Chapter II : Theorizing ‘Home’ and ‘Homelessness’
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Before taking up the study of Rhys’s novels from the perspective of ‘home’ and ‘homelessness,’ it is essential to discuss the multiple connotations of the two terms ‘home’ and ‘homelessness.’ ‘Home,’ for instance, does not only denote a geographical location, it also refers to certain socio-cultural constructions. Theano S. Terkenli speaks of its wide-ranging significances when he observes:

Homes become the symbols of selves or cultures. Whereas the residential landscape, for example, undoubtedly conveys symbolic notions of the house . . . the idea of home itself becomes a symbol of the feelings, circumstances, or types of relationships that it has come to represent in distinct epochs or cultures, such as a people . . . a local way of life . . . a family . . . or sentiments of ease, relaxation, comfort, and familiarity. (327)

The most noticeable aspect in Terkenli’s argument, which attracts considerable attention, is his differentiation between a ‘house’ and a ‘home.’ A house, as he argues, is a ‘residential’ place, a brick-and-mortar construction, having materiality of its own. It is a visible place which can be planned and mapped, accommodating a certain
number of individuals irrespective of whether they are bound by kinship relationship or not. Heidegger in *Basic Writings* also discusses the importance of houses or buildings as places of dwelling. He observes that man’s relation to locations and, through locations, to spaces inheres in his peaceful dwelling. Buildings as sites of residence are important in perceiving the essence of locations and spaces. He states:

“Building thus characterized is a distinctive letting-dwell . . . . All planning remains grounded in this responding, and planning in turn opens up to the designer the precincts suitable for his designs” (337). Building or a house space largely remains an impersonal place because its inmates have little or no emotional attachment to it. It is largely not a site for an interactive relationship. A ‘house,’ as a place of dwelling, grows into a ‘home’ when this interactive relationship with other members of a group, usually a family, develops within the material structure of the ‘house.’ Kinship—familial in this case—relationship is usually thought to be constitutive of ‘homeliness.’ An individual personalises the immediate environment of this place, identifies himself with it, enters into an intimate interaction with other members of the family, and converts the place into a ‘home’ space. Personalization of the ‘house’ space occurs through various methods and strategies. While personal relationship with other inmates remain the focal point, the personalization of the domestic environment is carried out through some rites and rituals (e.g. brother’s day or ‘bhai phonta’ for Bengali Hindus or Mother’s day for others) or through appropriate furnishing of rooms that satisfy the tastes of the inmates. Homemaking, thus, also becomes a performative ritual which attempts to secure a sense of homeliness in the domestic and adjacent spaces. The ritual, as Solrun Williksen and Nigel Rapport observe in the Introduction to *Reveries of Home: Nostalgia, Authenticity and the Performance of Place*, is both ‘memorial’ and mundane at the same time.¹ It is a ‘memorial’ act as an
individual tries to preserve and remember inter-personal and cultural memories through efforts like the preservation of the pictures of relatives, old postcards and articles used by old members of the family. Through remembrance of the dead members, observance of occasions like birthdays of the living members and similar gestures which are often accompanied by formal rites and rituals, a strong bond is created within the household. These customs are observed as a part of their duty, or in memory of the other members, or out of the feeling of love, attachment and respect that they have for those who have departed. The members of the household also carry on some performative acts regularly in their day to day lives in a ritualistic fashion. Such acts are done at the mundane level, and they create significant cultural patterns. These include decoration and furnishings of the rooms one inhabits. Rooms are often adorned with wall hangings, the pictures of gods and goddesses, national heroes, photographs of close relatives, and cultural icons. All these create an ambience of homeliness. The urgency to create such an ambience is more evident in the case of displaced persons who have left home and hearth, either voluntarily or by force. It is mundane also in the sense that it is a part of an everyday ritual carried out to personalize a place of residence. The act of arranging and furnishing the rooms, for instance, is intended to achieve a sense of comfort. In doing so one may be influenced by the cultural practices of the place one inhabits. To an extent home, particularly in the diaspora, accommodates new cultural factors. This, however, denotes the process of gradual changes that take place over the years in the concept of home and home-making. It is a commonplace performance but is imbued with great significance.

Interestingly, the garden which is in proximity with the actual living space may also reflect the taste of the subject and his/her associations with home. It may be considered an extension of the home space. It may accommodate plants and trees
according to his or her choice, and cultural/religious demands. The desire to plant a basil (tulsi) sapling in one’s home, for instance, may be related specifically to the cultural upbringing of a person. Similarly, the preference for a particular fruit/flower tree/plant may also lead one to nurture it in one’s garden. In this way, the garden may also become an intimate and personalized space intensifying the sense of homeliness.

