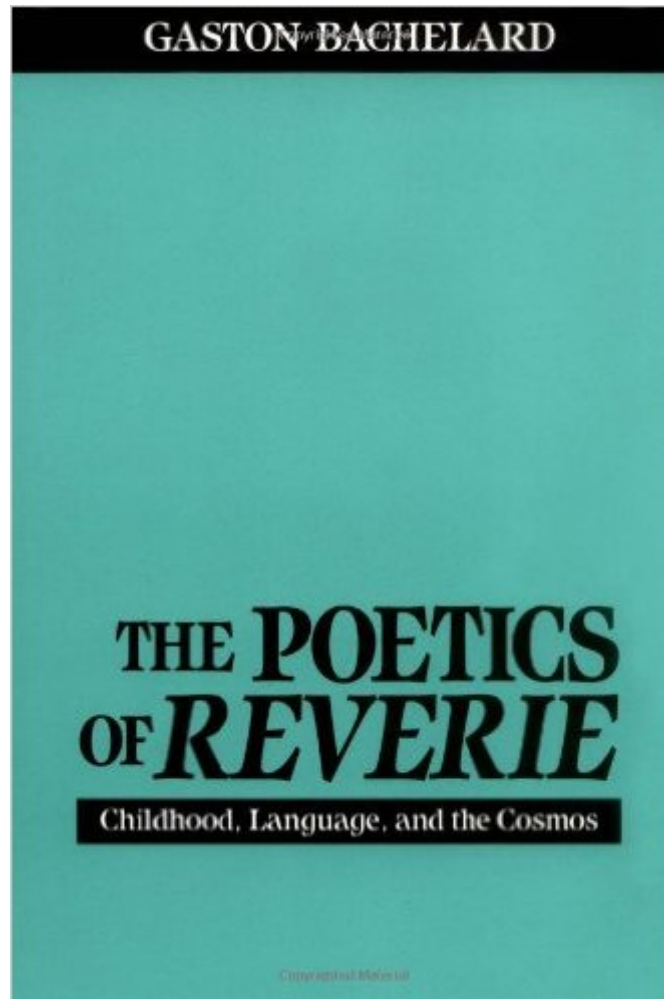


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The Poetics Of Reverie: Childhood, Language, And The Cosmos



Synopsis

In this, his last significant work, an admired French philosopher provides extraordinary meditations on the relations between the imagining consciousness and the world, positing the notion of reverie as its most dynamic point of reference. In his earlier book, *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard considered several kinds of "praiseworthy space" conducive to the flow of poetic imagery. In *Poetics of Reverie* he considers the absolute origins of that imagery: language, sexuality, childhood, the Cartesian ego, and the universe. Approaching the psychology of wonder from the phenomenological viewpoint, Bachelard demonstrates the augmentative potential of all that awareness. Thus he distinguishes what is merely a phenomenon of relaxation from the kind of reverie which "poetry puts on the right track, the track of expanding consciousness"

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Customer Reviews

A personal and profound argument for the power of "reverie," i.e., the active application of fantasy and imagination in life, love and perception. Bachelard argues for the importance of the "creating imagination" and argues that we are, first and foremost, beings who are "struck with wonder" by images: dreamers. In exploring three "deep" environments of reverie and imagination -- childhood, the cosmos and language itself -- Bachelard shows how "imagination augments reality" in such a way as to make life more poetic. Poets and poetry constitute the "soul" of language and, hence, our ability to perceive reality. Bachelard tells us that if there is a need for Freud's "reality principle," it is just as important that there be an "un-reality principle," i.e., fantasy and creative imagination as a

"cushion" against the degradation of so-called "realism." Probably my favorite quote from this book, and the one that best sums up the entire work is this: "The reality of love is mutilated when it is removed from all its unreality." This is a transformational work. While Bachelard works off Jung's archetypes, he adds his own unique insight and style in arguing that all imagination ultimately is a form of idealization, or, as he puts it "In order to truly perceive, we must not merely receive, we must affirm." If you have ever felt that rationality and knowledge are insufficient means to understand understanding, then you need to let Bachelard share his message with you. He says that writing a book is difficult work and one is tempted to merely dream it. Fortunately, Bachelard wrote this one so **we** could dream it. Share the dream. For as Heraclitus once put it, even the dreamers and sleepers are doing their part in the ongoing and unfolding work that is our world. According to Bachelard, dreamers and daydreamers are doing the most **important** work.

Bachelard's *Poetics of Reverie* is a fascinating, fascinating book, but those with no previous training in phenomenology might want to do some intro reading first. A must-read for anyone who's ever tried their hand at creative writing, especially poetry, and a must-read for anyone whose mind has ever been stuck in a state of reverie concerning the world around them.

Bachelard's book on reverie wonderfully explores the space that looms somewhere in between wakefulness and dream. Reverie is a form of consciousness that departs from the words of poets and then grows. Each section of this essay refines or sketches further some of the liminal suggestions of the author. Some of these excursions resonate more sensibly than others of course, but all of the chapters thoughtfully meditate on a placid and exciting state. I do not think the second section on the significance of word gender is terribly fruitful, since gender is a grammatical rather than semantic property, but even such meanderings around and slight abuses of traditional understandings leads to some joyful venues and phenomenal considerations. A book need not be useful to be pleasant. This book has a mite of the former quality and a might of the latter quality.

Few books satisfy the soul like this one. This book is to be read slowly, in solitude, and with the full attention of the heart.

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