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Of Earth and Breath – Landscape and Psyche in the Imaginaries of Identity

Abstract: This paper aims to amplify and discuss aspects of the imaginary related to the problem of identity and to self-image. This is done using fragments of mythology, the popular song-book, poetry and literature as a starting point, collected here insofar as these figurations combine, bringing together landscape and psyche in the construction of identities and of human self-image. Born of the earth and of breath, can there be a human self-image without earth and soul, without landscape and psyche? Within this context, the poetic and mythological fragments are studied in which landscape and psyche are mirrored and united in the search for images of identity.

Keywords: Landscape; Psyche; Imaginary; Identity; Self-image.

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Yahweh God fashioned man of dust
from the soil.
Then he breathed into his nostrils a
breath of life,
and thus man became a living being¹.

In the river's landscape / it is hard to
know / where the river begins; /
where the mud / starts from the river; /
where the land / starts from the mud; /
where man / where his skin / begins
from the mud; /
where man begins / in that man².

Introduction – Heaven, Earth, Man

According to the Judeo-Christian book of Genesis, it is of earth and breath that humans were formed and given life. After heaven and earth, after day and night, after water under and above the vault, after herbs, trees and lights, after all kinds of living beings, on the sixth day man was created in the image and likeness of a divine instance whose word effectively is, makes and operates the world and in the world, in a context where the senses of image and similarity seem to preexist, and in a deeper sense, the origin and designations

of the word itself are not even mentioned, allowing for a glimpse of an interesting anteriority of the word in relation to Creation, as well as a certain, very particular character of the word as a foundation that is both veiled and revealed; of the word as a preexisting reality, as manifest as it is unconscious; of the word as environment, in a certain way more vast and inescapable than the created universe itself and its creator; and of the word as human condition.

At this point in creation, Genesis starts to describe the Garden of Eden³, its trees that are enticing to look at and good to eat, the tree of life in the middle of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the river flowing from Eden that divides into four streams. An admonition is given in relation to the tree of learning of good and evil. It goes on to tell how the man gave names to the living beings, and only then does it tell of the creation of woman (*isha*, in Hebrew) from man (*ish*). The woman then appears as the first explicit differentiation of gender in the biblical narrative. Although nouns for sky and earth, day and night, etc., are already indicative not only of perceptions of male and female, but also of a certain position of the subject and of the gaze assigning names, in a given relationship between named beings and things.

In Portuguese, the terms *país* (country) and *paisagem* (landscape) can be traced back to French (*pays, paysage*), which is rooted in Latin (*pagus, pagus*) where it would be defined as homeland, town, village. This corresponds to Greek *paga* (παγά), *phgh* (πηγή – spring, wealth, origin) and *págos* (πάγος – fixed thing, mountain). This entire semantic field is associated with the Indo-European root *pak-*, which means

to fix, fasten, and ensure and from which the following Latin terms are said to be derived: *pax* (peace), *pango* (fix, embed in earth), *pālus* (post), and also *pāgus* (town, village, boundary marked with stakes), in addition to other Portuguese terms such as *página* (page) or *paisano* (countryman).

Traditionally linked to the Latin root and connected to the elements of earth and human settlement on earth, it is interesting to note other branches of the same semantic tree for the term *paisagem* (landscape) in the Greek forms *pais* (παίς), *paidi* (παιδί), *paidós* (παιδός), meaning child, small, son or even young slave⁴. If the familiar sounds or the bond between nature and the naturalness of human processes in *nascere* (to be born), *crescere* (to grow), and *criar* (to raise) seem insufficient (at a time when there is an insistence that nature be seen as something external to ourselves, objectified and utilitarian), this connection would probably seem more evident in the Indo-European root *ker-*, which gives rise to the terms *crescere* and *criar*, as well as the name of the harvest goddess, Ceres, identified as Demeter, the *maternal goddess of the earth* – according to Junito de Souza Brandão (2000, p. 271) – and her inseparable daughter Kore. All are goddesses associated with the significance of farmed land, but also with a religion of the dead. This is Earth as a simultaneous source of life, through cultivation aligned with natural cycles, and as a symbol of a deep connection between earth, humanity and ancestry.

Yet if man was made of earth and given life with breath (*sopro* in Portuguese, which comes from Latin, *sufflare*), this breath corresponds above all to the soul (*alma*, in Portuguese, from the Latin *anima*) that animates us, an essence that

combines the aerial and the immaterial: breath, life, respiration, vital principle. In Greek, the term *psique* (ψυχή) is also defined as having a strong link between *sopro* (breath) and *alma* (soul), and is derived from the Indo-European root *bhes-*, *bhs-*, to breathe, according to M. E. C. Leysa (1874, p. 538):

Ψυχή, breath, spirit, soul. This word, important in all languages, comes from the verb ψύχω (to blow, to make wind) in Greek; like the Latin *anima*, *animus*, from *ἀνεμος*, wind, breath, because the breath and breathing are the support and the symptom of life, of animation, and of the union of the two material and immaterial essences⁵.

