A FEMALE FIGHT, FRIGHT, AND FATALE: SURPLUS REPRESSION AND GENDER

DYNAMICS OF WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY HORROR LITERATURE

by

Michelle Casey Cockrum

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Thesis Advisory: Jamie L. McDaniel

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Jamie McDaniel   4/22/24

Dr. Jamie McDaniel
Thesis Chair

Date

Amanda Kellogg   4/22/24

Dr. Amanda Kellogg
Committee Member

Date

Michele Ren   4/22/24

Dr. Michele Ren
Committee Member

Date

ABSTRACT

I explore the neglected impact of the cultural collective as it influences female characters in horror and discuss societal influence upon atypical expressions of gender, the violent results determined through social value and complacency, and the formation of heroines and villains in horror as defined by cultural constructs. My main framework includes such theorists as Herbert Marcuse, Judith Butler, and Robin Wood who each expound upon and implement aspects of Freudian psychoanalysis which focus less upon the sexual identity of victims in favor of focusing upon the primal and cultural constructs under which identities form.

I use the theoretical framework provided by Marcuse, Wood, and Kristeva to explore three contemporary horror texts with female protagonists. These works include *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson, *A Certain Hunger* by Chelsea Summers*,* and *The Final Girl Support Group* by Grady Hendrix. I discuss the separate aspects of surplus repression and social otherization while positing a new concept which expounds upon Marcuse's work. I establish the expression of revolutionary surplus repression through the "final girl" in *The Final Girl Support Group*. Then I demonstrate the cultural impact of repression on gender performativity as it forms into neurotic surplus repression in *The Haunting of Hill House*. Finally, I posit the concept of absence repression as it demonstrates itself through psychopathy and the inability to form surplus repression in *A Certain Hunger*.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to all the bad ass women, past, present, and future, who've ever been
called crazy, psychotic, or cold-hearted for being themselves.

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Dynamics of Women in Contemporary Horror Literature

William Friedkin's adaption of William Peter Blatty's novel *The Exorcist* follows the story of twelve-year-old Regan MacNeil's decent into demonic possession. The movie depicts the child juggling the impacts of divorce, the onset of puberty, and the experiences of having a single mother. Regan's mother, Chris MacNeil, openly describes herself as an atheist, raising Regan outside the bounds of religion in the 1970s. The pair move to Washington, D.C. as Chris prepares to star in a film directed by her friend Burke Dennings. The film suggests Chris's lack of domesticity, particularly as the American religious prescribes it, leads to Regan's fortuitous encounter with a Ouija board with which she meets Captain Howdy, the demon Pazuzu's alias. Pazuzu soon possesses the child implicitly blamed on her mother's neglect. Regan's possession leads to erratic behavior, forcing Chris to turn first to science and then to Catholic Church when all secular avenues fail. The film introduces Damien Karras, a Jesuit psychiatrist struggling with his faith and believing that exorcism stands as the ultimate proof of the existence of God.

Many perceive *The Exorcist* as Father Karras's redemption story with Pazuzu using Regan as a form of collateral damage in pursuit of a battle between good and evil. Audiences focus on Karras's restoration of faith and his sacrificial death in exorcizing Regan as the focal point of the story, trivializing the trauma faced by Chris and Regan through Karras's redemptive narrative arc. The focus on Father Karras neglects the abject horror of Regan's possession and Chris's distress in watching her child suffer, centering him in a story rife with female trauma. However, in shifting the focus from Karras to the characters of Regan and Chris a new question regarding the narrative forms: What if *The Exorcist* speaks less about the redemption of a

Catholic priest and more about the fear of secular matriarchy and the attempts to repress a young girl entering puberty?

   The Exorcist's release comes on the coattails of Civil Rights Movement alongside second wave feminism which characterized the United States tumultuous entrance into the 1970s. As progressive policies like the legalization of birth control and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 became enshrined in United States law, conservative Americans began to push back culturally and legislatively, eventually leading to Republican control of the 1980s through Regan's presidential era. *The Exorcist* sits squarely between these two periods, presenting a depiction of these fraught social conditions through the possession of a girl's pre-teen's body. The film demonstrates the religious pushback of feminist policies to fearmonger audiences with the "consequential" impacts in deconstructing the nuclear family, matriarchy, and unchecked female puberty. However, in its depiction of female possession, *The Exorcist* inadvertently likewise demonstrates the repressive constraints, and resulting consequences, society places upon female bodies. Regan's possession depicts the horror of the uncontrolled female form entering puberty. The demonic entity works to express the repression of her development, representing the struggle between hierarchal public institutions' desire of control in private, domestic spaces. Regan manifestation of Pazuzu demonstrates patriarchal fear of women living outside the boundaries of masculine control. Father Karras sacrifice presents the Christian, patriarchal repression to sate this masculine fear and reinforce the domination of patriarchal hierarchies through repression of female bodies. *The Exorcist* offers the resulting horrific outcome of marginalized communities who experience a surplus of repression which leaks out in countercultural ways to confront hegemonic values in overcontrolled societies.

This proposed reading of *The Exorcist* illustrates a broad overview I explore further in the subsequent chapters which argue for a cultural explanation in the depiction of women characters and their behaviors in works of horror. Scholars often present repression through psychoanalysis frameworks which individuates characters from their prescribed societies, typically demonstrating symptoms of victimization resulting from an individual's psychological health. These psychoanalytical interpretations isolate cultural impact on the formation of traumatic experiences, social otherization, and repression, relegating responsibility to the individual expressing countercultural values or limiting it within the private, family unit. I aim to present a sociological explanation for repression and its various expression to expand the conversation in spaces scholarship to broaden our understanding of horror fiction and its commentary on social values, the creation of the otherized monster, and perceptions of countercultural in mainstream society.

In conversations about repression, scholars often consider Freudian psychoanalysis as a major key to studying interpretations of gender performativity, particularly when examining the behavior of women characters. Freud perceives repression as a "violent antagonism…aroused to prevent the psychic process in question from reaching consciousness, and it therefore remained unconscious…That pathogenic process which is made evident to us through the resistance, we will name repression" (232). Repression, to Freud, works only in the unconscious id with behaviors "carried out without the knowledge of the ego," often expressing themselves through dreams (232). He relegates repression to behaviors constituting from an "obscure obviously sexual desire" (718) that creates "all psychoneurotic symptom formations" (733). He specifically focuses on the formation of repression in women as "the power which renders it difficult or impossible for the woman…to enjoy unveiled obscenities we call 'repression,'" which "has

shown itself to be the principal factor in the causation of the so-called psychoneuroses" (961). He explains that neuroses (also termed hysteria) for women "lie in this change of the leading zone as well as in the repression of puberty. These determinants are therefore most intimately connected with the nature of femininity" (1817). Repression begins as women develop into sexual beings because "in order to become a woman a new repression is required which abolishes a piece of infantile masculinity, and prepares the woman for the change of the leading genital zones" that develop throughout puberty and, to Freud, during sexual intercourse (1824). Thus, as women enter puberty, they sluff off their remaining relation to masculinity as their erogenous zones moves from their clitoris (infantile masculinity) to their vaginal canal effectively castrating them. Women must repress sexualization of this "infantile masculinity" to truly become women, otherwise a confrontation of identity occurs leading to the further development of neurosis.

