

ESCAPING INTO THE WORLD OF FANTASY: A STUDY OF SHIRLEY JACKSON'S *HANGSMAN AND WE HAVE ALWAYS LIVED IN CASTLE*

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Abstract

Feminist perspective in the works of Shirley Jackson is well surfaced and self-reflective but the psychological perspective embedded in her works impels curious and creative mind to take an explorative insight. This article intends to study men's psychological perspective wherein an attempt will be made to highlight the fact that when Understanding and proper guidance are lacking in there world, people are forced to escape in the world of fantasy or somewhere in the real world.

Paper Identification



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Introduction

Psychoanalytical studies have much affected the study of creative writings by influencing the mode of reading and writing of literary texts because it has presented interdisciplinary perspectives. It has introduced literature in a new course of action by establishing a relationship with psychoanalytical texts

and psychological history. Freud introduces that there are two basic principles that involve all human intentions. When we avoid un-pleasure and want to do only those actions that provide pleasure to us is called "Pleasure Principle". But it's opposite "Reality Principal" permits us to distinguish that pleasure cannot be achieved by the method through which we want to achieve it and encourages us to find another mode of taking pleasure.

The history of escapism is also a series of paradigm changes whereby one dominant frame of reference gives way to another. Before going deep into discussion it is essential to have a look at what escapism is. The answer of this question cannot be encapsulated in a single sentence. Escapism according to The Merriam Webster dictionary is "*habitual diversion of Mind.*" Escapism as by Encyclopedia is "*an inclination to or habit of retreating from unpleasant or unacceptable reality.*" Oxford dictionary defines escapism as "*the tendency to seek distraction and relief from unpleasant realities.*"

Escapism can happen in many forms like physical, emotional and mental escape to another realm. Escapism can be happened in modes of action and a range of places. These modes of escape can take two forms or can be divided into two categories. One

is healthy escapism and other is unhealthy escapism. The main difference between these two categories is the impact of action in long term. Working, reading, traveling, day dreaming, meditation and exercise can be included in healthy escapism. These activities divert oneself from real life and lets the mind expand into a new area. Unhealthy escapism includes drug addiction, suicide, self harm and the blurring of lines between fantasy and reality. In psychological practice this type of behavior is considered as negative coping mechanism.

Healthy escapism helps the individual in providing a relief from daily life in a constructive way. Effective techniques to deal with the harsh realities of life is the way of escape in positive way because it refreshes the mind and prepares oneself to tackle the more difficult task in future.

The idea of escapism is also presented in J.R.R.'s *The Lord of Rings* where its main character repeatedly escapes from dangerous encounters. Tennessee William's *The Glass Menagerie* also presents the theme of resistance. In this novel all characters try to escape from the brutalities of life.

In her article entitled "Different Means of Escape in Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle*" Tanja Cvetkovic focuses on the method by which its main character Joan moves between fantasy and reality. In her article she wants to analyze the relationship between society and self. Joan Foster, the protagonist of this novel, tries to explain herself against her mother's rigid world. Here Joan acknowledges that human requirements are the main factor for their escape into the world of fantasy.

Escape wasn't luxury for them, it was a necessity they had to get it some how. And when they were too tried to invent escapes of their own, mine was available for them at the corner drugstore neatly packaged like the other painkillers (Cvetkovic).

Shirley Hardie Jackson was born in San Francesco in 1916. She was a very prolific writer who composed two memoirs, six novels and 200 short stories. Her first novel *The Road Trough the Wall* which was a semi-autographical account. Her to novel *The Haunting of Hill House* and *Bird's Nest* wer adapted in fills.. She has also contributed in the field of escapist literature. She presented the blending of fantasy and reality in an exceptional way. Her main interest is in the psychological analysis of her characters. She has also made great contribution in gothic fiction. Her fiction mainly deal with the theme of isolation, lack of identity, alienation and man's cruel behaviour towards the man. In his work *The Magic of Shirley Jackson* Stanley Hyman describes:

For her popularity, Shirley Jackson won surprising little recognition. She received no awards or prizes, grants or fellowships: her name was often omitted from list on which it clearly belonged (Hyman).

My present paper will include Shirley Jackson's novels *Hangsman* and *We Have Always Lived in Castle*. Through these novels she wants to depict that when the world of reality doesn't provide sympathy and love the imaginary world offers more sympathy and love. In her works *Hangsman* and *We Have Always Live in Castle* characters are driven into her imaginary world for different factors. All major characters of her works are driven into imaginary world to find true happiness which is not provided in their original world.

In her novel *Hangsman* Shirley Jackson delineates characters in such circumstances that they are alienated and isolated . The main heroine of this novel is Natalie Waite who is seventeen years old. In this novel, she wants to present the idea that when an adolescent is forcefully pushed in an environment which is undesirable and meaningless for him then he will try to take an escape from real world Natalie Waite by creating her world of fantasy, tries to flee

from the pressure and boredom of the real world. In her world of fancy, she tries to reveal her real self. She masquerades but her personality in these dual roles splits. In the realworld, she tries to smother her real self until her submerged instincts break free and create the world of fantasy. Natalie's dual personality creates the world of fantasy with so much interest that she wants it to become her own real world. Natalie has a conversation in her mind. Natalie was invited in a cocktail party arranged by Arnold Waite. She renders between internal conversation with her parents and the imaginary character Tommy. She was fascinated with the secret voice which followed her. She struggles between her inner voice and parents.

