

Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space (Boston: Beacon, 1994)

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**the house.  
from cellar to garret.  
the significance of the hut**

*A la porte de la maison qui viendra frapper?  
Une porte ouverte on entre  
Une porte fermée un anstre  
Le monde bat de l'autre côté de ma porte.*

PIERRE ALBERT BIROT

*Les Amusements Naturels, p. 217*

(At the door of the house who will come knocking?  
An open door, we enter  
A closed door, a den  
The world pulse beats beyond my door.)

The house, quite obviously, is a privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space, provided, of course, that we take it in both its unity and its complexity, and endeavor to integrate all the special values in one fundamental value. For the house furnishes us dispersed images and a body of images at the same time. In both cases, I shall prove that imagination augments the values of reality. A sort of attraction for images concentrates them about the house. Transcending our memories of all the houses in which we have found shelter, above and beyond all the houses we have dreamed we lived in, can we isolate an intimate, concrete essence that would be a justification of the uncommon value of all of our images of protected intimacy? This, then, is the main problem.

In order to solve it, it is not enough to consider the house as an "object" on which we can make our judgments and daydreams react. For a phenomenologist, a psychoanalyst, or a psychologist (these three points of view being named

in the order of decreasing efficacy), it is not a question of describing houses, or enumerating their picturesque features and analyzing for which reasons they are comfortable. On the contrary, we must go beyond the problems of description—whether this description be objective or subjective, that is, whether it give facts or impressions—in order to attain to the primary virtues, those that reveal an attachment that is native in some way to the primary function of inhabiting. A geographer or an ethnographer can give us descriptions of very varied types of dwellings. In each variety, the phenomenologist makes the effort needed to seize upon the germ of the essential, sure, immediate well-being it encloses. In every dwelling, even the richest, the first task of the phenomenologist is to find the original shell.

But the related problems are many if we want to determine the profound reality of all the subtle shadings of our attachment for a chosen spot. For a phenomenologist, these shadings must be taken as the first rough outlines of a psychological phenomenon. The shading is not an additional, superficial coloring. We should therefore have to say how we inhabit our vital space, in accord with all the dialectics of life, how we take root, day after day, in a "corner of the world."

For our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word. If we look at it intimately, the humblest dwelling has beauty. Authors of books on "the humble home" often mention this feature of the poetics of space. But this mention is much too succinct. Finding little to describe in the humble home, they spend little time there; so they describe it as it actually is, without really experiencing its primitiveness, a primitiveness which belongs to all, rich and poor alike, if they are willing to dream.

But our adult life is so dispossessed of the essential benefits, its anthropocosmic ties have become so slack, that we do not feel their first attachment in the universe of the house. There is no dearth of abstract, "world-conscious" philosophers who discover a universe by means of the dia-

lectical game of the I and the non-I. In fact, they know the universe before they know the house, the far horizon before the resting-place; whereas the real beginnings of images, if we study them phenomenologically, will give concrete evidence of the values of inhabited space, of the non-I that protects the I.

Indeed, here we touch upon a converse whose images we shall have to explore: all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home. In the course of this work, we shall see that the imagination functions in this direction whenever the human being has found the slightest shelter: we shall see the imagination build "walls" of impalpable shadows, comfort itself with the illusion of protection—or, just the contrary, tremble behind thick walls, mistrust the staunchest ramparts. In short, in the most interminable of dialectics, the sheltered being gives perceptible limits to his shelter. He experiences the house in its reality and in its virtuality, by means of thought and dreams. It is no longer in its positive aspects that the house is really "lived," nor is it only in the passing hour that we recognize its benefits. An entire past comes to dwell in a new house. The old saying: "We bring our *lares* with us" has many variations. And the daydream deepens to the point where an immemorial domain opens up for the dreamer of a home beyond man's earliest memory. The house, like fire and water, will permit me, later in this work, to recall flashes of daydreams that illuminate the synthesis of immemorial and recollected. In this remote region, memory and imagination remain associated, each one working for their mutual deepening. In the order of values, they both constitute a community of memory and image. Thus the house is not experienced from day to day only, on the thread of a narrative, or in the telling of our own story. Through dreams, the various dwelling-places in our lives co-penetrate and retain the treasures of former days. And after we are in the new house, when memories of other places we have lived in come back to us, we travel to the land of Motionless Childhood, motionless the way all Im-

memorial things are. We live fixations, fixations of happiness.<sup>1</sup> We comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection. Something closed must retain our memories, while leaving them their original value as images. Memories of the outside world will never have the same tonality as those of home and, by recalling these memories, we add to our store of dreams; we are never real historians, but always near poets, and our emotion is perhaps nothing but an expression of a poetry that was lost.

Thus, by approaching the house images with care not to break up the solidarity of memory and imagination, we may hope to make others feel all the psychological elasticity of an image that moves us at an unimaginable depth. Through poems, perhaps more than through recollections, we touch the ultimate poetic depth of the space of the house.

This being the case, if I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace. Thought and experience are not the only things that sanction human values. The values that belong to daydreaming mark humanity in its depths. Daydreaming even has a privilege of autovalorization. It derives direct pleasure from its own being. Therefore, the places in which we have *experienced daydreaming* reconstitute themselves in a new daydream, and it is because our memories of former dwelling-places are relived as daydreams that these dwelling-places of the past remain in us for all time.

Now my aim is clear: I must show that the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. The binding principle in this integration is the daydream. Past, present and future give the house different dynamisms, which often interfere, at times opposing, at others, stimulating one another. In

<sup>1</sup> We should grant "fixation" its virtues, independently of psychoanalytical literature which, because of its therapeutic function, is obliged to record, principally, processes of defixation.

the life of a man, the house thrusts aside contingencies, its councils of continuity are unceasing. Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul. It is the human being's first world. Before he is "cast into the world," as claimed by certain hasty metaphysics, man is laid in the cradle of the house. And always, in our daydreams, the house is a large cradle. A concrete metaphysics cannot neglect this fact, this simple fact, all the more, since this fact is a value, an important value, to which we return in our daydreaming. Being is already a value. Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house.

From my viewpoint, from the phenomenologist's viewpoint, the conscious metaphysics that starts from the moment when the being is "cast into the world" is a secondary metaphysics. It passes over the preliminaries, when being is being-well, when the human being is deposited in a being-well, in the well-being originally associated with being. To illustrate the metaphysics of consciousness we should have to wait for the experiences during which being is cast out, that is to say, thrown out, outside the being of the house, a circumstance in which the hostility of men and of the universe accumulates. But a complete metaphysics, englobing both the conscious and the unconscious, would leave the privilege of its values within. Within the being, in the being of within, an enveloping warmth welcomes being. Being reigns in a sort of earthly paradise of matter, dissolved in the comforts of an adequate matter. It is as though in this material paradise, the human being were bathed in nourishment, as though he were gratified with all the essential benefits.