Personalization of the interior domestic space of the *domus* or ‘home’ is also important as it is both private and sacred for its inmates. ‘Home’ space has been referred to as the Hestian space. Hestia, the spirit of ancient Greece, has a mythical association with the domestic space of home. Stories in ancient Greece, in fact, associate two deities – Hestia and Hermes – with the home space. Bolen observes: “Hestia provided the sanctuary where people bonded together into the family – the place to come home to. Hermes was the protector at the door, and the guide and companion in the world – where communication, knowing one’s way around, being clever and having good luck all make a difference” (109). Hestian fires were lit in ancient Greece towns – in home and in temples. They were symbolic of the well-being, security and peace of its inmates. Ginette Paris, an archetypal psychologist, identifies Hestia with the ‘heart(h)’ flame at “the center of the Earth, the center of the home, and our own personal center” (167). In her unpublished thesis, Heron notes that the word ‘hearth’ stems from the Latin word *focus*, and that “Hestia is the guardian of the fire in the temple and home focuses the sacred within the everyday” (27; emphasis original). Hestia was depicted as a ‘bodiless spirit’ by the ancient Greeks, suggestive of its ‘soulful presence’ bonding people together, thus breathing soul or life into a place. Absence or de-centring of Hestia in ‘home’ results in estrangement or loss of the sacred homely space for its members. As Heron mentions, “Loss of Hestia may feel like abandonment, a loss of boundaries, or loss of self” (36).
Certain practices were performed in the sanctified interior space of home to lend it a special importance. Heron highlights such customs in a Dutch domestic space during the seventeenth century. Guests visiting the Dutch households, for instance, were requested to take their shoes off and to put on new slippers after ascending upstairs. The lower floor of the house was considered as a part of the public street. In contrast, the upper platform or the upstairs was believed to be within the private realm of home space. Thus, the upstairs was opposed to the public nature of the streets. This was done more with, as Heron specifies, the ‘desire to define home as a separate, special place’ (27; emphasis original) than to display the fastidiousness for cleanliness. For them, as for others, ‘home’ was a house, a household, a dwelling, a refuge and was also associated with ownership and affection. Heron observes that this dwelling ‘gathered the family unit together and provided a place of sanctuary and wellbeing, but also because of the central importance of the kitchen, with its hearth and stove, and abundance of stores’ (33). ‘Homes’ were private and personal space bustling with intense domestic activities of warming, cooking, nurturing and interacting with inmates. Even in the eighteenth century, as Daly surveys, households were lively places having ‘boarders and a much heavier flow of visitor traffic’ (780). They were ‘busy, noisy and cluttered’ (Daly 780) spaces and the inmates did not have the same ‘private’ space as is found in the present day nuclear families. However, Gillis finds that more affection, warmth and cosiness were generated in the homely life in big or joint families. The idea of ‘home’ changed in the mid-nineteenth century and people began to think of home as more organized space with parlours and dining spaces to facilitate the gathering of the family members. During the post-War period in the twentieth century the interior space of a household in Europe was rearranged.
The bedrooms were shifted to the second floor, thus making it a more privatized space, increasingly guarded and screened out from the public view.

Since the family as a social structure is the primary site of a 'home,' it is crucial to have an idea of how a familial relation operates within a 'home.' Patricia Hill Collins describes it as follows:

Formed through a combination of marital and blood ties, ideal families consist of heterosexual couples that produce their own biological children. Such families have a specific authority structure; namely, a father-head earning an adequate family wage, a stay-at-home wife, and children. Those who idealize the traditional family as a private haven from a public world see family as held together by primary emotional bonds of love and caring. (62)

Collins in the above extract indicates the power structure that operates in a family/home. This aspect will be further detailed later in this chapter. Besides the household, she expands the concept of ‘home’ to include two other constituencies – neighbourhood and native country. ‘Home’ in the sense of belonging has been enlarged, in recent times, to include an individual within the fold of a society as well as that of a state. A sense of comfort felt within the interior space of home can be extended to include the public sphere of the state and society where this sense of belonging comes from the community feeling and acceptance in the society. Domestic space where the inmates reside broadens to include nation, state and culture, a part of the larger family in relation to which an individual exists in his/her own immediate outside space. Collins notes that the politics of law and hierarchy which dominates the homely space are similar to those found in the external socio-political
environment of neighbourhood and nation-state. It is the ‘father-head’ who acts as the hierarchical head and the decision maker inside the traditional family. Women, children and aged members are expected to abide by the decisions he takes. Likewise, the neighbourhood and the nation-states are the outside spaces where the interest group consists of people with considerable economic resources and political power, and it is they who control the course of events. Consequently, home, in the enlarged sense, manifests a deeply personal and highly political symbol.

When speaking in the context of the United States of America, Collins contends that ‘homeliness’ had long been associated with homogeneity. Hence, segregation of spaces for non-white was sought to be ensured, and localities for exclusively white people were considered as norms. As a family space, she contends, is exclusively for the members who have blood/kinship relationship, the neighbourhood should also be racially/ethnically homogeneous. Outsiders, she says, “can be invited in only by family members or else they are intruders” (67). Similarly, members from divergent groups in a particular community-dominated neighbourhood are often considered to be ‘intruders.’ She further observes that, “As mini-nation-states, neighborhoods allegedly operate best when racial and/or class homogeneity prevails” (68). In the same way, the nation space is also sought to be preserved by drawing borders and trying to protect the territory of the insiders, who truly ‘belong’ to it, from the outsiders who are perceived to be sources of threats. The nation state, like the household and the neighbourhood, is thus based on binary assumptions of pure space/impure space. The pure space is the protected one for those who belong. Discussion of ‘home’ as pure/impure space necessitates investigation under four specific heads – the private and the public spheres; the two genders; the colonizer and the colonized; and the west and the rest of the world. While analysing such prevalent
notions of different kinds of home in respect to the American socio-political space, Collins observes, “Because ‘homes’ provide spaces of privacy and security for families, races, and nation-states, they serve as sanctuaries for group members. Surrounded by individuals who seemingly share similar objectives, these homes represent idealized, privatized spaces where members can feel at ease” (67).

