

REPRESENTATIONS OF REVERIE: ROSSETTI, WHISTLER, CLAUSEN AND
THE PSYCHOLOGIES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores representations of reverie in British art, c.1850-1890. Reverie had a notable currency in Victorian art, yet, its significance has largely been overlooked by art historians. I examine the functions of reverie and contend that its semantic flexibility was seized on by artists in order to expand conventional expectations of narrative. Far from being the “subjectless” works noted in existing scholarship, reverie images courted popular awareness of discourses relating to psychologies of (un)consciousness. Theorisations of reverie by psychologists percolated generalist literary culture. Some held that excessive reverie induced insanity. Others marvelled over the powers of the unconscious and “unconscious cerebration”. Alongside related psychological phenomena such as mesmerism, trance, and somnambulism, discourses attached to reverie provided rich contextual material for artists. Chapter One reveals the relevance of *The Gay Science* (1866), by E.S. Dallas. The text is significant, I argue, because Dallas melds a theory of unconsciousness to art. Furthermore, his promotion of both the imagination and mystery can be related to Aestheticist ideologies. Aestheticism, I contend, was well-served by reverie. The examination of Rossetti in Chapter Two reveals the necessity to revise notions that Aestheticist art is predicated on “subjectless” content. I argue, instead, that reverie can operate autonomously as subject. Chapter Three shows how reverie could concurrently serve the formalist agenda of Whistler, whilst courting populist interest in reverie-related states. The chapter advances the overarching argument that applications of reverie span several schools of painting attesting its appeal and flexibility. Chapter Four focuses on George Clausen and Rural Naturalism. The critical potential of reverie within Clausen’s realist schema is explored and reveals a complex dual functioning. In Clausen, reverie augments social comment on the dilemmas of rural toil, yet, simultaneously helps sustain idyllic myths of rural life by evoking the pleasures of daydream.

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INTRODUCTION

During the second half of the nineteenth century reverie became an increasingly important subject in British art. That reverie became so pervasive in Victorian visual culture makes it remarkable that art historical scholarship has largely disregarded it. This study offers a study of reverie, revealing it to be extremely significant, far reaching and highly consequential for art historians. The thesis aims to demonstrate that the detailed consideration of reverie offers potential for scholars revisiting familiar works of art with a different eye. It shows that by applying more rigour to the concept of reverie, better sense can be made of Victorian painting.

In this thesis, I argue that one of the most significant grounds of reverie's appeal to British artists was its flexibility. Reverie is by no means exclusive to one school or group of artists. On the contrary, its presence is expansive and embraced by artists of very different persuasions. Its presence might be anticipated in Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism, but, this study brings to light its importance for realist strains of British art, such as Rural Naturalism. The thesis takes three figures, D.G. Rossetti, James Whistler, and George Clausen, each of whom is representative of one of the major artistic groups. In each case, reverie is significant. Although I discuss lesser-known artists in passing, the selection of established, canonical figures shows the adoption of reverie by influential artists. Reverie's widespread presence in Victorian art shows there to be a more pervasive set of connections between categories of Victorian art. A major assertion of the thesis is that reverie is common not only to Aestheticism. I also show that the appearance of reverie in Rural Naturalist works suggests closer affinities with Aestheticism than has hitherto been acknowledged.

The contextualisation of psychology within the first chapter provides a foundation for acknowledging a wider context for discourses on reverie. The subsequent chapters on Rossetti, Whistler and Clausen are used to explore in depth the visual manifestations of reverie. At times, these chapters draw on scientific writings in psychology. They also identify the import of psychological ideas within art criticism. Each of the following terms is extracted from the contemporary criticism relating to the works discussed: trance, vacancy, somnambulism, absorption, contemplation, abstraction, ecstasy,

spiritualism, passive dreaming, hallucination, unconsciousness, half-conscious, reverie. All reveal that states of consciousness, relating to reverie, were not unfamiliar to art critics. The extent of incorporating the psychological was clearly evident in the case of the art critic, W.C. Brownell, heading his 1883 article in *Magazine of Art*, “Bastien-Lepage: Painter and Psychologist”.¹ The examination of contemporary art criticism is used to aid the interpretation of the functions of reverie in art.

A loose chronological structure is adopted. The study focuses on the mid-Victorian years, which saw an abundance of reverie images. It extends to the year 1890, by which time ideas around consciousness were widely adopted in artistic culture, and reverie had become an established trope.² The 1890s and the early 1900s reveal a similar rich harvest of reverie images which, although not discussed here, warrant serious investigation. While recognising an earlier pre-history of the Victorian reverie image, (it plays a significant part, for instance, in Romanticist portraiture), this study sought to explore the years during which its abundance in art sat alongside both the contemporary fascination with psychologies of (un)consciousness, and contemporaneous changes in art which can be linked to Aestheticism. This latter aspect of the project examines the functions of reverie alongside its signifying potential in an artistic context which saw disruptions within the conventions of narrative. In this regard, the thesis makes a significant contribution to the scholarship on Aestheticism. The resulting findings show that reverie features significantly in Aestheticism and serves Aestheticist principles in two dominant ways. First, it serves the occlusion of narrative, and second, it augments Aestheticist spectatorial viewing practices which prioritised contemplative modes of appreciating mystery and beauty. Both these strategies have been identified as especially significant by scholars of Aestheticism, however, as of yet, the importance of reverie has not received the attention it deserves. *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting*, by Elizabeth Prettejohn, makes little mention of reverie, yet, of the one hundred or so Aestheticist works discussed, fifty one of these are sure contenders for the depiction of reverie, with a further

¹ W.C. Brownell, “Bastien Lepage: Painter and Psychologist,” *Magazine of Art* 6 (January 1883): 265-71.

² See Jenny Bourne Taylor, “Obscure Recesses: Locating the Victorian Unconscious,” *Writing the Victorians*, ed. J.B. Bullen (Essex: Longman, 1997), 137-79.

twenty-one being possible contenders.³ While Prettejohn's text is rich and insightful, its omission of any rigorous discussion of reverie is typical of the wider scholarship on Victorian art.

With their focus on movements, monographs and surveys, earlier accounts of Victorian art suggested it to be sectarian and fragmented.⁴ Recently, however, authors have offered re-appraisals and revisionist accounts of nineteenth-century artists.⁵ Sentimentality, time, memory and desire, and the visual imagination are but a few of the original and prodigious conceptual themes which have issued revitalised approaches to the study of Victorian art.⁶ In looking at the way reverie is present in different groupings of artists, the thesis compliments revisionist understandings keen to show connections in Victorian art. Via reverie, the chapters on Rossetti, Whistler and Clausen, offer new ways of exploring their art, and this thematic approach helps avoid an older tendency to accentuate differences, rather than exploring intersections and commonalities.⁷ The presence of reverie in genre painting, Pre-Raphaelitism, Aestheticism, Rural Naturalism and forms of social realist painting, shows there to be a distinctive overlapping between these artistic groupings. Moreover, its significance goes beyond this notable wider presence; for it is clear that reverie serves specific functions in the way that artists from these groupings negotiate various principles and strategies relating to a range of artistic concerns, such as, the depiction of character, the suggestion of narrative, beauty, mystery, and social issues. Seen in this way, reverie augments analysis of the cross-currents, the interconnectedness and intertextual character of Victorian art.

³ Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in British Art* (London: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁴ For example, see Graham Reynolds, *Victorian Painting* (London: Studio Vista, 1966); Jeremy Maas, *Victorian Painters* (London: Cresset Press).

⁵ See Paul Barlow, *Time Present and Time Past: The Art of John Everett Millais* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Tim Barringer and Elizabeth Prettejohn, ed., *Frederic Leighton: Antiquity, Renaissance, Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

⁶ For example, see Pamela Fletcher, "To Wipe a Manly Tear: The Aesthetics of Emotion in Victorian Narrative Painting," *Victorian Studies* 51, no. 3 (Spring 2009): 457-69; Kenneth McConkey, *Memory and Desire* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002); Sonia Solicari, "Selling Sentiment: The Commodification of Sentiment in Victorian Visual Culture," *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 4, (2007): 5 www.19.bbk.ac.uk [accessed 2 May 2011].

⁷ See David Peters Corbett, *The World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England, 1848-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 251-60.

The broad objectives of the thesis are twofold. First, the study considers the ways that reverie functioned both within and for images; artists' applications and representations of reverie are explored and I consider how these bear on the production and reception of art. Second, I consider contexts which are relevant to the concept of reverie itself. One significant context highlighted is that of mid-Victorian psychology. By significant, I mean that psychology most clearly reveals there to be a broad interest in questions of reverie in the culture. The research has adopted an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from historical and scientific texts, and where appropriate, considers the ways that representation relates to sophisticated historical contexts which impinge on the operations of power and ideology in relation to identity.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw pronounced developments in British psychology and ideas presented by psychologists percolated wider artistic and cultural contexts. The research undertaken of primary psychological texts reveals there to be rich contemporary discussions of reverie and related concepts of consciousness. These texts are discussed and my first chapter focuses on the substantial two-volume study *The Gay Science*, by E.S. Dallas, published in 1866. Dallas was a well known literary figure. He contributed to *The Times* and was editor of the popular periodical *Once a Week* between January 1868 and July 1869.⁸ He associated himself with artists such as D.G Rossetti who certainly knew of the text.⁹ While Rossetti may have been interested in aspects of the psychological literature, I do not propose that this is the case with all artists, nor do I wish to suggest that ideas drawn from psychological writings were directly transposed onto works of art. The importance, however, of discursive contexts and the wider, contemporaneous interest in reverie, as in the Dallas case, is shown to be especially resonant with art. We could describe Dallas's text as hybrid, melding new observations in scientific psychology with investigations into poetry and other arts. A key move of the text is to posit a theory of the unconscious. This on its own is

⁸ See *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Leslie Stephen, 13 (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1888), 395.

<http://www.archive.org/stream/dictionaryofnati13stepuoft#page/394/mode/2up/search/Dallas> [accessed 25 May 2010].

⁹ According to the inventory of books in his possession, D.G. Rossetti owned a copy of *The Gay Science* and may well have designed an unused version of the front cover. See *Rossetti Archive*, <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/dgrlibrary.rad.html> [accessed 11 April 2011].

fascinating, as Dallas talks through mental states relating to reverie, but, the apogee of Dallas's hypothesis is the fusion of the concept of the unconscious with art. This fusion leads to a theory of art-creation that has, as its centre, the psychological concept of unconsciousness. Its contiguity to the immediate context of mid-Victorian representations of reverie, exemplifies therefore, the relevance of the percolation of psychological ideas within artistic and cultural contexts. Alongside Dallas' text, writings by psychologists, including Henry Holland and William Benjamin Carpenter help to identify an intellectual history in the middle years of the nineteenth century, showing that reverie had a defined presence in psychological discourse. This situates Dallas' text within the broad arena of psychology, which accommodated a variety of positions relating to reverie and states of consciousness.¹⁰ That span incorporated the romantic idealism of Dallas's concept, the 'Hidden Soul', as well as the emergent physiological studies of mind¹¹ in works by Carpenter, Holland, Bain and others. But the span also extended to incorporate the pseudo-scientific explorations of phrenologists and physiognomists, and the popular fascination with mesmerism, hypnotism and spiritualism.¹² Clearly, the various tendencies in psychological thought, whether scientific, pseudo scientific, or quackery, each offered relational positions to conceptualising reverie. Seen together, these arenas of psychology offer a rich context which demonstrates the various ways that reverie could be considered.

What are the meanings of reverie?¹³ The term, nowadays, tends to be limited to scholarly or erudite usage, but, predominantly 'daydream' functions as an effective synonym. Both these terms coexisted in the nineteenth century and, as now, were

¹⁰ For an overview of the extent and range of debates relating to consciousness and the mind, see Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth, eds., *Embodied Selves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹¹ See Taylor and Shuttleworth, *Embodied Selves*, 67-72, 123-40.

¹² See Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Antonio Melechi, *Fugitive Minds* (London: Arrow Books, 2004); J.P. Williams, "Psychical Research and Psychiatry in Late Victorian Britain: Trance as Ecstasy or Trance as Insanity," in *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry: Volume One, People and Ideas*, ed. W.F. Bynum, Roy Porter, and Michael Shepherd (London: Tavistock, 1985), 233-54.

¹³ The scope of this study did not allow for an anthropological investigation of reverie, however, situating it globally, geographically and culturally would be revealing. Peter Brown has discussed "the common everyday trance" in *The Hypnotic Brain: Hypnotherapy and Social Communication* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 87. See also, Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception* (London: MIT Press, 1999).

synonymic.¹⁴ The term reverie was not mutually exclusive to the discourses of arts or science and, during the years defined by this study, its usage was expansive.¹⁵ Broadly, we can situate discourses of reverie within the categories of science and the arts. I will deal first with meanings of reverie within science.

Before the onset of experimental psychology, 'scientific' discussion of reverie was situated within the discipline of philosophy. By the middle of the nineteenth century, texts written by physicians explored reverie alongside concepts of consciousness, and therefore mark out the point at which reverie becomes attached to medical discourses. Psychology in the mid-Victorian period represents a critical juncture when models of psychology informed by the eighteenth-century discipline of mental philosophy intersected with the emerging discipline of mental physiology. These two branches would meld to become scientific psychology. By the early 1890s the delineation was crystallised. The psychologist James Sully marked out the distinctions of "Modern Psychology and Philosophy:"

The modern science of psychology exhibits, like the prae-scientific thought about mind, traces of each of the two tendencies: the spiritualistic and the materialistic. The first thing to note about this modern branch of inquiry is that it has separated itself, in a measure at least, from philosophy. As a positive science, it aims merely at studying observable facts or phenomena, and drawing inferences from these, according to properly scientific methods of investigation, respecting their laws.¹⁶

It is important, therefore, to recognise the scope of reverie within these shifting dynamics of scientific disciplines and its presence in both the philosophical tradition of philosophy and the positivist, materialist trajectory of "modern science".

¹⁴ Reverie meaning daydream was first attested in the 1650s. Douglas Harper, "Online Etymology Dictionary" <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=reverie> [accessed 27 June 2011].

¹⁵ A keyword search of the term 'reverie' in Chadwyck's database of British Periodicals suggests an explosion of the term's usage in the 1860s, which was sustained for three decades, falling off at the turn of the century. Number of usage instances within periodical articles in brackets: 1800-1809 (403) 1810-1819 (414) 1820-1829 (810), 1830-1839 (1035), 1840-1849 (1423), 1850-1859 (1734), 1860-1869 (2996), 1870-1879 (2988), 1880-1889 (2991), 1890-1899 (2834), 1900-1909 (1650) 1910-1919 (667), 1920-1929 (316).

<http://britishperiodicals.chadwyck.com/marketing/index.jsp> [accessed 23 May 2010].

¹⁶ James Sully, *The Human Mind: A Text-Book of Psychology* Vol. 1 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1892), 3.

By the onset of Victoria's reign, the concept of reverie, as a psychological state akin to daydream, was established and formulated in the psychological literature. Robert Macnish provided his definition of reverie in his influential *The Philosophy of Sleep* (1838); in the chapter headed 'Reverie' Macnish writes:

Reverie proceeds from an unusual quiescence of the brain, and inability of the mind to direct itself strongly to any one point: it is often the prelude to sleep. There is a defect in the *attention*, which, instead of being fixed on one subject, wanders over a thousand, and even on these is feebly and ineffectively directed... That kind of reverie in which the mind is nearly divested of all ideas and approximates closely the state of sleep, I have sometimes experienced while gazing long and intently upon a river. The thoughts seem to glide away, one by one, upon the surface of the stream, till the mind is emptied of them altogether.¹⁷

Macnish's description corresponds with current definitions which suggest an unwilling, absent-minded falling into reverie.¹⁸ Macnish and others were keen to distinguish some of the finer details of reverie-like states, thus demonstrating the depth of their enquiries. Concurrently, related psychological states, such as abstraction and trance, were debated. Collectively these enquiries identified realms of consciousness which could be distinguished from both the pure states of sleep and conversely, the state of lucid attentiveness to surroundings. At this point I should highlight that this study chose not to focus on representations of sleep. It became clear that both the extent of the contemporary debate around reverie, and the extent of its concurrent visual manifestations, made it viable as an overarching focus for the thesis.

Central to psychological discourse relating to reverie, is the concept of the will, and its operation in both the healthy, and the unhealthy mind. Key questions for psychologists were, to what degree can subjects harness volitional power? Where is the 'will' situated? Is it located in the mind or in the body? And, is it possible to cultivate the 'will' through both habit and training?¹⁹ Discussion on the will permeated popular

¹⁷ Robert Macnish, *The Philosophy of Sleep* 2nd ed. (Glasgow: W.R. McPhun, 1836), 278-79.

¹⁸ Dictionary.com. *Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition*. Harper Collins Publishers. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/reverie>. [accessed 27 June 2011].

¹⁹ Henry Holland, *Chapters on Mental Physiology* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852). Holland discusses the 'will' in Chapter Three. Also, see Alexander Bain, *The Emotions and the Will* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1859), subsequent editions

literature, serving Victorian debates around morals and self-improvement.²⁰ Discourses around reverie-like states and the will, would inevitably meld. When discussing volition, writers explored its ‘flighty’²¹ nature, often in relation to a loss of attention as indicative of reverie-like states. Correspondingly, when the subject turned to the character of reverie-like states, the concept of the ‘will’ was called upon to make sense of the loss of volitional powers, particularly in relation to attention. Carpenter noted the relationship between the will and reverie:

the complete *suspension* of the power of volitionally directing the current of thought and feeling, will be shown to be the essential feature, not merely of the states of Dreaming and Delirium, but also of natural and induced Reverie.²²

Carpenter and others suggest degrees of reverie within a register of perception. Henry Holland describes:

[a] natural function of mind by which we perpetually change our relation to external objects, even when all the senses are open and awake; at one moment abstracting our consciousness from them altogether – at another, admitting some sensations, while others are excluded.²³

Holland’s influential text *Chapters on Mental Physiology*, first published in 1852, is keen to identify commonalities in various psychological states. He notes that “the terms absence of mind, abstraction, and reverie, describe analogous conditions ...remarkable in character”²⁴, and in discussing mesmerism he observes,

the mesmeric sleep is exceedingly various in kinds and degree; - from the vague state of reverie or half-trance, in which impressions are still received from the senses, and excite wandering actions of mind – to that deeper trance.²⁵

were published in 1865 and 1875. See, W.B. Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology, with their Applications to the Training and Discipline of the Mind and the Study of its Morbid Conditions* (London: King and Co., 1874); Carpenter devotes a whole chapter to the subject in each of the book’s seven editions. Also, see Henry Maudsley, “On Volition,” in *The Physiology of Mind* (London: Macmillan, 1876).

²⁰ Many self-improvement texts were issued by religious organisations; for example, *Excelsior*, published by the Sunday School Union. Its subtitle *Helps To Progress In Thought And Action* is telling. *Excelsior* 3, (1881), 207-8.

²¹ Carpenter, *Mental Physiology*, 3rd ed. (1875), 24-25.

²² *Ibid.*, 393.

²³ Holland, *Chapters*, 54.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

Recognising the various degrees and similarities between reverie-like states is helpful in that it shows there to be pluralities in the conceptualisation of reverie. The following extract from Holland is useful here. It begins by identifying modes of cognizance, whereby, a subject is able to perform intellectual acts while appearing to suspend the normal operations of perception during wakefulness. It is important, here, to highlight such a description of the condition whereby the subject's mind is intellectually active, yet outward perceptions of surroundings are dulled – such a state corresponds with what was later termed 'unconscious cerebration'. Shortly, I will discuss the significance of this to the thesis. Holland links the state through varieties of intensity; "absence of mind" and another, less intense, everyday or "common" sense of reverie typified by drifting into states whereby perceptual recognition of surroundings are dimmed.

Another connection between these several states is that afforded by the curious phenomena of reverie, trance, or cataleptic ecstasy; where, with the external senses as much closed as in perfect sleep, it would seem that the intellectual and voluntary powers are sometimes exercised much more clearly and consecutively, yet not under the same relation to consciousness and memory, as in the waking state ... Reverie, in this medical sense, is but a higher degree of that which we call such in ordinary language; or what is still more usually termed *absence of mind*. And this again is merely the excess of the condition, common to all and of constant occurrence, in which the consciousness is detached for a time from objects of sense actually present to the organs, concentrating itself upon trains of thought and feeling within; — a condition which belongs to and characterises man as an intellectual being.²⁶

The end of the paragraph is telling, for Holland indicates the operations of reverie to be normative. This is most interesting, because this comes in the context of Holland also identifying reverie's relation to pathological states of insanity. I discuss this later on, but, it is sufficient here, to recognise the variety of reverie. As Holland's text suggests, reverie is closely allied with a range of related phenomena such as trance and mesmerism.

Holland and others, in the 1850s, were keen to dismiss the claim that the phenomenon of mesmerism came as a result of mysterious 'magnetic' powers issuing forth from an

²⁶ Ibid., 60.

inducer to a susceptible subject. With the work of James Braid and others, including Carpenter, the phenomenon was rationalised scientifically and new terms, such as “electro-biology” and “induced reverie” sat alongside Braid’s term, hypnotism.²⁷ Carpenter discussed the similarity to “ordinary reverie”, but was keen to distinguish the phenomena of reverie, electro biology (hypnotism), and somnambulism by degrees of intensity:

The Biologized “subject,” like a person in an ordinary Reverie, must be considered as *awake*; that is, he has generally the use of all his senses, and preserves, in most cases, a distinct recollection of what takes place. There is every gradation, however, between this condition and that of true Somnambulism; in which one or more of the inlets to sensation are closed, and no remembrance is afterwards preserved ... of anything that may have been thought, felt or acted. In fact, the two conditions are essentially the same in every respect, save their intensity, and the one graduates insensibly into the other.²⁸

Again, it is worth noting that reverie corresponds closely with the range of related phenomena characterised by a subject’s perceptions of outer data being suspended. Drawing this back to the analysis of reverie images, we can see that it is apposite therefore, to situate representations of reverie within a discourse of multiple forms, or degrees of reverie, which included such things as trance, somnambulism, mesmerism and hypnotism.

By 1851, a craze for public demonstrations of mesmerism was well underway, and found popularity amongst the middle classes.²⁹ Such events mark an interesting intersection between the popular cultural confrontations with reverie-like states and their scientific enquiry; and they further attest to there being a relevant historical context to the production of reverie images. The thesis reveals that, at times, the popular interest in reverie’s associated subjects, such as mesmerism and spiritualism, exists alongside artistic contexts. I discuss this proximity in the Chapter on Whistler.

²⁷ See Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology*, 544-67; Taylor and Shuttleworth *Embodied Selves*, 53-63.

²⁸ Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology*, 555.

²⁹ Taylor and Shuttleworth, *Embodied Selves*, 57-58.

In the arts, reverie had a presence within popular literature and music, as well as the visual arts. In these contexts, the meaning of reverie as synonymous with daydream was sustained. As art historians, we know that reverie had currency for Victorian artists and their publics. Paintings were often titled *Reverie* or *A Reverie*, and many other titles indicating reverie were adopted.³⁰ Such works invariably depicted figures in mental states suggestive of daydream. In music, the term reverie often appeared in the titles of pianoforte scores for domestic consumption.³¹ Similarly, in poetry the term had a wide currency. There is no shortage of Victorian poems with titles featuring the term reverie.³² Critical writings on poetry also applied the term. In Walter Pater's appraisal of "Poems by William Morris," published in 1868 in the popular periodical *Westminster Review*, he embraces the concept of reverie. One line describes the Christian medievalist spirit of Morris' poetry thus: "Into this kingdom of reverie, and with it into a paradise of ambitious refinements, the earthly love enters, and becomes a prolonged somnambulism".³³ In another line Pater writes, "Reverie, illusion, delirium: they are the three stages of a fatal descent both in the religion and the loves of the Middle Age".³⁴ Pater's review is especially significant. In large, it formed the two later writings, the famous conclusion to *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Literature* (1873), and the essay "Aesthetic Poetry". I mention its early incarnation here for four reasons; firstly, it encapsulates the conceptual appeal of reverie; secondly, the review positions usage of reverie as a concept and term in the popular press; thirdly, the review demonstrates a body of ekphrastic writing which may in itself be considered a reverie; and fourthly, the review identified a set of principles which came to be identified with Aestheticism and the philosophy of 'art for art's sake', which, later will be shown to be relevant to images of reverie.³⁵

³⁰ For example, Alfred Downing Fripp, *A Reverie*, 1850, (Wichita Art Museum, watercolour). Titles which strongly hinted at reverie, included ones with the word "thoughts", such as Walter Langley's *Wandering Thoughts*, (1882, fig. 100) or, John Everett Millais, *Wandering Thoughts*, c.1855, (Manchester City Art Galleries).

³¹ Many examples were reviewed in the musical press, for example, *Reverie* composed by John Cheshire, see *The Musical World* 46, no. 42 (30 May 1868): 367.

³² An early Victorian example typical of the many that were to follow is J.A. Wade's *A Reverie*. The first line indicates the inward mental state indicative of reverie: "Rapt in a solitude of scene and thought", in *Bentley's Miscellany* 2, no. 7 (January 1840): 357.

³³ Walter Pater (Anon), "Poems by William Morris" *Westminster Review*, 34, no. 2 (October 1868): 302.

³⁴ Pater, "Poems by William Morris," 302

³⁵ Pater uses the phrase. *Ibid.*, 312.

Artists who depicted reverie-like states, intentionally or not, raised a significant question in psychological enquiry at the time – what is the nature of the distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness? The semantic openness of reverie paintings must have resonated with contemporary ideas in psychology and the engagement with the subject of (un)consciousness. Opportunely, picturing reverie functioned as a metaphor for something of the impossibility of capturing and fixing with complete certainty the elusive workings of the mind and the scientific difficulties faced when defining (un)consciousness. In this sense, these paintings are question marks. At a time when scientific empiricism was paramount, here was a battle that art could win, as it revealed the inadequacy of science in its ability to explain essences of humanity. Pictures of reverie pose the question – what is consciousness? They do not answer that question, but they help us *imagine* an answer somewhere hidden within – that when we see states of consciousness illustrated, we, as viewers, might muse upon what consciousness is. This notional process of reflection upon what constitutes (un)consciousness was, I propose, a key concern and realm of investigation in Victorian art, via reverie. Although the paintings I consider hold no answers, they serve as a stimulus, or prompt, to explore this question on the nature of consciousness. And while they maintain openness they are not deceptive, for whatever psychological perspective one came from scientifically, the illustrative capacity of the pictures remained true – faithful representations of the untenable. This kind of semantic flexibility is demonstrated throughout the thesis in the analyses of works by Rossetti, Whistler and Clausen.

From our twenty-first century perspective, it is easy to overlook the semantic possibilities available to the nineteenth-century viewer of reverie images. Interpretations calling upon the subject of reverie itself, would certainly have been available to spectators. Subtle distinctions of consciousness and mind were within the grasp of the public. One example of this is evidenced in the concept of ‘unconscious cerebration’, whereby a subject’s unconscious is busily productive even if their conscious mode appears to be one of sleep or daydream. The concept generally referred to modes of automatic mental activity which were unwilled. Examples of the phenomena given by psychologists included instances whereby one searches one’s memory incessantly for a particular word, only for it to be later recalled, unwilled, in an instant; other examples included the unwilled action of poets and composers

creating works whilst in states of somnambulism.³⁶ Although the concept had been described elsewhere, Carpenter seems to be the first to designate the term in 1855.³⁷ The term ‘unconscious cerebration’ gained popular currency in the 1870s,³⁸ but, by the early twentieth century, had lost favour, being gradually replaced instead by the ‘subconscious’.³⁹ While the terms may shift, it is clear that the phenomena had a currency during the Victorian period. It is not my suggestion that unconscious cerebration has a relevance to all reverie images; instead, the reason for bringing it to light, is to show that it can help us to recognise a range of possibilities when confronted with the reverie image, and, as I go on to discuss shortly, reverie need not be configured as purely passive. One occasion where the phenomena seems to be directly called upon by an artist is in the watercolour painting by Robert William Buss, *Dickens’s Dream* (1875, fig. 1). Although unfinished, the under-drawing and painted sections clearly show the figure of Dickens in his study, immersed in a reverie-like state, surrounded by hovering images representing the characters of his works. The viewer is invited to muse upon the productive outpourings of Dickens’ imagination.

Alongside unconscious cerebration, other modes of consciousness, such as forms of cataleptic trance, or total vacancy, in which both conscious and unconscious activity appeared non-existent, also had a currency. Robert Macnish described the condition of “catalepsy or trance” whereby “the mental powers...are generally suspended, and participate in the general torpor, which pervades the frame...consciousness is abolished”.⁴⁰ These notions of vacancy or trance may have easily been contrasted with more active forms of consciousness which *appear* in the visual culture to correspond with the unconscious; thus, the notion of deep introspection, whereby subjects are actively engaged at a conscious level with deep thought, could also be an available

³⁶ See Taylor and Shuttleworth, *Embodied Selves*, 93-5, 99-101, 113-14.

³⁷ Holland *Chapters* (2nd ed. 1858), 60; W.B. Carpenter, *Principles of Human Physiology* 5th ed., (London: John Churchill, 1855), 607-9.

³⁸ Frances Power Cobbe’s article “On Unconscious Cerebration” appeared in the popular periodical *Macmillan Magazine*. See Cobbe, *Macmillan Magazine* 23, no. 133 (November 1870): 24-37.

³⁹ See A.H. Pierce, “Should We Still Retain the Expression ‘Unconscious Cerebration’ to Designate Certain Processes Connected With Mental Life?” *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 3, no. 23 (8 November 1906): 626-30.

⁴⁰ Robert Macnish, *The Philosophy of Sleep* 3rd ed. (1838), 228-29.

reading for reverie-like representations.⁴¹ Forms of deep introspection and forms of cataleptic trance had been considered by some as morbidly pathological in mid-nineteenth-century psychology and were the subjects of debate in popular medical discourses.⁴² Yet another state of consciousness was also available, in what was described as ‘poetic-reverie’, meaning flights of fancy of the imagination willed by the subject for pleasure or creative intent. Carpenter uses this sense of reverie in his comparison between reverie and abstraction, and is discussed further in Chapter Two.⁴³ One key point to make here is that these clear distinctions in modes of mind may be significantly different internally in an individual’s mode of mental activity, yet, outwardly, they could effectively appear identical; consequently, the *image* of reverie is open for interpretation. In concert with the contemporary psychological writings, the thesis often applies the term reverie, as a catch-all incorporating the senses of trance, abstraction, deep thought, melancholy and so on. This semantic breadth can be briefly illustrated if we compare Clausen’s *A Woman of the Fields*, (1882, fig. 2) with Whistler’s *Symphony in White, No.1: The White Girl*, (1862, fig. 3), alongside say, Rossetti’s *Reverie*, (1868, fig. 4). How do we unravel the distinctiveness of each work in relation to the subject of consciousness? Does the Whistler indicate a form of vacancy or trance as some contemporary commentators suggested? Does the Rossetti depict reverie as an indicator of poetic flights of fancy? Does the Clausen indicate a form of deep introspection, or melancholy, or merely a brief moment of rest from labour? Each presents the viewer with an opportunity to contemplate the nature of the respective figure’s consciousness. Each presents a solitary figure which, in itself augments an invitation to the viewer to consider the nature of their own consciousness. The outward appearance of each of the figures’ faces details very different individuals, but, essentially, each work presents faces which invite viewers to engage with reading modes of consciousness. The analyses I go on to offer, pick out subtle distinctions in the way that consciousness might be read. Following this brief comparison, it should

⁴¹ Such forms of deep introspection were of course evident in depictions of melancholy. British examples were already available in late eighteenth-century painting, for instance, Joseph Wright of Derby *Maria and her Dog Silvio* (Derby Museum and Art Gallery. Oil on canvas, 1781).

⁴² See M.J. Clark, “‘Morbid Introspection’, Unsoundness of Mind and British Psychological Medicine, c. 1830-1900”, in W.F. Bynum, R. Porter and M. Shepherd, *The Anatomy of Madness, Vol. III: The Asylum and its Psychiatry* (London: Routledge 1988).

⁴³ Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology*, p.544. This sense of poetic reverie emerges out of the Romantic tradition established in Rousseau, Wordsworth and Coleridge.

be clear that the semantic flexibility of the reverie picture can be useful in re-examining the shifting conventions attached to the organisation of narrative in Victorian art. While its pictorial conventions may have been limited to figures reclining, gazing, relaxing, pondering, posing and so on, the strength of the reverie picture lays in its openness and the way it offered viewers spectatorial agency.



Critical readings of reverie images have, for the most part, skirted around a detailed investigation of reverie. The image of the figure in reverie seems to have been assimilated into a dominant narrative of Victorian art, which identifies obsessions with kitsch sentimentality.⁴⁴ Yet, the conditions of art historical study today allow for more critical negotiations of such assessments, and the assumed insignificance of so-called kitsch work is being challenged and revised. The thesis aims to contribute to current art history which offers new readings and approaches to British art. Current scholarship is helping revise dismissive attitudes on Victorian painting, which have been coloured by the dominance of modernist critical paradigms that came to the fore in the twentieth century. The series 'New Readings in British Art and Visual Culture Since 1750' from Ashgate Press, which ran until 2005, is for example, indicative of more recent interest in the social and cultural history of nineteenth-century British art and its innovative interpretation. Recent interjections have critiqued the relevance of modernist theory as an appropriate paradigm for the scholarly appraisal of Victorian art.⁴⁵ My discussion of Whistler's *Symphony in White, No.1: The White Girl*, posits that the discursive contexts of reverie need to be considered over and above fragmentary statements made by Whistler, which have hitherto been used to identify his supposed modernist trajectory in the early 1860s. However, while the thesis acknowledges these dangers, it does not lose sight of the fact that reverie can be significant in the history of modernist art. The thesis acknowledges an existing strand of modernist criticism which identifies the apparent tensions in the negotiation of form and the fragmentation of narrative, as significant to the changes underway in Victorian art in the latter half of the nineteenth

⁴⁴ For a corrective to this see Paul Barlow, *Time Present and Time Past: The Art of John Everett Millais* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 195-96.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 193-201.

century. I am not concerned with a Greenbergian teleology;⁴⁶ its inevitable trajectory of flatness, self-critical irreducibility and opticality.⁴⁷ Instead, the thesis prefers to recognise contiguous tensions around narrative and form, which had substance for artists such as Whistler, and it explores the role that reverie plays in their negotiation. It would have been an oversight, therefore, *not* to question the significance of reverie as subject matter in painting, in the way that the subjects of prostitution, primitivism, and the café, have all been implicated in a history of modernism; the question here, being, how could reverie support formalist strategies? In considering certain works by Whistler (alongside Albert Moore), I show that reverie was an attractive proposition in view of its propensity to stifle narrative, in favour of what could be interpreted as subjectlessness. Tackled as a subject, (whereby expectations of narrative are redirected towards concerns of form), suggests that reverie can have a relevance to modernism. However, the thesis does not hinge on this. It is not about claiming reverie per se to be a modernist strategy – for it can be many things – the point however, is to reiterate that the flexibility and versatility of reverie had strong appeal – it *could* augment formalist strategies.

Aside from minor discussion on reverie in exhibition catalogues, surveys and monographs, which tends to describe, in brief, the psychological states of figures, there is a sustained absence of critical enquiry. Commentary tends to be limited to mere descriptions of a depicted figure's state. Occasionally, this goes a little further. In one typical example, Malcolm Warner identifies the “expressionless” faces of “the vast sisterhood of dreamy, impassive females who stare blankly out at us, and beyond us, from British paintings of the 1860s and 1870s”.⁴⁸ Related observations are offered by Paul Spencer-Longhurst and Susan Casteras. The former notes the mid-Victorian tendency, by painters such as Richard Redgrave and Alfred Elmore, of depicting “single beauties in swoony reverie over affairs of the hearth or heart”, with titles such

⁴⁶ Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting” in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (London: Harper and Row, 1982), 5-10.

⁴⁷ On this see Corbett, *The World in Paint*, 13-15. For Corbett, formalism need not be prised from history and culture, instead, painting's materiality has the power to signify cultural meaning, in particular, the self-conscious ambition of artists to negotiate the modern.

⁴⁸ Warner's discussion briefly considers Whistler's *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, (1862). See Malcolm Warner, *James Tissot, 1836-1902*, ed. Krystyna Matyjaszkiewicz (London: Barbican Art Gallery exh. cat., Phaidon, 1984), 34.

as “Loving Thoughts”, or “Lost in Thought”.⁴⁹ Spencer-Longhurst differentiates the works of Rossetti from such “fancy pictures” by his “reduction in narrative content” and his works’ “abstract qualities”,⁵⁰ a point which I discuss at length in Chapter Two. Casteras also identifies the popularity for depictions of “dreamy ladies, self consciously posed at a bower, window, or balcony”, with paintings and prints using “the aloneness and prettiness of the female as the pretext for framing her as an emblem of romantic reverie or expectation”.⁵¹ These examples typify the way that reverie tends to be discussed in passing.

The thesis calls for a corrective to this largely disregarded subject. The following anecdote reveals how easily the complexity of reverie may be overlooked, and it provides a form of null hypothesis which this thesis rejects. During the early stages of researching reverie, I discussed my findings at a seminar in which an audience member posited reverie images to be nothing more than representations of models-as-sitters, and that their expressions of daydream were merely symptomatic of the consequent boredom arrived at when sitting for an artist. Michael Fried confronts a similar question in his discussion of Manet and ruminates on this interpretive strategy:

One might wish to say that what distinguished Manet’s use of models is that he portrayed them as self-evidently posing before the painter – that his figures’ gazes are blank, their expressions are impassive, and their gestures are unreadable because those were the gazes, expressions, and gestures of models costumed or disrobed for the occasion and holding static poses for long sessions in the artist’s studio.⁵²

Fried’s rejection “but this won’t do” indicates his dissatisfaction with the approach. For Fried, the “uncanny and disturbing power” of Manet’s *Olympia* – the way it “posits a complex relation to the viewer” needs to be acknowledged as something more than just the chance outcome of posing for the artist. “The obdurate expressive opacity of his paintings can’t be rationalized in these terms”.⁵³ For Fried, issues around the

⁴⁹ Paul Spencer-Longhurst, *The Blue Bower: Rossetti in the 1860s* (London: Scala Publishing, 2000), 26.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵¹ See Susan Casteras, *The Substance of the Shadow: Images of Victorian Womanhood* (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1982), especially catalogue notes discussing Daniel Maclise’s *The Reverie*, 86.

⁵² Fried, *Manet’s Modernism* (London: University of Chicago Press), 339.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 339-40.

complex relationship between painter, model, painting and beholder are all too significant to Manet's ambition to negotiate modernist pictorial solutions in the reconstruction of the painting/ beholder relationship. Similarly, attached to readings of reverie, explaining the appearance of the figure as merely symptomatic of sitting for the artist "won't do". The spectrum of generative mechanisms that shaped the production of reverie images is too complex for this to be satisfactory. My interpretations of reverie images show that a more rigorous engagement with the subject of reverie can help assess the way that artists negotiated their subject matter alongside considerations of critical reception and commerciality. Reverie's currency in fictional texts, popular journal articles, scientific and pseudo-scientific texts on psychology, in musical and poetic works cannot go ignored. Nor can we ignore the fact that the trope of reverie was seized on by artists, in different ways, to serve different purposes, thus rendering it flexible and versatile. In recognising these complexities, the thesis reveals that far from being a mawkish, pot-boiler subject for artists, reverie could strategically address artistic, social, cultural and scientific concerns of the day. While it has been customary in art history to see reverie as an end point, a point which closes-off any further analysis of the image, the readings undertaken here, show how we can use reverie as a point of entry for more critical, detailed and enlightening analyses.



Any enquiry into Victorian reverie images courts questions of gender and the predominant representation of women in such images. This thesis is not centrally concerned with gender. However, it is worth noting that gender exclusivity is not the rule. I discuss Whistler etchings of male labourers, works by Rossetti, Clausen and others, all of which depict males in reverie. Feminist scholarship has remarked on the way that patriarchal structures render a dominant aspect of femininity as passive. Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock note that from the eighteenth century onwards,

woman is present as an image but with the specific connotations of body and nature, that is passive, available, possessable, powerless ... female figures are

frequently asleep, unconscious or unconcerned with mortal things, and such devices allow undisturbed and voyeuristic enjoyment of the female form.⁵⁴

At first glance, the image of woman-in-reverie articulates this ideology. Rendered passive, in states of daydream, unaware of the spectator, the figure of woman is displayed for the consumption of a heterosexual male gaze. The readings I offer show that images of reverie display complexities which are able to disrupt this paradigm of reverie as a sign-vehicle for woman as passive object. This disruptive potential comes out of examining both the contexts of psychology and the readings of paintings from which it was possible to posit reverie as active. The psychological context reveals that the mid-nineteenth century conception of unconscious cerebration held that states of reverie might be altogether *productive*. Surprisingly, reconfigured as active, we can start to imagine reverie as a site of resistance at the symbolic level. This leads us to review the logic of the powerful ideology that conflates female passivity with powerlessness. The duality of reverie, the fact that it can be taken as *both* passive and active has significant consequences. Even if we ignore the contemporary contexts of psychological discourse, taken at face value, it is clear, that rather than closing-off analysis at the point of reverie, used as a starting point for critical enquiry, we can start to imagine a profound distinction from previous articulations of reverie as passive. Reverie as a site of resistance appears at various points in the thesis. Colouring my enquiry has been Foucault's conception of power, where power and resistance cohabit.⁵⁵ The re-articulation of *passive* subjects as *active* is one way of revising traditional approaches to the question of gender and sexuality.⁵⁶ In these terms, we should not assume the absence of intellectual agency in the depicted psychological identity of female figures. This offers a strategy to further advance readings of female identity and subjectivity in nineteenth-century art.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women Art and Ideology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 116.

⁵⁵ See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume One: An Introduction* trans. Robert Hurley, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981), 92-96.

⁵⁶ In relation to the gendering of Aestheticism, see Pettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting*, 26-28. Pettejohn makes the valuable point that the predominance of images of beautiful women in Aestheticism indicate an obsession with the "role and status of women" which could be deemed "positively, as a defiant rejection of contemporary patriarchal assumptions," 26.

⁵⁷ Emily Apter observes that "in the fin de siècle, we find a curious predilection on the part of male authors, for writing femininity, that is, masquerading as a woman's consciousness". See

Originally, a chapter on James Tissot and realism was planned, but, material for that was reorganised into a chapter on Clausen which sought to explore ideas around realism in relation to rural naturalism. I mention Tissot, now, in order to draw attention to the complex articulations of female identity and subjectivity negotiated by Victorian artists. Reverie, as a methodological strategy for exploring such complex articulations, can be deployed for example, in relation to Tissot's women, who command sophisticated expressions of female identity and subjectivity, albeit mediated through the vision of a male artist. Two brief examples help demonstrate this. Tissot's oil painting, *La Rêveuse* (c. 1876, fig. 5) and associated etching *Summer Evening* (1881, fig. 6) may on first glance be perceived as typifying the trope of passive and recumbent female in reverie.⁵⁸ Seated in the grounds of Tissot's own garden, a fashionable bourgeois woman reclines in a wicker chair, gazing in reverie with half-closed eyelids. Concealed behind the seemingly transparent subject matter is a narrative of major personal significance to Tissot. The model, (his mistress) the divorcee Kathleen Newton, was the subject of Tissot's intense obsession.⁵⁹ Through the compositional and narrative trope of reverie, Tissot masks the reality that Newton was dying of tuberculosis; yet, to a knowing audience, cognizant of this fact, the image becomes intense, personal, sympathetic and deeply melancholic. With his production of the etching, Tissot clearly intended the picture to reach a wider public. Yet, for the purposes of reception, it is likely that Tissot needed to ensure that Newton's illness was concealed. Tissot's double-coded solution meant that he was able to record his grief and the last months of his mistress's life, and by adopting the pictorial conventions of reverie, he could concurrently masquerade the picture more innocently as a languorous reverie induced by the garden setting of a summer's evening. My second example, hints towards the critical potential of reverie. In Nancy Rose Marshall's account of Tissot's *Visiting the Louvre* (c.1879, fig. 7), gendered ideologies of art spectatorship are played out in the differentiation between masculine and

Apter, *Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the-Century France*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), xv.

⁵⁸ Michael Wentworth suggested the picture "disguises a harsh truth in its lavish approach". *Tissot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 153.

⁵⁹ See Elizabeth Prelinger "Tissot as Symbolist and Fetishist? A Surmise," in *Seductive Surfaces: The Art of Tissot*, ed. Katherine Lochnan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 185-211.

feminine responses to looking at art.⁶⁰ The male figure looks at the artworks with a critical gaze which is intellectually mediated via the guidebook he holds, whereas the female figure “abandons” visual aids, “in favour of an unmediated gaze”.⁶¹ As in many of Tissot’s images, the female figure in this painting appears to be in a state of reverie. I contend that if we read the female figure’s reverie, in *Visiting the Louvre*, as critical, we can read the work as a critical response on three levels. Firstly, her reverie negates an attentive scholarly concern with the classical works in the Louvre, and consequently suggests their irrelevance in light of Baudelarian conceptions of modernity, which, Tissot would have been aware of.⁶² Secondly, the figure’s reverie and lack of concern with a scholarly gaze acts as a celebration of the value and purity of the unmediated gaze (particularly prescient in the context of Aestheticist ideas). Thirdly, the work imparts an implicit critique of gendered spaces and institutions, as well as the conceptions of private and public time, all of which disrupt what Prettejohn terms the “notorious ideology of the separation of [gender] spheres”.⁶³

We can take this further still. Some may see an approach which aligns the alienation of modern life in the representation of figures’ psychological subjectivities as “cliché”, but, contextual understandings of reverie may help revive its critical acuity.⁶⁴ Reverie as resistance can help shape our understanding of responses to modernity and consumer cultures. When the model Joanna Hiffernan looks *through* the fashionable vase on the mantelpiece, in Whistler’s *Symphony in White No.2 (The Little White Girl)* (1864, fig. 8), what does that say to us? Read as signifying detachment from the materiality of products, in favour of an inner, immaterial experience characterised by suspended consciousness of an outer, material world, we are exposed to a powerful critique of consumer capitalism. Looking through and beyond material surfaces is indicative of reverie – the subject’s mind drifts and cognizance of the material world perceived, dissolves. The words of Marx and Engels, and the title of Marshall

⁶⁰ See Nancy Rose Marshall, “Image or Identity: Kathleen Newton and the London Pictures of James Tissot” in *Seductive Surfaces*, 23-52.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶² On Tissot’s attention to Baudelaire see Lochnan, “The Medium is the Message: Popular Prints and the Work of James Tissot” in *Seductive Surfaces*, 3-8.

⁶³ Prettejohn, *Art for Art’s Sake*, 26.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Fried’s remarks on Robert L. Herbert’s reading of the barmaid in Manet’s *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*: “the anonymity and loneliness of modern life are clichés.” *Manet’s Modernism*, 287.

Berman's book on modernity, "All that is solid melts into air" chimes uncannily with this reading of reverie.⁶⁵

There is significance here for both marxist and feminist art-historical scholarship. Questions might be raised around the notions of gendered consumption and the image of woman as sign, commodified and consumed. A critical reading of reverie in this sense has implications for social histories of art which have articulated women as consumers. Rosetta Brooks, has noted that, "if women are rendered invisible as producers, they are clearly visible as consumers ... these two modes of visibility are related, i.e., as consumer and as the consumed".⁶⁶ Later, I draw on Kathy Psomiades writing and her assessment of Aestheticism as a vehicle for the commodification of the image of woman. Widening this question, we might ask in more general terms, what roles do reverie images play in visual culture, contextualised alongside the development of industrial capitalism? Reading reverie as critical, not only offers the potential for a critique of consumer culture, but, also, a potential to shape new and original readings around themes of labour, production and consumption, and patterns of work and leisure. The realist works by Whistler, Clausen and others, that I discuss, take on a new light when seen in these terms. Strikingly, reverie affords such work with a critical power.

Within this thematic context, one may align reverie to the painting of modern life, and this study extends the ways that we might configure representations of reverie as an aspect of everyday life. Recognising that acts of reverie are grounded in the actualities of human experience, alongside contemporary discourses of reverie, helps us to caution against readings which posit it merely as formulaic and void of wider signifying potential. Rather than suspending our enquiries when confronted with the kinds of blank expressions that might be consistent with readings of reverie, we can attach the significance of historical context to such representations. Approaching reverie more rigorously helps us to tackle a problem identified by both Fried and T.J.

⁶⁵ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Teddington: The Echo Library, 2009), 8. Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983).

⁶⁶ Rossetta Brooks "Woman Visible: Women Invisible" in *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-1985* ed. Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (London: Pandora Press, 1987), 139-141.

Clark in relation to the signification of facial expression. In his discussion of the barmaid in Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882, fig. 9), Clark writes,

It is perfectly possible, in fact, to imagine the barmaid's face as belonging to a definite state of mind or set of feelings: that of patience perhaps, or boredom and tiredness, or self-containment. We might even have it be "inexpressive," in the sense of the word that implies there is something being deliberately kept back, or that some mistake has been made about how best to signal what one is feeling. But the problem is that all these descriptions fit so easily and so lightly, and none cancels out or dominates the rest.⁶⁷

Clark notes that "the look which results is a special one: public, outward, impassive, not bored, not tired, not disdainful, not quite focused on anything",⁶⁸ in Georg Simmel's sense, "blasé".⁶⁹ For Clark, the notion of blasé, (the impassivity resultant of experiencing the dynamic sensations of metropolitan life), provides one useful line of analysis. He argues that the physiognomy of the barmaid in *Bar* is ultimately related to social position, to the complex formations of identity amongst the Parisian petite-bourgeois; to disguising and intentionally disrupting the signification of class.⁷⁰

In contrast to blasé, reverie was an established visual trope, with its own currency and intertextual relationships. However, reverie can be read in concert with Clark's appropriation of blasé, for the purposes of detecting a subjective detachment, symptomatic of modernity. Jonathan Crary has implemented this, in his reading of Manet's *In the Conservatory* (1879, fig. 10). In considering the figure of the woman, Crary asks, is she "merely another instance of an often-noted Manet "blankness", psychological emptiness, or disengagement"?⁷¹ Incorporating Clark's appropriation of blasé to suggest that the woman demonstrates an "impassive mastery of the self", Crary goes on to propose that this "coexists with being in the grip of some thoroughly ordinary involuntary or automatic behaviour".⁷² For the latter "behaviour", Crary

⁶⁷ T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 251.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁶⁹ See Georg Simmel "The Metropolis and Mental Life" in *Simmel on Culture* ed. David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1998), 174-85. Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 22, and Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, 253.

⁷⁰ Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, 253.

⁷¹ Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 97.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 99.

suggests both reverie and hypnosis may be valid readings of the woman's psychological state. This thesis found that reverie acquired a methodological flexibility, which could deal with subjective detachment, and owing to this, the concept of blasé was largely redundant. However, further scholarship might explore the possible connections between reverie and blasé.

Both Clark and Crary dismantle the closure of blankness. Importantly for this thesis, reverie, as a methodological strategy, helps us see past the impasse blankness forms. For instance, we might use it to extend Griselda Pollock's approach to the blankness of Rossetti's women. For Pollock, Rossetti's spectators are unable to negotiate meanings beyond the fetishistic enterprise of Rossetti's works. Thus, his *Venus Verticordia*

juxtaposes signs which could be anticipated to signify erotically, representing the nude female body as a desirable object for a masculine sexuality which it signifies. But the relations between these signs do not ensure a full meaning. Their signification is stalled; the spectator's gaze is fixated upon a fetish, a fragmented body, a schematized face, a blank look.⁷³

Acknowledging the contemporary discourses on reverie, along with the extension of reverie-as-subject across Victorian visual culture, (its visual intertextuality), can help us go beyond the impasse of the "blank look" expounded by Pollock. In the context of Dallas, and emergent Aestheticist ideas, I show that Rossetti's applications of reverie resonate with ideas around mystery, contemplation, and self-reflexivity, thus providing alternative ways of reading blankness.

Evoking reverie as a choice made by artists, in order to purposefully signify meaning, pushes readings beyond the "expressionless" faces of "the vast sisterhood of dreamy, impassive females who stare blankly out at us, and beyond us, from British paintings of the 1860s and 1870s", as noted by Warner in my earlier quote. In my reading of Whistler's *Symphony in White, No.1: The White Girl*, reverie is used to adjust previously held views that the figure's face connotes mere blankness. Considering the 1880s and the work of Clausen, allows us to take the critique of blankness further still. Supplanted by reverie, we are able to see in his work, a remarkable complexity

⁷³ Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 140.

whereby he concurrently negotiates a critique of rural modernity whilst courting popular appeal.



It is the scholarship of Michael Fried which has come closest to a thematic exploration of reverie. The concept of absorption is initially explored in his book *Absorption and Theatricality*, and is returned to in *Manet's Modernism* and later works. Fried uses the concept of absorption as a vehicle for understanding the shifts in French art and art criticism. He argues that absorption is an anti-theatrical device used by “successive generations of French painters to make pictures that would somehow negate or neutralize the primordial convention that paintings are made to be beheld”.⁷⁴ Depicting figures in absorptive states, for Fried, plays a part in eschewing the presence of the beholder and his/her consciousness of viewing, thus antagonising theatricality.

There was a prima facie case for appropriating Fried's thesis, however, further consideration led to its rejection as the possible driving force of this thesis. To begin with, it was my objective to show that reverie had discursive contexts in science and popular culture. Fried on the other hand repudiates “social-historical”⁷⁵ contexts and his focus is clearly on the internal development of French painting and its tradition of absorption. A further point, which should be noted by future scholars of reverie, is that Fried tends to use absorption as a catch-all. Active and passive, sleep and engrossed states of attention are encompassed by the concept. This serves his thesis well. But for my purposes, reverie had clearly emerged as a specific and identifiable trope in mid-Victorian art, thus necessitating its own enquiry. The value of prising reverie from absorption is that reverie, in Victorian art, has applications which go beyond Fried's sense of anti-theatricality. Thus, for example, I have been concerned with the way that reverie colours the negotiation of narrative conventions and impacts on artistic strategies in relation to emerging Aestheticist principles, (Rossetti and Whistler), but also, this thesis is interested in the way that depicted reveries may allude to, or resonate with wider socio-cultural discourses, (Whistler and Clausen).

⁷⁴ Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 189.

⁷⁵ Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988), 5.

Fried's refinement of his absorption/theatricality antithesis, in his study of Manet and his generation adds the terms "strikingness" and a "more abstract" or "presentational theatricality" of "facingness". Fried notes that a "double or divided structure of *denial* and *direct address*" is "deeply characteristic of the painting of the generation of 1863".⁷⁶ In relation to Rossetti and Whistler, both of whom can be linked to Manet's generation, these terms are useful and they have assisted in my analysis of their works. However, my application of Friedian methodology does not go beyond this. While I do not draw on Fried to identify an internal tradition of reverie characterising a tradition in Victorian art, such a project may be possible, but falls beyond the scope here. What is clear is that reverie can push in opposite directions; by that I mean that in a Friedian scheme, reverie can augment autonomy, thus complimenting proto-modernist tendencies in art; obversely, it brings to the fore questions around social experience and the inseparable operations of psychology as inherent to such experience.

There has been some recent discussion relating to reverie and French art. Marnin Young⁷⁷ and Jill Beaulieu⁷⁸ build on Fried's work around absorption, and have explored reverie as significant in the signification of time. For Young, this has a specific relevance to the French artist Jean-Francois Raffaelli and his painting *The Absinthe Drinkers* (1881). It is clear that Fried can be useful with regard to the question of reverie.

Of particular use to the thesis has been Jonathan Crary's *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture* (1999). Crary examines the period 1879-1907 and undertakes close analysis of specific French works by Manet, Seurat and Cezanne, aligning them to a scientific context which debated understandings of perceptual attention. Crary shows how attentiveness as a normative paradigmatic model of subjectivity is counterposed by a range of modes of consciousness that threaten that idealised model. In Foucauldian terms, subjective states that sit outside

⁷⁶ Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 197.

⁷⁷ Marnin Young, "Heroic Indolence: Realism and the Politics of Time in Raffaelli's *Absinthe Drinkers*," *Art Bulletin* 2 (2008): 235-59.

⁷⁸ Jill Beaulieu, "Immanence and Outsidedness: The Absorptive Aesthetics of Diderot's Existential Reverie and Courbet's Embodied Merger" in *Refracting Vision: Essays on the Writings of Michael Fried*, ed. Mary Roberts, Jill Beaulieu, and Toni Ross (Sydney: Power Publications, 2000).

that model are deemed non-productive – thus, reverie, trance, psychosis, and the mesmerised or hypnotised subject can play no meaningful role in modern capitalist consumer culture. It is the role of capitalist consumer culture to constantly court ‘attention’ without which both production and consumption would falter. Crary’s study impressed me and led me to think about narrowing down the concept of attention to that of reverie, alongside the artistic context of Victorian art and the scientific context of British psychology. In course, the decision was expedient, as the research unravelled resonant links between scientific and artistic discourses on reverie. That resonance seemed to illustrate Gillian Beer’s notion of “open fields”, where discursive formations occupy and straddle various realms of enquiry in the generalist culture of Victorian Britain.⁷⁹ My methodology therefore is uncomplicated, in that it absorbed the significance of interdisciplinary study apposite to researching the discursive cross-currents of reverie. Beer brought something else to light – that English Literature was better served than Art History for discussion on concepts of reverie and the unconscious in relation to mid-Victorian culture. Beer’s own works complement the prodigious output in the area by Jenny Bourne Taylor, Sally Shuttleworth, and Rick Rylance. Each of these authors has written on the relevance of scientific debate to literary culture in the nineteenth century. Of particular value here were Rylance’s *Victorian Psychology and British Culture: 1850-1880*, and Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth’s edited anthology *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts 1830-1890*. All four authors have discussed the work of George Eliot and noted the significant relevance of contemporary psychology to descriptions of reverie in her novels. The research around Eliot and others has also highlighted the importance of socially positioning artistic circles with scientific circles. These authors helped identify connections. The circle around George Eliot for instance, included the psychologist George Henry Lewes (her partner), D.G. Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, and E.S. Dallas. The rigour of their work does not seem to have been matched in art historical studies, except in certain cases of interdisciplinary scholarship such as Kate Flint’s *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (2000). The focus of Flint’s book explored art in the context of science and the psychology of perception and sight, but

⁷⁹ See Gillian Beer, *Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). Beer discusses the term “open fields,” 8. Also see Beer, *Darwin’s Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

coverage of reverie or related states of consciousness is not the sustained focus of the text.⁸⁰ Recently, Natalie Ford has completed a PhD thesis on reverie and its part in early nineteenth century English Literature.⁸¹ My study takes some of the interdisciplinary flavour of the work mentioned above in English Literature, but also relies on art historical methods of interpretation through comparative analyses, and close analysis of works.



The following paragraphs provide an outline to the thesis structure. Chapter One helps situate reverie within a rich scientific and cultural context which embraced the psychological. Significant writings on the character of reverie emerged throughout the nineteenth century within the developing discipline of psychology.⁸² The chapter works through the significance of Dallas's *The Gay Science* as an exemplar of the cross-fertilisation of ideas between science and art, and especially the psychology of the unconscious as relevant to theorizing art. But Dallas' significance extends further, in that he provides a theory of art which successfully accommodates reverie, prioritising the unconscious over rational thought.

The chapter notes how the character of Victorian scientific writing and its authors was eclectic. Two key distinctions which mark the role of science in the public mind, and which render it culturally significant are acknowledged. First, writers of science were diverse. As noted by Rylance, writers on psychology included "economists, imaginative writers, philosophers, clerics, literary critics, policy-makers as well as biomedical scientists".⁸³ Dallas exemplifies this diversity, as does his contemporary, Francis Power Cobbe, whose output ranged from campaigning for feminism and

⁸⁰ See Kate Flint, "Edward Burne-Jones's *The Mirror of Venus*: Surface and Subjectivity in the Art Criticism of the 1870s" in *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 152-64.

⁸¹ Natalie Ruth Ford, "The Fate of Reverie: A Study of Scientific and Literary Currencies in Britain, 1830-1870," (PhD diss., University of York, 2007).

⁸² On this see Kurt Danziger, "Mid-Nineteenth-Century British Psycho-Physiology: A Neglected Chapter in the History of Psychology," in *The Problematic Science: Psychology in Nineteenth Century Thought*, ed. William R. Woodward, & Mitchell G. Ash (New York: Praeger, 1982); also, Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture 1850-1880* (Oxford; Oxford university Press, 2000).

⁸³ Rylance, *Victorian Psychology*, 7.

animal rights, to the morals of Darwinism.⁸⁴ Both authors play a role in promoting the concept of unconscious cerebration, which I show to be relevant to contemporary conceptualisation of reverie. Secondly, the diversity of authorial voices and interests, both defines, and is defined by a generalist culture: a fluid, open, and spacious discourse.⁸⁵ Offering a key vehicle for the dissemination of ideas and a forum for their articulation, generalist Victorian periodicals defined for their audience a non-specialist discourse. This is important. They map a territory of common concerns which link discursively. They chart “open fields” of inquiry and identify the overarching concerns, debates and anxieties of the day. Such debates and anxieties were seen to resonate in articles on psychology; mammoth issues relating to science and religion, the body, (in all its cultural and scientific manifestations), industrialisation and productivity, and related concerns of degeneration through social ills such as alcoholism⁸⁶ all placed the ubiquitous mental experiences of the individual relative to the social. The way psychological discourse was seen to freely permeate a generalist culture is a point deserving of attention in its own right.⁸⁷ But alongside this, if we are to make relevant the significance of psychology to cultural production, it is necessary to explore the content of psychological debate and the dialectics of psychology as it matures, is professionalized and institutionalised during the century. It is the significance here of the range of the discourse which sets bodies of oppositional ideas into a field of contestation, particularly around mid-century, that I argue, ought to inform readings of cultural artefacts indicative of states of mind. Both the content of that discourse – the way it scrutinises reverie – and its very presence as discursive and dialectic, relates to fine art’s representation of the figure in Victorian art. The multifarious character of debates in psychology at the time spanned realms of enquiry which insistently posited dialogue between science, religion and philosophy, and as such, presented the emerging discipline with a whole range of distinctions, categories and relationships to be formed, or indeed jettisoned. Fundamental disputes questioned the distinctions between the soul, the mind and the brain, thus disrupting grounded

⁸⁴ See Frances Power Cobbe, *Life of Frances Power Cobbe as Told by Herself* (London: S. Sonnenschein & Co. 1904).

⁸⁵ See Rylance, *Victorian Psychology*, Taylor and Shuttlesworth, *Embodied Selves*; Beer, *Open Fields*. All offer commentaries on this discourse.

⁸⁶ See Danziger, “Mid-Nineteenth Century British Psycho-Physiology,” 132.

⁸⁷ At the forefront of scholarship on this question is the work of Beer. See also, Rylance, *Victorian Psychology*; Cantor and Shuttlesworth, ed. *Science Serialized: Representations of the Sciences in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals* (London: MIT Press, 2004).

religious conceptions and exacerbating further the challenges science would impart. Meanwhile, the self-assuredness of science itself, with its positivistic trajectory was also to face an unforeseen challenge from psychology centred on the limits of objectivism.⁸⁸ Questions of method here were essential to psychology's scientific credentials. Yet, ill-equipped technologically until the latter part of the century, psychology was forced to rely on introspection. However, this did not hold back the theorisation of consciousness, sensation, experience, feeling, faculties, the will, and of course reverie.

Such discourses revealed interesting and dichotomous ideas about the experience and consequences of reverie. On the one hand, since reverie was associated with the suspension of will and lack of control, it fell on the borders of social respectability and could be regarded as a potential threat to the healthy mind.⁸⁹ Warnings were issued against the dangers of indulging in reverie for fear of its adverse affects on the faculties of attention. Conversely, some writers considered it as a normative aspect of the healthy mind, but also, a measure and locus of the mind's productive unconscious, or 'unconscious cerebration'. In this light, disputes around the normative and pathological states of mind form a significant context for reading of images of reverie.

