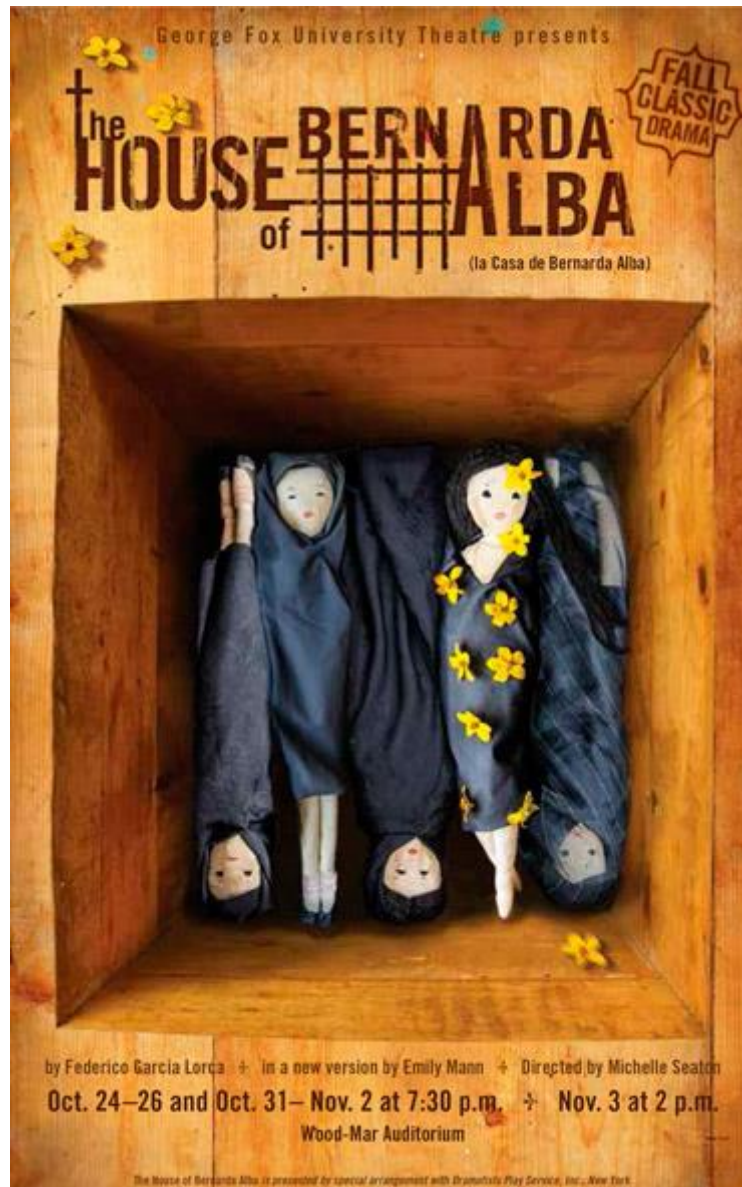


## The Study of Space in Lorca's Play *The House of Bernada Alba*

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### Abstract

This research paper is primarily concerned with the study of space in Federico Garcia Lorca's play *The House of Bernada*. The study aims at exploring the relationship between space and passion. This research investigates that the role of space construction is capable of

giving birth to passion. To study the function of space the researcher draws on Henri Lefebvre's theory "space as concrete abstraction". The findings of this research throws light upon how the confined spaces can unleash suppressed energies of human beings and create duende in the characters.

**Key words:** confined space, suppressed emotions, passion, abstraction, duende, concrete abstraction.

### **Research Questions**

What is space construction in *The House of Bernarda Alba*?

What is the function of space in Bernarda's daughters?

How is duende created by space?

### **Introduction**

Henri Lefebvre's *The production of space* was composed in 1974 and later translated by Donald Nicholson Smith in 1991. In this book, he draws attention to space acts as a concrete abstraction that separates a man from the world. The space being a concrete phenomenon plays a role of abstraction which facilitates specific past and conceptual practice. In his book 'The Production of space' he develops that the unity grasps three fields of space: Physical space, mental space and social space. Physical congested space is a material, visible and measurable that can be mapped in which character endure and remain perplexed. According to Lefebvre, obstructed mental space cannot be seen. This makes the characters mentally disturbed and they suppress their emotions. Lefebvre defines social space engorged social space which leads the character to tragedy.

