord, ring the garden.



*Figure 52.*  
Sandro Botticelli  
(Italian, circa 1445-1510).  
*Christ in the Garden of Olives*, circa 1500.  
Tempera on wood, 53 x 35 cm.  
Capilla de los Reyes, Granada - Spain

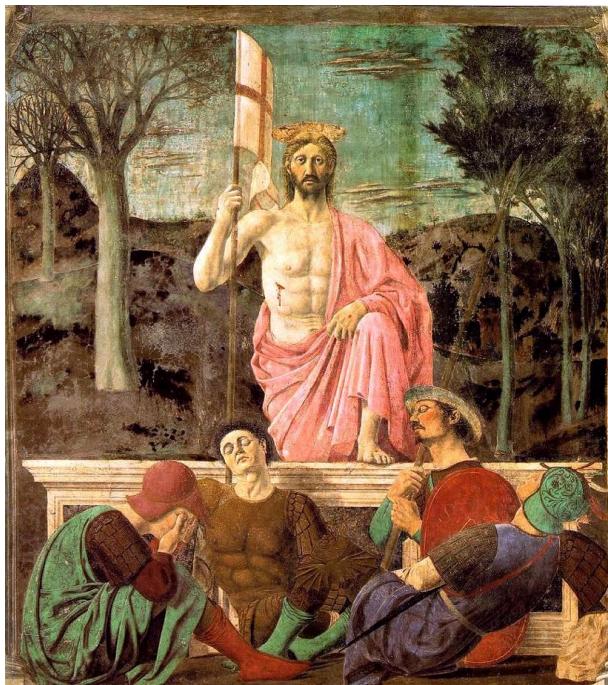
El Greco's (1541-1614) version of this episode (fig. 53), in its abandonment of the corporality so strong in the Italian models, breaks with the still archaic implausibility of the representation in Botticelli, while the supernatural elements of the landscape (void of olive trees or decorative foliage) acquire a prodigious presence.



*Figure 53. -El Greco (Greece, 1541 - Spain, 1614).  
Christ in the Garden of Olives, circa 1595.  
Oil on canvas, 102 x 114cm. Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo (Ohio) - USA*

The angel in its robe of green-tinted yellow stands on the cave in which the disciples, depicted in unrealistic proportions, sleep. The angel overlooks the transfigured Christ who, bathed in light, is directing his gaze both at the angel and inward. A rock behind Jesus seems to be shielding him from a cloud closing in, while the henchman below remain a shadowy presence. Destiny, in its inevitability, is suggested by the veiled eye of the moon surveying the scene. The work's almost fantastical degree of "surreality" contributed to its being rediscovered at the beginning of the 20th century. Thus took place the second birth of this painter whose works—with their undulating forms and elongated figures with hallucinatory eyes—abound in mysticism.

It is via the mediation of sleep that the premonitory vision of Christ's sacrifice and the mystery of His resurrection on the third day appear in all their clarity. While his Roman guards are conveniently neutralized by sleep, the risen Christ leaves the tomb. This is how things appear in the mental prayer that is Piero della Francesca's Resurrection of Christ (fig. 54), a fresco that has come down to us intact from the fifteenth century. The English writer Aldous Huxley, for one, considered it a supreme masterpiece. It is the guards' sleepiness that enables Christ in his majesty to triumph over darkness.

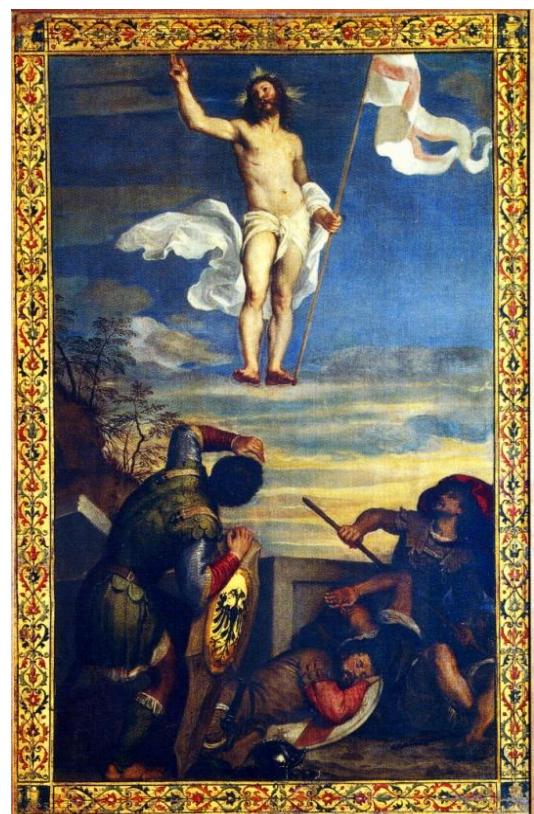


In a rigorously delineated space, standing impassive and perfectly still, He forms the apex of a triangle that stands out against an imaginary landscape of infinite tenderness: Perhaps it is a recollection, an evocation of the fantastic. This very astute structuring of the picture gives the Resurrected Christ, ready to regenerate the world, a concrete presence, frontal and direct.

*Figure 54.*  
Piero della Francesca  
(Italy, c. 1416-1492).  
*Resurrection of Christ, circa 1460.*  
Fresco, 225 x 200 cm.  
Museo Civico, Sansepolcro - Italy

Three generations later, Titian painted a miraculously aerial version of the Resurrection (fig. 55):

Here, raising his right hand in benediction, indicating the heavenly realm, the fully reincarnated Christ is suspended against a dawn sky of lustrous bronze and resplendent greys and blues, while beside the tomb (note the cleverly exposed angles) guards lie asleep or, awakened, adopt postures of self-defence and stupefaction..



*Figure 55.*  
Titian (Italian, 1488/89-1576).  
*Resurrection.*  
Painting.  
Palazzo Ducale, Urbino - Italy.

Greco-Roman mythology, for its part, is particularly rich in sleep-related events. We already mentioned (in chapter 2) the deeds and misdeeds of the indefatigable twins, Hypnos and Thanatos (fig. 5), and the protective wisdom that Hygieia, Goddess of health, offered the child-God Hypnos (fig. 7).

*Now we turn to consider the Furies, the infernal divinities. They appear as soon as a crime is committed in a family, and in the event of a parricide or matricide, they literally rush in: The murderer will not escape their clutches. In Athens they were the object of a particular cult. Indeed, in memory of the way they treated the matricidal Orestes when he sought refuge in the city, they are called the Eumenides, the Kindly Ones.*



Figure 56.  
Workshop of the Painter of  
Judgement (Greece, Southern  
Italy, 4th century BCE).  
*The Eumenides.*  
Ceramics with red figures,  
h. 36 cm, d. 39.3 cm.  
Museum of Fine Arts,  
Boston - USA

In the finely-drawn depiction on the bell-krater from the workshop of the Judgement Painter, they are shown asleep in the foreground (fig. 56). Athena and Apollo, standing respectively at the left and the right, have come to assure Orestes (in the center, brandishing his sword and clasping the omphalos) that the Furies will be transformed into beneficent being, the Eumenides.

*As for Endymion—an Aeolian king for some, a shepherd or hunter for others—his beauty inspired a violent love in Selene, goddess of the moon. Selene entreated Zeus, Olympian Ruler, to cast him into eternal sleep that he may remain forever young and perfect in his beauty: Zeus granted her wish. Every night, without waking him, Selene meets her beloved in a cave. Together, they had fifty daughters, but this passion only brought to Selene pain and sorrowful sighs.*

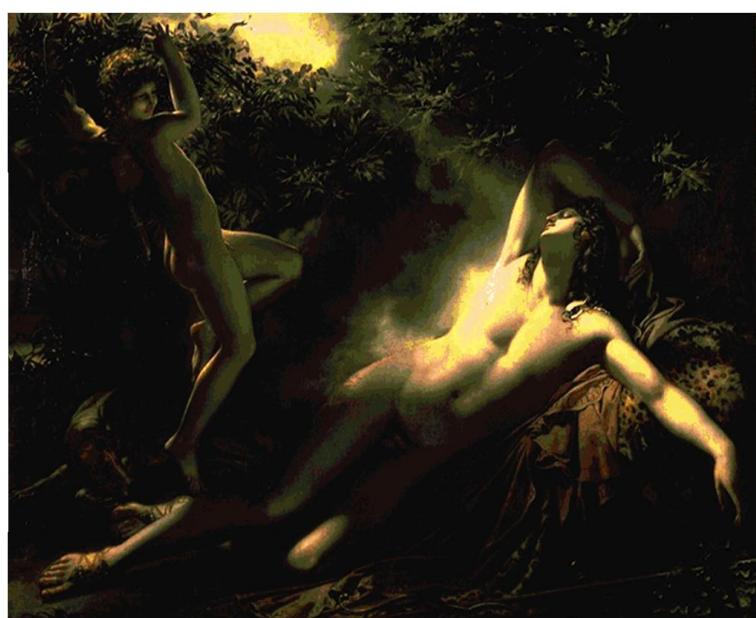
A delicate, Greco-Roman medallion from the Bagram treasure (fig. 57) shows the interest this theme aroused and testifies to the relations on the Silk Road between Asia and the Roman Orient.



*Figure 57.*  
*Anonymous*  
*(Afghanistan, 1st century).*  
*Selene and Endymion.*  
*Bagram Treasury.*  
*Emblemata, plaster, 16 cm.*  
*National Museum,*  
*Kabul - Afghanistan*

Much later, in the nineteenth century, Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson (1767-1824) painted his interpretation of this mythological scene, *The Sleep of Endymion* (fig. 58). Deep shadow and bright moonlight, with a vaporous effect around the idealized body, characterize the composition. Brilliant, Girodet's vision is also prudish, given its ethereal, seraphic aspect. As in Ingres, it is above all drawing that accounts for beauty; here, precision and finesse of line make for a beauty at once angelic and strange.

*Figure 58.*  
*Girodet-Trioson Roucy, Anne  
 Louis, called Girodet*  
*(France, 1767 - 1824).*  
*The Sleep of Endymion, 1790-1791.*  
*Painting on canvas,*  
*198 x 261 cm.*  
*The Louvre, Paris - France.*



In comparison with Aurora and Cephalus by Pierre-Narcisse Guérin (Aurora is set to abduct Procis' husband, Cephalus, with whom she is in love), the dreamer, as an effeminate Adonis, is shown to advantage in Aurora's light (fig. 59).



Ravishingly contoured, he is coyly presented to Aurora's gaze. True to life, palpable, sensual, the drawing is dazzling, while the palette of colours is dense and studied. On the evidence of this painting, one could be forgiven for thinking that Guérin found everyday reality too trivial for one who has celestial dreams.

*Figure 59.*

Pierre-Narcisse Guérin

(France, 1774-1833).

Aurora and Cephalus, 1810.

Oil on canvas, 254.5 x 186 cm.

The Louvre, Paris - France

For the ancient Greeks, the cult of beauty and ecstasy, the excessiveness inherent in the doings of the all-powerful gods, were favorite themes. Indeed, the Dionysian (Bacchanal) festivals they participated in were occasions for ritual madness and revelry. Gods and mortals, the sacred and the profane, existed side by side and sometimes intermingled.

Dionysus (Bacchus), god of wine and ecstatic liberation, is the son of Zeus (Jupiter) and the mortal Semele. He was thus a demi-god, and it took him many struggles to win acceptance of his divinity. The pregnant Semele, tricked by Zeus' jealous wife Hera (Juno) into asking Zeus to show himself in all his glory, was consumed in the blaze of the undisguised god. Before the mother-to-be died, however, Hermes (Mercury) rescued the divine child and sewed him into the gash he had cut in Zeus' thigh (and thus we have on record the first description of an incubator for premature babies), before releasing it some months later (whence Dionysus' cult title Dimetor, "twice-born"). Dionysus, in one version of the myth, was raised by the nymphs of Nysa who taught him winemaking. Hera, however, remained jealous; she sought vengeance for Zeus' infidelity by striking Dionysus or those looking after him with madness. Thus this beautiful demi-god, eternally youthful, wandered around the world, accompanied by Sileni (elderly companions), Maenads (Bacchants) and Satyrs. Together, they celebrated Bacchanals, orgiastic festivals of frenzied dancing and wild release.

These Bacchanals, where wine and fatigue inevitably led to sleep, were a favorite subject of artists both in Antiquity and in the Renaissance.



*Figure 60. - Nicolas Poussin (France, 1594-1665). The Childhood of Bacchus, also known as La Petite Bacchanale, from 1630 to 1635.  
Oil on canvas, 97 x 136 cm. The Louvre, Paris – France*

In The Childhood of Bacchus (fig. 60), Nicolas Poussin draws on Ovid's Metamorphoses to show a young Bacchus drinking the juice being pressed from a bunch of grapes by a Satyr. The mythological themes that appear in Poussin's work are often only pretexts for the painter to develop vast idyllic landscapes. During his long stay in Rome, Poussin was somewhat influenced by Italian painting, in particular—as the sleeping nudes here in the foreground show—that of Titian.



*Figure 61.- Luca Giordano (Italian, 1634-1705). The young Bacchus asleep, 1680.  
Oil on canvas, 246.5 x 329 cm. Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg - Russia*

Luca Giordano, in The Young Bacchus Asleep (fig. 61), shows the youthful god sleeping on a leopard skin, his face and upper body in shadow, surrounded by Bacchants, animals, Satyrs and cherubs. Amidst the play of transparent shadows, light insidiously reveals all there is to see.

The Bacchanal revels gave rise to depictions of unrestricted pleasures. One such scene is evoked in the decorative painting on a ceramic hydria from the 4th century BCE (fig. 62), where we see two satyrs ready to satisfy themselves on a luxurious Maenad asleep, a thyrsus (a staff crowned with a pine cone, a fertility phallus used as a prop in the Maenads' dance) in her hand.

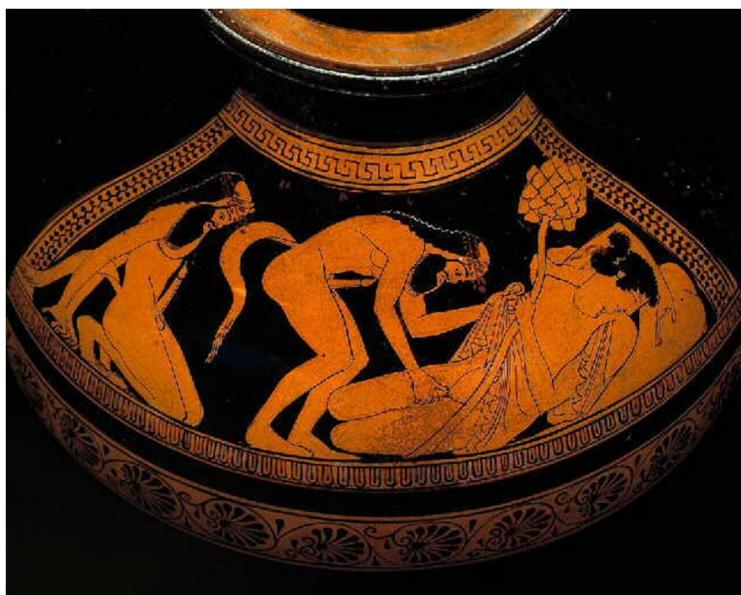


Figure 62.  
Painter Kleophrades  
(Greece, 6th century BCE).  
*Satyrs and Maenad asleep*  
(detail).  
Ceramics (hydria).  
Museum of Antiquities in  
the Seine-Maritime,  
Rouen - France.

Giambologna's (1609-1674) Sleeping Nymph and Satyr (fig. 63) was inspired by the discovery of a sculpture from ancient antiquity, placed in the garden of the Vatican. The theme of a satyr molesting a sleeping nymph was a popular motif in the Renaissance.



Figure 63.  
Giovanni da Bologna  
(Italian, 1529-1608).  
*Sleeping Nymph and*  
Satyr.  
Bronze, 19.3 cm.  
Boymans-van  
Beuningen Museum,  
Rotterdam - Holland

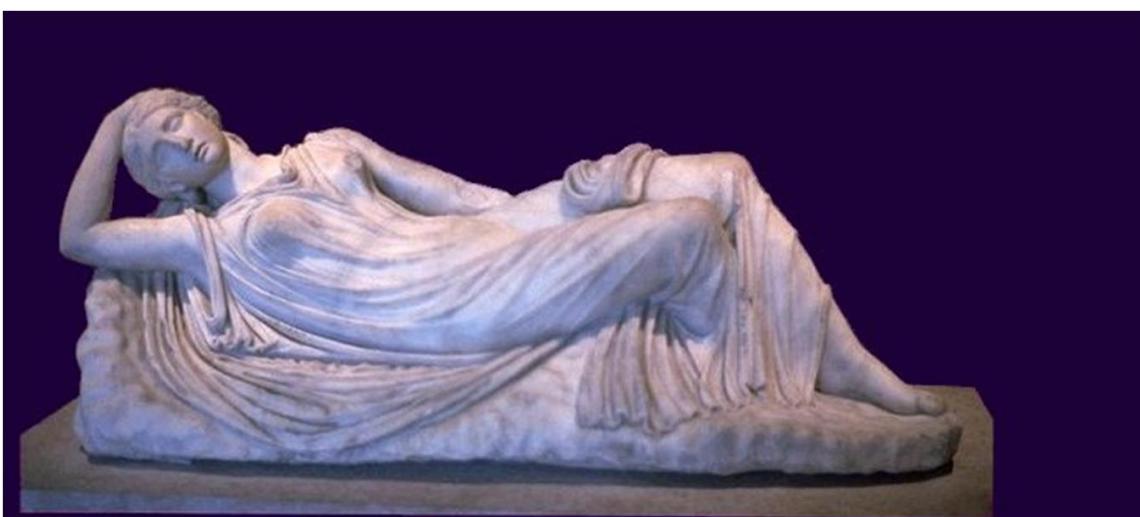
*Bacchus is seen in a good light in his encounter with Ariadne, daughter of Minos, king of Crete, and Pasiphae. Ariadne, in love with Theseus, gave him a ball of thread to guide him out of the Labyrinth once he'd killed the Minotaur. Theseus, having promised to marry Ariadne, sets sail with her towards Athens. On the way, he puts in at the island of Naxos, but then continues on to Athens without her, having left her sleeping on the shore.*



The scene is depicted on a jar from about 400 BCE (fig. 64). It shows Athena seated with her spear in her right hand; Hypnos, the winged boy dropping what may be poppies on Ariadne's head, and Theseus, his nude body turned frontally and his face in three-quarter view. From such depictions in Antiquity right up until today, the theme Ariadne on Naxos, abandoned asleep, has haunted the artistic imagination.

*Figure 64.  
The Painter of Ariadne  
(Greece, southern Italy, 400-  
390 BCE). Theseus abandons  
Ariadne. Ceramics with red  
figures, h: 30 cm, d: 26 cm.  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston -  
United States*

A Roman copy of a lost Greek sculpture of Ariadne sleeping (perhaps like the one in figure 65) influenced Giorgio de Chirico in his painting Ariadne (fig. 66).



*Figure 65.- Anonymous (Hellenistic Greece, Roman copy, 1st half of the second century). Girl (Ariadne) asleep. Marble, 58 x 150 cm. The Louvre, Paris - France.*

In a geometrically delineated space, stark monolithic arches cast a dark shadow into a deserted public square; casting a similar shadow, Ariadne, seen from overhead, sleeps on a bed of stone (figure 66). Deep brown, ocher, white, and green make up the palette of colours, while dry, thin lines characterize the drawing. It was paintings such as this one, with their magical, dreamlike quality, that made de Chirico a forerunner of the Surrealists.



Figure 66.  
*Giorgio de Chirico*  
*(Greece, 1888 - Italy,*  
*1978).*  
*Ariadne, 1913.*  
*Oil and graphite on canvas,*  
*135.6 x 180.5 cm.*  
*The Metropolitan Museum*  
*of Art,*  
*New York - USA.*  
 ©ADAGP, Paris, 2012

Naxos, then, was where Dionysus (Bacchus) found Ariadne, fell in love with her, then took her to Olympus as his wife. The delicate painting by the Le Nain brothers, Bacchus discovering Ariadne on Naxos (fig. 67), evokes their first encounter. The young demi-god, coming upon Ariadne lost in sleep, shows his emotion. Pictorially, the young woman asleep is the luminous pivot around which a composition at once dynamic and free organizes itself.

Figure 67.  
*The Le Nain Brothers*  
*(Louis?, France, 17th*  
*century).*  
*Bacchus discovering*  
*Ariadne on Naxos,*  
*before 1635.*  
*Oil on canvas, 102x152 cm.*  
*Museum of Fine Arts,*  
*Orleans - France.*



Other scenes of sleep drawn from Greek mythology will be examined in the following chapters.

## 5. What surprises sleep?

To state the obvious: Sleep as a form of rest is a recurrent episode of life; it is “something invincible”, as La Fontaine wrote, an inescapable part of the daily cycle. It is universal, shared by people everywhere, and being common to us all, we are all more or less equal before it. It is even, of the states of our physiological architecture, among the most stable, the least likely to modify its foundation. If soothsayers make it, through dreams, the arbiter of their clairvoyance and formulations, art exposes, not without a certain ostentation, its many silent acts.

As Jean Cocteau wrote in one of his poems, “Sleep is not a safe place”; indeed, it renders one vulnerable. It can be overrun with pathologies specific to it, but it can also prevent malevolent acts and facilitate healing (see chapter 2, fig. 6, Asclepius Healing a Sleeping Patient). Let us open the secret closet of imagistic memory and see what incidents—ordinary, extraordinary, or edifying—we find, be they charming, embarrassing or upsetting.