Chapter Two and Chapter Three argue that Aestheticist reverie paintings provide a semantic openness, fostering a spectatorial agency which disrupted conventional principles of narrative painting. These chapters demonstrate how in both Rossetti and Whistler, reverie operates as a device which expands narrative possibilities. Dallas' conception of mystery comes into play alongside Aestheticist strategies of autonomy, obfuscation and the obscure, all of which are augmented by reverie.

Both Chapters Two and Three detect a relationship between Aestheticism and reverie. Authors who write on Aestheticism frequently point to an assault on narrative, the pursuit of beauty, the role of mystery, and the concepts of artistic autonomy and "art

⁸⁸ Woodward & Ash, *The Problematic Science*.

⁸⁹ See Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 165; Mary Jacobus, Evelyn Fox Keller and Sally Shuttleworth, ed., *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science* (London: Routledge, 1990). Also see Crary's discussion of inattentiveness as a sociopathic form, in *Suspensions of Perception*, n.65, 35.

for art's sake".⁹⁰ Each of these concepts serves the idea that a new kind of viewing practice was being invited or courted in the 1860s and 1870s – one which emphasised agency in the viewer by encouraging his/her own narrative reading. Reverie as a device could assist this on two counts. Firstly, it could help foster an openness of narrative. Secondly, it could encourage spectatorial reflexivity by offering the viewer a model of contemplation – pensive, imaginative, and of extended duration. Thus, the viewing of introspective figures fosters introspection on the act of reflection itself – a self-awareness on the experience of contemplation. A supplement to this is that in the Aestheticist schema, not only was contemplation itself being contemplated, but the image of beauty. Recent writings by Kathy Psomiades and David Peters Corbett were helpful in exploring the way that the figure of feminine beauty (in reverie) could augment such contemplative viewing practices.⁹¹ This discussion also draws on the significance of Pater's writings. Pater's famous analysis of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* marks out the way he mobilises the concept of reverie. For Pater, the figure's reverie propagates spectatorial reverie. But, furthermore, in the manifestation of his critical account, there is yet a further order of reverie in the form of the literary text itself, a poetic reverie clearly exemplified in the oft cited passage:

Hers is the head upon which all "the ends of the world are come," and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions.⁹²

In light of this discussion of spectatorial and poetic reveries, Chapter Two also considers how, in works by Rossetti, the depiction of reverie allows for a duality of narrative positions. At one level the works offer an implied narrative codified by iconographic elements and titles. However, the functioning of depicted reverie opens up another level at which viewers can construct imagined narratives. In several cases, implied narratives are in fact obscure enough that one might almost expect viewers to

⁹⁰ See Elizabeth Prettejohn, ed., "Introduction," *After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England* (Manchester University Press, 1999), 1-15, and from the same, "Walter Pater & Aesthetic Painting," 36-58.

⁹¹ See Kathy Psomiades, *Beauty's Body: Femininity and Representation in British Aestheticism* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1997), 65-66. Corbett, *The World in Paint*, 59-66.

⁹² Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* 1st ed. (1873; Rockville MD: Serenity Publishers, 2009), 78.

construct their own imagined narrative. In works such as *La Pia de' Tolomei*, (1868-80, fig. 11) the psychological detachment of figures to their surroundings is so pronounced that reverie offers a counter-subject independent of iconography and titling strategies. This analysis shows that a distinction can be made between Rossetti's reverie pictures and those of contemporary popular artists who were also forming depictions of reverie. Contemporaries of Rossetti, such as William Maw Egley, used reverie to exaggerate sentimental narratives on romantic or sexual liaison. The distinction is a subtle one, as clearly Rossetti's themes fall into similar territory; however, it is the pronounced intensity of reverie in Rossetti and its part in the construction of mystery which separates his works from non-Aestheticist contemporaries. I argue that his mystification of subject matter and antagonism to conventional narrative was augmented by the application of reverie, and furthermore, that reverie was a feature of his avant-gardist endeavour.

Chapter Three takes these arguments further by exploring the idea that reverie could serve avant-gardist principles in the work of Whistler. Many art-historical accounts of Whistler describe his Aestheticist credentials in concert with his avant-gardist credentials. Such accounts propose his abandonment of narrative in favour of a formalist endeavour ushered in by works with titles drawn from musical forms, (Symphony, Nocturne, Arrangement, etc.). My discussion of Whistler acknowledges something of this trajectory and places the depiction of reverie within it. But, I also indicate another Whistler, one who has an interest in securing critical and commercial acceptance by the Royal Academy and a wider public.⁹³

The exploration of Whistler further demonstrates the flexibility of reverie for artists, in their navigation of critical and commercial success. Reverie could support dichotomous ideologies. On the one hand, it stultified conventional narrative, thus supporting an avant-gardist rejection of contemporary academic traditions and in turn, welcoming new spectatorial practices which thrived on ambiguity, mystery and the prioritisation of formal elements. On the other hand, it could be mobilised to secure

⁹³ For discussion on Whistler's tailoring of his work to the Victorian marketplace see David Park Curry, *James McNeill Whistler: Uneasy Pieces* (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts: 2004) and Deanna Marohn Bendix, *Diabolical Designs: Paintings, Interiors, and Exhibitions of James McNeill Whistler* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

popular appeal; in Whistler's case, anchoring his work to at least some expectation of conventional narrative. In this latter scheme, I argue that reverie was the lynchpin which secured Academy and popular acceptance via two counts. The first of these relates to the way Whistler's works could be adequately positioned in the company of images favourable to academic circles. The second was Whistler's strategy which conjured a set of narrative possibilities which tallied with a popular discourse around reverie-like modes of consciousness. That discourse was varied, incorporating such concepts as spiritualism, mesmerism and somnambulism. Those concepts formed something of a craze fired-on by Wilkie Collins' novel *The Woman in White* and the cult-idea of the 'white girl'.⁹⁴ In this reading of Whistler reverie *does* function as a narrative device and one which deliberately courts popular appeal.

By the 1870s and 1880s a popular form of reverie picture had become well established. Artists such as Marcus Stone, Walter Crane and various second generation Pre-Raphaelite artists capitalised on the form. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is possible to see the reverie picture becoming something of a genre, or sub-genre in its own right. Such works might be considered as extensions of the tradition mentioned above by Spencer-Longhurst, of "single beauties in swoony reverie" in place by the 1850s, characterised in images of wistful beauties in repose, having perhaps read a letter, or novel.⁹⁵ Such works were for the most part set up for a voyeuristic heterosexual male gaze and this tradition secured itself in the commercialised image of reverie in advertising graphics. These saccharine images of reverie fetishized femininity, but, were also wrapped into the commodification of beauty.⁹⁶ A harvest of reverie depictions also appeared in the related decorative images of the European Symbolists. While their works are outside the scope of this study, it is useful to recognise the exponential increase in reverie as a theme in the fin de siècle, binding together fetishized femininity and the commodification of beauty, with mystery and the irrational. One interesting feature of Symbolist artists' depiction of reverie is the sense of the psychological depth invested in their subjects; but, this is

⁹⁴ I elaborate here on observations made by Aileen Tsui in her essay "The Phantasm of Aesthetic Autonomy in Whistler's Work: Titling *The White Girl*" *Art History*, 29, no.3 (June 2006), 444-75.

⁹⁵ On the social and cultural relevance of the idea of the woman reader, see Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader: 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

⁹⁶ For the commodification of the image of feminine beauty in the nineteenth century, see Psomiades, *Beauty's Body*.

much akin to Rossetti. Whilst the striking fantasies of European Symbolism were muted in British art, there was evidence of the alliance of irrational other-worldliness and reverie in some quarters. Frank Dicksee's 'problem picture', *A Reverie*, (1895, fig. 12) offered a kind of domesticised, drawing-room equivalent to the irrational phantasies of European Symbolism. I make a link between the concept of the 'problem picture' and Whistler, who, I suggest, offers something of a pre-history for that genre. Dicksee's *A Reverie* confirms that the problem picture with its extended narrative structure could provide an interesting alternative to populist images of reverie, which for the most part relied on the concept of reverie to conceal, or dress-up, the frivolity of female objectification.

Chapter Four explores the work of George Clausen whose work also demonstrates alternative approaches to reverie in the 1880s. I consider Clausen's use of reverie in terms of its critical effect in relation to a social critique of the poverty and toil of rural labour. Works such as *A Woman of the Fields* (fig. 2) appear to have a critical power in contrast to other contemporary, popular depictions of reverie. Clausen's use of reverie was at times strikingly original. I look at several works which present figures in reverie-like states, but, rather than the cosy domestic settings of the drawing room, bedroom or suburban garden, these images picture the context of rural labour. They give reverie a critical resonance. Reverie, in this scheme, provides a metaphor for rest and sanctuary from drudgery, albeit momentary. It is the zone of liberty which Gaston Bachelard would celebrate when he posited, "reverie bears witness to a normal, useful *irreality function* which keeps the human psyche on the fringe of all the brutality of a hostile and foreign nonself".⁹⁷

Clausen is not unlike Whistler in his application of reverie. Like Whistler, Clausen concurrently offers one version of reverie as critical, and another, which courts popular tastes unconcerned with challenging Academy strictures. Thus, in Clausen, reverie is simultaneously part of a critical strategy, while conversely being instrumental in producing the "fictive sweetness", of a safe melancholic, bucolic nostalgia, where attractive girls fall into reverie and provide the combined double fantasy of rural idyll and objectified female subject. The double function of reverie marks out one of my

⁹⁷ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie: Childhood, Language and the Cosmos*, trans. Daniel Russell (Boston: Beacon, 1971), 13, quoted in Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 102.

conclusive observations about its application in nineteenth-century British art. Reverie, at once, is able to court popular appeal, whilst at other moments is central to progressive tendencies. As if capitalising on this dual functioning of reverie images, Clausen, in one curious painting, *Day Dreams* (1883, fig. 13), indicates both conservative *and* critical positions. I contend therefore, that his application of reverie is, like Rossetti's and Whistler's, complex. The exploration of this complexity can help us understand some of the concerns for him and others who took up the principles of Rural Naturalism. The chapter expands the significance of reverie from beyond Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism to forms of realism, thus, marking out its relevance across different movements and trajectories in nineteenth-century British art.

Depictions of rural life varied across the course of the nineteenth century. I detail how Clausen's work can be identified within each of two dominant tropes of rural existence. These were the rural idyll and the rural nightmare. Reverie functions within each. Its potential signifying capacity, as suggested, could complement a bucolic nostalgia on the one hand, and on the other, a critical sanctuary by way of a subject that stood as a symbolic escape from exploitation. In order to explore this contextualisation more fully, I have explored the historical context which pertained to the oppositional myths of rural idyll and rural nightmare.⁹⁸ One important finding here is that the stereotypical representation of the rural labourer as 'hodge', (the name given to the contemporary stereotype of the awkward, unintelligent, inarticulate rural labourer), is significant in an analysis of Clausen's paintings. Clausen seems to be simultaneously bound into the stereotype, whilst concurrently appearing to escape its strictures. That the contemporary accounts of hodge clearly draw on the psychological make-up of rural subjects, brings us full circle and allows us to consider the role of psychology in an analysis of representations of figures in reverie. Unlike the wistful romanticising of the unconscious in Dallas, contemporary accounts of rural character types propagated notions of inferior mental faculties and a 'dull stupidity'. How Clausen appears to navigate such a discourse is interesting. There is a telling

⁹⁸ Most useful here were, Christiana Payne, *Toil and Plenty: Images of the Agricultural Landscape in England 1780-1890* (New Haven And London: Yale University Press, 1993), Howard. D. Rodee, "The "Dreary Landscape" as a Background for Scenes of Rural Poverty in Victorian Paintings," *Art Journal* 36, no.4 (Summer, 1977), 307-13, and Mark Freeman, "The Agricultural Labourer and the 'Hodge' Stereotype, c. 1850-1914," *Agricultural History Review* 49 (2001), 172-86.

distinction in his later works after 1890, which avoid the concept of hodge, and instead depict ennobled labourers. However, works in the 1880s, such as *A Woman of the Fields*, in spite of their critical potential, seem unable to escape the context which formed the stereotype. I argue that the hodge stereotype is important because contemporary historical accounts of 'sociological' enquiry can be related to the way that the critical reception of Clausen was couched; in particular, the notion of ugliness sat alongside the realist vision of the rural poor, in stark contradistinction to themes of beauty and leisure, as identified in the bourgeois figure in reverie. This raises some interesting questions around the geographical space of reverie and the oppositional entities of public and private, and their relevance to viewing practices.



CHAPTER I

E.S. DALLAS AND VICTORIAN PSYCHOLOGY

It is a popular but erroneous perception that the development of the concept of the unconscious began with the writings of Freud.¹ This chapter reveals how, in the mid-nineteenth century, writing on psychology was highly developed and widely publicized. Moreover, it shows that the concept of the unconscious, which I argue is central to an investigation of reverie, had already emerged with some force, providing a significant contextual resonance for paintings of reverie. As several recent historians have shown, British psychology at the mid-century was being energetically pursued by some keen minds. In his inaugural address as Senior President of the Royal Medical Society, Edinburgh, the respected psychiatrist James Crichton-Browne gave an indication of psychology's contemporary relevance;

The importance of psychology is becoming daily more widely acknowledged. A short study of the subject is required by the India Board in its medical officers, and we have in our own medical school two distinguished lecturers upon the subject.²

Psychological debates were not simply the preserve of specialists, they were also widely present in the popular imagination. The key debates included the question of the role played by the brain in the production of thought. There were key philosophies, such as associationism and the psychology of faculties.³ There were key figures in Henry Holland, William Benjamin Carpenter, Herbert Spencer, George Henry Lewes, Henry Maudsley,⁴ and James Sully, to name but a few. Each produced significant and extensive writings on psychology.⁵ There emerged key groupings. Several figures became identified with a physiological psychology which emphasised the material

¹ See Jenny Bourne Taylor, "Obscure Recesses: Locating the Victorian Unconscious," 140.

² J. Crichton-Browne, "The History and Progress of Psychological Medicine. An Inaugural Address" *The Journal of Mental Science*, 7, no. 37 (April 1861): 30.

³ See Rylance, *Victorian Psychology*.

⁴ See Trevor Turner, "Henry Maudsley: psychiatrist, philosopher, and entrepreneur" in *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in The History of Psychiatry: Vol. 1, People and Ideas* ed. W.F. Bynum, R. Porter and M. Shepherd, (London: Tavistock, 1984), 151-89.

⁵ See Taylor and Shuttleworth, *Embodied Selves*, 389-412.

significance of the brain and the body in forming the operations of mind.⁶ There were figures such as the essayist and reformer, (and proto-social psychologist), Francis Power Cobbe whose writings often turned to psychology in recognition of its social significance.⁷ Figures such as Sully and Dallas were keen to marry psychological concerns such as perception, dreams and the unconscious, to the arts – a fact which makes the connection of mid-Victorian British psychology to painting especially relevant.

Dallas and his two volume study *The Gay Science* published in 1866 is a particular focus of this chapter for three key reasons. Firstly, his study offered an extensive conceptualisation of the unconscious, thus demonstrating how alluring the subject was in mid-Victorian culture. Secondly, I consider the placing of Dallas himself within artistic circles and how his ideas could have offered a remarkable contextual resonance for mid-Victorian artists who dealt with the subject of reverie. Thirdly, his text explores the subject of the unconscious in relation to the production and reception of art – an alignment which I argue has a special relevance for the place of reverie paintings and for the onset of principles associated with Aestheticism. However, before elucidating Dallas' significance and some of the details of *The Gay Science*, it is worth showing that his publication had its own context and set of references in relation to psychological literature. Dallas's text itself emerges out of a rich context of psychological writings which dealt with subjects relating to reverie.⁸ Prior to its publishing, several British authors had during the mid-century already broached the subjects of unconsciousness, dreams and the will.⁹ They included authors such as William Hamilton, Herbert Spencer, George Henry Lewes, John Addington Symonds and Sir Henry Holland, and W.B. Carpenter, all of whom had texts published in the 1850s or early 1860s. Carpenter's text, *Principles of Mental Physiology* was popular, reaching its seventh edition just before the close of the century. Carpenter had already dealt with aspects of consciousness and the will in his earlier book *Principles of*

⁶ Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body & Victorian Culture* (London: Harvard University Press, 1978), 38.

⁷ For Cobbe, see Sally Mitchell, *Frances Power Cobbe: Victorian Feminist, Journalist, Reformer* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2004).

⁸ For a provisional exploration of the range of psychological writings, see Taylor and Shuttleworth, *Embodied Selves*, especially "The Unconscious Mind and the Workings of Memory", 67-161.

⁹ For instance, Holland, *Chapters on Mental Physiology*.

Human Physiology; first published in 1842 it ran to a fifth edition in 1855. Holland's *Chapters on Mental Physiology* (1852) was also popular with a second edition being published in 1858. I would like to briefly discuss, the latter in order to demonstrate something of the character of the discussion on reverie. Following this, there will be a more extensive commentary on Dallas's *The Gay Science*.

Holland, a well known figure, aimed to pin down the way that the brain negotiated consciousness. He was interested in shifting mental states – the passage from consciousness to unconsciousness – and the analyses of such processes over time. Thus, consciousness is recognised by Holland as dynamic and multiple in its varieties. He remarks that,

In man these phenomena take their most complex character; and the ever changing relation of individual consciousness in the sentient unity, to the different bodily and mental actions which form the totality of life, illustrates best, though it may not explain, the endless varieties and seeming anomalies of human existence. Instincts, habits, insanity, dreaming, somnambulism, and trance, all come within the scope of this principle; which points out, moreover, connexions among them, not equally to be understood in any other mode of viewing the subject.¹⁰

Part of his exploration led him to dwell on the relationship between the subjects and their surroundings, and how consciousness may or may not be a product of physical sensations. Thus, Holland came to note how a subject might be situated in the most clamorous of settings, yet their mind could freely escape from physical sensations imposed on the senses. This enquiry was related to Holland's observations around the limits of perception, or rather the limits of the conscious mind to process the multitude of sensorial information to hand. Holland contends that the mind struggles to process more than one object of consciousness at any one time. He remarks:

Place yourself in the crowded street of a city, a thousand objects of vision before the eye – sounds hardly less various coming upon the ear – odours also constantly changing – contact or collision at every moment with some external object. Amidst this multitude of physical sensation, and with all the organs of sense seemingly open, one alone (whether in itself simple or compound does not affect the question) will be found at each moment distinctly present to the

¹⁰ Holland, *Chapters*, 44-45.

mind. It combines them only by giving close and rapid sequence to the acts of attention.¹¹

Earlier, he claims that “whatever the power of comprehension of the mind at each instant of time, it is clear that there is a limit to the number of objects coexisting to the consciousness”.¹² Thus, Holland locates the limits of perception to the ability of the mind to focus only on the singular. In another example Holland writes,

Let the trial be made to attend at once to figures of two persons within the same scope of vision; or to listen at the same moment to two distinct sounds; or to blend objects of sight with those of hearing in the same act of attention. The impossibility will often be felt, and the passage of the mind from one act to another very often recognised.¹³

These comments on the limitations of perception led Holland to consider the notion of reverie whereby the mind, void of a capacity to be fully attendant to all sensations imposed from the exterior, will indeed close-out the exterior and, instead, wander into trains of inner thought:

under the same circumstances, let the mind pass suddenly, by will or accident, into a train of inward thought, whatever the subject; and all the external objects thus crowded around you utterly disappear, though the physical agents producing, and the organs receiving sensations, remain precisely as before.¹⁴

In the text, the “same circumstances” allude to the clamour of the urban environment. Holland’s point is that even amongst such clamour, attention to surroundings can evaporate. For Holland, therefore, consciousness is not necessarily determined by surroundings and indeed it may be characterised by “the complete exclusion of all outward sensations during states of reflection or reverie”.¹⁵

For Holland, reverie is not a vacuum of mental activity but an active phenomenon; thus, “Every sense sleeps, while the mind is thus awake and active within itself.”¹⁶ A key aspect of this condition of semi-consciousness is that it is productive in spite of the

¹¹ Ibid., 55.

¹² Ibid., 50.

¹³ Ibid., 55.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 45.

¹⁶ Ibid., 55-56.

dimmed environmental effects on the senses. Holland recognises these mental experiences as common everyday experiences which need not necessarily be conceived as indicative of pathological symptoms. Holland's description of the active brain prefigures the term "unconscious cerebration" coined by Carpenter two years later and popularised during the 1870s. Unconscious cerebration is discussed below in relation to Dallas, but clearly Holland was alluding to its character when he remarked,

The terms absence of mind, abstraction, and reverie, describe analogous conditions...remarkable in character; and cases are related which might seem incredible in the separation thus made for a time between active mental existence and the material world without.¹⁷

The separation Holland describes between the "active mental existence" and the "material world without" takes on a special significance with Dallas, who explores its special qualities and also discusses some of the "incredible cases" Holland alludes to.



The substantial two volume study *The Gay Science*, by Dallas, evidences something of the popular interest in the unconscious in the mid-Victorian period.¹⁸ The book is intelligently written in a popular tone and courts an audience mindful of the arts. Its populist appeal is evident not only in its tone – the way for example it takes an 'us and them' approach to philosophers and psychologists – but also in the way it counts on popular belief as offering empirical evidence for its claims. It discusses art and criticism in relation to theories of the unconscious and gives an indication of the then-current thinking in psychology and the theoretical shifts from earlier in the century. It celebrates the qualities of the unconscious and its related mental states with discussions around sleep, reverie, somnambulism and the imagination. But importantly, it also promotes a theory of art and a theory of criticism that expressly links to an understanding of the unconscious.

¹⁷ Ibid., 56.

¹⁸ Dallas, *The Gay Science* Two Vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1866).

Dallas was well-placed and well-connected for acquiring and producing art theory. He was a friend of the psychologist George Henry Lewes who was himself theorising consciousness and the mind.¹⁹ Dallas's connections with Lewes and his partner, George Eliot, would surely have aided his ideas around melding contemporary ideas in psychology with the arts. However, we should also acknowledge the likelihood of Dallas's influence upon contemporary artistic culture.²⁰

His time at Edinburgh University was formative in his work on consciousness, for it was there that he studied under Sir William Hamilton, chair of logic and metaphysics. Dallas became familiar with Hamilton's work, which he references in *The Gay Science*. Significant for Dallas was Hamilton's *Three Degrees of Mental Latency* which I will discuss in light of Dallas' own ideas relating to the unconscious.²¹ In short, Hamilton proposed various levels of activity in the workings of the unconscious. As we will see, this notion of an active unconscious became particularly interesting for Dallas and others in the mid-nineteenth century.

Before I look closely at some of the concepts central to *The Gay Science*, I wish to consider the positioning of both Dallas 'the critic', and the text *The Gay Science*, in relation to the art-world. It is particularly significant that Dallas' publication is contemporaneous with the emerging popularity of paintings of reverie and related states. It is not inconceivable that many of the established London artists would have been aware of Dallas as the leading literary critic for *The Times* and member of the London intelligentsia, associated with influential artistic circles. Contemporary artists were aware of the work and it is useful to speculate on how they may have responded to it. At one level, artists would have noted that the text supports the idea that the semi-conscious and the unconscious are worthy of consideration in relation to art generally. At another level, artists may have identified a special relevance to contemporary art in the way that *The Gay Science* celebrates and systematically identifies reverie-like states as central to human existence. Such a celebration of the unconscious could have helped artists justify and validate the subject of reverie in painting. Following an

¹⁹ See Rylance, *Victorian Psychology*.

²⁰ On Eliot and Lewes in this light see Taylor and Shuttleworth, *Embodied Selves*, 400-402.

²¹ Sir William Hamilton, *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1859).

outline of the book's key concepts, I will argue this point further by considering Dallas' own comments in relation to art.

In *The Gay Science*, Dallas presents a range of interlinking key concepts. Some of these concepts emerge from his investigations into psychology and, for the most part, are closely identified with ideas relating to the unconscious and the more specific phenomenon of unconscious cerebration.²² I wish to deal in particular with three of his concepts, namely: the "Imagination", the "Hidden Soul", and "Hidden Pleasure". Each concept is afforded its own chapter and two concentrate on the imagination: "On Imagination" and "The Play of Thought". His aim is to meld the three concepts together and to show their interdependence. He convincingly associates them with each other – something which indicates the cohesion of Dallas' ideas and his attempt to construct a cogent theory. Following an exposition of these three concepts, I will look at one further concept that Dallas identifies; namely his notion of the "weird". It lacks the degree of refinement and development afforded to the other three, and Dallas does not give the weird a clear definition. However, the *sense* in which it is used is clear and it has its own importance. It will also serve, here, to round together the three key concepts as well as drawing our attention to the relevance Dallas' study has for painters, art critics and viewers. It should also be noted, here, that the weird, alongside the three concepts of 'the Hidden', link in with my discussions around Aestheticism in the following two chapters of the thesis. There are clear links between the critical theory proposed by Dallas, and various notional principles of Aestheticism – principles such as the quality of mystery, suggestion and the imagination. The main purpose is to show that these concepts provide a contextual resonance for the ways in which reverie-like images may have been conceived and understood.

Before considering the way Dallas discusses the imagination and links it to the unconscious, it is worth remarking upon the significance of the category of the 'imagination' both for Dallas and others. Dallas deals with the concept of the imagination at length and considers broadly how it has been conceptualised by others, noticing specific trans-national distinctions. For Dallas, it is in the English view of art that the imagination holds a special significance. Dallas considers the cultural biases of

²² Francis X. Roellinger, "E.S. Dallas on Imagination" *Studies in Philology* 38, no. 4 (Oct., 1941): 652.

national criticism. He observes the Spanish school of criticism holds that art is for the people; the French hold that the ideal of pleasure is held above that of reality; and for German criticism, the prime concern is beauty. English criticism on the other hand “dwells chiefly on the power of the imagination in Art”.²³

As well as considering those national tendencies, he outlines the range of current theoretical positions on the imagination summarising these under four categories. Firstly, Dallas proposes that it is considered by some as a form of memory, while at the same time it is distinct and afforded something more than memory alone; secondly, it is identified with passion; thirdly with reason; and lastly with those who defer to its inscrutability. The first three categories can be associated with faculty psychology which throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries proposed a hierarchy of faculties. Base instincts like hunger and sexual urges were of a different order to ‘higher’ faculties such as reasoning and the imagination. Dallas references the work of one such faculty psychologist, Dugald Stewart (1781-1828). Stewart, in his writing on memory, proposed that it had two forms: one of these is the spontaneous action of memory whereby no conscious action of the subject is involved; the other is the more active, deliberated performance of recollection.²⁴ The spontaneous action of memory will be shown to relate closely to Dallas’ ideas around the unconscious. However, Dallas distinguishes himself from Stewart and the contemporary mental physiologist Carpenter, both of whom considered the imagination as a faculty. Dallas remarks that

Dr. Carpenter, another good authority, has probably Stewart’s analysis in his mind, when he says that the imagination “involves an exercise of the same powers as those concerned in acts of reasoning.”²⁵

For Dallas, however, the imagination should not be defined as a “special faculty, but as a special function”.²⁶ Rather than taking Carpenter’s line that, acts of the imagination can be dutifully performed by rational willed acts, Dallas identifies the imagination as

²³ Dallas, *The Gay Science*, Vol. 1, xii.

²⁴ Dugald Stewart “Of Memory” in *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (1792), 6th edn., two vols. (London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1818), p 403-7, in Taylor and Shuttleworth, *Embodied Selves*, 141-42.

²⁵ Dallas, *The Gay Science*, Vol. 1, 187.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

entrenched in the darker realm of the unconscious; that in essence it is a product or “function” of the unconscious. This, in fact, becomes one of Dallas’ major claims:

It [the imagination] is a name given to the automatic action of the mind or any of its faculties – to what may not unfitly be called the Hidden Soul.²⁷

Dallas’ concept of the imagination, then, is secured firmly with “the automatic actions of the mind” and with “the free play of thought”.²⁸ The imagination is something spontaneous and sits within the unconscious rather than being a focussed, alert mental state. Indeed, a forced or willed imagination cannot exist as it would contradict its automatic character. Thus he remarks:

But dream by night and reverie by day are not to be raised, nor yet are they to be laid, by efforts of the will. We may coax and cozen imagination; we cannot command it. We must bide its time. The poet is born not made; he lies in wait for the dawn, and cannot poetise at will.²⁹

The operations of the will have no meaningful impact, then, on reveries which produce imagination. The will cannot conjure them up, nor can it lay them to rest. For the poet (or artist), the imagination is an automatic response of mind which cannot be hailed on command.

One significant implication of Dallas’ arrangement is that it implies a bespoke critical method in the appraisal of English art. In order to understand the essence of English art, (from the perspective of the English critic, i.e., the one who “dwells chiefly on the power of imagination in art”), one must come to understand the workings of the imagination, which in turn requires an understanding of the workings of the mind, the semi-conscious, the unconscious and the automatic functioning of mind. It is in this sense that Dallas advocates a science of criticism and one which absorbs new findings in psychology. These implications, of course, go beyond criticism and it must be inferred that to produce the best art, artists themselves should draw on an understanding of the imagination informed by the idea of unconscious cerebration.

²⁷ Ibid., 194.

²⁸ Ibid., 257.

²⁹ Ibid., 258.

The imagination and the unconscious conjoin in Dallas' concept of the "hidden soul".

He remarks that,

if on this understanding we may substitute the one phrase [imagination] for the other [hidden soul], as very nearly coinciding, then the task before me is to show that imagination is but a name for the unknown, unconscious action of the mind – the whole mind or any of its faculties – for the Hidden Soul.³⁰

Dallas willingly accepts the circularity of the argument – that the imagination *is* the automatic action of the mind – the automatic action of the mind *is* the "Hidden Soul" – and the "Hidden Soul" *is* the imagination; for in this arrangement,

it will reconcile philosophical analysis with popular belief. It will grant to the satisfaction of the philosophers that imagination is nothing of itself; and it will prove to the satisfaction of the multitude that it is the entire mind in its secret working.³¹

The notion of a "secret working" of the mind held good company with mid-Victorian psychological discourse which would frequently discuss interesting case studies of individuals' unusual actions of mind, while in seemingly unconscious-like states. In the second half of the nineteenth century the term 'unconscious cerebration' was used to describe such cases and came to be associated with the idea of the mind working intelligently, but independently of the actively conscious subject. Carpenter had outlined a theory of 'unconscious cerebration' in his fifth edition of *Human Physiology* published in 1855³² and popular exposition of the term was promulgated by the feminist social campaigner Francis Power Cobbe, whose essay "On Unconscious Cerebration" was published in the November edition of *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1870.³³ The idea of psychologists, literary critics and social campaigners all showing a concurrent interest in unconscious cerebration, certainly indicates the widespread level of interest in the phenomena. Dallas appropriates the phenomena and conflates it with his concept of the hidden soul. Essentially, both describe one and the same in terms of the mental phenomena in question. For Dallas, "this unconscious part of the mind is so dark, and yet so full of activity" and he declares, "it is my immediate aim to show that

³⁰ Ibid., 196.

³¹ Ibid.

³² See Carpenter, *Principles of Human Physiology*, 607-9.

³³ Cobbe, "On Unconscious Cerebration," 24-37.

we have within us a hidden life, how vast is its extent, how potent and how constant its influence, how strange are its effects".³⁴ These effects, along with Dallas' enthusiasm and conviction for the relevance of the hidden life, will be explored in more detail below. However, at this point it is valuable to understand the positioning of Dallas' fervour for unconscious cerebration within a broader psychological debate centred around the concepts of volition and soundness of mind. Examining this debate shows that the character of the debate on unconscious activity was indeed complex, extensive in its range of positions, and that it impinged on wider social concerns over the nature of the mind.



The positive role of unconscious cerebration in Dallas's theory was but one position in a broader psychological debate around the significance of the will and the related question over the capacity of subjects to regulate the control of thoughts.³⁵ The debate manifested contrasting positions. The view held by Dallas posited that the properties of the unconscious mind should be celebrated and harnessed. An alternative view, however, which had a strong following amongst physicians and psychiatrists, held that unfettered command of the unconscious mind would lead to morbid or diseased conditions of the brain.³⁶ Co-existing and relating to this debate over morbid introspection was the question over the material character of the brain and its effects on the mind. By the 1850s this debate was highly charged. An older conception of the mind as transcendent of the brain's material character was proving ever harder to defend.³⁷ The non-materialist view of the mind which posited that thought was governed by the 'self' (or 'soul') had a central role in Enlightenment mental philosophy.³⁸ However, new developments in the field of science, pseudo-science and popular interests in hypnotism, phrenology and spiritualism brought an intensity to the

³⁴ Dallas, *The Gay Science*, 199-200.

³⁵ See Holland, *Chapters*, 27.

³⁶ See Michael J. Clark, "Morbid Introspection', Unsoundness of Mind, and British Psychological Medicine, c. 1830-c.1900" in Bynum, et al. eds., *The Anatomy of Madness*, 71-101.

³⁷ See Lorraine Daston, "The Theory of Will versus the Science of Mind" in *The Problematic Science: Psychology in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, ed. W.R. Woodward and M.G. Ash, (New York: Prager), 88-115.

³⁸ See Rylance's discussion in the chapters, "The Discourse of the Soul", and "The Discourse of Philosophy", in *Victorian Psychology*.

mind-body question and how it might be resolved. Carpenter and Cobbe both wished to address the importance of the materialist foundations of the unconscious, claiming that the secretion of 'automatic' thought was a function of the physical brain. They were also concerned, though, with the significant role that the will ought to play in taking control of that "friskier", automatic side of mental action. Their concern was representative of a commonly-held belief that the 'sound' mind was one which could police those mental operations that were not directed by the intellect. It was a well-established view that excessive introspection could be dangerous. Although not a new idea these concerns took on new levels of intensity in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Clark comments, for instance, on how acts of daydreaming and reverie, particularly when associated with sedentary habits, were deemed injurious to health. A range of authorities on psychological medicine throughout the second half of the nineteenth century concurred that morbid introspection was a defining feature of unsound mind. Thus, notes Clark,

'morbid introspection', almost invariably in conjunction with habitual self-absorption and unnatural egoism, forms one of the principal constitutive elements of their conception of 'unsound Mind'.³⁹

It is important to distinguish the potential subtleties between an active and focused self-absorbed introspection, and a more passive sense of 'reverie'. Clark's evidence suggests that actively self-absorbed forms of introspection were deemed more dangerous than subjects' passive experiences of drifting into reverie. This may be because morbid self absorption was seen to have more in common with depression, or melancholia. In this respect, idle reverie must have been deemed less harmful than the excessive "self consciousness", "self analysis" and excessive "self-absorption" of the kind that Clark notes was to afflict Henry Maudsley.⁴⁰

Such worries about reverie-like states were not solely contained in medical literature. John Ruskin commented on the circumventive effects of reverie in one of his Edinburgh lectures, remarking, "young people are particularly apt to indulge in reverie,

³⁹ This position is identified also in the works of Henry Maudsely, Charles Mercier, Daniel Hack Tuke, Thomas Clouston, William Bevan Lewis. See Clark, "Morbid Introspection," 72.

⁴⁰ See Clark, "Morbid Intropsection," 72.

and imaginative pleasures, and to neglect their plain and practical duties".⁴¹ Ruskin was also keen to attach a physiological explanation to the vagaries of reverie when he complained,

I believe that a large amount of the dreamy and sentimental sadness, tendency to reverie, and general patheticalness of modern life results merely from derangement of stomach.⁴²

Such ideas linking mind and body were common in British psychology, which generally held that mental disorder was a consequence of physiological disorder.⁴³ In episodes characterised by the suspension of will, operations of mind were understood as being determined by the body. Thus, states such as the hypnotic trance were a direct result of the physiological conditions appertaining to the subject. Psychologists, such as Carpenter, emphasised the physiological reaction of subjects in hypnotic trance in relation to an operator, who would for example, encourage the subject to squint upwards towards bright lights.⁴⁴ In normative states the will could control the physiological processes of neural activity. However, in states where the will was inactive, or in suspension, subjects would lose control over thoughts and actions, which were now determined by physiological factors.⁴⁵

J.P. Williams has pointed out that, while suspension of the will could point towards dangerous pathological states, mental operations described as "unconscious cerebration" could, as noted above, yield productive and "intelligent behaviour" such as automatic writing.⁴⁶ What we see therefore in the psychological literature is a complexity in the way different states of consciousness were debated. A broad register of positions existed relating to the power the will yielded over consciousness. For example, it was recognised that the will had some presence during states of

⁴¹ John Ruskin, *Lectures on Architecture and Painting, Delivered at Edinburgh, in November 1853* (New York: Wiley and Halsted, 1856), 56-57.

⁴² John Ruskin "Of Classical Landscape," *Modern Painters*, quoted in, *The True and The Beautiful: in Nature, Art, Morals and Religion* 3rd ed. (New York: Wiley and Halsted, 1859), 377.

⁴³ See J.P. Williams, "Psychical Research and Psychiatry in Late Victorian Britain: trance as ecstasy or trance as insanity" in Bynum, *The Anatomy of Madness*, 233-54.

⁴⁴ Williams, "Psychical Research", 239.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 241.

dreaming.⁴⁷ This contrasted, however, with the notion of cataleptic trance wherein the consciousness of the subject was altogether suspended, having evaporated into a state which Jenny Bourne Taylor describes as “absolute blankness”.⁴⁸ Taylor has noted that while the condition of catalepsy was incorporated into William Hamilton’s list of states of suspended consciousness, it did not offer any “mighty powers of the mind”.⁴⁹ Catalepsy, then, involved an utter suspension of mental power. In the words of Robert Macnish, “consciousness is abolished”.⁵⁰

Conceptions of the will as a rational, governing power of the mind, checking and policing its direction and rescuing it from falling into dangerous territory, advanced a view incompatible with an unfettered reign of automatic thought. Writing in 1858, Alexander John Sutherland offered this advice to fellow physicians:

it is not of much use to advise a lady suffering melancholia to apply herself to needlework or music. We must bear in mind the distinction, so well pointed out by Bishop Butler between active and passive habits, and not allow the mind to lose itself in reverie, as the undue exercise of the reflecting faculties causes great exhaustion of mind, accompanied with depression of spirits.⁵¹

However, such views presented something of a problem for the role of the imagination. As we have seen in Dallas’ account, the imagination does not align itself comfortably with the ‘will’. The will was seen to be governed by reason, whereas the imagination was ruled by the wilier mental realms of passion, memory, or in Dallas’ account, by the unconscious. This tension is described by Clark, who shows that for some, the imagination was associated with, or considered of itself, a form of ‘morbid introspection’. Clark notes that,

according to Abercrombie, the imagination, when properly exercised, ‘under strict control . . . of reason and . . . virtue’, could ennoble the mind and strengthen the moral sense; but left to itself, ‘it tends to withdraw the mind from the important pursuits of life, to weaken the habit of [voluntary] attention and to impair the judgment’. Imagination, he warned, could either originate or

⁴⁷ See Taylor, “Locating the Victorian Unconscious,” 147.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁵⁰ Robert Macnish, *The Philosophy of Sleep*, 3rd edition, 228-29.

⁵¹ Alexander John Sutherland, “Croonian Lectures. On the Pathology, Morbid Anatomy, and Treatment of Insanity, delivered at the Royal College of Physicians, London, 1858,” *The Journal of Mental Science*, 7, no. 38 (July 1861): 177.

give a semblance of reality to nightmares, hallucinations, irrational fears, obsessional ideas, unnatural or immoral feelings, and irresistible impulses; while excessive indulgence in 'works of fiction' encouraged licentious excesses, and could bring about 'a disruption of the harmony which ought to exist between the moral [sentiments] and . . . conduct'.⁵²

The concern was one voiced by a range of thinkers throughout the second half of the century right through to its latter years. Thus, Clarke identifies Theophilus Hyslop, who in 1895 wrote:

The imagination is a function . . . which requires most careful watching. In . . . 'day-dreamers' you have an example of the result of [its] excessive indulgence. . . . Such an individual is generally purposeless. With too diffuse a consciousness [of the kind typical of 'daydreaming' and reverie] there is apt to evolve an unhealthy conceit, especially in adolescents.⁵³

Certainly then, some authors, like Carpenter and Cobbe, saw the application and exercise of the will as more than just a guard against unsoundness of mind. Their work also had a socio-political agenda. We must reflect on these agendas when considering the scope of available positions on reverie-like states in mid-Victorian culture. Questions around social evolution, morality, and the nullification of criminality necessitated concepts of the will and 'soundness of mind' as central to the debate. These concerns were particularly visible; the subtitle of W.B. Carpenter's book is telling: *Principles of Mental Physiology, with Their Application to the Training and Discipline of the Mind and the Study of its Morbid Conditions*.

But, what of Dallas' postulation of the unconscious, which seems to collide with the medical and social concerns outlined above? Far from cautioning against them, Dallas celebrates the "secret workings" of the unconscious mind. Moreover, as we will see later, he even reverses the argument by posing that excessive consciousness is injurious, while the unconscious life is the key to happiness. Perhaps at one level we might not be surprised that he takes this position, given his overarching concerns with creative production over and above the medical discourses of psychology. Yet, there were positions available in the arts that could accommodate those more threatening notions of an injurious unconscious. Such positions took on board the less romantic

⁵² Clark, "Morbid Introspection," 76.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

principles of social realism, questions of social identity and ‘character’, all of which were being allied to emerging ideas in science.⁵⁴ It may appear, therefore, that Dallas is something of a romantic, maverick-outrider, sidestepping medico-scientific principles of mind for the purposes of his own views on art. Is there a reason for this? I think that in order to understand the contrasting position of Dallas we have to return to considering the work of his teacher at Edinburgh University, Sir William Hamilton. I would argue that Dallas draws much of his enthusiasm for the character of the unconscious and its wily nature from Hamilton. Hamilton’s work, I would suggest, offers a similar sense of awe in the extent to which the unconscious operates as a governing structure of mind.

Dallas would have been aware of Hamilton’s work on the unconscious through the biennial lecture course he delivered from 1836. Nine of the lectures were on consciousness and these were later published posthumously, together with others in the collection *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic*, (1859). Hamilton delivered an influential lecture known as ‘Three Degrees of Mental Latency’ which would inform Dallas, as well as other writers on the unconscious.⁵⁵ In the lecture, he suggests that the role that the unconscious plays is significantly more profound than had been previously acknowledged. In summary, the first degree of mental latency describes the mind as a storehouse of knowledge most of which sits outside of consciousness until it is called upon by consciousness. Hamilton remarks, “thus the infinitely greater part of our spiritual treasures, lies beyond the sphere of consciousness, hid in the obscure recesses of the mind”.⁵⁶

The second degree of latency describes the way that whole tracts of knowledge once considered forgotten can be recalled. This degree also includes the recollection of

⁵⁴ See Sharrona Pearl, *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth Century Britain*, (Harvard College, 2010), and especially her chapter “Caricature Physiognomy: Imaging Communities,” for discussion of Cruikshank’s illustrations of Dickens’ character of Fagin in *Oliver Twist*.

⁵⁵ The actual title is different, but, for ease of reference I will continue to use “Three Degrees of Mental Latency”. See Sir William Hamilton, “Lecture XVIII. Consciousness, - General Phaenomena, - Is the Mind Ever Consciously Modified?” *Lectures on Metaphysics And Logic, Vol. I, Metaphysics* ed. Henry L. Mansel and John Veitch, (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1866), 235-252.

⁵⁶ Hamilton, quoted in Taylor and Shuttleworth, *Embodied Selves*, 81.

tracts of knowledge that were never in the first instance cogently identified in the consciousness of the subject. Hamilton remarks that the evidence for this,

. . . shows that the mind frequently contains whole systems of knowledge, which, though in our normal state they have faded into absolute oblivion, may in certain abnormal states, as madness, febrile delirium, somnambulism, catalepsy, &c., flash out into luminous consciousness . . .⁵⁷

and he revels in the capacity of the unconscious such that,

. . . in madness, in fever, in somnambulism, and other abnormal states, the mind should betray capacities and extensive systems of knowledge, of which it was at other times wholly unconscious, is a fact so remarkable that it may well demand the highest evidence to establish its truth.⁵⁸

The third degree of mental latency proposes that it is the unconscious that constructs the conscious; that "our whole knowledge, in fact, is made up of the unknown and the incognisable". For Hamilton, consciousness is but a point on a scale, on which either side lies the unconscious. We do not have an overall consciousness, rather consciousness is contingent; thus,

To be conscious, we must be conscious of some particular perception, or remembrance, or imagination, or feeling, &c., we have no general consciousness.⁵⁹

Consciousness in Hamilton's scheme is contingent then to a specific condition of perception. Beyond that narrow field of cognizance there lays a broader realm of unconsciousness that Hamilton, and Dallas after him, marvel over. A sense of marvel is apparent in Hamilton's language. For instance, in relation to the second degree he remarks on the "extraordinary exaltations of its powers".⁶⁰ While referring to extinct memory, he comments that "this phænomenon of latency, is one of the most marvellous in the whole compass of philosophy".⁶¹ The flavour of this we see in Dallas, but the depth also, to which Hamilton considers the *role* of the unconscious, I

⁵⁷ Ibid., 81.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 82.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

argue, is equally influential on Dallas. In his conclusion, Hamilton signifies something of that depth:

. . . the sphere of our conscious modifications is only a small circle in the centre of a far wider sphere of action and passion, of which we are only conscious through its effects.⁶²

Dallas, in his chapter on the "Hidden Soul", remarks on Hamilton's work:

Everybody who is acquainted with his writings must know how forcibly he has described the existence within us of what he calls latent activity. He shows as clearly as possible how the mind works in secret without knowing it. His proof of the existence of hidden thought is one of the most striking points in his philosophy.⁶³

While their work is some thirty years apart, it is important to note that *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic*, in its refined second edition, was published only five years before *The Gay Science*. Two points here might be noted; firstly that the (re)publication of Hamilton's work further emphasises the contemporary interest in the unconsciousness and, secondly, that it provides an alternative approach to the medical discourses associating the unconscious with 'unsoundness of mind'. One way for Dallas to court his public would have been to articulate the same kind of romantic inflections that Hamilton applied, to illustrate the marvels of the unconscious. Certainly Hamilton's text, with its emphasis on mental philosophy, appears to have had a certain appeal for Dallas over texts representative of the newer scientific psychology.

Hamilton's conception of latent thought served Dallas well. It provided a bed-rock for Dallas's own conception of the hidden soul which, he explains, forms a central part of our lives; it is "a secret flow of thought which is not less energetic than the conscious flow, an absent mind which haunts us like a ghost or a dream and is an essential part of our lives".⁶⁴ The idea of the hidden soul as 'secret' and 'hidden', linked also to debates

⁶² Ibid., 83.

⁶³ Dallas, *The Gay Science*, Vol. 1, 203.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 199.

in psychology at the time, around the conception of the mind and brain as double, as well as forms of double consciousness.⁶⁵ Dallas, remarks,

This unconscious part of the mind is so dark, and yet so full of activity; so like the conscious intelligence and yet so divided from it by the veil of mystery, that it is not much of a hyperbole to speak of the human soul as double; or at least as leading a double life.⁶⁶

But, for Dallas, a physiological explanation of the brain as a double organ, one side in repose while the other active, is not a satisfactory solution;

Even in full consciousness, when it may be supposed that both sides of the brain are active, we sometimes know of a double life being prosecuted something like that which sleep-walking shows. Sir James Mackintosh was a man who mixed much in the world and took a forward part in public affairs; but from his youth upwards, he led another life of curious reverie.⁶⁷

However, Dallas characterises the “human soul as double”, that the constitution of man is the sum of his conscious element alongside the equally weighty unconscious. He makes efforts to position the unconscious as universal. Indeed, his theory here is non-elitist. The productive capacity of the unconscious is afforded to all people.

Where previously superstition or transcendental God-given products of genius may have offered explanations to the faculty of imagination, Dallas now offers the hidden soul. In romantic language, he allies the workings of the mind with the enchantment of fairytale itself; where the sheer extraordinariness of the powers of the unconscious, formerly had been attributed to “the inspirations of heaven or to the whispers of an inborn genius” he reflects upon the “enchanted ground” he seemingly treads upon.⁶⁸ Metaphor is used in the description of the productive unconscious as being the ‘work’ of mythological folkloric characters such as the lubber-fiend:⁶⁹

⁶⁵ For more on double consciousness see Taylor and Shuttleworth, “Double Consciousness”, *Embodied Selves*, 123-140.

⁶⁶ Dallas, *The Gay Science*, Vol. 1, 200.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 236.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁶⁹ The Lubber-Fiend is a mythological creature, shy and hairy in appearance who partakes in household drudgery for gifts of warmth, milk, etc..

The hidden efficacy of our thoughts, their prodigious power of working in the dark and helping us underhand, can be compared only to the stories of our folklore, and chiefly to that of the lubber-fiend who toils for us when we are asleep, or when we are not looking...the lubber-fiend or some other shy creature comes to our aid. He will not lift a finger that we can see; but let us shut our eyes, or turn our heads, or put out the light, and there is nothing that the good fairy will not do for us. We have such a fairy in our thoughts, a willing but unknown and tricky worker which commonly bears the name of Imagination, and which may be named – as I think more clearly – The Hidden Soul.⁷⁰

Securing the intellectual credentials of his argument, though, he moves away from the language of folklore to the language of philosophy, saying that the ‘unconscious’ has now become “accepted as a fact” of philosophy.⁷¹ At this point, Dallas reveals his awareness of German philosophy, saying that with Leibnitz, there has emerged an acceptance of “thought possibly existing out of consciousness”, even if much of that (transcendental) philosophy is “folly”, the principle is acknowledged.⁷² His description as “folly” courts his English readership. He goes on to list a range of British psychologists, James Mill, Herbert Spencer and Sir William Hamilton all of whom acknowledge the existence of the unconscious.

For Dallas, the depth of significance of the unconscious is extensive. Assessing the world beyond consciousness, “there rolls a vast tide of life, which is perhaps, even more important to us than the little isle of our thoughts which lies within our ken”; but the comparison, he warns, is in vain because “each is necessary to the other”.⁷³ For rather than two disparate spheres, he fashions a model of the mind as two concentric rings of thought, whereby passage of thought travels back and forth, from consciousness to unconsciousness.⁷⁴ Consciousness is represented by the ‘light’, unconsciousness by the ‘dark’, and the movement between is continuous:

Trains of thought are continually passing to and fro, from the light into the dark, and back from the dark into the light. When the current of thought flows from within our ken to beyond our ken, it is gone, we forget it, we know not

⁷⁰ Dallas *The Gay Science*, Vol. 1, 201. On the subject of Victorian fairy paintings and their relation to scientific contexts, see Nicola Bown, *Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁷¹ Dallas, *The Gay Science*, Vol. 1, 202-203..

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 203.

⁷⁴ See Rylance, *Victorian Psychology*, 282.

what has become of it. After a time it comes back to us changed and grown, as if it were a new thought, and we know not whence it comes.⁷⁵

Like consciousness, the hidden soul is structured, says Dallas, according to memory, reason and passion. It is in memory that we locate the most familiar of marvels of “hidden thought ... how and where we hide our knowledge so that it seems dead and buried”, and how we seemingly “bring it to life again . . . is a mystery over which everyone capable of thinking has puzzled”.⁷⁶ The popular anecdote considered by other contemporary psychologists describes how one is unable to attain an object of thought previously known to memory, but on leaving the search for a while, it springs into consciousness.⁷⁷ Dallas remarks on the unusual contradiction of “a faculty knowing what it searches for, and yet making the search because it does not know”.⁷⁸ Given such examples as these, the notion that there existed an absolute vacancy-of-mind for subjects in trance, or in similar reverie-like states, was open to be challenged. We might also posit the relevance here in the way that images of subjects in reverie may be described in terms of a passive trance-like state where no action of mind is deemed evident. Examples of this are explored later, in the works of Whistler and Clausen. Working with a notion of Dallas’ “hidden thought”, readings of images of reverie-like states may draw on a position which places the mind, or at least one part of it, as active rather than vacant. Taken further, we can consider the added impact in spectators’ imagining the far reaches of memory, both in the sitter and the viewer. For, Dallas tells us, in memory nothing is lost; “what it once seizes it holds to the death”.⁷⁹ Photographic in its essence, memory, to use another term by Dallas is a “kleptomaniac”. Furthermore, understanding is not a precondition of memory. This discourse serves Dallas well, because, in using anecdotes of everyday folk, he secures the universality of the hidden soul. He takes a further example borrowed from the psychologist John Abercrombie, of a somnambulist,

⁷⁵ Dallas *The Gay Science*, Vol. 1, 203-204.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 209-210.

⁷⁷ Absence of mind later became central to Freud.

⁷⁸ Dallas, *The Gay Science*, Vol. 1, 210.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 211. In this claim he follows in the footsteps of theories of the palimpsest that had been covered earlier by Coleridge, in his ‘A Critique of Hartley’s Associationism’ *Biographia Literaria, or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions*, 2 vols. (London: Rest, Fenner, 1817), quoted in Taylor and Shuttleworth, *Embodied Selves*, 75.

a dull awkward country girl – who was considered uncommonly weak of intellect, who in particular showed not the faintest sense of music, and who was fit only to tend the cattle. It happened that while thus engaged with cattle, she had to sleep next a room in which a tramping fiddler of great skill sometimes lodged. Often he would play there at night, and the girl took notice of his finest strains only as a disagreeable noise. By and by, however, she fell ill, and had fits of sleep-waking in which she would imitate the sweetest tones of a small violin. She would suddenly stop in her performance to make the sound of tuning her instrument, and then after a light prelude would dash off into elaborate pieces of music, most delicately modulated. I have forgotten to mention that in the meantime a benevolent lady had taken a liking to her and received her into her family as an under-servant . . . Also, she spoke French, conjugated Latin verbs, and astonished everybody who approached her in her sleep-waking state, with much curious mimicry, and much fluent and sometimes clever talk on every kind of subject – including politics and religion.⁸⁰

The example supported Dallas's notion that the service of the hidden soul to memory is universal. However, Dallas re-affirms the indisputable pre-requisition of the hidden soul, in the make up of great men; thus, "all great poets, all great artists, all great inventors are men of great memory – their unconscious memory being even greater than that of which they are conscious".⁸¹ Dallas's argument veers towards tautology, as he argues that the hidden soul is universal, while at the same time he wants to mark it out as a pre-requisite of great artists. Dubious logic aside, it is clear that the concept of the unconscious is being made appealing and relevant to contemporary artistic culture.

As noted, psychologists deemed the unconscious as an irrational force which must be curtailed by the conscious intellect.⁸² Yet for Dallas, the unconscious has in itself rational properties. This gives it a special weight in Dallas' scheme. It means that far from being unremarkable, it is in fact productive. It is able to organise actions whereby "the distinct efforts of volition become through practice mechanical, involuntary movements of which we are wholly unaware".⁸³ Examples demonstrating this purposive intent of the unconscious are offered where "children at the factories have fallen asleep over the machines which their fingers kept plying", and "postmen have gone upon their daily rounds dead asleep, without oversight of consciousness or

⁸⁰ Dallas, *The Gay Science*, Vol. 1, 215-216. "Sleep-waking" was synonymous with sleep-walking.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁸² See for example, Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology* and Cobbe, "On Unconscious Cerebration".

⁸³ Dallas, *The Gay Science*, Vol. 1, 224.

intervention of will”.⁸⁴ Many more cases are there to be cited explains Dallas, of “actions begun in consciousness and continued in sleep – soldiers thus marching, coachmen driving, pianists playing, weavers throwing the shuttle, saddlers making harness, seamstresses plying the needle,” and so on.⁸⁵ With these cases in mind then, it is hard not to imagine there being an added complexity to the mid-Victorian reading of reverie images; readings cast with subtle inflections of imagined capacities for unconscious cerebration in the subject.

For Dallas, the hidden soul is our servant; “the mind keeps watch and ward for us when we slumber” and “it will remember, brood, search, poise, calculate, invent, digest, do any kind of stiff work for us unbidden, and always do the very thing we want”.⁸⁶ Furthermore, Dallas points to instances where tasks ruled by the unconscious can indeed be performed better; whereas to consciously struggle hinders the progress, the slackening of consciousness leads to exceptional things. He mentions Mozart’s avoidance of a deliberated, conscious thought-process in his compositional strategy.⁸⁷ He offers accounts of actions performed in sleep – lines composed by Coleridge for *Khubla Khan*, and Condillac mentally finishing off chapters during sleep. Instances of productive output in somnambulism are recognised. For example, Dallas refers to an advocate who had problems unravelling a complex case, wrote out notes unawares, returned to bed, and marvelled at the solution in the morning; another account related to complex mathematical problems being unravelled by a student unawares. Indeed, in the sleep-walking state Dallas finds “the precision and the facility of the work we can do very remarkable. The sleep-walker seldom makes a false step, or sings a wrong note.”⁸⁸

Dallas further seeks to prove the existence of the hidden soul by considering how it harbours a realm of unconscious or semi-conscious emotions. He marries it with “feeling”, “sympathy”, “instinct”, and “intuition”; all are

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 230.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 227.

⁸⁷ He quotes Mozart saying “I write because I cannot help it,” *ibid.*, 229.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 235.

processes which never fairly enter into consciousness, which we know at best only in a semi-consciousness, and less in themselves than in their results. . . . Passion, whether we view it as a feeling, is notoriously a blind unconscious force. . . . It matters not which of the passions we select for cross examination: they are all, in this respect, alike.⁸⁹

He directs the reader to the mystery of love, for “it is the central fire of modern poetry and romance”. The lover, “caught in a dream . . . rejoices in the accession of a new life, because then, for the first time, he becomes aware of his hidden soul – of dim Elysian fields of thought, far stretching beyond the bounds of his daylight consciousness”.

Instinct also “so clearly belongs to the hidden soul” which he considers has the closest parallel with somnambulism; thus,

the mind of beasts, void of self-knowledge and the reason which looks before and after, may well be compared to the belated mind of the sleep-walker; and on the other hand, the processes which we can trace in sleep-walking remind us for their easy precision for nothing so much as instinct.⁹⁰

He continues to demonstrate that the hidden soul has a close accord with reason, with certain instinctive actions taking place too far beyond our knowledge, especially those of the “unconscious muscles”; thus,

the artist can trust to his hand, to his throat, to his eye, to render with unfailing accuracy subtle distinctions of tone and shades of meaning with which reason have nothing to do – with which no effort can keep pace. . . . Mr. Ruskin has shown with great felicity how infinitely the hand of a painter goes beyond the power of seeing in the delicacy and subtlety of its work – the gradations of light and form which it can detail being expressible only in fabulous arithmetical formulas with no end of ciphers in them.⁹¹

The hidden soul also plays its part in the automatic, instinctive workings of the body; the control of heartbeat and breathing and numerous instances evidencing “a hidden life of thought working with a constant energy in our behalf in the economy of the

⁸⁹ Ibid., 238.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 241.

⁹¹ Ibid., 242-243.

bodily frame”.⁹² With Dallas’s proscription of the hidden soul as instinctual, it becomes ever more clear that the unconscious is an absolute foundation to life – a conception that may appeal to artists and poets alike. Dallas aligns the realm of the instinctive with that of mysticism. In doing this, he reiterates the universality of the hidden soul, but, also, carves out a place for it within Christianity, in that “the reality of a hidden life is a cardinal doctrine of our faith”.⁹³

Summarising his exposition of the hidden soul, Dallas gives a sense of the pleasure it brings, while reaffirming the role of dreams, sleep, and the semi-conscious. He reverses his metaphor of concentric rings and the inner life, realising that the inner life in its entire expanse may be served best, not by its containment to an inner ring, but by “an outer ring . . . spreading far beyond the cultivated park of our thoughts”.⁹⁴ Our conscious life, he says is but a “little spot of light” whereas the hidden soul is extensive;

In the dark recesses of memory, in unbidden suggestions, in trains of thought unwittingly pursued, in multiplied waves and currents all at once flashing and rushing, in dreams that cannot be laid, in the nightly rising of the somnambulist, in the clairvoyance of passion, in the forces of instinct, in the obscure, but certain, intuitions of the spiritual life ebbing and flowing, rippling and rolling and beating about where we cannot see it; and we come to a view of humanity not very different from that which Prospero, though in a melancholy mood, propounded when he said:

We are such stuff
As dreams are made of; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.⁹⁵

These characteristics and qualities Dallas attributes to the unconscious are couched with such poeticism that it is hard not imagine their appeal to artists. And the conflation of psychological terminologies – “trains of thought”, “waves and currents”, and their incorporation into poetic rhetoric provides a brief example of the power of

⁹² Ibid., 244.

⁹³ Ibid., 247. In effect Dallas wants to make sure his theory is not at odds with Christian thinking.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 249.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 250. Francis X. Roellinger, writing in 1941, remarked how this passage “strikingly anticipates the Freudian description of the world of the unconscious”. Roellinger, “E.S. Dallas on Imagination,” 659.

his critical theory. Such concepts as the “obscure”, and the associated mystery of “dark recesses”, would indeed come to play a significant part in elements of Aestheticism and Symbolism in the nineteenth century, and later on, Surrealism.

Having explored Dallas’ concept of the hidden soul, we can see the depth and extent to which he affords a place for the unconscious. I argued earlier that in this respect he develops Hamilton’s ‘Three Degrees of Mental Latency’ and how consciousness itself was considered to be structured by the unconscious. I now wish to explore Dallas’ concept of ‘hidden pleasure’, a concept which is again inextricably bound up with the unconscious.



“Hidden pleasure” is Dallas’ term used to describe the pleasure of the hidden soul. In his concluding remarks in his chapter “The Hidden Soul”, as we have seen, he quotes from Prospero, and makes the suggestion that the unconscious is a realm of pleasure,

For what is it? Our little life is rounded with a sleep; our conscious existence is a little spot of light, rounded or begirt with a haze of slumber – not a dead but a living slumber, dimly lighted and like a visible darkness, but full of dreams and irrepressible activity, an unknown and indefinable, but real and enjoyable mode of life – a Hidden Soul.⁹⁶

This “enjoyable mode of life”, the world of the hidden soul, is a world of pleasure.⁹⁷

In his chapter “Hidden Pleasure”, Dallas conceptualises pleasure and furthers his claim of the significance of the unconscious in our lives.⁹⁸ Like ‘the imagination’, pleasure

⁹⁶ Dallas, *The Gay Science*, Vol. 1, 250-251.

⁹⁷ There is a striking parallel between Dallas’ commentary and selected quotations on the unconscious, and the “Conclusion” to Pater’s *The Renaissance*. Thus Pater writes; “if we begin with the inward world of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring. ...There, it is no longer the gradual darkening of the eye...but the race of the mid-stream, a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought. ...At first experience seems to bury us...But, when reflexion begins to act upon those objects they are dissipated...in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects...but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them...the whole scope of observation is dwarfed to the narrow chamber of the individual mind.” Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, (Rockville: Serenity Press, 2009), 135-136.

