

The Hysteric's Cage: A Psychological Analysis of Domestic Space in Three Texts- *Mrs Dalloway*, *The Yellow Wallpaper* and *Sons and Lovers*

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Abstract:

There is a significant conceptual change in contemporary English fiction of domestic space. The house that used to be viewed as a source of comfort, moral stability and emotional stability is becoming increasingly viewed as a source of psychological repression and a prison. This paper will discuss how the house space becomes a psychological prison in three major works of the contemporary era: *Sons and Lovers* (1913) by D. H. Lawrence, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) by Virginia Woolf, and *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. By relying on feminist, psychoanalytic, and spatial concepts, the paper argues that the home serves as a key ideological device for contemporary novelists to restrict personal freedom, enforce gender norms, and increase emotional conflict. The paper describes the effects of domestic surroundings on the inner consciousness, resulting in identity fragmentation, emotional dependency, and repression via extensive text analysis. To depict domestic confinement as an internalisation, and not as a mere physical limitation, such narrative art devices as a stream of consciousness, interior monologue, symbolism of rooms, and psychological realism are required. Gilman symbolises domestic restriction as outward and harsh, Woolf demonstrates psychological restriction by societal veil, and Lawrence demonstrates emotional restriction by togetherness. They both confront the traditional idea of the house as a place of escape by transforming domestic space into a symbol of contemporary interests in alienation, gendered power, and the fractured self. It is possible to mention such.

Keywords: domestic space, psychological prison, modern English novel, gender, alienation, identity.

Introduction

For many years, the concept of household space has played an important role in literary representation. In the previous literary tradition, and most notably in modern fiction, the home was idealised as a place of warmth, moral steadiness, and emotional satisfaction. It is the representation of the security, order, and protective power of family life. This idealised concept of domesticity began to disintegrate with the emergence of modernism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The home was becoming challenged by new English novelists who began to represent it as a home of imprisonment, repression and mental torture. Domestic scenes frequently become the psychological prisons of the modern English novels, which affect and constrain the inner lives of people. This change in the way that household space is depicted is closely associated with the cultural, social, and psychological changes of the modern era. The consequences of World War I, city life, industrialisation, and the rise of the psychological theory all altered the human experience in a great way.

The evolving gender norm and the traditional family life inspired writers to explore the contradictions and anxieties that are hidden in ordinary family life. After being viewed as the way to escape the essence of the outer world, the house is now the place in which emotional conflicts are ever more acute instead of resolved. Much attention of modern English novels is paid to the study of inner consciousness. Instead of focusing on the external events, authors care about the ideas, recollections, desires, and concerns of characters. The symbolic meaning of domestic space in this theoretical context is gained. Rooms, homes, habits, and silences are the symbols of the mental and emotional restrictiveness of people. Characters are not physically caged but rather under societal demands and expectations, gender norms, emotional reliance, and the phobias they harbour within themselves.

The research paper on domestic space as psychological imprisonment makes use of feminist, psychoanalytic and spatial concepts. By showing the relationship of women and men

with the home sphere confines individuality and imposes silence and emotional work, feminist criticism draws attention to the gendered aspect of domesticity. Personal space and independence are missing, making domestic life more of a psychological prison. The psychoanalytic theory discloses the emotional conflict, dependency, and guilt at home as well as underlining the repression, unconscious desire, and the family. The house is turned into a mental and physical jail when the domestic restrictions are internalised. The spatial theory holds that houses and rooms actively constitute mental experience. What is inside the country is used as a symbolic borders that restrict identity, motion, and thinking. All these points together present domestic space in modern English novels as a place of psychological control and isolation.

The paper has strong arguments that the household environment is a psychological prison that confines personal freedom and makes people feel pain emotionally in the modern English novels. The paper shows how contemporary novelists destroy the notion of a happy home through the analysis of a couple of works by Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, Charlotte Perkins, and E. M. Forster. Men are also affected by the repressive factors of household life, but the paper demonstrates that women are particularly oppressed through domestic isolation from the perspectives of feminist and psychoanalytic approaches. In this way, the domestication of the space turns out to be a useful symbol of the broader condition of contemporary mankind, which is psychologically limited, estranged and discontinuous.

