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The Concept of the Archetype and Archetypal Models from the Perspective of Femininity in Visual Arts

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Abstract: *It is a fact that the world as a whole is diverse and that, in general, increasingly intense interactions between people, cultures, and civilizations generate a psychological need for identity. This is because individuals, when confronted with foreign ideas and models – with "the other" – define their own identity, their "self." We cannot ignore or overlook that in the cultural sphere, linguistic, psychological, mental, and religious barriers come into play – an entire spiritual edifice formed over centuries of differentiated and specific evolution.*

Keywords: femininity, archetype, psychoanalysis, visual art.

1. Introduction

The Romanian Explanatory Dictionary defines the archetype as: "A model, an initial type used as a guide; (especially) the original manuscript of a work or a deep, innate psychic structure that generates symbolic images and governs the organization of human experience"[1]. We will choose the second definition – the archetype as a symbolic sign – for the purpose of reflecting the chosen theme. In the 1950s, psychologist Carl G. Jung described archetypes as "archaic remnants whose presence cannot be explained by anything in the individual's life and which appear to be aboriginal, innate, and inherited forms of the human mind"[2]. Jung argued that archetypes are not known to the conscious mind, in which there are clear examples that define them. Instead, archetypes are imprinted in the subconscious, where they remain fluid and unknown, organized through a long evolutionary history that has continuously nourished the human mind as it reacts to real phenomena, to sights and sounds. After years of observing and interpreting dreams and fantasies across many cultures, Jung concluded that archetypes tend to form representations or motifs that reveal themselves only through symbolic images. These representations can vary significantly in detail, but they do not lose their fundamental structure. They have no known origin and

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[1] *Dicționarul Explicativ al Limbii Române*, https://dexonline.ro/definitie/arhetip

[2] C. G. Jung, Marie-Luise von Franz, *Man and his Symbols*, Ed. Anchor Press, New York, 1964, p. 67.

can appear anytime, anywhere in the world – making their general model a "collective" phenomenon of the human subconscious. Archetypes are thus connected to the uncontested universality of the collective subconscious, to ancestral memory, tradition, and the past. When used and applied in culture and folk art, they allow for easy generalizations about the world, its structures, and its inhabitants. Jung introduced archetypes as inherited predispositions within the human psyche to form primordial images. They are defined by their form, not their content, which allows for different manifestations across cultures, religions, or social groups.

Carl Jung proposed the theory of archetypes, claiming that there is an inherent tendency in how human beings unconsciously understand the world. The theory of archetypes explains how the symbolic meanings found in myths psychologically influence our unconscious mind. As an extension of Jung's theory, we aim to provide a theoretical framework that connects mythology and psychology, defining archetypal symbolism from the perspective of visual arts. Similar to myths, visual art is a symbolic narrative. In what follows, we will identify, as much as possible, symbolic content in visual art based on archetypal symbolism.

Carl Jung[3] suggests that all human beings share a deep, universal unconscious, which lies beneath the personal psyche (including the conscious and subconscious mind). The collective unconscious is made up of contents and behavioral patterns that are identical across all human beings and thus constitute a common psychic substrate of universal nature, present in every individual. As a result, all human beings – who essentially share the same biological equipment (e.g., the brain and central nervous system) – are likely to perceive shared meanings embodied in a symbol, even at an unconscious level.

Returning to archetypes, they are defined as components of the collective unconscious – more precisely, an innate tendency to experience things in a particular way that cannot be consciously acquired. They exist universally in the psyche and psychologically prepare the individual to face life experiences that are universally shared[4]. Archetypes are unconscious psychic impulses – hereditary traits that shape and motivate thoughts, emotions, and behaviors long before any conscious awareness develops. Archetypes are similar to other sensory and cognitive patterns; for example, the receptive fields of the retina are not consciously perceived but determine the structure of visual perception[5].

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[3] *Ibidem*, p. 74.

[4] Sally Walters, "Algorithms and archetypes: Evolutionary psychology and Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious", Journal of Social and Evolutionary Systems, nr.3, pg. 289, vol. 17, 1994, https://doi.org/10.1016/1061-7361(94)90013-2, 03.01.2025

[5] Leonid I. Perlovsky, Robert Kozma, *Neurodynamics of Cognition and Consciousness*, Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, 2007, pp. 230-250.

Jung initially identified a few essential archetypes: the hero, the shadow, the anima, the animus, the mentor (or wise old man), and the mother. Furthermore, mythologist Joseph Campbell[6] extended Jung's concept of the hero archetype into a more complex domain – the monomyth (the hero's journey), a structure common to all mythic hero stories across different cultures and religions. This metaphorical structure outlines seventeen stages that the hero must go through to complete their journey. These stages are generally grouped into three major categories: departure, initiation, and return. Interestingly, this structure also applies to modern society and is evident in contemporary art and mass media. These archetypes are considered essential in comparison to other types, such as:
The Self archetype – the image of the divine, the civilizing hero;
The Erotic archetype – Animus/Anima, representing the Feminine, the Masculine, and also the Androgynous;
The Parental archetype – The Paternal symbolizes Justice and Power, while the Maternal stands for Love, the Mother, the Daughter, Faith, and also nature-related archetypes like Fertility and Affection;
The Child archetype – representing Purity;
The Shadow archetype – representing the Mask, the mirror of the inner self, or the concept of duality.

2. Discussions

In the cultural sphere, projection is an active element in the formation of superstitions, myths, and religions. The construction of a supersensible reality is the result of projecting psychic forces outward. This supersensible world can be reinterpreted as a psychology of the unconscious. This idea is found not only in Freud but also in Jung, in a specific manner. For Jung, religions are the result of the projection of archetypal contents, and God is an external projection of the Self archetype – the archetype of harmoniously integrated psychic totality[7]. Every man carries within himself the image of the eternal feminine – not the image of a specific woman, but of woman in general. This image is, essentially, an inherited attribute passed down from ancient times and inscribed in the organic system, a "type" (an "archetype") of all ancestral experiences related to feminine nature, a sediment of all impressions concerning womanhood, a system of inherited adaptation. Throughout history, femininity has been seen as a set of traits that make up the specificity of the feminine character. When we speak of the term "feminine," we observe that its roots lie in biology, and in Freud's view, anatomy is destiny. Femininity has its origins in social structures. The famous feminist manifesto published by Simone de Beauvoir in 1949

[6] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Princenton Press, U.K., 2008, pp. 35-38.
[7] Pamela J. Brown, Jungian Psychology and the New God Image, http://www.dbcuuc.org/sermons/000604.html, 11.03.2020.

asserted that one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one. The symbol of womanhood, present as an archetypal figure – an initial model to be followed – according to psychology, is a deep structure that generates symbolic images and governs the organization of human experience, a concept that designates the primary, original, ideal model.