Locating ‘home’ spatially, Terkenli observes, “Home regions are culturally constructed and geographically and culturally contingent. They exist to serve fundamental individual and group needs, and as human constructs and cultural products, they also sustain these needs” (324). He describes it as a “refuge in the world, a cozy, warm place in juxtaposition to its immense, unknown surroundings, where people may regenerate themselves” (331). As a locational space, ‘home’ gains importance as it provides material comfort, rest and security from the perils that lurks outside. bell hooks identifies ‘homecoming’ as “the feeling of safety, of arrival . . . the warmth and comfort, of shelter, the feeding of our bodies, the nurturing of our souls” (41). ‘Home’ might be a quest for something which is concrete; the existence of which in the topographical or in the psychological sphere is definite. Cresswell, defining ‘Place as Home’, quotes Seamon who describes home as, “an intimate place of rest where a person can withdraw from the hustle of the world outside and have some degree of control over what happens within a limited space. Home is where you can be yourself” (24). For Bachelard, home is more psychological in nature. It consists of not one homogenous place but a series of places with their own memories, imaginings and dreams.

Traditionally, the concept of ‘home’ existed as a homogeneous, fixed, and a wholesome territorial place in space and history. However, with globalization and the spread of market economy, ‘home’ has lost its spatially fixed character with a
“recurrent, regular investment of meaning in a context with which people personalize and identify through some measure of control” (Terkenli 325). People are now constantly on the ‘routes,’ having roots in more than one geographic locations and a mindset that refuses to settle on a fixed localised identity. Hence, one tends to claim more than one village/city/country as one’s own home. Contemporary discourses look upon home in a different way – home is felt to be a tool of imperial ideology, a site of loss or desire. It is also a place to write from. Effects of colonization have made the definition of ‘home’ more critical for the inhabitants. The term ‘homesickness’ has often been used to describe the feeling of loss that a person might suffer when separated from his home and his desire to return to that lost space. ‘Pull of home’ (328), as Terkenli mentions, makes those who live in foreign countries ‘seek out the reminders of home’ (328). He reflects that the xenos, the foreigner or the outsider, longs for the ‘home’ country in a foreign land and is nostalgic (the term ‘nostalgia’ stemming from the Greek word nostos which means “to return home”), nurturing a desire of homecoming. In most of the aforementioned cases the paradigm of home can be distinctly constructed. A concept such as “home-country” or a “homeland” generates the idea of belonging, of having a home of one’s own. At the same time, it also implies that the speaker is away from home. While speaking about ‘homes,’ we also speak of ‘home-cultures,’ ‘travelling homes,’ about ‘travelling away from home,’ ‘home countries’ or ‘homelands.’ The idea of home is, thus, inevitably implicated in the critical concepts like rootlessness, diaspora, political refugees, alien residents, émigrés, exiles, expellees, expatriates and immigrants. All these terms refer to a movement, voluntary or coerced, away from home. People belonging to these categories have a nostalgic longing for home. They seek, in their minds, a private space in their past experiences to dwell on. Shards of memory help them to relate
more to the ‘concreteness’ (because of the vividness of vision) of the past than to the
‘distortion’ of the present and reinforce a desire for a return. This interstitial position
makes it difficult to fix a particular place as ‘home.’ Specifically rooted,
psychologically, in a particular place, society and time, they are unable to associate
themselves either with their immediate living and working environment or a place
‘out there.’ By referring to ‘unhomely’ life, Rushdie writes:

... exiles or immigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of
loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being
mutated into pillars of salt. But if we look back... our physical
alienation... almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of
reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will... create
fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary
homelands... of the mind. (10)

The mind is compelled to undertake a psychological journey in search of a space to
which it can belong. Displaced or nomadic people might have spatially dispersed
notions of home, but for most, home, as Terkenli argues, represents spatially ‘the site
of the domicile’ (327). It also embodies a human emotional territory. Clifford linking
up travel with the concept of culture asserts that the familiarity of individuals with
their respective cultures can also be called ‘home.’ He notes that when “travelling is
foregrounded as a cultural practice then dwelling, too, needs to be reconceived – no
longer simply the ground from which travelling departs, and to which it returns”
(115). Role of the memory and the importance of the mind as a site of ‘home’ are
emphasised here. The mind that is ready to acculturate can accept more than one
home. Demythifying the concept of home as a composite, ‘pure,’ and permanent
locale, bell hooks expresses: “At times home is nowhere. At times one only knows extreme estrangement and alienation. The home is no longer just one place. It is locations” (qtd. in Rosemary 1).