Literature review

The description of household space by the author continues to attract a critical response, particularly within the feminist, psychoanalytic, and modernist fields. Early literary criticism has regarded the house as a source of moral stability and emotional security. The house has always been traditionally associated with the first universe, as Gaston Bachelard notes in *The*

Poetics of Space, a real universe in all the senses of the word. The twentieth-century critics began questioning this notion, pointing to the worst psychological impact of domesticity. A growing number of modern analysts perceive domestic space as an ideological and patriarchal space capable of being a source of psychological captivity and oppression. Feminist critics have enabled the transformation of the concept of household space in a massive manner. In the book *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir claims that historically, women are limited to the realm of the household, which restricts their intellectual freedom, as well as that they are subjects of dependency and passivity. This idea is also reinforced by an article by Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, because in this work Woolf also says that a woman needs to have money and a room of her own to write fiction. This confirms that women also need personal space and independence to be healthy mentally and creatively. These prominent feminist authors present a theoretical basis for studying domestic space as a psychological prison, particularly for female characters.

The components of time, memory, urban modernism, and trauma of the post-war world have prevailed in the critical interpretations of Virginia Woolf and her *Mrs Dalloway* work. The theme of inner consciousness and self-destruction explored by Woolf is emphasised by such scholars as Julia Briggs and Hermione Lee. Julia Briggs pays special attention to the novel technique of narration that Woolf employs, and states that the novel reestablishes the frontiers between internal and external reality. Likewise, Hermione Lee also emphasises that Woolf was preoccupied with the issue of the fragmentation of the modern self within the social pressures. Even though these studies recognise the pressures of marriage and societal obligations, a handful of critics point to home space as a vibrant psychological factor that affected the inner world of Clarissa Dalloway. But the recent feminist readings have begun to speak of how the hostess role played by Clarissa facilitates identity fragmentation and repression of emotions. *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a novel written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, which has been subject

to a significant amount of feminist and psychoanalytic criticism. The story is also known as a feminist document by Elaine Hedges, who describes the story as a revelation of the sexual politics of nineteenth-century psychiatry. The book is a critique of the forced rest cure and male medical practices, as Elaine Hedges states in her seminal interpretation of the novel. The narrator's falling into madness is, to many critics, a response to male dominance and repression. Few studies examine the home room as a psychological prison in itself, though the themes of madness and medical patriarchy are well-developed. Others, such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwomen in the Attic*, propose that the psychological prison of the narrator is compounded by the house architecture and the symbolic meaning of the wallpaper, where the issue still needs further exploration. *Sons and Lovers* by D. H. Lawrence has generally been criticised for the relationship between mothers and sons, sex and Oedipal conflict. Freud-influenced psychoanalytic interpretations of the text that place stress on emotional dependence and repression dominate Lawrence studies.

The home setting is often discussed as an environment, but not as a psychologically repressive place, despite the fact that critics such as F. R. Leavis had accepted the fact that Lawrence had a strong emphasis on family life. New studies have begun to reconsider the Morel family as a locus where the male and female characters are psychologically imprisoned and emotionally violated. According to Terry Eagleton, the interior spaces of Lawrence are filled with emotional intensity, which turns out to be destructive instead of nurturing, and it affects both male and female characters. Comprehensively, comparative analysis of home space as a psychological prison remains a huge gap in the plethora of works by various modern researchers, even though contemporary research provides valuable information regarding gender, psychology, and family relations. The paper provides a comparative critique of *Mrs Dalloway*, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, and *Sons and Lovers* with a particularly focused approach to feminist and psychoanalytic criticism that follows others on the subject.