When we dream of the house we were born in, in the utmost depths of revery, we participate in this original warmth, in this well-tempered matter of the material paradise. This is the environment in which the protective beings live. We shall come back to the maternal features of the house. For the moment, I should like to point out

the original fullness of the house's being.) Our daydreams carry us back to it. And the poet well knows that the house holds childhood motionless "in its arms"<sup>1</sup>:

*Maison, pan de prairie, ô lumière du soir  
Soudain vous acquérez presque une face humaine  
Vous êtes près de nous, embrassants, embrassés.*

(House, patch of meadow, oh evening light  
Suddenly you acquire an almost human face  
You are very near us, embracing and embraced.)

## II

Of course, thanks to the house, a great many of our memories are housed, and if the house is a bit elaborate, if it has a cellar and a garret, nooks and corridors, our memories have refuges that are all the more clearly delineated. All our lives we come back to them in our daydreams. A psychoanalyst should, therefore, turn his attention to this simple localization of our memories. I should like to give the name of topoanalysis to this auxiliary of psychoanalysis.

Topoanalysis, then, would be the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives. In the theater of the past that is constituted by memory, the stage setting maintains the characters in their dominant rôles. At times we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being's stability—a being who does not want to melt away, and who, even in the past, when he sets out in search of things past, wants time to "suspend" its flight. In its countless alveoli space contains compressed time. That is what space is for.

And if we want to go beyond history, or even, while remaining in history, detach from our own history the always too contingent history of the persons who have encumbered it, we realize that the calendars of our lives can only be

<sup>1</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, translated into French by Claude Vigée, in *Les Lettres*, 4th year, Nos. 14-15-16, p. 11. Editor's note: In this work, all of the Rilke references will be to the French translations that inspired Bachelard's comments.

established in its imagery. In order to analyze our being in the hierarchy of an ontology, or to psychoanalyze our unconscious entrenched in primitive abodes, it would be necessary, on the margin of normal psychoanalysis, to *de-socialize* our important memories, and attain to the plane of the daydreams that we used to have in the places identified with our solitude. For investigations of this kind, daydreams are more useful than dreams. They show moreover that daydreams can be very different from dreams.<sup>1</sup>

And so, faced with these periods of solitude, the topoanalyst starts to ask questions: Was the room a large one? Was the garret cluttered up? Was the nook warm? How was it lighted? How, too, in these fragments of space, did the human being achieve silence? How did he relish the very special silence of the various retreats of solitary daydreaming?

Here space is everything, for time ceases to quicken memory. Memory—what a strange thing it is!—does not record concrete duration, in the Bergsonian sense of the word. We are unable to relive duration that has been destroyed. We can only think of it, in the line of an abstract time that is deprived of all thickness. The finest specimens of fossilized duration concretized as a result of long sojourn, are to be found in and through space. The unconscious abides. Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are. To localize a memory in time is merely a matter for the biographer and only corresponds to a sort of external history, for external use, to be communicated to others. But hermeneutics, which is more profound than biography, must determine the centers of fate by ridding history of its conjunctive temporal tissue, which has no action on our fates. For a knowledge of intimacy, localization in the spaces of our intimacy is more urgent than determination of dates.

Psychoanalysis too often situates the passions "in the century." In reality, however, the passions simmer and re-simmer in solitude: the passionate being prepares his explosions and his exploits in this solitude.

<sup>1</sup> I plan to study these differences in a future work.

And all the spaces of our past moments of solitude, the spaces in which we have suffered from solitude, enjoyed, desired and compromised solitude, remain indelible within us, and precisely because the human being wants them to remain so. He knows instinctively that this space identified with his solitude is creative; that even when it is forever expunged from the present, when, henceforth, it is alien to all the promises of the future, even when we no longer have a garret, when the attic room is lost and gone, there remains the fact that we once loved a garret, once lived in an attic. We return to them in our night dreams. These retreats have the value of a shell. And when we reach the very end of the labyrinths of sleep, when we attain to the regions of deep slumber, we may perhaps experience a type of repose that is pre-human; pre-human, in this case, approaching the immemorial. But in the daydream itself, the recollection of moments of confined, simple, shut-in space are experiences of heartwarming space, of a space that does not seek to become extended, but would like above all still to be possessed. In the past, the attic may have seemed too small, it may have seemed cold in winter and hot in summer. Now, however, in memory recaptured through daydreams, it is hard to say through what syncretism the attic is at once small and large, warm and cool, always comforting.

## III

This being the case, we shall have to introduce a slight nuance at the very base of topoanalysis. I pointed out earlier that the unconscious is housed. It should be added that it is well and happily housed, in the space of its happiness. The normal unconscious knows how to make itself at home everywhere, and psychoanalysis comes to the assistance of the ousted unconscious, of the unconscious that has been roughly or insidiously dislodged. But psychoanalysis sets the human being in motion, rather than at rest. It calls on him to live outside the abodes of his unconscious, to enter into life's adventures, to come out of himself. And natu-

rally, its action is a salutary one. Because we must also give an exterior destiny to the interior being. To accompany psychoanalysis in this salutary action, we should have to undertake a topoanalysis of all the space that has invited us to come out of ourselves.

*Emmenez-moi, chemins! . . .*

(Carry me along, oh roads . . .)

wrote Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, recalling her native Flanders (*Un ruisseau de la Scarpe*).

And what a dynamic, handsome object is a path! How precise the familiar hill paths remain for our muscular consciousness! A poet has expressed all this dynamism in one single line:

*O, mes chemins et leur cadence*

Jean Caubère, *Déserts*

(Oh, my roads and their cadence.)

When I relive dynamically the road that "climbed" the hill, I am quite sure that the road itself had muscles, or rather, counter-muscles. In my room in Paris, it is a good exercise for me to think of the road in this way. As I write this page, I feel freed of my duty to take a walk: I am sure of having gone out of my house.

And indeed we should find countless intermediaries between reality and symbols if we gave things all the movements they suggest. George Sand, dreaming beside a path of yellow sand, saw life flowing by. "What is more beautiful than a road?" she wrote. "It is the symbol and the image of an active, varied life." (*Consuelo*, vol. II, p. 116).

Each one of us, then, should speak of his roads, his crossroads, his roadside benches; each one of us should make a surveyor's map of his lost fields and meadows. Thoreau said that he had the map of his fields engraved in his soul. And Jean Wahl once wrote:

*Le moutonnement des haies  
C'est en moi que je l'ai.*

(Poème, p. 46)

(The frothing of the hedges  
I keep deep inside me.)

Thus we cover the universe with drawings we have lived. These drawings need not be exact. They need only to be tonalized on the mode of our inner space. But what a book would have to be written to decide all these problems! Space calls for action, and before action, the imagination is at work. It mows and ploughs. We should have to speak of the benefits of all these imaginary actions. Psychoanalysis has made numerous observations on the subject of projective behavior, on the willingness of extroverted persons to exteriorize their intimate impressions. An exteriorist topoanalysis would perhaps give added precision to this projective behavior by defining our daydreams of objects. However, in this present work, I shall not be able to undertake, as should be done, the two-fold imaginary geometrical and physical problem of extroversion and introversion. Moreover, I do not believe that these two branches of physics have the same psychic weight. My research is devoted to the domain of intimacy, to the domain in which psychic weight is dominant.

