

## GASTON BACHELARD

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French philosopher of science and phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard (1884–1962) trained originally as a scientist and as a philosopher, before developing a strong interest in phenomenology and the theory of the imagination. The seeds of his subsequent theorization of the imagination can be found in his early work on the philosophy of science. Bachelard stressed the dialectical relationship between rationalism (the world of thinking) and realism (the empirical world). Critical of the Cartesian drive towards simplicity, he emphasized instead complexity. In this Bachelard was heavily influenced by psychoanalysis and surrealism. He developed the concept of 'surrationalism', by which he sought to reinvigorate our understanding of the rational, by emphasizing the complexity of its material situation, rather as surrealism sought to invigorate realism by 'playing upon the dream world. In his later work the influence of psychoanalysis and the role of the imagination became increasingly dominant.

Gaston  
Bachelard

The introduction to Bachelard's influential work, *The Poetics of Space*, begins on a seemingly autobiographical note:

A philosopher who has evolved his entire thinking from the fundamental themes of the philosophy of science, and followed the main line of the active, growing rationalism of contemporary science as closely as he could, must forget his learning and break with all his habits of philosophical research, if he wants to study the problems posed by the poetic imagination.

In the extract included here Bachelard pursues this question in the context of the house. In order to understand the house we must go beyond mere description and beyond the limited constraints of a realist (Cartesian) conception. We need to resort to the world of the daydream where 'memory and imagination remain associated'. Here in the realm of personal memories, in the realm of 'the odour of raisins drying on a wicker basket', the 'oneiric house', the house of dream-memory, can be retrieved. For daydreaming is more powerful than thought, and through its poetic dimension can recover the essence of the house that has been lost 'in a shadow of the beyond of the real past'. In emphasizing the daydream rather than the dream it is clear that Bachelard owes his psychoanalytic insights to Jung rather than to Freud.

Clear parallels may be drawn between Bachelard's French suburban house and Martin Heidegger's German peasant hut. Likewise Bachelard's subsequent account of the cellar begins to evoke Freud's distinction between the 'heimlich' (homely) and 'unheimlich' (uncanny), and comparisons can be made with references to the cellar in Lyotard's essay, 'Domus and the Megalopolis'.

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Bachelard

## POETICS OF SPACE (EXTRACT)

## PART ONE

*A la porte de la maison qui viendra frapper?  
 Une porte ouverte on entre  
 Une porte fermée un anstre  
 Le monde bat de l'autre côté de ma porte.*

At the door of the house who will come knocking?  
 An open door, we enter  
 A closed door, a den  
 The world pulse beats beyond my door.

Pierre Albert Birot, *Les Amusements Naturels*, p. 217

The house, quite obviously, is a privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space, provided, of course, that we take it in both its unity and its complexity, and endeavour to integrate all the special values in one fundamental value. For the house furnishes us with dispersed images and a body of images at the same time. In both cases, I shall prove that imagination augments the values of reality. A sort of attraction for images concentrates them about the house. Transcending our memories of all the houses in which we have found shelter, above and beyond all the houses we have dreamed we lived in, can we isolate an intimate, concrete essence that would be a justification of the uncommon value of all of our images of protected intimacy? This, then, is the main problem.

In order to solve it, it is not enough to consider the house as an 'object' on which we can make our judgments and daydreams react. For a phenomenologist, a psychoanalyst or a psychologist (these three points of view being named in the order of decreasing efficacy), it is not a question of describing houses, or enumerating their picturesque features and analysing for which reasons they are comfortable. On the contrary, we must go beyond the problems of description – whether this description be objective or subjective, that is, whether it give facts or impressions – in order to attain to the primary virtues, those that reveal an attachment that is native in some way to the primary function of inhabiting. A geographer or an ethnographer can give us descriptions of very varied types of dwellings. In each variety, the phenomenologist makes the effort needed to seize upon the germ of the essential, sure, immediate well-being it encloses. In every dwelling, even the richest, the first task of the phenomenologist is to find the original shell.

