
The Politics of Domesticity: A Comparative Study of Ibsen, Deshpande, and Shaw's Portrayals of Marriage and Power Dynamics

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Abstract:Ibsen, Deshpande, and Shaw depict domestic life and marriage as battlegrounds of ideology—those spaces typically understood as being private or apolitical also contain elements of oppression. *The Politics of Domesticity: A Comparative Study of Ibsen, Deshpande, and Shaw's Portrayals of Marriage and Power Dynamics* investigates how each author uses marriage as a lens through which to examine the power imbalance in gender roles, as well as examine how the authority of men and women continues to change based on circumstance. This research specifically looks at Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Deshpande's *That Long Silence*, and Shaw's *Candida* and determines that each author uses his or her work to show how domestic space provides an opportunity for individuals to resist oppression, negotiate their identity, and realize their potential. Ibsen critiques the bourgeois marriage system via Nora's transformation in *A Doll's House*; she awakens to the realization that she is her husband's "doll-wife" and refuses to remain a prisoner in her own home in order to seek her individuality. By contrast, Deshpande's *That Long Silence* shows Jaya's struggle with an internalized form of oppression through silence; she has internalized the societal oppression of women in Indian middle-class marriages to the point where she has made silence a "habit." In his play *Candida*, George Bernard Shaw exposes the traditional power structure of marriage, using irony and suggesting that *Candida* herself possesses emotional & moral authority within her marriage: "You have needed me." The three authors analyzed; Ibsen, Deshpande, and Shaw each show marriage as a structure of power dynamics but differ in their narrative techniques and resolutions; Ibsen proposes a radical separation, Deshpande suggests a way to maintain intimacy via individual contemplation & continuity, while Shaw advocates for a new definition rather than a complete rejection of marriage. Thus, these writers illustrate that domesticity is not simply a private matter, but rather is an arena for the contestation of authority, agency, & gender in various socio-political contexts.

Keywords: Domesticity, Deshpande, Shaw's Portrayals, Power Dynamics

Introduction

Historically, marriage and domesticity were seen as a private or personal sphere removed from social and political scrutiny. Lately, the literary critic has been increasingly interested in examining the home as a site where such concepts as power, ideology, and gender are constructed and maintained. Rather than seeing it as merely an emotional institution, marriage has often been characterized as a means of normalizing or internalizing patriarchal authority. Across cultures and historical periods, writers have utilized domestic narratives to explore such patriarchal structures, illustrating how the way that personal relationships reflect larger social hierarchies. The works of *Henrik Ibsen*, *Shashi Deshpande*, and George Bernard Shaw, within the framework of the analysis of marriage as a space for negotiation, resistance, and representation, provide key insights into these critical issues. *Ibsen's A Doll's House (1879)* marks a significant development in modern drama by revealing the instability of bourgeois marriage and the falsehoods surrounding domestic peace. The discovery by Nora *Helmer* that she is living as a "doll-wife" reflects the moral and legal principles underpinning nineteenth-century patriarchal society. Ibsen's view of marriage is not that of a partnership of equals; rather, he presents it as a well-rehearsed piece of theatre, in which the female's role is relegated to that of subservience and dependency. *Jaya's story in That Long Silence (1988)* illuminates the pervasive and oppressive nature of conformity and silence on the lives of women in contemporary India who have lived their lives to fulfill socially acceptable roles. Unlike Nora, who demonstrates her rejection of domestic confinement through direct action, Jaya's rebellion is internalized through her self-awareness, allowing her to slowly awaken to who she is and what she desires from her life. In her own words, "Silence had become a habit," serves as a reminder of the detrimental effects of a society that discourages women from expressing dissent in order to maintain family structure. (*Adams, R. M. ,1957,p. 415*) Deshpande's writing shifts focus away from tangible manifestations of patriarchy to the emotional and cultural subjugation of women by systems of oppression through the enforcement of emotional discipline. In addition to Deshpande's literary exploration of marriage and domesticity, George Bernard Shaw's *Candida (1898)* also questions the traditional role of women within marriage by using irony and humor.