Research gap

The critique of literature has delved more into the domestic space in context to gender roles, patriarchy, and family setups to an extent; however, there are still few comparative studies to assess home space as a psychological prison in modern literature. The treatment of time, memory, and post-war trauma in Mrs Dalloway is a topic that has been heavily discussed; however, the domestic world as a site of psychological incarceration has not been deeply explored. The Yellow Wallpaper is, in many ways, discussed through the prism of medical patriarchy and insanity, yet little is known regarding how domestic architecture adds to psychologicality. The Sons and Lovers is mainly critically analysed in terms of Oedipal conflict, excluding the house as a symbol of constant emotional attachment. This vacuum is addressed by exploring the role of household space as a psychological jail in Mrs Dalloway, The Yellow Wallpaper and Sons and Lovers. It raises questions in terms of how gender power regimes increase psychological entrapment, how domestic space conditions psychological entrapment, and how narrative practice in modern fiction perpetuates the feeling of domestic entrapment.

- How do Sons and Lovers, The Yellow Wallpaper and Mrs Dalloway portray domestic space as a mental prison?
- In what ways do the home spaces of patriarchal, medical, and family power containment make the home a place of psychological enslavement in these writings?
- What are the current narrative practices that describe domestic space as a kind of emotional and mental incarceration?

Mrs Dalloway

In Mrs Dalloway (1925), Virginia Woolf portrays domestic space as a place of psychological confinement dictated by gender roles, social constructs, and post-war post-modernism, instead of showing it as a supportive place. The interior monologue used by Woolf illustrates the psychological consequences of living a life at home, which become apparent in

Clarissa Dalloway, even though the events in the novel unfold over a span of one day. Although Clarissa lives in a comfortable and lavish family, she constantly feels like a prisoner, and she admits at the very beginning of the novel that she has the most unusual feeling of not seeing herself: not noticed. The house that Clarissa lives in is a psychological prison, which does not allow her to express herself and be true to herself. The main way through which Clarissa identifies with her home is through being a wife and hostess. She takes her home as a stage to show harmony, sophistication and order in society. She mentioned that she is free to roam around her house, but she has much emotional repression in her mind.

Woolf emphasises the contrast between exterior and interior comfort and imprisonment: the house where Clarissa lives is both comfortable and secure in terms of emotions and material possessions. The home increases her desire to adhere to social norms as it prompts her to suppress her own desires and existential fears so as to be respectable. Marriage worsens the psychological confinement of Clarissa, which is closely connected to the home. She enjoys a stable yet repressed affair with Richard Dalloway. This emotional detachment is reflected in their own home, which is decent and tidy without any intimacy. The recollections of Peter Walsh and Sally Seton provide the reader with alternative types of emotional freedom that were sacrificed to the comfort of getting married.

The domestic space, therefore, increases her feelings of imprisonment as it reminds her of the unutilized opportunities. The description of interiors and rooms helps highlight this psychological captivity by Woolf. The home shapes Clarissa in her perception of herself and her place in this world, and it becomes part of her consciousness. Eventually, the domestic setting of the bourgeois household is renegotiated in Mrs Dalloway to continue the emotional suppression in the name of stability. The life of Clarissa relies rather on acceptance than on escaping, and the lack of freedom and its power, as well as the conceit and efficiency of home imprisonment in modern society, are in the shadows.

The Yellow Wallpaper

The Yellow Wallpaper (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman may be regarded as one of the most popular descriptions of household space as a mental prison in modern literature. The story shows how this change in the psychological breakdown of the narrator was caused by the inability to escape domestic confinement by the will of patriarchal marriage and medicine. Gilman presents the domestic space as a direct and violent form of psychological imprisonment, as opposed to Mrs Dalloway, where the imprisonment is hidden socially. The story is set almost entirely in a rented house and more specifically in an upstairs room, which the narrator is held captive by as part of a so-called rest cure that her husband, a doctor, has prescribed.

