

Gendered Spaces

Domesticity in the Novels of David Lodge

Yuliia Terentieva

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

Abstract. The paper examines a number of novels written by David Lodge to find out if the representation of women had changed throughout Lodge's works written in different decades. Since it is often the case that women are represented through domestic, private spaces in Lodge's novels, the paper inspects the places female characters occupy in the structure of the narratives and the places women inhabit in the fictional worlds of the novels. While closely investigating the chosen four novels that seem the most relevant to such an analysis, the research also includes some other novels by the same author in which the presence of domestic spaces is significant.

Keywords: domestic space, David Lodge, home, gender

With the emergence of feminist literary criticism, David Lodge acknowledged the relevance of this approach's assessment in regard to one of his early works, *Ginger, You're Barmy* (1962) (213). In the novel's afterword written in 1983, he attributed the behaviour and underlying views of the main character of his novel to the effect of the times in which the novel was written (saying that "neither [the main character] nor his creator had heard of 'sexism'" in 1962) and further added that, in any case, the presence of a certain amount of sexist views in the narrative was necessary due to the nature of the main character's environment (military service) in the story (*Ginger* 213).

Without aiming to answer the question of whether Lodge's novels are indeed sexist (moreover, it would not be correct to judge on the basis of the opinions alluded to or expressed by the characters or the narrator of the book), this paper aims to examine a number of novels written by Lodge to find out if the representation of women had changed throughout Lodge's works written in different years. To do so, a close inspection will be conducted of the places female characters occupy in the structure of the narratives and, more literally, the locations women inhabit in the fictional worlds of the novels. The spatial arrangements of the narratives are important for a number of reasons, the most significant of which being the fact that the spaces the characters occupy in the novels and the ways the characters behave in those spaces are often defining for the development of the story and the representation of the characters. It is not unusual for Lodge's novels to describe women in and through domestic spaces, hence, domesticity and its representations are the primary focus of this paper.

It is, of course, necessary to include *Ginger, You're Barmy* as a part of this investigation, as it was the criticism of this novel that induced his reaction. It is also important to take a look at a novel written close to the time when said afterword was produced. *Nice Work* (1988) not only was published in the same decade but also features a female academic and a supporter of feminist views as

one of its main characters. As the change of attitudes in the following decades may also be of interest, it is reasonable to include *Therapy* (1995) and *Deaf Sentence* (2008) into the analysis. In three of these novels the protagonist is male, and even in the fourth one, namely, *Nice Work*, the narrative is often focalised through the male protagonist. The majority of female characters take a role of a love or sexual interest in the stories.

The investigation into the chosen four novels will be accompanied by a brief overview of the presence and representation of women in and through domestic spaces in the other novels written by Lodge to provide a better understanding of a general trend or the absence of one. The descriptions of domestic spaces themselves play a significant role in a number of Lodge's works, and it is beneficial to see how the representation of these spaces correlates with the representation of women, since such an investigation may expose additional meanings and narrative characteristics of the novels at hand.

Starting the investigation into the domestic spaces, it is important to point out that the value of such spaces is defined both by the value of privacy of the inside, the internal space of home and by the framework of attitudes towards everyday objects that prevail in a given society. According to Gaston Bachelard, inside and outside are binary oppositions (211). These complete opposites are often loaded with a set of connotations, and in many cases one item of the pair is seemingly positive, while the other one is perceived as negative.

Outside and inside form a dialectic of division, the obvious geometry of which blinds us as soon as we bring it into play in metaphorical domains. It has the sharpness of the dialectics of yes and no, which decides everything. Unless one is careful, it is made into a basis of images that govern all thoughts of positive and negative. (Bachelard 211)

Even though in many cases it can be difficult to attribute positivity and negativity to the notions of inside and outside, home and the world outside it, feminist historians argue that gendered dialectics of domestic and public develop into the oppressive state of "imprisonment" inside the domestic space for many women. As a result of the industrial revolution and the diversification of activities, home ceased to be the space of both work and dwelling, and thus acquired its gendered qualities (Gillis 4). The inability of women to participate fully in the social and working life of the society led to home and domestic life being reimagined as their sole sphere of competence and responsibility.

