



46. Paul Gauguin, *Reverie* (Faaturuma [Melancholic]), 1891. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Nelson Fund, 38-5.

space. Another temporal condensation is that of night (note the presence of the moon), which is the usual time for dreams, with the bright, daytime sky.

The curious, gray figure playing the pipe in the center is a composite of human and nonhuman, also created by condensation. In standing upright, wearing a tunic, and playing an instrument, he has a human quality. In his simian physiognomy and dark gray skin tone, he is not human. He is a variation on the mythological woodland creatures, such as satyrs, that populate forests and represent instinctual, or libidinal, forces. In being both human and subhuman, the musician creates an evolutionary link between the dreamer and the wildlife, and a psychic link between conscious and unconscious thinking.

The flowers, the birds, and the serpent can be read as fairly direct sexual symbols. Their abundance, together with the tame wild animals, is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden and its sexual consequences. The con-



47. Henri Rousseau, *The Dream*, 1910. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller.

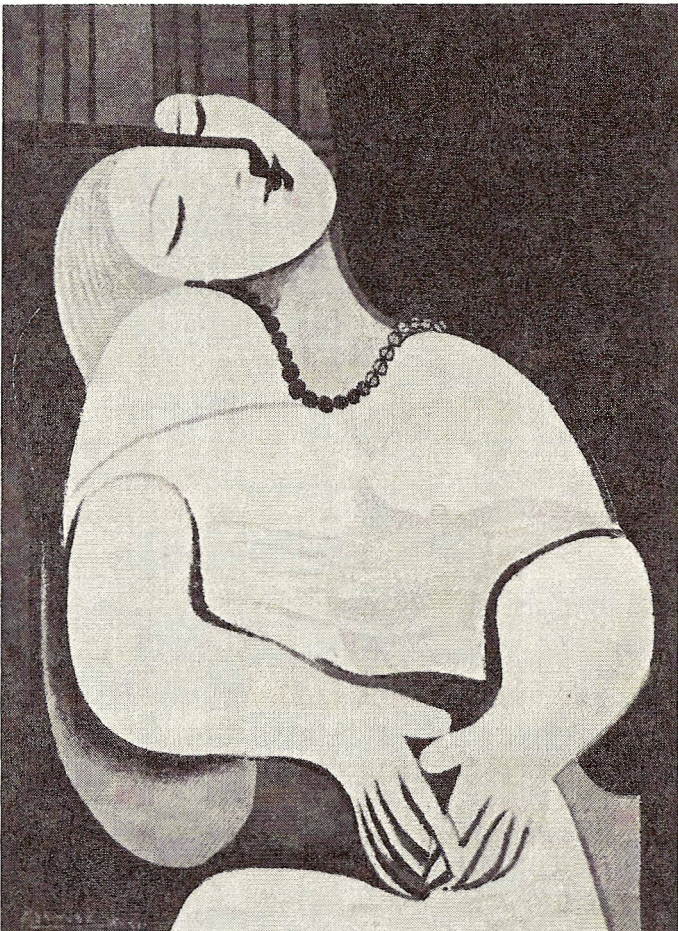
trast between bright, clear wildlife and the dark, mysterious musician is related to their functions as dream elements. The more vivid features—as in screen memories—are also the most disguised. The darkness of the musician makes him seem to emerge from the depths of the forest, as from the depths of the dreamer's unconscious.

Rousseau's own comments on *The Dream* replicate the process of secondary revision. In 1914, he described the painting as follows:

