*Gaston Bachelard*

# the poetics of space

*Translated from the French by Maria Jolas*

*With a new Foreword by John R. Stilgoe*

*Beacon Press, Boston*

Beacon Press
25 Beacon Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108-2892

Beacon Press books
are published under the auspices of
the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

First published in French under the title *La poétique de l'espace,*
© 1958 by Presses Universitaires de France

Translation © 1964 by The Orion Press, Inc.

First published as a Beacon paperback in 1969
by arrangement with Grossman Publishers, Inc.

Foreword to the 1994 Edition © 1994 by John R. Stilgoe

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

04 12

Text design by Wladislaw Finne

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Bachelard, Gaston, 1884–1962.
[Poétique de l'espace. English]
The poetics of space / Gaston Bachelard ; translated from the French by Maria Jolas, with a new foreword by John R. Stilgoe.
p. cm.
Originally published: New York : Orion Press, 1964. Translation of: La poétique de l'espace.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-8070-6473-4
1. Space and time. 2. Imagination. 3. Poetry. I. Jolas, M. II. Title.
B2430.B253P6313 1994
114—dc20 93-27874

# contents

Foreword to the 1994 Edition vii
Foreword to the 1964 Edition xi
Introduction xv
1 The House. From Cellar to Garret. The Significance of the Hut 3
2 House and Universe 38
3 Drawers, Chests and Wardrobes 74
4 Nests 90
5 Shells 105
6 Corners 136
7 Miniature 148
8 Intimate Immensity 183
9 The Dialectics of Outside and Inside 211
10 The Phenomenology of Roundness 232

# 3
# drawers, chests and wardrobes

I always feel a slight shock, a certain mild, philological pain, whenever a great writer uses a word in a derogatory sense. To begin with, all words do an honest job in our everyday language, and not even the most ordinary among them, those that are attached to the most commonplace realities, lose their poetic possibilities as a result of this fact. But somehow, when Bergson uses the word "drawer," he does it disdainfully. Indeed, the word always appears in the rôle of a controversial metaphor, giving orders and passing judgment, always in the same way. Our philosopher dislikes compartmented arguments.

This seems to me to be a good example for demonstrating the radical difference between image and metaphor. I shall therefore insist upon this difference before returning to my examination of the images of intimacy that are in harmony with drawers and chests, as also with all the other hiding-places in which human beings, great dreamers of locks, keep or hide their secrets.

Although there is a superabundance of metaphor in Bergson's writings, in the last analysis, his images are rare. It is as though, for him, imagination were entirely metaphorical. Now a metaphor gives concrete substance to an impression that is difficult to express. Metaphor is related to a psychic being from which it differs. An image, on the contrary, product of absolute imagination, owes its entire being to the imagination. Later, when I plan to go more deeply into the comparison between metaphor and image, we shall see that metaphor could not be studied phenomenologically, and that in fact, it is not worth the trouble, since it has no phenomenological value. At the most, it is a



*fabricated image,* without deep, true, genuine roots. It is an ephemeral expression. It is, or should be, one that is used only once, in passing. We must be careful, therefore, not to give it too much thought; nor should the reader think too much about it. And yet, what a success the drawer metaphor has had with Bergson's followers!

Contrary to metaphor, we can devote our reading being to an image, since it confers being upon us. In fact, the image, which is the pure product of absolute imagination, is a phenomenon of being; it is also one of the specific phenomena of the speaking creature.

## II

As is well known, the drawer metaphor, in addition to certain others, such as "ready-made garments," is used by Bergson to convey the inadequacy of a philosophy of concept. Concepts are drawers in which knowledge may be classified; they are also ready-made garments which do away with the individuality of knowledge that has been experienced. The concept soon becomes lifeless thinking since, by definition, it is classified thinking.

I should like to point out a few passages which show the polemical nature of the drawer metaphor in Bergsonian philosophy.