The house, where one is expected to recover, turns into a control device. The narrator does not have social interaction, artwork, or education. The fact that she has to hide writing makes her even more psychologically isolated, as she says, I did write a while, it does weary me a good deal--must be so cunning about it. That is one of those long flaunting designs which sin every artistic sin, and this is the only outlet of her self-expression. Even the space itself is a symbol of being incarcerated. It was a nursery with barred windows, a bed on the floor, and a dreadful yellow wallpaper that is one of those shameless, spreading, flamboyant designs that do all the sins of art. These architectural features make the room look like a cell. The narrator considers her home place a carceral place, although she is literally in one. The home interior is an imposition of passivity and submission as a demonstration of a greater patriarchal view of women as fragile and dependent.

The yellow wall covering is the most dramatic symbol of being locked up. The narrator begins to perceive that there is a woman crouching and crawling behind that pattern. behind the design of the wallpaper, as she becomes lonelier. Her imagined individual is a reflection of her own circumstances, who is imprisoned, silent and needs to escape. Wallpaper transforms

the home decoration into a psychological sadness by making external the repressed consciousness of the narrator. From a feminist perspective, the story questions the notion of the linkage of the female well-being to domesticity. The home has not helped the narrator; it has made him mentally collapse at a faster pace. Domestic imprisonment is strengthened by medical authority, which justifies imprisonment as a form of treatment. John does not give the narrator agency or voice because his reasoning causes her subjective experience to be dismissed. This is what causes the last downfall of the narrator: When she rips down the wallpaper and says I am out, finally... despite you! she sees herself as the imprisoned woman, representing symbolic rebellion and mental breakdown at the same time. It is the confinement she had at home that made her insane, as opposed to something inherent. Gilman thus shows how patriarchalism and domestic space may be harmful to mental health. The Yellow Wallpaper challenges the conventional ideas about home in drastic ways. It is one of the most significant pieces of literature to understand the ideas of domestic captivity in modern literature because it reveals domestic space as an abusive, surveilled and psychologically controlled place.

Sons and Lovers

In *Sons and Lovers* (1913), D. H. Lawrence portrays the house as a psychologically oppressive and emotionally charged environment due to unrealised desire and family conflict. Male and female characters are both emotionally confined in the Morel household. Contrary to Woolf and Gilman, Lawrence gives attention to domestic space as an emotional dependency rather than a definite restriction. Mrs Morel has to spend her life at home, disappointed and bitter because of her horrible marriage. It seemed like she was being sunk into something close to nothingness. She directs her emotional spirit to her sons and her elder son, Paul, in particular, since her sons were her life now. And she can't escape either physically or socially. This emotional bond is greatly focused on the household, which encourages reliance instead of growth. This makes domestic space a psychologically repressing environment. Paul cannot

develop self-sufficient effects of love relations due to emotional incarceration at home. The bond that he has towards his mother controls his emotional life and makes other relations appear to be inadequate. This mental conflict is a direct point made by Lawrence: he was unable to love her since his mother was his closest bond.

The home environment is a source of emotional inflexibility rather than the enhancement of individuality. This is a kind of psychic incarceration that develops into adulthood, according to Lawrence. Morel's home is a typical illustration of how family environments affect emotional growth from a psychoanalytic perspective. The consequences of continuous conflict and possessive love are confusion, paralysis and guilt. The inability of Paul to escape home influence reminds the reader that he may not need physical restraint to be psychologically captivated. The domestic violence of emotions which controls the everyday life of a house is shown by the realism of Lawrence. The house is emotionally manipulated; the house is turned into a battlefield of unfulfilled dreams and suppressed desires. Paul keeps feeling that home does not allow one to be free, and he could not feel like going away and abandoning her. Dependence cycles are the result of Mrs Morel emotionally imprisoning her son because she is confined to domesticity.

