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RE-DEFINING FEMALE GENDER ROLES IN RELATION TO THEIR SPATIAL BOUNDARIES IN ANITA DESAI'S CLEAR LIGHT OF DAY

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Abstract

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This study explores how the female characters in Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980) struggle to redefine their gender roles within a male-dominated environment. The novel spans both pre-colonial and post-colonial eras, illustrating how the departure of colonizers gives rise to a new elite class that perpetuates colonial ideologies and patriarchal practices. The paper analyzes the interplay between female gender roles and their domestic, psychological, physical, and national spatial boundaries. Methodologically, this paper employs comparative literary analysis, utilizing Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's theoretical framework from her work *Women's Identities and Bodies in Colonial and Postcolonial History and Literature* (2012). Ruiz's focus on the construction and representation of women's bodies and identities in different spatial contexts provides a valuable lens for examining how Desai's characters navigate and contest spatial boundaries. Through close reading and textual analysis, the study identifies and analyzes the spatial dynamics in the novel, highlighting how the characters' interactions with their environments reflect broader societal and cultural constraints. The insights gained from this analysis aim to offer a nuanced understanding of how spatial boundaries influence and are influenced by female gender roles in a patriarchal society. This paper contributes to broader discussions on gender, space, and postcolonialism in literary studies, ultimately providing recommendations for rethinking and redefining female gender roles in contemporary contexts. This analysis highlights the subtle ways Desai's characters navigate their roles, shedding light on broader societal limitations and offering deeper insights into the intricate dynamics of gender, space, and resistance in postcolonial literature.

Keywords: Gender, Patriarchy, Postcolonialism, Transgender, Intricate.

Introduction

The essay, "Re-defining Female Gender Roles about Their Spatial Boundaries in Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*," examines how female characters navigate and challenge patriarchal roles. Using Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's framework from *Women's Identities and Bodies in Colonial and Postcolonial History and Literature* (2012), it analyzes how spatial boundaries domestic, psychological, physical, and national interact with female identities, reflecting broader societal constraints.

Problem Statement

The research explores how spatial boundaries, domestic, psychological, physical, and national shape female gender roles in *Clear Light of Day*. It examines how these dynamics enforce or challenge patriarchal norms, using Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's framework to analyze how Desai's female characters navigate these constraints, shedding light on gender and space in postcolonial contexts.

Summary

The essay examines how female characters confront and resist their prescribed roles in a patriarchal society. Using Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's framework, it analyzes the interaction of domestic, psychological, physical, and national spaces that shape female identity in the novel. This reveals how Desai's characters navigate societal constraints, shedding light on gender, space, and resistance in postcolonial literature.

Contribution

This study offers a new perspective on *Clear Light of Day* by Anita Desai, applying Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's spatial theory, which hasn't been previously explored in this context. It examines the complex relationship between physical space and psychological states, revealing how these dynamics either resist or reinforce patriarchal constraints. By integrating spatial theory with feminist critique, the research enriches the analysis of postcolonial literature and highlights how spatial politics shape gendered experiences, proposing

spatiality as a key lens for understanding women's roles in patriarchal societies.

Research Objectives

- 1.To explore how spatial boundaries in *Clear Light of Day* shape female gender roles, focusing on how Desai's characters navigate and resist patriarchal constraints.
- 2.To examine whether these spatial interactions reflect socio-cultural changes and contribute to redefining female identity through Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's framework on women's identities in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Research Questions

- 1.How do spatial boundaries within Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* influence the construction of female gender roles?
2. In what ways do the characters in the novel navigate and challenge the patriarchal constraints imposed by these spatial boundaries?
- 3.How do the spatial interactions in *Clear Light of Day*, using Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's framework on women's identities in colonial and postcolonial contexts, reflect socio-cultural changes and impact the redefinition of female identity?