Shaw's critique of the Victorian patriarchal ideal does not involve the destruction of the institution of marriage; rather, he sees it as an area for the negotiation and movement of power. *Candida*, rather than being an absent-minded spouse, is portrayed as the moral and emotional anchor of the play. Her statement, "It is you who have needed me," is a reversal of the traditional views on dependency and authority. Shaw's portrayal implies that power in a marriage does not necessarily correspond to sex or to financial status, but rather to moral

and emotional sensitivity and strength. Although they exist in different cultural and historical settings, Ibsen, Deshpande, and Shaw all present a view of domestic life that is a contested territory rather than a haven. All three authors refute the stereotype of the perfect marriage by exposing the power asymmetries inherent in spousal relationships, but they differ significantly in their methods of narrative construction and their philosophies for resolving these imbalances. (Archer, William, 1899, p. 3) Whereas Ibsen's methodology is the liberation of the individual from the marital union, Deshpande emphasizes the analysis of one's self through introspection to reach gradual self-expression of one's own needs, and Shaw's philosophy is the establishment of equilibrium and definition for the marriage relationship. Because these works are written by separate authors in separate locations at different times, their authors' distinctive artistic visions are also present; in addition, their respective authors' cultural and social realities have affected the development of their texts. When one views the two authors' works—both *A Doll's House and Candida*—and places them side by side with *That Long Silence*, one can develop a transnational understanding of how marriage functions as a socio-political institution across the globe. (Baruch, Elaine Hoffman, 1979, p. 374) The relative tensions of modernity in 19th-century Europe presented in *A Doll's House*; the relationship between patriarchy and post-colonial Indian society presented in *That Long Silence*; and the discussions of socialism and feminism present in *Candida* highlight the link between domesticity and issues of gender, power, authority, and social reform. Each author demonstrates that domesticity is never simply personal. By considering all three works critically, this paper asserts that marriage, as seen by Ibsen, *Deshpande*, and *Shaw*, is a site of dynamic negotiation of power where women's identities are constructed and reconstructed. In conclusion, the paper provides evidence that the domestic sphere has political implications, as it is a powerful area of both address and reform. In short, this work affirms that the home is not outside the political agenda. (Bennett, Louie. 1910, p. 278)

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Feminist literary theory has long focused the attention of feminist scholars on the impact of marriage and the domestic sphere as ideological structures that reinforce male-female power relations. The work of the early feminist theorist Simone de Beauvoir suggests that women, through the confinement experienced through marriage and domestic responsibilities, historically represent immanence; whereas for men, through their ability to hold positions of authority in the public sphere, the representation is much more transcendental. (Bennett, Louie. 1899, p. 66) This concept has provided a framework for examining the depiction of marriage in literature, the personal and the political are not easily separated; therefore, the textual representation of marriage becomes an area of research for examines how domestic roles have been constructed by society, and how women can

negotiate those expectations through negotiation, resistance, or incorporation into their self-image.

A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen, published in 1879, has sparked much debate among literary critics since it was published concerning its feminist implications. For some feminist critics, such as Toril Moi, Nora's decision to leave Thyme at the end of the play is not merely a feminist action but a declaration of her own existence against the determinism of society. The play has been interpreted as exposing the moral and legal constraints that were placed upon women's lives through marriage during this time period in Europe; moreover, it also exemplifies how women are represented in literature. Nora realizes that both her father and husband have treated her like a doll, illustrating how patriarchal domesticity infantilizes women. Generally speaking, scholars agree that the domestic space in Ibsen's work acts as a "court of law," where marriage itself undergoes an examination for its moral fault(s). The writing of Shashi Deshpande, on the other hand, is studied within the framework of Indian Feminism and Postcolonial Gender Discourse. Specifically, it focuses on Jaya's journey from outward expression of discontent to an inward exploration of feelings of entrapment. Jaya's silence is seen as both a means of survival but also a measure of her collusion to be silent (which has been identified by Feminist theorists as internalizing the patriarchy). (Brustein, Robert. 1962, p. 54) However, while Jaya's view of marriage is limited, she questions what value there is in being compliant or conforming to what is expected. As Meenakshi Mukherjee states, "Deshpande's women are not necessarily rebels in the traditional sense, but rather are contemplating the implications of living the way society dictates." The novel illustrates how the "ideal wife" in Indian cultural standards requires that women endure, sacrifice for, and be silent about their struggles; therefore, it creates psychologically complicated and socially risky methods of women using resistance.