*Figure 68. Asmus Jacob Carstens (German, 1754-1798). Night and her two children, Sleep and Death, 1795. Black chalk and white highlights, two sheets of brown paper assembled on board, 74.5 x 98.5 cm. Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Weimar - Germany.*

What threatens sleep is well seen in the Night and its Two Children, Sleep and Death (fig. 68) by Asmus Jacob Carstens (1754-1798). Using the technique of scumbled black chalk on paper, the artist confers on Night, depicted as powerful protector whose face is filled with a Raphaelesque tenderness, the gift of a Janus figure: Life and death resemble each other; ambiguous shadows bring them together under one wing. This coalescence is seen in perspective, with Night positioned off-center in a triangular space. Worry and potential violence characterize the attitudes of the background characters. Heightened in white, the shaded black chalk lends volume to the forms and vivacity to the expressions.

Manifold subterfuges have been used to watch over sleep and ward off the dangers that threaten it. As we have already seen, headrests used as pillows, bearing protective images, were the preferred device of the ancient Egyptians (chapter 1, fig. 1), while the mother leaning over her sleeping child is an image that has recurred in multiple variations since earliest times (chapter 3, fig. 16, 22-34, 40-41, 43).

Elsewhere, a wide variety of dramatic devices are employed. Simeon Solomon (1840-1905), in *The Moon and Sleep* (fig. 69), opts for a spiritual rendering of the theme, rich in interiority and trance-like contemplation. Against a dark-blue night sky and ground, a sisterly moon is attributed the power to tenderly watch over the human figure of sleep. Some interpret this image differently, seeing in it transposed homoerotic overtones and a version of the Endymion myth, but the ambiguity of the painting lends itself to still other interpretations: reciprocal recognition, an act of hypnosis in a pagan celebration, or an encounter to talk about love. No one-dimensional reduction, however, can dissipate the work's ambiguity, whether grounded in a symbolic tête-à-tête or a naïve lullaby for chaste children.



Figure 69.- Simeon Solomon (Great Britain, 1840-1905). *The Moon and Sleep*.  
Oil on canvas, 51.4 x 76.2 cm. Tate Gallery, London - G.B.

That sleep conceals dangers is shown in Jacob van Campen's (1595-1657) Mercury, Argus and Io (Fig. 70). The subject of the painting is taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

*Briefly, the fable goes like this: Io, beautiful daughter of the river god Inachus, earned Hera's hatred by attracting the attention of Juno's (Hera's) husband, Jupiter (Zeus). To protect Io from his wife's vengeance and at the same time to continue to plot to have his way with her, Jupiter transformed Io into a beautiful white cow. Juno, ever-vigilant in her jealousy, was not dupe to what Jupiter had done; she persuaded him to give her the lovely cow, and she had Argus, the many-eyed monster, guard it. Jupiter then commanded his messenger Mercury (Hermes) to slay Argus. Mercury approached the meadows where Argus and Io were resting, played songs on his pipe to lull the guard to sleep, then grabbed his sword and beheaded him.*

The painting depicts the scene before the murder, giving it a bucolic, even idyllic, dimension. Argus, naked, is slumped in guilty sleep, having fallen under the spell of Mercury's lullabies. The two dogs flanking Argus will not save him: Io will finally be delivered, turned back into a woman by Jupiter. In this painting, Argus, Mercury and the animals inhabit the golden light they breathe; the mood is peaceful, everything seems to be made from the same transmuted matter.



Figure 70.  
*Jacob van Campen*  
*(Netherlands, 1595-1657).*  
*Mercury, Argus and Io, circa 1630.*  
*Oil on canvas.*  
*Mauritshuis, The Hague - Holland*

Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806), in his *Mercury and Argus* (fig. 71), offers his interpretation of the mythical scene. As a brigand sure of his impunity, Jupiter's messenger intently observes the hoary shepherd's sleep: It won't be long before the moment to slit his throat arrives. The scene is presented as a benign pastoral, with the cows and sheep brought up close in their semi-sleep. The reddish tint to the flesh tones of hands and face, the sky laden with clouds, are the only dramatic elements Fragonard brings into play.



Figure 71.  
*Jean-Honoré Fragonard*  
*(France, 1732-1806).*  
*Mercury and Argus,*  
*circa 1761-1762.*  
*Canvas, 59 x 73 cm.*  
*The Louvre,*  
*Paris - France.*

From the Hebrew Bible, Anton van Dyck (1599-1641) drew the inspiration for a painting of great power and beauty, *Samson and Delilah* (fig. 72).

*From the Hebrew Bible, Anton van Dyck (1599-1641) drew the inspiration for a painting of great power and beauty, Samson and Delilah (fig. 72). At a time when God was punishing the Israelites by exposing them to their enemies the Philistines, Samson, a Jewish hero of supernatural strength, was in love with Delilah a woman from the Valley of Sorek. Philistine lords offer Delilah eleven hundred pieces of silver if she can discover the secret of Samson's strength. After several unsuccessful attempts, she succeeds in extracting the truth: In fulfillment of a vow to God, Samson never cuts his hair, for that is the source of his strength. Van Dyck portrays Samson asleep, resting his head on Delilah's lap. Her accomplice, shears in hand, prepares to cut off the hero's hair, while in the background Philistine soldiers stand ready to capture him and put out his eyes as soon as he is stripped of his strength. Behind Delilah, a matronly woman is gripped by curiosity; next to her, a younger woman stands with bated breath, fearing Samson may awake before the deed be done.*



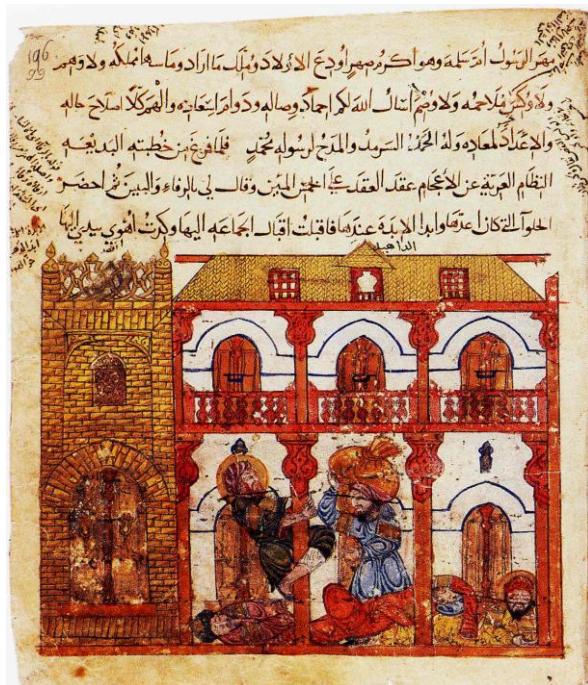
Figure 72.- Anton van Dyck (Flemish, 1599-1641). *Samson and Delilah*, 1618-1620. Oil on canvas, 149 x 229.5 cm. The Trustees of Dulwich Picture Gallery, London - G.-B.

Van Dyke, through his mastery of all the elements of the painting, gives the drama an intense emotional pitch. Contrasting with Delilah's pale flesh, the copper-toned body of the bearded hero harmonizes with the blue-tinged moiré of her dress; in the background, in the gaps where the sky shows through, smoky grey blends with pale blue.

A sequence from *The Assemblies of al-Hariri* by the Arabic poet al-Hariri of Basra (1054-1122) evokes the following story, written in calligraphic script on an illumination (fig. 73):

*In a caravanserai in a city on the Tigris, Al-Hârith makes the acquaintance of Abû Zayd. He offers to act as a go-between and facilitate the marriage of Abû Zayd to a nabob's daughter in town. The wedding, following upon the go-between's success, is a crowded affair. Al-Hârith and his son pour a sleeping potion into the food. As soon as it takes effect, they proceed to rob the guests. In red and ochre tones and precise filiform lines, the painter Al-Wâsiti Yahyâ ibn Mahmud portrays episodes of this story and assembles them into a miniature volume.*

The drape of the clothes reminds one of the ellipsoidal, broken folds found in the drapery of Byzantine icons.



*Figure 73.  
Al-Wasit, Yahya ibn Mahmud  
(Iraq, 13th century).  
Illumination, illustration of the  
mischievous News (Maqamat), 1237,  
Al-Hariri, Abu Muhammad al-Qasim  
(1054-1122).  
Institute of Oriental Studies,  
St. Petersburg - Russia*

Sleep can also contribute to overcoming injustice. Greco-Roman mythology contains a multitude of such stories. Figure 56 (chapter 4), which shows the Furies transformed in their sleep into the Kindly Ones, the Eumenides, is one such example. Another is that of Hercules' victory over the Giant Alyconeus, represented on a black-figure Attic vase painting from the sixth century BCE (fig. 74).

*Heracles (Hercules), the most famous of all the Greek heroes, is shown wearing the skin of the Nemean lion, the monstrous beast he had strangled to death in the first of the ten Labours imposed upon him by Eurystheus on Hera's behalf. Sword at the ready, he is preceded by the winged Hypnos, the kindly god of sleep. Alcyoneus, the most powerful of the Giants, was immortal, but only within his homeland: Heracles shot him with a poisoned arrow and dragged him off to die outside its bounds. Hypnos participated in the exploit by making Alcyoneus incapable of defending himself.*

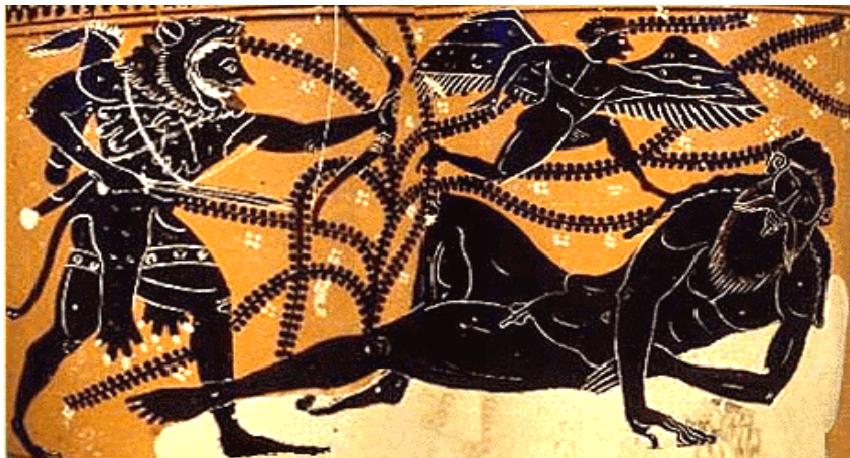


Figure 74. . Anonymous (Greece, 6th century BCE). *Heracles, Alcyoneus, Hypnos.*  
Black-figure Attic vase painting. Toledo Art Museum, Toledo - USA

The New Testament story of the resurrected Christ escaping from his tomb while the soldiers guarding it are asleep, represented in two works examined earlier (chapter 4, fig. 54-55), is, of course, another instance of the sleep-facilitating-a-happy-outcome theme.

Another version of this theme, also drawn from the New Testament, is *The Liberation of St. Peter* (fig. 75) by Filippino Lippi (1457-1504). Imprisoned by Herod, King of Judea, the chained-up apostle is visited at night in his cell by an angel (Acts 12:3-19). When the angel tells Peter to leave, his chains fall off, the prison doors open of their own accord and—under the nose of the guards—he walks out. Lippi's painting depicts a compressed space made up of three distinct sequences. The angel, his adolescent face open, holds Saint Peter's hand; a halo floats behind each figure's head. Rosy light bathes the scene as they stand conversing peacefully at the entrance to the cell. On one side sits the sleeping sentinel, gripping a tall stick to support himself; on the other side, separated by a fluted column, two patricians appear to be unaware of what's going on. The composition, beautiful in its sobriety, combines vertical planes with perspective lines. These planes and lines give the painting the clean look of a piece of theater scenery, or of a box opened on one side. Thus the world is conceived in miniature, and thus figures, architecture and objects can be made to obey the canons of proportion defined by generations of Renaissance artists, the architect Alberti foremost among them.



Figure 75.  
Filippino Lippi (Italian, c. 1457-1504).  
*The Angel freeing St. Peter from prison,*  
from 1481 to 1485.  
Fresco.  
Church of the Carmine, Florence - Italy.

An amusing popular print from 1862 caricatures the notorious Ogre from Charles Perrault's fairy tales (fig. 76).

*Worn out with fatigue, this pursuer of runaway children and eater of raw flesh slouches at the base of a tree, sleeping the sleep of a giant. Nimble and resourceful, Tom Thumb strives to pull off one of the Ogre's seven-league boots and thereby neutralize him. It is when sleep is so deep that it can become a terrain favorable to transgression. Here, sleep is Tom Thumb's accomplice, and he takes full advantage of it by running away with his brothers. The woodcutter's family will be reunited; happy days will return.*

Craftiness and guile  
thus bring  
compensation and  
reward; with a little  
common sense, the  
puny whipping boy can  
overcome the bully.  
Sleep is the interlude  
that enables justice to  
win the day.

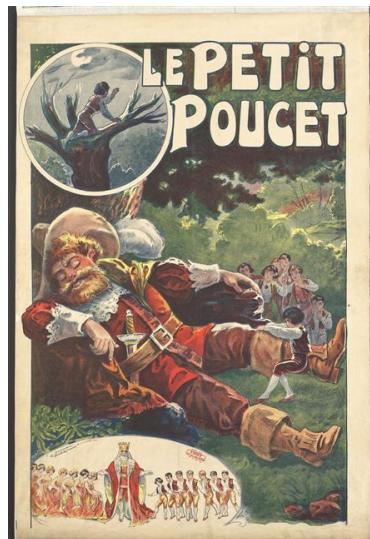


Figure 76.  
Anonymous  
(France, 19th century  
folk art).  
Poster Tom Thumb (*Le Petit Poucet*, after the tale by Charles Perrault), 1862.  
Print, lithograph,  
120 x 65.5 cm.  
National Museum of Art and  
Folk Traditions,  
Paris - France

If the external dangers lurking around our sleep have been an inexhaustible subject of art, the dangers lodged in the heart of sleep itself have rarely been represented. Today we know that sleepers suffering from obstructive sleep apnea, especially those who are overweight, may experience moments of asphyxia during their sleep. Artists have long recognized the relationship between obesity and sleepiness; in *The Land of Cockaigne* (fig. 77) by Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1525/1530-1569), one can see the risk latent in over-indulgence. Sleep that may turn out to be dangerous is the state the three corpulent figures—a clerk, a peasant and a soldier—find themselves in. Around a tree on top of a hillock, they sleep in radial formation on the ground. One can almost hear them snoring.

Figure 77.  
Pieter Bruegel, called Bruegel  
the Elder  
(Flemish, 1525/30- 1569).  
*In the land of Cockaigne*, 1567.  
Oil on oak, 52 x 78 cm.  
Alte Pinakothek,  
Munich – Germany.



Around the tree, the axis of the painting, a table laden with food and drink is attached. The source for this work is a tale published in 1546 in Antwerp after a farce by Hans Sachs; it chastises man's idleness, gluttony and laziness. The painting can also be seen as a pagan hymn to abundance and feasting, a representation of ritual excess. The farcical dimension is seen in the half-eaten egg running between the peasant and the clerk, the roasted fowl laying itself upon a silver platter, and the pig equipped with a carving knife running along the edge of the hillock. Compulsive over-indulgence can damn these obese sinners, playthings of their greed. One can easily imagine that their breathing may lose its regularity. If that happens, they would then sit up, puppet-like, and desperately clear their throats to combat their choking. Gluttony and sloth, two of the seven deadly sins, have nefarious consequences, but if one opts for the pagan-hymn interpretation, over-indulgence in this fantasy-land-of-plenty can perhaps be forgiven, especially since in reality epidemics and scarcity of food were almost endemic.

In *The Drunkenness of Noah* (fig. 78), Giovanni Bellini (1430-1516) painted a rarely-treated theme from the Old Testament: Noah is discovered drunk, lying naked amidst his vines, by his son Ham; Ham, together with his brothers, Shem and Japheth, look away as they put a robe on their sleeping father. Bellini composes an elliptical space, diaphanous and rich in colour effects; his chromatic fantasy plays out within the refined sobriety of the drawing.



*Figure 78.- Giovanni Bellini (Italian, 1433-1516). The Drunkenness of Noah.*  
Oil on canvas, 103 x 157 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Besançon - France.

Sleep is a favourite theme of a contemporary artist, Fernando Botero, who takes a mischievous pleasure in depicting it. Indeed, his massive characters, at once inexpressive and dignified, are often shown sleeping in broad daylight. In *The Siesta* (fig. 79), he shows a man dozing at table, a “fat boy” figure like Joe in Dickens’ *Pickwick Papers*. (The medical term “Pickwickian syndrome” refers, in obese people, to obstructive sleep apnea and daytime somnolence.) Wearing a hat, he sits holding an empty glass, an array of yellow fruit on the table before him. In the background, a bare light bulb, a mirror, and a portrait on the wall are disturbed only by the flies buzzing around. One may believe that the insistent passivity in the

work of Botero, found in most of his figures, is the representation of a pathological listlessness, but Botero himself has been quoted as saying, "An artist is attracted to certain kinds of form without knowing why. You adopt a position intuitively; only later do you attempt to rationalize or even justify it."



Figure 79.  
Fernando Botero  
(Colombia, 1932).  
*The Siesta*, 1986.  
Oil on canvas, 144 x 127 cm..  
©Fernando Botero

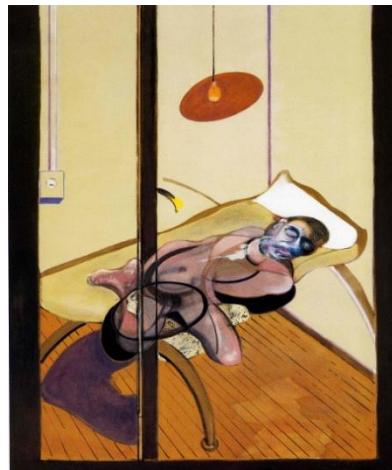
It is also to Botero that we owe one of the rare representations of an age-old malady, though one perhaps more acute today: *Insomnia* (fig. 80), a bronze sculpture, shows two corpulent nudes lying on their backs, their eyes wide open. Are they troubled by some thought or do they fear, should they fall asleep, their excess weight will cause obstructive apnea? To each viewer his own obsessions, obsessions which no doubt condition his imagination before the work of art.



Figure 80.  
Fernando Botero  
(Colombia, 1932).  
*Insomnia*, 1990.  
Bronze, 73 x 125 x 145 cm.  
©Fernando Botero

Francis Bacon (1909-1992) turns the spectator into a witness in *Sleeping Figure* (fig. 81), his depiction of troubled sleep. Painted after a photograph taken by the artist, the male figure, his sex circled in black, lies with his legs folded under him on a bed. The consistency of the flesh seems doubtful; hanging over the edge of the bed, it appears ready to fall. The figure is seen as if through a window; lost in the immateriality of sleep, it floats in a foreign space. Concerned to capture the presence of death in the subject's outward appearance, Bacon, by distorting the figure and smudging the face, refuses illustration. The artist, whose own face came to take on a mask-like quality, is the unavowed double rendered intelligible by the mirror of the painting. One may see in his work suffering made strident, a humanity stripped of the mask of civilization, returned to the magma from which it came; this "inhumanity", however, is suffused with a totemic essence that somehow makes it more fully human.

*Figure 81.*  
Francis Bacon (British, 1909-1992).  
*Sleeping figure*, 1974.  
Oil on canvas, 198 x 147.5 cm.  
Private Collection,  
New York - USA  
©The estate of Francis Bacon/All rights  
reserved/ADAGP, Paris, 2012



In *The Siesta* (fig. 82), Jean Rustin (b. 1928), addresses the theme of the artist suddenly troubled by sex, incarnated in this case by a woman sleeping uneasily in a deck chair, her legs open to view. The man sitting on the floor before her, his back to the wall, is evidently not indifferent: Perhaps he had hoped for this moment to arrive, and now that it has, his face vibrates with the excitement of a voyeur. Experiencing this extraordinary instant with a certain terror, he is both outside and within the scene. The artist, craving something through painting, seeks it in the model. The work that reflects himself is resistant to speed: Only through patience can he be revealed to himself.



*Figure 82.*  
Jean Rustin (France, b. 1928).  
*The Siesta*, 1972.  
Private collection.  
©ADAGP, Paris, 2012

It may happen that out of the alluvium of sleep furred and feathered creatures suddenly emerge, as in Goya's (1746-1828) *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (fig. 83),

one of eighty etchings that make up the series *Los Caprichos*. Owls of folly and bats of ignorance appear to attack the dreamer, his head buried in his arms: This is the stuff of nightmare.

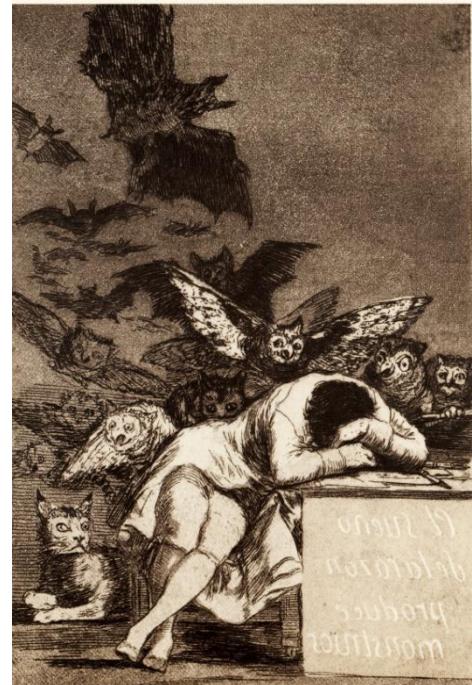


Figure 83.