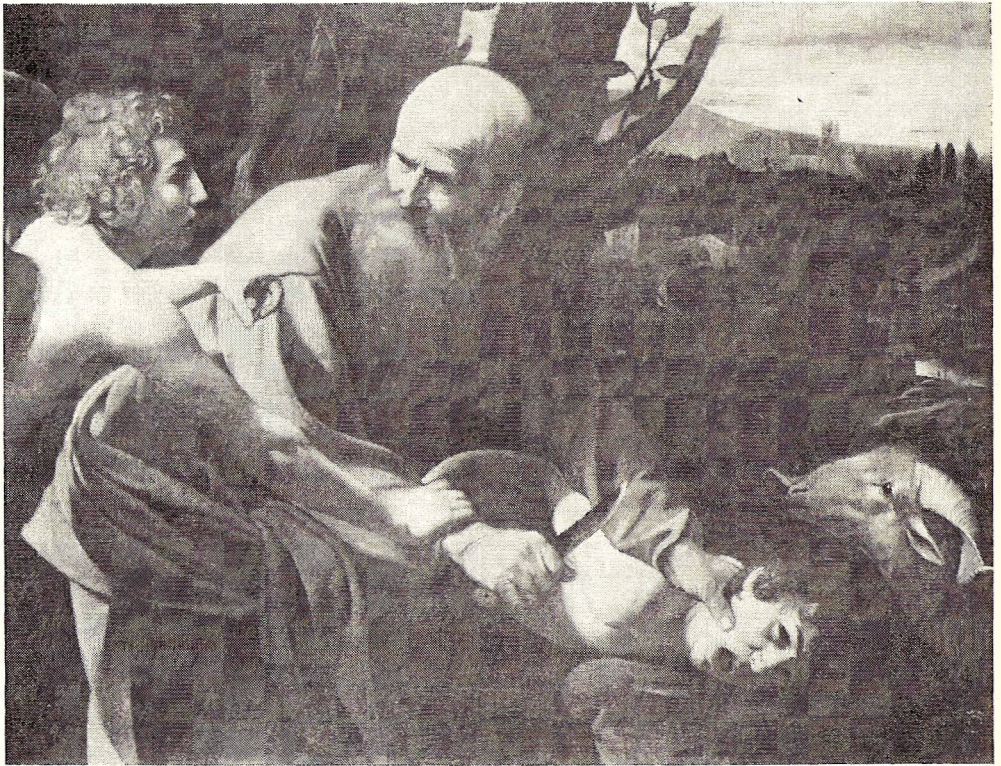
In a beautiful dream
Yadwigha gently sleeps
Heard the sounds of a pipe
Played by a sympathetic charmer
While the moon reflects
On the rivers and the verdant trees
The serpents attend
The gay tunes of the instrument.¹⁵

He accounted for the unusual juxtaposition by saying that the dreamer is sleeping on the sofa and has been transported to the jungle. Later he said that he put the sofa in the jungle because of its red color.

By the time Picasso had painted his *Dream* of 1932 [48], psychoanalysis was well on its way to becoming an international movement. Picasso's bright, unmodeled planes of color are typical of his early 1930s Surrealist style. His dreamer is represented in a more frontal version of the reclining nude than Gauguin's daydreamer and merges more formally with the shifting planes and colors of the chair. In the Picasso, the unlikely, surreal character of many dream images is reflected in the odd colors and spatial distortions of both figure and chair. Also unlikely, although humorous, is



48. Pablo Picasso,
The Dream, 1932.
Private collection.



49. Michelangelo da Caravaggio, *Sacrifice of Isaac*, 1594–96. Uffizi, Florence.

the exaggerated hump of the woman's shoulder, creating a pillow for her head.

Ambivalence is represented pictorially in *The Dream* by a series of dual arrangements. Lavender interlocks with green, and red with yellow; part of the chair is flattened and part is volumetric. Picasso's characteristic facial duality, combining profile with front view, reinforces ambivalence. The dreamer's expression shifts; it is sober in profile and smiling in the front view. This shift can be read as a sequence of movement responding to an inner psychological state. That the dreamer's expression responds to an erotic dream wish is implied by her pose and gesture, as well as by the particular nature of her facial shift. A section of the face seems to become detached along the bridge of the nose, as if slowly floating upward. It cannot be a coincidence, in view of the dreamer's reclining pose and traditional erotic gesture, that the detached shape is unmistakably phallic.