In *L'Evolution creatrice* (1907, p. 5) we read: "Memory, as I have tried to prove,[1] is not the faculty for classifying recollections in a drawer, or writing them down in a register. Neither register nor drawer exists . . ."

Faced with any new object, reason asks (see *L'Evolution creatrice,* p. 52) "in which of its earlier categories the new object belongs? In which ready-to-open drawer shall we put it? With which ready-made garments shall we invest it?" Because, of course, a ready-made garment suffices to clothe a poor rationalist. In the second Oxford conference of May 27, 1911 (later included in *La Pensée et le mouvant,* p. 172), Bergson shows the indigence of the image according to which there exist "here and there in the

1 This refers to Bergson's *Matière et Mémoire,* chapters II and III.

brain, keep-sake boxes that preserve fragments of the past."

In the Introduction to Metaphysics (*La Pensée et le mouvant,* p. 221) Bergson states that all Kant saw in science was "frames within frames."

He was still haunted by this metaphor when he wrote his essay entitled *La Pensée et le mouvant,* 1922, which, in many respects, summarizes his philosophy. On page 80 of the 26th edition, he says again that in memory words are not deposited "in a cerebral or any other kind of drawer."

If this were the occasion to do so, it could be demonstrated that in contemporary science, the active invention of concepts, necessitated by the evolution of scientific thinking, is greater than those determined by simple classifications that "fit into one another," as Bergson expresses it (*La Pensée et le mouvant*). In opposition to a philosophy that seeks to discover the conceptualistic features in contemporary science, the "drawer" metaphor remains a crude instrument for polemical discussion. But for our present problem, which is that of distinguishing between metaphor and image, this is an example of a metaphor that hardens and loses even the spontaneousness of the image. This is particularly noticeable in the simplified Bergsonism taught in the classrooms, where the polemical metaphor of the drawer in the filing cabinet comes back time and again in elementary analyses that set out to attack stereotyped ideas. It is even possible, when listening to certain lectures, to foresee that the drawer metaphor is about to appear. And when we sense a metaphor in advance there can be no question of imagination. This metaphor—which, I repeat, is a crude polemical instrument—together with a few others that hardly vary at all, has mechanized the debates that Bergsonians carry on with the philosophies of knowledge, particularly with what Bergson himself, using an epithet that passed quick judgment, called "dry" rationalism.

III

These rapid remarks are intended to show that a metaphor



should be no more than an accident of expression, and that it is dangerous to make a thought of it. A metaphor is a false image, since it does not possess the direct virtue of an image formed in spoken revery.

A great novelist has used this Bergsonian metaphor but it was for the purpose of characterizing the psychology of an arrant fool, rather than that of a Kantian rationalist. I refer to Henri Bosco's *Monsieur Carre-Benoit à la campagne,* in which the drawer metaphor is presented in reverse: it is not the intelligence that is a filing cabinet; the filing cabinet is an intelligence.

The only piece of furniture, among all that he possessed, for which Carre-Benoit felt real affection was his solid oak filing cabinet, which he contemplated with satisfaction whenever he passed in front of it. Here, at least, was something that was reliable, that could be counted on. You saw what you were looking at and you touched what you were touching. Its proportions were what they should be, everything about it had been designed and calculated by a meticulous mind for purposes of utility. And what a marvelous tool! It replaced everything, memory as well as intelligence. In this well-fitted cube there was not an iota of haziness or shiftiness. Once you had put something in it, even if you put it a hundred or ten thousand more times, you could find it again in the twinkling of an eye, as it were. Forty-eight drawers! Enough to hold an entire well-classified world of positive knowledge. M. Carre-Benoit attributed a sort of magic power to these drawers concerning which he said that they were "the foundations of the human mind."[1]

It should not be forgotten that in the novel, this is said by a very commonplace man. But the novelist who makes him say it is an unusually gifted one. For with this filing cabinet he has succeeded in embodying the dull administrative spirit. And since stupidity must be turned to ridicule, Henri Bosco's hero has hardly spoken when, as he opens the drawers of the "august cabinet," he finds that the maid has used it as a place to put mustard, salt, rice, coffee,

[1] Cf. *loc. cit.* p. 126.

peas and lentils. His reasoning cabinet had become a larder.