The identification of women with the private sphere from the late eighteenth century onwards played a central role in creating new forms of gender inequality and domesticity emerged as an ideology that legitimated these new gender inequalities. [...] For many feminist historians, the emergence of separate spheres represented a retrograde step in the history of women because the distinction between public and private was also gendered. The private sphere was imagined as feminine—the 'proper' place for women—while the public sphere was imagined as masculine. In the process, women became economically dependent on men as they were excluded from the public sphere of paid labour. Women's lives were thus solely defined by their responsibilities as wives and mothers. (Gillis 4)

The shift that happened in the 18th century has been affecting women to a different degree throughout the following centuries. While the situation has been evolving

since, the 20th century witnessed a high degree of polarisation of the dialectics of inside and outside in regard to male and female spheres of control and interest. Thomas Foster argues that even though the 20th century is marked by the “desanctification” of the inside and outside binary as a gendered one, it is still a prevailing way of understanding the dichotomy of public and private for many people.

While it may never have been entirely valid to ‘characterize women’s lives by the distinction of public and private domains’, as Haraway argues, it is still necessary to account for the power that the public/private distinction held in the literary imagination, even after the impossibility of a strict demarcation between these gendered spaces began to become apparent. I agree with Foucault that modernism ‘desanctified’ nineteenth-century oppositions between a masculinized public sphere and a privatized feminine one, but what Foucault ignores is the fact that desanctification does not mean that these oppositions cease to circulate or to organize ideological formations and power relations. (Foster 6)

Outside of the gendered context, when it comes to the home itself, it is important to trace the value of objects that constitute home, since the objects that surround people are believed to affect the way they construct their identities:

... men and women make order in their selves (i.e., "retrieve their identity") by first creating and then interacting with the material world. The nature of that transaction will determine, to a great extent, the kind of person that emerges. Thus the things that surround us are inseparable from who we are. The material objects we use are not just tools we can pick up and discard at our convenience; they constitute the framework of experience that gives order to our otherwise shapeless selves. Therefore the things we make and use have a tremendous impact on the future of humankind. (Csikszentmihalyi 16)

The objects inside homes are the ones people interact with the most, as they constitute their everyday life and are designed and picked to fulfil the basic needs of and provide comfort to the members of the household. Even though the dichotomy of inside and outside has been getting less gendered over time, it is often the case that women as “household managers” are responsible for the state of the home in general and objects inside it in particular, hence the domestic space often defines women through the choices they make in regards to the household.

It is often the case that women are represented through domestic, private spaces in David Lodge’s novels. Such representation may be motivated by the tradition of identifying women with the private sphere of life in general and domestic space in particular, as well as by the structure of the given narrative, or a number of other reasons to be discussed in the paper. For instance, both the aforementioned tradition and narrative structure can be listed as forming factors for the representation of women (mostly, a woman) in the novel *Ginger, You’re Barmy*.

The female character in question is Pauline, a love interest of the novel’s main character. It would be incorrect to say that Jon Browne and Mike Brady, the protagonist of *Ginger, You’re Barmy*, compete for Pauline, Mike’s love interest who later becomes Jon’s girlfriend, as Jon never admits his interest in Pauline to

Mike. However, Pauline is seen as a prize, since Jon envies his friend and believes Mike is not worthy of having such a girlfriend.

Jon repeatedly compliments on Pauline's femininity, which, for him, is manifested through her manners, clothes and, most notably, her home: "The mingled perfumes from her dressing-table, the teddy-bear in which she kept her night-clothes ..., the prints of Degas's ballet dancers on the wall, the stockings and petticoats hung out to dry on the line in the kitchen..." (*Ginger* 141). The description gives an exhaustive picture of Jon's impression of Pauline and of what he perceives as feminine: she is well-groomed, cultured, and somewhat infantile. Pauline's home defines her in Jon's eyes, which also gives another layer to the understanding of Jon's character. The domesticity of her character is emphasised by the fact that Pauline is rarely seen (narrated) outside her flat: while other characters move around, travel between and within cities, Pauline is present in the narrative almost exclusively over the phone or while hosting guests in her flat, which also implies her being at home. It is possible to say that the reason for her narrative 'confinement' is that Jon, as the narrative's focaliser, only has a chance to interact with her in certain circumstances, however, their visits to the theatre are also mentioned throughout the story while never narrated. No matter if the reason for the absence of such visits in the story is the fact that they never actually went to the theatre, or Jon's (or, possibly, the implied author's) selective representation of their relationship, it is still a fact that Pauline's story happens mostly inside her flat. Pauline may be perceived as a narrative tool rather than an active participant of the events, as she lacks agency of her own. It is also possible to assume that Jon felt obliged to "look after" Pauline, since he thought he was the reason for her loss of her partner, Mike. This interpretation, however, renders Pauline helpless and lacking agency too.