Outside of well-known scholars like Robin Means Coleman, most horror academics focus on commonplace Freudian concepts the coincide with his understanding of repression including the id, Oedipal complex, and phallic symbolism, usually disregarding sociological cultural influences upon a character's behavior and representation. Popular academic writers such as Carol Clover, Tony Williams, and Barbara Creed demonstrate this implementation of Freud's theory onto works of horror. This psychoanalytic framework typically individuates characters, separating their experiences from the cultural collective, placing blame upon the victimized who exhibit atypical expression of gender and experience increasingly violent deaths when compared to their socially conventional counterparts.

Carol Clover's depiction of "final girls" (a term she coined) demonstrates these views as she considers the masculinization of "final girls" essential to their survival. She states, "the moment at which the Final Girl is effectively phallicized is the moment that the plot halts and

horror ceases. Day breaks, and the community returns to its normal order" (82). This transformation demonstrates the Final Girl as "a congenial double for the adolescent male" which presents "masculinity in conjunction with a female body…a characterological androgyne" (82, 86). I mean to counter such ideals through presenting three female protagonists, each experiencing vastly different characterizations of horror, yet each otherized due to their confrontation with gender dynamics, mimicking actual experiences of American women. The masculinization and individuation of these characters neglect real life horrors and violent misogyny experienced by women in western culture, denying cultural power and inspiration in their survival.

Similarly to Clover, Barbara Creed uses Freudian concepts in her scholarship to deconstruct horror narratives, presenting the monstrous as it forms in taboo developments of gender and sexuality. Her book *Phallic Panic* explores Freud's concept of the uncanny, repression, and castration. She states that "to take up his place in the symbolic order, man has repressed desires that would otherwise mark him as female, other or animal" (217). However, men who express themselves with feminine or animalistic characteristics develop themselves into the uncanny which "Freud argued, is repression…that which should have remained repressed…but which has come to light" (333). Creed argues the uncanny appears "in relation to repressed infantile complexes such as the castration complex and womb phantasies" (342). The association to the feminine occurs mainly within these "womb phantasies" which appears through a "space that represents repressed uterine memories, intrauterine existence, being buried alive, the female genital organs, the mother's genitals, entrance to the former home or the womb" (368). Thus, the proximity of male characters to domestic spaces or feminine behaviors creates

an uncanny, figure of horror that derives from the inability to repress such domesticated, feminine characteristics.

While Clover presents the "Final Girl" as a masculine androgyne due to her ability to survive and Creed considers the taboo creation of masculine monsters, Tony Williams considers Freud's Oedipal concept in the home and the punishment of disobedience in his article "Trying to Survive on the Darker Side: 1980s Family Horror." Williams delves into family dynamics in which "a parent still commits a brutal, authoritarian act upon a helpless victim" causing "the children [to] become conveniently designated as monsters" as "the family attempts to produce convenient gendered product within capitalist society" (197). He presents the *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise as a narrative that "clearly reveal masochism as a key structure within the patriarchal unconscious, producing generations of victims and future victimizers produced by the family" (204). Williams relates these masochistic family dynamics to "rigid Oedipal narratives" (193) that occur "within the authoritarian bourgeois family, an organization attempting to repress its subjects into being conformist products" (197). Williams reconstitutes child abuse by parental figures as sadomasochistic, presenting a sexual element necessary in maintaining patriarchal hegemonic values.

However, as Williams begins to explore the incursion of authoritarian power structures into domestic spaces to represent repression, he continues to preserve the sexualized framework presented by Freud in the development of repression in horror narratives. Psychoanalysis typically focuses on individualization of development, neglecting cultural impacts on the expression of repression. I explore this neglected impact of the cultural collective as it influences female characters in horror and discuss societal influence upon atypical expressions of gender, the violent results determined through social value and complacency, and the formation of

heroines and villains in horror as defined by cultural constructs. My main framework includes

such theorists as Herbert Marcuse, Judith Butler, and Robin Wood who each expound upon and

implement aspects of Freudian psychoanalysis which focus less upon the sexual identity of

victims in favor of focusing upon the primal and cultural constructs under which identities forms.

My primary theoretical application includes Marcuse's theory of basic and surplus

repression from his work *Eros and Civilization* in which he combines Marxist theory with

psychoanalysis to demonstrate repression as "the modifications of the instincts necessary for the

perpetuation of the human race in civilization" (40). Marcuse moves his theoretical focus from

individual constructs and Oedipal complexes into the sociological realm of public, dominant

power structures and their influence on private, domestic spaces. He posits that increasingly

authoritarian power structures which encroach into individual's domestic environments create

what he defines as surplus repression. Surplus repression forms as "specific interests of

domination introduce additional controls over and above those indispensable for civilized human

association…public control over the individual's private existence" (42). Marcuse suggests

authoritarian environments, which increasingly restrict individual freedoms, result in an

overabundance of repression. Individuals who remain unable to conform to these narrow cultural

constructs build a surplus repression which then manifest in public spaces through atypical social

behavior.

I include horror theorist Robin Wood who expands Marcuse's theory of surplus

repression by defining the otherization of those expressing atypical social behaviors through

neurotic or revolutionary means. He states those deviating from "monogamous, heterosexual,

bourgeois, patriarchal capitalist," norms become "neurotic or…revolutionary" (25). Thus, Wood

suggests otherization occurs from a "bourgeois ideology [which] cannot recognize or accept but

must deal…by rejecting and if possible annihilating [the other], or by rendering it safe and assimilating it, converting it as far as possible into a replica of itself" (27). By combining Marcuse's theory of surplus repression and Wood's understanding of "otherization," I demonstrate a connection between social systems, the formation of repression that reveals itself through neurotic or revolutionary means and present the direct impact of cultural otherization of women in horror literature.

Additionally, in chapters two and three, I include Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity which she details the development of gender culturally and counterculturally, demonstrating the influence of social fashioning on the development (or lack thereof) of neurotic surplus repression. Butler considers gender a performance that works as a tool "of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression" (13-14). The "contestation" she speaks of presents the power of performativity as it works to both "reinscribe the power domains that it resists…that it is compelled both to reiterate and to oppose" (17). Gender performativity presents the hierarchal values in society and their binary opposition which must exist for definitional necessity. Therefore, culturally "normative" performativity must coexist alongside its countercultural counterpart to maintain its existence. I present the dichotomic power of gender performativity as it works to formulate a neurotic surplus repression or hide absence repression as dictated through sociological impressions.

Through the theoretical framework provided by Marcuse, Wood, and Butler, I explore three contemporary horror texts with female protagonists. These works include *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson, *A Certain Hunger* by Chelsea Summers*, and *The Final Girl Support Group* by Grady Hendrix. I discuss separate aspects of surplus repression and social

otherization while positing a new concept which expounds upon Marcuse's work. I establish the expression of revolutionary surplus repression through the "final girl" in *The Final Girl Support Group*. Then I demonstrate the cultural impact of repression on gender performativity as it forms into neurotic surplus repression in *The Haunting of Hill House*. Finally, I posit a new concept I term absence repression as it demonstrates itself through psychopathy and the inability to form surplus repression in *A Certain Hunger*.

Chapter One spotlights revolutionary surplus repression in Grady Hendrix's *The Final Girl Support Group.* I examine scholarship on final girls in horror and challenge psychoanalytic readings of them to provide a new cultural explanation for such archetypes. I investigate the relationship between the characters in *The Final Girl Support Group*, each representing final girls from popular horror films such as *Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Friday the 13th, Halloween, Silent Night Deadly Night, A Nightmare on Elm Street,* and *Scream*, to demonstrate the "final girl" archetypes as survivors of western misogyny. I establish their continued survival as revolutionary as they subvert social expectations of obedience to men in patriarchal societies while strongly opposing scholarship which masculinize or separate these characters from female cultural spaces.