It is for no less important reasons that the first phrase of Genesis says “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”⁶. From earth and breath, from landscape and psyche, because we would be engendered here, materially and symbolically: humans. Yet *human* also concerns man, from Latin *homo*, *hominis*, of *humus* (*húmus*), fertile land, the land from which we came, and also connected to the Greek *humai* (ὑμαί), from the verb *huo* (ὑώ), I moisten. This etymological kinship is less evident in Brazilian Portuguese, as the ‘h’ was removed from words such as *úmido* (humid, wet) and *umidade* (humidity, moisture); however, European Portuguese maintains this consonant, in line with its Latin roots. The same meaning can be found in Pierre Commelin (1960, p. 16), in an entry on Earth (Gaia) in Greco-Roman mythology:

Man, it was said, was born from earth soaked with water and warmed by

sunshine; thus, his nature is part of all the elements, and when he dies, his venerable mother buries him and keeps him in her chest. In mythology, sons of the Earth are frequently mentioned⁷.

The same nature of fertility and generosity that is assigned to the earth can be found in certain uses of the term *human* as an adjective, meaning kind, careful, and nice. The same generosity possibly attributed to the gods, masters of creation, masters of mystery and knowledge, gods that across a variety of traditions are the supreme agents of creation, transformers, givers of life and intercessors in the issues of the world through the direct action of the word. A creative gesture, divine verb, breath of life; in this context, the word seems to be the universal instrument (divine and human) of action, intention and will, capable of impacting things and beings, here and now, as well as in any time and space. It is through the word and breath that the world is created and that Nature is created, the laws of which are stated through the spoken and written word. It is also through the word that people cry, sing and evoke these gods, so that they hear us, help us, provide us with justification and situate us.

The Word as a Territory of the Symbolic

Although Genesis contains no major indications of the origin or modes of the verbal expression with which a god creates the world (which would give it a degree of tacit preexistence), it seems to echo the configuration of the Greek *Chaos* – from the Greek verb *kainein*, to open

oneself, to open the throat or beak, to split in two what was one, and also to differentiate the undifferentiable (J. Torrano, 2003, p. 43-44) – the first god to appear in the *Theogony* of Hesiod. However, in the context of Greek mythology this opening is also the beginning of a universe that is announced and exists through the word⁸, through song, and through a poetic cosmogony that is sure to revere the Muses before the primordial gods (Chaos, Earth, Tartarus and Eros), as the inhabitants of foggy Mount Helicon and the invisible dames of the word and of the enchantment it produces.

Let us begin to sing from the Heliconian Muses, who possess the great and holy mountain of Helicon [...] they perform choral dances on highest Helicon, beautiful, lovely ones, and move nimbly with their feet. Starting out from there, shrouded in thick invisibility, by night they walk, sending forth their very beautiful voice (Hesiod, 2006, p. 3).

The word, and poetic daydreaming through it – this *my non-I (non-moi mien)*, as expressed by Gaston Bachelard (1971, p. 13) – is this reflex, this material and immaterial artifice, this bridge; if it is by means of this same word that Hesiod (VIII century BC) evokes the Muses and the foggy and luminous heights of a sunny Mount Helicon, the word is also at least one of the ways through which Petrarch (XIV century AC) climbs another mountain: the Ventoux⁹. He compares physical ascension to a spiritual asceticism, the story of which would later be attributed the characteristic of originating the concept of landscape

(J. M. Besse, 2014, p. 1). Likewise, Anne Cauquelin (2007) and Alain Roger (2000) discuss the word and history as forming elements of the concept of landscape, alongside pictorial depiction.

However, if the word is the pillar and the structural element of mythology, literature, philosophy and psychology, it is also a structural element of everyday life and of what we are able to understand as being human. Moreover, if we resort to it in a very fundamental way to say who we are, to form and transform our sense of identity, of identification and of being an individual amongst others, it is then necessary to underscore its multifaceted capacity of transporting not only a *logos* or a certain logical linearity, but also of producing verbal images that activate visions, sounds, rhythms, silences and so many other impressions of sensibilities and imaginations, which can be equally understood and elaborated as *image*. It is like an index, a trace, an approximation and a *poiesis*, creation.

If the Muses, daughters of Memory, preside over the word, a similar relationship is highlighted by André Leroi-Gourhan in the connection he establishes between memory and the modes of evolution of language. Human memory, says Leroi-Gourhan, “is a product of exteriorization, and it is stored within the ethnic group”. The group’s body of knowledge would be “the basic constituent of its unity and its personality” and transmission of this intellectual instrument would be the condition for the group’s material and social survival¹⁰. It seems clear that insofar as development connected to memory and language is understood as a social gesture of survival and of the group’s unity and personality, the direct connection between

the social group and identity can also be understood, in a bond where the word plays a fundamental role. For no other reason, the concept of identity would more appropriately refer to a sense of equality and belonging, although it is many times used to represent difference.

Imaginary and Identity

There is, therefore, a question that has already been posed in this paper: is it possible to imagine a sense of identity, an image of the human self, of a human made of earth and breath, of earth and soul, without considering the traits that form us, the threads that connect us and the material and immaterial web that supports us and releases us into the world? Is it possible to articulate an image of ourselves without considering the earth, the soul, and the quality of the gaze we direct at the world and at ourselves? Is it possible to talk about this gaze and this process of imagination without talking about our own consciousness, which is the subject and agent of such a process? Is it possible to talk about the imaginary without this also implying a portrait of who we are?