⁹⁸ Dallas, “Hidden Pleasure,” *The Gay Science*, Vol. 2, 109-140.

too sits in the realm of the unconscious and conversely the unconscious is pleasurable. He argues that states of focussed consciousness are, on the other hand, potentially injurious to mental health. In this, he plays the orthodox psychologists such as Carpenter, at their own game. Turning the debate on its head, the *unconscious* is seen as constituting the productive and healthy individual, whereas excessive articulations of consciousness are injurious. Dallas thus warns of the dangers of deep, attentive introspection:

There is no more wasting malady than that of incessant introspection. . . . In point of fact, it is out of a flourishing self-consciousness that suicide springs.⁹⁹

He points to George Eliot, saying how in “her last novel” she “speaks of ‘that higher consciousness which is known to bring higher pains’”.¹⁰⁰ The converse he says is in fact true; the higher the level of unconsciousness, the higher the form of pleasure. He locates this in “those passages in the poets wherein the connection between the drowsiness of trance and the perfection of enjoyment is firmly maintained”.¹⁰¹ He remarks how there is a guarantee of the pleasures of the unconscious to be found in sleep and trance:

Beset though it be with the difficulty of clouds and darkness, -though it elude our logic and defy our language, the fact is there from which we cannot escape – the pleasure of trance, the pleasure of sound sleep. There are few things so strange in human life as the joy of ecstasy and of trance in which consciousness is lost’.¹⁰²

Evidence for Dallas is to be found also with Buddhists and Brahmin philosophers, whose claim is that the extinction of thought leads to Nirvana.¹⁰³

He challenges William Hamilton’s view that all pleasure must be conscious;

if consciousness be not essential to the exercise of thought, nor yet to the possession of knowledge, it is difficult to understand why it should be essential to feeling, which is notoriously blind.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Ibid., 116.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 123.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 124. He cites Keats where he addresses the nightingale.

¹⁰² Ibid., 121.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 123-24.

Although he concedes that Hamilton rightly rejects the Cartesian logic of ‘I think therefore I am’, he does not think Hamilton goes far enough. If consciousness is not a requirement for the acquisition of knowledge, then why should it be essential for feeling, thus, “the blindness of passion, and the unconsciousness of instinct are proverbial, and the sense of pleasure has the same characteristic”.¹⁰⁵

Dallas claims that we always know when we are unhappy, but we are often unaware when we are happy and it is only with the loss of that happiness that we become aware of its prior existence. For Dallas, “most of our pleasure – often the best of it – is hidden out of sight, and that we are ignorant of its own felicity”.¹⁰⁶ He argues that the pleasure of the unconscious is verifiable and can be experienced in the pleasure of sleep. For this he quotes Dr. Isaac Watts, who remarks that,

There seems to be a constant sense of pleasure in sound sleep, which appears by a reluctancy [sic] to be disturbed in that pleasure, and strong tendencies to re-enjoy it when we are suddenly awakened; this is at least as demonstrable as that we have no consciousness at all.¹⁰⁷

Dallas identifies two things here; firstly, that evidence for the pleasure of sleep is universal; that “there is no man, [sic] however stupid, who has not observed that, when profound slumber is invaded, he is balked of his pleasure”.¹⁰⁸ Secondly, that the mind is active when it comes out of the soundest sleep. From this the question arises for Dallas:

Is it possible to resist the argument that if, by observing how the mind is engaged when we wake from deep sleep, we may convince ourselves that in a state of profound unconsciousness it thinks, we may with not less logic conclude from similar premises that in profound unconsciousness it can have a real pleasure?¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 126.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 134.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 131.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 132.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

We should note that Dallas' account of hidden pleasure advocates the celebration and practise of sleep, trance and reverie. In the context of the prevailing medical discourse perhaps this was surprising. But, Dallas is not advocating a leap into a shady oblivion for the unconscious. Rather, it should be deemed a productive realm, working hard behind the scenes. The unconscious is therefore conjoined with pleasure and labour.

Having explored Dallas' concepts of the imagination, the hidden soul, and hidden pleasure, it is important to now show how he relates these concepts to a view of art. Collectively, the notion of the unconscious binds the three concepts together. However, it is via the concept of hidden pleasure that he forges an approach to applying his theory to art. In considering pleasure, he makes a key distinction between the literary form of drama and the plastic art of sculpture, remarking that

painful pleasure, wherein the sense of action is dominant, finds its artistic reflex in the drama and whatever is dramatic [. . .] pure pleasure, wherein the sense of repose and perfect harmony prevails, finds its artistic reflex in the beautiful, and whatever forms of art, such as sculpture, aim chiefly at the beautiful.¹¹⁰

It is interesting, then, that Dallas seems to propose that drama (narrative) does not achieve the same degree of 'pure' pleasure afforded to realms of art which pursue beauty. This distinction, which has a relevance to my subsequent discussions around the concept of narrative alongside concepts of Aestheticism is important on two levels; firstly, because it indicates a demotion of narrative over form and secondly, his remarks suggest an importance to the notional ascendancy of beauty over narrative.

He asks, "what is the relation of hidden pleasure to art? How is art moved by our hidden pleasure? How is hidden pleasure moved by art?"¹¹¹ His answer to this is that the relationship between art and pleasure resides in the "element of mystery". Mystery surrounds the unconscious, as it does the key quality of art. He writes,

Here, at last, we reach the most wonderful, the most vital, of all the elements of art – the element of mystery, that sense of the unseen, that possession of the far-away, that glimmer of infinity, that incommunicable secret, that know-not-what, of which I tried to give some account of in the first volume of this work.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 134.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

It is the suggestion of the unknown something in art which we are in the habit of signalling as in a peculiar sense poetical.¹¹²

He seeks to elaborate the somewhat nebulous nature of 'mystery'. In order to do this he proffers the term "weird". He keeps a thorough definition of weird from the reader; but perhaps this is intentional because his aim is to articulate the sense of the weird in art as indefinable. It is an "incommunicable secret" and its character is of the "know not what". However, it may be identifiable as a "quality" and a criterion of art. For Dallas, art may have the following criteria – the dramatic, the beautiful, and the weird. He remarks that "an artistic effect may be dramatic and yet not beautiful; so it may be beautiful and not poetical".¹¹³ A work may have all or only some; for instance he cites a verse by Milton as having beauty and drama, but no quality of the weird.¹¹⁴ However, all art is able to contain the quality of the weird. Dallas claims that it is the weird that "easily" and "naturally" combines with the other art-effects of the dramatic and the beautiful. He says "there is no antagonism between that quality of art which we know as weird or poetical and the dramatic; no antagonism between the weird and the beautiful".¹¹⁵ He remarks how

You may have symmetry the most perfect, beauty the most lovely, and not only is there nothing to prevent its being weird – it has a native tendency to become so, to appeal to the secret heart, to ally itself with unknown delights, and to win from us epithets in which we recognise it as a dream of enchantment.¹¹⁶

However, the crucial point being made is that the weird underlies all great art;

Therefore, that quality of art which we understand as the know-not-what, which comes of the hidden soul and which appeals to a hidden pleasure, is the most constant of the characteristics of art. It underlies all art. You can have great art which is not dramatic, and you can have great art which is not beautiful; but you cannot have great art which is not weird.¹¹⁷

For Dallas, works of art

¹¹² Ibid., 134-135.

¹¹³ Ibid., 135.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 136.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 138.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 139.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

must pierce to the Hidden Soul and engage it in Hidden Pleasure. They need not always be dramatic; and they need not always be beautiful; but they must always suggest the incommunicable secret of the know-not-what.¹¹⁸

Reverie paintings may always succeed on this last point, for as vehicles suggestive of the “know-not-what” quality, they always point to the impossibility of reading the mind. It is interesting to conjecture how painters may have interpreted these ideas on art, and to ask if it was clear to contemporary readers of *The Gay Science* whether or not Dallas had in mind the transposition of his ideas from literary criticism to painting. At a literal level, at least, we can say that reverie paintings communicated the sense of an inner psychological world and as such could suggest the realm of the unconscious. On another level, reverie subject paintings are ambiguous; unless there is a textual aid, it is not possible to ascertain with precision if a subject is in deep introspection, or lost in blissful reverie, and in this sense they automatically embody a sense of Dallas’ “mystery” or “know-not-what” quality.

There is a final observation to make regarding Dallas’ text, which again, accords with a particular relevance with reverie images. In his final chapter “The Ethical Current”, Dallas observes a macro shift in the culture and one which has a significant relevance to art. This shift is characterised by the onset of the dominance of the private sphere; thus,

there is gradually being wrought a change in the relation of the individual to the mass. Whether we regard that change as a growth or as a withering will depend very much on what we think of the individual... the little men and the private men and all the incidents of privacy are coming into repute.¹¹⁹

Dallas writes, “most noteworthy in its ethical bearing on the imaginative art of our time”, is,

the new power which we possess of acting on the masses and of being acted on – has led...to many changes, but non more important than the withering of the individual as a hero, [and] the elevation and reinforcement of the individual as a private man. ...This elevation of the private life and the private man to the

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 251.

place of honour in art and literature, over the public life and the historical man that have hitherto held the chief rank in... amounts to a revolution.¹²⁰

Dallas notes this revolution has been seen,

most distinctly in the pictorial art, where it is impossible not to be struck with the almost entire subsidence of historical painting. Instead of craving historical pictures, we glory in genre and landscape.¹²¹

Amongst those genre pictures, we would certainly place images of reverie. Indeed, reverie images fall perfectly into the shift that Dallas describes. They offer something attractive in the concept of reverie as a typically common experience, unlike the Romantic “hero” that Dallas alludes to. In their exposition of the themes of (un)consciousness, they go a little way towards illustrating Dallas’ final point of argument;

it appears that the withering of the hero the flourishing of the private individual, which I have ventured to describe as being (for art at least) the most salient characteristic of our time, is but the last and most complete development of a tendency which belongs to modern art an literature.¹²²

As we will go on to see, this “flourishing of the private” and its articulation as common, everyday-experience, is manifest in the breadth of reverie paintings.



This chapter has charted something of the broad psychological discourse relevant to our understanding of reverie. It is worth recalling certain key points which we might carry forward with any analysis of Victorian reverie painting. To begin with, nineteenth-century culture recognised a broad register of reverie-like states – a complexity which should not be ignored even when reading the most mundane of reverie images. We should also acknowledge the percolation of ideas relating to

¹²⁰ Ibid., 323.

¹²¹ Ibid., 323-24.

¹²² Ibid., 325-26.

reverie and the notable open fields of discourse between science and the arts. Within that discourse we need to recognise texts, such as *The Gay Science*, which establish complex commentary around the relationship between psychology and art. Lastly, we ought to mark-out the special relevance of *The Gay Science* in relation to emerging principles in Aestheticism. The next two chapters will, in part, demonstrate that relevance. To some degree, all the following chapters have partly been driven by a question: Is it possible to read subtle distinctions of consciousness pertaining to reverie-like states? The analyses that follow here do not aim to mercilessly pin-down exact states of mind, but rather reveal that the images discussed demonstrate an openness which allows for a discussion around notions of consciousness. Dallas's work revealed the contemporary fascination for the unconscious and how this may be attached to cultural life and cultural artefacts. The subsequent investigations which consider Rossetti, Whistler, and Clausen respectively, explore further the relationship between cultural products and concepts of consciousness and further highlight the significance of Dallasian concepts such as mystery, unconscious cerebration, the private world, the mental life and the pursuit of beauty. These concerns run parallel with the special consideration to how reverie functions in and *for* images. Thus, particular concerns of artists are explored and are related to key questions of how reverie might serve their art.



CHAPTER II

REVERIE, AESTHETICISM, ROSSETTI

Psychological commentary on reverie, popular images of reverie, and the emerging tendencies of Aestheticism, all coexisted in the 1860s. This chapter begins to detail the diverse and versatile pictorial applications of reverie, by exploring the context of emergent Aestheticism. Initial observations suggest that the diversity of reverie seems to reveal categorical distinctions, in that particular schools of painting appear to approach reverie in different ways. Thus, for popular genre artists, reverie helped serve constructions of sentimentality by connoting romance, courtship, and themes of lost love. For naturalists, reverie could signify the effects of toil or hardship, while for artists combining sentiment with social realism it could convey optimism, adversity or religious faith. For Aestheticists reverie could augment notions of autonomy and independence of narrative. Yet, while these kinds of rigid categorical affiliations might seem useful towards formulating a theory of reverie in Victorian painting, they do not satisfactorily take account of the subtleties inherent to individual artistic practices. Therefore, caution and discrimination needs to be applied when considering a framework of distinct schools of practice, particularly if we accept the likelihood of cross-fertilization between artistic practices in cultures of open fields. My object is not to formulate a crystalline theory of reverie based around hard and fast distinctions between schools of painting. Instead, from here onwards I look closely at individual practices, and while utilising a broader framework of the classifications mentioned above, it is my main objective to unravel the details and complexities of reverie in Rossetti, Whistler and Clausen. This chapter is the first of three offering a detailed examination of reverie images and it is therefore worth noting how a discriminative approach is directed by the methodological logic applying to the remainder of the dissertation. In order to achieve discriminative analyses, I take a tri-partite approach that deals with specific works, their placing and reception in the art-world, and analysis of contemporary art theory respectively. In addition, this approach is augmented by recognising the psychological contexts and discourses of reverie considered in Chapter One.

Exploring in detail the way that reverie was applied by individual artists allows us to improve hermeneutic understanding of those works. It is also important to account for the inter-relationship of works in shared or similar contexts. In addition, we need to take account of guiding principles of art theory, or at least an acknowledgement of contemporary artistic conventions and respective critical discourses. Taking this tripartite approach helps foreground the way that reverie performs not only paradigmatic functions, determining the semantic possibilities of specific works, but also how it performs syntagmatically, inflecting the meanings of works in their relationship to one another. It is particularly helpful to regard reverie as an identifiable subject matter in itself – to be recognised by its Victorian audience, dwelled upon, compared and contemplated. Owing to their commonality of subject matter, reverie paintings inter-relate. I see our need to acknowledge this fact as important. In our efforts to unravel the full complexity of reverie images, we need to acknowledge how these inter-relationships and inter-textualities can aid our further understandings of specific works.

One unusual feature of reverie as subject is the way it affords an interpretive elasticity. Prosaic on the one hand, it can suggest flippant, sentimental frivolity – a day dream of love, a fanciful musing; yet on the other hand it can indicate profound sentiments of mind – deep contemplation or introspection, rapturous imagination, unconscious cerebration, as well as the pathologies of mind – depression, melancholia, nostalgia, catalepsy, insanity. Such breadth is fascinating and offers art historians great room for manoeuvre. For the reader, then, reverie may be many things and the breadth of semantic possibility afforded to the image of reverie must have issued a deal of complexity for both the Victorian artist and viewer. This interpretative breadth is one reason why it makes sense to tread cautiously around notional specificities of category boundaries. By retaining both caution, but, also, flexibility with categorical conceptions of schools of art and respective theoretical principles, we can go far with reverie. By acknowledging popular and scientific discourses on reverie, we can go further still. Thus, in summary, the methodology that steers the remainder of the dissertation involves:- close interpretative readings of reverie in specific works; it necessitates an understanding of the relationships of those works to others; and it requires the consideration of the contemporary critical and theoretical framework of art. Acknowledgment of psychological discourses compliments each of these points of enquiry.

In this chapter, I argue that there are notable distinctions in depictions of reverie in the Aestheticist paintings of Rossetti that differ from non-Aestheticist work. But also, I argue that different applications of reverie are inherent within the broader corpus of Rossetti's own works. This argument, which poses that reverie was versatile and diverse in its applications, sits alongside another proposition, namely that reverie has an especial relevance to Aestheticism, serving well the principles that it would later be defined by. This chapter considers how one of those Aestheticist principles, the tendency towards autonomy from narrative strictures, is closely bound to the application of reverie as subject matter. Reverie, I argue, has a special resonance with Aestheticism.

In unravelling the subtle distinctions in depictions of reverie in Aestheticist works, certain defining features of Aestheticism come to light. Because reverie appears to have such a forceful resonance and visibility within Aestheticism, it is possible to suggest that it warrants a place alongside its other constituting criteria. Although it is not an aim here to extensively define or redefine Aestheticism, the chapter shows how various characteristics and principles associated with Aestheticism resonate with concepts of reverie. Significant amongst those characteristics are ideas around open narratives, spectatorship, a particular vocabulary, the concepts of beauty, autonomy, art for art's sake, and inter-disciplinarity. This chapter considers, therefore, how in Aestheticist works, reverie augments these principles – for example, in the picturing of beauty, reverie reinforces the ideal of feminine beauty as static, introspective, private, and reflective. Also, reverie images foster a certain kind of spectatorship which encourages reflexivity and reflection in the beholder. On another level, we see reverie functioning as a way of assuaging conventional narrative form and therefore promoting the idea of the autonomous artwork. We can also see reverie being used to depict the contemplation of other art-forms, such as music, thus foregrounding notions of inter-disciplinarity and inter-textuality.

The role of reverie in Aestheticist work can be seen to differ, therefore, from other work. The conventional emphasis on narrative predicating much Victorian art was aborted in Aestheticist strategies which instead favoured open narratives. On this point of open narratives, I contend that reverie provides a particularly strong relevance to

Aestheticism. The elusive character of reverie, its ambiguity, and its obscurity served well that trajectory of Aestheticist art which aimed to bypass over-riding concerns with narrative. Reverie, with its inherent qualities of obscurity, mystery, and transcendence, (qualities not always apparent in the more realist strains of Victorian genre painting) advanced the obfuscation of narrative associated with Aestheticism. Moreover, I contend that a vocabulary fostering notions of obscurity demonstrated in the statements of artists, critics, poets and psychologists, all of whom could be associated with Aestheticism, implies a certain concord with concepts of reverie.

Relevant to that vocabulary are the concepts and discourses in psychology around reverie which inter-relate with Aestheticism. Thus, psychology informs this discussion of Aestheticism because it is implicated in several ways. Critics, such as, Pater, Dallas and Theodor Friedrich Vischer demonstrated knowledge of psychology and laid an emphasis on states of consciousness relating to reverie. Both Pater and Dallas can be attached to Aestheticist circles.¹ It is possible to relate their interests in psychologies of consciousness to Aestheticism via language. Thus, terms associated with notions of obscurity can be found in Dallas's *The Gay Science*, while in Pater's writing the term "reverie" appears in important tracts.² Furthermore, psychologists, such as Sully, who took a keen interest in art, considered psychology as imperative to understanding aesthetics and spectatorship.³ Psychological contexts were relevant to Aestheticist discourse on other levels. Curious psychological states such as somnambulism, mesmeric and hypnotic states were a feature in popular literature. This was apparent in the realms of both fiction and non-fiction.⁴ Aestheticist artists therefore, could access a broad discourse on reverie and related states.

¹ For the links between Pater and Aestheticist circles see Elizabeth Prettejohn, "Walter Pater and aesthetic painting" in ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn, *After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 36-58.

² Pater uses the term "reverie" seven times in *The Renaissance*; Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, 1st ed. (Rockville: Serenity Press, 2009).

³ See Kate Flint, "Edward Burne-Jones's *The Mirror of Venus*: Surface and Subjectivity in Art Criticism of the 1870s", in *After the Pre-Raphaelites: Art and Aestheticism in Victorian England* ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 152-164.

⁴ Particularly in the sensation novel. Dallas remarks on the new popularity of the form: "There is a demand for what is called sensation, and dramatic authors are compelled to gratify this craving for sensation." *The Gay Science*, Vol. 2, 318.

Before undertaking a closer analysis of the relationship between reverie, Aestheticism, and the works of Rossetti, we firstly need to address some of the critical claims made about Aestheticist painting. Art-historical scholarship suggests that Aestheticist art abandoned wholesale the tyranny of narrative in favour of “subjectless” pictures.⁵ There has, however, been a lack of any sustained enquiry around the relevance of psychologies of reverie and their place in the formation of “subjectless” pictures. Furthermore, little has been said about the inherent capacity of reverie to function as subject or narrative device. Addressing these issues can give us new ways of reading depictions of reverie whilst also tempering the claims made that most Aestheticist paintings are subjectless. Our navigation around Aestheticism requires some tracing of its meanings, contexts and progenitors.



The term ‘Aestheticism’ was not available to artists in the 1860s and consequently its retrospective application can be problematic.⁶ As Elizabeth Prettejohn has pointed out, “if there is any consensus, it is that Aestheticism as a category is exceptionally elusive”.⁷ Prettejohn prefers the form Aestheticist over other terms such as aesthetic movement, and aims to mobilise the term in this form to serve art-historical purposes relating to painting in the 1860s and 1870s. For these reasons, I will also adopt the term Aestheticism as this chapter concerns the same field of paintings from the 1860s.⁸ Prettejohn remarks that R.V. Johnson, in his introductory text of 1969, prefers to describe Aestheticism not as a movement but rather as a “tendency”.⁹ Taking Aestheticism then, as a tendency, or set of tendencies is helpful.

⁵ Paul Spencer-Longhurst and Elizabeth Prettejohn independently use the term “subjectless”. See Paul Spencer-Longhurst, *The Blue Bower: Rossetti in the 1860s* (London: Scala Publishing, 2000), 36; Elizabeth Prettejohn, “Walter Pater and Aesthetic Painting,” 51.

⁶ See Kathy Psomiades, *Beauty’s Body: Femininity and Representation in British Aestheticism* (Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 1997), 8. Prettejohn, *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, 2.

⁷ Prettejohn, *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, 2.

⁸ See Prettejohn, *After the Pre-Raphaelites*; Jason Edwards, *Alfred Gilbert’s Aestheticism: Gilbert Amongst Whistler, Wilde, Leighton and Burne Jones* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing 2006).

⁹ Prettejohn, *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, 2.

Central to the art-historical construction of Aestheticism is a recurring list of artists, members of artistic circles, poets and critics. My exploration of Aestheticism and reverie, considers the work of Rossetti, Whistler, and to a lesser extent, Albert Moore, each of whom were identified by Sidney Colvin, in his article “English painters and English painting”, published in the *Fortnightly Review* in October 1867.¹⁰ Colvin identified a grouping of just nine artists from the possible 700 or so who exhibited at the Royal Academy that year.¹¹ These artists were, in Colvin’s eyes, marked out as both superior and distinctive from the rest of the English School. In his article, Colvin identifies Frederic Leighton, Moore and Whistler as artists who pursue “beauty without realism”.¹² He then identifies artists of “imagination” or “passion” in Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and Simeon Solomon.¹³ A further grouping included George Frederic Watts, “in whom the passion for beauty is strong”, Arthur Hughes, and the landscape painter George Hemming Mason, who both “serve the goddess beauty”.¹⁴

Beyond the significance of the groupings, Prettejohn has considered how Colvin’s article is also important because it identifies theoretical principles for an aesthetic doctrine.¹⁵ Colvin identified the importance of art’s formal qualities and highlighted the key criterion of beauty; thus:

Pictorial art addresses itself directly to the sense of sight; to the emotions and the intellect only indirectly, through the medium of the sense of sight. The only perfection of which we can have distinct cognizance through the sense of sight is the perfection of the forms and colours; therefore perfection of forms and colours – beauty, in a word – should be the prime object of pictorial art. Having this, it has the chief requisite; and spiritual, intellectual beauty are contingent on this, are something thrown into the bargain.¹⁶

Although the terms “beauty without realism” and “the art whose aim is beauty” did not catch on, Prettejohn argues that the artist grouping identified by Colvin is repeatedly attached to diverse contexts in which the increasingly significant term, “art for art’s

¹⁰ Sidney Colvin, “English Painters and Painting in 1867,” *Fortnightly Review*, 2, no. 10 (October 1867): 464-76.

¹¹ Prettejohn, *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, 3.

¹² Colvin, “English Painters and Painting in 1867,” 473.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 474-75.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 475.

¹⁵ Prettejohn, *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, 3.

¹⁶ Colvin, “English Painters and Painting in 1867,” 476.

sake”, is employed.¹⁷ The term gradually became attached to the artistic contexts of Walter Pater, William Morris, Algernon Swinburne, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Frederick Leighton and George Frederic Watts.

The autonomy of art was central to the art for art’s sake dictum. In Colvin’s estimation, British art was proliferated by paintings that relied on anecdote, the “aim of the painter being to *illustrate* for purposes of amusement or edification, and without reference to beauty”.¹⁸ Together with “Anecdotal” art, Colvin identified “Academic” art, but also, art which merely seeks to imitate nature.¹⁹ Collectively, they represented the failure of contemporary English painting. For Colvin, salvation lay in art which pitched itself against these dominant artistic trajectories; in other words, an autonomous art liberated from the strictures of anecdote, academic convention and illustrative objectivism. In Colvin’s scheme, autonomy in art could be won through the quest for beauty and form. Similar ideas were held by Pater. In his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, Pater develops a theory of aesthetics which posits, in the words of Ian Small, that “aesthetics, far from being implicated in cultural and moral issues, could, and should, exist freed from those contexts”.²⁰ Pater, notes Small, “focussed attention away from the object of contemplation and on to the contemplating mind”.²¹ In Aestheticism, a complex set of possibilities emerge which allow for artists, such as Rossetti, to signify the material body while concurrently providing opportunities for relating artworks to more autonomous concepts such as spirituality, the soul, and obscurity. Interestingly, we might note that reverie paintings can perform such bilateral functions, depicting both the material properties of the figure in reverie, as well as the immaterial, signified by allusions to mental states, or indeed more transcendental concepts that go beyond the material body.



¹⁷ Prettejohn, *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, 3.

¹⁸ Colvin, “English Painters and Painting in 1867,” 466.

¹⁹ Colvin uses the term “scientific”, to describe art which is excessively topographical in its objective imitation of nature, citing John Brett’s work as an example; *ibid.*, 468-469.

²⁰ Ian Small, ed., *The Aesthetes: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1979), xiv.

²¹ *Ibid.*, xiv.

Reverie, I would argue, is a central element of Rossetti's art. It is mobilised in a range of ways in his works and, at each turn, it serves the emergent Aestheticist trajectory of his practice. It functions as a way of suggesting deep introspection – of a mental turning away from the physical boundaries of space. It provides the vehicle to escape contemporary narrative conventions and, instead, offers something of a surrogate position, in that reverie itself appears as if to occupy the central idea of the narrative. Reverie has another function in Rossetti's work. With its elusiveness and ambiguity, it helps reinforce the senses of mystery, mysticism and the obscure, accentuating the sense of "imagination" and "passion" that Colvin identified in his work.²² In his 1883 review of the Rossetti retrospective, Colvin notes, "his art is as remote from realism on the one hand, as it is from commonplace artistic fiction on the other; it is at once acutely original, and almost exclusively poetical and imaginative." He then identifies in Rossetti qualities of mystery associated with romantic art, which searches for

a character of far-sought curiosity and strangeness ... it is precisely this character of curiosity and strangeness, of beauty not found at hand but sought longingly and far, which constitutes the so called romantic element of modern art.²³

In identifying these particular characteristics, it is also possible to align his work to contexts relating to psychology and the associated critical writings that shared that context as well as melding ideas on consciousness with ideas around mystery and the imagination. Alongside its formal properties, the psychological content of Rossetti's work was hinted at in Colvin's assessment:

An amazing power of realisation and extreme splendour of colour are used to embody subjects symbolical, suggestive, and pregnant of fanciful allegory. There is mingled with all this a strong touch of archaic quaintness, and that vein of languid, half morbid, melancholy which has always been a prae-Raphaelite characteristic.²⁴

Both the notions of "suggestion" and "fanciful allegory" allude to experiences of reverie. But furthermore, the ideas of pathological psychologies associated with

²² Colvin describes Rossetti as the only artist "who seems thoroughly to have combined beauty with passion and intellect", see Colvin, "English Painters and Painting in 1867," 474.

²³ Colvin, "Rossetti as a Painter," *Magazine of Art* 6 (January 1883): 177-178.

²⁴ Colvin, "English Painters and Painting in 1867," 474.

morbid introspection are identified here in Colvin's identification of a "languid, half morbid, melancholy".

A further function of reverie in his work is that it fosters spectatorial reflexivity. This reflexivity comes as the result of the work of art drawing viewers to dwell on the act of spectatorship. Images of reverie, because of the way they indicate mental acts of an inward nature, be they deep contemplation, aesthetic rapture, trance, or introspection, have a capacity to foster in the viewer ideas around such mental acts at a personal level. The idea of the spectator being aware of the act of spectatorship has a currency within Aestheticism because the principles of Aestheticism advocated a shift from the spectator as solely a reader of narrative. Thus, for Rossetti's and other Aestheticists' work, the depiction of subjects in reverie can operate as an analogue to how the spectator ought to respond to the work itself.

Prior to the work of the 1860s, it appears that Rossetti may well have been considering the possibilities in developing complex approaches to the consideration of reverie-like states. Such ideas on reverie could have been formed through his familiarity with the work of Edgar Allen Poe.²⁵ Around 1848, Rossetti undertook a series of drawings inspired by Poe's story *The Raven* (1845) and it is very likely that he was familiar with Poe's interest in psychological states of mind. Poe's interest in morbid reverie comes to the fore in his story 'Berenice' (first published 1835) and its main character whose youth was "dissipated", "in revery" and "addicted body and soul to the most intense and painful meditation".²⁶ In the first paragraph of Poe's short story 'Eleonora' (available in 1841), again, a narrator raptures on the nature of forms of reverie, this time exalting its effects:

They who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream only by night. In their grey visions they obtain glimpses of eternity, and thrill, in awaking, to find that they have been upon the verge of the great secret. In snatches, they learn something of the wisdom which is good, and more of

²⁵ Rossetti scholarship often acknowledges Poe in relation to Rossetti's early career; see for example, Lisa Tickner, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), 9.

²⁶ See Edgar Allen Poe, *Selected Tales*, ed. David Van Leer, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 14-16.

the mere knowledge which is of evil. They penetrate, however rudderless or compassless, into the vast ocean of the 'light ineffable'.²⁷

Rossetti's interest in Poe extended to other poems, undertaking a drawing *The Sleeper* (c. 1848, fig. 14) based on Poe's poem of the same name. The drawing represents an early instance in which Rossetti evokes disengaged states of consciousness that evade a determinate reading; thus, the viewer is encouraged to question whether the seated female figure is asleep, between sleep and wakefulness, or even alive or dead. As Chapter One demonstrated, in-between psychological states, such as those considered by Holland in his *Chapters on Mental Physiology*, which looked at, for example, the passage between sleep and wakefulness, were readily available in the popular scientific literature. In another work, *Ecce Ancilla Domini* (1849-50, fig. 15), Rossetti depicts a similar indeterminacy suggestive of the passage from sleep to wakefulness.²⁸ The young Mary appears suspended in an ambiguous psychological state, exaggerated by the way her gaze bypasses the face of the angel in favour of her intent focus on the lily.

In both *The Sleeper* and *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, the exact essence of each figure's psychological state can only remain ambiguous. This kind of ambiguity which helps foster an imaginative spectatorial role is of key importance to Rossetti, and illustrates the way depictions of reverie-related states are important in relation to the application of Aestheticist principles. While the notion of autonomy is picked up later on in relation to spectatorship alongside the implications around narrative obfuscation, I also want to show how the autonomy of Rossetti's figures can be considered as a starting point with which to explore the adoption of reverie as a key subject in his works. In order to do this, it is worth noticing a common compositional device deployed by Rossetti in certain works of the pre-1860s. Essentially this involves figures which turn away from other dramatic elements of the scene. We might examine this turning away on two levels: firstly of a physical turning, and secondly, on the mental plain of psychologically turning away from attentive engagement with the diegesis. In part, these levels of turning away stand for something else – in the form of an autonomy that sees the artwork exist independently of societal structures and conventional narrative

²⁷ Poe, *Selected Tales*, 123.

²⁸ F.G. Stephens observes, "As the subjective incident of the work is the Annunciation, Rossetti intends us to suppose that the Virgin was aroused from sleep, if not from prayer." F.G. Stephens, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Seeley and Co. Ltd. 1894), 21.

constraints. Thus, the rupture of attention, of figures rejecting attendance with the diegesis, as marked-out by reverie, equates with both the rupture of conventional narrative precepts, but also the societal expectations of attention.²⁹ But furthermore, we might go on to equate such intra-diegetic ruptures of attention with the Aestheticist shift in Rossetti, which I contend sees a marked rejection of spectatorial preoccupations with dramatic narrative in favour of what I later term as spectatorial reflexivity. Ian Small's observation of Pater's shift of attention "away from the object of contemplation and on to the contemplating mind" could be transposed to Rossetti.³⁰

In several works of the 1850s, we can see Rossetti's interest in depicting figures which illustrate both levels of physical and mental turning away. These range from portrait sketches to narrative subjects. The portrait sketch *Head of Lizzie Siddal Full Face, Looking Down* (1855, fig. 16), is one of many sketches depicting Siddal in what could be read as a reverie-like state; and there are examples of narrative works too, such as *The Maids of Elfen-Mere* (c.1854, fig. 17) which depicts the foreground figure in a state of introspection. Both works depict a sense of 'inwardness', or a turning away, yet, a close comparison of the two reveals the distinction I make between physical and mental turning away. Thus, the foreground figure in *The Maids of Elfen-Mere* centralises that concept of physical turning away; whereas *The Head of Lizzie Siddal Full Face Looking Down*, captures a mental turning away. Depictions that illustrate that sense of a willed, deliberated physical turning away, as in *The Maids of Elfen-Mere*, seem to be predominant in the work of the pre-1860s. Whereas, the mental turning away, coloured by a sense of the total revocation of intra-diegetic details of the kind we see in *The Head of Lizzie Siddal Full Face Looking Down*, flourishes in the work of the 1860s and 1870s. This latter approach I regard as reflecting the general psychologizing of Rossetti's works in the 1860s.

Both the senses of physical and mental turning away that we see in Rossetti, can be aligned to a larger debate in psychology around the concept of the will. Each sense relates to the notions of willed or unwilled action. As noted in Chapter One, concepts of volition were central to debates around consciousness and interjected discussion around reverie. The ability for individuals to take charge of, and to train the will was

²⁹ See Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*.

³⁰ Small, *The Aesthetes*, .xv.

one aspect of this debate, while another aspect focussed on the implications of lack of will, or its revocation.³¹ Psychologists and those interested in the subject, noted limitations in the mental faculties to retain sustained focussed attention. The will, it seems, could easily be suspended, leading to a lack of concentration. The context of the debate of willed and unwilled action was fuelled by the popular interest in mesmerism, also termed “induced reverie”, or “electro biology”.³² Naturally, these states illustrated clearly the fundamental characteristic the will played in the normative functioning of the human constitution. The sense of degrees of willed action could be found also in Carpenter’s distinction in forms of reverie. He discusses reverie in two modes, namely “reverie” and “abstraction”. Carpenter writes that reverie and abstraction

are fundamentally the same in their character, though the form of their products differs with the temperament and previous habits of the individual, and with the degree in which his consciousness may remain open to external impressions.³³

This suggests that, for Carpenter, reverie benefits from the automatic, unwilled action of mind, thus, “*Reverie* being the automatic mental action of the Poet, *Abstraction*, that of the Reasoner”.³⁴ He goes on –

The Poet who is fond of communing with Nature [...] is apt to give the reins to his Imagination, whilst gazing fixedly upon some picturesque cloud, or upon the ever-varying surface of a pebbly brook [...] or he falls into reverie as he sits before his winter fire, and contemplates the shapes and hues of its burning caverns [...]. In his attention to such monotonous series of impressions his Will seems, as it were, to glide away; and his thoughts and feelings are thus left free to wander hither and thither, according as they are swayed by changes in the external impressions which prompt them, or by those seemingly erratic suggestions which proceed from that play of association to which we give the name of Fancy.³⁵

³¹ For the purposes of structuring his chapter “Of the Will”, Carpenter offers the headings, “Influence of the Will on Bodily Movement”, “Influence of the Will on Mental Action”, “Influence of the Will on the Formation of Belief” and “Influence of the Will on the Direction of the Conduct”. See Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology* 3rd ed. (London: Henry S. King, 1875), xvii-xviii.

³² See for example, Carpenter, “Chapter XIV: Of Reverie and Abstraction - Electro-Biology” in *Principles of Mental Physiology*.

³³ *Ibid.*, 544.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 544-45.

In contradistinction to the “Poet”, Carpenter’s “Reasoner” or “Philosopher”, reflects upon his own ideas;

the promptings of fancy or imagination – if he should happen to possess any share of such endowments – are at once repressed ... and thus it happens that his mind ... works with more or less of logical consistency, and that the fabric which it rears possesses a unity and stability which is in striking contrast with the airy castle-building of the poetic day-dreamer.³⁶

I do not wish to suggest that there is a natural pairing or an equivalency between Carpenter’s two modes of reverie and Rossetti’s two types of turning away, but rather to remind the reader of the sophistication of thought that was being applied to the concept of reverie as one aspect of the debate around the will. In this debate, Carpenter, for example, noted how “the Will *is* something essentially different from the general resultant of the automatic activity of the Mind”, which is proven,

not merely by the evidence of our own consciousness of the possession of a *self*-determining power, but by the observation of the striking contrasts which are continually presented in abnormal states of Mind, between the automatic activity and the power of volitional control.³⁷

Those abnormal states of mind might be the result of insanity, or stimulants, but Carpenter also notes that,

the complete *suspension* of the power of volitionally directing the current of thought and feeling, will be shown to be the essential feature, not merely of states of Dreaming and Delirium, but also of natural and induced Reverie,³⁸ and of natural and induced Somnambulism; while the *weakening* of that power, usually in concurrence with an exaltation of some Emotional tendency, is the special characteristic of Insanity.³⁹

The distinction, then, of willed and unwilled action is a very important consideration in illustrating the nature of reverie. The sense of willed action associated with the physical turning away, apparent in Rossetti’s works before the 1860s, helps us form a distinction between these and Rossetti’s later applications of reverie which suggest an

³⁶ Ibid., 545.

³⁷ Ibid., 392.

³⁸ Carpenter distinction of “induced”, and “natural”, is referring to either the hypnotised or non-hypnotised subject respectively.

³⁹ Ibid., 393.

unwilled, mental turning away. What is useful here is that across the 1850s and 1860s Rossetti captures both the sense of volitional, as well as unwilled, or automatic passages of mind into introspection.

There are several examples in the early work that demonstrate a physical sense of turning away. In Rossetti's *Found* (1854-5/1859-81, fig. 18), a fallen woman slumps, head cast against the wall. With a frowning brow, and eyes closed, the woman is physically 'turned away' from her male associate as her body recoils away from his. In another work *Hamlet and Ophelia* (c.1858-9, fig. 19) Ophelia turns away in semi-exhaustion from Hamlet in response to his denial of love.⁴⁰ In a similar fashion to *Found*, Ophelia's head presses up against a vertical structure, and in both works it is the backs of the heads of the women that face the men. In the watercolour *Writing on the Sand* (1859, fig. 20) the positioning of the young woman's body in relation to the man's, also suggests a physical turning away from their relationship as her body is oriented away from his.

The pen and ink drawing *The Maids of Elfen-Mere* (c.1854, fig. 17) and its associated woodcut *The Maids of Elfen-Mere* (1855, fig. 21) depict three maids standing facing the viewer while a youth sits on the floor immersed in introspection. The pen and ink drawing illustrates the youth in a slightly different orientation compared to the woodcut. In the drawing, his back is turned away from the maids. This is not the case with the woodcut. However, in both versions the youth is seen turning away. All these works depict figures as active agents, self-consciously and deliberately turning away. All are characterised by the awkward poses of the figures, which often twist or recoil, thus emphasising the physical action of turning away.

In comparison, the single-figure works of the 1860s ushered in by *Bocca Baciata* (1859, fig. 22) suggest a calmer, less self-conscious, passive slide into introspection – to a turning away that involves an inwardness that absolves association with others in

⁴⁰ The work was first conceived in 1854, and Rossetti describes how Ophelia has “done speaking to him [Hamlet] and lets him rave on. In the woodwork are symbols of introspection – the Tree of Knowledge, and the man who touched the Ark and died.” See details under Cat. 88, in, Julian Treuherz, Elizabeth Prettejohn, Edwin Becker, ed. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003).

favour of contemplative self-reflection.⁴¹ Such introspection might be deemed part and parcel of the single-figure-form of such works. However, even in some of the multiple-group subject works after circa 1860, such as *Morning Music*, (1864, fig. 23) there is a sense of figures that slowly dissolve into private reveries, rather than the more deliberated and instantaneous turning away apparent in the works of the pre-1860s. While depictions of mental turning away do feature in some work of the pre-1860s, that work is constituted by sketches, predominantly in either pencil or pen and ink. What this suggests is that the extended potential of this approach only appears to be fully realised around 1859, with *Bocca Baciata*, around the same time that Rossetti's new approach to narrative emerges.

The earlier provisional enquires into mental turning away centre around several pencil sketches of Siddal undertaken around the time of the pen and ink study of the aforementioned *Head of Lizzie Siddal Full Face, Looking Down* (fig. 16). Many of these drawings depict Siddal in deep states of reverie or introspection. These include a range of drawings from around 1855 of Siddal seated, such as *Elizabeth Siddal Seated in an Armchair* (c.1855, fig. 24), *Elizabeth Siddal Seated, Resting Her Head on One Arm* (c.1855, (fig. 25.).

Introspection of this kind was not confined to sketches of Siddal. The ink and pencil sketch *Dante in Meditation Holding a Pomegranate* (c.1852, fig. 26), peculiar in its conception, depicts the spectatorial view held by Giotto from his perspective in Rossetti's associated watercolour *Giotto Painting the Portrait of Dante* (1852, fig. 27).

The artist's viewpoint of Dante that forms the sketch is quite distinct from the watercolour – in the watercolour Dante is posed, and the setting convivial – the sketch, however, emphasises more distinctly, the private introspection of Dante himself, interestingly observed vicariously through Rossetti's projected viewpoint of Giotto. This vicarious, projected viewpoint could certainly suggest that Rossetti was beginning

⁴¹ Some authors have noted how this idea of figures looking inwards is analogous to the Aestheticists' concern for art's autonomy and self reflexivity. See David Peters Corbett, *The World in Paint*, 58-66. Kathy Psomiades, *Beauty's Body: Femininity and Representation in British Aestheticism* (Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 1997), 24-25.

to explore notions of spectatorship which dealt with ideas relating to a viewer's self-reflexivity.⁴²

Rossetti, during the 1860s, does not reserve the theme of reverie and mental retreat to studies and sketches. In the paintings of the 1860s and after, those themes come dramatically to the fore. However, it is useful to acknowledge that prior to those works, Rossetti appears to signal a provisional interest in the psychology of modes of reverie, contemplation and related states.

This rough chronological distinction in Rossetti's works is helpful because it points to the way that the operations of narrative were seen to shift between the 1850s and 1860s. If the sketches produced in the mid-1850s mark out a provisional enquiry into reverie as a mental turning away, we can see this becoming full-blown by the very end of the decade with *Bocca Bacciata*. Mental turning away starts to accompany the relaxation of narrative in the 1860s. Furthermore, this coincides with the increased discussion and debate around reverie in the 1860s. This division in his career was clearly identified by Colvin, who proposed three distinct periods: in the first period, 1847-1862, "Rossetti's aim in art was almost entirely of the dramatic and narrative kind; his pictures almost always intended to embody a story". The second period, 1862-1870 witnessed the cessation of "dramatic and narrative aims" in favour of "single female heads and half-figures in oil". These figures are divided into two sorts of pre-occupation with beauty; the first explores the "mere sensuous charm of womanhood and rich array", in works such as *Monna Vanna* and *The Blue Bower*, whereas "symbolical and intellectual personifications" invested with "a halo of intellectual attributes and secondary meanings" characterise works such as *Sibylla Palmifera* and *Venus Verticordia*. The third period, 1870-1882, is typified for Colvin by works which "exhibit for the most part a manifest falling-off in artistic sanity and self-control". While these works still retained "strong imaginative emotion" and a "fervent sense of the power of beauty and sex, and of the awe and mystery of life",

⁴² An interesting work to consider on this point is Rossetti's *How They Met Themselves*, (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 1860-1864). Originally conceived as a drawing in 1851, the work depicts the startled responses of two identical couples who meet themselves. Although the work does not suggest reverie, it clearly identifies notions of self-reflexivity. See Rossetti Archive, <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/s118.r-1.rap.html> [accessed 23 June 2010]

Colvin's criticism was their sheer repetition.⁴³ It is to Colvin's second period of Rossetti, characterised by a cessation of "dramatic and narrative aims" that we now turn to.



Many authors agree that *Bocca Baciata* (fig. 22) marks out a new direction in Rossetti's painting. This work and other similar works of the 1860s, the so-called Venetian pictures, see a self-acknowledged shift in Rossetti's style, compositional arrangements, and subject matter.⁴⁴

Colvin aligns the work with his designated second career period:

Beginning, after a few earlier essays like 'Bocca Bacciata' (1859) with the first 'Beata Beatrix', and the "Aurelia" (1863), the productions of this class and period include certainly all that is most technically accomplished, if not what is most strikingly interesting and suggestive, in Rossetti's work as a painter.⁴⁵

Its "suggestive" qualities seem to have been accompanied by a perplexity for Rossetti's friend, F.G. Stephens, when he reviewed the work. Stephens describes "a young woman, whose face, saturated with passion as it is, baffles description and justifies the title of *Bocca Baciata*, or *Lips that have been Kissed*".⁴⁶ That sense of the work baffling description has been picked up by several contemporary commentators for whom this painting and others to follow signalled the new tendency of painting "subjectless" pictures.

Rossetti's work in the 1860s is seen to be in line with our understanding of what we now retrospectively consider as the Aestheticist rejection of narrative. However, I do not want to pose, as others have done, that these works are subjectless – that they mercilessly renounce narrative. Instead, I want to propose that Rossetti's works in the period reveal a complex approach towards the application of narrative and that this

⁴³ Colvin, "Rossetti as a Painter," 182-183.

⁴⁴ See William E. Fredeman, ed., *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti: The Formative Years, 1835-1862, II. 1855-1862* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002), 269-70.

⁴⁵ Colvin, "Rossetti as a Painter", 182-183.

⁴⁶ F.G. Stephens *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 53-54.

complexity is a consequence of picturing the subject of reverie itself. What is interesting in Rossetti's works of the 1860s is that reverie and narrative conflate – reverie has the capacity to both cancel out narrative and to operate as a surrogate for narrative. Rossetti's applications of reverie do not result, therefore, in a singular effect on narrative. Instead, reverie is paradoxically the vehicle for both assuaging narrative but also extending narrative – narrative is both contained and expanded in works of the period. In a sense, the works play across a register which at one end sees distinctive narrative references, and at the other end, narrative instability. However, reverie fields this register, allowing for a plurality of approaches to narrative. The consequence here, of there being a plurality of narrative possibilities, raises an important dimension around the role of the spectator. In effect, this fosters a double mode of spectatorship in which the agency of the spectator determines semantic possibilities around narrative.

In order to help explain this, it is helpful to consider two modes of works. Firstly, we can consider works which evade narrative, and secondly, works which more overtly foster narrative readings, or at least allude to narrative. In those works that evade narrative readings, the spectator, in the struggle to elicit meaning, is left with limited material with which to form a sense of narrative. However, there is retained a residual subject itself in the form of reverie, which offers its own signifying potential. This sequestration of reverie (as subject), allows the construction of surrogate, imagined narratives. Reverie can function *as* the narrative, or alternatively as the gateway to extended imagined narratives. In other works that offer clearer allusions to narrative, those narrative allusions can either be taken or disregarded; when taken, the spectator may read narrative conventionally; alternatively, when disregarded, reverie offers a narrative surrogate. This potential, then, for spectators to construct imagined narratives, demonstrates a remarkable spectatorial freedom that sits in harmony with Aestheticist principles of autonomy. What we need to consider, then, is how reverie can be both a mechanism for an assault on contemporary narrative conventions, but also a vehicle for expanding spectatorial possibilities for engaging with narrative.

It is important to consider how distinct from other works *Bocca Baciata* may be considered in relation to the contemporary conventions of narrative and subject. Paul Spencer-Longhurst has noted a pronounced difference between Rossetti's paintings of women in the 1860s and those of other contemporary genre artists:

Rossetti's sensual depictions of women developed from the mid-Victorian genre scenes that had originated in the illustration of books of beauty and annuals such as *The Keepsake* in the 1830s and 1840s. Twenty years on, Richard Redgrave, Alfred Elmore and others continued to show single beauties in swoony reverie over affairs of the heart or hearth. The settings were more or less imaginary, the titles sentimental, such as 'Loving Thoughts' or 'Lost in Thought'. Closely related to this genre were William Etty's depictions of musical scenes of dalliance, often in Renaissance costume...which may have influenced Rossetti...Yet the ethos of Rossetti's women of the 1860s is entirely different from such maudlin costume pieces; they stand out from these fancy pictures by their reduction in narrative content and their emphasis on more abstract qualities.⁴⁷

It is worth pursuing this distinction so that we might establish how Rossetti's approach to the application, or function of reverie, may differ from his contemporaries. It is indeed useful that Spencer-Longhurst points out artists, such as Redgrave, showed figures "in swoony reverie over affairs of the heart or hearth". In particular, the sense that the word "over" helps us to see that such works indicate that "affairs of the heart", take precedence in the narrative scheme. Put another way, reverie is subjugated in the narrative as merely an effect caused by romantic affairs. Yet, looking at Rossetti's works of the 1860s reveals that this kind of subjugation of reverie is not as apparent. Rather than operating as a side-show to the dominant narrative theme of romance, reverie for Rossetti takes centre stage. We can demonstrate this by comparing two contemporary works by William Maw Egley (1826-1916), with Rossetti's *Bocca Baciata*. Egley, a contemporary of the artists listed above by Spencer-Longhurst, specialised in literary themes and Costume Pictures. In his *Lady of Shalott* (1858, fig. 28), Egley depicted the Lady in a reverie-like state of introspection. He is better known though for his *Omnibus Life in London* (1859, fig. 29), which could incidentally be examined in terms of forms of introspection amongst its various figures of strangers amongst strangers occupying the packed omnibus.

In Egley's *The Talking Oak* (1857, fig. 30) a young woman rests against an oak tree and gazes into the distance in a reverie-like state. As her right hand rests against the tree bark we are given the sense that the oak tree plays a symbolic role, suggesting the

⁴⁷ See Paul Spencer-Longhurst, *The Blue Bower: Rossetti in the 1860s*, 26-27. See also Casteras, in the context of the catalogue notes relating to Daniel Maclise's work, *The Reverie. The Substance of the Shadow*, 86.

meeting place for some romantic affair. Its dominance, however, acts to suppress the singular potential of reverie as an autonomous narrative focus in its own right. The work's title, the proximity of the woman to the tree, and the tree's dominance in the composition, all point towards its structural importance to the narrative. The potential foregrounding of reverie is resisted; instead, reverie is merely a consequence of the narrative of romance. In another slightly earlier work by Maw Egley, *In Thought* (1855, fig. 31), the artist depicts the half-figure of a lady, who looks directly out towards the viewer. In this work, the landscape plays a minor role, and on first glance the work presents reverie (or introspection) as its key subject matter. Its title indicates reverie-like practices of day-dream, romantic or otherwise, but also plays on the idea that the object "in thought" may either be the woman in the eyes of the spectator as suitor, or the spectator as suitor, in the thoughts of the figure. One effect of this excessive play on notions of courtship is that the potential here for reverie as profound subject matter is thwarted. The excesses go further. The woman's address to the spectator appears *too* significant. She offers a half smile, a flirtatious gaze, and the gesturing hand on the chin appears contrived, suggesting that there is a hidden narrative probably around courtship, that is intended to be the central theme of the work. Moreover, the figure's direct address with the spectator breaks down imagined exchanges of deep reverie. Any sense here of imagined psychological exchanges between spectator and subject is going to be restricted owing to the obvious sense of presence in that exchange. The extra-diegetic address, or indeed "come-on" issued by Egley's lady, is interpolative. Instead, then, this hailing proffers notions of social engagement and not notions of private, isolated reveries. While the title hints at reverie, either on the part of the lady, or the spectator, each interpretation is punctured by the sense of the immediacy pertaining to the imminence of social exchange. Although very different from *The Talking Oak*, both works act to suppress the autonomous potential of reverie as the central subject.

Similar effects are evident in other mid-Victorian genre works, whereby reverie, whilst occupying a key role in the operations of narrative, is circumvented in favour of a more conventional narrative theme. The thought-object of reverie (that which the figure contemplates) in such works is allied to the dominant narrative theme. We have seen romance in Maw Egley's examples, but other works, such as Marshall Claxton's *An Emigrant's Thoughts of Home* (1859, fig. 32) capture the psychology of reverie as

bound up with other sentiments such as memory or nostalgia. Often such sentiments would reference current social concerns, as in the case of Claxton's references to emigration.

In contrast to these works, Rossetti's assuagement of narrative goes hand-in-hand with a more pronounced emphasis on the depth of the psychological state of his subjects. What this allows, in essence, is the suggestion of profound reveries in contrast to the more fanciful reveries we see in Egley's works for example.⁴⁸ This pronounced psychological element of Rossetti's works in the 1860s is further enhanced by the shift towards the depiction of busts or three-quarter length portraits, rather than groups of figures. The significance of this shift in format was identified by Stephens, when he noted *Bocca Baciata* as

having that peculiar importance which attaches to the first remarkable, if not actually the first example of the artist's later, and much affected custom of painting single busts and half-length figures which, afterwards, came to be of life-size or even larger – of women, amorously, mystically, or moodily lost in dreams, or absorbed by thoughts too deep for words. In course of time a generation arose about Rossetti who knew him only by these startling, powerful and thoroughly original examples, and ignored him as a painter of *genre*, and dramatic and biblical themes.⁴⁹

The importance of the bust and half-length figure format will be outlined below, but it will be helpful, first, to make sense of the distinction between Rossetti's depiction of romance and the contemporary narrative conventions relating to depictions of romance.

As both Stephens and Colvin attest, Rossetti's works of the 1860s mark a move away from narrative aims. This, I suggest, opens out the possibility for the foregrounding of reverie over other narrative concerns. In contrast, the works of contemporary non-Aestheticist artists adhere to genre conventions but consequently tie-in reverie to a limited set of parameters and expectations hinged predominantly around notions of sentiment. It is necessary to make this distinction in order to show that there are in fact

⁴⁸ The use of the term profound reverie is indebted to Natalie Ford. See Natalie Ruth Ford, "The Fate of Reverie: A Study of Scientific and Literary Currencies in Britain, 1830-1870" (PhD diss., University of York, 2007).

⁴⁹ F.G. Stephens, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 54.

differences and that Rossetti handles reverie in a different way. In non-Aestheticist Victorian genre paintings which depict reverie and romance, it is romantic love that supplies the principal narrative focus.⁵⁰ In such works, the psychological state of reverie is subjugated as a secondary effect of the subject's context – reverie is subsumed under the principal subject of romance and courtship which occupies more narrative significance. More often than not, such works feature the subject standing, perhaps waiting for a lover, and there is often a sense of context built into the scene via the detailing of props or location, just as we have seen with Maw Egley's *Talking Oak*. In contrast, Rossetti seizes hold of reverie. It is elevated to the position of principal subject circumventing the narrative dominance of romance typified by more banal renditions preoccupied with the mores of Victorian courtship. How, then, is this achieved, especially given that romantic love retains a significant place in his works? One way that the subject of reverie is prioritised owes to the compositional structure inherent to the busts. Their foregrounding of the subject of reverie has the effect of emphasising a psychological depth, quite different to the playful sentimentality of popular genre works. I will elaborate below on the nature of this foregrounding capacity by employing Michael Fried's concept of facingness. Preceding that analysis though, it is useful to point out that contemporary commentary identified a psychological intensity in Rossetti's figures. For example, Stephens' description of women "absorbed by thoughts too deep for words," serves the point. Indeed, his description implies both the apparent mental depth of Rossetti's women, but also the impossibility of being able to detail that depth, thus, obfuscating narrative certainties, whilst expanding dominant models of narrative. One might say that Rossetti's reveries arrest the spectator and operate as a trigger for possible or imagined narratives which may (or may not) be linked to romance. Many of Rossetti's works relate to themes of romance and the passionate psychological intensity of love, for example, *Bocca Baciata* (fig. 22), *Beata Beatrix* (c.1863-1870, fig. 33), *La Pia de' Tolomei* (fig. 11) and *Aurelia (Fazio's Mistress)* (fig. 34). But, it is possible to look past the allusions of romance in these works to other subjects, such as the psychologies of consciousness and the unconscious. The distinction here, then, between Rossetti's Aestheticist and the non-Aestheticist applications of reverie, is in the capacity Rossetti's work allows

⁵⁰ See Stephen Kern, *The Eyes of Love: The Gaze in English and French Paintings and Novels, 1840-1900* (London: Reaktion Books, 1996).

for reverie to be read autonomously as a surrogate to conventional narrative expectations of genre painting.

Unlike other contemporary genre works, then, Rossetti's reverie paintings are sophisticated because of the plural possibilities of narrative they foster. It is useful to again consider his works sitting within a register of narrative, with semantic certainty at one end and uncertainty at the other. We might imagine a work such as *Reverie* (1868, fig. 4), which is seemingly void of narrative references, sitting at one end of that register along with other works of obfuscated narrative. Yet at the same time, such works allow their theme of reverie to sustain imaginative possibilities for narrative. So, while narrative reference is seemingly void, the theme of reverie still allows the spectator to participate in reading the work imaginatively. This may partly be a consequence of some of the subtle detail Rossetti offers.

In *Reverie*, leafy fronds, hints of historical garments and the curious monogrammed placard act as subtle triggers for the contextualisation of private reverie. But the most arresting feature of *Reverie* is the foregrounding of the subject of reverie on which the spectator might focus in various ways. Thus, spectators may dwell on the cause of the figure's reverie, or the nature of reverie as a particular kind of consciousness, or the appearance of reverie, or (if familiar) the contemporary debates around consciousness emerging out of scientific discourses being charted in psychology. Works, such as *La Pia de' Tolomei* (fig. 11) along with others that designate specific literary references and therefore more secure narrative allusions, can be placed at the opposite end of the register.

Importantly, however, in such works as *Pia*, the figure in reverie can be read by the viewer as sitting-out out of those narratives, existing independently of them, with reverie occupying the tiller, steering the viewer's imagination. I do not wish to propose that this kind of reading is impossible in works such as Claxton's and Egley's, but that it seems to be made especially possible in Rossetti's works because of the perceived depth of introspection his figures seem to occupy. *Pia* is typical. The figure's acute psychological detachment from her surroundings offers a spectatorial curiosity of its own. Moreover, three separate chalk studies of the work, all produced in 1868, are each void of the details seen on the left in the finished oil, suggesting that Rossetti's

major focus from the time of the work's inception was always the prominent characterisation of reverie in the figure.⁵¹

In this reading then, reverie is a counter-subject independent of the literary narrative but generating narrative possibilities of its own. With this scope of spectatorial possibilities in the narrative works of Rossetti, it is possible to propose the idea of a two-fold mode of spectatorship which both allows for narrative, but which also, by the operations of reverie, by-pass, or transcend literary narrative details. In our register, or scale of narrative, we might go on to suggest that works such as *Bocca Bacciata* occupy a central ground, mildly alluding to literary themes while conspicuously foregrounding the subject of reverie. An alternative reading to *Bocca Baciata* and similar works may, of course, thread narrative possibilities around the given props, (in this case, flowers, jewellery, an apple, a window opening). However, even in examples that most demonstratively engage more conventional ideas of narrative, there is a level of narrative uncertainty, a consequence of both Rossetti's tendency towards obscurity, and the unmistakable depth of absorption of his figures. The results, then, of Rossetti's application of reverie leads to something of a curious paradox – reverie occupies a position which is central to the works' possible narratives, playing some part in explaining literary references, yet, the dominant position of reverie as subject, coloured by its inherent uncertainties, ruptures any conventional notions of dominant, dramatic narrative. We are seduced by the possibility of narrative, only to then recognise the possibility of its absence. In this reading of Rossetti, what remains is the essence of reverie itself.



It is worth considering in more detail the ways in which Rossetti brings reverie to the fore in works such as *Bocca Baciata*. One method can be linked to his sustained use of the form of the bust, or head portrait format. One effect of this is to block out narrative possibilities, instead drawing to the foreground as much as possible the face in reverie.

⁵¹ See Rossetti Archive, available at, <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/19-1880.s207.rawcollection.html#pictures> [accessed 16 June 2010].

This raising up of reverie to the beholder, offers it forward as dense subject matter. We might think here of how Michael Fried, in *Manet's Modernism*, explored the complex nature of the relationship between the beholder and the subject in absorption. In the work of artists such as Fantin Latour, Manet and Whistler, Fried notes how, on the one hand, the depiction of absorption negates a beholder, while on the other hand strategies are deployed to draw the beholder into the picture.⁵² Artists in the 1860s, argues Fried, combine the absorptive figure with visible effects which strike or face the viewer.⁵³ Rossetti, it could be argued, constructs the figure in *Bocca Baciata* in such a way as to draw her forward so as to strike the viewer. The pale flesh of the face and décolletage contrasts with the dark greens of both her robe and the background. Spatial depth is heavily suppressed with seemingly little distance between the back of the woman's head and the wall behind. Set against this confined and flattened space, the heavily modelled face with its luminescent glow pushes outward encouraging a relationship or presence with the viewer. This "facingness", to use Fried's term, acts on the beholder in two ways. Firstly, it presses a reading that the subject of the painting *is* reverie, owing to its fore-grounding. Secondly, it introduces to the viewer the idea of reflexive contemplation, whereby the viewer's own subjectivity becomes conscious of the act of contemplating. In this latter sense, facingness acts as a mirror. This analogy between picture and mirror is important. I contend that the similarity of the compositional framing of Rossetti's figures with the notional sense of mirrors framing a subject's own reflection can be closely allied to Aestheticist ideas around autonomy. In a number of works, which literally or spatially suggest mirrors, it is as though the viewer is invited to think, not only of physical reflection, but also mental reflection. In essence, the spectator is encouraged not only to reflect on themselves, and to dwell on their own psychology, but to reflect on the idea of art. This, I would suggest, significantly positions the operations of reverie in concert with Aestheticist strategies, particularly the repudiation of conventional conceptions of narrative, in support of concerns addressing the autonomy of art.

The literal depiction of mirrors is not the only way we can conceptualise reflection in Rossetti. In the smaller cabinet pictures, we see an equivalence of scale in the way the bust is composed in the frame, with that of domestic toilet mirrors. Such a mirror is

⁵² Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 195-196.

⁵³ Fried's terms are "strikingness," (21) and "facingness", (17), *ibid.*

visible in the background of *Lady Lilith* (1864-8, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington). The works *Bocca Baciata*, *Fair Rosamund*, (1861, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff) and *Girl at a Lattice* (1862, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge), all depict women at windows, and I would contend that such a visual scheme of face-on encounter through the frame of the window offers a visual analogy with self-reflection and the mirror. Another work, *Helen of Troy* (1863, fig. 35) does not feature any such literal framing device, but there is a sense of Helen looking at herself as she holds the pendant depicting a flaming torch. By conjuring up the idea of self-reflection in small domestic mirrors, the works reinforce the idea of the subject in reverie, as well as the inter-subjective experience of reverie itself. This is taken to another level with Rossetti's *Woman Combing her Hair* (1864, fig. 36).

The figure, seated at a dressing table, directly faces the spectator and there is an overriding sense that the image depicts her own mirror reflection. While there is no literal reference to the picture frame standing as an analogue for the frame of a mirror, Rossetti supplies an oval mirror in the background.⁵⁴ The effect of this background oval mirror helps signal the *idea* of reflection, thus eliciting the spectator's reading of the whole image as a singular mirror reflection. While there exists a sense of time captured – a durational temporality indicated by captured action of the woman in the midst of combing her hair – the face of the figure suggests her deep, private introspection and a temporality extended.⁵⁵ Moreover, the private domestic setting attests further to the sense that what we imagine is an image of her reflection. Its companion work, *Morning Music* (1864, fig. 23), operates slightly differently in that its three figures occupy the private setting – the woman being assisted by a maid while behind them a lutenist strums and sings.

Again, in spite of the sense of momentary duration (in this case owing to the nature of the action and social arrangement), the woman appears immersed in reverie – her gaze just passing-by that of the spectator. In 1863 Rossetti had completed another work that incorporated a mirror, which, again, suggests notions of reflection. *Fazio's Mistress*

⁵⁴ See Treuherz et al., ed. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 188.

⁵⁵ See Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time (and Space: 1880-1918)* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983); also see Maureen Perkins, *The Reform of Time: Magic and Modernity* (Pluto Press, 2001).

