FEMALE COMPANIONSHIPS IN SHIRLEY JACKSON'S *THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE* AND *WE HAVE ALWAYS LIVED IN THE CASTLE*

BY

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AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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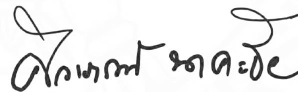

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ABSTRACT

In her gothic fictions *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962), Shirley Jackson explores the ambiguous relationship between female characters within gothic settings through creating mysterious atmosphere and spectrality. This research aims to investigate different outcomes of female relationships presented in Jackson's last two novels. The failed bond between Eleanor and Theodora in *The Haunting of Hill House*, which is formed to protect themselves from a threatening space as Hill House where a long history of women control and domination take place, is explored in contrary to the bond between the Blackwood sisters Merricat and Constance, whose construction of female space within a patriarchal setting like the Blackwood house leads to a successful withstanding against patriarchal oppressions and a lasting female bond.

This study uses a psychoanalytic perspective to understand how the primary attachment between mother and daughter affects the internal conflicts of these female characters, especially Eleanor Vance and Mary Katherine Blackwood, which results in their longing for lasting female companionships. In the context of American society in the 1950s that tried to confine women in the role of mother and wife, both female relationships represent women's struggles and resistance against patriarchal power that aims to control women in obedience. Although the relationship

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between Eleanor and Theodora fails to carry through, the sisterly bond between Merricat and Constance has a more positive outcome which shows the importance of women’s relationship against patriarchal oppressions.

Keywords: female bond, gothic fiction, female oppression

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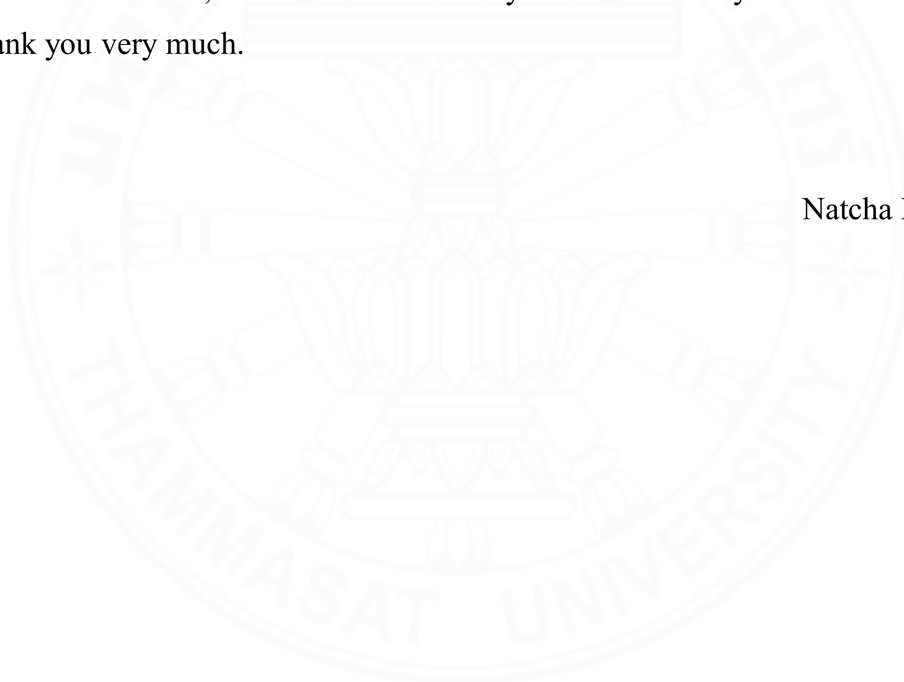

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In 1948, Shirley Jackson published her short story "The Lottery" in *The New Yorker*. Her debut received a sensational response from readers widely, leading to a publication of her first novel, *The Road Through the Wall* (1948) in the same year, before there came five more: *Hangsaman* (1951), *The Bird's Nest* (1954), *The Sundial* (1958), *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962). There are also collections of short stories, children's books, and memoirs. Jackson's pieces after pieces terrify her readers, which prominently makes her one of the most fascinating and influential American horror and mystery authors of the twentieth century. In an Associated Press report, she is given a reputation of a woman writer who writes "with a broomstick" rather than a pen (Baker, 2016). The author herself did not take this criticism personally, however. On the other hand, she proudly announces her interest in witchcraft and the occult. In her autobiography, Ruth Franklin jokes, "perhaps [that makes her] the only contemporary writer who is a practicing amateur witch" (Franklin, 2017, p. 3).

Born in San Francisco in 1916, Jackson later moved to New York to start her career as a professional writer. She settled down with her husband, Stanley Edgar Hyman, and the couple had four children together. Being a wife and a mother, Jackson continued her writing career faithfully and steadily, publishing numbers of mesmerizing stories. However, it is undeniable that it was a rough path for her, and for most American middle-class women in the 1950s, to have a "real" job. The 1950s was a difficult period for women. *The Feminine Mystique*, by Betty Friedan (1963), significantly situated the living conditions of American women after World War II, especially during the Cold War. The term "feminine mystique" refers to a social expectation that women should be "feminine" and a social supposition that women find domestic works assigned by their societal roles - including a role as a mother and a wife - satisfying.

To sum up, a woman's identity is usually associated with her biology and societal gender role, but they are often refused to be seen as a rational individual. By the end of World War II, the majority of female workers were dismissed from their jobs, which were handed back to male workers who had recently come back from war. The domesticated housewives were placed back in their kitchen, while the society waited expectantly for them to continue their role as a dutiful housewife and a nurturing mother and wife - to be "the angel in the house" - passive and devoted. Moreover, white middle-class women became a tool to exercise the national propaganda called "nuclear family," which was an ideal concept of a perfect household consisting of a husband and a wife with children, which promotes the two-parent home myth, displaying a family of two loving parents as the perfect environment for children to grow up in.

Many white middle-class housewives in the 1950s share the same longing for faithful companionship. At the time, American families were propagandized by the nuclear family concept, a perfect picture of an ideal home, which encourages women to stay home and raise children, convincing them to believe that domesticity is

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the most fitting and proper place for women to be. Being stuck at home, many housewives start to question the meaning of themselves and the roles they have been assigned and which they have unquestioningly devoted themselves to: "It was an identity crisis, but also a role crisis. The boredom that women resented made them question if this "perfect life" was perfect if the family life and the maintenance of the house were everything that they could have" (Lamb, 2011, p. 32). Within the restrictive and isolating domestic sphere, women are forced to disconnect from the rest of the society, resulting in their intensified urge for companionship, someone who has experienced the same and understands their suffering.

Like many other white middle-class American women in the 1950s, Jackson has experienced the hardship of housewifery and motherhood in the "home" that was supposed to give her warmth and security. She struggled with her internal conflicts for most of her life. Her mother and husband, who were the closest and most influential few people in her life, terrifying, also seemed to be the two significant figures that mentally weighed her down. In one of her most heartbreaking documents, which was likely written in 1958, the same time Jackson was obsessively working on *The Haunting of Hill House*, Jackson expresses her bitterness towards her husband's "indifference to her and the children, [and] his inveterate interest in other women." In Jackson's autobiography, Ruth Franklin concludes, "To be married, Shirley always feared, was to lose her sense of self, to disintegrate—precisely what happens to Eleanor in the grip of the house" (Franklin, 2017, p. 216). During her most painful time of dealing with agoraphobia, Jackson sought refuge in her novels. Although struggling with serious health issues in her last years, Jackson created remarkable pieces of writings, especially her last two completed novels, *The Haunting of Hill House* and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*[1]. Jackson projects her suffering onto Eleanor, using her as an escape route to writing herself "out of the house," something she cannot have done in real life. More importantly, she expresses her desire for companionship through Eleanor's journey within Hill House, hand-in-hand with Theodora, altogether with her longing to form a lasting bond shared among the Blackwood sisters Merricat and Constance. Her female characters are carefully constructed, and the plots are neatly woven. These fictional women, the brave Merricat and the insecure Eleanor, represent her desires, anxieties, and fears, not only of herself but these feelings are shared among the housewives. In both novels, women's anxieties and repression are presented through the female protagonist's desperation for "home" and security.

In Jackson's last two novels, the gothic setting of haunted houses plays a significant role as it metaphorically represents women's fear and discomfort for domestic space. At the same time, it also reflects a strong attachment between women and the house, complicating the feeling they have for the house or about the concept of "home." The genre itself highlights female struggles under the rules of patriarchal society, allowing the women to express their fears and desires metaphorically through the use of magical and supernatural elements, reinforcing the significance of the relationship between two women who are naturally, romantically, and homo-

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[1] Throughout this research, the name of both novels: *The Haunting of Hill House* and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* will be referred to as *Hill House* and *Castle* accordingly.

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erotically drawn into each other, with the backdrop of the broken or lost bond of mother and daughter.

Published in 1959, *The Haunting of Hill House* makes one of the most recognized works by Shirley Jackson. The novel follows the gothic tradition, centered on the dark personality of a haunted house and its guest who finds the place both terrifying and alluring. The story starts when thirty-two-year-old Eleanor Vance receives an invitation letter from Dr. Montague to visit and participate in an experiment at Hill House that she happily accepts. It is a perfect opportunity for Eleanor to finally escape from her mundane routines - the life overshadowed by the death of her sick mother, whom she spent eleven years taking care of, and her controlling sister and pathetic brother-in-law. After successfully stealing her sister's car, Eleanor starts the journey. Observing houses and scenery along the way, she daydreams about the lives she wishes she could have. However, this dream-like road trip is put to a stop when she is greeted by the cold and hostile gaze of Hill House. Eleanor suddenly regrets her decision as she finds the presence and atmosphere of the house haunted and threatening.

Entering Hill House, Eleanor encounters the mysterious housekeepers, Mr. and Mrs. Dudley, who disturbingly insists they never stay in the house after dark. Then, Eleanor is led to the blue room, where she recognizes the house's strangely crooked and abnormal structure. While checking out her new room, however, Theodora, the only other person who has replied to Dr. Montague's letter, arrives. The two women, although described to be totally different from each other, get along quickly. In the evening, Eleanor and Theodora finally meet Dr. Montague and the "playful" Luke Sanderson, the heir of Hill House. The four members finally meet and become familiar with each other in no time. Late at night, Dr. Montague tells the rest about the house's dark history behind its bewildering and perplexing design, of its maker and the two sisters who were the former heir of this haunted building. In the next few days, strange incidents start to surface: the insane bangings echoing down the hallway, the writing on the wall, the blood on Theodora's clothes. Eleanor is terrified to find herself "a target" of the house. At the same time, other members start to suspect Eleanor, excusing her of craving attention. Therefore, Eleanor Vance is slowly and helplessly isolated from the rest of the crews.

Meanwhile, minor personal occurrences are happening to Eleanor, perhaps a message of comfort and understanding. Amid loneliness, Eleanor develops a sense of trust and intimacy towards Hill House. Then, Mrs. Montague arrives, alongside her companion Arthur. Together, they start the paranormal investigation, differently from Mr. Montague, using different types of tools. At one point, it becomes clear to Eleanor that she ceases to exist; nobody talks about her or acknowledges her presence. Nevertheless, she feels connected to the house, like they are a part of each other. She thinks she can hear and feel the movements inside the house. Her conditions eventually grow worse. That night Eleanor gets out of bed and runs around the house, knocking on doors. She enters the library, where she has forbidden herself from entering earlier, and starts climbing a staircase to the turret. Other members find her in a semi-hysterical state, and they send Luke to rescue her. Everyone agrees that Eleanor ought to leave Hill House the following day. The poor woman insists that she has nowhere else to go, that she belongs to Hill House, and, in

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the end, while all members are waving her goodbye, Eleanor's car is sent flying into the tree, the same one a horse crushed a poor fellow to death eighteen years ago.

On the other hand, the haunted house in Jackson's last completed novel, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, published in 1962, is presented differently. The Blackwood House also has its reputation. Although it possesses no ghosts, it certainly carries a grotesque past - a horrifying tragedy of its owner's death. The novel itself had become the author's "masterpiece," a perfect curtain-call before she unexpectedly passed away in her sleep of heart failure, at the age of 48, after having suffered from several health problems in her last years. The story is told through the perspective of the 18-year-old Mary Katherine Blackwood – Merricat – who lives an orderly, peaceful life with her beloved sister Constance, her invalid Uncle Julian, and her cat Jonas. They are survivors of the tragic homicide that wipes out most members of the Blackwood family several years ago. Constance was suspected of having poisoned the whole family by putting arsenic in the sugar bowl simply because she does not use sugar and, after the incident, washed the bowl thoroughly clean before the police arrived at the crime scene. In the present, Constance has agoraphobia which prevents her from leaving the house, making it Merricat's duty to get groceries and library books from town. Throughout these trips into town, Merricat expresses her discomfort towards town people. It appears that the Blackwood sisters are not well-liked at all. Town people mock and despise them immensely that Merricat finds comfort imagining herself "walking on their [dead] bodies" (Jackson, 1962, p. 10).

