

Architecture and the Psychological Confinement of Women in the Mill on the Floss

Gülşah Terzi

Istanbul Aydın University, English Language And Literature

Abstract

This research article examines the interplay between architectural spaces and the psychological confinement of women applying Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological framework from *The Poetics of Space* (1958) to George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). Bachelard's conceptualization of architecture as a repository of memory, emotion, and existential meaning provides a critical perspective to examine how domestic and rural spaces in the novel mirror and enforce the gendered oppression of Maggie Tulliver. By flagging Tulliver home, Dorlcote Mill, and the Dodson households, this study argues that Eliot uses architectural imagery to materialize the societal constraints imposed on women in Victorian England. The rigorously designed interiors of these areas with thresholds, walls, and enclosures represent Maggie's confinement within patriarchal norms suppressing her intellectual curiosity and emotional autonomy. Bachelard's ideas of "hostile space" and "felicitous space" shed light on the conflict between Maggie's desire for freedom symbolized by the river Floss and her enforced conformity to societal expectations. The mill, as a crucial symbol of family heritage and economic power, represents the psychological burden of women's oppression, while the river represents an elusive sense of independence. This study reveals how Eliot's architectural depictions drive as a phenomenological critique of women's lives by employing the interplay between physical environment and internalized oppression. This research illustrates that *The Mill on the Floss* presents architecture not only as a setting, but also as a psychological portrait that confines, defines, and contests the possibilities of women agency in a rigidly gendered world.

Keywords: The Mill on the Floss, Gaston Bachelard, phenomenology, architecture, space, place, identity, confinement, gender, Victorian literature.

1. INTRODUCTION

George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) presents a lavishly layered investigation of gender roles, societal assumptions, and psychological confinement inside homegrown and rustic spaces. This paper looks at the role of architecture in molding the psychological encounters of women in the novel, especially from the perspective of Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological system as expressed in *The Poetics of Space* (1958). Bachelard conceptualizes architectural spaces as stores of memory, feeling, and existential importance, contending that actual structures shape human consciousness and identity. Applying his hypotheses to Eliot's novel, this study contends that homegrown and provincial spaces capability as instruments of gendered oppression, building up Maggie Tulliver's confinement inside patriarchal structures.

Eliot's representation of space in *The Mill on the Floss* is profoundly entwined with Victorian beliefs of

gentility and home life. The nineteenth century saw an unbending depiction among public and private spheres, with women generally confined to homegrown spaces that were instilled with assumptions for accommodation, ethical quality, and obligation (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000). Architectural spaces in the novel, including Dorlcote Mill and the Dodson families, become metaphors for Maggie's psychological entrapment. The organized and encased nature of these conditions reflects the societal constraints forced upon her, suppressing her scholarly interest and profound independence (Brew, 1962). The novel's spatial metaphors feature Maggie's battle against patriarchal standards as well as illustrate how Victorian architecture was intended to support gender hierarchies (Ashton, 1983).

Bachelard's phenomenological approach gives a basic focal point through which to break down these spatial structures. He recognizes "hostile space," which forces psychological restrictions, and "well suited space," which considers opportunity and self-realization (Bachelard, 1958). This differentiation is evident in the novel's critical spatial themes. The mill, representing both family heritage and economic power, arises as a site of psychological weight and repression for Maggie, upholding her social and familial commitments. Conversely, the waterway Floss, with its ease and unlimited nature, symbolizes her longing for independence and getaway from societal constraints (Ehrmann, 1966). Nonetheless, the waterway's definitive horrendous power additionally recommends the risks intrinsic in resisting social assumptions, building up the novel's tragic suggestions (Hans, 1977).

Past Bachelard, Henri Lefebvre's (1991) hypothesis of the development of space further contextualizes how architectural settings in *The Mill on the Floss* capability as destinations of force elements. Lefebvre places that space is socially constructed and fills in for of building up philosophical structures. In Eliot's novel, homegrown architecture exemplifies Victorian gender philosophies that prescribe women's roles and breaking point their agency. The unbending insides of the Dodson families, characterized by severe dignity and moral inflexibility, represent how actual spaces become augmentations of patriarchal control (Miller, 1982). These encased, controlled spaces contrast with the liquid and naturalistic representation of the waterway, which, while offering the deception of opportunity, at last supports the inevitability of societal standards.