The household capture is tragic and complicated, as depicted by Lawrence, unlike Gilman, who clearly criticises patriarchy. The house is also a place of destruction and love. The house is a locus of love and pain at the same time, and love itself can also serve as a control mechanism. According to Lawrence, the love of his mother was a poison killing his manhood gradually, and this fact highlights the harmful nature of emotional prison. Emotional proximity becomes a weapon of domination, demonstrating how much a home can be enclosed by love in the same way it is enclosed by power. Finally, in *Sons and Lovers*, domestic space is depicted as a psychological prison restricting the ability to create identity and express emotions.

Lawrence empowers the modern novel's attack on the romanticised home by revealing how domestic confinement is harmful to interpersonal relationships.

Narrative Techniques and Symbolism

Modern English novelists employ innovative storytelling techniques in an attempt to describe psychological imprisonment within the family. The stream-of-consciousness and the monologue within the minds of the characters provide the readers with immediate exposure to the thoughts of the characters, thus demonstrating a sense of internal incarceration. An example is that the manner in which Woolf flows in narration erases the boundary between mental condition and physical space. Symbolism is needed when describing domestic imprisonment. Silence is a sign of the emotions which are not expressed, and the walls and rooms are a symbol of isolation. The sense of being caught by reflection is enforced by repetition and routine in terms of reflection of a mechanical life. The windows and doors are closed, which symbolise the inability to escape and transform even the ordinary home setting into a tense mental one.

In *Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf, the stream-of-consciousness narrative helps to break the boundaries between the inner world and domestic space. The divided aspect of Clarissa Dalloway reflects on the divided aspect of the novel in the format of the narrative, the demonstration of the imposition of fragile psychological discipline on a woman through societal obligations and housewifery. *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is written in the first person of confession that confines the reader to the limited and failing consciousness of the narrator. This narration restriction can be compared to the reality of the narrator trapped within the house.

D. H. Lawrence employs the use of free indirect language and psychological realism in *Sons and Lovers* to depict an image of the family space as an emotionally limiting but not a geographical one. The novel goes way into the inner world of the characters, and Paul Morel in particular, demonstrating how the lack of fulfilment of the desire and emotional reliance

results in psychological entrapment. These texts combined indicate how modern narrative methods- confessional voice, stream of consciousness and psychological realism enable domestic space to be represented as an internalised control space. Symbolism enhances the theme of domesticity as a household where individuals are exploited rather than being reassured by the modern novel.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed domestic space as a form of psychological confinement in modern English novels, arguing that the house is a psychological and ideological structure that restricts and determines individual subjectivity, besides being a physical residence. Through the revelation of the governing of daily practices, emotional restraint, and internalised social expectations ruling behaviours and consciousness, modern fiction undermines the idealised understanding of domestic space. One of the key processes through which psychological space is confined in a house is internalisation as opposed to implicit control. Individuals are taught how to restrain their passions, suppress their urges and acquire roles which they are supposed to play. In many cases, they think that these practices are necessary to keep their families together. To disclose the experience of imprisonment as inward and manifested in emotional silence, self-disintegration, and perpetual dissatisfaction with the outer conformity, the modern novel focuses on inner awareness.

In the given study, the role of household space in identity formation is also pointed out. The house becomes a large venue of manufacturing and restraining individuality, where responsibility and emotional control take precedence over individual fulfilment. The psychologically confined people tend to experience internal conflict as they struggle to align their personal interests with the social norms. Contemporary stories bring out these tensions by expressing internal conflicts that are otherwise not recognised in domestic life. Moreover, home imprisonment influences not only physical, but also emotional relationships. Intimacy,

attachment and care as the mechanisms of control may develop into emotional dependence, which reinforces psychological imprisonment when influenced by unequal expectations.

Accordingly, the novel of the 21st century gives a sense of captivity an affective and relational dimension. To sum it up, the contemporary fiction reformulates the house as a problematic place where power, identity, and resistance interrelate in the context of representing the domestic space as a psychological prison. It is only by taking this perspective that the contemporary novel can be considered as exploring the intricacy of the contemporary human condition and condemning the mundane aspects of life as critically as possible.

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