But the related problems are many if we want to determine the profound reality of all the subtle shadings of our attachment for a chosen spot. For a phenomenologist, these shadings must be taken as the first rough outlines of a psychological phenomenon. The shading is not an additional, superficial colouring. We should therefore have to say how we inhabit our vital space, in accord with all the dialectics of life, how we take root, day after day, in a 'carrier of the world'.

For our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word. If we look at it intimately,

the humblest dwelling has beauty. Authors of books on 'the humble home' often mention this feature of the poetics of space. But this mention is much too succinct. Finding little to describe in the humble home, they spend little time there; so they describe it as it actually is, without really experiencing its primitiveness, a primitiveness which belongs to all, rich and poor alike, if they are willing to dream.

Bachelard

moving  
argument  
forward

But our adult life is so dispossessed of the essential benefits, its anthropocosmic ties have become so slack, that we do not feel their first attachment in the universe of the house. There is no dearth of abstract, 'world-conscious' philosophers who discover a universe by means of the dialectical game of the I and the non-I. In fact, they know the universe before they know the house, the far horizon before the resting-place; whereas the real beginnings of images, if we study them phenomenologically, will give concrete evidence of the values of inhabited space, of the non-I that protects the I.

Indeed, here we touch upon a converse, whose images we shall have to explore: all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home. In the course of this work, we shall see that the imagination functions in this direction whenever the human being has found the slightest shelter: we shall see the imagination build 'walls' of impalpable shadows, comfort itself with the illusion of protection - or, just the contrary, tremble behind thick walls, mistrust the staunchest ramparts. In short, in the most interminable of dialectics, the sheltered being gives perceptible limits to his shelter. He experiences the house in its reality and in its virtuality, by means of thought and dreams. It is no longer in its positive aspects that the house is really 'lived', nor is it only in the passing hour that we recognize its benefits. An entire past comes to dwell in a new house. The old saying: 'We bring our lares with us' has many variations. And the daydream deepens to the point where an immemorial domain opens up for the dreamer of a home beyond man's earliest memory. The house, like fire and water, will permit me, later in this work, to recall flashes of daydreams that illuminate the synthesis of immemorial and recollected. In this remote region, memory and imagination remain associated, each one working for their mutual deepening. In the order of values, they both constitute a community of memory and image. Thus the house is not experienced from day to day only, on the thread of a narrative, or in the telling of our own story. Through dreams, the various dwelling-places in our lives co-penetrate and retain the treasures of former days. And after we are in the new house, when memories of other places we have lived in come back to us, we travel to the land of Motionless Childhood, motionless the way all immemorial things are. We live fixations, fixations of happiness.<sup>1</sup> We comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection. Something closed must retain our memories, while leaving them their original value as images. Memories of the outside world will never have the same tonality as those of home and, by recalling these memories, we add to our store of dreams; we are never real historians, but always near poets, and our emotion is perhaps nothing but an expression of a poetry that was lost.

Thus, by approaching the house images with care not to break up the solidarity of memory and imagination, we may hope to make others feel all the psychological elasticity of an image that moves us at an unimaginable depth. Through poems, perhaps more than through recollections, we touch the ultimate poetic depth of the space of the house.

*Bachelard* This being the case, if I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace. Thought and experience are not the only things that sanction human values. The values that belong to daydreaming mark humanity in its depths. Daydreaming even has a privilege of auto-valorization. It derives direct pleasure from its own being. Therefore, the places in which we have *experienced daydreaming* reconstitute themselves in a new daydream, and it is because our memories of former dwelling-places are relived as daydreams that these dwelling-places of the past remain in us for all time.

Now my aim is clear: I must show that the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. The binding principle in this integration is the daydream. Past, present and future give the house different dynamisms, which often interfere, at times opposing, at others, stimulating one another. In the life of a man, the house thrusts aside contingencies, its councils of continuity are unceasing. Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul. It is the human being's first world. Before he is 'cast into the world', as claimed by certain hasty metaphysics, man is laid in the cradle of the house. And always, in our daydreams, the house is a large cradle. A concrete metaphysics cannot neglect this fact, this simple fact, all the more, since this fact is a value, an important value, to which we return in our daydreaming. Being is already a value. Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house.