I shall therefore put my trust in the power of attraction of all the domains of intimacy. There does not exist a real intimacy that is repellent. All the spaces of intimacy are designated by an attraction. Their being is well-being. In these conditions, topoanalysis bears the stamp of a topophilia, and shelters and rooms will be studied in the sense of this valorization.

## IV

These virtues of shelter are so simple, so deeply rooted in our unconscious that they may be recaptured through mere mention, rather than through minute description. Here the nuance bespeaks the color. A poet's word, because it strikes true, moves the very depths of our being.

Over-picturesqueness in a house can conceal its intimacy.

This is also true in life. But it is truer still in daydreams. For the real houses of memory, the houses to which we return in dreams, the houses that are rich in unalterable oneirism, do not readily lend themselves to description. To describe them would be like showing them to visitors. We can perhaps tell everything about the present, but about the past! The first, the oneirically definitive house, must retain its shadows. For it belongs to the literature of depth, that is, to poetry, and not to the fluent type of literature that, in order to analyze intimacy, needs other people's stories. All I ought to say about my childhood home is just barely enough to place me, myself, in an oneiric situation, to set me on the threshold of a day-dream in which I shall *find* repose in the past. Then I may hope that my page will possess a sonority that will ring true—a voice so remote within me, that it will be the voice we all hear when we listen as far back as memory reaches, on the very limits of memory, beyond memory perhaps, in the field of the immemorial. All we communicate to others is an orientation towards what is secret without ever being able to tell the secret objectively. What is secret never has total objectivity. In this respect, we orient oneirism but we do not accomplish it.<sup>1</sup>

What would be the use, for instance, in giving the plan of the room that was really *my* room, in describing the little room at the *end* of the garret, in saying that from the window, across the indentations of the roofs, one could see the hill. I alone, in my memories of another century, can open the deep cupboard that still retains for me alone that unique odor, the odor of raisins drying on a wicker tray. The odor of raisins! It is an odor that is beyond description, one that it takes a lot of imagination to smell. But I've already said too much. If I said more, the reader,

<sup>1</sup> After giving a description of the Canaen estate (*Volupté*, p. 30), Sainte-Beuve adds: "It is not so much for you, my friend, who never saw this place, and had you visited it, could not now feel the impressions and colors I feel, that I have gone over it in such detail, for which I must excuse myself. Nor should you try to see it as a result of what I have said; let the image float inside you; pass lightly; the slightest idea of it will suffice for you."

back in his own room, would not open that unique wardrobe, with its unique smell, which is the signature of intimacy. Paradoxically, in order to suggest the values of intimacy, we have to induce in the reader a state of suspended reading. For it is not until his eyes have left the page that recollections of my room can become a threshold of oneirism for him. And when it is a poet speaking, the reader's soul reverberates; it experiences the kind of reverberation that, as Minkowski has shown, gives the energy of an origin to being.

It therefore makes sense from our standpoint of a philosophy of literature and poetry to say that we "write a room," "read a room," or "read a house." Thus, very quickly, at the very first word, at the first poetic overture, the reader who is "reading a room" leaves off reading and starts to think of some place in his own past. You would like to tell everything about your room. You would like to interest the reader in yourself, whereas you have unlocked a door to daydreaming. The values of intimacy are so absorbing that the reader has ceased to read your room: he sees his own again. He is already far off, listening to the recollections of a father or a grandmother, of a mother or a servant, of "the old faithful servant," in short, of the human being who dominates the corner of his most cherished memories.

And the house of memories becomes psychologically complex. Associated with the nooks and corners of solitude are the bedroom and the living room in which the leading characters held sway. The house we were born in is an inhabited house. In it the values of intimacy are scattered, they are not easily stabilized, they are subjected to dialectics. In how many tales of childhood—if tales of childhood were sincere—we should be told of a child that, lacking a room, went and sulked in his corner!

But over and beyond our memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us. It is a group of organic habits. After twenty years, in spite of all the other anonymous stairways, we would recapture the reflexes of the "first stairway," we would not stumble on that rather

high step. The house's entire being would open up, faithful to our own being. We would push the door that creaks with the same gesture, we would find our way in the dark to the distant attic. The feel of the tiniest latch has remained in our hands.

The successive houses in which we have lived have no doubt made our gestures commonplace. But we are surprised, when we return to the old house, after an ody of many years, to find that the most delicate gestures, earliest gestures suddenly come alive, are still faultless short, the house we were born in has engraved within the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting. We the diagram of the functions of inhabiting that particular house, and all the other houses are but variations of a fundamental theme. The word habit is too worn a word to express this passionate liaison of our bodies, which not forget, with an unforgettable house.

But this area of detailed recollections that are easily retained because of the names of things and people we knew in the first house, can be studied by means of general psychology. Memories of dreams, however, which only poetic meditation can help us to recapture, are more confused, less clearly drawn. The great function of poetry is to give us back the situations of our dreams. The house we were born in is more than an embodiment of home, it is also an embodiment of dreams. Each one of its nooks and corners was a resting-place for daydreaming. And often the resting-place particularized the daydream. Our habits of a particular daydream were acquired there. The house, the bedroom, the garret in which we were alone, furnished the framework for an interminable dream, one that poetry alone, through the creation of a poetic work, could succeed in achieving completely. If we give their function of shelter for dreams to all of these places of retreat, we may say, as I pointed out in an earlier work,<sup>1</sup> that there exists for each one of us an oneiric house, a house of dream-memory, that is lost in the shadow of a beyond of the real past. I called this oneiric house the crypt of the house that we were born

<sup>1</sup> *La terre et les rêveries du repos*, p. 98, Corti, Paris.

in. Here we find ourselves at a pivotal point around which reciprocal interpretations of dreams through thought and thought through dreams, keep turning. But the word *interpretation* hardens this about-face unduly. In point of fact, we are in the unity of image and memory, in the functional composite of imagination and memory. The positivity of psychological history and geography cannot serve as a touchstone for determining *the real being* of our childhood, for childhood is certainly greater than reality. In order to sense, across the years, our attachment for the house we were born in, dream is more powerful than thought. It is our unconscious force that crystalizes our remotest memories. If a compact center of daydreams of repose had not existed in this first house, the very different circumstances that surround actual life would have clouded our memories. Except for a few medallions stamped with the likeness of our ancestors, our child-memory contains only worn coins. It is on the plane of the daydream and not on that of facts that childhood remains alive and poetically useful within us. Through this permanent childhood, we maintain the poetry of the past. To inhabit oneirically the house we were born in means more than to inhabit it in memory; it means living in this house that is gone, the way we used to dream in it.

