



EARTH  
AND  
REVERIES OF REPOSE

An Essay On Images of Interiority

Gaston Bachelard

translated from the French and annotated by **Mary McAllester Jones**

Series Overview by **Joanne H. Stroud**

## Earth and Reveries of Repose

*The Bachelard Translation Series*

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EARTH AND REVERIES OF WILL: AN ESSAY ON THE IMAGINATION OF MATTER

AIR AND DREAMS: AN ESSAY ON THE IMAGINATION OF MOVEMENT

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WATER AND DREAMS: AN ESSAY ON THE IMAGINATION OF MATTER

EARTH AND REVERIES OF REPOSE: AN ESSAY ON IMAGES OF INTERIORITY

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THE BACHELARD TRANSLATIONS  
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# PART I

## Chapter I

### Reveries of Material Interiority

You wish to know what is going on inside things and yet you are content to view them from outside; you wish to savor the pith but stick at the bark.

FRANZ VON BAADER

I wish I were like a spider that draws all the threads of its work from within its belly. Bees I loathe and honey is for me the product of theft.

GIOVANNI PAPINI,  
*Un Homme fini*

## I

IN HANS CAROSSA'S *Les Secrets de la maturité*, he writes that "Human beings are the only creatures upon earth with the will to look inside another creature."<sup>1</sup> The will to look inside things makes vision *piercing* and *penetrating*. It turns vision into an act of violence. It detects the crevices, clefts, and cracks through which we can *violate the secret of hidden things*. This will to look inside things, to look at what we cannot see, at what we *ought* not see, gives rise to strange *tense reveries*, *reveries* that lead to furrowed brows. This is no passive curiosity that waits about for surprising sights to come along; rather, it is aggressive curiosity, curiosity that *inspects*, in the etymological sense of the word. This is the curiosity of children who break their toys in order to see what is inside.

1. Hans Carossa (1878-1956), *Les Secrets de la maturité, extrait du journal d'Angermann*, trans. D. Decourdemanche (Paris: Stock, Delamain et Boutelleau, 1941), 104.



Incidentally, if this breaking and entering kind of curiosity is in truth natural to humankind, is it not surprising that we do not give children *toys with depth*, toys that really reward deep curiosity? Having put bran inside their Mr. Punch, we are surprised that children, in their will to anatomy, do no more than rip the puppet's clothes. We regard this as simply the need to break and destroy; we forget that the psychological forces in action here are aiming to get away from all that is external in order to see *something else*, to see beyond and within, **to escape, in short, the passivity of vision**. As Françoise Dolto has pointed out to me, celluloid toys – which are *superficial* toys, toys with a misleading weight – probably deprive children of many psychologically useful dreams. As a psychoanalyst and an expert on children, she has in fact recommended solid, heavy toys for those children who are driven by curiosity and eager to explore reality. A toy with an internal structure would provide a normal outlet for inquisitive eyes, for the will to look that needs an object's *depths*. Yet what upbringing fails to do, imagination will always manage to accomplish. Beyond the panorama viewed by tranquil eyes, the will to look combines with an inventive imagination that envisages a perspective of the hidden, a perspective of the interior darkness of matter. **It is this will to see inside all things that gives so many values to the material images of substance.**

In posing the problem of substance in terms of *material images*, I have been struck by the fact that despite their great number and variability, and despite their considerable and frequent confusion, these images can quite easily be classified as different types of *perspectives of the hidden*. What is more, these different types allow us to specify certain emotional nuances of curiosity. And perhaps by classifying objective images, we may subsequently find not just interesting ways of studying subjective interiority but also interesting approaches to the study of depth psychology. To take an example, the category of extraverts would itself need to be divided up in accordance with the degree of depth at which a particular extravert's interests are active. Those who dream of degrees of depth within things will end by determining different degrees of depth within themselves. **Every theory of images is mirrored by a psychology of the person imagining.**

I shall briefly put forward four different perspectives: **first, a perspective that is nullified; second, a dialectical perspective; third, a perspective filled with wonder; fourth, a perspective of infinite substantial intensity.**

## II

I shall first of all discuss that flat refusal – philosophical and dogmatic as it very much is – which brings to an abrupt halt all movements of curiosity that would go to the interior of things. This is what I mean by a perspective that is nullified, and I deal with it here so as to present all aspects of these images and their interplay. For this kind of philosopher, depth within things is an illusion. The veil of Maya and the veil of Isis too cover the whole universe: the universe is a veil. Human thought, human dreams, and human sight can never have anything other than superficial images of things, never anything other than the external form of objects. While human beings can indeed dig down deep into rock, all they will ever find is rock. And while French-speakers may have fun with grammatical gender here – the hard rock we dig into being masculine (*le rocher*), the rock we excavate within it being feminine (*la roche*) – such changes of gender, extraordinary as they in fact are, do not bother these philosophers. Depth is for them an illusion, and curiosity an irrational quirk. How contemptuously do philosophers of this kind disregard childhood dreams, the dreams that never grow up despite all the efforts of our upbringing, thus condemning human beings to remain, as they put it, “on the phenomenal plane.” And having forbidden us to think the “thing in itself” in any shape or form (we go on thinking of it, however), philosophers will often add the aphorism “Everything is but appearance.” It is pointless to go and have a look, and even more pointless to imagine.

How can this ocular skepticism find so many proponents and prophets when the world is so very beautiful, so deeply and profoundly beautiful, so beautiful in its depths and all its matter? How can we not see that nature has depth? How indeed can we miss the dialectic of that ambiguous coquetry in so many living organisms, revealing and concealing in such a way that the organism lives according to a rhythm of disguise and display? Hiding is a primary function of life, a necessity bound up with its economy, that is to say with the laying-down of reserves. And since interiority so obviously exercises the function of darkness, we should give equal importance to what brings to light and what casts into darkness when we are classifying dreams of interiority.

Indeed, philosophers’ proscriptions do not bring the science of matter to a halt, though this is not the subject of my present work. The science of matter quietly gets on with what one might call a *depth chemistry*, studying not just reactions between homogeneous substances but the molecules beneath those substances, and not just the molecules but the atoms within them, and

then the nuclei within those atoms. Philosophers make no effort to go where this takes them, that is to say to go along with this perspective of depth. They believe they can save their absolute phenomenalism by raising the objection that all these “rational entities” (which are moreover pretty amenable to images) can only be known experimentally by means of phenomena on a human scale. Since the development of philosophical thought has led to the notion of the noumenon being discredited, philosophers close their eyes to the amazing constitution of a *noumenal* chemistry which, in the twentieth century, represents a major systematics of the organization of matter.

Modern philosophy’s lack of affinity with the science of matter is moreover just another aspect of the negativism of philosophical method. By adopting *one* method, philosophers reject the rest. By learning from one kind of experience, philosophers render themselves inert with regard to experience of other kinds. And sometimes very lucid minds shut themselves away like this in their lucidity, denying all the light – and all the enlightenment – which comes from darker areas of our psyche. Thus, where the problem under discussion is concerned, a theory of the knowledge of reality that takes no interest in oneiric values can indeed be felt to cut itself off from some of the interests that encourage the attainment of knowledge. I shall be dealing with this problem in another book.

For now, let us be aware that all knowledge of the interiority of things is immediately a poem. As Francis Ponge has clearly shown in the following lines, when we work oneirically within things, we go to the dreaming root of words:

I propose that everyone should open up interior trap doors, journey into the depths of things, and let qualities invade. I thus propose to everyone a revolution, a subversion comparable to that by spade and plow when suddenly and for the very first time they bring to light millions of tiny fragments and mineral grains, of roots and worms and little creatures that lay buried until then. Infinite indeed are the resources of the depths of things, resources rendered by the infinite resources of the semantic depths of words.

Words and things seem therefore to acquire depth together. We go at one and the same time to the principle of words and of things. Hidden, fleeting beings forget to flee when poets call them by their real names. How many dreams there are in these lines by Richard Euringer:

Then like a sounding lead I go deep into the heart of things,  
 I seize the golden cup, I infuse names into them and so conjure them  
 That confounded, they forget to flee.<sup>2</sup>

Let us simply try here to relive the dreaming forms of those movements of curiosity that would go to the interior of things. As the poet Paul Éluard puts it:

Together, let us open the last bud of the future.<sup>3</sup>

### III

Let us therefore pay no further heed to the abstract objections of philosophers and go instead with poets and dreamers to the interior of a few objects. This brings us to my second point, that is to say to a dialectical perspective.

How ample interior space is once we have gone beyond external limits; how restful too is the atmosphere within! Here, for example, is a piece of advice given by Henri Michaux in “Magie”: “I place an apple on my table. I then place myself inside this apple. What tranquillity is here!”<sup>4</sup> This is so rapid a movement that some will be tempted to find it either childish or purely verbal.<sup>5</sup> Yet a judgement in these terms constitutes a refusal to participate in one of the most normal and regular functions of the imagination, that is to say the function of miniaturization. All dreamers can, if they so wish, go and dwell in miniature within the apple. It is a postulate of the imagination that the things we dream never keep their dimensions and are not stabilized in any dimension. And reveries that are truly possessive, that give the object to us, are Lilliputian reveries. It is reveries that give us all the treasures of the interiority of things. A dialectical perspective does indeed open before us here, an inverted perspective that can be expressed in this paradoxical phrase: the interior of a small object is big. As Max Jacob has put it, “The miniscule is the enormous!”<sup>6</sup> To be sure of this, all we need do

2. Richard Euringer (1891-1953), in René Lasne and Georg Rabuse, *Anthologie de la poésie allemande*, 2 vols. (Paris: Stock, Delamain et Boutelleau, 1943), II, 216.

3. Paul Éluard (1895-1952), cited by Léon-Gabriel Gros (1905-1985), *Présentation de poètes contemporains*, 2 vols. (Marseilles: Les Cahiers du Sud, 1944), I, 44.

4. Henri Michaux (1899-1984), “Magie,” in *Plume, précédé de Lointain intérieur* (1938, 1963), *Entre Centre et Absence* (1936), *Oeuvres complètes*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), I, 559.