George Bernard Shaw's *Candida* occupies a distinctive space in the debate regarding how to view marriage and power. Unlike works that fall neatly within the definition of either being feminist or anti-feminist, *Candida* offers a different interpretation of this subject. Specifically, Shaw's views on domestic affairs are heavily influenced by his Socialist and Realist philosophies; therefore, they reject romanticism and promote a rational attitude to social critique. Although Shaw does challenge the authority of men over women, he does not reject the institution of marriage. Instead, in the view of Shaw, one's true power lies in their ability to sustain and nurture others, not only economically or intellectually. As such, the choice *Candida* must make between *Morell* and *Marchbanks* becomes more symbolic than romantic.

In comparison to each other, much of the current critical work on Shaw, Ibsen, and Deshpande create different cultural/literary frameworks (European Realism, Indian Feminist Fiction, and British Social Drama). Although some recent studies have placed this relationship into direct dialogue (to explore the ways that marriage serves as a culturally inflected and shared site of power), fewer studies have included multiple authors examining how these authors critique the idea of a 'patriarchal domesticity' within their writing. A comparative approach provides insight into how, although all three authors critique the institution of patriarchal domesticity, they consider different avenues of resistance based on their respective historical and cultural contexts. Ibsen focuses on rupture and the act of liberating oneself from one's marriage, Deshpande places attention on an individual's ability to articulate themselves, and Shaw stresses balance by means of mutual support. (Canudo, Ricciotto. 1906, *p. 561*)

A feminist-comparative framework is employed in the current study, leveraging theoretical constructs of patriarchy, the patriarchal domestic ideology, and the relations between gender and power. The author posits that when viewed through the lens of marriage as a political institution instead of being merely a cultural artifact or an individual affair, the contributions made in the current study are positioned in harmony with the feminist maxim of "the personal is political." The domestic environment is represented as an example of how societal power relationships manifest: the exercise and establishment of authority are accomplished through legal, linguistic, and emotional methods. With this framework, one can see how the constraints existing within marital relationships create new opportunities for women to exert their agency. In this way, *A Doll's House*, *That Long Silence*, and *Candida* will serve as examples of how these works relate to one another and can help create a greater understanding of the concept of domestic politics across cultures. In the next section, a more detailed comparison will be made among the three texts in regards to their views of marriage and power dynamics. (Chamberlain, John. 1982, *p. 102*) The specific themes that will be focused upon include authority, silence, emotional labour, and the agency of women.

Historical Context

The portrayal of marital relationships and women's roles in the home in *A Dolls House*, *Candida* and *That Long Silence* illustrate the differences in authors' perspectives which are shaped by the authors' culture and time. Henrik Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw and Shashi Deshpande's differences in history and culture (time) have drastically shaped the authors' views on domesticity, gender and marital authority.

Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906): Late 19th Century Europe

In 1879, Henrik Ibsen published *A Doll's House* during an era dominated by Victorian Morality, Legal Inequality for Women, and Bourgeois Family Values throughout

Europe. Women were not afforded many legal rights during this time and were often economically and socially dependent upon their husbands, especially in regards to their marriage. Ibsen's critique of Marriage reflects the rise of Liberal Humanism and early Feminist Ideas. Nora Helmer's determination to refuse her place as a "Doll Wife" is in direct opposition to the Ideal Woman of the 19th Century who was portrayed as obedient and domestic. The theme of Individualism First, Self-Realization Over the Marital Duties of the Wife is representative of Ibsen's break from tradition in his writing.

George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950): Turn of the 20th Century Britain

Written in 1898, *Candida* by George Bernard Shaw reflects the upheaval of society due to late Victorian and early modern times, as well as those influences that included socialism, realism, and issues surrounding women's rights. While Ibsen may advocate for abolishing a marriage, Shaw does not. Instead, he challenges the norms that have established authority within the marriage system. When Shaw was writing, women's education and opportunity for public involvement were on the rise; therefore, he has presented marriage as a flexible arrangement. (Crawford, Oswald.. 1891,p. 727) Through *Candida's* role of moral and emotional dominance over her family, it becomes apparent that Shaw believes that the unequal distribution of power within relationships is not just a one-sided affair based on patriarchy, but rather something negotiated within the relationship itself, based on each person's circumstances. Shaw's approach to domesticity represents an attempt to reform it, as opposed to changing its structure through radical means.

Shashi Deshpande (Born 1938): Late 20th Century Postcolonial India

In the novel, "That Long Silence," which was published in 1988 and set in the context of post-independence Indian culture where women's rights to equality under the Constitution exist alongside patriarchal societal norms, Shashi Deshpande's work reflects the emergence of feminist writings in India and explores the psychological and emotional side (not the legal or structural) of marriage, i.e., the struggles Jaya (the main character in the book) must sort out internally rather than openly defy like Nora left. Jaya's internal struggles represent the educated middle-class women in India who are raised to be quiet for peace and stability within their families. Jaya's resistance to patriarchy is both gradual and reflective; she sees how society has conditioned her to be silent and accept the role of wife, just like so many of the women around her.