These questions can have simple answers, yet that also cause immersion in this territory permeated with suggestions, unexpected transitions and delicate threads that at times seem to guide us and tell us who we are, but whose origin and destination also seem to be wrapped in a mist that is both permeable and persistent. Even if we are able to move within this mist and elaborate concrete and theoretical objectivities to some degree, and even if we can have the impression that we are moving decisively toward understanding

our assumptions – or, at least, toward placing ourselves outside the mist – it seems we would always have some difficulty in completely illuminating this mist, or even a small part of it. In its very own way, which always partly escapes us (far away, inside, behind, slumbering in each unidentified detail), the mist floats around us, around each thing towards which we direct our gaze, our hands and our thought, like successive horizons, changing the limits of a reality (or of a dream), as part of our possibility and as part of us.

One issue regarding how this mist permeates even the most objective knowledge is related to the fact that objective knowledge – built and sedimented on the observations and reconstructions that identify forms as well as limits and that constitute limits, clearances and delimited spaces in thoughts (and even if they are temporary, limits will always be limitations) – never properly corresponds to the supposed completeness of a reality, but rather to images, parts, representations, and approximations. It corresponds to sections of what is real, a realness that in turn seems to always be extending beyond or short of our observation and of the very senses of observation and objectivity. According to Bachelard:

Sometimes we stand in wonder before a chosen object; we build up hypotheses and reveries; in this way we form convictions which have all the appearance of true knowledge. But the initial source is impure: the first impression is not a fundamental truth. In point of fact, scientific objectivity is possible only if one has broken first with the immediate object, if one has refused to yield to the seduction of the initial

choice, if one has checked and contradicted the thoughts which arise from one's first observation. Any objective examination, when duly verified, refutes the results of the first contact with the object¹¹.

So, although preliminary evidence might not be a fundamental truth, why would all objectivity disavow the first contact with the object? As Bachelard asks starting in his *Essay on Approximate Knowledge*, could this be possible because all objectivity implies a continuous process of reconstruction of itself? Our gaze or our thinking is always a section and is always in process. Yet when we work to build an image of ourselves, what is it we are actually seeking? What kind of image could emerge and what image could satisfy us?

When talking about the imaginary, even in the academic realm, there seems to be a curious need to didactically, permanently and first and foremost affirm its existence. In a materialistic environment, reality would only be understood by its material and, using this measure, supposedly objective elements. "We have only to speak of an object," says Bachelard, "to believe that we are being objective"¹². In this supposedly realistic environment, where we cannot touch or see thoughts, can they still seem real? And would thought only be validated insofar as it indicates material objects and supposedly objective representations?

At this point in History, as in others, we think we are capable of a fully objective gaze, and we get a taste of owning the truth (without feeling that we are owned) when uttering the word *scientific*; however, our supposedly objective gaze is also

conditioned by all sorts of conscious and unconscious limitations (moral, cultural, political, technical, etc.) which lead us to choose (based on what we do and do not know), engaging our time, our trajectory, and our identity. According to Jung:

The moment one forms an idea of a thing and successfully catches one of its aspects, one invariably succumbs to the illusion of having caught the whole. One never considers that a total apprehension is right out of the question. Not even an idea posited as total is total, for it is still an entity on its own with unpredictable qualities. This self-deception certainly promotes peace of mind; the unknown is named, the far has been brought near, so that one can lay one's finger on it. One has taken possession of it, and it has become an inalienable piece of property, like a slain creature of the wild that can no longer run away. It is a magical procedure¹³.

How is it possible to know who we are? The fish lives in the sea. It is born, grows, interacts, and to some degree it is the sea. However, can we say that it knows what the sea is? Does it know what it is to be a fish? As for us, humans, we are aware of our body, our gestures, our thought, our group, and our moment in the world, but do we know what consciousness is? We are on a journey, a constant journey of finding out who we are. We think we understand, we elaborate contexts and apparent realities, while invariably compromising our gaze with background images and with ways of thinking and seeing. We adhere to circumstantial forms and limits, oftentimes

without even having any idea of their existence, complexity and qualities and the degrees of limitation that are implicit in the routine gestures of seeing, thinking, existing, and walking.

Notions of identity and imaginary, of verbal, visual and other kinds of traits which perhaps seek to define a face, a surface, a map, or a sense. We look for signs and assimilable differences: an author of reference, a line of thought, any alteration between the region of the eyes and the mouth, or a new relevance in the landscape. Look! I point, I indicate with my finger (such is the sense in Portuguese of *indicar*, to indicate, and in the etymology of the Portuguese verb *dizer*, to say). We say to ourselves: something seems to us, appears to us, allows and makes us to see. Something in me sees.

From the mist of relative ignorance, we pluck out identifiable elements which we can elaborate, with them we produce portraits, shapes and all kinds of developments, from one or more initial differences. Based on one difference (and on the background against which it stands out), a certain sense of identity is built or arises, which rapidly constitutes a new sphere, a new medium from which and in relation to which new differences, new identities and new situations of knowledge can emerge. We make portraits and therefore identities out of difference and undifferentiation (and “we are made of them”), out of what we see and out of what to a certain degree we *do not see*, yet which regardless is part of our gaze, part of our seeing-not-seeing. Portraits and therefore identities, made of consciousness and unconsciousness, as well as of a continuous and multifaceted permeability between these instances.