From my viewpoint, from the phenomenologist's viewpoint, the conscious metaphysics that starts from the moment when the being is 'cast into the world' is a secondary metaphysics. It passes over the preliminaries, when being is being-well, when the human being is deposited in a being-well, in the well-being originally associated with being. To illustrate the metaphysics of consciousness we should have to wait for the experiences during which being is cast out, that is to say, thrown out, outside the being of the house, a circumstance in which the hostility of men and of the universe accumulates. But a complete metaphysics, englobing both the conscious and the unconscious, would leave the privilege of its values within. Within the being, in the being of within, an enveloping warmth welcomes being. Being reigns in a sort of earthly paradise of matter, dissolved in the comforts of an adequate matter. It is as though in this material paradise, the human being were bathed in nourishment, as though he were gratified with all the essential benefits.

When we dream of the house we were born in, in the utmost depths of reverie, we participate in this original warmth, in this well-tempered matter of the material paradise. This is the environment in which the protective beings live. We shall come back to the maternal features of the house. For the moment, I should like to point out the original fullness of the house's being. Our daydreams carry us back to it. And the poet well knows that the house holds childhood motionless 'in its arms':<sup>2</sup>

*Maison, pan de prairie, ô lumière du soir  
Soudain vous acquérez presque une face humaine  
Vous êtes près de nous, embrassants, embrassés.*

House; patch of meadow, oh evening light

Suddenly you acquire an almost human face  
 You are very near us, embracing and embraced.

Bachelard

## PART TWO

Of course, thanks to the house, a great many of our memories are housed, and if the house is a bit elaborate, if it has a cellar and a garret, nooks and corridors, our memories have refuges that are all the more clearly delineated. All our lives we come back to them in our daydreams. A psychoanalyst should, therefore, turn his attention to this simple localization of our memories. I should like to give the name of topoanalysis to this auxiliary of psychoanalysis. Topoanalysis, then, would be the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives. In the theatre of the past that is constituted by memory, the stage setting maintains the characters in their dominant roles. At times we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being's stability – a being who does not want to melt away, and who, even in the past, when he sets out in search of things past, wants time to 'suspend' its flight. In its countless alveoli, space contains compressed time. That is what space is for.

And if we want to go beyond history, or even, while remaining in history, detach from our own history the always too contingent history of the persons who have encumbered it, we realize that the calendars of our lives can only be established in its imagery. In order to analyse our being in the hierarchy of an ontology, or to psychoanalyse our unconscious entrenched in primitive abodes, it would be necessary, on the margin of normal psychoanalysis, to *desocialize* our important memories, and attain to the plane of the daydreams that we used to have in the places identified with our solitude. For investigations of this kind, daydreams are more useful than dreams. They show moreover that daydreams can be very different from dreams.<sup>3</sup>

And so, faced with these periods of solitude, the topoanalyst starts to ask questions: Was the room a large one? Was the garret cluttered up? Was the nook warm? How was it lighted? How, too, in these fragments of space, did the human being achieve silence? How did he relish the very special silence of the various retreats of solitary daydreaming?

Here space is everything, for time ceases to quicken memory. Memory – what a strange thing it is! – does not record concrete duration, in the Bergsonian sense of the word. We are unable to relive duration that has been destroyed. We can only think of it, in the line of an abstract time that is deprived of all thickness. The finest specimens of fossilized duration concretized as a result of long sojourn, are to be found in and through space. The unconscious abides. Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are. To localize a memory in time is merely a matter for the biographer and only corresponds to a sort of external history, for external use, to be communicated to others. But *hermeneutics*, which is more profound than biography, must determine the centres of fate by ridding history of its conjunctive temporal tissue, which has no action on our fates. For a knowledge of intimacy, localization in the spaces of our intimacy is more urgent than determination of dates.

Psychoanalysis too often situates the passions 'in the century'. In reality,

*Bachelard* however, the passions simmer and resimmer in solitude: the passionate being prepares his explosions and his exploits in this solitude.