For Beauvoir, cultural understandings of femininity are imaginary constructs. This foreshadows Jacques Derrida's argument that linguistic structures are conceived through a series of dualities, so that concepts do not arise from an intrinsic nature but rather from a relationship of difference with the other[8]. For Beauvoir, the binary of sex positions man as "the subject" and woman as "the other." Woman is defined and differentiated in relation to man, yet not with reference to herself[9].

Intellectual perceptions of masculinity and femininity have been transformed into visual arts since antiquity. Fertility and motherhood, as well as the relationships between women and men, are dominant themes in ancient representations. One of the earliest illustrative examples of gender representation is the faceless Paleolithic statue known as the Venus of Willendorf (circa 28,000–25,000 BCE). It is a depiction of a female figure in a symbolic and conceptual context, representing feminine fertility. In the following sections, we will identify the most well-known and commonly used archetypes in visual arts, from prehistory to the present day, in order to highlight the persistence of those archaic remnants as defined by Jung. Representations of women in both art and mythology can serve as vehicles for understanding how feminine archetypes have evolved over time. Jung's theoretical framework concerning the human psyche aligns with Taoist principles: the extrovert is balanced by the introvert; the external material world is balanced by the internal world; the masculine principle – Animus (Yang in Yin) – is balanced by the feminine principle, Anima (Yin in Yang). Just like physical inheritance stored in our genes, cultural patterns are preserved in our collective consciousness. They can be invoked, forgotten, or even suppressed. Nevertheless, archetypes can be summoned as symbols at any moment – hence their power to manipulate, to motivate, and to influence. One of Sigmund Freud's most important contributions to the development of psychology as a science – as well as to anthropology, ontology, and epistemology – was the introduction and clarification of the concept of the unconscious and its role in the development and functioning of human behavior. Freud's first theory of the structure of the psyche distinguishes three instances of personality: the unconscious, the ego, and the superego, noting that complex and hard-to-identify interdependencies exist between them. From Freud's perspective, the unconscious is a personal, individual

[8] Simone de Beauvoir, "The Second Sex. A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader", Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan (ed.), Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2004, pp. 51-54.
[9] *Ibidem*, p.52.

realm – the most primitive and elemental part of the psychic life. The phenomena unfolding within this true reservoir of repressions are among the most complex and unpredictable in terms of manifestation. This psychic instance is driven primarily by instinctual drives – authentic biological forces that continuously strive to break through into the conscious mind. The unconscious is a veritable ocean of energy, housing both accepted and illicit, unwanted, and unacknowledged drives. If the ego represents control, and the superego the censorship of the ego's actions based on internalized norms, then the unconscious lies at the opposite pole, with its domains of manifestation (dreams, Freudian slips) and its characteristic elements (instinctual drives) and their consequences (aggression, sensuality). Whereas Freud considered the unconscious to exist solely at the individual level, Carl Gustav Jung defined the concept of the collective unconscious as a shared database of all humanity, emerging from millions of years of soul formation. According to Carl Gustav Jung, symbolic art originates from the realm of the collective unconscious. Not being repressed or forgotten, the content of the collective unconscious – which does not exist in itself as such – represents only a potential, which can be inferred only from the content of an artwork, similar to a priori ideas. Only from the completed work of art can we deduce the symbol that, through imagination, guides us to reconstruct the original model. In this way, the contact between the human psyche – within the collective unconscious – and the archetype can generate the transformation of archetypal symbols into art. Primordial images are, in fact, archetypes, and they represent psychic residues of the same types of experiences lived by countless human ancestors. In Jung's view, the effect of art lies in the unconscious stimulation of the archetype and in connecting the artist's and viewer's consciousness to the fundamental, deepest resources of the collective unconscious. Thus, the role of art is to educate, to guide consciousness toward the living sources of the archetype, from which the people of a given time may absorb – according to their capacity for understanding – the perennial truth of the primordial image.

3. Results

The mother archetype is perhaps the most recognizable and commonly encountered. We can deduce three main relationships in connection with the creative artist: 1) the biological mother or a close family member; 2) any woman or caregiver, such as a nurse or a teacher; 3) the mother in a more figurative sense – anything that evokes a sense of devotion, such as a church, the sky, the earth, or a home. There is also the mother archetype embedded in everything that represents Mother Earth (Nature), associated with the creation and birth of all things. The mother is symbolized by the phases of the moon, the womb, and any similar forms, representing fertility and fecundity. The act of giving life through birth is the most

recognized aspect of the mother archetype. Her body is soft and rounded, with an exaggerated emphasis on reproductive qualities such as the breasts, abdomen, and hips.

The example of the Venus of Willendorf statuette (ca. 28,000–25,000 BCE) was certainly not created as a portrait of a specific person, but rather as a representation of the reproductive and child-rearing aspects of womanhood. In combination with the emphasis on breasts and pubic area, it is believed that the Venus of Willendorf served a symbolic function relating to fertility or motherhood.

A similar role is played by the goddess Gaia in ancient Greek mythology and art. She was considered the Mother of Creation, the one who brought the world out of chaos into light, the mother of all gods, and the oldest deity responsible for the creation of the world. In the symbolism associated with this goddess – Mother Nature – who heals and sustains all life on this planet, the archetype is personified in sculpture or painting as a representation of the universal nature of woman and the protective essence embodied by the figure of the mother.

Fig. 1: *Gaia*, Roman bas-relief

Fig. 2: *Gaia*, *Den stora modern*

Gradually, the projection of this archetype in visual arts often appears bathed in an aura of light or wearing a symbolic crown of divine origin, indicating the devotion she deserves. The mother is usually depicted with outstretched arms, off ring food or comfort, caring for those around her (man or child), and is essential to their existence.