As soon as she leaves her domestic space, the situation and Jon's attitude toward her change drastically. After Jon is demobilised and leaves the army, and Mike is imprisoned (partly due to Jon's indecisiveness about helping his friend), Jon and Pauline go on vacation to Majorca (the destination she intended to visit with Mike originally), where it becomes clear that Jon's guilt over what happened to Mike impedes the enjoyment of his "victory":

"I tried to will myself into enjoying the long-awaited holiday by reminding myself that I was free; but I felt less at ease in the glaring gaudy, hedonistic resort than I had been in the Army. The dusty offices of Badmore, the gloomy huts of Catterick, tugged at my thoughts with a strength like nostalgia. And at the core of my uneasiness was of course Mike, silently reproaching me from his cell in the county gaol." (*Ginger* 204)

Even though Jon receives the "prize", as he married Pauline at the end of the story, he is never satisfied with the outcome. The epilogue re-establishes Pauline as 'domestic' (however, not "feminine" any more). Jon's decision to move his new home closer to the prison where Mike is held is undeniably significant. The house can be perceived as the manifestation of his guilt, as he intends to visit and, to a degree, mimic Mike's conditions of confinement: the new house is small, uncomfortable and situated in a secluded area, a "damp, isolated place, where the local industry is a prison" (*Ginger* 207). The house can, indeed, be seen as a metaphor for prison, in which Jon is confined voluntarily not only - at least to a

degree - physically, but also by the contract of being married to the woman who is not a loved, appreciated, or, in fact, desired one. He fulfils “no more than statutory requirements of a husband and father” (*Ginger* 208) without any interest in Pauline’s life, her psychological state or her comfort.

Domesticity in *Ginger, You’re Barmy* is an inevitable part of Pauline’s characterisation, as well as the way of establishing Jon’s attitude to people and spaces. Jon is the subject of most activities and attitudes, while the domestic space and, by extension, Pauline herself are very often seen as merely the objects of his actions and decisions.

Similar to the female character of *Ginger, You’re Barmy*, in *The British Museum Is Falling Down*, written three years later, Adam Appleby’s wife, Barbara, is always portrayed at home. The domestic space in this case, however, helps to represent both of the characters:

It comprised only two rooms, plus kitchen and bathroom. One of the rooms had originally been a living-room, but this had long ago become Adam’s and Barbara’s bedroom, while the children occupied the other. This seemed the logical and inevitable design of a good Catholic home: no room for *living* in, only rooms for breeding, sleeping, eating and excreting (*The British Museum* 88)

Barbara is confined in these conditions due to the young age of the couple’s three children, and Adam, whose life is, effectively, lived at the Reading Room of British Museum, associates home with his wife and kids, and sees it mainly as a source of discomfort and financial difficulties.

Nice Work is different from *Ginger, You’re Barmy*, as well as the other novels represented in this analysis, in a number of ways. Unlike the main characters of the three other novels involved in this analysis and the majority of Lodge’s novels in general, *Nice Work* has Robyn Penrose as its main character. Robyn (an interestingly unisex name) not only is a woman but also a firm supporter of feminist and liberal views. Being a lecturer in English literature at Rummidge University which is currently in crisis, she is invited (if not forced) to participate in the Shadow Scheme which implies that she will visit an industrial institution and “shadow”, i.e. follow, its manager to understand how said institution works. She is sent to the factory called Pringle & Sons Casting and General Engineering to become a “shadow” of Vic Wilcox, a middle-aged factory manager of working-class background.

The initial Shadow Scheme is one-sided in its original form. It is only Robyn who needs to become a shadow and “learn the trade”, while Vic is invited to take a more pre-eminent, teaching, position. Vic, under Robyn’s long-term influence, turns it into a much more equal version where he also has to participate as a “shadow”. It is undeniable, however, that Vic is interested in Robyn herself more than in her literary insights, and, similar to the novel discussed previously, the decision is made by him, and he forces Robyn to accept it.