Literature Review

In postcolonial literature, gender, space, and power dynamics are key in shaping female identity within spatial boundaries. This article focuses on *Clear Light of Day* by Anita Desai, exploring how physical and psychological boundaries imposed by patriarchal societies influence female identities. (Uddin, Anwar, 2024), Using Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's framework, which asserts that spaces actively shape gender roles, the study examines how Desai's characters navigate and challenge these constraints. While previous scholarship on Desai has focused on memory and familial relationships, this study fills a gap by emphasizing the role of spatial dynamics in shaping identity and resistance. Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space" as a site of hybridity aligns with the spatial dynamics in

Clear Light of Day, where characters' internal and external conflicts are reflected in the spaces they inhabit. This perspective, combined with Levinas' notion of "Ethics and the Other," reveals how encounters with the other shape identity. According to Levinas, identity is continually formed through the self's ethical responsibilities and responses to the Other, which is evident in how Desai's female characters navigate their societal and familial surroundings.

Theoretical framework

Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's framework in *Women's Identities and Bodies in Colonial and Postcolonial History and Literature* (2012) examines how women's identities and bodies are shaped by the socio-political contexts of colonial and postcolonial societies. She argues that spaces—domestic, public, or national—are imbued with power relations that shape gender roles. Ruiz emphasizes an intersectional approach, considering how gender, race, and class interact to create unique experiences of oppression and resistance. Additionally, she views women's bodies as sites of control and resistance, where power dynamics are both imposed and contested. Ruiz emphasizes narratives of resistance, showing how women in literature challenge spatial and social constraints. She argues that literary depictions reveal the tensions in resisting patriarchal and colonial forces, offering insights into how women redefine imposed identities. Applying her framework to literary texts, Ruiz deepens the understanding of how women's identities are shaped by and respond to their environments, particularly in postcolonial literature. Her work enriches discussions on gender, space, and power, providing a valuable lens for exploring female identity in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Analysis

Desai constructs a fluid narrative of events about Das's family and the two sisters Bim and Tara who, after the death of their father and the partition of 1947, face their family's

disintegration. The paper contends to examine the redefinition of gender roles with connection to their spatial boundaries, in Anita Desai's novel *Clear Light of Day* (1980), as a post-colonial novel. This research begins by examining the concept of 'Space' and its interaction with its surroundings. Space must be understood about its inhabitants and other contexts, rather than as an abstract entity. (Kayani, Mubeen et. al., 2023), A literary work can be viewed as a literary space that generates knowledge. Michel Foucault suggests that knowledge is linked to the space where subjects engage with their discourse. Thus, a literary text creates interconnected spaces within its discourse. If these discourses operate independently without connecting to related codes, such as urban spaces like shops or markets, their meaning remains purely descriptive. In *Clear Light of Day*, the narrative addresses female repression while also celebrating women's bodies as hybrid, maternal, and healing across national, social, and domestic spheres. The text encompasses various spaces—geographical, social, national, domestic, and mental. The paper argues that, despite their victimization, women in the novel ultimately challenge and redefine patriarchal stereotypes and control. In the novel, Aunt Mira's body embodies traditional Hindu ideologies of widowhood. Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz, in *Women's Identities and Bodies in Colonial and Postcolonial History and Literature*, argues that "the body can be defined as a space, registering and representing various social and discursive relations" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 14). This interplay between women's bodies and their environments is where they challenge traditional roles and seek new identities. Aunt Mira's body, after her husband's death, is subjected to pain and ridicule, reflecting traditional views of widows as burdensome. Desai portrays her as being treated with disdain, likening her to a "discarded household appliance" (Desai, 1980, p. 105). Her physical

appearance deviates from traditional feminine beauty, protecting her from further exploitation. This aligns with Ruiz's view that an unappealing female body can become a site of oppression (Ruiz, 2012, p. 3). Aunt Mira's body thus becomes a space of cultural and political control, illustrating how societal practices impose restrictive identities on women and contribute to their oppression in postcolonial contexts. In Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*, Aunt Mira embodies the revered and resilient aspects of Indian female bodies. Unlike the Westernized, elite mother, Aunt Mira provides genuine nurturing and support, described as a tree offering shade and a warm, comforting presence to the children (Desai, 1980, pp. 107, 110-111). While Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz contrasts Asian female bodies with Western delicacy, noting their role in regeneration (Ruiz, 2012, p. 3), Aunt Mira's character reflects this strength, offering a nurturing environment distinct from more superficial, elite models of femininity. Ruiz's framework, which defines the body as a space representing various social relations (Ruiz, 2012, p. 14), helps elucidate Aunt Mira's role in *Clear Light of Day*. Her body functions as a site of both nurturing and resistance against patriarchal and colonial ideologies. Ruiz argues that "the female body in colonial and postcolonial contexts is a battleground" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 72). Aunt Mira's character reflects this duality, embodying both reverence and subjugation. Her role highlights how female bodies in Indian culture navigate and resist societal pressures, aligning with Ruiz's view of the body as a space of contested power dynamics. Aunt Mira's body is symbolically portrayed with vegetative imagery: "She was the tree, she was the soil, and she was the earth" (Desai, 1980, p. 111). She nurtured the children as a tree provides support, embodying ecofeminist values of reciprocity and nurturing (Gaard, 1993, p. 1). Her nurturing role aligns with nature, symbolizing a harmonious flow of regenerative energies that sustain both her and the children.