Fig.3: Gerard David, *Madonna and Child*

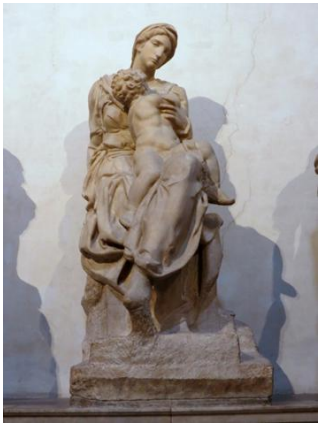

Fig.4: Michelangelo, *Madona di Medici*

Virgins are typically classified as representations of a woman's independent and autonomous qualities. Some of the symbols associated with virgins include youth, sensual beauty, artistry, and wisdom. The most familiar aspects of the virgin archetype involve the personification of eternal youth, a reverence for beauty, and an unrestrained, confident nature. These characteristics are represented by a slender, sometimes prepubescent body, often with luxuriant hair, surrounded by flowers, colorful textiles, or precious metals. She is usually depicted alone or accompanied by cherubic figures, whose presence indicates a non-earthly origin. When shown in the presence of men, the virgin is either painted or sculpted as a warrior engaged in battle or as a lover whose embrace is fierce and passionate. The true power of the virgin archetype is revealed in her ability to command control over a situation – whether engaged in love or conflict. Independence, confidence, and passion are her most empowering traits. As we can observe, this archetype has multiple subdivisions: the beloved virgin, the chaste virgin, the warrior virgin, and so on. Each of these variations finds a corresponding artistic representation from Greek/Roman Antiquity to the present day.

Fig. 5: Jacques-Louis David, *The Vestal Virgin*

Fig. 6: *Joan of Arc*, miniature

The earliest representations of Mary date back to the early Christian period (2nd–3rd centuries), discovered in the Roman catacombs. One type of icon shows only Mary (without the infant Jesus) standing, usually glorified and making a gesture of prayer, blessing, or prophecy. This type of image appears in a series of ancient apse mosaics. Complete depictions of the Madonna more frequently include the Christ Child, who is shown either facing the viewer or raising his hand in blessing. The most famous Byzantine image, the Hodegetria, was originally of this type, although most later copies are half-length. This image type often appears in sculpture as well and can be found in delicate ivory carvings, limestone decorations on church doorways, and in painted wooden or plaster statues in nearly every Catholic church. The enthroned Madonna is a type of image dating from the Byzantine era and was widely used in medieval and Renaissance times. These depictions of the Madonna and Child often take the form of large altarpieces. They also appear as frescoes and apse mosaics. In medieval examples, the Madonna is often accompanied by angels supporting the throne or by rows of saints. In Renaissance painting, particularly in High Renaissance works, the saints are grouped more informally in a type of composition known as Sacra Conversazione. The seated Madonna and Child is a style of image that became especially popular in 15th-century Florence and was imitated elsewhere. These depictions are usually small in size, suited for a small altar or domestic use. They typically show Mary holding Jesus in an informal and maternal manner. These paintings often include symbolic references to the Passion of Christ. Very few ancient images of the Virgin Mary survive, although the image of the Madonna has roots in the painting and sculptural traditions of the earliest Christian communities in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. Important to the Italian tradition are Byzantine icons, especially those created in Constantinople (Istanbul), the capital of the longest-lasting medieval civilization, whose icons played a vital role in civic life and were celebrated for their miraculous properties. Byzantium (324–1453) saw itself as the true Rome, being a Christian empire speaking Greek, with Italian colonies living among its citizens, participating in Crusades launched at its borders, and eventually looting the churches, palaces, and monasteries for many of their treasures. Later, in the Middle Ages, the Cretan School became the primary source of icons for the West, and its artists could adapt their style to Western iconography when necessary.

Old age is often portrayed as a negative archetype – a hideous, aged, and dried-up woman, a symbol of life's passage. This archetype manifests either in the features of the character, emphasizing signs of aging, or as a skeletal figure representing death. This physical connection highlights the most important aspect of old age as a means or bridge between life and death. Old age is also associated with magic or incantation. Its connection to

the supernatural gives it a sense of wisdom and mystery. Old age completes the circle of life, marking the passage of time and becoming a memento mori about youth and lost beauty. Its presence in a visual artwork evokes fear and respect. Although usually represented as a negative character, in pre-Hellenic mythology it was attributed with the power that comes from seeing beyond time. This prophetic talent and knowledge are achieved only through living a full and long life. The power of this archetype in visual arts is emphasized through the wrinkles and dry skin that mark the passage of time and accumulated experience.

Fig. 7: *Life and Death*, unknown author

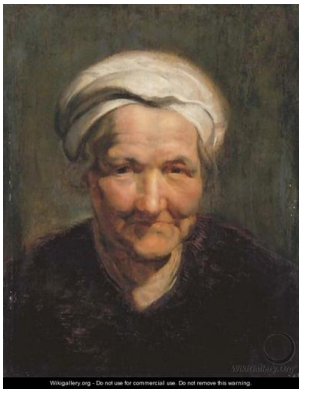

Fig. 8: Paul Rubens, *Portrait of an Old Woman*

In early Christian and medieval art, the image of the woman primarily served to emphasize a typological meaning. By the end of the medieval period, women were depicted in moralizing narratives such as the Biblia Moralisées from the 13th century, which alternated biblical stories with elaborate commentary by Parisian theologians, as well as in the 1400–1530 manuscripts of Speculum Humanae Salvationis, where illustrations often focused on the importance of foreshadowing and distorted certain events at the expense of biblical narrative[10]. With the introduction of the printing press, Northern European artists in the 16th and 17th centuries published books depicting biblical women such as Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel as true models of virtue. The Renaissance, Baroque, and 18th-century art often used biblical women as acceptable excuses for depicting the contemporary ideal of the nude female form. Characters such as Lot's daughters and Bathsheba were reproduced repeatedly. In the 19th century, the "good" biblical wife tended to be overshadowed by the "bad" one. An example of this is the typology of the character Delilah, who becomes a projection of the femme fatale, a seductress.

[10] Speculum Humanae Salvationis, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speculum_Humanae_Salvationis, 20.05.2020.

Fig. 9: The Adoration of the Magi from *Speculum humanæ salvationis*

20th-century art sees the emergence of secular images of biblical women, replacing earlier religious conceptions and treating them through formal, personal, or national perspectives. The artist of the Speculum Humanae Salvationis[11], in an undated work, replaces the figure of Adam with a basilisk with a woman's head – an imaginary creature interpreted by popular Christian thought as one of the appearances of evil, of Satan. Many medieval artworks illustrating the creation cycle – in frescoes, mosaics, and stained glass – are intended to project a sequence of events that will unfold in the New Testament; for example, the creation of Eve was understood as foreshadowing the birth of the Church (Ecclesia). Thus, in a Parisian Biblia Moralisée (c. 1240), Eve, assisted by God-Christ, leaps from Adam's side as he sleeps. Above this scene, the Crucifixion is depicted, with a crowned Ecclesia emerging from Christ's wounded right side.