Concepts of identity and belonging are deeply embedded in personal and social spaces. These personal and psychological spaces are firmly intertwined with the concept of home. The formation of an integrated personality depends much on the sense of familiarity and security that particular places can offer. A feeling of harmony with these places leads to the formation of an idea of home. Rutherford relating the concept of home as a personal space to identity contends, “Only when we achieve a sense of personal integrity can we represent ourselves and be recognised – this is home, this is belonging” (24). The issue of representing one’s own self and getting recognition from the others in the society inevitably links the personal to the public. This link between the self and the family, on the one hand, and the world at large (either in the form of a community, nation or country) is gradually getting lost because of the modern conditions. Andrew Gurr comments that the “need for a sense of home as a base, as a source of identity even more than refuge has grown powerfully in the last century or so,” but “deracination, exile and alienation in varying forms are the conditions of existence for the modern writer the world over” and thus the intellectual is “committed either physically or spiritually to a homeless existence” (qtd. in Dharwadker 282). Such a condition leading to a sense of homelessness and alienation often results in the schizophrenic fragmentation of the self.

In this dissertation I propose to use two German terms – ‘heimlich’ and ‘unheimlich’ – which have been used in critical parlance and would be useful for my purpose also. Sandra Todd in her article “Spiritual Homelessness in Today’s World” employs both the terms. She uses the term ‘heimlich’ to refer to that which is familiar
and 'unheimlich' to mean 'hidden, expressed, unconscious, unfamiliar, unhome-like' (5). Julia Heron also uses the word 'unheim' to mean not-home: "a ghostly, uncanny and haunting presence which may be translated as 'haunted house'" (36).

Interestingly, 'unheimlich' or 'unheim' conveys a sense of the unusual, the otherworldly and, of course, undesirable. Concept of home ('heimlich') is constructed on the basis of familiarity and desirability, while the 'unheimlich' is just its opposite. Presence of familiarity in a structure of existence determines whether it should be 'heimlich' or 'unheimlich.' The extent of rejection implied in the word 'unheimlich' in a particular domestic or social setting is indicated by the word 'uncanny'. The association of a 'ghostly house' again suggests the spectral presence, the shadows of relationship that have gone awry. When the relationship between human beings, mostly kins, turns sour, the shadow, the spectral or the uncanny begins to assert its presence there, in the process turning a home or 'heim' into a 'not-home' or 'unhomely home', the 'unheimlich.' Tyson Lewis and Daniel Cho employ the term 'unhomely home' and in the course of explaining its meaning have also used the word 'uncanny'. They begin their article "Home Is Where the Neurosis Is: A Topography of the Spatial Unconscious" with reference to the popular understanding of the term 'uncanny' which "designates the recognition of something familiar in what should be unfamiliar" (69). The example they offer is something like this: "[When] we meet a stranger who has a striking resemblance to loved one – say one's mother – we remark, "You have an uncanny resemblance to my mother" (69). They then invoke Sigmund Freud's use of the term 'uncanny' in an amazingly different way:

For Freud, it is just the opposite: the uncanny is an experience of the unfamiliar in something that should otherwise be quite familiar.

Freud's famous examples are his thinking he saw a strange man in a
window but which turned out to be his own reflection in a mirror and his experiencing a street as new when in reality he had been there just moments before. What produces this uncanny sensation is the return of some repressed content that was formerly kept secret. (69)

They contend in the essay that "the home, which is something that should feel most comfortable and familiar, has increasingly, in late capitalism, become a space where the uncanny is experienced" (69). This uncanny home, for them, "is a symptom of the repressed truth concerning the alienating results of private ownership" (69). While the question of the homely or the unhomely is not approached exactly from the point of view adopted by Lewis and Cho, their invocation of the Freudian idea of the familiar turning into an unfamiliar would be useful in the analysis of Rhys's novels. The home space containing familiar spaces and predictable expectations of prescribed behavioural norms may suddenly turn out to be uncanny. The mother figure, one on whom her children depend emotionally and from practical points of view may indeed turn out to be an estranged figure transforming gradually into a veritable symbol of essential neglect and oppression. This is exactly what happens in Rhys' *The Wide Sargasso Sea* where Antoinette increasingly finds her own mother becoming unfamiliar and uncanny as the latter gradually lapses into insanity. Similarly, the husband figure on whom faith is reposed may behave in an unfriendly way. Such examples are scattered all over Rhys's fictions. Besides these two words 'heim' or home (alternately *heimlich* or homely), and 'unheim' or unhomely, it is necessary to discuss another category 'nonhome' which would contribute to our understanding of the discourses relating to home and homelessness. The idea of the 'nonhome' is posited by Terkenli. In the article "Home as a Region," he differentiates between a home and nonhome, and argues that there is a 'home-nonhome dialectic' relationship.
He asserts: “The definition of home rests on a dynamic dialectical relationship between home and the outside, on which people build their everyday geographical understanding of the world. Consequently, they come to know home much more by its absence from a nonhome perspective” (328). So, the nonhome for him is the space “outside the home” (328) and he comments, “Many literary and poetic references to home have been written either by someone in exile or when a home is in danger of being lost or changed in unwanted ways...” (328). He continues to argue that “home does not become an issue until it is no longer there or is being lost, because the concept of home is constructed on the division of personally known worlds into home and nonhome contexts” (328). Since, in Jean Rhys’s novels the feeling of home is accessed through the persons in exile for many of whom the home is “no longer there or is being lost,” this space outside the home will be a contributory factor in the discussion of home and homelessness in her novels.