Iconographic Choice and Dream Elements

The elements of a dream have to satisfy various requirements, including those of the dreamwork and the censor. The elements of a work of art have to satisfy formal and iconographic demands, but they may also have to comply with the wishes of a patron, the conscious bias of an artist, his general public, and possibly even critics and dealers. Regardless of these considerations, every original work of art contains unique choices made by the artist. These, in turn, reveal the artist's personal contribution to the image, just as dreams reveal the dreamer.

A comparison of the *Sacrifice of Isaac* by Caravaggio [49] and by Rembrandt [50] illustrates the psychological underpinning of iconographic



50. Rembrandt, *Sacrifice of Isaac*, 1635. Hermitage, Saint Petersburg.

choice. Both artists worked in the Baroque style—the former in Italy early in the seventeenth century, and the latter, somewhat later in Holland. Both artists depict a biblical text that deals with a father's willingness to kill his son in obedience to a "higher" father—namely, God. God instructs Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, as proof of his faith. Abraham is distressed, but complies. As he is about to cut Isaac's throat, Abraham is interrupted by an angel who instructs him to substitute a ram.

An artist's response to this text is likely to reveal something of his emotional relationship to his own father and/or son, if he happens to have one. In Caravaggio's version, the tension between father and son is palpable; physical strain reflects anger and horror. Abraham grasps the knife firmly; Isaac's distorted face turns toward the viewer, emphasizing his anguish as a struggling victim. Caravaggio's Abraham is angry at the interruption; he glares fiercely at the angel and digs his fingers into his son's flesh.

Rembrandt's *Sacrifice of Isaac* is of an altogether different character. Isaac's face is not visible and therefore does not communicate his fear to the observer. One has the impression that Abraham hides his son's face from himself as well, as if to distance himself from the killing. The moment the angel arrives, Abraham drops the knife. From the same text, Rembrandt has created a father who kills with reluctance, while Caravaggio's kills with determination. Rembrandt's Isaac is passive and his face is hidden; Caravaggio's is anguished and rebellious. Neither of Caravaggio's figures obeys the rules of the text, whereas both of Rembrandt's do. In these rather striking differences are to be found clues to the artists' own characters as well as to broader considerations of their iconographic and thematic choices.

Self-Portraits and Self-Images

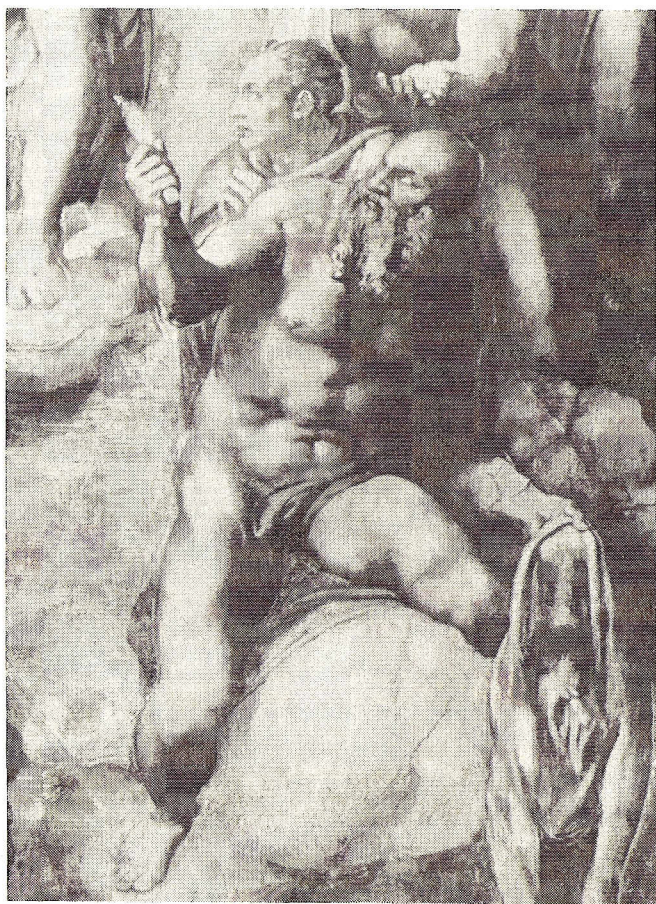
Freud first thought that dream personages were facets of the dreamer himself. Later, however, he amended that view. The identity and meaning of people in dreams can be as elusive as in works of art. Nevertheless, there are instances when artists quite literally displace their own self-portraits onto historical, biblical, or mythical characters. In such cases, their identifications are clear and direct rather than implicit, as in the *Sacrifice of Isaac* by Caravaggio and Rembrandt.