Traditional early Christian iconography presents Adam and Eve on either side of the Tree of Knowledge, which is itself encircled by a serpent. They cover their intimate parts with leaves, as seen, for example, on the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (in the Treasury of St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican)[12]. This image conveys a typological-redemptive message, suggesting that the divine grace lost by humanity will be restored to the faithful after death.

[11] *Ibidem*.
[12] *Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus*, https://www.thebyzantinelegacy.com/junius-bassus, 12.03.2020.

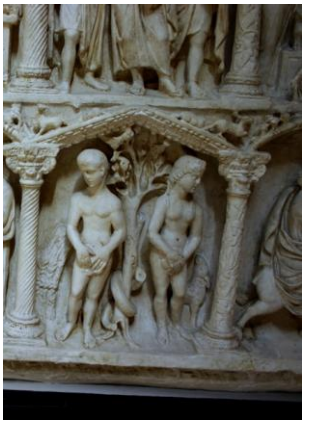

Fig. 10: *Adam and Eve*, *Sarcophagus Junius Bassus*

16th-century artists continued to refrain from portraying the carnal nature of Eve that tempted Adam. This perception is clearly illustrated in the left panel of a diptych created by Hugo van der Goes around 1470, where Eve, with her body slightly turned toward Adam, picks the fruit from the tree without the serpent's help, which is also depicted as half-woman. The moralizing attitude persists in 17th-century Dutch art. In the work Adam and Eve (1638) by the master Rembrandt, the primordial couple – depicted as middle-aged – is shown at the moment of temptation: the tree is wrapped by the serpent, emphasizing its evil nature, and Eve is shown tempting Adam with an apple as round as her belly. A different interpretation of this biblical moment comes from Tintoretto, for whom this episode signifies a struggle between the masculine and the feminine. Adam is portrayed as a submissive figure, while Eve takes a dominant stance in The Temptation of Adam (1550).

Fig. 11: Hugo van der Goes, *The Fall of Man*

Fig.12: Rembrandt, *Adam and Eve*

Fig.13: Tintoretto, *The Temptation of Adam*

Under the influence of John Milton's Paradise Lost, the 18th century witnessed the emergence of a secular image of Eve, transmitted into modern art primarily through her transformation into a femme fatale – a blend of beauty, seduction, and independence intended to destroy man. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's painting, Lady Lilith[13] (1864–1868, reproduced in 1872–1873) visually embodies this interpretation, portraying a beautiful, melancholic woman gracefully combing her hair. She is no longer the first wife of Adam, but rather a sensual and earthly woman[14].

Fig. 14: Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith*

Fig. 15: Constantin Brâncuși, *Adam and Eve (Le roi des rois)*

Constantin Brâncuși's sculpture Adam and Eve (1916–1921) presents a modern reinterpretation of the primordial couple as two nearly equivalent figurative components fused into a unified structure composed of geometric forms. Adam is depicted as a zigzag-edged rhombus, while Eve is represented in the upper part through an interaction of curves and spheres. Sculpted from oak, Adam serves as the pedestal for Eve, carved in chestnut wood.

[13] Amy Scerba, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti's painting 'Lady Lilith' (1864–1868?): oil", Feminism and Women's Studies, EServer.org, 02.03.2020.
[14] *Ibidem*.

Marc Chagall's approach in the lithograph Paradise: The Tree of Knowledge for the Bible Verve II, 1960[15], blends Christian and Jewish exegetical traditions in the depiction of the couple, showing Adam and Eve lying on the ground, with the Tree of Knowledge sprouting from their intertwined bodies as if they were one. This atypical iconography refers to Christian theology, where the Tree of Knowledge is associated with the mystical Tree of Life.

Fig. 16: Marc Chagall, *Paradise: The Tree of Knowledge for the Bible Verve II*

Fig. 17: Roberto d'Oderisio, church fresco, *Santa Maria Incoronata* Church

Alongside Eve, another biblical figure frequently appears in visual arts over the centuries, representing a distinct typology – the deceitful and seductive woman: Potiphar's wife, from Genesis in the Old Testament. Potiphar is a figure in the biblical story of Joseph in the Book of Genesis. It is said that Potiphar was captain of the palace guard. Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers, is taken to Egypt, where he is sold to Potiphar as a domestic servant. Potiphar appoints Joseph head of his household, but Potiphar's wife – unnamed in the Bible and Christian tradition – becomes angry with Joseph for resisting her seduction and falsely accuses him of attempted rape.

[15] Marc Chagall in colectia Zaidan Gallery, http://www.zaidan.ca/art_gallery/Chagall/Chagall-Paradise.htm, 20.02.2020.

Potiphar throws Joseph into prison, where Joseph's gift for interpreting dreams is eventually brought to Pharaoh's attention.

In early Renaissance art, Potiphar's wife symbolizes Luxuria, as seen in a fresco by Roberto d'Oderisio in the Church of Santa Maria Incoronata, Naples (1340–1343). Sitting on a bed presumed to be in the woman's chamber, she lifts her dress to expose her legs while Joseph flees in fear.

Joseph's story fascinated Rembrandt, who created numerous drawings, engravings, and paintings based on the Old Testament figure. In one 1634 engraving, Potiphar's wife is shown stretched out on the bed, nude, grabbing Joseph. Considered "unprecedented in its erotic candor"[16], the work highlights the stark contrast between the characters' desires – Joseph averts his gaze while the woman shamelessly reveals her body. Rembrandt likely intended to emphasize the moral implications through his dramatic use of light and shadow, with Joseph brightly lit on the left and Potiphar's wife engulfed in darkness on the right.

Fig. 18: Rembrandt, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*

Judith, the pious widow of Bethulia, is one of the few biblical women identified with both the traditional Catholic version of the Virgin Mary and as a heroic figure. The biblical story tells that Judith, widowed after the death of her husband Manasseh, decides to save her city by seducing and beheading the Assyrian general Holofernes. To do so, she bathes, perfumes herself, dresses festively, and adorns herself with jewelry[17]. After killing Holofernes, she returns with his head and saves her people, choosing to live the rest of her life alone. In Northern European art of the 16th century, Judith appears as a sensual woman who uses her feminine charm to seduce Holofernes. Thus, she is often associated with other seductive women such as Delilah. Artists frequently portrayed her as a sinful, aggressive seductress – cold and unflinching in her act. A notable example is Judith (1525) by Hans Baldung Grien.

[16] Shelley Perlove, Larry Silver, *Rembrandt's faith: church and temple in the Dutch golden age*, University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009, p. 99.
[17] Biblia Ortodoxă, Cartea Iuditei, cap. 10/ The Orthodox Bible, Book of Judith, chapter 10, https://www.bibliaortodoxa.ro/carte.php?id=45, 02.02.2020.

