



Haunted Homes Architecture as a Site of Trauma in Contemporary Displacement Fiction

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Abstract:

This article explores how the concept of 'home' changes in stories about displacement and migration. Usually, home is thought of as a safe and comfortable place where people feel secure. In many contemporary novels, this idea is challenged. Home often becomes a place of pain, memory and emotional disturbance instead of comfort, for the people who are displaced.

Most studies on displacement literature focus on identity, belonging and culture. The works talk about how people adjust to new places and how they struggle with their identity. However, very few studies focus on physical spaces of the home itself such as houses, rooms and environment and how these reflect trauma. This paper addresses the gap by showing that homes are not just background settings but they are important in expressing emotional suffering.

This article focuses on two texts Jhumpa Lahiri's the Lowland and Kamila Shamsie's Homefire. In these works, homes are shown as fragmented, temporary or uncomfortable spaces. The characters in the works do not feel safe or connected to their homes. These homes are filled with silence, absence, fear or memories of the past. This paper also uses ideas from trauma theory where it portrays that trauma does not live in the mind of character but also connected to the places they 'live in'. Homes carry memories of separation, loss and violence.

In conclusion, this article argues that in displacement fiction, home is not a peaceful place but a complex and also painful space that shows inner struggles of people who have displaced. By focusing on architecture and space, this study shows a new perspective of understanding trauma in contemporary literature.

Keywords: *Architecture, Unhomeliness, Domestic Space, Uncanny, Trauma, Displacement, Contemporary Fiction*

1. Introduction

The concept of home is mostly associated with safety, comfort and a sense of belonging. It is often seen as a secure place where people feel protected from the outside world, However, in contemporary displacement fiction, the conventional understanding of home is challenged. People who experience displacement due to migration, social issues or political conflict, the concept of home becomes unstable. They live in a physical house but the emotional security and connection is no longer felt. As a result, the home is no longer a peaceful space but becomes a ground for emotional struggle. This transformation can be understood through the concept of the uncanny. As Sigmund Freud explains, "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (Freud 124). This suggests that even known places like home can become strange for displaced individuals.

Several studies on displacement literature focus on diaspora, identity and cultural conflict. These works explain how individuals adapt to new environments and negotiates their identities. However, the role of

physical space, especially the home, walls, architecture is given less attention while expressing trauma. This article focuses on the ignored area that argues that physical spaces play an important role in portraying emotional and psychological experiences.

2. Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to analyse how the idea of home is portrayed in contemporary displacement fiction. The goal is to look how domestic spaces such as houses, rooms and environments reflects the psychological trauma experienced by displaced people.

Another objective of the study is to understand how the meaning of home changes from a place of safety to a space of instability, memory and emotional discomfort. The study also shows the importance of architecture in expressing inner emotional struggle in literary texts.

3. Research Methodology

This study a qualitative research approach. It is based on close reading and analysis of selected works especially *The Lowland* and *Home Fire*.

The research uses ideas from trauma theory to explore how physical spaces are represented in these texts. It focuses on examining themes such as loss, memory, displacement and emotional instability.

The study also uses secondary sources like essays and theoretical works to support the arguments. The method involves interpretation of story, characters and description of space to understand how trauma is connected to architecture in displacement fiction.

4. Significance of the Study

This study is crucial as it examines the area which has still not received much attention in displacement literature like the role of physical space in expressing trauma. While most studies focus on culture, identity and belonging, this study highlights how physical space also play an important role in shaping emotional experiences.

This study offers a new perspective on understanding fiction by analysing architecture as a site of trauma. It shows that trauma is not only psychological but is also connected to the spaces individuals inhabit. This study contributes to literary research by bringing together trauma theory and spatial theory and gives a deeper understanding of how the concept of home is transformed in displacement narratives.

5. Theoretical Framework

This article uses concepts from trauma theory and spatial theory to analyse the relationship between space and human emotions. The idea of the “uncanny”, which is developed by Sigmund Freud, shows how familiar spaces can become strange and uncomfortable. This idea helps in understanding how the home in displacement fiction becomes a ground of emotional disturbance and painful memories.

Similarly, Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of “unhomeliness” describes the feeling of being a stranger within one’s own home. When the boundary between private and public space is disturbed by external forces such as social pressure or politics, individuals may feel like a stranger and unfamiliar to their own space. As Bhabha states. “The unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow” (Bhabha 9). This portrays how displaced people feel uncomfortable even in familiar spaces.

Trauma theory, especially the work of Cathy Caruth, suggests that trauma is not fully experienced at the moment it occurs but it returns later through repetition, nightmares and memory. As Caruth explains, “trauma is not experienced fully at the time of the event, but only later” (Caruth 4). In displacement narratives, trauma is mostly connected to physical spaces, especially the home which becomes a site of memory and emotional pain.

The connection between space and memory can also be analysed through the concept of Gaston Bachelard, who states that “the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind” (Bachelard 6). This shows that homes are not just physical structures but also spaces that hold emotional and psychological experiences.

6. Textual Analysis

In *The Lowland*, the home is portrayed as a space of silence and emotional distance. The characters live together but they are unable to communicate their feelings. The house becomes a place where loss and absence are constantly felt. Instead of providing comfort, it shows emotional disconnection and unresolved grief. This emotional distance is reflected when “each day, he began to forget the details of his previous life” (Lahiri 197). This shows that the characters gradually lose their connection not only with their past but also with their present space.

In *Home Fire*, the home is influenced by political forces and surveillance. It is no longer a private or safe space. The presence of external control creates fear and tension within the domestic environment. The characters feel insecure, and the home becomes a place of anxiety rather than protection. This sense of monitoring is clear when “he watched her as if everything she did might be evidence” (Shamsie 148). This shows how the physical space is no longer free but controlled and continuously under surveillance. In both texts, the home is not stable or comfortable. It becomes fragmented, emotionally heavy and uncomfortable. This supports the idea that displacement affects not only individuals but also the spaces they inhabit.

7. Discussion

The study shows that in displacement fiction, the idea of home is deeply transformed. Homes are no longer seen as safe, stable or comfortable spaces but are filled with emotional tension and instability. They demonstrate the inner struggle of the characters and act as a place where trauma is expressed.

Another important point is that the boundary between private and public spaces is weakened. Peace is disturbed when external forces such as politics and social pressure enter the home. This makes the home an unsafe and uncomfortable place.

The home also becomes a space of memory. It carries the past memories, mostly the painful ones and reminds characters of their loss and displacement. As Cathy Caruth suggests, trauma is often experienced later through repeated memories rather than at the moment it occurs. This shows that past experiences continue to affect the present, especially through spaces like the home. Because of this, individuals feel unsettled even when they have a physical place to live.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this article portrays that in contemporary displacement fiction, the idea of home is complex and deeply connected to trauma. Homes are not just physical structures but emotional spaces that show memory, loss and psychological struggle.

This study offers a new way of understanding displacement literature by focusing on architecture and domestic space. It also highlights that trauma is not only experienced internally but also where individuals try to inhabit. As a result, the home becomes a place of emotional turmoil rather than comfort, showing the deep impact of displacement on human life.

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