What special depth there is in a child's daydream! And how happy the child who really possesses his moments of solitude! It is a good thing, it is even salutary, for a child to have periods of boredom, for him to learn to know the dialectics of exaggerated play and causeless, pure boredom. Alexander Dumas tells in his *Mémoires* that, as a child, he was bored, bored to tears. When his mother found him like that, weeping from sheer boredom, she said: "And what is Dumas crying about?" "Dumas is crying because Dumas has tears," replied the six-year-old child. This is the kind of anecdote people tell in their memoirs. But how well it exemplifies absolute boredom, the boredom that is not the equivalent of the absence of playmates. There are children who will leave a game to go and be bored in a corner of the garret. How often have I wished for the attic

of my boredom when the complications of life made me lose the very germ of all freedom!

And so, beyond all the positive values of protection, the house we were born in becomes imbued with dream values which remain after the house is gone. Centers of boredom, centers of solitude, centers of daydream group together to constitute the *oneiric house* which is more lasting than the scattered memories of our birthplace. Long phenomenological research would be needed to determine all these dream values, to plumb the depth of this dream ground in which our memories are rooted.

And we should not forget that these dream values communicate poetically from soul to soul. To read poetry is essentially to daydream.

v

A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability. We are constantly re-imagining its reality: to distinguish all these images would be to describe the soul of the house; it would mean developing a veritable psychology of the house.

To bring order into these images, I believe that we should consider two principal connecting themes: 1) A house is imagined as a vertical being. It rises upward. It differentiates itself in terms of its verticality. It is one of the appeals to our consciousness of verticality. 2) A house is imagined as a concentrated being. It appeals to our consciousness of centrality.<sup>1</sup>

These themes are no doubt very abstractly stated. But with examples, it is not hard to recognize their psychologically concrete nature.

Verticality is ensured by the polarity of cellar and attic, the marks of which are so deep that, in a way, they open up two very different perspectives for a phenomenology of the imagination. Indeed, it is possible, almost without com-

<sup>1</sup> For this second part, see page 29.



mentary, to oppose the rationality of the roof to the irrationality of the cellar. A roof tells its *raison d'être* right away: it gives mankind shelter from the rain and sun he fears. Geographers are constantly reminding us that, in every country, the slope of the roofs is one of the surest indications of the climate. We "understand" the slant of a roof. Even a dreamer dreams rationally; for him, a pointed roof averts rain clouds. Up near the roof all our thoughts are clear. In the attic it is a pleasure to see the bare rafters of the strong framework. Here we participate in the carpenter's solid geometry.

As for the cellar, we shall no doubt find uses for it. It will be rationalized and its conveniences enumerated. But it is first and foremost the *dark entity* of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces. When we dream there, we are in harmony with the irrationality of the depths.

We become aware of this dual vertical polarity of a house if we are sufficiently aware of the function of inhabiting to consider it as an imaginary response to the function of constructing. The dreamer constructs and reconstructs the upper stories and the attic until they are well constructed. And, as I said before, when we dream of the heights we are in the rational zone of intellectualized projects. But for the cellar, the impassioned inhabitant digs and re-digs, making its very depth active. The fact is not enough, the dream is at work. When it comes to excavated ground, dreams have no limit. I shall give later some deep-cellar reveries. But first let us remain in the space that is polarized by the cellar and the attic, to see how this polarized space can serve to illustrate very fine psychological nuances.

Here is how the psychoanalyst, C. G. Jung, has used the dual image of cellar and attic to analyze the fears that inhabit a house. In Jung's *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*<sup>1</sup> we find a comparison which is used to make us understand the conscious being's hope of "destroying the autonomy of complexes by debaptising them." The image is the fol-

<sup>1</sup> Harcourt, Brace and World, New York.

lowing: "Here the conscious acts like a man who, hearing a suspicious noise in the cellar, hurries to the attic and, finding no burglars there decides, consequently, that the noise was pure imagination. In reality, this prudent man did not dare venture into the cellar."

To the extent that the explanatory image used by Jung convinces us, we readers relive phenomenologically both fears: fear in the attic and fear in the cellar. Instead of facing the cellar (the unconscious), Jung's "prudent man" seeks alibis for his courage in the attic. In the attic rats and mice can make considerable noise. But let the master of the house arrive unexpectedly and they return to the silence of their holes. The creatures moving about in the cellar are slower, less scampering, more mysterious.

In the attic, fears are easily "rationalized." Whereas in the cellar, even for a more courageous man than the one Jung mentions, "rationalization" is less rapid and less clear; also it is never *definitive*. In the attic, the day's experiences can always efface the fears of night. In the cellar, darkness prevails both day and night, and even when we are carrying a lighted candle, we see shadows dancing on the dark walls.

If we follow the inspiration of Jung's *explanatory* example to a complete grasp of psychological reality, we encounter a co-operation between psychoanalysis and phenomenology which must be stressed if we are to dominate the human phenomenon. As a matter of fact, the image has to be understood phenomenologically in order to give it psychoanalytical efficacy. The phenomenologist, in this case, will accept the psychoanalyst's image in a spirit of shared trepidation. He will revive the primitivity and the specificity of the fears. In our civilization, which has the same light everywhere, and puts electricity in its cellars, we no longer go to the cellar carrying a candle. But the unconscious cannot be civilized. It takes a candle when it goes to the cellar. The psychoanalyst cannot cling to the superficiality of metaphors or comparisons, and the phenomenologist has to pursue every image to the very end. Here, so far from reducing and explaining, so far from

comparing, the phenomenologist will exaggerate his exaggeration. Then, when they read Poe's *Tales* together, both the phenomenologist and the psychoanalyst will understand the value of this achievement. For these tales are the realization of childhood fears. The reader who is a "devotee" of reading will hear the accursed cat, which is a symbol of unredeemed guilt, mewling behind the wall.<sup>1</sup> The cellar dreamer knows that the walls of the cellar are buried walls, that they are walls with a single casing, walls that have the entire earth behind them. And so the situation grows more dramatic, and fear becomes exaggerated. But where is the fear that does not become exaggerated? In this spirit of shared trepidation, the phenomenologist listens intently, as the poet Thoby Marcelin puts it, "flush with madness." The cellar then becomes buried madness, walled-in tragedy. Stories of criminal cellars leave indelible marks on our memory, marks that we prefer not to deepen; who would like to re-read Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado"? In this instance, the dramatic element is too facile, but it exploits natural fears, which are inherent to the dual nature of both man and house.

Although I have no intention of starting a file on the subject of human drama, I shall study a few ultra-cellars which prove that the cellar dream irrefutably increases reality.

If the dreamer's house is in a city it is not unusual that the dream is one of dominating in depth the surrounding cellars. His abode wants the undergrounds of legendary fortified castles, where mysterious passages that run under the enclosing walls, the ramparts and the moat put the heart of the castle into communication with the distant forest. The château planted on the hilltop had a cluster of cellars for roots. And what power it gave a simple house to be built on this underground clump!