Fig. 19: Hans Baldung Grien, *Judith*

Fig. 20: Caravaggio, *Judith Beheading Holofernes*

Fig. 21: Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith Slaying Holofernes*

Caravaggio's Judith Beheading Holofernes (1598–1599) captures the figures dramatically lit from the side, extracted from a dark background. Their facial expressions reveal the artist's deep emotional insight – Judith's face shows a mix of determination and revulsion, suggesting psychological ambivalence.

Artemisia Gentileschi's Judith Slaying Holofernes (1614–1620) is an emblematic work. In this painting, Judith bears the artist's own face, while Holofernes resembles Agostino Tassi – the master who raped her. The scene is powerful and violent, unlike previous representations: the maid, typically passive (as in Caravaggio's work), is here an active accomplice, matching Judith in strength and fury.

The portrayal of Judith as a woman who betrays and kills her lover becomes a recurring theme in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Gustav Klimt approached this subject in two iconic works: Judith I (1901) and Judith II (1909). Judith is depicted as a sensual, erotic woman, her face bearing an expression of sexual ecstasy, emphasized by parted lips and intense eyes.

Both images present Judith as the quintessence of the femme fatale, while the use of gold leaf transforms her into an emblem of this universal archetype.


Fig. 22, Fig. 23: Gustav Klimt, *Judith I* and *Judith II*

The use of female biblical typologies was also intended to reflect virtuous models aimed at German and Flemish elites. One such figure is Sarah, who embodies feminine virtues and is illustrated by Rembrandt in Abraham and the Angels (1656). In this engraving, the guests are seated at the entrance to a home on what appears to be an oriental rug. Abraham bows his head humbly as he addresses the central figure – God – who announces the miraculous birth. Behind them is Ishmael, Abraham and Sarah's 13-year-old son. God is portrayed as a bearded elderly man, while the two accompanying angels have distinctly individualized features and hybrid characteristics, blending masculinity with traditional angelic traits. Sarah is represented as a beautiful woman whose inner grace and loyalty are synonymous with humility and faith.

Fig. 24: Rembrandt, *Abraham and the Angels*

A central image in both Orthodox and Catholic iconography, depictions of the Virgin Mary have persisted since early Christianity (2nd–3rd centuries), as found in the catacombs of Rome. Initially narrative in style, the classic Madonna image began to develop in the 5th century, following the Council of Ephesus in 431, which confirmed her status as the "Mother of God" or Theotokos[18]. The iconography that emerged in the 6th–8th centuries became especially important during the medieval period (12th–14th centuries), both in the Eastern Orthodox and Latin spheres.

According to an 8th-century tradition, the iconography of the Virgin Mary originated from a portrait painted from life by the Evangelist Luke. Several icons (such as Panagia Portaitissa) claim to be either the original or direct copies. In the Western tradition, Madonna representations were extremely diverse, as seen in the practices of Renaissance masters like Duccio, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Giovanni Bellini, Caravaggio, and Rubens – and later, certain modernists such as Salvador Dalí and Henry Moore. In contrast, Orthodox iconography has generally remained more faithful to traditional types.

Very few early images of the Virgin Mary have survived, although the Madonna's image has roots in the pictorial and sculptural traditions of the earliest Christian communities in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. There are several types of representations of the Virgin Mary. One depicts her standing alone (without the infant Jesus), usually glorified and in a gesture of prayer, blessing, or prophecy. This type of image appears in a series of ancient apse mosaics[19]. While theft was one way Byzantine images made their way west into Italy, the relationship between Byzantine icons and Italian Madonna imagery is much richer and more complex. Byzantine art played an essential role in Western Europe, especially when Byzantine territories included parts of Eastern Europe, Greece, and even Italy. Byzantine manuscripts, ivory carvings, gold and silver objects, and luxurious textiles were widely distributed throughout the West.

In Byzantium, the usual title for Mary was Theotokos or Mother of God, rather than Virgin Mary, and salvation was believed to be granted to the faithful at the moment of God's incarnation. This theological concept takes pictorial form in the image of Mary holding the child in her arms. Another frequent representation shows both the Virgin and the infant Jesus standing. The most famous Byzantine image of this type, Hodighitria, portrays the Virgin holding the child on her left arm and pointing to him with her right hand. Jesus holds a scroll, symbolizing the Gospel, the good news brought into the world through his arrival. This type of image appears frequently in

[18] Conciliul de la Efes/ The Council of Ephesus, https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conciliul_de_la_Efes, 11.03.2020.
[19] Dorian SJ Llywelyn, Mary and Mariology, http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com, pg.540-541, 03.02.2020.

sculpture and can be found in delicate ivory carvings, on limestone in cathedral doorposts, and in polychrome wood or plaster figures in nearly every Catholic church. One particularly renowned example is Raphael's Sistine Madonna[20].

Located in Paris, Sainte-Chapelle was built in 1239 at the request of King Louis IX of France to house newly acquired holy relics, believed to include a piece of the True Cross, the Crown of Thorns, and other Passion artifacts. The reliquary at Sainte-Chapelle integrates three elements: the Old Testament's "Wisdom Incarnate" in the design of the throne; the New Testament's Incarnation (God as Jesus in Mary's womb) related to the sacred relics; and the Capetian fulfillment of sacred kingship. Beginning in the 12th century, several medieval theologians, including Guibert of Nogent, saw the ivory throne as a typological precursor to the Virgin Mary and referred to her as the "living throne of God"[21]. This designation persisted from the 9th century through the Middle Ages.

The Virgin and Child statue from Sainte-Chapelle is a key example of a new genre of small-scale statues that marked a shift in the French aristocracy's devotional practices – from public church prayer to more intimate, private worship. This statue was made specifically for Louis IX. The move toward private veneration arose from the medieval desire for an internal, personal religious experience. To facilitate such experiences, small statues like this were created between the 11th and 13th centuries. Their modest proportions emphasized the humanity of religious figures, allowing for a more direct spiritual connection.

Fig. 25: Anonymous artist, *Virgin and Child*, *Sainte-Chapelle*

[20] *Ibidem*.
[21] Willem Van Loon, *Istoria artei*, Editura Snagov, Bucureşti, 2001, p. 204.