And all the spaces of our past moments of solitude, the spaces in which we have suffered from solitude, enjoyed, desired and compromised solitude, remain indelible within us, and precisely because the human being wants them to remain so. He knows instinctively that this space identified with his solitude is creative; that even when it is forever expunged from the present, when, henceforth, it is alien to all the promises of the future, even when we no longer have a garret, when the attic room is lost and gone, there remains the fact that we once loved a garret, once lived in an attic. We return to them in our night dreams. These retreats have the value of a shell. And when we reach the very end of the labyrinths of sleep, when we attain to the regions of deep slumber, we may perhaps experience a type of repose that is pre-human; pre-human, in this case, approaching the immemorial. But in the daydream itself, the recollection of moments of confined, simple, shut-in space are experiences of heartwarming space, of a space that does not seek to become extended, but would like above all still to be possessed. In the past, the attic may have seemed too small, it may have seemed cold in winter and hot in summer. Now, however, in memory recaptured through daydreams, it is hard to say through what syncretism the attic is at once small and large, warm and cool, always comforting.

### PART THREE

This being the case, we shall have to introduce a slight nuance at the very base of topoanalysis. I pointed out earlier that the unconscious is housed. It should be added that it is well and happily housed, in the space of its happiness. The normal unconscious knows how to make itself at home everywhere, and psychoanalysis comes to the assistance of the ousted unconscious, of the unconscious that has been roughly or insidiously dislodged. But psychoanalysis sets the human being in motion, rather than at rest. It calls on him to live outside the abodes of his unconscious, to enter into life's adventures, to come out of himself. And naturally, its action is a salutary one. Because we must also give an exterior destiny to the interior being. To accompany psychoanalysis in this salutary action, we should have to undertake a topoanalysis of all the space that has invited us to come out of ourselves.

*Emmenez-moi, chemins! . . .*  
Carry me along, oh roads . . .

wrote Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, recalling her native Flanders (*Un Ruisseau de la Scarpe*).

And what a dynamic, handsome object is a path! How precise the familiar hill paths remain for our muscular consciousness! A poet has expressed all this dynamism in one single line:

*O, mes chemins et leur cadence*  
Oh, my roads and their cadence.

Jean Caubère, *Déserts*

When I relive dynamically the road that 'climbed' the hill, I am quite sure that the road itself had muscles, or rather, counter-muscles. In my room in

Paris, it is a good exercise for me to think of the road in this way. As I write this page, I feel freed of my duty to take a walk: I am sure of having gone out of my house.

Bachelard

And indeed we should find countless intermediaries between reality and symbols if we gave things all the movements they suggest. George Sand, dreaming beside a path of yellow sand, saw life flowing by. 'What is more beautiful than a road?' she wrote. 'It is the symbol and the image of an active, varied life' (*Consuelo*, vol. II, p. 116).

Each one of us, then, should speak of his roads, his crossroads, his roadside benches; each one of us should make a surveyor's map of his lost fields and meadows. Thoreau said that he had the map of his fields engraved in his soul. And Jean Wahl once wrote:

*Le moutonnement des haies  
C'est en moi que je l'ai.*

The frothing of the hedges  
I keep deep inside me.

*Poème*, p. 46

Thus we cover the universe with drawings we have lived. These drawings need not be exact. They need only to be tonalized on the mode of our inner space. But what a book would have to be written to decide all these problems! Space calls for action, and before action, the imagination is at work. It mows and ploughs. We should have to speak of the benefits of all these imaginary actions. Psychoanalysis has made numerous observations on the subject of projective behaviour, on the willingness of extroverted persons to exteriorize their intimate impressions. An exteriorist topoanalysis would perhaps give added precision to this projective behaviour by defining our daydreams of objects. However, in this present work, I shall not be able to undertake, as should be done, the two-fold imaginary geometrical and physical problem of extroversion and introversion. Moreover, I do not believe that these two branches of physics have the same psychic weight. My research is devoted to the domain of intimacy, to the domain in which psychic weight is dominant.