Aunt Mira's decline into madness can be viewed on two levels. Initially, her flourishing relationship with the children and domestic space provided her with vitality and protection. However, as this connection wanes in Part 2, she withdraws into isolation. Her repeated use of the word "Danger" foreshadows the family's impending troubles and reflects her awareness of the socio-political unrest impacting their lives. Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz argues that "the body can be defined as a space, registering and representing various social and discursive relations" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 14). This dynamic allows women to seek new identities and challenge traditional roles. Aunt Mira's body exemplifies this, serving as both a symbol of nurturing and a battleground for societal and familial expectations. Ruiz states that "the female body in colonial and postcolonial contexts is a battleground where power dynamics are both imposed and contested" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 72). Aunt Mira's revered nurturing role contrasts with the suppression of her autonomy. Her decline as her relationship with the children deteriorates underscores the connection between her self-identity and her nurturing ability. In conclusion, Aunt Mira's portrayal in *Clear Light of Day* exemplifies the dual nature of female bodies in Indian culture—as spaces of nurturing and sites of resistance. Her character reflects Ruiz's assertion that the body is a space that registers and represents social and discursive relations, providing a deeper understanding of how women navigate and contest their roles within patriarchal structures. Through this lens, Aunt Mira's character illustrates the profound connection between physical space, identity, and the socio-cultural forces that shape women's lives. Aunt Mira's tragedy peaks as she realizes she can no longer help the children through their family's disintegration, merely pressing her finger to her lips in helplessness (Desai, 1980, p. 96). Symbols of nurturing, like the cow, reflect her role and its drowning mirrors her plight. Her death, akin to Ophelia's,

haunts Bim and the characters. Aunt Mira's madness suggests a breakdown of creative energies, leading to her isolation, muteness, and alcoholism (Desai, 1980, p. 99). Her decline symbolizes the loss of vitality and balance as the children's lives falter. Aunt Mira's madness symbolically reflects Dionysian rites challenging societal norms. Her torn sari and tangled muslin represent barriers faced by women (Desai, 1980, p. 77). Her nakedness, though deemed disgraceful, signifies a resistance to societal constraints and an unconscious assertion of freedom against colonization. Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz argues that "the body can be defined as a space, representing various social and discursive relations" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 14). This concept highlights how women, like Aunt Mira, use their bodies to challenge traditional roles and societal expectations. Ruiz notes that in colonial and postcolonial contexts, the female body is a battleground for power dynamics (Ruiz, 2012, p. 72). Aunt Mira's revered nurturing role contrasts with her suppressed autonomy, and her deteriorating relationship with the children underscores the link between her self-worth and caregiving ability. Aunt Mira's portrayal in *Clear Light of Day* illustrates female bodies in Indian culture as both nurturing and resistant spaces, reflecting Ruiz's view of the body as a site of social and discursive relations. Bimla challenges traditional female roles and redefines herself as a modern Indian woman by pursuing education and encouraging self-reliance among her students. Her actions embody Ruiz's notion of the body as a space representing social and discursive relations, symbolizing resistance and empowerment within the socio-cultural framework of post-partition India. (Faheem, Khan, 2023), The novel decolonizes the myth of womanhood by exposing how Bimla's elite parents replicate imperial norms in their domestic space, which mirrors colonial aesthetics. Bimla challenges these colonial notions and resists the constraints imposed on