I then move to discuss neurotic surplus repression in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* in Chapter Two. I demonstrate the protagonist's, Eleanor Vance, development and expression of neurotic (hysteria) surplus repression through examining her relationships with various other guests of Hill House, especially through her sexual attraction towards Theodora, Dr. Montague's infantilization of her character, and the metaphorical binary of patriarchy and matriarchy presented in Hill House. I define Eleanor's cultural otherization through Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity to depict the character's refutation of accepted social

expressions of gender performativity and the rejection of her peers which leads to a development of neurosis.

Finally, I work to forward Marcuse's theory of surplus repression by coining a new term called absence repression in Chelsea Summers's *A Certain Hunger*. I use the term absence to examine psychopathy broadly and in consideration of Dorothy Daniels, the serial killer and cannibal protagonist in *A Certain Hunger*. I establish Daniels's inability to develop surplus repression due to her innate lack of empathy, self-consciousness, and inability to feel guilt and other typical emotional expressions towards other people. Due to these features of character, alongside her ability to escape capture through gender performativity, Daniels remains unable to form neurotic or revolutionary surplus repression, shaping her identity regularly to mirror the culture surrounding her. However, Daniels still faces otherization as her crimes become public knowledge. I demonstrate how this otherization stems from public perception of Daniels's crime and her gender, including scholarship that discusses the phenomena of women spectacles in the true crime genre.

Through the exploration of *Final Girl Support Group*, *The Haunting of Hill House*, and *A Certain Hunger*, I hope to challenge horror scholars' fascination with Freudian psychoanalysis in efforts to consider other theories which expound, forward, and transform Freud's work. Similarly, I hope to present horror as a genre that criticizes dominant power structures which victimize the marginalized in American society. I desire to illustrate the undue repressive control women experience in the United States. I want to contextualize their behaviors as responses to a patriarchal culture, whose presence seeks to grow in the current, evolving conservative movement which threatens the political agency and public existence of all women in America.

character. Clover states, "The moment at which the Final Girl is effectively phallicized is the moment that the plot halts and horror ceases. Day breaks, and the community returns to its normal order" (82). The horror enforced upon the "Final Girl" by a male antagonizer ends when she presents affectations typically associated with male gender performativity. This transformation demonstrates the Final Girl as "a congenial double for the adolescent male" which presents "masculinity in conjunction with a female body…a characterological androgyne" (82, 86). Thus, Clover's argument defines Final Girls as vehicles of male agency, usurping masculinity to survive gender coded violence. Their heroism, in self-protection, forms through gender ambiguity as socially define characteristics produce by male and females comingle, removing female agency from the term of "Final Girl," replacing it with a male-centered androgyny.

Several scholars interact with Clover's discussion of Final Girls in much of the scholarship dedicated to the slasher subgenre of horror film and literature. Tony Williams pushes back against Clover's argument suggesting her work disregards "revealing social and family dynamics" that create male slashers birthed from an "authoritarian bourgeois family, an organization attempting to repress its subjects into being conformist products" of which "the family attempts to produce a convenient gendered product within capitalist society" (196-197). Williams points out the social foundations that create male slashers to demonstrate the impacts of dominant capitalist ideologies on the formation of violence and male-hood commented on in slasher works. Williams similarly depicts Clover's neglect of the trauma that Final Girls experience as "they are never entirely victorious at the end of certain films nor are they devoid of the recuperation into a male order of things that they are supposedly free of" (198). According to

Williams, Clover denies the trauma suffered upon Final Girls during and after the violence they experience from male killers.

Morgan Podraza echoes Williams' criticism of Clover's lack of discussion about trauma in slasher films with Final Girls. She presents the cyclical and pervasive nature of trauma in the *Halloween* franchise through Laurie Strode stating "it is necessary to address the ways in which the Final Girl remains connected to the monstrous threat as a result of the traumatic experience of their confrontation" (134). Podraza posits the importance of exploring "the life of the Final Girl following the traumatic event, but also to consider her potential futures" (135). This line of inquiry asks audiences to consider the events taking place during and after slasher films and the possible impact these acts of violence present to Final Girls. Similarly, Podraza depicts survival in Final Girls as "characterized by a tension between her experience of trauma as a possession and her ability to gain agency as a survivor" (141). This survival suggests an ongoing interaction between abuse, objectification, and learned autonomy resulting from trauma that continues through audience consideration off screen and page to fully understand the Final Girl.

Christensen and Pelish decidedly contradict the chartable readings of Podraza and Williams by arguing a presentation of antifeminist rhetoric in certain Final Girl tropes. Christensen argues that "some critics have perpetuated the misconception that Laurie [Strode] is feminist, or, at the very least, pro-woman" while she "often seems to reflect the core characteristics of the oppressive 'cult of the true womanhood'" as "the four cardinal virtues of a 'true woman' were: purity, piety, submissiveness, and domesticity" (28-29). He suggests Laurie Strode, a staple Finale Girl from John Carpenter's *Halloween,* presents anti-feminist ideals through her depiction as a Final Girl. Her survival promotes and upholds patriarchal values of virginial purity and feminine submissiveness to viewers as necessary components of femininity.

Alyssa Pelish takes a different approach, positing that Final Girls promote the "not like other girls" trope as they manage to "survive the systematic slaughter of the more ditzy and voluptuous young things. And the thing about the Final Girl—the reason she alone survives—is that she's not like the other girls" (60). Somewhat relating back to Clover's androgyny, Pelish presents Final Girl's as proving themselves "in a man's world" (61). Final Girls must inhabit aspects of masculinity to set themselves apart and survive. Women who present themselves as archetypes of hyper femininity are killed due to their inability to adapt and separate from the societal norm.

Weaver, Ménard, Cabrera, Taylor, Hernández-Santaolalla, and Raya all attempt to quantify the above scholars' arguments through methodical analysis to determine specific statistical qualities of Final Girls in films spanning from the 1970s to the 2010s. Hernández-Santaolalla, and Raya found "from a purely sexual perspective, there is a clear difference between the role of men and women in the subgenre. He is the sexual aggressor, while she is the one who suffers the sexual abuse," even with a nearly even split of female to male victims, demonstrating a focus on the female form in slasher films (1184). Weaver, Ménard, Cabrera, and Taylor discovered that Final Girls were typically "less likely to be shown nude or engaging in significant onscreen sexual behavior, demonstrated more prosocial behaviors…[and] survival-oriented behaviors against the antagonist, and were more likely to demonstrate an androgynous gender role" (31). Also, both studies establish that most Final Girls are white, heterosexual, attractive, between young adult to middle age (Weaver et al. 38-39), middle to upper class, adverse to drug use, and mostly killed with knifes or sharp projectiles (Hernández-Santaolalla and Raya 1178-1179). These findings indicate a correlation between dominant US social structures and literature and films which depict Final Girl characters. Thus, works that include

Final Girls support dominant hierarchical structures while both framing gender identities and posing questions about certain gender tropes within these power structures.

