

Space, Light, and Sun: Figures of Flight

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The setting sun soars
above the mountain.
— Wang Lang

The longing for aerial flight has been one of mankind's¹ most consuming preoccupations. A burning desire for lightness, verticality, and flight is opposed to the fatality of universal gravity. Jules Michelet, in his study of the subject, entitled *L'Oiseau* (The Bird), which he wrote toward the end of his life, deems this aspiration for upward motion to be characteristic of all nature. He writes: "It is the cry of all the earth, of the world and of all life . . . : 'Wings! We want wings, we want flight and movement.'"² From ancient times, this basic element of physical experience has nourished human imagination and been a source of motivation for the pursuit of scientific knowledge. Mesopotamian civilization had its winged divinities and spirits; indeed the Western tradition of depicting winged persons has been linked to the influence of Mesopotamian art.³ As Jules Duhem has pointed out, four centuries before Jesus Christ, Aristotle himself was already exploring certain notions that have become part of the history of ideas of aeronautics and astronomy.⁴ Among these are the ideas of void, weight, the resistance of air, and the movement of birds and other flying creatures. Duhem has also demonstrated that Aristotle proposed an explanation, as imperfect as it was, for what causes projectiles to fall from the sky. Throughout the ages, humanity has continually expressed its desire to fly: "Man is proud of being free and of leaning on nothing," Elias Canetti has written in regard to man's upright position.⁵ Striking examples of the impulse to fly are to be found not only in scientific discourse but in myths, literature, and works of art.

The Call of Space

This dialectic of lightness and weight is first expressed in images of motion depicted in an imagined space. At all times, humans have

wanted to escape upwards from the limits of their terrestrial condition. In connection with this desire, they have developed a vision of the universe in which the expanse of the sky is opposed to the surface of the earth as mountain peaks are opposed to lowlands or even to the abyss. The legend of Icarus, told by Ovid and a celebrated part of the history of the idea of flight, eloquently expresses this opposition.⁶ An earthly labyrinth is opposed to the sky's expanse; and this labyrinth, which is a place of captivity, looks out onto light and sky. Young Icarus escapes from this labyrinth. In his dazzling ascent he is carried between the labyrinth and the sun, which act as poles of meaning; even as this hero with "wings of wax" falls, this fundamental opposition is maintained: now it is expressed as an opposition between sun and sea.

This situation, in which a contrasting vision of sky and sun stands out against a backdrop of imagination, was recently explored in novelistic terms, in Christoph Ransmayr's magnificent description of a tapestry scene:

everything that slithered, floated, hunted or fled, seemed pregnant with the desire for flight . . . even as the sea was roiled by storm, and navigation became impossible, pink sea-gulls, swallows and petrels were visible . . . as if the violence of the waves only caused the birds' joy at their own lightness to grow . . . while a predator, at the bottom of a dense copse, sat shredding its victim, larks soared up into the sky, singing above the countryside. As abyss-like as the earth became, there were always birds flying above it, laughing at earthly obstacles and traps . . . as if their flight were a form of mockery, expressed in a thousand different forms and addressed to earthly weight and the vertical condition.⁷

The heart of this novel, *Le Dernier des Mondes* (The Last of Worlds), concerns Ovid's exile on the shores of the Black Sea; one of his disciples, coming from Rome, seeks the poet and his manuscript, *The Metamorphoses*. The topographical framework of the novel is a universe of minerals, a rocky and devastated landscape, which at the same time is a kind of petrified reality. In the course of his search, the disciple meets up with a deaf and dumb weaver. This weaver, after describing, "with nimble gestures that she *inscribed in the air with her fingers*,"⁸ her dream to see the wonders of Rome, leads her visitor into a stuffy, dark room. As she opens the shutters, a world of light and birds comes alive. It is here, in this room, that the tapestries described above have been stored; here we find "heavenly worlds" thrown across a "filthy floor," and skies "adorned with birds in flight."⁹ In the description there is a striking contrast

between, on the one hand, the joy of flight and the “animation” of the sky (to use Ransmayr’s word), and, on the other, the trials of terrestrial existence. The expression of this contrast is intensified by the dream inscribed in the air, and the shutters opening onto a world of light and birds. The last tapestry unrolled on the ground depicts the flight of Icarus; in the context of the novel, it is further evidence of the presence of Ovid in the region.

Directions of Flight

The space within which flight takes place is described as if from the point of view of earth. Although “the feeling of rising,” to use Bachelard’s expression,¹⁰ is generally favored because of the dynamism of the imagination, it is not the only direction that aerial flight can take. Along with the incredibly numerous – and varied – examples of the impulse to rise, flight in other directions is of course also a possibility.

Sometimes it is necessary for flight to be horizontal; for example, in the already mentioned legend of Icarus. Upon the recommendation of Daedalus, Icarus decides to fly equidistant from the sea and the sun: in order for his flight to succeed he must, like Daedalus, follow a median path, that is to say, a horizontal one. The Greeks, at that time, accorded great importance to the sea, and analogies between sea and sky, and water and wind, are common in the literature and painting of the period.¹¹ In the case of Icarus, the rhythmic beating of his wings is reminiscent of oars; and the layer of moist, dense air that hovers above the sea is supposed to offer better resistance to the wings.¹² Moreover, Daedalus, the maker of wings, may in the past have been a ship’s carpenter; at least this what Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux’s incisive analysis suggests. Also, there are many striking analogies, in the Icarus story, between flight and navigation, between the fabrication of wings and the construction of a ship, and between the path to the sky and the path to the sea.¹³

It sometimes happens that a fall is described in terms of upward flight, or that the opposite happens, or even that the understanding of the direction of a flight varies from one person to another:¹⁴ such is the case in *The Thousand and One Nights*, in the cycle of stories concerning the bird Roc, told in “The Second Voyage of Sinbad.”¹⁵ This flight is comprised of several stages, and its main episode occurs within the confines of a steep and narrow chasm. Sinbad, abandoned on a desert isle, attaches himself to the foot of the giant bird

Roc, in order to be carried off the island. The eagle's long ascent into the sky is followed by a sudden and steep descent into the bottom of a deep valley, where the bird snatches up a snake. The hero, once on the ground, and without realizing that he is at the bottom of a chasm that he will call "my tomb," detaches himself from Roc. It is impossible for him to climb out by himself. However, he sees that the area is strewn with diamonds and that men are gathered at the top of the chasm. Hoping to acquire the jewels, the men are throwing morsels of meat onto the diamonds. The eagles descend into the chasm to gather the meat for their young and at the same time carry off the diamonds that have stuck to the meat. Sinbad attaches a long piece of meat to himself and is finally snatched up by an eagle and carried out of the abyss – in fact, to the summit of a mountain.