Comparative Temporal Significance

Through a comparison of how domestic power has changed over the last hundred years through Ibsen's play about rebellion and rupture at the end of the 19th century, Shaw's vision of partnership through balance and emotional authority in marriage at the end of the 19th century, to Deshpande's focus on silence, perseverance, and self-understanding at the

end of the 20th century within what is perceived as the modern context in all three cases have shown that while all three authors wrote within different historical contexts, they all point to the fact that marriage is a product of culture, constructed by the power dynamics that surrounds it, rather than based solely on what would be considered a private or natural basis.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the representation of marriage and domesticity as sites of power and control in *A Doll's House*, *Candida*, and *That Long Silence*.
2. To analyze how gender roles and marital authority are constructed, reinforced, or challenged within domestic spaces in the selected works.
3. To compare the similarities and differences in Ibsen's, Shaw's, and Deshpande's portrayals of marital relationships across different cultural and historical contexts.

Research Methodology

The present study utilizes qualitative, descriptive, and comparative methodologies to investigate the themes of Domesticity as portrayed in *Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House (1879)*, *George Bernard Shaw's Candida (1898)* and *Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence (1988)*. The focus of this research is textual and interpretive as every selected primary text will be closely read and analysed for the underlying theme depicted by each of the three novels, which are the representations of marriage, Gender Roles, Authority, Silence and Women's Agency. The selection of these texts has been made to allow transnational & diachronic comparison through different Cultural, Social and Historical Contexts (19th Century Europe), The Late Victorian Era in England, Post-Colonial Society (Indian). The structure of this study is based upon Feminist Literary Criticism and therefore draws upon such issues as patriarchy, domestic ideology, emotional labour and the Feminist Perspective that says, "The Personal is Political".(Deshpande, Shashi. 1988, p. 99) With this work, we apply this theoretical framework to create a framework for examining the home as a battleground for negotiating power, rather than simply seeing it as a neutral zone of privacy. We use a close reading of the texts to see how power is demonstrated in terms of language, silence, emotional dependence, and social expectations in marriage. We quote key lines from these texts to illustrate how the authors of these texts approached home life and marriage differently and similarly. We analyze primary source materials (the texts themselves) as well as secondary source materials (peer-reviewed journal articles, critical essays, and scholarly books) to provide context for our findings and to engage in existing academic discussions. We compared the works within this comparative framework to see where they share and differ in the areas of narrative strategies, character development, and ideology. The research focuses on the use of qualitative methods rather than statistical data to conduct my analysis; therefore, we are engaged in a thematic interpretation and a critical synthesis of the data to

show how marriage functions as a socio-political institution in the context of literature. By applying this comparative methodology, I will shed light on how three writers -- Ibsen, Shaw, and Deshpande -- articulate forms of resistance, conformity, and redefinition in their writing of the home. Thus, the contributions that this research makes to feminist scholarship and the field of comparative literature will be of significance. (Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. 1979,p. 206)

Results

The Comparative Study of "*A Doll's House*," "*Candida*" and "*That Long Silence*" identifies key similarities in the portrayal of Marriage, Home/Family, and Power Dynamics in each of these three plays. This comparative analysis was created with a thematic structure and can be found in five different Analytical Tables. Interpretations of these findings follow each table.

Table 1: Representation of Marriage in the Selected Texts

Text	Nature of Marriage	Dominant Power Structure
A Doll's House (Ibsen)	Patriarchal, hierarchical	Male economic and legal authority
Candida (Shaw)	Negotiated, reformist	Emotional and moral authority
That Long Silence (Deshpande)	Conformist, inwardly oppressive	Cultural norms and psychological conditioning

Each of the three works discussed in Table 1 shows how the institution of marriage works differently. Ibsen views marriage as a form of oppression that stems from legal and economic inequality. Shaw offers an alternative view of marriage as a fluid negotiable relationship rather than an institution that has a definite authority over it. Deshpande illustrates how power resides with tradition, silence and the expectations that are imposed on individuals within any culture, rather than in an immediate or overtly controlling manner.