Francisco de Goya (Spanish, 1746-1828).  
*The sleep of reason produces monsters.*  
*Los Caprichos* etching.  
 Royal Library Albert I,  
 Brussels - Belgium

Like the Scottish pre-Romantic writer James Macpherson, translator/author of *The Works of Ossian* (1765), Henry Fuseli (Johann Heinrich Füssli, 1741-1825) created intriguing atmospheres blending reality and fiction. In *The Nightmare* (fig. 84), a highly-charged dream image/image of a dream, a sleeping woman in a clinging nightgown lies supine on a bed, exposed, vulnerable, her head hanging down. An incubus, a demon with simian features, sits on her upper body; behind her, a horse's head parts the red velvet curtains. The painting is at once a fantasy and a literal representation of a “night-mare”. In this mixture of darkness and light, evil and innocence, the night reveals what the day conceals.

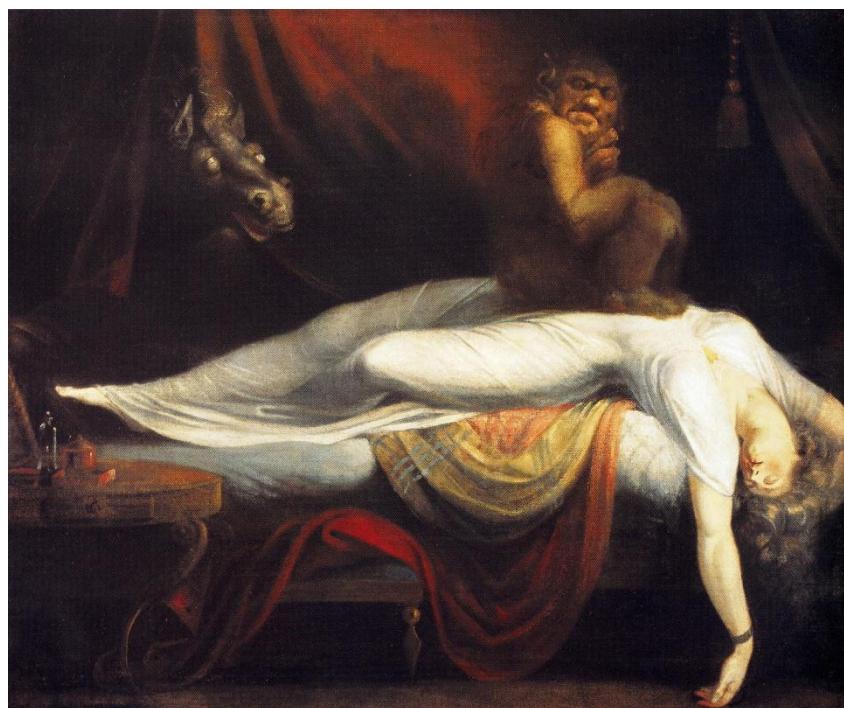


Figure 84.  
 Johann Heinrich Fuseli  
 (Switzerland, 1741 – G.B.1825).  
*The Nightmare*, 1781.  
 Oil on canvas, 101.6 x 127cm.  
 Institute of Arts, Detroit - USA

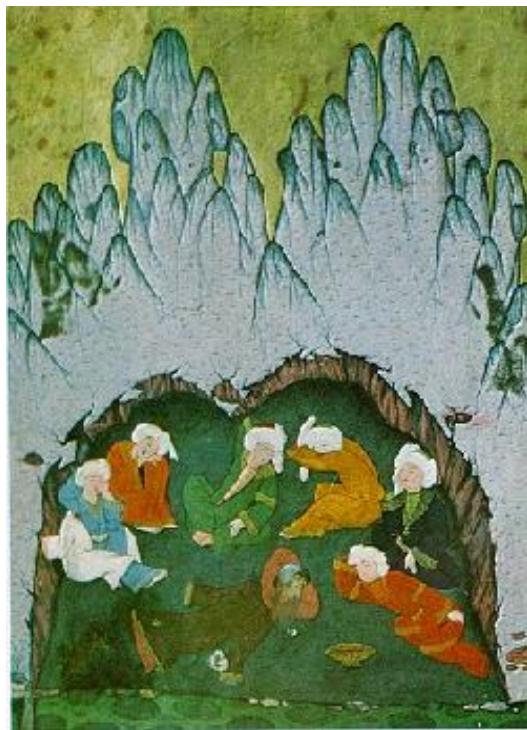
In his *Lady Macbeth Sleepwalking* (fig. 85), Fuseli does not focus, as in *The Nightmare* (fig. 84), on an eerie sensualism, but rather on the fantastic. Indeed, in this painting, he bores into the darkness of madness and crime and the trance-like state they induce. Through the darkness of the castle, Lady Macbeth carries the firebrand of her guilty conscience; in a corner, a shadowy doctor and a fascinated woman cringe. The work shows Fuseli's adoption of Edmund Burke's concept of the Sublime: What is dark, uncertain and confused moves the imagination to awe. Indeed, in his staging of Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking, Fuseli allows us not only to imagine the monsters that breed in the darkness of her unconscious, but also to feel in our bones the permeability between normality and madness.

Figure 85.  
*Johann Heinrich Fuseli,*  
*(Switzerland, 1741 – G.B., 1825).*  
*Lady Macbeth sleepwalking*  
*(Shakespeare, Macbeth,*  
*Act V, Scene I).*  
*Painting, 221 x 160 cm.*  
*The Louvre, Paris - France.*



We close this chapter with a legend concerning hypersomnia (excessive sleepiness).

*The legend: During the persecution of Decius (250 CE), seven Christians (perhaps brothers) took refuge in a cave after having courageously resisted the governor of Ephesus' attempts to force them to renounce their faith. The governor had the cave walled up; the Christians were presumed dead. The martyrs, however, had only fallen asleep. Many years later (158 or 197), in the year 408 or 447, during the reign of the very Christian Theodosius II, they woke up, believing that they had simply slept over a single night. One of them was sent out of the cave, miraculously opened, to buy provisions; in town, he was amazed to see the sign of the cross on the doors. He also astounded the merchants by presenting them with coins from the time of Decius.*



*Figure 86.*  
Anonyme (Turquie, 16e siècle).  
*The sevent sleepers,*  
In *The important people in history,*  
1583.  
Miniature. Topkapi Museum,  
Istanbul - Turkey

An article in Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique* is devoted to this legend. With variations, this story is also told in the Islamic world. According to the Quran, the miraculous sleep lasted 309 years. At Ephesus, as in other Muslim countries, the seven sleepers continue to be honored. Every year, tens of thousands of pilgrims, both Muslim and Christian, pray and meditate at the House of the Virgin Mary and at the Cave of Ephesus. The miniature image, *The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus* (fig. 86), is a perfect example of the rich colours and luminous tones typical of the Ottoman painters of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

## 6. Dreams, the progeny of sleep

“We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep.” The richness of the words which Shakespeare, in Act IV of *The Tempest*, placed in Prospero’s mouth needs no emphasizing.

*Dreams abound in art, as they do in the Bible. “And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it” (Genesis 28:12). In Jacob’s Dream (fig. 87), a painting by Nicolas Dipre, a 15<sup>th</sup> century Provençal painter, God, standing amidst a cluster of puffball clouds from which a ladder descends, blesses Jacob and announces to him: “The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed” (Genesis 28:13).*



Jacob’s haggard face expresses the fatigue of his journeying. At a place called Haran (which he later names “Bethel”, meaning “House of God”), he sleeps with his head on a stone, dust in the folds of his loose-flowing garment. The whole painting is executed in pale yellow-browns and burnt reds, with the rocks standing out against a luminous sky that darkens towards the top of the painting. Lacking mathematical precision, the illusion of perspective is nevertheless in place. The immobility of the landscape and the stillness of the Patriarch are disturbed only by the motion of the angels ascending or descending the ladder.

*Figure 87.  
Nicolas Dipre  
(Known in Provence, France,  
from 1495 to 1531).  
Jacob's dream. Painting.  
Petit Palais Museum, Avignon - France*

In 1639, José de Ribera (1591-1652) produced his version of *Jacob’s Dream* (fig. 88). In its use of the image of a shepherd resting in the countryside, it has a touch of the profane, and even the voluptuous, about it. Lying on a slab of stone, a tree inclining sharply behind him, Jacob sleeps with his weight on his left shoulder, his head in his hand. Demonstrating Ribera’s delicate sense of colour, the register moves from saturated lilac through a range of violets to watered black. The divine presence and the ladder itself are suggested in the diagonal wash of light that illuminates the sky and brings Jacob’s features into focus. In this work of resonant austerity, there is something timeless in the mysterious end-of-day atmosphere and something carnal in the gentle sweetness; a drama is nevertheless suggested. Ribera’s supreme achievement in this painting is to have evoked the miraculous dream through an austere realism.



Figure 88. Jusepe de Ribera (Spanish, 1591-1652). *The dream of Jacob*, 1639.  
Canvas, 179 x 233 cm. Prado Museum, Madrid - Spain.

Marc Chagall's (1887-1985) staging of Jacob's Dream (fig. 89), in the form of a diptych, shows the Patriarch asleep while his dream animates itself all around him. On the left panel, acrobatic angels, reminiscent of Chagall's beloved circus, move gracefully around a rickety ladder; on the right panel, an angel bears the divine light in the form of a menorah illuminating the blue darkness. Chagall's characteristic intermingling of sacred and profane is fully in evidence in this painting.



Figure 89. Marc Chagall (Russia, 1887 - France, 1985). *The Dream of Jacob*, 1960-1966.  
Oil on canvas, 195 x 278 cm. National Museum of the Marc Chagall Biblical Message,  
Nice - France. ©ADAGP, Paris, 2012

As a medium of dreams, sleep is a favourable terrain for premonitions. Indeed, legendary dreams arise in sleep and prophetic storms are prepared, making sleep a fabulous springboard for the imaginary. The renowned Dream of the Magi (fig. 90), with its air of child-like credulity, shows the three wise men sleeping side by side, a circular blanket folding its embroidered stone over them. They decorate a capital of stippled stone in the chapter house of the Romanesque Saint-Lazare d'Autun Cathedral in Burgundy, France (12th century).

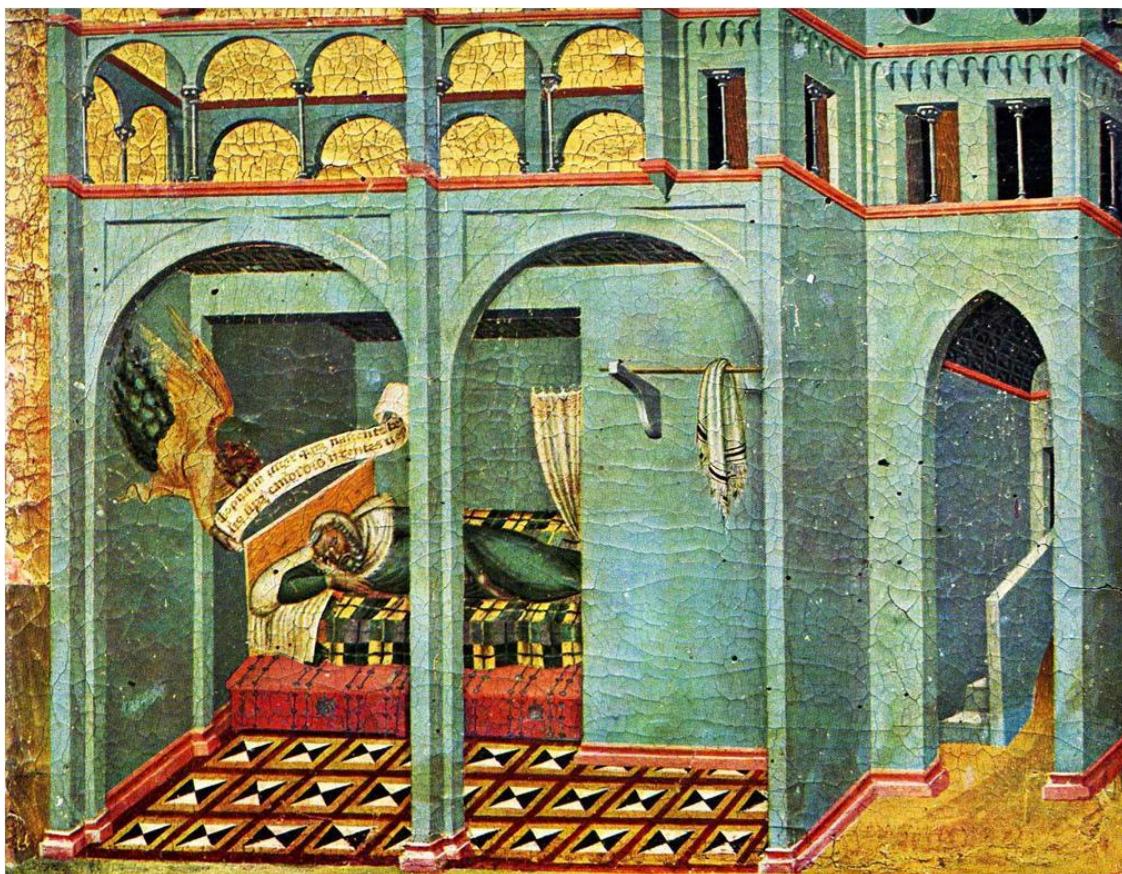


Figure 90.- Master Gislebertus of Autun (France, 12th century). *The Dream of the Magi*, 1130-1135. Saint Lazare Cathedral, Autun - France

With one hand, the angel points to the star that will guide them to Bethlehem; with the other, it awakens one of the sleeping Magi with a touch of the hand. Fulfilling its role of messenger, the angel thus links the astral and the earthly, the human and the divine. The four Biblical figures thus find themselves spiritually connected, thanks to a Burgundian stone-cutter who transposed the intangible into touch, the mystery of divine transmission into the solid and visible. A page in the open book of spiritual edification, could this sculpture, for those seeking the divine, show the way? In the undulations of its relief, it contains enough naïveté, innocent simplicity and affability to move, here and now, hearts to higher things. Nights were dark, then, and light could be found in the monasteries and churches of Europe, determined to develop the religion derived from a faraway desert tribe.

In what order shall we present the multiplicity of images featuring dreams and premonitions? Let us opt for a chronological order.

In pre-Renaissance paintings, where “illogicality” is a convention, the severity of the composition is often attenuated when it comes to painting a predella (a series of small paintings in a long narrow strip forming the lower edge of an altarpiece). In *The Annunciation to Sobac* (fig. 91), Pietro Lorenzetti’s (1280-1348) panel of the predella of the Carmelite altarpiece, an angel announces in a dream to Sobac, the father of the prophet Elijah, that his son will found the Carmelite order.



*Figure 91.- Pietro Lorenzetti (Italian, 1288/90-1348). The Annunciation to Sobac, 1328-1329. Panel of the predella of the altarpiece of the Carmelites. Tempera on wood, 37 x 44 cm. Pinacoteca, Siena - Italy.*

The sleeper lies in an alcove, clearly visible through the big openings in the architecture. The check pattern of the blanket echoes the geometrical motif of the floor tiles, while the dreamlike architecture features subtle gradations of green-grey trimmed in Siena red. Above, arches resting on graceful columns stand out against a wall of burnt gold.

Piero della Francesca, in Constantine's Dream (fig. 92), depicts the legend which holds that Constantine the Great was prompted, in a dream, to embrace the Christian faith (indeed, he was the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity). On the eve of the battle of the Milvian bridge on the Tiber, the dreaming Constantine saw an angel pointing to a cross in the sky and heard it say, "By this sign shalt thou conquer".

The scene takes place at night. We see, through the open tent, the emperor in his brightly-covered bed. In the foreground, two sentries stand guard, lit by the light emanating from the angel bursting in from above, while an attendant sits facing us on the edge of the bed platform. The sentries are convincing in their Roman soldier's garb; molded in three dimensions by the light, casting a shadow, they mark a break with the medieval convention of flat figures.



*Figure 92.*  
*Piero della Francesca*  
*(Italy, c. 1416-1492).*  
*The Dream of Constantine, circa 1460.*  
*Detail of a fresco.*  
*Church of San Francesco,*  
*Arezzo - Italy.*

The artist, in this geometrically precise composition, has light play a capital role; it floods the cone of the tent to great volumetric effect, and grades the colour of the curtains to suggest depth in space. As in the Dipre, Ribera and Chagall renditions of Jacob's dream (fig. 87-89), the effulgence evokes the divine. It is worth insisting on the volumetric effects Piero della Francesca, like Masaccio before him, pursued so audaciously. Indeed, these effects mark a real innovation, and are brilliantly realized in the rotundity and folds of the tent, the alternation of dark and light in the interior, and the subtle nuances in the rendering of the back-lit sentry in the foreground and the side-lit one facing us. The overall atmosphere is supernatural; everything is serene and alive. Constantine's Dream is a masterpiece that has become all the more valuable since the destruction in 1944 of Andrea Mantegna's fresco for the Eremitani Church in Padua.

In the West's storehouse of dreams, mutability rules: Ceaselessly the arts recreate the myriad forms dreams take. Or, to use a different metaphor: Infinite and open to all forms of interaction, the movie of humanity's dreams never stops unspooling. In the cinema of any particular sleeper, however, it may flicker brightly or not at all, delighting in being unpredictable, right up until the moment all lights go out for good.

In Antonio de Pereda's (1608-1678) *The Knight's Dream* (fig. 93), a young hidalgo dozes in an armchair before an allegorical table filled with items of vanitas: a bouquet of flowers, a bishop's mitre; books, coins, jewels; a globe, a gun, a clock; a violin, a sword, a mask. And in the midst of all this, a human skull reminds us of the transience of life, the futility of pleasure, and the certainty of death. Lest anyone miss the message, a lovely angel in the bloom of youth, looking at the sleeping knight, unfurls a banner that reads, *Aeterna pungit et occidit volat* (Eternally it stings and kills swiftly), the "it" referring to the bow and arrow depicted in the middle of the banner. The moralistic message, part and parcel of this Baroque genre, is beautifully staged by the still life painter: The careless sleep of conscience visited by the lightness of divine grace makes the darkness radiant.



*Figure 93.*  
Antonio de Pereda  
(Spain, 1608-1678).  
*El sueño del caballero*  
(*The Knight's Dream*),  
mid-seventeenth century.  
Oil on canvas, 152 x 217 cm.  
Academia de San Fernando,  
Madrid - Spain.

In *The Shepherd's Dream*, from 'Paradise Lost' (fig. 94), Fuseli, this time inspired by Milton's epic poem, once again depicts a world of imagination, dreams and the supernatural. Drawing directly on a verse where the poet speaks of revelling fairies by a forest bewitching a passing peasant, the painter shows these fantastical creatures linking arms and whirling above a sleeping shepherd, while a congregation of imps, fairies and elves busy themselves all around him. Connoisseurs of English folklore will make out Queen Mabs, the bringer of nightmares, sitting on the stone steps on the right, while the most observant viewers will notice the demonic incubus (given a central place in *The Nightmare*, fig. 84), attached to her by a chain, pointing at the sleeping man. The building behind Queen Mabs may represent the ivory portal, described by Homer and Virgil, through which delusive dreams emerge. Nightmare and dream, then, once again blend in Fuseli's work.

*Figure 94.*  
.Johann Heinrich Fuseli  
(Switzerland, 1741 - Great  
Britain, 1825).  
*The Shepherd's Dream*,  
1762.  
Oil on canvas,  
154.5 x 215.5 cm.  
Tate Gallery, London - G.B.



Ossian's Dream (fig. 95), by Ingres, is a large-scale depiction of a scene from James Macpherson's epic Ossian poems. (Macpherson's *The Works of Ossian* was widely influential; it gave a great impetus to the development of the Romantic movement and touched not only Walter Scott and Goethe, for example, but also Napoleon and Jefferson). In it, we see the Gaelic bard asleep, leaning on his harp, and dreaming that he sees his dead son Oscar (depicted in a warrior's helmet); Oscar's wife, Eviralina; Fingal, the bard's father, and Starnos, king of the snows. An Ingres filled with enthusiasm for the irrational funnels his filtered light from Ossian in the foreground to the parade of phantasmal figures in the background, extending like timeless statues into the picture's vanishing point.



Figure 95.  
Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres  
(France, 1780-1867).  
*Ossian's Dream*, 1813.  
Oil on canvas, 335 x 194 cm.  
Ingres Museum, Montauban – France

Puvis de Chavannes' (1824-1898) *The Dream* (fig. 96) is of an altogether different nature: Classical in its scenography, clean in its lines, the painting opts for a muted palette of chalky colors. The content of the sleeping traveller's dream is given by what the diaphanous female figures hold in/drop from their hands: roses, a laurel and coins; love, glory and wealth. As insubstantial as the dream itself, it would take no more than a blink of an eye to make these floating figures vanish.



Figure 96.  
Pierre Puvis de  
Chavannes Cecil  
(France, 1824-1883).  
*The Dream*, 1883. Oil  
on canvas, 82 x 102 cm.  
Musée d'Orsay,  
Paris - France.

The contrast of these chimerical creatures with the exuberant figure in *Moment of Creation*, Harpy in a Dream (fig. 97), the work of another symbolist painter, Jacek

Malczewski (1854-1929), couldn't be more striking. Indeed, whereas in Puvis' painting the atmosphere is aseptic, not to say insipid, here the hallucinating dreamer is subject to a highly erotic charge. The man depicted in the painting is in fact a self-portrait of the artist, and it is no accident that he has placed the robust curves of his fantasy figure, a kind of carnal temptation, at the top of the painting. Is the artist expressing his own desire or is it the harpy who will end up pouncing on her prey? Smiling in her sleep, she basks in her own power: She knows the fascination she exerts over the man is irresistible.