It can be seen here that the meaning of flight is dissociated from its usual topographical landmarks. For the diamond merchants, the object is below, at the "summit" of the abyss, while for Sinbad the aim is to reach the "foot" of the abyss. The presence of snakes at the bottom of the precipice has a negative meaning for the hero, but a positive one for the eagle. And the action of the bird snatching up the snake suggests a spatial dimension. Furthermore, the diamonds, images of light, are also found in these same depths. The bird flies upward but also, and especially, out of the abyss. For its part, the eagle rises as it falls. Equally, apart from all individual objectives, everyone – Sinbad, the merchants, and the young to be fed – share one thing: all of them depend on the eagles in order to reach the "heights."

Sometimes the pattern grows even more complicated, and the directions and themes of flight are not so much reversed as confused. A complex myth widespread among the Montagnis people of Labrador well illustrates this situation.¹⁶ In this story, the hero is carried off in the dead of night to a lofty peak by an eagle who intends to devour him at daybreak. Yet the ascent through the cold of night proves fortunate. Wrapped in the warmth of the eagle's feathers, the hero takes pleasure in singing and observing, on the ground, his native village dotted by campfires. In dawn's light he realizes that the mountain's peak is shaped like a razor, and that it is stained with the blood of the predator's latest victims. The hero, who manages to escape from the menacing eagle, returns the next night and sets fire to the huge eagles' nest that he himself had intentionally built for this use. The eagles whose wings have burned die because they are unable to fly. The hero is able to return to his vil-

lage by wrapping himself in the moss-covered carcass of another eagle, in which he rolls over the edge of the slope. At the sight of trees and the feeling of stopped movement, he realizes that he has arrived at his destination, that is, the ground.

Although the alternation of day and night structures the mythical framework and adds to the meaning of each episode, it remains difficult to define clearly the significance of rising and falling. Although a rhythm is established, the relationship between day and night is confused, as are the relations among the events. For example, one is surprised to find that the nocturnal ascent of the hero is described as fortunate, since he is wrapped in the feathers of the enemy. And his fall, which takes place during the day, happens without fear or complications.

It is, however, certain that the symbolic functions of death increase around this "abyss-like" peak: to begin with, there is the death that the hero escapes, then the deaths of the eagles; also, from a visual perspective, there is the razor-shaped peak that in the end becomes a fiery nest. As to the sky: it can easily be imagined to be on the ground itself, since the view of the village lighted by campfires suggests the image of a starry vault. The objective of this solitary "flight" is thus located in the "sky," that is, on the earth. It should also be noted that both the ascent and the "fall" of the hero are described with equal enthusiasm. Moreover, both in coming and going, he makes use of the bird's feathers or its carcass; he is able to rise – even as he first experiences flight – and he is able to fall: he moves, on his own, through space, toward an objective. This leads to the conclusion that, both in his bird's body and in his human spirit, the hero truly flies. In contrast with men who value rising alone, he is like a bird, favoring no particular direction. All of space is his sky, and in particular the ground of his village. Like the birds and, for example, like the bird Roc in *The Thousand and One Nights* (and better than flying men), he rose and he descended. During the time it took to come and go (and to build a nest!), the hero was part of the feathered tribe.

Heavenly "Sciences"

Flight opens up the possibility of exploring the immensity of space. By combining free movement with the power of vision, flight allows us to glimpse the distant dimension of heavenly things, and even to explore their unknown side. More broadly, flight presents a means

of learning about the world; it gives an opportunity to travel about it in all directions, to study and know the world in its entirety.¹⁷

Like mythologies, spatial “sciences” articulate and explore the vertical dimensions of the universe. This inquiry leads to the development of fields of basic “knowledge” that take up questions related to the structure of the world, its unity, and the harmony of its parts. It is on the basis of this “knowledge” that mythologies develop their initial cosmic concepts. The resulting “cartographies” of the heavens and the rest of the universe – whose spiritual sources lie deep within these cultures – lay the groundwork for the first descriptions and explanations of the origins of the world. In numerous myths flight is an essential element in the establishment of the “cosmic space” that assures this unity and harmony.

In the story of *Genesis* (1, 1–31), which describes the origin of the Creation, God begins by *ordering* space; he creates the heavens and the earth, setting in motion a series of developments.¹⁸ On the first day he creates light, on the second the *expanse of sky*. The creation, on the fourth day, of the sun and moon not only underscores the idea of a vertical perspective but serves to reinforce the separation between the earth and the vault of heaven. Motion is the next thing to appear, then animate beings. As Clive Hart has emphasized, the creation of birds is described as an important event, and occurs immediately following the creation of motion.¹⁹ With the words, “Let the birds fly above the earth in the expanse of sky” (*Genesis*, 1, 20), God entrusts the feathered tribe with the role of mediator between the heavens and humanity; at the same time, the vision of a unified universe is achieved.

In other myths of genesis, birds – whose role is to bear the immensity of the universe – are directly linked to the act of creation itself. In the East Indies, in a Bornean myth of the Ngagu tribe, the creation of the world, and especially the appearance of mankind, is ascribed to the descent of a pair of primordial birds.²⁰ This *Calaos* couple, born of a double divinity in a dualistic system, enters into battle within a cosmic tree, a symbol of totality (divine and cosmic); out of this battle is born the first human couple, whose native village is located in primordial waters. Their last-born child crawled onto the earth and becomes mankind’s first ancestor. This story is pervaded by an atmosphere of harmony and unity.