5. Flaubert went more slowly but said the same thing: “By dint of looking at a pebble, an animal, or a picture, I felt myself go into it.”

6. Max Jacob (1876-1944), *Le Cornet à dés* (Paris: Stock, 1945), 25.

is go and dwell there in our imagination. One of psychotherapist Robert Desoille's patients said, when gazing upon the unique light of a precious stone, "My eyes are lost there. It is immense and yet so small: just a dot."<sup>7</sup>

The moment we go and dream or think in the world of the very small, everything grows big. The phenomena of the infinitely small take a cosmic turn. Go and read Hauksbee's work on electricity, with its descriptions of flashes and crackles, discharges and bangs. Indeed, in 1708, Dr. Wall is still happy to write after rubbing a diamond that "the light and the crackling here seem in some way to represent thunder and lightning." Thus, we see a theory of the *miniscule meteor* developing, which is pretty clear evidence of the power of imaginary analogies. The forces within the infinitely small are always dreamed as cataclysms.

Reversing as it does the relationship of big and small, this dialectic can also operate at a playful level. In Swift's two contrasting voyages to Lilliput and to Brobdingnag, the author was really only trying to catch the tone of an amusing fantasy which also had a satirical edge. Swift did not get beyond the model of a conjuror pulling a large rabbit out of a small hat or, as Lautréamont did, extracting a sewing machine from a box of surgical instruments, just to amaze those of a conventional disposition. All these literary games will have much more value, though, if they are played with the sincerity of oneiric experiences. We shall then *visit* – in the fullest sense – *all* objects. We shall follow the Crumb Fairy and step into her pea-sized coach with all the formality of olden times, or with just a simple greeting and no fuss, walk inside an apple. A universe of innermost interiority will be revealed to us. We shall see the other side of everything; we shall see the deep and inward immensity of small things.

Paradoxically, dreamers can go inside themselves. One of Rouhier's subjects said, when under the influence of the miniaturizing drug mescaline, "I'm inside my mouth and looking at my bedroom through my cheek." Hallucinations like this can be expressed in words because this is the effect that drugs have. Such hallucinations are not, however, rare in normal dreams. There are nights when we *withdraw* inside ourselves, when we go and visit our organs.

This oneiric life of interiority, of the innermost interiority we go into in detail, seems to me very different from the traditional intuition of those philosophers who assert that the being they contemplate is always lived by them *from the inside*. This wholesale adherence to *living from the inside* is

7. Robert Desoille (1890-1966), *Le Rêve éveillé en psychothérapie, essai sur la fonction de régulation de l'inconscient collectif* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1945), 17.

in fact an immediate move to the unity of the invaded being. Let us consider philosophers as they give themselves up to this intuition: they half-close their eyes in an attitude of concentration. The idea of delighting and reveling in their new abode does not cross their minds, and because of this, confidences about these inner objective lives – these inner lives of objects – never go very far. Oneiric powers are, on the contrary, much more diverse. They go into a walnut’s every wrinkle, becoming familiar with the oiliness of its two halves and with all the masochism of the interior prickles on the shell’s underside. The walnut inflicts harm on itself, as all gentle beings do. It was surely from a pain of this kind that Kafka suffered, through his absolute affinity with his images: “I am thinking of those nights,” he wrote, “at the end of which, having come out of sleep, I awakened with the sensation that I had been shut up inside a walnut shell.”<sup>8</sup> Yet this suffering of a being that is crushed and bruised deep within, tightly held in its innermost interiority, is an exceptional notation. Admiration for concentrated being can heal everything. In Spitteler’s *Prométhée et Épiméthée*, the goddess stands beneath the walnut tree’s canopy and asks “What jewel, pray, are you hiding under your roof? To what magical walnut have you given birth?”<sup>9</sup> And of course, evil lies hidden just as good does: wizards often put the devil inside the walnuts they give children.

The same image of interiority can be found in Shakespeare. Rosencrantz comments thus on Hamlet’s view of Denmark as a prison:

Why, then your ambition makes it one; ’tis too narrow for your mind.

And Hamlet responds to him as follows:

O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.<sup>10</sup>

If we agree to attribute primary reality to images and not limit them to being mere expressions, we shall suddenly become aware that the nut’s interior conveys the value of an early happiness. We would live in it contentedly if early dreams of happiness, of well-guarded interiority, could be found there.

8. Franz Kafka (1883-1924), “Journal intime,” *Fontaine*, May 1945, 192.

9. Carl Spitteler (1845-1924), *Prométhée et Épiméthée*, trans. Charles Baudouin (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1940).

10. William Shakespeare (1564-1616), *Hamlet*, Act II, scene 2, lines 251-255.

Happiness is no doubt expansive and needs expansion. Yet it also needs concentration and interiority. Consequently, when happiness has been lost and life has given us “bad dreams,” we feel nostalgia for the deep interiority of lost happiness. The first reveries that are attached to an object’s innermost image are reveries of happiness. Whenever the interiority of an object is explored in a natural reverie, it is a *germ of happiness*.

It is great happiness because it is happiness that lies *hidden*. An inside is always defended by a sense of decency, of modesty. Pierre Guéguen expresses this particular nuance with great subtlety in his work *Arc-en-ciel sur la Domnonée*, where a woman shares the closet’s modesty. “She dashed forward,” he writes, “when Hervé opened both doors of the closet where, like some secret anatomy, her shifts and petticoats and all her underlinen were neatly piled, and as sincerely distressed as if she had been caught naked, she drew together the folds of this wooden cloak.”<sup>11</sup>

For both good and ill however, the interior of things – a child’s version of an interior, in a way – is always neat and tidy. When the grandfather in Émile Clermont’s novel *Laure* opens flower-buds with his penknife for the amusement of Laure, his granddaughter, what greets the eyes of the enraptured child is the inside of a tidy *closet*.<sup>12</sup> This image – a child’s image – expresses in fact one of the unfailing joys botanists experience. Étienne Geoffroy writes in his *Matière médicale* that “We know and cannot consider without pleasure the ingenuity with which the offspring of plants, furnished with their leaves, their flowers, and their fruits, are arranged in the buds.”<sup>13</sup> Need we emphasize that the pleasure of contemplating this interior has greatly enlarged it? If we see leaf, flower, and fruit within the bud, this means that we are seeing with the eyes of our imagination.<sup>14</sup> It seems that here the imagination is a wild hope of unbounded seeing. As rational an author as Father Vanière writes: “Were men skillful enough, after breaking open a grape seed, to separate its slender fibers, they would see and admire the

11. Pierre Guéguen (1889-1965), *Arc-en-ciel sur la Domnonée* (Paris: F. Rieder et Cie, 1925), 40.

12. Émile Clermont (1880-1916), *Laure* (Paris: Grasset, 1913), 28.

13. Étienne-François Geoffroy (1672-1731), *Traité de la matière médicale, ou de l’Histoire des vertus, du choix et de l’usage des remèdes simples*, trans. A. Bergier, 7 vols. (Paris: J. Dessaint et C. Saillant, 1743), I, 93.

14. A poet can misunderstand botany and write a beautiful line:

The flower on the wild rose feels its buds bloom.

See Alfred de Musset (1810-1857), “La Nuit de mai,” line 2.

branches and bunches of fruit lying beneath the thin, delicate skin.”<sup>15</sup> How great a dream it is to read the wine-harvesting future in a hard, dry seed! A scholar who continues this dream will have no difficulty in accepting the thesis of limitless “encasement” in seeds.<sup>16</sup>

For dreamers, it seems that the smaller the being, the more active are its functions. Because they live in a small space, their lives are lived in fast time. We dynamize oneirism by shutting it in. We might even go as far as proposing a Heisenberg’s principle for the oneiric life. Fairies, then, are extraordinary oneiric activities. By taking us to the level of minutely detailed, meticulous action, these activities take us back to the center of intelligent, patient will. This is why Lilliputian reveries are so invigorating and so beneficial. They are the antithesis of those escapist reveries that shatter the soul.

Thus, the meticulous, detailed imagination seeks to slip into everything, inviting us not just to *retire into our shells* but to slip into every shell so that we may live the life of true retirement there – life that is tucked up and curled in on itself – and all the values of repose. This is indeed what Jean-Paul Richter advises: “Go carefully,” he says, “through your life’s surroundings, inspecting every floorboard in your bedchamber and every corner, and curl yourself up so that you may lodge within the innermost, last spiral of your snail shell.”<sup>17</sup> Inhabited objects might bear this sign: “Everything is a shell.” And a dreaming being would echo this: “Everything is a shell for me. I am soft matter that comes to be protected by all hard forms and to delight, within all objects, in the consciousness of being protected.”

Like Jean-Paul Richter, Tristan Tzara hears the call of miniscule space: “Who calls me in the padded hole, the hole with its fabric-seed lining, it is I, the open earth replies, the hardened layers of unbreakable patience, the jaws of the floor.”<sup>18</sup> Rational people, people with their feet firmly *on* the ground, are quick to point out that such images are gratuitous. But just a little bit of miniaturizing imagination will suffice for us to understand that it is the whole

15. Le Père Vanière (1664-1739), *Oeconomie rurale, traduction du poème du P. Vanière intitulé “Praedium rusticum” par M. Berland*, 2 vols. (Paris: chez les frères Estienne, 1756), II, 168.

16. Pierre-Maxime Schuhl studies these reveries and thoughts of “encasement” in an article that only came to my attention when correcting the proofs of this book; see *Journal de psychologie*, no. 2, 1947.

17. Jean-Paul Richter (1763-1825), *La Vie de Fixlein, régent de cinquième*, trans. Pierre Velut (Paris: Aubier, 1943), 230.