In terms of occupied space, Robyn is mainly represented through the university she works for and her attitude to both the university and the factory she has to attend weekly. The space of academia, Rummidge University, becomes the location that is closely associated with her character throughout the novel. However inviting it might be to suggest a binary opposition of male and female spaces in regards to the Pringle’s factory Vic works for and Rummidge University,

such an allocation would hardly be correct. It is difficult to associate Rummidge University with femininity, as it is dominated by male scholars. In fact, Robyn is the only woman among the teaching staff of her department, and she occupies the rather unstable position of a “Temporary Lecturer in English Literature” (*Nice Work* 21). Joan Acker explained in her 1992 article that multiple institutions, including the academy “are institutions historically developed by men, currently dominated by men, and symbolically interpreted from the standpoint of men in leading positions, both in the present and historically. These institutions have been defined by the absence of women” (567). Robyn’s academic life is in many respects controlled by the choices other (male) members of the faculty make, including the decision on Robyn’s participation in the Shadow Scheme, which is made by Phillip Swallow, the head of department, and other male members of the faculty who do not want to participate in the activity themselves (*Nice Work* 55).

Robyn’s domestic space, even though it is not mentioned frequently in the novel, plays an important role in the introduction of the character. The first of the chapters devoted to Robyn follows her around her house as she gets ready to leave for work, and the interior of the home, along with the way she interacts with it, serves a major role in the establishment of Robyn’s character. It is safe to argue that “within modernity the interior became a marker of people’s changing identities, one of the only stable (if temporary) frameworks for the construction of the ‘self’ and social status” (Sparke 17), and the descriptions of the characters’ dwellings can often serve to represent their beliefs, class and gender roles.

Robyn’s living room is full of “books and periodicals everywhere — on shelves, on tables, on the floor — posters and reproductions of modern paintings on the walls” (*Nice Work* 30), and has a variety of drafts of her dissertation at the very centre of the room. The centrality of her research in her life is proven (and sometimes questioned) multiple times throughout the novel, but this is the first glimpse that serves as a foundation for further development of this side of her character. As she is seen walking “across the floor, putting her shapely boots down carefully in the spaces between books, back numbers of *Critical Inquiry* and *Women’s Review*, LP albums by Bach, Philip Glass and Phil Collins [...] and the occasional wineglass or coffee cup, to the desk” (*Nice Work* 30-31) it becomes clear that the space of home is inseparable for her from the space of work, they have merged and, even though have not become interchangeable, the home environment is not defined as such for Robyn. “‘I never stop working,’ said Robyn. ‘If I’m not working here, I’m working at home’” (*Nice Work* 240), she explains later in the novel, and her home is a clear evidence of her words. Another indication of this fusion of functions and the loss of “domestic” properties of home is Robyn’s attitude to cleaning. According to Gaston Bachelard, home acquires its properties of the space of comfort and safety through a number of rituals, one of which is cleaning (68). Even though initially he attributes the process of “building the home from the inside” (Bachelard 68) to women, he then elaborates that “a human being can devote himself to things and make them his own by perfecting their beauty” (Bachelard 69), associating the act of perfecting with the result - the state of being “polished”. In this regard, Robyn’s domestic space is lacking “homeness” as well - she is not preoccupied with perfecting it, but rather utilises it according to her needs: “she puts her soiled breakfast things in the sink, already

crammed with the relics of last night's supper, and hurries upstairs" (*Nice Work* 27). Robyn is not a "domestic" woman, surely not in Bachelard's terms.

Robyn's attitude to the space of her home is contrasted with that of Marjorie's, the wife of Vic Wilcox. Vic calls his wife "softhearted or softheaded" (*Nice Work* 8) and lazy for sleeping through the morning ("No wonder the country is going to the dogs" (*Nice Work* 13)). He mostly sees her and talks to her in the kitchen, and, symptomatically, about the kitchen. The first time the reader encounters Marjorie in the novel, she tries to negotiate the purchase of a microwave oven that would supplement her collection of kitchen tools, the purchase Vic assumes to be motivated by the fact that all their acquaintances already possess microwaves. This scene paints a portrait of Marjorie as of a woman who is mostly focused on her home, while also being painfully aware of its imperfections and trying to fix them by perfecting the physical world around her rather than focusing on the relationship with her husband and children. While she is struggling to be "no worse than other people", Vic despises her attempts and does not find any interest in communicating or indeed spending time with his wife, especially once he meets Robyn.