Many tales and legends are based on the knowledge of, or regular contact with, flying creatures who circulate freely in space, with or without wings. We can point to the phenomenon, in ancient Greek

legend, of frequent ascents by heroes as well as unions between heroes and Goddesses; this type of encounter comes up again and again in the works of Aristophanes and Pindar.

The existence of celestial women can be found in many cultures. There is an Indo-Chinese tale, with numerous variants, in which the heroine is a celestial spouse; this mythical cycle spread to Thailand, Burma, and even the Indo-Chinese archipelago. In it a bird-woman, in the company of other young women, comes to bathe in a pond, leaving her wings or feathery attire next to the water. A man who happens to be passing by causes the wings or attire to disappear and, in several versions of the story, marries her. Later the bird-woman recovers her ability to fly and escapes from her husband; her comings and goings between earth and sky grow frequent. In some versions, there is a reconciliation between the bird-woman and either light or a bolt of lightning.²¹

In other parts of Asia, one can trace similar basic elements of this widespread idea. In a legend found among Turkish and Mongol peoples, a man steals the clothes of a girl who, in the company of other young women, has come to bathe in a pond. He then marries her. Once she finds her clothes she reverts to her form of a *swan*. This beautiful image, Jean-Paul Roux argues, can be linked to "the ancient legend of Swan Lake, which is found among almost all contemporary Turkish and Mongol peoples, and which penetrated Turkey in ancient times."²²

Among the rituals that rely on imaginary flight, the example of shamanism is striking. Among Altaic and Siberian peoples (some of whose rituals researchers have been able to study in depth), flight takes place within a framework of a hierarchical or tiered universe, cut by a vertical axis. These rituals are rich in images of the beyond. During the ceremony, the wearing of a wide range of costumes and accessories contributes to the identification of the shaman with an animal form. Birds are frequent: such is the case with the Tongus tribe of Siberia, where the attributes of a bird are a necessary component of cosmic flight. Among the medicine men of Australia, magical flight is an obligatory stage in the initiation of apprentices. To reach these celestial heights (and its light), certain mythical elements are required by the ritual: a very well-lit grotto, quartz crystals, elaborate attire of wings and feathers, and a magic rope.²³

The tradition of auspices²⁴ and the institution of augurs can also be linked to the mythical search for knowledge of the heavens. From ancient times, the ritual observation of birds in flight has been

used in order to comprehend the will of the gods and interpret the enigmas of the sky. In ancient Rome in particular, the taking of auspices relied on the distribution of birds – by species – across the sky; a painstaking interpretation of the birds' flight would lead to the application of this or that series of rigorous measures.

In some cultures, as a result of the bird's role as mediator between heaven and earth, the migration of entire human populations could depend on the behavior of a sacred bird. Such was the case with the Aztecs, where solar symbolism was particularly well developed. In the foundation myth of Mexico, a hummingbird – the national bird of the Aztecs – played an essential role. It was this bird, the god of the midday sun and of war, who guided, by its oracles, the Elect of the Sun in its migration to the site of Mexico (and to the solar eagle, who was to serve as the sign of this promised land).

Another possibility was an aerial view from the celestial heights down onto earth. Here the results were geographic concepts of terrestrial expanses integrated within a mythical framework; such was the case in the narrative, *Description de la Terre habitée* (Description of the Inhabited Earth), written by Denys the Periegete and brilliantly analyzed by Christian Jacob in his acute study of ancient Greece.²⁵ Jacob reminds us that since the time of Herodotus, five centuries before Jesus Christ, the "direct view . . . had been the foundation of the knowledge and truth" of space. However, the images of earth that are presented to us by this second-century author are based on the assumption of a possible aerial view of the world.²⁶ In another work, he ascribed the origin of this knowledge to the Muses. This was a moment in history when the theme of flight – of the body or the spirit – was taking important cultural forms. It was precisely by relying on an imaginary framework in which flight was depicted as conceivable, although exceptional, that the geographic fictions of Denys the Periegete – as C. Jacob has shown – derived their essential believability and coherence; this necessarily aerial view was based on the conceivability of flight. More than a means of knowledge, and even more important than its role as a means of knowledge, the aerial voyage here clearly serves as the basis of the verisimilitude of a narrative that took place in imagination. As Jacob describes it, "the words of geographical description must gradually penetrate the reader's imagination, creating the contours of earth and a mosaic of countries and peoples."²⁷

Even in the eighteenth century, at the height of the Enlightenment, when rationalism had taken center stage and the inquiry into

human nature was at its most intense, Restif de la Bretonne, for his part, used elements of the fantastic, the utopian, and the fairy tale in his writing. He took an active interest in the “sciences” of space and the adventure of flight. In his *La Découverte australe* (The Southern Discovery), which appeared in 1781, Bretonne offered an exhaustive inventory of mythical and literary theories of various forms of human genesis, and also, with a combination of precision and imagination, described the adventures of a flying man.²⁸

At the Pinnacle of Flight: The Sun

At the acme of ascent, at the pinnacle of flight, is the sun, which, according to Plato, “is the brightest thing in the visible and material world.”²⁹ In his famous allegory of the cave, in which light is opposed to shadow in the same way as knowledge is to ignorance, Plato uncovers the joy of reaching truth through light. The gradual and difficult progression of a prisoner from darkness to light is at the same time an illustration of the soul’s ascent to a higher region.³⁰ The entire allegory is developed on the basis of an ascent from the shadows of the cave to solar reality, which is the site of truth.³¹

In many mythological narratives, the course of the sun is described in terms of motion combined with light and altitude. What makes these narratives specially relevant is the way in which the course of the sun can be seen as an analogy to aerial flight. Nietzsche – whom Bachelard calls “the very essence of the *vertical poet*, the *poet of the summit*, the *ascending poet*”³² – has expressed the proximity of these two concepts in a magnificent line: “Like hurricanes, suns fly along their route; this is their way.”³³

Celestial chariots, which are often depicted as resembling the sun, are sometimes the subject of complicated mythical actions that center around their flight through the air. Many images underscore the analogy between the path of these flights and the course of the sun. It is not unusual to find, in these narratives, mention of the importance of skillful handling of these chariots; the probable reason for this warning is its symbolic connection to the sun’s trajectory.