(*Aurelia*) (1863 / 1873, fig. 34) seems initially to have been inspired by a poem by Dante's contemporary Fazio degli Uberti, which describes the character of his mistress's beauty. In this work Rossetti places the figure in three-quarter profile and we see her gaze into a mirror placed immediately before her while she plaids her hair. The exact direction of the figure's gaze is not clear, yet we sense her deep introspection and contemplation upon her own beauty. In 1869, the owner of the work, George Rae, was asked by Rossetti to have the title changed to *Aurelia*. Some commentators have suggested that this was a direct response to the contemporary discussion around art for art's sake ideas, and that Rossetti wished to revoke the literary allusions, preferring the painting to operate as an "independent work of art in its own right".⁵⁶ The effect of this re-titling was to occlude specific narrative allusions and literary references, and instead, to open up the potential readings of the work. It is an important point to note that Rossetti's composition allowed for this. In essence, in Rossetti's images, reverie could quite easily absorb titular changes.⁵⁷ Moreover, many of his works started without any narrative allusions and during their completion Rossetti would add the title, possibly along with a literary source.⁵⁸ However, what is important to note here, is that facingness, mirror-like framing, and general allusions to reflection, all conspire to foreground the theme of reverie – an effect which augmented emerging Aestheticist ideas around the reconfiguration of the conventions of narrative and spectatorial engagement.



The rupture of narrative inscribed by foregrounding reverie as subject had been well established in Rossetti's work by the time he came to embark on the painting of *Beata Beatrix* (fig. 33) in 1863. As with other works from the early 1860s, the compositional structure brings reverie to the foreground. This work however, is set apart from others from the early 1860s, in particular by the distinctiveness of its handling.

⁵⁶ Treuherz et al., ed. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 186.

⁵⁷ This point around titular changes further comes to light in my discussion around Whistler in Chapter Three.

⁵⁸ Treuherz et al., remark that *Bocca Baciata* was a case in point. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* 184-185.

The relationship between form and content – between the material exposition of form and the signification of reverie, takes on an additional resonance in *Beata Beatrix*. Most authors have noted the suffused effects, the halo-like glow around Beatrix and the indistinct character of detailing. Spencer-Longhurst for instance, associates these effects with the “soft-focus” photography of Julia Margaret Cameron.⁵⁹ Prettejohn describes an “atmospheric space with shadowy indications of a distant city, and spectral figures”.⁶⁰ Each of these obfuscating characteristics fall in with the observations made above around narrative ambiguity. But what is fascinating is that these formal characterisations of the obscure resonate with discourses that married the uncertainties associated with psychological states to the kinds of effects critics admired, such as mystery and passion. It is useful here to recall Dallas’ call that works of art “need not always be dramatic; and they need not always be beautiful; but they must always suggest the incommunicable secret of the know-not-what”.⁶¹

In the various interpretations of the work, many authors have noted the biographical significance of Siddal’s death and how Rossetti had always identified Siddal with Beatrice.⁶² In this sense, the subject of trance-like-reverie operates as a biographical narrative which could be appreciated by Rossetti himself and his private circle. Rossetti’s response to the subject of love in *Beata Beatrix* presents something powerful and complex, taking on a mystical and spiritual significance, itself obscure and intangible.⁶³ For Rossetti, love seemed to have mystical and religious significance.⁶⁴ He places love’s effects and significance as transcendental. Compared with the casual romantic daydreams of, say, Egley’s *In Thought* (fig. 31), the figure of Beatrix is clearly enraptured. Her head tilted back slightly, her closed eyes and semi-parted lips suggest a trance-like state. Painterly effects, such as the contra-jour halo, augment this sense of a mystical trance-like state and spiritual intensity. We might fairly assume that a much tighter, naturalistic style would struggle to achieve the same effect. But it is also possible to align the work beyond the private realm, within a more generalist context around states of consciousness, dream-states and trance that are apparent in the

⁵⁹ Spencer-Longhurst, *The Blue Bower: Rossetti in the 1860s*, 48.

⁶⁰ Prettejohn in Trueherz et al. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 80

⁶¹ Dallas, *The Gay Science*, Vol. 2, 139.

⁶² Prettejohn, in Trueherz, et al., ed. *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 80.

⁶³ See Lisa Tickner, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 54.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

period. As Chapter One has shown, the interest in mesmerism, hypnotism, and reverie-like states fell well within the bounds of both a generalist discourse as well as medical discourses exploring morbid states, diseases of the mind and so forth. F.G. Stephens comment that *Beata Beatrix* is “dream-like, and of a dream”, remind us that the contemporary fascination with dreams was extensive.⁶⁵ His remark, “of a dream”, reminds us of the productive capacity of the unconscious, as if Rossetti had himself formed the composition in an episode of unconscious cerebration. Moreover, the figure of Beatrix herself alludes to the sense that the inner workings of the mind are acute and active, even in ostensibly passive states such as reverie. Recalling Chapter One, notions around unconscious cerebration were part of a larger discourse around the relationship between mind and body. Rick Rylance’s study of psychology in the period discriminates various discourses in psychological theory. One of these is the “discourse of the soul”, which for Rylance

disconnected mind from the tyranny of its unpredictable earthly origins and structured its ontology, as it were from above ... Psychologically, human beings [as distinct from other life forms] were thought to possess relatively autonomous, distinctively human, mental faculties.⁶⁶

These faculties explains Rylance,

are arranged hierarchically with the so-called ‘higher faculties’, such as reason, faith, love, spiritual apprehension, a sense of the numinous, exercise of the will, and so on, at the top, and the ‘lower faculties’, such as sensation, feeling, appetite, desire, and so on, at the bottom. Clearly this implies a mind-body separation.⁶⁷

One aspect, or function of reverie in Rossetti’s work, is that it absorbs his distinctive interests in the representation of both the body and the soul. In *Beata Beatrix* Rossetti’s ideas of love as spiritual and transcendental can be associated with those “higher faculties” Rylance identifies. And generally, Rossetti’s figures in reverie, might be seen as an attempt to indicate some material-form to the idea of the soul, and if not the soul, the idea of the mind. This seems particularly apparent in *Beata Beatrix*.

⁶⁵ F.G. Stephens, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 62.

⁶⁶ Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture, 1850-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 27.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

In his account of the painting, F.G. Stephens picks up on the mind's eye and the physicality of vision noting how, "she is herself a vision while – her corporeal eyes losing power of outward speculation – the heavenly visions of the New Life are revealed to the eyes of her spirit".⁶⁸ Eyes have the propensity to signify both mind and body and it is intriguing that in an early sketch for the painting (*Sketch for Beata Beatrix* c.1854, fig. 37), the eyes were depicted open.⁶⁹ The decision to change this and depict the eyes closed in the final painting may have been made in order to accentuate the sense of the mind's-eye, and in Stephens' terms, suggest instead, the "eyes of her spirit".

There are two important aspects, then, to the discussion here around *Beata Beatrix*. Firstly, there is the context of unconscious cerebration and the associated debates in psychology; secondly, there is the language (both pictorial and ekphrasis), of dimness, suggestiveness and obscurity, which relates to my earlier arguments around narrative rupture and reverie. We might recall here that both of these aspects can be found in Dallas's *The Gay Science* and it is quite likely that Rossetti was aware of pertinent psychological debates as well as Dallas' specific interest attached to the language of obscurity and dimness. The ideas around mystery and suggestiveness in artworks that Dallas advocated seem to be unquestionably resonant in relation to Rossetti's images of reverie-like states. Rossetti himself used the term "trance" in a letter regarding *Beata Beatrix*, saying that the picture was,

not at all intended to represent Death [...] but to render it under the resemblance of a trance, in which Beatrice seated at the balcony over-looking the city is suddenly rapt from Earth to Heaven.⁷⁰

The context of such psychological considerations appears to resonate throughout the work even in terms of Rossetti's technical execution. The criteria of obscurity and mystery that Dallas called for, or the "dark unconscious" that the German critic

⁶⁸ Stephens, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 62

⁶⁹ For details on the drawing see <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/img/s168b.m.jpg> [accessed 19 June, 2010].

⁷⁰ Cited in Tickner, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 52.

Theodor Friedrich Vischer advocated, were clearly evident in *Beata Beatrix*.⁷¹ F.G. Stephens' account picked up on such qualities when he described the figure of Beatrix as "merged in the dimness caused by our looking at the splendour of the river"; he goes on: "accordingly, the figure appears partly outlined against the lustre, partly lost in the half-gloom of the chamber ... her form is merged, not lost, in the shadowy space".⁷² We therefore see both technical handling as well as the narrative content alluding to various psychological states of half-consciousness.



So far, I have been arguing that a key aspect of Rossetti's work involves a distinctive mobilisation of reverie which impacts upon, or conflates with narrative, and as a consequence demonstrates certain key concerns of Aestheticism. My final observations around Rossetti relate to a set of photographs. As we have seen, the work of the 1860s variously sways along a register between, on the one hand, loosely conceived narratives and on the other, more generously guided narratives directed by literary referencing, intertextuality, or biographical relevance. Yet, my key contention is that the repeated applications of reverie are a sustaining feature of his work. We could say that reverie offers a template for Rossetti. Narratives, of various depths are laid on top – sometimes thick, sometimes thin. If Rossetti himself considered such an idea, it may explain the enigmatic series of photographic studies he had taken of Jane Morris.

Rossetti commissioned the photographer, John Robert Parsons, and at least eighteen photographs of Jane Morris were taken on the 7th July 1865.⁷³ Two of these were photographed inside Rossetti's house at Cheyne Walk, while the remainder were photographed in the garden. Of those eighteen, fifteen clearly fall into the pictorial conventions of reverie images. Ten of the photographs feature Jane Morris seated (fig. 38) and in each of these she appears deeply introspective. The remaining five

⁷¹ Vischer's *Kritik meiner Aesthetik* (1866), see Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger, eds., *Art in Theory: 1815-1900 An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 686-690.

⁷² Stephens, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 63.

⁷³ See <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/bottomly.radimages.html> for digital reproductions of the album of photographs, [accessed 19 June 2010].

photographs of reverie depict Morris standing, but they also depict a sense of deep introspection.

Often, Morris' head is tilted down or over to one side, and her eyes focus on points unknown, outside the frame. It is likely that Rossetti directed Parsons in the posing of Morris, and that this had been planned in advance of the event. The predominance of reverie-like imagery clearly suggests its importance to Rossetti. By this time, it is plausible that he recognised the versatility and adaptability of the figure in reverie, and how it allowed for the circumvention of conventional narratives as well as the construction of imagined narratives. We saw a case in point with the aforementioned *La Pia de' Tolomei* (fig. 11). Interestingly, Lisa Tickner has identified the similarity of the pose between the associated photograph from 1865, (fig. 39) and the painting.⁷⁴ The implied narrative for the painting is quite specific. Rossetti references Pia, a figure from Dante's 'canto V' from *Purgatory*, who was locked away by her jealous husband. While this may be the prescribed narrative, the viewer is still invited to dwell on the meditative state and reflective melancholy of Pia. Given the preceding photograph and the way it operated as a form of template, it is easy therefore to imagine how Rossetti may have courted the idea of spectators undertaking their own independent readings of the narrative.

The composition of Rossetti's *Reverie* (1868, fig. 4) also derives from one of the Carson photographs of 1865 (fig. 40). *Reverie* might be understood as the converse of *Pia de' Tolomei* in that, unlike *Pia*, overt narrative allusion is not prescribed, or, I would suggest, expected. While there seems to be a significant distinction between the two works, it is worth asking the question, is narrative a necessity in reading Rossetti's works of the 1860s, or does reverie dissolve the conventional functions of narrative? Indeed, that question may be posed in relation to the majority of Rossetti's works after 1859. But, *Reverie* commands a special significance in my observations around Rossetti's oeuvre because of its title. With its promotion to the title, Rossetti's acknowledgment of the subject of reverie marks out the completion of this project of autonomy. *Reverie*, now centre-stage, reflects back the sheer redundancy of narrative in favour of the signalled importance of spectatorial practices of contemplation and

⁷⁴ See Tickner, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 66.

deep introspection. But also, the title suggests the implicit intertextuality of Rossetti's other works. Because of the drawing's title, and its close compositional correlation with the sister photograph, we can assume that Rossetti's early conception of this photograph, (and indeed others in the series), hinged around the notion of reverie. In the photograph we can see the traditional way of depicting contemplation or melancholy, with the head being supported by the hand, and in this respect, we sense that Rossetti already had in mind introspective psychological modes.

Furthermore, if we consider the nature of the figure's gaze, these psychological operations take on another level. In both the photograph and *Reverie*, the gaze of Jane Morris *appears* to address the viewer directly. Rossetti may have been aware of other works which do this, such as Maw Egley's *In Thought* (fig. 31). It suggests to us that the direct address was indeed one option when it came to picturing the subject in reverie. Curiously, though, the direct address reveals a contradiction in images depicting reverie. This contradiction lies in the fact that, in reality, a subject who has a direct address with another would likely be too attentive to the other and therefore unable to maintain a state of reverie. In this sense, then, it may be likely that Rossetti intended there to be a double significance to the idea of reverie, in that it was also to be intended as a reference for the spectator to consider reflexively. This may add another dimension to Rossetti's consideration of the spectator in-line with emerging Aestheticist principles, which came to foreground the role of the spectator. The point may be picked up in relation to a later work by Rossetti – his large oil painting *The Day Dream* (1880, fig. 41). Classed in the catalogue raisonné of Rossetti's work as a "subject picture", there is a sense that the daydreaming subject may well apply to the invoked daydream of the viewer as much as the daydreaming figure seated in the tree.⁷⁵

It is likely that this ambiguity was intentional. But there is yet a further consideration to *The Day Dream*, *Reverie*, and indeed most of the Rossetti works discussed here in relation to reverie. That *appearance* of direct address – of the figure's eyes meeting the spectator's dead-on – is not quite as it seems when looked at more closely. Detailed inspection reveals in nearly all these cases the gaze operates as something of a near-

⁷⁵ See Virginia Surtees, *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

miss, offering yet a further ambiguity, the effects of which are tantalising. It is as though Rossetti allows us as close as possible to imagining the forging of a relationship with the figure, predicated on the conformities of eye-contact in social intercourse, and then severs that possibility. The privacy of the figure is retained and reverie can ensue, unrestricted for both figure and viewer with the acknowledgement that any real engagement between spectator and figure is pure phantasy. Instead, what is left, is a more viable and principled phantasy – a penetrating reflection on the depths of reverie, as opposed to the voyeuristic fancy imbued by the coquettish allure apparent in Egley's *In Thought* and the slightly later *Reverie* (1869, fig. 42), by Tissot.

What seems to be without question, is that Rossetti wanted us to look at reverie – to see it in action, for it to be contemplated but also experienced. It is plausible that if Rossetti took the idea of reverie as a template on which narratives and titles may be overlaid, it may explain his titling of the later work, *The Day Dream*. Initially, he called the work *Vanna Primavera*. Following some complexities in painting spring flowers in Jane Morris's hand, he abandoned the title and renamed the work *The Day Dream*.⁷⁶ Although by this point reverie, as a subject, had become common, the renaming shows how Rossetti felt no need at all to disguise reverie behind narrative references and that the subject could operate autonomously, in a large scale, highly-worked oil painting.

In Rossetti, the image of reverie elicits the dissolution of narrative importance in favour of the kind of spectatorial practices one associates with modernism's formalism. Works such as *Reverie*, suggest therefore something of the gravity that is afforded to reverie as subject in the 1860s. In 1868 the evasion of conventional narrative form in favour of reverie (the surrogate of narrative) may have been cutting edge; yet what follows throughout the second half of the nineteenth century in the works of countless other artists who take on the subject, demonstrates the voracity of Rossetti's application of reverie – that it could stand on its own as a subject, and yet hold artistic, cultural and even scientific significance. If the Carson photographs might be considered an experiment in typologizing reverie, then Rossetti's paintings of the

⁷⁶ Tickner, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 67.

1860s undoubtedly became themselves a paradigm for later artists' depictions of reverie.



CHAPTER III

REVERIE AND WHISTLER

The concept of reverie and its related states is also an important consideration in an analysis of certain key works by James Whistler. This chapter explores several ways of considering reverie in Whistler's work and sheds light on a particularly important stage of his career. The period 1859 to 1867 is explored here, as not only is this the period that sees important shifts in relation to Whistler's practice, it is also during this period that Whistler works through various applications of reverie. In particular, this chapter shows how reverie as content is significant to considering the way that Whistler engaged with the concept of narrative. Whistler scholarship has often tended to focus on the proto-modernist credentials of his works.¹ A dominant strand of this enquiry proposes that in an effort to achieve a more sustained formalist endeavour, Whistler flagrantly ejects narrative content from his works in favour of pursuing a formalist agenda. This chapter both aligns itself to, and against that trajectory, for the simple reason that taking this open stance exposed a rich complexity relating to Whistler's application of reverie in relation to artistic and other contemporary contexts. Typically, art-historical accounts identify the inception of Whistler as proto-modernist with his painting *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl* (1862, fig. 3), which for many, marks an ensuing redundancy of narrative content. By challenging that account, this chapter demonstrates that the way Whistler attends to narrative in the early 1860s is indeed more complex and is far from the knee-jerk dismissal of narrative suggested by some. The chapter draws on recent research by Aileen Tsui, which re-evaluates the significance of the cult-idea of the 'white girl' and its relevance in the popular culture of the time.² However, towards the end of the chapter, I propose that Whistler's developing interest in form, as it matures, is augmented by the depiction of figures in reverie, and in this light we must attend to that account of Whistler the formalist and

¹ Elizabeth Prettejohn has remarked that "in histories of modern art, Whistler has been characterized both as the supreme aesthete, and as a proto-modernist"; see Elizabeth Prettejohn, "From Aestheticism to Modernism, and Back Again," *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 2 (Spring 2006), www.19.bbk.ac.uk [accessed 9 January 2009]. See also Nicholas Daly, "The Woman in White: Whistler, Hiffernan, Courbet, Du Maurier" *MODERNISM/modernity* 12, no. 1 (2005): 11.

² See Aileen Tsui "The Phantasm of Aesthetic Autonomy in Whistler's Work: Titling *The White Girl*," *Art History* 29, no.3 (June 2006): 444-75.

acknowledge its strengths. It makes sense therefore to accommodate both positions, but also, it is helpful to align these to distinct periods in the development of Whistler's art.

Central to the evidence marking out Whistler's shift towards a preoccupation with formalism were his inferred re-titling of his two important paintings, *The White Girl* and *The Little White Girl*; these became *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl* and *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl* (1864, fig. 8) respectively. The logic of this retrospective re-titling was to align the two works in serial with *Symphony in White, No. 3* (1865-7, fig. 43), and in so doing, create a suite of works with musical allusions. As has often been noted, the effect of aligning his works to the abstract condition of music and musical structures (such as the symphony) ensconced by strictly formal conventions, was integral to Whistler's formalist endeavour, and one that saw him able to escape the limitations and expectations of contemporary academic painting.³ It is particularly interesting that as the titling strategies came into play in the late 1860s, reverie was retained and maintained as subject matter, operating as something of a lynchpin between Whistler's concerns for formalist experimentation and his need to appeal to an art establishment tied down to entrenched ideas around narrative. As we saw in the previous chapter, the 1860s saw challenges to the conventions around narrative which characterised contemporary genre painting. In Rossetti's works, the nature of narrative content was handled in such a way so as to open up narrative possibilities; a strategy I argued was entwined with applications of reverie. A similar process happens in Whistler's art of the early 1860s. However, this chapter proposes that Whistler's application of narrative and the way it is inflected by his application of reverie is not straightforward. I argue that there is no simplistic, wholesale rejection of narrative in Whistler's work in the period, primarily because his depictions of reverie, (as with Rossetti's), can be appropriated within a context which is able to assign narrative significance and semantic potential to reverie. The chapter proposes that reverie as deployed by Whistler is simultaneously the vehicle for *both* the location of narrative, as well as the rejection of narrative.

³ Robin Spencer, "Whistler, Swinburne and Art for Art's Sake" in *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, ed. Prettejohn, 59-89.

My consideration of reverie in Whistler's work aims to ingress into the debates around Whistler as a progressive artist of his day and as an artist who is often now described as avant-gardist.⁴ In this respect I wanted to show how his application of reverie is paradoxically both a vehicle for pursuing avant-gardist concerns, but also, for pursuing a commercial and critical acceptance. Thus, on the one hand, reverie could augment an avant-gardist trajectory in the way it complemented the assault on conventional narrative form, typical of Victorian genre works, and as a consequence emphasise formalist concerns. In this scheme reverie could provoke the qualities of ambiguity and mystery, which were considered critical qualities for good art.⁵ As mentioned in the previous chapter, Colvin distinguishes popular and progressive art and firmly calls for an art which signalled beauty in its formal qualities.

Whistler's works of the early 1860s suggest that he grasps the potential of reverie to be mobilised as a vehicle for the progression of art; that reverie may help carry art away from the pathos of popular Victorian genre painting, towards something more sophisticated in its formal complexity and mystery which could appeal to a more discerning public attuned to contemporary developments. Reverie, as noted earlier, could also provoke spectatorial reflexivity, and can therefore be linked with emergent Aestheticist concerns for autonomy. This is explored below in an analysis of *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl* (fig. 8). Yet, conversely, reverie could be a mechanism for absorbing, or taming the avant-gardist direction of Whistler's painting. In this sense it provided conceptual references to conventional genre works which also depicted reverie, and helped therefore, in retaining his work's appeal to commercial markets and Royal Academy selection committees. Situating Whistler's work within popular psychological contexts further complicates our understanding of this dialectic. Such contexts help inform my discussion around the significance of narrative in Whistler's *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*. This chapter demonstrates the significance of considering narrative in an analysis of the work, and how narrative is inflected by both the concept of reverie, as positioned in discursive

⁴ Critical reaction to Whistler in the 1860s and 1870s demonstrates the difficulty viewers had with his work. Current authors place Whistler's work as avant-gardist, see for example Jason Edwards, *Alfred Gilbert's Aestheticism: Gilbert Amongst Whistler, Wilde, Leighton and Burne Jones* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2006).

⁵ See Chapter One, for Dallas' criteria of good art. Also, see Sidney Colvin "English Painters and Paintings in 1867," *Fortnightly Review* 2, no. 10 (October 1867): 473.

contexts, and the content of reverie as subject matter in itself. A series of illustrations produced by Whistler, some of which appear to be titled 'White Girl' are considered alongside the painting *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl* and these help throw light on the way Whistler conceived the subject of the painting.

Although depictions of reverie-like states appear proportionately less than in Rossetti's work, as with Rossetti, Whistler's application of such states relates importantly to principles of Aestheticism that emerged in the 1860s.⁶ I consider several etchings of the pre 1860s, a period in which Whistler was influenced by Realism. These works demonstrate Whistler's predilection for engaging reverie as a theme. In his work of the 1860s there is a shift away from realist tendencies towards an approach which accommodates emergent Aestheticist principles. Interestingly reverie is common to both Whistler's realist and Aestheticist phases. As we saw earlier, works by genre artists such as Egle, would attach narrative significance to reverie. It is my contention that Whistler, in the early 1860s, allows his works to operate within a similar narrative schema to genre artists, but that by 1867, the year that *Symphony in White, No. 3* was exhibited (under this title) at the Royal Academy, the conceptual distance from conventional genre paintings became significantly evident. This distance becomes even more apparent in terms of the claims Whistler makes for his art. By this point in his work, reverie functioned to censure allusions to narrative. Concurrently and somewhat paradoxically it also provided a pseudo-content that could appeal to commercial interests and to conservative factions of the Royal Academy.⁷

All three 'symphonies in white' are considered to be key paintings in Whistler's output. Scholarship around each work points to the emergence of Aestheticist tendencies in Whistler's work and my particular interest in these works is that they each display nuanced approaches to the subject of reverie. These variable approaches suggest that Whistler was working-through the potential of picturing reverie in different ways. More than likely, engagement with reverie appealed to Whistler. In

⁶ Like Rossetti, Whistler was familiar with Edgar Allen Poe. See *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, on-line edition, Centre for Whistler Studies, University of Glasgow, 2004. Edited by Margaret F. MacDonald, Patricia de Montfort and Nigel Thorp, at <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence> (record no. 1784) [accessed 25 July 2011].

⁷ *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl* was rejected by the Academy, whereas *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl* was accepted.

particular, Whistler appears to have been drawn to the intrinsic ambiguities inherent to the semantics of reverie and its connotations of mystery.

The obfuscation of narrative certainties lends a sense of mystery to his works, which no doubt contributed to the difficult contemporary reception of Whistler. Commentators agree that it is likely that Whistler admired the quality of mystery in his works. Being a keen supporter of Baudelaire's writing, Whistler may well have been aware, as Frances Spalding has suggested, of the poet's review of the 1855 Paris Exposition Universelle, in which he remarked,

The Beautiful is always strange. I do not mean that it is coldly, deliberately strange. . . . I mean that it always contains a touch of strangeness, of simple, unpremeditated and unconscious strangeness, and that it is this touch of strangeness that gives it its particular quality as Beauty.⁸

Spencer suggests Whistler almost certainly met Baudelaire after Whistler's arrival in Paris on 16th June, 1863.⁹ Whistler, remarking on his *Old Battersea Bridge: Nocturne in Blue and Gold* (1865), complained:

There is mystery here. The people don't want it. What they like is when the east wind blows, when you can look across the river and count the wires in the canary bird's cage on the other side.¹⁰

Describing the effect of disappearing light, he noted how, ultimately, it plays into the hands of the painter's imagination. Whistler:

As the light fades and the shadows deepen all petty and exacting details vanish, everything trivial disappears, and I see things as they are in great strong masses: the buttons are lost, but the garment remains; the sitter is lost, but the shadow remains; the shadow is lost, but the picture remains. And that night cannot efface from the painter's imagination.¹¹

⁸ Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," quoted in Harrison, Wood and Gaiger, *Art in Theory: 1815-1900*, 487. See, Frances Spalding, *Whistler* (London, Phaidon, 1994).

⁹ See Robin Spencer, "Whistler's 'The White Girl': Painting, Poetry and Meaning," *Burlington Magazine* 140, no. 1142 (May, 1998): 308.

¹⁰ Quoted in Lionel Lambourne, *The Aesthetic Movement* (London, Phaidon 1996) 97.

¹¹ Quoted in Spalding, *Whistler*, 22.

Mystery and ambiguity also seem to have played a part in the challenges faced by viewers' readings of the psychological states of his figures and I will argue that those effects issue out of Whistler's engagement with reverie.

It is important at this stage to introduce a caveat for defining reverie in works by Whistler. Of the three 'symphonies in white', it is *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl* which seems to fall most comfortably into examples of images of reverie. *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl* and *Symphony in White, No. 3* could in fact be read respectively, as one being a portrait of a posed figure, and the other, an image of two young girls not strictly in reverie but reclining in boredom. The kind of "swoony reverie", to borrow Paul Spencer-Longhurst's term,¹² or the kind of intense introspective reveries we might associate with several Rossetti images are not as obviously apparent in these two Whistler works. However, it is my contention that in spite of their ambiguity, it is meaningful to place these two works within the context of popular reverie images. Not only does this make sense in that each of these images is flanked by what must be acknowledged as the more secure image of reverie in *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl*, but also, because all three of these works sit within the context of Rossetti, as well as the non-Aestheticist artists who produced images of reverie. This rich intertextual framework of reverie images provides a significant visual and thematic context for Whistler. Reverie, as should be clear at this point, is one of a number of associated states we may class as converse to the normative paradigm of the subject who engages attentively and perceptually with his or her surroundings.¹³ And as we have seen, the concept of reverie in the middle of the nineteenth century sat alongside discussions on mesmerism, trance, and the will. In relation then to Whistler, I will use the term 'reverie' to indicate generally those works that depict passive states of disengagement and where required, more specific distinctions will be made.

We can separate Whistler's application of reverie into two different broad strands. His pre-1860 figures in reverie can be seen to sit within a realist oeuvre. In these works, the character of reverie in his depicted figures sits comfortably within the narrative

¹² Paul Spencer-Longhurst, *The Blue Bower: Rossetti in the 1860s* (London: Scala Publishing, 2000), 26-27.

¹³ See Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 11-79.

subject of the works and the conventions of realist genre works. The depicted scenes in these works suggest contexts which logically account for the subject of figures in reverie. The other strand emerging in the 1860s sees works which are more ambiguous in their contextualisation of reverie. These works suggest uncertain subjects, often without sentiment, or clear narrative direction. I will briefly consider that first kind of application, seen in works of the late 1850s, which demonstrate Whistler's predilection for handling the subject of reverie. Following this, an exploration of his works in the 1860s will elucidate an alternative strain of Whistler's application of reverie.



Several etchings, produced by Whistler around the late 1850s, all feature working-class figures who are engaged in psychologically reflective states. In his etching *La Marchande de Moutarde* (1858, fig. 44) Whistler depicts a young woman casually resting against the entrance to a kitchen, who appears to be in a reverie-like state of reflection as she gazes at the stone door-post facing her. Another etching, *The Lime Burner* (1859, fig. 45), from the 'Thames Set' series, depicts the interior of a wharf-side building. Inside the building a lime burner props himself casually against barrels during a spare moment. Looking towards the viewer, he appears likewise to be in a private reverie-like moment of introspection. In *Rotherhithe* (1860, fig. 46) two male companions are seated together in the foreground smoking pipes, yet, in spite of their proximity to each other there is no sense of conversational engagement here, as each looks out listlessly, their gazes bifurcating each others whilst they partake in private moments of reflection. This scheme of social proximity bereft of engaged social intercourse is later repeated in *Wapping* (1860-64, fig. 47) and *Symphony in White, No. 3*.

A further two etchings demonstrate the fascination with subjects in reverie. *Black Lion Wharf* (1859, fig. 48) features in the foreground a longshoreman sitting alone and gazing introspectively into the distance parallel with the river's edge. A print of the *Black Lion Wharf* appears on the wall in Whistler's painting *The Artist's Mother*, and the theme of reflection may have been thought by Whistler to be a way of conceptually relating the two works.

The related etching *Eagle Wharf* (1859, fig. 49) together with *Black Lion Wharf* and *Rotherhithe*, all share the foregrounding of figures in reverie. All of these works depict figures immersed in reverie and temporarily disengaged from their duties of labour. Each work hints at a narrative that might explain the psychological states of the figures. Primarily, that narrative relates to the immediate context of labour in which their reveries might be interpreted as a response or side-effect of. In this sense there is a similarity in narrative structure with those popular genre works discussed in Chapter Two. So, while reverie can be explained as an effect of romance in Egley's works, in Whistler, it can be explained as an effect of labour. In Whistler's etchings we could say that labour offers something of a structure for the spectator to make sense of the apparent reverie-like states, and consequently the works do not digress extensively from contemporary narrative conventions. They do help, however, to illustrate the way an artist, such as Whistler, may place figures in reverie in particular contexts associated with work. In doing so, the viewer is invited to consider the significance of the dichotomy between work and non-work, but also the distinctions between the temporal and the physical. Thus, the works encourage us to reflect on how the suspension of the physical is paired with reverie – and of course, how reverie imbues the further suspensions of engagement with surroundings.

A new direction in Whistler's art, emerging around 1860, can be seen to challenge the necessity for stability of meaning in narrative subjects. It is possible to chart Whistler's development of an approach in the years 1860-1864, which seemingly frustrates the workings of narrative. It is also possible to locate an emerging complexity in his application of reverie-related subject matter not seen in the etchings of the 'Thames Set'. This complexity seems to emerge around 1860 when Whistler began working on the oil painting *Wapping* (fig. 47), another Thames subject, which he finally completed in 1864. Although not strictly a reverie work, it is useful to consider the painting because it signals a new approach in the way Whistler came to handle narrative alongside the depiction of ambiguous psychological states.

The painting depicts three figures seated at a table. Scholarship on the work tends to focus on the relationship of these figures, noting how the woman, identified as a prostitute, sits next to her associate and is being pimped to the sailor who sits on the

right hand side of the painting.¹⁴ None of the literature on *Wapping* suggests that the figure of the woman is in reverie; perhaps this is because the idea of a narrative around prostitution has courted more interest. However, it is possible to read the woman's state of attention as ambiguous – that she may be reflecting on something. The model for the figure was Joanne Hiffernan, Whistler's model and mistress.¹⁵ Her expression suggests her possible abstraction from the immediate context, something which seems exaggerated by the suffusion of detail around her eyes. Whistler makes the direction of her gaze ambiguous – yet it does seem that she gazes directly in front of her, rather than catching the eye of the sailor who sits diagonally opposite her on the table. This mismatch of eye contact is further evident in that her face is in three-quarter profile compared to the side profile of the sailor, suggesting that their gazes do not meet and that she indeed inhabits a personal psychological space. We might also further note that the pictorial space framing her head is demarcated by a flank of pale background which augments the suggestion that she inhabits a separate mental sphere. This triangular space seems to cast down an almost religious, auratic frame of light onto the figure of Hiffernan. While the work sits a little too early to be compared with the kinds of spirit photographs of the later nineteenth century, we can make a comparative reference in the form of religious paintings which feature auratic shafts of light and, doing so, makes us think that that Whistler wanted to highlight the psychology of the woman.

Authors have pointed out that Whistler struggled with the painting of *Wapping* and made significant changes to the woman, who had, in Whistler's words a "superlatively whorish air".¹⁶ Whistler describes his work on the painting in a letter to Fantin Latour:

There are three people - an old man in a white shirt, the one in the middle who is looking out of the window - then on the right in the corner, a sailor in a cap and a blue shirt with a big collar turned back in a lighter blue, who is chatting to a girl who is jolly difficult to paint! And that is why I wish above all to have you here so that we could discuss it - Well I have painted her three times and I do not want to get tired - besides if I fiddle about with her too much I will have hardly any time to do the rest - Well you can imagine! I have managed to give

¹⁴ Richard Dormont and Margaret Macdonald, *James McNeill Whistler*, exh. cat., Tate Gallery (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1994), 103-4.

¹⁵ See *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, online edition (record no. 08042) [accessed 25 July 2011].

¹⁶ Cited in Dormont, *James McNeill Whistler*, 104.

her an expression! really my dear friend! a real expression - ah but if only I could describe her head - She has the most beautiful hair that you have ever seen! a red not golden but copper - as Venetian as a dream! - skin golden white or yellow if you will - and with the wonderful expression I described to you - an air of saying to her sailor "That is all very well, my friend! I have seen others!" you know she is winking and laughing at him! - Now all that against the light and in consequence in atrociously difficult muted colours - but I do not think I shall paint her again. - Her neck is exposed - her blouse can be seen almost entirely and how well it is painted mon cher - and then a jacket you should see it! in a white material with big arabesques and flowers of all colours!¹⁷

His changes resulted in alterations which suppressed earlier indications of her overt sexuality. His letter to Latour remarks that the sailor is seen to be "chatting to a girl," however, it is curious that the final version of the painting shows her tight-lipped. The respective postures and eye contact between the two men seems to indicate that they are the main protagonists in any apparent conversation. The letter also suggests that her jacket was originally white, and Whistler remarks that, in the early version, "her neck is exposed – her blouse can be almost seen entirely". Yet in the final painting Whistler has lessened the woman's décolletage and there is no white jacket, instead, the woman wears a more sober black outfit.¹⁸ Whistler even repainted the woman's face three times. These changes may address the fact that Whistler wanted the painting to be exhibited at the Royal Academy and that he wished to avoid any sense with the selection committee that the work was overtly risqué. But it is interesting here that while the result of these changes led to something more "innocuous" in the words of Richard Dorment, they also contributed to the narrative ambiguity of the work.¹⁹ We can say, then, that *Wapping* marks out an important shift in Whistler's work in the early 1860s on the basis of its narrative ambiguity. From this, we can go on to explore how such ambiguity resonates with his subsequent applications of reverie-related images.

During the early 1860s, Whistler began to move away from the realist principles he acquired whilst under the influence of Courbet. Also during this period, he became

¹⁷ James Whistler, letter to Fantin Latour, January/June 1861, Library of Congress, *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, online edition (record no. 08042) [accessed 26 July 2011].

¹⁸ For details around the change in the décolletage and dress, see Dorment, *James McNeill Whistler*, 104.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

associated with Rossetti's circle and it seems very likely that he was influenced by the symbolic capacity of Rossetti's work. Conflating with these shifts, Whistler came to import an increasing significance to the idea of formal arrangements being the kingpin of his art. A new aim began to take shape in the form of producing works that suppress narrative certainties but favour formal arrangement and a sense of mystery. While the avant-gardist enterprise of these aims ensued, Whistler retained a strong commercial sense and pursued Academy exhibition and commercial sales.



We have seen above how reverie occupied popular genres. However, in Whistler's so-called 'symphonies in white', it could be argued that reverie operates within an avant-gardist territory oppositional to popular genre. Scholarship on the avant-gardist credentials of Whistler's work tends to focus on its formalist qualities and how these are linked to the suppression of narrative, but also on the works' capacity to foster ambiguity and mystery. I consider later the formalist endeavour of Whistler's work, but, firstly, I wish to focus on an analysis of the 'symphonies in white' which concerns primarily the way that narrative is fashioned by the implied subject of reverie or its associated states. To consider narrative in these works may seem wayward given the emphasis placed on Whistler the formalist. But, I should remind the reader that the concerns here also relate to the obfuscation of narrative. While much scholarship seems to promote the idea that narrative suppression is a consequence of foregrounding formalist concerns, I contend that narrative suppression, or more accurately its obfuscation could equally be a by-product of Whistler's depiction of reverie-like states. One could even argue that the formalist credentials of the 'symphonies in white' are made possible through the vehicle of reverie. The conventions of 'genre' work itself, as mentioned already, involved the articulation of comprehensible narrative. Interestingly, Whistler manages to retain the figure, (essential to genre works), while obfuscating narrative, something which is achieved primarily through the depiction of ambiguous psychological states. By adopting elements of the figurative conventions of images of reverie, in essence those elements that characterised figures as inactive and disengaged psychologically from the immediate surroundings, Whistler was able to depict such ambiguous psychological states.

To take the subject of consciousness in *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, as well as its associated concepts, such as, reverie, provides an alternative approach to reading the work as proto-modernist. Rather than taking a proto-modernist stance that would argue for Whistler's eradication of narrative, I propose that it is useful to consider Whistler as working-through strategies that could refashion modes of narrative engagement for the viewer.²⁰ My contention is that *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, as it was conceived by Whistler and received by its contemporary audience, is better understood by its being placed within an artistic context of works (by Whistler and others) which depict subjects in reverie-related states, and within a discursive context that embraced psychological conceptions relating to reverie and its associated states. Reverie, I argue, produces a paradox around the functioning of narrative in *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*. Curiously, it both fosters narrative possibilities, but it also provides an appropriate vehicle for negating comprehensible narrative. It is likely that Whistler would have enjoyed this paradox and we can see evidence of this in the way that he responded to the debate that allied his work to the narrative figure of "the woman in white" from the Wilkie Collins novel of that name. Each of these characteristics signals avant-gardist possibilities. Where reverie fosters narrative possibilities on the one hand, we can start to see in Victorian art a shift from the clear guided narratives of genre painting towards works such as Whistler's that foster a different kind of spectatorial agency. This kind of agency we have already seen in Rossetti's works and could be described as issuing a different kind of reflective subjectivity in the role of the spectator. Reverie is the ideal vehicle for obfuscating narrative certainty because the spectator, unless given concrete clues, can only imagine the psychology of the figure represented. On the other hand, reverie as a subject, able to foster the suppression, or, even negation of narrative can encourage the direction of spectatorial concerns towards form. But, a third trope exists as well, and this relates to the commercial endeavour of Whistler that attached his works to the popular image of "the woman in white". Reverie allows for this concurrency.

²⁰ See Tsui, "The Phantasm of Aesthetic Autonomy," 444-75.

While art historians have often considered *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl* to be an over-riding expression of Whistler's formalist agenda, I share the opinion of Aileen Tsui, who argues that the multiple titles given to the work in Whistler's correspondence suggest that Whistler was happy for the work to be co-opted into various contexts that fostered a range of possible narrative operations. Reverie and the discourses relating to consciousness emerging out of contemporary psychology are key to understanding the way the work may function on level of narrative. Forwarding this understanding involves re-assessing the way the work has commonly been understood by art historians. Scholarship often picks up on the idea that Whistler ostensibly wished to court a literal and straightforward reading of the content, one that would explore primarily the formal qualities of the work. Authors on Whistler often quote the last sentence of his letter to the *Athenaeum* July 1st 1862, in which he says "My painting simply represents a girl dressed in white standing in front of a white curtain".²¹ The degree to which the remark was meant to operate as formalist doctrine ought to be questioned. Tsui has convincingly argued that Whistler was happy to court multiple readings of the work. In particular, she explores the various discourses that were attached to the cult-idea of the 'woman in white' that were concurrent with the exhibition of Whistler's painting in London at the Berners Street Gallery and in Paris at the Salon des Refusees. Tsui and other commentators note how the cult-idea of the woman in white had common currency in both England and France at the time and that it probably influenced Whistler. In England the idea had been fuelled by the Wilkie Collins, novel *The Woman in White*, serialized in 1859-60 and published as a book in 1860. In France *La Dame Blanche* was the title of Adrien Boïeldieu's and Eugene Scribe's popular comic opera. Based on novels by Walter Scott the opera opens with the appearance of a spirit-like figure of a woman dressed in white.²²

Whistler entered his painting 'Woman in White' to the Royal Academy in April 1862, but it was rejected by the selection committee. However, it created public interest when it was exhibited at the Berners St. Gallery in June 1862. According to Whistler, the directors of the gallery had advertised the painting on a placard outside the gallery

²¹ Robin Spencer also argues this point and, how, taken out of context, Whistler's remarks have lead to a reductive modernist interpretation. See Spencer, "Whistler's 'The White Girl': Painting, Poetry and Meaning," 300.

²² Tsui notes that the opera had by 1862 reached its 1000th performance; "The Phantasm of Aesthetic Autonomy," 454.

and in adverts across London as 'Whistler's extraordinary picture THE WOMAN IN WHITE'.²³ In a letter to George Aloysius Lucas, Whistler commented on the affair:

In the catalogue of this exhibition it is marked "Rejected at the Academy". What do you say to that! isn't that the way to fight 'em! Besides which it is affixed all over town as 'Whistler's Extraordinary picture the WOMAN IN WHITE'.²⁴ That is done of course by the Directors but certainly it is waging an open war with the Academy eh?²⁵

Whistler, it seems, readily welcomed at this point, the titling strategy by the Berners St. Gallery and their new name *The Woman in White*. The allusion to Wilkie Collins' literary character seems not to have been an issue. It was only after a review by F.G. Stephens, however, that Whistler sought to affirm a distinction between his figure and the Wilkie Collins character. Stephens, no doubt influenced by the Berners St. Gallery's appended title, seems to have understood the painting as intentionally illustrative of Wilkie Collins' character. He therefore remarked in his review for *The Athenaeum*, "The face is well done, but it is not that of Mr. Wilkie Collins's Woman in White".²⁶ After the publication of these comments Whistler was driven to correct the misapprehension following the negative commentary imparted by Stephen's criticism. In a letter to *The Athenaeum* Whistler wrote:

May I beg to correct an erroneous impression likely to be confirmed by a paragraph in your last number? The Proprietors of the Berners Street Gallery have, without my sanction, called my picture "The Woman in White." I had no intention whatsoever of illustrating Mr. Wilkie Collins's novel; it so happens, indeed, that I have never read it. My painting simply represents a girl dressed in white standing in front of a white curtain.²⁷

Whistler scholarship has placed a particularly stringent emphasis on this last sentence, which taken on its own out of context, appears to evidence the idea that Whistler was

²³ The advert can be seen in *The Athenaeum* (5th July 1862): 24, reproduced in Spencer, "Whistler's 'The White Girl': Painting, Poetry and Meaning," 303.

²⁴ The text in the letter "Whistler's Extraordinary picture the WOMAN IN WHITE" is drawn separately to illustrate the actual textual presentation by the gallery on a placard.

²⁵ Whistler to George Aloysius Lucas, 26th June 1862, *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, online edition (record no. 11977) [accessed 25 July 2011].

²⁶ Quoted in Dormont, *James McNeill Whistler*, 76.

²⁷ James Whistler to William Hepworth Dixon (of the *Athenaeum*), 1st July 1862, *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, online edition (record no. 13149) [accessed 25 July 2011].

concerned only with formal effects and not with subject. However, understood in this way, these remarks distort the degree to which Whistler excluded the possibilities for broader interpretive readings of the work. If we re-interpret the remarks as a riposte, the sentence demonstrates an antagonism that Whistler must have held towards the negative criticism imparted by Stephens. Considered in these terms, there is a defensive critical logic in Whistler's sentence which discounts it as a doctrinal statement relating to the rejection of narrative. It seems much more likely that around the time of its first exhibition Whistler was happy with the way audiences undertook interpretive readings of the work. Indeed, Frederick Buckstone, secretary of the Berners St. Gallery, suggested that Whistler was initially far from unhappy with their title 'The Woman in White'.²⁸ Buckstone made a point of clearing the matter with the *Athenaeum* writing to them on 19th July after they had just published Whistler's corrective notice. Buckstone's response:

Mr. Whistler was well aware of his picture being advertised as 'The Woman in White,' and was pleased with the name ...There was no intention, to mislead the public by the supposition that it referred to the heroine of Mr. Wilkie Collins's novel; but being the figure of a female attired in white, with a white background, with which no-colour the artist has produced some original effects, the picture was called 'The Woman in White,' simply because it could not be called 'The Woman in Black,' or any other colour.²⁹

No doubt Buckstone was being as defensive as Whistler. Buckstone would also have been aware of the commercial appeal in naming the painting "the Woman in White", but owing to the stigmas accorded to crass commercialisation of art, he would also have wanted to escape any accusation of being merely attending to commercial concerns. Both are perhaps guilty of feigning ignorance. And without doubt, Buckstone had his own reputation and that of his gallery to consider. This aside, Buckstone's comments do suggest that Whistler seems to have courted the idea of a variety of titles for the work. From the evidence we have, Whistler never referred to the work as *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, although this title, as mentioned, was retrospectively conferred in 1867, when he titled his third painting of subjects of women in white as *Symphony in White, No. 3* (fig. 43). The correspondence

²⁸ See Robert Slifkin, "James Whistler as the Invisible Man: Anti-Aestheticism and Artistic Vision," *Oxford Art Journal*, 29, no. 1 (2006): 53-75.

²⁹ Frederick Buckstone to William Hepworth Dixon, 19th July 1862, *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, on-line edition, (record no. 12979) [accessed 26 July 2011].

of Whistler seems to suggest that his preferred title was 'The White Girl', yet, Whistler also referred to the work as 'White Child',³⁰ and as Tsui notes, 'Whyte Ladye',³¹ which seemed to acknowledge mediaevalizing Pre-Raphaelite subjects,³² and when referring to its French exhibition Whistler called the work 'La Dame Blanche'.³³ Whistler's flexibility around the work's titling reinforces the idea that the work was conceived in such a way that would foster a range of interpretations. However, beyond its titling, what also fuels the possibilities for a breadth of interpretations of *The White Girl* is the way that the figure's psychological state appears ambiguous, which, when coupled with a rich context associated with contemporary psychology, could propagate such themes as madness, trance states, mesmerism and so on. Titular and narrative ambiguity conflate with the ambiguity one associates with reverie itself.



Lacking coherent iconographic relations and a certainty of narrative, *The White Girl* emphasises an absorbing spectatorial curiosity around the figure's subjective state. Thus, without any secure narrative props, the viewer is left to conjugate the various possible meanings of the figure's subjective state.³⁴ On the face of things, it may appear that Whistler's aim was to eject narrative from the work; however, I want to be clear that what is apparent here is an engagement with narrative. If we accept that the painting emphasises something of states of mind, then not only does it fall appositely into the cult-idea of the 'woman in white' as a psychologised subject, but it also allows for broader references to psychological states. As Chapter One demonstrated, contemporary psychological debates explored a range of conditions all associated with states of consciousness including reverie, mesmerism, somnambulism, hallucination and spiritualism. These subjects were covered widely in such popular periodicals as

³⁰ Whistler to George Aloysius Lucas, 26th June 1862, *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, on-line edition [record no. 11977] (accessed 26 July 2011)

³¹ Tsui, "The Phantasm of Aesthetic Autonomy," 454.

³² A comparison might be drawn on this note with William Morris's *La Belle Iseult* (1858, Tate Britain, oil on canvas, 72 x 50 cm), which shares with Whistler's painting a full length figure of a woman in an interior setting.

³³ See Tsui, "The Phantasm of Aesthetic Autonomy," 454.

³⁴ Tsui has remarked on the peculiar way that the pelt, with its dominant placing, and 'facingness' of its head towards the viewer, teases a sense of iconographic significance which is ultimately impenetrable. "The Phantasm of Aesthetic Autonomy," 463. Tsui also comments on the way the flowers that have fallen from the figure's hand, cannot be read in the popular Victorian scheme of a 'language' of flowers, 463.

Once a Week, (a periodical for which Whistler contributed four illustrations in 1862) and both the stories and the accompanying illustrations, such as George Du Maurier's for "The Notting Hill Mystery" (fig. 50) must have offered a narrative frame of reference that could be related back to the particular curiosities of Whistler's *White Girl*.

After the exhibition of the *White Girl* in Paris in the infamous 1863 Salon des Refusés, the painting received a range of critical readings which certainly aligned the work both to spiritualism and psychological conditions such as trance. Interestingly, the critical vocabulary identifies with both the subjective state of the viewer as well as the subjective state of the figure. In such cases, the figure is described as "an apparition" suggesting hallucination in the viewer and questioning his or her own psychological state. Paul Mantz in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* described what he saw as a "strange white apparition".³⁵ Such reflections on spectatorial subjectivity remind us of how reverie images complement those Aestheticist principles around autonomy discussed earlier, alongside the calls for mystery and obscurity. Courbet also described the work as an "apparition",³⁶ while Théophile Thoré described the work as "a vision",³⁷ again suggesting the figure illustrates or issues the subjective experience of hallucination. Paul Mantz also assigned subjectivity to the figure of the woman, as if to suggest she had entered an heightened psychological state, "her great eyes swimming in ecstasy" and her pose "languid".³⁸ An alternative position was offered by Fernand Desnoyers who described her as "the portrait of a spirit, a medium".³⁹ Although Michael Fried has cautioned against critical fantasy of the kind that interpreted Whistler's figure as mad, or in trance, or as a medium, all of these interpretations resonate with contemporary psychological contexts.⁴⁰ Elements of the French critical response, such as Mantz's terms "eyes swimming in ecstasy" and "languid pose", strongly suggest the idea of a figure in reverie, or trance, dimmed to her surroundings. Because Whistler offers no clues as to the subject of her gaze we are encouraged to dwell on the idea that she sees through the object of her gaze and her attention is inwardly focussed. Taking this line

³⁵ Quoted in Dorment, *James McNeill Whistler*, p.77.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 223-24.

of interpretation may be one way of tying the formal peculiarities of extensive whiteness to a narrative scheme; as an alternative to the sense of white as metaphor for purity, if white as a non-colour is aligned to ideas of blankness then the kinds of readings which suggest trance-like states take on a special significance. In Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick* (1851), he refers to the character of whiteness as "a dumb blankness, full of meaning".⁴¹ The 'blanche' in 'La Fille Blanche',⁴² another title attached to the work, could also signify in loose translation 'blank'. The French word 'blanc' (masculine) / 'blanche' (feminine) translates into English not only as 'white', but also as 'blank' as in its use to refer to a blank state of mind. Viewed in these terms, the formalist agenda has a logical correlation to narrative that goes beyond what art historians have considered as autonomous 'art for art's sake' expression.⁴³ The idea of blank state of mind may well have been one way of interpreting the painting for contemporary viewers.⁴⁴ Conversely, the blank stare associated with reverie-like states could have also signified the idea of unconscious cerebration – the busying internal workings of mind operating beneath consciousness.⁴⁵ In both these regards, the question of whether Whistler is deliberately drawing attention to subjective states of mind is a valid one, especially as some of the critical responses indicate this is the case. If so, Whistler's depiction of the figure would resonate with the popular interest in reading the physiognomy and facial expression of individuals as an outward indicator of internal states of mind or character. In both England and France in the nineteenth century, discourses around character related to the popular sciences of

⁴¹ Quoted in Tsui, "The Phantasm of Aesthetic Autonomy," 469.

⁴² George Lucas noted in his diary, April 1st, "To see Whistler who packed his picture of the 'femme blanche'", L.M.C. Randall, ed. *The Diary of George A. Lucas, An American Art agent in Paris*, Vol. 2, (Princeton, 1979), 130-32, quoted in Robin Spencer, "Whistler's 'The White Girl': Painting, Poetry and Meaning," 300.

⁴³ See also Nicholas Daly "The Woman in White: Whistler, Hiffernan, Courbet, Du Maurier," 1-25. Daly argues that *The White Girl* is a visual analogue to the sensation novel and audiences would have been hard-pressed not to call to mind Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*. Daly argues that Whistler's *The White Girl* demonstrates such discordance in its colour scheme that it would jar with contemporary spectators and invoke nervous strain which may be associated with modernity.

⁴⁴ Psychologists had noted the morbid condition of trance-like reveries in which the subject seemingly had no active mental operations of mind; see Chapter One.

⁴⁵ This recalls ideas charted in Chapter One of unconscious cerebration. For more on the relevance of unconscious cerebration in relation to the Victorian novel see Vanessa L. Ryan "Fictions of Medical Minds: Victorian Novels and Medical Epistemology" *Literature and Medicine* 25, no.2 (Fall 2006): 277-297.

physiognomy and phrenology.⁴⁶ It seems unlikely that Whistler was not aware that viewers would strive to make sense of the expression of ‘the white girl’. Richard Dorment notes how it must have been Whistler’s intention to depict a face that would “lack expression, that Jo [Hiffernan] should assume the facial equivalent of the non colour, white”.⁴⁷ However, rather than closing off meaning as seems to be suggested by Dorment, the effect of this expressionless face is to open up possibilities of meaning. Moreover, this notion of the expressionless face is spurious, because even a so-called blank expression offers inherent signifying potential.⁴⁸ Whistler himself, in discussing the painting in a letter to George Aloysius Lucas anthropomorphises the figure and gives her a sense of character. The “White Child”, he terms her here, “shows herself proudly to all of London” and “she looks grandly in her frame and creates an excitement in the Artistic World here”.⁴⁹ If we understand Whistler’s remarks here to refer to the figure as opposed to the painting as an object, then he himself gives her specific qualities of character.

⁴⁶ Contemporary criticism would often remark on the physiognomy of figures as an outward indicator of ‘character’. Cesare Lombroso’s and Francis Galton’s studies later in the century on criminal types had built on a large body of thinking which held some of its origins in eighteenth-century pictorial studies of facial types, such as those undertaken by Johann Spurzheim. Publications like *Harper’s Weekly* in the mid-nineteenth century published articles comparing racial physiognomy, which fuelled racist discourses around Anglo-teutonic superiority. With the emerging modernisation of transport and city life, the fascination of physiognomy as an indicator of ‘character’ was significant given the way that passengers, for example, were brought into close proximity with one another. Fears of criminality, therefore, fuelled ideas that it was possible to ‘read’ character from the visible outward signs of physiognomy. Critical photographic histories have in recent years covered the relevance of physiognomy to visual culture, see for example, Liz Wells *A Critical History of Photography* (2nd ed.), (London: Routledge, 2000), and John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

⁴⁷ Dorment, *James McNeill Whistler*, 77.

⁴⁸ As noted in my Introduction, T.J Clark’s discussion on Manet’s *A Bar at the Folies-Bergere*, suggested the barmaid’s facial expression is “not quite focussed on anything.” Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, 253-54. The domestic context of Whistler’s ‘White Girl’ affords a different analysis from the bustle of modernity Clark attaches to Parisian bars; however, the scope for possibilities of psychological state afforded by the seemingly ‘expressionless’ face of the ‘White Girl’ is both extensive yet paradoxically focussed; her expression indicates what she is not feeling; by not indicating certain expressions, certain states are ruled out, thus her psychological state must lie somewhere between for example, extreme sadness and extreme happiness, or between, extreme drowsiness and extreme alertness; a wide scope of possibilities.

⁴⁹ Whistler to George Aloysius Lucas, 26th June 1862, *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, on-line edition, (record no. 11977) [accessed 26 July 2011].

Whichever way *The White Girl* was interpreted, predominantly, those interpretations corresponded closely with psychological discourses. The critical reception here indicates the possibilities for reverie-like images to be received by audiences in the terms set out by the popular discourses around psychological debates. Concurrently, the public reception shows how there could be alternatives to popular genre works in the way that they linked a specific narrative to the psychological state of reverie, and how reverie in *The White Girl* was a vehicle for giving the spectator interpretive agency. It is useful on this point, to offer a brief comparison with John Everett Millais' slightly later painting, titled *A Somnambulist* (c.1871, fig. 51). Millais, who knew Collins, appears to deliberately reference the Collins' archetype of 'the woman in white'.⁵⁰ The work's title and the literal depiction of a somnambulist offers a dramatic narrative in the sensationalist manner that would have been familiar to readers of Collins's mysteries. Whistler's work, on the other hand, is able to take on a broader range of semantic possibilities that not only included somnambulism, but other related psychological states such as the blankness one would attach to forms of trance. At the same time, however, *The White Girl* also demonstrated how depictions of reverie-like states need not necessarily equate with themes of romance and courtship. We could say that the fostering of such alternatives to narratives of courtship was vanguard.



So far, the discussion here, around *The White Girl* has focussed on critical and cultural contexts, suggesting the importance of reverie as significant to understanding the painting. In the search to claim the work as initiating the formalism of Whistler's proto-modernism, scholarship seems to overlook an artistic context in which images of reverie were commonplace. It is worth noting the immediate context of Whistler's own practice and how in his works of the late 1850s and early 1860s, figures in reverie-like states figured frequently. This is illustrated above in the discussion around Whistler's etchings featuring reverie, several of which were produced in 1859. But there is also another series of works contemporaneous with *The White Girl*, which throw light on my assessment of Whistler's articulation of narrative engagement and its conflation with the depiction of reverie.

⁵⁰ See Jason Rosenfeld and Alison Smith, *Millais* (London: Tate Publishing, 2007).

Tsui has identified a set of three wood engravings in the Avery Collection at New York Public Library, by Whistler which were used for illustration in the popular periodical *Once a Week*. The engravings were all published in 1862, the same year that *The White Girl* was completed. I wish to contend that the engravings Tsui identifies, along with other works that I ascribe as relevant to the series, provide a context which further promotes the idea that the conceptualisation of reverie closely functions alongside narrative in *The White Girl* and Whistler's other works of this period. Dealing first with the three engravings identified by Tsui; *The Major's Daughter* (fig. 52) illustrated a love story, *The Morning Before the Massacre of St Bartholomew* (fig. 53) accompanied a poem based on that subject, and another drawing known as *The Nun in 'Count Buckhardt'* illustrated a scene from the poem 'Count Buckhardt'.⁵¹ The proofs of the engravings are particularly curious. Set on blank proof pages Tsui has noted that, along with Whistler's signature next to two of these proofs, *The Major's Daughter* (fig. 54) and *The Morning Before the Massacre of St Bartholomew* (fig. 55) are titles written in what appears to be Whistler's hand. In both these two proofs, the titles for the magazine illustrations were not used; instead, set clearly underneath the works can be read the title 'The White Girl'. Tsui asks the question "what do the two prints entitled *The White Girl* share with the painting better known for bearing this title, besides their having all been produced and presented to the public in 1862?"⁵² Tsui's answer covers a convincing argument around the notion of visual purity and aesthetic quality – that the proofs are transformed from their function as commercial illustration into artworks by their re-titling and detachment from the textual references of the magazines. The title of *The White Girl* not only gives the works an "independence from textual and mass-cultural impurities",⁵³ but for Tsui, it denotes Whistler's conferment of artistic and aesthetic quality. This argument is interesting, but there is also another way of responding to Tsui's question around the shared contiguities of these works. These prints entitled *The White Girl* share with the painting *The White Girl* the depiction of solitary women immersed in reverie-like

⁵¹ These images are available for viewing in high resolution from the Database of Mid-Victorian Illustration <http://www.dmvi.cardiff.ac.uk/>.

⁵² Tsui, "The Phantasm of Aesthetic Autonomy," 457.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 459.

states. This seemingly measured approach of cohesive cross-applications of reverie cannot be ignored.

Tsui points out the significance of alternative readings of the works according to their context when they are either independent of, or allied to the accompanying published text. What is striking is that as published illustrations accompanying texts, the works demonstrate that in the same year he produced *The White Girl*, Whistler also produced images of reverie which comfortably sat within the conventions of popular genre works – that is, that the figure’s reverie is explained by a coherent comprehensible narrative. We can see an example of this in the engraving known as *The Morning Before the Massacre of St Bartholomew*, where the figure’s reverie is explained by a coherent narrative (in this case the impending political ramifications of her interfaith marriage).

Moreover, the work shows strong allusions to the Pre-Raphaelite subject of Mariana, the subject of Tennyson’s poem. Whistler may well have been aware of Millais’ painting *Mariana* (1851, fig. 56), and how the work depicts an introspective woman having paused from working at an embroidery frame. Functioning also as a conventional narrative work, *The Major’s Daughter* (fig. 52) offers an illustrative logic to the text in the way it accounts for the figure’s reverie. As the young woman looks out from the boat we are given the sense that she is occupied by romantic thoughts. In this work, the title of *The White Girl* allied to the proof (fig. 54) may even relate to textual description of the white muslin dress she wears in the published story. Yet, when read independently of textual references, (as Whistler certainly intended, later on in his career), the obfuscation of clear and coherent narratives accompanied by reverie-like absorptive states, give the works a similar inchoate semantic scheme that parallels the painting *The White Girl*.⁵⁴ In the print, identified by Tsui, also known as *The Morning Before the Massacre of St Bartholomew* (fig. 53), a young woman sits at an embroidery frame positioned in a bay window. Perhaps having been working on the

⁵⁴ Following a request from The Pennells, (Whistler’s biographers), to select and publish examples of his early work, he proposed these two works as good examples. Whistler had a preference for *The Morning Before the Massacre of St Bartholomew*, although the way he refers to the works in his correspondence with the Joseph Pennell in 1894 appears to ignore the textual reference, preferring to refer to it as *The Lady of the Embroidery*. Letter, 21 February, 1894, recipient Joseph Pennell, *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, on-line edition, (record no. 07785) [accessed 26 July 2011].

embroidery, (although her gloved right hand makes us question this) she has fallen into a passive state; her left arm and hand have relaxed and come to rest in the folds of her dress; and her non-animated expression and accompanying gaze towards a region beyond the picture frame (as with *The White Girl*) suggest deep introspection. However, seen independently from the published illustration, the work is slightly more confusing owing to the ambiguity around her actions in relation to the embroidery. Her attention seems elsewhere, and the fact that her right hand is gloved and her left hand lies in the fold of her skirt (fig. 57), suggests that an active, productive engagement with the embroidery has ceased. If there is any manual engagement with the work, then it may be that her gloved right hand has traced some of the dominant lines of an image, which for the viewer is impenetrably inchoate as a subject. Viewed in this light, the viewer's curiosity is drawn (as it is in the painting *The White Girl*) to the figure's ambiguous trance-like psychological state. The other proof titled *The White Girl* known also as *The Major's Daughter* (fig. 54), when viewed independently of the published text, likewise offers an uncertain narrative. However, with the dominant iconographic content of the ship deck, the sea, and what appears as land on the horizon, (although the ambiguous hatched area could be a representation of clouds), building imagined narratives is somewhat easier than in *The Morning Before the Massacre of St Bartholomew*. Placing the solitary figure of the 'major's daughter' in reverie-like introspection and depicting her gazing out onto a subject out of view, fosters the possibilities for imagined narratives around journeying, geographical and temporal passage, loss, displacement, romantic love and so on. We can see in each of these etchings a kind of double-coded scheme which is similar to what happens with the painting 'The White Girl' – firstly, set in an applied context of textual references the works have a narrative logic, illustrative of those textual references. In these instances, reverie supports the narrative. In the case of the painting *The White Girl*, reverie is a key vehicle with which to reference the textual contexts relating to Collins's *Woman in White* and other related textual material. A second, alternative reading, autonomous from textual references, shows the works to be semantically anchored by reverie alone. This centrality of reverie fosters for spectators a speculative approach that requires the imagination to construct possibilities around narrative; this comes without the assistance seen in the directed narratives of popular genre painting.