Robyn unknowingly brings distress to the Wilcox household even before she appears in their house. Vic not only becomes more and more distant, but also tries to reformat his wife's domestic routine (which is a rather vital part of her identity) by suggesting practices that she is not used to:

"We never have a starter," said Marjorie.

"There's always a first time."

"What's got into you, Vic? Anybody would think the Queen was coming."

"Don't be stupid, Marjorie. Starters are quite normal."

"In restaurants they may be. Not at home."

"In Robyn Penrose's home," said Vic, "they'd have a starter. I'd take a bet on it."

(*Nice Work* 163)

As Marjorie, urged by her husband's neglect and change of character, explores other sides of her identity, Vic starts appreciating his wife and the domestic space closely associated with her more, noticing both "the smooth surfaces of the fitted kitchen and all the shining gadgetry arrayed upon them" (*Nice Work* 267) and the changes in Marjorie's looks and behaviour. While Marjorie is still associated with the kitchen where Vic usually spends time with her, the description differs from the previous ones as it creates a more positive representation of Marjorie. Not only does such a shift take Marjorie out of the domestic sphere, but also gives an opportunity for character growth. However, it is important to highlight that this growth only happens out of necessity and is somewhat forced by Vic, whose indifference threatens their marriage in Marjorie's eyes. Despite this fact, it is possible to say that both Robyn and Marjorie, even though at some point defined through their domestic spaces and attitudes to them, are not associated with the domestic spaces they occupy by the end of the novel. The changes in Marjorie's relationship with herself and the space around her are seen as positive by Vic, through whom the parts of the narrative that include Marjorie are focalised.

Nice Work is the last novel in David Lodge's *Campus Trilogy* and the first that has a female character at the centre of the narrative. Other academic novels, written somewhat earlier, focus on male academics and mostly portray women as

belonging to the domestic sphere, often controlled or affected from the outside by the male scholars.

In *Changing Places*, the first part of the trilogy, Phillip Swallow, a professor from Rummidge University in England, and Morris Zapp from Euforia State University in the US exchange workplaces for a semester, while their wives stay at their respective homes. While the domestic settings stay stable and mostly unchanged, they get “invaded” by the visiting main characters. In this case, it is possible to say that the homes of each of the professors may stand for their identities, hence identifying and highlighting the change that happens within and outside of them throughout the novel.

In *Small World*, the second book in the trilogy, the main character, a PhD student Persse McGarrigle, sets off on a quest to find the woman he fell in love with, Angelica Pabst, and the domestic spaces do not play any significant role in either the development of the story or the representation of characters. However, it is important to point out that the novel contains the following dialogue:

“Exactly! Even two campuses wouldn’t be enough. Scholars these days are like the errant knights of old, wandering the ways of the world in search of adventure and glory.”

“Leaving their wives locked up at home?”

“Well, a lot of the knights are women, these days. There’s positive discrimination at the Round Table.” (*Small World* 63)

It is, evidently, a commentary on the previous novel of the trilogy (and, possibly, *The British Museum Is Falling Down* as well) that indicates a certain change in the attitude towards women and their place in the narratives both inside the trilogy and in the further novels.

The main character of *Therapy*, Laurence, does not inhabit any particular space himself, as he circulates between his family house in London suburbs and a flat in West End. At the beginning of the novel, it seems unclear whether to consider both of these places his home or neither of them, as home is supposed to have both physical and symbolic boundaries (Dovey, 36), and there is a certain discrepancy between the two when it comes to Laurence’s “homes”. His wife, Sally, spent years staying at home and raising children, but, as they grew up and moved out, she started working on her career, which meant she was rarely present at home. While the space of the house is rarely mentioned, its atmosphere is represented through the relationship between Laurence and his wife:

She brings home piles of boring agendas and reports to work through in the evenings and at the weekends. We sit in silence on opposite sides of the fireplace, she with her committee papers, I connected to the muted television by the umbilical cord of my headphones (*Therapy* 72)