18. Tristan Tzara (1896-1963), “Le Nain dans son cornet,” *L’Antitête, Oeuvres complètes*, 5 vols. (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), II, 292.



earth that is opening and offering itself in this miniscule resting-place, between the fine teeth of a line in the floor. Let us therefore accept these changes of scale and say with Tristan Tzara: “I am the millimeter.”<sup>19</sup> Tzara also tells us here that: “Enlarged as they are in childhood’s dream, I look very closely at dry breadcrumbs and dust between the fibers of hard wood in the sun.”<sup>20</sup> The imagination, like mescaline, changes the dimensions of objects.<sup>21</sup>

Countless examples of the proliferation of Lilliputian beauty could be found were we to peruse the scientific works that recount, in terms of exploits, the very first discoveries made with microscopes. It can truly be said that when the microscope appeared on the scene, it was the kaleidoscope of the very small. However, in order to keep myself to literary material here, I shall cite just one passage – taken from Richter – where images of reality are indeed brought to bear on the moral life:

Take a compound microscope and see that your drop of Burgundy is in fact a Red Sea, that a dun-colored butterfly’s wing is a peacock’s plumage, that mold is a field full of flowers and sand a pile of jewels. These amusements that microscopes provide are more lasting than the costliest water features [...] I have thought to explain these metaphors by others. My intention in sending *La Vie de Fixlein* to the Lübeck bookseller and publisher is precisely to show the whole world [...] that more value should be attached to the small pleasures of the senses than to the big ones.<sup>22</sup>

19. Tristan Tzara, “Le Nain dans son cornet,” *L’Antitête*, 292.

20. Tristan Tzara, “La Pétrification du pain,” *L’Antitête*, 308. Alfred Jarry finds the *absolute* expression for Lilliputian hallucinations when writing of a Faustroll smaller than Faustroll: “One day, Dr Faustroll [...] wanted to be smaller than himself and resolved to go and explore one of the elements [...] having reduced himself to the classic size of a mite – as a paradigm of smallness – he journeyed along a cabbage leaf, heedless of his fellow mites and of how enlarged everything was, until he encountered Water.” See Alfred Jarry (1873-1907), “Faustroll plus petit que Faustroll,” *Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien, roman néo-scientifique, Oeuvres complètes*, 3 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), I, 670-671.

21. Francis Ponge also sees “the temple of Angkor” in an oyster shell; see “Notes pour un coquillage,” *Le Parti pris des choses, Oeuvres complètes*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), I, 38.

22. Jean-Paul Richter, *La Vie de Fixlein*, 24.

## IV

After this geometrical contradiction of the small that, deep within, is big, there are many other contradictions to be seen in reveries of interiority. For a certain kind of reverie, it seems that the interior is automatically the reverse of the exterior. Look! How white the pulp is in this dark chestnut! How smooth the ivory that lies beneath this homespun robe! How delightful it is to find with such ease substances that contradict one another, that come together in order to contradict one another! Milosz looks for his dreams' coat of arms and finds:

An ermine nest for the blazon's crow.

These antithetical reveries are, we realize, at work in the "accepted truth" of the Middle Ages that the snow-white swan is entirely black inside. Langlois tells us that this "truth" was accepted for a full millennium.<sup>23</sup> The most cursory of examinations would have proved that a swan's inside is not very different in color from that of a crow. If the intense blackness of the swan is so repeatedly affirmed, despite the facts, this is because it fulfils a law of the dialectical imagination. Images that are primary psychological forces are stronger than ideas, stronger too than real experiences.

In *Plain-Chant*, Jean Cocteau follows the dialectical imagination and writes:

The ink I use here is a swan's blue blood.<sup>24</sup>

On occasion, a poet has such confidence in the reader's dialectical imagination that only the first part of the image is given. Thus, immediately after Tristan Tzara's portrayal of "the swan that gargles its water-white," he simply adds "outside is white."<sup>25</sup> If we read this little phrase purely positively and learn that swans are white, then we have a dreamless reading. A negativist reading, a reading with sufficient liberty to let us revel in the liberties the poet takes, will on the contrary restore us to depth. If "outside is white," it

23. Charles-Victor Langlois (1863-1929), *La Vie en France au moyen-âge du XII<sup>e</sup> au milieu du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 4 vols. (1926-1928), III: "L'Image du Monde," *La Connaissance de la nature et du monde d'après les écrits français à l'usage des laïcs* (Paris: Hachette, 1927), 179.

24. Jean Cocteau (1889-1963), "Plain-Chant" [1923], *Poèmes 1916-1955* (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), 60.

25. Tristan Tzara, *L'Homme approximatif* (Paris: Éd. Fourcade, 1931), 6.

is because this being has put on the outside – has driven out – all the whiteness it had. Negativity evokes the dark.

Alchemy too will often surrender itself to this simple dialectical perspective of inside and outside. It often sets out to turn substances inside out, just as gloves are turned inside out. If you can put the inside on the outside and outside on the inside, says the alchemist, you are a true master.

Often too, alchemists will recommend that the inside of a substance should be washed. This deep-down washing will sometimes require “waters” that are very different from ordinary water. It will have nothing in common with the washing of surfaces. This deep and inward cleanness of substance will not of course be achieved simply by crushing it to a fine powder under running water. Pulverization does not help purification here. Only a universal solvent can achieve this purification of substance. The two themes of turning substances inside out and of purifying them internally are sometimes brought together. Substances are turned inside out in order to cleanse them.

There is thus an abundance of themes that make the interior of substances the opposite of their exterior, and these themes reinforce one another. A dialectic of this kind gives a learned twist to the old saying that what is bitter to the taste is good for the body. Bitter as walnut shells may be, the nut inside is good. Florian wrote a fable about this.

Such inversions of external and internal qualities must not be regarded as outdated reveries. Poets are also beguiled, as the alchemists were, by these deep inversions and when these “turnings inside out” are performed with discrimination, they produce literary images that delight us. Francis Jammes, for instance, gazing at rushing water torn apart by the stones of a mountain stream, thinks he sees “the inside of water”: “Shall I not call this whitening the *inside of water*, of water that is blue-green in repose, the color of a lime tree before it is turned up by the air?”<sup>26</sup> This water with its substance turned inside out will, for dreamers who love water with a *material love*, be the occasion of bitter delights. While they suffer when they see the torn robe beneath the foam’s fringe, they endlessly dream of matter that is never seen. The substance of the water’s reflections is dialectically revealed to them. It seems then that the water has “a water” in the same way that an emerald, with its luster, is said to have “a water.” In his *Voyage aux Pyrénées*, Taine also dreams of innermost depth when gazing at a mountain stream. He sees the river “grow deeper”; he sees “its livid belly.”<sup>27</sup> The vacationing historian does not, however, see in it the image of a turned-up lime tree.

26. Francis Jammes (1868-1938), in *Nouvelle Revue Française*, April 1938, 640.

27. Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893), *Voyage aux Pyrénées* (Paris: Hachette, 1881).

This dialectical perspective of the internal and the external is sometimes the reversible dialectic of a mask that is removed and then replaced. I read these lines of Mallarmé's in two different ways, according to the hour of my reverie:

Beneath its stern silver, a candlestick  
Lets the copper laugh.

First, I read them ironically, hearing the copper laugh at the silver-plating's lies. Second, I read them more gently, without poking fun at a candlestick that has lost its silver but rhythm-analyzing in a better way the pale sternness and robust jollity of these two associated metallic powers.<sup>28</sup>

With these same dialectical impressions in mind, we shall examine in some detail an image from Audiberti, an image whose life stems from the contradiction between a substance and its attribute. In a sonnet of his, Audiberti speaks of "the secret blackness of milk." This pleasing sonority is, oddly enough, not just a verbal joy. For anyone who loves to imagine matter, it is a deep joy. Indeed, we only have to dream a little of this thick, pasty whiteness, of this solid, nourishing whiteness, and we shall feel that the material imagination needs there to be something dark and pasty beneath whiteness. Without it, milk would not have this matte whiteness, this really thick, deep whiteness that is sure of its depth. And without it, this nourishing liquid would not have all these *terrestrial* values. It is this desire to see the other side of whiteness beneath whiteness that leads the imagination to darken certain blue reflections passing over the surface of the liquid, and to find its way toward "the secret blackness of milk."<sup>29</sup>

Pierre Guéguen offers a curious variation on this, which can be taken as a prime example of all the many metaphors regarding the secret blackness of white things. He wants to describe water that is very rough with foam and very white with internal movements, water that, like the white horses of Rosmersholm, draws the melancholy to their death, and so writes this: "Curdled milk would taste of ink."<sup>30</sup> There could surely be no better way of

28. Similarly, we would find two ways of drinking wine if we read this line of André Frénaud's dialectically, giving life to the two colors:

The red of heavy blue wines.

For where is the substance: in the red that designates or in the dark interior? See André Frénaud (1907-1993), "14 juillet," *Soleil irréductible* (Paris; Neuchâtel: Ides et Calendes, 1946).

29. Cf. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), *L'Être et le néant. Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), 691.

30. Pierre Guéguen, *Bretagne. Au bout du monde. Types et coutumes* (Paris: Aux Éditions des horizons de France, 1930), 67.

expressing the interior blackness, the innermost sin of a substance that is hypocritically all sweetness and white. What fine fatality of the human imagination leads this modern writer to rediscover the idea of foul astringency so frequent in Jacob Boehme's work? Milky, moonlit water has the interior, innermost blackness of death; balsamic water has an aftertaste of ink, the bitterness of the suicide's chosen draught. Thus, the Breton water that Guéguen describes is like the Gorgons' "black milk" which, in Élémir Bourges's novel *La Nef*, is "iron's seed."<sup>31</sup>

Once the developer, as it were, has been found, pages in half tones can be revealed as singularly deep. With the secret blackness of milk as our developer, let us take for example the passage where Rilke recounts his journey over the hills by night, with young girls, to go and drink goats' milk:

The fair-haired girl brings a stone bowl and places it on the table before us. The milk was black. Everyone is surprised at this but no one dares give word to this discovery. Everyone thinks "well, of course it's night and I've never milked goats at this hour, so the explanation must be that when dusk falls, their milk darkens and at two o'clock in the morning, it is like ink [...]" We all tasted the black milk of this nocturnal goat.<sup>32</sup>

How deftly Rilke prepares this material image of night's milk!