Moreover, Eliot's utilization of architectural imagery lines up with more extensive conversations of space in artistic stories. Scholars like Zoran (1984) and Norberg-Schulz (1971) have investigated how spatial representation in writing serves to construct and deconstruct identity. In *The Mill on the Floss*, spatial constraints don't simply confine Maggie actually yet shape her psychological turn of events and healthy identity. This lines up with Christofides' (1962) examination of Bachelard's feel, which proposes that space in writing capabilities as a reflection of inner states. The novel's architectural settings in this way work as psychological scenes that depict Maggie's conflict under the surface among conformity and resistance.

The crossing point of architecture, gender, and psychological confinement in Eliot's novel is additionally evident in near investigations of nineteenth-century writing. Gilbert and Gubar's (2000) original work *The Madwoman in the Loft* examines how Victorian novels much of the time portray homegrown spaces as locales of female oppression. Additionally, Kaplan (1972) explores how Bachelard's way of thinking of creative mind can be applied to artistic examination, contending that space in writing is frequently pervaded with philosophical importance. This paper expands on such scholarship to contend that *The Mill on the Floss* utilizes architectural metaphors to study the restrictive idea of Victorian womanliness and the psychological cost of spatial confinement on women.

Notwithstanding artistic examination, this study attracts upon architectural hypothesis to additionally

enlighten the ramifications of space in Eliot's novel. Pallasmaa (2015) and NoorMohammadi (2015) stress the tactile and profound impact of architecture on human experience. Their experiences help to approach a comprehension of how the materiality of space in *The Mill on the Floss* contributes to Maggie's psychological entrapment. By analyzing the novel's architectural settings through these interdisciplinary points of view, this research features the significant connection among space and identity in Eliot's work.

2. Theoretical Framework: Gaston Bachelard's Phenomenological Framework from The Poetics Of Space

Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958) provides a phenomenological method for managing sorting out the connection among architecture and human consciousness. In this work, Bachelard examines how local spaces shape individual experience, memory, and identity, underlining how spatial conditions become weaved with significant and psychological states. His hypotheses offer significant pieces of information into George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), particularly in how architectural spaces confine and characterize women's experiences inside a patriarchal society.

A. Phenomenology Of Space: Memory, Imagination, And Identity

Bachelard's phenomenology of space is grounded in the possibility that architecture fills in as a store of human memory and imagination (Bachelard, 1958). He puts that resided spaces are actual structures as well as rather are soaked with significant and existential significance. This concept is particularly relevant to *The Mill on the Floss*, where Dorlcote Mill functions as both a familial anchor and a site of confinement for Maggie. As a youngster, Maggie's connection to the mill is significantly nostalgic, but as she creates, it transforms into a space of restriction, symbolizing her battle against rigid gender norms.

Memory

Bachelard conceives of space as a storehouse of human recollections, the imprinting of lived experience within constructed structures. Such spaces as houses, children's rooms, and familiar landscapes are repositories of multiple layers of past experience affined to individual and collective identities. *The Mill on the Floss* endows Dorlcote Mill with the function of housing Maggie's childhood memories. In the early stages, the mill suffused an atmosphere of warmth and family bonds, but then inexorably became a prison as it pressed its claim, through social constraints, upon her self-development. This transformation helps clarify the relationship between memory and place, affirming nostalgia, identity formation, and emotional conflict..

Imagination

Imagination is the key to how people perceive and respond to space. Architecture, according to Bachelard, acts as a trigger, inspiring a lively imagination in a person that can impose feelings, hopes, and longings on its surroundings. Within the novel, Maggie's imaginative interaction with her environment lies in her idolized visions of the river and nature as a space for escape and self-fulfillment. But the subconscious desire for creative fulfillment and adventure is contrasted by the puritanical domestic realm of her house and forms a cage around her intellectual and emotional life..