Perhaps, after all, this image could be used to illustrate a "philosophy of having," since it may be taken both literally and figuratively. There are many erudite minds that lay in provisions. We shall see later, they say to themselves, whether or not we'll use them.

IV

By way of preamble to our positive study of images of secrecy, we began by examining a hastily formulated metaphor that does not really unite exterior realities with intimate reality. Then, in this passage from Bosco's book, we succeeded in getting a direct, characterological hold, based on a clearly outlined reality. Now we must return to our studies of the imagination, all of them positive. With the theme of drawers, chests, locks and wardrobes, we shall resume contact with the unfathomable store of daydreams of intimacy.

Wardrobes with their shelves, desks with their drawers, and chests with their false bottoms are veritable organs of the secret psychological life. Indeed, without these "objects" and a few others in equally high favor, our intimate life would lack a model of intimacy. They are hybrid objects, subject objects. Like us, through us and for us, they have a quality of intimacy.

Does there exist a single dreamer of words who does not respond to the word wardrobe? . . . . .

And to fine words correspond fine things, to grave-sounding words, an entity of depth. Every poet of furniture—even if he be a poet in a garret, and therefore has no furniture—knows that the inner space of an old wardrobe is deep. A wardrobe's inner space is also *intimate space,* space that is not open to just anybody.

But words carry with them obligations. Only an indigent soul would put just anything in a wardrobe. To put just anything, just any way, in just any piece of furniture, is the mark of unusual weakness in the function of inhabiting. In the wardrobe there exists a center of order that protects the entire house against uncurbed disorder. Here order reigns, or rather, this is the reign of order. Order is not merely geometrical; it can also remember the family history. A poet knew this:[1]



*Ordonnance. Harmonie.*
*Piles de draps de l'armoire*
*Lavande dans le linge.*

(Orderliness. Harmony.
Piles of sheets in the wardrobe
Lavender in the linen.)

With the presence of lavender the history of the seasons enters into the wardrobe. Indeed, lavender alone introduces a *Bergsonian durée* into the hierarchy of the sheets. Should we not wait, before using them, for them to be, as they say in France, sufficiently "lavendered"? What dreams are reserved for us if we can recall, if we can return to, the land of tranquility! Memories come crowding when we look back upon the shelf on which the lace-trimmed, batiste and muslin pieces lay on top of the heavier materials: "A wardrobe," writes Milosz,[2] "is filled with the mute tumult of memories."

Bergson did not want the faculty of memory to be taken for a wardrobe of recollections. But images are more demanding than ideas. And the most Bergsonian of his disciples, being a poet, recognized that memory is a wardrobe. The following great line was written by Charles Péguy:

*Aux rayons de mémoire et aux temples de l'armoire*[3]

(On the shelves of memory and in the temples of the wardrobe)

But the real wardrobe is not an everyday piece of furniture. It is not opened every day, and so, like a heart that confides in no one, the key is not on the door.

1 Colette Wartz, *Paroles pour l'autre*, p. 26.
2 Milosz, *Amoureuse initiation*, p. 217.
3 Quoted by Albert Béguin in *Eve*, p. 49.

*—L'armoire était sans clefs! . . . Sans clefs la grande armoire*
*On regardait souvent sa porte brune et noire*
*Sans clefs! . . . C'était étrange!—On rêvait bien des fois*
*Aux mystères dormant entre ses flancs de bois*
*Et l'on croyait ouir, au fond de la serrure*
*Béante, un bruit lointain, vague et joyeux murmure.*[1]

(The wardrobe had no keys! . . . No keys had the big wardrobe
Often we used to look at its brown and black door
No keys! . . . It was strange! Many a time we dreamed
Of the mysteries lying dormant between its wooden flanks
And we thought we heard, deep in the gaping lock
A distant sound, a vague and joyful murmur.)