The myth of Phaethon is a remarkable illustration of the analogy between the path followed by the celestial chariot and the course of the sun. From dawn until dusk, the solar body journeys “on a track that slants in a broad curve, confined within the boundaries of three zones, avoiding the astral pole and Ursa Major, but also the North with its chilling winds.”³⁴ The ascent to the sky’s summit and the

descent are part of a vast geography of the sky. Phaethon, young and inexperienced, had persuaded his father, Apollo, to allow him for *one day* to take command of his father's chariot. However, the ardor of the horses, who "take flight . . . carried by their wings,"³⁵ combined with the dangers of the route, overcome Phaethon, and he is bewildered and terrified; he is unable either to follow the beaten path or to maintain proper altitude, that is, halfway between earth and the vault of heaven. As a result of his enormous failure, the stars are thrown into chaos and the earth is set afire. Cosmic disaster is averted only by the actions of mighty Zeus himself.

The description of Apollo's chariot is rich in solar symbolism; its sun-like sparkle is a result of precious stones and metals, in particular gold. These essential elements of the structure of the chariot, those that guide it, are thus highlighted:

The axles were of gold, and the chariot pole was too; gold were the rims of the wheels, and the spokes were of silver; on the yoke, in a regular pattern, were chrysolites and other precious stones, which reflected with brilliant light when Phoebus (Apollo) shone upon them.³⁶

The author of the Indian epic *Ramayana* describes the celestial chariot, *Pushpaka*, as rich in goldwork and solar symbolism.³⁷ Indeed, this golden celestial vehicle has the appearance of a sun; it is covered in jewels; emerald birds, silver and coral medallions, crystal inlay, a golden lotus, gilt-work. Rapid as thought, resplendent, it soars through the sky: "orbiting the sun like a lighthouse, it flies through space, infinitely resplendent."³⁸ No divine chariot, we are told, has ever surpassed it. The description of this chariot is reminiscent of the Sun Palace in the myth of Phaethon, "sparkling with the gleam of gold and of rubies," rich in gilt and frieze work, in which art outdoes its material.³⁹

Another Indian example – we shall leave aside the *Vedas*, which are a vast hymn to light – is the great Hindu temple of Konarak, which is dedicated to the Sun God, *Surya*. The form of the monument is a solar chariot, with twenty-four wheels (symbolizing the sun's radiance) and pulled by eight horses. The temple itself, of pink sandstone, represents a giant solar calendar.

The idea of associating the sun's course with flight and even with the celestial chariot can be found in a myth that was widespread throughout ancient China. In it, this relationship is taken a step further, joining suns and birds in a single allegory. The suns, of which there are ten, are inhabited by ravens.⁴⁰ Perched on the branches of the solar mulberry tree, named the Blood-crazed, the ravens appear

on its top branch, one after another, in order to light the world. One day they all appear on it at one time! In order to save the universe from fire, the hero, Yi, "an excellent archer and fowler," slays nine of the ten suns. Only one is left alive. This last sun, from then on, takes his place on a chariot, following a daily trajectory from the Valley of Boiling Waters, where the mulberry tree stands (and the sun rises), to Sad Springs (where it sets); by this means, he crosses the entire sky. Thus in this myth, in which the suns play the role of the firebird, only one is saved, by a hero who is himself of solar lineage. Like the phoenix, this sun-bird is henceforth unique.

The Taoist mythology, in which flight is seen as part of the search for longevity and immortality, includes many references to light and time.⁴¹ The characteristics of the sage are birdlike; his body, liberated and lightened, is covered with down and with feathers, and his arms have been transformed into wings. He sets off on a mystical flight to the isles of the blessed. Located in the East, these isles are at the same time a land of light. The founder of Taoism, Lao-Tze, who was deified during the Han dynasty, "stands at the center of the sun."⁴² According to an inscription of that era, his nine transformations are related to the course of the sun: they occur "in harmony with the course of the sun and the rhythm of the seasons."⁴³ Finally, the description of his first transformation is reminiscent of the phoenix, the solar bird whose attire Lao-Tze is wearing at the time.

Eye and Wing

The experience of flight connects the eye to motion: Michelet thoroughly grasped this close connection when he wrote of "the joy of seeing so much, so far, and so well, piercing the infinite with eye and wing. . . ." ⁴⁴ The author of the *L'Oiseau* affirms once more, and in a more explicit manner, in the same chapter, entitled "La Lumière. La Nuit" (The Light. The Night), "that flight depends as much on the eye as it does on the wing."⁴⁵

Merleau-Ponty, in his essay on painting, closely analyzes the intimate connection between vision and corporeal motion.⁴⁶ The philosopher, for whom "vision hinges on motion," explores the encounter between the body that "moves" and the world, between the body "that both sees and is visible" and the visible world that propels it and of which it is a part.⁴⁷ Summing up this totality, he affirms that "the visible world and the world of my motor activities are complete parts of an identical Being."⁴⁸ Pursuing his reflections,

he writes: "The human body is present when there is a crisscrossing of seeing and the visible, touching and the touched, between eye and other, . . . it is then that the spark of what is simultaneously feeling and felt [*sentant-sensible*] is lit."⁴⁹ It is tempting to try to apply these reflections on painting to the experience of flight, since in flight the body is specially imbued with what it sees. Can the study of the "art of space," to use Merleau-Ponty's expression, be linked to the study of flight, the exploration of space?