Space

According to Bachelard, space is not only a mere physical space but rather an experienced and lived phenomenon that constitutes and expresses human consciousness. Like Dodson's house, domestic spaces can grant a sense of security and impose oppression. While homes offer a semblance of belonging, they also foster the notion of repression exerted by social structures and expectations, particularly gender

roles. In *The Mill on the Floss*, the formal domestic setting restricts Maggie's possibilities, showing how architecture can dictate one's personal identity and impose social restriction instead of being mere passive background.

Houses, lofts, and basements epitomize human consciousness and, as such, put in order feelings, thoughts, and memories derived from human experience (Hans, 1977). This house of the Dodsons epitomizes conventional Victorian home life and becomes an oppressive space where Maggie's thirst for knowledge and freedom is stifled. The rigid setting of the house expresses the decent social roles legitimized for women and complements Bachelard's reasoning that architecture is not politically neutral but actively shapes individual and aggregate identities. (Ehrmann, 1966).

B. Hostile Space Versus Felicitous Space

Bachelard makes a distinction between "hostile space" and "felicitous space", the former representing oppression, confinement, and psychological imprisonment, and the latter freedom, comfort, and possibility of creation (Bachelard, 1958). In *The Mill on the Floss*, this spatial opposition is fundamental to Maggie's life, as she moves between the strict, contained domestic interiors of the Dodson house and the open, fluid space of the River Floss. The mill, even though it was her home as a child, is a hostile environment, enforcing her confinement in terms of societal and familial expectations. The Dodson home is also representative of the stifling institutions of Victorian domesticity, where Maggie's intellectual prowess and autonomy are consistently suppressed. These environments, created to maintain conventional gendered roles, illustrate how architecture and domestic space directly impact social identity and enforce systemic constraints (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000).

Conversely, the river is a happy space, as in Bachelard's description of spaces that invite movement, reflection, and poetic daydreaming (Kaplan, 1972). Water, with its flowing and dynamic form, is an image of Maggie's desire for liberty and emotional escape. Unlike the confines of her house, the river provides another space where she can briefly free herself from societal restraints and pursue self-exploration. But the feeling of agency is short-lived. The same openness that makes the river a site of freedom also serves to highlight Maggie's inability to actually be in control. Victorian social conventions ultimately push her back indoors into restricted domestic settings, reiterating the restraints placed on women during that era.

This tension between limiting interiors and limiting exteriors reflects the larger conflict between individual desire and societal oppression. Bachelard's phenomenology implies that space is not just the background to human experience but an active participant in the construction of consciousness and the perpetuation of systemic hierarchies (Norberg-Schulz, 1971). In *The Mill on the Floss*, the conflict between antagonistic and favorable spaces is a highly effective metaphor for Maggie's internal struggle—her desire for intellectual and emotional freedom versus the constrictive structures that try to contain her.

C. Thresholds and Transitions: Liminal Spaces In The Mill On The Floss

Bachelard stresses the importance of thresholds, doorways, and in-between spaces as being the areas of psychological change where individuals negotiate the confines and liberty (Bachelard, 1958). Liminal areas are neither wholly one nor another; they exist in in-between states that personify change, ambiguity, and tension between what has gone and what is coming. In *The Mill on the Floss*, these spaces have an important bearing on Maggie's psychological and emotional growth, illustrating points of wavering, restraint, and identity discovery.

The door of Dorlcote Mill represents the line between domestic obligation and personal autonomy. Thr-

ough the novel, Maggie struggles against the obligations set upon her by family and society, and her successive efforts to breach physical as well as figurative boundaries—whether through schooling, romance, or self-willed ambitions—are thwarted. The threshold is a site of limitation, affirming the notion that Victorian women were not to venture beyond the home, not to be able to fully assert control over their lives (Lager, 1962).