The rediscovered humanity in the Virgin and Child statue was central to intimate devotion. The image of Christ evolved from that of a "Shepherd" in the 3rd century, to a "God-King," and by the 12th century to a "God born of man." As focus shifted from divinity to morality, a dedicated cult of the Virgin arose. During this time, the portrayal of the Virgin transitioned from a seated position – signifying the throne of wisdom – to a standing one, symbolizing a gentle, caring mother. When Mary is shown standing, she no longer serves as a throne for Jesus, but appears more dominant, not merely as the Theotokos, but as a human mother. In this statue, Mary and Jesus are depicted with natural behavior through their interactions and appear full of life and emotion. They play with an apple, perhaps an allusion to original sin. Another ivory statue from the same period, Virgin and Child from Saint-Denis, also emphasizes their humanity. From the Byzantine period comes the image of the Virgin on a throne, widely used throughout the medieval and Renaissance periods. These representations of the Madonna and Child often took the form of large altarpieces. They also appeared as frescoes or apse mosaics. In medieval depictions, the Madonna is often accompanied by angels holding up the throne or surrounded by rows of saints. In Renaissance painting, especially in the most recognized works, saints are often grouped informally in a composition known as Sacra conversazione.

The humble, pious Madonna is sometimes depicted with Christ in her lap. This style emerged from Franciscan piety and is likely attributed to Simone Martini[22]. It quickly spread through Italy, and by 1375, to Spain, France, and Germany. This portrait style became popular in the early Renaissance.

Andrea Pisano's Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino, 1340), carved in marble and housed at the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence, was originally installed on the exterior of the bell tower next to Florence Cathedral. The sculpture captures a dynamic interaction between Mary and Jesus – while Mary tickles her child, he smiles and tries to push her hand away. The image illustrates the heightened realism of Tuscan art during a period when modern family values and the importance of children were being addressed seriously for the first time.

The work attributed to the Master of Sant'Anastasia (Crocifissione, c. 1330, carved in stone) stands out through the large heads and expressive hands that emphasize the characters' gestures. Standing beside Jesus, St. John grimaces in pain, while Mary raises her clasped hands in a pleading gesture. Christ turns his head toward Mary, his mouth open in suffering, as if crying out to his mother[23].

[22] Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, Ed. Lund Humphries, New York, p. 112.
[23] J. M. Greenstein, *The creation of Eve and Renaissance realism. Visual theology and artistic invention*, Cambridge University Press, San Diego California, 2015.

Fig. 26: Andrea Pisano, *Madonna and Child*

Fig. 27: Maestro di Sant'Anastasia, *Crucifixion*

Tino di Camaino, in his work Madonna and Child/ Throne of Wisdom (Madonna Sedes Sapientiae, c. 1318–19, marble), presents the seated Virgin on a throne, herself a support for Christ, rendered in a monumental form. The inscription above, Sedes Sapientiae ("Seat of Wisdom"), refers both to her support of Jesus and to His divine wisdom in human form. Crowned and seated on her own throne, Mary also holds a book on her lap, referring to the idea that Christ is the Word of God[24].

Despite the innovations brought by the painters who portrayed the Virgin in the 13th and 14th centuries, she can still be recognized by her clothing. Typically, when portrayed as the mother of the newborn, she wears a blue mantle over a red garment. This mantle usually covers her head, replacing the sheer silk veil. Mary holds Jesus, who shares her halo and regal appearance. Often, the Virgin's gaze is directed toward the viewer, acting as a mediator for prayers flowing from the believer to her, and then to her son. However, medieval Italian artists also followed the traditions of Byzantine icon painting, developing their own methods of illustration.

Fig. 28: Tino di Camaino, *Madonna and Child*

Fig. 29: Cosmè Tura, *Madonna and Child*

[24] Liana Castelfranchi Vegas, Alessandro Conti, *L'arte medievale in Italia e nell'Occidente europeo*, Jaca Book, 1993, p. 83.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, Italian painters expanded their repertoire to include historical events, independent portraits, and mythological subjects, while Christian imagery remained dominant. Most artworks of the period were sacred. While religious themes often included Old Testament subjects and images of saints, the Madonna remained a central figure in Renaissance iconography.

Cosmè Tura's work Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino, c. 1460–70, Grimaldi Fava terracotta collection) is executed in relief, emphasizing the head and hands of Mary and the sleeping Christ Child. Tura developed a highly personal style, exaggerating proportions for expressive effect. Mary's wide forehead and elongated praying hands convey spiritual intensity. The sculpture may have been a preparatory study for a painting or a later conceptualization of the subject in a new medium.

Benedetto da Maiano from Florence created Madonna and Child Giving a Blessing (Madonna col Bambino Benedicente, c. 1480, polychrome terracotta collection – Grimaldi Fava). This original relief panel was made for a noble family, with symbols referencing devotional practices. The Latin inscription on the Virgin's open book, Magnificat anima mea Dominum ("My soul magnifies the Lord"[25]), is a verse from the Bible often recited during evening prayers. The Virgin's sleeve is adorned with a star, highlighting one of her honorary titles, Stella Maris ("Star of the Sea"). Christ's right hand, now missing, was originally raised in a gesture of blessing.

Fig. 30: Benedetto da Maiano, *Madonna dell'Olivo*

Fig. 31: Luca della Robbia, *Madonna in the Garden of Roses*

[25] Benedetto da Maiano, Bernardo di Stefano Rosselli, Madonna and Child Giving Blessing (Madonna col Bambino Benedicente), terracotta; Grimaldi Fava Collection, https://issuu.com/piccoligrandimusei/.../castelfiorentino_pp2, 19.03.2020.

Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), also known as Madonna in the Garden of Roses (Madonna del Roseto, c. 1450–60), by Luca della Robbia, is made of glazed terracotta and held at the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence. Artists often depicted Mary and Jesus among flowers and gardens to emphasize that Jesus took His earthly nature from His mother, like a flower growing from the soil. Jesus is shown reaching for a white rose, a common symbol of the Virgin Mary's purity. Della Robbia was best known for innovations in glazed terracotta, a technique where molded clay is covered with colored glazes, creating a durable surface that enhances modeled detail.

In many depictions of the Virgin with the Christ Child, artists allude to her fears regarding His future. In representations of the Crucifixion where Mary directly witnesses the suffering and death of her son, sorrow often becomes a central theme. The Virgin's presence emphasizes her psychological involvement in her son's drama, from birth to death. In Sandro Botticelli's Madonna and Child (Madonna col Bambino), also called Madonna of the Book (Madonna del Libro, 1480–81, Poldi Pezzoli Museum, Milan), the Madonna is shown reading a prayer book. Jesus is positioned between her and the book, symbolizing in Christian belief that Christ is the Word of God. The mother's expression is melancholic, suggesting she knows Christ's destiny. The nails and crown of thorns held by Jesus (probably added later by another artist) reinforce the idea that Mary foresaw her son's future and the events leading to His crucifixion.