I shall therefore put my trust in the power of attraction of all the domains of intimacy. There does not exist a real intimacy that is repellent. All the spaces of intimacy are designated by an attraction. Their being is well-being. In these conditions, topoanalysis bears the stamp of a topophilia, and shelters and rooms will be studied in the sense of this valorization.

#### PART FOUR

These virtues of shelter are so simple, so deeply rooted in our unconscious that they may be recaptured through mere mention, rather than through minute description. Here the nuance bespeaks the colour. A poet's word, because it strikes true, moves the very depths of our being.

Over-picturesqueness in a house can conceal its intimacy. This is also true in life. But it is truer still in daydreams. For the real houses of memory, the houses to which we return in dreams, the houses that are rich in unalterable oneirism, do not readily lend themselves to description. To describe them would be like

*Bachelard* showing them to visitors. We can perhaps tell everything about the present, but about the past! The first, the oneirically definitive house, must retain its shadows. For it belongs to the literature of depth, that is, to poetry, and not to the fluent type of literature that, in order to analyse intimacy, needs other people's stories. All I ought to say about my childhood home is just barely enough to place me, myself, in an oneiric situation, to set me on the threshold of a daydream in which I shall *find* repose in the past. Then I may hope that my page will possess a sonority that will ring true – a voice so remote within me, that it will be the voice we all hear when we listen as far back as memory reaches, on the very limits of memory, beyond memory perhaps, in the field of the immemorial. All we communicate to others is an *orientation* towards what is secret without ever-being able to tell the secret objectively. What is secret never has total objectivity. In this respect, we orient oneirism but we do not accomplish it.<sup>4</sup>

What would be the use, for instance, in giving the plan of the room that was really *my* room, in describing the little room at the *end* of the garret, in saying that from the window, across the indentations of the roofs, one could see the hill. I alone, in my memories of another century, can open the deep cupboard that still retains for me alone that unique odour, the odour of raisins drying on a wicker tray. The odour of raisins! It is an odour that is beyond description, one that it takes a lot of imagination to smell. But I've already said too much. If I said more, the reader, back in his own room, would not open that unique wardrobe, with its unique smell, which is the signature of intimacy. Paradoxically, in order to suggest the values of intimacy, we have to induce in the reader a state of suspended reading. For it is not until his eyes have left the page that recollections of my room can become a threshold of oneirism for him. And when it is a poet speaking, the reader's soul reverberates; it experiences the kind of reverberation that, as Minkowski has shown, gives the energy of all origin to being.

It therefore makes sense from our standpoint of a philosophy of literature and poetry to say that we 'write a room', 'read a room' or 'read a house'. Thus, very quickly, at the very first word, at the first poetic overture, the reader who is 'reading a room' leaves off reading and starts to think of some place in his own past. You would like to tell everything about your room. You would like to interest the reader in yourself, whereas you have unlocked a door to day-dreaming. The values of intimacy are so absorbing that the reader has ceased to read your room: he sees his own again. He is already far off, listening to the recollections of a father or a grandmother, of a mother or a servant, of 'the old faithful servant', in short, of the human being who dominates the corner of his most cherished memories.

And the house of memories becomes psychologically complex. Associated with the nooks and corners of solitude are the bedroom and the living room in which the leading characters held sway. The house we were born in is an inhabited house. In it the values of intimacy are scattered, they are not easily stabilized, they are subjected to dialectics. In how many tales of childhood – if tales of childhood were sincere – we should be told of a child that, lacking a room, went and sulked in his corner!

But over and beyond our memories, the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us. It is a group of organic habits. After twenty years, in spite of all



the other anonymous stairways; we would recapture the reflexes of the 'first stairway', we would not stumble on that rather high step. The house's entire being would open up, faithful to our own being. We would push the door that creaks with the same gesture, we would find our way in the dark to the distant attic. The feel of the tiniest latch has remained in our hands.