*Figure 97.*  
Jacek Malczewski  
(Poland, 1854-1929).  
*Moment of Creation,*  
*Harpy in a Dream, 1907.*  
Oil on cardboard,  
72 x 92 cm.  
Private Collection,  
Poznan-Poland

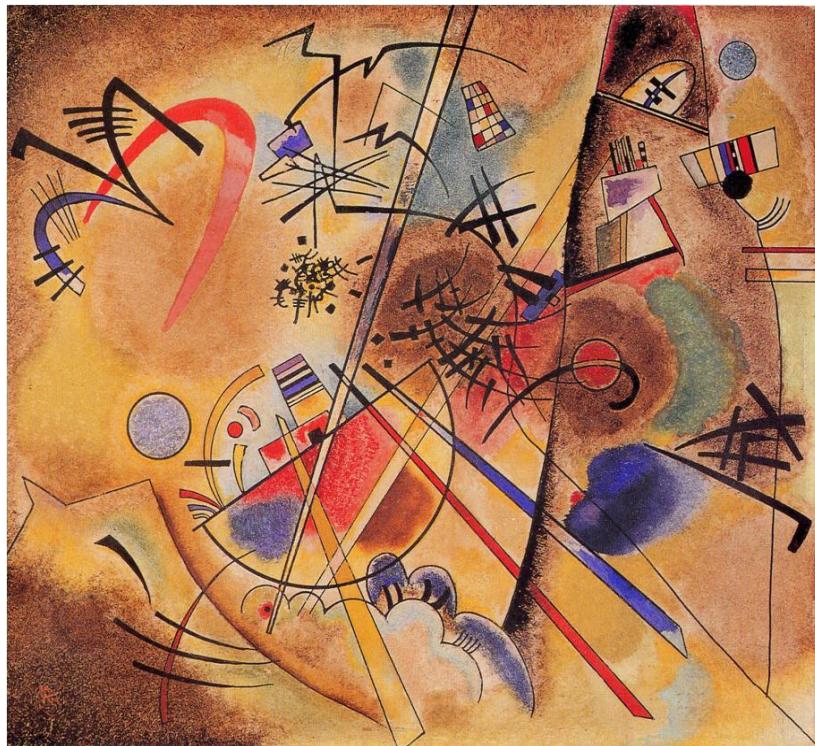
Literally teeming with exotic life, Henri Rousseau's (1844-1910) *The Dream* (fig. 98) is as exuberant as the jungle it depicts. Amidst the lush equatorial vegetation, he places a pair of lions, a bird of paradise, a serpent, an elephant, a jungle inhabitant playing a horn, and... a shapely nude stretched out on a sofa, her pale white skin contrasting with its crimson velvet. Rousseau, customs official (hence his nickname Le Douanier) and self-taught artist, could have made his the Latin motto, Horas non numero nisi serenas ("I only remember the happy moments"). Indeed, only an artist as instinctive as he was, in tune with his genius and touched by grace, could evoke such uncomplicated charm. He believed himself, in all modesty, to be making an accurate observation when, as Picasso reported, he told the Spanish painter, "You're good in the Egyptian genre; I in the modern style".



*Figure 98.*  
Henri Rousseau  
(France, 1844-1910).  
*The Dream, 1910.*  
Oil on canvas,  
204.5 x 299 cm.  
Museum of Modern Art,  
New York - USA

In the 20th century, largely during the period between the two world wars, the Surrealists sought to liberate desire via techniques aimed at reproducing the mechanism of dreams. Painting was conceived as a site of privileged access to the imagination and its deeper truths, while the adoption of startling juxtapositions was to be its preferred technique. André Breton, the principal theorist of the movement, conceived Surrealism as the union of the real and the imaginary, two concepts usually considered to be poles apart. As he wrote in the first Manifesto of Surrealism (1924), “I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality”.

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), as devoted to theory as to practice, briefly subscribed to this vision. The year following the publication of the first Surrealist manifesto was also the year that he, the initiator of purely abstract art with his First Abstract Watercolor (1910), painted Little Dream in Red (fig. 99). Throwing off the weight of the past, he paints a fervour of parallel and intersecting lines, variously subdivided rectangles and whole or segmented circles against a ground where colour is applied in a gaseous or powdered state. The dream is conceived as a syncopation, an implosion contained within a netting of forms stretched across an undefined space where neither top nor bottom nor any sense of scale exists. In a word, the dream is cosmic, without beginning or end.



*Figure 99. -Wassily Kandinsky (Russia, 1866 - France, 1944).  
Little Dream in Red, 1925. Oil on paper on cardboard, 35.5 x 41.2 cm.  
Kunstmuseum, Bern - Switzerland.*

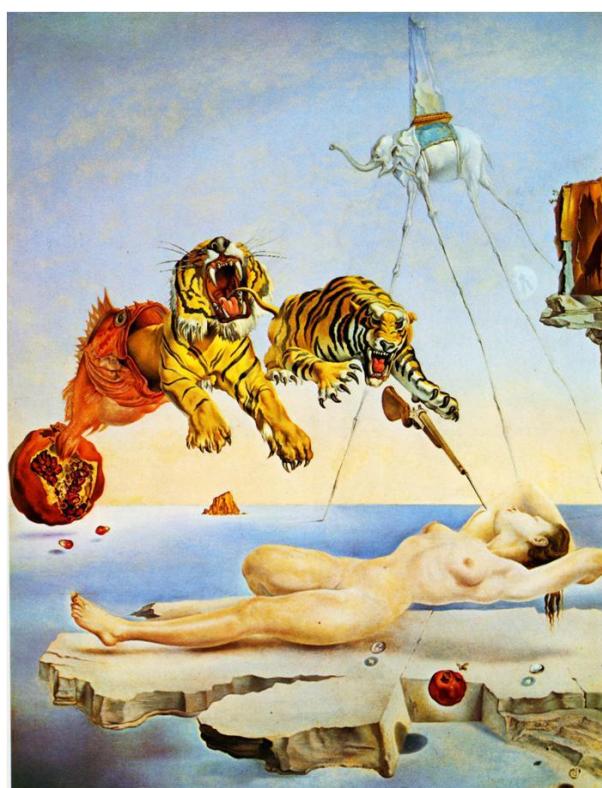
In 1931, shortly before the publication of the second Surrealist manifesto (which he signed alongside Luis Bunuel and Yves Tanguy, among others), Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) painted his *Dream* (fig. 100). The bust of a woman imposes her blind presence on the viewer: her bronze skin is turning virescent, and her hair is as snaky as the Medusa's. In the distance, humanoid figures struggle before a red form that dwarfs them. In Dalí's madness there is always method, and here that method produces a more coherent result than the artist's definition of it might lead one to expect: The paranoid-critical method (as he calls it) is “a

spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based on the critical and systematic objectivity of the associations and interpretations of delirious phenomena.”

*Figure 100*  
*Salvador Dali (Spanish, 1904-1989).*  
*The Dream, 1931.*  
*Oil on canvas, 96 x 96 cm.*  
*The Cleveland Museum of Art,*  
*Cleveland-Etats-Unis*  
 © Salvador Dali, Gala-Salvador Dali  
 Foundation/ARS, New York)/  
 ADAGP, Paris, 2012



In Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee around a Pomegranate a Second before Awakening (fig. 101), Dali gives a fine example of his method of constructing dreamscapes. This painting, he said, set out “to express for the first time in images Freud’s discovery of the typical dream of which the lengthy narrative is in fact the instantaneous consequence of a chance event which causes the sleeper to wake up. Thus, as the fall of a curtain rod onto the neck of a sleeping person might simultaneously awaken him and trigger a long dream that ends with the fall of a guillotine blade, the buzzing of a bee here provokes the sensation of the sting which will awaken Gala.” (Gala, of course, is Dali’s Muse and wife).

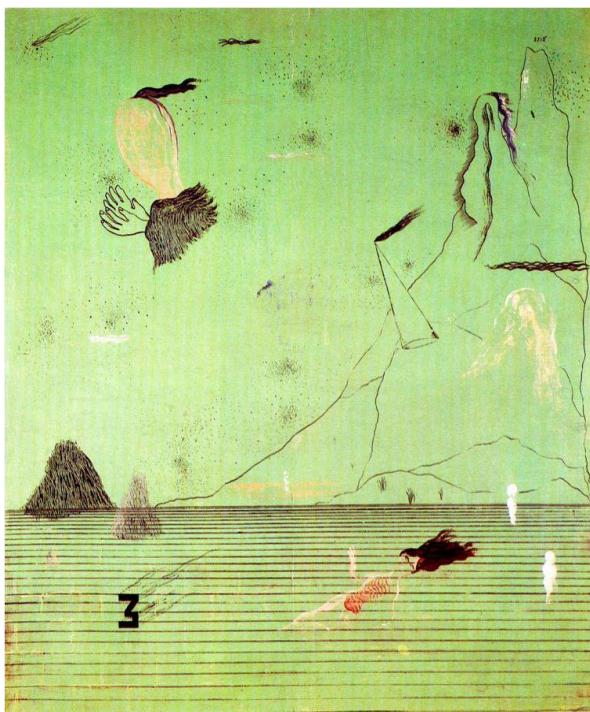


©Salvador Dali, Fundacio Gala-Salvador Dali/ADAGP, Paris, 2012

As if propelled by an explosion in the ruptured pomegranate, the evocations of the bee (the tigers’ black-and-yellow stripes, the bayonet/stinger) surge towards the floating dreamer, while an elephant with string-like stilts and an obelisk on its back walks on the water. The burlesque imagination of the painter, with its “startling juxtapositions”, displays the coherence of dreams. For Dali, dreams reveal the soul’s tribulations, the soul which in sleep turns away from the external world to reveal its true nature.

*Figure 101.*  
*Salvador Dali (Spanish, 1904-1989).*  
*Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee around a Pomegranate a Second before Awakening, 1944.*  
*Oil on canvas, 51 x 41 cm.*  
 Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection,  
 Madrid - Spain.

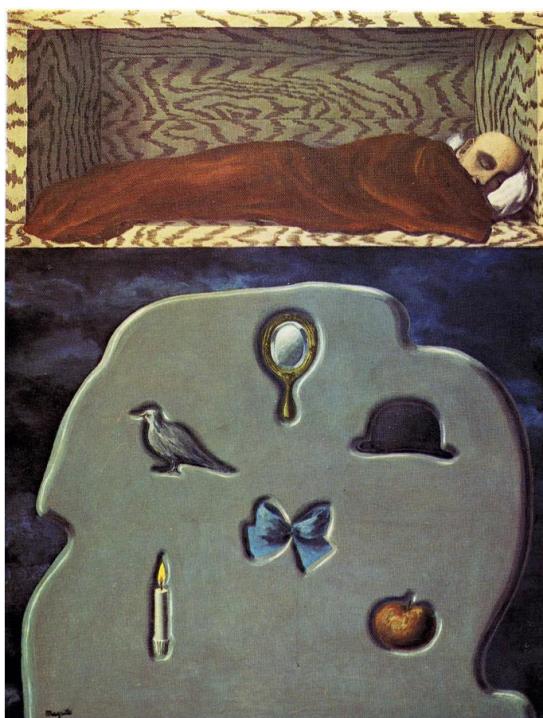
Dreams derive their substance from the medium in which they arise; they adopt particular disguises and intermingle with labile realities.



In Yves Tanguy's (1900-1955) *Dreamer (Sleeper)* (fig. 102), we float in a weightless landscape while the dreamer drowns: With the faith of the sceptic, the artist effaces himself in the airy green.

Figure 102.  
Yves Tanguy  
(France, 1900 - United States, 1955).  
*Dreamer (Sleeper), Réveuse (Dormeuse)* 1927.  
Oil on canvas, 55 x 46 cm.  
Private Collection, France  
©ADAGP, Paris, 2012

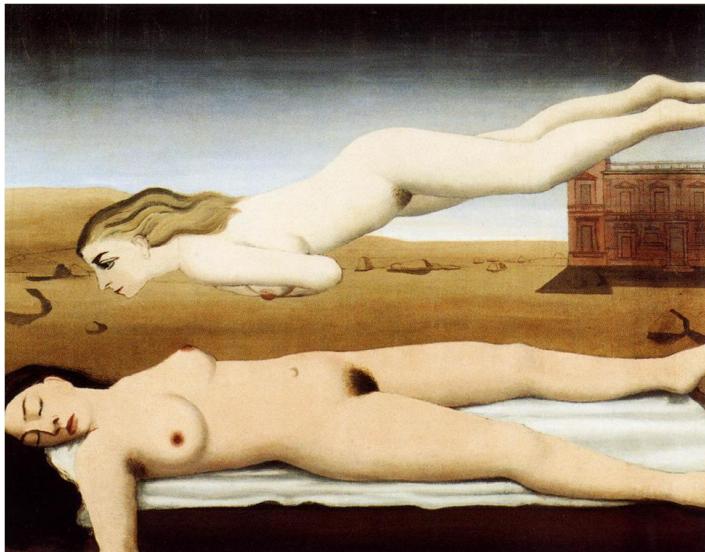
Art is unafraid to change forms; indeed, it tirelessly seeks to do so, since one of its very *raisons d'être* is to modify our perception of reality. It refuses routine in the shaping of a reality that belongs to it alone. René Magritte (1898-1967), with his deadpan sense of humour and deadly serious intentions, is one of the best illustrations of this principle. Master of the "startling juxtaposition" and the surprising shift in perspective, the artist has constructed a system wherein the ferment of the absurd contends with an ironic disalienation. With Magritte, art is to be found where one least expects to find it.



Mockery, acidity, provocation may all be harnessed as he attempts to remove himself from stale patterns of seeing and judging. In *The Reckless Sleeper* (fig. 103), unease and disorientation arise at the sight of a man sleeping in a sort of coffin while below him, everyday objects embedded in a stone tablet assert their banality. Just what does the dream consist in? The mystery remains.

Figure 103.  
René Magritte (Belgian, 1898-1967).  
*The Reckless Sleeper, Le Dormeur téméraire*, 1928.  
Oil on canvas, 116 x 81 cm.  
Tate Gallery, London - G.B.  
©ADAGP, Paris, 2012

Surrealism and the metaphysical paintings were to mark a decisive influence on Paul Delvaux (1897-1994) style. In 1935 he painted *The Dream* (fig. 104), featuring a pale-skinned nude suspended above a serene sleeper, another female nude.



Will the wingless angel, this equivocal visitor, awaken the senses of the dreamer in whom desire still sleeps? Without any extravagance, Delvaux suggests the first stirrings of female love, foregrounded, substantial, and unaffected.

Figure 104.- Paul Delvaux  
(Belgian, 1897-1994).  
*The Dream*, 1935.  
Oil on canvas, 148 x 173 cm.  
Private Collection  
©Fondation Paul Delvaux, St  
Idesbald/ADAGP, Paris, 2012

Frida Kahlo's (1910-1954) *The Dream* (fig. 105) offers a spectacle of the artist coming to terms with her pain. In a bed suspended against a cloudy sky, she portrays herself asleep under a bright yellow spread; from the base of the bed, as a sign of her fate foretold, the climbing shrub known as "Crown of Thorns" crawls up to cover her. On the canopy of the bed, that fate is made clear: The spectre of her death in the form of a skeletal figure lies stiffly on its side, explosives wound around its legs. The skull rests on two cushions, echoing the dreamer's pillowied head, while in its hand the skeletal figure holds funeral flowers (or is it a macabre bridal bouquet?). This silent allegory, then, is a vision of the death that for Frieda, bed-ridden for long periods with a broken back, would come fifteen years later. Here, as an exemplary Surrealist, the artist portrays herself simultaneously with her skeletal double, painting "the big sleep" before and after. In this Janus-like self-depiction, then, the artist has Janus, the god of passages and bridges, open the door to the future before having closed the one that shuts the present.

Figure 105.  
Frida Kahlo  
(Mexico, 1910-1954).  
*The Dream (The bed)*, 1940.  
Selma and Nesuhi Ertegun  
Collection,  
New York - USA  
© 2012 Banco de Mexico Diego  
Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums  
Trust, Mexico, D.F./ADAGP,  
Paris, 2012



In the post-WWII period, artists maintained such formal inventiveness in the representation of sleep and dreams. Eduardo Chillida (1924-2002) offers a fine example. In the age of the atom and stainless steel, he takes up the tradition of Vulcan and works out of metal a Dream Anvil (fig. 106). The sculpture is forged from two iron bars folded into ellipses then made to represent the process of breaking up the dictatorship. The misfit between the dream-signifying object and the raw matter meant to transmit its message provokes a piquant shock. The tough and the tender, opposite by nature, here come together to seal a new alliance.



*Figure 106.*  
Eduardo Chillida  
(Spanish, 1924-2002).  
*Dream Anvil No. 9, 1959.*  
Iron, 47 x 55 x 32 cm.  
Kunsthaus  
Zurich - Switzerland.  
©Zabalaga-Leku /ADAGP,  
Paris, 2012

Jacques Doucet (1924-1994) was a co-founder of CoBrA (Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam), a group of artists created in response to the quarrel between abstraction and figuration.

Doucet's painting, *The Dream* (fig. 107), is an excellent example of his style of lyrical abstraction. There is magic in his colour variations, but the forms viewed up close, because of their instantaneity, appear to be a jumble of blobs, a meaningless assembly of viscous emulsions. Viewed from further back, however, they easily yield their charms, acquiring a consistency that resembles a suspension of pigments settled on the bottom of a liquid.

*Figure 107.*  
Jacques Doucet (France, 1924-1994).  
*The dream, before 1970.*  
Private Collection  
©ADAGP, Paris, 2012



Dreamy abstractions with an aura of the unusual: Such is *Dream* (fig. 108) by the French painter of Chinese origin, Chu Teh-Chun (b. 1920), a work at once fluid and discontinuous.



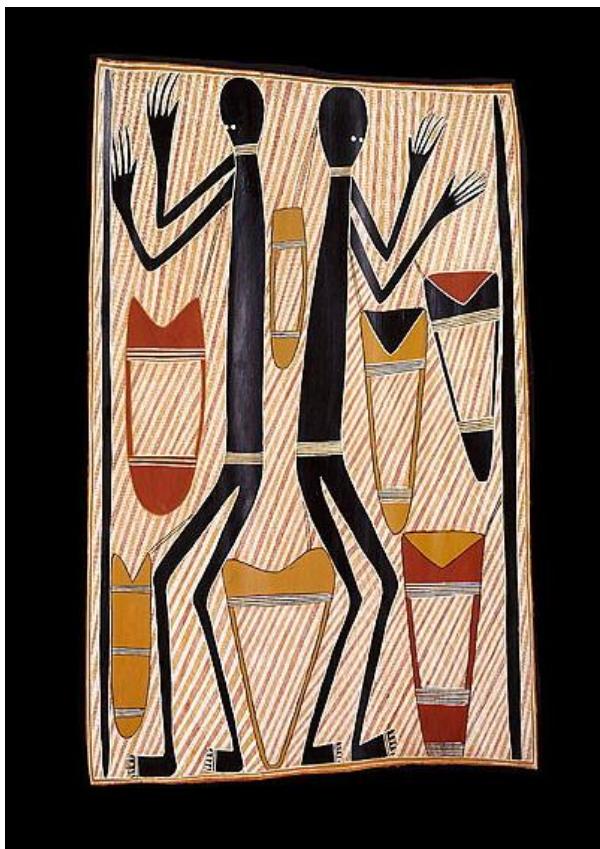
Figure 108. Chu Teh-Chun (born in China in 1920, works in France). *Dream*, 1992.  
Oil on canvas, 130 x 162 cm. Artist's Collection. ©ADAGP, Paris, 2012

François Arnal (b. 1924) inhabits a similar emotional zone, even if his *Dream of Power* (fig. 111) is, a contrario, a humorous, even delirious, euphemism for a restless aspiration (of the organs of sex, depicted in the phase of tumescence or detumescence?). Here, the unconscious is on full display, even if ambushed in the back rooms of sleep. This dream is object and vision bonded.



Figure 109.  
François Arnal (France, 1924).  
*Dream of Power*, 1994.  
Oil and acrylic on canvas. 73 x 60 cm.  
Artist's Collection  
©ADAGP, Paris, 2012

In the Australian bush the Aborigines transmit, usually from mother to child, the techniques of assuring the memorial power of painted images; for this they use either pigments found in nature or—ever since the galleries of Sydney and Melbourne (if not Sotheby's itself) have attracted enthusiasts for their work—fast-drying acrylic paint. These images put synergies into play, synergies concerning not neurophysiological dreams but Dreamtime, the sacred Aboriginal era in which ancestral totemic spirit-beings created the world. It is preferable to see works such as these, characterized by an anthropological function, as spontaneous attempts at visual narratives of exorcism, as aide-mémoires for the community, or as reinforcers of tribal belonging, even if these days such paintings bear individual signatures. Otherwise, how could one interpret a work like George Milpurrurru's (b. 1934) *The Artist's Mother Dreaming* (fig. 110), a dream of Dhuwa honey where two characters standing back-to-back, ochre-colour against bark of eucalyptus, dance amidst containers lighter than air?