Table 2: Position of Female Protagonists within Domestic Space

Protagonist	Domestic Role	Mode of Response
Nora Helmer	Decorative, dependent wife	Open rebellion and departure
Candida	Emotional anchor and moral guide	Assertion through choice
Jaya	Dutiful wife and mother	Introspection and self-realization

The data demonstrate that female agency is historically and culturally developed. Nora responds in a radical and confrontational manner (a symbolic rupture). Candida's authority comes from her emotional intelligence, which permits her to choose a course of action and preserve the institution of marriage. (Kalita, Manoj Kumar. 2023,p. 581) Jaya's resistance is internal rather than external; Jaya is aware of patriarchal oppression but is unable to actualize her awareness into action. These differences represent the multiple expressions

of

feminist thought that each woman has channelled through the context within which she exists.

Table 3: Forms of Power Operating in Marriage

Text	Economic Power	Emotional Power	Cultural Power
A Doll's House	High	Low (female)	Moderate
Candida	Moderate	High (female)	Low
That Long Silence	Moderate	Suppressed	High

The multidimensionality of power in marriage is demonstrated in Table 3. Ibsen portrayed economic power as dominant in marriage while Shaw identified emotional power as primary. Deshpande pointed out that cultural power is rooted in established norms which perpetuate inequality, even when there is no overt domination.

Table 4: Role of Silence and Speech

Text	Silence	Speech	Outcome
A Doll's House	Initially submissive	Final assertion	Liberation
Candida	Minimal	Strategic dialogue	Balance
That Long Silence	Central motif	Emerging articulation	Consciousness

The manner in which Silence operates within different texts is variable. Through an evolution from silence to decisive speech, Nora achieves a liberation of self through her speech/words. Conversely, Candida utilises speech to redefine the meaning of authority including her own. Jaya's silences are culturally enforced and habitual, and her gradual ability to articulate herself will reflect her psychological awakening, rather than rapid change.

Table 5: Resolution of Domestic Conflict

Text	Resolution Type	Feminist Implication
A Doll's House	Separation	Radical feminism
Candida	Reconciliation	Reformist feminism
That Long Silence	Continuance with awareness	Introspective feminism

The differences between the ideological conclusions are illustrated in the final table. Ibsen's conclusion is that separation is necessary before self-definition can occur. Shaw's conclusion is that reform may take place in marriage. Deshpande's conclusion is to focus on developing awareness before taking action due to the complicated situation for women in the domestic environment in postcolonial times. (Kalita, Manoj Kumar. 1993, p. 581) Therefore, all three writers do not see domesticity as simply a private or apolitical space. Domesticity consists of the ongoing struggle for power, and women's thoughts are part of this dynamic process. While all three writers criticized the patriarchal system, they each defined the path for women in different ways according to their respective historical, cultural, and ideological

backgrounds: Ibsen advocated separation; Shaw advocated for redefining marriage; and Deshpande put emphasis on the need to be introspective. In conclusion, the overall findings of the study support the belief that marriages as shown in the texts analysed are political structures, with regard to gender, authority and agency.

Discussion

The results of the study support the view that marriage and domesticity, as represented in Ibsen, Shaw and Deshpande, are ideologically populated spaces through which power is enacted, contested and resisted. The three writers reveal that the idea of the home as a safe place, free from conflict, is an innocent, misguided notion. Each writer demonstrates, despite cultural and historical differences, that marriage will always be a place where gendered authority can either be controlled or challenged. Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is the most explicit example of the patriarchy's oppression of women within patriarchal relationships. (Othman, Noraini. 2024, *p.* 45) The results of the analysis show that economic and legal power are what enable Torvald to hold the power over Nora, thereby relegating her to a position of dependence in the home. Nora's ultimate rejection of her role as a "doll-wife" also corresponds to feminist interpretations of her actions as a radical assertion of her autonomy. Ibsen is viewed as one of the pioneers of modern feminist thought, with an emphasis on liberation through rupture. (Sharma, Ritu. 2020, *p.* 112) The resolution of the play reinforces the idea that true self-realization cannot happen within an institution rooted in deception and inequality. In addition, while Candida's non-feminist views have been a source of contention among feminist scholars, it undoubtedly complicates the traditional view of a woman rejecting marriage for professional success. Candida's choice as a woman and her recognition of her 'neediness' provides an alternate means of disrupting traditional gender hierarchies while still being recognized as a marriageable woman. This has led feminist critical theorists to label Shaw as a reformist and pragmatist feminist; unlike Ibsen's model of separation and disconnection between men and women in the home, Shaw proposes that equality between men and women can be achieved through mutual dependence and emotional intelligence within the context of the marriage institution. (Shaw, George Bernard. 2006, *p.* 112) In contrast to Shaw and Ibsen's interpretations of gender, Deshpande's *That Long Silence* reflects a very different yet equally meaningful view. In her work, power is shown as operating through silence and social expectations, as well as through internalized patriarchal values. Jaya's internal struggle is personal and self-expresses the reality of many post-colonial Indian women. In this context, Deshpande reaffirms the positions taken by feminist scholars who claim that silence can represent both survival and oppression. Unlike Nora or Candida, Jaya's resistance to patriarchy does not come from direct or visible rebellion, but rather stems from her gradual awareness of her own identity. Deshpande places