It seems, moreover, that an interior night that guards our personal mysteries is in communication with the night of things. We shall find this correspondence expressed in an article by Joë Bousquet that I shall be studying in a later chapter here. Bousquet writes that "In each of us, mineral night is what intersidereal blackness is in the azure of the sky."<sup>33</sup>

The secret blackness of milk has caught Brice Parain's attention. He sees it, however, as a mere flight of fancy. "I am quite at liberty," he writes, "to speak, against all likelihood, of the 'secret blackness of milk,' and to lie in full knowledge that I am lying; language lends itself, it seems, to my every whim, since it is I who take it where I wish to."<sup>34</sup> An interpretation of this

31. Élémir Bourges (1852-1925), *La Nef* (Paris: Stock, 1922).

32. Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), *Fragments d'un Journal intime*, in *Lettres (1900-1911)*, selected and trans. H. Zylberborg and J. Nougazol (Paris: Stock, 1934), 14.

33. Joë Bousquet (1897-1950), in *Labyrinthe. Journal mensuel des Lettres et des Arts*, no. 22, December 1946, 19ff.

34. Brice Parain (1897-1971), *Recherches sur la nature et les fonctions du langage. L'Embarras du choix* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), 71.

kind does poetic imagination an injustice. It seems that the poet is no more than an illusionist who wants to make sensations lie, who accumulates whims and contradictions at the very heart of the image. Yet the adjective that makes the secret blackness of milk *secret* is in itself enough to indicate a perspective of depth. What is hinted at is by no means always a lie and we must be aware that in contradicting itself, material reverie gives us two truths. Were it a question of a polemic between an *I* and a *Thou*, we might see it as the need to contradict: it only needs one to say *white* for the other to say *black*. But dreams do not argue and poems do not enter into polemics. When the poet tells us milk's *secret*, he is not lying to himself nor is he lying to others. On the contrary, he finds an extraordinary totality here. As Jean-Paul Sartre says, "we have to invent the heart of things if we wish to discover it some day. Audiberti is informing us about milk when he speaks of its 'secret blackness.' For Renard though, milk is irremediably white since 'it is but what it appears to be.'"<sup>35</sup>

It is here that we can grasp the difference between all the dialectics of reason, of the reason that juxtaposes contradictions in order to cover the whole field of the possible, and those of the imagination that wants to take hold of all the real and finds more reality in what is hidden than in what is shown. These dialectics of juxtaposition and of superposition have an inverse movement. In the former, the synthesis serves to reconcile two contradictory appearances. It is the final step. On the contrary, in total imaginary apperception (form and matter), the synthesis comes first: the image that takes the whole of matter is divided in the dialectic of the deep and the apparent. A poet who communicates at once with a deep material image is well aware that an opaque substance is necessary in order to support such delicate whiteness. Brice Parain is right to compare the following statement by Anaxagoras with Audiberti's image: "Snow composed of water is black, despite our eyes."<sup>36</sup> Indeed, what credit would snow deserve for being white were its matter not black? What would its merit be if it did not come from the depths of its dark being and crystallize in its whiteness? The will to be white is not a gift bestowed by a ready-made color that has only to be maintained. The material imagination, which always has a demiurgic tone, wishes to create all white matter from matter that is dark, and wishes to overcome the whole history of blackness. These are phrases that will appear gratuitous

35. Jean-Paul Sartre, "L'Homme ligoté. Notes sur le Journal de Jules Renard," *Situations I. Essais critiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), 306.

36. Brice Parain, *Recherches sur la nature et les fonctions du langage*, 71, footnote 2.

or false to clear thought. But reveries of material interiority do not obey the laws of signifying thought, and it seems that Brice Parain's very interesting theory of language could in a way be augmented by giving a certain depth to the *logos* that proves, a depth in which myths and images can live. In their own way, images too can *prove*. Clear evidence that their dialectic is objective is our own recent observation of an "improbable image" imposing itself on the poetic conviction of the most diverse of writers. Poets have thus, very simply, rediscovered Hegel's law of the "inverted world" which can be expressed as follows: what, by the law of the first world, is white becomes black by the law of the inverted world, with the result that in a first dialectical movement, black is, as Hegel puts it, "the inherent nature of white," that is to say the "in-itself" of white.<sup>37</sup> Let us, though, conclude this section by going back to the poets.

Whenever a poet of substances meditates on a color, black will be that color's substantial solidity, black will be the substantial negation of all that attains the light. We shall never cease dreaming in depth this strange poem by Guillevic:

In the depths of blue, there is yellow,  
And in the depths of yellow, there is black,

Black that stands up  
And looks,

That cannot be knocked down, as a man could be,  
With our fists.<sup>38</sup>

The color black, as Michel Leiris also says, "is by no means the color of emptiness and nothingness but rather the active hue that brings out the deep and therefore dark substance of all things."<sup>39</sup> And if crows are black, this for Leiris is the result of "cadaveric meals"; they are black "like congealed blood or calcined wood." Black feeds all deep colors; it is the inward place wherein all colors dwell. Thus do obstinate dreamers dream their dreams of black.

37. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), *La Phénoménologie de l'Esprit*, trans. Jean Hyppolite, 2 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1939-1941), I, 132-134.

38. Eugène Guillevic (1907-1997), "Exécutoire," *Cahiers du Sud*, no. 280.

39. Michel Leiris (1901-1990), *Aurora, roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), 45.

Great dreamers of black will even wish to discover, as Biely does, “black within blackness,” the piercing black at work beneath blackness that has dulled, the black of substance that produces its abyss-color.<sup>40</sup> In this way, then, a modern poet rediscovers the alchemists’ old reveries of black as they sought the black that was blacker than black, the *Nigrum nigrius nigro*.

D. H. Lawrence finds the depth of certain impressions in similar *objective inversions, inverting* all sensations. Referring to the sun in one of his short novels, he writes that:

It is only his jacket of dust that makes him visible [...] And the true sunbeams coming towards us flow darkly, a moving darkness of the genuine fire. The sun is dark, the sunshine flowing to us is dark. And light is only the inside-turning away of the sun’s directness that was coming to us.<sup>41</sup>

And having given this example, Lawrence goes on to develop his argument in the next few lines:

Well, we’ve got the world inside out. The true living world of fire is dark, throbbing, darker than blood. Our luminous world that we go by is only the reverse of this [...] Now listen. The same with love. This white love that we have is the same. It is only the reverse, the whited sepulchre of the true love. True love is dark, a throbbing together in darkness.

Going deep into an image means engaging the very depths of our being. This is another aspect of the power of those metaphors that work along the very same lines as the first and oldest dreams.

## V

The third perspective of interiority I wish to study is that which reveals to us a wondrous interior, one more richly sculpted and colored than the fairest of flowers. Chip away a rocky matrix, open up a geode, and immediately a crystalline world will be revealed to us; a well-polished section of

40. Andrei Biely [Boris Nikolaevich Bugaev] (1880-1954), “Le Tentateur,” in Emmanuel Rais and Jacques Robert, *Anthologie de la poésie russe, du XVIII<sup>e</sup> à nos jours* (Paris: Bordas, 1947).

41. David Herbert Lawrence (1885-1930), *The Ladybird* [1923], in *The Fox, The Captain’s Doll, The Ladybird*, ed. Dieter Mehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 180.



a crystal shows us flowers, fine tracery, figures. Our dreams are endless here. This interior sculpture, these three-dimensional drawings deep within, these effigies and portraits are like sleeping beauties there. This profound pancalism has given rise to the most diverse explanations which are, in the end, ways of dreaming. Let us study some of these explanations.

Let us follow an observer coming from the external world where he or she has seen flowers, trees, and light. That observer then enters a dark, enclosed world and finds efflorescence, arborescence, and luminescence. All these vague forms prompt him or her to dream, for in these vague forms that seek completion and clarification there lies a sign of dreams. In *Water and Dreams*, I emphasized the aesthetic suggestions dreamers receive from the reflection of a landscape in still water. It seemed to me that this *natural watercolor* offered constant encouragement to dreamers who for their part also wanted to reproduce colors and forms. A landscape reflected in the water of a lake will determine the reverie that precedes artistic creation. A reality that has first been dreamed will be imitated with more soul. An author of times gone by, Pierre-Jean Fabre, who in the seventeenth century wrote one of those alchemical works which were more widely read than the scientific books of the time, will lend support to my argument that oneirism has an aesthetic impetus:

And were these gifts and this learning not (first) in the interior of Nature, art would never of itself known how to invent these forms and figures, and would never have known how to paint a tree or a flower had Nature never done this. We admire and are enraptured when in marbles and jaspers we see men and angels, beasts and buildings, vines and meadows bright with every kind of flower.<sup>42</sup>

This sculpture discovered in the interiority of stone and ore, these natural statues, these natural, inner paintings all represent exterior landscapes and personages “outside their common fabric.” Those who dream the interiority of substances are filled with wonder at these inner, interior works. Pierre-Jean Fabre regards the *crystalline genius* as the most skilled of all engravers, as the most meticulous of all miniaturists: “We see, therefore,” he argues, “that these natural pictures in marbles and jaspers are far more exquisite and more perfect than those that art sets before us, the colors of artifice being never as perfect, as bright and as vivid as those that Nature employs in these natural pictures.”

42. Pierre-Jean Fabre (1588-1658), *Abrégé des secrets chymiques; où l'on voit la nature des animaux végétaux & minéraux entièrement découverte: avec les vertus et propriétés des principes qui composent & conservent leur estre* (Paris: Antoine de Sommaville, 1636).