Bachelard

The successive houses in which we have lived have no doubt made our gestures commonplace. But we are very surprised, when we return to the old house, after an odyssey of many years, to find that the most delicate gestures, the earliest gestures suddenly come alive, are still faultless. In short, the house we were born in has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting. We are the diagram of the functions of inhabiting that particular house, and all the other houses are but variations on a fundamental theme. The word habit is too worn a word to express this passionate liaison of our bodies, which do not forget, with an unforgettable house.

But this area of detailed recollections that are easily retained because of the names of things and people we knew in the first house, can be studied by means of general psychology. Memories of dreams, however, which only poetic meditation can help us to recapture, are more confused, less clearly drawn. The great function of poetry is to give us back the situations of our dreams. The house we were born in is more than an embodiment of home, it is also an embodiment of dreams. Each one of its nooks and corners was a resting-place for daydreaming. And often the resting place particularized the daydream. Our habits of a particular daydream were acquired there. The house, the bedroom, the garret in which we were alone, furnished the framework for an interminable dream, one that poetry alone, through the creation of a poetic work, could succeed in achieving completely. If we give their function of shelter for dreams to all of these places of retreat, we may say, as I pointed out in an earlier work,<sup>5</sup> that there exists for each one of us an oneiric house, a house of dream-memory, that is lost in the shadow of a beyond of the real past. I called this oneiric house the crypt of the house that we were born in. Here we find ourselves at a pivotal point around which reciprocal interpretations of dreams through thought and thought through dreams, keep turning. But the word *interpretation* hardens this about-face unduly. In point of fact, we are in the unity of image and memory, in the functional composite of imagination and memory. The positivity of psychological history and geography cannot serve as a touchstone for determining *the real being* of our childhood, for childhood is certainly greater than reality. In order to sense, across the years, our attachment for the house we were born in, dream is more powerful than thought. It is our unconscious force that crystallizes our remotest memories. If a compact centre of daydreams of repose had not existed in this first house, the very different circumstances that surround actual life would have clouded our memories. Except for a few medallions stamped with the likeness of our ancestors, our child-memory contains only worn coins. It is on the plane of the daydream and not on that of facts that childhood remains alive and poetically useful within us. Through this permanent childhood, we maintain the poetry of the past. To inhabit oneirically the house we were born in means more than to inhabit it in memory; it means living in this house that is gone, the way we used to dream in it.

What special depth there is in a child's daydream! And how happy the child

*Bachelard* who really possesses his moments of solitude! It is a good thing, it is even salutary, for a child to have periods of boredom, for him to learn to know the dialectics of exaggerated play and causeless, pure boredom. Alexander Dumas tells in his *Mémoires* that, as a child, he was bored, bored to tears. When his mother found him like that, weeping from sheer boredom, she said: 'And what is Dumas crying about?' 'Dumas is crying because Dumas has tears,' replied the six-year-old child. This is the kind of anecdote people tell in their memoirs. But how well it exemplifies absolute boredom, the boredom that is not the equivalent of the absence of playmates. There are children who will leave a game to go and be bored in a corner of the garret. How often have I wished for the attic of my boredom when the complications of life made me lose the very germ of all freedom!

And so, beyond all the positive values of protection, the house we were born in becomes imbued with dream values which remain after the house is gone. Centres of boredom, centres of solitude, centres of daydream group together to constitute the oneiric house which is more lasting than the scattered memories of our birthplace. Long phenomenological research would be needed to determine all these dream values, to plumb the depth of this dream ground in which our memories are rooted.

And we should not forget that these dream values communicate poetically from soul to soul. To read poetry is essentially to daydream.

## PART FIVE

A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability. We are constantly re-imagining its reality: to distinguish all these images would be to describe the soul of the house; it would mean developing a veritable psychology of the house.

To bring order into these images, I believe that we should consider two principal connecting themes:

- 1 A house is imagined as a vertical being. It rises upward. It differentiates itself in terms of its verticality. It is one of the appeals to our consciousness of verticality.
- 2 A house is imagined as a concentrated being. It appeals to our consciousness of centrality.<sup>6</sup>

These themes are no doubt very abstractly stated. But with examples, it is not hard to recognize their psychologically concrete nature.