Another important liminal space in Bachelard's phenomenology is the attic, which is a site of reflection, fantasy, and retreat from outside pressures (Rybczynski, 1986). Although Eliot does not literally put Maggie in an attic, her times of solitude—usually by the river or in isolated areas—serve the same purpose. These places give her temporary shelter, enabling her to withdraw into her own mind and temporarily escape societal expectations. But these escapes are always temporary; Maggie is constantly pushed back into the strictures of domestic and social expectation, underlining the transitory nature of liminal spaces for women in a patriarchal world (Zografos, 2019).

In the end, liminal spaces in *The Mill on the Floss* play a double role. They provide temporary freedom and self-discovery and at the same time affirm the limitations of social norms. Maggie's interactions with these spaces are also a reflection of her inner conflict—she wants to be independent, but the strict boundaries of Victorian society will not allow her to completely become a life of independence. In this manner, Eliot employs thresholds and liminal spaces not just as architectural features but as symbolic indicators of individual and social tension, enriching the novel's examination of gender, identity, and societal restriction.

D. The House As A Symbol Of Patriarchal Authority

Bachelard sees the house as something more than a simple physical dwelling—it is an essential organizing principle of human life, influencing individual consciousness and larger social hierarchies (Bachelard, 1958). Domestic architecture in *The Mill on the Floss* serves as a symbol of patriarchal power, consolidating gendered expectations and limiting Maggie's personal and intellectual ambitions. The strict discipline of the Dodson household, with its great stress on material prosperity, social decorum, and strict observance of custom, is a microcosm of Victorian gender roles (Lefebvre, 1991). Here, women must conform, obey, and give precedence to familial responsibilities, and men hold authority and power over physical and ideological spaces.

Eliot's representation of home space underscores the convergence of physical restriction and ideological repression. The Dodson household is carefully arranged, evidencing an unyielding adherence to social norms, which, in turn, restricts Maggie's independence. Her scholarly interests are dismissed or positively discouraged, which demonstrates the wider exclusion of women from the realms of academia and the professions. This supports Bachelard's contention that architecture is not a passive backdrop but an active force in constructing social reality—it prescribes roles, imposes hierarchies, and quietly conditions people into obedience (NoorMohammadi, 2015).

Maggie's conflict in the home represents the broader conflict of Victorian women, who were trapped in domesticity and excluded from intellectual and social advancement. The home, conventionally understood as a source of comfort and stability, is for Maggie a site of restriction and stagnation, highlighting how patriarchal institutions control and curtail female agency. Even as she tries to push against these boundaries—whether through education, relationships, or self-discovery—she is repeatedly brought back into the parameters of domestic service and obedience.

Through depicting the home as a space of physical confinement and ideological conditioning, Eliot satirizes the rigid gender roles of her day. Maggie's inner conflict—her hunger for intellectual and

personal autonomy and the social forces that bind her—is rooted in the very architecture of the home. Therefore, the house in *The Mill on the Floss* is not merely a location but a symbol of patriarchal domination, demonstrating how space can be employed to reinforce and perpetuate systemic oppression.

3. Literature Review

The crossover among architecture and psychological confinement in literature has been a grim point in feminist and spatial evaluations. Scholars have long researched how architectural spaces reflect, create, or challenge societal standards, especially concerning gender roles. George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) gives a convincing contextual assessment, as its legend, Maggie Tulliver, encounters both physical and psychological confinement inside neighborhood and country spaces. This literature survey analyzes existing scholarship on the spatial parts of women's oppression in Victorian literature, Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological method for overseeing space, and Eliot's utilization of architectural imagery to feature gender constraints. By orchestrating snippets of data from feminist literary criticism, spatial theory, and phenomenology, this outline contextualizes the present review's attention on the confinement of women through architecture in *The Mill on the Floss*.

A. Spatial Confinement and Gender in Victorian Literature

The concept of confinement has been a central concern in Victorian literature, especially with respect to the portrayal of women's restricted roles inside neighborhood settings. Gilbert and Gubar (2000) contend that Victorian literature routinely constructs female characters as entrapped inside patriarchal spaces, symbolized by the home and its unbendable limits. This entrapment shows both genuinely, through the limitations constrained by architectural structures, and psychologically, through consolidated gender standards. In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar (2000) examine how women in nineteenth century fiction are a huge piece of the time confined inside claustrophobic spaces, reflecting more prominent social constraints. Essentially, Lager (1962) features how Eliot's novels usually portray courageous women battling against the societal and spatial restrictions set upon them.