Cyrano de Bergerac, who at the end of his life wrote *L'Autre Monde ou les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil* (The Other World: Voyages to the Moon and the Sun), seems to furnish the literary basis for this enterprise.⁵⁰ In it the protagonist, Dyrcona (a virtual anagram of Cyrano), describes his adventures in a flying machine that he built by himself and which carries him to the sun; in certain passages concerning flight, the fusion of sight and the body is striking:

for, as my sight ranged here and there, it fell on my breast and, instead of stopping at the outer surface of my body, passed through it; then a moment later I perceived I was looking backwards with hardly a moment's interval. As if my body had become nothing but an *organ of sight* I felt my flesh, purged of its opacity, carry objects to my eyes, and my eyes to objects by its means.⁵¹

Gathered in this description are eyes in motion, a body seen and seeing itself, that is, seeking and self-conscious; and the back and forth between eyes and objects. Moreover, it is apparent that, for Cyrano-Dyrcona, sight passes through the body and perhaps even through the body's own sight. For his part, Merleau-Ponty writes:

It [the body] is not unaware of itself, not blind to itself, but radiates from a self. . . . Looking at all things [Merleau-Ponty writes somewhat later], the body can look at itself, and can recognize in what it sees "the other side" of its visual power. It sees in seeing, is touched in touching, it is palpable and visible for itself.⁵²

Thus the indivisibility that Merleau-Ponty defines as the basis of vision finds a dazzling illustration in de Bergerac's novel. In the world of Cyrano-Dyrcona, the whole body sees: it is "*an organ of vision*" at the same time as it is flesh; the back and forth of vision, within a space simultaneously narrow and enormous, is offered to the reader's view. As Merleau-Ponty conceives the question, things are "inlaid in the body's flesh, are part of its complete definition; the world itself is made from the fabric of the body."⁵³ And he adds:

an act of vision occurs or takes place in the middle of things, when something visible is offered to view, when vision becomes visible for itself and by the vision of all things, like the residue of fully crystalized water, endures in the indivisibility of feeling and felt.⁵⁴

Is this not exactly the same experience as Cyrano's literary character, except expressed by Merleau-Ponty in philosophical terminology? Moreover, Dyrcona embodies indivisibility – and the truth of the relationship between the seeing and visible body and the visible world – to the point of transparency:

At last, after striking a thousand times, without seeing them, the roof, the floor, and the walls of my chair, I understood that my cabin and I had become transparent.⁵⁵

Having arrived on the sun, the protagonist develops this idea further:

my astonished body was desirous of support from my eyes and since this transparent land which they penetrated could not support them. . . .⁵⁶

Thus, having landed on the sun, Dyrcona embodies the truth of this relationship to the point of *visible transparence*. He is so desirous of being exact in his description that he is careful to distinguish between the transparency of his eye-body and that of his "cabin."⁵⁷ At the same time, he underscores the special relation between the "organ of sight," that is, the body, and the sun:

One difficulty may embarrass the reader, which is how I could see myself and yet not see my box, since I had become as diaphanous as it was. To this I reply that the Sun doubtless acts differently upon living than upon inanimate bodies, since no portion of my flesh, of my bones, or of my entrails lost its natural color. . . .⁵⁸

Both Merleau-Ponty and Cyrano de Bergerac celebrate sight. Nevertheless, it may seem somewhat reckless to try to fuse painting with the experience of flight based solely on a similar relation of eyes to hands in the two cases. On this score, at least one caveat must be made. In the case of painting, the artist's visual experience is translated into a work of art; through this work the artist's experience is offered to the viewer. As Merleau-Ponty has written, it is at this moment that "a visible object of the second power arises, whose essence is carnal or is an icon of the initial experience."⁵⁹

In contrast to painting, the purpose of flight has nothing, *a priori*, to do with sharing an experience; in the eyes of others it remains

someone else's experience. However, in the case of *The Other World*, Cyrano *invents* his voyage to the sun; he never in fact carries it out. He shares with the reader the visual and corporeal experience that he has created out of whole cloth and which takes shape before our eyes. Rather than placing ourselves in an aerial adventure, the *work* causes us to share the adventure. Expressed in this form, Cyrano's visual, nonpictorial experience can be seen as similar to the pictorial experience described and analyzed by Merleau-Ponty. If a relationship has been successfully established between these authors, its basis is surely the enormous sensitivity to space that they share. How indeed can one express the vision, and even the sensation, of space with more vigor? How, finally, can the opposite of a blinding opacity be expressed with more precision and fullness?

Cyrano: Author of the Sun

Cyrano de Bergerac, "a fiery man if ever there was one,"⁶⁰ was at the height of his powers as a fantasist when he wrote *The Other World: Voyages to the Moon and the Sun*. The second part of the novel, "Voyage to the Sun," plunges us into a universe that is as much "solar" in its themes and allegories as it is in its narrative structure. Certainly, the narrator who tells his tale is dazzled by the sun's light: "This land [i.e., the sun] is like burning snowflakes, so luminous it is," he says upon arrival on "the great plains of day."⁶¹

As Hillel Schwartz has explained, a new image of the sun, which deviated from the orthodox view of it as a metaphysical symbol, arose in the seventeenth century.⁶² The philosophers of both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were more interested in the sun's heat than its light and, as Schwartz demonstrates, "we have here a movement that favors tactile and kinesthetic sensations over visual representations."⁶³ She also emphasizes that, for Descartes, who appears as a character in the novel, the sun emits more heat than light; and she also notes that the philosopher is heaped with praise. Another major scientific figure, for the author of *The Other World*, is Pierre Gassendi; this philosopher's research interests closely trace the major intellectual movements of his time.⁶⁴ And Cyrano himself in fact is a kind of disciple of Gassendi. The range of knowledge of his teacher is vast; and his work on reflective mirrors identifies light with heat. Finally, in order for his sun "to succeed," Cyrano borrows freely from various sources, ancient and contemporary. He is interested in both the star's heat and its light; and he also investigates it as a metaphysical symbol.

Dyrcona's flying machine combines all of Cyrano's ecstasies and anxieties, his knowledge and his doubts. Shaped like a large box topped by a crystal globe in the form of an icosahedron, the machine has multiple convex and concave facets that create the effect of a reflecting mirror. The heat of the sun's rays causes an increase of air pressure inside it and, as it is vented at the top and bottom, a furious wind passes through it; thus, depending on the amount of sunlight, Dyrcona's "little purple sky, enameled with gold," rises faster or slower.⁶⁵

For the protagonist, space is infinite, and light is *bottomless*. He does not, however, skirt the issue of time; nor does he forget its relationship to light.⁶⁶ Although his adventure takes place in the open framework of a continuous day, the protagonist never forgets about the alternation of day and night, even in this place where "night does not fall to distinguish day."⁶⁷ Yet the numerous temporal landmarks that dot the narrative serve more to mark temporal *duration* [durée] than rhythm; for example, the stages of the voyage; reflecting on death, Dyrcona is fascinated by the case of the inhabitants of the sun, whose lives are extremely long and who are eternally reborn. Finally, it may be significant that the only event marking a temporal rhythm is the regularity with which meals are served in *prison* (on the sun)!