her, reflecting a broader postcolonial struggle for identity and autonomy. Her actions highlight the intersections of gender, space, and power, as outlined by Ruiz's view of the female body as a battleground for power dynamics. Ruiz's framework reveals how Bimla navigates and contests patriarchal roles, highlighting her role in redefining female identity in post-colonial India. Bimla embodies both traditional and modern aspects: she reflects the sincerity of traditional Indian women like Aunt Mira while resisting the Misra sisters' artificiality. Her disdain for early marriages and preference for education over marriage underscores her struggle to balance gender roles and challenge societal expectations. (Feroz, Aslam, Farah, 2023), Marriage and domestic spaces traditionally confine women to private roles, restricting their access to public spheres. Bim resists these norms, challenging patriarchal expectations by adopting behaviors typically reserved for men, such as trying on Raja's pants to symbolize masculinity and defy gender roles. When she tried on those trousers, she entered the world of masculinity, demonstrating another instance of hybridization. Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's theoretical framework supports this interpretation. Ruiz posits that "the body can be defined as a space, registering and representing various social and discursive relations" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 14). Bim's actions, such as wearing trousers and playing sports with boys, reflect her resistance to gender-based roles and her attempt to navigate both masculine and feminine spaces. Bergson suggests that those trapped in their gender-based roles are incomplete characters, while those with transgender abilities are "whole" characters because they can embody both characteristics simultaneously (Bergson, 1992, p. 45). To Bim, school and its teachers and lessons were a challenge to her natural intelligence and mental curiosity that she was glad to meet (Desai, 1980, p. 123). Playing sports with boys is another example of

hybridization, giving Bim a chance to assert her existence. Like a young boy who enjoys playing sports, Bim had a "natural affinity with the bat and ball" (Desai, 1980, p. 124). Furthermore, Ruiz explains that "the female body in colonial and postcolonial contexts is a battleground where power dynamics are both imposed and contested" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 72). Bim's resistance against patriarchal norms showcases her struggle and determination to redefine her identity within a society that seeks to constrain her. Her journey reflects the broader postcolonial struggle for identity and autonomy, highlighting the intersections of gender, space, and power. In this reference, when Aunt Mira asks Tara to accompany them to the hospital for charity purposes, Tara pretends to be ill or outright refuses to go (Desai, 1980, p. 126). At this instance, Bim would tease Tara, saying, "Too fine a lady to step into the hospital?... Oh, you poor thing... you better get a bit tougher, otherwise what good will you ever be... what will you ever be able to do when you grow up?" (Desai, 1980, p. 126). Bim is displeased with the notion of being invariably associated as a means of pleasure (Desai, 1980, p. 124). She has no desire to be owned in any way (Desai, 1980, p. 124). Bim refuses to confine herself to her role as a mere female, connoting an insignificant prey or object for others' use and pleasure (Ruiz, 2012, p. 41). Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's theoretical insights further elucidate Bim's resistance. Ruiz asserts that "the female body in colonial and postcolonial contexts is a battleground where power dynamics are both imposed and contested" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 72). Bim's actions reflect her refusal to submit to these imposed power dynamics, embodying a form of resistance against traditional gender norms. Her teasing of Tara underscores this resistance, as she challenges Tara to be stronger and more independent, rejecting the passive and submissive role expected of women. In this connection, Edward Said posits in his book "Culture and Imperialism" that "colonial

discourse and culture are in close alliance with the norms of patriarchal society" (Said, 1993, p. 6). Bim's actions translate into what can be termed "an expression of resistance to colonial discourse" of submission to authority. Bim's body becomes a site of resistance, where she contests the social and discursive relations that seek to define and limit her. This resistance is not just against gender norms but also against the broader colonial and patriarchal structures that perpetuate these norms. Bim's refusal to be confined to her role as a mere female is a powerful statement against the objectification and commodification of women. (Zeheer, Khan, Zubair, 2023), Her challenge to Tara to be tougher and more self-reliant is a call to reject the passive roles assigned to women and to embrace a more active and empowered identity. This aligns with Ruiz's assertion that "the female body in colonial and postcolonial contexts is a battleground where power dynamics are both imposed and contested" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 72). Bim's character in "Clear Light of Day" serves as a powerful example of resistance against the oppressive norms of both colonial and patriarchal societies. Through her actions and attitudes, Bim challenges the traditional roles assigned to women, asserting her autonomy and redefining her identity. This analysis, supported by the theoretical insights of Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz and Edward Said, highlights the complex interplay between gender, space, and power in postcolonial contexts. Bim's journey reflects the broader struggle for gender equality and empowerment, offering valuable insights into the ongoing efforts to resist and redefine oppressive norms. Unlike all the menfolk in her family, Bimla carries the burden of the family's business and looks after their retarded brother, Baba. In contrast to Raja, who feels that he "cannot go on living just to keep" his "brother and sister company" (Desai, 1980, p. 100). Bim, feeling that she bears a prerogative to influence the new generation with her revolutionary ideals of womanhood,