In the novels of Henri Bosco, who is a great dreamer of houses, we come across ultra-cellars of this kind. Under the house in *L'Antiquaire* (The Antique Dealer, p. 60), there is a "vaulted rotunda into which open four doors." Four

<sup>1</sup> Edgar Allan Poe: "The Black Cat."

corridors lead from the four doors, dominating, as it were, the four cardinal points of an underground horizon. The door to the East opens and "we advance subterraneously far under the houses in this neighborhood . . ." There are traces of labyrinthine dreams in these pages. But associated with the labyrinths of the corridor, in which the air is "heavy," are rotundas and chapels that are the sanctuaries of the secret. Thus, the cellar in *L'Antiquaire* is oneirically complex. The reader must explore it through dreams, certain of which refer to the suffering in the corridors, and others to the marvelous nature of underground palaces. He may become quite lost (actually as well as figuratively). At first he does not see very clearly the necessity for such a complicated geometry. Just here, a phenomenological analysis will prove to be effective. But what does the phenomenological attitude advise? It asks us to produce within ourselves a reading pride that will give us the illusion of participating in the work of the author of the book. Such an attitude could hardly be achieved on first reading, which remains too passive. For here the reader is still something of a child, a child who is entertained by reading. But every good book should be re-read as soon as it is finished. After the sketchiness of the first reading comes the creative work of reading. We must then know *the problem* that confronted the author. The second, then the third reading . . . give us, little by little, the solution of this problem. Imperceptibly, we give ourselves the illusion that both the problem and the solution are ours. The psychological nuance: "I should have written that," establishes us as phenomenologists of reading. But so long as we have not acknowledged this nuance, we remain psychologists, or psychoanalysts.

What, then, was Henri Bosco's literary problem in his description of the ultra-cellar? It was to present in one central concrete image a novel which, in its broad lines, is the novel of *underground maneuvers*. This worn-out metaphor is illustrated, in this instance, by countless cellars, a network of passages, and a group of individual cells with frequently padlocked doors. There, secrets are pondered,

of the  
"Real-World"  
Labyrinth

projects are prepared. And, underneath the earth, action gets under way. We are really in the intimate space of underground maneuvers. It is in a basement such as this that the antique dealers, who carry the novel forward, claim to link people's fates. Henri Bosco's cellar, with its four subdivisions, is a loom on which fates are woven. The hero relating his adventures has himself a ring of fate, a ring carved with signs that date from some remote time. However, the strictly underground, strictly diabolical, activities of the *Antiquaires* fail. For at the very moment when two great destinies of love are about to be joined, one of the loveliest sylphs dies in the vault of the accursed house—a creature of the garden and the tower, the one who was supposed to confer happiness. The reader who is alive to the accompaniment of cosmic poetry that is always active beneath the psychological story in Bosco's novels, will find evidence, in many pages of this book, of the dramatic tension between the aerial and the terrestrial. But to live such drama as this, we must re-read the book, we must be able to displace the interest or carry out our reading in the dual interest of man and things, at the same time that we neglect nothing of the anthropo-cosmic tissue of a human life.

In another dwelling into which this novelist takes us, the ultra-cellar is no longer under the sign of the sinister projects of diabolical men, but is perfectly natural, inherent to the nature of an underground world. By following Henri Bosco, we shall experience a house with cosmic roots.

This house with cosmic roots will appear to us as a stone plant growing out of the rock up to the blue sky of a tower.

The hero of *L'Antiquaire* having been caught on a compromising visit, has been obliged to take to the cellar. Right away, however, interest in the actual story is transferred to the cosmic story. Realities serve here to reveal dreams. At first we are in the labyrinth of corridors carved in the rock. Then, suddenly, we come upon a body of murky water. At this point, description of events in the

novel is left in abeyance and we only find compensation for our perseverance if we participate by means of our own night dreams. Indeed, a long dream that has an elemental sincerity is inserted in the story. Here is this poem of the cosmic cellar:<sup>1</sup>

"Just in front of me, water appeared from out of the darkness.

"Water! . . . An immense body of water! . . . And what water! . . . Black, stagnant, so perfectly smooth that not a ripple, not a bubble, marred its surface. No spring, no source. It had been there for thousands of years and remained there, caught unawares by the rock, spread out in a single, impassive sheet. In its stone matrix, it had itself become this black, still rock, a captive of the mineral world. It had been subjected to the crushing mass, the enormous upheavals, of this oppressive world. Under this heavy weight, its very nature appeared to have been changed as it seeped through the thicknesses of the lime slabs that held its secret fast. Thus it had become the densest fluid element of the underground mountain. Its opacity and unwonted<sup>2</sup> consistency made an unknown substance of it, a substance charged with phosphorescences that only appeared on the surface in occasional flashes. These electric tints, which were signs of the dark powers lying on the bottom, manifested the latent life and formidable power of this still dormant element. They made me shiver."

But this shiver, we sense, is no longer human fear; this is cosmic fear, an anthropo-cosmic fear that echoes the great legend of man cast back into primitive situations. From the cavern carved in the rock to the underground, from the underground to stagnant water, we have moved from a constructed to a dreamed world; we have left fiction for poetry. But reality and dream now form a whole. The house, the cellar, the deep earth, achieve totality through depth. The house has become a natural being whose fate

<sup>1</sup> Henri Bosco, *L'Antiquaire*, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> In my study of the material imagination: *L'eau et les rêves*, there was mention of thick, consistent water, heavy water. This was imagined by a great poet, by Edgar Allan Poe, cf. chapter II.

is bound to that of mountains and of the waters that plough the land. The enormous stone plant it has become would not flourish if it did not have subterranean water at its base. And so our dreams attain boundless proportions.

The cosmic daydream in this passage of Bosco's book gives the reader a sense of restfulness, in that it invites him to participate in the repose to be derived from all deep oneiric experience. Here the story remains in a suspended time that is favorable to more profound psychological treatment. Now the account of real events may be resumed; it has received its provision of "cosmicity" and daydream. And so, beyond the underground water, Bosco's cellar recovers its stairways. After this poetic pause, description can begin again to unreel its itinerary. "A very narrow, steep stairway, which spiraled as it went higher, had been carved in the rock. I started up it" (p. 155). By means of this gimlet, the dreamer succeeds in getting out of the depths of the earth and begins his adventures in the heights. In fact, at the very end of countless tortuous, narrow passages, the reader emerges into a tower. This is the ideal tower that haunts all dreamers of old houses: it is "perfectly round" and there is "brief light" from "a narrow window." It also has a vaulted ceiling, which is a great principle of the dream of intimacy. For it constantly reflects intimacy at its center. No one will be surprised to learn that the tower room is the abode of a gentle young girl and that she is haunted by memories of an ardent ancestress. The round, vaulted room stands high and alone, keeping watch over the past in the same way that it dominates space.

On this young girl's missal, handed down from her distant ancestress, may be read the following motto:

*The flower is always in the almond.*

With this excellent motto, both the house and the bed-chamber bear the mark of an unforgettable intimacy. For there exists no more compact image of intimacy, none that is more sure of its center, than a flower's dream of the future while it is still enclosed, tightly folded, inside its seed. How

we should love to see not happiness, but pre-happiness remain enclosed in the round chamber!