Maggie Tulliver's encounters line up with these more noteworthy literary patterns. Scholars like Ashton (1983) note that *The Mill on the Floss* portrays the home not as a safe space, yet rather as a site of control and suppression. The Dodson family, characterized by outrageous requesting and tradition, encapsulates the unbending doubts constrained on women in Victorian society. The legend's psychological trouble is closely attached to the architectural spaces she has, supporting the subject of gendered confinement. These understandings line up with Lefebvre's (1991) theory of space as a socially constructed substance, wherein neighborhood architecture fills in as a material expansion of patriarchal power.

B. Gaston Bachelard and the Poetics of Space

Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958) gives a central theoretical point of convergence to reviewing the phenomenology of architectural spaces. Bachelard contends that spaces are actual structures as well as rather vaults of memory, feeling, and existential significance. His concepts of "felicitous space" (spaces that help imagination and opportunity) and "hostile space" (spaces that restrict and oppress) are particularly pertinent to feminist literary examination (Bachelard, 1958).

Christofides (1962) applies Bachelard's phenomenology to literature, highlighting how spatial imagery reflects the psychological conditions of characters. Because of *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie's confinement inside the mill and the Dodson home lines up with Bachelard's concept of hostile space, supporting her psychological entrapment. NoorMohammadi (2015) further makes sense of on the role of

poetic imagery in Bachelard's architectural perspective, contending that literature regularly uses spatial metaphors to convey further existential battles.

Kaplan (1972) grows this assessment by discussing how Bachelard's contemplations on space can be used to decipher gendered experiences of confinement. In patriarchal societies, local architecture habitually fills in as a device of oppression, dealing with women's mobility and freedom. This perspective is critical for understanding how Eliot's spatial descriptions in *The Mill on the Floss* capability as story settings, yet as psychological scenes that characterize Maggie's constrained presence.

C. Architectural Imagery in *The Mill on the Floss*

Eliot's usage of architectural imagery in *The Mill on the Floss* has been comprehensively analyzed in literary criticism. Miller (1982) explores the novel's symbolic usage of space, particularly the way that the mill represents both familial commitment and psychological weight. The mill, with its decent region and economic ties, encapsulates the greatness of tradition and societal presumptions put upon Maggie. As a construction, it is both a home and a prison — offering stability while simultaneously restricting her chance.

Hans (1977) applies Bachelard's construction to Eliot's spatial descriptions, observing that Maggie's yearning for the stream Floss symbolizes her desire for improvement and break. The waterway, as an open and fluid space, contrasts distinctly with the firm, encased spaces of the home. This duality among confinement and opportunity is a dull topic in feminist literary assessments. Zografos (2019) explores tantamount subjects in architectural conservation, contending that certain records as often as possible privilege male-overpowered spaces while disregarding the restrictive conditions constrained on women. Moreover, Norberg-Schulz (1971) features the phenomenological parts of architectural experience, stressing how spaces shape human identity. In *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie's identity is indivisibly connected to the spaces she has. The constraints constrained by local architecture reflect her internal conflict against societal principles. This understanding lines up with Rybczynski's (1986) contention that the undeniable improvement of local spaces has been shaped by gendered presumptions about women's roles.

D. Feminist Perspectives on Space and Agency

The intersection point of feminist theory and spatial assessment has given critical pieces of information into the role of architecture in shaping women's experiences. Lefebvre (1991) contends that space isn't neutral yet is actively conveyed through social relations. In the context of *The Mill on the Floss*, local spaces are expected to develop patriarchal control, limiting Maggie's agency.