self-expression, and liberation, protects the family in the same way Aunt Mira had done. Aunt Mira struggled all her life to survive and overcome problems like a man. After the children's parents abandoned their duties, she endured various degrees of victimization but still had sufficient courage and strength to care for the Das family. Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's analysis further elucidates this dynamic, arguing that "the female body in colonial and postcolonial contexts is a battleground where power dynamics are both imposed and contested" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 72). Aunt Mira's resilience and nurturing role underscores the complex interplay between gender and power within the family. Bakul represents a modern embodiment of the colonial superstructure, radicalizing the female roles of Indian women. (Brennan, 1990), He openly expresses his reservations about being posted to an Eastern-based country like Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) but smugly shares that he will eventually be posted in "Western Europe" for his training. As a defender of Western traditions, he practices the same colonial ideologies. He is likened to a white man who is inclined to play a persistent role in exercising his theoretical assumptions on post-colonial gender issues (Rajan, 2002, p. 15). Similarly, Dr. Biswas claims to have "so much" and to be "so rich" in Germany, but in his own country, he "feels very poor and useless" (Desai, 1980, p. 84). Bakul's white man persona is evident in his patronizing expressions while he seeks Tara's hand in marriage from Bim. He sympathizes with her, saying that he "does not like" her "having all the worries of the family" (Desai, 1980, p. 81). Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's theoretical framework provides a deeper understanding of Bakul's character, highlighting how his actions reflect the imposition of colonial power dynamics on gender roles. Ruiz posits that "colonial discourse and culture are in close alliance with the norms of patriarchal society" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 61), which is evident in Bakul's attitudes and behavior. In his relationship with

Tara, Bakul is compared to an "indulgent father" (Desai, 1980, p. 71). The metaphor of a 'father' suggests Bakul's character is garbed in the role of a savior for the downtrodden colonized people. He closely approximates a white man, emphasizing that he must take Tara away from her "place" ridden "with so much sickness and worries" (Desai, 1980, p. 71). He believes that the best way to resolve the worries and sickness housed in Tara's domestic space is not to seek solutions by staying back with his kind but to evade them. Bakul never "liked Bim when she spoke in" an "abrupt, staccato" manner (Desai, 1980, p. 81). Judith Butler (1990), in "Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity", suggests that for the masculine subject of desire, the female is an invisible entity. The trouble arises when the female begins to contest the place and authority occupied by the male gender by showing her autonomy. Tara conforms to the standards of Bakul's erstwhile mentioned "invisible" entity; she is admired because she is submissive and never challenges Bakul's dominance. Furthermore, he invariably compares her feminine disposition to "Jasmine" (Desai, 1980, p. 71). Jasmine, a traditional flower of the East, signifies femininity and fragility (Criot, 1990, p. 110). Tara's idiosyncratic disposition contests the domineering space enjoyed by Bakul and Dr. Biswas. The Das family serves as a symbolic representative of the Indian nation. The father figure of the Das family signifies the authoritative role of the colonizer, and his death can be analogous to the colonial departure from India. Throughout the novel, the womenfolk are seen to have taken up the role of caretaker. With the egress of the prior authority, the new system of rulers is expected to take over. Here, Raja is supposedly expected to be the new caretaker of the family. Dr. Biswas, the doctor, asserts that "Raja must take his father's place" (Desai, 1980, p. 68). He realizes that for a "young lady" like Bim, "there are great problems" to cope with after her

