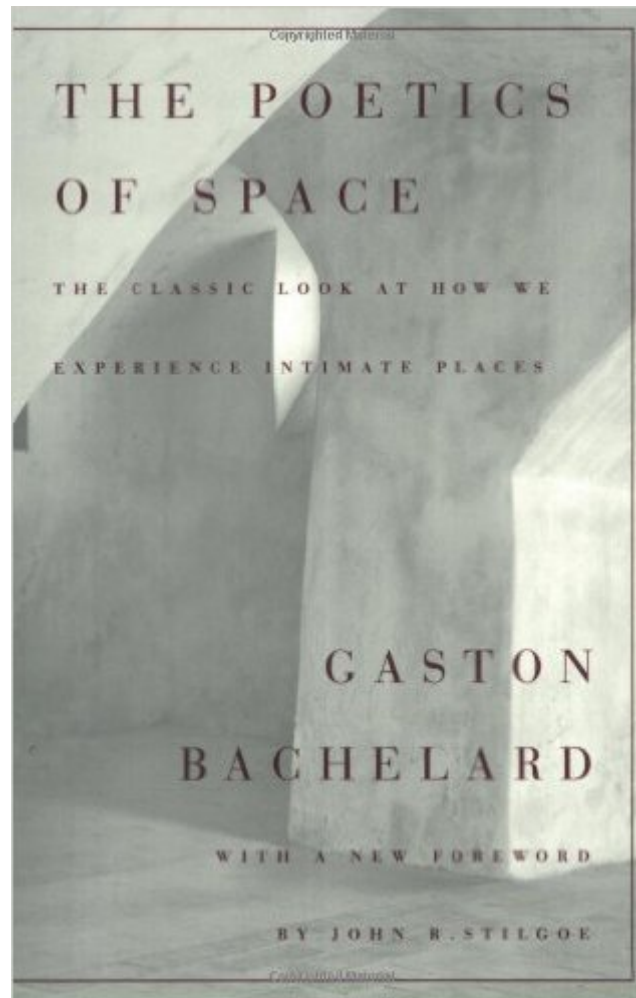


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# The Poetics Of Space



## Synopsis

Thirty years since its first publication in English, French philosopher Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* one of the most appealing and lyrical explorations of home. Bachelard takes us on a journey, from cellar to attic, to show how our perceptions of houses and other shelters shape our thoughts, memories, and dreams.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The *Poetics of Space* is one of the most inspiring books I have ever read. It is to be taken slowly - the author's primary idea is that people crave spaces that inspire them to daydream. The style of the book is one that inspires daydreams itself; you will suddenly find that you have placed the book in your lap and you were off daydreaming! *Poetics of Space* is a methodical, carefully argued book which tells us that we read spaces like we read a book. There is a distinct psychology to each type of space - attics, cellars, the forest, and nests are just some of the spaces examined. The author was chair of the Philosophy department at the Sorbonne. For most of his life, he examined the philosophy of science, but in his later years he turned to artistic reverie as his main subject. The book is written with thought, love, and passion and is a tour-de-force. Highly recommended to those who enjoy poetry, philosophy, architecture or art.

Though you may not immediately think that there is a connection between language and the places where you live and pass through, your sense of your surroundings and of language itself will be

transformed after you read Gaston Bachelard's "The Poetics of Space." Bachelard argues that language--especially poetry--can reveal hidden aspects of our experience of space, especially of our home space. For example, he considers how common phrases such as "go up to the attic" and "go down to the basement" are revelatory of our typical sense that stairs to an attic are stairs one ascends, while stairs to the basement are stairs one descends--in spite of the fact that both sets of stairs must be equally ascended and descended. As he does with other such observations, Bachelard extends his observation regarding the directionality of different staircases into a discussion of how the attic and basement hold different roles in our daily and imaginary lives. In addition to exploring how we experience space and place, Bachelard equally attends to the way in which language can function either as a daily and common means of communication or as a site of new and creative insight; roughly speaking, he argues that poetry happens when the motions of language itself open us up to a new way of seeing or understanding something. By reading this beautifully written and engaging book, you will likely come to understand or see anew experiences from childhood through adulthood that pertain to places where you have lived, grown up, felt comfortable or alienated, had a feeling of wonder or fear, etc. I recommend this book to anyone interested in the experience of place or space, in language and what it can reveal to us, or in what counts as poetry rather than as common everyday language.

How do we associate emotional relationship to intimate spaces? This is the basic premise of this book. Gaston Bachelard unleashes our imaginations as he helps us to explore these feelings with an journey through our house - a sacred place that holds dear to most of us, a place that we grew up, a place that is full of memories both from our childhood and our present existence. From the cellar to the attic, Bachelard also shows that these fantasies are not only common to all of us, but also can be viewed in a greater context and reflected in literary works, poetries, philosophies, etc. Also, these kinds of primal response also can be reflected in our relationship with natural spatial objects like nests and shells. It also deals with the metaphysical question of outside and inside. This is a book that is full of philosophical treasures and wonders!

Phenomenology is the school of philosophy that claims to begin its analysis of existence with a careful study of human experience. Its founder, Edmund Husserl, and its most famous exponent, Martin Heidegger, laid its groundwork with studies of the epistemological foundations of science and the nature of Being. Bachelard applies their methods to architecture, basing his analysis not on purported origins (as was the trend in Enlightenment thinking about architecture) but on lived

experience of architecture. He is thus led to consider such emotionally charged spatial types as the attic, the cellar, drawers and the like. In its emphasis on actual experience, it is refreshingly real, in contrast to much recent architectural theory that treats architecture as "text". The proof of the phenomenological pudding is always in the reader's response to the experiences being described. Bachelard is an exceptionally acute writer of such descriptions. This book implicitly urges architects to base their work on the experiences it will engender rather than on abstract rationales that may or may not affect viewers and users of architecture.

Bachelard's classic is a beautiful contribution to phenomenology. It does not so much "talk" about space and place, but rather gives the reader a thoughtful experience of the subjectivities and meanings of space. For example, Bachelard presents poetic interpretations of enclosures, inside/outside, and other spatial phenomena while applying it to such entities as the nest, the shell, the corner, the drawer, etc. A work to savor, slowly.

I read this book in grad school and it completely changed the way I look at Home and the built environment. It brought back many memories of all the places I lived when I was a kid and then as an adult and made me re-examine, not just the building but the town where I live. Beautifully written, it brings images to your mind. It also inspired my thesis project and the photographs I have been working on for the last few years. I've read it and re-read it, it's just made me think about my home so much.

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