Merricat and Constance have their schedule. On Monday, the sisters tend to the house, dusting and scrubbing the whole house clean. On Tuesday and Friday, Merricat goes into town to get food and books. On Wednesday, Merricat goes around the house, checking the fences, making sure she and Constance are perfectly secure in their house. On Thursday, Merricat's "most powerful day," she goes up to the attic and dresses up in her dead family's clothes. On Saturday, Merricat helps Constance in her garden. Then, most importantly, on Sunday morning, Merricat examines her safeguards – the box of silver dollars buried by the creek, the doll buried in the field, the book nailed to the tree in the pine woods – all these treasures held together, creating a "powerful taut web" guarding herself and her sister. However, "a change was coming," and Merricat can somehow sense it from the "bad omens" she receives. Unfortunately, this orderly routine is disrupted by the visit from Charles Blackwood, their cousin. Charles's intention becomes quite apparent that this is not just a friendly visit he has intended. By marrying Constance and sending Merricat away, he will become the new master of the house and inherit all of Blackwood's fortune. Merricat protests against Charles's presence in the house. He is disrespectful towards Uncle Julian and is utterly rude to her.

Most importantly, he tries to come between Constance and herself. Merricat desperately needs him gone. She even asks him straightforwardly to leave, but Charles refuses to, and Constance also becomes drawn to him and wishes him to stay. After a big fight with Charles, Merricat goes straight up to his room and brushes his burning pipe down the dustbin, starting the fire that quickly swallows the house up. Constance and Merricat hide in the bush when firefighters come to rescue the house while all the town folks watch, putting the fire out. Then, they start to rampage the house, vandalize the Blackwood mansion until it becomes a pile of ruins. After things quiet down, they learn that Uncle Julian has died in the fire. Charles has gone

away, luckily, but the house is a sight of tragedy. The sisters try to restore the house as much as they can: returning all the unbroken things to their places, making themselves dresses from table clothes, nailing up boards onto the windows to prevent people from looking inside. Finally, they shut themselves up in the house, or the remains of what used to be a house, and happy life starts to take shape again. Town people start to come around, leaving food on the doorsteps with notes, apologizing for misdeeds they have done on that night. Rumors and stories start spreading around; the two sisters become one of the town legends, but in the shade of the ruins, they live a happy and secure life, away from the rest of the world.

Jackson's horror stories follow the traditions of American gothic, making use of haunted houses, tall tales, and unreliable narrators. She uses the supernatural and the fantastic to highlight the issue of American women's lives postwar and explores their fears and desires, restricted within domestic space and female roles, the struggle Jackson herself also experienced throughout her womanhood. Although Jackson has never announced her position as a feminist, her works boldly and significantly contribute to the second wave of women's rights movement: "The gothic mode serves well Jackson's purpose to the depths and contours of female violation in the modern world" (Parks, 1984, p. 26). In her last two novels, the gothic setting of haunted houses plays a significant role as it metaphorically represents women's fear and discomfort for domestic space. At the same time, it also reflects a strong attachment between women and the house, complicating the feeling they have for the house or about the concept of "home." The genre itself highlights female struggles under the rules of patriarchal society, allowing the women to express their fears and desires metaphorically through the use of magical and supernatural elements, reinforcing the significance of the relationship between two women who are naturally, romantically, and homo-erotically drawn into each other, with the backdrop of the broken or lost bond of mother and daughter.

In her essay, Elizabeth Abel (1981) emphasizes the importance of same-sex relationships in female identity formation and suggests the urge for female bonding to originate from the child's attachment to the mother in the pre-oedipal phase. She significantly refers to Heinz Lichtenstein (1961), who proposes in his essay that the child forms a "primary identity" with its first caretaker, the mother, which becomes one's "core identity" that shapes the person's interactions with others. Moreover, Abel explains how, later in 1978, this idea is explored exhaustively by Nancy Chodorow, focusing primarily on female identity formation. Her object-relations theory explains the significance of the girl's preoedipal attachment to the mother to be the origin of "enduring female bonds" between women (Abel, 1981, p. 416). Unlike the boy, the girl does not cut ties with her mother and continues to define herself with the mother while forming a connection with the father, resulting in triangulation which complicates the relationship, especially with the mother. While the girl desires to detach herself from the mother, she also longs for attachment. When the girl enters society, the attachment to her mother remains "crucial in determining her sense of identity and her experience of the oedipal phase," leading to the girl's emotional attraction and the urge to create a bond with other women to re-establish the pre-oedipal attachment to her mother once again (Abel, 1981, p. 417-8). Similarly, Gardiner (1981) agrees that "female identity formation is dependent on the mother-daughter bond." She also adds, "Throughout women's lives, the self is defined

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through social relationships"; as a result, their "independence and autonomy are typically harder for women to attain" (Gardiner, 1981, p. 352). From this aspect, it is apparent that Eleanor has never truly separated from her mother since this particular relationship is the primary foundation of her own identity.

Through the representation of powerful and dominant mother figures in her works, the mother-daughter bond has undoubtedly become the center of literary criticism in Jackson's novels, mainly associated with a rumor about the author's complex relationship with her mother. In the light of the author's biography, it is widely known that Jackson did not get along well with her mother. In fact, she was plagued by a complicated relationship with her mother Geraldine, who often harshly criticized almost every aspect of her private life: "Her criticisms of her daughter – Shirley's appearance (especially her weight), her housekeeping, her child-rearing practices – never relented." Even after Jackson had moved away with her family, "Geraldine continued to nag and needle her daughter by mail." Perhaps Geraldine's obsession stems from her disappointments, "horrified" by the fact that Jackson turned out to be "a lumpish redhead." This results in complicating depictions of mother-daughter relationships, in which the sense of helplessness, resentment, and hatred is directed towards the malevolent and cold-hearted mother figures in most of Jackson's works.

Claire Kahane (1980) and Roberta Rubenstein (1996) associate the house with the mother-daughter bond while perceiving it as a "womb-like" space in which the female protagonist finds herself longing and despising. In her article "Feminine Identity," Claire Kahane perceives Hill House as "a maternal antagonist" (Kahane, 1980, p. 53). She goes further to explain that the novel follows a modern gothic trope in which "the spectral mother typically emerges as an actual figure" rather than "a diffuse spectral mother," which is usually portrayed in older gothic works. Therefore, the heroine Eleanor is imprisoned not in an ordinary haunted house but in a female body, which itself "embodies the maternal legacy," which, according to Kahane, appears both as a habitat and a jail (Kahane, 1980, p. 55). Similarly, Rubenstein's article "House Mothers and Haunted Daughters: Shirley Jackson and Female Gothic" (1996) focuses on Jackson's representations of "the primitive and powerful emotional bonds that constitute the ambivalent attachment between mothers and daughters" in Shirley Jackson's works in several contexts, including the author's autobiography, feminist and object-relations psychology, and the convention of female gothic. Rubenstein significantly points out that there are similarities in many of Jackson's novels in which "the daughter struggles with the powerful presence of her mother's absence." In *Hill House*, the ambivalent mother-daughter relationship is presented through the house, which symbolizes the "externalized maternal body," "seductive and threatening," which has successfully consumed its daughter in the end. In *Castle*, this emotional struggle to the mother is represented by splitting the daughter figure into two major characters, which Rubenstein names: "the saintly Constance" and "the wicked Merricat." It is claimed further that the relationship of these two sisters mirrors the ideal mother-daughter relationship in Merricat's fantasy. Several food-related scenes suggest the characters' longing for maternal nurture; for example, the child's "cup of star" in *Hill House*, Merricat's punishment to be sent upstairs without food, and the poisoning sugar bowl in *Castle*.

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The association between the mother-daughter relationship and food is also thoroughly explored in Esther Muñoz-González's "Food Symbolism and Traumatic Confinement in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*" (2018). In this article, Muñoz-González mentions the association between food and mother, which is common in many cultures. In *Castle*, when food, which is a "symbolic signifier for the mother," is denied by Mrs. Blackwood. Therefore, she is included in the patriarchal system and everyone else in the Blackwood family whom Merricat needs to rebel against. Therefore, Mrs. Blackwood's absence is replaced by Miss Blackwood's presence; Constance resumes the role as a "surrogate mother," occupying herself with kitchen chores, cooking, and feeding Merricat. This is an opposite image of the real mother, Mrs. Blackwood, who has been neglected and agreed to leave Merricat's stomach emptied as a form of punishment, leaving an imprint and turning her two daughters Constance and Merricat Blackwood into, what Muñoz-González calls, victims of "aching loneliness" or "unendurable guilt."

As previously mentioned, the mother-daughter bond in the pre-oedipal phase importantly contributes to women's longing for companionships with other women. In a threatening situation under the suppression in the patriarchal society, metaphorically represented through the gothic setting and ghostly elements, women are allowed to seclude themselves and reside in the female world, where they form a special connection with other female figures, rebuilding a sense of security and recreating a sense of "self." In "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," an article that explores female relationships in American society through the studies of letters and diaries of women and men in thirty-five families between the 1760s and 1880s, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg makes a significant discovery that there were no lines in female relationships before the wake of sexual orientations. Smith-Rosenberg describes female friendship as "an essential aspect of American society." Moreover, the portrayal of female friendships presented in letters written by "eminently respectable and socially conservative" families proves the relationships to be "both socially acceptable and fully compatible with heterosexual marriages" (Smith-Rosenberg, 1975, p. 8). Smith-Rosenberg sees "female friendships as compensatory, valued because they applied the emotional warmth missing between wives and husbands in a society premised on separate gender spheres" (Smith-Rosenberg, 1975, p. 30). As mentioned, Smith-Rosenberg claims that the reading of female friendships takes a sharp turn when entering the twentieth century. The "secure and empathetic" female world became, as Adrienne Rich describes, one's "stigma, ostracism, and violence" (Marcus, 2009, p. 10). Perhaps, the attempt to categorize and segregate certain kinds of same-sex friendships – the ones too intimate or too affectionate – into "abnormality" is a part of heterosexual propaganda.

When it comes to *The Haunting of Hill House*, which is considered one of Jackson's most "closeted" novels, the ambiguity of female intimacy in the relationship between Eleanor and Theodora is often read as a sign of homosexual romance rather than an ordinary female companionship. This sexual ambiguity arises from their dubious love and jealousy shared in several scenes, plus Eleanor's probable sexual awakening after years of isolation from the world and a vague description of Theodora's roommate, whom she fights with back in the city. In "Spectral Femininity," Rebecca Munford suggests that the "ghostly happening" at Hill House

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does not only represent a “spectral projection” of Eleanor’s guilt towards her mother’s death, but it also reflects Eleanor’s ambivalent desire for Theodora. This idea reinforces a longstanding association between lesbianism and ghostliness specifically in the uncanny space of the home and significantly in the context of the 1950s America when the domestic sphere is turned into a space of confinement, creating “cultural anxieties” which forces Eleanor to be driven away from the house, preventing her from having any further “aberrant” female sexuality. This unclear relationship between Eleanor and Theodora is also highlighted in the article “‘No proper feeling for her house’: The Relational Formation of White Womanliness in Shirley Jackson's Fiction” by Alexis Shotwell (2013), in which she suggests “an improper feeling for an improper house” to intermingle with “the semi-overt lesbian love” and “a failure to achieve proper womanliness.” She suggests further that Eleanor has been “desexualized” through a relationship with her sick mother and her sister’s house; therefore, she lacks selfhood and sexual fulfillment, which she seeks to fulfill, firstly in Luke who can give her a proper heterosexual relationship, and later in Theodora who gives her a sense of compassion and comfort.

On the other hand, although the bond between the Blackwood sisters is not straightforwardly identified as a homosexual relationship, they are usually identified by specifically gendered categorization. For instance, Darryl Hattenhauer claims that "Merricat is generally more male-identified. She plays the husband's role by taking her sister as her partner […] and performs the manly duties of carpentry, trading downtown, and killing people" (Hattenhauer, 2003, p. 177). Because of their contrasting characteristics, Merricat is identified as “male” while Constance adopts a “female” role. This reproduction of gendered stereotypes is problematic because it automatically makes the Blackwood sisters a “couple” rather than siblings. Joyce Carol Oates describes the relationship of the Blackwood sisters Constance and Merricat in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* as "a quasi-spiritual-incestuous bond," (Jackson, 1962, p. 155) strengthened by the death of the Blackwood family. Moreover, she concludes that the ending of the novel has a "fairy-tale romance" (Jackson, 1962, p. 155) undertone to it, "in which lovers have found each other" (Jackson, 1962, p. 155).