father's death: the house, the family, and Raja's illness. Despite all this, like the Das family, India requires a sage ruler. Characters like Aunt Mira and Bim personify the true spirit of a helmsman who could steer the boat to its coast. Bim wanted to become a "heroine," and she emerged as one—someone who could subvert society's stereotypical roles. Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's analysis further elucidates these dynamics. Ruiz posits that "the body can be defined as a space, registering and representing various social and discursive relations" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 14). In this context, Bim's actions and choices reflect her struggle to redefine her identity within a patriarchal and post-colonial context. She challenges the societal expectations imposed on her, embodying a form of resistance against traditional gender norms. Ruiz also asserts that "the female body in colonial and postcolonial contexts is a battleground where power dynamics are both imposed and contested" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 72). Bim's resistance to conforming to traditional gender roles highlights her determination to assert her autonomy and redefine her identity. Thereby, Bim's character in "Clear Light of Day" serves as a powerful example of resistance against the oppressive norms of both colonial and patriarchal societies. Through her actions and attitudes, Bim challenges the traditional roles assigned to women, asserting her autonomy and redefining her identity. This analysis, supported by the theoretical insights of Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz and Edward Said, highlights the complex interplay between gender, space, and power in post-colonial contexts. Bim's journey reflects the broader struggle for gender equality and empowerment, offering valuable insights into the ongoing efforts to resist and redefine oppressive norms. Bim represents the changing sensibilities of "Modern times, Modern India, Independent India" (Desai, 1980, p. 81). She embodies a blend of old traditions and modern values, serving as a repository of Old Indian Culture.

Bim speaks of her deep connection to her heritage: "It's where my ashes will be thrown after I am dead and burned" (Desai, 1980, p. 24). She harmonizes with the "holy river on whose banks Krishna played his flute and Radha danced" (Desai, 1980, p. 24). These lines echo Aunt Mira's cremation rites in Section 2, highlighting Bim's spiritual and cultural ties to her roots. As a modern woman, Bim contrasts sharply with William Blake's sunflower in "Ah! Sunflower," which is weary of time and fading youth. Unlike Blake's flower, which symbolizes a "youth pinned away with desire," Bim is pragmatic and forward-looking. Blake's flower, a "pale virgin" shrouded in snow, stands in stark contrast to Bim, who by the novel's end, beams with "light" and vitality. She is not like Lorca's Dona Rosita, the wailing spinster who anticipates someone for her survival. Instead, Bim emerges as a savior and an Indian heroine (Desai, 1980, p. 157). There are no overt references to Dr. Biswas' marriage inclinations towards Bim; however, his strong emotional inclination is evident. Throughout the novel, readers can see his empathy for Bim, who handles her domestic problems alone. His absence after Mira Masi's death highlights his inability to be a sole soother for Bim in a rightful manner. Like Bakul, Dr. Biswas might also be intimidated by Bimla's female independence. Her non-traditional dispositions likely pose a threat to male autonomy, exposing their dominance in public spaces as "illusory" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 8). Both Tara and Bim undergo a schizophrenic condition in their mind space (Akhtar, 1992, p. 79). For Bim, the shadows on the white walls dragged her body into the past, where she ostensibly faced control and took orders. In their childhood play of "hide and seek," the girls ran and tore their clothes into rags while Raja always hid. Bim often complained to Raja, "It's always me, always me to do things, why can't there be anyone else" (Desai, 1980, p. 65). Her mind becomes a humdrum of her splintered past and present condition. She nursed and nursed