The domestic qualities of the space are ruined, according to Laurence, by Sally’s introduction of her work tasks into the domestic routine. Their marriage is on the brink of collapse, even though Laurence does not notice it until Sally announces that she wants to divorce him. As the home environment is presumed to be predictable and stable (Dovey, 37), it is at this point that the house ceases to be a home for Laurence. However, as it becomes apparent later, the “home” environment for Laurence is extended to other locations as well (even if they are his personal spaces, not family ones), as even though he is used to meeting Amy,

his friend and a frequent conversation partner, in the flat in London, their relationship is platonic up until the point when they leave the spaces of Laurence's dwelling. Home, it seems, is a space of routine that gives Laurence comfort - be it the house in the suburbs or the flat in the centre of the city.

However, he often perceives his wife as merely an element of this routine ("routine" is a word that appears quite frequently in the novel), and her remarks and requests are frequently left unattended if even noticed. As his wife leaves him, he initiates a quest to find a new interest and lover, and the choices and arrangements he makes in the process are representative of not only his attitude to these women but also of his understanding of what "home" is. Three women become the objects of his pursuit, and, interestingly, he only shows his interest to all three of them once he is outside his home and outside of London (or, for that matter, the UK), the city where he lives, works and spends most of his time. Since "home is an experience of complete insideness that can only develop over time" (Dovey, 37), it seems possible to say that the opposition of insideness and outsideness lies for Laurence not only in physical spaces, but also in the difference between the routine of his family life and the adventurous life outside of this routine. Each of his pursuits of romance can serve as an illustration of such a distinction, for Laurence invites or follows each of the three women he is interested in to faraway places. He even takes Amy, who used to be his friend and a frequent visitor of his London flat, as far within Europe as it seems possible, to Tenerife.

The representation of women and their roles in the main character's life, hence, is closely linked with the places and spaces they are associated with. Since home is a space of routine and repetition, none of which are usually welcome in a romantic relationship, it is reserved only for a marital relationship, while new and fresh interests are represented through outsideness, through travelling and the experience of new places. Such a distinction introduces a variety of interpretations of the roles and characters of women, but only as perceived by the main character of the novel. The dialectics of inside and outside come into play here too, defining home as inside and accompanying this allocation with a set of expectations and stereotypes.

As Laurence is deprived of both his homes by the end of the novel (he leaves the house to his wife after the divorce, while the city flat gets burgled), he is supposed to start a new life and rebuild his routine of insideness, but whether he does so is questionable.

In the novel *Deaf Sentence*, the main character, Desmond's, relationship with his wife, Fred (another "masculine" name, short for Winifred), is quite similar to Laurence's in *Therapy*. While he is retired, her social life and career are going upwards. The house the couple live in is not only the domestic space of their everyday life, but also the space of extensive communication with the outside world, since the house is "extravagantly large for just the two of [them], but Fred likes to throw big parties, and to host inclusive family gatherings at Christmas and similar occasions" (*Deaf Sentence* 61-62). The house itself and the process of perfecting it are sources of pleasure for Fred, "living space is her luxury: some people like fast cars, or yachts, or second homes in the Dordogne, but she prefers to spend her money on space she can enjoy every day" (*Deaf Sentence* 62), hence

the house is indeed perceived as home in Bachelardean terms, and this creates certain expectations regarding the nature of Fred's relationship with the house.

However, Fred's developing career is undermining her everyday participation in the life of and care for the household; she "leaves the house early in the morning, comes back late in the evening, cooks a perfunctory dinner, or [Desmond makes] one with pre-cooked chilled meals from Marks & Spencer's" (*Deaf Sentence* 232), which affects Desmond's life negatively, as such a situation contradicts his set of expectations regarding their roles in the care about the house:

While he was still employed himself Desmond was amused and pleased by his wife's success in her late entrepreneurial career. If there was a slight decline in domestic comforts as a result of her busy life - more prepared food from the supermarket for dinner, an occasional shortage of clean socks and laundered shirts - that was a small price to pay for the satisfaction she obviously derived from it, and his own social life was enlivened by contact with new people and places through association with her (*Deaf Sentence* 32-33)

The dependence of Desmond's domestic comforts on the ability and willingness of his wife to perform the majority of the chores is understandable and predictable. His disaffection for what he calls a "dull routine of a house-husband" (*Deaf Sentence* 235) is confronted by his own childhood memories, which give the reader better understanding of Desmond's preconceptions about home, and the reality of the present day state of the house he spent his childhood in.