Consciousness and Unconsciousness

For ancient people, the term *to know* had a sense of involvement, indeed related to the involvement between man and woman, as in biblical texts, which suggests the idea of reciprocity, of mutual implication and of interaction between knowledge, the agent of the knowledge and the known object. Among the Greek, there was already a perception of different levels or qualities of knowledge, as expressed by the opposition between *doxa* (of a more immediate and superficial character) and *episteme* (the result of reflection) in the so-called “divided line” of Plato. Regardless of whether the implications and separations of the act of knowing are considered, this process can be perceived as demanding traffic and trade in the known and the unknown, both of which constitute the process of knowledge. And intrinsic to these territories of the known and the unknown, intrinsic to these situations in which we can think we know and think we do not know, there will moreover be those things that we do not know so completely to the point of not even being able to equate them. Such mystery can be in the world and, within the world, in ourselves, in precisely those things that we can understand (and also cannot understand) as being the *soul*, or more contemporarily, as *consciousness*.

Without any intention of advancing into the field of consciousness studies, some aspects should merely be highlighted, initially based on Bachelard, who in his discussion of epistemology attempts to address scientific knowledge as a process in permanent reconstruction, based on a constructive logic that separates knowledge

and common sense, articulating successive approximations with sections of realities that, by force of this process, will also be reconstructed, generating new sections and new horizons of reality. Because of its own formalizing character (limiting and limited), it would not be exempted from veiling the very reality it tries to know, insofar as every new revelation is also a new veil, a new veiling, which Bachelard discusses in *The Formation of the Scientific Mind*, through the concept of the epistemological obstacle. The philosopher says: “Knowledge of reality is a light that always casts a shadow in some nook or cranny. It is never immediate, never complete. Revelations of reality are always recurrent. Reality is never ‘what we might believe it to be:’ it is always what we ought to have thought”¹⁴.

Then in parallel to the epistemological studies in his work, and not lacking important contact points with these studies, Bachelard goes on to develop a philosophy of material imagination (through which he aims to first psychoanalyze objective knowledge), which will gradually affirm itself as a philosophy of the poetic imagination, where he expands on a dialogue with several writers and poets and with works by Carl Gustav Jung and Robert Desoille (which he expressly uses as references) and through which he provides us with a kind of floating, movable, half-opened method, a very particular exercise in phenomenological exploration, in a profound poetic investigation of the human being in the world and of the poetic image as a path to knowledge, to imagination and to conception of this condition.

It is with this sense of *poetic image* – an image possibly envisioned through reverie, “sudden salience on the surface of

the psyche”¹⁵, in express dialogue with the Jungian concepts of archetype and collective unconsciousness – that Bachelard seems able to stitch together image and concept, knowledge and appearance, in a moving philosophy that transits between exteriorities and interiorities, between science and poetic imagination, outlining an itinerary of interests that are not exactly explicit or linear, from the abstract concreteness of science to a philosophy of science, to a philosophy of material imagination, and to the phenomenological concreteness of a philosophy of poetic imagination.

Based on this trajectory or itinerary, can Bachelard be said to suggest a certain character of primacy, anteriority, and foundation of the poetic image (like the psychic image in Jung) in relation to thought understood as conscious, rational, and scientific? Like a silk floss tree in the middle of a rainforest, could rational thought be understood as “just one more” specialization in the environment around the psychic and poetic imagination? Instead of an incisive answer or a precise definition, another question can be asked: between epistemology and poetic imagination (in Bachelard), between consciousness and unconsciousness (in Jung), where exactly would the limit be?

Jung describes the *I* as a sort of center in the field of consciousness, denominating another deeper and broader center corresponding to the totality of the psyche as *self* or *oneself*, which would include consciousness and unconsciousness. It would be impossible for Jung to pinpoint the limit of consciousness (and, therefore, unconsciousness), unless it is done empirically, whenever the consciousness “comes up against the unknown”¹⁶, whether related

to the exterior or the interior world. According to Jung, just like unconsciousness, consciousness is “relative, for it embraces not only consciousness as such, but a whole scale of intensities of consciousness”¹⁷. It is this permeability that leads Jung to stress the concept of consciousness, affirming that there would be no conscious content of which we could be absolutely certain of being totally conscious. That is even because “every science is a function of the psyche, and all knowledge is rooted in it. The psyche is the greatest of all cosmic wonders and the sine qua non of the world as an object”¹⁸. Jung also states that:

Nothing that exists could be discerned were there no discerning psyche. Only by virtue of psychic existence do we have any “being” at all. Consciousness grasps only a fraction of its own nature, because it is the product of a preconscious psychic life which made the development of consciousness possible in the first place. Consciousness always succumbs to the delusion that it developed out of itself, but scientific knowledge is well aware that all consciousness rests on unconscious premises, in other words on a sort of unknown *prima materia*; and of this the alchemists said everything that we could possibly say about the unconscious¹⁹.