Federico Garcia Lorca is a Spanish dramatist describes the play in its subtitle; as a drama of women in the villages of Spain. The house of Bernard Alba was Lorca's last play completed in 1936, two months before his death. The play was first performed on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1945 at the 'Avenida theatre, in Buenos Aires. The play is about Bernarda Alba, who is in mourning after the death of her second husband and has total control over her five daughters Angustias, Magdalena, Amelia, Martirio, and Adela. Housekeeper la Poncia and Bernarda's mother Maria Josefa also live there.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is based on the study of space which cause distraction in Lorca's characters in *The house of Bernarda*. The article analyses the destruction in Bernarda and her daughters under Lefebvre's insight 'space as a concrete abstraction'. The three fields of space: physical space, mental space and social space hold the unity. Physical confined space is a material and visible that can be mapped. Mental space cannot be seen but makes the characters mentally sick. The social obstructed space plays a role as socialism. Society does not allow to live without fulfilling the requisites of society. These three aspects of space are same in nature and cause repression.

## **Literature Review**

Geneva Ged in the thesis 'Costume and dramaturgical analysis of the house of Bernarda Alba by Fredrico Garcia Lorca' states that by observing the biography of writer and the cultural surrounding of the play, the theme and the effects of the themes upon the design process are explained. He further explores the relationship between character and costumes. Ged also illuminates that how a Dramaturgical Assessment can be a vital for the designer. Toby Bercovici in his thesis, freedom in structure: life inside *The house of Bernarda Alba* states that the house of Bernarda Alba feels like an end of life. He also states that freedom can be found through structure.

My contribution is to explore the study of space in The house of Bernarda by Lorca with the help of Lefebvre's theory. The researcher finds that how space with its three components (physical, mental and social) distress characters in Lorca's play. These three constituents of space as constructed space create repression, depression and duende in the characters.

## **Textual Analysis**

In Lorca's play the House of Bernarda Alba Bernarda, Bernarda's daughters are suffering from three spaces, physical space, metal space and social space. The setting given in the play is congested which shows that physical space is constructed and obstructed. In which characters are not allowed to breathe even freely. They are not allowed to live freely and outside world is not allowed to interrupt. Even day light is not permitted to peep inside the house as walls are covered with thick portieres. 'A whiter-than-white inner room of

Bernarda's house. Thick walls. Arched doorways with hessian curtains edged with tassels and flounces. Rush bottomed chairs. Pictures of nymphs or legendry kings in unrealistic landscapes. It is summer. A great shadowy silence pervades the stage. When the curtain rises the stage is empty. Sound of tolling bells. (p.1)

The play *The House of Bernarda Alba* is about three generations; Bernarda, her mother and her five daughters who are confined within the four walls of the house. These are funeral days of Bernarda's husband. Bernarda restricts her daughters within the four walls of house. When drama begins, the women mourners enter two by two with black shawls, black skirts and black fans. They come slowly and fill the house. At this moment, Bernarda says to her Maid 'less wailing and more work. You should have got the whole place cleaner, ready for the mourners, (p.4) The setting of the play is also congested in *The House of Bernarda Alba* because there is no wide space. The daughters and the mother of Bernarda are restricted within four walls and suffer from confined spaces. In this way, social space is restricted for Bernarda and her daughters. As one of girls says *Girl. We can't live* without eating. Bernarda says, 'At your age you should hold your tongue in front of your elders' (p.5)

They are not allowed to express their feelings in front of society because physical space is over gorged for them. Bernarda orders her daughter Magdalena that she is not allowed to weep in the presence of mourners and her voice should not be heard to men sitting in yard. Bernarda [loudly] Magdalena, don't cry if u want's to cry, get under your bed, Do you hear me? (p.5) Bernarda is strict to her daughters because she has fear of society. When Bernarda asks for fan then her daughter gives her decorated fan with red and green flowers.

Then Bernarda says,  
[flinging the fan to the floor]is that the sort of the fan to give to a widow? Give me a black one and have some respect for your father's memory. MARTERIO. Take mine, mother. BERNARDA. What about you? MERTERIO. I don't feel hot. BERNARDA Well, you'd better find yourself another because you are going to need it. We have eight years mourning ahead of us, on while it lasts no breath of air from the street is going to yet in the house . It is going to be as if we we'd bricked up the doors and windows. (p.8)