We can relate Whistler's deliberate obfuscation of narrative towards practices in the later nineteenth century and especially to the phenomena of what became known as the problem picture. The ambiguity inherent to Whistler's work (and Rossetti's) presents something of an intriguing pre-history to the problem picture. It is interesting to align some of the concerns and practices that Pamela Fletcher attaches to the conventions of the problem picture between 1895 and 1914, with Whistler's *The White Girl*. In her insightful study, *Narrating Modernity*, Fletcher defines the problem picture as referring to:

Ambiguous, slightly risqué, paintings of modern life which invited multiple, equally plausible interpretations. While based on the conventions of Victorian narrative painting, problem pictures omit the necessary clues, stock characters and textual titles that made such paintings and their moral messages legible, and thus presented to their audiences morally, as well as narratively, indeterminate 'problems'.⁵⁵

These tendencies appear to be particularly close to Whistler's practice. Moreover, Fletcher assesses the value of the problem picture as more than just an idle curiosity, but that it offered a form of critical engagement with the modern. Thus, the

creators of problem pictures...invoked characteristics that connoted the distinctively 'modern'...including an interest in the naturalistic representation of modern life, a play with narrative ambiguity, and a focus on questions of gender, sexuality and identity.⁵⁶

Such criteria seem to be strikingly close to the assessment of Whistler's images under analysis here. In terms of "narrative ambiguity" there is yet one more etching from the *Once a Week* series that marks out reverie's significance in relation to Whistler's early work. This illustration, like the others, also draws new light on the painting *Symphony in White, No. 1 The White Girl* in the way that the context of the latter has been conceived.

⁵⁵ Pamela M. Fletcher, *Narrating Modernity: The British Problem Picture, 1895-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 2003). Fletcher notes how histories of modern art tend to ignore the problem picture altogether. Surveys of Victorian art "relegate" it "to an Edwardian footnote, or use the term inaccurately to refer to any narrative painting," 2.

⁵⁶ Fletcher, *Narrating Modernity*, 2.

The work in question is known as *The Relief Fund in Lancashire* (fig. 58) and was published in the 26th July edition of *Once a Week*. The image depicts an expanse of water in the background and in the foreground, the figure of a woman in profile who gazes outwards. As in the other works discussed here, the figure gazes onto a scene that is beyond the recesses of the picture frame. She appears to be in reverie or some form of introspective melancholy. Her left elbow rests on what appears to be a wooden post, while her left hand seems to support her head, thus following the art historical convention of depicting melancholy. Like Joanna Hiffernan in *The White Girl*, the figure wears her hair down and it may be inferred that the non-shaded band of the lower front of her dress, and similarly around her right shoulder denote a white garment. There are other striking similarities with the painting *The White Girl*. If the figure in the etching is visualised without her left arm supporting her head (see composite, fig. 59) and instead as limp as her right arm, then the figure would closely approximate the stance of Hiffernan's in *The White Girl*. Indeed, the appearance of heavily worked lines around the left upper arm and the hidden left hand suggest that this area could have been a later addition to the sketch's composition. Had Whistler initially conceived the figure in this pose, then its appearance could connote the kind of spectral quality one associates with popular visual conceptions of ghostly female figures. Millais' slightly later work, *A Somnambulist* (fig. 51) offers a good example of this, and as with *The Relief Fund in Lancashire*, the coastal setting and menacing sky augment those spectral effects. Ignoring my conjectural reading around the concealed right arm, the etching offers a quality one may easily align with cultural conceptions of the 'other worldly'. Such subject matter may either have been attached to psychological discourses of consciousness but also to spiritualism which we noted above was acknowledged to be a particularly hot topic in the periodicals of 1861.

We can make another link between *The Relief Fund in Lancashire* and *The White Girl* which helps us relate all these images of reverie. In the same way that the narrative function of certain details in *The White Girl*, such as the pelt confounds, the curious object that is positioned in front of the figure in *The Relief Fund in Lancashire* is difficult to decipher.⁵⁷ In relation to the way the pelt in *The White Girl* conjures semantic comparisons between human and beast, we might also note Dallas'

⁵⁷ See Tsui, for more discussion around the ambiguity of the animal pelt. "The Phantasm of Aesthetic Autonomy," 463.

comments regarding the psychological dimension of the mind in somnambulism and how he relates this state to the absence of reason and memory in animals. Dallas:

the mind of beasts, void of self-knowledge and the reason which looks before and after, may well be compared to the belated mind of the sleep-walker; and on the other hand, the processes which we can trace in sleep-walking remind us for their easy precision for nothing so much as instinct.⁵⁸

Aside from the connotations of somnambulism and indeterminate dream imagery, there may be other ways of understanding the object in *The Relief Fund in Lancashire*. In his article “Whistler’s Early Relations with Britain and the Significance of Industry and Commerce for His Art: Part 1”, Robin Spencer discusses Whistler’s connections to an industrial context.⁵⁹ Spencer notes how a young Whistler drew a model for a locomotive turntable. The accompanying illustrations of locomotive engineering drawings in Spencer’s article may offer one possible way of understanding the mystery object in *The Relief Fund in Lancashire* as some kind of engineered object like a locomotive wheel. However, the accompanying text to the illustration in *Once a Week* may offer clues as to a more likely explanation. The text opens thus:

An amateur dramatic performance took place at the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden...in aid of the funds for the relief of the present distress in Lancashire.⁶⁰

In view of the link with the textiles industry and the plight of Lancashire weavers, the object might therefore have a more likely referent in the structure of a spinning wheel. But whatever the object represents, we can see a familiar process in Whistler obscuring certain narrative cues and iconographical elements, whilst bringing to the fore psychologised states relating to reverie. At the same time, we can see Whistler potentially alluding to references inherent to a sense of the modern, be they the plight of the Lancashire weavers, or the phenomenon of the modern sensation novel, and, as such, we can place Whistler as a precursor to the creators of problem pictures and their

⁵⁸ Dallas, *The Gay Science*, Vol. 1, 241.

⁵⁹ Robin Spencer “Whistler’s Early Relations with Britain and the Significance of Industry and Commerce for His Art: Part 1,” *Burlington Magazine* 136, no. 1093 (April 1994): 212-224.

⁶⁰ *Once a Week* (26th July, 1862): 140.

concerns of the modern that Fletcher identifies.⁶¹ Our analysis relating the illustration to *The White Girl* does not end here.

The accompanying text yields yet another juncture at which we can link *The Relief Fund in Lancashire* with *The White Girl* and in so doing, return full-circle to the context of the cult-idea of ‘the woman in white’. Directly following the quote above, the author of the *Once a Week* article notes the programmed events in the “performance”. First in the list – “Mr Wilkie Collins’ drama of “The Lighthouse””. Was Whistler’s etching intended, therefore, to operate as a vignette referencing the Wilkie Collins’s drama? The depicted coastal setting would certainly be appropriate iconography if this were the case. Unfortunately, the text reveals nothing more in the way of details, except that “Tennyson [who was too ill to do so] was requested to furnish an introductory address; [and] the above Vignette was to have accompanied his address”.⁶²



With the contemporary critical reaction to the *White Girl* being couched in terms associating it to either things mysterious or to the sensationalist context of *The Woman in White*, we might have expected Whistler to have returned to the depiction of content which was indeed *less* ambiguous and more in line with the realist strain of the Thames set etchings. Were he to follow such a path, depictions of reverie could be controlled and suggestions of narrative contained, and if Whistler’s imagined artistic trajectory was formalism at this point in 1862 then he could pursue it unfettered from the associated clamour of women in white. This does not happen. However, scholarship on Whistler persistently identifies the *White Girl* as marking a turning point towards the formalist manifesto that Whistler identified in his later statements and lectures.⁶³ This accedence holds us back. The works which immediately followed the *White Girl* demonstrate as much an interest in depictions of sleep and reverie of the

⁶¹ See Daly, “The Woman in White: Whistler, Hiffernan, Courbet, Du Maurier”. Daly offers an insightful discussion around the placing of Whistler within the context of a “speeded up modernity”, and the notion of spectacle, whereby he argues that *The White Girl* relies on “the same shock effects that sustained the sensation novel and drama,” 3.

⁶² *Once a Week* (26 July 1862): 140.

⁶³ See James McNeill Whistler, “The Ten O’Clock Lecture” [1885], in Harrison and Wood ed., *Art in Theory 1815-1900*, 838-847.

kind Rossetti was exploring, as they did with pure formalist endeavour. Rather than considering reverie and formalism as mutually exclusive, we might formulate a better approach which sees the emergence of Whistler's formalist tendencies as running parallel with a picture-making that deployed the theme of reverie – that reverie, as a pictorial device was intrinsic to Whistler's formalist project. To consider reverie in this way, and how its application might have been useful to Whistler is one useful way of revising the account of Whistler's emergent formalism during the critical period between *The White Girl* (1862) and *Symphony in White, No. 3* (1867).

As mentioned above, the titling of *Symphony in White, No. 3* was not retrospective unlike the other two 'symphonies in white'. Therefore, the year 1867, we could say represents a critical juncture at which Whistler more firmly establishes what we might consider a formalist doctrine, inspired as it was by the abstract notions of music and the idea that painting may be unfettered from content and rooted instead to the formal effects of paint. However, in that journey between the two paintings, one thing remains stable – the consistent usage by Whistler of figures in reverie-like states. That figures in reverie appear in *Symphony in White, No. 3*, (a work which marks the stage at which Whistler's formalist trajectory appears more settled), is important to acknowledge here, because it demonstrates how reverie could be deployed in the service of formalist strategies.

This amalgamation of reverie with Whistler's formalism plays a central role in works between 1862 and 1867, as well as featuring as a key aspect of major works in the early 1870s. In my section above on *The White Girl*, I caution the reader against a purely formalist account of the work and instead point to a context which shows the significance of reverie within a fairly wide discursive field and how that might be attached to the work itself. That context remains pertinent also to *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl*, and *Symphony in White, No. 3*, as well as important etchings such as *Weary* (1863, fig. 60). Therefore, to attach that context to works between 1862 and 1867, to acknowledge formalist developments, and to consider the persistence of reverie in Whistler at this point, helps us to explore the particular nature of his work in this period. In brief, my claim is that the development of Whistler's artistic formalism is bound up in the parallel applications of reverie between 1862 and 1867. Reverie, I contend, is implicated in Whistler's formalism.

What is clear in the three ‘symphonies in white’ is the way that reverie, or sleep-like states, are used by Whistler to explore the potential of reverie as a subject, while concurrently operating as a kind of template which functions as a backdrop to formal investigations. One might say that reverie forms a kind of invisible content which functions as a device for pictorial organisation. The amalgam of reverie within a pronounced formal schema is significant to the works from this point on, through to the early 1870s. *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl* and *Symphony in White, No. 3* certainly illustrate Whistler’s developing interests in form. Many authors have also considered the influence of Albert Moore on Whistler around the mid-1860s and this scholarship makes much of the way Whistler seems to have absorbed Moore’s own interests and artistic concerns around form.⁶⁴ I will briefly consider the relationship between the two artists when I come to discuss Whistler’s *Symphony in White, No. 3*. We could say that by the early 1870s, Whistler’s exposition of formal interests appears fully fledged. Yet, it is very interesting to note how in two of the most significant works of the early 1870s, *Arrangement in Grey and Black: The Artist’s Mother* (1871) and its sister work, *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 2* (1873) the significance of reverie-like states maintains a central role. The concern here, however, is with the Whistler’s emergent formalism and, in order to assess the significance of reverie within that project, we need to turn to its inception in the early 1860s.

The parallel development between reverie and formalism appears in the early 1860s. A good place to start to unravel its development is July 1862, when Whistler and Rossetti met. By January 1863 a friendship developed between the two.⁶⁵ Whistler would likely have been aware of Rossetti’s new works of the 1860s featuring depictions of reverie and, perhaps as a result of this, he produced an etching entitled *Weary*, (1863, fig. 60) which certainly appears to have been inspired by Rossetti’s works.

Depicted in the etching is a seated woman who seems to be in some state of reverie. Quite different from his realist etchings which featured figures set in contexts of working class labour, (as in the Thames Set works) the figure here occupies a domestic

⁶⁴ See for example, Robyn Asleson, “Nature and Abstraction in the Aesthetic Development of Albert Moore”, in Prettejohn, ed., *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, 126-127.

⁶⁵ Robin Spencer, “Whistler’s ‘The White Girl’: Painting, Poetry and Meaning,” 304.

setting. The wicker chair, voluminous hair and voluminous dress (possibly silk given its reflective properties) connote a middle-class identity far removed from the workers on the Thames. Being careful not to totally exclude that possibility of a connoted working-class identity, we could consider the notion of the fallen woman. However, without the depiction of specific details suggesting a moralising narrative typical of say, Holman Hunt's *Awakening Conscience* (1853), the reader of *Weary* might only speculate over possible narratives.⁶⁶ It is this lack of detail alongside the representation of reverie which ferments this work within the schema I have outlined above, of ambiguous narratives as a constituent of emergent Aestheticist principles. *Weary* falls within that oeuvre of similar works by Rossetti, particularly the latter's drawings of Lizzie Siddal, and as with Rossetti's works, the etching propagates ambiguity. Indeed the title itself does not confirm fully the exact state of consciousness, and this uncertainty is played out further in the ambiguous treatment of the subject's eyes. It is especially hard for the spectator to determine an exact position of the sitter's eyes, which seem to oscillate between being either open or closed. This ambiguity strikes something of a chord with the interest that psychologists, such as Holland, had with states of transition between sleep and wakefulness. Is the figure awake or asleep? When we read the eyes as open, a further ambiguity is suggested by the fact that her eyes appear almost to have rolled back – as if the sitter is in some state of trance-like delirium. Married to this uncertainty is the pronounced formal quality of the etching, with its lack of finish and seemingly deliberate indeterminacy in the lower half of the work; the right hand for example is merely hinted at, while Hiffernan's left hand is impossible to situate. The loose formal structure, the liberal, linear strokes and the uncertain detailing, collude with the ambiguous content of the sitter's conscious state.

Two associated charcoal drawings also made around the time of *Weary*, similarly bind a formal intensity with the subject of (un)consciousness. *The Sleeper* (c.1863, fig. 61) also depicts Jo Hiffernan reclining on either a seat or bed. As with *Weary*, it is not totally certain how we are meant to read the eyes of the figure; her left eye actually

⁶⁶ As with the *White Girl*, the etching *Weary* can be considered alongside Pre-Raphaelite works of fallen women. Tsui discusses sexuality and offers a reading that considers the connotations apparent in *The White Girl* convey a "deliberate mixture of conflicting signs of feminine purity and corruption," 467. See also, Daly, "The Woman in White: Whistler, Hiffernan, Courbet, Du Maurier," for a discussion around the notion of female chastity and innocence, 11.

appears to be slightly open, while her right could be read as closed. Once again, an ambiguity around the exact state of consciousness comes into play. This uncertainty is accentuated by the lack of clear details of objects – thus we cannot fathom if the setting is a bedroom or sitting room. Nor can we fathom whether the depicted spherical mass of cross-hatched lines that flow around the figure's left hand is the woman's dress, a bedspread or a rug.

The related drawing *Sleeping Woman* (c.1863, fig. 62) is perhaps the least ambiguous of all these three works. It is clear that she sits in a wicker chair, that her eyes are fully closed, and given the title, that she is indeed sleeping.⁶⁷ But as with its companion works, the subject here is used as an opportunity for the exploration of form; in particular we might observe the effects of mass as determined by the lower half of the figure's body and how the upper perimeter of her crinoline (or is it a mass of rugs?) bifurcates the drawing into two distinct halves.

Together, the three works demonstrate Whistler's interest in the kinds of possibilities afforded to subjects in reverie-like states, and in each case there is a pronounced experimental formal scheme. Exploring the boundaries between sleep and other forms of consciousness and their affinity with Rossetti's works, hint that these works can be seen as indicative of Whistler exploring a shift away from realism.⁶⁸ We might note that this shift away from realism alongside the apparent influence of Rossetti in works of 1863 such as *Weary* and *The Sleeper* appears to have extended quite dramatically to Whistler's *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl*.

Looking at the painting certainly signals a number of similarities between the two artists' works around this time. Significant amongst those are the depiction of reverie and the use of Oriental objects. Other similarities include the use of the mirror as a device both formal and symbolic, in order to reiterate the condition of reverie and the

⁶⁷ Whistler's painting of 1861 *The Coast of Brittany* or *Alone with the Tide* depicts a young Breton peasant girl propped and reclined against the rocks asleep. Unlike Moore and Rossetti, there is little besides this painting and the three works discussed here that depicts the state of sleep except one or two minor works, such as *Note in Red: The Siesta* (1883-4).

⁶⁸ See Spencer, "Whistler, Swinburne and Art For Art's Sake," in *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, ed. Prettejohn, 66-67.

realm of the psychological.⁶⁹ Some sources note how a photograph owned by Rossetti (fig. 63) (taken by William Downey in June 1863) of Fanny Cornforth may have been used by Whistler for his *Symphony in White, No 2*, a possibility which would further bind the working practices of the two artists.⁷⁰

Unlike the figure of Hiffernan in the *White Girl*, whose psychological state is indeterminate, the figure in the *Little White Girl* (again Hiffernan modelled), is without much doubt intended to be read as being immersed in reverie. We can say this with some confidence because the work has much in common with other contemporary works⁷¹ intended to depict reverie states⁷² such as John Roddam Stanhope's *Thoughts of The Past* (1859, fig. 64) or Millais' *Meditation* (1859).⁷³ In this respect *The Little White Girl* falls more easily within the popular conventions of depicting reverie than does the *White Girl*. Moreover, it is a strong possibility that Whistler recognised the difficulties the public had in reading the latter, which is why a slightly more conventional approach to the signification of the figure's state in the *Little White Girl* was worked out. That the *Little White Girl* was accepted by the Royal Academy (unlike *The White Girl*) where it was exhibited in May 1864 as *The Little White Girl* (cat. No. 530), may testify to the palatability of the subject matter in the eyes of the Academy judges.⁷⁴ But this is not to say that the work's application of reverie and reverie's operations as content are not without complexity.

While the signification of reverie in *The Little White Girl* appears more clear-cut, the way it comes into play is elaborate. Operating on different levels, reverie is placed as

⁶⁹ Comparisons here might be drawn with Rossetti's *Fazio's Mistress (Aurelia)* (1863-1873).

⁷⁰ Rossetti had many photographs by Downey. See the Rossetti Archive, <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/sa223.rap.html> [accessed 26 July 2011].

⁷¹ An anonymous etching, entitled *Before the Mirror* formerly attributed to Millais, which depicts a figure standing at a mantelpiece in reverie, is reproduced in Dormant, *James McNeill Whistler*, fig.42, 286.

⁷² We might compare Whistler's figure at the mantelpiece mirror to paintings of women by the window. See Spencer, "Whistler's 'The White Girl': Painting, Poetry and Meaning", 307. For the subject of women by the window in Victorian paintings see E. Shefer, "The Woman at the Window in Victorian Art, Christina Rossetti as the Subject in Millais's *Mariana*", *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, 4 (November 1983): 14-25.

⁷³ Millais's *Meditation*, (1859, Oil on Wood, The Provost and Scholars of King's College, Cambridge).

⁷⁴ Tom Taylor in his review of the work tells us that it was effectively hung for the preview, but given an inferior position for the public show. *The Times* (24 May 1865), available at <http://archive.timesonline.co.uk>.

central to the work via mechanisms through the gazes of the figure and her reflection, the depiction of aesthetic contemplation, and the suggestion of double identity or double consciousness. Exploring firstly the implications of the direction of the figure's gaze, we find ramifications relating to issues around contemplation and the perception of beauty. Looking carefully, we notice how she gazes towards her left hand which rests on the mantelpiece of the fireplace. Situated next to her left hand is a large blue and white Chinese vase, and next to this a red Japanese bowl. In the 1860s, such ceramics were being defined in aesthetic terms as collectable objects of beauty. Both Whistler and Rossetti expanded their collection of oriental objet d'art in the 1860s and such pieces are depicted in several paintings. Kathy Psomiades has commented on the role of such objects as playing a part in the development of Aestheticist principles.⁷⁵ Psomiades links Aestheticism to ideas around surface, depth, art's autonomy and its contradictory place in commodity culture. An important question arises here around the degree to which reverie paintings offer critical scope in addressing art's separation from the praxis of everyday life. Reverie encourages 'looking past' the material character of the commodity form. In *The Little White Girl* the figure looks beyond the material beauty of the blue and white china vase that sits on the mantelpiece; thus, in this instance, the subject in reverie 'loses sight' of exterior objects, as thoughts drift away from immediate material surroundings.

When depicted in artworks, objet d'art could signal the role of art in the appreciation of beauty, and therefore invite the viewer to consider their own aesthetic contemplation of the work of art before them.⁷⁶ This brings us to considering the significance around the intra-diegetic depiction of figures in works contemplating beauty. I would contend that the intra-diegetic aesthetic contemplation of objects is closely bound up with the depiction and imagined operations or significance of reverie, in the aesthetic experience. In such depictions, figures appear in reverie-like states and the viewer is led to imagine that objects contemplated induce such states. Whistler's painting *Purple and Rose: The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks*, (fig. 65) also of 1864, is a clear example of induced reverie in its depiction of a figure contemplating a Chinese porcelain vase.

⁷⁵ Psomiades, *Beauty's Body*.

⁷⁶ See my discussion above in Chapter Two relating to Rossetti. Also, see Kate Flint "Edward Burne-Jones's *The Mirror of Venus*: Surface and Subjectivity in the Art Criticism of the 1870s," in *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, ed. Prettejohn, 152-164.

Indeed, this example, along with other similar examples, help us to register the significance of reverie as central to experiences of viewing art; for not only can we ascribe a sense of reverie being an indicator of experiencing the aesthetic, but furthermore, of experiencing the symbolic potential of the aesthetic object. In other words, we might envisage reverie bringing home to the viewer symbolic properties of objects, either of the kind imbued with cultural capital or charged with personal meanings and significance.⁷⁷

As discussed earlier, in cases like these, the object inducing the contemplative act is notionally analogous, but also different from painting itself, while also, the figure's actions are indicative, (and didactic) of how viewers might themselves respond to art – that their response might be couched as a spectatorial reverie. The painting by Octavius Oakley *A Student of Beauty* (186, fig. 66) plays out these concerns, as the figure, a female artist, dwells intently on the bust which is likely intended as the next subject of her own painting. Here, the bust, (the object of beauty signalled in the title of the painting) invokes reverie. While in Rossetti's works discussed in Chapter Two, the conduit for this kind of spectatorial reflexivity was the subject of the female figure (herself an object of beauty), we see here that the art object is an additional agent in this relationship.

We might match the same actions of contemplation to the figure of Hiffernan as she gazes towards the vase. In doing this, we remind ourselves of the significance of the emergent concerns of Aestheticism and how critics, such as Pater, came to apply, in their own writings on works of art, a discursive account in terms of their work being a reverie on the object being considered. Considered in this way, the term 'reverie' extends beyond its meaning relating to the psychological condition of an individual, towards something productive, comparable with contemplation. And we might recall Pater's commentary on Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* as itself a reverie on the painting formed by a precursory spectatorial reverie. His description is very much a flight of fancy in the way that W.B. Carpenter understood how reverie could be a "poetic

⁷⁷ Other examples include James Tissot, *Young Ladies Looking at Oriental Objects*, (1869, Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati).

reverie” as opposed to the abstract reverie initiated by the scientific mind.⁷⁸ Pater even uses the term reverie in order to accentuate his flight of fancy:

Hers is the head upon which all “the ends of the world are come,” and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions.⁷⁹

We can say with some confidence that Whistler readily accepted a subjective reception of the kind Pater would later demonstrate, as a preferred mode of reading this work. It is possible to make this assertion because of the decision Whistler took to print on gold paper and paste onto the frame of *The Little White Girl* the poem by Swinburne entitled “Before the Mirror”, itself a reverie on the painting. Whistler must have admired Swinburne’s response to *The Little White Girl*, as he described in his letter to Whistler, (2 April 1865) the “metaphor of the rose and the notion of sad and glad mystery in the face languidly contemplative of its own phantom and all the other things seen by their phantoms”.⁸⁰

Swinburne undoubtedly picked up the way that facial expression is doubled up in the image, which depicts a reflected image of the figure along with her fore-grounded profile; thus, an expression of both “sad” and “glad mystery” was suggested to the poet. His observations are useful to us and we can gain something from considering the nature of the concurrency of thoughts suggested by the two faces. This concurrency is reiterated in the variety of possible foci of the figure’s gaze. The variety of trajectories of gaze not only creates a structural ambiguity, but also has the effect of at once suggesting possible meanings and then deflecting them. Taking the fore-

⁷⁸ Carpenter writes that reverie and abstraction “are fundamentally the same in their character, though the form of their products differs with the temperament and previous habits of the individual, and with the degree in which his consciousness may remain open to external impressions.” *Principles of Mental Physiology* 3rd ed., 544. Elements of Carpenter’s book had been published much earlier in the 1850s. His collected essays were published in *Nature and Man: Essays Scientific and Philosophical* (1889), which includes the essay first published in 1850, “The Automatic Execution of Voluntary Movements” in which he discusses reverie and somnambulism.

⁷⁹ Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* 1869 version.

⁸⁰ Spencer, “Whistler, Swinburne and Art For Art’s Sake,” 62. See also, letter, Algernon Swinburne to James Whistler 2nd April 1865, *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler, 1855-1903*, on-line edition, (record no. 05619) [accessed 26 July 2011]. Enclosed with the letter are the verses.

grounded image of the figure first, her gaze is directed predominantly in the direction of the flower that overlaps the blue and white vase. However, we are unable to determine the exact angle of trajectory of her right eye, therefore, it is not clear if her gaze falls on the flower or falls more to her left, onto the vase itself, or indeed through a gap in each. Some suggest her gaze actually falls on her wedding ring which would therefore introduce an “implied narrative” with its connotations relating to marriage.⁸¹ Moving to a reading of the image of her reflected face in the mirror, we also find similar ambiguities. On first thoughts, it appears as if the direction of this set of eyes similarly fall downwards in the direction of the vase, but a little lower in the region of the woman’s hand. Yet, further deliberation tells us that were we to anthropomorphise the reflected head by imagining its capacity to see, the proximity of the mirror to the mantelpiece negates this as a physical possibility. Instead, the gaze of the reflected head must have a trajectory that falls well above the arm, to penetrate the central area of the room. In essence, a coherent reading of the direction of the figure’s gaze is an impossible struggle. The multiplicity of trajectories cancels out the assuredness of a singular determinate focus.

Such indeterminacy of gazes calls to mind Crary’s assessment of the shifting understanding of the properties of vision in the nineteenth century, from a Cartesian objective logic, towards a subjective vision, which results in what Crary terms the “crisis in perception”.⁸² Robert Slifkin argues that Whistler can be placed in opposition to scientific positivism, artistic realism, visibility and modernisation – instead, his work represents invisibility, aesthetic subjectivity and the unconscious.⁸³ We can ally such an assault on determinate visibility with Swinburne’s poem “Before the Mirror” and his line, “she sees by formless gleams”. Another line “she sees all past things pass” might not only be read as a reverie on memory, but also in a very literal manner of her seeing past things, in the sense of looking through something without attending

⁸¹ Dorment notes that in spite of the “implied narrative” demarcated by the wedding ring the work would still deny the Victorian viewer the certainty of this as a “subject” painting. *James McNeill Whistler*, 78. Spencer briefly discusses the distinction between the “ringless” ‘White Girl’ with the ‘Little White Girl’ “Whistler’s ‘The White Girl’: Painting, Poetry and Meaning,” 309.

⁸² See Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1990), and his *Suspensions of Perception*.

⁸³ Robert Slifkin “James Whistler as the Invisible Man: Anti-Aestheticism and Artistic Vision,” 53-75.

to it with attentive cognition. In this sense, Hiffernan's gaze is accurately representative of the psychological experience of reverie, whereby consciousness altogether misses, or overlooks a perception of what the eye focuses upon. Such effects of vision were noted by psychologists. Holland noted how the passage to inward trains of thought may, or may not be the results of a willed action, thus he observes:

the faculty the mind possesses of withdrawing itself wholly or partially from objects of sense which yet physically impress the external organs in the same way as when fully perceived, shifting itself to some other sensations or to trains of internal thought, sometimes by direct effort of the will sometimes, in effect of causes with which the will has no concern.⁸⁴

One time artist and psychologist, William James also described the loss of perception which results in reverie, but noted how such a state may be *induced* at will:

This curious state of inhibition can at least for a few moments be produced at will by fixing the eye on vacancy. . . . Monotonous mechanical activities that end by being automatically carried on tend to produce it. . . . The eyes are fixed on vacancy, the sounds of the world melt into confused unity, the attention becomes dispersed so that the whole body is felt, as it were, at once, and the foreground of consciousness is filled, if by anything, by a sort of solemn sense of surrender to the empty passing of time. In the dim background of our mind we know what we ought to be doing: getting up, dressing ourselves, answering the person who has spoken to us. . . . But somehow we cannot start. Every moment we expect the spell to break, for we know no reason why it should continue. But it does continue, pulse after pulse, and we float with it.⁸⁵

James's description of the trance-like effects of reverie that keep us locked into its spell, is pertinent to all images of reverie, but seems to have a particular resonance with Whistler's *The Little White Girl* in which the notion of eyes being fixed on vacancy comes to the fore. The lack of a solid detailed pictorial handling further exaggerates this uncertainty and sense of vacancy. The eyes here are rendered as painterly masses, the left eye for instance lacking any indication of the white of the eye. This loose handling of paint that is used to mark out the eyes in the figure of the reflected image accentuates indeterminate vision and was clearly remarked by one contemporary reviewer. Tom Taylor's piece in *The Times* commented: "In the glass is

⁸⁴ Holland, *Chapters on Mental Physiology*, 43-44.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 101, original source, William James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 1 (New York: Dover, 1890), 444.

a blurred (and needlessly ugly) reflection of her face, which, as seen by the spectator, is in profile. The execution is of the broadest and least laboured kind, but its slightness is the result not of carelessness, but of careful calculation".⁸⁶ Taylor's account is primarily concerned with formal execution, for example he notes how

of all the paintings in the exhibition...[this] one [is] most likely to impress itself deeply on minds finely attuned to the delicate harmonies of colour and the subtlest suggestions of form.⁸⁷

But as Swinburne's poem suggests, viewers of the work would have been drawn to the sense of a deeper complexity in the figure's reverie given the two differing facial depictions and their distinct expressions which suggested a concurrency of different thoughts. In this sense, the work suggests something of the tensions of personal experience with all its complexity, but also the depth of psychological workings. This depth and complexity hinted at in the work's content combines with the formal qualities of depth; thus for Jette Heldjsen, the structural scheme of the work expands the possibilities of suggested space through the vehicle of the mirror and the different ways the figure and her reflected image is framed in the work. Thus,

The Little White Girl is simultaneously a harmonious whole, contained within its own regular lines, and at the same time it is infinite, with no actual borders to it. We are taken into its depth or space, but, where this space seems to abandon its formal nature and lose itself into haziness, psychological space takes over.⁸⁸

Heldjsen's analysis is useful here because it helps identify the amalgam of formal schema alongside psychological content. The suggested intensity of that psychological space, multifarious in character, was not alien to mid-Victorian culture, as indicated in my first chapter. The idea of thoughts and memories carving out deep channels in the mind was staple fare in the psychological theory of Associationism, which still held ground in the mid-Victorian period.⁸⁹ But also, the duality of character suggested by Whistler's figure was not only a feature of the more specialist psychological literature,

⁸⁶ Tom Taylor, *The Times* (24 May 1865).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Jette Heldjsen "What can the Aesthetic Movement Tell Us about Aesthetic Education?" *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 35, no.1 (Spring, 2001): 91.

⁸⁹ For an assessment of Associationism on Victorian psychology see Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and Culture and British Culture*.

such as in Holland's chapter "On The Brain as a Double Organ", it also could be found in the 1860s in popular contexts.⁹⁰ Characters revealing dual personalities or schizophrenic tendencies were evident in popular novels, while both spiritualism through the vehicle of the medium, and the hypnotised subject each represented the unconscious as a conspicuous 'other' to consciousness.⁹¹

Moving forwards, the binding together of psychological content with form is extended further by Whistler in *Symphony in White, No. 3* (fig. 43). As with the previous two 'symphonies in white', the subject is of female-reverie within a domestic setting. Apparently, Whistler was engrossed with the work's formal structure. Writing to Fantin Latour on 16 August 1865, he says, "Most of all it's the composition which occupies me", and in the letter he illustrates in a sketch the compositional structure of the girls arms in relation to the sofa.⁹²

In the final painting, Whistler depicts two young women, both seated, inactive and seemingly immersed in reverie-like states. Unlike the other two 'symphonies in white' which feature sole figures, it is more difficult to give the work the status of 'portrait' and therefore we can push the work more towards the category of subject picture. Michael Fried has argued that portraits cannot be absorptive where the sitter gazes out at the viewer, unless they are, like Fantin Latour's women, occupied in some activity like reading.⁹³ To extend that idea, it would be feasible to suggest the sitter is in an absorptive state in images where the artist seemingly intends the spectator to read the figure as absorbed, (perhaps in reverie), and that this would notionally preclude the

⁹⁰ Holland describes "double consciousness" as, "where the mind passes by alteration from one state to another, each having the perception of external impressions and appropriate trains of thought, but not linked together by the ordinary gradations, or by mutual memory. I have seen one or two singular examples of this kind, but none so extraordinary as have been recorded by other authors. Their relations to the phenomena of sleep, of somnambulism, reverie, and insanity, abound in conclusions of the deepest interest to every part of the mental history of man". Holland, *Chapters on Mental Physiology*, 2nd ed. (1858), 187.

⁹¹ On the subject of dual personality as a Victorian phenomenon, see Antoni Melechi, *Fugitive Minds: On Madness, Sleep and Other Twilight Afflictions* (London: Arrow Books, 2003). Also see Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture* (London: Virago, 1987) and *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle* (London: Virago, 1992).

⁹² "Et maintenant, c'est surtout la composition qui m'occupe voici ou j'en suis". See *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler, 1855-1903*, on-line edition, (record no. 11477) [accessed 26 July 2011]. The sketch is illustrated in Prettejohn *After the Pre-Raphaelites*, 66.

⁹³ Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 233.

sitter being unaware of the beholder/artist. Fried also points out that if a viewer were made to feel as though the sitter were present before the artist, i.e., cognizant of the artist, then they would not be present to the viewer. This raises some interesting ideas around paintings where we know that there is a strong relationship between the artist and the model as in the case of Hiffernan and Whistler, or for example James Tissot and Kathleen Newton.

Although we might describe *Symphony in White, No. 3* as a subject painting, Whistler makes very limited concessions to the expectations of mid-Victorian conventions that tie subject to narrative. As in the etching *Rotherhithe* (1860, fig. 46), the figures do not converse in spite of their shared proximity. The lack of conversation only emphasizes the idea that they are emerged in private reflective states which is further emphasised by the composition. The two figures occupy different pictorial spaces and different poses in relation to the sofa, and while the girl on the right (Emilie Jones, a.k.a. 'Milly') sits in profile, the other on the left (Jo Hiffernan), looks outwards and gives the spectator a frontal view of her face. Jo Hiffernan's head rests on her arm, again indicative of the art historical convention for depicting melancholy. Her facial expression, however, does not appear melancholic, more a contented reverie, partly suggested by her half-smile. On the right, the figure seated on the floor, resting against the sofa, appears sadder in her expression. The occupation of the figures within different but related pictorial space corresponds with their different but related psychological space, not unlike the duality of expressions in *Symphony in White, no.2: The Little White Girl*, again suggesting the parallel relationship of form and reverie. We can explore that relationship further by considering the links between Whistler and his contemporary Albert Moore.

The composition of the seated figures in *Symphony in White, No.3* has led several commentators to draw similarities with Albert Moore's work.⁹⁴ Whistler had come to know Moore after seeing and praising his work *The Marble Seat* (1865) exhibited at the Royal Academy. Moore's *Marble Seat* does not depict reverie and it would be

⁹⁴ Dormant notes that Whistler met Moore in 1865 and relates the work *Symphony in White, No. 3* to Moore's *The Musician* (1867) (Yale Centre for British art, New Haven); *James McNeill Whistler*, 81. Asleson gives that same work the title, *A Musician* and dates it earlier to 1865-6, therefore positioning it as contemporaneous with *Symphony in White, No. 3*. Robyn Asleson, *Albert Moore* (London, 2000).

wrong to suggest Moore's work at this point, around 1865, was responsible for Whistler's interest in figures being immersed in reverie, with Whistler having already explored the concept as early as 1859. However, Moore's work may have encouraged Whistler to maintain the device of reverie, seeing as the placing of figures seated in languorous positions as in *Symphony in White, No. 3* was indeed a common feature in Moore's own work. Moore's *Lilies* (1866, fig. 67) for example, shows a close compositional similarity to *Symphony in White, No. 3* with the scaling and orientation of the couch.

The indeterminate psychological space so key to the works of Whistler I have been looking at, resides also in Moore's work. The exact psychological state of the figure in *Lilies* is ambiguous. Although an initial response might suggest she is immersed in sleep, further consideration might take account of her raised left arm and her left hand's fingertips which cling to the top of a cushion suggesting sleep has not taken its full hold and that she occupies a state between sleep and wakefulness. One aspect however, of the depiction of reverie that Whistler may have taken from Moore, is the idea of having the figures languidly seated. In both *Lilies* and *A Musician* (1865-66, fig. 68) Moore's figures languorously recline, having fallen into reverie-like states and it seems right to relate the works in this way to Whistler.

Both Hiffernan's vacant gaze, along with the collapsing state of Milly Jones, whose restful languor looks to have caused the fan⁹⁵ to drop from her hand, imposes an ambiguity in the exactitude of their psychological and physiological states, and perhaps this is what encouraged Fantin Latour to describe the work to Whistler after seeing it in Paris in 1867, as "a bit misty, more like a dream".⁹⁶ Spalding notes how the figure of Jo Hiffernan looks outwards "so that she interrogates the spectator" thus charging "the picture with a note of psychological enquiry".⁹⁷ However, as with *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl* that outward gaze does not meet precisely the gaze of the spectator. Hiffernan's gaze has more in common with the seated figures

⁹⁵ For more on the significance of the fan in Victorian painting, see Pamela Gerrish Nunn "Fine Art and the Fan 1860-1930," *Journal of Design History* 17, no.3 (2004): 251-266.

⁹⁶ Spencer, "Whistler, Swinburne and Art For Art's Sake," 68.

⁹⁷ Spalding, *Whistler*, 72.

in the foreground in Whistler's painting of the same period, *Variations in Flesh Colour and Green: The Balcony* (1865, fig. 69).

The work depicts two figures in reverie-like states gazing toward the viewer, but in each case the precise direction looks to be more of a near miss, with Whistler creating enough ambiguity in the handling of paint around the eyes to create the kind of uncertainty seen in the reflected eyes of Hiffernan in *The Little White Girl*. Taking this point further, it is useful to make further comparisons with the work of Rossetti in order to consider the formal handling of the eyes in his figures and how this might exaggerate the sense of indeterminacy of psychological states. In *Bocca Baciata* (fig. 13), for example, the detail and finish are tight enough to avoid any uncertainty around the direction of the gaze, whereas Whistler's looser style creates ambiguity, thus generating something of a dialectical tension around the depiction of reverie. On the one hand, the viewer's attention is drawn to the technicalities of paint, of brushwork, which alongside the imaginative composition shifts the interest away from content. On the other hand, the occlusion of detail operates as a metaphor for the difficulties of reading the thoughts of a figure. Whistler's and Rossetti's corresponding formal treatment of figures in reverie comes close in the mid-1860s when Rossetti's formal treatment of *Beata Beatrix* (fig. 33) could be seen to correspond with that found in *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl*, and *Symphony in White, No. 3*. Together these works demonstrate the semantic potential of a looser style in the handling of detail, and the formation of "mistiness" or "vagueness" in Latour's⁹⁸ sense. And in this we are able to locate the marriage of form and content – form that fosters and encourages the same characteristics we would assign to reverie itself.



The completion of *Symphony in White, No. 3* marks the point at which Whistler started to adopt musical titles for his works. In a letter to Alfred Stevens, February 13/20,

⁹⁸ Spencer's translation of Latour's remarks "a bit misty, more like a dream", derive from Fantin Latour's letter to Whistler of 12 February 1867, in which he writes "un peu nuage, c'est comme un rêve". See Spencer, "Whistler, Swinburne and Art For Art's Sake," 68.

1867, he refers to the work “symphonie en blanc No.3”.⁹⁹ When Whistler started work on the painting around 1865, it is unlikely that he attached the idea of it being a musical analogue. At some point not long after 1867, however, ‘The White Girl’ and ‘The Little White Girl’ were retrospectively given new titles with the prefix ‘Symphony in White’ owing to Whistler’s nomenclature of ‘III’ in *Symphony in White, No. III*. Care should be given in assessing the works begun before 1867, not to over-emphasise musical analogies. Instead we need to see Whistler working in a similar context to artists like Rossetti, in which reverie as a subject matter was being explored in a variety of ways.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, it still makes sense not to ignore the popular contexts associated with unusual psychological phenomenon that coloured interpretations of *The White Girl*. Mesmerism still had a currency in the mid 1860s when Whistler was working on *Symphony in White, No. 3* and a comparison between the painting and the Du Maurier’s illustration for “The Notting Hill Mystery” from *Once a Week* (6 December 1862, fig. 50) is one way of understanding the possible meanings attached to disengaged figures in abstracted states.

By the late 1860s, Whistler’s intent is to eschew a sense of that context and, in doing so, he maintains a distance from the idea of reverie as subject in the way it was used by genre artists such as Stanhope, Egley and others. He may have retrospectively stripped reverie of its narrative potential in his re-titling strategies, however, it is important to note its retention of conceptual potential as an indicator of aesthetic rapture as it might relate to the experience of music. By the time of *Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1: The Artist’s Mother* (1871) and *Arrangement in Grey and Black, No.2: Portrait of Thomas Carlyle* (1872) reverie-like states of absorption and introspection could for Whistler, be absolved from any narrative or signifying potential, because by then his formalist agenda had taken shape as a central doctrinal feature of his practice.

In the following decades of the nineteenth century, reverie can be seen to operate along both the lines I have outlined here. On the one hand, it can align itself to narrative themes, however obscurely, while on the other, it could offer a foundation for other

⁹⁹ James Whistler to Alfred Stevens, February 13/20, 1867, *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, on-line edition, (record no. 08145) [accessed 26 July 2011].

¹⁰⁰ Spencer, makes the point that particularly in the 1860s, Whistler’s work can be integrated into the context of Victorian painting which at times he did aim to emulate. *James McNeill Whistler*, 9.

artistic trajectories. Its narrative possibilities would still be mobilised, for example, by artists pursuing realist concerns, the subject of the next chapter, while reverie as a vehicle for expressing Aestheticist concerns retains a presence into the twentieth century. The question of the importance of reverie to modernism may be hinted at here: as Elizabeth Prettejohn has suggested, the links between Aestheticism and modernism are acute enough to consider the significance of seeing early works by Picasso in relation to Burne Jones, or Klimt's *Danae* to Frederic Lord Leighton's *Flaming June*.¹⁰¹



¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Prettejohn, "From Aestheticism to Modernism, and Back Again," *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 2 (Spring 2006) <http://www.19.bbk.ac.uk/index.php/19/issue/view/65> [accessed 26 July 2011].

CHAPTER IV

REVERIE, CLAUSEN, AND RURAL NATURALISM

This chapter focuses primarily on George Clausen, one of the arch exponents of British Rural Naturalism. A consideration of his work further demonstrates the various operations of and approaches to reverie as a vehicle of meaning in Victorian art. As we saw earlier, precepts of Aestheticism could be allied with the application of reverie as subject matter in apposite ways, thus serving the interests of Aestheticists. Likewise, in this chapter I show that looking closely at the way artists depicted reverie, informs our understanding of those artists' allegiances to particular artistic principles, to critical reception, and to current artistic trends.

The chapter will show that reverie is a key feature not only of Clausen's work, but of other artists associated with Rural Naturalism. Doing this furthers the thesis that applications of reverie appear in an array of works which were attached to different styles and philosophies of art production. Clausen is represented as a key figure amongst British artists who came to embrace the emerging tendencies of Naturalism around the end of the 1870s and early 1880s. In the Naturalist works that he produced, I trace applications of reverie, which I argue inflected particular meanings for contemporary viewers. These inflections are heterogeneous, varying from work to work. As such, they appear to demonstrate Clausen's various articulations of response to particular problems pertaining to Naturalist principles and the picturing of the rural labourer in the 1880s. For the Naturalist artist, a key problem centred on the creation of an accurate, objective depiction of rural life. However, representing rural life objectively was (and still is) problematic. I show that Clausen was at the mercy of opposing myths of rural life and that his works appear to respond variously to those myths, primarily because of the expectations of the viewing public and the nature of the critical reaction to his works.¹ I argue that reverie is deployed in various ways in accordance with those myths. As such, reverie in his works has a schizophrenic

¹ Particularly useful here, for framing the character of these oppositional myths of rural life as they pertained to Victorian art, has been Christiana Payne, *Toil and Plenty: Images of the Agricultural Landscape in England 1780-1890* (New Haven And London, Yale University Press, 1993).

presence. It appears at times to explode populist myths of rural idylls in the way it serves connotations of hardship, toil and poverty. In other instances it tallies with popular artistic conceptions of reverie as a signifier of femininity, romance, and daydream, and in so doing reinforces an urbanised conventional perspective of rural life as idyllic and romanticized. Whilst reverie may seem like an unlikely focus of investigation for a study of Clausen, I contend that it has much relevance in key works and its presence is more pronounced than has hitherto been recognised. Kenneth McConkey has suggested Clausen's interest in reverie to be temporary. Discussing the painting *Day Dreams* (1883, fig. 13), McConkey comments: "not usually given to reverie, Clausen may have momentarily been impressed by the work of romantic naturalists such as Frank O'Meara and William Stott of Oldham".² This chapter suggests reverie to be a much stronger feature of Clausen's work. In order to fully demonstrate that presence of reverie in Clausen's work, the chapter also considers works prior to his Rustic Naturalist phase. In the period 1879-1881 Clausen not only shows an interest in reverie but draws inspiration from artists, such as Tissot, who were often preoccupied with depicting reverie-like states. In this pre-Rustic Naturalist phase, Clausen had already adapted principles that became associated with Naturalism, such as the depiction of modern subjects without idealisation and without predictable narratives. In fact, we could say that in this phase, there lies a realist foundation. His depictions, in the late 1870s, of Dutch fisher girls and women washing point to an interest in realism, and in 1888 an article written by Clausen would advocate that the artist should pursue a "modern realism".³ What is particularly interesting is the way that Clausen handles psychologized subjects with a certain predisposition towards authenticity – an accurate faithful rendering which sits within the precepts of Naturalism. In comparison with Aestheticist works, this marks-out notionally a quite different approach to representing the subject in reverie; but with it comes some unexpected curiosities, such as the paradoxical capacity of Realist or Naturalist images to represent the indeterminacy of reverie.

² See Kenneth McConkey, catalogue note, for Sotheby's "Victorian and Edwardian" sale, (11 December 2007), London, [Lot 54], available online at <http://www.sothebys.com/en/catalogues/ecatalogue.html/2007/victorian-edwardian-107132#/r=/en/ecat.fhtml.L07132.html+r.m=/en/ecat.lot.L07132.html/54/> [accessed 26 July 2011].

³ George Clausen, "Bastien Lepage and Modern Realism," *Scottish Arts Review* 1 (1888), 114-15.

The words Naturalism and realism are used extensively in this chapter and require definition. As Kenneth McConkey has pointed out, the terms realism, Realism, naturalism and Naturalism are contested, oft “misused” and “misunderstood”.⁴ He notes that, in Britain in the late nineteenth century, there was no clear delineation between “Realism” and “naturalism” to the degree that there was in France. The ‘realist’ criteria in France was recognised by the depiction of generalised types from the lower classes with the signification of a politicised social message, in contrast to the “*actualité*,” and “the photographic” and the focus “upon individuals, states of minds and precise locations” which characterised Naturalism.⁵ The confusion for the British may be understandable; for example, Naturalist works by Clausen in several cases, appear to advocate critical social comment. Contemporary critics can be forgiven for identifying realism in his works. I have tended to accommodate the terms’ range of inflections, which is perhaps more representative of how Clausen and others would have responded to the concepts of realism and Naturalism. The distinction pointed out by Adrian Jenkins that the word naturalism “describes the work of artists and writers seeking to portray an accurate and un-idealised view of the world around them”, whereas the term “Naturalism (with an initial capital) refers to the specific artistic and literary movement that emerged in France during the second half of the nineteenth century”, is useful, and concurs with my own usage of ‘Naturalism’.⁶ The semantic overlap ought not to obscure our recognition of the key distinction of the works being looked at here – that they represent a version of contemporary life of the poor contextualised by the rural. The subject was not new. Naturalist and realist versions of rural life sat within a broad range of approaches to the subject.⁷ However, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, questions around authenticity and the social meanings attached to depicting the rural poor became increasingly significant. How, then, did reverie function in relation to the capturing of an authentic view of rural life, and to what degree did it obscure or augment social comment? For those Ruralists recognising the great changes in rural economies and working methods, one aspect of the realism in their work was the acknowledgment of a changing world. The

⁴ See Kenneth McConkey, *Memory and Desire: Painting in Britain and Ireland at the Turn of the Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002), 270.

⁵ McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, 270.

⁶ Adrian Jenkins, *Painters and Peasants Henry La Thangue and British Rural Naturalism, 1880-1905* (Bolton: Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, 2000), 6.

⁷ For the range of rural genre see Jenkins, *Painters and Peasants*, 14-23

transience of labour and instability of secure employment was a subject for artists such as Hubert von Herkomer. His painting *Hard Times* (1885, fig. 70) depicts figures in reverie. Depicted reveries in this work and several works by Clausen are set within this context of transitory action. The tension here, of course, was that changes in the landscape jarred with more traditional notions of landscape as permanent. This chapter goes on to demonstrate that depictions of reverie could articulate subtle meanings that related to the onset of significant change affecting rural Britain.

Well before the onset of Naturalism during the 1880s, the painting of rural peasants had become a popular and firmly established genre.⁸ I wish to show that as the representations of rural life became more sophisticated in its Naturalist expression, through artists like Clausen, the depiction of reverie becomes increasingly significant. Part of this significance lies in the fact that reverie could help establish the political intensity of works. On the one hand, reverie could operate as a device to diffuse an overtly political message, while on the other hand, it could augment political comment. This unusual duality makes the co-option of reverie into realist and Naturalist schemes particularly interesting. cursory expectations may lead us to think that the frivolity of reverie as a popular subject and the tendency for its connoting saccharine feminine psychology as the product of romantic daydream would be ill-suited to both realist and Naturalist expressions. It may help, however, to recall at this point my earlier discussion of Whistler's realist phase and his Thames Set etchings. Reverie in those images signifies the experiential condition of labour through its suggestion of rest. This chapter helps extend that earlier brief discussion, but it also helps bind together the sense of reverie as cutting across different philosophies of art, as well as exploring possible relationships between realism and Aestheticism. One outcome of my research around reverie and Aestheticism revealed that reverie could be used as a vehicle to compound certain principles of Aestheticism, such as the contemplation of beauty, the self reflective operations of the viewing subject as contemplative, as well as art for art's sake ideas and the autonomy of art. Reverie, I concluded, complemented Aestheticist doctrine. What might be its effects, however, in relation to the precepts of

⁸ See Payne, *Toil and Plenty*; John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting, 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition 1740-1860* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987).

Naturalism and realism? Could its application augment the objective intensity of Naturalist canvases? Could the depiction of reverie strengthen realist principles by rendering works more politically acute? Or conversely, did reverie act to 'tame' realism by drawing on either its Aestheticist or populist heritage in order to secure a defence against hostile strains of anti-realism inherent to the Academy, criticism and journalism?

As we address these questions we also need to consider something of the goals of Naturalism and how those goals may have equated with not only the authenticity of the representation of rural life, but also the way contemporary stereotypes of the rural labourer coloured such representations. In order to achieve some clarity here, I have drawn on research by the historian George Mingay and others,⁹ whose histories of rural Victorian England have helped inform perspectives on the character of rural life beyond visual representations alone. Studying representation of rural life in paintings requires not only an understanding of the various social and political contexts of rural life, but necessitates an assessment of the functions of painting; thus, while it may have been the goal for some artists to attempt faithful or accurate representations of rural life, it is impossible not to sever from the logic of those representations something of the vicissitudes of the art world, its markets, critics and institutions.

A key challenge to those artists wishing to pursue a truthful representation of rural life was how to negotiate what Christiana Payne has referred to as "rural myths and values".¹⁰ The weight of such myths and values, and their conflation with the expectations of how paintings of rural life ought to function, must have bared down hard on Clausen and others, and may be partially responsible for the limited lifespan of Naturalism which had, by the end of the 1890s, run its course.¹¹ While we may note that elements of Clausen's work in the 1890s and 1900s began to take on symbolist

⁹ George E. Mingay, ed., *The Victorian Countryside* Two Volumes (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981); Pamela Horn, *Labouring Life in the Victorian Countryside* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1976); Alun Howkins, "The Discovery of Rural England" in *Englishness: Culture and Politics 1880-1920* ed., R.Colls and P. Dodd, (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Alun Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History 1859-1925* (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1991); Mark Freeman, "The Agricultural Labourer and the 'Hodge' Stereotype, c. 1850-1914," *Agricultural History Review* 49 (2001), 172-86.

¹⁰ See, Payne's chapter "Rural Myths and Values", *Toil and Plenty*.

¹¹ For the rise and fall of Naturalism in Britain, see Kenneth McConkey, "The End of Naturalism" in *Memory and Desire*, 131-56.

credentials, it should also be noted that paralleling his work in the early 1880s (the high point of Naturalism) ran a concurrent strain of Naturalism, itself characterised by symbolist or even Aestheticist overtones. The works of William Stott of Oldham (1857-1900) and Frank O'Meara were contemporaneous with Clausen's work of the 1880s, and while sharing certain Naturalist precepts, they would incorporate forms of poetic symbolism. Several of their canvases depicting rural peasant scenes imply figures in reverie and help to frame the artistic context of Clausen's own Naturalism, but additionally they help explore some of the nuances of Naturalism itself.

Before exploring both Clausen and the onset of Naturalism in Britain, it is necessary to consider the painting of the rural poor alongside both rural myths and values, and historical accounts, and where appropriate to discuss specific examples of works which depict reverie. This prelude to the discussion around Clausen will help clarify the significance of these oppositional myths in relation to his works and the various depictions of reverie.



The painting of rural life was widespread before the onset of British Naturalism and had formed its own genres and traditions. Howard D. Rodee identifies two notable traditions. One of these drew on Dutch and Flemish genre painting and was developed by the artists Thomas Faed, David Wilkie, William Collins and William Mulready. A rustic or "cabin interior" was often the setting and themes were injected with pathos with topics such as homecomings, homelessness, and emigration.¹² A second tradition "emphasized healthy and happy shepherds and farm workers laboring under sunny skies amidst lush foliage and fields of waving grain"¹³ and was characteristic of the works of Samuel Palmer and Peter de Wint early in the century, and of Myles Birkett Foster, William Maw Egley and Richard Redgrave in the mid-Victorian period. Often the sense of a prodigious nature is central, as in Redgrave's *The Valley's Also Stand Thick with Corn* (1864, fig. 71), and accordingly rural peasants are depicted as contented. The "British artist's view of rural life" remarks Rodee, was "a comforting

¹² See Howard. D. Rodee, "The 'Dreary Landscape' as a Background for Scenes of Rural Poverty in Victorian Paintings," *Art Journal* 36, no.4 (Summer, 1977): 307-13.

¹³ Rodee, "The Dreary Landscape," 307.

one, until well past mid-century. . . an unchanging world of simple pleasures, religious devotion, and family harmony".¹⁴ Payne positions this artistic perspective of rural life as part of an overarching "idyllic myth"¹⁵ which concealed the extent of rural poverty for various reasons. Pictures depicting cheerful harvest scenes, such as Redgrave's or Maw Egley's were extremely popular and sold well.¹⁶ Yet, other reasons for this concealment are also plausible. Payne identifies Barrell's argument that the images represent "'desirable' virtues of the poor, created for the benefit of the rich".¹⁷

Counter to the idyllic myth, reports of social unrest in rural areas were becoming widespread. Rick burning and machine breaking were common in the period.¹⁸ In this context, one function of rural genre painting was to assuage fears and "counteract the reports of arson, machine breaking and poaching that would have been well known to readers of newspapers".¹⁹ Fears of revolution mid-century abounded, so whilst artists felt it necessary to disguise rural discontent, they might simultaneously capitalise on the symbolic power of rural England in order to promote particular virtues which, as Payne suggests, could "maintain social stability and avert revolution". Such virtues of "industriousness, sobriety, piety, domestic affection and deference to rank on the part of the workers, paternalism and charity on the part of their social superiors" were thought to survive in the social order of rural England.²⁰ The idyllic myth of rural England captured by artists functioned also as an antidote to industrialism.²¹ In this sense, images of idyllic rural scenes provided an escapist, nostalgic view of a pre-industrial past which was particularly appealing to the emerging middle classes in the growing urban centres of the nineteenth century. But conversely, such a view could also be co-opted by a conservative landowning class. Thus, Payne points out that the "moral superiority of rural life was adapted to validate the power of the aristocracy and gentry at a time when it was threatened by the newly powerful middle class, the merchants, manufacturers and industrialists".²² The myth of "Old England" provided a

¹⁴ Rodee, "The Dreary Landscape," 307.

¹⁵ Payne, *Toil and Plenty*, 44.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 59-61.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8; see also Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*.

¹⁹ Payne, *Toil and Plenty*, 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

²¹ See Jan Marsh, *Back to the Land London*, (London: Quartet Books, 1982).

²² Payne, *Toil and Plenty*, 24.

justification against the threats of industrialisation and could conceal the negative consequences of enclosure and unfair treatment of the rural poor. The versatile idyllic myth “provided political ammunition, therefore for both conservatives and for radicals”.²³

By the 1860s a counter myth emerged of “rural misery” which Rodee notes saw artists depicting “downtrodden labourers, often solitary, in dreary landscapes, which are melancholy rather than cheerful in mood”.²⁴ Rodee has also noted how art critics began to object to the sentimentalised version of rural life. William Michael Rossetti, for example, complained of the “pigmy prettiness”, the “light comedy”, and the “sentimental dramas” characteristic of rural genre works.²⁵ Writers of rural life by the 1870s had begun to describe quite a different picture of rural life. Richard Jefferies’ articles on women field-workers were a case in point. Noting their physical attributes, he commented on “the thin frame, the bony wrist, the skinny arm showing the sinews, the rounded shoulders and stoop, the wrinkles and lines on the sunburnt faces”.²⁶ Such details were ignored by most artists – Clausen being an exception. His *A Woman of the Fields* (1882, fig. 2) explored in detail below, could almost act as an illustrated response to Jefferies’ remarks. Documentary reports, like those of Jefferies, were perhaps one reason for the changes in artistic representations of rural life.²⁷

In 1873, the Agricultural Children’s Act was drawn up in response to the growing concerns of child labour. In spite of this, Rodee notes how the depictions of children undertaking bird scaring duties were inevitably represented as “happy and healthy, frolicking through the fields to frighten off the birds”.²⁸ However, one example of work demonstrating the shifting social concerns of artists was the watercolour *One of Our Breadwatchers* (fig. 72) by Frederick Shields, exhibited in 1866.

²³ Ibid., 24.

²⁴ Ibid., 61.

²⁵ Quoted in Rodee, “The Dreary Landscape,” 307.

²⁶ Quoted in Payne, *Toil and Plenty*, 8. Richard Jefferies was the author of “Field Faring Women” (first published *Fraser’s Magazine*, 1874), and “Women in the Field”, *Graphic*, (11 September 1875), 263.

²⁷ See Rodee, “The Dreary Landscape.”

²⁸ Ibid., 309.

The work represented something of a shift in Shields' oeuvre. According to Treuherz, he previously "made his name painting watercolours of pretty children in the manner of William Henry Hunt".²⁹ Bird scaring, in Shields' painting, was one form of child labour now made to look cruel, particularly in winter weather. This small water colour helps us to consider not only the shifting representations of rural life, but the variety of critical responses to socially aware art. While the *Art Journal* critic spoke about the appeal of the child's suffering, and the work's honest sentiment,³⁰ the critic for *The Times* was suspicious of the title which was felt to be "of questionable taste".³¹ As Treuherz has pointed out, rather than titling the work 'A Breadwatcher', Shields' title with its possessive 'our', "implicated everyone who eats bread in the child's exploitation".³² This bifurcation in the critical reception to works which had realist endeavours was to continue along these lines with the reception of Clausen. Shields' work also provides an opportunity to assess the function of the depiction of a reverie-like state and its operations in accord with a realist subject matter. A close look at the figure sees the eyes of the young girl cast upwards, not particularly directed at the birds, which have flown behind the shelter, but towards a pictorial space outside the frame. This skywards gaze bears a similarity to pseudo-religious works where figures' gazes are directed heavenwards.³³ Reverie and the signification of the girl's gaze function allegorically. However, the work also calls to mind my earlier discussions around Rossetti and Whistler, in that the exact focus of the child's vision is beyond our reach. Cast through a haze of smoke from the fire that burns in front of her feet, her own vision must also be occluded.³⁴ Together, vision occluded and the girl's reverie-like expression fosters viewers to act contemplatively. In the same manner as Aestheticist reverie pictures, the vehicle of reverie allows the viewer to partake in both a disengaged way, overlooking content, and an engaged way, reflecting on content.

²⁹ Julian Treuherz, *Hard Times: Social Realism in Victorian Art* (London: Lund Humphries / Manchester City Art Galleries, 1987), 38.

³⁰ The critic writing in *Art Journal* praised the work, noting "among the snow sits a starved child in a straw shed. The eye and the mouth pathetic, yet patient, in suffering make strong appeal. The execution is as earnest and honest as is the sentiment". "The Society of Painters in Watercolour, Sixty Second Exhibition 1866," *Art Journal* (June 1866): 174, quoted in Rodee, "The Dreary Landscape," 309.

³¹ Quoted in Treuherz, *Hard Times*, 39.

³² *Ibid.*, 39.

³³ See, for example, John Roddam Spencer Stanhope's *Thoughts of the Past* or Anna Blunden's seamstress picture *For Only One Short Hour...* (1854) reproduced in Treuherz, *Hard Times*, 31.

³⁴ For more on the occlusion of vision in nineteenth-century paintings see, Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*.

Other works around the period 1866-8 operate in a similar way. Thomas Wade's *Carting Turf from the Moss* (1866-8)³⁵ is set in a dreary landscape in which a family assist in moving the cart which seems too heavy for the donkey alone. The father toils, bent over as he pulls the donkey's rope, while the mother gazes beyond the pictorial space, suggesting her being in reverie. Two children push the cart from the rear and gaze directly at the viewer with expressions that evoke a sense of abstraction. Another example is the painting *The Vagrants* (1867, fig. 73) by Frederick Walker,³⁶ and its related etching published in *Once a Week* in 1866 (fig. 74).