In combining the aforementioned scholarship defining the "Final Girl," I posit that horror literature and films present Final Girls as narrative subversions of female gender performances in western ideologies, particularly in hegemonic environments which support and maintain social hierarchal roles. These women typically appear in white, suburban cultures that model values of the nuclear family through female submission and male dominance. Final girls arise, through traumatic experiences, as Podraza suggests, out of opposing and resisting these presentations of male domination which desires to claim lives of female victims in the ultimate act of control through murder. Rather than assuming characteristics of masculinity, becoming androgenous characters as Clover suggests, Final Girls confront gender conformation through begrudgingly adapting to horrific situations of violence by applying survival tactics to persist in a system that would otherwise see them killed. They allow instinctual behavior to overrule innate sociocultural training to remain submissive to patriarchal hierarchy. Instead of viewing Final Girls as Clover's assumptive males, Christensen's reinforcements of patriarchy, or Pelish's "not-like-other-girls" girls, these characters should be considered actors of revolutionary values within the upper echelons of American social order, forging for freedom under threat of ultimate male authority.

When discussing Final Girl figures in horror literature and film that affirm or confront dominant cultural values in established social orders, a consideration of Herbert Marcuse's theory of repression and surplus repression becomes important in understanding the dynamics between the public and private spheres. Herbert Marcuse's theory of surplus repression presents an initial understanding of repression in relation to social constructs. Surplus repression is "the restrictions necessitated by social domination" which are "distinguished from (basic) repression:

the modifications of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization" (40). Marcuse establishes repression as a social device which permits cultural unity. Surplus repression develops as a response to dominant social hierarches intruding on the private existence of those who possess identity traits that deviate from the norm. Marcuse states that "specific interests of domination introduce additional controls over and above those indispensable for civilized human association…public control over the individual's private existence" (42). These "additional controls" move because of power imbalances as the dominant social hierarchy desires to increasingly control, change, and dominate marginalized individuals who subsist outside typical cultural archetypes.

Horror scholar Robin Wood extends Marcuse's theory of surplus repression by depicting social "outcasts" as monstrous or as those who lie outside the "monogamous, heterosexual, bourgeois, patriarchal capitalists," norms becoming "neurotic or…revolutionary" (25). Thus, otherization occurs from a "bourgeois ideology [which] cannot recognize or accept but must deal…by rejecting and if possible annihilating [the other], or by rendering it safe and assimilating it, converting it as far as possible into a replica of itself" (27). This otherization creates the monstrous out of those who express neurosis resulting from surplus repression. However, while society creates monsters out the neurotic individual, examination of those who express revolutionary surplus repression remains unexplored in the field of horror, particularly in association to Final Girls who reject neuroticism (or hysteria) in favor of rebellion towards male domination.

Scholars such as Mari Ruti, Caroline Ashcroft, and Bruce Baugh expand on concepts of the revolutionary using Marcuse's concept of surplus repression. Ruti present Marcuse's theory as a "critique of the biopolitical fashioning of obedient subjects under capitalism" and "the

subject's ability to break its 'investment' in its own oppression" (300). The "break" of this "investment" from cultural oppression demonstrates a revolutionary's war against expressions of Capitalist hegemony. The revolutionary seeks to confront "the societal authority…absorbed into the 'conscience' and into the unconscious of the individual" and to destroy the "suffering that is added, for the benefit of those who hold power" (303-304). Revolutionaries seeking to confront dominant power structures ultimately attempt to "refuse the parameter of the current symbolic" (307). This refusal dissolves the boundaries created by surplus repression, allowing revolutionaries to challenge cultural hegemony without the development of neurosis. Final girls utilize nonconforming expressions of gender performativity to demonstrate confrontation towards American "societal authority," acting against cultural norms of female submission. They survive through dominating the masculine power that seeks to destroy them by appealing to gendered vulnerability in female obedience.

Ashcroft similarly presents Marcuse's philosophy of revolution and repression by suggesting those vulnerable to dominant power hierarchies must perceive their oppression in order to recognize their need for freedom. Revolutionaries must experience "'the feeling, the awareness, that the joy of freedom and the need to be free must precede liberation'" (849). Thus, individuals only understand the necessity for revolution when they realize their need for "liberation." This demonstrates the delineation between neurotic surplus repression and revolutionary surplus repression as the neurotic cyclically attempts to meet dominant cultural standards without the revelation of their need for liberation.

The neurotic's lack of understanding perpetuates a cycle of surplus repression that creates a neurotic, otherized by society, who continually works to become a part of the dominant culture in detriment to themselves. Ashcroft continues stating, "the active nature of revolutionary

freedom is apparent in the way each ties active dissent to freedom." Freedom requires action by the revolutionary who understands the necessity of liberation as "freedom exists only for 'the one who thinks differently,' who understands dissent as a real possibility" and that "freedom is only freedom when the possibility of dissent is really available…when individuals have the opportunity to participate in a world where difference is possible" (852). Revolutionaries form in societies where the ability to enact free speech and activism, aboveground or underground, is possible. Dissidents evolve by the access of information that initiates the understanding of freedom as "the first condition of revolution is to become conscious of being negated, conscious of being threatened in our vital being, conscious of our alienation and lack of freedom" (Baugh 199). Individuals who express countercultural values develop into revolutionaries as they become aware of their subjugation. Final girls must first implicitly recognize their gendered oppression as forms of control by dominant power structures against them. Violence leads revolutionary survival that demands freedom through self-defense which ends in the death, supposedly, of the male slasher who ultimately intends to kill the Final Girl character.

While horror scholars discuss the significance of Final Girls in discussions of gender, trauma, and reinforcement of cultural values, scholarship lacks on the subversion of typical tropes and their revolutionary value in discussing hegemonic, sexist gender binaries in American culture. Works like Robert Eggers *The Witch*, Leigh Whannell's *The Invisible Man*, Nia DaCosta's *Candyman*, Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic*, Stephen Graham Jones' *My Heart is a Chainsaw*, and Grady Hendrix's *The Final Girl Support Group* all defy typical classifications of Final Girl scholarship. Each of these works presents revolutionary characters who confront gender, race, and cultural expectations to survive acts of violence presented in a patriarchal culture attempting to dominate and control their personal, performative expressions.

Characters like Cecilia Kass, Brianna Cartwright, Noemí Taboada, and Jade Daniels all become Final Girls by the end of their stories, performing as revolutionary, autonomous characters to survive patriarchal violence while maintaining their own particular expressions of femininity.

Grady Hendrix further explores the subversion of the Final Girl in *Final Girl Support Group* by creating a cast of characters, most Final Girls themselves, who work together to survive a threat on their own Final Girl-ness. These characters present an understanding of survival, trauma, and revolutionary thinking to form a group of women who fight to preserve their lives against masculine violence, creating a new concept of Final Girls. Each woman represents a specific Final Girl from classic slasher movies to demonstrate "lived experiences of trauma survivors as well as the longer history of feminist struggles to recognize and fight against gendered violence" (Podraza 135). These 'feminist struggles' depict a "new sensibility, sensitivity against domination" which cause Final Girls to respond counterculturally, using violence and self-protective ingenuity to endure their encounters with slashers (Ashcroft 849). Hendrix peeks behind the curtain that closes after slasher flicks roll credits to demonstrate the ongoing, revolutionary suburban survival of Final Girls who refuse to submit to violent male domination.