In Bachelard, as in Jung, through different though interconnected approaches, there seems to be a certain preoccupation with elaborating the problem of consciousness, as well as with elaborating a certain difficulty in pinpointing where so-called rational, conscious, and scientific thought

may differ from thinking that is open to the processes of relative autonomy in imagination and poetic imagination. Let us wrap up this brief tangent on consciousness and unconsciousness, returning to Bachelard, in a text that does not mention Jung, but that was also published in 1938, the same year as *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, which opens his philosophy of imagination:

We see then that if we wish to measure the obstacles that stand in the way of objective knowledge, of tranquil knowledge, it is human beings as a whole that we must consider, human beings with their heavy burden of ancestry and unconsciousness, and with all their confused, contingent youthfulness²⁰.

The Breath of the Muses

Through the image in a broad sense, just as through the word, we enter a symbolic territory, in which elements, *things* (this dormant word), and images are connected to each other in a dynamic and sensible game, veiled and revealed, which at times seems to belong more to them (words and Muses) than to us. In the fashion of Bachelard, it is in this territory that references will be made to certain excerpts from mythology, song, poetry, and literature, where earth and breath, landscape and psyche are found to be combined to constitute self-images, identities, and individual and collective configurations of being, which will also be forms of perceiving, imagining, and inhabiting the world.

Like Hesiod, starting with the Muses themselves, whose essentially original character makes them inhabitants of

Mount Helicon, permanently shrouded in thick mist, entities of the word and of their enchantment, like everything that is transmitted through the word. The daughters of Memory (*Mnemosyne*) and of Zeus, invisibility, mist, and light (luminosity and concealment, clarity and ambiguity) are usually attributed to the Muses, as is their lofty geographical location, which combines attributes of landscape, atmosphere (from Gr. *atmos/sfera*, vapor/sphere), and also mystery (by the Gr. verb $\mu\upsilon\omega$ [*myeo*], close the eyes or the mouth; from the Indo-European root *mus-*) since mist, even when luminous, also hides.

A leap can be made from the Muses to a song by Gilberto Gil, with the composer using the lyrics to associate elements and processes of nature and of the vegetal world with images related to a time in the poet's life, in a portrait that is also a landscape, which contains both the narrator and his muse. Arranged in regular verses, the lyrics are sung in melodic phrases of consecutive and ascending degrees, in which it is almost possible to see plants growing and opening up to the sky. The phrases develop, with each verse reaching higher pitches and then smoothly descending at the end of each strophe, creating an environment of lightness, elevation, tranquility, stability, harmony, and communion with nature and time.

I imagine you already old / leafy, all the foliage / multiplied branches of now. / After everything has passed / flowers and fruits of the image / with which I make this journey / through the kingdom of your name, oh Flora. / I imagine you as a jack tree / placed by the roadside / old, strong, bountiful,

beautiful, lady / across the ground, many lumps / like the remains of our/ own dreams devoured / by dawn's bird, oh Flora. / I imagine you in the future/ even more beautiful, mature / pure in the taste of love and blackberries. / All that light on / in sweetness and in beauty / I'll be sleepy, for sure / under your shadow, oh Flora²¹.

As was pointed out in relation to Genesis, the figure and the particular gaze of the enunciator, narrator, and poet may not exactly be objects of the discourse; but they can be in the structure, in between the lines, in the apparently inexistent subject, which can, however, as Rousseau may say, forget in between the flowers the gardener's marks. In the song by Gilberto Gil, the name Flora refers to aspects of nature and can also be a woman's name, and the relationship between the poet and this diffuse muse would not necessarily need to be interpreted as a mirror of the singer's life. All these meanings, however, participate in one way or another in the expanded body of the lyrics and of its poetic possibility.

There is also a simple poetry of landscape and everyday beach life in the songs of Dorival Caymmi, sung with a musicality that sounds familiar, like an unornamented drama amidst nature, chores, and the rhythms of earth, the simplicity of which is also the sister to myths and to the endless stories in which our memory can bathe, in which the image of somebody we could be eventually arises.

Itapoã coconut, coconut tree / Itapoã sand, sand / Dark-skinned girl from Itapoã, dark-skinned girl / Missing Itapoã, leave me / Oh wind that

makes songs / on the leaves atop the coconut grove / Oh wind that makes waves on the water / never have I had the same longing / Bring me good news / of that land every morning / And throw a flower on the lap / of a dark-skinned girl in Itapoã²².

In *The Legend of Abaeté*, Caymmi still does a description of the landscape, both natural (inhuman) and human, the expression of a material and immaterial environment, of the lived landscape, here underscoring the contrast between light and dark, white sand and the morning co-existing with the dark lagoon and a moonlit night. In the first, more rhythmic part, the lyrics describe the scenery, the lagoon surrounded by sand, the mystery interlaced with the routine of washing the laundry and caring for small children, the melody moves high and low, seeming to alternate between daylight and the deep darkness of the lagoon and of imagination.