Verticality is ensured by the polarity of cellar and attic, the marks of which are so deep that, in a way, they open up two very different perspectives for a phenomenology of the imagination. Indeed, it is possible, almost without commentary, to oppose the rationality of the roof to the irrationality of the cellar. A roof tells its *raison d'être* right away: it gives mankind shelter from the rain and sun he fears. Geographers are constantly reminding us that, in every country, the slope of the roofs is one of the surest indications of the climate. We 'understand' the slant of a roof. Even a dreamer dreams rationally; for him, a pointed roof averts rain clouds. Up near the roof all our thoughts are clear. In the attic it is a pleasure to see the bare rafters of the strong framework. Here we participate in the carpenter's solid geometry.

As for the cellar, we shall no doubt find uses for it. It will be rationalized and its conveniences enumerated. But it is first and foremost the *dark entity* of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces. When we dream there, we are in harmony with the irrationality of the depths. Bachelard

We become aware of this dual-vertical polarity of a house if we are sufficiently aware of the function of inhabiting to consider it as an imaginary response to the function of constructing. The dreamer constructs and reconstructs the upper stories and the attic until they are well constructed. And, as I said before, when we dream of the heights we are in the rational zone of intellectualized projects. But for the cellar, the impassioned inhabitant digs and redigs, making its very depth active. The fact is not enough, the dream is at work. When it comes to excavated ground, dreams have no limit. I shall give later some deep cellar reveries. But first let us remain in the space that is polarized by the cellar and the attic, to see how this polarized space can serve to illustrate very fine psychological nuances.

Here is how the psychoanalyst C. G. Jung has used the dual image of cellar and attic to analyse the fears that inhabit a house. In Jung's *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* we find a comparison which is used to make us understand the conscious being's hope of 'destroying the autonomy of complexes by debaptising them'. The image is the following:

Here the conscious acts like a man who, hearing a suspicious noise in the cellar, hurries to the attic and, finding no burglars there decides, consequently, that the noise was pure imagination. In reality, this prudent man did not dare venture into the cellar.

To the extent that the explanatory image used by Jung convinces us, we readers relive phenomenologically both fears: fear in the attic and fear in the cellar. Instead of facing the cellar (the unconscious), Jung's 'prudent man' seeks alibis for his courage in the attic. In the attic rats and mice can make considerable noise. But let the master of the house arrive unexpectedly and they return to the silence of their holes. The creatures moving about in the cellar are slower, less scampering, more mysterious.

In the attic, fears are easily 'rationalized'. Whereas in the cellar, even for a more courageous man than the one Jung mentions, 'rationalization' is less rapid and less clear; also it is never *definitive*. In the attic, the day's experiences can always efface the fears of night. In the cellar, darkness prevails both day and night, and even when we are carrying a lighted candle, we see shadows dancing on the dark walls.

If we follow the inspiration of Jung's *explanatory* example to a complete grasp of psychological reality, we encounter a cooperation between psychoanalysis and phenomenology which must be stressed if we are to dominate the human phenomenon. As a matter of fact, the image has to be understood phenomenologically in order to give it psychoanalytical efficacy. The phenomenologist, in this case, will accept the psychoanalyst's image in a spirit of shared trepidation. He will revive the primitivity and the specificity of the fears. In our civilization, which has the same light everywhere, and puts electricity in its cellars, we no longer go to the cellar carrying a candle. But the unconscious cannot be civilized. It takes a candle when it goes to the cellar. The psychoanalyst cannot cling to the superficiality of metaphors or comparisons, and the

Bachelard phenomenologist has to pursue every image to the very end. Here, so far from reducing and explaining, so far from comparing, the phenomenologist will exaggerate his exaggeration. Then, when they read Poe's *Tales* together, both the phenomenologist and the psychoanalyst will understand the value of this achievement. For these tales are the realization of childhood fears. The reader who is a 'devotee' of reading will hear the accursed cat, which is a symbol of unredeemed guilt, mewling behind the wall.<sup>8</sup> The cellar dreamer knows that the walls of the cellar are buried walls, that they are walls with a single casing, walls that have the entire earth behind them. And so the situation grows more dramatic, and fear becomes exaggerated. But where is the fear that does not become exaggerated? In this spirit of shared trepidation, the phenomenologist listens intently, as the poet Thoby Marcelin puts it, 'flush with madness'. The cellar then becomes buried madness, walled-in tragedy.