Familiarity and all that ensue from it may thus be considered to be the hallmark of a ‘home’. On the contrary, ‘nonhomes’ become spaces denied of any such territorial or emotional affiliation. It has been discussed as a complete opposite of ‘home’, the outside space without a sense of homeliness. It is a space that cannot in any way be called a ‘home,’ for instance, a street, a market place, a public institution, etc. A ‘nonhome’ can almost be equated with Cresswell’s concept of ‘non-places,’ which are ‘sites marked by their transience... of mobility’ (45). Augé categorises ‘non-places’ as spaces of circulation, as freeways and airways; of consumption, as department stores and supermarkets; of communication, as telephones, faxes, television, and cable networks. He remarks: “These are spaces where people coexist or cohabit without living together” (110). They are uprooted places characteristic of mobility and travel, are essentially fleeting, temporary and ephemeral. The concept of
'home,' 'unhomely home' and 'nonhomes' as evident in the fictions of Rhys will be analysed in the third and fourth chapters respectively.

The terms mentioned in the preceding paragraphs suggest inclusion within a structure of relations (home), partial exclusion within a structure of inclusion (unhome) and total exclusion from that structure (nonhome). 'Home,' is an inclusive space essential for the identity and development of an individual. 'Unheim' is the unhomely home or the 'other' space. Nonhome is the opposite of home, a space outside the Hestian one, one that is marked by unfamiliarity and insecurity. Michel Foucault posits another interesting term 'heterotopia' in order to refer to 'other' spaces exclusively as spaces of exclusion. He defines 'heterotopia' as a site for 'otherness,' the 'counter-site' in which all real sites are contested and inverted. The sense in which Foucault uses the term is inclusive of the senses inherent in both 'unheim', 'unhomely home' and 'nonhome' which have been discussed before. Heterotopia includes, analyses, and describes the features of these 'other' spaces. 'Heterotopias,' as classified by him, are 'crisis heterotopias' (kriz heterotopyasi), 'heterotopias of deviation' (sapma heterotopyalari) and 'heterotopias of collected time' (Biriken zamanin heterotopyasi). In primitive societies 'heterotopias' or 'other' spaces were reserved for the privileged or sacred and at the same time were denoted as the forbidden places. Today, people like the adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly are confined to the space of 'crisis heterotopias;' people in the rest homes, psychiatric hospitals and prisons live in 'heterotopias of deviation' and museums and libraries exist as 'heterotopias of collected time' where objects exist fossilized in time. Asylums, on the other hand, exist both as places of 'crisis heterotopias' and 'heterotopias of deviation.' Segregated spaces for those who do not belong to the 'normal' mainstream are confined to the 'heterotopias.' As a result,
these ‘heterotopic’ spaces are the ‘unhomely spaces’ through which society confines or isolates individuals. Collins, as has been discussed earlier, refers to the hierarchy that prevails within a family structure. While speaking about it, she observes that hierarchy inside the family creates ‘heterotopic’ space which are ‘naturalized’ on the basis of age (old aged people, children), genders (mother and sisters), and by sexuality (the gay, lesbian, and bisexuals who live outside the boundaries of ‘masculinity as the source of authority’ (65)). Foucault’s formulation of this multivalenced term also signifies the co-existence of multiple spaces within the society.

Thus, gender hierarchies and power structure operating within a family-society-state result in ‘heterotopias.’ Collins and Ann McClintock point out that hierarchy is ‘naturalized’ within the family structure. McClintock mentions: “the family image came to figure hierarchy within unity as an organic element of historical progress, and thus became indispensible for legitimising exclusion and hierarchy within nonfamilial social forms such as nationalism, liberal individualism and imperialism” (45; emphasis original). Collins, speaking of the ‘family values’ in the United States, notes that in a traditionally patterned family, the male is privileged to be the natural head, thus, legitimising masculinity as a source of authority. In a nation-state, which is also often considered to be a model family, the inequality persists racially, perceiving the whites to be the privileged leaders. Thus, the traditional view of ‘home,’ as a sanctified space, is subverted. Adorno, also, observes that the sacred space of ‘home’ has been lost in the modern day. The suburban homes, he argues, have become technologized. Lewis and Cho, similarly, notes ‘the withering of the father’ in the modern homes and the ‘invasion of the interior space by technologies’ (76). Adorno’s contention regarding the crisis of individual within the modern homes will be detailed later.
Hierarchy and inequality legitimize the actual or implicit use of force. Sanctions and violence become necessary for the maintenance of unequal power relations. Position of a woman within a family and her sense of belonging to ‘home’ has been questioned by feminists. ‘Home’ as a problematic social or personal space, for a woman, has been discussed in works like Virginia Woolf’s “A Room of One’s Own” or in Alice Walker’s non-fiction “In Search of our Mothers’ Garden.” Feminist geographers like Gillian Rose feel that home as a personal space has been denied to many women. Home, for a female member, can be stifling and often the place of drudgery, abuse and neglect. She argues that many women would not recognise home as a place that is “conflict-free, caring, nurturing and almost mystically venerated by the humanists” (56). She claims

. . . to white feminists who argue that the home was ‘the central site of the oppression of the women,’ there seemed little reason to celebrate a sense of belonging to the home, and even less, I would add, to support the humanistic geographers’ claim that home provides the ultimate sense of place. (55)

Within the feminist concept itself the idea of an all-encompassing home is absent. The concept of ‘home’ is based on various sexual, racial, personal histories or ethnic identities. There is a constant conscious effort among the feminist writers to weave together a subject-status into the fabric of a place that sustains an individual; at the same time they reveal their resistance to places that are ‘non-homes’.