In the house, they live as prisoners are engaged. They suffer physically, socially and mentally. Bernarda's obsessions are illustrated through her behavior, particularly with her daughters. She is victim of society. Consequently, the external world is forbidden in her house. She wants to keep her daughters virgin and chaste. When her daughters cry on their father's funeral, Bernarda forbids her daughters from weeping loudly. She time and again orders 'be quite' she does not want her daughters cry at man. When Angustias enters with powdered face Bernarda does not like this act of her daughter and says "Bernarda. Have you had the audacity to put powder on your face? Have you audacity even to wash your face on the day of your father's funeral. Let you go? When I've wiped that powder of your face. Soft-soaping hypocrite! Just like your aunts [she roughly wipes off the powder with her handkerchief] now get out! (p.17)

Bernarda's harsh behavior with Angustias confines her mental space. Angustias feels no space for her in the house. She remains mentally disturbed as well as physically and socially. The relationship between Bernarda and her mother Maria Josefa is more cruel. She locks her mother in a room, because of dark room it creates repression and depression in her mother. Maria Josefa and Bernarda's daughters suffer from obstructed spaces. They are physically and mentally stressed as they are bounded in the house as Maria Josefa in room. Bernarda confines her daughter's physical and mental space as she says "We've eight years mourning ahead of us." (p.8)

Bernarda's daughters live in the house as prisoners in the prison, and they do abnormal activities like Adela Bernarda's younger daughter wants water time and again. Other sister feels heat in the rooms they want to go outside as Martirio says, "Last night I couldn't get to sleep for the heat." (p.20)

In the confined spaces Bernarda's daughters repress their desires, even they want man like Maria Josefa. Adela makes relation through the window of her room as mother does not allow them to stand at window side but the obstructed spaces subjugate them. This subjugation and over-puffed spaces create DUENDE in Bernarda's daughters. Adela makes relation with Pepe el Romano who is fiancé of Angustias. Even they both hide their relation. Nobody is aware of this fact but Bernarda's housekeeper is in doubt because she knows what others do not know. She notices her and tries to tell her mother Bernarda but Bernarda does

not pay attention to it because she thinks that her housekeeper is telling a lie. On the other side the picture of PePe el Romano is lost from the Angustias' room. She inquires but no one is agreed to accept this. Martirio has the picture of PePe-el-Romano she also loves him. But on the founding of picture she says that she was kidding with Angustias. Bernarda does not notice this. Bernarda's daughters indulge in such kind of activities because they are like prisoners in *The House of Bernarda Alba*. Adela, younger daughter of Bernarda, meets PePe el Romano at night and makes relation with Romano. Duende is also created in the character of Adela. Adela says, What I'm thinking is that this period of mourning has come upon me at this time in my life when I'm least able to stand it. MEGDALENA. You'll soon used to it. ADELA [breaking into angry tears]. No, no I won't get used to it. I don't want to shut in. I don't want my body to moulder like yours. I don't want the whiteness of my skin to fade away in these rooms! Tomorrow I'm going to put on my green dress and I'm going out in the street for a walk. I want to go out (p.16) They all are obsessed and preoccupied by their repression. They are overpowered by duende even Adela wants to leave home.

Adela. I can't stand the horror of this house any more, not after feeling the taste of his mouth. I'll whatever he wants me to be. The whole village will on against me, pointing fiery fingers and burning that call themselves respectable, and the front of them all I'll put on the of thorns by every women who's loved by a married man. MERTIRIO Be quite ADELA yes ,yes [softly] let's go to back, Let's leave him to merry Angustias. ADELA I don't care anymore. But I'll go and live in a little house by myself where he can come and see me when he wants to whenever he feels like it. [P51]

At this time, ADELA wants to elope with Romano but Martirio makes her fail in her intention.

ADELA [standing to her mother] this place has sounded like a prison long enough [she snatches her mother's stick and breaks it into two] that's what I do with the tyrant rod. Don't take another step. Nobody but Pepe tells me what to do. (p 52)

After it, Adela commits suicide. On Adela's dead body her mother does not allow anyone to cry. Bernarda has fear of society. She wants to secure her family from the society which constructs boundaries for human beings especially for girls.



BERNARDA. I want no weeping. We must look death in the face. Quiet! [to one of the daughters] Quiet, I said! [To another daughter] keep your tears when you are alone. We'll all draw ourselves in our ocean of mourning? She, the youngest daughter of Bernarda Alba, died a virgin. Do you hear me? Quiet, Quiet, I said Quiet. (p 53,54)

## Conclusion

The findings of this research suggest that sufferings take place in the mind set of characters because of congested spaces. Unity of three constructed spaces create repression and depression in the characters. Congested spaces cause tragedy in the play as the suicide of Adela, madness of Maria Josefa and sickness in Bernarda's daughters. The research concludes that the constructed and obstructed spaces; physical space, mental space and social space creates duende in the characters.

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