The Final Girl Support Group depicts a group of women who survived separate acts of traumatic violence perpetuated by male murderers that purposely mirrors several famous slasher films from the 70s, 80s, and 90s. The protagonist Lynette Tarkington meets monthly with other group members, Heather DeLuca, Marilyn Torres, Dani Shipman, and Julie Campbell, as support for surviving horrific attacks, mediated by Dr. Carol Elliot, who many speculate Hendrix named in homage to Carol Clover who coined the term "Final Girl." Each character presents as a stand in for famous Final Girls. Heather DeLuca acts as Nancy Thompson, played by actress Heather

Langenkamp, surviving the Dream King, who "[lurks] in the shadows of the mirror on the other side of the room" as a nod to Freddy Kruger from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) (91). Dani Shipman represents Jamie Lee Curtis's Laurie Strode, haunted by Nick Shipman "wearing his mask, [working] his way through their neighborhood" as a novelized Michael Myers from 1978s *Halloween* (105). Marilyn Torres embodies Sally Hardesty, portrayed by actress Marilyn Burns, escaping the cannibalistic Hansen Family who found a "van full of firm young flesh and…fell on it like starving tourists at an all-you-can-eat buffet" like Leatherface's family from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) (138). Julie Campbell presents as actress Neve Campbell's Sidney from *Scream (*1996) whose boyfriend "shared his Ghost costume with his best friend and together they carved their way through the student body of their graduating class" mimicking Billy Loomis and Stu Macher (64). Lynette Tarkington rounds out the group as she stands in for Linnea Quigley's Denise from *Silent Night Deadly Night* (1984) surviving two separate attacks by killers Ricky and Billy Walker in the Silent Night Slayings.

These women, brought together by traumatic acts of violence, became Final Girls through the influence and inspiration of Adrienne Butler, who the novel deems as the first Final Girl. Butler stands in for Alice Hardy, portrayed by Adrienne King in *Friday the 13th* (1980), surviving an amalgamation of Jason and Pamela Vorhees through Bruce Volker, "the former camp cook…who claimed that twenty years ago, two counselors had let his son, Teddy, drown while they were having sex" (42). Volker's violence "made Adrienne the first final girl" as she survived the attack on Camp Red Lake. Adrienne revolutionized Volker's violence against to "make all her dreams come true" (42) as she reclaimed the place of her attack and purchased Camp Red Lake to transform her place of trauma into "a camp a retreat for victims of violence" (18). Butler uses Camp Red Lake as a space for those who survived similar threats on their lives,

metamorphosing acts of dominance through violence into a space where victims confront imposed trauma and regain their freedom, revolutionarily separating from the control of gender hierarchies. Butler recognizes the needs for a place where "individuals have the opportunity to participate in a world where difference is possible" (Ashcroft 852). Without this liberating space Adrienne Butler recognizes that "survivors…detach from other people, they withdraw, they rely on routines rather than actual healing to give the appearance of stability" (371). However, due to her reclamation of agency and demand for liberation, Butler becomes an arbiter of revolutionary ideals for Final girls, an archetype of difference as she models tactics of liberations to survivors of male perpetuated violence proceeding her.

Lynette, Dani, Marilyn, Heather, and Julie all reflect the importance of Adrienne's work as they form a monthly support group to discuss the individual trauma each experienced as Final Girls. Women who thwart their attackers and then find support within communities of similarly traumatized victims demonstrate Butler's proposed treatment as "more than sixty percent of these families last, that Sisters stay in touch with each other for years, that they move to be closer to each other, that they stay in each other's lives. That they rescue each other" (371). Each woman's attacker attempts to separate her from communities that provide safety by murdering their families, friends, public officials, and first responders, leaving them vulnerable by removing cultural protections in patriarchal communities.

Attackers expect these Final Girls to succumb to the gendered defenselessness innately taught to women in suburban communities where men safeguard security. Instinct overrides social propriety as Hendrix's Final Girls "follow our guts. That's why we survive" (176). This instinctual reliance demonstrates a revolutionary response in a culture that demands women to listen and obey figures of male authority. Lynette defines herself and her fellow Finals Girls as

"the women who kept fighting back no matter how much it hurt, who jumped out that third-story window, who dragged ourselves up onto that roof when our bodies were screaming for us to roll over and die" (20). She defines their expressions of survival as traumatic events of extreme pain overcome through tenacity, a revolutionary response to violent conflict in association with femininity. She further expresses the revolutionary gendered delineation as "plenty of women survive violence, but what makes those of us in group our own toxic little category of final girl is that we killed our monsters" (30). Lynette describes the separation between survivors of violence and Final Girls through the usurpation and enforcement of masculine violence upon perpetrators.

Final Girls revolutionarily perform liberation through destroying that which keeps them imprisoned. However, the cyclical nature of dominant hierarchies continues to perpetuate the women reflect on their survival stating, "we thought we did [survive] and then it happened to us again" as they discover Adrienne Butler's murder (30). Butler's death, mirroring Alice Hardy's shocking death in the beginning of 1981's *Friday the 13th part II*, demonstrates the desire for patriarchal reinforcement over female revolutionaries. A male murderer reinserts masculine domination over female agency by killing the vanguard of Final Girl revolutionaries. Lynette reflects on the violent conflict between male domination and the trauma of Final Girl survivors stating, "We tend to die, women who've been through the fire. Sometimes we choose obvious ways, suicide and overdoses; sometimes we're more subtle, marrying someone who likes to use his fists, or we drink too much and keep getting behind the wheel until we run out of luck" (235). This reflection echoes Morgan Podraza's concept of the Final Girl "feminist struggle" of identifying and confronting "gendered violence" (135). The central battle each woman faces centers itself in the fight for equality between revolutionary feminist activism and oppressive patriarchal dominance through violence. Julia presents this gendered conflict as Final Girls

"tangled up in memories of our trauma…when we walk back in our minds to this supposedly wonderful time we have people trying to kill us. For us, nostalgia and violence are inextricably linked" (80). Hendrix shows the cultural survival of women who resist the patriarchal system as categorized through recollections of trauma and violence indistinguishably attached to female experience participating in revolutionary behavior.

The cyclical nature of surplus repression through the masculine imposition of traumatic events demonstrates the perpetuation of dominant hierarchies in suburban America as Final Girl survivors carry both physical and emotional reminders from their abusers. Alongside the physical repercussions faced by the characters, such as Lynette's back scar from being impaled on an antler and Julia becoming a wheelchair user after trying to protect her roommate from a copycat Ghost killer, Lynette points out emotional factors of trauma stating, "Each of us responded to our trauma differently. Dani became self-sufficient, Adrienne got into self-help, Marilyn married up and buried her head in the sand, Heather got high, Julia went activist. Me? I learned how to protect myself" (31). Each woman responds separately to their own assumed trauma resulting from male attackers.

These scars, physical and emotional remind the women of their various experiences whether it be Lynette witnessing "Ricky and Billy Walker, sneaking down the stairs," Dani seeing "Nick Shipman standing at the front door," Marilyn watching "The Hansens fumbling around in the garbage," Julia observing "The Ghost coming in through the garage door," Adrienne viewing "Teddy Volker standing in the light of the refrigerator" or Heather hiding from "the Dream King lurking in the shadows" (91). Trauma preserves reminders of the dominant hierarchies as it pertains to Final Girls. Social response reinforces the natural order as "no matter how much we fight, no matter how many we kill, things keep changing, and growing, and living,

and people get lost, and fall away, and come back, and get born, and move on" (425). These Final Girl revolutionaries recognize this recurring progression as a consequential perpetuation of oppression by privileged roles in society, demonstrating their need for freedom from a system of which creates such traumatic cycles.