Although Dyrcona's awareness of passing time remains in force, it does lose some of its precision. The use of phrases expressing an approximate measure accentuates the impression of an homogeneous temporal development: "somewhere toward the end of the week," "after having traveled, I believe, some two weeks," "after about four months of travel, as best I can calculate it."⁶⁸ It may be that the insistence on these imprecise temporal measurements is the author's attempt to highlight, by paradox, the extratemporal dimension, exceptional and sublime, of continuous solar light.

Cyrano's sun is a locus of transcendence and perfection. In spite of the skepticism with which he treats religious faith, the author sees in the star of light "the father and author of all things"; it was here, he writes, that "God placed his throne."⁶⁹

The sun is also the land of souls purified by fire. As Dyrcona explains it, they are drawn here by a principle of resemblance:

in a region near to the Sun . . . the souls are filled with fire and are clearer, more subtle and more penetrating than those of other animals in more distant spheres.⁷⁰

This perfection is progressive and can be observed on the spatial

level: "The Sun, in a region so near, purges bodies much more perfectly of their opacity."⁷¹ This same idea of continuous progress toward perfection is applied to the lives of the philosophers who inhabit the planet. In the course of their successive lives, they acquire more perfection and knowledge; their ability to make themselves diaphanous and to communicate without speech is tied to this perfection.

Along with this celebration of light, and perhaps to deepen or broaden it, a dialectic between *opacity* and *light* is developed; it is a source of images throughout the narrative. Obviously the opposition between the earth – and the other planets – and the sun is part of this dialectic; this fundamental opposition also finds expression in terms of the evolution of heavenly bodies: we learn that the light of each one is gradually extinguished over time and replaced by darkness. Finally, and especially, the partition of light on the sun's own surface necessitates a carving up of this surface into *opaque* (extinguished) *regions* and *luminous regions* – the former being illuminated by the latter. Cyrano describes the former as "lands . . . that without the light of the Sun, which can be seen from there, would be plunged in darkness."⁷² The Peoples of the Luminous Regions and the Peoples of the Opaque Regions develop this cartography in their very physical characteristics; the visitor to the sun becomes transparent or opaque depending on the region in which he finds himself.

Voyage to the Sun is buttressed by a second dialectic, as important as the first; this is the opposition between *lightness* and *heaviness*. The relationship between this opposition and the preceding one is close: lightness is associated with light, heaviness with opacity. For Cyrano, this is the framework within which the sun, symbol of light and lightness, attains its full meaning, and where flight finds its natural space! In this regard, it may be significant that, after arriving on the sun, Dyrcona continues to move with such a light step that it almost seems as though he were still flying:

I only remember that when I arrived there I walked lightly upon it; I only touched the ground by a point and I often rolled like a ball without finding it any more uncomfortable to walk with my head than my feet.⁷³

Perfection, whose relationship to light has already been underscored, is also linked to lightness; Dyrcona expresses it this way:

the imagination of these Solar People [who are more perfect than humans], which on account of the climate must be hotter, while for the

same reason their bodies must be lighter and their entities more mobile . . . I conceived . . . that without a miracle this imagination could produce all the miracles it had recently done.⁷⁴

In the lighted part of the sun, the protagonist witnesses a dazzling sight of metamorphosis that transcends perfection itself. According to him, the phenomenon is such that "perfection itself has never been able to fly here";⁷⁵ with that, he has linked the concept of perfection with flight!

The qualities of opacity and heaviness are combined in the subject of sleep, which occupies a large place in the narrative. In the course of the elaborate description of the magnificent geography of the sun, Dyrcona describes the heart of the opaque regions, the Lake of Sleep, above which "arches the black concave form of a grotto;"⁷⁶ the lake is formed by the waters that flow from the Fountains of the Five Senses. The lake itself flows into the rivers *Memory*, *Imagination*, and *Judgment*, which also "water the dazzling fields of this fiery world."⁷⁷ Sleep, "the ancient tyrant of half our days," belongs of course to the realm of shadow;⁷⁸ its relationship to heaviness is essential because "if it did not mingle with the three rivers and thicken their waters with its weight no animal in our world could sleep."⁷⁹ In other examples, sleep is contrasted with the aerial realm. Thus in the luminous regions, in order to foster sleep, artificial nights are created by using the huge wings of condors in flight. More generally, the nocturnal dreams of all the Sun Peoples are "incredibly perfect."⁸⁰

The theme of prison, and with it the theme of flight and escape from prison, is perhaps the most important in the novel. Dyrcona is incarcerated both on earth and on the sun. He compares prison – where, in opposition to the sun, "days can only be counted by nights"⁸¹ – both to a tomb and to a pit, and sometimes even to a mouth. Dyrcona evokes the "heavy" atmosphere of the prison in his description of the ring on which the jailer's keys hang, "whose weight overthrew me and hurled me from top to bottom of a dark flight of stairs."⁸² On another occasion, while still on the sun, he is captured by a flock of birds. After flying and fluttering above him, the birds swoop down in a "weighty" pack: "suddenly I felt my arms held down by a million of all kinds [of birds], weighing so heavily that I could not move my limbs."⁸³ In this case Cyrano broadens the idea of opacity to include blindness, since these same birds threaten to peck out his eyes if he resists.