Differently, pieces of evidence from Jackson’s autobiography show that lesbianism is not the only description that fits to explain women's unconventional traits or the overt intimacy with each other. In Jackson’s autobiography, Franklin concludes that “[*Castle*] is about two women who metaphorically murder a male society and its expectations for them by insisting on living separate from it, governed only by themselves” (Franklin, 2017, p. 452). In an early draft of *Castle*, Jenny (whose name was changed to Merricat in the final version) conspires with her sister Constance into murdering her husband. However, the relationship of the alliance of the two sisters is mistaken as a lesbian relationship. Jackson insists that such an interpretation would change the meaning of the novel. She associates her selfhood so profoundly with her works and seemingly becoming one with them: “then *castle* is not about two women murdering a man. It is about my being and afraid to say so, so much afraid that a name in a book can turn me inside out” (Franklin, 2017, p. 452). In her last years of struggling with agoraphobia, Jenny appears as Jackson’s projection of her ideal self, wanting to feel “absolutely secure in her home and her place in the world” (Franklin, 2017, p. 457). Her unhappy marriage and her desire for a faithful

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female companion are also projected through Jenny's murder of her husband and her affectionate relationship with her devoting sister Constance.

This research is carried out mainly through a textual analysis of the novel in the context of American society in the 1950s and a psychoanalytic perspective, especially of Nancy Chodorow. Her study of the mother-daughter complex creates a possibility to understand the psyche of the novel's protagonists Eleanor Vance and Merricat Blackwood. Moreover, this psychoanalytic theory explains how the attachment to mother is the cause of these female characters' internal conflicts, which results in their longing for companionship, as a replacement or a recreation of the primary mother-child bond, which is the foundation of female identity formation which originates continuing female bonds and emotional attraction towards other.

Since writing the fantastic and gothic allows women freedom of expression, I find it interesting to explore further how female characters' relationships develop in gothic fiction written by women. The main focus of this research is to explore different outcomes of female companionships, especially those of two female friends, within the female gothic tradition, using the threatening atmosphere of the gothic elements to reflect women's internal conflicts and powerful male domination, notably in the context of 1950s America in Shirley Jackson's last two completed novels *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962). In Chapter Two, the relationship between the two female friends Eleanor and Theodora, is explored in association with the novel's gothic setting, Hill House, which creates and destroys their friendship. In comparison, Chapter Three focuses on investigating the bond between the Blackwood sisters Merricat and Constance, whose attempts to self-preservation and to construct female space within their family estate lead to a successful bond withstanding patriarchal oppressions and a lasting female bond. Along this line, I hope to contribute to the study of female companionship in gothic fiction written by women.

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CHAPTER 2

The Failure of Female Bond in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*

The Haunting of Hill House (1959), one of the most recognized works by Shirley Jackson, follows the gothic tradition centered around the dark personality of a haunted house which its guest Eleanor Vance finds both terrifying and alluring, leading to her death in the end. Undoubtedly, the female bond is the book's central plot, which marks the beginning and the ending of Eleanor's journey. Eleanor and Theodora's friendship is built in days under the same haunted house's roof before it is shortly put to an end. They are driven by the sinister look of the house and its dark personalities to form a female bond – a safe sphere of their own –to exist and hold out against the domination of Hill House. In this attempt, however, Eleanor develops a desire to form a forever bond, possibly as a recreation of the primary bond shared with her mother, which is eagerly responded to by Hill House, failing female bonding, and the death of the protagonist.

2.1 Hill House as a Patriarchal Power

As a central theme of the novel, Hill House is portrayed as "awake" and could be treated as another main character – the antagonist – of the novel. Interestingly, Hill House plays a significant role in contributing to and destroying the bond between Eleanor and Theodora

> Hill House, not sane, stood by itself against its hills, holding darkness within; it had stood so for eighty years and might stand for eighty more. Within, walls continued upright, bricks met neatly, floors were firm, and doors were sensibly shut; silence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone (p. 3)[2].

In the opening paragraph of the novel, Jackson describes Hill House as a dark and evil place, unfit for humans to inhabit. The house, standing "by itself against the hills" (p. 3), isolated from others, implies not of its loneliness but its pride and "never off guard" characteristics. Instead of providing shelters for humans, Hill House, a "not sane" "live organism" (p. 3) which develops its own "arrogant and hating" consciousness "without concession to humanity" (p. 35). Upon her observation of the distorted yet powerful pattern of her Blue room, not only that Eleanor becomes aware of Hill House's superiority but also its recognition of her existence within itself, feeling "like a small creature swallowed whole by a monster…and the monster feels my tiny little movement inside" (p. 42).

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[2] In Chapter 2, the author's name and year of publication will be omitted in citations from *The Haunting of Hill House* to avoid repetitions and confusion.

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Many critics associate the house with the mother-daughter bond while perceiving it as a "womb-like" space in which the female protagonist finds threatening and seductive at the same time. For example, Roberta Rubenstein perceives the house as a symbol of the "externalized maternal body" which would eventually consume its daughter. Similarly Claire Kahane sees the house as "a maternal antagonist" which appears both as a habitat and a jail (Kahane, 1980, p. 55). Differently, in my interpretation, Eleanor's journey to Hill House signifies her separation from the mother, fleeing from maternal authority into the paternal embrace of Hill House. Therefore, if Hill House possesses any maternal qualities, it does not necessarily signify the space as a maternal embodiment. This maternal force does not have absolute authority but is controlled and manipulated by paternal force, which dominates the house. While domesticity is often recognized as "women's space," it is undeniable that the center of authority remains with the man of the house. "Accordingly, the home has been conceptualized as a site of women's oppression, where patriarchy takes a variety of forms from direct domestic violence, through economic dependence to socio-cultural vulnerability" (Blumen et al., 2013, p. 11). Interestingly, Crain's intention to build this house as a "home" for his family, purposefully designs it to be a safe space – a shelter for his women to grow up into and to protect them from the cruel and sinful world, resembling patriarchal propaganda which portrays women as innocent and fragile beings which need to be sheltered within domestic space and kept away from harm.

The house's history of female repression is represented through the deaths of Crain's young wives. Although "died minutes before she first was to set eyes on the house," (p. 75) his first wife is brought lifeless into Hill House where her husband has specially designed and built for her. Similarly, other wives whom Crain marries later share the same fate, lifeless in the grasp of Hill House. The death of these young wives, in a way, represents women's loss of subjectivity. Once entering marriage and motherhood, women are taken away from their independence, subjectivity, and autonomy. Their body becomes like a vessel that no longer carries her desires but social expectations. As Choo (2016) puts it, the mother's absence highlights women's repression within patriarchal society. Hill House is genuinely motherless and loveless. The house itself feeds on whatever it could find, primarily mothers, wives, and motherless children like Sophia and Eleanor, and rightfully gains a reputation as a repressive female space.

Repressive lives of Eleanor and Sophia (the Crain older sister) could also shed light on the reading of Hill House as a repressive female space operated by paternal force, which could cause the failed female bonding. Both women lack maternal love which makes them vulnerable prey for Hill House. Sophia is raised solely by her father after she loses her mother at the gate of Hill House in her childhood. The evidence of Hugh Crain's terrible child-rearing is the scrapbook he makes of horrifying-looking illustrations of religious paintings. The book is signed in Hugh Crain's blood in an attempt to bind father and daughter together even in death. The Crain older sister grows up to be whom her father tells her to be. For example, her unmarried status is probably a result of her father's instruction to stay away from "lusts" and "preserve" herself (p. 169). In Dr. Montague's words, Sophia "seems to have resembled her father strongly" and loves Hill House dearly as her family home (p. 77). Confining herself within the space her father has built to preserve her from

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"the pitfalls of this world" (p. 171), Sophia refuses to leave Hill House or allows any intrusion from outsiders other than her little companion, whom she must have considered most trustworthy.

On the other hand, the death of Eleanor's father marks the beginning of her repressive life under her mother's absolute authority. The mother controls and entraps Eleanor within the house as her caretaker. Although Eleanor claims that she hates her mother most, she is unconsciously obsessed with her victimization, which confirms a connection she once shared with her mother. Having lived together for more than thirty years, Eleanor has undoubtedly taken after some of her mother's traits. Not only has Eleanor grown into a paranoid, pessimistic, and self-conscious woman like her mother, but she is also profoundly affected by love stories and fairy tales she has read for her mother, which shape the way she perceives reality. What happens with Eleanor, enchanted by Hill House's seduction, which sucks up her life, is not merely a coincidence since Eleanor has also become another victim of Hill House's delusion, which responds to her desperation for maternal affection. I understand the repetition of the two women's fates which fall under domination of Hill House as the house's attempt to recreate a tragedy by continuing with its "women consummation".

2.2 The Female Bond between Eleanor and Theodora

Within this dark and threatening atmosphere of Hill House, Eleanor and Theodora form an instant bonding at first sight. Even Eleanor is surprised to find herself, who has always been "shy with strangers, awkward and timid," to have quickly considered Theodora as "close and vital" (p. 49). One of the most reasonable explanations, I believe, lies in the women's *psychic ability*. According to Dr. Montague, the two women are selected because they have a history of being in touch with supernatural events: Eleanor has witnessed the falling stones, and Theodora has shown a possibility for psychic power by guessing cards correctly. Although this subject of psychic ability is lightly touched in the novel, it is evident that this psychic power allows Theodora to understand and empathize with Eleanor more than other guests. As if she could see through Eleanor's fears and insecurity, Theodora is often the first to comfort and lighten Eleanor's mood. Notably, she is the second guest to arrive at the house, right on time to rescue Eleanor, who is being threatened by the dark presence of Hill House and its "absolute reality." Upon their first encounter, it seems like Theodora has already sensed Eleanor's insecurity and responses to it.

> Perhaps she shivered, because Theodora turned with a quick smile and touched her shoulder gently, reassuringly; she is charming, Eleanor thought, smiling back, not at all the sort of person who belongs in this dreary, dark place, but then, probably, I do not belong here either; I am not the sort of person for Hill House but I cannot think of anybody who would be (p. 43).

Perhaps Eleanor does not shiver. This passage suggests a high possibility that Theodora might be telepathic. Note that Eleanor is unsure whether her fear is shown physically. It is Theodora who takes the first step to reassure her and gives Eleanor the security she needs. With only one touch from the newcomer, Eleanor seems to be surrounded by positive energy and becomes aware of her worth,

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convinced that she too is unfit for this lifeless house. In another event, Theodora quickly becomes aware of Eleanor's anxiety after Dr. Montague tells Eleanor that she is invited to Hill House because of her association with supernatural happening – the falling stones – in the past. Because Dr. Montague's statement is entirely different from what Eleanor's mother has told her: "That was the neighbors. My mother said the neighbors did that. People are always jealous" Eleanor becomes extremely uncomfortable that she cannot move on from this topic. Finally, Theodora comforts Eleanor with the telling of her vandalism in her childhood, "I was whipped for throwing a brick through a greenhouse roof," supporting Eleanor's perception of the event the way she wants it remembered (p. 73).

In the article "Holy Spirits: The Power and Legacy of America's Female Spiritualists," Diana London Potts (2018) describes how spiritual movements allow women to empower themselves as well as each other. In conducting a spiritual act, a female spiritualist's body becomes "a conduit capable of bridging the gap between the seen and unseen," which gives a woman mobility and dependency from "domestic work" or "men." Moreover, "by communicating with the dead, women willing to reject unreformed, unenlightened modes of knowing – like canonical theology and patriarchal politics – became vessels capable of possessing the power of oration, foresight, and political influence." In this light, I understand women's spiritual world (community) as the space that liberates women from repression – possibly even existing beyond society's expectations. Therefore, by imposing psychic ability (or magical power) onto Eleanor and Theodora, Jackson provides them a proper female sphere in which they can naturally understand each other without communicating by words.

Interestingly, Jackson uses the psychic ability to illuminate women's hidden powers that need liberation. Touching and being touched also become an option for women to communicate and express intimacy towards one another, very intimate and personal, creating a private and secure gesture for the two. Through these physical contacts, Theodora offers her loyalty towards Eleanor with no hesitation to touch whether her hands, shoulder, cheeks, or feet. Although Eleanor generally dislikes being touched, she does not dislike the touch from Theodora and understands these physical gestures as "Theodora's chosen way of expressing contrition, or pleasure, or sympathy" (p. 86). However, the roles of Eleanor and Theodora as psychics appear quite ambiguous since they are invited as Dr. Montague's guests and have their specialty regarded as a kind of experimental object – studied and observed. Because Eleanor has not yet embraced her psychic ability and Theodora appears not to take her own seriously, their space is not yet strengthened to the point that they could hold against rules and conventions.