Finally, the house Bosco describes stretches from earth to sky. It possesses the verticality of the tower rising from the most earthly, watery depths, to the abode of a soul that believes in heaven. Such a house, constructed by a writer, illustrates the verticality of the human being. It is also oneirically complete, in that it dramatizes the two poles of house dreams. It makes a gift of a tower to those who have perhaps never even seen a dove-cote. A tower is the creation of another century. Without a past it is nothing. Indeed, a new tower would be ridiculous. But we still have books, and they give our day-dreams countless dwelling-places. Is there one among us who has not spent romantic moments in the tower of a book he has read? These moments come back to us. Daydreaming needs them. For on the keyboard of the vast literature devoted to the function of inhabiting, the tower sounds a note of immense dreams. How many times, since reading *L'Antiquaire*, have I gone to live in Henri Bosco's tower!

This tower and its underground cellars extend the house we have just been studying in both directions. For us, this house represents an increase in the verticality of the more modest houses that, in order to satisfy our daydreams, have to be differentiated in height. If I were the architect of an oneiric house, I should hesitate between a three-story house and one with four. A three-story house, which is the simplest as regards essential height, has a cellar, a ground floor and an attic; while a four-story house puts a floor between the ground floor and the attic. One floor more, and our dreams become blurred. In the oneiric house, topography only knows how to count to three or four.

Then there are the stairways: one to three or four of them, all different. We always go down the one that leads to the cellar, and it is this going down that we remember, that characterizes its oneirism. But we go both up and

down the stairway that leads to the bed-chamber. It is more commonly used; we are familiar with it. Twelve-year olds even go up it in *ascending scales*, in thirds and fourths, trying to do fifths, and liking, above all, to take it in strides of four steps at a time. What joy for the legs to go up four steps at a time!

Lastly, we always go up the attic stairs, which are steeper and more primitive. For they bear the mark of ascension to a more tranquil solitude. When I return to dream in the attics of yester-year, I never go down again.

Dreams of stairs have often been encountered in psychoanalysis. But since it requires an all-inclusive symbolism to determine its interpretations, psychoanalysis has paid little attention to the complexity of mixed revery and memory. That is why, on this point, as well as on others, psychoanalysis is better suited to the study of dreams than of daydreams. The phenomenology of the daydream can untangle the complex of memory and imagination; it becomes necessarily sensitive to the differentiations of the symbol. And the poetic daydream, which creates symbols, confers upon our intimate moments an activity that is polysymbolic. Our recollections grow sharper, the oneiric house becomes highly sensitized. At times, a few steps have engraved in our memories a slight difference of level that existed in our childhood home.<sup>1</sup> A certain room was not only a door, but a door plus three steps. When we recall the old house in its longitudinal detail, everything that ascends and descends comes to life again dynamically. We can no longer remain, to quote Joë Bousquet, men with only one story. "He was a man with only one story: he had his cellar in his attic."<sup>2</sup>

By way of antithesis, I shall make a few remarks on dwellings that are oneirically incomplete.

In Paris there are no houses, and the inhabitants of the big city live in superimposed boxes. "One's Paris room,

<sup>1</sup> *La terre et les rêveries du repos*, pp. 105-106.

<sup>2</sup> Joë Bousquet, *La neige d'un autre âge*, p. 100.

inside its four walls," wrote Paul Claudel, "is a sort of geometrical site, a conventional hole, which we furnish with pictures, objects and wardrobes within a wardrobe."<sup>1</sup> The number of the street and the floor give the location of our "conventional hole," but our abode has neither space around it nor verticality inside it. "The houses are fastened to the ground with asphalt, in order not to sink into the earth."<sup>2</sup> They have no roots and, what is quite unthinkable for a dreamer of houses, sky-scrapers have no cellars. From the street to the roof, the rooms pile up one on top of the other, while the tent of a horizonless sky encloses the entire city. But the height of city buildings is a purely exterior one. Elevators do away with the heroism of stair climbing so that there is no longer any virtue in living up near the sky. *Home* has become mere horizontality. The different rooms that compose living quarters jammed into one floor all lack one of the fundamental principles for distinguishing and classifying the values of intimacy.

But in addition to the intimate value of verticality, a house in a big city lacks cosmicity. For here, where houses are no longer set in natural surroundings, the relationship between house and space becomes an artificial one. Everything about it is mechanical and, on every side, intimate living flees. "The streets are like pipes into which men are sucked up." (Max Picard, *loc. cit.*, p. 119).

Moreover, our houses are no longer aware of the storms of the outside universe. Occasionally the wind blows a tile from a roof and kills a passer-by in the street. But this roof crime is only aimed at the belated passer-by. Or lightning may for an instant set fire to the window-panes. The house does not tremble, however, when thunder rolls. It trembles neither with nor through us. In our houses set close one up against the other, we are less afraid. A hurricane in Paris has not the same personal offensiveness towards the dreamer that it has towards the hermit's house. We shall understand this better, in fact, when we have studied, further on, *the house's situation in the world*, which gives us, quite

<sup>1</sup> Paul Claudel, *Oiseau noir dans le soleil levant*, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> Max Picard, *La fuite devant Dieu*, trans. p. 121.

concretely, a variation of the metaphysically summarized situation of man in the world.

Just here the philosopher who believes in the salutary nature of vast daydreams is faced with a problem: how can one help confer greater cosmicity upon the city space that is exterior to one's room? As an example, here is one dreamer's solution to the problem of noise in Paris:

When insomnia, which is the philosopher's ailment, is increased through irritation caused by city noises; or when, late at night, the hum of automobiles and trucks rumbling through the Place Maubert causes me to curse my city-dweller's fate, I can recover my calm by living the metaphors of the ocean. We all know that the big city is a clamorous sea, and it has been said countless times that, in the heart of night in Paris, one hears the ceaseless murmur of flood and tide. So I make a sincere image out of these hackneyed ones, an image that is as much my own as though I myself had invented it, in line with my gentle mania for always believing that I am the subject of what I am thinking. If the hum of cars becomes more painful, I do my best to discover in it the roll of thunder, of a thunder that speaks to me and scolds me. And I feel sorry for myself. So there you are, unhappy philosopher, caught up again by the storm, by the storms of life! I dream an abstract-concrete daydream. My bed is a small boat lost at sea; that sudden whistling is the wind in the sails. On every side the air is filled with the sound of furious klaxoning. I talk to myself to give myself cheer: there now, your skiff is holding its own, you are safe in your stone boat. Sleep, in spite of the storm. Sleep in the storm. Sleep in your own courage, happy to be a man who is assailed by wind and wave.

And I fall asleep, lulled by the noise of Paris.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, everything corroborates my view that the image of the city's ocean roar is in the very "nature of things," and that it is a true image. It is also a salutary thing to

<sup>1</sup> I had written this page when I read in Balzac's *Petites misères de la vie conjugale* (edited by "Formes et Reflets" 1952, vol. 12, p. 1302): "When your house trembles in its beams and turns on its keel, you think you are a sailor, rocked by the breeze."

naturalize sound in order to make it less hostile. Just in passing, I have noted the following delicate nuance of the beneficent image in the work of a young contemporary poet, Yvonne Caroutch,<sup>1</sup> for whom dawn in the city is the "murmur of an empty sea shell." Being myself an early riser, this image helps me to wake up gently and naturally. However, any image is a good one, provided we know how to use it.