Conversely, both Chrissy Mercer and Stephanie Fugate present foils to revolutionary Final Girls with both characters preserving patriarchal authority after surviving their own horrific trauma. Chrissy Mercer lived through an attack executed by her godfather to eventually open a museum commemorating the murders and selling "murderbilia" of those in the Final Girl support group. Lynnette believes Chrissy chose a path of exploitation of her female counterparts "because her monster was her godfather, maybe she had a deep-seated sense of guilt and needed the monsters to forgive her" (296). Chrissy's actions establish the character an apologist for patriarchy, turning murderers into celebrities through a traumatic response in honoring her godfather. As the women belonging to the Final Girl support group "pasted our shattered lives back together and tried to put these monsters behind us, Chrissy embraced them. She became their loudest advocate and their most vocal defender" (296). This advocacy demonstrates the unconscious cultural expressions of gender as Chrissy embraces the violence of patriarchal authority, working to profit off its perpetuation of female trauma.

Stephanie Fugate, like Chrissy, similarly propagates male dominance teaming up with Dr. Carol Elliot's son, Skye Elliot, to destroy all the woman participating in the Final Girl support group. Her desire to help Skye kill Lynette, Marilyn, Dani, Julia, and Heather reflects Robin Wood's idea of the "other" which must become "assimilated," like Stephanie and Chrissy, or "annihilated" like Adrienne (27). She and Skye create an elaborate plan to murder the Final Girls which beginswith Stephine "surviving" a second attack on Camp Red Lake to publicize a

connection between herself and members of the support group. Their plans backfire as Stephine fails in an impulsive attempt to kill both Dani and Lynette, alerting the women to the couple's intentions. Stephine believes she and Skye "will be heroes. People will be talking about the statement we made here for years to come. You're just pointless nostalgia and we're here to sweep you into the trash" (411). She works with Skye in efforts to create herself into a legend, a female perpetuator, enforcing masculine violence on women for the simple desire to kill rather than defend.

Stephanie adopts a masculine role within the patriarchal system, not in spite of it, viewing the other Final Girls as objects. She assumes the male gaze, which, as Clover states, is "reserved for males and hideously punished in females when they assume it themselves" (80). Lynette reveals this gendered "punishment" to Stephanie stating, "You're the sad daughter-in-law to his psycho obsession… we'll be the heroes, he'll be embraced by a bunch of sad little boys on the Internet, but you don't fit in anywhere. You'll be forgotten because all you ever did was say 'yes, sir,' 'no, sir'" (412). Her obedience to and assumption of typical ideals of masculine authority ultimately renders her actions meaningless while the revolutionary survival of her fellow Final Girls immortalizes them due to their bravery in opposing the same ideals.

As Stephanie demonstrates an assimilation of female submission to patriarchal dominance, Skye Elliot acts as the enforcer of masculine cultural authority. His access to his mother's case files allows him to formulate an insidious plan against the women Dr. Carol Elliot wished to rehabilitate. Skye wanted "to murder everyone his mother ever cared about, to leave her all-important career broken into pieces that could never be repaired, to humiliate her in front of the whole world" (429). He schemed to humiliate his mother because he resented her work, wanting her to exist only in the role of "mother." Carol Elliot's professional career confronts

patriarchal notions of employment and motherhood, her agency in conflict with her mothering. Lynette foreshadows this conflict between mother and son stating that "it's degrading to watch the woman who hauled us back from the brink reduced to the status of waitress for her children…They'll have to trick some poor woman into marrying them to get all that for free again" (96). Skye desires to punish his mother for facilitating a space for these Final Girls, fostering their revolutionary bodies alongside his archetypical masculine notions of domesticity.

Lynette recognizes Skye's futile attempts as reinserting male dominance over his mother and her revolutionary group of Final Girls. She desires both Stephanie and Skye as to "live and see just how small and meaningless their murders were" (415). The Final Girls' survival supersedes the acts of Skye's patriarchal enforcement because it confronts notions of control in a system oversaturated with male performed violence. The efforts to kill the women work within the system, making their actions commonplace in a culture that perpetuates male authority. However, in living, the Final Girls remain revolutionary, atypical to social status quos. Their relationship to each other allows them to defeat the system which desires to control them and their lives become an amalgamation of revolution as "I'm Julia running through her dorm, I'm Heather running down her high school halls, I'm Marilyn running through the Texas afternoon, I'm Dani running through a hospital…and I'm Lynnette…the fastest girl in the world" (405). These Final Girls discover freedom because they choose life in a structure that aids in the death of women. Their ultimate act of revolutionary liberty comes when they take Stephanie, a girl they see as groomed by a male predator, into the fold expressing that "we can't help ourselves. This is what we do. You never stop trying to save your Sisters" (431). Hendrix maintains their existence as revolutionaries as they reclaim and define womanhood as life, overcoming death as the novels closes with "Ever wonder what happens to those final girls…They turn into women.

And they live" (423). These Final Girls evolve into women who live in spite of a system that supports and inflicts male rage and violence in efforts to control women who perform revolutionarily.

Hendrix's *The Final Girl Support Group* behaves as a metanarrative exploring American slasher films to regard the Final Girl as a plurality of women enacting a revolutionary surplus repression in a patriarchal system which prefers death for women who seek liberty from cultural norms. Lynette, Heather, Marilyn, Julia, and Dani survived their own individual traumas, demonstrating their capabilities in thwarting a prejudicial and sexist suburban system. These women, by the end of the novel, come together in efforts to overcome another overarching act of masculine violence. They choose to engage with a gender coded, unequally balanced culture because they perceive their need for revolutionary liberty. Hendrix's novel demonstrates the power of the marginal collective, presented in horror literature, as he examines and subverts typical narrative patterns to present the positive liberating power of revolutionary surplus repression. *The Final Girl Support Group* presents women in relational spaces overcoming assimilation or the formation of neurotic surplus repression, recognizing and fighting for their liberation through countercultural, revolutionary means.

CHAPTER TWO: PECULIAR PERFORMANCE: GENDER PERFORMATIVITY

AND HYSTERIA IN *THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE*.

Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* serves an example of womanly bodies in societal connection between hysteria and horror. Jackson presents a set of characters to provide a spectrum of gender performativity, ranging from the stereotypical American patriarchal figure, autonomous and well-to-do mysterious female figure, and the figure of masculine wealth whose linage provides social security. Jackson places these representative and distinctive identities as the backdrop to explore feminine forms outside the cultural norm and present the sociological challenge of non-conforming women. *The Haunting of Hill House* demonstrates the clash between atypical gender performativity and social normativity which forms a cultural surplus repression that creates representations of the monstrous. Robin Wood expands on Herbert Marcuse's theory of surplus repression to present this monstrous otherization due to a formation of a cultural neurosis due to unconscious inhabitation of certain counter-cultural expressions of social roles. Thus, female hysteria in Jackson's novel is not a product of psychological weakness, but rather a manifestation of sociological conflict, metaphorically represented through the relationship between the socially confining Hill House and the "ill-behaved" Eleanor.

In conversations of gender performativity and social normativity, scholars often turn to Judith Butler in her discussion of social construction, formation of identity, and sociological conflict of the two established in her theory of gender performativity. In her work, *Imitation and Gender Insubordination,* Butler states, "identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression" (13-14). Thus, any form of performed gender, typical or otherwise, acts to regulate the identifier through conformation, regardless of its

level of counter-cultural placement. Butler proposes even identifying with counter-cultural movements acts to "reinscribe the power domains that it resists…that it is compelled both to reiterate and to oppose," demonstrating both a cultural and internal struggle with identification (17). Roles form to dominant social performance through "a copy, an imitation, a derivative example, a shadow of the real" which establishes "a compulsory performance in the sense that acting out of line with…norms brings with it ostracism, punishment and violence" (20, 24). Expressions of gender and sexuality form through social enforcement. Normativity evolves through threat of cultural force. Identities which act outside societal normativity seek to oppose the normative group; however cognitive dissonance appears as the normative continues to act as a standardizing force to the counter-cultural identity. Jackson demonstrates Butler's understanding of cultural control in gender performativity, portraying it as a restrictive force created to control those who identify with particular groups.