an emphasis on the importance of consciousness as a prerequisite to enacting change. In the comparative analysis of these three different works, we see points of convergence and divergence when discussing each author's treatment of domesticity. (Showalter, Elaine. 1985, p. 168) Each of these authors recognizes that the idealised view of marriage is only a social construct created through the power relations inherent in all societies, but each has taken a different approach to solving the problem. Ibsen advocates emancipation from marriage through leaving, Shaw supports emancipation through negotiations, and Deshpande recommends emancipation through self-reflection. Each of these different solutions reflects not only the ideologies of the respective authors but also the socio-historical constraints on the authors and the possibilities open to women at the time. (Singh, Pooja. 2024, p. 66) The way in which each author uses silence and speech for her feminist perspectives allows for deeper insight when analysing each author's text. For example, Nora's transition from silence to speech and her final assertion of freedom illustrates her liberation from her husband and society; Candida's methodical use of articulation reinforces her authority; and Jaya's continued silence illustrates the psychological toll of conformity. This progression demonstrates how feminist discourse has evolved from overt rebellion against men and marriage to nuanced negotiation and internal resistance to conformity across cultures and years. The author's discussion concludes that while the sources of power are varied — politically, socially and economically — domesticity is a space where power is enacted in multiple ways. Therefore, through the comparative analysis of Ibsen, Shaw and Deshpande, one can conclude that marriage is not a static and universal entity and should not be described as such. Instead, it is a dynamic institution continuously reshaped by historical conditions, cultural values, and individual agency. (Templeton, Joan. 1989, pp. 28)

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate, from a feminist perspective, the relationships that exist between the home and familial authority in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, George Bernard Shaw's *Candida*, and Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*. The results of this study indicate that the way marriage is defined in these three works reflects very much the influence of prevailing social, political, and gender activities today. The examination of domestic experience as central to the literature of the three writers demonstrates support for the feminist idea that private life is inextricably linked to the political aspects of life. The comparison of the three authors indicates that they have both similarities in their attitudes and philosophies related to marriage, as well as significant differences. Ibsen presented an image of marriage that is, in his view, an oppressive structure founded on economic dependency and patriarchal authority; he sees tearing down this structure as the only means of achieving self-realization. Nora's leaving the home area is a

clear assertion against the traditional domestic values of the nineteenth century and emphasizes the individual's right to personal freedom rather than adhering to social obligations. While Deshpande takes a broader view of domesticity than Ibsen or Shaw, she examines both the cultural conditions that create difficulties for women in domestic settings and how this issue is compounded by cultural conditioning and emotional restraint. Both authors provide an interpretation of domesticity as a dynamic space of negotiated power relations rather than as a fixed institution. Shaw's work provides unique insights into how a successful marriage can be achieved through emotional and moral authority, equalizing the husband and wife; Deshpande's work highlights the importance of consciousness and the gradual development of self-awareness in resisting oppression. In contrast to the resolute endings found in the works of Ibsen and Shaw, Deshpande focuses on self-awareness and building one's identity as the most important means for women to develop agency. Her portrayal reinforces the complexity of female agency in contexts in which overt rebellion is constrained, either socially or psychologically. The study clearly shows that although domesticity has often been portrayed as marginal to literature, it serves as a focal point for the study of gendered authority, identity, and agency. The incorporation of texts from a diverse cultural and temporal background will contribute to a comparative understanding of literary studies and feminist thought and will offer increased insight into the manner in which women throughout history have struggled against oppression by marriage and continue to negotiate within marriage on their way to autonomy and selfhood.

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