Here Rimbaud designates a perspective of hope: what good things are being kept in reserve in the locked wardrobe? This time it is filled with promise, it is something more than a family chronicle.

André Breton, with a single word, shows us the marvels of unreality by adding a blessed impossibility to the riddle of the wardrobe. In *Revolver aux cheveux blancs* (p. 110) he writes with typical surrealist imperturbability:[2]

*L'armoire est pleine de linge*
*Il y a même des rayons de lune que je peux déplier.*

(The wardrobe is filled with linen
There are even moonbeams which I can unfold.)

This carries the image to a point of exaggeration that no reasonable mind would care to attain. But exaggeration is always at the summit of any living image. And to add fantasy linen is to draw a picture, by means of a volute of words, of all the superabundant blessings that lie folded

1 Arthur Rimbaud, *Les étrennes des orphelins.*
2 Another poet, Joseph Rouffange, writes:

*Dans le linge mort des placards*
*Je cherche le surnaturel*
(In the dead linen in cupboards
I seek the supernatural.)
*Deuil et luxe du coeur*, éd. Rougerie.



in piles between the flanks of an abandoned wardrobe. How big, how enveloping, is an old sheet when we unfold it. And how white the old tablecloth was, white as the moon on the wintry meadow! If we dream a bit, Breton's image seems perfectly natural.

Nor should we be surprised by the fact that an entity which possesses such great wealth of intimacy should be so affectionately cared for by housewives. Anne de Tourville says of a poor woodcutter's wife: "She had started rubbing, and the high-lights that played on the wardrobe cheered the heart."[1] An armoire radiates a very soft light in the room, a communicative light. It is understandable, therefore, that a poet watching the October light play over the wardrobe should write

*Le reflet de l'armoire ancienne sous*
*La braise du crépuscule d'octobre*[2]

(The reflection on the old wardrobe
Cast by the live coals of an October twilight.)

If we give objects the friendship they should have, we do not open a wardrobe without a slight start. Beneath its russet wood, a wardrobe is a very white almond. To open it, is to experience an event of whiteness.

V

An anthology devoted to small boxes, such as chests and caskets, would constitute an important chapter in psychology. These complex pieces that a craftsman creates are very evident witnesses of the *need for secrecy*, of an intuitive sense of hiding places. It is not merely a matter of keeping a possession well guarded. The lock doesn't exist that could resist absolute violence, and all locks are an invitation to thieves. A lock is a psychological threshold. And how it defies indiscretion when it is covered with ornaments! What "complexes" are attached to an orna-

1 Anne de Tourville, *Jabadao*, p. 51.
2 Claude Vigée, *loc. cit.* p. 161.

mented lock! Denise Paulme[1] writes that among the Bambaras, the center of the lock is sculptured "in the form of a crocodile, or a lizard, or a turtle . . ." The power that opens and shuts must possess the power of life, human power, or the power of a sacred animal. "And among the Dogons, in the Sudan, locks are decorated with two human figures representing the first man and first woman." (*Loc. cit.*, p. 35).

But rather than challenge the trespasser, rather than frighten him by signs of power, it is preferable to mislead him. This is where boxes that fit into one another come in. The least important secrets are put in the first box, the idea being that they will suffice to satisfy his curiosity, which can also be fed on false secrets. In other words, there exists a type of cabinet work that is "complexualistic."