In most romantic novels, female friendships hardly come by as the main topic of discussion. Moreover, women are often designed to become each other's rivalry, destroying one another for a man's love, reproducing, and confirming the idea that female worth can only be confirmed by male love. Growing up under her mother's influence, Eleanor becomes unaware of her "true love" and naturally turns Theodora into a (love) rival. The women meet and get along, but there is only one man in the house. It is understandable for Eleanor to turn sour towards her friend after seeing the good chemistry around Theo and Luke since Romance novels have shaped Eleanor's selfhood. Her fantasy is a heterosexual plot, just like those love stories she

reads to her mother. Love stories and fairy tales teach little girls to grow up into proper young women. They are a part of the male-dominated culture, reproducing stereotypes of what society expects of "ideal" women, domesticating and entrapping them within the domestic space by the assigned roles of a mother or a wife. It is unsurprising that Eleanor would not recognize her feeling for Theodora as something more than ordinary friendship since she has grown up in a confined space reading "love stories" two hours a day to her sick mother. Therefore, Eleanor directs her expectation at Luke, hoping the journey to end in the lovers' meeting. This significant phrase which Eleanor is obsessed with is taken from William Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night*, initially sung by a male character to court his love interest, convincing her there is no more time to wait ("In delay there lies no plenty") and that she should hurriedly become his lover. Therefore, when she sees Luke for the first time, Eleanor is carried away by the thought, "journey ends in lovers' meeting," and secretly hopes he takes her at her worth. The young man fits perfectly, whether as "a prince in disguise" (p. 52) or "a devilishly handsome smuggler" from Eleanor's imaginations (p. 32). As a result, although Eleanor and Theodora get along well initially, conflicts slowly take root within Eleanor when Luke enters the scene. Theodora's small moments with Luke make Eleanor uneasy. She thinks bitterly, "it might sometimes be oppressive to be for long around one so immediately in tune, so perceptive, as Theodora" after seeing her giving Luke "that quick understanding glance" she has given Eleanor earlier (p. 61). Certainly, Eleanor's reaction is childish and possessive, especially towards her first friend Theodora. Although Theodora's indifference towards the man is apparent, Eleanor finds it upsetting to see them having such good chemistry.

However, it is doubtful if all the acts of hate and jealousy between the two women are genuinely caused by their desperate needs for Luke's attention? I think Jackson uses this love triangle trope for a different purpose because once we readers seem to have decided this novel is just another romance about women's rivalry and their senseless competition for a man's love, Luke is out of the picture. Instead of recreating a stereotype of female rivalry, Jackson creates an ambiguity in the two women's relationship through this rivalry and turns it into a satisfying rejection of male love. Having learned that the man is "altogether selfish" and "simply not very interesting," Eleanor quickly dismisses him as her love interest (although with a bit of disappointment) (p. 167). Sitting beside Luke, Eleanor's head is full of fancy questions she probably remembers from romance novels: "Tell me something that only I will ever know, was perhaps what she wanted to ask him, or, What will you remember me by? – or even, Nothing of the least importance has ever belonged to me; can you help?" (p. 165). In contradiction, Eleanor cannot seem to move on from Theodora. Comparing her questions for Luke and Theodora (and possibly also Theodora's for her), it is apparent that Eleanor has stronger feelings for her female companion:

> Nothing irrevocable had yet been spoken, but there was only the barest margin of safety left them, each of them moving delicately along the outskirts of an open question, and, once spoken, such a question – as "Do you love me? – could never be answered or forgotten. (…) Each knew, almost within a breath, what the other

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> was thinking and wanting to say; each of them almost wept for the others (p. 174-5).

No matter what the definition of "love" exactly is, Eleanor straightforwardly puts it, with herself, as a question she has for Theodora, and although she already knows what the answer might be, Eleanor waits in expectation and hopes, like how she has hoped with Luke, that Theodora takes her for "her worth." Despite all the bitter arguments and cruel insults, Theodora is still the only person she seeks among the crowd and asks for help. Standing on the top of the tower, desperately trying not to get caught by "them" (practically referring to Luke and the others), Eleanor looks down and sees only "one face clearly": "Theodora? I cannot get out; the door's been nailed shut". Only when Theodora begs, "Nell (…) *Please* do what they say", Eleanor finally comes to her senses and realizes she has been out of control (p. 234). Theodora's words do not fail to convey a secret message for Eleanor. By calling the others "they," she significantly puts a boundary, separating herself and Eleanor from the rest of the crews.

Significantly, the relationship between Eleanor and Theodora does not develop further than that of an ordinary companionship between friends. However, many events prove it common that their sudden and overtly intimate friendship should be doubted. As for Theodora's sexual orientation, there is a possibility of her being lesbian, as several critics have pointed out. As a result, the intimacy between Eleanor and Theodora is often recognized as a homosexual attraction towards one another. However, I suggest we should not dismiss the fact that she has already defined their relationship – "cousins" (p. 55) – which perfectly describes the indescribable friendship between women. The word "cousin" refers to a relative from the same bloodline; while the word gives a closeness to one's relationship, its sense is more distant than that of a "sibling". Therefore, this word creates an ambiguous "in-between" space for Eleanor and Theodora where they can be more than friends but not really a family. This results in their spontaneous changes in attitudes towards one another throughout the book; they can easily get jealous over the other and make up in a day. Since women's relationships are still "left without rules" (De Rogatis, 2019), it remains "a territory with fragile codes where love … by its nature, carries with it everything, lofty sentiments, and base impulses" (De Rogatis, 2019). In Elena Ferrante's words, "Competition between women is good only if it doesn't prevail; that is to say if it coexists with affinity, affection, with a real sense of being mutually indispensable, with sudden peaks of solidarity despite envy, jealousy, and the whole inevitable cohort of bad feelings" (De Rogatis, 2019). In this light, the relationship between Eleanor and Theodora is nothing out of the ordinary; in fact, Jackson presents how women's relationship is naturally developed and flourished within a restrictive space where trustworthy and faithful companions are needed most.

2.3 The Mother-Daughter Relationship and Eleanor's Struggles for Maternal Attachment

Although I disagree with the idea of Hill House as a representation of the dead mother, I certainly cannot dismiss the importance of the mother as a significant issue that contributes to and destroys the relationship between Eleanor and Theodora. As previously stated, Eleanor's conflicting feelings towards her mother, wanting to

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break away yet longing for maternal attachment, is understood as a result of the inseparable bond between mother and daughter, which creates a long-lasting impact that prevents her from constructing selfhood. Eleanor's decision to come to Hill House is an act of liberation, an attempt to run away from the mundane life and to escape from her sister, who appears like an embodiment of her dead mother. Eleanor's statement, "Everything is different, I am a new person, very far from home (p. 27)" suggests that Eleanor believes she has successfully put the past behind her and that her runaway is the beginning of her new life. Although Eleanor's past is not much spoken of, she recalls having "aching memories" of her early childhood and the winter her father dies (p. 15). This recollection suggests that the death of her father has a considerable impact on Eleanor's childhood. Indeed, it has broken a beautiful picture of a perfect family she should have grown up into, and more importantly, forces her into an absolute authority of her mother, the time of her life in which Eleanor describes, "She could not remember ever being truly happy in her adult life; her years with her mother had been built up devotedly around small guilts and small reproaches, constant weariness, and unending despair" (p. 6). To break away from her mother, it turns out that Eleanor might have deliberately put an end to her suffering as a caretaker by dismissing her mother's call for help, only to be forever haunted by her own desire to re-establish an inseparable bond she used to share with her mother: "It was my fault my mother died," Eleanor said. "She knocked on the wall and called me and I never woke up… I've wondered ever since if I did wake up. If I did wake up and hear her, and if I just went back to sleep. It would have been easy, and I've wondered about it". Theodora's blunt response to Eleanor that she "probably just like thinking" that her mother's death is her fault turns Eleanor's guilt-driven statement into a prideful remark, proudly perceiving her mother's death as a trophy – a symbol of victory – over her mother's domination that puts their controlling relationship to an end (p. 212).

On the other hand, Eleanor's longing for the mother is reflectively projected through the ghostly events in Hill House. The writing on the wall, "HELP ELEANOR COME HOME" (p. 146, p. 155), which marks the first terrifying exchange between Eleanor and the house, is read as a message from Eleanor's dead mother, reflecting Eleanor's guilt towards her mother's death and emphasizing her desperate need to reconnect with the mother. Moreover, Mrs. Montague's result from her planchette reveals a bitter truth of Eleanor's perception of herself as a child seeking maternal comfort and home; when the entity named "Nell" is asked, "What do you want," its answer is "Mother" and its home is "Lost. Lost. Lost" (p. 193). Even in death, her mother still manipulates and controls Eleanor's sense of self and belonging. She cannot become an independent being because her existence depends on her relation with others. For instance, when she is first introduced in the book, Eleanor's existence depends on her role as her mother's caretaker and victim of her mother's abusive authority. Then, after she has met Theodora, Eleanor uses the other woman to define whom she is not instead of describing herself. In this light, readers might come to understand the bond between Eleanor and Theodora as a replacement for a maternal figure. However, instead of re-establishing the inseparable bond, Theodora intends to guide Eleanor into self-discovery and independence, which is opposite to what Eleanor truly desires.

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2.4 The Failure of the Female Bond between Eleanor and Theodora

The more tragic example of how patriarchal order destroys female life is presented through the failure of Eleanor and Theodora's relationship. The women's relationship ends when Eleanor falls into Hill House's "absolute reality" and starts to experience a different "reality" from others. One might be easily misled by Eleanor's perception and misunderstand Theodora for being the one who betrays Eleanor to catch the heir of Hill House. However, one of the most concrete pieces of evidence that shows Eleanor's out-of-touch with reality is the interactions between other guests which appear incredibly out-of-character in Chapter 8 of the book. Since the main focus of this chapter is usually on the flirtatious conversation between Luke and Theodora, one might not realize that there are also strange exchanges between Dr. Montague and Arthur in the library and Mrs. Dudley and Mrs. Montague in the kitchen. While desperately searching for someone to recognize her existence, Eleanor comes across the library and overhears Arthur's attempt to catch Dr. Montague's attention by bringing up an "interesting thing" he finds in a book: "how to make candles out of ordinary children's crayons." Strangely, his peak of interest does not add up to his occupation as a headmaster of the school, leading to more questions if Eleanor's perception can be trusted anymore. Besides, the conversation between Mrs. Dudley and Mrs. Montague sounds even more chillingly wrong. Mrs. Dudley, who appears to be mechanically conventional and strict, is defending the young people, specifically referring to Luke and Theodora, from disapproval of Mrs. Montague, who is unnaturally helping with the kitchen. These details are extremely out of place and character. First of all, Mrs. Dudley would never let anybody touch (her) silverware. Second of all, Mrs. Montague would never bother to help Mrs. Dudley with the housekeeping despite how delicious she could cook. However, I understand why Hill House would impose these scenes from its "absolute reality" on Eleanor and repeatedly turn her down to confirm her vanishing existence. More importantly, Eleanor's perception does not fail to highlight gendered spheres within Hill House where males occupy themselves in the library with books and documents and females help each other with dishes in the kitchen. Significantly, this scene helps immensely in understanding Theodora in a new light and shows a possibility that she who appears kind and supportive in the beginning might not have suddenly turned into a complete melodramatic villain who would betray a friend for a man's love.

As a symbol of freedom, Theodora plays a significant role in reconstructing Eleanor's identity and redefining the concept of the mother-daughter relationship. Theodora has tried to eliminate the cause of Eleanor's insecurity by getting rid of the mother, hoping that it would lead Eleanor to regain her independence and reclaim her subjectivity. Theodora is well-aware of the mother's influence over Eleanor. Her reactions towards Eleanor's anxieties, especially when it comes to the mother, suggest Theodora's attempt to wrestle with the domination of Eleanor's mother. On many occasions, Theodora's words intended to encourage Eleanor to overcome the guilty obsession of her dead mother. When Eleanor recalls the picture of her mother's kitchen, a "dark and narrow" place where food has no taste nor color, Theodora simply asks, "what about your kitchen...in your little apartment?" (p. 111) before directing the conversation elsewhere. Even though Eleanor's "little

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apartment" is a lie, Theodora intends to remind Eleanor not to dwell back into the past and focuses on whatever gives her comfort in the present. In another event, Theodora refuses, quite aggressively, to have Eleanor resume the task of a housekeeper, especially when Eleanor's urge of a caretaker is under the influence of the mother. When Eleanor insists on clearing away the table, saying, "…my mother would never let me get up and leave a table looking like this until morning," (p. 122) Theodora convinces and prevents her from doing so. Theodora's reaction is suggestively a symbolic act to discontinue Eleanor's toxic master-slave relationship with her mother. This shows Theodora's effort to eliminate the cause of Eleanor's insecurity by getting rid of the mother so that Eleanor could finally regain freedom and reform her identity.