Gilbert and Gubar (2000) broaden this contention by examining how literary courageous women a large part of the time search for create some distance from through non-nearby spaces, like nature or nature. Maggie's attraction to the stream fills in as an attempt to transcend her spatial and social limitations. Pallasmaa (2015) further explores the tactile pieces of architecture, contending that confined spaces can instigate psychological distress. This viewpoint is critical for understanding Maggie's own battle as she explores the restrictive conditions of her home and neighborhood.

Zoran (1984) presents the concept of story space, which looks at how actual conditions contribute to character improvement and powerful importance. In *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot's spatial descriptions act as foundation parts as well as active powers forming Maggie's destiny. This lines up with Ehrmann's (1966) conversation of Bachelard's impact on literary criticism, featuring how architectural imagery can work as a psychological metaphor.

4. Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative way to deal with look at how design and spatial constraints add to the psychological confinement of women in *The Mill on the Floss*. Utilizing topical analysis, the exploration recognizes repeating spatial themes and their effect on the hero, Maggie Tulliver. Eliot's descriptions of homegrown spaces, the mill, and regular settings are analyzed to figure out their reflection of Maggie's psychological state and societal constraints.

The review follows four phases. Initial, a nearby textual analysis is led on key entries describing homegrown spaces like the Dodson family and the mill, as well as normal spaces like the waterway and open scenes. Second, a phenomenological interpretation is applied, drawing from Bachelard's ideas of "felicitous" and "hostile" spaces to analyze Maggie's encounters. Third, feminist spatial criticism is integrated to investigate how design spaces support male centric control, restricting Maggie's office. Finally, a comparative analysis cross-references the findings with existing academic conversations on spatial confinement in Victorian writing.

Information assortment depends on auxiliary sources, remembering *The Mill for the Floss* as the essential text, close by academic articles on feminist scholarly criticism, spatial hypothesis, and phenomenology. Hypothetical texts like Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958), Lefebvre's *The Development of Space* (1991), and Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (2000) illuminate the review. The story spatial analysis method is utilized to distinguish repeating spatial images and analogies, survey how Maggie's feelings connect with her actual environmental factors, and compare her encounters inside homegrown and open spaces to figure out their representative significance. Given its textual and hypothetical concentration, the review is interpretive as opposed to quantitative, underlining applied analysis over exact information assortment.

5. Findings

The study shows how spatial design and confinement are significant in the formation of Maggie Tulliver's mental condition, mirroring general themes of gender oppression and social restriction. There are three findings from this research that indicate the ways in which architectural spaces in *The Mill on the Floss* operate as sources of control, marginalization, and symbolic resistance.

1. Domestic Spaces as Instruments of Patriarchal Control

Home life in the novel is used as an agent of repression, reinforcing patriarchal domination and repressing feminine autonomy. The Dodson clan illustrates a repressive social regime which privileges material riches, social propriety, and stringent gender codes. Maggie's mental and personal aspirations here are checked because she is required to carry out classical female functions centering around compliance, household tasks, and self-deprivation.

Similarly, Dorlcote Mill is both Maggie's residence and an economic trap that holds her bound to the family legacy in a restricted personal agency. While her association with the mill is a part of her identity, it is also a site of obligation rather than liberty, which reinforces the notion that Victorian women were typically confined to predetermined domestic roles. Maggie's lack of a personal space of her own in the home serves to underscore the more pervasive system of exclusion of women from domains of intellect and profession, as there was a restricted place for them in 19th-century Britain.

2. The River Floss as a Symbol of Freedom and Illusion

The outside world, with River Floss at its helm, symbolizes freedom, openness, and emotional release—a sharp contrast to the constricted domestic environment. The river thus symbolizes a liminal space for

Maggie: she sets herself free by fantasizing about and reflecting upon moments and experiences. Where the house confines her to a space of staleness and lifelessness, the river gives her a glimpse of life beyond the narrow social constraints.

Yet while at the surface the river might symbolize freedom and independence, its embedding in the narrative of Maggie becoming one with the story proves it ultimately as a mirage of escape for women like Maggie. That she dies in its waters illustrates the impossibility of freedom for women within a patriarchal society. Once a haven and symbol of hope, the river becomes the site of her final captivity, tightening the novel's critique of the gendered restriction and circumscribed mobility and choice of women.