In Abaeté there is a dark lagoon / in Abaeté there is a dark lagoon / surrounded by white sand / surrounded by white sand / oh by white sand, by white sand... / Early in the morning if a washerwoman / will wash clothes in the Abaeté / she blesses herself because she says she hears / hears the sounds of drumming / oh of drumming, oh of drumming... / The fisherman tells his little son / to take a raft, do what you want / but he beats the little boy if he plays / near the Abaeté lagoon / oh of Abaeté, oh of Abaeté...

At a certain point, the song's mood shifts, still combining ascent and descent,

yet slower, contemplative, and static. This is the place that holds day and night, imagination and nature, the moon's beauty casting a silver glow everywhere and falling in love in the waters of the lagoon, small children... and then there is an abrupt cut, with a warning that is quietly spoken in a deep voice, to anyone who would by chance utter the name of the mystery: Abaeté.

The night is like a day / says someone looking at the moon / And on the beach the little children / play in the moonlight / The moonlight glows silver everywhere / coconut, sand and sea / We wonder how / the beautiful the lagoon is / The Moon falling in love / in the waters of Abaeté... / Oh God, I curse the one who spoke of Abaeté!²³

We do not know whether Bachelard would have listened to Caymmi, but the lagoons of one author and another, and the visions that arise from them, seem to converse in the philosophy of Bachelard: "But is it the lake or the eye which contemplates better? The lake or pool or stagnant water stops us near its bank. It says to our will: you shall go no further; you should go back to looking at distant things, at the beyond"²⁴.

The lake is a large tranquil eye. The lake takes all of light and makes a world out of it. [...] The true eye of the earth is water. In our eyes it is *water* that dreams. Are our eyes not "*that unexplored pool of liquid light which God put in the depths of our being*"? In nature is once again water that sees and water that dreams: "*The lake has created the garden. Everything is composed around*

this water which thinks. [...] Thus, water is the gaze of the earth, its instrument for looking at time" (1982, p.28-31).²⁵

From the Moon reflected on the Abaeté lagoon, we can go to Narcissus, numb in contemplating his own face on a spring. Son of the river-god Cephissus and a nymph, Liriope, Narcissus had his fate predicted by Tiresias, the blind clairvoyant: of living a long life provided *he not see himself*. Yet if the name Narcissus is connected to the flower of the same name and to the meanings of narcosis (from Gr. *narké*) and vanity, his myth particularly reflects the power of identification and the imprisonment in a self-image, from which eventually we are unable to disconnect.

Narcissus is a being born of a river waters and a Nymph (she also a being from wet territories, such as springs and caves), in a natural genealogy that seems to join the narcissus and the lily, indicating the presence of numbness as of purity, of the sublime as of perdition (J. Chevalier, 2009). The myth is then showed by the water's symbolism, by the fertility of the river waters and by the intimacy of calm waters, where a sense of specular water flourishes, as a gateway to identity as well as to idealization; to consciousness as to enchantment with an image; to sterility, to isolation and to death.

"But at the fountain", says Bachelard, "Narcissus has not given himself over exclusively to contemplation of himself. His own image is the center of a world. With and for Narcissus, the whole forest is mirrored, the whole sky approaches to take cognizance of its grandiose image." And

quoting Joachim Gasquet, "The world is an immense Narcissus in the act of thinking about himself"²⁶.

Also in relation to the mirrors of Narcissus, we can go back to Philostratus, the Elder, to his *Eikones* (Images), in which he builds descriptions of figurative images, exercises in *ekphrasis* through which he expresses the "insoluble equation between the visible and the legible, between the visual and the verbal, amidst which we still must live"²⁷, in which there is seemingly a suggestion that it is to a degree impossible to

distinguish any advance between images and words. Every word has an image as its imminence, to which it serves as a foundation; every image has a word as its imminence, which serves as its resonance (idem, p.11).²⁸

In the text on Philostratus where a painting of Narcissus is described, the sense of connection between the observer and the image is put in a double key, which develops into inverted meanings and plays on words. Immersed in the myth of Narcissus, and, like him, a prisoner to a self-image, we cannot be sure whether it is the bee that mistakes the painting for a flower or whether the narrator-observer is the one who mistakes the painting for a bee.

The pool paints Narcissus, and the painting represents both the pool and the whole story of Narcissus. A youth just returned from the hunt stands over a pool, drawing from within himself a kind of yearning and falling in love with his own beauty; and, as

you see, he sheds a radiance into the water. [...] The painting has such regard for realism that it even shows drops of dew dripping from the flowers and a bee settling on the flowers – whether a real bee has been deceived by the painted flowers or whether we are to be deceived into thinking that a painted bee is real, I do not know²⁹.

Closing the Circle

Lonely as Narcissus, the long-bearded Hermit on card IX of the Tarot seems to reflect not on his image, but on his condition. Protected by a mantle, he is upright, on the verge of his next step. He illuminates and tests the land where he will tread. Nine is also the number usually assigned to the Muses, born from nine nights of love, as well as the number of days that Demeter runs across the world in pursuit of Persephone (in this same myth she is also drawn to a narcissus). Nine can be the number of openings on the human body and the initial number of the Lernaean Hydra's reduplicating heads. With a format resembling a serpent biting its own tail (Uroboros), the numeral 9 also is a symbol of totality, of the closing of a cycle, and of return to unity (J. Chevalier, 2009).