However, instead of gaining independence, Eleanor is dragged deep into the obsession with her fantasy and determined to never separate from Theodora ever again. Undoubtedly, while Theodora is guiding Eleanor into self-discovery and independence, Eleanor's genuine desire is to create an inseparable bond with Theodora, reproducing the mother-daughter relationship she has not yet broken away from. Following the same pattern from the primary bond, Eleanor comes to identify herself through Theodora and, as Kahane puts it, confuses her identity with the other party, having shared the same clothes and slept on the same bed. Like a child clinging to her mother, Eleanor insists on following Theodora home, to which Theodora responds: "This is just a summer, just a few weeks' visits to a lovely old summer resort in the country. You have your life back home, I have my life. When the summer is over, we go back. We'll write each other, of course, and maybe visit, but Hill House is not forever, you know" (p. 209). Theodora's statement confirms what Eleanor fears most, reminding her of the harsh reality of a life outside of Hill House waiting for her. Eleanor's desperation to create an attachment is intensified under the impression that once she has bonded with someone or somewhere, she can rest assured that she does not have to "go back."

In its final attempt to lure Eleanor into its realm, Hill House visualizes Eleanor's ideal image of a mother through an illusion of a picnic. Walking beside each other, "Eleanor and Theodora looked into a garden, their eyes blinded with the light of sun and rich color; incredibly, there was a picnic party on the grass in the garden" (p. 176). Both of them hear the sounds of children and the voices of the mother and father. The brightness of its scenery contradicts the dark and gloomy atmosphere at dusk, making the picnic dreamlike and heavenly. This scenery is probably a part of Eleanor's imagination visualized by Hill House, reflecting her longing and seducing her with a perfect picture of a family picnic. While the bright and colorful scenery appears as an ideal representation of a perfect family, Theodora is horrified by the image of the "smiling" mother to the point that she tells Eleanor to run away from it and never look back. This "smiling" mother undoubtedly represents the female roles, especially housewifery and motherhood, which are often romanticized as women's primary source of happiness, while women's repression and confinement within the domestic sphere are overlooked or dismissed. When they arrive back in the house, Theodora tries to take things jokingly, but Eleanor appears to be mesmerized by that scene, especially with the "children," the one who wears a red romper whom Eleanor finds resembles herself (p. 176).

Since Eleanor turns obsessively invested in her fantasy of re-establishing the bond with the mother, the female bonding between Eleanor and Theodora can

hardly proceed further. Therefore, Eleanor desperately seeks companionship elsewhere and offers herself entirely to the devouring of Hill House, which represents patriarchal society, contributing to the breaking of the bond between Eleanor and Theodora. Perceiving Hill House as another character with its agency, I'm convinced that the house must have tried to win over its prey, and one of the methods is by becoming or pretending to be the mother and the lover Eleanor desperately longs for. In the end, Hill House becomes Eleanor's "lover." Eleanor says her vow, "whatever it wants of me it can have" (p. 204), and her submission to Hill House marks the end of her journey, which metaphorically establishes marriage between herself and the house. The house is a combination of masculine and feminine – a lover and a mother – offering Eleanor its full attention others fail to give her. Unlike Theodora, who ditches her for Luke, or other members who do not recognize her existence, Hill House makes Eleanor feel special. It allows her to hear and feel the movements of the house and beyond while others cannot. While others continue with their activities, Eleanor sits and listens to "the sounds of the house," thinking joyfully, "none of them heard it…nobody heard it but me" (p. 226). Eleanor becomes like Hugh Crain's wives, who lose their names and autonomy to the house by allowing herself to be consumed into Hill House.

In conclusion, the female bond between Eleanor and Theodora is founded for self-preservation against the domination of Hill House, a haunted house with dark personalities, which feeds on women. Having developed a solid attachment to Theodora, Eleanor insists on creating a forever home with Theodora, with whom she shares complicated feelings. If read through a psychoanalytic perspective, their relationship could be regarded as Eleanor's replacement of the maternal figure. This specific desire of hers is eagerly responded to by Hill House. By pretending to be a lover and a mother Eleanor fantasizes, it successfully conquers its victim's heart. Therefore, the bond between Eleanor and Theodora is disrupted and destroyed by the domination of Hill House, which successfully seduces Eleanor back into the realm of female convention and heterosexual codes, entrapped once again within domestic space in isolation. Despite all the changes around it, Hill House remains unchanged – indifferent towards human sufferings – and continues to "walk alone" maybe for eighty more years or eternity (p. 246). In the context of American society in the 1950s, the house represents a patriarchal society that creates alluring pictures of the domestic sphere as a homely and safe space and reproduces the idea of perfect housewives, causing many women to suffer from melancholia and isolation they feel at home after discovering the ugly truth behind such illusions. While Jackson shows the possibility of conducting a secure sphere of womanhood through female bonding, its failure suggests the risks it takes to follow Eleanor's path. The repetition of the opening and ending paragraph of the novel, along with the house's habitual consummation of its female occupants, gives an impression that this evil house would continue to repeat this same repressive loop of haunting other female victims who are yet to visit.

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CHAPTER 3

The Lasting Female Bond and Women's Resistance against Patriarchy in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*

In her last novel, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962), Shirley Jackson highlights the idea of women's self-sufficiency and the importance of sisterhood against patriarchal oppression. Through the portrayal of the Blackwood family, Jackson criticizes the idealistic traditional family value imposed on most American households in the 1950s. Instead of providing shelter and comfort for its inhabitants, the house becomes a place of traumatic domestic abuse and female suffering. Unlike Eleanor and Theodora in Hill House, the Blackwood sisters Constance and Merricat successfully withstand the patriarchal threat from domestic and outside and maintain their female space within the Blackwood mansion. In Castle, patriarchal oppressions come in various forms: the Blackwood family, the male love-interest, or the villagers. These three figures represent the father's law and social conventions that threaten the sisters to submit to their domination and lives by the "rules." However, instead of breaking the sisters' bond, these three threats ironically end up straightening their bond instead.

3.1 Women against patriarchal threats

The first patriarchal oppression against Merricat and Constance comes from maltreatment and alienation from their family. The two sisters are mistreated as children; Merricat is neglected and unloved, and Constance is raised as a dutiful work slave, leading to the sisters' reasserting power by eliminating the patriarchal figures and having the family hierarchy shifted. Before the murder, Merricat's existence is almost transparent. It raises a red flag when Julian tells Charles, "my niece Mary Katherine has been a long time dead," while Merricat is sitting in the same room and breathing the same air (Jackson, 1962, p.93)[3]. Because of his illness, Julian may babble and most of the time makes non-sense remarks; however, whenever it comes to mentioning Merricat in his writing, he dismisses her existence, saying, "a great child of twelve, sent to bed without her supper. But she need not concern us" (p. 34). Although Julian claims that Merricat is dead of neglect "during her sister's trial for murder," his "neglecting" of Merricat's existence highlights the girl's status in the Blackwood house as a middle child who is unloved and often dismissed by her family. Merricat is often punished, and she never feels loved. In *Castle*, patriarchal threat takes the form of childhood maltreatment and abuse against children and women. The Blackwood's terrible child-rearing affects the girl's sensibilities and personality as she grows up, causing Merricat to behave differently from others and see "reality" upside down. Significantly, Merricat's desire to be cherished and

[3] In Chapter 3, the author's name and year will be omitted in citations from *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* to avoid repetitions and confusion.

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"respected" by her family is represented through her fantasy in the summerhouse, the place where "no one had ever liked […] very much" (p. 94). In this scene, Merricat imagines herself surrounded by her past family. Sitting between Constance and Julian in her "rightful, [her] own and proper, place at the table," she listens to the dead ones chant "we love you" and promise never to punish her again. Merricat's fantasy reflects how her family's maltreatment has affected her psyche and probably raises an obsession with becoming the one her family loves and "bowing" their heads to.

The family's maltreatment, a part of patriarchal oppression, results in Merricat's peculiar psychology. Unlike ordinary girls of the same age, an eighteen-year-old Mary Katherine Blackwood is still a wild child who dislikes "washing herself, and dog, and noise" (p. 1). In a conversation with Helen Clarke, Constance describes Merricat as a child who "was always in disgrace," "a wicked, disobedient child" whom she has to secretly feed after their parents go to bed (p. 34). Her wickedness is often portrayed through her narratives, which sometimes include violent and sensitive thoughts about killing and wishing people dead. Feeling threatened and mocked by the villagers, Merricat thinks, "I wished they were all dead" and imagines herself "walking on their bodies" (p. 10). Merricat's aggression is usually read as an effect of her disturbed mind which labels the girl as a "mad" or "hysterical" woman. In social norms, aggression and violence are unacceptable for women because it shows that they have "lost control over themselves and the situation" when women are always expected to be calm and keep their composure (Good, 2003, p. 88). Nonetheless, some critics argue that Merricat's "wickedness" instead highlights the girl's history of abusive relationships with her past family. During her visit, Helen Clarke makes a significant comment that it is "an unhealthy environment" for Merricat to be sent to bed without supper because "a child should be punished for wrongdoing, but she should be made to feel that she is still loved" (p. 34). Her statement shows where the situation has gone wrong in the Blackwood family; Merricat is just an ordinary child who wants love and adoration, but the family keeps wrongly ill-treating her.

On the other hand, Constance is depicted as simple and submissive towards her assigned role as a house-maker and a caretaker. She is always busy with housework; her daily routines revolve around cooking, tending to the garden, and looking after her invalid uncle. Moreover, some statements explain that Constance's responsibility is to be "only" in the kitchen. From Julian's recollection of the family before the murder, it appears that Constance is always in the kitchen. Julian points out how his wife always remembers to get dressed early in the morning and "go down to Constance in the kitchen" (p. 47). He also describes how the family relies so much on Constance regarding food: "we relied upon Constance for various small delicacies which only she could provide" (p. 35).

As the oldest sister of the family, Constance has to inherit the Blackwood women's legacy, which has been passed down from one generation to the next. As Mrs. Blackwood does not care to take after this inheritance, it is passed down to Constance from a very young age. Constance dedicates her entire life in the kitchen until it becomes her most "familiar" space, working "all her life at adding to the food in the cellar," in which Merricat comments, "her rows and rows of jars were easily the handsomest, and shone among the others" (p. 42). Constance represents the helplessness of middle-class American housewives in the 1950s. Her characteristics

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resemble traits any "ideal" woman should have – being soft-spoken, kind, and submissive to the role assigned. Constance's dedication towards being a homemaker indicates that she accepts the traditional family ideal, which "assumes a relatively fixed sexual division of labor, wherein women's roles are defined as primarily in the home" (Andersen, 1991, p. 236) – to take care of children and housework all by herself. However, her submission does not justify that she "works like a slave" (p. 81). Her female duty segregates Constance from the rest of the family. While the family, including the youngest brother, enjoys themselves in the garden, Constance "was weeding the vegetables." After she works with the garden "all morning," she still has to "make something quickly for lunch" because nobody else ever offers a hand in kitchen works (p. 49).

Constance develops agoraphobia – an anxiety disorder – which is also known as "women's syndrome" and is usually associated with white middle-class housewives (Siegel, 2001, p. 6). This symptom is not simply the fear of "social interaction," but "the fear of being alone in any place or situation from which it seems escape would be difficult or help unavailable should the need arise" (Siegal, 2001, p. 8). Partly, Constance's agoraphobia must have worsened during the trial when she has to encounter hostility and intrusions from reporters and the world alone. However, it is also important to note that Constance's identity is deeply intertwined with her space and roles raised in the kitchen. The whole kitchen has the imprint of her delicate touch, like the garden she tends to with love and patience. Therefore, she becomes anxious to leave the house for fear that she might "lose control" of herself which is mentally tied to the kitchen and garden where she feels safest.

The family murder is Merricat's and Constance's first act against patriarchal control and its abusive authority. In Carpenter's observation, "rage is the most appropriate response to oppression" (Carpenter, 1984, p. 209). In this light, although there is scarce information about the family's maltreatment and abuse, what is essential is that the oppressed feels "justified" to respond to the oppressor right back with "rage." The Blackwood family is operated by the patriarchal power, wherein every member lives submissively under the authority of patriarchal figures represented by Mr. and Mrs. Blackwood. Through Julian's recollection, John Blackwood is portrayed as a man who "took pride in his table, his family, his position in the world" (p. 33). Furthermore, he is seriously indulged in his material wealth. For instance, he keeps a notebook "to record the names of people who owed him money, and people who ought … to do favors for him" (p. 77). He even agrees with his wife to put fences around the house with a sign PRIVATE NO TRESPASSING to keep the villagers off his property (p. 18). From Merricat's memory of her father, the man always tries to make "profitable use" out of his property, but he neglects it without hesitation once he sees no use of it. As Carpenter points out, "John Blackwood's power in his family and his community derived not only from his gender but also from his material wealth" (Carpenter, 1984, p.32). Therefore, it is unsurprising that he takes the liberty as "the head of the family" to dominate and controls other members, including Merricat and Constance, whose position is inferior to others. Whether submissive or rebellious against patriarchal control, daughters are still not as "desirable" as a son. While the oldest daughter Constance who can be put to "profitable use," is forced into being a "slave" in a kitchen, a middle child and a

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daughter Merricat whose presence is utterly unimportant, is wholly dismissed and has to suffer from emotional abuse.

