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

**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.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Ashton, R. (1983). George Eliot: A life. Penguin Books.

Bachelard, G. (1958). The poetics of space. Penguin Classics.

Beer, G. (1962). The mill on the Floss. Barron's Educational Series.

Christofides, C. G. (1962). Bachelard’s Aesthetics. *The Journal of Aesthetics and*

*Art Criticism*, *20*(3), 263–271. https://doi.org/10.2307/427324

Ehrmann, J. (1966). Introduction to Gaston Bachelard. *MLN*, *81*(5), 572–578.

https://doi.org/10.2307/2907980

Eliot, G. (1860). The mill on the Floss. William Blackwood and Sons.

Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (2000). The madwoman in the attic: The woman

writer and the nineteenth-century literary imagination. Yale University Press.

Hans, J. S. (1977). Gaston Bachelard and the Phenomenology of the Reading

Consciousness. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *35*(3), 315–

327. https://doi.org/10.2307/430291

Kaplan, E. K. (1972). Gaston Bachelard’s Philosophy of Imagination: An

Introduction. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *33*(1), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.2307/2106717

Lefebvre, H. (1991). The production of space. (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.).

Blackwell Publishing.

Miller, J. H. (1982). Fiction and repetition: Seven English novels. Harvard

University Press.

NoorMohammadi, S. (2015). The Role of Poetic Image in Gaston Bachelard’s

Contribution to Architecture: The Enquiry into an Educational Approach in

Architecture. *Environmental Philosophy*, *12*(1), 67–86. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26169821

Norberg-Schulz, C. (1971). Existence, space & architecture. Praeger.

Pallasmaa, J. (2015). The eyes of the skin: Architecture and the senses. John

Wiley & Sons.

Rybczynski, W. (1986). Home: A short history of an idea. Viking.

Zografos, S. (2019). On Fire. In *Architecture and Fire: A Psychoanalytic Approach*

*to Conservation* (pp. 39–58). UCL Press.

Zoran, G. (1984). Towards a Theory of Space in Narrative. *Poetics Today*, *5*(2), 309–

335. https://doi.org/10.2307/1771935