excellently (Desai, 1980, p. 85). Bim invariably sees Aunt Mira's white body floating around the house. Her mind remains haunted until she learns to come to terms with her past grievances. Like Aunt Mira, she must learn to dole out unconditional love. She realizes that throughout her life, she had been clinging to Raja and neglecting Baba: "Her love for Raja had too much of a battering that she had not given Baba enough thought, her concern had not been keen...she would have to mend and make her net whole" (Desai, 1980, p. 165). Once she acknowledges this lapse in her nurturing, her mind clears from the shadows (Desai, 1980, p. 177). In this respect, she mirrors Mira Masi in "nursing her family" to the best of her ability (Desai, 1980, p. 85). Dr. Biswas suggests that Bim should "consider turning to the nursing profession...as she does it so—so excellently" (Desai, 1980, p. 85). With this revelation, "clear light" pours down from the sun, signifying a harmonious alignment of her mind space with the physical spaces of her past and present (Desai, 1980, p. 177). Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's theoretical insights further elucidate Bim's journey. Ruiz posits that "the body can be defined as a space, registering and representing various social and discursive relations" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 14). Bim's actions and choices reflect her struggle to redefine her identity within a patriarchal and post-colonial context, challenging societal expectations. Ruiz also highlights that "the female body in colonial and postcolonial contexts is a battleground where power dynamics are both imposed and contested" (Ruiz, 2012, p. 72). Bim's character exemplifies this struggle as she navigates and resists the oppressive norms imposed on her. In conclusion, Bim's character in "Clear Light of Day" serves as a powerful example of resistance against the oppressive norms of both colonial and patriarchal societies. Through her actions and attitudes, Bim challenges the traditional roles assigned to women, asserting her autonomy and redefining her identity. (Cirlot, J. E, 2001), This

analysis, supported by the theoretical insights of Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz and Edward Said, highlights the complex interplay between gender, space, and power in post-colonial contexts. Bim's journey reflects the broader struggle for gender equality and empowerment, offering valuable insights into the ongoing efforts to resist and redefine oppressive norms. Tara is a migrant female who embodies a "bicultural body," a result of the immigrant experience and identity formation, and she represents hybrid bodies (Akhtar 79) in the process of "acculturation," where bodies become sites of both cultural preservation and change. She complains about seeing no change in the house for years. However, her mind also must correspond to everything she carries along: her memories, her guilt, her escape, and her present situation. In the novel, we encounter a "third space," not traceable to two original contexts, but "which enables other positions to emerge" (Bhabha, "The Third Space" 211). Like Bim, Tara's mind resembles a psychic landscape of a conquered land, staggering under nationalism and surviving the weight of a colonial past. This liminal space is toned down when she confesses that she never attended Aunt Mira's funeral, saying, "I could have come I should have come back here immediately...she never thought of Aunt Mira, had not once worried about her" (174). It is at this moment she realizes that both Tara and Bim are "alike more than any other people could be." As her mind space corresponds with her memories and her present, she now sees that the two sisters always "had their hands in the same water and their faces reflected together" (174). Maria Isabel Ruiz's work emphasizes the significance of women's bodies in the novel, serving as a synecdoche for the whole social body, registering and representing various social and discursive relations (Ruiz 14). Clear Light of Day is a powerful novel where the changing conditions of the physical space of Das House can be symbolically felt on both a personal and

political level. (Narayan, 2010), On a macrocosmic level, Das House serves as an exemplary model to explore the changing and reforming political body of India in a postcolonial society. Hence, the womenfolk are seen to have taken up the role of caretakers. This paper investigates the complex relationships between gender, social class, and ethnicity amid spatial restrictions through a close reading of Anita Desai's postcolonial text, *Clear Light of Day*.

Conclusion:

Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* provides a deeper understanding of how female characters negotiate their identities within a patriarchal framework through the lens of spatial boundaries. The study examines the complex dynamics that influence the autonomy and self-expression of women by examining the intersections of domestic, psychological, physical, and national spaces. Instead of passively accepting societal norms, Desai's characters actively engage with and often subvert them. Ultimately, this exploration contributes to a broader discussion on the fluidity of gender roles and how space can both confine and empower individuals. As a result, the novel highlights how traditional gender roles can be redefined through an intentional engagement with the boundaries that shape individual and collective identities, providing a nuanced perspective on postcolonial societies' ongoing struggle for equality and self-definition. Besides enriching feminist discourse on Desai's work, this study further explores the spatial dimensions of gender identity across diverse literary landscapes.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that future research examine spatial boundaries and gender identity in other postcolonial texts, taking into consideration cultural and historical contexts. A comparative study of Desai's work and that of other postcolonial writers may enhance our

understanding of the interaction between space and gender roles across various literary traditions. Similarly, interdisciplinary approaches that incorporate sociology, psychology, and feminist geography could further enrich the analysis of how spatial constructs influence the negotiation of female identities in postcolonial literature.

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