Desmond's home is not the only domestic space elaborated on in the novel. Throughout the narrative, Desmond visits his father's house which used to be Desmond's home, and compares it to his wife's house. Since "the homes of our past set the ground for our very perceptions of attractiveness and ugliness" (Dovey, 37) and, by extension, set the standard of domestic life, the comparison draws Desmond to certain conclusions about his life both in childhood and at the present moment. While Desmond remembers his childhood home as a comfortable and welcoming place, he eventually realises what kind of difficulties and limitations his mother had to endure to keep the house the way it was. It took the presence of another woman, Desmond's first wife, for him to realise "what a limited, home-bound existence Mum had led for most of her life, living vicariously on the anecdotes her musician husband and scholarly son brought back from the wider world" (*Deaf Sentence* 262). The parallel between the insideness turned into constraint for Desmond's mother and the insideness of Fred's comfortable home that does not depend on her willingness to sacrifice her life for other people's convenience is further extended to motivate the difference between the ways Desmond and his father tend to their homes.

Even though Desmond is not exactly enthusiastic about participating in the chores, he understands the necessity to respect (even though somewhat unwillingly) his wife's right to not be limited to the inside space of the house. Meanwhile, his father's house is deteriorating after the death of Desmond's mother, which implies and illustrates her vital role in keeping order in the house.

I shrink from sleeping in the sagging, lumpy and always slightly damp bed in the back bedroom which was my room as a boy, and sharing the cheerless bathroom and smelly toilet [...], and making my breakfast in the cramped kitchenette where

everything is covered with a film of grease - the chairs, table, plates, cutlery, cups and saucers, toaster, saucepans, work surfaces, everything - from the daily precipitation of molecules of burned cooking fat. The house has never looked really clean since Mum died thirteen years ago, but it's gone steeply downhill since Irena, Dad's Polish home help, got sick and retired (*Deaf Sentence* 38-39)

If one were to extrapolate Desmond's experience of home on the society in general, it would be possible to say that the generation of Desmond's father established the role of a woman as defined by (if not limited to) the household and the needs of the men in the family. Desmond's generation seems to redefine the dichotomy of the outside belonging to men and the inside where women are imprisoned and set up a new standard for the presence and responsibility in domestic spaces.

The four novels at the centre of this analysis illustrate a variety of attitudes towards domestic space and a number of different approaches to the representation of women in association with home. It is a common denominator for the majority of the novels to be focalised through and express the opinions of the male main characters, who in many cases unknowingly perpetuate the stereotypical gendered dichotomy of the inside and outside, the domestic space and the rest of the world.

While the first analysed novel, *Ginger, You're Barmy*, represents and characterises the sole female character through her domestic space and does not grant her any agency, the situation changes in the following ones. The female characters in the other novels discussed are not bound to their domestic spaces, although the focalisers' tendency to associate women with the space of home is still present and often motivates the characters' actions and attitudes. While *Nice Work* has a female character as one of its protagonists, who is identified with the space of academia much more than with the domestic space (if at all), it characterises the character through the space of her home. The majority of the female characters of *Therapy* are not identified with the private spaces at all, but it is possible to assume that the reason for it is the fact that they do not represent the "domestic" type of relationships for the male protagonist. The last of the analysed novels, *Deaf Sentence*, pays attention to the balance of private and public and where the female characters stand in relation to the spaces of home. It introduces the shift in the attitudes towards women and their role in both private and public spheres of life among different generations of men, and illustrates this shift through the representation of male characters' opinions about house work and the balance of their involvement in it. Even though these issues are never central for the aforementioned novels, they play an important part in the construction of the narrative and representation of the characters. It is, however, evident that the attitudes towards the space of home and the relation of this space to the female characters are very often used as an instrument used to represent the male protagonists.

It is not unreasonable to say that, metaphorically, *Deaf Sentence* may be seen as an answer to *Ginger, You're Barmy* regarding the ideas they express about women and femininity. The shift in attitudes and expectations in regards of the issues brought up above may be understood as a dialogue between the past and the present of the perception of the domestic space and the roles of men and women in it.

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