Locked in his prison cell, Dyrcona has but one idea: escape. Like

aerial flight, escape is conceived in images of opacity and light, heaviness and lightness. The protagonist's most spectacular escape was from the prison tower of Toulouse. It was from this tower that his "little castle in the air" was carried up to the sun while the city *sank into the earth*.⁸⁴ His earlier escapes had already been described in aerial terms; for example, when pursued by jailers who were as capable of flight as himself, he writes that: "flying with all their power, as I was with mine . . . I was so lightly pursued, . . . it seemed to me that the air they pushed as they pursued me pushed me in front of them."⁸⁵ The same analogy, between escape and flight, can be found in Dyrcona's description of one of his own dreams; he is fleeing toward light, warmth, liberty, the sun, and finally:

that night, when, after flying as usual for a long time and often escaping my persecutors, I seemed at last to lose sight of them and to continue my journey with a body delivered from all weight under a clear, very bright sky until I reached a Palace composed of heat and light.⁸⁶

Michelet too described – on a collective, as opposed to individual, level – this longing, felt by men disappointed by the real world, for the heights of the sun:

Often late in life . . . a man has the good fortune to forget that he is a man, slave of gravity and tied to the earth. Suddenly he flies, he soars; sailing above the world in a ray of sunlight, he revels in the immense joy of embracing with his eye the infinity of things that fill the world.⁸⁷

Suns of the Absolute

There is one particular image of a bird, supercharged with meaning, that seems to embody all the light of the aerial adventure described by Cyrano:

it [the Bird] sustained itself with so light and so imperceptible a movement that I wondered several times if it were not a little universe balanced on its own center. It . . . at last arrived so near to me that my eyes were happily filled with its image. Its tail appeared to be green, its belly of enameled azure, its wings carnation color and its purple head glittered, when moved, with a golden crown whose rays sprang from its eyes . . . my soul was as if folded and reduced to the single operation of seeing. . . .⁸⁸

This gold and azure bird, which wakes Dyrcona from sleep in the Kingdom of Birds, is none other than the phoenix. The bird is

sparkling and light; it flies *naked*. The visual distance separating Dyrcona from the bird is slight. Described in solar and aerial terms, the bird has the appearance of a compact star.

There may very well be a second miniature sun, revolving on its axis, in *Voyage to the Sun*. Earlier we quoted a passage in which Dyrcona says of himself that, after arriving on the sun, he "often roll[ed] like a ball." Another rounded form that may be added to this list is Dyrcona's flying machine: "little crystal dome," "the little purple sky, enameled in gold," the "glass ball" that can move without him.⁸⁹ There is no shortage of hints.

Michelet too makes use of a spherical image of a bird that can be linked to the examples mentioned above: "*the bird, almost completely spherical* in shape, is certainly the acme, sublime and divine. . . ." ⁹⁰ Bachelard analyzes the sphere in terms of roundness, oneness, and its cosmic qualities; he sees in the sphere "the absolute bird."⁹¹

In his beautiful essay "The Soul of Dance" (*L'âme de la danse*), the poet Paul Valéry creates metaphors using the image of a bird, of flying, and even of a nest; he also uses the metaphor of a rising flame: ". . . all that passes from a state of heaviness to lightness must pass through a stage of fire and light. . . ." ⁹² Socrates, speaking of the dancer Athikté, says she "turns upon herself. . . . She turns and turns"; to which Eryximach adds: "It is truly to enter a different world. . . ."; and for her part, Phaedrus says: "It makes one think that it could last forever." Somewhat later, reflecting on the possibility of the dancer ceasing to dance, Socrates opines: "At the very center of her movement she stands as if motionless. . . . Alone, alone, like the earth's axis. . . ." ⁹³ Is this not, in a certain sense, another example of the *absolute bird*, a small, compact star fixed in the infinite, that one could call an "absolute sun"?

Vertical images have often been used to express mankind's disappointment in the real and its faith in skyward motion. Petrarch, as he made the climb up Mount Ventoux, compared his body, "but a little piece of nothing, to the sky."⁹⁴ René Char has written that "only by being lifted up can one go beyond reality."⁹⁵ "Light! Still more light!": these were supposedly Goethe's last words.⁹⁶ Many upward-striving images are based, to varying degrees, on themes borrowed from flight. Chagal's flying characters are painted against a background of pure sky; Goya, who struggled against encroaching absurdity, painted numerous flying creatures, especially in his series of *Caprices*; and in Shakespeare's works one finds many winged spirits.

In some cases, old age has seen a marked increase in interest in the aerial sphere and in flight; the writings of Michelet and Cyrano are cases in point. Indeed, in the case of Cyrano we can justly wonder whether he did not, in his last (and lost) manuscript, *L'Étincelle* (The Spark), continue his aerial adventures. Leonardo da Vinci, it is known, turned to the study of aeronautics at the end of his life.⁹⁷

Turned toward the stars fixed eternally in the heavens, the artist finds himself at risk. As Jean Starobinski has written: "Standing upon a mountain crest overhanging the abyss, the artist, even in his most moving triumph, is a specter of infinite fragility."⁹⁸ In "The Soul of Dance," Socrates is perhaps expressing the ephemerality of this condition when, dazzled by the dancer's fragility, he is prompted to say to Phaedrus: "We seem to be able to see her only as if she were about to fall. . . ." ⁹⁹ Finally, it is indeed on these heights that the never-ending search for meaning and order takes place. In this regard, Ransmayr specifies about the tapestries discussed above, that "the essential element in all these panoramas was neither earth nor sea: it was sky."¹⁰⁰

Translated from the French by Thomas Epstein

Notes

1. Some of the ideas developed in this paper were first presented in a preliminary form within the context of an exhibition, entitled *l'Homme-Oiseau* [The Man-Bird], which was presented at the Musée de la civilisation de Québec from 21 June 1989 to 4 March 1990. The exhibition later traveled to the Pulperie de Chicoutimi, where it was presented from 16 May to 30 September 1990.

2. Jules Michelet, *L'Oiseau*, Paris, Librairie de L. Hachette, 1856, p. 23.

3. Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1974, p. 93.

4. Jules Duhem, "Biblioteca aeronautica vetustissima, IVe siècle avant J.-C. Aristote," *Thalès*, VIII, 1952, pp. 1–32 (p. 1).

5. Elias Canetti, *Masse et puissance*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966, p. 412.

6. Ovide, *Les Métamorphoses*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1976, t. II, pp. 67–69, and *L'art d'aimer*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1951, pp. 32–35.