For many people, the fact that there should exist a homology between the geometry of the small box and the psychology of secrecy does not call for protracted comment. However, novelists occasionally make note of this homology in a few lines. One of Franz Hellens' characters, wishing to make his daughter a present, hesitates between a silk scarf and a small, Japanese lacquer box. He chooses the box "because it seems to be better suited to her reserved nature."[2] A rapid, simple notation of this kind may well escape the attention of the hurried reader. And yet it is at the very core of a strange tale, in which father and daughter hide the *same* mystery. This same mystery is heading towards the same fate, and the author applies all his talents to making us feel this identity of intimate spirits. Indeed, this is a book that should be added to a dossier on the pent-up soul, with the box for emblem. For it shows us that the psychology of reserved persons is not depicted by listing their negative attitudes, cataloguing their detachments or recounting their moments of silence! Watch them,

1 Denise Paulme, *Les Sculptures de l'Afrique noire*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1956, p. 12.

2 Franz Hellens, *Fantômes vivants*, p. 126. Cf. the line in Baudelaire's *Les petits poèmes en prose*, p. 32, in which he speaks of "the egoist, shut up like a box."



rather, in the moment of positive joy that accompanies the opening of a new box, like this young girl who receives implicit permission from her father to hide her secrets; that is to say, to conceal her mystery. In this story by Franz Hellens, two human beings "understand" each other without a word, without knowing it, in fact. Two pent-up human beings communicate by means of the same symbol.

## VI

In an earlier chapter, I stated that to say one "reads" a house or a room, makes sense. We might also say that writers let us read their treasure-boxes, it being understood that a well-calculated geometrical description is not the only way to write "a box." And yet Rilke has spoken of the pleasure he felt when he saw a box that closed well. "A box-top that is in good condition," he wrote, "with its edges unbattered, should have no other desire than to be on its box."[1] A literary critic will probably ask how it was possible, in as well-written a work as the *Cahiers*, for Rilke to have overlooked such a "commonplace" as this. The objection will be overridden, however, if one accepts the germ of daydream contained in the gently closed box. And how far the word *desire* goes! I am reminded of an optimistic proverb according to which: "Every pot has its cover." The world would get along better if pots and covers could always stay together.

Gentle closing calls for gentle opening, and we should want life always to be well oiled.

If we "read" a Rilke box, we shall see how inevitably a secret thought encounters the box image. In a letter to Liliane,[2] Rilke wrote: "Everything that touches upon this ineffable experience must remain quite remote, or only give rise to the most cautious handling at some future time. Yes, I must admit that I imagine it taking place one day the way those heavy, imposing seventeenth-century locks work; the kind that filled the entire top of a chest with

1 Rilke, *Cahiers*, p. 266, French translation.

2 Claire Goll, *Rilke et les femmes*, p. 70.

all sorts of bolts, clamps, bars and levers, while a single, easily turned key pulled this entire apparatus of defense and deterrence from its most central point. But the key is not alone. You know too that the keyholes of such chests are concealed under a button or under a leather tongue which also only responds to some secret pressure." What concrete images to express the "Open, Sesame" formula! And what secret pressure, what soft words, are needed to gain access to a spirit, to calm a Rilkean heart!

There is no doubt that Rilke liked locks. But who doesn't like both locks and keys? There is an abundant psychoanalytical literature on this theme, so that it would be easy to find documentation on the subject. For our purpose, however, if we emphasized sexual symbols, we should conceal the depth of the dreams of intimacy. Indeed, one is probably never more aware of the monotony of the symbols used in psychoanalysis than in such an example. When a conflict between lock and key appears in a night dream, for psychoanalysis this is a clear sign, so clear, in fact, that it cuts the story short. When we dream of locks and keys there's nothing more to confess. But poetry extends well beyond psychoanalysis on every side. From a dream it always makes a daydream. And the poetic daydream cannot content itself with the rudiments of a story; it cannot be tied to a knotty complex. The poet lives a daydream that is awake, but above all, his daydream remains in the world, facing worldly things. It gathers the universe together around and in an object. We see it open chests, or condense cosmic wealth in a slender casket. If there are jewels and precious stones in the casket, it is the past, a long past, a past that goes back through generations, that will set the poet romancing. The stones will speak of love, of course. But of power too, and fate. All of that is so much greater than a key and its lock!