Another influential figure in the Blackwood house is Mrs. Blackwood, whose authority over the house is notably presented as compatible with her husband's. From Merricat's recollection, her mother is the one who decides to close off the path to keep the estate "private" and abandons the summerhouse only because she sees "a rat looking in" (p. 94). Her decisions are absolute, and "where [she] did not go, no one else went" (p. 95). Her peculiar characteristics as a "strong-willed" woman who denies home-making or child-rearing give a wrong impression that she represents women's liberation and has successfully overcome the domination of patriarchal power by refusing assigned gender roles. In fact, Mrs. Blackwood enjoys her privilege as the mistress of the house and uses her power to abuse other inferior women to take over her responsibility. Her "ignorance" (or perhaps “willingness”) towards her daughters’ oppression is contributing to the continuation of gender abuse.

To liberate themselves, the sisters reassert their power through violence, which disrupts the order and destroys the former hierarchy of the family. Indeed, the death of the Blackwood family suggests the fall of a patriarchal system that dominates Merricat and Constance. In Merricat's simple reasoning, she only makes her deadly wish literal: "I am going to put death in all their food and watch them die" (p. 110). When she listens to Julian's recollection of the murder, Merricat hardly expresses any emotions towards the family's death. Apparently, Merricat does not find her crime repulsive. On the contrary, it is a punishment they deserve for having mistreated her: "Bow your heads to our beloved Mary Katherine … or you will be dead" (p. 111). Through their death, she can create a utopia of her own, a place exclusively reserved for herself and her beloved Constance, her "most precious person in [her] world, always" and whom she adopts as her loyal companion and an idealistic mother figure (p. 20).

On the other hand, Constance's decision to take responsibility suggests her commitment to becoming Merricat's partner-in-crime. This observation makes Constance an accomplice to the family murder and implies her secret struggles against the patriarchal control that takes over her life as well. On that faithful night, Constance washes the bowl clean after seeing family members "dying around her like flies" and never calls a doctor until it is too late. Moreover, in her statement to the police, she blames herself for the murder and claims that "those people deserved to die" (p. 37). Through the destruction of the Blackwood household, Constance successfully gains liberation and control over the house and the rest of the family. Her confession reinforces her power over her dead family and shatters her reputation as a delicate and dedicated older sister of the Blackwood. However, as it turns out, Constance's desire to empower herself through the murder is not carried through; Constance is put on trial but never punished for the crime. Like Mrs. Wright, the law refuses to believe that a "pretty young girl" could be a "homicidal maniac" since she does not fit social expectations, which denies women's capability of violence (p. 38). According to social standards, violence and aggression are often associated with men, while women are perceived as "frail and helpless." Constance's status as a culprit for the family murder threatens the authority's stability and discourse. Therefore, they choose to let Constance free instead of imprisoning her not to destroy its long-standing ideology about women.

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Another patriarchal threat comes in the form of love and marriage. Charles's visitation marks the second intrusion into the sisters' private sphere as a threat to the female bond. After six years in isolation, "[Charles] was the first one who had ever gotten inside, and Constance had let him in" (p. 57). Undoubtedly, the coming of Charles shatters Merricat's orderly happy days in the Blackwood mansion. Charles's arrival represents the return of the patriarch that needs to take over the women and the house. His appearance and characteristics resemble Mr. Blackwood to the point that it terrifies Merricat and captivates Constance. Merricat is unsettled with a realization that Charles is a "ghost" of her father, probably coming back to put them both under control again. He claims it is only a short visitation but quickly changes his attitude from an amiable man to a prideful oppressor who often gives Constance orders and verbally violates Merricat. It becomes apparent then that he intends to marry Constance and inherit the Blackwood property.

Like Eleanor in Hill House, Constance wavers to Charles's persuasion to an idealistic family and causes her attitudes towards Merricat to change. She quickly develops positive feelings towards Charles, or perhaps towards "an opportunity," and starts to think of ways to beautify herself. Once, she wonders aloud to Merricat, as if asking for permission, "if it would be right for [her] to wear Mother's pearls," in which Merricat detests, "they are better off in the box where they belong" (p. 68). Another significant moment that shows Constance's relapse into being a "duplicate" or Mrs. Blackwood is when she threatens to limit Merricat from wandering around: "I think … that we are going to have to forbid you wandering. It is time you quieted down a little" (p. 81). Significantly, Constance uses "we" to refer to herself and Charles while scolding her sister, excluding Merricat from them both completely. At the same time, "we" also erases Constance's existence, merging and becoming a part of Charles. It is the moment Merricat realizes Constance's attention is shifting away from her. This scene importantly implies the changing atmosphere in the sisters' relationship because Constance starts to violate the rules they set for each other and lets Charles intrudes as he wishes.

Merricat and Constance have to eliminate the lingering patriarchal presence to its root to reassure and reconstruct their forever sisterly bond and their own private space. Finally, after multiple attempts to eliminate and drive him away from the house, Merricat settles with a conclusion and uses "fire" to purify the house. This purification process gives Merricat the rightful authority to banish Charles as "a demon" or "a disguised ghost" and drives him away from her sacred land. In exchange, the house that symbolizes Blackwood's past legacy is sacrificed, with the frail and invalid Uncle Julian, an accomplice who contributes to the sisters' gendered oppression in the past.

The sisters' last encounter with patriarchal threat comes in the form of the villagers, representing both patriarchal domination and social convention, who intrude and vandalize the Blackwood house. Jackson portrays patriarchal fear of women's subjectivity and self-sufficiency through the villagers' hostility and violence as an attempt to make the women dependent and helpless as they "should" be. Although Helen Clarke has once reassured Merricat that her feeling is "nothing but [her own] imagination," Merricat still firmly believes that the villagers "have always hated [them]" (p. 4). Significantly, this idea is confirmed through the villagers' intrusion and violation of the house, which, to many critics, resembles a "witch-hunt." The fire,

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although it demolishes the Blackwood patriarchal presence of her father, allows another terrifying intrusion from "other fathers" (Carpenter, 1984, p.35), which appears as a rescue at first, before quickly changes to a violent vandalization of the Blackwood property and turns it to a sight of "ugliness and ruin and shame" (p. 113).

Notably, the sisters' relationship with the villagers has been sickening from the beginning. The villager's unkindness towards Constance reasonably stems from her negative reputation from her crime. On the other hand, Merricat, a survivor who lives harmoniously with a murderer, also becomes a target of the villager's despise. The grocery and Stella's are usually not too unbearable compared to "the grinning and gesturing" of "the gossiping" village men and their watchful gazes, especially of Jim Donell, who seems to hold a strong grudge towards the Blackwood since they close off the path. He taunts her with ugly sarcasm, asking if they are finally moving away because "there will not be any peace around" unless the sisters abandon their wealth and leave (p. 15). Even the children make up nasty rhymes about the Blackwood poisoning, "shrieking and shouting" it whenever they see Merricat's face (p. 17). Considering these traumatic experiences, Merricat's belief that "the people of the village have always hated us" is relatively reasonable (p. 4).

Even after the fire, the patriarchal oppression continues in a "disguised" form as the food offerings. Their acts of self-repentance in which they offer food to the sisters do not happen out of guilt for their wrongdoings. The villagers express their “kindness” out of their superiority to the Blackwood women. Therefore, as a representation of social convention, they feel responsible for the inferior, especially the two poor women who lock themselves in the house out of fear. They are satisfied with the destruction of the Blackwood house. Perhaps they feel justified to have the house burnt down and vandalized because it is a more "proper" punishment for a mass murderer than to have her pridefully live a fancy life in a big mansion. Even their elite friends, especially the Clarkes and Dr. Levy, come around and demand Constance and Merricat to show their faces, claiming they are "worried" about their physical conditions. These acts of "kindness" and offer to take the sisters home; however, their choices of words sound more like threats than persuasions; for example, "we are not going to keep coming ... there is a limit to how much friends can take," or, "one of these days you're going to need help. you’ll be sick, or hurt. you’ll need help” (p. 129). This scene shows the men’s irritations towards women’s exclusive relationship, which they cannot keep under surveillance.

The three patriarchal threats which keep returning and confronting the women to submission fail at their task. Constance, almost drawn into submitting to patriarchal domination through a marriage with Charles, is pulled back into Merricat's comforting embrace. They "lock [themselves] in more securely than ever" in the house and barricade doors and windows to keep themselves safe against the world. Whether this sacrifice is worthy or not, the sisters have never been this “happy” (p. 145). Constance and Merricat disguise themselves as "ghosts" and haunt the ruin of their family house. Being unseen and unheard of, the sisters soon become a "legend." They have received a reputation of child-eating witches, which they happily accept. Because only through their "ghostly" existence would they be allowed to keep their sacred sisterly bonding which is a taboo to the male-dominated society that demands women to behave.

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3.2 Female Space in Blackwood House

In *Castle*, Jackson portrays women's rebellion against patriarchal power by exhibiting an extreme situation in which daughters commit patricide and mass murder to seek a little space of their own. As a woman, Constance and Merricat would never be able to "own" anywhere. The Rochester house, which should have "rightfully" belonged to Constance, will never be hers. The same goes for the Blackwood house, which will be passed down not to the oldest daughter but the youngest son. Therefore, the only way to construct their own space is through eliminating the root of their problem – the patriarchal convention – and reconstructing their own space where they live by their own rules and which rightfully belongs to them.

The Blackwood house is a gothic setting – separated from others and in isolation. Unlike Hill House, where every angle is crooked and badly shaped, the Blackwood house has its “roof pointed firmly against the sky, and the walls met one another compactly, and the windows shone darkly” (p. 97). It threatens and irritates the villagers because it symbolizes the Blackwood legacy. Therefore, as a heritage that carries Blackwood's history of wealth and privilege, the agency over the Blackwood mansion is not transferred to the Blackwood sisters after the death of their parents. Instead, the sisters continue to live a quiet and happy life in isolation because they are protected and secured within the legacy of the Blackwood – the product of the patriarchal system they try to overthrow. The sisters, too, seem to sense the lingering presence of the patriarchal force that overtakes almost an entire house, leaving Constance and Merricat a small kitchen and a garden to run around. As Akçil puts it, “the Blackwood house, as Merricat’s (the witch’s) castle, is deranged, just like Hill House” (Akçil, 2019, p. 169). Although it has no strong personalities, Blackwood house is considered by the outsiders "a crazy house" which carries with it a dark history – a tragedy of a mass family murder. Moreover, although the house itself does not appear to possess strong characteristics like Hill House, it is still worthy of discussion as a place that harbors women's oppressive history, especially of Constance and Merricat, in the form of childhood maltreatment and gendered oppression by patriarchal power.

The concept of space in *Castle* is quite complex because there is a reversal of power hierarchy which transformed and redefined from a patriarchal space to a female space. After the power hierarchy is reversed, the space represents women's self-sufficiency, a threat to a male-dominated society. A picture of two unmarried sisters living happily together in a secluded mansion is an eye-sore to society as a whole. Compared to Eleanor and Theodora, who try to create "female space" in Hill House as "outsiders," Merricat and Constance already have some agency over the Blackwood house. Because "…almost all of [their] life was lived toward the back of the house, on the lawn and the garden where no one else ever came," the sisters become overly familiar with the place (p. 20). Therefore, they tend to form "[an] emotional bond with the physical home structure" that they fail to "articulate properly or coherently since they lack a community of peers outside" of their space (Dennis, 2014, p. 29).

However, because Constance and Merricat are raised and oppressed differently, their ways of constructing female space are portrayed differently. While

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an older sister like Constance is assigned an important task – a full responsibility on feeding the whole family, a middle child like Merricat is completely neglected and often wrongly punished. In Constance's case, her construction of female space is associated with her feminine role and her familiarity with "the back of the house." As previously mentioned, Constance spends most of her life dedicated to the kitchen and garden to the point that she appears more like a "slave" than another Blackwood family member. However, by adopting a role of a food provider, she also gains some authority over the space she occupies while submitting to this idealistic female role and following the rules of gendered oppression. In Muñoz-González's observation, "food gives Constance a rightful place in the long genealogy of Blackwood's women […] she is the owner of the kitchen" (Muñoz-González, 2018, p. 89). Julian even points out Constance's hidden power over the domestic sphere, claiming that it does not make sense for Constance to use arsenic because her garden is full of poisonous plants, which could always be used if she wants to. His statement shows how crucial Constance's position in the family is; she has everyone's life and death in her hands.