*Figure 110.*  
*George Milpurrurru*  
*(Australia, b. 1934). The artist's*  
*mother Dreaming, 1984.*  
*Ochre on bark of Eucalyptus,*  
*111 x 73.5 cm.*  
*National Gallery of Australia,*  
*Canberra - Australia.*  
*© George Milpurrurru /*  
*ADAGP, Paris, 2012*

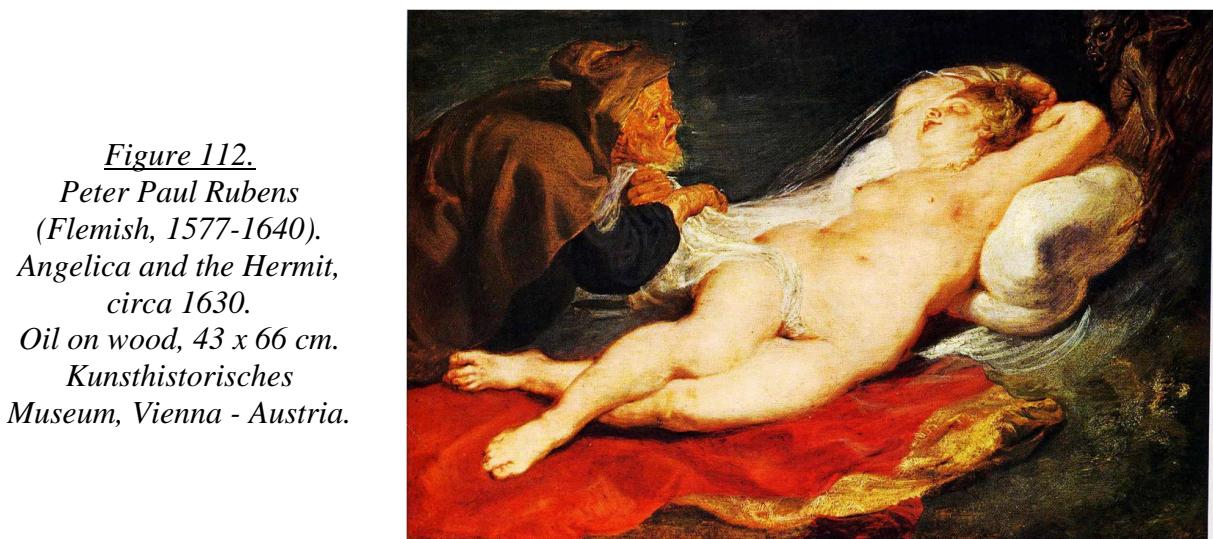
## 7. Ideality and Realism

Historically, the scenario of the sleeping nude is that of modesty caught unguarded, as if a hunter had stumbled upon a sleeping doe. In Greek mythology it is particularly common (chapter 4, fig. 60, 62-64, 67). In Renaissance painting, it was Giorgione (1477-1510) who, in the last year of his life, inaugurated the genre with his *Sleeping Venus* (fig. 111). She reclines languorously on rich velvet cushions and lush drapery; her air of repose conveys unselfconsciousness while her relaxed hand covers her sex. Her tranquil face has the oval shape typical of the Madonna, while the raised right arm that uplifts her breast grounds her in a more earthly womanhood. The harmonious setting of the nude in the landscape, the one's contours echoing the other's curves, and the assumption of the female figure as the primary subject, make Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* the iconic image it has become.



*Figure 111.*  
*Giorgio da Castelfranco,  
 called Giorgione  
 (Italy, 1477-1510).*  
*Sleeping Venus, circa  
 1510. Oil on canvas, 108  
 x 175 cm. Gallery of Old  
 Masters, Dresden -  
 Germany*

Rubens' (1577-1630) *Angelica and the Hermit* (fig. 112) depicts a scene from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*: Angelica, after a demon conjured by the hermit takes control of her horse, ends up stranded on an island; while she is asleep, the hermit attempts to have his way with her. As the old man removes the delicate cloth covering her, the demon behind her stands defiant. The flesh of the heroine, painted in pigments of Venetian luminosity, is set off by the vermillion drapery she lies upon. What is going through her mind at this moment? Her voluptuous pose invites one to imagine.



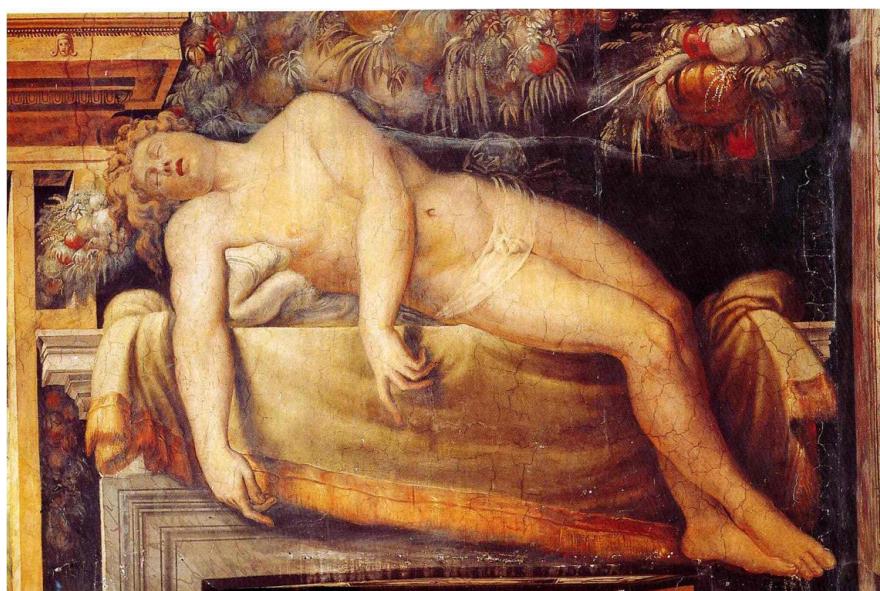
*Figure 112.*  
*Peter Paul Rubens  
 (Flemish, 1577-1640).*  
*Angelica and the Hermit,  
 circa 1630.*  
*Oil on wood, 43 x 66 cm.  
 Kunsthistorisches  
 Museum, Vienna - Austria.*

Botticelli's (1445-1510) Venus and Mars (fig. 115) juxtaposes masculine and feminine beauty in an allegorical image: The near-naked god, virile and smooth as marble, sleeps in post-love bliss; the goddess, alert in her gold-trimmed gown, gazes at him ambiguously, as if wondering, "Do I really know this intimate stranger?". The rose-coloured drapery they lie upon highlights the lovers' symmetry; behind them, shrubs of myrtle, the evergreen aphrodisiac, curtain off a plain meadow. And what about the boisterous acolytes of Bacchus so assiduously ignored by the satisfied lover? Goat-legged, horned and tailed, the little satyrs, playing with his helmet, lance and cuirass, amuse themselves as the warrior rests: Love has disarmed the god of war; love, indeed, has conquered all.



*Figure 113. Sandro Botticelli (Italian, 1445 - 1510). Mars and Venus, circa 1483. Tempera and oil on wood, 69 x 173 cm. National Gallery, London - G.B.*

In the physically awkward pose and the ambiguity of the nude it depicts, Francesco Salviati's (1510-1563) Allegory of Sleep (fig. 114), an overdoor fresco in the Palazzo Ricci-Sacchetti in Rome, asserts its artificiality, its rejection of the harmonious ideals and restrained naturalism typical of his Renaissance peers. Indeed, the subject's red lips and blonde curls sit uneasily with his fortissima donna limbs.



*Figure 114. Francesco Salviati (Italian, 1510-1563). Allegory of sleep. Fresco. Palazzo Ricci-Sacchetti, Rome - Italy.*

Donato Creti (1671-1749), inspired by his fellow Bolognese painters Annibale Carrach and Guido Reni, opted for a monochrome in white and brown oil to render the superbly balanced proportions of his male nude (fig. 115). The finely-measured play of light and shadow, the pose at once modest and provocative, give the work a brooding quality.



Figure 115.-Donato Creti (Italian, 1671-1749).  
Naked male asleep. Brush and brown and white oil on thick paper, 28 x 41 cm.  
Prado Museum, Madrid - Spain.

François Boucher's (1703-1770) Diana Asleep (fig. 116) is a pencil and chalk rendering in his typical rocaille style of a Diana flaunting her modesty.

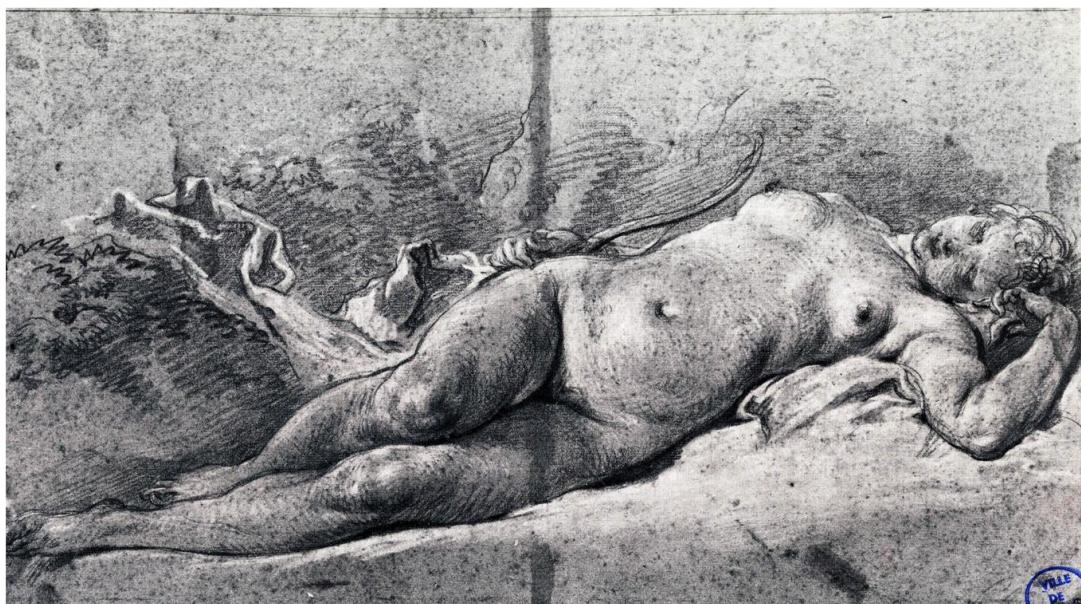


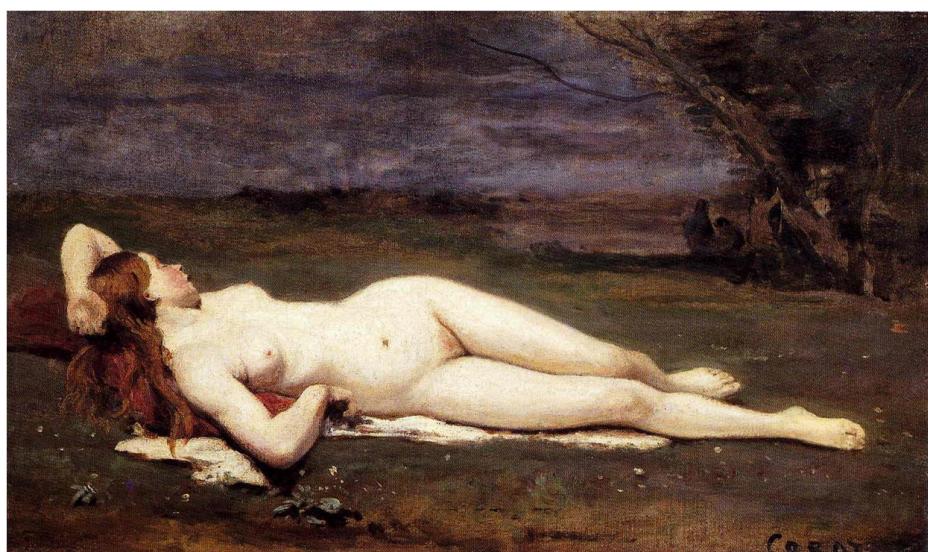
Figure 116.- Francois Boucher (France, 1703-1770). Diana asleep. Sanguine and chalk on gray paper, 23.2 x 38 cm. Ecole des Beaux - Arts, Paris - France

In *Le feu aux poudres* (fig. 117) Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806), “the poet of erotic painting” (as nineteenth-century critic Paul de Saint-Victor called him), gives us another of his rapid-fire renderings of the stirrings of desire. Indulging their curiosity, ribald little angels, one of them brandishing a firebrand, gaze upon the crotch of the robust sleeper. Rosy-pink flesh and silver-grey bedding, a suspension of action in contemplation, concur to create a heady atmosphere.



*Figure 117.*  
Jean - Honore Fragonard  
(France, 1732-1806). «  
*Le Feu aux poudres,*  
circa 1763-1764.  
Oil on canvas, 37 x 45 cm.  
The Louvre,  
Paris - France.

Altogether different from Fragonard is Jean-Baptiste Corot’s (1796-1875) *The Nymph of the Seine* (fig. 120). Indeed, Corot, no stranger to poetic invention, was nevertheless anchored in realism. Baudelaire considered him, at least as far as landscape painting was concerned, the first of the moderns. This early Odalisque is among the first in a series the artist painted throughout his career.

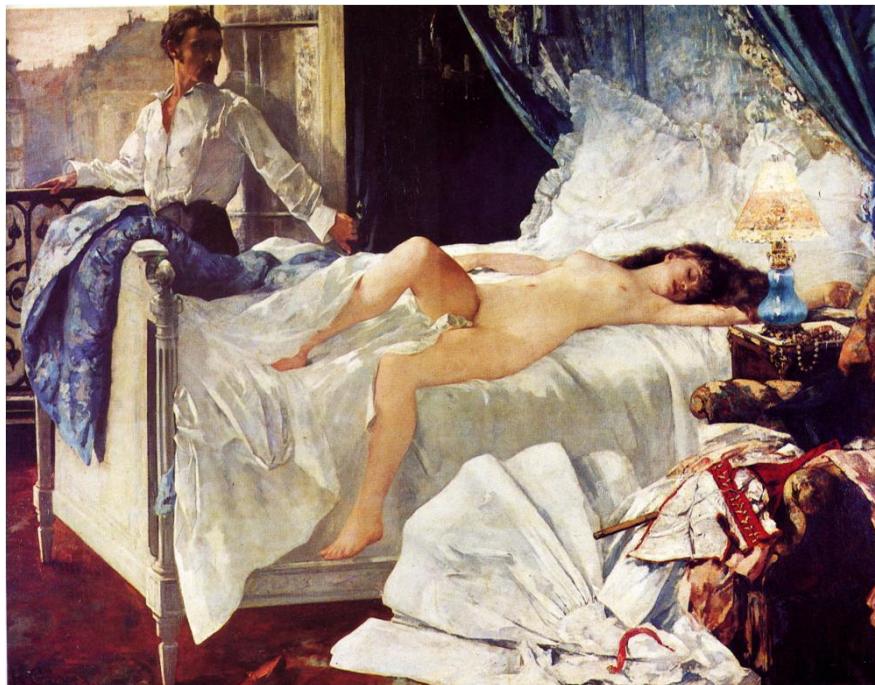


*Figure 118.* - Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot (France, 1796-1875).  
*The Nymph of the Seine*, 1837. Oil on canvas, 30 x 45 cm. Private collection

With something of the Renaissance masters, he depicts a reclining nude in a moody landscape, nature and nude in perfect harmony. Her red hair flows loose, as if to emphasize

her organic link with the landscape, while her long legs and womanly curves testify to Corot's feminine ideal. As the 1996 Corot Exhibition catalogue stated, Corot's oeuvre reflects "the seemingly contradictory tenets of Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Realism, and Naturalism". Courbet would give the nude a greater realism, but who else but Corot could evoke, with such unaffected naturalness and personal poetry, a nude as virtuous as she is provocative, wrapped in the autumnal tones of a rural day?

Henri Gervex (1852-1929) enjoyed a great succès de scandale with *Rolla* (fig. 119), a painting that has become one of the iconic images in the abundant depiction of the demi-monde in French nineteenth-century painting. The scene evokes the last night that Rolla, the dissolute hero of Alfred de Musset's poem, spent with Marion, a poor girl turned prostitute, just before Rolla poisons himself. It was not Marion's pose that caused scandal, but rather the depiction of the clothes on the armchair. Indeed, the man's top hat and the girl's corset, garters and skirt make the characters' respective social statuses explicit, and such a frank depiction of social relations was not acceptable to bourgeois spectators. Even the sexual metaphor of the man's cane sticking through the girl's corset, one end of the diagonal running through the girl's sex to the man's head, was not as "offensive" as this. For the Salon jury that refused *Rolla*, this was simply "too much reality" to bear.



*Figure 119. Henri Gervex (France, 1852 - 1929), Rolla, 1878. Oil on canvas, 175 x 220 cm. Museum of Fine - Arts, Bordeaux – France*

A number of artists found in the sleeping nude an occasion to charm the viewer/critic or, failing that, to provoke him. During a period when virtue was so easily offended, when defenders of bourgeois taste and public morals would denounce in a self-righteous chorus the work of independent artists, these painters would take liberties with the accepted code. With courage and daring, Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), an artist that no sound and fury could shake from his "régime of freedom", painted *Le Sommeil* (The Sleep, fig. 120). Vividly clear and life-size, the painting shows two female lovers in a languorous caress, while a broken string of pearls and a hairpin on the bed make it clear that these are not academic nymphs,

purged of earthly flesh. Once again, sleep serves as a pretext to free art from the constraints of archaic social codes. The painting may flatter the taste of the Turkish diplomat who commissioned it, but it remains as fresh today as it was in 1866, the year of its creation. One only has to consider that Courbet's most famous violation of taboo, *The Origin of the World*, is today on open display (after almost 130 years in clandestinity) to measure the distance come—and the time it has taken—since *Sleepers* first opened the way. Indeed, when it comes to sex, painting is no longer the incendiary medium it once was. This, in fact, may be something to regret, for as Degas said, "A painting is a thing which requires as much cunning, trickery and vice as the perpetration of a crime" (R.H. Ives Gammell, *The Shop-Talk of Edgar Degas*). Having lost sex as a source of transgression, today's postmodern provocations make do with much lesser things.



*Figure 120.*  
Gustave Courbet  
(France, 1819-1877).  
*Le Sommeil*  
(the Sleep), 1866.  
Musée du Petit Palais,  
Paris - France

Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901), whose aristocratic parents' inbreeding left him with a man's torso and a child's legs, contradicted his state by mastering in art the human body in motion, and by making himself at home—literally—in brothels and cabarets. In *Alone* (fig. 121), an oil-on-cardboard study for a lithograph, he exploits the fluidity of the medium to produce a snapshot, as it were, of a prostitute flat on her back on an unmade bed, abandoning herself to her exhaustion.



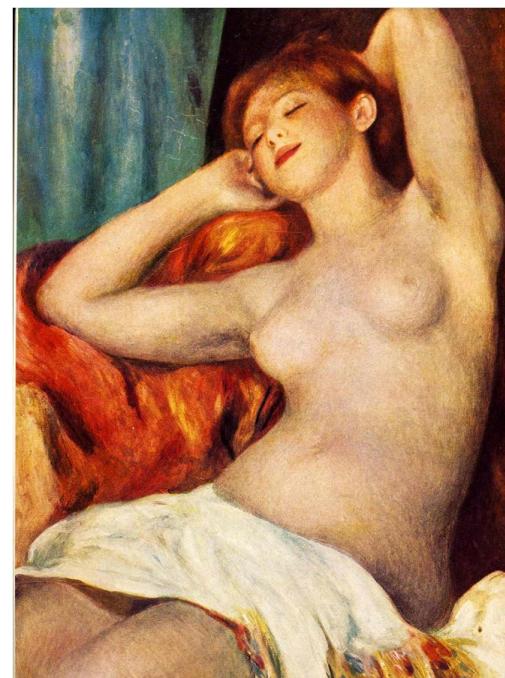
*Figure 121.*  
Henri de Toulouse-  
Lautrec  
(France, 1864-1901).  
*Alone*, 1896.  
Oil on cardboard,  
31 x 40 cm.  
Musée d'Orsay,  
Paris – France

Van Gogh (1853-1890) the martyr, van Gogh the madman, van Gogh the saint: Let us try not to impose our romantic clichés on his painting. And yet, the weight of the documentary evidence is overwhelming: van Gogh, the replacement son of a mourning mother, had miserably unhappy relationships with women (A.J. Lubin, *Stranger on the Earth*. H.Holt & Co., NY, 1972) and sought refuge in his friendships with prostitutes. Attracted to “despised” women on whose “half-faded face” life has left its mark, he depicts here, in *Nude Woman Reclining* (fig. 122), one such figure. It is a small-format painting in which clarity of line gives way to milky colour. The woman is shown in the now-classical diagonal pose, with no attempt to make her conventionally desirable. Emile Bernard, van Gogh’s fellow artist and friend, wrote of Vincent’s “extreme humanity for prostitutes”; if van Gogh, in his life, tended to idealize them into madonnas, there is no evidence of that in this particular work.



*Figure 122.*  
Vincent Van Gogh  
(Dutch, 1853-1890).  
*Reclining nude woman*,  
1887.  
Oil on canvas,  
24 x 41 cm.  
Van Gogh Museum,  
Amsterdam - Holland

Sleep can also be seen as one of life’s pleasures and as a dreamy respite from the cares of living. In its opulence and quietude, Pierre-Auguste Renoir’s (1841-1919) *The Sleeper* (fig. 123) conveys this attitude. The pink, purple-tinged light captures the evanescent grace of the pose and, with its flecks of gold, shows the forms to advantage.