Jackson also presents in her novel *Hangman* that the attitude and actions of the children are mainly dependent on the behavior of the parents. Through this novel she tries to present the idea that when the social and moral order is corrupted, it is impossible for the human beings to remain alive. In the end, she rejects both worlds and commits suicide because she knows the reality of the world.

In her novel *We Have Always Lived in Castle* she presents the real meaning to her readers through character of Merricat. Merricat, the protagonist of this novel, takes an escape from her glooming world to isolated world of fantasy that offers her more sympathy and love as compared to the real world. Merricat's main concentration is with keeping her world isolated, safe and secure through the use of arsenic, fire and black magic.

In the opening of this novel Jackson presents that Constance decides to go into the world again. But Merricat who sees Constance's decision as a threat to her private world of fantasy and rejection of herself is frightened especially when their cousin Charles Blackwood comes to stay with them.

Merricat alienation was started from the real world by two different factors: her own family and cruelty of villagers. Family members always quarreled

with family members on trivial matters. Joan Blackwood Merricat's father and Uncle Julian regularly had bitter arguments about their wives petty quarrels. During the meal Merricat was never permitted to sit with her parents but always sat by her sister Constance. She wants that her parents had once said "Marry Katherine, we love you". She was not only prohibited from any association with her parents but she was continually sent to bed without any supper because of her disobedience. When she was sent to bed without dinner Constance her sister who showed sympathy towards Merricat and would creep supper up to her.

Merricat, who rejects the world of her family's pettiness and hate determined to mitigate their dejected existence and commence her own safe existence with Constance. This was all consummated in a peculiarly manner with lump of sugar. When her sister was apprehended she informed to the police that they all warrant to die. Merricat's withdrawal from her real world into her own imaginary world had started. When Constance tells all these to Helen Clarke she said "*A child should be punished for wrong doing, but she should made to feel that she is still loved.*"

Villagers are the another reason that leads Merricat's isolation from the society. The villagers have always despised Merricate's family because they have a big home, money and they made a barrier to keep the villagers out. When Merricat was in an orphanage the people of the village came to their house to steal souvenirs and torment them. After Constance's trial they loose their dogs in the garden and take pictures in front of the house. They would picnic on the front lawn and write their names on the front wall of the house. In this novel Jackson clears that Merricat generates her own fantasy world to escape from the inhumanity of her family and the villagers. Jerry M. Waddle describes.:

The village, symbolic of society, With its dull and deliberate hate, continues to cause

Marricat to seek further alienation and become obsessed with keeping her world, the 'Castle' safe and secure. Marricat hates Tuesdays and Fridays because She has to go into the village for food on those days; the villagers hate her because she always has money to pay for the food (Wadden).

Through the anonymous hate of the people of village Jackson presents a desolate image of the society. The kids of the village despise her because their parents tell them to detest. Marricat reveals her apprehension of this hate when she perceives to herself, while they make fun of her as she is departing from the town that kids could not be so cruel if their elders did not tell them. When Marricate requests Mrs. Harries, the shopkeeper to make the children stop taunting. Mrs. Harris says to them "Don't call no lady names", and after that she and children all laugh. She describes :

I always stood perfectly straight and stiff when the children come close, because I was afraid of them. I was afraid that they might touch me and the mothers would come at me like a flock of talented hawks that was that was always the picture I had in my mind (Jackson7).

Merricat's fear of her cousin is that he will destroy their world. She cleans the thing her cousin touches in venture to refine . We represents a threat to her world Marricat like the main character of her novel *Hill House* would have no space to go if anything happens to her existing world; so, like the protagonist of *Hill House* she must preserve and protect it. When Constance starts to say 'We' referring to Charles and herself Marricat thinks that something is wrong. She must do something to preserve her world. As a result she burns her house and purify her world of Charles.

Through this novel Jackson presents the people of the town as cruel, malicious and selfish. They have no emotions other than avarice. Those characters who

try to find safety and refuge to Jackson's real world and always disheartened because her real world always offers only the poison of hate and cruelty. So this is the main factor that her characters think that compassion and love must be found in alienated world of fantasy and castle of imagination. So Marricat starts to live in the imaginary world that is castle like house. She sometimes starts live on the moon in her imagination and feels life better on moon.

I like my house on the moon, and I put a fireplace in it and a garden outside and I was going to have lunch outside in my garden on the moon. Things on the moon were very bright, and add colours; my little house would be blue (Jackson 15)

Through her novels *Hangsman* and *We Have Always Lived in Castle* Jackson wants to present the picture of the 20th century. In these novels she portrays an unpleasant world. In these works she tries to portray man's inhumanity towards man, the cruelty of society and detachment of parents with their children. If the people find love and happiness in their real world they can save from the escape in the fantasy world. Undoubtedly understanding, proper guidance, love, motivation from the family and society can save the life of man from becoming so tiresome and monotonous. To save this technologically advancing world from activities like violence, envy as well as unethical activities require a culture filled with understanding and love.

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