Uroboros (from Gr. *oura*, tail, and *boros*, voracious), which appears in alchemical iconography as a serpent and also as a winged dragon, would perhaps be to Jung “probably the oldest pictorial symbol in alchemy”, representing the Uno, the complete *alchemical opus* that “proceeds from the one and leads back to the one, that it is a sort of circle”. In the context of alchemy, the dragon, understood as a monster, symbolically integrates the chthonic (of the serpent) and aerial (of the bird) principles, thus being related to

the beginning and to the end: “He is metallic yet liquid, matter yet spirit, cold yet fiery, poison and yet healing draught – a symbol uniting all opposites”³⁰.

In relation to the imaginaries of identity, each culminant moment is also likewise the start of a new cycle, in the typical dynamism of images and life. However, faced with so many reflected and projected images (and contrary to Narcissus bent over the spring), the image of the Hermit claims the same verticality of the wooden stick, of the lamp he carries ahead of him (and the wood and the light together dream of the same dawn of elevation and verticality), while the covered head and the slightly downward-facing look suggest not only attention to where he steps, but also an inner listening, sensitive to the smallest signs, to the light breeze that deforms the water's surface and a small flame.

In the eternal return of consciousness over itself, I *reflect* on possible *reflects*, about openings and mirrors, and about the luminous and earthy fragment of Orides Fontela: “With bare hands / plough the field: / hands getting hurt / on beings, edges / of the underlying unity / hands digging up / light fragments / of the last mirror”³¹. Plough the land, gather the pieces of a dreamed unity. From the earth, from ploughing the earth, the “light fragments of the last mirror” emerge, both light and reflective matter, pieces of a difficult identity, while at the same time being the path that is shown. And she continues: “With bare hands / plough the field: / stripping the essential star / with no pity for the blood”. Of everything in us, in the world, of our vast body in the world, what image would we choose as a mirror?

Close the cycle; resume the infinite circle that is also an infinite center.

From outside the mirror, the request for a self-image can also be addressed to the subject of the gaze. Behind the eyes, who is looking? Who sees? Paraphrasing Caetano, *what is this mystery Psyche must hold so firmly in her heart*³²?

A sign of life and humanity, a breath whose sole attribute was to abandon humans in death and get lost in Hades, the mythic figure of Psyche crosses an infernal road of the feminine through the Earth elements to reach precisely Olympus, like a human woman, for the love of Love. Yet, why would the human psyche walk along similar paths? And to whom does the domain of her judgment belong? What kind of divinity are we looking at, and what kind of divinity is *looking with our eyes*?

Is it by circulating and exchanging looks and figures with a temporary image of the world and of ourselves that we slowly move closer to a sense of identity, of authenticity, of belonging? In a small silent room, in the light of a candle's precarious and vertical flame, the hermit Bachelard meditates alone, and in this meditation he dreams of a place, a place he can finally inhabit, in which he can finally integrate himself with the poetic image of the house and of himself: "Late in life, with indomitable courage, we continue to say that we are going to do what we have not yet done: we are going to build a house. [...] A house that we shall live in later, always later, so much later, in fact, that we shall not have time to achieve it"³³.

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NOTES

1. Genesis 2:7. *The Jerusalem Bible*. New York, Doubleday, 1966.
2. Free translation of an excerpt from the poem *Paisagem do Capibaribe*, in João Cabral de Melo Neto, *Antologia Poética*. Rio de Janeiro, José Olympio, 1950. *Na paisagem do rio / difícil é saber / onde começa*