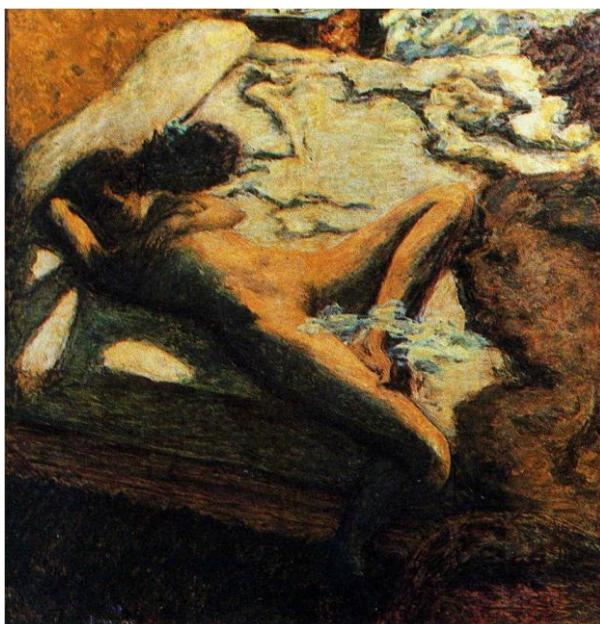
*Figure 123.-* Pierre-Auguste Renoir  
(France, 1841-1919).  
*The Sleeper*, 1897.  
Oil on canvas, 81 x 63 cm.  
Sammlung Oscar Reinhart Am Römerholz  
Winterthur – Switzerland

Amedeo Modigliani's (1884-1920) Nude (fig. 124) is one of the at least 26 reclining nudes he painted. It is a genre in which his intensity never failed him, unlike in his portraits, where occasionally his mannerism would slip into sentimentality. Here the burnt-orange body cuts a diagonal between the planes of white and black, mediated by the carmine of the bed cover. As so often in Modigliani, all is tenderness and grace, serenity and melancholy. An artist of singular independence, largely indifferent to the fashions of his times, he pursued his own path, taking the elongated oval face of the African mask as a model to create enduring renditions of the human figure, resonant with emotion and grace.



Figure 124. - Amedeo Modigliani (Italian, 1884 - France, 1920). *Nude (Nu)*, 1917.  
Oil on canvas, 73.0 x 116.7 cm. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,  
New York - United States

Like a number of paintings we have examined in this chapter (fig. 113, 119, 120), Pierre Bonnard's (1867-1947) *The Indolent Woman* (fig. 125) depicts a figure resting after lovemaking. From a magma of colour it emerges, seen from above, half in shadow.



The bold composition is characterized by sinuous lines and vibrant textures; an air of intimacy pervades the quiet monochrome. The model happens to be Bonnard's muse, and the woman who would become his wife. A puff of blue smoke, floating across her ankle towards her sex, suggests the lover's presence, while her shock of black hair and her uplifted arm, together with her open thighs, convey a nonchalant eroticism evocative of love in the afternoon.

Figure 125. - Pierre Bonnard (France, 1867-1947). *Woman Dozing on a Bed or The Indolent Woman*, 1899. Oil on canvas, 96 x 106 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris – France.  
©ADAGP, Paris, 2012

Charles Camoin (1879-1965) in *La Saltimbanque au repos* (Resting Acrobat, fig. 126) uses colour to bring to incandescence a yellow-hued nude in performer's boots and stockings. (Such use of colour would come to be known as the "Fauve aesthetic".) Indeed, the hot colours combine with the obscene pose to bring the painting to a feverish pitch, if not of eroticism, then at least of provocation.

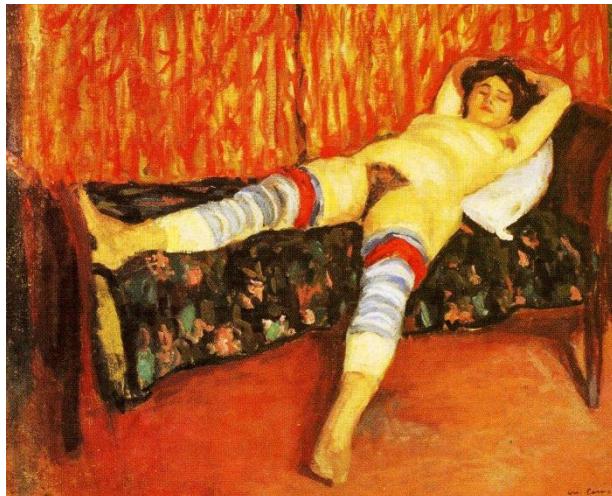


Figure 126.

Charles Camoin (France, 1879 - 1964).

*La Saltimbanque au repos*, 1905,

65 x 81 cm.

Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de

Paris, Paris - France

©ADAGP, Paris, 2012

Sir William Nicholson (1872-1949) painted very few nudes. The model of this one (fig. 127) was the artist's second wife Edith. The young woman, endowed with a delicately coloured peach skin is taken in lateral view. The work is full of charm and languid nature.



Figure 127. . Sir William Nicholson (British, 1872-1949).

*Nude*, circa 1921. Oil on wood 40.6 x 58.4 cm. Tate Gallery, London - G.B.

©ADAGP, Paris, 2012

Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966) spent his artistic life in a relentless struggle to express his vision of volume and space, as much in his drawing as in his sculpture. Here, in a *Nu couché* dated 1940 (fig. 128), the figure, the bed and the empty space around them (the latter interests Giacometti as much as the former) are rendered in a few rapidly-traced lines.

Between the model and the artist's hand and eye, one feels the flow of a restless mind never satisfied with facility.

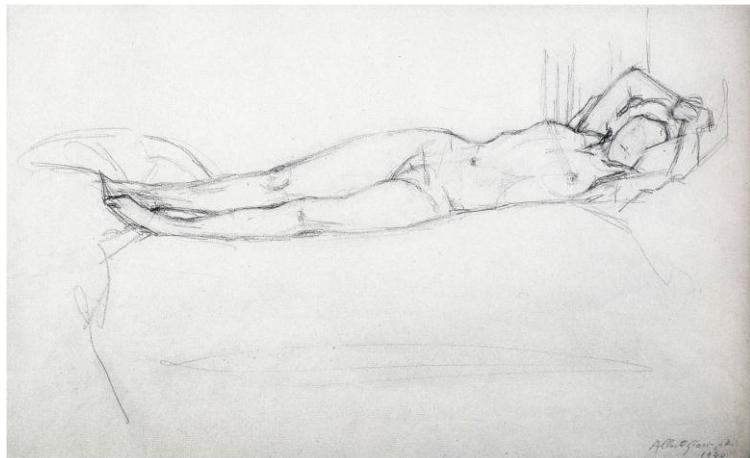


Figure 128.

Alberto Giacometti  
(Switzerland, 1901 - 1966).  
*Reclining Nude, 1940.*  
Pencil on paper, 31 x 48 cm.  
Collection Alain Frumkin, New  
York, USA  
©Succession Alberto  
Giacometti, (Fondation Alberto  
et Annette Giacometti, Paris  
/ADAGP, Paris, 2012

Prodigious and enigmatic, Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) could express his thought, with or without pencil or brush in hand, in whatever medium happened to be available: scraps of metal, bits of cardboard, wrapping paper, driftwood or pebbles. He once made a series of drawings featuring sleep in all its details. These drawings are as exciting as a spirited film sequence or comic strip; in them, the mischievous artist, at once a plaything of his animal spirits and a master of his means, orchestrated a collaboration between Eros and creativity. Does anyone need to be reminded of how, at every renewal in his cycle of creativity, Eros presented itself in a new incarnation? We understand that the attitude of the man facing the woman is ambivalent: Young, the artist at his easel is at one with the model; old, he is weary with obstination. In the end, blending desire, beauty and real presence, the image-maker himself becomes image.

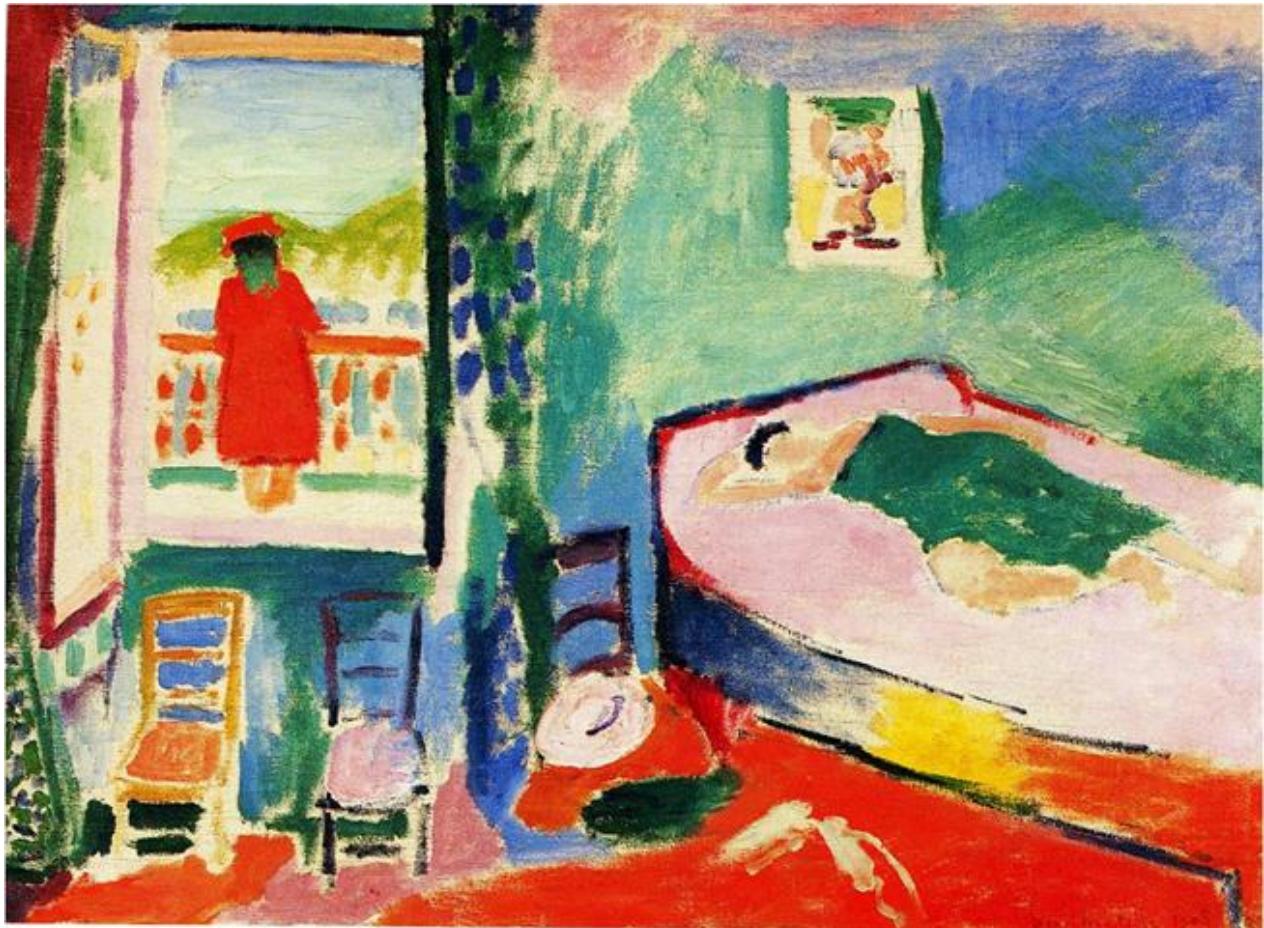


Figure 129.

Pablo Picasso  
(Spain, 1881 -  
France, 1973).  
*Faun revealing a  
woman, 1963.*  
Aquatint.  
Kupferstachkabinett,  
Staatliche Museen zu  
Berlin, Berlin -  
Germany.  
©Succession Pablo  
Picasso

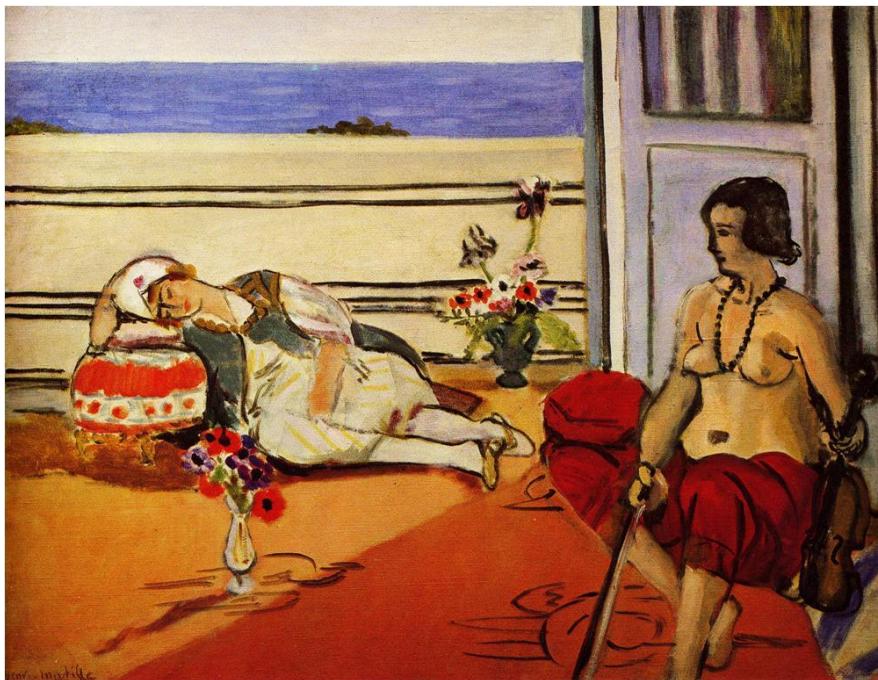
Sleep, then, is a recurring subject in Picasso's oeuvre; indeed, we have inventoried over one hundred different works, in all media and from all periods, in which he dealt with it. In *Faun Revealing a Sleeping Woman* (fig. 129), he takes up the theme in the register of moonlight, producing a subtle nocturne made possible by the tonal effects of aquatint.

Picasso, even more than his alter ego Matisse, conceives of sleep as the height of voluptuousness, a domain where the model totally submits to the artist's caprices, be they propitiatory or vengeful.



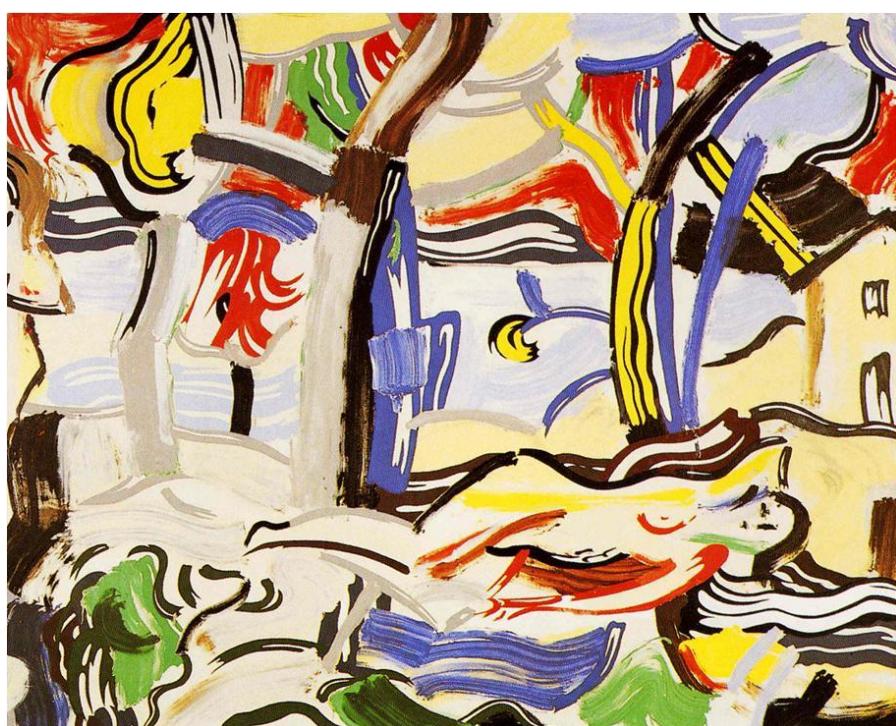
*Figure 130. Henri Matisse (France, 1869 - 1954). Interior at Collioure (Nap), 1906. Oil on canvas, 52 x 72 cm. Private Collection, Ascona - Switzerland.  
©Succession H. Matisse*

In his *Interior at Collioure (The Siesta)* (fig. 130) and *The Two Odalisques (The Terrace)* (fig. 131), Henri Matisse (1869-1954) evokes a vision of leisure as a luminous fusion of sleep, seaside and summer. Among painters he was among the most aware of all that sleep could offer the artist pictorially; indeed, wakefulness and sleep in perpetual pursuit of each other may be seen as one of his enduring subjects. Typically, as in *The Two Odalisques*, his decorative compositions convey a sense of calm and abandon, of lush reverie, while in his Fauvist works, such as *Interior at Collioure*, the human figure loses its physicality and abandons itself to colour.

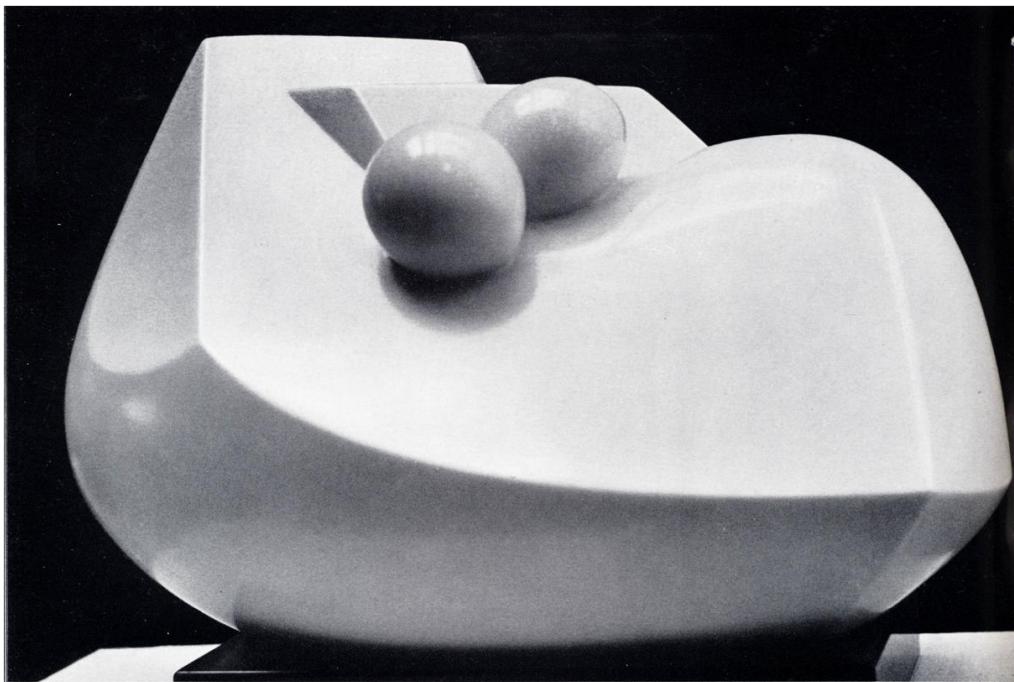


*Figure 131.*  
Henri Matisse  
(France, 1869-1964).  
*Two Odalisques (the terrace)*, 1921.  
Oil on canvas.  
Hester Diamond  
Collection,  
New York – USA  
©Succession H. Matisse

Roy Lichtenstein's (1923-1997) *Figure in a Landscape* (fig. 132) is one in a series of what he called "Brushstroke Landscapes", painted in 1985. It shows a space lacerated by strips of pure colour—red, green, yellow, blue and brown—with shades of would-be-calming white showing through. The image conveys a sense of urgency and agitation; it is the landscape that appears dazed and confused, while the figure seeks refuge, if not in sleep, then in stasis and recumbency.



*Figure 132.- Roy Lichtenstein (USA, 1923 - 1997).*  
*Figure in a Landscape*, 1985. Oil and magma on canvas, 243.8 x 279.4 cm.  
Private collection. ©Estate of Roy Lichtenstein New York/ADAGP, Paris,



*Figure 133.* Emile Gilioli (France, 1911-1977). *Woman Sleeping ( La Dormeuse)*, 1962.  
Marble. Private Collection. . © ADAGP, Paris, 2012

In Woman Sleeping (fig. 138), Emile Gilioli (1911-1977) distills the essence of sleep in a synecdoche of femaleness: two balls of dense marble, suave and sensual, disposed as a pair in the gentle hollow of a sloping surface. Here, the eroticization of sleep is achieved with the most economical of means; it is matter itself, restricted in form, which becomes hypnotic. One is seduced: The presence of the object in its deceptive simplicity contrives to replace reality with an art of the real.

## 8. Siestas and Snoozes

When one yawns until the hinges of the jaws can't open any wider and stretches to the point of tumbling over, drowsiness seeks satisfaction in sleep: The body is demanding attention. Twenty or thirty minutes of rest are called for, ideally during the fall in vigilance between three and five in the afternoon. Studies show that halfway through the day at least twenty minutes of sleep boosts one's intellectual and physical performance. In East Asia, many companies make time available for workers and staff to take a nap after lunch. Elsewhere, however, this break that promotes wellbeing is rarely respected. Like other practices that once seemed so difficult to establish, however, leadership and example, together with appropriate facilities, could make for an enduring change. If people are really a company's most precious resource, why can't a break that makes them more productive become established practice?

When one is sleepy, it shows: Edgar Degas' (1834-1917) *The Ironers* (fig. 134) is a justly famous work that captures this theme perhaps better than any other.