The Haunting of Hill House establishes the conflict of counter-cultural identity using horror, a genre typically created for a male audience. Katherine Farrimond writes, "male viewers are positioned as horror's natural audience, while the genre is often understood as unwelcoming to female viewers… [horror] is positioned as a comfortable genre for men but an inhospitable one for women" (151). She asserts "men are thought to be brave viewers…while women…cover their eyes in response to images too evil to view, and scream uncontrollably," mirroring a typical performance of hysteria, reinforced by female characters within the story (151). When the roles of viewers reverse, placing masculine viewers in positions normally held by female characters, they "naturally identify with those male characters typically understood as perpetuating horror's misogynist tendencies…[the] male audience en-masse becomes an uncomfortable collection of leg-crossers as a result of these identifications" (162). Jackson uses the genre of horror to

structure a subversion of gender built directly into the narrative which creates a sense of unease in readers as she confronts their understanding of gender performativity. She frames the narrative through the lens of a female character who struggles internally with outward presentations of gender to create a sense of audience dissonance which mirrors Eleanor's own internal conflict.

      This struggle of gender performance initiates a crisis of identity as the protagonist, Eleanor, a single woman at the age of thirty-two, seeks to find herself through her experience at Hill house. Eleanor lives with her sister's family at the beginning of Jackson's novel, lacking typical female domesticity, domesticity of which she does not desire. Her family attempts to caution Eleanor with respects to her atypical behavior. Her sister's husband seeks personal references for a Dr. Montague, the man who sought Eleanor in prospect of a project to explore the possibility of supernatural occurrence at Hill House. Her "brother-in-law had insisted upon calling a couple of people to make sure that this doctor fellow was not aiming to introduce Eleanor to savage rites not unconnected with matters Eleanor's sister deemed it improper for an unmarried woman to know," yet she continues forward unphased by her family's caution (Jackson 4). The inversion of the common female spectacle displaces the "determining male gaze [which] projects its phantasy on to the female figure" (Mulvey 153). Jackson removes the titular character, Eleanor, from "an erotic object for the [masculine] characters…and as erotic object for the [masculine] spectator," an eroticism the character further challenges through her attraction to the female character Theodora (153). Thus, the spectator's gaze, unable to interact sexually with the protagonist, views her as a spectacle, exhibiting the sociological effect of a woman's refusal of male sexualization. Eleanor's internal individuality creates conflict with her outward presentation of gender and sexuality. The cognitive dissonance, evolving from external sociological forces, produces a repression of identity Eleanor struggles to conceal.

As a result, Eleanor experiences an undesired cultural consequence due to the suppression of abnormal performative traits and personality idiosyncrasies which materialize through surplus repression. Robin Wood defines surplus repression as "the process whereby people are conditioned from earliest infancy to take on predetermined roles within that culture." If individuals lie outside the "monogamous, heterosexual, bourgeois, patriarchal capitalists," they become "neurotic or a revolutionary…[with] neurotics [accounting] for a very large" percent of outliers (25). While repression, in certain instances, remains integral in maintaining the peaceful continuation of societies, surplus repression creates the "other," which "bourgeois ideology cannot recognize or accept but must deal with…by rejecting and if possible annihilating [the other], or by rendering it safe and assimilating it, converting it as far as possible into a replica of itself" (27). The characters around Eleanor act to demonstrate a "healthy" relationship between cultural repression and gender performativity, while she struggles to maintain balance between action, perception, and normative cultural repression. This imbalance, due to Eleanor's lack of reform and conformation to standard ideals, creates neurosis. The repression she experiences overflows into excess, unable to remain concealed. Jackson writes Eleanor "in the most clear-cut and direct way, because central to [horror] is the actual dramatization of the dual concept of the repressed/the Other, in the figure of the Monster" (Wood 28). Hill House "others" Eleanor, identifying her internal separation from the culturally typical performative characters and exposes her outwardly through growing neurotic presentations of self.

Thus, Eleanor's hysteria forms as a neurotic consequence resulting from the relationship between gender performativity and surplus repression. Hysteria is best understood through the "pressing intersection of hysteria and cultural and performance studies" (Braun 12). The culmination of "religious, medical and political concepts…extensive histories (in fact and

fiction), and the forms of its representation," define hysteria, making it an ambiguous and complex concept, not only studied from the lens of psychoanalysis (12). Eleanor's hysteria must be viewed through "classes, genders, races, sexualities, religious beliefs, locations, or time periods," to determine a cultural formation and defining features (12-13). Dr. Montague's expertise as a doctor and as the architect of a supernatural experiment, inviting Theodora, Luke, and Eleanor to stay in Hill House, presents the diagnosis of hysteria as a "masculinized [performance] of medical diagnosis…[a] destructive, desirable [approach] to disorderly bodies and minds," thus demonstrating it as an oppressive tool to control atypical performances of feminine bodies, instead of a response to cultural confinement (Delchamps 106). While Eleanor conveys symptoms of the ambiguous disorder of hysteria, its expression directly connects to social performativity. The more socially disassociated Eleanor becomes, her hysterical presentation grows, attaching the disorder to the sociological factors of repression in a conforming circumstance.

In fact, Theodora's introduction works as an initial exemplification of female gender performativity to highlight and instigate Eleanor's growing neurotic expressions. Jackson introduces Theodora as carrying, "a suitcase…considerably larger than Eleanor's, and considerably more luxurious," which demonstrates Eleanor's desire for a material possession of femininity and instigates Eleanor to change clothes shortly after to match her female counterpart (30). This desire for material possession connects to a moment earlier in the novel as Eleanor watches a mother trying to convince her child to drink from a regular glass rather than the child's preferred cup. Eleanor wishes the girl to "insist on your cup of stars; once they have trapped you into being like everyone else you will never see your cup of stars again" (15). Jackson attaches performativity to material possession. Eleanor wishes for the "luxurious" wardrobe of Theodora

but lacks the capital to obtain it. She desires the child to maintain a headstrong, stubborn affect to preserve the girl's strong spirit, something Eleanor lacks as she had "become reserved and shy, she had spent so long alone…that it was difficult for her to talk…without self-consciousness" (5). Jackson presents Eleanor with an integral desire for independence, strength, and individuality which conflicts with her reservations created through solitude. Her reintegration into society reveals her lack of autonomy and wanted agency.

Theodora exposes this lack of agency upon their first meeting. She identifies this internal lack of identity within Eleanor as Theodora states, "it's like the first day of school; everything's ugly and strange, and you don't know anybody, and you're afraid everyone's going to laugh at your clothes" as she perceives the protagonist's initial nervous excitement (32). Jackson, again, focuses on the material possession of clothes, repeating Eleanor's opening impressions of Theodora, which presents the physical, foremost expression of social performativity through the act of wearing. Eleanor follows and mimics Theodora as Theodora becomes a modeled performance of womanly agency. Theodora states, "I'm horrible and beastly and no-one can stand me. There. Now tell me about yourself" and Eleanor repetitiously responds with "I'm horrible and beastly and no-one can stand me" demonstrating an absence of formed identity within the protagonist (Jackson 63). Anderson suggests this nonexistence of autonomy is expressed though "ghostly characteristics even though [Eleanor] is alive. She lacks agency and direction, and she has bought into certain scripts for women's lives that focus on romance and marriage as the culmination of a life not actually lived" (199). Eleanor's shortage of autonomy and confusion of internal self leaves her vulnerable to the wiles which surround her, presented both through human relationships and in the malevolence of the house.