When Bernini created his self-portrait as David,¹⁶ he portrayed an energetic and victorious fighter. Caravaggio's *David* [11], on the other

hand, is the portrait of the artist's young lover, and the artist's self-portrait is in the severed but living head of Goliath.¹⁷ The sadomasochistic relationship between David and Goliath in Caravaggio's image puts Goliath—and therefore the artist—in a passive, exhibitionistic role. He has been literally "bloodied" by his homosexual lover and exhibits himself as such.

David's gesture, in which he seems to offer Goliath's head to the observer, is a formal and psychological quotation from Michelangelo's Saint Bartholomew in the *Last Judgment* [51]. Both Caravaggio's David and Michelangelo's saint "exhibit" their respective artist's self-portrait in a depressive and masochistic way.

Caravaggio also borrowed the pose of Michelangelo's Saint Bartholomew for what is perhaps his most defiant and blatantly homosexual figure,



51. Michelangelo, *Last Judgment*, detail of Saint Bartholomew, 1536. Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome.



52. Michelangelo da Caravaggio, Victorious Cupid, 1598–99. Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

in *Amor vincit omnia*, or *Victorious Cupid* [52]. The Amor's pose resembles Saint Bartholomew's, although their manifest characters are entirely different. Caravaggio has, in effect, quoted visually from Michelangelo's saint for two paintings that are directly self-related and explicitly homosexual. Caravaggio thus adapted one of Michelangelo's self-related images to convey two facets of his own homosexual experience. The Amor exudes seductive confidence as he dominates the worldly and artistic pursuits represented by armor and the instruments of kingship and music. The *David* expresses the dangers of homosexual submission to a younger lover.

That Caravaggio chose to quote from Michelangelo in these two works has considerable psychological significance. Michelangelo had been Caravaggio's most illustrious artistic predecessor in Italy, which fact placed him in a paternal relation to the younger artist. Michelangelo also shared Caravaggio's homosexual orientation, even though its overt expression was quite different. Howard Hibbard, in fact, suggests that Caravaggio's visual quotations of Michelangelo include a desire to expose the homosexual impulse underlying his predecessor's attraction to the male nude in a direct and defiant way.¹⁸

The conflicts that Michelangelo had had with his father over his wish to become a sculptor would have been well known through Vasari. Caravaggio's violent conflicts with authority are evident from his *Sacrifice of Isaac* and his extensive criminal record (see Chapter 11). To the extent, however, that Caravaggio learned from Michelangelo and assimilated aspects of his work, he experienced him as a positive paternal influence. Nevertheless, Caravaggio's intensely conflicted relationship with Michelangelo is revealed in the split nature—one triumphant and the other submissive—of the two homosexual images derived from Saint Bartholomew.

Another kind of conflicted self is exemplified by Gauguin's *Self-Portrait with Halo* of late 1889 [53]. Like *Reverie*, the *Self-Portrait* belongs to the artist's Symbolist phase and consciously depicts a state of mind. The background is divided into two colors, red above and yellow below, a chromatic echo of Gauguin's inner self, caught between an identification with good and evil. The halo denotes sainthood, while the curved patterns of black outline the artist and evolve into a serpent. The apples, in such a context, must refer to original sin and the Fall. Gauguin's lifelong struggle with good and evil persists in the Christian themes integrated with Tahitian subjects. Although living in what seemed a "Paradise," Gauguin's Tahitian paintings continued to depict themes of loss of innocence, danger, and paranoia. Just as psychological conflict, or indecision, can be repre-



53. Paul Gauguin,
Self-Portrait with Halo,
1889. National Gallery of
Art, Washington, D.C.
Chester Dale Collection.

sented as immobility in a dream, so Gauguin seems caught between red and yellow, sainthood and Satan.