With the advent of modernism and the two great Wars, as have been discussed in the Introduction, uncertainty, bohemianism and homelessness became the dominant scenario in Europe and its colonies. Even the theme of the creative artists, as
McFarlane observes, concentrated more on the wanderer, the loner, the exile, the restless, the rootless and the homeless who were the rejects of the society. But homelessness is fraught with different connotations for men and women. In context of a study conducted on the homeless women in Toronto, Lesley Harman contends that homelessness in women is different from that of men. She notes: “the very notion of ‘homelessness’ among women cannot be invoked without noting the ideological climate in which this condition is framed as problematic, in which the deviant categories of “homeless woman” and “bag lady” are culturally produced” (10). The stigma imposed on such women is often the result of the social aversion to forms of deviance, especially in women. Daly, while discussing home and family, points out to another dimension of the issue. She asserts that when women were confined to the domestic space, men were expected to travel between ‘home’ and the ‘world’.

“[W]omen” Daly observes “were for the most part at home with their young children, serving as a kind of spatial family anchor. For men, home was a place of coming and going as they were supposed to be ‘in the world,’ thereby maintaining distance from home as a part of ritually defining their manhood” (780). Collins, in a way, sums up the position of women vis-à-vis that of men in the social set-up in the following way:

Because women were so often associated with family, home space becomes seen as a private, *feminized* space that is distinct from the public, *masculinised* space that lies outside its borders.... Within this gendered spheres of private and public space, women and men again assume distinctive roles. Women are expected to remain in their home “place.” Avoiding the dangerous space of public streets allows women to care for children, the sick, and the elderly, and other dependent
family members. Men are expected to support and defend the private, feminized space that houses their families." (67; emphasis mine)

Feminists, as has been seen, critique the ‘home’ space as a feminized space where the patriarchal norms are reproduced. At times violence is also enacted there and the women’s unpaid work gets de-valued. Thus, a woman is perceived as an ‘angel in the house’ and is expected to play the role of a homemaker. Home is viewed emphatically in this way in the context of women. ‘Home,’ for a woman, exists as a confinement. She encounters in this space a kind of psychological homelessness. In a twentieth century ‘home’ the attitude to women has not changed radically even though women now work outside and contribute to the family income.

The relationship between home and travel is fraught with immense significance. Morris contends:

... there is a very powerful cultural link – one particularly dear to a masculinist tradition, inscribing ‘home’ as a site both of frustrating containment (home as dull) and of truth to be rediscovered (home as real). The stifling home is the place from which the voyage begins and to which, in the end, it returns. (12)

While home is supposed to be a site of stability and non-movement, travel is just its opposite. Women are “produced as gendered subjects at the expense of any clear sense of self” (qtd. in Wolff 191), while men are culturally produced as travelling subjects who are, according to the norms, quite expected to move in and out of home. Travel, is therefore, a normal attribute to the male self. But Janet Wolff observes that travel, for women, is all the more important for the formation of the self and therefore travel is a potentially significant tool for this purpose. She observes that “one might
think that women have more of an investment in discovering a 'self' and if travel is a
mode of discovery then this would have a strong attraction to women” (191). Wolff's
opinion is largely based on the finding of a study made by Dea Birkett on Victorian
women travellers. Birkett's study confirms that the discovery of the self through
travel was a reality for 'some women whose fragile sense of identity collapsed on the
death of parents in relation to whom such women defined themselves” (qtd. in Wolff
191). She observes that the sense of loss encountered by a woman for the breaking of
relationships had made her a traveller, moving in search of a self-definition. A much
travelled women can improve the nature of home because she too, like her male
counterpart, can invest the rich dividends of travel in the home space.

The identity of a woman at home is usually determined in terms of a daughter,
a wife or a home-maker, and a mother. These terms of reference do not leave to her
any independent space of self-fulfilment, for instance, that of a writer. But for women
who refuse to conform to these traditionally codified spaces are confined to the
negative space of witches, the insane and prostitutes. Domestic home, as bell hooks
mentions, for a woman becomes more a place of resistance than acceptance. Their
resistance to this 'home' space can help them break out of the oppressive nature of
domestic space. She sees it as a subversive feminist space. Both for a white and a
black woman 'home' was never a liberating space. Women who are deviant reside
outside the home space – they remain ostracized and marginalised. They are denied
the social space of the 'respectable' women and the psychological space of coherent
familial relationships. They become outsiders relegated to the heterotopic space of the
social 'other.' In speaking of the social 'other,' Jonathan Rutherford asserts: "The
centre invests the Other with its terrors. It is the threat of the dissolution of the self
that ignites the irrational hatred and hostility as the centre struggles to assert and
secure its boundaries, that construct self from not-self" (24). The conception of the 'other' is invested in the deviant such as the mad man/woman, the prostitute, and the 'terrorist'. For people who 'transgresses' prevalent social practices become 'out of place.' They suffer from 'placelessness' and 'homelessness' and are relegated to 'other places'. Their 'existential outsiderness involves the alienation from place which is the antithesis of an unreflective sense of belonging that comes from being an existential insider' (Cresswell 44). 'Home,' which is closely related to the concepts of place, identity and morality, remains a mirage for the people 'out of place'.