The casket contains the things that are *unforgettable*, unforgettable for us, but also unforgettable for those to whom we are going to give our treasures. Here the past, the present and a future are condensed. Thus the casket is memory of what is immemorial.



If we take advantage of images to indulge in psychology, we find that every important recollection—Bergson's pure recollection—is set in its little casket. The pure recollection, the image that belongs to us alone, we do not *want* to communicate; we only give its picturesque details. Its very core, however, is our own, and we should never want to tell all there is to tell about it. This in no way resembles unconscious repression, which is an awkward form of dynamism, with symbols that are conspicuous. But every secret has its little casket, and this absolute, well-guarded secret is independent of all dynamism. Here the intimate life achieves a synthesis of Memory and Will. This is *Iron Will,* not against the outside, or against other persons, but beyond all the psychology of being "against." Surrounding certain recollections of our inner self, we have the security of an *absolute casket.*[1]

But with this absolute casket, I too am now talking in metaphors. Let's get back to our images.

VII

Chests, especially small caskets, over which we have more complete mastery, are objects *that may be opened.* When a casket is closed, it is returned to the general community of objects; it takes its place in exterior space. But it opens! For this reason, a philosopher-mathematician would say that it is the first differential of discovery. In a later chapter I plan to study the dialectics of inside and outside. But from the moment the casket is opened, dialectics no longer exist. The outside is effaced with one stroke, an atmosphere of novelty and surprise reigns. The outside has no more meaning. And quite paradoxically, even cubic dimensions have no more meaning, for the reason that a new dimension—the dimension of intimacy—has just opened up.

[1] In a letter to Aubanel, Mallarmé wrote: "Every man has a secret in him, many die without finding it, and will never find it because they are dead, it no longer exists, nor do they. I am dead and risen again with the jeweled key of my last spiritual casket. It is up to me now to open it in the absence of any borrowed impression, and its mystery will emanate in a sky of great beauty." (Letter dated July 16, 1866.)

For someone who is a good judge of values, and who sees things from the angle of the values of intimacy, this dimension can be an infinite one.

As proof, I should like to quote a marvelously perceptive fragment from an article by Jean-Pierre Richard,[1] which offers a veritable theorem of the topo-analysis of intimate space. Jean-Pierre Richard is a writer who analyzes literary works in terms of their dominant images. Here he allows us to relive the moment in Poe's story, *The Gold Bug*, when the casket is opened. To begin with, the jewels found in it are of inestimable value. They could not, of course, be "ordinary" jewels. However, the treasure was not inventoried by a lawyer, but by a poet. It is fraught with "unknown and possible elements, it becomes again an imaginary object, generating hypotheses and dreams, it deepens and escapes from itself toward an infinite number of other treasures." Thus it seems that at the moment when the story reaches its conclusion, a conclusion that is as cold as a police record, it has lost nothing of its oneiric richness. The imagination can never say: was that all, for there is always more than meets the eye. And as I have said several times, an image that issues from the imagination is not subject to verification by reality.

Having achieved valorization of the contents by valorization of the container, Jean-Pierre Richard makes the following penetrating comment: "We shall never reach the bottom of the casket." The infinite quality of the intimate dimension could not be better expressed.

Sometimes, a lovingly fashioned casket has interior perspectives that change constantly as a result of daydream. We open it and discover that it is a dwelling-place, that a house is hidden in it. To illustrate, there exists a marvel of this kind in a prose poem by Charles Cros, in which the poet carries on where the cabinet-maker left off. Beautiful objects created by skillful hands are quite naturally "carried on" by a poet's daydream. And for Charles Cros, imaginary beings are born of the "secret" of a marquetry casket.

[1] Jean-Pierre Richard, "Le vertige de Baudelaire," in the review *Critique*, nos. 100-101, p. 777.