In van Gogh's *Resurrection of Lazarus* [54], inspired by a Rembrandt etching of the same subject, the artist displaced his own face onto the resurrected corpse. Van Gogh's recent discharge from a mental hospital reinforced his personal connection with Lazarus as one who has gained a new "lease on life." The two women, Mary and Martha, are Lazarus's sisters, who, in the Bible (John 11), plead with Christ to return their brother to life. In the painting, they are represented as opposites. One is expansive, frontal, illuminated, and brightly colored; the other is withdrawn, silhouet-

ted, dark, and seen in a three-quarter rear view. The expansive woman stretches out her arms in the traditional gesture of Mary Magdalene at the Crucifixion. The gesture itself refers formally to the Cross, by echoing Christ's crucified pose.

In these figures, van Gogh has effected a series of conflations. Mary, who is Lazarus's sister, is related to the biblical prostitute through pose and gesture; as such, she is both saint and sinner (Mary Magdalene), a sexual object (the prostitute) and a taboo woman (sister). The two women can be read as van Gogh's split image of women—expansive (the prostitute) and depressive (the dark, withdrawn figure). Lazarus, in turn, is conflated with both Christ and the artist. Van Gogh himself intuits these meanings as he writes his brother Theo of "the personalities of whom I would have dreamed as characters."¹⁹

54. *Vincent van Gogh, Resurrection of Lazarus, 1890. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Vincent van Gogh Foundation/Vincent van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.*



The eerie white light pervading the picture suggests at once the glare of hospital light and the intensity of ordinary daylight when one wakes from a deep sleep. Dominating the sky and the natural light source of the painting is van Gogh's characteristic yellow sun. Here, the sun has replaced the figure of Christ in Rembrandt's Lazarus etching.²⁰ In addition to the traditional Christian association of Christ with the sun, the substitution in this painting has personal significance. Van Gogh's father was a minister, which had also been the artist's first calling. Only when he failed to be ordained, did van Gogh choose to be an artist.

The paternal implications of the sun and its role as the "eye of God" in Western iconography are an important feature of van Gogh's imagery. Albert J. Lubin has written extensively on the artist's relationship to the sun and its function as a symbolic halo in many of his pictures.²¹ "Vincent," according to Lubin,²² "worshiped the sun" and had no fear of confronting it directly.²³ These findings reveal van Gogh's sense of connection with, and idealization of, his father and his dreamlike conflation of him with Christ and God.

In most of his paintings containing a bright sun, the yellow circle is above the horizon and therefore *behind* a usually solitary figure, such as a sower or a reaper. These isolated workers, with whom van Gogh identified, do not actually "confront" the sun. But there is a paradoxical sense of intimacy between the sun and the figure—"so near and yet so far"—as if, in spite of its distance, the sun is connected to the figure's very existence. Likewise, the *Resurrection of Lazarus* is "warmed" by the paternal sun, whose light pervades the picture plane.

The Motif of the Sun

When Freud wrote *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he delineated, among other things, the iconography of the mind. If one considers an image such as van Gogh's sun, it is clear that a single manifest form can contain multiple layers of latent meaning. When a psychoanalyst interprets a dream, he follows the dreamer's associations until a theme emerges. A similar method defines the iconographic analysis of imagery in the visual arts. In the latter instance, however, free associations by the artist are usually unavailable.

The iconographer deals with specific artistic motifs by researching them. Associative links are made by knowing something of the culture in which the work was produced, the artist's milieu, the available texts, the tastes of a patron, and so forth. It is also helpful to know the artistic

precedents of the work, if any, as well as the meanings of related images. Amassing such information and interpreting it is a form of historical reconstruction. For the same reason, it is useful for an analyst to have as much cultural information as possible about an analysand. Likewise, biographical information about an artist can sometimes enrich art-historical reconstruction and also elucidate the iconography of a work.