For us, with our rational way of thinking, drawing is preeminently a human sign: we see the outline of a bison drawn on a cave wall and know at once that a human has been there. **If, though, a dreamer believes that nature is an artist, that it paints and draws, can nature not sculpt a statue in stone just as it molds it in flesh?** The reverie of the interior powers of matter goes as far as this in Fabre's mind:

I have seen in caves and caverns in the earth near Sorège in the Languedoc area, in a cavern commonly called the "Tranc del Caleil," the outlines of the most perfect sculpture and imagery one could wish for; those who are most curious can go there and see them set into and bound to the rock in a myriad figures, which delight the eyes of on-lookers. **No sculptor has ever set foot in it to carve and chisel images there [...] Which must lead us to believe that Nature is endowed with the gifts and wondrous knowledge that her Creator has given her so that she may work in many ways, as she does in all kinds of matter.**<sup>43</sup>

And let it not be thought, Fabre goes on to say, that these are the works of subterranean demons. Belief in gnomes working in their forges is a thing of the past. No indeed, we must face the facts and ascribe aesthetic activity to substances themselves, to the interior powers of matter:

It is subtle, celestial, igneous, and aerial substances dwelling in the general spirit of the world which have the virtue and the power to arrange it in all kinds of figures and forms that matter may wish; (sometimes) outside the class and kind in which the figure is usually found, like that of an ox, or of any other animal figure one might imagine, in marble, stone, and wood; these figures appertain to the natural virtue of the Architectonic spirits that are in Nature.<sup>44</sup>

Fabre then cites the example – an example that I have very often come across when reading alchemical texts – of a fern root which, when cut into the shape of a doe's foot, reproduces the figure of the Roman eagle. The wildest of reveries thus unites fern, eagle, and Roman Empire: though the connection between fern and eagle remains a mystery, their relationship is, for this writer, all the more deep and inward, and he declares that "fern must be of use to the eagles, holding a great secret for their health."<sup>45</sup> As for the

43. Pierre-Jean Fabre, *Abrégé des secrets chymiques*, 305.

44. Pierre-Jean Fabre, *Abrégé des secrets chymiques*, 305.

45. Pierre-Jean Fabre, *Abrégé des secrets chymiques*, 307.

Roman Empire, all is clear: “Fern grows throughout the world,” he writes on the same page, “the arms of the Roman Empire are natural for the whole earth.” The reverie that draws up coats of arms will find in the roughest of sketches the signs it seeks.

If I accept such crazy bits of writing and such immoderate images, I do so because I have found attenuated forms of these unobtrusively present in writers who have quite obviously not been influenced by alchemists’ stories and who have not read the old books of magic spells. Having read the passage about fern in a seventeenth-century writer, it is surely remarkable to see a similar image beguiling a writer as restrained as Hans Carossa. In his novel entitled *Le Docteur Gion*, we find this passage describing the young sculptor Cynthia as she cuts up a tomato: “A fruit of this kind knows a lot about brilliancy of color, she said, and pointing to the cross-section of the white heart surrounded by the pulp’s reddish crystal, she tried to prove that this heart resembled a small ivory angel, a small kneeling angel with pointed wings like a swallow’s.”<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, we find this passage in Strindberg’s *Inferno*:

For four days I had been allowing a walnut to germinate, and I had then detached the embryo. Shaped like a heart, and no bigger than a pear pip, it lies between the two seed-lobes which also closely resemble a human heart. Imagine my emotion when, on the slide [under the microscope], I saw two tiny hands, white as alabaster, raised and clasped as if in prayer. Was it a vision? A hallucination? Not at all! It was a startling reality that filled me with horror. The hands did not move, they were stretched out towards me, I could count on each five fingers, the thumbs shorter than the rest. They were exactly like the hands of a woman or a child.<sup>47</sup>

This passage – among many others – shows us the dream-power of the infinitely small for Strindberg, the prolix significance he gives to the insignificant, and his obsession with the mystery *enclosed* in the detail of things. Generally speaking, when we cut open a fruit, a seed, or an almond, we are getting ready to dream a universe. Every germ of being is a germ of dreams.

Greater poets blur the image just a little and in doing so, they lead us to

46. Hans Carossa, *Le Docteur Gion* (Paris: Delamain et Boutelleau, 1937), 23.

47. Johan August Strindberg (1849-1912), *Inferno* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1898), 65.

deep dreams. In a memoir on Rilke, we find an account of a dream of his in which several dialectics of interiority and surface are in play, dialectics that alternate in accordance with repulsion and attraction. We read that in his night dream, the poet:

has a clod of black earth in his hand, a wet, disgusting clod, and feels in fact profound distaste and nauseous aversion while knowing that he must handle this lump of mud and form it, so to speak, in his hands, and works as if working clay, with great repulsion. He takes a knife and must cut away a thin slice of this piece of earth, and tells himself as he cuts that its interior will be even more horrible than its exterior. Faltering almost, he looks at the inner part that he has just laid bare, and sees the surface of a butterfly with its wings spread open, delightful in pattern and color, a surface made wondrous by its living jewels.<sup>48</sup>

Rough and unsophisticated as this account may be, oneiric values are indeed in place here. Those who are skilled at slow reading will, by gently displacing these values, discover the power of that fossil of light embedded in “black earth.”

## VI

We come now to my fourth perspective. In addition to these reveries of interiority that multiply and magnify all the details of a structure, there is another type of reverie of material interiority – the last of the four types I indicated – that valorizes interiority in terms of substantial intensity rather than of prodigiously colored figures. Then begin the infinite daydreams of riches without end. The interiority discovered here is not so much a casket filled with countless gems but rather a mysterious, unceasing power that, like an unbounded process, descends into the infinitely small of substance. So as to introduce my study and give it material themes, I shall resolutely start with the dialectical relations of color and dye. We immediately sense that color is surfaces’ seduction while dye is a truth of the depths.

In alchemy, the idea of *tincture* – that is to say, the idea of dye – gives rise to innumerable metaphors precisely because there are ordinary, clear experiences corresponding to it. The *tincturing virtue* is thus especially valorized.

48. Marie von Thurn und Taxis (1855-1934), *Princesse de la Tour et Taxis, Souvenirs sur Rainer Maria Rilke, publiés par Maurice Betz* (Paris: Émile-Paul frères, 1936), 183.

There are endless dreams of the converting power of powders and of the tincturing power of substances. The philosopher's stone could, by the force of its tincture, turn a quantity of lead a hundred thousand times its own weight into gold, according to Roger Bacon, while for Isaac le Hollandais a quantity of lead a million times the stone's weight could be thus transformed. And Raymond Lulle writes that the sea could be tinctured if we possessed the true mercury.

Yet images of colored liquids are too weak and passive, and water is too receptive a substance to give us the dynamic images of tincture. The material drama in which the alchemist is engaged is, as I have said, a trilogy of black, white, and red. Having started from black's substantial monstrosities and passed through the intermediate purifications of whitened substance, how are red's supreme values to be attained? Ordinary fire gives a fleeting red coloration that may deceive the uninitiate. A more inward, interior fire is needed, and a tincture that can both burn away inner impurities and fix its virtues on substance. This tincture eats into black, grows calm as it whitens, and then triumphs with the interior redness of gold. To transform is to tincture, to dye.

In order to sum up this transforming power after the dissensions over the color of the philosopher's stone, which is said by one to be saffron-colored and by another to be the color of rubies, one alchemist writes that the stone has all the colors: "it is white, red, yellow, sky blue, and green." And if it has all the colors, the implication is that it has all the powers.

Once tincture has been so greatly valorized that it becomes the true root of substance and *supplants* formless, lifeless matter, images of natural virtues and of impregnating powers are easier to follow. *The dream of impregnating* ranks among the most ambitious reveries of will. It has only one temporal aspect: eternity. With their will to insidious power, these dreamers identify with a force that impregnates for evermore. While *marks* can be erased, true tincture – true dye – is indelible. Interiority is conquered in the infinity of depth, for the infinity of time. It is this that the tenacity of the material imagination wishes for.

Were we able to realize, in their full oneiric power, these reveries of interior dye and tincture, that is to say to realize color endowed with its coloring *force*, we would perhaps have a better understanding of the rivalry between a psychological theory, which is what the theory of color in Goethe and Schopenhauer really is, and a scientific theory based on objective experience, as is Newton's theory of color. And we would be less surprised by the vehemence with which Goethe and Schopenhauer fought – so vainly –

against the theories of mathematical physics. They had inner convictions, built on deep material images. What Goethe holds against Newton's theory is, in short, that it only considers the *superficial* aspect of coloration. For Goethe, color is not a simple play of light but an *action* in the depth of being, an action that awakens essential sensory values. "*Die Farben sind Thaten des Lichts, Thaten und Leiden,*" he writes, that is to say, colors are actions of light, actions and sorrows. The question for a metaphysician such as Schopenhauer is this: how can these colors be understood if we do not participate in their deep act? And does not dyeing constitute the very act of color?

Taken in its primary force, this act of dyeing soon seems like the hand's will, the will of a hand that squeezes the fabric down to its last little thread. The dyer's hand is that of one who kneads, who wishes to reach the *depths of matter*, the *absolute of fine detail*. A dye or tincture also goes to the *center* of matter. An eighteenth-century writer states that "A tincture is like an essential point from which, as from a center, come rays that are multiplied in their operation."<sup>49</sup> When the hand has no strength, it has patience. Housekeepers rediscover these impressions in certain kinds of very meticulous cleaning. A curious passage in D. H. Lawrence's novel *Kangaroo* shows us a will to whiteness, a will to impregnate cleanness to the point that it comes so close to the depths of matter that it seems matter explodes and cannot maintain this pitch of whiteness. This is one of the many great dreams of excessive material life that are to be found in the work of this great English writer:

Harriet [...] washed her linen herself for the sheer joy of it, and loved nothing so much as thinking of it getting whiter and whiter, like the Spenserian maid, in the sun and sea, and visiting it on the grass every five minutes, and finding it every time really whiter, till Somers said it would reach a point of whiteness where the colours would break up, and she'd go out and find pieces of rainbow on the grass and bushes, instead of towels and shirts. "Shouldn't I be startled!" she said, accepting it as quite a possible contingency, and adding thoughtfully: "No, not really."<sup>50</sup>

49. See *La Lettre philosophique. Très estimée de ceux qui se plaisent aux Vérités Hermétiques. Traduite d'Allemand en François par Antoine Duval* (Paris: Laurent d'Houry, 1723), 8.