In Merricat's case, the attempts to seek female space and preserve it is presented through her uncanny rituals and "the moon." According to Joyce Carol Oates, "witchcraft is a primitive attempt at science; an attempt to assert power by the powerless" (Jackson, 1962, p. 156). Having been neglected and maltreated throughout her childhood, Merricat expresses her desperation for power and the fear of losing security and control through her use of magic and superstitions. Critics often associate Merricat's wickedness to "witchcraft" because her characteristics fit in a stereotype of a (young) witch with a black cat who lives solitarily in a castle and obsesses with magical rituals. Her daily routine is primarily linked to witchcraft practices which include acts of burying and nailing valuables to the trees:

> "All our land was enriched with my treasures buried in it, thickly inhabited just below the surface with my marbles and my teeth and my colored stones, all perhaps turned to jewels by now, held together under the ground in a powerful, taut web which never loosened, but held fast to guard us" (p. 41).

In Merricat's understanding, piles of things she bury create an invisible barrier that keeps them both secure "inside." This passage reveals her unconventional practices and rituals due to the girl's desperation to protect herself, her sister, and the little space they have for themselves. Although her magical practices are mostly "ineffective" (because what guards the Blackwood house and the two of them is the Blackwood legacy and wealth), Carpenter argues that "her magic words and charms constitute attempts to gain power over a world in which, first as the second girl child in a patriarchal family and then as a grown woman in a patriarchal society, she is essentially powerless" (Carpenter, 1984, p. 34). Therefore, Merricat is not merely an aggressive young girl with twisted sensibility but a woman with a strong desire to protect herself and rebel against conventions that control and restrict her.

The description of the moon sounds peaceful, solitary, and somewhat mythical. There is a little blue house with a garden outside where the sisters can have lunch together (p. 15). It is illustrated as a place with "very bright, and odd colors" where they wear "feathers" in their hair and have "rubies" on their hands (p. 60). The land is also described as abundant and secure:

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> "On the moon, we have everything. Lettuce, and pumpkin pie and *Amanita phalloides*. We have cat-furred plants and horses dancing with their wings. All the locks are solid and tight, and there are no ghosts. On the moon, Uncle Julian would be well and the sun would shine every day. You would wear our mother's pearls and sing, and the sun would shine all the time" (p. 75).

By mentioning "locks" and "ghosts," Merricat emphasizes Charles's intrusion into the Blackwood house, significantly disrupting the sisters' ongoing relationship. Her remark reveals her insecurity and fear for "exposure"; on the other hand, the moon is portrayed as a "utopia" – a secure space that can secure them from outside threats.

Whenever Merricat is confronted with uncontrolled or threatening situations, "the moon" is the first thing that comes to her mind. When confronted by the villagers' hostility, Merricat resides in her imaginary space – "the moon" – where she feels most secure. The simplest explanation for the moon's existence is Merricat's self-defense mechanism to distract herself from traumatizing experiences. At the same time, this imagined space also represents women's attempt to rebel against oppression. Instead of bowing her head and accepting people's criticisms, she refuses to listen to them, claiming she does not understand their language. On the moon where they speak "a soft, liquid tongue, and sang in starlight, looking down on the dead dried world," Merricat imagines herself above other earthly creatures where she can observe but never be seen or found by others (p. 16). The denial of language shows the rejection of conventions within this imagined space. Merricat does not simply rebel against conventions but also constructs another place where she lives according to her own rules.

The imaginary "moon" becomes literal as soon as the Blackwood house falls into destruction. At first, one might understand that Merricat only refers to the hideaway as "the moon," but apparently, the term exclusively refers to "the kitchen" where the sisters keep barricaded from the outside world. The fire symbolically destroys the late Blackwood authority and leaves the throne available for the sisters to take over. Therefore, in Merricat's perspective, the house is not only gone but is transformed into "a castle, turreted and open to the sky" (p. 120). The Blackwood house becomes "a house which no longer existed and had no connection with the house where [they] lived now, and where [they] were very happy" (p. 145). Anderson points out that this transformation does not only signify the sister's severed connection from "the traditional marriage plot but from the world itself" This out-worldly space allows Merricat and Constance to create "a new order" which only the two of them are permitted (Anderson, 1991, p. 182).

The merging between imagined and real space symbolizes the bond between sisters, which has become Constance's "kitchen," and Merricat's "moon" finally interchanges and transforms into a whole new space, ideally in separation from the outside world. Unlike Eleanor, Merricat can connect with her imaginary space, "the moon," to the real one. While Eleanor has to sacrifice her life to enter into her imaginary space, Merricat's "moon" can finally connect with a literal space, creating a secure female sphere for herself and Constance where their bond becomes genuinely inseparable.

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3.3 Sisterhood between Merricat and Constance Blackwood

While the relationship between Eleanor and Theodora in *Hill House* ends in despair and separation, Merricat and Constance in *Castle* successfully withstand the patriarchal domination and finally construct a female space for themselves. A significant contribution to a successful bonding between Merricat and Constance is undoubtedly the dynamic of their co-dependent and shared-dominant relationship. While Constance takes a role of a house-maker and fulfills Merricat's needs for maternal comfort and companionship, Merricat becomes her guardian and takes responsibility for business outside of the home. Their power and authority over each other depending on the space they occupy. Within the home, specifically the kitchen, there are certain rules Constance sets for Merricat to follow. This observation is proven by Merricat's occasional reminders of what she is allowed or not allowed to do. For instance, she is not allowed to prepare food nor gather mushrooms (p. 20); she is also restricted from entering Uncle Julian's room (p. 42). These rules are the tool to keep the sisters' relationship harmonious and "safe."

On the other hand, Constance's authority in the Blackwood house is toned down by Merricat's ability to go outside. The outside of the house is forbidden for Constance due to her mental condition called "agoraphobia," which causes anxiety every time she leaves the estate. Specifically, Constance becomes completely weak and helpless when confronted by strange "gazes" from the outsiders. Seeing a wave of people gathering around their house, she keeps her eyes tightly shut and constantly asks Merricat, "Can they see me … is anyone looking?" (p. 103) while having "her hands over her eyes" and "her face" (p. 106). The description of this specific scene highlights how Constance's "symptom" affects her and possibly suggests Constance's fear of being the "object of the gaze" since women are often objectified and sexualized through a patriarchal lens. Ironically, while Constance is frightened by the patriarchal threat from the outside, she becomes a victim of another patriarchal force within the home, which entraps and controls her within. Helen Clarke misunderstands Constance's "agoraphobia" to be "a penance" for the family murder and believes the guilt prevents Constance from leaving the estate, but this condition metaphorically represents women's attachment to domestic space. Constance's condition symbolizes how a women's identity is usually tied to her home. Jackson treats this ideology literally as a symptom which is also known as a "female symptom."

Therefore, the family clearly needs to rely on Merricat to get groceries from the village because Uncle Julian cannot, and Constance will not. In this light, Merricat is the only connection the family has to the world. Merricat is also aware of this advantage, and she likes to be a "necessity" in her sister's life. This observation rouses critics' curiosity and leads to the discussion of the possibility that Constance is entrapped and victimized by her younger sister Merricat. Through the "cracks" of Merricat's narrative, Constance shows some struggles to get away from this obsessive and controlling relationship. In her theatre journal, Chirico explains how Adam Bock's version of *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* highlights Merricat's psychotic obsession with her sister more clearly. In Bock's play, "liberation came in the form of Cousin Charles … [whose] arrival injected a bit of normalcy into the macabre Blackwood nightmare." In this light, the play shows another "reality" which reveals Constance to be the victim of Merricat's child-play. She is portrayed as a helpless,

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fearful sister who must be rescued by a man while bearing with her psychotic sister's victimization. In another essay by Michelle Caroline Jager, Merricat is seen as a "deluded and power-hungry sister" (Jager, 2017, p. 34). She explains that "Merricat considers Constance subordinate to her will." Therefore, when she notices that Constance's "sympathy" starts to shift, Merricat reminds herself not to get angry with Constance or else "she might very well be lost" (p. 79). Jager points out the ambiguity in this particular passage and raises the question of whether Merricat is afraid she might slip and kill her sister like she once did to the whole Blackwood family.

I differ that this specific scene, which, as Jager claims, implies Merricat's threat towards Constance, actually shows Merricat's genuine love and respect towards Constance. During this emotional outbreak, Merricat "could not allow [herself] to be angry" with Constance because it is the time her sister needs "guarding" more than ever (p. 79). Merricat is very persistent with her duty, always to keep her sister secure and never risk having their bond destroyed. It is certain that "the affectionate attachment between the sisters is mutual" (Rubenstein, 1996, p. 321). Merricat's honest narrative reveals her genuine feelings towards her sister, both as a loyal companion and a sanctuary of hope, which Constance gives in return. Despite their outward differences, the rebellious Merricat and the docile Constance reflect each other's "unconscious wishes." While Merricat treats Constance like a mother, Constance "secretly delights in Merricat's dissident personality" (Akçil, 2019, p. 36).

Constance's caring and nurturing gestures are usually portrayed through "food offerings." For example, when young Merricat is sent to bed without supper, Constance secretly takes food to her room and feeds her younger sister. Daily, she also provides and cooks Merricat's favorite dishes. Although these actions seem insignificant, "food-as-love" is regularly used as a "medium" to convey "disinterested sisterhood, sibling love, altruistic caring." In Merricat's understanding, food "means to convey love, care, and worship and to mark the privileged situation of the person that receives the food from the others." Undoubtedly, when Constance uses the same gesture towards Charles to make him feel "welcome," Merricat is triggered by the thought that this maternal love is once again shifting away from her (Muñoz González, 2018, p. 87-89).

On the other hand, Merricat's idealization of her sister starts in childhood. She fantasizes about Constance as a "fairy princess" and, perhaps, places herself in a spot of her sister's "guardian" (p. 28). The seriousness and devotion of Merricat's feelings towards her sister are evident in her missions to never have Constance "frightened." Merricat's bravery to stand against patriarchal oppression and protect her sister is portrayed repeatedly throughout the book. Although she is not fond of the village herself (as described by her multiple attempts to ignore people's meanness and hostility directed at her), she takes up a responsibility to get groceries by herself so that Constance can stay well and safe at home. Even during the purge, when she is terrified, almost out-of-wit, she courageously protects Constance with all her might and safely escorts her to the hideaway. These acts of boldness are usually confused with being "male-identified" traits and assume that Merricat takes the role of Constance's partner. Instead, I argue that there are pieces of evidence of Merricat's devotion to her sister and only family.

In my opinion, identifying Merricat's characteristics as "male" rather than calling it "female power" is problematic because categorizing and assigning

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characters specific gender roles reproduce gender stereotypes that women should only be "feminine." Some critics claim that Merricat adopts male-identified characteristics because her responsibilities are usually considered "men's work." For instance, Darryl Hattenhauer claims that "Merricat is generally more male-identified, especially when compared to Constance, who plays a role of a housemistress and whose duties as a food-provider and a homemaker are female-identified (Hattenhauer, 2003, p. 177). Joyce Carol Oates calls the sister's ambiguous relationship "a quasi-spiritual-incestuous bond," adding a tabooed and homosexual undertone of this relationship (Jackson, 1962, p. 155). Perhaps, a situation, like a sudden attraction between Eleanor and Theodora, who are total strangers to each other, can be challenging to understand why they can become attracted to one another so quickly. However, in the case of Constance and Merricat, it is apparent that the two sisters are bonded by a primary sisterly bond and share a history of oppression by the same oppressor. These factors significantly contribute to the construction of their exceptional relationship.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, Merricat and Constance are bound by the sibling bond between sisters, which cannot be terminated. The bond allows them to understand and sympathize with each other more than any other person who does not share the same bond possibly could. In Sullivan's words, the sibling bond is "the first 'we' relationship" and "the first budding of love" since siblings are relatively similar. Moreover, the sibling bond is likely to "accelerate the separation from the mother and helps to overcome the illusion of symbiotic oneness with mother" (Woodrow, 2006, p. 22). In *Castle*, the relationship between Merricat and Constance goes beyond a common sisterly bond because it also imitates the mother-daughter relationship. According to Sullivan, an older sister can become "as significant a person in the child's life, as primary caregiver, as the mother/father" and "the bond itself cannot be canceled" (Woodrow, 2006, p. 22). In this light, Constance can be as influential as Mrs. Blackwood. Like Eleanor in *Hill House* seeking maternal comfort in Theodora, Merricat cherishes Constance's motherly gestures towards her.