*Figure 134.- . Edgar Degas (France, 1834-1917). The Ironers, circa 1878/79.  
Oil on canvas, 76 x 81.5 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris – France*

Two women in a laundry stand before an ironing bench. Degas places them along a diagonal. The one on the left, already in a state of lethargy, yawns as drowsiness overcomes her; beside her, her exhausted workmate leans heavily on her iron, pressing down with both hands. Confined in the close frame of the painting, the women evoke an emotion that the restricted space intensifies. Behind them, the coarse linen of the canvas is visible in places; these brown spots give the impression of steam and heat peeling the paint. The atmosphere is conducive to a weakening of the will as the weary bodies strain to continue their work: The artist succeeds in evoking, without any pathos or heroism, the physicality of effort. He captures the moment when courage and vigour are about to give way to the onset of sleep, that in-between moment when one succumbs to a force stronger than one's will.

A source of rest following labour, sleep—as in Jean-François Millet's (1814-1875) *The Siesta* (fig. 135)—can have the force of a heavy blow. It is midday (“Meridienne”, the French title of the painting), and the young harvesters—the peasant heroes of this Naturalist painting—are worn out by their work in the hot sun. In the shade of a huge rick, they sleep on sheaves of wheat, their scythes and a pair of shoes beside them in the foreground.



*Figure 135.*  
Jean-François Millet  
(France, 1814-1875).  
*Noonday Rest*  
(*La Méridienne*), 1866.  
Pastel and pencil,  
29.2 x 41.9 cm.  
Museum of Fine Arts,  
Boston - USA.

In the winter of 1889-90, van Gogh, forced to stay indoors by both his nervous state and bad weather, made a copy from an engraving of Millet's *Siesta*. Reversing the image along its left-right axis, he made an exact copy of the composition, but painted it with his own sensibility (fig. 136): The rick of wheat in the sunlight is a flaming yellow, the sky a vibrant blue, and in the foreground the sleeping peasants evoke his vision of the dignity of work.

*Figure 136.*  
Vincent Van Gogh  
(Dutch, 1853-1890).  
*The Siesta*  
(after J. F. Millet),  
or *La Méridienne*,  
1889-1890.  
Oil on canvas,  
73 x 91 cm.  
Musée d'Orsay,  
Paris - France.





Jules Bastien-Lepage's (1848-1884) *Hay Making* (fig. 137) is, in the words of Emile Zola, "a masterpiece of naturalism in painting". Indeed, the affinity with Millet is evident, but what is striking about this work is the modernity of the composition.

*Figure 137.*

*Jules Bastien - Lepage  
(France, 1848-1884).  
Hay Making, 1877.  
Oil on canvas, 160 x 195 cm.  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris - France.*

Indeed, the prominence of the vacantly self-absorbed woman in the foreground (note the photographic realism of her rendering), the protracted perspective of the sleeping man, the sweep of the silver-yellow hay into the distance and the distance of the hills beyond—all these elements make for a composition that resembles a close-cropped, wide-angle photograph, and bring a freshness to the genre of realist rural scenes.

Eugène Fromentin (1820-1876), a painter as well as a writer, was a Frenchman who accompanied an archeological mission to Algeria, got to know the land and its people (having already visited the country earlier), and became one of the first "painter-reporters" on North Africa (he also visited Egypt). Indeed, many of his paintings have a realism that gives them as much an ethnological as an artistic interest. In *A Street in El-Aghouat* (fig. 138), he evokes a scorching afternoon in this gateway town to the Sahara desert. The blazing sun bisects the street, fissuring the baked mud. On one side, a huddle of men in white jellabas lie resting on the ground; on the other, a figure is about to enter a building, while further up the street a stray dog roams. In the oppressive heat, sleep is welcome.



*Figure 138.*

*Eugene Fromentin  
(France, 1820-1876).  
A street at El Aghouat (detail),  
circa 1859.  
Oil on canvas, 142 x 103 cm.  
Musée de la Chartreuse,  
Douai - France.*



*Figure 139.*  
*Camille Pissarro*  
*(France, 1830 - 1903).*  
*Rest, Peasant Lying in the*  
*Grass, 1882.*  
*Oil on canvas 63 x 78 cm.*  
*Kunsthalle*  
*Bremen - Germany.*

In Camille Pissarro's (1830-1903) Rest: Peasant Girl Lying in Grass (fig. 139), the fine mesh of brushstrokes gives a soft, luminous effect, unifying the painting and creating a oneness between girl and earth. There is an air of pantheism in the work, and a suggestion that one day the nourishing earth will in its turn be nourished by the girl who now draws comfort from it.



*Figure 140.- Pablo Picasso (Spain, 188-France, 1973). Peasants asleep. 1919.*  
*Tempera, watercolor and pencil on paper, 31.1 x 48.9 cm. The Museum of Modern Art,*  
*New York - USA. ©Succession Pablo Picasso*

There is something imperturbable and timeless in Picasso's Sleeping Peasants (fig. 140). With their monumental bodies and opposing gestures—his in-gathered, hers expansive—the figures make a harmonious composition that radiates grace, as if in sleep anything can be pardoned. There is an insolent innocence in the pose, and a boldness of colour that makes one wonder how long these lovers will stay down on the farm.

In Bulgarian artist Vladimir Dimitrov-Maïstora's (1882-1960) Rest (fig. 141), all is blocks of matter linked by a play of light and shadow. Between figures, ground and sky nothing is particularly distinct, everything coheres into a general impression: Nature is all. An atmosphere saturated with coagulated reddish-browns envelopes everything, reinforcing the pantheistic vision.



*Figure 141.*  
Vladimir Dimitrov -  
Maïstora  
(Bulgaria, 1882-1960).  
*Rest.*  
Oil on canvas.  
Art Gallery "Vladimir  
Dimitrov-Maïstora"  
Kustindil - Bulgaria.  
© V.Dimitrov-  
Maïstora Gallery

Honoré Daumier (1808-1879) can be seen as the urban counterpart of Millet. One of a three-part series depicting socioeconomic distinctions, The Second-Class Carriage (fig. 142), a work of 1864, shows four individuals—two dozing, two awake—sitting next to each other in a train, each absorbed in their own world. Snow falls outside the window; inside it is cold, and Daumier's technique (watercolor, inkwash and charcoal) captures that frigidity. The artist's vision of early industrialization and urbanization is a bleak one.



*Figure 142.* - Honoré Daumier (1808-1879). 2nd class car, 1864.  
Watercolor, ink wash and charcoal, 20.5 x 30.1 cm. Walters Art Gallery,  
Baltimore, USA

One hundred and eighteen years later, on the eastern edge of Europe, the Bulgarian artist Vihroni Popandreev (b. 1953) painted *The Company Bus* (fig. 143), a bus taking workers to the factory. As the sun emerges from under the horizon, the passengers—head sunk in turned-up collar or head thrown back—steal a few more moments of sleep. The horizontal and vertical bars, together with the harsh delineation of shadow and light, emphasize their isolation.



*Figure 143.* Vihroni Popnedelev (Bulgaria, b. 1953). *The Company Bus*, 1982.  
City Gallery, Sofia - Bulgaria. © Vihroni Popnedelev

In French artist Fabrice Béghin's (b. 1959) *The Green Negress* (fig. 144), there is a certain serenity in the woman dozing on the bus. The solidity of the geometrical lines, the bold colours and blue sky, and the glimpse of nature outside combine to give this scene an air of dignified repose.



*Figure 144.*  
Fabrice Béghin  
(France, b.1959).  
*The green Negress*, 1995  
Oil on canvas, 65 x 54 cm.  
Collection of the artist,  
Paris – France  
© Fabrice Béghin

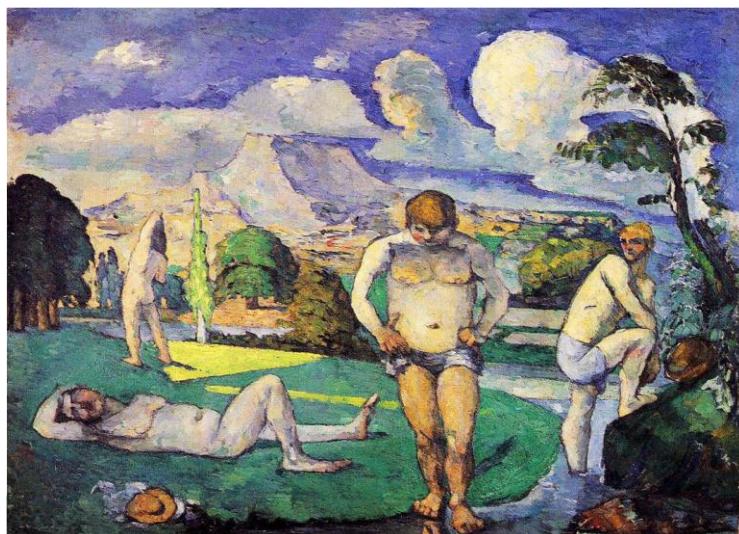
Robert Guinan (b. 1934), chronicler of urban life in his adopted city of Chicago, has painted a number of subway scenes. In *On the Subway* (1984) (fig. 145), he depicts in rapidly sketched lines a woman on a subway train with three children beside her. The scene has an air of silence, the woman staring straight ahead and the children sitting still, perhaps dozing, while a man reads a newspaper behind them.



*Figure 145. Robert Guinan  
(USA, 1934).*  
*On the subway, 1984.*  
*Oil on canvas, 91 x 100 cm.*  
*Private Collection*  
© Robert Guinan

What has caught the artist's attention, what has made him want to capture this moment on a moving train? Perhaps he was touched by a vision of innocence. Perhaps in a reverie, before picking up his brush, he felt himself a child again.

*Figure 146.*  
*Paul Cézanne*  
(France, 1839-1906).  
*Bathers at Rest, 1875-1876.*  
*Oil on canvas,*  
*82 x 101.2 cm.*  
*Barnes Foundation, Merion*  
(Pennsylvania) – USA



Paul Cézanne's (1839-1906) *Bathers at Rest* (fig. 146) is an early example (1875-76) of his reinterpretation of the tradition of nude figures in a landscape. Indeed, he would go on to produce over seventy such works, evolving from a bright, high-key palette such as this one, wherein figure and landscape are clearly distinct, to greater abstraction with toned-down colours in a lower key, more complex compositions, and a treatment of the figure not as flesh but as surface and volume. Aiming for a fusion of figure and landscape, focusing on composition and structure, his series of bathers was always in a state of becoming. From this early evocation of bathers at rest, he would move on to produce paintings that exerted a decisive influence on the giants of early- to mid-twentieth century art, Matisse and Picasso.

Half Hours with the Best Authors (The Siesta) (fig. 147), Philip Hermogenes Calderon's (1833-1898) evanescent watercolour, shows three young ladies in billowing, milky-white dresses, sitting as if exhausted by their reading. The humour of this English painter of Spanish and French descent is as light as the misty lilac and pale russet of the décor; with a bit of imagination, one can even breathe in the perfume of these young things with tired heads.



*Figure 147.*  
Philip Hermogenes  
Calderon  
(Great Britain,  
1833-1898).  
*Half an hour with the  
best authors (The  
Siesta)*, 1866.  
Watercolor on paper,  
17.8 x 27.9 cm.  
Tate Gallery,  
London - G.B.

What strikes one immediately in James McNeill Whistler's (1834-1903) Note in Red (The Siesta) (fig. 148) is the harmony of the brilliant red and the raw, semi-transparent sienna, and the rapidity and nervousness of the brushstrokes. One senses an unposed moment, seized on the run while the model sleeps; indeed, the painting conveys a feeling of privacy, even intimacy, that is confirmed when one learns that the model was also the artist's mistress. Her face turned away from the viewer, the woman sleeps, her sprawling pose belying the voluptuousness of her dress, while everywhere in the painting the presence of the artist is manifest.



*Figure 148.- James Abbott McNeill Whistler (United States, 1834-1903).  
Note in Red (The Siesta), 1883 - 1884. Oil on wood 21.6 x 30.5 cm.  
Museum of American Art, Giverny - France.*

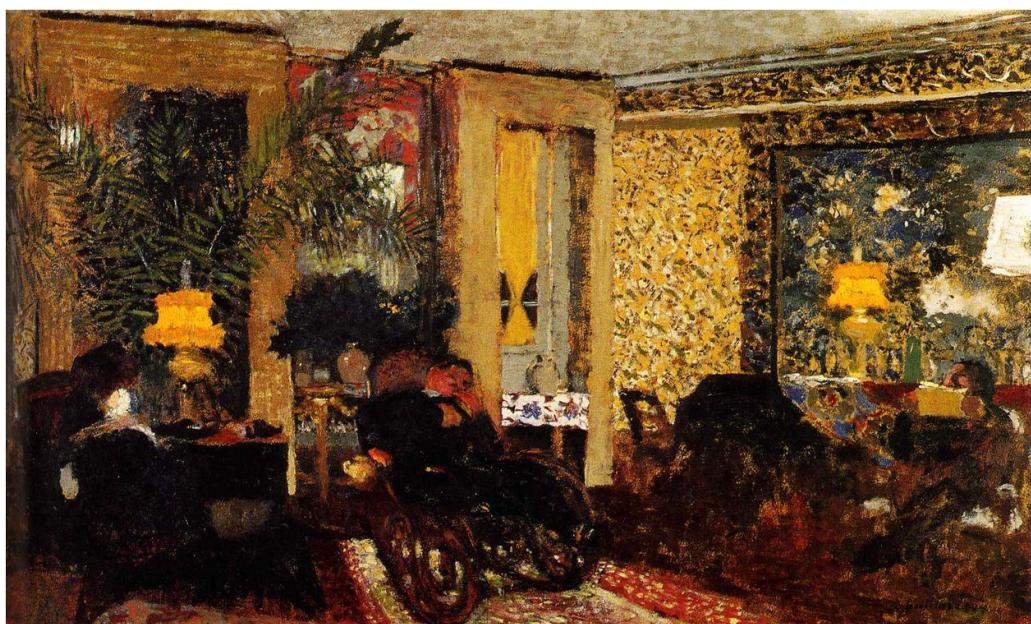
Intimacy is again the keyword in Rest: Portrait of Vera Repina (fig. 149), Ilya Repin's (1844-1930) portrait of his wife dozing in an armchair.



One respects the silence, even in painting, when observing someone sleep; here, one also admires the beautifully rendered hands and head, the gracefully crossed feet, of this youthful wife absenting herself from the world. The close framing and unitary colour scheme reinforce the impression of privacy. There is emotion in the technical mastery, and when one knows the work is late nineteenth-century Russian, one is all the more justified in saying the tenderness it gives off is Tolstoyan. (As it turns out, the painter and the novelist were good friends.)

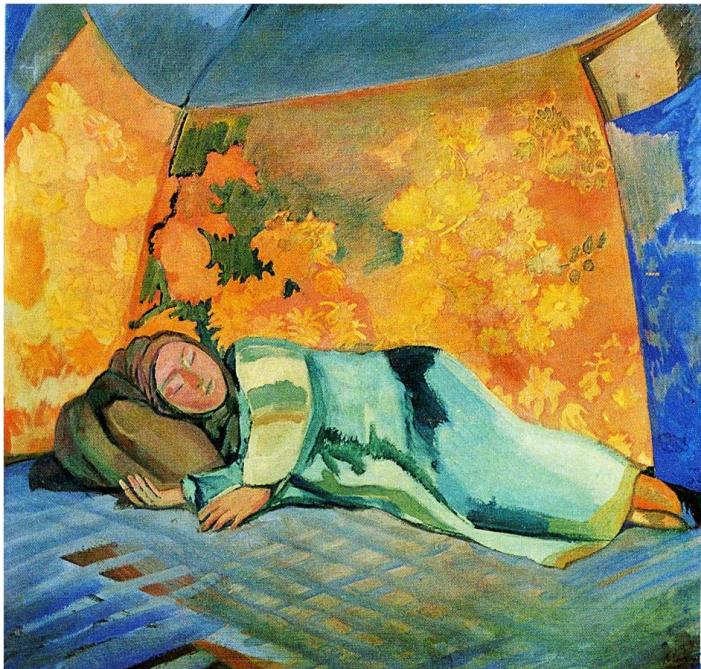
*Figure 149.  
Ilya Iefimovitch Repin (Russian, 1844-1930).  
Break  
(Portrait of Vera Alexeyevna Repin), 1882.  
Tretyakov State Gallery, Moscow - Russia.*

The eye is at first confused when it encounters Edouard Vuillard's (1868-1940) Interior with Three Lamps, rue Saint- Florentin (fig. 150). Indeed, it finds nowhere to rest in the proliferating flicker of the patterned wallpaper, the many-planed mosaic of textured surfaces, the indistinct masses of black. The clutter is cloying. The man dozing in the rocking chair takes no precedence over the bright shawl covering the piano;



*Figure 150. Edouard Vuillard (France, 1868-1940). The living room with three lamps,  
Saint-Florentin street, 1899. Oil and distemper on canvas, 60 x 96 cm.  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris - France.*

the potted palm is as important as the person sitting under it. But then one steps back, and perceives that the painting's limited tonal range and diffused lighting make all its elements cohere; suddenly the noise becomes silent, the atmosphere intimate. And then one gets it: This is a turn-of-the-century bourgeois interior, a faithful vision of a highly-decorated living room; this is an evocation of relaxed intimacy between old friends, at a point in the evening when one can be comfortably alone, yet still together. And in that, there is enchantment.



In the simplified forms and planes of colour in Pavel Kuznetsov's (1878-1968) *Woman Sleeping* (fig. 151), one can detect the influence of Gauguin and Cézanne. Indeed, in 1905 the Russian painter spent a year in France, but it is from his trip to Central Asia that he brought back this scene of nomadic life on the Steppes.

*Figure 151.- Pavel Kuznetsov  
(Russian, 1878-1968)  
Sleeping Woman, 1911.  
Oil on canvas, 66 x 71 cm.  
Tretyakov Gallery,  
Moscow - Russia.  
©ADAGP, Paris, 2012*

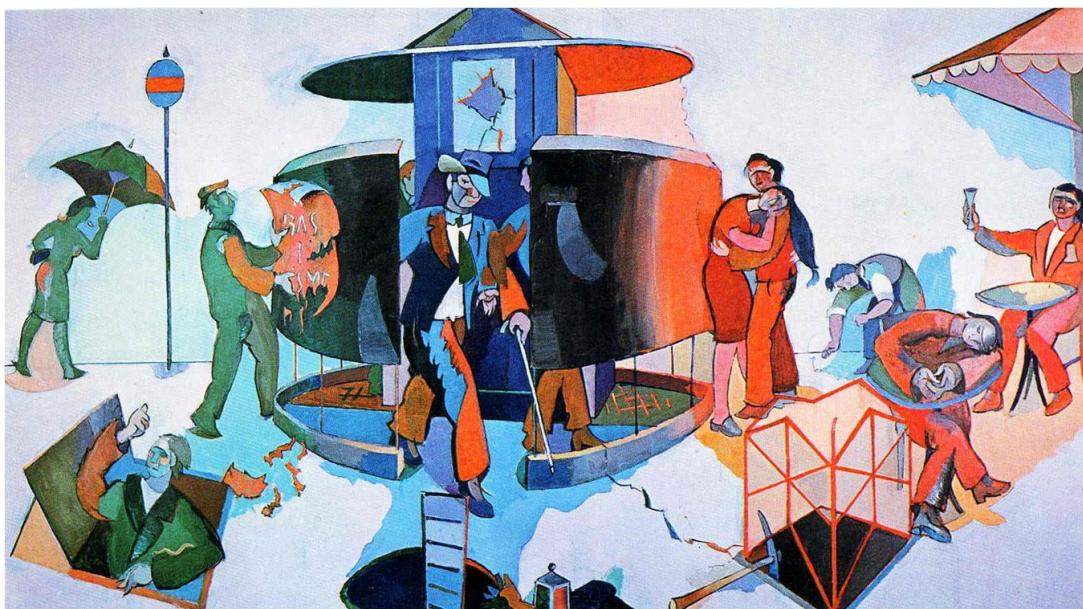
The oval face and slant of the eyes register the Asian origin, but otherwise the painting asserts its artistic transformation of reality. It evokes the feeling of observing a woman sleeping, it gives an idea of the tent, but it dispenses with any documentary depiction. Indeed, it is the symbolic dimension of the scene that takes precedence, giving the painting a timeless air.

*Figure 152.  
Karl-Otto Götz  
(Germany, b. 1914).  
Siesta I, 1947.  
Tempera on paper,  
40.5 x 54.5 cm.  
Suzanne Besson Collection,  
Le Mans - France.  
©ADAGP, Paris, 2012*



A figure seated on a carpet, resting in a kind of couch: With its recognizable human forms, Karl-Otto Götz's (b. 1914) *Siesta* (fig. 152; painted in 1947, two years before he gave up figurative painting), retains an elementary representationalism. The forms appear infinitely malleable, freed from all contingency; one has the impression they could reconfigure

themselves in the blink of an eye. Could they constitute a burlesque homage to insouciance, a testimony to the fleetingness of childhood sensations?



*Figure 153. Jean Helion (France, 1904-1987). The city is a dream, 1976.  
Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 350 cm. Habasit A. G. Collection, Basel – Switzerland  
©ADAGP, Paris, 2012*

What philosophical allegory of the mystery of life is depicted in Jean Helion's (1904-1987) *The City is a Dream* (fig. 153)? A blind man steps out of a street urinal, his white cane ready to detect the three holes in the ground: Out of one a man rises, as if surfacing for air; out of another a ladder stands, while the third is barriered against a fall, a pickaxe balanced on its edge. Around the urinal, a diverse cast of characters go about their business: two people in a café, one dozing on a table, the other calling for another drink; a couple embracing, a woman walking under her open umbrella, a billposter sticking up a political slogan. An allegory of streetlife? *La vida es sueño: Make of it what you will.*

## 9. Awakening

A moment of awakening is depicted in a fresco in the House of Meleager in Pompeii (fig. 154); it shows Ariadne rousing after Theseus has abandoned her (for the myth, see the commentary on chapter 4, fig. 64-67). The artist shows Ariadne wiping a tear from her eye while a winged figure stands behind her, one hand on her shoulder and the other indicating the treacherous Theseus sailing away in the distance. A third figure stands by, commiserating. This theme recurs in a number of patrician homes in Pompeii, largely destroyed following the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE.