50. D. H. Lawrence, *Kangaroo* [1923], ed. Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 126.

This is surely a fine example of dreams being taken to absolute images, to impossible images. What we have here is a laundress's dream processed by the material imagination in a desire for substantial whiteness, where cleanliness is in a way given as if it were a quality of atoms. To take things as far as this, it is often enough to begin well and, as Lawrence did, to dream as we work.

Tincture and dye are enduringly faithful to matter, as can be seen in some very curious practices. Thus Carnaut reminds us that Roman painters used calcined wine lees for the color black: "they claimed," he says, "that the quality of the wine determined the beauty of the black."<sup>51</sup> Thus the material imagination readily believes in the transitivity of values: good wine gives good thick lees that give a beautiful black color.<sup>52</sup>

Again, in 1783, in his book entitled *De l'Électricité des végétaux*, the Abbé Bertholon says this:

In the fifth volume of papers published by the Academy of Sciences of Turin, the Comte de Mouroux has tried to prove, by conducting a great many experiments, that flowers contain a particular and permanent coloring principle that is still present in the flowers' ashes and that communicates the color of the flower itself to the vitrifications into which these ashes are placed.<sup>53</sup>

Swift, in an amusing vein, also thinks of a deep kind of dye. In "A Voyage to Laputa," he makes an inventor speak in these terms: is it not foolish to weave silkworms' thread when spiders are there to serve us as slaves who can both spin and weave it for us? All that would remain for us to do would be to dye it. And even where this is concerned, are not spiders ready for a third job? All we need do is feed them on "Flies most beautifully coloured."<sup>54</sup>

51. Boris Carnaut, *La Peinture dans l'industrie* (Paris: Dunod, 1941), 11.

52. Let us compare this beautiful black color with a poet's ink. In *Le Dit du sourd et muet qui fut miraculé en l'an de grâce 1266* (Rome: L'Oleandro, 1936), d'Annunzio dreams of writing his solemn promises in indelible ink, in ink "made with the black of smoke, a black then dissolved in honey, gum, musk, and hippomanes" (11). Those who love substances will dream long dreams when they encounter an inkwell such as this.

53. Abbé Bertholon, *De l'Électricité des végétaux* (Paris: P-F. Didot jeune, 1783), 280.

54. Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), *Gulliver's Travels* [1726], ed. Albert J. Rivero (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 153.

Indeed, the colors could be better blended with the food, for the flies that serve as food for spiders could surely themselves be fed on “certain Gums, Oyls, and other glutinous Matter, to give a Strength and Consistence to the Threads.”<sup>55</sup>

The objection may perhaps be raised here that such playfulness is very far from the seriousness of reverie. While dreams may not be in the habit of making jokes, there are, however, clear-minded people who are able to make jokes of their dreams and Swift is one of them. Yet the fact remains that the basis of his material fantasy is the theme of digestive assimilation. Swift’s digestive psyche would be easily recognized by even a trainee psychoanalyst, given that its characteristic features are to be found throughout the *Voyages*, and although it offers us a simplified version of the material imagination, it does indeed bear the mark of a deep impregnation by substantial properties.<sup>56</sup>

I shall moreover now give an example which will, I believe, clearly show how a material image as odd as dye that is dreamed in its substantial impregnation can trouble the moral life and take on moral judgements. The imagination is indeed as passionate in its hatred of images as it is in its affection for them. In this example, we see an imagination that rejects dye in its entirety, regarding it as dirt, as a kind of material lie that symbolizes all lies. While the passage I shall cite is a fairly long one, William James – from whom it is taken – did not hesitate to use it in full, despite its anecdotal detail, in his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.<sup>57</sup> It will show us that the attractions and repulsions formed by the imagination of the interior, innermost matter of things can play a part in the highest regions of the spiritual life. The passage is as follows:

These early Quakers were Puritans indeed [...] John Woolman writes in his diary:

55. *Gulliver’s Travels*, 153. Travelers’ tales are another way of “augmenting” images. A traveler cited in the *Introduction à la philosophie des anciens* (1689) saw spiders in Brazil that “made webs which were strong enough to catch birds as big as thrushes.”

56. Not just color but all qualities are of course tonalized in depth by the imagination. For his tar-water, George Berkeley recommends in *Siris* the use of “logs from old, *well-nourished* Pines.”

57. William James (1842-1910), *The Varieties of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature* (London: Longman, Green, and Co, 1902), 294-296.



I have often been excited to think on the original cause of that oppression which is imposed on many in the world [...] As I have thus considered these things, a query at times hath arisen: Do I, in all my proceedings, keep to that use of things which is agreeable to universal righteousness? [...]

Thinking often on these things, the use of hats and garments dyed with a dye hurtful to them [...] believing them to be customs which have not their foundation in pure wisdom. The apprehension of being singular from my beloved friends was a strait upon me, and thus I continued in the use of some things [...] I was taken ill [...] feeling the necessity of further purifying, there was now no desire in me for health until the design of my correction was answered [...] Then I thought of getting a hat the natural color of the fur, but the apprehension of being looked upon as one affecting singularity felt uneasy to me [...] On this account I was under close exercise of mind in the time of our General Spring Meeting in 1762, greatly desiring to be rightly directed; when, being deeply bowed in spirit before the Lord, I was made willing to submit to what I apprehended was required of me, and when I returned home, got a hat of the natural color of the fur.

In attending meetings this singularity was a trial to me, and more especially at this time, as white hats were used by some who were fond of following the changeable modes of dress, and as some Friends who knew not from what motives I wore it grew shy of me, I felt my way for a time shut up in the exercise of the ministry [...] Some Friends were apprehensive that my wearing such a hat savored of an affected singularity; those who spoke with me in a friendly way, I generally informed, in a few words, that I believed my wearing of it was not in my own will.<sup>58</sup>

Later, when travelling on foot in England, he had similar impressions and writes as follows:

In these journeys, I have been where much cloth hath been dyed; and have at sundry times walked over ground where much of their dyestuffs has drained away. This hath produced a longing in my mind that people might come into cleanness of spirit, cleanness of person,

58. *The Journal of John Woolman*, Chapter VIII.

and cleanness about their houses and garments [...] Dyes being invented partly to please the eye and partly to hide dirt, I have felt in this weak state, when travelling in dirtiness, and affected with unwholesome scents, a strong desire that the nature of dyeing cloth to hide dirt be more fully considered.

Washing our garments to keep them sweet is cleanly, but it is the opposite to real cleanliness to hide dirt in them. Through giving way to hiding dirt in our garments a spirit which would conceal that which is disagreeable is strengthened. Real cleanliness becometh a holy people; but hiding that which is not clean by coloring our garments seems contrary to the sweetness of sincerity. Through some sorts of dyes cloth is rendered less useful. And if the value of dyestuffs, and expense of dyeing, and the damage done to cloth, were all added together, and that cost applied to keeping all sweet and clean, how much more would real cleanliness prevail.<sup>59</sup>

It can thus be seen that some spirits – some souls – found *values* on the oddest of images, on images which make no impression on most people. This is real proof that any material image which is sincerely adopted is immediately a value. To underline this, I shall end this chapter by putting forward one last dialectic of values, a dialectic that can be represented in these terms: *we dirty something so as to make it clean*. This dialectic will mark an intestine war between substances and lead to a real Manichaeism of matter.

## VII

I have already come across a reverie of active cleanness in my study of the air, a reverie of cleanness won against deep and insidious dirt.<sup>60</sup> Every value – cleanness like all the others – must of necessity be won against an anti-value, failing which we do not live the valorization. Thus, as I have pointed out, a curious dialectic develops in the oneirism of active cleanness: we dirty first, the better then to clean. The will to clean wishes to have an adversary

59. *The Journal of John Woolman*, Chapter XII. We might moreover raise the question as to whether there is not a sexual element in Woolman's scruples. We need to remember that for the unconscious, the act of dyeing is a male act. Cf. Herbert Silberer (1882-1922), *Probleme der Mystik und ihrer Symbolik* (Vienna and Leipzig: H. Heller, 1914), 76.

60. See *Air and Dreams*, Conclusion, Part II.

that can match it. And for a well-dynamized material imagination, a thoroughly dirty substance offers more of a hold to cleansing action than does a substance that is simply dulled. Dirtiness is a *mordant* that retains the purifying agent. Housekeepers prefer cleaning up stains rather than just rings left on things. It seems, therefore, that the imagination of a fight for cleanliness needs something to provoke it. This kind of imagination has to be aroused in artful anger. How cunningly we smile as we cover a brass tap with a thick layer of polish, imputing to it all the filth left on the rottenstone smearing the grubby, greasy old rag. Bitterness and hostility gather in the worker's heart. Why do such mundane work? But the time of the dry rag is at hand and with it comes merry malice, malice that is both vigorous and talkative: "You, tap, will be a mirror; you, boiler, will be a sun!" When the brass shines and laughs a nice guy's unsophisticated laugh, then at last is peace made and housekeepers can contemplate their gleaming victories.

It is impossible to put our hearts into our work and have a taste for housecleaning without being driven by dialectics such as these.

In a fight of this nature, the imagination varies its weapons. It does not treat rottenstone and wax polish in the same way. Dreams of impregnation sustain the gentle patience of hands that give beauty to wood through the wax, wax that must gently enter wood's innermost interiority. Let us see old Sidonie in Henri Bosco's novel *Le Jardin d'Hyacinthe* as she goes about her housekeeping-life's work:

With the pressure of her hands and the wool's useful warmth, the gentle wax would penetrate this polished matter. Slowly, the tray would take on a muted luster. It seemed that there arose from the ancient sapwood, from the very heart of the dead tree, a radiance that was attracted by the magnetic polishing; it seemed that little by little, this would spread to reach the state of light upon the tray. Her old fingers, endowed as they were with every virtue, and her hand's generous palm would draw from the solid wood and inanimate fibers the latent powers of life.<sup>61</sup>

Passages like this invite the remarks often made in my previous book: workers do not remain "on the surface of things." They dream of interiority, of innermost qualities, with the same "depth" as philosophers. They give wood all the wax it can *absorb*, without excess, and slowly.