In this special bonding, Constance fulfills Merricat's desire for maternal comfort perfectly. This attachment is a result of Merricat's traumatic childhood experience of being neglected by her family. As a middle child, she is not as helpful as her older sister nor as necessary as her younger brother. When asked about Merricat, Uncle Julian claims the girl has died of "neglect" in the orphanage and that she is not that important in his book (p. 93). Unlike Eleanor, whose attachment to her mother restrain and entrap her forever within a dark and ominous domestic sphere, Merricat is able to liberate herself through the elimination of the "bad" mother and resumes the bond with the "good" mother, which is her older sister Constance (Rubenstein, 1996, p. 320). Constance comes in to ideally fulfill Merricat's lack, tending her with care, feeding, and spoiling her. Therefore, she becomes "the most precious person in [Merricat's] world, always" (p. 20).

According to Lynette Carpenter, "Merricat and Constance are seen as witches because they choose to live outside the boundaries of patriarchal society, because they choose to live with women rather than with men, and because they have challenged masculine power directly by poisoning" (Carpenter, 1984, p. 204). As it turns out, both Constance and Merricat successfully withstand and wad off the patriarchal threats which oppress and confine them to gendered spheres and conventions. They lock themselves securely together within a newly-constructed

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utopia – a combination of the kitchen and the moon – and lead perfectly "happy" lives according to their new routines. In exchange for security, the sisters happily sacrifice their former identities as "the Blackwood women" and become two ghosts that haunt the Blackwood ruins. Although they are still restricted to a small space, their transformation allows them to invent their own space and have full control. Importantly, through portraying a lasting and successful bond between Constance and Merricat, Jackson emphasizes the significance of female bonding, constructed with love and understanding, as a significant contribution to women's resistance against patriarchal oppression. Compared to the outcome of Eleanor's and Theodora's relationship in *Hill House*, it is safe to say that Jackson's last novel, *Castle* gives a more positive consequence, perhaps to welcome a women's liberation movement which is to come in the 1960s and '70s.

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CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSION

In her last two novels, Shirley Jackson presents the importance of female bonding to resist and rebel against patriarchal oppression through different outcomes of two women's relationships. Both novels were written in the 1950s, a period in which women were used as a tool to exercise national propaganda and promote its idealistic family value called "nuclear family." Jackson uses gothic and fantastic elements to highlight the issue of postwar American women's lives and explores their fears and desires for companionship, being restricted within the domestic sphere and feminine roles, the struggle the author herself also experiences in her womanhood.

In Chapter Two, an investigation is taken on *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), which portrays a failed female bond caused by an intervention of patriarchal force, represented by a gothic setting Hill House. The bond between the two women is formed to protect themselves from the threats of Hill House, which has a long history of controlling and dominating women who live in it. In this attempt, however, Eleanor develops a desire to form a forever bond, possibly as a recreation of the primary bond shared with her mother. Eleanor's fantasy is eagerly responded to by Hill House, leading to a failing female bond and the death of the protagonist.

Jackson uses a love-triangle trope to empower the female bond between Eleanor and Theodora. Instead of recreating a stereotypical female rivalry, the author embraces female affection by creating ambiguity in the women's relationship. Although Eleanor appears attracted to Luke, it is only a short-lived feeling compared to her lasting affection for Theodora, expressed as "love." The word "cousins" they use to define their relationship perfectly describes the indescribable friendship between women. Moreover, Jackson uses supernatural elements such as "psychic ability" to highlight and emphasize women's "private space," constructed out of the conventional realm. This psychic power allows Theodora and Eleanor to naturally understand and empathize with each other more than other characters do without communicating by words. However, as "outsiders" of Hill House, both Eleanor and Theodora have no agency over the space at all; instead, they fall under the control of the space themselves.

Hill House is portrayed as an "antagonistic" character in this novel. The place symbolizes not the mother but "the Father" - a paternal force dominating and controlling its female inhabitants. While its creator Hugh Crain intends to build this house to be a safe space - a shelter to protect his women (wives and daughters) from the cruel and sinful world - he repeats and reproduces the patriarchal propaganda which uses the same ideology that views women as innocent and fragile beings to chain them to the domestic sphere and to keep away from the world. In this light, Hill House is depicted not as a Garden of Eden but a place of female repression. The house's history of female repression can be observed from similarities between Sophia Crain and Eleanor Vance, who share similar fates; despite lacking maternal love, they are deprived of freedom and entrapped within the domestic sphere operated by patriarchal force.

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As presented in the novel, by using a psychoanalytic perspective, Eleanor has conflicting feelings towards her mother: wanting to break away, yet longing for maternal comfort and attachment. This maternal issue has a lasting impact on Eleanor's internal conflicts, which results in her longing for companionship as a replacement for the primary mother-child bond, and prevents her from constructing her selfhood. Furthermore, this clinging attachment to her mother is used to Hill House's manipulation to seduce and devour its targeted victim.

Despite Theodora's attempts to help Eleanor reconstruct her identity and redefine the concept of the mother-daughter relationship, Eleanor is still deluded by Hill House's "absolute reality," which uses her mother-issue against her and erases her existence from every guest's attention, including Theodora's. During a confrontation between Eleanor and Theodora, the latter states that, to her, "Hill House is not forever" (p. 209). This announcement highlights the women's different standpoints and goals. While Eleanor seeks a forever home and a faithful companionship, Theodora already has those available at "home" - back in the apartment she shares with her "roommate." Although Theodora's attempts to help Eleanor gain self-sufficiency and self-liberation appear sincere enough, their relationship cannot proceed any further due to Eleanor's obsession with her fantasy, especially to re-establish the bond with the mother - a task Theodora refuses to fulfill. Apparently, Eleanor and Theodora do not share the same level of determination to resist the patriarchal threat: their "devotion" towards one another is simply "not mutual."

In comparison to the previous novel, Chapter Three focuses on a successful female bonding between Merricat and Constance in Jackson's final novel *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962), which highlights the idea of women's self-sufficiency and the importance of sisterhood against patriarchal oppression. Unlike Eleanor and Theodora in *Hill House*, the Blackwood sisters can withstand the patriarchal threats and maintain their female space within the Blackwood mansion.

In *Castle*, patriarchal oppressions come in various forms, representing the Father's law and social conventions that threaten the sisters to submit to their domination and lives by the "rules." The first patriarchal threat takes the form of childhood maltreatment and abuse against children and women in the Blackwood family. The sisters are treated oppositely: while Merricat is neglected and unloved, Constance is raised as a dutiful work slave to take full responsibility for feeding the whole family. Along this line, Merricat develops uncanny and aggressive behaviors, considering her acts of "rebellion," and Constance becomes an embodiment of a typical middle-class housewife by choicelessly inheriting the Blackwood women's legacy. To liberate themselves, Merricat and Constance assert their power through "violence" to destroy the patriarchal order and hierarchy in the family. Therefore, the death of the Blackwood signifies the fall of a patriarchal microcosm that dominates Merricat and Constance. The family murder marks the sisters' first rebellion against patriarchal control and its abusive authority, represented by their parents Mr. and Mrs. Blackwood.

A second threat comes in the form of love and marriage. Similar to the character Luke in *Hill House*, Cousin Charles is portrayed as an "intruder" in the sisters' private space and a threat to female bonding. He responds to Constance's fantasy, fulfilling her role of a housewife by making her a new "Mrs. Blackwood." However, with Merricat's determination to rescue her sister and put things back into

"order," she again uses "violence" - a fire - to drive Charles, who attempts to reestablish the patriarchal system within the house. In exchange for Charles's banishment, the house that symbolizes the Blackwood's legacy collapses, with the sisters "exposed" to the world without shelter, allowing another patriarchal threat to invade this female territory in the form of the villagers who intrude and vandalize the Blackwood house.

The patriarchal fear of women's subjectivity and self-sufficiency is presented through the villager's hostility and violence towards Merricat and Constance. They have "hated" the Blackwood sisters from the beginning and would verbally assault the girls, especially Merricat, who has to get groceries from the village, whenever they get the chance. Even after the fire, their attitude towards Merricat and Constance does not change because of guilt or sympathy, merely because they are now superior to the two women who hide in the haunted ruins.

Undeniably, the construction of female space plays a significant role in women's rebellion against patriarchal oppression. In 1950s America and most cultures, a family's fortune is usually passed down to a son rather than a daughter. Therefore, to have a place of their own, the sisters have to destroy the root of their problem: the patriarchal hierarchy in the family. By murdering their parents, the power hierarchy is transformed and redefined into a female space. In contrast to Eleanor and Theodora, who are the "outsiders" in Hill House and have no history or connection to the place, it is essential to note that Constance and Merricat are "insiders" in the Blackwood house, especially the kitchen and the garden. Constance's construction of female space is strongly associated with her feminine role and her familiarity with "the back of the house," which makes her "the owner of the kitchen" rather than a "slave." On the other hand, Merricat constructs her female space through uncanny rituals and imagined space, "the moon." Unlike Eleanor, who has to exchange her life to enter her imaginary space, Merricat's "moon" becomes literal and interchanges with the real space "the kitchen." The merging between the imagined and the real space signifies the sister's success in constructing a female space and their bond, which has become truly inseparable

Most importantly, the affection between Merricat and Constance is "mutual." Constance expresses her love for Merricat through food-offering, Merricat shows her adoration for Constance through her devotion to keeping her sister "secure" from outside threats. From a psychoanalytic perspective, it is apparent that their relationship resembles a bond between mother and daughter. However, unlike Eleanor, whose desire is turned down by Theodora, Merricat's lack of maternal love is fulfilled by Constance, who willingly becomes her surrogate mother and resumes the mother-daughter suspended bond. As it turns out, the three patriarchal threats ultimately fail to destroy the bond between Merricat and Constance and, ironically, end up strengthening it. The bond between Merricat and Constance flourish under the shadow of their "ghostly" existence, having to remain unseen and unheard of by the world.

Shirley Jackson's last two novels consist of similar elements: gothic setting, powerful mother figure, patriarchal oppression, and most importantly, female bonding. Although the relationship between Eleanor and Theodora fails to carry through, the sisterly bond between Merricat and Constance shows a quite satisfying outcome. The Blackwood women's successful attempt to withstand the patriarchal

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threats shows the importance of women's relationship to rebel against patriarchal oppression. Jackson realistically projects a life of two women who decide to become "ghosts" and live outside of norms. In the 1950s, when women's identity was still firmly attached to the home and devoted to family values, "invisibility" seemed to be the safest solution to survive and gain self-sufficiency.

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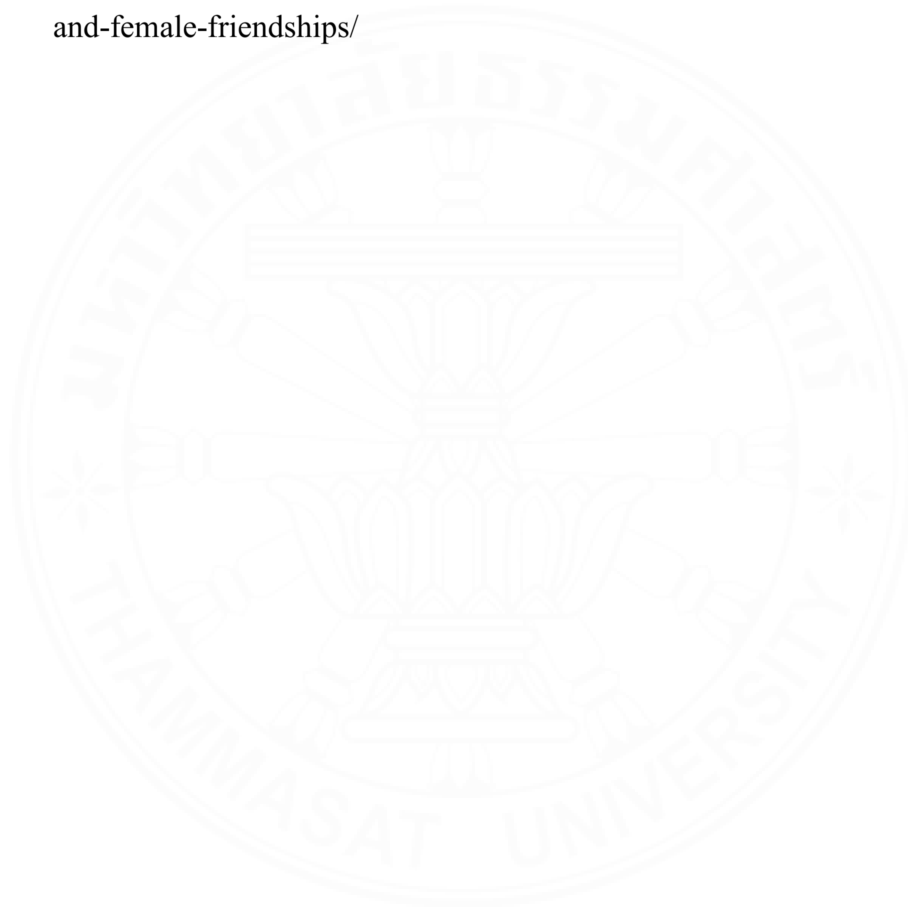

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