As discussed earlier, 'home' was considered as a fixed, stable entity rooted in place and time; it was the domicile where women took care of the domestic space and men travelled between the inside and the outside. However, in a twentieth century home, when both the male and the female may be the earners, homes become sites of dispersion and reconvergence after the 'hustle and bustle of alienated working life' (Lewis 72). Larson described this daily reconvergence as "5 o' clock crash." The liquidation of the domestic home space, as Benjamin also observes, took place in the last years of the nineteenth century. This is the reason behind the practically extant pattern of conventional 'home' in the postmodern era of late capitalism. The changing pattern of the domestic space, in recent times, has been developed by Theodor Adorno in topography of modern homes. Adorno's inspection of the 'unhomely homes' in the modern day is immensely significant. In the modern day homes, Adorno contends, the historically constructed division between the interior and the exterior and public and the private is subverted. He observes: "Dwelling, in the proper sense, is now impossible. The traditional residences we grew up in have grown intolerable: each trait of comfort in them is paid for with a betrayal of knowledge, each vestige of shelter with the musty pact of family interests" (38). This leads to an unwelcoming
home where the individuality is more suppressed than promoted. It is primarily the result of, as Lewis states, “postmodern massification, transnational migrations, and the ubiquitous standardization of suburban sprawl” (70). As a result, in the postmodern era the nature of home itself becomes ‘uncanny,’ making the individuals homeless in their own home (‘unhomely home’). Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have emphasised on the drifter, the hobo and the wanderer – the homeless subjects whose presence was previously seen as a disturbance to the normative symbolic order that was constructed around the concept of the traditional home. Conflict existed between the external living space and the internal psychic space, specially, in the context of the standardization and commodification of late capitalism and the post-World War II American urbancy. He mentions that the home of childhood memories is non-existent. The same view is also expressed by Lewis and Cho:

The private space of the conjugal family where the subjectivity of the bourgeois intellectual was cultivated has become a nostalgic impossibility, contaminated by the remembrance of “family interests” or rather family disputes, quarrels, and betrayals. If the bourgeois traditional home was once a sphere for the fostering of subjective interiority, it has now been taken over by cobwebs, becoming an attic for lost dreams and repressed memories. (72)

Modern day homes, as they note, have shifted from their traditional affiliations to a mere increase of ‘sanitation’ to promote better living. Adorno interprets them as “living-cases manufactured by experts for philistines, or factory sites that have strayed into the consumption sphere, devoid of all relation to the occupant: in them even the nostalgia for independent existence, defunct in any case, is sent packing” (38). Thus,
these places do not overbrim with emotion and attachment, but are the empty
depersonalized container. He further notes that the individual residing in such an
empty space is forced to “take an interest in furniture design or interior decoration”
(39), attempting to conceal the vacuity and sterility of these interior ‘home’ space. As
Lewis and Cho mention:

Thus the current obsession with home decoration... acts as a fantasy
shield protecting the home owner from the unbearable reality of the
impossibility of being at home in the modern home. The homeyness of
decoration attempts to defend against the unhomeyness of the ultimate
failures of the home in postmodern times as these decorations are but
superficial markings that attempt to differentiate and individualize a
home from among its massified neighbourhoods. (74)

Modern homes have, thus, been reduced to nothing but a collection of interior
decorations and technical gadgets. Adorno points to its graver implication for the
inmates, as the homely space deteriorates into a utilitarian box loaded with
technological gadgets and gizmos. The internal development of the subjects is stifled
with their forced interaction with the new automated technologies. He observes:

Technology ... expels from movements all hesitation, deliberation,
civility. It subjects them to the implacable, as it were ahistorical
demands of objects. Thus the ability is lost, for example, to close a
door quietly and discreetly, yet firmly. Those of cars and refrigerators
have to be slammed, others have the tendency to snap shut by
themselves, imposing on those entering the bad manners of not looking
behind them, not shielding the interior of the house which receives them. (40)

Technophiles may describe the technological innovations as ushering of an age of convenience, sanitation and security, but Adorno is afraid of things that are lost in the process, and of the excessive violence that hides behind these unhomely gadgets. In the traditional home one could idealize expression of one’s own individuality but the present home, crowded with technological items, resists any such gestures.

