

And sometimes you will see cities and castles and towers, and sheep and different colored cattle and images or specters of other things, where there is no city, no sheep, not even a thorn bush. I myself have sometimes had the pleasure of seeing these plays, this *lusus naturae*.

Antonius de Ferrarii, 1507-1509

I was startled to see the Empress above the fog completely upside down with her hull pointing skywards and her masts apparently resting on the layer of fog. The illusion lasted for about one minute and was perfectly clear in every detail when it finally disappeared and the ship came out of the fog in its normal position.

J. R. Sherwood, 1932

Then too a mist, aroused by the excessive warmth of the ground, obscures the light, and the aspect of the plain is not unlike that of a vast and deep sea.

Quintus Curtius Rufus, c. 40 AD

Mirages are definitely not photogenic.

James H. Gordon, 1959

Meanwhile, the most capricious shapes were appearing on the line of the horizon. The spectacle lasted, charming and pleasant, near half an hour. As the twilight grew darker, so the striking appearance decreased in beauty, and ended completely after three quarters of an hour.

G. M. Giovene, c. 1790

Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the one-and-twentieth day of the month Artemisius, a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armour were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities.

Flavius Josephus, c. 78 AD

Throughout the day the mirage of the sea ice, resembling in every particular an immense land, seemed to be mocking us. It seemed so near and so easily attainable if we would only turn back.

Donald MacMillan, Crocker Land Expedition, 1915

Curley: Look, water. Real pure salty water. It's the ocean.

Larry: Ocean, nothing. That's a MIRage.

Moe: MIRage is something you see yourself in. That's a mirAGE.

Curley: MirAGE? That's where you keep your automobile.

Moe: I said MirAGE, MIRage, whatever it is, I'm goin' swimmin.'

The Three Stooges, *We Want Our Mummy*, 1939

And the hulk dilated and vanished,
As a sea-mist in the sun!
And the people who saw this marvel
Each said unto his friend,
That this was the mould of their vessel,
And thus her tragic end.
And the pastor of the village
Gave thanks to God in prayer,
That, to quiet their troubled spirits,
He had sent this Ship of Air.

H. W. Longfellow, 1851

Here the ice islands presented a most romantic prospect of ruined castles, churches, arches, steeples, wrecks of ships, and a thousand wild and grotesque forms of monsters, dragons, and all the hideous shapes that the most fertile imagination can possibly conceive.

J. Marra, 1771-1775

Thus the parts of this moving picture will vanish in the twinkling of an eye. Sometimes the air is at that moment so impregnated with vapours, and undisturbed by winds, as to reflect objects in a kind of aërial screen, rising about thirty feet above the level of the sea.

Henry Swinburne, 1777-1780

I went upon the eastern cliff of hill, which is of a very considerable height, when a most beautiful scene presented itself to my view; for I could at once see Dengeness, Dover cliffs, and the French coast, all along from Calais, Boulogne, &c. to St. Vallery; and, as some of the fishermen affirmed, as far to the westward even as Dieppe . . . This curious phenomenon continued in the highest splendour till past eight o'clock, when it gradually vanished.

William Latham, 1798

At one moment, the rippled surface of a lake was before my eyes; at another time, a thick plantation appeared on either side of me; the waving of the branches was to be seen, and this view was only changed for that of a distant glimpse of a city; the mosques and minarets were distinct, and several times I asked my Bedouins if that were not Suez before us; but they laughed and said it was all sand; and what appeared to me a city, a forest, or a lake, the nearer I endeavoured to approach it the farther it seemed to recede, till at last it vanished altogether, like the baseless fabric of a vision, leaving not a wreck behind.

H.W. Bayfield, 1835

In adverting to this subject, one can hardly avoid noticing the remarkable inattention of not a few to what is passing under their immediate view, while they eagerly search after that which is distant, and far removed from the sphere of their contemplation . . . Is nothing interesting but what is distant?

H. H. Blackadder, 1825

If I were to speak of the nature of the mirage from my own sensations, I should say, it was more a mental hallucination than a deception of the sight; for, although I was aware of the existence of the mirage, I could not prevail on myself to believe that the images which were painted on my retina were only reflected, like those in a dream, from the imagination, and yet so it was.

H. W. Bayfield, 1835

On July 24th, while traveling in an easterly direction between Canton and Alliance, Ohio, I noticed a car about half a mile ahead apparently perfectly reflected in the roadbed, as if the latter was flooded with water. The road in front was straight almost to the horizon and an exceptionally fine cemented brick surface. When I came up to the 'given point' I found the road perfectly dry and the car ahead again showing a reflection in a perfectly mirror-like surface about the level of the bottom of the spare tire.

C. P. Du Shane, 1918

On clear mornings, about an hour after dawn, when the desert is very flat, a mirage of the country about a day's journey distant appears on the horizon. For a few minutes one sees a picture of what is some 50 kilometres farther on. The Arabs call it 'the country turning upside down.'

