

STUDIES IN FRENCH LITERATURE

XII



SURREALISM
AND THE LITERARY
IMAGINATION

A STUDY OF BRETON AND BACHELARD

by

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Quand je saurai où prend fin en moi la terrible lutte du vécu et du viable, quand j'aurai perdu tout espoir d'accroître dans des proportions stupéfiantes le champ du réel, jusqu'ici parfaitement limité, de mes démarches, quand mon imagination, en se repliant sur elle, ne fera plus que coïncider avec ma mémoire, je m'accorderai volontiers, comme les autres, quelques satisfactions relatives. Je me rangerai alors au nombre des brodeurs. Je leur aurai pardonné. Mais pas avant!¹

Breton, *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*.

Suivant notre courage ou notre lassitude nous dirons que le monde est commencé ou qu'il est inachevé.²

Bachelard, *Paysages d'Albert Flocon*.

¹ André Breton, *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (Paris, 1928), p. 13.

² Gaston Bachelard, *Paysages d'Albert Flocon*, p. 61. Quoted in Georges Canguilhem, "Sur une Epistémologie concordataire", *Hommage à Gaston Bachelard* (Paris, 1957), p. 12.

PREFACE

The ideas put forward in the following pages were first worked out in a dissertation entitled: "Gaston Bachelard and André Breton: a poetics of possibility." I am indebted to Professors Reinhard Kuhn and J. Neale Carman for many helpful suggestions in preparing the original version, of which this book is an enlargement and revision. An article based on the dissertation ("The 'Rationalisme ouvert' of Gaston Bachelard and André Breton") appeared in the *French Review* (January, 1964) and has been largely incorporated in the present text; I should like to thank the editors of that journal for allowing the use of this material as well as for their valuable comments. I am above all grateful for my husband's advice, which was indispensable at every stage.

New York, September 26, 1964.

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