61. Henri Bosco (1888-1976), *Le Jardin d'Hyacinthe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), 193.

We can assume that simple souls, souls that meditate as they work physically, as they work manually, as was the case with Jacob Boehme, have known the real character of material images that makes the *mordant of evil* an almost necessary condition for the *impregnation of good*. It seems to me that when we read the work of this philosopher-shoemaker, we can recognize this duel of images, which we do not then reduce to being mere metaphors. The Manichaeism of pitch and wax is perceptible in the ever-renewed, close-fought battle between the contrary adjectives associated with astringency and gentleness. We can persuade ourselves that in many pages in Boehme, the starting point of his material reverie is matter that is both bitter and black, compressed, compressing, and sullen. Upon this evil matter, the elements are engendered:

Between astringency and bitterness, fire is engendered; the sharpness of fire is bitterness, or the goad itself, and the astringent is the root-stock and father of the one and of the other, yet nevertheless engendered by them, for a spirit is like a will or a thought that rises up and that, in its own ascension, seeks itself, impregnates itself, and engenders itself.<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, faithfulness to Boehme's thinking requires that the time of astringency should not be systematically placed before the time of gentleness, for that would mean accepting too ingenuously what Claude de Saint-Martin has referred to as creatural language. Astringency and gentleness are materially bound together: it is by astringency that gentleness is attached to substance; it is on the mordant of evil that good is impregnated. Any clean matter – any matter of cleanness – remains faithful and active by means of the astringent compression of sticky, pitchy, acrid matter. There has to be a battle that will endlessly awaken its acuity. Cleanness, like goodness, has to be endangered if it is to remain alert and fresh. What we have here is a particular case of the imagination of qualities, to which I shall be returning in my chapter on the tonalization of qualities. For now, I wish to show that where the most apparently placid of qualities are concerned, the imagination can give rise to endless oscillations, oscillations that penetrate the minutest detail of the interiority of substances.

62. Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), *Des trois principes de l'essence divine; ou, de l'Éternel Engendrement sans origine de l'homme; d'où il a été créé et pour quelle fin*, trans le Philosophe inconnu [L.-C. de Saint-Martin], 2 vols. (Paris: de l'Imprimerie de Laran, 1802), I, 2.

## VIII

We can, moreover, give examples of a tenacious interiority, an interiority that holds on to its qualities while at the same time exalting them. It seems, for instance, that a mineral's purpose is to valorize its own color; it is imagined in that *active pancalism* which is so characteristic of the material imagination.

Indeed, a *beautiful color* is always seen by alchemists as indicating *happy substance*, substance that completely fulfils dreamers' wishes and brings all their efforts to a close. Alchemy's phenomenon is not presented as being just the production of a substance that makes its appearance: it is a wonder that alchemists behold, with all its accompanying splendor and spectacle. Paracelsus calcines mercury "until it appears with its beautiful red color," or as other adepts say, with *its beautiful red tunic*. A color that is not *beautiful* would be the sign of an incomplete manipulation. No doubt modern chemists use similar expressions, frequently describing such and such a body as a beautiful green or again, as a beautiful yellow. This, though, expresses a reality, not a value. Scientific thought has no aesthetic tonality here. But this was not the case in the days of alchemy, when *beauty* enhanced a result and was the sign of pure substantiality, of deep substantiality. Consequently, when historians of science read these old books with the convictions born of the scientific knowledge of their own day, they will often regard these declarations regarding beautiful, pure color as just ways of indicating the substance under consideration. They very rarely see an alchemical judgement in terms of its real function, which is that of a judgement of inward, interior value, a value judgement in which all imaginary values converge. If we are to appreciate such convergences, we need to formulate not only a theory of experience but also a theory of reverie.

Thus, if an alchemical substance is a *beautiful green*, this for a value judgement is the sign of a *well-founded valorization*. Green is in many cases the *first beautiful color*. The scale of values that are substantially valorized – the scale of colors that are the mark of deep value – varies a little according to the different adepts. The scale of perfection goes most often from black to red and then to white. There is also, however, the scale that goes from black to white and then to red. And material sublimation is a real conquest of color. Here, for example, is the *domination* of red.

The Falcon is always on the mountaintops crying:

I am the White of Black and Citrine's Red.

The valorization of pure colors exposes the devilish filthiness of colors that are dull, dirty, and mixed together. In the sixteenth century, the Elector of Saxony proscribed indigo as being “a biting, devilish color” – “*fressende Teufels Farbe*.”<sup>63</sup>

The beauty of a material color is in any case revealed as richness in both depth and intensity. It is the mark of mineral tenacity. And in an inversion that is very usual in the realm of the imagination, the more beautiful the color is, the stronger and more durable it is when dreamed.

Indeed, in his book on the history of chemistry, where he has succeeded in establishing the duality of chemistry and alchemy better than anyone before him, Fierz-David points out the valorization of substantial colors that underlies the invention of gunpowder. Black charcoal “was, as the *materia prima*, mixed with sulfur (the red man) and salt (the white woman).” The explosion – an outstanding cosmic value – was the vivid sign of the birth of “the young king.”<sup>64</sup> We cannot fail to recognize the action of a particular causality of color here, for the gunpowder achieves a synthesis of the powers of black, red, and white. Such reveries of substantial powers may well seem remote and woolly-minded to us now. We find it hard to accept that what is being put forward is a theory of *inventive reverie*, a theory of false reveries that lead to true experiments. Yet many interests are needed if first patience is to be maintained, and many hopes of magic powers required if first research is to be kept alive. Consequently, we must not ignore any pretext underlying first discoveries at a time when objective knowledge was not held together by any system possessed of inductive power and inventive values.

The same problem still confronts us, therefore: expressions must, I believe, be given their full psychological sense whenever we begin to study themes involving unconscious values mixed with objective observations. Here, colors do not fall within the province of nominalism: they are substantial forces for an activist imagination.

Similarly, when *comparisons* with cosmic powers are made, these comparisons must be heightened so that they become *participations*, failing which we detonalize psychological documents here. For example, when alchemists refer to a precipitate that is *as white as snow*, they are already filled with admiration and with reverence. Admiration – or wonderment – is the first and ardent form of knowledge, it is knowledge that extols its object,

63. Cf. Jean Chrétien Ferdinand Hofer (1811-1878), *Histoire de la chimie*, 2 vols. (Paris: Didot frères, fils, & cie., 1866-1869), II, 101.

64. Hans Eduard Fierz-David, *Die Entwicklungsgeschichte der Chemie* (Basel: Verlag Birkhäuser, 1945), 91.

that valorizes it. When a value is first embraced, it is not evaluated but admired. And any comparison made between a substance and a being in nature – snow, lily, or swan – is a participation in deep interiority, in a dynamic virtue. In other words, all dreamers who valorize white substance by comparing it to substances that are immaculate believe that they are grasping whiteness in its act, in its natural acts.

We shall lose the benefit of the material and dynamic imagination as an element of psychological investigation if we do not respect the profound realism of expressions. Alchemical tinctures – or dyes – go deep into substance; they are depths of substance. All through alchemical transmutations there is a will to color and to dye. The finalism of alchemical experiment makes color an aim. For example, its supreme aim is the white stone and this ends by being whiteness rather than stone, whiteness made concrete. Valorization underlies the wish for this stone to be stony no longer, to be pure enough to embody whiteness.

Once we have understood this deep action of *beautiful colors*, of beautiful material colors, we shall forever know that beauty takes endless delight in its pleonasm. This guides me as I reread the pancalist impetus in the following lines by the poet Luc Decaunes:

I have met beautiful snow, snow with its flaxen arms,  
Beautiful, barley-limbed snow,  
Snow as beautiful as snow.<sup>65</sup>

In the last line here, whiteness returns to the bosom of whiteness and the circle of substantial beauty, of beauty's interiority, is complete. There is no beauty without pleonasm. This also demonstrates the transitivity of the other metaphors: these other metaphors are well aligned because they lead to primary substance, in a wondrous unity that is the dream of whiteness. All this will only be apparent if literary analysis is accompanied by an analysis of oneiric values. These, though, are *truths of the imagination* that traditional literary criticism does not accept. Attached as they are to the nominalism of color and anxious to let adjectives be free, traditional literary critics want to go on separating things from their expression. They do not want to follow the imagination as it embodies qualities. In short, literary critics explain ideas by ideas, which is legitimate, and dreams by ideas, which can be useful. They

65. Luc Decaunes (1913-2001), "Les Mains froides," *A L'Oeil nu, poèmes. Avec 4 dessins de Man Ray* (Marseille: Les Cahiers du Sud, 1941), 53.

forget, however – and this is indispensable – to explain dreams by dreams.

Thus the dream of the interiority of matter is not at all afraid of a tautology of impressions; it makes substance the root of the quality that is most valorized. This is what gives dreams of substance their singular fidelity. *Gold* might be said to be psychologically immutable. Those who dream of matter benefit from a kind of tap-rooting of their impressions. Materiality then confronts the ideality of impressions, and reverie is objectified by a kind of external and internal obligation. There then comes into being some sort of enchanting materialism that can leave imperishable memories in a soul.

If we consider the myth of the deep purification of substances, this will perhaps give us a good way of measuring the depth dreamed in the interiority of things. The alchemists' desire to wash *the interior of substances* has already been noted here in order to indicate its dialectical character. Yet an image of this kind calls up countless metaphors, metaphors that do not simply augment reality but clearly prove that alchemists wish to somehow exorcise realist images. Herbert Silberer has seen this very well and shown how all expressions shift.<sup>66</sup> How is this washing done? If water is used, then it is immediately said that this is not natural water; if soap is used, this is not ordinary soap; if mercury is used, this is not metallic mercury. Three times is meaning shifted, three times is reality just a provisional meaning. For the imagination, reality is not the true and active subject of the verb "to wash." The imagination wishes for an indefinite, infinite activity that goes down to the very depths of substance. We are aware of a mystique of cleanness, a mystique of purification, at work here. The metaphor that remains ever unexpressed represents then the psychological reality of the desire for purity. Here again, the perspective of an infinitely deep interiority opens before us.