In biblical and apocryphal narratives, Mary's words and actions express humility, foresight, and understanding. Artists have also used her image to allude to broader concepts that define Christian faith. The Virgin Mary represents the Church in her role as caretaker of the faithful, serving as an emblem of total devotion.

Fig. 32: Agostino di Duccio, *Madonna and Child*

Fig. 33: Michelangelo, *Madonna of Bruges*

A serene depiction of the Madonna appears in Agostino di Duccio's work, likely created around 1481, in which the Madonna and Child are surrounded by four angels, also known as the Madonna d'Auvillers. At the top of her forehead, the artist added the unusual detail of a medallion bearing the face of a cherub. Mary was the first human being privileged with the knowledge of the Savior's identity, and the divine source of this knowledge is symbolized by the angelic face adorning her head. Michelangelo's Madonna of Bruges differs significantly from previous representations of this subject, which typically depicted the Virgin as humble and devoted. In Michelangelo's sculpture, Mary is portrayed with less warmth or emotional engagement with the child, who pulls away from her, prefiguring the tragedy of His future. This tragic dimension finds further expression in Michelangelo's iconic Renaissance sculpture Pietà, housed in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. The Virgin Mary cradles the body of Christ after the crucifixion – a theme of Northern origin popular in France at the time, but not yet common in Italy. One of the most enigmatic representations of the woman figure appears in Édouard Manet's painting A Bar at the Folies-Bergère (1881–82), a work that has sparked much speculation. Many believe the woman is a courtesan, given the absence of gloves, which would have indicated respectable social status. Others, however, interpret the barmaid as a secular Madonna[26], due to the position of her hands turned outward – echoing poses from many contemporary depictions of the Virgin Mary. Regardless of the painting's deeper meaning, it is undoubtedly a commentary on society and the rapidly evolving roles of women in newly industrialized Paris.

According to Gilbert Durand, the imaginary is a "path through which the representation of an object is assimilated and shaped by the subjective impulses of the individual; reciprocally, subjective representations are explained through the subject's previous adaptations to the objective environment." The imaginary can thus be both product and process: it is the outcome of the conflict between objective and subjective and a process that involves assimilation, shaping, and adaptation[27].

Reflecting on artistic imagination, philosopher Jean-Jacques Wunenburger states that "art thus testifies to a universal human need to fabricate images and provide a corporeal support to visual and textual imagination"[28].

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[26] "The Bar at the Folies-Bergeres de Edouard Manet", Sunday Telegraph "In The Picture", The Courtauld Institute Galleries, 2002, https://www.andrewgrahamdixon.com/archive/itp-141-the-bar-at-the-folies-bergeres-by-edouard-manet.html, 19.03.2020.

[27] G. Durand, *Structurile antropologice ale imaginarului/ Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary*, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, București, 1998, p.15.

[28] Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, *Imaginarul/ L'imaginaire*, Editura Dacia, București, 2009, p.38.

E.H. Gombrich asserts that "every image implies the association of a concept and a sign, and it is not correct to isolate the sign and then the concept because, reduced to a sign, the image no longer signifies anything"[29]. The sign-symbol image is what gives meaning, message, and consistency to visual language, as it is an iconic sign. This icon exists only in the presence of its model or imaginative archetype. The explanatory approach to this idea can be realized both through decoding symbolic reading mechanisms of the visual artistic image and through a semiotic analysis of the visual language within the structure of the artwork.

Lorenzo the Magnificent described the ideal beauty of the Italian Renaissance woman as someone "of an attractive and ideal height; with fair skin, but not pale; fresh, but not radiant; grave in demeanor, but not proud; sweet and pleasant, without frivolity or fear. Her eyes are lively and her gaze free of pride or malice; her body is well proportioned, so that, among other women, she appears noble… in walking and dancing… and in all her movements, elegant and charming; her hands are the most beautiful that Nature could have created"[30].

However, when it comes to the representation of women, they had multiple roles: artworks featuring female portraits depicted them either as models of ideal beauty, as commemorative figures, or in recognition of donations made.

In the case of commemorative portraits, noble origin and wealth were of great importance and needed to be communicated visually – often posthumously. Women are also depicted in religious paintings as donors, such as in the work of Flemish artist Hugo van der Goes, The Portinari Altarpiece, created for the church of Santa Maria Nuova Hospital in Florence, which includes the portrait of the commissioner, Maria di Francesco Baroncelli, and her daughter[31]. When it comes to idealized portraits, works by the brothers Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo titled Portrait of a Lady depict three different faces, but the images do not differ substantially. They preserve equal proportions and perfect symmetry – attributes of beauty such as blond hair, high forehead, rosy lips, and fair complexion.

[29] E. H. Gombrich, *Artă şi iluzie/ Art and Illusion*, Editura Meridiane, Bucureşti,1986, p. 84.
[30] *Ibidem*.
[31] Hugo van der Goes and the Portinari Altarpiece, http://arthistoryblogger.blogspot.com/2011/07/hugo-van-der-goes-and-portinari.html, 19.02.2020.

Fig. 34: Hugo van der Goes, detail from *Portinari Altarpiece*

During the Italian Renaissance, especially the Quattrocento, women were often portrayed in profile – a format Leonardo da Vinci addressed as follows: "How to draw a profile portrait after seeing the subject only once: one must commit to memory the variations of the four different traits in the profile, namely the nose, mouth, chin, and forehead"[32]. Regarding the preference for the profile pose, theorists explain that this type of flat representation was intended to illustrate chastity and modesty, as the lack of eye contact or frontal gaze signaled a rejection of possible seduction[33].

Fig. 35: Fra Filippo Lippi, *Portrait of a Woman and a Man at a Casement*

Fig. 36: Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi, *Venus Caritas*

[32] The Metropolitan Museum of Art, https://jpsleesketchbook.weebly.com/field-trip-3.html, 19.03.2020.

[33] Patricia Simons, "Women in Frames, the Gaze, the Eye, the Profile in Renaissance Portraiture", History Workshop Journal, 1988, p. 12, 20.03.2020.