Stories of criminal cellars leave indelible marks on our memory, marks that we prefer not to deepen; who would like to re-read Poe's 'The Cask of Amontillado'? In this instance, the dramatic element is too facile, but it exploits natural fears, which are inherent to the dual nature of both man and house.

Although I have no intention of starting a file on the subject of human drama, I shall study a few ultra-cellars which prove that the cellar dream irrefutably increases reality.

If the dreamer's house is in a city it is not unusual that the dream is one of dominating in depth the surrounding cellars. His abode wants the undergrounds of legendary fortified castles, where mysterious passages that run under the enclosing walls, the ramparts and the moat put the heart of the castle into communication with the distant forest. The château planted on the hilltop had a cluster of cellars for roots. And what power it gave a simple house to be built on this underground clump!

In the novels of Henri Bosco, who is a great dreamer of houses, we come across ultra-cellars of this kind. Under the house in *L'Antiquaire* (*The Antique Dealer*, p. 60), there is a 'vaulted rotunda into which open four doors'. Four corridors lead from the four doors, dominating, as it were, the four cardinal points of an underground horizon. The door to the East opens and 'we advance subterraneously far under the houses in this neighbourhood . . .'. There are traces of labyrinthine dreams in these pages. But associated with the labyrinths of the corridor, in which the air is 'heavy', are rotundas and chapels that are the sanctuaries of the secret. Thus, the cellar in *L'Antiquaire* is oneirically complex. The reader must explore it through dreams, certain of which refer to the suffering in the corridors, and others to the marvellous nature of underground palaces. He may become quite lost (actually as well as figuratively). At first he does not see very clearly the necessity for such a complicated geometry. Just here, a phenomenological analysis will prove to be effective. But what does the phenomenological attitude advise? It asks us to produce within ourselves a reading pride that will give us the illusion of participating in the work of the author of the book. Such an attitude could hardly be achieved on first reading, which remains too passive. For here the reader is still something of a child, a child who is entertained by reading. But every good book should be re-read as soon as it is finished. After the sketchiness of the first reading comes the creative work of reading. We must then know *the problem* that confronted the author. The second, then the third reading . . . give us, little by little, the

solution of this problem. Imperceptibly, we give ourselves the illusion that both the problem and the solution are ours. The psychological nuance: 'I should have written that', establishes us as phenomenologists of reading. But so long as we have not acknowledged this nuance, we remain psychologists, or psychoanalysts.

Bachelard

### NOTES

All footnotes for this article have been reproduced verbatim.

- 1 We should grant 'fixation' its virtues, independently of psychoanalytical literature which, because of its therapeutic function, is obliged to record, principally, processes of defixation.
- 2 Rainer Maria Rilke, translated into French by Claude Vigée, in *Les Lettres*, 4th year, Nos. 14-15-16, p. 11. *Editor's note*: In this work, all of the Rilke references will be to the French translations that inspired Bachelard's comments.
- 3 I plan to study these differences in a future work.
- 4 After giving a description of the Canaan estate (*Volupté*, p. 30), Sainte-Beuve adds:
 

it is not so much for you, my friend, who never saw this place, and had you visited it, could not now feel the impressions and colours I feel, that I have gone over it in such detail, for which I must excuse myself. Nor should you try to see it as a result of what I have said; let the image float inside you; pass lightly; the slightest idea of it will suffice for you.
- 5 *La terre et les rêveries du repos*, Paris: Corti, p. 98.
- 6 For this second part, see Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, Maria Jolas (trans.), Boston: Beacon Press, 1969, p. 29.
- 7 C.G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York.
- 8 Edgar Allan Poe: 'The Black Cat'.