7. Christoph Ransmayr, *Le Dernier des mondes*, translated from the German by Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, Paris, Flammarion/P.O.L., 1989, pp. 151–53.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 150; italics are by the author of this article.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

10. Gaston Bachelard, *L'air et les songes*, Paris, José Corti, 1943, p. 111.

11. See, on this subject, Clive Hart, *The Images of Flight*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988, pp. 89–135.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

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13. Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux, *Dédale. Mythologie de l'artisan en Grèce ancienne*, Paris, Maspero, 1975, pp. 151–70.
14. See, as regards falling, the chapter entitled “La chute imaginaire,” in G. Bachelard, *op. cit.*, pp. 107–28.
15. *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, translated by Antoine Galland, Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 1965, t. I, pp. 239–45.
16. Peter Desbarats (ed.), *What They Used To Tell About Indian Legends From Labrador*, Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1969, pp. 25–28.
17. For an inquiry on vision, see Thomas De Konnick, “Pour l’amour de la beauté,” in *Communio*, 7, 6, 1982, pp. 31–40.
18. The question of the role of flight in the book of *Genesis* is central to the first chapter of Clive Hart’s book, *op. cit.*, “Upward Flight: Freedom,” pp. 1–51.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
20. Denys Lombard and Christian Pelras, “Origines des hommes” and “Totalité divine (La) et ses composantes,” in Yves Bonnefoy (dir.), *Dictionnaire des mythologies*, Paris, Flammarion, 1981, t. II, pp. 192–94 and 498–500.
21. Several versions of this tale are brought together in Evelyn Porée-Maspero, *Étude sur les rites agraires des Cambodgiens*, t. III, pp. 656–65.
22. Jean-Payl Roux, “Animaux. Leur primauté dans la religion des Turcs et des Mongols. Mythes tribaux et rites de chasse,” in Y. Bonnefoy (dir.), *op. cit.*, t. I, pp. 31–35.
23. Mircea Eliade, *Religions australiennes*, Paris, Payot, 1972, pp. 136–43.
24. An ancient Roman tradition of divination or prognostication based on observing the flight of birds [TRANS.].
25. Christian Jacob, “Dédale géographe. Regard et voyage aérien en Grèce,” *Lalies*, 3, 1984, pp. 147–64; all the information gathered here concerning Denys the Periegete and his narrative are taken from this study. See also, by the same author: *La Description de la Terre habitée de Denys d’Alexandrie ou la leçon de géographie*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1990 (translation, introduction, and topographical notes).
26. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
28. Nicolas Restif de la Bretonne, *La découverte australe par un homme volant*, Genève, Slatkine Reprints (Ressources) 1979, 2 t.
29. Platon, *La République*, Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 1966, p. 291.
30. Another allegory of Plato that takes up the question of the perfection of the soul concerns the coachman and the yoke: *Phèdre*, Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 1964, p. 125.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 273, 59.
32. G. Bachelard, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
33. F. Nietzsche, *Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra*, Paris, Le Club français du livre, 1958, p. 100; this line is quoted by Bachelard, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
34. Ovide, *Métamorphoses*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1980, t. I, p. 41.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
37. *The Ramyana of Valmiki*, translated from the Sanskrit by Hari Prasat Shastri, London, Shantisidan, 1957, t. II, pp. 351–53, and 1959, t. III, pp. 346–48.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 353.
39. Ovide, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
40. The elements of this narrative are taken from Maxime Kaltenmark, “Ciel et terre,” in Y. Bonnefoy (dir.), *op. cit.*, t. I, pp. 194–99.
41. M. Kaltenmark, “Taoism and mythology,” in Y. Bonnefoy (dir.), *op. cit.*, t. II, pp. 477–79.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 477.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Jules Michelet, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
46. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'œil et l'esprit*, Paris, Gallimard, 1964.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
50. Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac, *L'Autre Monde ou les États et Empires de la Lune et du Soleil*, Paris, Le Cercle du Livre, 1960.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 183. Italics are by the author of this article.
52. Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20. Italics are by the author of this article.
55. S. de Cyrano de Bergerac, *op. cit.*, p. 183.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
57. The analogy between the body and the “cabin” is occasionally made explicit. When his little “crystal dome” disappears from sight, Dyrcona more or less confesses his feeling of vertigo: “as I directed my eyes toward the glass ball, I felt with a start something heavy fly out from all the parts of my body” (p. 182).
58. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
59. Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
60. G. Bachelard, *Fragments d'une poétique du feu*. Paris, P.U.F., 1988, p. 80.
61. S. de Cyrano de Bergerac, *op. cit.*, pp. 186–87.
62. Hillel Schwartz, “Le soleil et le sel de la terre,” *Diogène*, 146, 1982, pp. 3–20.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
65. S. de Cyrano de Bergerac, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
66. On the subject of the sacred memory of temporal rhythm, see Jean Starobinski, “Le jour sacré et le jour profane,” *Diogène*, 146, 1982, pp. 3–20.
67. S. de Cyrano de Bergerac, *op. cit.*, p. 175.
68. *Ibid.*, pp. 174–75, 187, 209.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 254 and 174.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 261.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 187.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 255.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
87. J. Michelet, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
88. S. de Cyrano de Bergerac, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
89. *Ibid.*, pp. 168, 181, 182.
90. J. Michelet, *op. cit.*, p. 291. The italics are by the author of this article.
91. G. Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace*, Paris, P.U.F., 1978, p. 213.
92. Paul Valéry, “L'âme de la danse,” *Œuvres*, II, Paris, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1960, pp. 148–76 (pp. 171–74).
93. *Ibid.*, p. 174. Italics are those of the author of this article.

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94. Pétrarch, *L'Ascension du mont Ventoux*, Séquence, 1990, p. 44.
95. René Char, *La Parole en archipel*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1983, p. 413.
96. These words were quoted by Michelet in *op. cit.*, p. 123.
97. In this regard, see Michel Mathieu, "D'une improbable esthétique. Essai sur les théories psychanalytiques de l'art," in Didier Anzieu, et al., *Psychanalyse du génie créateur*, Paris, Dunod, 1974, pp. 49–57.
98. J. Starobinski, *Portrait de l'artiste en saltimbanque*, Paris, Flammarion, 1970, p. 86.
99. P. Valéry, *op. cit.*, p. 173.
100. C. Ransmayr, *op. cit.*, p. 151.