3. Spatial Boundaries and Psychological Entrapment

In Maggie's case, the clash between her projected self and the middle-class woman only found reiteration in the architectural type of symbols in the narrative. No less strikingly, superstructural symbols—doors, sized windows, narrow rooms, and boundaries—bring to mind, over and over again, the separation that exists between Maggie and personal freedom.

There exist metaphorical schemas in the rudiments of doors and windows, functioning on many levels: removal of the girl from the temptation of the other world outside the family household. The very surveillance and scrutiny she is put under manifest the limits of women's freedom. While pathways and bridges form liminal spaces through which Maggie is forced repeatedly to traverse between desire and obligation. These spaces promising movement hardly ever lead to real freedom, and they highlight the structural limits imposed in her case. Closed areas, especially areas aligned with domesticity, suggest interment, oversight, and social contemplation, and that constant assessment of Maggie's actions and thought is done at great rates.

Through these checks and balances of the space, Eliot externalizes the conflict in Maggie herself into a grand abstraction built into the apparatus that constructs and justifies her limited social agency.

4. The Intersection of Space, Gender, and Social Constraints

From the findings, it could be settled that space limitation in *The Mill on the Floss* is a tangible fact that acquires subjective meaning. Within this context, through construction-spaces, the Bachelard view gives a voice to deeper struggles over identity, autonomy, and gendered repression. Private domestic spaces are literally the locales in which patriarchal repression holds sway and nominally regulate a woman's experiences—and thus a woman's freedom—through their sometimes unyielding architectural and social norms. In this light, natural places are far from liberating and instead contribute to a different kind of social control by accentuating the boundaries imposed on women with regard to mobility and autonomy. Eliot's use of spatial imagery not only externalizes Maggie's internal tension but also offers a broader commentary on Victorian gender roles. The novel's representations of space involvement across the socio-political spectrum weave their way into larger discourses in feminist spatial theory, Victorian fiction, and architectural phenomenology. Maggie's fate is an emblem of the limits historically imposed on women's mobility, a topic salient to current discussions on gender, space, and social expectation.

5. Conclusion

The spatial components in *The Mill on the Floss* serve as an insightful exploration of the gendered limitations imposed on women during the Victorian era. Utilizing a phenomenological approach informed by Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, this analysis illustrates that both architectural and traditional settings within the novel extend beyond mere backgrounds; they actively shape Maggie

Tulliver's psychological state, societal interactions, and ultimate fate. The findings indicate that Maggie's quest for independence is deeply intertwined with both physical and symbolic restrictions embedded in her environment.

A key takeaway from this examination is the understanding that local spaces become symbols of patriarchal control, constraining Maggie's possibilities while reinforcing conventional gender norms. Both the mill and Dodson family act as institutions influencing her behavior instead of providing refuge, representing societal expectations that confine women to domestic responsibilities. Eliot enhances these themes through detailed descriptions of rooms, heightened familial awareness, and rigid notions surrounding family dynamics, all contributing to Maggie's sense of entrapment. This notion aligns with Bachelard's view that space is fundamentally connected to personal identity and memory; for Maggie, the inflexibility inherent in her surrounding architecture echoes the constrained gender roles she faces.

These findings provide much larger ramifications, tying back into *The Mill on the Floss*. The novel serves as a starting point for feminist spatial theory, showing by example how literary fiction may condemn existing spaces for their created modes of gendered oppression. Through a Bachelardian phenomenological lens, the current analysis emphasizes the value of attending to space as an important element of trim identity, freedom, and viability. In closing, the sad ending of this novel provides explicit evidence of the restraints on women for moving and assuming authority—a topic that is still relevant today in discourses on gender and space.

This magical quality thus found its justification in the strong spatial element of Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, wherein the very fact of the local and the everyday is radically used as metaphors for the open door and confinement, respectively. The architectural and spatial symbolism reflects Maggie's struggles with the larger critique on the gendered confines of Victorian society, thus allowing this novel to be set forth as an enormous text for feminist literary and spatial analysis.

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