We could find many other images on the theme of the city-ocean. Here is one that occurred to a painter. The art-critic and historian, Pierre Courthion,<sup>2</sup> tells that when Gustave Courbet was confined in the Sainte Pélagie prison, he wanted to paint a view of Paris, as seen from the top floor of the prison. In a letter to a friend, Courbet wrote that he was planning to paint it "the way I do my marines: with an immensely deep sky, and all its movement, all its houses and domes, imitating the tumultuous waves of the ocean."

Pursuant to my method, I have retained the coalescence of images that refuse an absolute anatomy. I had to mention incidentally the house's "cosmicity." But we shall return later to this characteristic. Now, after having examined the verticality of the oneiric house, we are going to study the centers of condensation of intimacy, in which daydream accumulates.

## VI

We must first look for centers of simplicity in houses with many rooms. For as Baudelaire said, in a palace, "there is no place for intimacy."

But simplicity, which at times is too rationally vaunted, is not a source of high-powered oneirism. We must therefore experience the primitiveness of refuge and, beyond

<sup>1</sup> Yvonne Caroutch, *Veilleurs endormis*, éd. Debresse, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Courthion, *Courbet raconté par lui-même et par ses amis*. Published by Cailler, 1948, vol. I, p. 278. General Valentine did not allow Courbet to paint his city-ocean on the grounds that he "was not in prison for the purpose of amusing himself."

situations that have been experienced, discover situations that have been dreamed; beyond positive recollections that are the material for a positive psychology, return to the field of the primitive images that had perhaps been centers of fixation for recollections left in our memories.

A demonstration of imaginary primitive elements may be based upon the entity that is most firmly fixed in our memories: the childhood home.

For instance, in the house itself, in the family sitting-room, a dreamer of refuges dreams of a hut, of a nest, or of nooks and corners in which he would like to hide away, like an animal in its hole. In this way, he lives in a region that is beyond human images. If a phenomenologist could succeed in living the primitiveness of such images, he would locate elsewhere, perhaps, the problems that touch upon the poetry of the house. We find a very clear example of this concentration of the joy of inhabiting in a fragment of Henri Bachelin's life of his father.<sup>1</sup>

Henri Bachelin's childhood home could not have been simpler. Although no different from the other houses in the oversized Morvan village where he was born, it was nevertheless a roomy home with ample outbuildings in which the family lived in security and comfort. The lamp-lit room where, in the evening, the father read the lives of the saints—he was Church sexton as well as day-laborer—was the scene of the little boy's daydreaming of primitiveness, daydreaming that accentuated solitude to the point of imagining that he lived in a hut in the depth of the forest. For a phenomenologist who is looking for the roots of the function of inhabiting, this passage in Henri Bachelin's book represents a document of great purity. The essential lines are the following (p. 97): "At these moments, I felt very strongly—and I swear to this—that we were cut off from the little town, from the rest of France, and from the entire world. I delighted in imagining (although I kept my feelings to myself) that we were living in the heart of

<sup>1</sup> Henri Bachelin, *Le serviteur*, 6th edition, Mercure de France, with an excellent preface by René Dumesnil, who relates the life and work of this forgotten writer.

the woods, in the well-heated hut of charcoal burners; I even hoped to hear wolves sharpening their claws on the heavy granite slab that formed our doorstep. But our house replaced the hut for me, it sheltered me from hunger and cold; and if I shivered, it was merely from well-being." Addressing his father—his novel is constantly written in the second person—Bachelin adds: "Comfortably seated in my chair, I basked in the sensation of your strength."

Thus, the author attracts us to the center of the house as though to a center of magnetic force, into a major zone of protection. He goes to the very bottom of the "hut dream," which is well-known to everyone who cherishes the legendary images of primitive houses. But in most hut dreams we hope to live elsewhere, far from the over-crowded house, far from city cares. We flee in thought in search of a real refuge. Bachelin is more fortunate than dreamers of distant escape, in that he finds the root of the hut dream in the house itself. He has only to give a few touches to the spectacle of the family sitting-room, only to listen to the stove roaring in the evening stillness, while an icy wind blows against the house, to know that at the house's center, in the circle of light shed by the lamp, he is living in the round house, the primitive hut, of prehistoric man. How many dwelling places there would be, fitted one into the other, if we were to realize in detail, and in their hierarchical order, all the images by means of which we live our daydreams of intimacy. How many scattered values we should succeed in concentrating, if we lived the images of our daydreams in all sincerity.

In this passage from Bachelin's book, the hut appears to be the tap-root of the function of inhabiting. It is the simplest of human plants, the one that needs no ramifications in order to exist. Indeed, it is so simple that it no longer belongs to our memories—which at times are too full of imagery—but to legend; it is a center of legend. When we are lost in darkness and see a distant glimmer of light, who does not dream of a thatched cottage or, to go more deeply still into legend, of a hermit's hut?

A hermit's hut. What a subject for an engraving! Indeed

real images are *engravings*, for it is the imagination that engraves them on our memories. They deepen the recollections we have experienced, which they replace, thus becoming imagined recollections. The hermit's hut is a theme which needs no variations, for at the simplest mention of it, "phenomenological reverberation" obliterates all mediocre resonances. The hermit's hut is an engraving that would suffer from any exaggeration of picturesqueness. Its truth must derive from the intensity of its essence, which is the essence of the verb "to inhabit." The hut immediately becomes centralized solitude, for in the land of legend, there exists no adjoining hut. And although geographers may bring back photographs of hut villages from their travels in distant lands, our legendary past transcends everything that has been seen, even everything that we have experienced personally. The image leads us on towards extreme solitude. The hermit is *alone* before God. His hut, therefore, is just the opposite of the monastery. And there radiates about this centralized solitude a universe of meditation and prayer, a universe outside the universe. The hut can receive none of the riches "of this world." It possesses the felicity of intense poverty; indeed, it is one of the glories of poverty; as destitution increases it gives us access to absolute refuge.

This valorization of a center of concentrated solitude is so strong, so primitive, and so unquestioned, that the image of the distant light serves as a reference for less clearly localized images. When Thoreau heard the sound of a horn in the depths of the woods, this image with its hardly determined center, this sound image that filled the entire nocturnal landscape, suggested repose and confidence to him. That sound, he said, is as friendly as the hermit's distant candle. And for those of us who remember, from what intimate valley do the horns of other days still reach us? Why do we immediately accept the common friendship of this sound world awakened by the horn, or the hermit's world lighted by its distant gleam? How is it that images as rare as these should possess such power over the imagination?