Loss of ‘home’ for the bourgeois individual in the post-modern era had made Adorno theorize on ‘homely’ space of four types – the traditional home, the modern home, ‘period house’ lost in time, and hotel space. Absence of homeliness within a modern home makes Adorno theorize the concept of ‘period house’, a home frozen in a moment of time without any historical movement. It is a home filled with the nostalgia of the good times which is nonexistent spatially and exists only in imagination. The concept of ‘period house’ confirms Heron’s idea of ‘house’ as a lived space in time which stands as a lost ‘home’ space: “House exposed the boundaries and solidified the central (Hestian) space of life. In doing so the “social time-space was deadened, muted. The movement, the noise, the interchange . . . were gone . . . Mute it stood there, asking us to remember, to think, to question . . .” (38; emphasis original). From the disruption and convulsion of the modern social reality the mind reverts to the idealized world of the past. But in reality ‘period house’ is an unlivable home which is an empty escapist fantasy. As Lewis and Cho argues: “To return to the nostalgic past and deny the possibilities of the present is to threaten to “embalm” the self in romantic nostalgia for a time that never existed” (78). A rented room or a hotel can be taken to be another alternative for home. It might serve as a temporary getaway from one’s own home or might become a permanent alternative
for a home. A hotel space can be positively represented as there is no burden of ownership or the responsibility of maintenance. But it, at the same time, negates all possibilities of personalization and it lacks in privacy. It causes homelessness because there is no sense of privacy and ownership. There is a constant anxiety about the lack of control and of actual ownership. Accordingly, it acts more as a traveller’s space, trapping the subject within its double bind and propagating the idea of a collective living. The concept of hotel space will be discussed in details in Chapter V. Non-existence of the traditional home, unhomeliness in the modern home, unreality of the ‘period house,’ and dislocation in a hotel indicate that “the home is no longer capable of safeguarding our egos from direct immersion in society itself, which thus thrusts us into an estranged relation with the home” (Lewis and Cho 81). The feeling of homelessness at home either generates a senseless destructiveness or a secret longing for the lost remnants.

In contradistinction to Adorno, Deleuze and Guattari argue that traditional home is a site of repression through the means of Oedipalization: “The family’s mission... is to produce neurotics by means of its Oedipalization, its system of impasses, its delegated psychic repression, without which social repression would never find docile and resigned subjects, and would not succeed in choking off the flow’s lines of escape” (361). Proper development of the individual cannot occur within the suppressive boundaries of home. They visualize and admire the individuality and multiplicity within the schizo-subject, who negates all chances of homely confinement as it can never be territorialized into ego formations. For a positive individuality a subject must escape the system of repressions within the home where it resides uncomfortably in the hierarchy of representations. They feel that it is homelessness which is an ideal state of pure movement outward, and an individual,
like a nomad, can explore the varied possibilities. Without any repression or boundaries between the private and the public, there is an infinite possibility of dispersal and intensification, a continual movement of nomadic existence. As a result, they propagate a complete destruction of the boundaries of home and valorise the state of homelessness. Benjamin also refers to the ‘flâneur’ or the wanderer in Baudelaire’s poems who exposes the profound alienation and anxiety of the inhabitants of the metropolis. He explains: “The flâneur seeks refuge in the crowd. The crowd is the veil through which the city appears now as a landscape, now as a room...” (21). Such ideas in Adorno and Deleuze and Guattari can be amalgamated with Jameson’s conceptualization on ‘the space of dirty realism’ (qtd. in Lewis 86) as a collective space where the space between the inside and the outside is nullified:

Dirty here means the collective as such, the traces of mass, anonymous living and using. The traditional values of privacy have disappeared, nor do we any longer approach this collective mass within the stark terror of the earlier inner-directed bourgeois individuals, for whom the multitude threatened a fall, as in naturalism, where collective space seemed radically unclean in the anthropological sense. (158)

Jameson, thus, brings in the idea of a new “form of spatial organization that maintains the transnational flow of the multitude while also providing a new topography of living spaces that allow for community to thrive outside of melancholia or schizophrenia” (qtd. in Lewis and Cho 87). He propagates the notion of a collective living where there is space for the drifters and nomad and of cohabitation and collective dwelling. These ‘dirty homes’ will be free from the repression within a bourgeois habitation and will also refrain from a pure state of homelessness. Lack of
property ownership in ‘dirty home’ brings in the ‘desubjectification’ of a homeowner. It is a dwelling outside historical conflict, and the home ceases to be an unhomely habitation. Rather, it becomes a revolutionary space for collective politics and adventurous dwelling. It is free from the anxieties toward the past, permeability, the present and the uncanny. Thus, it is flexible, a junction, a getaway and an opening.

‘Home’ as a cloistered Hestian space gives way to the idea of convergence; it becomes more a place of Hermes who resides in transitions and between space of the inside and the outside. A negation of the bourgeois manifestation, home as an open Hermian space, provides a “permeable membrane for the collective reorganisation of social relations outside the parameters of private property and Oedipal family structures” (Lewis and Cho 88).

For the Rhysian women protagonists ‘home’ operates on several planes – cultural, domestic and also gender. In the next chapter the changing concept of ‘home’ space and ‘homelessness’ as in evident in the fictions of Rhys will be analysed in details.

Notes

1. Solrun Williksen and Nigel Rapport have surveyed various settler communities and found that these people engage in various ceremonial revivals and mundane routines that they observed in their homes to re-live their homely experiences abroad. Home-making, thus, has become an individual as well as a collective performance. Personalization makes it necessary to discuss some associative rites, ritualistic practises and home
warming activities through which this impersonal ‘house’ space is converted into a necessary ‘home’ space.

2. *Domus* is a Latin term which was used in the ancient Rome to mean house, home or residence. Modern English derivatives such as domestic, domesticity, referring to the interior space of home or homely warmth or activities of homemaking, stem from it.

3. The flame of Hestia in a household was, however, always extinguished on an occasion of mourning if ‘the latter signified at the same time the end of a household, the death of a family, the abandonment of a location, and the dispersion of those who had formerly constituted the household’ (Heron 37).