R. Forbes, 1921

But for two or three hours as they advanced the land kept receding and getting lower, until finally without becoming obscured by any fog or mist it sank beneath the horizon as if it had been some heavenly body setting.

Vilhjalmur Stefansson, 1922

Distant and dense air does of course normally act as a mirror . . .
which is why when there is an east wind promontories on the sea appear
to be elevated above it and everything appears abnormally large.

Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, c. 340 or 350 BCE

And both in this land and in Libya which lies beyond the Syrtis there takes place a marvellous thing. For at certain times, and especially when there is no wind, shapes are seen gathering in the sky which assume the forms of animals of every kind; and some of these remain fixed, but others begin to move, sometimes retreating before a man and at other times pursuing him, and in every case, since they are of monstrous size, they strike such as have never experienced them with wondrous dismay and terror. . . . although the natives, who have often met with such things, pay no attention to the phenomenon.

Diodorus Siculus, 30 AD

Jonas performs series of ritualistic gestures. Begins making “endless drawing” on blackboard. Alternately draws and erases series of images (heart, cone, sun, moon, rainbow, etc.; this drawing activity continues at various times throughout performance). Laughs insanely through large end of cone. Blows through small end.

Mirage by Joan Jonas, script from a performance at MoMA, 2010

Backstage sound of water.

Mirage by Joan Jonas, script from a performance at MoMA, 2010

Stay away from Bitcoin. It's a Mirage!

Warren Buffet, 2014

Eyesight is often slaughtered by the other senses, and when that happens it becomes necessary to seek out dispassionate abstractions. The dizzying spiral yearns for the assurance of geometry. One wants to retreat into the cool rooms of reason. But no, there was Van Gogh with his easel on some sun-baked lagoon painting ferns of the Carboniferous Period. Then the mirage faded into the burning atmosphere.

Robert Smithson, 1970

As when a shepherd of the Hebrid' Isles. . .
(Whether it be lone fancy him beguiles,
Or that aerial beings sometimes deign
To stand, embodied, to our sense plain) . . .
A vast assembly moving to and fro:
Then all at once in air dissolves the wondrous show.

James Thomson, "The Castle of Indolence," 1748

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R. R. Madden, 1830

The mirage shows many ambiguous images. Desire often insists we are seeing the thing we want.

E. A. Mills, 1926

A mirage is an optical phenomenon in which light rays are bent to produce a displaced image of distant objects or the sky. The word comes to English via the French mirage, from the Latin mirari, meaning "to look at, to wonder at." This is the same root as for "mirror" and "to admire."

Crowd Source, 2015

My land is in a large, flat valley with very little vegetation—it's land worn down by Lake Bonneville, an ancient lake that gradually receded over thousands of years. The Great Salt Lake is what remains of the original lake now, but it's just a puddle by comparison. From my site you can see mountains with lines on them where the old lake bit into the rock as it was going down. The mirages are extraordinary: You can see whole mountains hovering over the earth, reflected upside down in the heat. The feeling of timelessness is overwhelming.

Nancy Holt, 1977

The only interesting things were the mirages, which one beheld on every side and apparently quite close; and so true to nature were these clumps of trees dotted about, standing apparently on little islands with their images reflected in shining waters, that at first it was impossible not to believe that they did not exist, but on looking behind, and seeing the empty desert land which we had been passing over trying to humbug us in the same way, then we thought we had had enough of it.

Sir Edgar Collins Boehm, 1904

Ijirait are often considered the cause of taulittuq. Taulittuq is the experience of moving but without the sense of getting any closer to one's destination.

M. David Sills, date unknown

In Inuit mythology, Ijirait are land spirits and elusive shape shifters. They can take the form of any arctic creature, including a human. Mirages surround them, so when a mountain or island on the horizon looks bigger or closer than it really is, an Ijirait might be near.

Ava, Amitturmiut, 1929

Jonesy: Lou, you gotta pull yourself together.

Lou: Give me a towel.

Jonesy: Lou, men go crazy on the desert chasing mirages.

Lou: But if you don't chase mirages, how do you know they're mirages?

Abbott and Costello, *The Foreign Legion*, 1950

The world disintegrates around me.

Yvonne Rainer, 1968

Queen of the black black
In t valley of all all
With one glance sees t King
Mountain top
7 climb
7 way
Restless winds
Midnight blooms
Tons of colors
Tones of waterdrops
Crystal reflections
Painting mirages
Celestial splendor
Highest grandeur
Queen of t black black
King of t all all.

Louise Nevelson, "Queen of the black black," 1961

The beauty that shimmers in the yellow afternoons of October, who ever could clutch it? Go forth to find it, and it is gone; 'tis only a mirage as you look from the windows of diligence.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1851