Treuherz has noted the handling of the drawing in the etching (which preceded the oil painting) to be "impressionistic" owing to its lack of fine detail, and that this sat well with the translation of the Russian poem *The Gypsies' Song* it accompanied, which "calls up an image of mysteriousness" and "fatal beauty" in the vein of Rossetti.³⁷ The key figure of the woman on the left complements the mystery by appearing in reverie. The painting, produced for the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1868, exaggerates this further.

In a re-organised composition, the woman's expression appears less harsh, taking on a "countenance moodily meditative" in the words of *The Times* critic.³⁸ But, as if to exaggerate the extent of moody contemplation, Walker pictured in more detail the three central figures. One figure was added to provide a pair of children embracing one another while appearing deep in thought as they look towards another child who adds leaves to the fire. As in Shields' *One of Our Breadwatchers*, the smoke from the fire provides an occluded mass which is looked-through by the dominant figure of the standing woman, and also potentially by the seated woman who seems to be holding a baby covered by her shawl, her eyes cast downwards towards the smoke drifting about her feet. For the critic of the *Art Journal*, the reverie of these figures appeared to equate with their melancholy when he remarked, "there is a pathos, a melancholy

³⁵ Reproduced in Treuherz, *Hard Times*, 40.

³⁶ Rodee notes Walker as "one of the earliest and most influential exponents of English social realism", "The Dreary Landscape," 310.

³⁷ See Treuherz, *Hard Times*, 50.

³⁸ *The Times* (2 May 1868): 14, quoted in Treuherz, *Hard Times*, 50.

about these poor outcasts which awakens compassion”.³⁹ This invocation of compassion demonstrates an important function of reverie.

Reverie, functioning in this way, seems to have been an important feature of the social realist canvases that were to follow. Set in dreary landscapes antithetical to the sunshine-smothered prodigious harvest scenes of earlier works, figures in reverie in these works may have gone some way in challenging a mythical sense of social harmony.⁴⁰ By the mid 1880s, this kind of work had become firmly established. Hubert Von Herkomer’s *Hard Times* (1885, fig. 70) developed the theme initially laid down by Walker and was viewed as “reformist”.⁴¹ Treuherz notes the responses of conservatives “condemning its ‘modern sociology’” and the liberalists’ response “hailing it as ‘a cry for humanity in these hard times’”.⁴² Its lasting political effect was testified by the comment written in 1905 that it was “art on the way to make socialists”.⁴³ However, the potential political threat of the subject appears to have been tamed. An interesting comparison can be made with a similar work by Joseph Farquarson, *Where Next?* (1883, fig. 75). Treuherz has noted how Herkomer’s figures allegorize hope. Although the figure of the mother in *Hard Times* appears exhausted, the male figure purposively gazes into the landscape, his reverie indicative of hopes for the future as he looks towards the horizon. In comparison, however, Farquarson’s male figure’s slouching posture and hard stare appears more menacing, and his female figure is more actively engaged than Herkomer’s. Indeed, the question offered in the title, seems to be hers, having preceded the implied rhetoric of the direct inquisitional gaze towards her husband.⁴⁴

Herkomer’s work and the artists associated with him, such as Luke Fildes and Frank Holl, made up a body of social realism in British art which drew attention to rural poverty. However, their work retained a formulaic academicism. In the onset of Naturalism, I argue that a form of reverie was to materialise in the paintings of

³⁹ *Art Journal*, (1868): 107.

⁴⁰ Rodee notes that for the most part paintings in the 1840s, 50s and 60s presented no sense of “disruption” or “disharmony,” “The Dreary Landscape,” 308.

⁴¹ See Treuherz, *Hard Times*, 98

⁴² *Ibid.*, 98

⁴³ Handbook to the Manchester City art Gallery, 1905, p.21. Quoted in Treuherz, *Hard Times*, 98.

⁴⁴ For a comparison between the two works see Treuherz, *Hard Times*, 99.

Clausen, which like *Hard Times* and *One of Our Breadwatchers* functioned in support of the critical function of the works.⁴⁵ However, unlike the works of Herkomer and Fildes, the reliance on allegory and sentiment was more oblique in certain works by Clausen.

Having considered some of the background to rural genre painting, we can attempt to classify different kinds of reverie image along the lines of their critical engagement. Firstly, there exist uncritical, reactionary images in which reverie serves an allegorical function in furthering an idyllic myth of rural England. Secondly, there are images which do invoke critical comment, but similarly rely on an allegorical use of reverie (*Hard Times*), and, as such, the naturalism of such works is compromised. A third category of image exists which also invokes critical comment; however, reverie is not overtly allegorical in these images. I aim to demonstrate how this latter critical Naturalist form of reverie, as identified in several works by Clausen was modern, unromanticised and that its deliberate evasion of overt allegory gave the works a pronounced difference to what had come before. We could say that this form of reverie helped fashion a sense of what Naturalism was. But, we could also say that it emerged partly as a result of Naturalist principles. I will show that Clausen learns the power of this kind of reverie which he seemingly draws from an understanding of Tissot, Bastien-Lepage and the notion of encounter, and the desire to depict accurate psychologized subjects. While I wish to highlight this critical form of Naturalistic reverie in the work of Clausen, I do not wish to suggest that it is exclusive to his work. Because of its forceful critical stance, a later work by Herkomer, *On Strike* (1891) could fall into this category. The work is similar to *Hard Times* in the way that the male figure's contemplative reverie motivates a narrative. Clausen however, succumbs to other allegorical forms of reverie, and, at such moments, a staunch adherence to Naturalism appears compromised. Before taking that direction, the discussion now needs to explore in some detail the significance of Bastien-Lepage on Clausen and emergent Rural Naturalism in Britain.

⁴⁵ I use the term critical here, in accordance with the way that Peter Bürger and Nikos Hadjinicolaou have identified the socially critical dimension of avant-gardist philosophy as opposed to its more formalist applications which relate to an aesthetic avant-garde. See Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* trans. Michael Shaw, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), and Nicos Hadjinicolaou, "On the Ideology of Avant-gardism", *Praxis* 6, (1982): 39-70.

Sir Coutts Lindsay and fellow directors of the Grosvenor Gallery invited Jules Bastien-Lepage to show a small retrospective of his work for their summer exhibition of 1880.⁴⁶ Several works were shown including *Les Foins*, *La Communiant*e (1875), and *Sarah Bernhardt* (1879).⁴⁷ Most writers on Rustic Naturalism agree that the retrospective had a significant impact on the movement.⁴⁸ Bastien-Lepage delighted critics with his portraits, praise being directed especially at *Sarah Bernhardt*. However, *Les Foins* (1878, fig. 76) seemed to inspire most discussion. The work needs to be discussed here in some detail because of its recognised importance for Clausen and others, and because it characterises certain key principles of Naturalism those artists were to follow. For Colleen Denney, Bastien's Naturalism incorporated three essential components; firstly, an emphasis on scientific exactitude, secondly, a large scale format which connoted a relationship to earlier Realists, and thirdly, a "psychological examination of the sitter or subject, which united him with the Symbolists".⁴⁹ Melding a literalist objectivity alongside an interest in the psychological must have been a fascinating combination for those who saw his work and it was not long before Bastien had a coterie of followers.⁵⁰

Les Foins seemingly stole the show⁵¹ and one of the things that captured the critics' attention was what Denney calls "the mesmerized expression" in the figure of the woman.⁵² Bastien himself commented on it. In a letter to M. Theuriet on the subject of the painting, he describes the figure:

⁴⁶ McConkey describes the decision as a risk by the "emboldened" directorship, following the recent controversy around the Whistler-Ruskin trial, see McConkey, "Rustic Naturalism at the Grosvenor Gallery" in Susan P. Casteras and Colleen Denney (eds.) *The Grosvenor Gallery A Palace of Art in Victorian England* (New Haven, Yale University, 1996), 134. For more discussion of Bastien-Lepage's contacts with Britain see McConkey, "The Bouguereau of the Naturalists: Bastien Lepage and British Art," *Art History* 1, no. 3 (September, 1978): 371-382.

⁴⁷ Also shown were *The Annunciation to the Shepherds* (1875), *Portrait of Monsieur Charpentier*, *Portrait of My Grandfather* (1873), *Monsieur Klotz*, *Madame Klotz*, and *My Parents*. For their relative positions in the Grosvenor's galleries see Colleen Denney, *At The Temple of Art: The Grosvenor Gallery, 1877-1890* (London: Associated University Press, 2000), 161.

⁴⁸ See for example McConkey, "The Bouguereau of the Naturalists," 374.

⁴⁹ Denney, *At the Temple of Art*, 165.

⁵⁰ See McConkey, "The Bouguereau of the Naturalists," 374.

⁵¹ McConkey, "Rustic Naturalism at the Grosvenor Gallery" in Susan P. Casteras and Colleen Denney (eds.) *The Grosvenor Gallery A Palace of Art in Victorian England*, 134.

⁵² Denney, *At the Temple of Art*, 165.

My young peasant woman is sitting on the grass. Her arms are drooping, her face is red and hot, her eyes have a vacant look. Her whole attitude is tired and worn out. She will, I think give you the idea of a true peasant.⁵³

It is useful for this study to see Bastien using the sense of verity alongside his description of vacancy, because it indicates that reverie-like states could indeed be accommodated alongside the drive for objectivity in Naturalism. This accommodation was also noticed by the contemporary critic William Crary Brownell who considered closely the look of Bastien's sitters, as well as extending his analysis by considering how the artist had the ability to reveal veritable psychological depths. Appearing in the *Magazine of Art* in 1883, Brownell's detailed article "Bastien-Lepage: Painter and Psychologist" argued that Bastien was able to capture the real and truthful essence of human nature.⁵⁴ While Brownell complains about certain of Bastien's technical procedures and how formal "pictorial qualities" like "design" are lost owing to his unremitting realism, he contends that "there are serious intellectual elements" to his works. For Brownell, the realism of Bastien was also his originality, however, taking nature in its "exact strictness" as model, was also limiting. Significantly, Brownell identifies those intellectual elements in Bastien's depiction of reverie-like states, and acknowledges that the depiction of reverie can be incorporated into a realist schema, but moreover, that in doing so, Bastien was creating an art which was modern. Before he discusses *Les Foins*, Brownell comments on Bastien's *Tired*.⁵⁵ Noting the deliberate lack of sentimentality and that the artist "does not move us at all", he says that "one feels the painter were himself a camera, and almost wonders at the girl's unconsciousness in a presence of such searching scrutiny".⁵⁶ This scrutiny of mind is picked out as one of Bastien's preoccupations. And turning to *Les Foins*, Brownell further identifies the significance of depicting 'unconsciousness' or reverie and the psychological realm; thus, the work

⁵³ Letter from Bastien-Lepage to M. Theuriet August 15, 1878, Quoted in Julia Cartwright *Jules Bastien – Lepage* (London, Seeley and Co. 1894), 37.

⁵⁴ W.C. Brownell, "Bastien Lepage: Painter and Psychologist," *Magazine of Art*, 6, (1883): 265-271. Another article in the same journal entitled "Current Art" also attends to the subject of Bastien's attention to psychology. In it the author considers Bastien's *L'Amour au Village* and describes "a powerful study of physiognomy and character . . . the psychological element, indeed, is as marked and successful as the handicraft," 379-80.

⁵⁵ The work is reproduced as an engraving alongside Brownell's article, 265

⁵⁶ Brownell, "Bastien Lepage," 270.

represents two labourers at their noontide rest, one a man, asleep, and the other, a woman, wide awake and wearing, like the rest [of his works], the curious half-conscious half ecstatic look of protest against misery, and pining for far-off things.⁵⁷

It is particularly notable here that the sense of semi-consciousness is conflated with the sense of protest. One might normally imagine depictions of agency and an antagonism to toil would be accompanied by the representation of engaged conscious states. That Brownell reads into the work a sense of protest signified by a “half-conscious” state is revealing. His comments help us assess the function of reverie in related works, such as Clausen’s *The Stone Pickers* (1887, fig. 77) and *A Woman of the Fields* (1882, fig. 2) discussed below, because, likewise, figures in those works appear in states of abstraction which could easily be interpreted as suggesting protest. The sense that Brownell is alluding to reverie is reinforced when we consider his use of both the adjective “curious” and his notion that the girl’s facial expression indicates a “pining for far-off things”. He goes on to say that the depiction of this kind of expression was Bastien-Lepage’s “favourite problem” and that “he interprets it to perfection...one would look in vain for anything approaching it in Millet. It is not pictorial, it is not poetic; it is psychological”. The distinctions Brownell makes here are telling. He pushes this kind of representation of reverie into the realm of the modern picture, separating it from idealist ‘poetic’ works and distinguishing it from mere forms of pictorial design.⁵⁸ For Brownell, this depiction of reverie has more in common with the Naturalism of Emile Zola’s characters: “M. Bastien-Lepage’s wild-eyed young peasants are as clearly “human documents” as the characters of Zola”. And he suggests that, for other artists, the representation of reverie may offer the potential for developing a “dramatic picture” – but, perhaps the day for that has gone, instead he proposes a credo, saying that

⁵⁷ Ibid., 271.

⁵⁸ By the end of the nineteenth century, one form of reverie image had secured itself as a form of decorative design. Its ease of transferability to commercial design and advertising saw its success throughout the twentieth century, particularly as an indicator of femininity. The versatility of such reverie images was exemplified in for example, the series of poster designs undertaken by Alphonse Mucha. His designs such as *Reverie* (1897), and *Evening Reverie* (1899) are representative of many of his works and therefore demonstrate that the image of reverie could operate in a generic form.

To the painter of the future such terms as imagination, invention, enthusiasm, will sound fantastic and antique; he will realise that what is needed is poise, observation, the scientific spirit, in fine to be in harmony with the intellectual movement going on around him.⁵⁹

The supplanting of concepts like the imagination for the scientific spirit must have sounded like an assault on Aestheticism. Yet, in Brownell's scheme, reverie's depiction might better serve notions of objective scientific exactitude, revealing human nature rather than poetic expression and sentimentality. This is perhaps why for Brownell, Bastien is a "psychologist". By 1883, that term had become more fully ensconced in scientific rather than philosophical debate, as has been noted in my first chapter. That is not to say that Naturalist artists could not benefit from earlier ideas of reverie signifying the poetic in art as will be demonstrated below. However, there is a sense that there is a turning point here, in that reverie could clearly be co-opted into the services of representing the modern, whether that be a form of 'protest' on the conditions of the poor, whether it represented the scientific objectivity of the artist, or, whether it represented a curiosity of the mind of the modern subject.

For certain, following Bastien's success in Britain, younger artists now had a model to follow which could help either direct an assault against sentimentality or at least provide an alternative to it. However, while the critics may themselves have sensed the overburden of sentiment in British painting, its alternative in continental realism was for many too much to bear.⁶⁰ The critic writing in 1880 on the "Pictures of the Year" in the *Magazine of Art* identified Bastien as the "first of the extreme realists" in London, and noted,

The English, who however much they may have been misunderstood in the matter, care little for realism, and love sentiment above all, have not proved enthusiastic over M. Lepage's cleverness, and more than cleverness – his extraordinary truthfulness.⁶¹

The author seemed to admire Bastien's truthfulness, yet found the character of the female peasant in *Les Foins* seemingly not feminine enough, being "excessively repulsive and life-size", and wished that the artist had offered "a comelier and more

⁵⁹ Brownell, "Bastien Lepage," 271.

⁶⁰ See for example P.H. Calderon, "Realism in Art," *Art Journal* (February 1884): 58.

⁶¹ "Pictures of the Year.-IV.," *Magazine of Art* 3 (January 1880): 400.

intelligent specimen of French peasantry”.⁶² This attack extended into the nature of the figure’s reverie: “her vacant broad face looking out in an abstraction which has no thought in it, but merely the passive dreaming of an animal”.⁶³ The terms “vacant” and the concept of an abstraction void of thought, clearly bring to mind the psychological investigations into consciousness which revealed forms of cataleptic trance and a pathologised subject lacking normal mental faculties.⁶⁴ The writer here conflates this vacancy with intelligence, and the metaphorical association to the “animal” would have reminded the reader about the current debates attached to Darwinism. That link was lucidly made by the voracious *Illustrated London News* critic:

such a Flora for ‘les Foins!’ – with the high cheek bones and massive jaws of the most debased Celtic type conceivable – a pure descendant of the primeval Eve as first evolved from the gorilla. Even the moral of such degradation is not pointed, so repellent is the total absence of any touch of pathos and the lack of all artistic fitness betrayed in the choice of so large a canvas.⁶⁵

The unrefined “Celtic type” was oppositional to the expectations of feminine beauty. As if to clearly illustrate the distinction between different levels of comeliness, intelligence and feminine beauty that could be achieved in a reverie picture, the editor of the *Magazine of Art* had placed central to the text discussing Lepage, an etching of one of Marcus Stone’s “ideal Beauties” (fig. 78). The contrast to Bastien’s figure is markedly notable:

Mr. Marcus Stone’s type is a very charming one. The face, otherwise perfectly regular, gains in character by the slight difference which the artist has marked in the lines of the eyebrows. The expression is thoughtful and refined, and the figure eminently graceful.⁶⁶

Stone’s figure not only seemed to represent an ideal beauty in terms of physical type and appearance, she could also be distinguished from Bastien’s peasant girl by her mental engagement – her “thoughtful” expression.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 400.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ McConkey suggests Bastien was preoccupied with the “look of his models” and “that they should appear vacant, staring and dehumanized by toil”, see McConkey, “Rustic Naturalism at the Grosvenor Gallery,” 134.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Denney, *At the Temple of Art*, 165-60.

⁶⁶ “Pictures of the Year.-IV.,” 400.

Also appearing in this review was a small illustration of the work *La Pensee* (1880, fig. 79) by George Clausen, also shown at the Grosvenor that year. Commentary accompanied the illustration. The work and its title demonstrate that Clausen was painting figures at this stage with a certain depth of consideration around psychology.⁶⁷

This interest in the psychological may have been influential in Clausen's attraction to Bastien. The critic noted the work for its characteristically "French character in the treatment" and pointed out that "Clausen has won the admiration of artists and critics for some years by his peculiarly intelligent work".⁶⁸ The psychological distinction between the middle-class thinker in *La Pensee* and the working-class labourer in *Les Foins* on the surface appears pronounced. However, the distinction between "vacancy" and "thought" can be as narrow or wide as we might want to imagine. A more obvious distinction in the figures and their respective contexts is formulated around class, which could easily provide enough bias for critics to read the figure's individual psychologies as and how they wished. Later works by Clausen, as we shall see, would muster the same critical reaction and hostility in terms of repulsion towards peasant types as the reviews here showed towards Bastien's *Les Foins*.

Clausen's *La Pensee* is affirmation that, around the late 1870s, he was exploring highly-charged psychological subjects and forms of reverie. For a London audience the work would have represented the trend in paintings of contemporary women in contemporary settings. They would have noted similar works by continental artists such as James Tissot who had a presence in London. Several works by Tissot depicted women in deep thought and his sustained interest in reverie is demonstrated by works such as *Reverie* (1869, fig. 42), the etching *Dreaming* (1881, fig. 80), *Reverie: Mrs Newton Reclining in a Chair* (1878, fig. 81) and *La Rêveuse* (c.1876, fig. 5).

A painting by Clausen titled *The Novel* (unlocated), also takes on similar themes to Tissot's works.⁶⁹ As with Tissot, Clausen took an interest in the depiction of the

⁶⁷ 'La Pensée' translates as 'The Thought', but Clausen may have also intended the French to mean 'The Thinker'.

⁶⁸ "Pictures of the Year.-IV.," 398.

⁶⁹ See McConkey, *Sir George Clausen, R.A.*, p.24.

solitary woman deep in thought, seated in a domestic setting. Both works show the sitter holding a book, but neither sitter is depicted reading; instead, each is seen to be reflecting in a state of reverie. The *Magazine of Art* failed to remark on the details of the narrative, but noted,

Mr George Clausen adopts this year the prevailing fashion for painting studio arrangements of decorative drapery: *The Novel* contains a combination of orange colour and pale green, and is very closely lighted.⁷⁰

Clausen offered a sketch (1879, fig. 82) of the work for *The Magazine of Art* to be included alongside the review of works at the Dudley Gallery.⁷¹ The sketch and the comments by the reviewer suggest hints of Whistler.⁷² Perhaps referring to the influence of Whistler, Tissot, or both, the *Magazine of Art* had noted that Clausen had adapted a “French character in the treatment”.⁷³ The treatment has a strong similarity with Tissot’s works. There are similarities in palette, compositional treatment of interior spaces, and the appearance of sitters, who often gaze directly towards the viewer. Another point of similarity is with the titles. Tissot’s usage of the title ‘Reverie’ may have encouraged Clausen to adapt a similar title for his oil painting *Contemplation* (1879, fig. 83), which seems to have been inspired by Tissot’s paintings of fashionable women.

The veiled figure in the work also recalls Tissot’s images of Kathleen Newton, who also appeared similarly veiled (and in reverie) in several works of the late 1870s.⁷⁴ Clausen used the device to good effect here, whereby detail in the face is obscured by

⁷⁰ “Pictures of the Year: The Dudley Gallery, *Magazine of Art* 3 (1880): 118.

⁷¹ The painting *The Novel* was for a long time unlocated, but came to light and was offered for sale at Sotheby’s in 1997, <http://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/sir-george-clausen,-r.a.-r.w.s.-yxwz5lrm8v-197-m-38vhg9hw3a> [accessed 26 July 2011].

⁷² McConkey notes that from around 1877 after his move from Moore Park Road, Fulham, to 4, The Mall, Hampstead, Clausen began to move in circles of more established artists who “were attuned to the needs of rich middle-class patrons.” *Sir George Clausen, R.A. 1852-1944* (City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council and Tyne and Wear County Council, 1980). McConkey also suggests that Clausen had met Whistler and discussed the latter’s nocturnes, 23. Writing in the in 1890, R.A.M. Stevenson’s also identified Whistler’s influence; possibly describing *La Pensee* he wrote, “a dark low-toned portrait of a girl exhibited in the Grosvenor of 1880, manifests the influence of Mr. Whistler.” “George Clausen,” *Art Journal* 26 (1890): 292.

⁷³ “Pictures of the Year.-IV.,” 398.

⁷⁴ I am thinking here of Tissot’s *Waiting for the Ferry*, 1878, private collection. Oil on panel, reproduced in Lochnan, ed. *Seductive Surfaces*, 43.

the veil. This obfuscation also represents something of the impenetrability for the perceiver of the contemplative subject, while being a metaphor itself for the obfuscated nature of mental action and its meanderings during contemplation or reverie. While the title suggests contemplative action on both the part of the subject and the viewer, the direct encounter with the woman suggests that Clausen was taking on new ideas around the notion of encounter in the modern world. This notion brings together both the impact of a photograph in its ability to create a presence in its subject, and new ways of depicting the modern subject which were already underway in French art, seen for example in Gustave Caillebotte's *Paris Street, A Rainy Day* (1877, Art Institute of Chicago). These techniques of depicting the modern subject were brought into play in Clausen's *A Spring Morning, Haverstock Hill* (1881, fig. 84). The work bears a similarity to Caillebotte's street scene. It is unlikely that Clausen saw the work, however, the aspects of photographic-like cropping and close-up encounter with subjects, which were increasingly more noticeable in French and British art, seem to have percolated through to Clausen's practice. The direct, close-up encounter certainly hints at an interest in the psychology of his subjects, but this is further attested to in the work, by the appearance on the left hand side of the canvas, of a seated woman immersed in contemplation.

In assessing these several works, it is clear to see that the key principles of Naturalism – the focus on the actual, the photographic, and “upon individuals, states of mind and precise locations” – were already being adopted by Clausen, alongside a sense of the broad applications of reverie, with all its multiple modes.⁷⁵

After witnessing Bastien's work at the Grosvenor, Clausen's direction took a new turn. Some sources suggest this was fairly immediate;⁷⁶ however, canvases such as *A Spring Morning, Haverstock Hill* show that between 1880 and 1881, Clausen was still committed to modern urban genre scenes. Clausen himself recalls the impact of Lepage and others:

⁷⁵ See McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, 271-72, (n. 1) for discussion of the distinctions between naturalism and realism and the relevance of photography.

⁷⁶ Denney noted Clausen was “immediately attracted to Bastien's work.” *At the Temple of Art*, 167.

I was invited to exhibit at the old Grosvenor, where I first saw Whistler's and Cecil Lawson's work, and later that of Bastien-Lepage. These things opened my eyes. Sydney Starr and I often discussed them; we realised that it was not a question of subject, but of seeing: that anything could be seen as a picture, at its moment. It was all wrong to go on painting dressed-up models! So, one day I told Tooth, the dealer, that I would not paint any more Dutch things.⁷⁷

His Dutch paintings, such as *High Mass at a Fishing Village on the Zuyder Zee* (1876, fig. 85) showed him drawing from the techniques of the Hague school, but also seemingly from the work of Legros who was at the time considerably influential in England, having been appointed Professor of Fine Art at the Slade School of Art in 1876. A comparison might, for example, be drawn between Legros' *Blessing the Sea* (1872, fig. 86) and Clausen's slightly later *High Mass at a Fishing Village on the Zuyder Zee*. The contemplative behaviour associated with prayer is a feature of both works, as is the spectator's viewpoint which in each case offers a voyeuristic position slightly away and behind the figure group. Clausen's comment around "dressed up models" probably refers to his Dutch works, however, it seems that the design for this picture was recalled from a real life experience when holidaying in the Dutch village of Volendam.⁷⁸ Therefore, it may be that Clausen was instead referring to the so called "studio arrangements of decorative drapery" which depicted "dressed up models" as in the case of Tissot whose practice was to have a selection of favourite dresses which he would use to dress his models. Ruskin had complained that Tissot's works were "mere coloured photographs" thus calling to question the similarity with fashion plates and the fickle sphere of contemporary fashion.⁷⁹ Perhaps responding to this kind of critical position, Clausen began a shift away from both the Dutch work and the studio figures à la Tissot. Perhaps after recognising the continued success of Bastien around this time, Clausen moved to the rural setting of Chidwick Green in 1881 to begin his own experiment in Rural Naturalism.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Denney, *At the Temple of Art*, 167.

⁷⁸ See catalogue entry in McConkey, *Sir George Clausen*, 18.

⁷⁹ See Lochnan's discussion of the significance of Ruskin's remarks on Tissot, in *Seductive Surfaces*, 7-10.

Anna Gruetzner Robins has written in some detail about Clausen's time at Childwick Green, (a small hamlet two miles north of St. Albans), and she proposes that during his time there, Clausen produced two kinds of images.⁸⁰ A close consideration of Robins' image types is helpful and will be used to extend my own analysis around Clausen. The first type, notes Robins, "celebrates a remote, reassuring quintessential pastoral of Englishness – nostalgic and unchanging" demonstrated in the "fictive sweetness" of *Haying* (1882, fig. 87).⁸¹ These works "sanitised the realities of rural life" and often "play with the trope of sex, femininity and youth", thus, "young women alone or in pairs, ostensibly haying or tending sheep, but lost in reverie, are depicted in pictures which evoke a longing for a rustic idyll".⁸² Such works had a ready market in the new manufacturing rich who were Clausen's main patrons. But there is also a second kind of image, influenced by French Naturalism and involving the "creation of an utterly convincing visual image that could be tied in the viewer's imagination to rural life"; and it was this category of images that demonstrated Clausen's search for "critical recognition as an avant-garde artist". Primarily, this category of image, argues Robins, depicted the elderly and "did not sit well with Clausen's urban viewers".

What might we make, therefore, of these two strands in Clausen's work, in particular around the concept of reverie? Was reverie merely a vehicle for the commercialisation of his work and did it merely function allegorically, so as to exaggerate that sense of a "reassuring quintessential pastoral of Englishness – nostalgic and unchanging"? I concur with Robins and agree that, indeed, this is often the case. However, I argue that Clausen plays out reverie in each of these two categories of image, and that in his critical avant-gardist endeavour, reverie is also a central feature. Moreover, I contend that Robins' bifurcation of types of image, while it is a useful starting point for analysis, becomes uncertain, especially when certain paintings characterise both tropes. Instead, I prefer a reading of Clausen which posits a sophisticated engagement with the way reverie and psychology might be brought to the fore in the span of his representations of not just rural peasants, but the urban poor, as well as the urban

⁸⁰ Anna Gruetzner Robins, "Living the Simple Life: George Clausen at Childwick Green, St. Albans" in *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1889-1940*, ed., David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Holt and Fiona Russell, (London: Yale University Press, 2002), 1-27.

⁸¹ This work is also known as *Haytime*.

⁸² Robins, "Living the Simple Life," 3.

bourgeoisie as we saw earlier. As he works through the different strengths of Naturalism, different nuances to reverie appear. Reverie functions in both of Robins's categories, yet, there are complexities in the way it serves Clausen's works. These complexities issue from the variable symbolic operations of reverie, which we will see powerfully inflect meaning in Clausen's canvases.



On his retreat to Childwick, one of Clausen's first pictures undertaken which responded to the new rural setting was *In the Orchard* (1881, fig. 88). The figure of a girl, possibly in her early teens, has been collecting fallen apples from the orchard and appears to have paused, caught up in reverie, whilst another girl in the background proceeds with apple gathering. The work is possibly Clausen's first naturalist painting and takes on board elements of Bastien-Lepage's techniques. The spectator's viewpoint is taken from a standing position and, as in Bastien's *Les Foins* and *Jeanne D'Arc ecoutant Les Voix* (1879), there is a high horizon line which both secures the figure within the landscape, but also brings it forward, so as to confront the viewer. As with the later work *The Stone Pickers* (fig. 77), there is a sense that the repetitive nature of the chore could have induced the girl's reverie, but, as an image of rural labour, *In the Orchard* lacks the critical potential of later works. Instead, the work occupies the oeuvre identified by Robins which captures "fictive sweetness", "femininity and youth", thus securing the subject within the safe boundaries of expectations of Victorian art. However, it should also be noted that Clausen's depiction of the girl's pensiveness places the work alongside those "young adherents of Rustic Naturalism" who, as Denney has described, "understood the impact that would result from placing figures within their appropriate locales and giving their characters a psychological profile".⁸³ As well as Bastien as a source for the psychological, Clausen would have been familiar with the work of John Robertson Reid.⁸⁴ His *Mary the Maid of the Inn* depicted what McConkey has described as "a

⁸³ Denney, *At the Temple of Art*, 168.

⁸⁴ Clausen's *Women Washing, Volendam* (1879), was hung next to Reid's *Toil and Pleasure* at the Royal Academy. It is likely that Clausen was partially influenced by this work's theme of rural labourers pausing while a hunt passes through their field, but also by its depiction of a cold dreary winter landscape.

country maid advancing towards the spectator in a mood of distraction”⁸⁵ and “attracted marked attention at the Royal Academy”.⁸⁶ Clausen’s work operates in a similar fashion, with the key figure close-up to the viewer, emphasising the consideration of psychological elements. Psychological content was not new for Clausen, of course, as his suburban works attest. However, the distinctions in geography create distinctions in the symbolic possibilities of the psychological. Thus, in works with suburban settings, reverie seems more a curious by-product of modern urban identity, whereas rustic settings contextualise an explanation of reverie as the momentary pause between longer episodes of labour. Unlike images of middle-class urban women, images of rustics, whose identity was defined by rural work, would undoubtedly conjure up discourses of labour. Swathes of Naturalist images testify to this, and although “fictive sweetness”, “femininity and youth” may help conceal it, the spectre of labour pervades the majority of works in the genre. Reverie then, in Naturalism, even if meant to be the antithesis of labour, is bound in to its discourses.

In his painting *The Villager* (1882, fig. 89), Clausen starts to demonstrate an interest in the rustic type as a symbol of rural labour.⁸⁷ The canvas depicts an elderly male rustic, who, in a reverie-like state, relaxes outside a tavern.⁸⁸ Leisure, time and reverie are the painting’s subject. Yet, as with Clausen’s depictions of femininity and youth, labour is not fully concealed. The man’s worn features and dark skin suggest a lifetime of outdoor labour. Set in the location of the Village of Childwick, the figure of the elderly villager is handled as if a portrait. In doing this, Clausen brings an actuality to the subject and his identity. This objectivity is further augmented on two counts. Firstly, the nomenclature and geographical locale of the titling of the work attest to a proclamation of authenticity. Clausen detailed on the back of the canvas, “The Villager, Childwick, Herts”.⁸⁹ Secondly, the work clearly demonstrated the use of

⁸⁵ McConkey, *Sir George Clausen*, 29. A sketch of the work is reproduced, however, the original is untraced.

⁸⁶ “Pictures from the Winter Exhibitions”, *Magazine of Art*, 4, (1881): 167.

⁸⁷ As with the *Portrait of A.G. Webster* (1881), (reproduced in McConkey, *Sir George Clausen*, 28), *The Villager* adopted the square brush technique now being taken up by followers of Bastien-Lepage.

⁸⁸ Robins identifies the tavern as the ‘Old Bell’ in Childwick Green, see “Living the Simple Life,” 17.

⁸⁹ See image details, in *ibid.*, 16.

photography in its emulation of photographic effects, thus furthering this mirage⁹⁰ of the real.⁹¹ The work demonstrates the new practice in Naturalism of emulating the photographic effects of focus, which were being debated by Peter Henry Emerson. Clausen had bought a portable Marion Miniature 'academy' camera, at some time around 1881, and began to take photographs of the villagers. One purpose of these photographs was as a support to on the spot sketches, but also, the principles of Naturalist photography would also have a bearing on Clausen. Emerson held that attaining a selective focus in the subject was the equivalent of the how the eye itself worked. Thus, the centrality of the subject should be determined by more fine detail in the focus, while background and extraneous details to the subject ought to be placed lightly out of focus. Clausen, and others like La Thangue, began to adopt this method. One effect of this in portraits like *The Villager* was to underline the significance of the real identity of the character, partly by mirroring the actions of photography itself, but also by literally focussing in on the fine detail of what must have been an actual personage.

The Villager helps us position the various registers of reverie image produced by Clausen in his ensuing Naturalist phase. Its subject of an elderly figure contrasts with the reverie of femininity and youth in *In the Orchard*. However, one commonality of the works is their limited critical scope. *The Villager* in essence represented a harmless old rustic – a representative of a past age. The work is nostalgic. Past traditions and notions of heritage are apparent in that the figure wears a smock, a garment no longer in fashion amongst rural labourers.⁹² An alternative critical direction would, however, start to materialise in Clausen's works. It takes shape around 1882.

Clausen's practice across the following two or three years is interesting. On the one hand, there is the continued expression of the idyllic, but alongside this, exist on the other hand, a series of works which centralise the theme of toil. These expressions of

⁹⁰ I use the term here as an acknowledgment of the substantial theoretical scholarship around photography's contested claims to objectivity. For an introduction to the debate, see Liz Wells, (ed.) *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, third edition, (Oxon: Routledge, 2004).

⁹¹ Robins, "Living the Simple Life," 17.

⁹² McConkey makes the point that "English fieldworkers no longer wore embroidered smocks and bonnets" in works by Naturalists, see, *Memory and Desire*, 7. For the cultural significance of the labourer's smock, see Lou Taylor, *The Study of Dress History* (Manchester University Press, 2002).

toil are permeated with psychological nuances of reverie. Equipped with the 'Naturalist' techniques of Bastien which were at this time understood by critics as signifiers of 'realism', Clausen began a series of works which received agitated responses. In these works, I identify a category of rural reverie images which are critical yet less reliant on allegory than their contemporary counterparts. They accommodate the principles of Naturalism with their identification of real personages, their focus on the psychology of those personages, a sense of un-staged action, a lack of narrative, and the sense of reverie being a realistic conditional response to toil.⁹³ Several works occupy this category and include the early version of *Winter Work* (1883-4, fig. 90), *Hoeing Turnips*, (1883, fig. 91), *The Stone Pickers* (fig. 77), all of which are discussed here. However, I give one work, *A Woman of the Fields* (1882, fig. 2), special attention. I contend that the painting set the bar for Clausen, in terms of the extent to which Naturalism could be criticality. I also argue that the work's critical reception would temper the degree of "thoroughgoing realism"⁹⁴ in subsequent works.



A Woman of the Fields represents a turning point for Clausen. Critical appraisal of Clausen prior to the work had been positive. Writing about *The Gleaners* (1882), the critic for *Magazine of Art* proposed that Clausen could

impart to his own treatment of motives from peasant life and peasant labour a something of the eloquent sincerity, the dignified solemnity, the true heroic melancholy, which distinguish the work of the greatest modern painter. . . in the "Gleaners" he has produced an excellent picture.⁹⁵

The reviewer goes on to praise the work's realism: "He shows us a little company of the poor, not in picturesque rags, but in the garments of fact, gleaning the modern English fields".⁹⁶ In comparison, however, the response from some quarters to *A Woman of the Fields* (also referred by reviewers as *A Field Hand*) was hostile. When exhibited at The Royal Institute in 1885, it was described as "a mere record of

⁹³ Jenkins identifies the lack of narrative as one element of Naturalism; see, *Painters and Peasants*, 16.

⁹⁴ The term "thoroughgoing realism" was used by Stevenson. "George Clausen," 292.

⁹⁵ "Current Art," *Magazine of Art* 5 (1882): 438.

⁹⁶ "Current Art," 438.

observation”.⁹⁷ Even though the reviewer noted its superiority in comparison to other works, in terms of its “colour, tone, handling, method, capacity of production”, its “lack of justification” lay in that “it is excessively ugly, and seems to have been painted for its ugliness’ sake, and nothing else”. The reviewer describes in detail the physiognomy of the figure:

She has little or no forehead; her cheeks, all weather-worn and coarse with exposure, are purpled in their staring redness; her mouth is a mere gash; her hands, clasped on top of a hay-fork, are brutalised with work, with fingers worn to the bone, and stubby, grubby, grimy nails, each one carefully crescented with black. She wears an old black bonnet, a grey shawl, a white *fiche*, and a lilac dress, and she confronts you – dull, squalid, uninteresting – with all the solemn stupidity of what by a contradiction in terms is called “realistic art”...Nothing, indeed, is represented but the fact of the model’s actuality, and nothing is suggested but the suspicion that, like Thackeray, Mr. Clausen counts it his function to “discover the Ugly” and delights in its exercise.⁹⁸

The reviewer makes the comparison with Millet, who has “painted viler matter than the ‘Field-Hand’”, however, his works are “no mere studies from the life: they are pictures of man in nature; each the correlation of a certain set of facts; each an expression of a certain definite sentiment; each the embodiment of a self-sufficing plastic idea”.⁹⁹ He notes also, that at one time, Clausen “seemed to be treading in Millet’s traces” but that it is now a pity that he has “set his longing upon strange gods”.¹⁰⁰ The symbolic character of Millet’s works made them acceptable, whereas the study from life, with its realist overtones was unpalatable.

Some years later, R.A.M. Stevenson noted how the work was

admired by some and hated by others as a piece of thoroughgoing realism, unusual in England at this time, when peasants were represented as unnaturally clean, coquettish, and simperingly pretty...people objected bitterly to the black rims around the nails” and the artist endeavoured to omit “nothing of her natural wrinkles, tan, and griminess.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ “The Royal Institute,” *Magazine of Art* 8 (1885): 134.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Stevenson, “George Clausen,” 292.

Stevenson observed, however, that the artist did not always paint “ugliness” and refers to his *Haymakers* (1885), noting that Clausen thinks “justly that there are many kinds of beauty besides that of the received human ideal of face”, citing Clausen’s own words, “I may see other beauties in nature and I may yet tackle beauty of face”.¹⁰²

The nature of this critical hostility and the curious dualistic nature of Clausen’s art require unravelling. It seems clear from the details identified by the reviewer for the *Magazine of Art* that several different but related concerns around the specifics of Clausen’s representation of an elderly working peasant woman were problematic. We can identify several related concerns around such issues of her physiognomy, the expectations relating to the hodge stereotype, the discourse of feminine beauty, and the discourse of realist art with its antagonism to the concerns of narrative and sentiment in Victorian art. Interestingly, each of these concerns can be related to the depiction of reverie.

The reviewer’s description of the woman begins by identifying that she has “little or no forehead”. Whilst today such an observation would be oblique, writing at the time, this reviewer was acknowledging the popular science of physiognomy.¹⁰³ The degree of angle to the vertical of the forehead was popularly believed to indicate a subject’s intelligence and moral character (fig. 92).¹⁰⁴ The remark was a deliberate assault on the choice of character.

The model for Clausen’s *Woman of the Fields* has been identified by Robins as a Mrs. Susan Chapman, aged 60 and resident of Childwick Green.¹⁰⁵ In fact, the photograph taken by Clausen (fig. 93) suggests that he was by no means overly inventive in his depiction of Chapman’s forehead if we compare the image here with the painting. So, was Clausen’s selection of Chapman strategic in reaffirming physiognomic theories

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Contemporary evidence for the significance of physiognomy in readings of paintings by critics comes to light for example, in one critic’s description of Bastien Lepage’s work *L’Amour au Village* which is described as “a powerful study of physiognomy and character. . . The psychological element, indeed is as marked and successful as the handicraft”, see “Current Art,” *Magazine of Art* 6 (1883): 379.

¹⁰⁴ For more on physiognomy as it related to Victorian painting, see Mary C. Cowling, “The Artist as Anthropologist in Mid-Victorian England: Frith’s *Derby Day*, the *Railway Station* and the New Science of Mankind,” *Art History* 6, no.4 (December, 1983): 459-77.

¹⁰⁵ Robins, “Living the Simple Life,” 15.

and rustic stereotypes? Robins argues that in spite of the Naturalists' aims towards a "heightened sense of reality", their images still "encode messages about their subjects that reflect commonly held prejudice and belief" and that for Clausen, Susan Chapman was undoubtedly an "object of fascination".¹⁰⁶ This is an important point. As with photography, the process of selection itself will always compromise the rigidity of claims to ultimate objectivity and verity. What, then, if anything, is significant about the choice of Chapman as a model, the nature of her pose and the depiction of her face? A photograph of Chapman taken by Clausen shows her physiognomy to be comparable to the painting. Perhaps Clausen did exaggerate the angle of her forehead by highlighting the skin's reflectivity in the region near the hairline; however, following Naturalist principles, the real personage of Chapman the rural agricultural worker, would have extended claims to authenticity. Taking on board Bastien's ideas of painting actual individuals in a truthful manner would have been important to Clausen.

While we might speculate over Clausen's intentions regarding Chapman's physiognomy, it seems that Clausen did not shy away from forming a representation of the rural type which could, and indeed did sit within a stereotypical trope which identified the type as "dull, squalid, uninteresting" and stupid. Clausen's *A Woman of the Fields* is complex and occupies a register of possibilities. On the one hand, it is political, raising awareness of the hardship of rural toil. On the other hand, it is voyeuristic, a sociological curiosity, and one which plays along with stereotypical notions of the rural type as unintelligent.¹⁰⁷ And central to those variable readings of the figure is the fact that she is depicted in a state of reverie. By mobilizing reverie, Clausen was automatically conjuring up the discourse of mental action. Inevitably viewers are invited to question the nature of her reverie. As with *Les Foins*, we might ask, was Chapman's reverie indicative of some "protest against misery"? Or was the purpose of reverie to invoke a spectatorial voyeurism that aided the sociological placing and differencing of the rural worker as 'other' to the intelligent urban art

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 18.

¹⁰⁷ I use the term here, in the same sense that Lubben has discussed the paintings of fisherfolk, contemporaneous with Clausen. Nina Lubben, "Toilers of the Sea': Fisherfolk and the Geographies of Tourism in England, 1880-1900" in Corbett, et al., eds. *The Geographies of Englishness*. Robins, similarly points out that Clausen would have viewed Susan Chapman with "as an object of fascination." "Living the Simple Life," 18.

viewing bourgeoisie? Either way, Chapman's reverie and inaction procures each of these questions. It would not only have been the physiognomic characteristics that may have persuaded the *Magazine of Art* reviewer to identify her as unintelligent, dull and uninteresting. Such abuses were a staple criticism against the personality and character of the rural agricultural labourer.



Mark Freeman has examined the stereotyping of the agricultural labourer as "Hodge" in the nineteenth century and has identified certain shifts in the stereotype occurring around the 1880s and 1890s.¹⁰⁸ Freeman shows that the urban perception of the backwardness of rural labourers had pervaded from the 1820s and incorporated a notion that their mental culture was deficient. Freeman cites various contemporary articles written about the agricultural labourer, many of which suggest a widespread notion that the labourer was ignorant. One author, for example, writing in 1854, complained, "they seem scarcely to know any other enjoyments than such as is common to them, and to the brute beasts which have no understanding ... So very far are they below their fellow men in mental culture".¹⁰⁹ Some claimed that with the flow of migration away from rural areas, a growing decline in rural culture was partly responsible for labourers being uncultivated. One farmer, for instance, remarked that the "secret of their being so uncultivated" was that there was "so little to exercise his mental faculties".¹¹⁰ If this was a common conception, as Freeman suggests, then pictorial representations of labourers in states of reverie or vacancy may take on subtle meanings not yet considered by art historians. Freeman also notes that around the 1880s there was some shift in the perception of the mental character of Hodge. Writing in 1879, T.H.S. Escott remarked,

Talk to the average country labourer to-day, and you will find him no longer the dull, despondent being that he was a decade since, the horizon of his views and knowledge being the boundaries of his parish, or the field in which he was

¹⁰⁸ Freeman, "The Agricultural Labourer," 172-86.

¹⁰⁹ John Eddowes, *The Agricultural Labourer as He Really is, or Village Morals in 1854* (Drifffield, 1854), 12, 16, quoted in Freeman, "The Agricultural Labourer," 174.

¹¹⁰ "A Wykehamist", *The Agricultural Labourer* (1873), 10, quoted in Freeman, "The Agricultural Labourer," 10.

plying his task. His senses have quickened, his moral and mental nature has been breathed upon with the breath of life.¹¹¹

Such views came in the wake of the formation of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union in 1872, with its efforts to improve the material and intellectual conditions of labourers and were contemporaneous with the advancing spread of education and newspapers which no doubt broadened labourers' horizons.¹¹² Yet, there still remained a major concern that the rural culture was under threat from depopulation and that this was aggravating "an apparent spiritual and cultural poverty of rural England",¹¹³ the consequences of which were that "rural life was dull, and had a dulling effect on the population".¹¹⁴ In contrast to rural subjects, notes Freeman,

the minds of the urban population were quickened by their better, and rapidly improving, opportunities for social interaction and intellectual advancement, while the country-dweller remained backward and, despite the spread of education to the villages, ignorant.¹¹⁵

One of the most significant contributors to writing on rural life of the 1880s, and commentator on these perceived rural / urban contrasts, was Richard Jefferies.¹¹⁶ He compared the lives of railway workers with rural labourers; the former were generally well travelled, intelligent and well read, while for the latter, "there was absolutely no poetry, no colour" in their lives.¹¹⁷ Several writers repeated Jefferies sentiment. Often descriptions of labourers identified the condition of sloth and lack of drive: one writer insisted that the labourers "prefer slouching to any other condition".¹¹⁸ Another commented on "the same dully, dreary mode of life",¹¹⁹ while Jefferies noted that in

¹¹¹ T.H.S. Escott, *England: It's People, Polity and Pursuits* 2 vols, 1881 [1st edition 1879]), I, 341, quoted in Freeman, "The Agricultural Labourer," 176.

¹¹² Freeman, "The Agricultural Labourer," 176.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 178.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Jefferies died in 1887, but his publications had a lasting effect well into the Edwardian period. His two volume *Hodge and His Masters* was published in 1880, and although Freeman, (p.178), notes that it sold little in this form, it was serialised for the *Standard* thus achieving an audience of around 180,000 readers. Freeman, "The Agricultural Labourer," 178.

¹¹⁷ Freeman, "The Agricultural Labourer," 178.

¹¹⁸ C. Scrivener, *Our Fields and Cities, or Misdirected Industry* (1891), p.80, quoted in Freeman, "The Agricultural Labourer," 179.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*

Wiltshire, the “plodding” labourer lacked a “mental object”.¹²⁰ It is easy to see how such descriptions might be mobilised against Naturalist pictorial representations of labourers, such as Clausen’s *Labourers After Dinner* (1883, fig. 94); and we can infer that the language and sentiment that was applied to *A Woman of the Fields* by the reviewer for *The Magazine of Art* conformed to an already prejudicial perception of rural identity. The image of Susan Chapman was clearly troubling. The writer appears to be especially disturbed by the way “she confronts you”. This confrontational quality attests both to the critic’s fear of the other, but also the realistic power of the work and its photographic qualities. When George Moore recalled Clausen’s work of this period he wrote that he has “gone further, in abject realism, than a photograph ... it is not probable that those peasants would look so ugly in a photograph as they do in his picture”.¹²¹ For Moore and the *Magazine of Art*’s reviewer, this realism was problematic in that it did not allow for mystery or suggestion. Generally, reverie images devoid of mystery, suggestion and sentiment are few and far between, but from some quarters, Clausen it seems, managed to produce just such an image. The familiar operations of reverie, with its allegorising function in genre painting and its propensity to augment open, imagined narratives in Aestheticism, had been made (temporarily) redundant.

For both George Moore and seemingly for the reviewer of *A Woman of the Fields* in *The Magazine of Art*, there was nothing in Clausen’s “realist” work to draw the mind away from the picture. For the latter complainant, “nothing is suggested”. For Moore, “mystery”, “passion”, and “suggestion” were vital qualities to good art. He noted such deficiencies in Clausen’s painting *Labourers After Dinner*. Moore:

Until I saw Mr. Clausen’s “Labourer’s”, I did not fully realise how terrible a thing art becomes when divorced from beauty, grace, mystery, and suggestion. It would be difficult to say where and how, this picture differs from a photograph; it seems to me to be little more than the vices of photography magnified.¹²²

¹²⁰ Richard Jefferies, “After the Country Franchise”, *Longman’s Magazine* 3 (1884): 372.

¹²¹ George Moore, *Modern Painting* (London: Walter Scott Limited, 1893), 120.

¹²² Moore, *Modern Painting*, 117.

For Moore, realism and the quest for truth had no validity in art, thus he remarked “the Mission of art is not truth, but beauty”.¹²³ The artistic quest for naturalist detail exacerbated the critical response against Clausen and his lack of sentiment, anecdote, suggestion and mystery. When Moore described *Labourer’s After Dinner* his response not only revealed his own hostility to the Hodge stereotype transparent in his perception of the psychology of the figures, but also the antagonism to Clausen’s depiction of authentic details that made up the identity of his figures:

We can tell how many months that man in the foreground has worn those dreadful hobnailed boots; we can count the nails, and we notice that two or three are missing. Those disgusting corduroy trousers have hung about his legs for so many months; all the ugliness of the labourer’s faces and the stolid earthiness of their lives are there; nothing has been omitted, curtailed or exaggerated. There is some psychology. We see that the years have brought the old man cunning rather than wisdom. The middle-aged man and the woman live in mute stupidity – they have known nothing but the daily hardship of living, and the vacuous face of their son tells how completely the life of his forefathers has descended upon him.¹²⁴

The antagonism to the corduroy trousers and the hobnailed boots with their missing nails are counterparts to Susan Chapman’s dirty finger nails, “purpled cheeks” and “old black bonnet” in *A Woman of the Fields*. And the “psychology” Moore speaks about in *Labourer’s After Dinner* – the “cunning”, of the old man, the “mute stupidity” of the middle-aged man and woman, and “vacuous face” of their son, are counterparts to Susan Chapman’s “dull” and “uninteresting” “stupidity”.

While Aestheticist reverie paintings could handle occluded narrative, *A Woman in the Fields* is striking in the way narrative potential is closed off. While there was room for anecdote in Clausen’s *In the Orchard*, fostered either by an empathy with the girl’s state of mind, or with the pleasant setting, *A Woman of the Fields*, it seemed struggled to induce any form of spectatorial fantasy. This distinguishes it clearly from the operations of anecdotal pictures in which Rosen and Zerner propose, “the painting becomes a point of departure for the spectator’s fantasy, absorbing him in an

¹²³ Ibid., 119.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 117-18.

imaginary world”.¹²⁵ Their definition of anecdotal works is helpful in drawing comparisons between different registers of realism in reverie pictures, thus,

the anecdotal picture not only emphasizes the subject, but – by forcing one to speculate and even invent part of the subject – draws the mind away from the picture itself into reverie and reflection. It evades the effect of immediate real presence preferred by the Realist painter.¹²⁶

Their definition is useful as it encompasses both the notion of spectatorial reverie, which, as seen in my preceding chapters, could be aligned with Aestheticist reverie images. Furthermore, it also highlights the kind of ‘real presence’ and confrontational quality which critics noticed in *A Woman of the Fields*.



The lack of anecdote and sentiment in *A Woman of the Fields* is particularly noticeable when compared with Clausen’s watercolour *Flora* (1883, fig. 95). Painted not long after *A Woman of the Fields*, Clausen again depicts Susan Chapman, but in an urban setting where she appears still in rural dress and retaining the physical details apparent in works where she is depicted as a field labourer.

There is a similarity evident between *Flora* and *A Woman of the Fields* in the passive stillness of both figures and their pensive gazing. Whilst the suggested operations of reverie (the inaction and appearance of drifting thoughts), in each figure appears similar, the way that those depicted reveries function differs. In *Flora* we are no longer confronted by a “thoroughgoing realism” because of the introduction of narrative and sentiment in the subject matter. The flower seller, (Chapman), sits on a street corner and is being approached by a lady who walks purposively towards her, as if to attend immediately to this charitable cause. As Robins has pointed out, in visual culture the flower seller was “a recognisable London type” and had been a popular subject in illustration.¹²⁷ It was no surprise, therefore, that following the work’s exhibition at The Institute of Water-Colours, two independent reviews by *The Magazine of Art* offered

¹²⁵ Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, *Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth Century Art* (London: Faber, 1994), 164-65.

¹²⁶ Rosen and Zerner, *Romanticism and Realism*, 165.

¹²⁷ Robins, “Living the Simple Life,” 23.

favourable reviews. In the January edition, the image was engraved and the reviewer thought it “something entirely fresh in Mr. Clausen’s art”, having previously remarked that “he has been imitating Bastien-Lepage, with no very good results”. The reviewer’s tone could not have been further from the hostility inflicted on *A Woman of the Fields*. Thus, on *Flora*, he continues:

In point of humanity it is the best thing he has done; and being original as well as simple and honest, it is more notable, and more valuable as art, than all the imitative efforts together. There is something very touching in the expression of the old flower-seller’s face, in the ingenious contrast of her weather-beaten aspect and poverty-stricken figure with the fresh flowers; and so far as sentiment is concerned – and sentiment is much in art – Mr. Clausen’s picture is one of the best in the galleries.¹²⁸

The reviewer for the “Art in May” column was equally positive –

His most impressive and original work is “Flora” - not a lovely goddess, but simply a street flower-seller: an old woman with a weather beaten face scarred with experience and poverty; a world of suffering in her eyes, a strange pathos in her whole attitude and aspect. It is as yet, Mr. Clausen’s best work.¹²⁹

Robins argues that the work was received more successfully than *A Woman of the Fields* because there was more of an expectation that “filth, poverty and deviant sexuality” complied with representations of the city as opposed to the countryside, in the minds of middle-class observers in the 1880s.¹³⁰ I would argue, also, that because “pathos” and “sentiment” were identified by these reviews as laudable, (no doubt partly because a narrative exists which draws out issues of charity), the work satisfied expected conventions and consequently attained a positive critical reception. This introduction of narrative and particularly sentiment seems to have shaken off some of the confrontation and the forcefulness apparent for viewers attending to the figure’s psychology in *A Woman of the Fields*. In *Flora*, Chapman’s reverie is easily transformed into allegory and therefore diffused. Such a transformation is harder to initiate in *A Woman of the Fields*, which lacks the details and signifying material that might help engender allegory. It is easy to see that *Flora* does not extend its sentiment as mawkishly as Thomas Kennington’s slightly later *The Pinch of Poverty* (1891, fig.

¹²⁸ “Current Art,” *Magazine of Art* 6, (1883): 428.

¹²⁹ “Art in May,” *Magazine of Art*, 6, (1883): 29.

¹³⁰ Robins, “Living the Simple Life,” 22.

96), with its young attractive mother for a flower seller, whose clothing seems to avert a realistic image of poverty. Yet, *Flora* likewise, relies on sentiment and narrative, both of which are augmented by the central figure's reverie.

In *A Woman of the Fields*, the unadulterated and confrontational directness of the figure's reverie proclaims the actuality of the woman, her surroundings and occupation. In this respect, *A Woman of the Fields* offers something subtly different from conventional depictions of reverie; its reverie is not a conduit for suggestion, for narrative or for the allegorical, instead, it is a vehicle for augmenting the representation of the psychology of a real individual. Stripped of its potential for narrative and suggestion, and void of sentiment, reverie here is consigned to the domain of the internal psychology of the figure alone.

Sentiment seems to have troubled Clausen. The related operations of reverie as a vehicle for sentiment must also have been a concern of his. I have already questioned McConkey's generalising remark that Clausen was "not usually given to reverie." Instead, we might say that, at his most progressive, he seems to be cautious of reverie in its popular sentimental form. It is as though he recognised that at certain points he could rely on it in some form or other to convey realistic representations of the psychological identity of his figures. At other points, it seems that he recognised how he may tentatively draw on its popular appeal – thus satisfying commercial needs at a time when reverie images were taking hold as populist fare.

When Clausen wrote his article "Bastien-Lepage and Modern Realism", he revealed something of this dilemma by arguing the case for there being a form of sentiment in the work of Bastien.¹³¹ Clausen puts a case forward that allows Bastien's "claims to feeling, sentiment, and that spiritual quality which makes fine art, as distinct from lifeless imitation" on the grounds of "relation" and "intimacy" with his subject. Although this relation is "loving", it maintains an "impartial presentation" of the

¹³¹ It must have been interesting for Clausen when one reviewer of *Labourers After Dinner* (1883), pointing out the similarities between Lepage and him, noted also that "M. Lepage has always a sentiment, an idea, in his work; and this is wanting in Mr. Clausen's painting this year." "The Exhibition of the Royal Academy" *Art Journal* 23 (August 1884): 244.

subject.¹³² Perhaps, then, Clausen felt that at times reverie could be used as a vehicle to achieve a similar intimacy without compromising or relinquishing a sense of realism and truth. Returning to Rosen and Zerner's sense of realist work avoiding the anecdotal and the invitation for the viewer to even invent narrative, Clausen appears to operate strategically. *Flora* certainly does invite some spectatorial invention, albeit a predictable one, whilst *A Woman of the Fields* is more evasive.



Moore's antagonistic commentary on Clausen was retrospective, but it is most likely that around 1882-3 Clausen was aware of the negative critical reception to his form of Naturalism and the hostility against the influx of French inspired art. To further my exploration of his use of reverie, it is useful to look at further works by Clausen that depicted field work. Inspired in part by Bastien-Lepage's *October, Gathering Potatoes* (1879), Clausen embarked on a set of images that would culminate in his *Winter Work* (1883-4, fig. 90). To look at the development of *Winter Work* is useful because it indicates the critical power of a facing figure in reverie, as demonstrated by the female figure positioned on the right hand side of the composition. In its first compositional configuration as exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1883, *Winter Work* depicted a male and a female labourer topping and tailing mangolds, (the term refers to cutting off the tops and bottoms of a form of turnip used as cattle fodder, with a sharp scythe). The sketch made by Clausen for the catalogue (fig. 97), gives us a clear idea of the painting in its early form.

It is clear that the work was a development of a similar work, *December*, (1882, fig. 98) which was probably painted in the latter months of 1882.¹³³ McConkey notes that working drawings informed by photographs led to the small oil *December* which was probably produced in part in the open air.¹³⁴ Clausen, he suggests, then moved on to paint the larger Grosvenor canvas, *Winter Work*.¹³⁵ The key compositional distinction between *December* and the early configuration of *Winter Work* is that the figure of

¹³² George Clausen, "Bastien-Lepage and Modern Realism," 114-15.

¹³³ See McConkey, *Sir George Clausen R.A.*, 38.

¹³⁴ McConkey, "Rustic Naturalism at the Grosvenor Gallery," 137.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

Susan Chapman now directly faces the viewer, while behind her, in the middle distance is a male youth in profile, bent over sorting mangolds. Robins notes that the topping and tailing of mangolds was an “unskilled and unpleasant” task that women were employed to do during the winter months.¹³⁶ It is fair to suggest that Clausen turned the figure of Chapman to face the viewer in order to render the image more powerful – possibly more confrontational. Robins points out that the work was not received well in its early form. She cites how *The Times* reported that it had been “wisely skied” and that it was “really too ugly” and would “give no pleasure”.¹³⁷ The work did not sell following its first exhibition.¹³⁸ Clausen then reworked the painting by adding, on the far right hand side, the figure of a young girl holding a hoop. Payne has suggested that Clausen added the girl with a hoop “perhaps in an attempt to make the painting less of a stark comment on rural hardship and to suggest a family group, like the very successful sunny harvest scenes of some of his contemporaries”.¹³⁹ McConkey similarly suggests a taming of the work, noting that after the Grosvenor exhibition Clausen inserted the girl on the right of the composition, thus “turning the picture into a rural naturalist conversation piece and taking it back into the domain of John Robertson Reid”.¹⁴⁰

Indeed, we could argue that the critical power of the work is diffused by the presence of the girl and the ensuing discursive engagement that is triangulated amongst what now appears a family group. The positioning of the young girl and the apparent conversation acts to close-off certain readings. We can easily imagine how, in its earlier form, the work would invite readings centred around the psychology of Chapman. It appears apparent, also, that Clausen diffuses the critical potential of the work by acknowledging updated legislature around child labour which had been a pertinent issue in the years shortly before the work was produced. There is no sense of child labour here – the young girl’s satchel identifies her as a schoolgirl, and would remind the contemporary viewer of the recent legislation in the Education Act of 1880 which made it compulsory for children under the age of ten to attend school.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ Robins, “Living the Simple Life,” 18.

¹³⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 18.

¹³⁸ Payne, *Toil and Plenty*, 63.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 63-64.

¹⁴⁰ McConkey, “Rustic Naturalism at the Grosvenor Gallery,” 137.

¹⁴¹ Robins, identifies the figure as a schoolgirl. “Living the Simple Life,” 20.

McConkey points out that, before the additions were made, “it was clear that the picture mounted a serious assault upon critical sensibilities when it first appeared at the Grosvenor”.¹⁴² For instance, Cosmo Monkhouse, writing for *The Academy*, remarked that “Mr. Clausen dared for once to be thoroughly unsentimental”.¹⁴³ McConkey draws his conclusions from the work, saying that “British notions of sentiment had been discarded”. Comparing the work with Millet’s *L’Angelus*, McConkey posits that in Clausen’s painting “there is no backdrop of spiritual consolation, no ritual, no primitive piety”.¹⁴⁴ In its early configuration, *Winter Work* must have been hard-hitting. Its bleakness was pronounced and noted by the critic for *Vanity Fair* who was impressed by the similarity they perceived with Millet:

An old man and a ragged old woman are pulling turnips on a bitter day. The strong sincerity of this fine picture reminds one of Millet, and we would rather see that worn old woman than a number of ladies with liver complaint. The air looks bleak and you feel the sadness of poverty and labour . . . There are few pictures that one would care to live with, and we are forced to name the work of a young and unknown man, Mr. Clausen, as the best to be seen in the place.¹⁴⁵

These feelings around the “sadness of poverty and labour” identified here were no doubt augmented by the placing of the figure of Chapman in a form of reverie. We need to imagine the work minus the figure of the schoolgirl. Considering a detail of the figure of Chapman alone (fig. 99), we can get a sense of how a viewer may have initially engaged with the work and responded to what appears now to be a more critical and confrontational image of reverie, and one loaded with realist overtones. The experience of viewing the early version of *Winter Work* must have been similar to *A Woman of the Fields*. Side by side the images here are comparable. A further comparison of the two versions of *Winter Work* reveals that their psychological dynamics are quite different. In its early configuration *Winter Work* would not have invoked a sense of conversation – instead, Chapman’s gaze which is directed towards

¹⁴² McConkey, “Rustic Naturalism at the Grosvenor Gallery,” 137.