The meaning of the bright yellow sun in van Gogh's pictures can be understood by its association to his minister father, to his psychic relationship to his father, and to the sun's traditional significance in Western art, religion, and myth. The significance of the sun also informed the fifteenth-century personal emblem of Alberti, the winged eye, whose manifest character seems very far removed from van Gogh's sun. The sun is, of course, a broad subject; and what I am proposing here is a small example of the way in which probing the unconscious can contribute to iconographic exploration. I will begin with a brief consideration of Freud's landmark study of paranoia, in which the psychological meaning of the sun plays the central symbolic role. In this instance, it is a matter of looking into the meaning of delusions and hallucinations, which, like dreams, are visual phenomena and can be thought of as waking dreams. Both are believed at the time they occur; but dreamers wake up and resume a life based in reality, whereas those who hallucinate have lost touch with reality.

Freud on Schreber's Sun (1911)

In 1911, Freud published "Psycho-analytical Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia,"²⁴ generally referred to as the Schreber case. Freud analyzed the paranoid delusion of Daniel Paul Schreber, described by the patient himself in *Memoirs of a Nerve Patient (Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken)*, published in 1903. Altogether Schreber suffered three breakdowns, was hospitalized, and attempted suicide. His most severe psychotic episode followed a promotion in 1893 to Presiding Judge of Dresden's Superior Court (*Senatspräsident*). While in the hospital, Schreber kept detailed notes on his state of mind. Freud's analysis was undertaken from Schreber's writings rather than in a clinical situation, and it is thus, like his *Leonardo*, a psychobiography. The Schreber case became the classic study of paranoia, although subsequent revisions of it have contributed new perspectives on paranoia as well as on Schreber himself. In it Freud showed that, in contrast to the condensation, or compromise, necessary to create a hysterical symptom, paranoia is a process of *disintegration*. The analysis of hysteria—like the analysis of a dream—requires teasing out

threads whose very entanglement has disguised the latent meaning. In the disintegration of paranoid delusions and hallucinations, the threads come apart of their own volition (compare "to come apart at the seams" and "to come unraveled") and expose the latent imagery.

The crux of Schreber's delusion was the belief that he had become a woman, because God had wished it. Convinced first that his doctor and then that God was persecuting him, Schreber appeased God by his transformation. As a result, God would impregnate Schreber through the sun's rays and create a superior race. The sun spoke to Schreber in human language, and Schreber shouted back at the sun. Schreber's delusion transformed his father into the sun, whose female counterpart was Mother Earth.

Freud analyzed the delusion in relation to the Oedipus complex as a defense against an outbreak of homosexual feeling. Instead of accepting that he loves another man, the paranoid of Schreber's type first changes the love to hate and then reverses the object relationship. In its final delusional form, the original homosexual love object—the father—becomes the persecutor.

The prototype, or first edition, of "the other man" is the oedipal father; in Schreber's case, this association was reinforced by the fact that his own father was a physician, whose treatment of him had been physically abusive.²⁵ William G. Niederland²⁶ has added to Freud's analysis the observation that Schreber was afraid to compete realistically with his father and consequently, when promoted, he suffered breakdowns. In so doing, he associated success with oedipal danger and regressed, like Phaëthon, to a passive, feminine position.

In his *Postscript* to the Schreber case,²⁷ Freud referred to myth to validate his view that the sun was a "sublimation" of the patient's father. Taking Schreber's delusion that he could safely gaze at the sun as his point of departure, Freud noted that in antiquity only eagles were believed to have such powers.²⁸ Since the eagle was associated with sky gods, notably Zeus and Jupiter in Greek and Roman mythology, it could stand specifically for the sun as well as for the heavens. That the sun also became the eagle's totemic ancestor is clear from the ancient belief that eagles subjected their young to a test of lineage. Before acknowledging its young as legitimate, the eagle forced them to look at the sun. If the young eagles blinked, they were thrown from the nest. Freud²⁹ explained such ordeals as expressions of totemic thinking, which assumes that the totem—or original ancestor—will not harm its legitimate descendants.³⁰