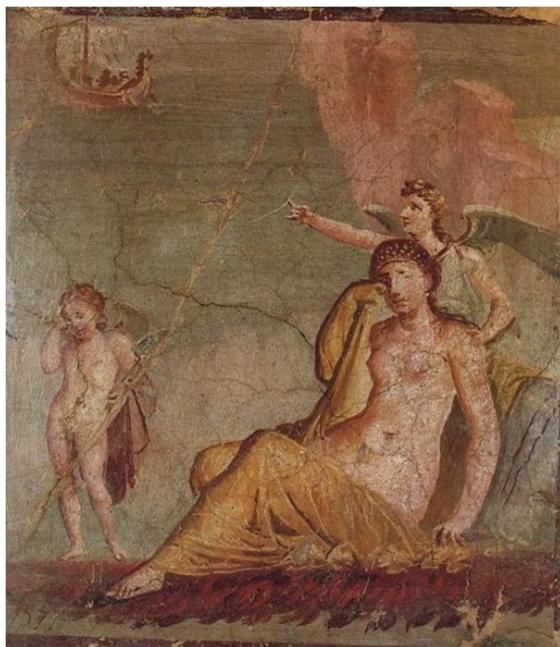


Figure 154.- Anonymous  
(Pompeii, 1st century BCE or earlier).  
*The Awakening of Ariadne,*  
Mural painting, Fourth style (House of  
Meleager) 76 x 70 cm.  
Museo Archeologico Nazionale,  
Naples - Italy.

A Renaissance marble relief (Ariadne's Awakening, or the Awakening of the Nymphs; fig. 155), similar to a composition attributed to Francesco Primaticcio (1504-1570), takes up the same theme; it shows the abandoned Ariadne among a group of nymphs, a male figure sounding a horn behind her.

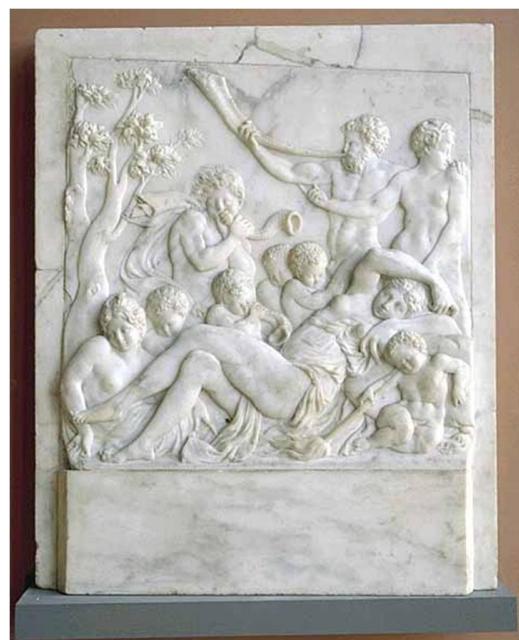


Figure 155.- Anonymous  
(Ile-de-France, mid-16th century,  
circle of Primaticcio).  
*The Awakening of Ariadne or The  
Awakening of nymphs.*  
Marble, 60 x 49 x 9 cm.  
The Louvre, Paris – France

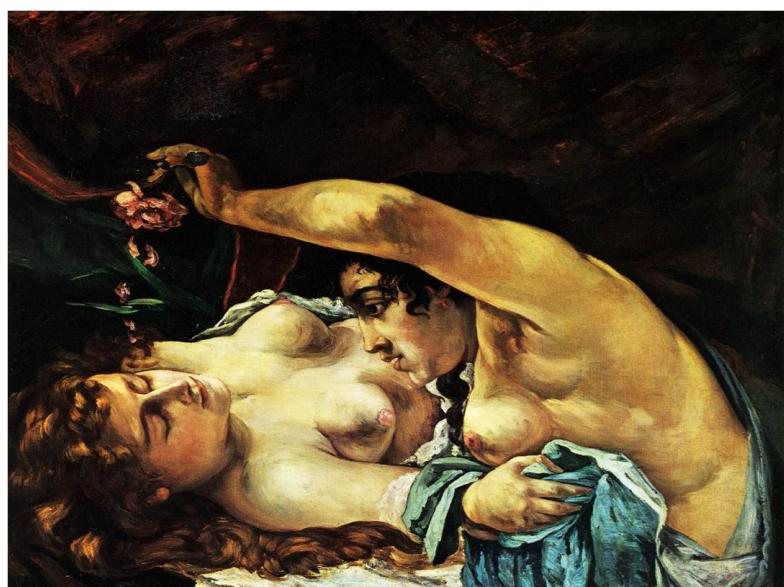
Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* furnishes an awakening scene that has become as famous as that of Ariadne on Naxos: Titania, Queen of the Fairies, is awakened from her sleep in the forest by Bottom's singing and, as a result of the machinations orchestrated by Oberon, her husband, immediately falls in love with a Bottom who has been endowed with an ass's head by Oberon's agent, Puck. Henry Fuseli painted several versions of this scene. Indeed, all Shakespeare's evocations of the supernatural delighted Fuseli, and in *Titania Awakes, Surrounded by Attendant Fairies* (fig. 156), he shows the beguiled Queen aroused by love clinging to the near-naked rustic transformed into a virile giant.



Titania's fairy servant Peaseblossom strokes the donkey-headed lover between his enormous ears, while her attendants, painted in contemporary dress, look on from the background. The small figures of the other fairies are depicted in highly-individualizing detail. The realism of Fuseli's rendering of the fantastical, disturbing in many of his other paintings, is here simply enchanting.

*Figure 156.*  
Johann Heinrich Fuseli (Switzerland,  
1741 - Great Britain, 1825)  
*The Awakening of Titania*, 1793 - 1794.  
Oil on canvas, 169 x 135 cm..  
Kunsthaus, Zurich - Switzerland

In 1864, on learning that the Salon had refused his painting *The Awakening (Venus Pursuing Psyche out of Jealousy)* (fig. 157) on the grounds of indecency, Gustave Courbet wrote to the art dealer Jules Luquet, "If this painting is immoral, then all the museums of Italy, France and Spain must be closed down".



*Figure 157.*  
Gustave Courbet (France,  
1819-1877). *The Awakening  
(Venus and Psyche)*, 1866.  
Oil on canvas 77 x 100 cm.  
Kunstmuseum,  
Bern - Switzerland.

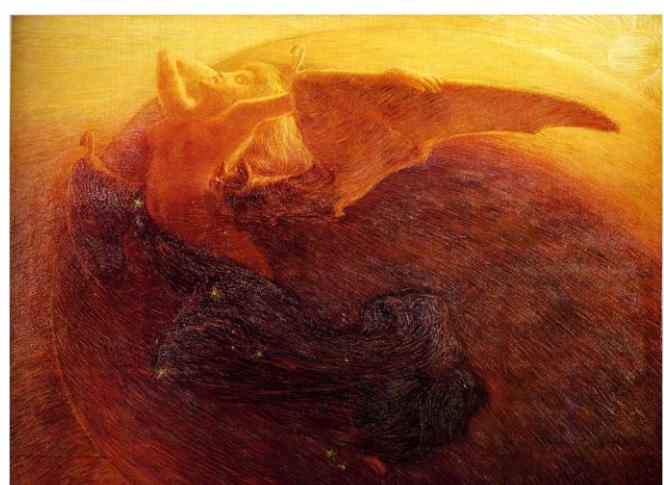
And indeed, in Second Empire France, the depiction of the female nude had become (as we have already seen; cf. chapter 7, fig. 119, 120) the locus of a battle between the Academy and its bourgeois-pleasing conventions, on one hand, and artists of independent mind, Manet and Courbet foremost among them, on the other. Indeed, still referring to mythological figures as a camouflage, Courbet paints two female nudes in an evidently lesbian scenario, and what's more, he paints them not in the idealized classical style of a Cabanel, for example, but with a technique that yields a much more realistic impression of the reality of human flesh. The jealous Venus, looking decidedly butch, leans over the femme beauty of Psyche; no longer content to be passively put on display, she is a subject who can seduce. To be awakened by the scent of roses, to fall into the arms of love: The scene is not so simple, for the mythological resonances lend an emotional complexity to the painting that defies easy reading.



*Figure 158.*  
Eugène Robert  
(France, 1831 - 1912).  
*The Awakening of the abandoned,*  
1894.  
Marble, 50 x 130 x 85cm.  
Musée de l'Assistance Publique,  
Paris - France

Awakenings can also be moments of distress. Sculptor Eugène Robert (1831-1912), in his marble work, *The Awakening of the Abandoned Baby* (fig. 158), suggests the awake through the multiple folds of the blankets, and more subtly in the modelling of the expression on the baby's face and the movement captured in its left hand and foot. If it is not yet crying, one senses it might, in the instant it fully awakens, let out a cry for attention: It the sculpture touches us, it is because we know there will be no mother to hear the baby's appeal.

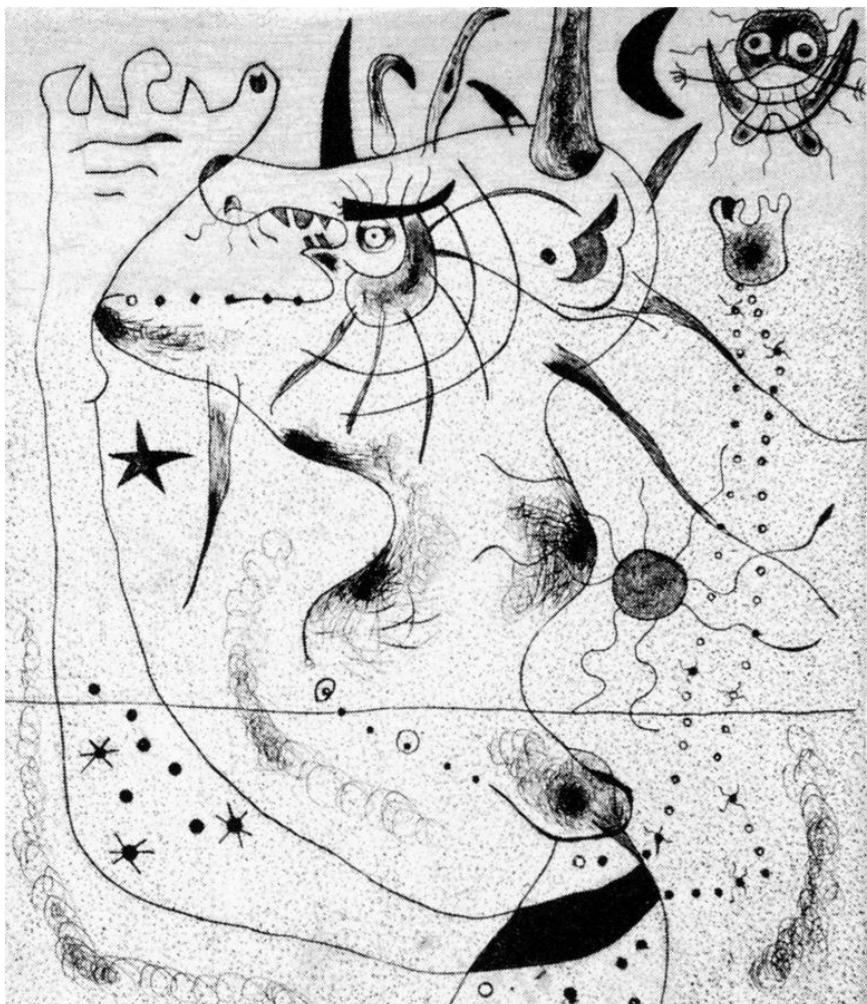
*Figure 159.*  
Gaetano Previati  
(Italy, 1852 - 1920).  
*The Day awakens the Night,*  
circa 1905.  
Oil on canvas, 180 x 210 cm.  
Museo Revoltella,  
Trieste - Italy.



In Gaetano Previati's (1852-1920) *The Day Awakens the Night* (fig. 159), a nymph with winged arms bursts through the dark turmoil to bring a golden light that clarifies her features, sending the night to the nether realms while the day dawns.

*In book IX of The Odyssey, Odysseus narrates before King Alcinous the episode involving the one-eyed pastoral giants, savage and inhospitable, living in caves on an island: the Cyclopes. In the cave of the Cyclops Polyphemus, Odysseus, imprisoned with his crew, devises a strategy to escape the man-eating monster. He offers him wine he had brought from his ship, and when Polyphemus is lying in his drunken sleep, Odysseus blinds him with the heated point of a stake. Sleep has thus proved fatal for the duped Polyphemus; Odysseus and his surviving crew make their way to their ships, embarking with the blinded giant's flock of sheep.*

In Paris in 1938, while the Civil War was raging in his native Spain and premonitions of the world war to come were already a pall on people's spirits, Joan Miró (1893-1983) created the drypoint work *The Awakening of the Giant* (fig. 160). Here Miró's near-continuous line renders an open-mouthed monster raising an arm, threatening to remake the world in its own image, while the artist's archetypal moon and stars descend from the cosmos in chaos. Spontaneous, laconic, consistently fecund, Miró "graffiti" does not represent war, but expresses the anger and anguish it engenders.



*Figure 160. - Joan Miro (Spanish, 1893-1983). The Awakening of Giant, 1938. Drypoint. The Museum of Modern Art, New York - USA*

Awakening at Dawn (fig. 161), one of a series of 23 gouache-on-paper works (1939-1941) collectively titled “Constellations”, is a playful, dream-like painting. Escaping the war, enclosed within himself, what kind of cosmos does the artist construct?



*Figure 161.- Joan Miro  
(Spanish, 1893-1983).  
Awakening at Dawn, 1941  
(the Constellations serie).  
Gouache and petrol paint on paper,  
46 x 38 cm.  
Mr. and Mrs. Ralph F. Colin collection,  
New York - USA.  
©Successio Miro/ADAGP, Paris, 2012*

A very lyrical one in which an idiosyncratic music of the spheres is expressed in a kaleidoscope of cut-out shapes—circles, squares, birds, breasts, a phallus, moons and stars—echoing each other in whimsical harmony. The eye sees patterns in the heavenly bodies, every culture personalizes the constellations, but the only pattern in Miró’s universe is that of the unconscious and poetry. At once airy and ardent, vigorous and floating, it expresses the aspiration of an independent spirit to touch something deeper than social reality. Affirming the value of the individual spirit, it is a fundamentally humanist vision, but not something for which a world at war was prepared to pause.

## 10. Epilogue

To represent sleep implies that a form be interiorized the better to invoke the spirit of dreams. “What is a work of art?” asked Swiss art collector Jean Planque (1910-1998) in a letter to his niece. “A painting has a smell, he wrote, a painting is ‘experienced’ not only by what is on its surface and what one sees, but also by the totality, by what is under it, behind it, what it points to, what is hidden: the painter’s secret, one’s own secret, the discovery of oneself...” (Jean Planque Exhibition catalogue, Hôtel de Ville de Paris, 2003). Indeed, in front of a painting scintillating with matter and spirit, words can only capture so much.

Four final works

Angels sigh in the realm of sleep: Softly allusive is Georges Seurat’s (1859-1891) drawing (a preparatory work for a painting), *The Sleeper* (fig. 162). Pencil in hand, the artist pursues his research in light, rendering in black and white a subtle play of shadows that conjures the sleep of a hatted man.

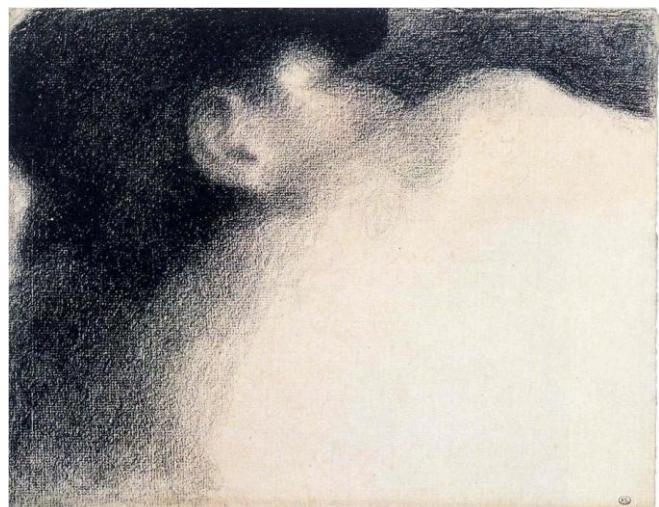


Figure 162.  
Georges Pierre Seurat  
(France, 1859-1891).  
*The Sleeper*, 1883.  
Conte pencil, 24 x 31 cm.  
Musée d'Orsay, Paris - France

André Masson (1896-1987) experienced at first hand the horrors of the Great War, witnessing scenes such as soldiers with ripped-open bodies, their insides pouring out, twitching in a trench. Such trauma left its mark on all his art.



Figure 163.  
André Masson  
(France, 1896-1987).  
*In the Tower of Sleep*, 1938.  
Oil on canvas,  
81,2x100,3 cm.  
The Baltimore Museum of Art,  
Baltimore, USA  
©ADAGP, Paris, 2012

A delirious, nightmare vision, *In the Tower of Sleep* (fig. 163) portrays that horror filtered through the artist's violent, erotic obsessions. In contrast to the escape, the turning inward, sought by his contemporary Joan Miró in a work like *Awakening at Dawn* (fig. 161), Masson confronts horror head-on; his "music of the spheres" is a cacophony played on saw-toothed instruments, a natural consequence of a deranged universe.

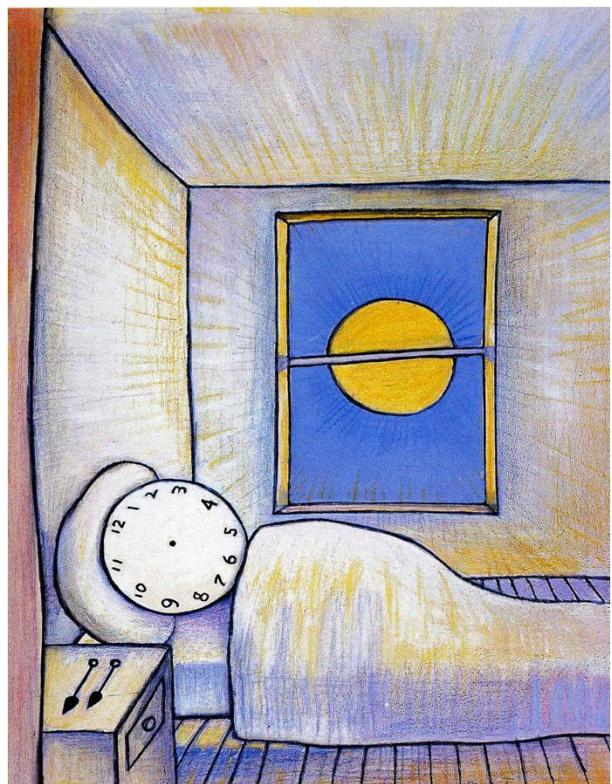


In *Sleep II* (fig. 164), contemporary painter and engraver Thérèse Boucraut expresses sleep in all its ambiguity, portraying a duality of reverie in which day and night occur together. Like death, its twin, which enables a new beginning, sleep is a descent into darkness that refreshes the light of day. In the stillness of this composition, at once balanced and edgy, the bright and the dark appear equally ominous—or equally calm, depending on one's disposition.

*Figure 164.* Therese Boucraut (France) *Sleep II*, 2003. Oil on canvas, 130 x 130 cm.  
Collection of the artist. ©ADAGP, Paris, France

In *Sleeping In* (fig. 165), a New Yorker magazine cover in 1971, Hungarian-born French cartoonist André François (1915-2005) offers a vision of a sleep freed from the constraints of the daily grind, a state of suspension limited neither by the rising sun nor the alarm clock. The stripped-down serenity of the illustration suggests that depriving time of its ruthless turning is the precondition for forgetful sleep—or at least, for a sleep in which trouble is wrapped in peaceful

*Figure 165.*  
André François  
(Romania, 1915-France, 2005).  
*Sleeping In*, 1971.  
Pastel and ink, 31.5 x 24cm.  
The New Yorker (cover), May 1971  
©ADAGP, Paris, France



### *A word on the sleep of animals*

The sleep of animals, the object of a fundamental research effort that, since the mid-20th century, has produced rich results internationally, has interested artists across all periods. Dürer, Velazquez, Turner and Dali, to mention a few examples from among many, have often given a subtle and suggestive place to sleeping animals in their work. This stimulating subject, in both its scientific and affective dimensions, merits study in its own right, independent of human sleep, the object of the current work.

### *By way of conclusion...*

In the sands of time all works of art are sifted; some are left by the wayside, others slip into the canon. Ideologies, whether sponsored by commissars, kings or commerce, have always tried to hijack art to their cause. But, as Degas said, with “cunning, trickery and vice”, art outwits all attempts to make it subservient. If art’s watchword is freedom, it nevertheless knows how to thrive under constraints.

And what of sleep? Sleep, too, is a redoubt of freedom, a sanctuary wherein social masks are abandoned and body and spirit are renewed. As in art, demons as well as the divine may populate it. Between art and sleep, then, there is a complicity, a perpetual exchange. Art appropriates sleep’s freedom; the dreams that animate art are the dreams that drift through sleep, making it now disturbing, now delightful. It is when our vigilance is relaxed that new vistas open; it is when our bodies are most still that we move in new realms.

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