¹⁴³ Cosmo Monkhouse, “The Grosvenor Gallery,” *The Academy* 574 (5 May 1883): 317, also quoted in part in McConkey, “Rustic Naturalism at the Grosvenor Gallery,” 137.

¹⁴⁴ McConkey, “Rustic Naturalism at the Grosvenor Gallery,” 137.

¹⁴⁵ “The Grosvenor Gallery”, *Vanity Fair* 29 (5 May 1883): 234, quoted in Colleen Denney, *At the Temple of Art*, 173. For more on the significance of the corset, and the debates around it, see Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History* (London: Yale University Press, 2004).

the right of the picture, in the opposite direction of her male colleague, suggests an interiorised isolated psychology.

Her brooding gaze and slightly downcast head invokes as strong a sense of toil as the figure of Chapman in *A Woman of the Fields* (see fig. 99). The sense of her reverie would be further augmented by the notional monotony of this kind of labour.¹⁴⁶ This depicted monotony is prominent and sets the work apart from a related watercolour *Hoeing Turnips* (1883, fig. 91), which also depicts both field work and Chapman in reverie.

As with *A Woman of the Fields*, *Hoeing Turnips* identifies Chapman as pausing from labour, thus following the theme set out in Bastien's *Les Foins*. Thinking in these terms, the depiction of reverie and the concurrency of labour in *Winter Work* (in its early form) invokes an even more pronounced sense of toil and psychological impoverishment of the kind we saw identified in the stereotypical figure of Hodge. I would also argue, therefore, that this temporal or durational conflation of labour with reverie was fundamental to the critical character of *Winter Work*.

The focus of psychological intensity apparent in the figure of Chapman in the early version of *Winter Work*, characterised by wandering thoughts during monotonous labour, is a good example of how we might explore other Victorian paintings dealing with similar themes. Works such as Walter Langley's *Wandering Thoughts* (1882), Albert Chevalier Tayler's *Girl Shelling Peas*, (1886) and Frank O'Meara's *Towards Night and Winter* (1885) (see composite, fig. 100), all fit within the oeuvre of Naturalism and depict the conflation of reverie with labour. However, the majority of reverie images in Victorian art, place women outside the sphere of labour – images of women in reverie whilst engaged with labour, are the minority.

Before considering another important work by Clausen, *The Stone Pickers* (fig. 77), from this minority category of reverie images, I want to consider another painting,

¹⁴⁶ Monotonous activity was regarded as something that may induce reverie-related states. See, George Henry Lewes *The Physiology of Common Life* (2 Vols.), Vol 2 (New York: D. Appleton and Co. 1867), 311.

which, like *Winter Work* traces Clausen's ambivalence around a critical avant-gardist expression on the one hand, and on the other, a more conventional idealised approach to the depiction of reverie in a rustic setting. As *Winter Work*, with its taming update demonstrates, Clausen seemed to be particularly aware of market tastes whilst simultaneously wishing to create powerful realist commentary on the toils of rural labour. By looking at his work *Day Dreams*, I want to show how once again reverie becomes a central vehicle through which he explores this dichotomy.



Clausen's painting *Day Dreams* (1883, fig. 13) helps us to consider how the discourses of age, gender, and the implications of female labour play out in his positioning of contemporary rural life. As Robins has pointed out, there existed a contemporary antagonism towards the idea of women working the fields.¹⁴⁷ But, as she also notes, the idyllic myth of rural life could be accommodated by Clausen in his propensity to depict "young women alone or in pairs, ostensibly haying or tending sheep, but lost in reverie".¹⁴⁸

Depicting a youthful femininity, as seen in *Haytime*, seemed to be a way around the potential antagonism towards female labour. Yet, at the same time, its simultaneous contextualisation alongside works like *A Woman of the Fields* make those images of elderly labourers even more remarkable. How were images of elderly figures in states of labour-induced reverie to be understood? Critics may have easily described the young woman in *Les Foins* (fig. 76) as in a reverie-like state akin to daydreaming, but it seems that this kind of description was more difficult to attach to elderly figures. This may be because reverie images of youthful women could readily accommodate the discourse of romance. To make the point, the compositional structure of *A Woman of the Fields* is not very different from Rossetti's *Bocca Bacciata* (fig. 22) but the effects of their subject are quite different.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Robins, "Living the Simple Life".

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁴⁹ The point may also be considered by drawing a comparison with Herkomer's painting *Eventide: A Scene in the Westminster Union* (Liverpool Museums, 1878), which depicts elderly inmates resting in reverie-like states.

The contrasting distinction between depictions of old and young in reverie is brought to the fore in Clausen's work. McConkey has noted that Clausen revealed his primary concerns with *Day Dreams* to be that of the technical difficulties amassed around the changing light conditions apparent to plein-air painting, and that "critics and collectors may muse over the sentiment implied by the figures, but for the painter, 'the principal person is the light'".¹⁵⁰ However, in 1905 when Clausen was making his comments, he was securing his own position as an advocate of Impressionism. To explain the work in purely technical terms would deny our understanding of its context and complexity of meaning around its subject. The distinctions between the two figures and their 'implied sentiment' is too important here, not to consider closely. Not only does the work reveal something of the contrasting ideas around how reverie might be read in subjects of different ages, but, it reveals the complexities around the depiction of women rural labourers within the context of art and the changing nature of rural labour. We might start by asking the question, could Clausen's *Day Dreams* have been titled thus, if it depicted two elderly women as opposed to the elderly figure of Susan Chapman alongside the attractive young woman in reverie? Probably not. As we know, the subject of reverie, or daydream, was often attached to femininity and feminine beauty. When the painting was exhibited at the first exhibition of the Institute of Painters in Oil-Colours¹⁵¹ in the winter of 1883, the critic of the *Saturday Review* certainly identified the distinction in mental state between the two figures, noting in this "powerful work" that "an old lady and a younger one sit in a hay meadow", but that "the younger lady is the dreamer".¹⁵²

The idea of daydreaming as the preoccupation of youthful beauties was also identified by Frederick Wedmore. Reviewing the work for *The Academy*, he firstly noted that generally Clausen, "a naturalist", would be "more popular...if he allowed his

¹⁵⁰ McConkey cites Clausen in interview with J.M Gibbon for the journal *Black and White* in 1905 in which Clausen quotes Manet's famous dictum as being "that in a picture the principal person is the light". See Kenneth McConkey, catalogue note, for Sotheby's "Victorian and Edwardian" sale, (11 December 2007), London, [Lot 54], available online at <http://www.sothebys.com/en/catalogues/ecatalogue.html/2007/victorian-edwardian-107132#/r=/en/ecat.fhtml.L07132.html+r.m=/en/ecat.lot.L07132.html/54/> [accessed 26 July 2011].

¹⁵¹ W.E. Henley noted that "in its first exhibition the Institute has done fairly well; next year it must do much better". See "The Institute," *Magazine of Art* 7 (1884): 161.

¹⁵² "The Institute of Painters in Oil-Colours," *The Saturday Review* 56 (22 December 1883): 798.

observations to be directed to any appreciable extent to the beauty of women and children...but he cares above all things, for character”, foregoing the “facile fascinations of grace”. He goes on:

This year however, he presents us with a carefully studied picture, which includes one specimen of humanity more agreeable than any which he usually vouchsafes. The young woman is not a “lady”, nor even very pretty; she is a peasant suffered to display the refinements which, even in the life of the fields, may be the possession of youth, if not of womanhood. An old crone sits by her on the herbage; in the background mowers are cutting the last grass of the scanty meadow. The expressions of the old woman absorbed in her mid-day rest, and of the young one absorbed in her own thoughts – which have a touch of romance in them – permit us to speak of the picture as truly dramatic, though no dramatic incident passes within the four walls of the frame.¹⁵³

The discourse of youth and beauty easily allowed Wedmore to attach the theme of romance into his analysis of the younger woman’s reverie, “absorbed in her own [romantic] thoughts”. However, in accordance with the prejudices noted above around the lack of mental action, or a “mental object”, in rural labourers, Wedmore denies the possibility of the “old crone” having any thoughts. The hostility is carried through in his inference that the older woman is not “an agreeable specimen of humanity”. Instead, her absorption is the focus of rest itself. A similar distinction was made by W.E. Henley, writing in the *Magazine of Art*.¹⁵⁴ Contrasting the work with Frank Dacey’s painting of the same title, Henley writes:

In Mr. Clausen’s work the truth is so graphic that the physical aspect is delineated with the same quiet masterly grasp as the mental process. The solitary figure in the hayfield, beyond the dozing woman and the dreaming girl, is involved in the subtle contrast between the visible realism of the scene and the inner abstraction of the girl’s face.¹⁵⁵

Henley identifies a truthfulness in the depiction of “mental process” so much so, that he feels he can accurately distinguish the older woman as dozing in contrast to the younger girl’s “dreaming”.

¹⁵³ Frederick Wedmore, “The Institute of Painters in Oil,” *Academy* 607 (22 December 1883): 421-22.

¹⁵⁴ The article is unsigned, however, Kenneth McConkey in “Victorian and Edwardian” (sale cat. Sotheby’s 11th December 2007) notes the author as being Henley.

¹⁵⁵ Henley, “The Institute,” 162.

Painted around the same time as *Labourers After Dinner* the response to *Day Dreams* did not articulate either of the women's reverie as "vacuous", or "vacant" as with *Les Foins*. To explain this, we might have to consider that the figure of the young woman presents firstly an ambiguity around the serious question of work and rural toil, and secondly, that her depiction sits within an already established convention of recumbent reverie, the kind identified for example in Whistler's *Symphony in White No. 3* (fig. 43). The hostility to the idea of women undertaking hard rural work took hold in the mid-century. Previously, field work had for women, according to Robins, been considered "as physically healthy and economically necessary".¹⁵⁶ However, this thinking changed as a sexist discourse began to emerge around women's field labour. In the Parliamentary Report of 1867 (The Royal Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture), the suggestion was that field work did "irreparable damage to the female character" and "the commissioners found suffering and deprivation and a reputed lack of sexual restraint, and blamed women for the lack of family values and stability".¹⁵⁷ Robins noted that the Reverend James Fraser reported to the Commission,

not only does [field work] almost unsex a woman in dress, gait, manners, character, making her rough, coarse, clumsy, and masculine, but it generates a further very pregnant social mischief, by unfitting her or indisposing her for a woman's proper duties at home.¹⁵⁸

I argue then, that *Day Dreams* represents something of Clausen's struggle, or rather, something of the struggle for Clausen, as to how he might achieve both a critical and commercial success whilst also pursuing the aims of Naturalism and the search for an authenticity in his rural figures.

The painting occupies a curious position, then, for it articulates a complexity of meaning around reverie set within the context outlined above. It appears to satisfy both strands of Clausen's oeuvre that Payne draws on – thus, it satisfactorily accommodates the idyllic myth of rural idylls; thus a beautiful young woman accompanied by her

¹⁵⁶ Robins, "Living the Simple Life," 19.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

grandmother takes a break from Haysel¹⁵⁹ in the golden sun drenched landscape – sat beneath the shade of a tree idle daydreams occupy the minds of the two women – for the elderly woman, perhaps daydreams of the past, and for the younger, daydreams of the future. And in accord with Payne’s idyllic myth of rural life, the work can be accommodated within Robins’ classification of that branch of Clausen’s work depicting a “fictive sweetness”, of “figures lost in reverie” and a nostalgic pastoral view of Englishness. But as Payne has noted, representations of the idyllic myth came to coexist with representations of “downtrodden labourers, often solitary”, and images which are “melancholy rather than cheerful in mood”.¹⁶⁰ It is as if Clausen attempted to satisfy both myths with this work. At the same time the two women appear to represent two different eras of women’s field work. The young woman wears very different clothing to the elderly drooped figure of Susan Chapman. In fact there is more comparability between the image of the young woman and two later works by Clausen depicting what look like younger middle-class girls. In the work *Noon in the Hayfield* (1897, fig. 101), labour is represented in the form of the two males in the background in the top left hand corner of the frame. Hardly noticeable, they partake in haying, possibly using scythes or pitchforks, while close to the girl lays a rake, but it is not clear whether she is a mere onlooker to the labour here or if she undertakes the lighter duty of raking the mown hay.¹⁶¹

In another similar but later work, there is no evidence of labour. Functioning like a plein-air version of Whistler’s *Symphony in White No. 3*, Clausen’s *The Spreading Tree* (1901, fig. 102) depicts two young well-dressed women relaxing under a large oak tree. While the suggestion of female work in *Noon in the Hayfield* is fairly weak, it is clear in *Day Dreams* that even the attractive younger woman has been assisting haysel. Two rakes, one for each woman, lay on the floor and the accoutrements of lunch lie nearby, clearly connoting a pause in the labour for food, drink and some rest. However, although it was recognised in the 1880s, and indeed into the twentieth century, that women would play an important part in summer labour events such as

¹⁵⁹ The term denotes the hay harvest, see Alun Howkins, “In the Sweat of thy Face” in *The Victorian Countryside: Volume Two*, 515.

¹⁶⁰ Payne, *Toil and Plenty*, 61.

¹⁶¹ This work relates closely to *Girl in a Field* (1897), reproduced in McConkey, *Sir George Clausen R.A.*, 67. The latter may well be a sketch for *Noon in the Hayfield*. The level of detail and handling differs, with *Girl in a Field* lacking the farming tools which are evident in *Noon in the Hayfield*.

Haysel and harvest time, the younger woman seems to represent the turning tide. Her mind is on other things as she fingers the petals of a flower, and we do not sense that a life of rural toil will be the story of her future. On the other hand, a parallel narrative exists through the slumped sunburnt figure of Chapman, worn out by a life time of toil. The title 'Daydreams' as suggested above, invites the viewer to consider each figure's psychology. The generic posed reverie of the young woman would have issued no shocks for its audience. Her eyes are open and the sense here is that she is 'daydreaming'. However, the figure of Chapman invites us to think of other forms of 'daydream'. Slumped and head bowed, her eyes are concealed to the viewer, and we could assume that she is napping. There may be a sense that she inhabits that space in between waking and sleeping, which fascinated psychologists of the day. Perhaps it would be wrong, though, to imagine this was Clausen's aim. As the critics' remarks reveal, her daydreams are more indicative of the need for physical rest rather than an opportunity for idle daydreaming. Her slumped figure even recalls Henry Wallis' *Stonebreaker* (1857, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery) – the dead figure of a labourer having just collapsed out of sheer exhaustion and years of toil. Thus, the two figures in *Day Dreams* again contrast, as one evokes a politicised sentiment around toil and poverty, while the other invokes populist notions around sentiment as well as the Aestheticist concerns of beauty, mystery and suggestion. It is interesting to raise the question, to what extent was Clausen offering a critical comment on both the capacities of this kind of genre work and of Naturalism itself. In other words, did his distinction of two very different figures serve as an example from which to extend the possibilities of the genre – that it may incorporate a critical vision alongside a pictorial version of "fictive sweetness". While my own preferred reading is that the work was more a response to satisfying commercial aims, further research may help unravel Clausen's intentions.



The depiction of reverie in *Day Dreams* appeared to be one way that Clausen could treat the hardship of rural labour without the risk of the kind of hostility aired against *A Woman of the Fields* and the unrevised version of *Winter Work*. By the mid-1880s, Clausen was probably beginning to note that Naturalism could be co-opted with elements of Aestheticism by drawing on poetic sensibilities towards rusticity. Rural

Naturalist works by William Stott, George Henry, Frank O'Meara, and Fred Hall, all depicted women in reverie in rustic landscapes yet flavoured by a sense of lyrical melancholy. *Day Dreams* partially fits into this wing of Naturalism. However, the more poetic Naturalism which had much of its roots in the artists' colony at Grez Sur Loing, tended to avoid the kind of critical comment that tallied with the depiction of Clausen's fieldworkers.¹⁶² Although the critical potential of *A Woman of the Fields* and the early version of *Winter Work* may have been at the far limits of Clausen's avant-gardism, he did not shy from returning to the subject of field work by women and the psychology of character. Avoiding any potential criticism in the depiction of elderly figures (this seemed to be half the problem for critics of Clausen's), he returned to the subject of women fieldworkers in his *The Stone Pickers*, (1877, fig. 77) but this time, the central figure was a young, attractive woman.¹⁶³



Robins has remarked that "social overtones can be imputed to the title, [*Stone Pickers*] but they appear to have been little interest to the Clausen".¹⁶⁴ She quotes Clausen, who was cited in R.A.M. Stevenson's article of 1890, as saying that peasant life was interesting, "if for no other reason than that it is the bottom crust of society".¹⁶⁵

The model for the painting was in fact Clausen's children's nursemaid, Mary 'Polly' Baldwin.¹⁶⁶ Robins notes that the figure of Mary Baldwin is generic to Clausen's works of the 1880s in that his figures "share the same characterless and passive immobility". Her argument poses that Clausen was primarily interested in "sensitivity to colour" and "delicacy of treatment of natural details". Clausen, according to Stevenson, vocalised these concerns himself. Thus writes Stevenson, "He considers a beautiful type of face in the model as apt to distract one from the serious pursuit of

¹⁶² For more on the impact of the colony see Jenkins, *Painters and Peasants*, 74-81.

¹⁶³ McConkey notes that the work was painted in the Autumn of 1886 at Cookham Dene, and sent on to the dealer Goupil in the new year. In 1887 the work was exhibited at the Dudley gallery in the second exhibition of the New English Art Club. *Sir George Clausen R.A.*, 46.

¹⁶⁴ Anna Gruetzner Robins, *Post-Impressionism: Cross-Currents in European Painting* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), 279.

¹⁶⁵ Robins, *Post-Impressionism*, 279.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

artistic qualities. One becomes careless of construction and modelling".¹⁶⁷ By 1890, Clausen was moving away from the "thoroughgoing realism" that Stevenson had described in relation to his "Field Hand" [*A Woman of the Fields*].¹⁶⁸ However, to treat *The Stone Pickers* as part of the swathe of Clausen's Impressionist inspired works of the 1890s, prevents us from recognising the realist credentials of the work in relation to its subject and the potent Naturalistic focus on psychology of character, both of which I contend are augmented by the application of reverie. *The Stone Pickers*, I would argue, is best understood as demonstrating Clausen's wrestle with the precepts of "modern realism"¹⁶⁹ alongside the necessity of creating commercial works. In his article of 1888, "Bastien-Lepage and Modern Realism", Clausen insists that "it is to me unquestionable that the main business of painting – indeed, of all art – is with our own times".¹⁷⁰ Writing in 1887, the same year that *The Stone Pickers* was exhibited, F. Mabel Robinson had had a thirteen page article published in the *Fortnightly Review* that July, entitled "Our Working Women and their Earnings". The article drew information from census returns and sought to highlight the significance of working women in a period which was seeing the diminishing traditional patterns of women's work as it might have attached to the now disappearing homestead. It noted the number of working women in the United Kingdom to be more than four and a half millions. Women in domestic work numbered around two million, as did women in industry. The remaining groupings saw a professional class of some 288,919, made up of nurses, nuns clerks etc., a commercial class of merchants, traders and innkeepers, of 26, 344, and a class of "agriculturalists" of some 215, 108.¹⁷¹ Robinson had noted a declining rural population and that the

system of large farming has almost swept away the female agriculturalist . . . Our farmer's wives often are, and usually aspire to be, ladies of education and culture, and the practical workings of the farm devolves, as a rule, entirely on hired labour.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Stevenson, "George Clausen," 292.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Clausen's term. Clausen, "Bastien-Lepage and Modern Realism," *Scottish Arts Review* 1 (1888).

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 115.

¹⁷¹ F. Mabel Robinson, "Our Working Women and Their Earnings," *Fortnightly Review* 42, no. 247 (July 1887): 50.

¹⁷² Robinson, "Our Working Women," 60-61.

However, Robinson also noted how in “remote districts the womankind of the labourers are employed at busy seasons, and in the eastern counties “gangs” of women still work in the fields under the supervision of a male contractor or ‘ganger’”. Clausen must have been familiar with this practice in the eastern counties. He may also have been familiar with the subtleties in the distinctions of class of peasant women and the various kinds of prejudice and accusations of disrepute Robinson had noted:

Some gangs are made up of the women of the villages; in others the very offscourings of the peasantry are received – unfortunate creatures without decency or civilisation, and often grossly immoral. The risk of being thrown into close association with such women (to say nothing of the ganger) is one of the causes through which field labour has fallen into disrepute among the better class of peasant women. In fact there is precisely the same distinction between the yeoman’s daughter working on her father’s farm and the hired female labourer, as between the daughter of a poor gentleman cooking, ironing, doing housework at home, and the woman who seeks to earn her bread by domestic service among chance companions and with strangers.¹⁷³

In light of this, Clausen was focussing on a much more pressing and current discourse than when he earlier tackled the subject in 1882 in his watercolour *Stone Pickers (Midday)* (fig. 103), in which his labourers are male.

It is hard to determine whether or not Clausen intended his female figure in the later work to be one of the reputable “women of the village” or one of the gang-hired disreputable peasantry. The plain, but attractive looks of the young woman does suggest the former; however, the discourse identified by Robinson identifies the subject as a contemporary one and one which may have fascinated Clausen’s viewers. By capturing a reverie-like moment in amongst the depiction of monotonous labour, Clausen is inviting the viewer to explore in depth the character of the central figure, both in terms of her physiognomy, but also in terms of her mental state. Her vacancy and the intensity of her stare towards the ground and the stones which are the object of her labour does invite the viewer to empathise with the monotony of her toil. Yet her gaze, which seems to look through and beyond the heap of stones, tells us something more. If the sexual identity of the girl remains open to question, the nature of the labour is overt, and it seems that her reverie in its manifest conflation with labour, is

¹⁷³ Ibid., 61.

the real focus of the work. The foregrounding intensity of labour as subject matter is heightened by Clausen's attention to temporality. The contrast is remarkable between the durational instantaneity of the last suspended stone, just about to fall onto the pile at the girl's feet, and the facial expression of the girl's reverie which we sense as ongoing, endless even. Thus, while labour is fore-grounded, the 'something more' that her gaze offers can be related to the nineteenth-century concerns that Crary has identified in the way that the psychology of the individual was inimitably married to productivity.¹⁷⁴ There is a hint here that Clausen's figure attests to the notion of the mind as that sanctuary of freedom, which if only for a few moments, liberates workers from their toil.

On one further level, the intensity with which the viewer is asked to attend to the figure's psychology and the subject of labour is borne out by aesthetic considerations. Both of Clausen's works, *The Stone Pickers* and the watercolour *Stone Pickers (Midday)*, (which also uses reverie to denote toil) formulate ways of closing off the aesthetic capital inherent to the landscape genre. In the watercolour, the male labourer pauses and looks into the distance. His left hand appears to wipe sweat off his brow, while at the same time acts to shade the bright sunlight as he momentarily takes in a view across the landscape. Yet, the portrait format of the frame and the high horizon line closes off any opportunity to aestheticize the landscape in such a way as to initiate a picturesque prospect. For the most part, the landscapes in each of the works are barren, thus complying with the sense of the "dreary landscape" as identified by Howard D. Rodee above. This, in effect, forces the viewer to engage more directly with the figure. This feature of Clausen's work is oppositional to what Lubben has located in Naturalist fisher-folk paintings. She argues that figures in fisherfolk paintings looking out onto seascapes acted vicariously, as if to model the spectator's mode of viewing as well as indicating the aestheticisation of the landscape in accord with contemporary tourism.¹⁷⁵ The works of Stanhope Forbes, Walter Langley and Henry Herbert La Thangue, set in seaside locations, would often depict an individual in profile in the middle distance looking into the landscape. La Thangue's *Study in a Boat Building Yard on the French Coast* (1881, fig. 104) is a case in point, exemplifying the paradigm. A useful comparison might also be drawn with Fred Hall's

¹⁷⁴ See Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 11-79.

¹⁷⁵ Lubben, "Toilers of the Sea," 29-63.

In the Fields (1886, fig. 105). The composition of Hall's work is similar to *The Stone Pickers*, in its depiction of a woman field worker in a full length portrait format. Bathed in the evening light, Hall's figure is captured in reverie; her gaze is directed across a picturesque landscape dowsed in a luminescent afterglow. Clausen's figure, on the other hand, disregards the wider landscape; her sight line cast downwards. As with the touristic fisher-folk paintings, the female figure's reverie in Hall's painting conflates with the intended aesthetic response of the viewer – thus, figure and viewer each respond to the aesthetics of picturesque landscape. Clausen's two works *The Stone Pickers* and *Stone Pickers (Midday)*, on the other hand, close off that possibility; *The Stone Pickers* even more so, being void of the warm sunshine and blue sky depicted in the watercolour. These landscapes are barren, uninteresting and uninviting. Consequentially, the effect of this in *The Stone Pickers* is to draw the viewer *closer* to the psychology of the figure of Mary Baldwin and the subject of rural poverty.¹⁷⁶ As such, the viewer's conscience is directed to the kind of reverie that we considered above in Clausen's *December* (fig. 98), and that we imagined in the earlier version of *Winter Work* (fig. 97) – a reverie that coincides with monotonous labour. That the depiction of reverie is in some way connected here with active toil is without question. As to the exact detail of that relationship between reverie and toil, we can only speculate. Thus, we might dwell on the sense of reverie as a pleasurable psychological sanctuary, offering briefly, the hiatus of a welcome pause, of at least some respite from the enveloping constraining physical and mental oppression of rural labour; alternatively, we might reflect on the way monotonous labour, in itself, fosters conditions for reverie. Indeed, John Ernest Phythian, writing in 1908, discussed the nature of labour depicted in Clausen's work and hinted at the kind of reverie induced by monotonous labour;

He has not idealised the work of the fields. Some of it is laborious, monotonous, mechanical, and he has shown it thus. In one picture of harvesters at work in an upland field, under blazing sun, one of the men, after binding up a sheaf, is moving forward to gather corn from another one. He is staring vacantly before him, his thoughts evidently far from his work; but already his

¹⁷⁶ See Rosemary Treble, "The Victorian Picture of the Country" in *The Victorian Countryside; Vol. One*, ed., G.E. Mingay (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 174.

arms and hands are instinctively bent, as the need to be, to gather corn for the next sheaf.¹⁷⁷

As well as noting reverie-like vacancy induced by labour, Phythian also identified the absence of narrative, remarking, “the point is of course that Mr. Clausen’s pictures do not tell a story like Sir Luke Fildes’s *Doctor* and *Village Wedding*; they only reveal the beauty of ordinary scenes”.¹⁷⁸

Yet, while operating to some degree on critical levels (perhaps more so than Clausen liked to admit by the end of the 1880s), the work maintains a commercial viability in that “Beauty of face” and the appeal of an attractive model to heterosexual audiences helped maintain Victorian conventions of beauty in art. It is perhaps this point alone which closes-off the full critical potential of the work as a cutting commentary on the toil of rural labour, because, whatever the details of the narrative, the attractiveness of Mary Baldwin’s face lost in reverie, would always provide a palatable point of focus for viewers, in spite of Clausen’s claims around avoiding “beauty of face”. The critical reception to the related work *A Girl’s Head* (1886, fig. 106), which also depicted Mary, indicates how amenable the depiction of youthful beauty was in comparison to the elderly figure in *A Woman of the Fields*. The critic for the *Magazine of Art* claimed *A Girl’s Head* was “the best picture in the exhibition” when it was shown at the Society of British Artists, noting how Clausen had “expressed in the youthful face such pathos and such vitality”.¹⁷⁹ The placing of the elderly figure in the background with her back to the viewer in *The Stone Pickers* seems to safely put at bay less conventionally attractive versions of femininity. Unlike the watercolour *Stone Pickers (Midday)*, the depiction of youthful, feminine beauty could invoke the qualities of mystery so admired by critics. In this respect, *The Stone Pickers* operates in a similar way to the poetic Naturalism of Hall, Stott, O’Meara, and George Henry. While a reading of the work may easily skew towards Aestheticist trajectories, or the “fictive sweetness” and femininity attached to notions of the Hardy-esque country-girl, (à la Tess Durbeyfield), there does remain however, the spectres of rural toil, and of

¹⁷⁷ John Ernest Phythian, *Fifty Years of Modern Painting: Corot to Sargent* (New York, E.P. Dutton and Company, 1908), 331-32.

Available at <http://openlibrary.org/b/OL7112035M/Fifty-years-of-modern-painting,-Corot-to-Sargent> [accessed, 26 July, 2011].

¹⁷⁸ Phythian, *Fifty Years of Modern Painting*, 333.

¹⁷⁹ “Current Art”, *Magazine of Art*, 1887, 113.

inequitable class and gender relations. Insistently, the phantom of *A Woman of the Fields* hovers over Mary Baldwin. Literally, the old woman, (we know to be Susan Chapman) both of *Day Dreams* and of *A Woman of the Fields*, offers a knowing presence. The follower of Clausen would recognise her in both those works, but would also imagine her as the stooped elderly figure here. At this moment our understanding of Mary Baldwin's reverie is more disquieting – is she to *become* the “weather worn” “dull” “stupid” haggard crone of *A Woman of the Fields*? And is this perhaps the subject of the figure's own reverie? The proximity of the stooped elderly woman to the face of Mary Baldwin (in reverie) invites such a question. Other details hint at the phantom of rural toil – Baldwin's hands are enlarged and red – her fingers are not the delicate wiry appendages of, say Rossetti's or Sargent's women. Clausen, it seems, offers here a portentous foresight of what will become the “brutalised”, “worn to the bone” “stubby” “grimy” appendages that were despised by the critic of *A Woman of the Fields*. At this point in the analysis, the last suspended stone about to drop from the girl's apron does something more. It ties the notion of reveries on time-passing to the notion of reverie induced by toil. That brief duration captured by the stone falling is braced to both the durational concepts of private time and to reflections on broader expanses of historical time. Our witnessing the moment of the figure's reverie casts both a reverie on the passage of time in relation to the figure's life ahead, but also, across the very current question relating to the changing directions of rural life and rural labour being manifest towards the century's end.



In his chapter “The End of Naturalism”, McConkey notes how remarkable it seems that Naturalist artists were content to reject “five centuries of historical, mythological and biblical epic” in favour of unremarkable scenes from peasant life captured with a photo-realistic precision.¹⁸⁰ He writes:

this elaborate envisioning of the inconsequential was extraordinary when the medium could manifestly be more suggestive, could do so much more through allegory and invention to help us think about abstractions . . . Gradually the

¹⁸⁰ McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, 140.

sense developed in the late 1880s that painting was, or could be, about something more.¹⁸¹

For McConkey, Clausen's *The Girl at the Gate* (1889, fig. 107) is representative of "the end of naturalism". It signifies the curtain call after which "it was increasingly expected in the 1890s that painters would transcend the literal in terms of either handling or subject matter". He poses however, that its place in that final curtain might not have existed had Clausen pursued an initial idea to title the work *Marguerite*. The provisional title alluded to the country maid in Faust – a connection noted by George Moore who remarked on the narrative possibilities afforded by the work's former title:

When we saw the picture some months ago it was called "Marguerite." The title gives a new significance (especially when we remember Lepage's rustic rendering of Joan of Arc) to the three figures – the man digging, the watchful uneasy money, the girl dimly foreseeing anguish not yet comprehensible, and wishful to be alone. Sex works in tragedies in hamlets as in courts. But the "Girl at the Gate" is artistically beautiful, without the gloss of literary or psychological interest.¹⁸²

Abandoning the literary title in favour of the modest "Girl at the Gate" did not seem to detract Moore from its artistic beauty, but clearly *he* believed that the extra "gloss" of the literary and "psychological interest" could have given the work the "something more" that McConkey complains was lacking in Clausen. Did Clausen feel the same way? Or conversely, did Clausen not feel the need for the literary reference, and instead was aware that the work could operate on psychological levels as well as imbuing a sense of mystery? McConkey argues that in the end, the decision to use the literary reference was dismissed by Clausen and that "he would not attempt to transcend literal appearances".¹⁸³ Perhaps though, McConkey's position relies too heavily on Moore's account. I would argue, instead, that attaching the work solely to the dogmatic precepts of Naturalism does not allow us to consider the subtle ways in which Clausen was able to negotiate other concerns, such as the psychological realm and the signifying potential of reverie alongside such precepts as realism and photographic actualité. Overt literary references were unnecessary. Clausen was able to draw on several fields of reference in order to avoid a sterile literalism. One such

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 141.

¹⁸² Moore, "The Grosvenor Gallery," *The Speaker* 1 (24 May 1890): 567.

¹⁸³ McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, 141.

source was Whistler, whose influence on Clausen was pointed out by Stevenson.¹⁸⁴ Not only does the re-titling of the work hark back to Whistler (compare “The Girl at the Gate” and “The White Girl”) and therefore take on board the openness of narrative potential and mystery characteristic of Whistler’s work of women in reverie-like states, (and of Aestheticism generally), but also the format of the work – the full length figure of a woman looking out at the viewer is also comparable with Whistler’s *White Girl* (fig. 3). Although Clausen’s girl is not wholly dressed in white, it is useful to make the connection. Extending the links between other paintings is telling. His *Day Dreams*, with its seated woman in white recalls Whistler’s *Symphony in White, No. 3* (fig. 43) and Clausen may have had in mind Henry Herbert La Thangue’s 1886 work, *The Return of the Reapers* which centralises a full length figure in white, again recalling Whistler’s ‘White Girl’ series, albeit in an open air rural context.¹⁸⁵ A further connection lies with the curious and ambiguous psychological state of Clausen’s figure, which in another way recalls *The White Girl*. Other admirers of Whistler were well ingrained in Naturalist circles; the aforementioned William Stott and Frank O’Meara had both painted various versions of standing pensive women and Clausen would have been aware of their work. Such works as Frank O’Meara’s *Reverie* (1882, fig. 108), and William Stott’s *Prince or Shepherd?* (1880, fig. 109), (also known as, *A Girl in a Meadow*), both of which depict young women in reverie, standing in repose next to fence or gate-like structures, bear strong similarities with *The Girl at the Gate*.¹⁸⁶ Taken in this light, it seems inaccurate to suggest, as McConkey does, that *The Girl at the Gate* “was in essence no more than a reprise of the single ‘figure and field’ subjects which had been a kind of stock-in-trade for eight years”.¹⁸⁷ Instead, I would say that Clausen momentarily explores a compromise which allowed for both the literalist objective rendering of the image in combination with Aestheticist conventions which allowed for an openness of narrative content and the offer of “something more”.

¹⁸⁴ Stevenson refers to Clausen’s *La Pensee*. “George Clausen,” 292.

¹⁸⁵ Henry Herbert La Thangue, *The Return of the Reapers* is reproduced in Jenkins, *Painters and Peasants*, 91.

¹⁸⁶ Frank O’Meara’s *Reverie* was exhibited in London at the Fine Art Society in July 1882; see Julian Campbell, *Frank O’Meara and his Contemporaries* (Dublin: Dublin Corporation for the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art in Association with Industrial Print Limited, 1989), 72.

¹⁸⁷ McConkey, *Memory and Desire*, 141.

The “something more” was picked up by critics who noted the figure’s expression, the description of which was immediately conveyed in psychological terms as if to explore her states of feeling and her cause for such intense abstractedness.¹⁸⁸ Claude Phillips, writing in *Art Journal*, commented on the figure’s abstraction:

The figure which gives its name to the picture is the life-size one of a fair-haired girl of some sixteen years, who stands gazing with an abstracted and somewhat joyless look into vacancy, as she leans against a rough wooden fence.¹⁸⁹

George Moore himself attached strangeness to the expression when he wrote “a strange wistful expression is in the girl’s blue eyes and troubles her comely but far from beautiful face”.¹⁹⁰ The critic for *The Times* suggested that the girl’s expression was indicative of a meaningful psychology when he wrote, “there is no action, but the expression of her not uncomely features implies that feeling counts for much in her life”, and there was the suggestion that hidden meanings were apparent and would be uncovered by the discerning viewer, thus: “as to this picture, the naked realism of it will offend many, but those who will look longest will see most meaning in it”.¹⁹¹ Certainly, the character of the girl’s expression would have driven spectators’ curiosity as to the nature of the meaning of the work. Walter Armstrong was quick to relate the work to Bastien’s *Jeanne d’Arc Ecoutant Les Voix* (1879),¹⁹² and noted “in both pictures we see a peasant girl, under the stress of some haunting thought”.¹⁹³ The critic of the *Athanaeum* indicated that the viewer would have to work hard to determine an explanation of the figure’s expression,

M. [sic] G.Clausen’s¹⁹⁴ *Girl at the Gate* will puzzle the visitor by her dismal expression. Except her depressing and inexplicable face, which is carefully and

¹⁸⁸ Denney also notes the psychological content. *At the Temple of Art*, 178.

¹⁸⁹ Claude Phillips, “The Summer Exhibitions at Home and Abroad,” *Art Journal* (June, 1890), 170-71.

¹⁹⁰ George Moore, *The Speaker* 1 (24 May, 1890): 567.

¹⁹¹ *The Times* (5 May 1890): 10.

¹⁹² Bastien’s painting demonstrates the curious cross-over apparent in some Naturalist works. Critics like Theuriet, felt the ghostly image of Joan of Arc would have been best left out of the work. See, Andre Theuriet, *Jules Bastien-Lepage and His Art: A Memoir* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892).

¹⁹³ Walter Armstrong, “George Clausen A.R.A.,” *Magazine of Art* 18 (January 1895): 405. A reproduction was featured on the same page.

¹⁹⁴ The author gave Clausen the French title, possibly believing him to be continental, or perhaps as an ironic jibe at his dependence on Lepage’s influence.

very well painted, there is little worthy of the name of art in this flat and dull commonplace, which is a sort of false Bastien Lepage.¹⁹⁵

The ambiguous nature of the work's content, its hidden meanings centred around the girl's curious "inexplicable" expression and psychology, and the idea that the viewer must "puzzle" over the work makes it possible to attach it to the emerging conventions of the problem picture being popularised by artist such as Frank Dicksee.¹⁹⁶ As such, *The Girl at the Gate* clearly did accommodate "something more".

Primarily its "psychological gloss", to use Moore's term, its open narrative and its propensity to encourage critics to refer to "haunting thoughts", "vacancy", and "abstracted states", was the result of depicting the figure in a reverie-like state, one which would encourage suggestiveness, mystery, and the imagination. Rather than the work being in McConkey's terms "a reprise of the single 'figure and field' subjects", its concerns are not in essence the same as those works. The subject of labour is no longer a primary concern, and the bleak landscape which operated as symbolic of rural toil is absent, replaced by a cosier cottage-scene. The cottage garden and the background figures may well symbolise the changes facing traditional rural lifestyle and the fact that many from the younger generation would be looking to attain positions as domestic servants or as factory workers in urban settings; the gate, in this sense symbolizes the passage from one specific (pre modern) domain of labour, culture and history, to another quite different – a domain we might describe as modern. However, the primary focus in *The Girl at the Gate* is the psychology of the girl, her reverie. Unlike the "figure and field" works by Clausen, in which reverie secures an idea of labour as toil, here, the issues around rural women labourers have disappeared. Clausen in the 1890s would come to focus on the male field labourer in his impressionistic works that were to draw more from the symbolism of Millet than Bastien-Lepage.¹⁹⁷ While, for McConkey, *The Girl at the Gate* represents a last gasp of Naturalism with regard to its sterile objectivity, I would say that it represents a

¹⁹⁵ "The Grosvenor Exhibition," *The Athenaeum* (10 May 1890): 611.

¹⁹⁶ The year Clausen's *The Girl at the Gate* was first exhibited, 1890, was also the year that Frank Dicksee painted *A Reverie*, a work which marks the onset of the popularity of the problem picture. See, Pamela M. Fletcher, *Narrating Modernity*.

¹⁹⁷ Mark Freeman cited George Clausen, Cecil Sharp and the photographer P.H. Emerson, as representatives of those who came to supplant the traditional stereotype of "Hodge" in favour of "Lob", (the title of a poem by Edward Thomas), see Freeman, "The Agricultural Labourer," 182.

moment that Clausen fully recognised the need to indicate “something more”, and that his workings through Naturalism helped him draw this conclusion. Either, this came primarily as a result of his ideas, or as a response to others. Critics such as Selwyn Image articulated the deficiencies of pure Naturalism vociferously. In 1888, the year before Clausen began *The Girl at the Gate*, Image had written an article that responded to the principles of the ‘Naturalist School’ as laid down by Francis Bate, secretary of the New English Art Club. He revealed his horror that, in Bate’s terms, “art is only an accurate reflection of natural appearances”. Image writes “to me . . . that seems precisely what Art is not” and goes on to say,

The essential idea of art is the idea of something, which has its rise and energy in the imagination and feeling of human beings: its radical distinction from Nature and from Science being precisely this, that it has to do with the expression of what is human in the world, that is the expression of human imagination and feeling as these deal with the experiences of life.¹⁹⁸

Perhaps, in his rationale for *The Girl at the Gate*, Clausen was considering ideas like Image’s, in, for example, the “expression of human imagination and feeling”. It is important to look at the way reverie threads through Clausen’s works, because it seems to indicate something more than the sterile objectivity that has been aligned to his Naturalism. Clausen would later say, in one of his *Lectures on Painting*, “in looking at a picture, the mind refers to more than is before the eye, to our consciousness of things outside the picture”; and such words were set in the context of his complimentary appraisal of the works of that figurehead of the imagination, G.F. Watts.¹⁹⁹

By the early twentieth century, the critical language describing Clausen’s work comfortably accommodated a notion that mystery could be attached to his works. Frank Rinder’s review of London exhibitions in 1905 ended with a commentary on Clausen’s work at the Goupil gallery, where he noted,

intimate nature-moments mysteriously potent, flower painted with feeling as well as intellectual understanding, essential memories in other kinds – included the hauntingly beautiful ‘Willow trees at sunset,’ from the 1904 Academy . . .

¹⁹⁸ Selwyn Image, “A Note on a Pamphlet Entitled ‘The Naturalistic School of Painting’, by Francis Bate,” *Century Guild Hobby Horse*, 2, no. 11 (June 1888): 116-20.

¹⁹⁹ Clausen, *Royal Academy Lectures on Painting: Sixteen Lectures Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy of Arts* (London: Methuen, 1913), 185.

Mr. Clausen responds subtly to fine influences, and he is not ashamed to show that he feels the mystery, the joy and sorrow of the world.²⁰⁰



²⁰⁰ Frank Rinder, "London Exhibitions," *Art Journal* 12 (January 1905): 33.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has dealt with reverie and its significant presence in Victorian art; a subject largely overlooked in existing scholarship. I have shown that the reverie image is situated within a wider, complex and pervasive discourse of reverie. The concept of reverie traverses both artistic and scientific fields, revealing its cultural significance which, I have argued, requires more serious attention if we are to advance interpretation of its visual manifestations. Links were made between psychological writings and artistic culture, evidencing a cross-currency of ideas on reverie. In exploring these links, I showed how readings of reverie may be pursued via an interdisciplinary approach, thus furthering our understanding of familiar works by Rossetti, Whistler and Clausen.

The rich and varied discursive context of reverie now requires more serious attention in art history scholarship. How we now attend to images of reverie requires more rigorous analysis of reverie as a concept, without losing sight of its definition as a psychological state. This approach can help revise former perspectives of the reverie image as mawkish, kitsch or even subjectless. As I have shown, we must recognise a plurality of reveries. For example, reverie need not be delineated solely as passive. Alternative conceptions of reverie as active and productive were available to contemporary artists and audiences, and these must also be considered. Fundamentally, this transforms our ideas of how images of reverie may function. Unexpectedly, it allows us to imagine agency in subjects. Also, it allows us to reconfigure artists' intentions and to reconstruct the functions of the reverie image, which, as I have shown, can be organised into critical and artistic schema. Therefore, even in the array of mawkish works, we can see something more than pot boilers. Reverie pictures, (even the mawkish variety), ask the viewer to reflect upon consciousness. This sense of recursion – viewers' reveries upon reverie – requires significantly more attention, because it highlights important changes in ideas about spectatorship. Furthermore, these changes may be attached to a wider tendency within Victorian culture, concerned with examining the character of consciousness.

A principal claim of this thesis has been that reverie was versatile. Artists could seize on its flexibility and adapt it to complement critical, commercial, and artistic aims. It was striking to see the way reverie could serve critical agendas. Again, this is significant in altering our perceptions of reverie paintings. For example, the social critique of rural modernity may have seemed an unlikely location for reverie; yet, my readings show that reverie performs a central role in key works, such as, Clausen's *A Woman of the Fields* (fig. 2), and *The Stone Pickers* (fig. 77). Future research might build on this critical function of reverie in exploring the social-realist agendas of artists, such as, Hubert Von Herkomer, Luke Fildes and Frank Holl.

One interesting assessment of reverie within the psychological discourse was the dialectic between accounts of its common-place occurrence in the healthy mind, and its occurrences as pathological. Alongside this, the phenomenon of unconscious cerebration was marvelled upon by contemporary commentators, and in the case of Dallas, was aligned to ideas about art and the imagination. This dialectic offers a rich context to further explore social history via Victorian art. Research on the reverie image in conjunction with concepts of health, care and convalescence may be fruitful. Tissot's *The Convalescent* (1876, fig. 110), beckons discussion of reverie in these terms. Tissot is mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, but, a more sustained study of his adoption of reverie may reveal more on the various themes of leisure, class, courtship, illness, suburbia and the city, and their exploration via the vehicle of the muse in reverie. Psychological depth gives his works a narrative complexity similar to that shared by proponents of the so-called problem picture. Works in this vein, such as, Frank Dicksee's *A Reverie* (fig. 12), call upon the discourse of reverie and further demonstrate its presence across a breadth of Victorian art practice. Characteristics of the problem picture were recognised in works by Whistler in his handling of narrative. Importantly, the thesis argued for the reconsideration of his works in line with the subject of reverie, whereby reverie is not redundant or meaningless, but may signify meanings accommodated within a broader discourse of reverie. With reverie central to such investigations, we can learn more about artistic strategies, but, also, about the social significance of themes of reverie and related states of consciousness. I argued that in highlighting a wider discourse of reverie, we were able to better understand the meanings and reception of Whistler's *Symphony in White, No.1: The White Girl* (fig. 3). Considering this work in the context of a wider interest in reverie-related states,

such as, somnambulism, trance, spiritualism and mesmerism, called for a revision of existing proto-modernist accounts of the work's formalist trajectory.

The thesis has highlighted that reverie was deployed by a wide range of artists, confirming interesting links between categories of Victorian art. It therefore contributes to recent revisionist perspectives and helps to modify earlier accounts of Victorian art, which suggested a sectarian character of groupings and movements. I have established the significance of reverie in three canonical figures. Research might address the influence of Rossetti, Whistler and Clausen upon lesser-known British artists, to further explore the nature of reverie's wider appeal. Research on the application of reverie by Marie Spartali Stillman, for example, may throw more light on its appeal amongst Pre-Raphaelite circles, as well as women artists negotiating subjects of female identity and subjectivity. Stillman was pupil to Rossetti and modelled for both him and Whistler. Research may provide more detail on the way that reverie had a common currency for all three artists. One of the significant outcomes of the Clausen chapter was the unexpected relationship, via reverie, between Rural Naturalism and Aestheticism. There is certainly more to say on this relationship, especially in terms of the Aestheticist impulse in much Rural Naturalist work. These links might be explored through figures such as Frank O'Meara, William Stott, and their peers that made up the Grez-sur-Loing colony, and in so doing, help to further unravel the sophisticated cross-currency of ideas that characterised the close proximity at Grez, of English, Irish, Scottish, American and French artists.¹

The wide take-up of reverie by artists has been noted, but, it was also apparent that within the body of works produced by specific artists, it could be deployed in different ways for different works, to promote different messages and effects. Furthermore, as we saw in Clausen's *Day Dreams* (fig. 13), this plurality could be situated within the single work. Recognising this, helps us to revise our thinking on artists, such as Clausen, by showing us the subtle and complex approaches to meaning in works that may otherwise be overlooked.

¹ See R. A. M. Stevenson, "Grez," *Magazine of Art* 17 (January 1894): 29.

As well as identifying the span of reverie, I have shown how it could be ascribed a key role within new artistic trajectories. The formal investigations by Whistler, (again, not an obvious candidate for reverie), and Rossetti, in his *Beata Beatrix* (fig. 33), combined with their interest in, and application of reverie. I argued that in their deployment of reverie, artists could embrace formalism and augment Aestheticist ideas of mystery, suggestion and autonomy. In turn, this fostered a model of viewing as contemplative, inward, and self-reflective. As noted above, the subject of formalism was cautiously traversed. In my account, the subject of reverie does not evaporate – reverie works are not “subjectless,” rather, the inherent subject of reverie can consistently be called upon. This point is important because it helps to reconfigure previous assessments of the history of emergent modernism in Aestheticist figures, which have tended to conflate subjectlessness with meaninglessness. I have argued that there *is* meaning in reverie. Consequently, the thesis performs a historiographical corrective to accounts of emergent modernism which have tended to overlook, or preclude the presence of meaning in the subject of reverie. Wider acknowledgment of this may well generate new perspectives on familiar works. The conclusion to Chapter Three hinted at the need to review the links between Aestheticism and developing modernism. I believe that reverie can play a key role in such an investigation by further revealing the complex inter-relational character of British art in the late nineteenth century. Corbett has noted complexities in the way English artists accommodated notions of modern experience alongside the shared Symbolist and Aestheticist concerns of beauty, mystery, magic and poetry.² He comments that the most interesting works of the artist Philip Wilson Steer are “hybrid, mixing techniques derived from Impressionist attention to the surface with the implication of hidden or indeterminate but significant meaning characteristic of Symbolism”.³ We might think of the potential of reverie to operate as a conduit through which the Symbolist impulse of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century works negotiated themes of beauty and mystery. Steer was not unfamiliar with reverie subjects. Several of his works depict women in reverie seated on chairs or sofas. His *Girl on a Sofa* (1891, fig. 111), *Mrs Cyprian Williams and her Two Little Girls* (1891, fig. 112), and *The Muslin Dress* (1910, fig. 113), might each represent Corbett’s sense of hybridity, with reverie augmenting speculation around meanings hidden, or indeterminate. This notional

² Corbett, *The World in Paint*, 170-77.

³ *Ibid.*, 175-76.

synthesis, which extorts the value of material form, (its surface and opticality), with the immaterial harnessed by reverie, assisted my readings of Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix* and works by Whistler, and may complement Corbett's approach in recasting notions of the modern and modernism in the historiography of British art. Pondering this historiography, an important conclusion drawn on Rossetti, Whistler, and Aestheticism, was that reverie, not only served Aestheticist principles, such as autonomy, beauty and mystery, but, furthermore, was fundamental in shaping those principles. Given the extensive adoption of reverie by so-called Aestheticist artists, and its resonance with these principles, future accounts might consider further, the significance of reverie as a defining characteristic of Aestheticism.

The thesis confirmed the appeal of reverie as applied to subjects of love and courtship by genre artists. Future research might explore this appeal and draw on current scholarship on themes of sentimentality. Situating genre works within the discourse of reverie may reveal a richer complexity in the eyes of contemporary audiences than has hitherto been recognised.⁴ Works by popular artists, such as, Marcus Stone's *A Reverie* (c. 1884, fig. 114) might be explored in light of psychological contexts, and related to the significance of sentimentality.⁵ Attaching the themes of gender, female identity and subjectivity to the many reverie works by Stone and others, could be relevant to analysing the role of art in relation to ideas of the New Woman in the late nineteenth century.

On occasion, the thesis drew on Fried's work and showed that his concept of strikingness could be attached to works by Rossetti, in order to accentuate the subject of reverie itself. Although the thesis did not necessitate the adoption of Fried's category 'absorption', linking it with the subject of reverie may prove fruitful.

⁴ For correctives see David H. Solkin *Painting Out of the Ordinary: Modernity and the Art of Everyday Life* (London: Yale University Press, 2008); Nicholas Tromans *David Wilkie: The People's Painter* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

⁵ Nicola Bown "Introduction: Crying Over Little Nell" *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 4 (2007): 1-13. www.19.bbk.ac.uk. See also in the same issue, Sonia Solicari, "Selling Sentiment: The Commodification of Sentiment in Victorian Visual Culture", unpaginated [accessed 2 May 2011].

While this thesis has introduced a range of reverie images, it was not my intention to provide a survey. Instead, it was more pressing to explore the nature of Victorian artists' engagement with reverie within a wider scientific and artistic context. That I have shown this engagement to be complex, widespread and markedly significant in helping to define the character of Victorian art, suggests that a larger scale survey project cataloguing the expanse of reverie would greatly benefit scholars.



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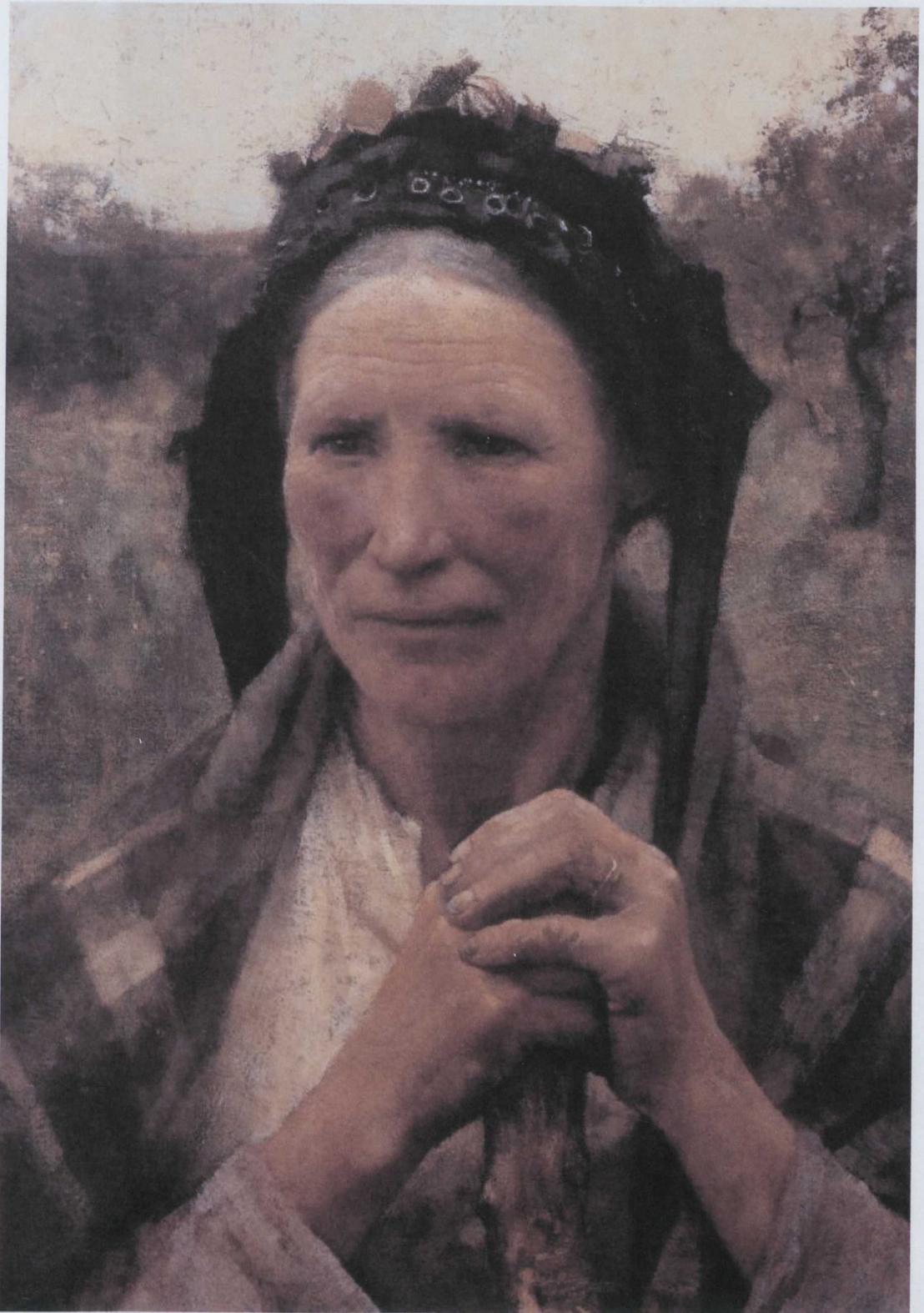


ILLUSTRATIONS



(Fig. 1) Robert William Buss, *Dickens's Dream*, 1875, The Charles Dickens Museum, London. Watercolour, 70 x 89 cm.

(Fig. 2) George Cruikshank, *A Memory of the South Sea Bubble*, 1825, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. 25.5 x 40.5 cm.



(Fig. 2) George Clausen, *A Woman of the Fields*, 1882, Courtesy of Sotheby's. Oil on canvas, 55.5 x 40.5 cm.

(Fig. 3) James Whistler, *Portrait of a Woman in White No. 1*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. <https://www.nga.gov/whistler-portrait-of-a-woman-in-white-no-1.html>



(Fig. 3) James Whistler, *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, 1862, The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC. Oil on canvas, 214.6 x 108 cm.



(Fig. 4) D.G. Rossetti, *Reverie*, 1868, Ashmoleum Museum, Oxford. Coloured chalks, 33 ¼ x 28 in.



(Fig. 5) James Tissot, *La Rêveuse*, c.1876, Musee D'Orsay, Paris. Oil on canvas 34.9cm x 60.3cm.



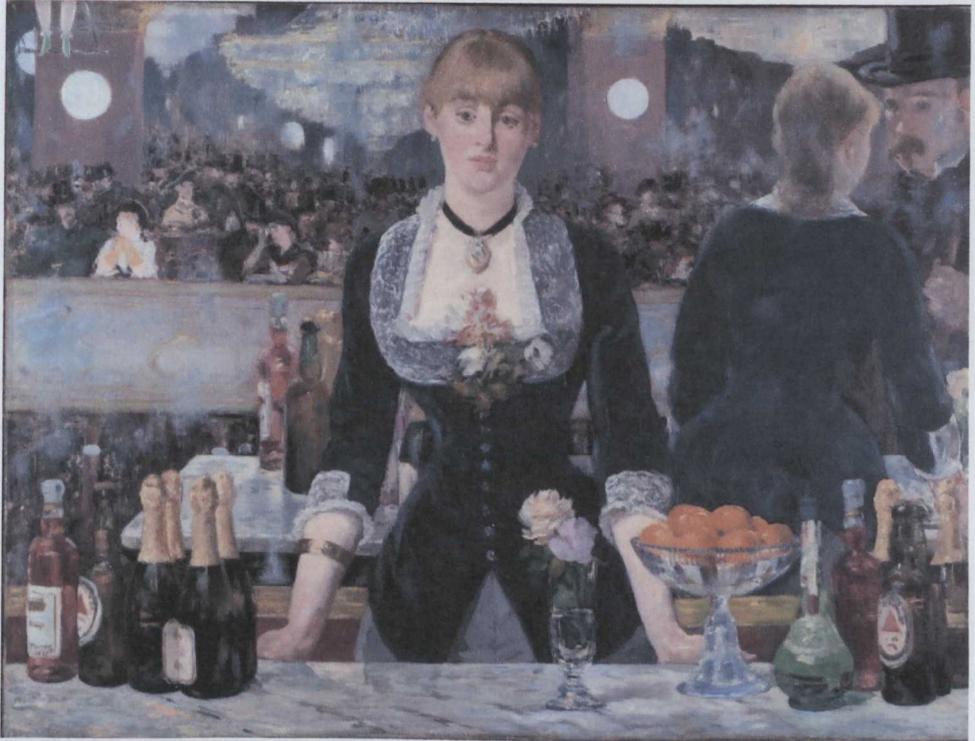
(Fig. 6) James Tissot, *Summer Evening*, 1881, Auckland Art Gallery. Drypoint etching, 22.8cm x 39.6cm.



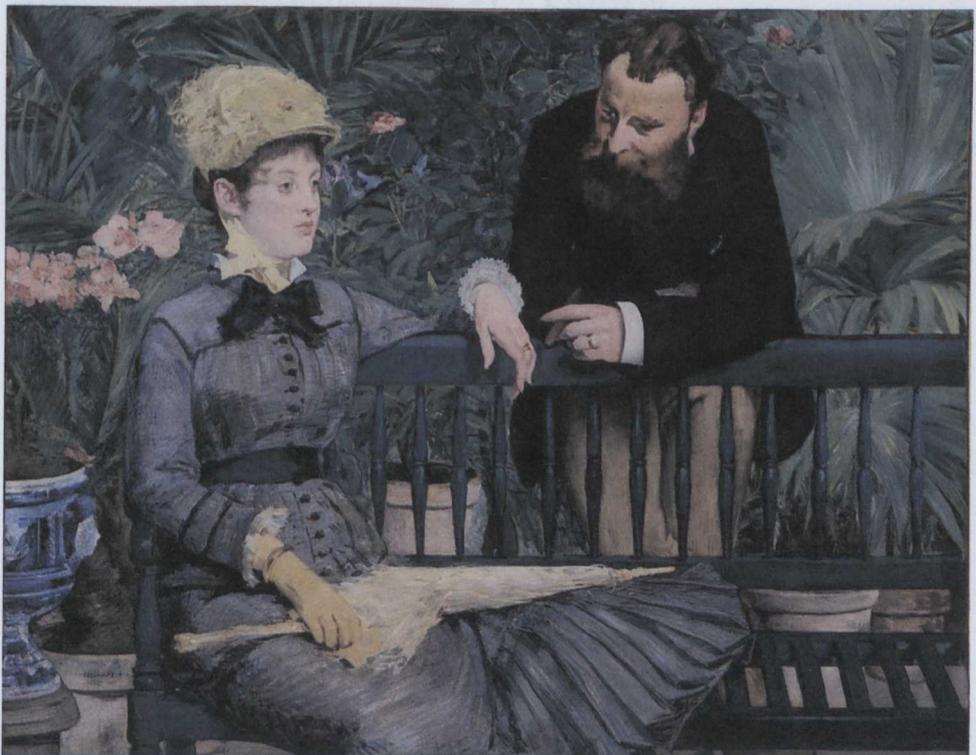
(Fig. 7) James Tissot, *Visiting the Louvre*, c.1879, The Richard Green Gallery, London. Oil on canvas, 36.9 x 26.6 cm.



(Fig. 8) James Whistler, *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl*, 1864, Tate Gallery, London. Oil on canvas, 76.5 x 51.1 cm.



(Fig. 9) Edouard Manet, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, 1882, Courtauld Institute of Art, London. Oil on canvas, 96 x 130 cm.



(Fig. 10) Edouard Manet, *In the Conservatory*, 1879, Old National Gallery, Berlin. Oil on canvas, 115 x 150 cm.



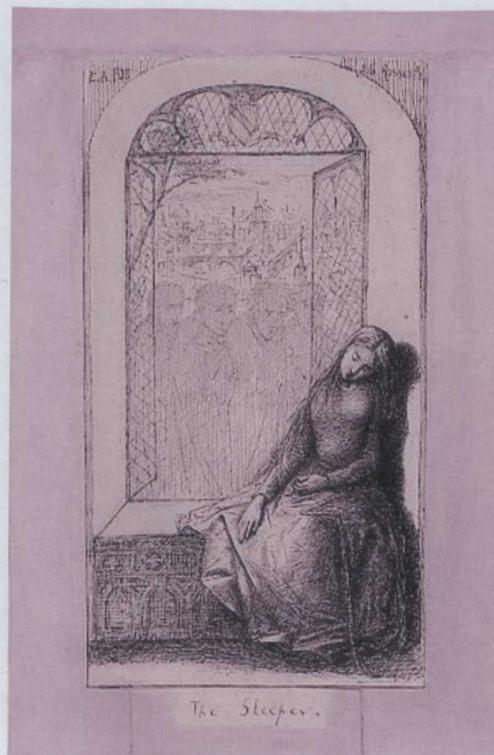
(Fig. 11) D.G. Rossetti, *La Pia de' Tolomei*, 1868-80, Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, Kansas. Oil on canvas, 41 ½ x 47 ½ in.