- o rio;/ onde a lama / começa do rio; onde a terra / começa da lama; / onde o homem, / onde a pele / começa da lama; / onde começa o homem / naquele homem.*
3. In the Greek version, the word *garden* would be translated as *paradise*, while in the Israeli tradition *Eden* can indicate either a *steppe* or *delights*. However, the expression of the terms together seems common, with the meaning somehow opposite to desert or steppe. (*The Jerusalem Bible*, Genesis 2:8, note d).
 4. At least for the ancient Greek, the term *pais* (παῖς) corresponds both to child and slave, in other words, both infants with no voice. The same approximation also seems to be echoed in Portuguese, between the terms *cria* (offspring) and *criado* (helper, servant).
 5. Free translation of M. E. C. Leysa. Bordeaux, 1874, p.538. Ψυχή, *souffle, esprit, âme. Ce mot, important dans toutes les langues, vient, en grec, du verbe ψύχω, souffler, faire du vent, comme le latin anima, animus, de ἄνεμος, vent, souffle, parce que le souffle, la respiration sont le soutien et le symptôme de la vie, de l'animation, de l'union des deux essences matérielle et immatérielle.*
 6. Genesis 1:1. *The Jerusalem Bible*, 1966.
 7. Free translation of Pierre Commelin, 1960, p.16. *L'homme, disait-on, était né de la terre imbibée d'eau et échauffée par les rayons du soleil; ainsi, sa nature participe de tous les éléments, et, quand il meurt, sa vénérable mère l'ensevelit et le garde dans son sein. Dans la mythologie, il est souvent parlé des enfants de la Terre: en général, lorsqu'on ne connaissait pas l'origine soit d'un homme, soit d'un peuple célèbre, on l'appelait fils de la Terre.*
 8. The same senses of *opening* and of *speech* gathered in the same term *chaos* appear in their Indo-European root *gheu-*, connected to *yawn*, *be open*, as well as to *talk*.
 9. "L'ascension du mont Ventoux," in Joachim Ritter, 1997.
 10. André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and speech*. Translated from French by Anna Bostock Berger. Massachusetts, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1993, p.258.
 11. Gaston Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*. Translated by Alan C. M. Ross. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964, p.1.
 12. *Ibidem*.
 13. Carl Gustav Jung, *The structure and dynamics of the psyche*. Translated by R. F. C. Hull. Princeton/N.J., Princeton University Press, 1972, §356.
 14. Gaston Bachelard. *The Formation of the Scientific Mind: A contribution to a psychoanalysis of objective knowledge*. Introduced, translated and annotated by Mary McAllester Jones. Manchester, Clinamen Press, 2002, p.24.
 15. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. Translated from French by Maria Jolas. Boston, Beacon Press, 1994, p.xv.
 16. Carl Gustav Jung. *Aion: Researches into the phenomenology of the self* (v.9/2). Translated by R. F. C. Hull. Princeton/N.J., Princeton University Press, 1979, §2.
 17. Carl Gustav Jung, *Op. cit.*, 1972, §385.
 18. *Ibidem*, §357.
 19. Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* (v.12). Translated by R. F. C. Hull. Princeton/N.J., Princeton University Press, 1980, §516.
 20. Gaston Bachelard, *op. cit.*, 2002, p. 208.
 21. Free translation from *Flora*, Gilberto Gil, 1980. *Imagino-te já idosa / frondosa toda a folhagem / multiplicada a ramagem de agora / tendo tudo transcorrido / flores e frutos da imagem / com que faço essa viagem/ pelo reino do teu nome, oh Flora. / Imagino-te jaqueira / postada à beira da estrada / velha, forte, farta, bela, senhora. / Pelo chão, muitos caroços / como que restos dos nossos / próprios sonhos devorados / pelo pássaro da aurora, oh Flora. / Imagino-te futura / ainda mais linda, madura / pura no sabor de amor e de amora. / Toda aquela luz acesa / na doçura e na beleza / terei sono, com certeza / debaixo da tua sombra, oh Flora.*
 22. Free translation from *Coqueiro de Itapoã*, Dorival Caymmi, 1959. *Coqueiro de Itapoã, coqueiro / areia de Itapoã, areia / morena de Itapoã, morena / saudade de Itapoã, me deixa. / Oh vento que faz cantigas / nas*

- folhas no alto do coqueiral / Oh vento que ondula as águas / eu nunca tive saudade igual. / Me traga boas notícias / daquela terra toda manhã / E jogue uma flor no colo / de uma morena em Itapoã.*
23. Free translation from *A lenda do Abaeté*, Dorival Caymmi, 1959. *No Abaeté tem uma lagoa escura / No Abaeté tem uma lagoa escura / arroteada de areia branca / arroteada de areia branca / oh de areia branca, de areia branca, de areia branca... / De manhã cedo se uma lavadeira / vai lavar roupa no Abaeté / vai se benzendo porque diz que ouve / ouve a zoada do batucajé / oh do batucajé, oh do batucajé... / O pescador disse que seu filhinho / tome jangada faça o que quiser / mas dá pancada se o filhinho brinca / perto da lagoa do Abaeté / oh do Abaeté, oh do Abaeté... // A noite tá que é um dia / diz alguém olhando a Lua / e na praia as criancinhas / brincam à luz do luar / O luar prateia tudo / coqueiral, areia e mar / a gente imagina quanto / a lagoa linda é. / A Lua se enamorando / nas águas do Abaeté... / (credo cruz te desconjuro / quem falou de Abaeté!).*
24. Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An essay on the imagination of matter*. Translated from French by Edith R. Farrell. Dallas, The Pegasus Foundation, 1982, p.28.
25. *Ibidem*, p. 28-31. In the detached segments, Bachelard mentions Paul Claudel.
26. *Ibidem*, p. 24.
27. Pérez-Oramas, in Filóstrato, o Velho. *Amores e outras imagens (Eikones)*. Translated by Rosângela Amato. São Paulo, Hedra, 2012, p. 11.
28. Free translation from Filóstrato, 2012, p. 11.
29. Philostratus the Elder; Philostratus, the Younger; Callistratus. *Imagines / Descriptions*. Translation by Arthur Fairbanks. London, William Heinemann / New York, G. P. Putnam's, 1931, p.89-91.
30. Carl Gustav Jung, *op. cit.*, 1980, §404.
31. Free translation from the poem *Mãos [Hands]*, in Orides Fontela, *Poesia reunida*, 2006. *Com as mãos nuas / lavar o campo: / as mãos se ferindo / nos seres, arestas / da subjacente unidade / as mãos desenterando / luzesfragmentos / do anterior espelho. / Com as mãos nuas / lavar o campo: / desnudar a estrela essencial / sem ter piedade do sangue.*
32. Reference to the song *Clarice*, Caetano Veloso, 1968.
33. Gaston Bachelard, *op. cit.*, 1994, p. 61.