In couple portraits, one of the best-known examples is by Fra Filippo Lippi, Portrait of a Woman and a Man at a Casement – the earliest surviving double portrait of the Early Renaissance, the first known portrait of a woman in a hypothetical interior, and the first to include a landscape in the background. A coat of arms is visible in the painting, and the woman wears jewelry and garments belonging to noble families. On the sleeve of her dress is a motto, according to art historians[34], "lealtà" (loyalty), embroidered in gold thread and pearls. The work was probably made to commemorate the marriage of Lorenzo di Ranieri Scolari and Angiola di Bernardo Sapiti. Classical sculptures from Antiquity were considered the most beautiful representations of the female form and served as prototypes for the ideal. By the late 16th century, Peter Paul Rubens – the leading painter of the Baroque – became famous across Europe for his religious altarpieces and grand mythological scenes. Today, however, the master is best known for his preference for full-figured, voluptuous bodies, so much so that we now refer to such body types as "Rubenesque." Venetian painters found new ways of depicting Venus, often reclining nude in a landscape or domestic setting. Although reflecting the proportions of classical statuary, The Venus of Urbino (1538, Uffizi Gallery, Florence) emphasizes the sensual warmth of the female body rather than its ideal geometry. The small bronze sculptures made by Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi – nicknamed L'Antico by his contemporaries – were a delight for collectors. "Antico was the first sculptor to realize the commercial advantages of producing identical replicas of his compositions… He created an original wax model around an iron armature… The wax could be poured or packed into the resulting mold cavity to make the casting model – often in separate components (e.g., head, torso, limbs). Despite the commercial potential of this casting approach, Antico did not use it on a large scale"[35].

The magnificent and complex sculpture by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa (1647–1652), illustrates a blend of the sacred and the profane. Commissioned in 1644 by Cardinal Federico Cornaro as a funerary chapel for his family, the artist had complete freedom to imagine and describe in stone the sublime ecstasy felt by Saint Teresa of Ávila upon experiencing divine love. The swirling movement of her garments reflects the saint's restless state, her entire body in a state of tension. This combination of mysticism and sensuality is striking – and remains controversial to this day.

[34] Keith Christiansen, Stefan Weppelmann, Patricia Lee Rubin, "Understanding Renaissance Portraiture", in The Renaissance Portrait: From Donatello to Bellini, 2-25. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011, https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/354/oa_edited_volume/chapter/2778920, 29.02.2020.
[35] C. Avery, 'Antico' in J. Turner (ed.), *The Dictionary of Art*, Macmillan Publishers, Londra, 1996, Vol. 2, pp. 139-142.

Francesco Laurana was an itinerant artist who worked in Italy and southern France (Provence), an enigmatic figure whose body of work includes a series of idealized female portrait busts considered among the most sublime sculptures of the 15th century. His Bust of Eleanor of Aragon depicts the wife of William II Peralta, Lord of Sciacca and Count of Caltabellotta, who died in 1406. The posthumous portrait of Eleanor was idealized into a model of formal perfection that served as a benchmark for developing a feminine beauty standard in painting, embodying spiritual balance and ethical virtues.

Fig. 37: Bernini, *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*

Fig. 38: Francesco Laurana, *Bust of Eleanor of Aragon*

A particularly remarkable work by Rubens is a Portrait of the Family of Jan Brueghel the Elder (1613–15), notable not only for the intimacy of the scene – Brueghel was a close friend and collaborator – but also because it presents a previously unseen approach to the family portrait. While group portraits were common at the time, the master's composition is unusual in how it centers the woman, who lovingly embraces her children in a protective and dominant gesture, while the male figure, Brueghel, is compressed into the edge of the frame. There's a practical explanation for this atypical dynamic – possibly the husband was added later. The position of the woman is unusual for the patriarchal family portraits typically commissioned in the Netherlands at that time. This image would later inspire Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works – for instance, Auguste Renoir's La Loge (1874), where the man is hidden in the background, in the shadows.

As far as the archetype is concerned, in 16th-century painting, in the works of Quentin Massys, we find the archetype of the "Holy Virgin." This is not the earliest example of a female saint, but the painting contains several visual elements indicating that the Virgin Mary wears a blue garment, symbolizing her elevated status in society (lapis lazuli was an expensive mineral sourced from Afghanistan at the time), embroidered with gold thread,

giving the impression that she belongs more to the social elite than to a religious painting. Like most saints, Massys's virgin has an essential attribute: she holds the infant Jesus in her arms, indicating her sacred character, accompanied by three cherub-like angels. Given that the work was likely commissioned by a noble family and not intended for a religious space, it shows that this character's projection represented the ideal of womanhood as motherhood – a positive female representation with well-defined attributes in a domestic, intimate, and protective setting. However, not all representations of women have been "positive." There are depictions of beings that oscillate between the grotesque and the sublime, between seduction and threat[36]. One such example is found in Goya's work Song and Dance (Cantar y Bailar, 1819–20), in which an elderly woman holds a guitar and opens her mouth to sing, appearing to float. Below her is a figure perceived as a witch due to the bowl and spoon with which she seems to be stirring a potion. Drawing on stereotypes of good and evil, we notice in Goya's painting two ways of illustrating evil. The archetype of the demon is an ambivalent concept – ranging from the belief in its nonexistence (as a fantastic embodiment) to its ubiquity and reality. Demonological obsession also took hold of the collective imagination in the 14th century, manifesting as anxiety intensified by the aggressive realism of sermons and artistic depictions. The traditional bestiary was expanded by scholarly texts from which terrifying images emerged – monstrous humans and hybrid creatures. The demon became a being capable of taking on any living form and gradually appeared in all representations in humanized form, diminishing the fear it may once have inspired.

Fig. 39: Goya, *Song and Dance*

Fig. 40: David d'Angers, *Mary Robinson*

[36] Lorenzo Lorenzi, *Witches: Exploring the Iconography of the Sorceress and Enchantress*, Antique Collecto, SUA, 2005, p.118.

David d'Angers was the most innovative and influential portrait sculptor of the Romantic period. His early works, such as the bust of Mary Robinson, reflect the influence of neoclassical trends. Mary Robinson is depicted with striking simplicity and a focus on geometric abstraction. Her features and bow-shaped lips are precisely rendered. Her hair is styled in two large curls, an elaborately stylized coiffure. The geometric purity of the portrait is emphasized by the complete absence of decorative elements such as clothing, jewelry, or hair accessories.

Conclusions

Each archetype – whether inspired by the Holy Scriptures or by the realities of the time – be it the saint, the mother, the sensual woman, the witch, etc., has been historically classified or placed within the category of either "good" or "evil." This has led to a simplistic division of certain archetypes, which, as we have shown, are deeply rooted in the history of humanity. The examples provided here will serve as support material for the periods that will be discussed further, up to the present day.

The role and status of women in society developed significantly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. With the onset of industrial and technological revolutions, women's independence grew increasingly widespread, and as more and more middle- and upper-class women gained personal incomes that allowed them to acquire or commission artworks, artists began to depict them in idealized, feminine, and seductive forms, often nude.

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