(Fig. 12) Frank Dicksee, *A Reverie*, 1895, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside (Walker Art Gallery). Oil on canvas, 104 x 137 cm.



(Fig. 13) George Clausen, *Day Dreams*, 1883, private collection, photo courtesy of Sotheby's. Oil on canvas, 70 x 150 cm. Sold as Lot 54, 11 December 2007.



(Fig. 14) D.G. Rossetti, *The Sleeper*, c. 1848, The British Museum. Pen and Indian Ink, 9 x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.



(Fig. 15) D.G. Rossetti, *Ecce Ancilla Domini*, 1850, Tate Gallery London. Oil on canvas mounted on panel, 28 x 16 in.



(Fig. 16) D.G. Rossetti, *Head of Lizzie Siddal Full Face, Looking Down*, 1855, Ashmoleum Museum, Oxford. Pen and brown and black ink, 4¾ X 4¼ in.



(Fig. 17) D.G. Rossetti, *The Maids of Elfen-Mere*, c.1854, Yale Center for British Art. Pen and ink, 5 x 3¼ in.



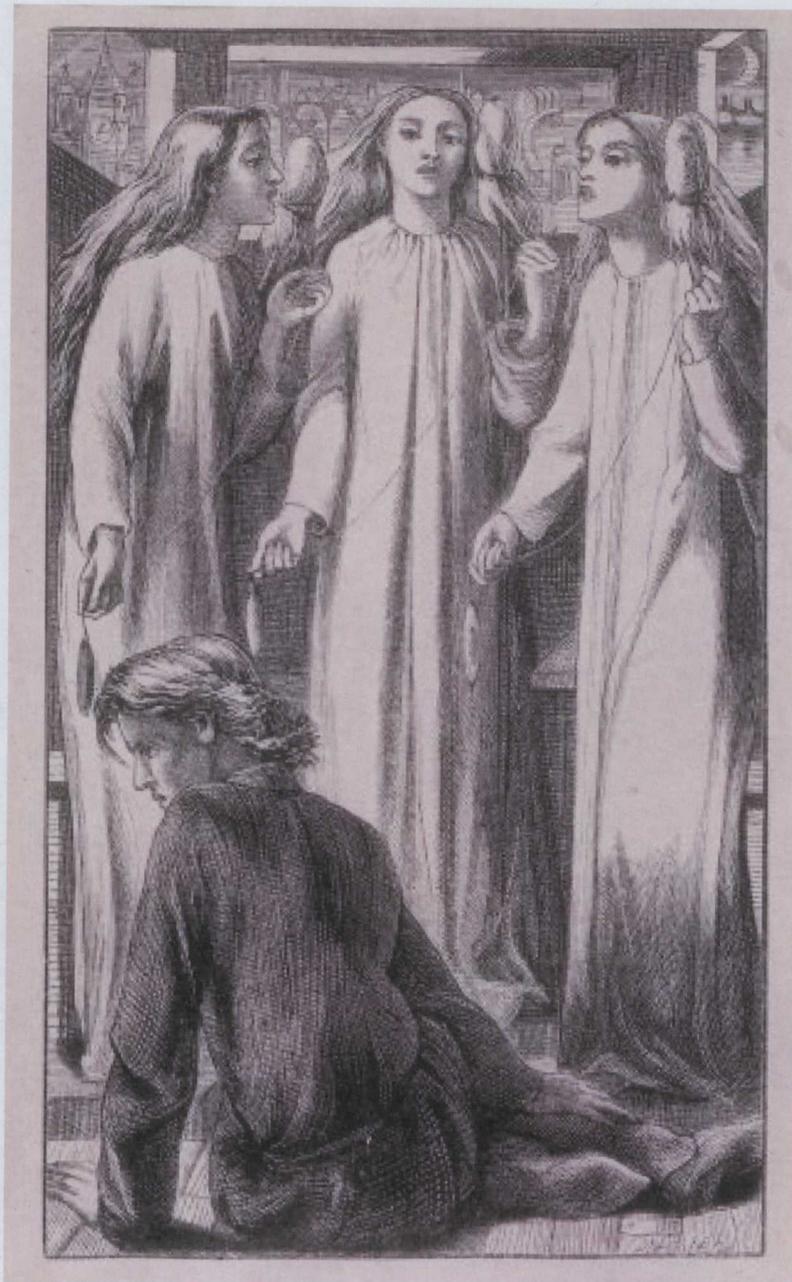
(Fig. 18) D.G. Rossetti, *Found*, 1853-82, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington. Oil on canvas, 36 x 31½ in.



(Fig. 19) D.G. Rossetti, *Hamlet and Ophelia*, c.1858-9, British Museum, London. Pen and ink, 12 x 10 ½ in.

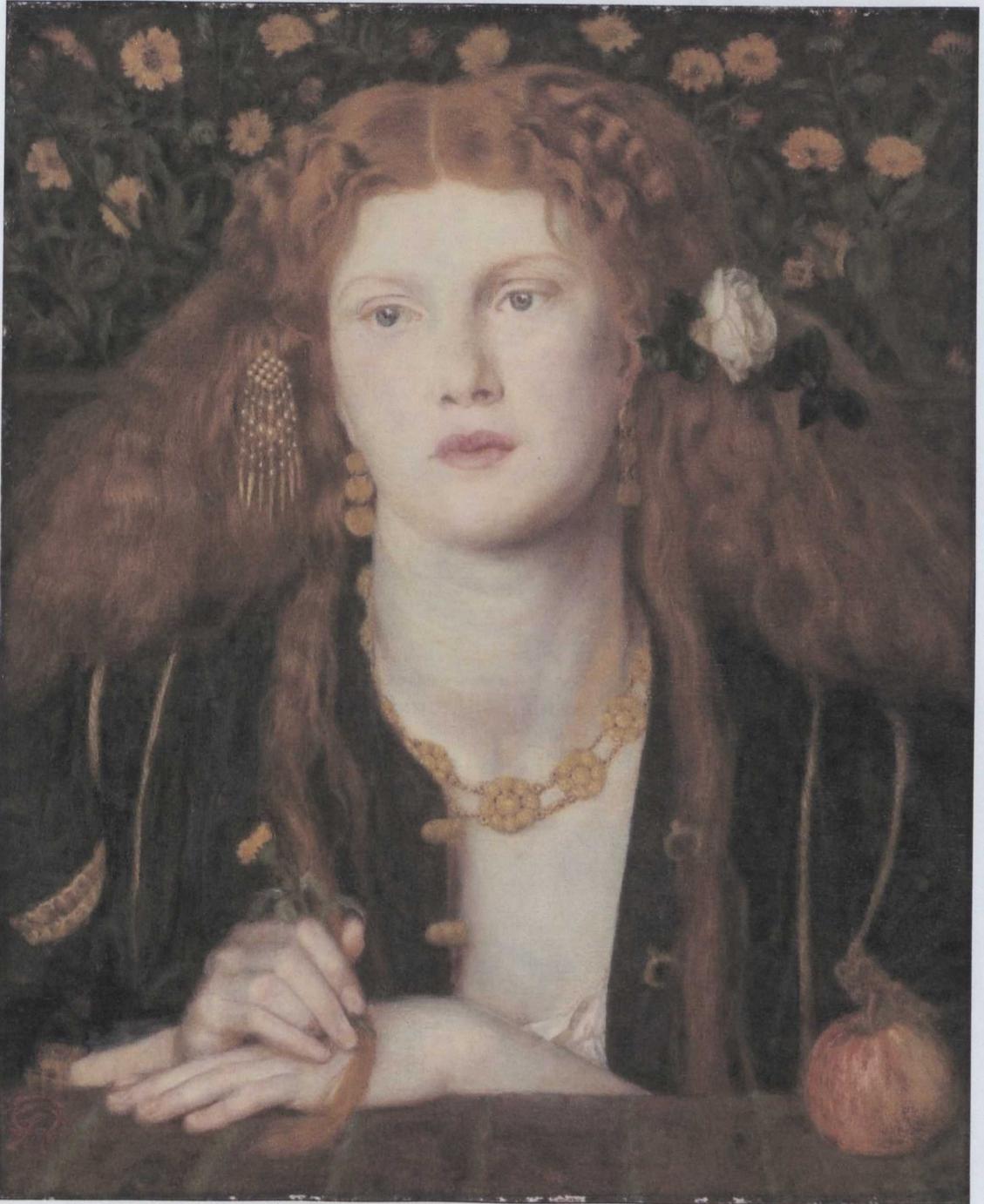


(Fig. 20) D.G. Rossetti, *Writing on the Sand*, 1859, British Museum, London. Watercolour, 10 ½ x 9 ½ in.



(Fig. 21) D.G. Rossetti, *The Maids of Elfen-mere* 1855, Tate Gallery London. Wood engraving published by Dalziel Brothers, 1855.

(Fig. 22) D.G. Rossetti, *Brother and Sister* 1859, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Oil on panel, 12 1/2 x 12 1/2 in.



(Fig. 22) D.G. Rossetti, *Bocca Baciata*, 1859, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Oil on panel, 13 ¼ x 12 in.



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(Fig. 23) D.G. Rossetti *Morning Music*, 1864, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Watercolour, 11 5/8 x 10 1/2 in.



(Fig. 24) D.G. Rossetti, *Elizabeth Siddal Seated in an Armchair*, c.1855, The British Museum, London. Pencil, 7 1/4 x 5 in.



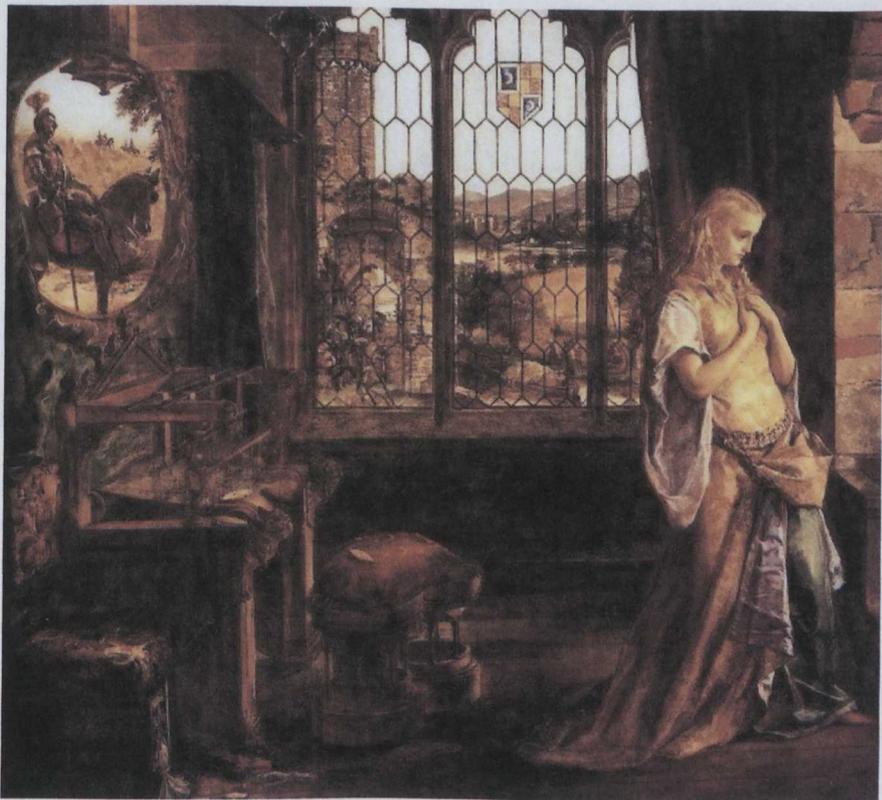
(Fig. 25) D.G. Rossetti, *Elizabeth Siddal Seated, Resting Her Head on One Arm*, c.1855, private collection, cat. 35 in Treuherz et al. Pencil, 6 3/8 x 4 1/8 in.



(Fig. 26) D.G. Rossetti, *Dante in Meditation Holding a Pomegranate*, c.1852, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven. Pencil.



(
Fig. 27) D.G. Rossetti, *Giotto Painting the Portrait of Dante*, 1852, Collection of Lord Andrew Lloyd-Webber. Watercolour, 14 ½ x 18 ½ in.

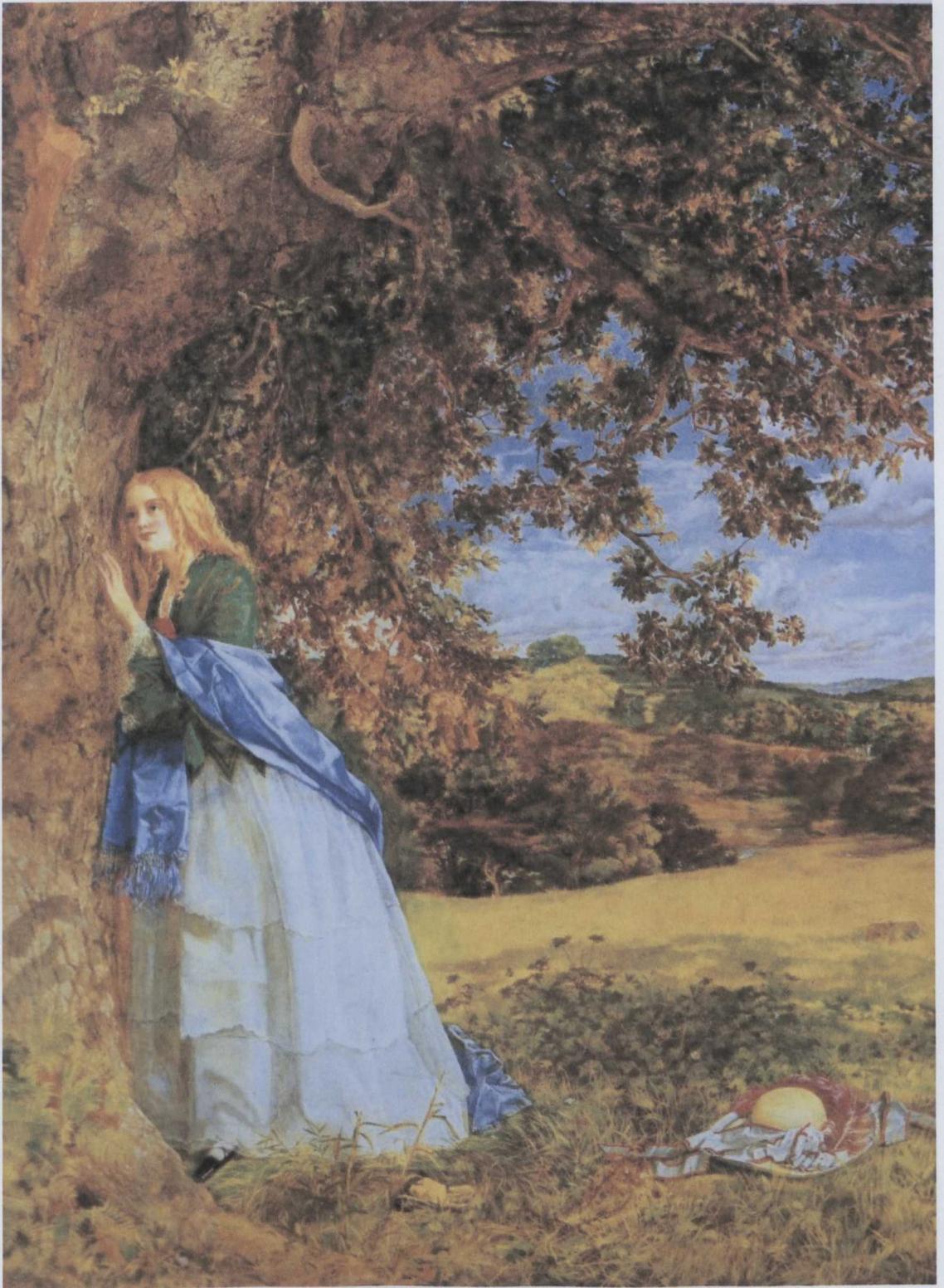


(Fig. 28) William Maw Egley, *The Lady of Shalott*, 1858, Sheffield Museums and Galleries Trust, Sheffield. Oil on Canvas, 63.5 x 76.5 cm.



(Fig. 29) William Maw Egley, *Omnibus Life in London* 1859, Tate Gallery London.
Oil on canvas, 45 x 42 cm.

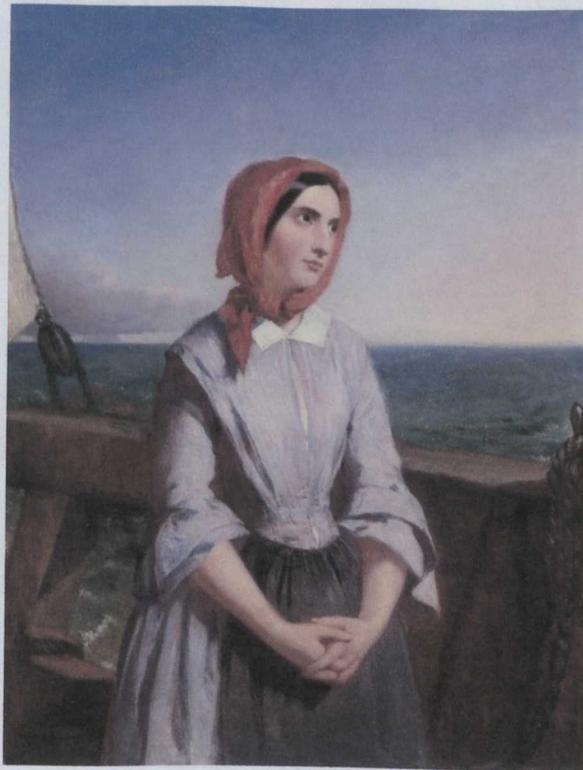
(Fig. 30) William Maw Egley, *The Railway Carriage* 1857, Tate Gallery London.
Oil on canvas, 75.8 x 62.7 cm.



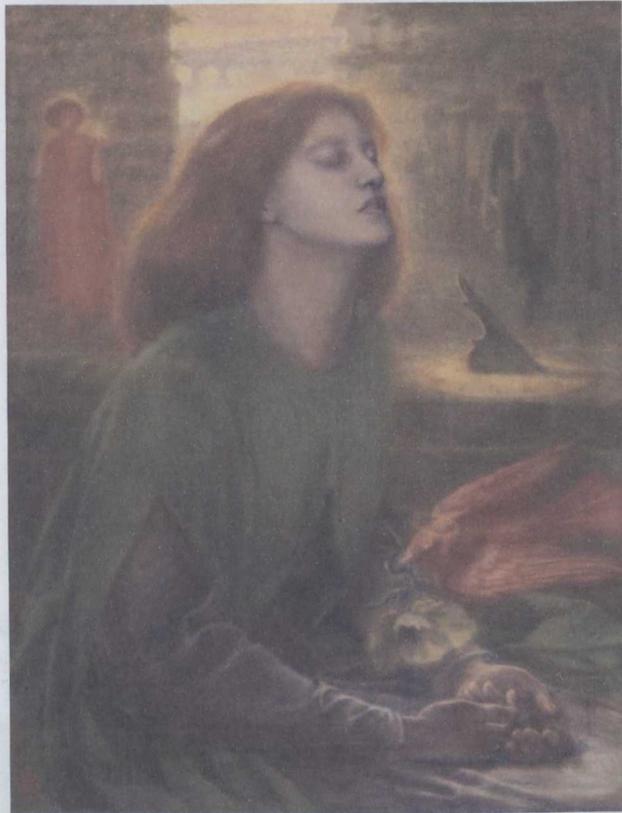
(Fig. 30) William Maw Egley, *The Talking Oak*, 1857, Detroit Institute of Arts. Oil on canvas, 75.6 x 62.9 cm.



(Fig. 31) William Maw Egley, *In Thought*, 1855, private collection. Oil on canvas, 30.5 x 25.4 cm.



(Fig. 32) Marshall Claxton, *An Emigrant's Thoughts of Home*, 1859, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia. Oil on cardboard, 60 x 47 cm.



(Fig. 33) D.G. Rossetti, *Beata Beatrix*, c.1863-1870, (date on painting 1864), Tate Gallery, London. Oil, 34 x 26 in.



(Fig. 34) D.G. Rossetti, *Fazio's Mistress (Aurelia)*, 1863; 1873, Tate Gallery, London. Oil, 17 x 15 in.



(Fig. 35) D.G. Rossetti, *Helen of Troy*, 1863, Kunsthalle, Hamburg. Oil on panel, 12 ¼ x 10 ½ in.



(Fig. 36) D.G. Rossetti, *Woman Combing Her Hair*, 1864, Collection of Virginia Surtees. Watercolour, 14 ¼ x 13 in.



(Fig. 37) D.G. Rossetti, *Sketch for Beata Beatrix* (eyes open), c.1854, William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow. Pencil, 5 ½ x 4 ½ in.



(Fig. 38) D.G. Rossetti and John R. Parsons (photographer), 1865. Selection of three photographs of Jane Morris, seated.



(Fig. 39) D.G. and John R. Parsons (photographer), *Jane Morris*, 1865.



(Fig. 40) D.G. Rossetti and John R. Parsons (photographer), *Jane Morris*, 1865.



(Fig. 41) D.G. Rossetti, *The Day Dream*, 1880, V&A, London. Oil on canvas, 92.7 x 158.7 cm.



(Fig. 42) James Tissot, *Reverie*, 1869. Reproduced in Christopher Wood, *Tissot: The Life and Work of Jacques Joseph Tissot 1836-1902* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), (fig. 32), 42.

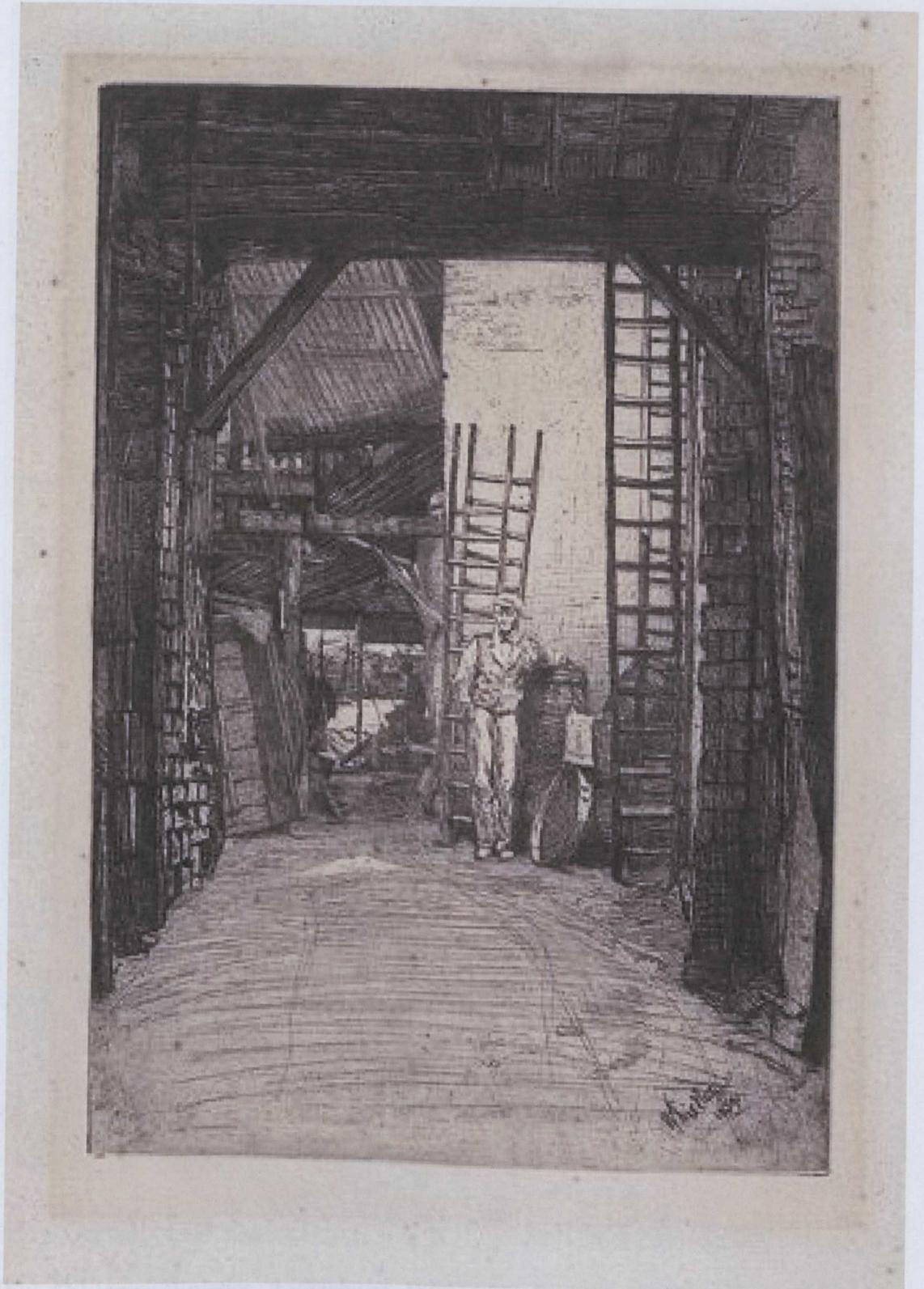


(Fig. 43) James Whistler, *Symphony in White No. 3*, 1865-67, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham. Oil on canvas, 51.4 x 76.9 cm.



© The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. UK

(Fig. 44) James Whistler, *La Marchande de Moutarde*, 1858, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Etching printed on Japanese paper.



(Fig. 45) James Whistler, *The Lime-Burner*, 1859, National Gallery of Australia. Etching and drypoint, intaglio print, 25.2 x 17.6 cm.



(Fig. 46) James Whistler, *Rotherhithe*, 1860, ASU Art Museum, Phoenix. Etching, 10 7/8 x 11 7/8 in.



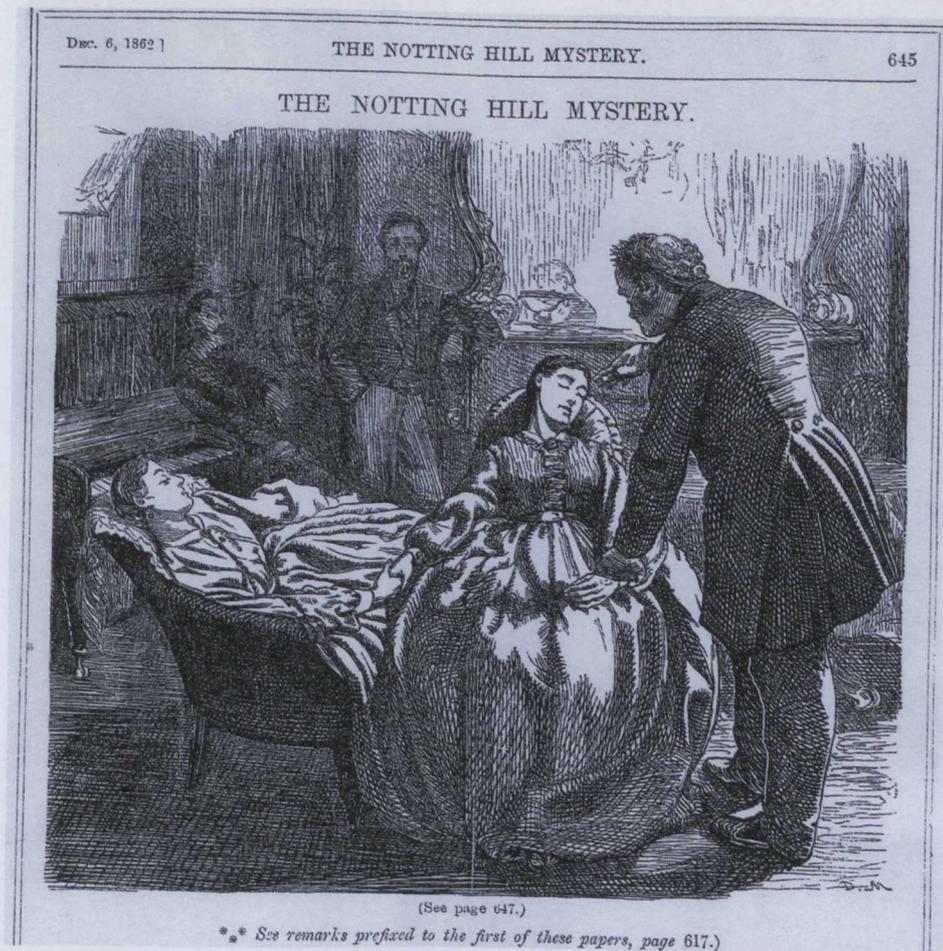
(Fig. 47) James Whistler, *Wapping*, 1860-1864, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC. Oil on canvas, 72 x 108 cm.



(Fig. 48) James Whistler, *Black Lion Wharf*, 1859, V & A, London. Etching, 13 x 25 cm.



(Fig. 49) James Whistler, *Eagle Wharf*, 1859, V&A, London. Etching, 13 x 21 cm.



(Fig. 50) George du Maurier, Illustration for "The Notting Hill Mystery" depicting "mesmeric séance. In *Once a Week* 7, (6 December, 1862): 645, 114 x 127mm



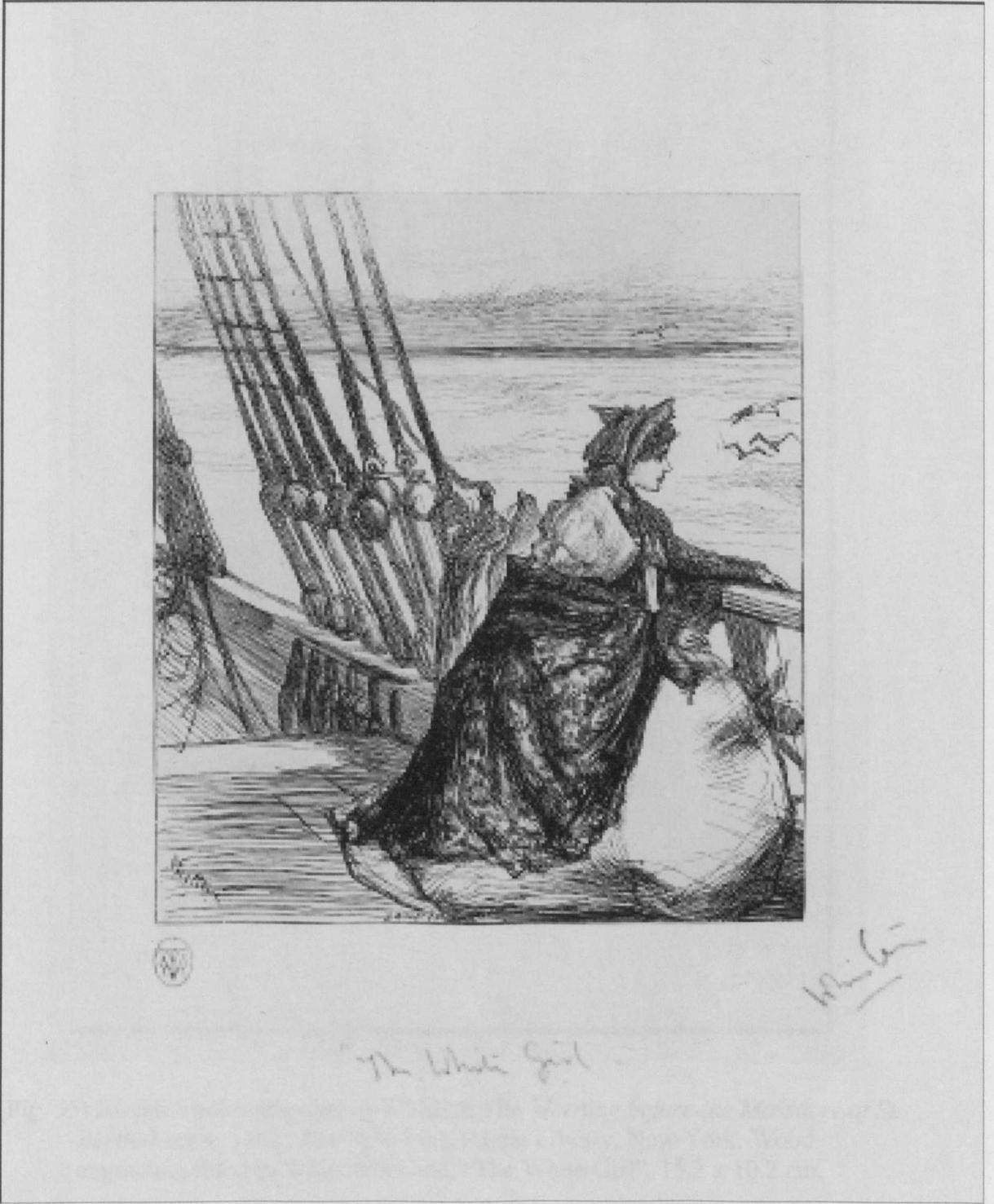
(Fig. 51) John Everett Millais, *A Somnambulist*, 1871, Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, Bolton. Oil on canvas.



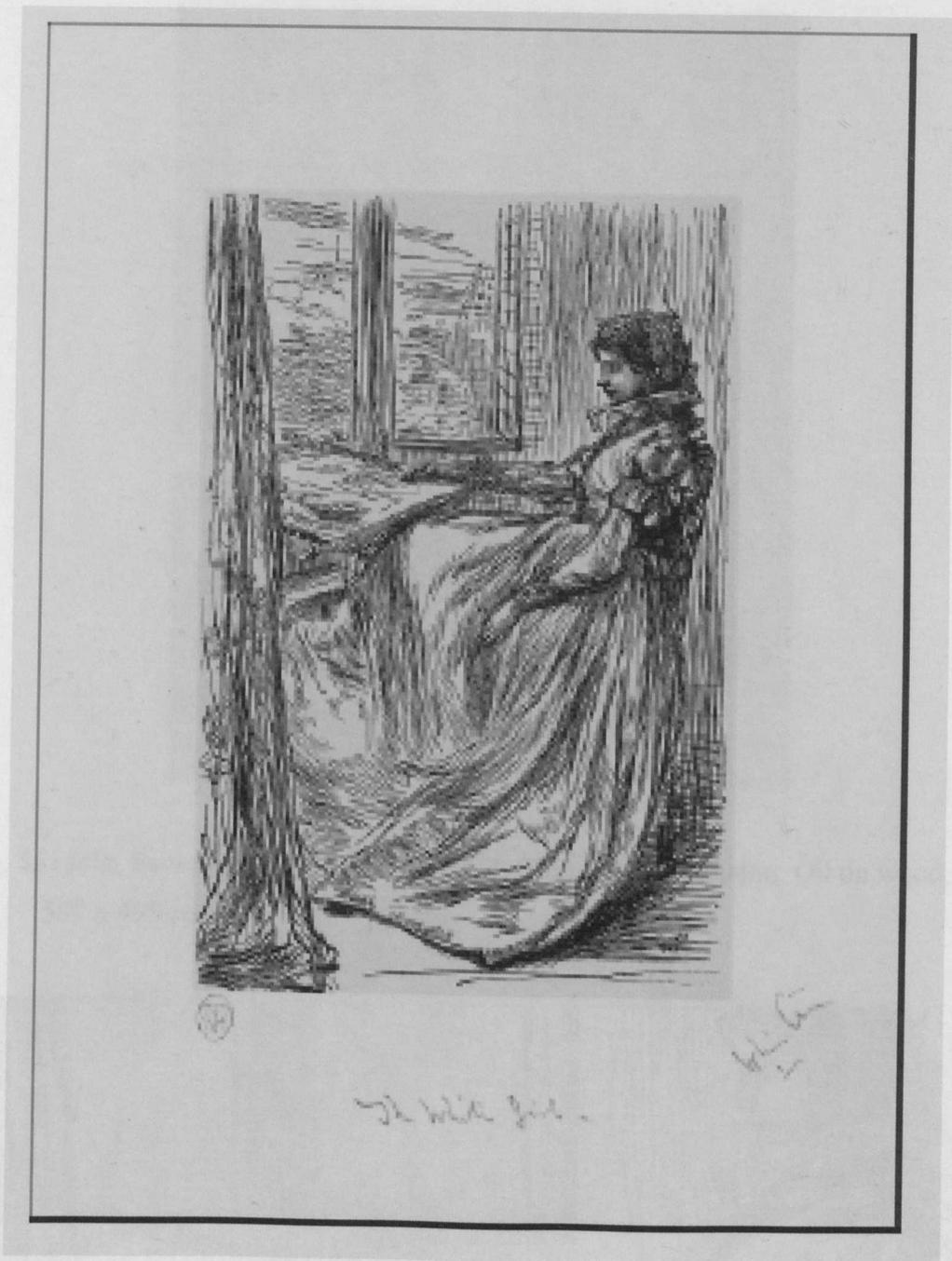
(Fig. 52) James Whistler, *The Major's Daughter*, in *Once a Week*, 6 (21 June 1862), 712. 127 x 114 mm.



(Fig. 53) James Whistler, *The Morning Before the Massacre of St Bartholomew*. In *Once a Week*, 7 (16 Aug 1862): 210. 153 x 102 mm.



(Fig. 54) Joseph Swain, after James Whistler, *The Major's Daughter*. The New York Public Library, New York. Wood engraving, titled in Whistler's hand, "The White Girl", 12.7 x 11.2 cm.



(Fig. 55) Joseph Swain, after James Whistler, *The Morning before the Massacre of St. Bartholomew*, 1862, The New York Public Library, New York. Wood engraving, titled in Whistler's hand, "The White Girl", 15.2 x 10.2 cm.



(Fig. 56) John Everett Millais, *Mariana*, 1851, Tate Gallery, London. Oil on wood, 597 x 495 mm.



(Fig. 57) Detail of Fig. 53, *The Morning Before the Massacre of St Bartholomew*.

THE RELIEF FUND IN LANCASHIRE.
A COMMENDATION.



AN amateur dramatic performance took place at the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden, on Wednesday, the 9th instant, in aid of the funds for the relief of the present distress in Lancashire. Mr. Wilkie Collins' drama of "The Lighthouse," the burletta of "The Waterman," and the well-known farce of "Betsy Baker," were the pieces presented. In pursuance of a strongly expressed request, these performances passed unnoticed by the public journals, as the gentlemen engaged were all amateurs, and among them were several members of the public Civil Service; but we are enabled to certify the entire success of the representation, and that there resulted some two hundred pounds, or more, to be added to the "relief fund" for the Lancashire weavers. Mr. Tennyson was requested to furnish an introductory address; but, from a letter from Farringford, the committee regretted to learn that Mr. Tennyson had been "suffering so much that

it had been an effort even to sign his name, so that to write anything for them has been out of the question." The above vignette was to have accompanied his address. Failing the Post Laureate, at the last moment the Rev. T. J. Baty, of Rochampton, wrote the following lines in furtherance of this good object:

The echo of the wailing farther West
Sounds in our land;
And in her midst, with want oppress,
Our brothers stand.

Their voices clamour for the daily bread
They cannot gain,
And, oh, the fire of charity were dead,
Were it in vain.

Then honour every effort for their weal,
And ours to-night:
Our cause, at least, must your approval steal;
What though we act!—we feel;
And your fair presence here gives our poor effort might.

(Fig. 58) James Whistler, *The Relief Fund in Lancashire*, *Once a Week*, 7, (26 July 1862): 140. 13 x 11 cm.



(Fig. 59) Composite - Left to right: *The Relief Fund in Lancashire* 'photo-shopped' to demonstrate its appearance with the left arm hidden from view; James Whistler, *Symphony in White No. 1: The White Girl*; Millais, *A Somnambulist*, 1871, Bolton Museum and Art Gallery, Bolton. Oil on canvas.



(Fig. 60) James Whistler, *Weary*, 1863, Hunterian Museum of art, Glasgow. Drypoint.



(Fig. 61) James Whistler, *The Sleeper*, c.1863, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA, USA. Chalk, 24.9 x 17.6 cm.



(Fig. 62) James Whistler, *Sleeping Woman* (chalk, charcoal) c.1863. Reproduced in Dorment, *James McNeill Whistler* (London: Tate Gallery Publications 1994).



(Fig. 63) William Downey and D.G. Rossetti, *Fanny Cornforth*, June 1863, Wilmington Society of Fine Arts, Delaware. Collodion, 15.3 x 13.3 cm.



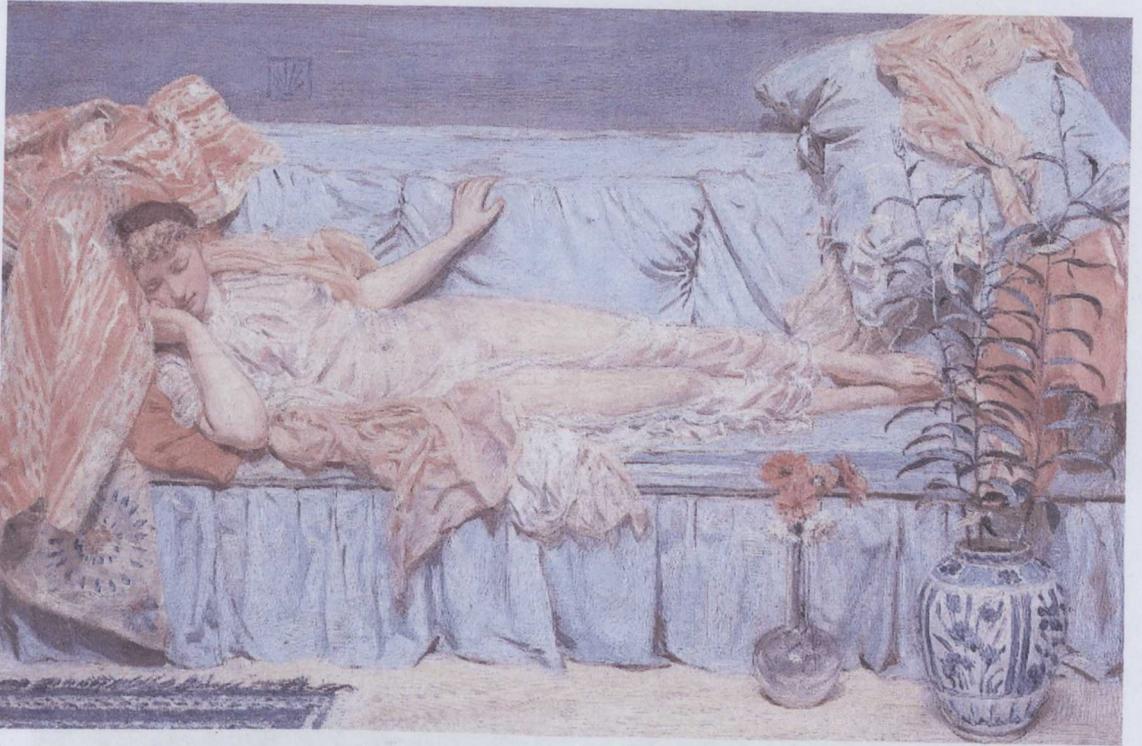
(Fig. 64) John Roddam Stanhope, *Thought's of The Past*, 1859, Tate Gallery, London. Oil on canvas, 86 x 50 cm.



(Fig. 65) James Whistler, *Purple and Rose: The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks*, 1864, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia. Oil on canvas, 92 x 61.5 cm.



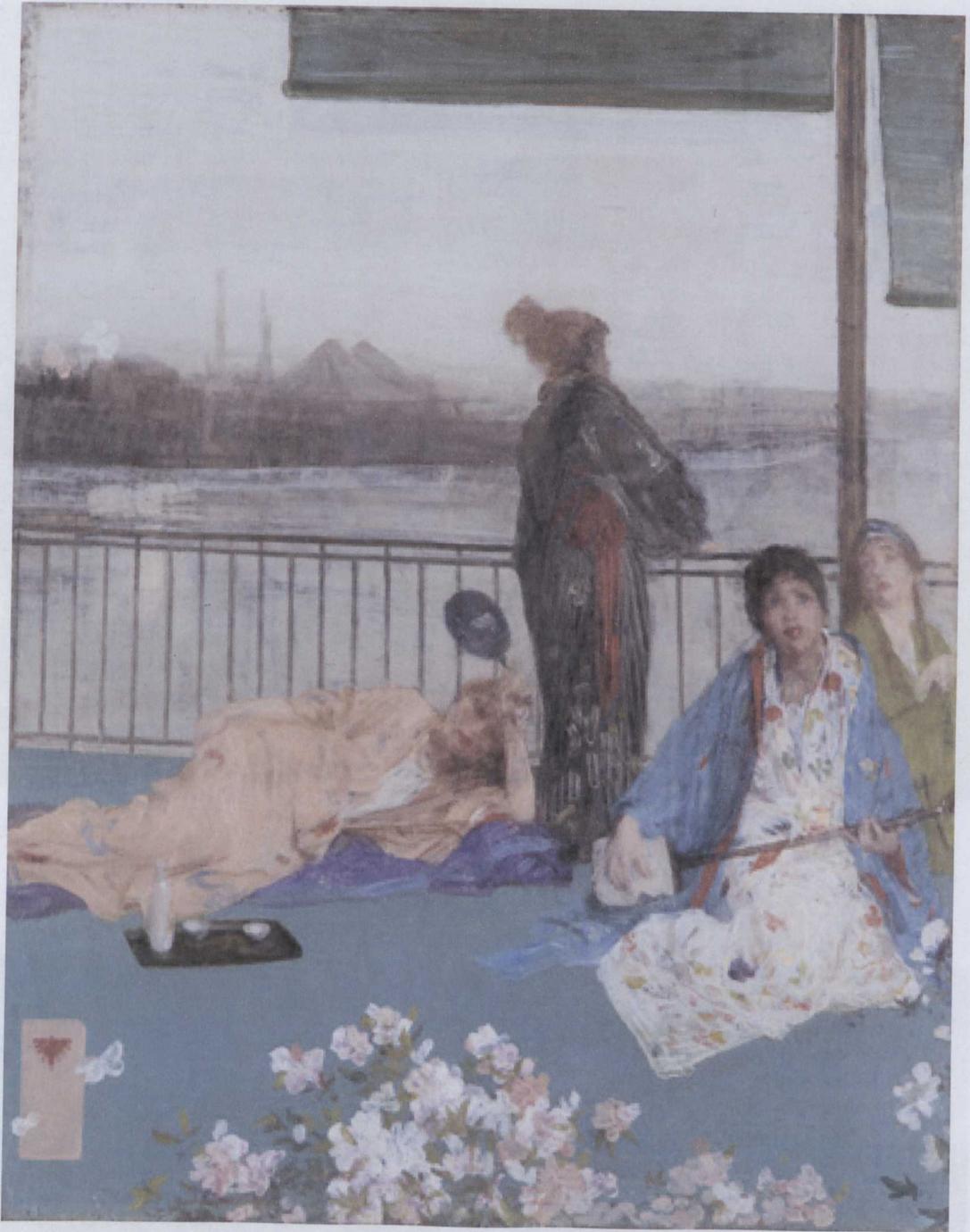
(Fig. 66) Octavius Oakley, *A Student of Beauty*, 1861, Sotheby's Auction, "Property from the Estates of David M. Daniels and Stevan Beck, 29 October 2002, Lot 127, also, reproduced in Susan Casteras, *Images of Victorian Womanhood in English Art*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), (plate 20), 117. Pencil, gouache and watercolour on paper, 76.2 x 54.6 cm.



(Fig. 67) Albert Moore, *Lilies*, 1866, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown. Oil on canvas, 29.8 x 47.8 cm.



(Fig. 68) Albert Moore, *A Musician*, 1864-66, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven. Oil on canvas, 10 ¼ x 15 ¼ in.



(Fig. 69) James Whistler, *Variations in Flesh Colour and Green: The Balcony*, 1865, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC. Oil on wood panel, 61.4 x 48.8 cm.



(Fig. 70) Herbert Von Herkomer, *Hard Times*, 1885, Manchester City Art Gallery, Manchester. Oil on canvas, 86.5 x 112 cm.



(Fig. 71) Richard Redgrave, *The Valleys also Stand Thick with Corn, (Psalm LXV)*, 1864, Birmingham City Museum and Gallery, Birmingham. Oil on canvas, 28 x 38 in.



(Fig. 72) Frederick Shields *One of Our Breadwatchers*, 1866, Manchester City Art Galleries. Manchester. Watercolour, bodycolour, pencil, 32.8 x 42.5 cm.



(Fig. 73) Frederick Walker, *The Vagrants*, 1867, Tate Gallery, London. Oil on canvas, 83 x 126 cm.



(Fig. 74) Frederick Walker, *The Vagrants* (Once a Week 1866). Etching, available at <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Jwalker.htm>, [accessed 7 April 2011].



(Fig. 75) Joseph Farquarson, *Where Next?*, 1883, unlocated. Illustrated in Treuherz, *Hard Times*, (London: Lund Humphries, 1986), 99.



(Fig. 76) Jules Bastien-Lepage, *Les Foins*, 1878, Musée D'Orsay, Paris. Oil on canvas, 160 x 195 cm.

(Fig. 77) George Clark, *The Snowy Mountains*, 1879, Newcastle. Oil on canvas, 100 x 75 cm.



(Fig. 77) George Clausen, *The Stone Pickers*, 1887, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle. Oil on canvas, 106.5 x 79 cm.



(Fig. 78) Marcus Stone, (From the "Graphic" Gallery of Beauties) "Pictures of the Year.-IV.", *Magazine of Art*, 3 (January 1880): 400



(Fig. 79) George Clausen, *La Pensee*, 1880, Glasgow City Art Gallery. Oil on canvas, 124.5 x 73.7 cm.



(Fig. 80) James Tissot, *Dreaming*, 1881, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Etching and drypoint, 22.7 x 11.3 cm.



(Fig. 81) James Tissot, *Reverie: Mrs Newton Reclining in a Chair*, 1878, private collection. Oil, 30.5 x 43.2 cm. (Available at Bridgeman Art Library online).



(Fig. 82) George Clausen, *The Novel*, 1879, Royal Academy of Arts, London. Ink on paper, 22 x 14.5 cm.



(Fig. 83) George Clausen, *Contemplation*, 1878, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle. Oil on canvas, 39 x 29 cm.



(Fig. 84) George Clausen, *A Spring Morning, Haverstock Hill*, 1881, Bury Art Gallery. Oil on canvas, 101.5 x 134.5 cm.



(Fig. 85) George Clausen, *High Mass at a Fishing Village on the Zuyder Zee*, 1876, Nottingham Castle Museum, Nottingham. Oil on canvas, 47 x 84 cm.



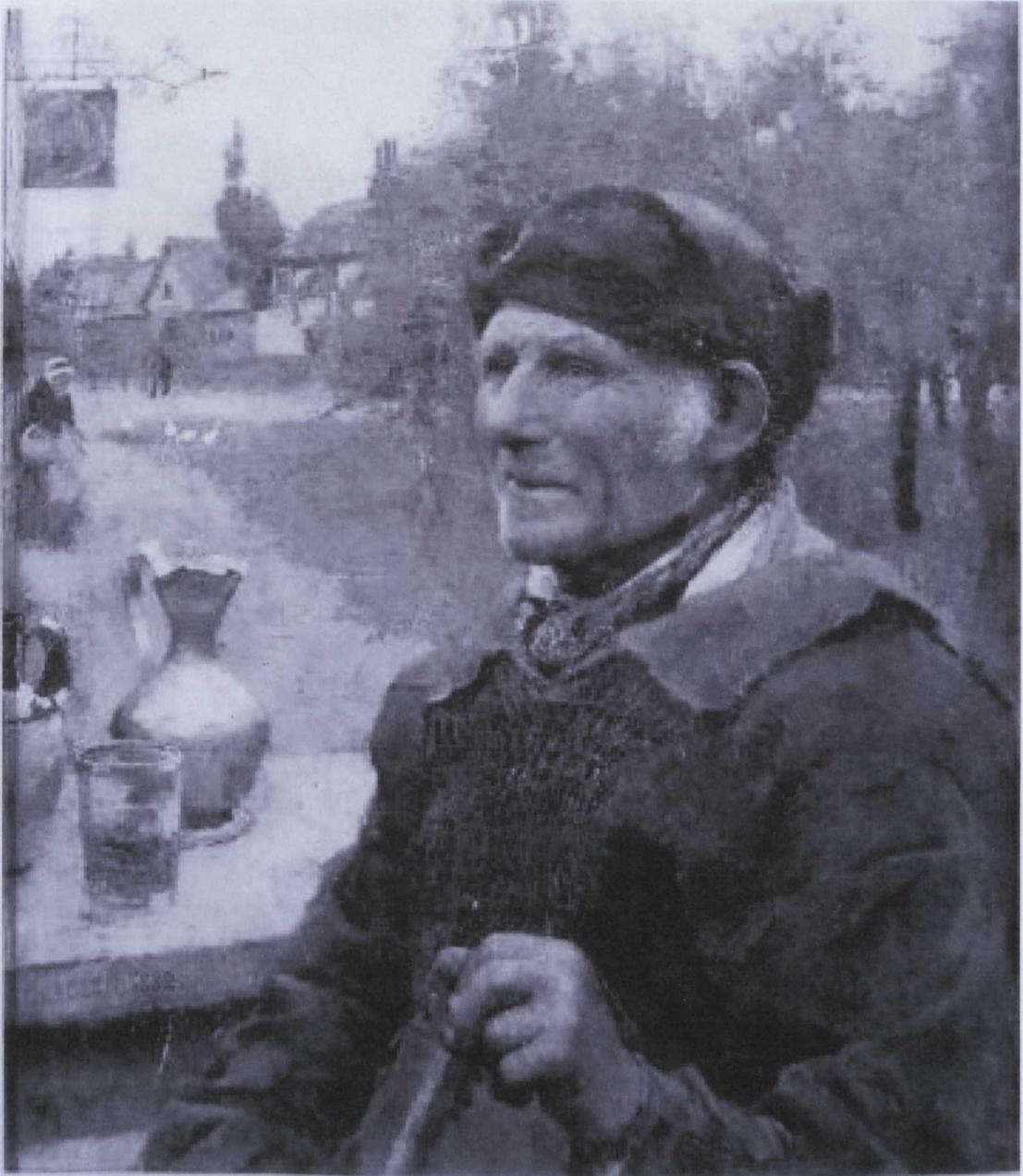
(Fig. 86) Alphonse Legros, *Blessing the Sea*, 1872, Sheffield Galleries & Museums Trust, Sheffield. Oil on canvas, 179.5 x 243.3 cm.



(Fig. 87) George Clausen, *Haying*, 1882, Ontario Art Gallery. Oil on canvas, 68.6 x 60.3 cm.



(Fig. 88) George Clausen, *In the Orchard*, 1881, Salford Art Gallery. Oil on canvas, 75 x 49.5 cm.



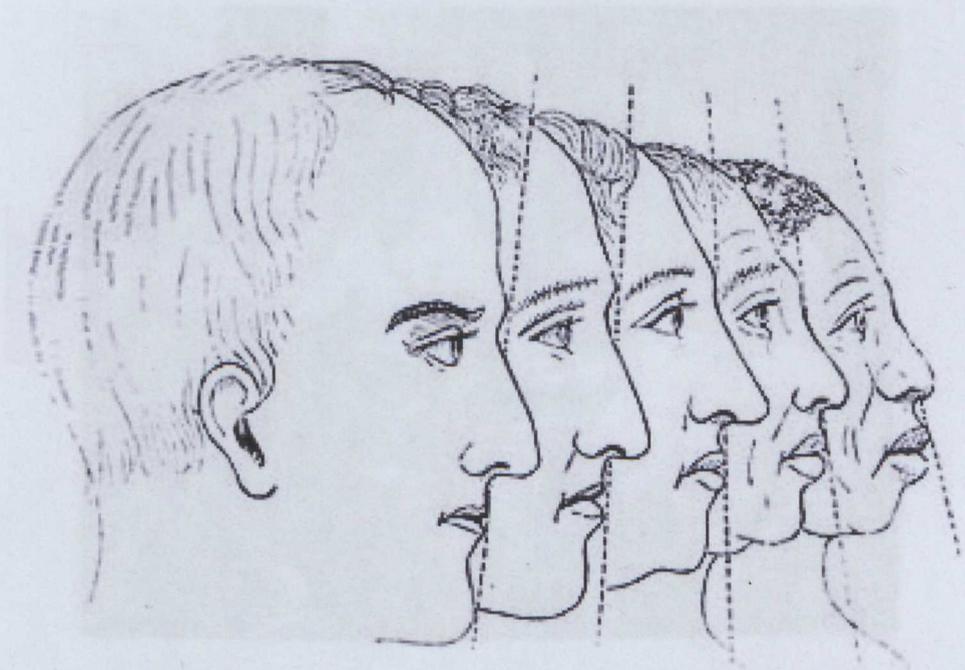
(Fig. 89) George Clausen, *The Villager*, 1882. Oil on canvas, 32 x 29 cm, (inscribed 'The Villager, Childwick, Herts'), Reproduced in Corbett, Holt and Russel, *The Geographies of Englishness* (London: Paul Mellon Centre for British Art 2002), 16.



(Fig. 90) George Clausen, *Winter Work* 1883-84, Tate Gallery, London. Oil on canvas, 107.5 x 122 cm.



(Fig 91) George Clausen, *Hoeing Turnips* 1883 watercolour, 37.5 x 57 cm.
Reproduced in Corbett, Holt and Russell, ed. *The Geographies of Englishness*,
(London: Paul Mellon Centre for British Art 2002), 19. Photograph courtesy of
The Pym's Gallery, London.



(Fig. 92) Grades of Intelligence; from S.R. Wells, *New Physiognomy*, 1866.
Reproduced in Cowling, M. "The Artist as Anthropologist in Mid-Victorian
England: Frith's *Derby Day*, *The Railway Station* and the New Science of
Mankind." *Art History* 6, no. 4, (December 1983): 462.



(Fig. 93) George Clausen, photograph of Mrs Susan Chapman, (left) and detail (right).



(Fig. 94) George Clausen, *Labourers After Dinner*, 1883, private collection, Australia. Reproduced in McConkey, *Sir George Clausen, R.A. 1852-1944*. (Bradford: City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council and Tyne and Wear County Council, 1980), 30.



(Fig. 95) George Clausen, *Flora*, 1883, private collection. Watercolour, 30 x 26 cm. Image courtesy of Sotheby's.



(Fig. 96) Thomas B. Kennington, *The Pinch of Poverty*, 1891, The Foundling Museum, London, oil on canvas, 114 x 101 cm.



(Fig. 97) George Clausen, *Winter Work*, Royal Academy of Arts, London. Ink on card, 22.4 x 24 cm. Reproduced for Grosvenor 1883 catalogue. In McConkey *Sir George Clausen, R.A. 1852-1944* (Bradford: City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council and Tyne and Wear County Council, 1980), 39.



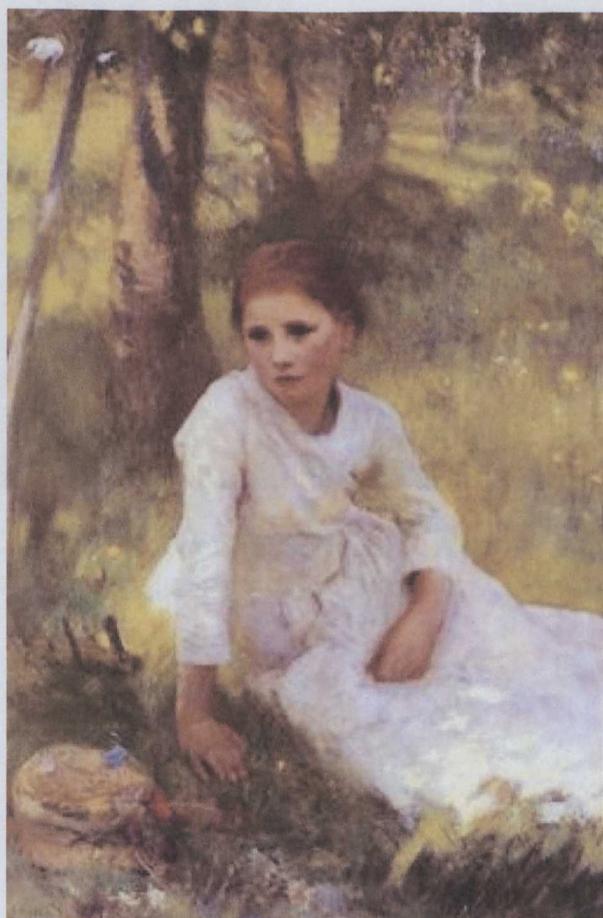
(Fig. 98) George Clausen, *December*, 1882. Sold at Sotheby's 17 December 2009. Oil on panel, 23 x 30.5 cm.



(Fig. 99) Comparison between, detail of *Winter Work* (left), and *A Woman of the Fields* (right).



(Fig. 100) Composite - From left to right, Walter Langley, *Wandering Thoughts*, in 1882, (Jenkins, 2000, p.94) Albert Chevalier Tayler, *Girl Shelling Peas*, 1886, Frank O'Meara, *Towards Night and Winter*, 1885, (Campbell, 1989).



(Fig. 101) George Clausen, *Noon in the Hayfield*, 1897, private collection, oil on canvas, dimensions unavailable.



(Fig. 102) George Clausen, *The Spreading Tree*, 1901, private collection. Oil on canvas, 61 x 51 cm. Image courtesy of Sotheby's.

(Fig. 103) George Clausen, *Stone Pictorial (Detail)*, 1902, Museum of St. Anne's, Wexford, 37 x 24 cm.



(Fig. 103) George Clausen, *Stone Pickers (Midday)*, 1882, Museum of St. Albans. Watercolour, 37 x 24 cm.



(Fig. 104) Henry Herbert La Thangue, *Study in a Boat Building Yard on the French Coast*, 1881, National Maritime Museum, London. Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 81.3 cm.



(Fig. 105) Fred Hall, *In the Fields*, 1886, Penlee House, Gallery and Museum. Oil on canvas.



(Fig. 106) George Clausen, *A Girl's Head*, 1886, Manchester City Art Galleries. Oil on canvas, 57 x 45 cm.

(Fig. 107) George Clausen, *The Girl in the Gown*, 1889, Tate Gallery, London. Oil on canvas, 171.4 x 118.4 cm.



(Fig. 107) George Clausen, *The Girl at the Gate*, 1889, Tate Gallery, London. Oil on canvas, 171.4 x 138.4 cm.



(Fig. 108) Frank O'Meara, *Reverie*, 1882, private collection. Image courtesy of Pym's Gallery, London, oil on canvas, 180 x 129.5 cm.



(Fig. 109) William Stott, *Prince or Shepherd? [Girl in a Meadow]*, 1880, Tate Gallery, London. Oil on canvas, 71.8 x 57.8 cm.



(Fig. 110) James Tissot, *The Convalescent*, 1876, Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust. Oil on canvas, 76.7 x 99.2 cm.



88. *Girl on a Sofa* (Rose Pettigrew). 1891. (Cat.85)

(Fig. 111) Philip Wilson Steer, *Girl on a Sofa*, 1891, Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich. Oil on Canvas, 56.3 x 61.3 cm.



(Fig. 112) Philip Wilson Steer, *Mrs Cyprian Williams and Her Two Little Girls*, 1891, Tate Gallery, London. Oil on canvas, 76 x 102 cm.



145. *The Muslin Dress*. 1910. (Cat.438)

(Fig. 113) Philip Wilson Steer, *The Muslin Dress*, 1910, Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, Birkenhead. Oil on canvas, 39 x 56 inches.



(Fig. 114) Marcus Stone, *A Reverie*, c. 1884 location unknown, reproduced in A.L. Baldry, *Marcus Stone R.A.: His Life and Work* (London: The Art Journal Office, 1896), 22.