This is a good example of the alchemists' need to *multiply* metaphors. For them, reality is an illusion. Sulfur that bears smell and light is not *true sulfur*; it is not the origin of true fire. Fire itself is not true fire. It is but fire that makes flames, sounds, smoke, and ashes, that is a distant image of true fire, of fire that is the principle, the fire that is light, substantial fire, the fire-principle. We are indeed aware here that the dream of substances is *against* the phenomena of substance, that the dream of interiority is the becoming of a secret. The *secret* character of alchemy does not correspond to the prudence that is a form of social conduct. It stems from the nature of things, from the nature of alchemical matter. This is not a secret that is known, but

66. Herbert Silberer, *Probleme der Mystik und ihrer Symbolik*, 78.



rather an essential secret that is sought, that is sensed. We go toward this secret, which lies there, centered, enclosed in the encased coffers of substance; every covering is deceptive, though. And so the dream of interiority goes on, strangely confident in its success, despite ever-recurring illusions. Alchemists love substance so dearly that in spite of all its lies, they cannot believe it is lying. The search for interiority is a dialectic that no unfortunate experience can ever halt.

## IX

If we read Jung's lengthy study of alchemy, we shall reach a fuller understanding of the dream of the depth of substances. Indeed, Jung has shown that alchemists *project* their own unconscious onto the substances they have long been working on and this unconscious then accompanies sensory knowledge. When alchemists talk about mercury, they are thinking "externally" of quick-silver while at the same time believing themselves to be in the presence of a spirit that is hidden or imprisoned in matter.<sup>67</sup> Underneath this term *spirit*, which Cartesian physics will make a reality, there begins, however, the working of an endless dream, of a kind of thinking that does not wish to be enclosed in definitions, that multiplies both meanings and words in order not to be imprisoned in precise meanings. Although Jung advises against thinking the unconscious as situated *underneath* consciousness, the alchemist's unconscious can, I think, be said to project itself into material images as *depth*. I shall therefore say, more succinctly, that alchemists *project their depth*. This same projection will be encountered in several chapters later in this book and I shall therefore be returning to this discussion. I think it useful, however, to draw attention, whenever the case arises, to a law that I shall call the isomorphism of images of depth. When we dream depth, we dream our own depth. When we dream of the secret virtue of substances, we are dreaming of our secret being. The greatest secrets of our being are hidden from us, however: they lie in the secrecy of our depths.

## X

A comprehensive study of the material images of interiority ought to give lengthy consideration to all the values of hidden warmth. Were I to undertake such a study, I would have to revise the whole of my book on fire so as to pay closer attention to those features that allow us to speak of a real

67. Cf. Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychologie und Alchemie* (Zurich: Rascher, 1944), 399.

dialectic of warmth and fire. When warmth and fire receive their characteristic images, it seems that these images can serve to indicate an introverted and an extraverted imagination. Fire is exteriorized; it explodes; it shows itself. Warmth is internalized; it is concentrated; it hides itself. It is warmth rather than fire that best deserves to be called the *third dimension*, to use a term found in Schelling's dreaming metaphysics: "*Das Feuer nichts anderes als die reine in der Körperlichkeit durchbrechende Substanz oder dritte Dimension sei*"; that is to say, "fire is nothing other than the pure substance breaking through in corporeality, or a third dimension."<sup>68</sup>

The interior that is dreamed is warm, and never burning hot. Warmth that is dreamed is always gentle, constant, and regular. Warmth makes everything *deep*. Warmth is the sign of depth, the sense of depth.

An interest in gentle warmth gathers all the values of interiority. Thus, in the seventeenth-century debate on the two main theories of stomachal digestion (as either grinding or cooking), when it was argued that warmth as gentle as that of the stomach could not possibly melt, in just two hours, a bone "that the strongest elixation could never divide," some doctors replied that this warmth borrowed an additional *force* from the soul itself.

## XI

In the work of a great poet, the dialectic of interiority and expansion will sometimes be found in such a mitigated form that we forget the dialectic of big and small, which is, however, the underlying dialectic. Here, the imagination no longer delineates; it transcends delineated forms and *exuberantly* develops the values of *interiority*. In short, all interior richness extends the inner space in which it is condensed, making it boundless. Dreams retire into this place and develop there in the most paradoxical of pleasures, in the most ineffable bliss. Let us follow Rilke as he searches in the heart of roses for the *embodiment* of sweet interiority:

What skies are mirrored here  
in the interior lake  
of these open roses.<sup>69</sup>

The whole sky fits into the space of a rose. The world comes and lives in a perfume. The intensity of interior beauty condenses the beauties of an

68. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854), *Oeuvres complètes*, II, 82.

69. Rainer Maria Rilke, "Intérieur de la rose," *Ausgewählte Gedichte*, (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1922), 14.

entire universe. Then, in a second movement, the poem presents the expansion of beauty. Of these roses, we read that:

Scarcely can they stand unsupported on their own,  
 interior space brimmed over in a myriad sips  
 as these days ended in vast and ever vaster plenitude,  
 until the whole summer became a bedchamber,  
 a bedchamber in a dream.

The whole summer is *in* a flower; the rose brims over with inner space. Through objects, the poet lets us live the two movements so ponderously described by psychoanalysts as introversion and extraversion. These movements correspond so well to the poem's inspiration that we shall benefit from following them as they develop. The poet seeks both interiority and images. He wishes to *express the interiority of a being of the exterior world*. He does this with a curious purity of abstraction, by detaching himself from immediate images, knowing very well that describing things is not the way to make people dream. He puts us in the presence of the simplest motifs for reverie; as we follow him, we enter *the bedchamber of a dream*.

## XII

Thus, by studying in turn alchemists' meditations, preconceptions like those of Roman painters, a puritan pastor's obsessions and hobby-horses, Swift's jokes, Boehme's long and obscure images, and even just the fleeting thoughts of someone doing the housework, I have shown that the material interiority of things calls forth a reverie that is, despite its many aspects, a very distinctive one. When they are dreaming, human beings wish to go to the heart of things, into the very matter of things, even though philosophers forbid this. We are too quick to say that in things, human beings find themselves. The imagination is more interested in the newness reality offers, in what matter reveals. It loves the open materialism that unceasingly presents itself as opportunities for new, deep images. In its own way, the imagination is objective. I have attempted to prove this by devoting this entire chapter to the interiority of the dream in things, with no concern for the interiority of the dreamer.

## XIII

Were I to set myself the task of studying the most hidden levels of the unconscious and were I to seek the wholly personal sources of the subject's interiority, I would, of course, have to follow a very different perspective, which is typified by the return to the mother. This perspective has been carefully enough explored in its depths by psychoanalysis for me not to have to study it myself.

I shall make just one observation relative to my precise subject of the determination of images.

This *return to the mother*, which presents itself as one of the most powerful tendencies toward *psychological involution*, appears to be accompanied by the repression of images. The attractions of this involutive return are impeded if its images are made precise. Here indeed we find images of sleeping being, images of being with closed – or half-closed – eyes, eyes which never have the will to see, the very images of the strictly blind unconscious that forms all its sensory values with gentle warmth and with well-being.

Great poets are able to take us back to this primary interiority which has the most indistinct forms. We have to read them without putting in more images than there are in their lines of verse, otherwise we shall be going against the psychology of the unconscious. For example, in a book in which he carefully and perceptively studies Clemens Brentano's social circle, René Guignard believes he can judge a poem from the standpoint of clear consciousness. "The lines in which the child reminds its mother of the time when it was in her womb seem to me somewhat infelicitous," he writes, and continues thus:

While the deep and inward union of two beings could probably not be more adequately represented, I find it shocking that a child should be made to say:

*Und war deine Sehnsucht ja allzugroß  
Und wußtest nicht, wem klagen,  
Da weint' ich still in deinem Schoß  
Und konnte dir's nicht sagen.*

And your yearning was indeed too great  
And you knew not to whom you could cry out,

I silently wept there in your womb  
 And could say nothing to you.

We may well ask ourselves whether this is touching or ridiculous. Brentano was in any case very fond of this piece and revised it later on – it is not possible to say when this was – in order to bring out its almost religious character.<sup>70</sup>

The inability to judge from the standpoint of the unconscious is evident here. Guignard, as an academic critic, has a visual image of a child *in* its mother's womb. This is an image that shocks us. If readers form such an image, they are not positioned on the poet's line of imagination. Had the critic followed the poet's dream into the world of vague warmth, the world of unbounded warmth in which the unconscious dwells, reliving the time of the first nourishment, he would have understood that a third dimension opens up in Brentano's text and goes deep into it, a dimension beyond the alternative of being either "touching" or "ridiculous."

If the poet "was very fond of this piece" and even sought to give it a religious tone, this is because the text had *value* for him, a value that a broader criticism can only seek in the unconscious, the clear part being, as René Guignard saw, pretty meager here. This deeper kind of criticism will have no difficulty in showing the influence of an interiority of the maternal powers. The traces of this interiority are plain: all we need do is see where they take us. Brentano speaks to his betrothed "as a child [...] speaks to its mother," and so the critic sees this as "a very characteristic symbol of the poet's weakness, as he desires above all to feel himself petted and pampered." Pampered indeed! This is like the twist of a surgeon's knife in living, healthy flesh! What Clemens Brentano wanted from love was a far deeper sleep.

Such many-sided poems would in fact open up many paths for us to follow. A single paragraph is insufficient to study the maternal interiority of Death: "If the mother is too poor to feed her child, let her gently lay it down 'on the threshold of death' and die with it, so that when the child opens its eyes it will see her in heaven!" This heaven would doubtless have the pallor of Limbo, this death would have the womb's sweetness and this communion would be in a more peaceful life, in life before birth. Yet images grow blurred and disappear along this path of the imagination. The interiority which,

70. René Guignard, *La Vie et l'oeuvre de Clemens Brentano (1778-1842)* (Algiers: J. Carbonel, 1933), 163.

when dreamed in substances, called forth so very many images, is now *wholly intensity*. Here, this interiority gives us primary values, values so long and deeply rooted in the unconscious that they go beyond familiar images and meet the most archaic of archetypes.