"In order to detect its mystery, in order to go beyond the perspectives of marquetry, to reach the imaginary world through the little mirrors," one had to possess a "rapid glance, fine hearing, and be keenly attentive." Indeed, the imagination sharpens all of our senses. The imagining attention prepares our attention for instantaneousness.

And the poet continues: "Finally I caught a glimpse of the clandestine festivity. I heard the tiny minuets, I guessed the complicated web of entanglements that was being woven inside the casket.

"The doors open, and we see what appears to be a parlor for insects, the white, brown and black floors are seen in exaggerated perspective."[1]

But when the poet closes the casket, inside it, he sets a nocturnal world into motion. (p. 88).

"When the casket is closed, when the ears of the importunate are stopped with sleep, or filled with outside noises, when the thoughts of men dwell upon some positive object,

"Then strange scenes take place in the casket's parlor, several persons of unwonted size and appearance step forth from the little mirrors."

This time, in the darkness of the casket, it is the enclosed reflections that reproduce objects. The inversion of interior and exterior is experienced so intensely by the poet that it brings about an inversion of objects and reflections.

And once more, after dreaming of this tiny parlor enlivened by the dancing of figurines of another day, the poet opens the casket (p. 90): "The lights go out, the guests, composed of belles and their beaux, and a few aging relatives, disappear pell-mell, into the mirrors and along the corridors and colonnades, without giving a thought to their dignity, while chairs and tables and hangings evaporate into thin air.

"And the parlor remains empty, silent and clean." Serious minded persons may then say with the poet, "It's a marquetry casket, and that's all." Echoing this reasonable opinion, the reader who is averse to playing with inver-

[1] Charles Cros, *Poèmes et Prose*, Gallimard, p. 87.

sions of large and small, exterior and intimacy, may also say: "It's a poem and that's all." "And nothing more."[1]

In reality, however, the poet has given concrete form to a very general psychological theme, namely, that there will always be more things in a closed, than in an open, box. To verify images kills them, and it is always more enriching to *imagine* than to *experience*.

The action of the secret passes continually from the hider of things to the hider of self. A casket is a dungeon for objects. And here is a dreamer who feels that he shares the dungeon of its secret. We should like to open it, and we should also like to open our hearts. The following lines by Jules Supervielle can be read in a dual sense:[2]

*Je cherche dans des coffres qui m'entourent brutalement*
*Mettant des ténèbres sens dessus dessous*
*Dans des caisses profondes, profondes*
*Comme si elles n'étaient plus de ce monde.*

(Roughly I search in coffers that surround me
Putting disarray in the darkness
Of cases that are deep, deep
As though they had departed this life.)

He who buries a treasure buries himself with it. A secret is a grave, and it is not for nothing that a man who can be trusted with a secret boasts that he is "like the grave."

All intimacy hides from view, and I recall that the late Joë Bousquet wrote:[3] "No one sees me changing. But who sees me? I am my own hiding-place."

It is not my intention, in this volume, to recall the problem presented by the intimacy of substances, which I have outlined elsewhere.[4] I shall, however, point out the nature of the two dreamers who seek the intimacy of man and the

[1] In English in the text.
[2] Jules Supervielle, *Gravitations*, p. 17.
[3] Joë Bousquet, *La neige d'un autre âge*, p. 90.
[4] Cf. *La terre et les rêveries du repos*, Chapter I, and *La formation de l'esprit scientifique*, contribution to a psychoanalysis of objective knowledge, Chapter VI.



intimacy of matter. Jung has shown very clearly this correspondence between dreamers of alchemy (cf. *Psychologie und Alchemie*). In other words, there is only one *place* for the *superlative* element of what is *hidden*. The hidden in men and the hidden in things belong in the same topoanalysis, as soon as we enter into this strange region of the *superlative*, which is a region that has hardly been touched by psychology. And to tell the truth, all positivity makes the superlative fall back upon the comparative. To enter into the domain of the superlative, we must leave the positive for the imaginary. We must listen to poets.