Great images have both a history and a prehistory; they are always a blend of memory and legend, with the result that we never experience an image directly. Indeed, every great image has an unfathomable oneiric depth to which the personal past adds special color. Consequently it is not until late in life that we really revere an image, when we discover that its roots plunge well beyond the history that is fixed in our memories. In the realm of absolute imagination, we remain young late in life. But we must lose our earthly Paradise in order actually to live in it, to experience it in the reality of its images, in the absolute sublimation that transcends all passion. A poet meditating upon the life of a great poet, that is, Victor-Emile Michelet meditating upon the life of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, wrote: "Alas! we have to grow old to conquer youth, to free it from its fetters and live according to its original impulse."

Poetry gives not so much a nostalgia for youth, which would be vulgar, as a nostalgia for the expressions of youth. It offers us images as we should have imagined them during the "original impulse" of youth. Primal images, simple engravings are but so many invitations to start imagining again. They give us back areas of being, houses in which the human being's certainty of being is concentrated, and we have the impression that, by living in such images as these, in images that are as stabilizing as these are, we could start a new life, a life that would be our own, that would belong to us in our very depths. When we look at images of this kind, when we read the images in Bachelin's book, *we start musing on primitiveness*. And because of this very primitiveness, restored, desired and experienced through simple images, an album of pictures of huts would constitute a textbook of simple exercises for the phenomenology of the imagination.

In line with the distant light in the hermit's hut, symbolic of the man who keeps vigil, a rather large dossier of literary documentation on the poetry of houses could be studied from the single angle of the lamp that glows in the window. This image would have to be placed under one of the greatest of all theorems of the imagination of the world



of light: *Tout ce qui brille voit* (All that glows sees). Rimbaud expressed in three syllables the following cosmic theorem: "Nacre voit" (Mother-of-pearl sees).<sup>1</sup> The lamp keeps vigil, therefore it is vigilant. And the narrower the ray of light, the more penetrating its vigilance.

The lamp in the window is the house's eye and, in the kingdom of the imagination, it is never lighted out-of-doors, but is enclosed light, which can only filter to the outside. A poem entitled *Emmuré* (Walled-in), begins as follows:

*Une lampe allumée derrière la fenêtre  
Veille au coeur secret de la nuit.*

(A lighted lamp in the window  
Watches in the secret heart of night.)

while a few lines above the same poet speaks:

*Du regard emprisonné  
Entre ses quatre murs de pierre<sup>2</sup>*

(Of a gaze imprisoned  
Between its four stone walls.)

In Henri Bosco's novel, *Hyacinthe* which, together with another story, *Le jardin d'Hyacinthe* (Hyacinth's Garden), constitutes one of the most astounding psychological novels of our time, a lamp is waiting in the window, and through it, the house, too, is waiting. The lamp is the symbol of prolonged waiting.

By means of the light in that far-off house, the house sees, keeps vigil, vigilantly waits.

When I let myself drift into the intoxication of inverting daydreams and reality, that faraway house with its light becomes for me, before me, a house that is looking out—its turn now!—through the keyhole. Yes, there is someone in that house who is keeping watch, a man is working there while I dream away. He leads a dogged existence, whereas

<sup>1</sup> Rimbaud, *Oeuvres Complètes*, published by Le Grand-Chêne, L'Asynne, p. 321.

<sup>2</sup> Christiane Barucoa, *Antée*, Cahiers de Rochefort, p. 5.

I am pursuing futile dreams. Through its light alone, the house becomes human. It sees like a man. It is an eye open to night.

But countless other images come to embellish the poetry of the house in the night. Sometimes it glows like a firefly in the grass, a creature with a solitary light:

*Je verrai vos maisons comme des vers luisants au creux  
des collines<sup>1</sup>*

(I shall see your houses like fire-flies in the hollow of the hills.)

Another poet calls houses that shine on earth "stars of grass"; and Christiane Barucoa speaks elsewhere of the lamp in the human house as an

*Etoile prisonnière prise au gel de l'instant*

(Imprisoned star caught in the instant's freezing.)

In such images we have the impression that the stars in heaven come to live on earth, that the houses of men form earthly constellations.

With ten villages and their lights, G. E. Clancier nails a Leviathan constellation to the earth:

*Une nuit, dix villages, une montagne,  
Un léviathan noir clouté d'or.<sup>2</sup>*

(A night, ten villages, a mountain,  
A black, gold-studded Leviathan.)

Erich Neumann has analyzed the dream of a patient who, while looking at the stars from the top of a tower, saw them rise and shine under the earth; they emerged from the bowels of the earth. In this obsession, the earth was not, however, a mere likeness of the starry sky, but the great life-giving mother of the world, the creator of night

<sup>1</sup> Hélène Morange, *Asphodèles et Pervenches*, Séghers, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> G.-E. Clancier, *Une Voix*, Gallimard, p. 172.

and the stars.<sup>1</sup> In his patient's dream, Neumann shows the force of the Mother-Earth (*Mutter-Erde*) archetype. Poetry comes naturally from a daydream, which is less *insistent* than a night-dream; it is only a matter of an "instant's freezing." But the poetic document is none the less indicative. A terrestrial sign is set upon a celestial being. The archeology of images is thus illumined by the poet's swift, instantaneous image.

I have dwelt somewhat at length on this apparently commonplace image, in order to show that images are incapable of repose. Poetic reverie, unlike somnolent reverie, never falls asleep. Starting with the simplest of images, it must always set the waves of the imagination radiating. But however cosmic the isolated house lighted by the star of its lamp may become, it will always symbolize solitude. I should like to quote one last text which stresses this solitude.

In the *Fragments from an intimate diary* that precede a French collection of Rilke's letters,<sup>2</sup> we find the following scene: one very dark night, Rilke and two friends perceive "the lighted casement of a distant hut, the hut that stands quite alone on the horizon before one comes to fields and marshlands." This image of solitude symbolized by a single light moves the poet's heart in so personal a way that it isolates him from his companions. Speaking of this group of three friends, Rilke adds: "Despite the fact that we were very close to one another, we remained three isolated individuals, seeing night for the first time." This expression can never be meditated upon enough, for here the most commonplace image, one that the poet had certainly seen hundreds of times, is suddenly marked with the sign of "the first time," and it transmits this sign to the familiar night. One might even say that light emanating from a lone watcher, who is also a determined watcher, attains to the power of hypnosis. We are hypnotized by solitude, hypnotized by the gaze of the solitary house; and the tie that binds

<sup>1</sup> Erich Neumann, *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, 1955, pp. 40-41.

<sup>2</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, *Choix de lettres*, Stock, 1934, p. 15.

us to it is so strong that we begin to dream of nothing but a solitary house in the night.

*O Licht im schlafenden Haus!*<sup>1</sup>

(O light in the sleeping house!)

With the example of the hut and the light that keeps vigil on the far horizon, we have shown the concentration of intimacy in the refuge, in its most simplified form. At the beginning of this chapter, on the contrary, I tried to differentiate the house according to its verticality. Now, still with the aid of pertinent literary documents, I shall attempt to give a better account of the house's powers of protection against the forces that besiege it. Then, after having examined this dynamic dialectics of the house and the universe, we shall study a number of poems in which the house is a world in itself.

<sup>1</sup> Richard von Schaukal, *Anthologie de la poésie allemande*, Stock, II, p. 125.