In combination with Eleanor's vulnerability as established through her lack of agency, Eleanor's relationship with Theodora initiates a socially divergent romantic desire. This desire conflicts with an equal desire of typical gender performativity contributing to her neurotic hysteria. Shortly after they first meet, Eleanor comments on Theodora's chosen outfit as, "[Bringing] more light into this room than the window" (34). Jackson immediately demonstrates a dichotomous dissonance between Eleanor's yearning to own similar possessions as Theodora while desiring the woman herself. However, Theodora works as a character for Jackson to "[illustrate] the novel's definition for what happens when one sees that reality too clearly and too long" (Wilson 117). While Eleanor openly desires Theodora saying, "I…am going to follow you home…I want to be someplace where I belong," Theodora denies their romantic connection stating, "I am not in the habit of taking home strange cats" (153-154). This exchange provides a clear demonstration of conflict between atypical outward expression of romantic exchange and of the repression of sexuality in accordance with realistic social circumstances.

As demonstrated through Theodora and Eleanor's conflicting response to romantic desire, Theodora's ability to control her social expression causes her to conform to socially accepted gender roles regardless of desire. Her gender identity, as Butler defines, behaves as an "imitation for which there is no original…a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an effect and consequence of the imitation itself" (21). Theodora presents as a copy of typical femininity performed by broader society to maintain certain fixed gender ideals. These feminine and heterosexual archetypes are "performatively constituted through an imitation that sets itself up as the origin and the ground of all imitations," determining identity as "propelled into an endless repetition of itself" (21). Thus, Theodora's gender expression acts as a feminine, heterosexual imitation without true origin to cover culturally perceived abnormalities.

Therefore, Theodora's proximity to realistic consequences and expectations of society cause her to hide homosexual desire through veiled mentions and coded terms. She states that she lives with "the friend with whom she shared an apartment," implicitly ciphering a possible homosexual relationship behind heterosexual, platonic terms (Jackson 5). Butler states that "oppression works through the production of a domain of unthinkability and unnameability…it had not even made its way into the thinkable" to demonstrate the power of vocabulary to define specific identities (20). Identity without terms holds no cultural recognition. Theodora speaks in code contributing to her own sexual oppression, leaving her sexuality unnamable and hidden, thus, unrecognized. This code allows a façade of normalcy which projects the "repressed" aspect of self onto a weaker victim. Theodora others Eleanor through this exchange, denying her internal truth while Eleanor becomes increasingly isolated as any "consolidation of identity requires some set of differentiations and exclusions" (19). Eleanor's acceptance of homosexual attraction differentiates her from the group and excludes her from participating in an unmatched social setting. The desire Eleanor feels for Theodora, a model of queer, domestic longing, is likewise thwarted after a shared intimate moment, mirroring their first picnic upon meeting, which ends with both women running away while Theodora yells "don't look back," after Eleanor wonders "do you love me" (128, 130). This moment between the two women suggests a metaphorical Sodom and Gomorrah destruction of their implicit queerness, Theo acting as Lot and Eleanor Lot's wife, doomed upon reflection.

Highlighted through Theodora's condemnation of the relationship, Eleanor's nonconforming gender performance becomes increasingly rejected as it develops further into sexual desire. Eleanor states "Fear and guilt are sisters," which exhibits the emotional response to her attraction to Theodora (127). Theodora gaslights Eleanor throughout the novel, ultimately

withdrawing her initial affections contributing to the character's developing hysteria. She proposes Eleanor as the perpetrator in the seemingly supernatural occurrences within the house which propagates a neurotic formation of surplus repression, the overflow of repressed expression, identified through Eleanor's "hysteric" behavior. However, Theodora shifts her initial denunciation as an act to "[shock Eleanor] out of hysteria" making Eleanor "to be the outsider, she is going to be it all alone (109). Theodora denies the supernatural nature of Hill house, representing her confirmation of social norms and separation from Eleanor as "both women are thus seeing the same thing…the house is not interested in seducing and then destroying Theodora, and Theodora lacks Eleanor's wounded gift for self-deceptive illusions that the House goes to pains to reinforce" (Wilson 117). Theodora's outward agency and social conformity secure her from hysteria. However, Eleanor's lack of self-agency, disconnection from the other Hill House inhabitants, and Theodora's gaslighting create the perfect victim in Jackson's protagonist.

The men of Hill House expound on Eleanor's victimization through the presentation of normalized, patriarchal behavior. They remain wealthy in their social conventions and survive the manor as static archetypes of desired, performative normalcy. Dr. Montague endures as a conventionally educated man and his patriarchal authority reveals itself through the depiction of his subjects as "three willful, spoiled children, who are prepared to nag [him] for [their] bedtime story" (50). He treats Eleanor as a child, growing more concerned with her behavior as the story progresses, eventually telling her to "forget everything about Hill House," diagnosing her unfit due to her uncharacteristic behavior (179). He removes her autonomy and ability to make decisions by stating "I was wrong to bring you here," which suggests Eleanor incapable of self-agency (179). Dr. Montague becomes a prototypical father-figure to Eleanor, guiding her to a

perceived safety which ultimately leads to her suicide as he states, "you will go away…Right now," sending her from "the only time anything's ever happened to me" (179). Eleanor becomes isolated her from "her proto-family when Dr. Montague tells her that she must leave," separating her from the sense of "belonging to this group of people in a way that she has never felt she belonged before…[as this] sense of belonging unravels…we begin to see Eleanor, too, unraveling" (Junker 9). The masculine patriarchal normativity of Dr. Montague reinserts the "perversion" of Eleanor's gender expression and homosexual awakening. Her display of hysteria, as caused from a neurotic expression of surplus repression manifested by Hill house, inspires the doctor to remove her from the place regardless of Eleanor's autonomy, acting in the role of the proverbial father chastising a wayward child.

Similarly to Dr. Montague, Luke stands as a prototypical male who succeeds due to his wealth and association to the manor. He states, "I keep thinking of this house as my own future property…I keep telling myself that it will belong to me someday," demonstrating male dominance over home and inheritance (86). Luke's vapid personality exhibits the privilege experienced by a straight male as he is "entirely selfish…hoping that someone will tell [him] to behave," (123). He demands the necessity for a maternal figure to structure his boyish character, desiring the women to become models of domesticity. He states to Eleanor, "I never had a mother…[now] I find that everyone else has had something that I missed," suggesting Eleanor to fill the missing maternal role he presents before her. He continues, stating he wishes "someone will make herself responsible for me and make me grown-up" (123). Luke depicts the expectations of a future wife to hold both a marital and maternal role for himself. Similarly, Luke demonstrates his individual failings as a result of an absent mother figure in his childhood. His character defects stand as a consequence of womanly failing. He presents this to Eleanor stating,

"[you] were so lucky…[you] had a mother," presenting her social failings in not mimicking a maternal role (123). Luke desires Eleanor to satiate his yearning for a motherly figure and enter his life to repair his injured character while simultaneously blaming her for his lack of personal development. Jackson presents Luke's maternal yearning as a contradictory force impossible for Eleanor to satisfy in order to demonstrate the unfeasible standards presented in American feminine gender performativity.

As a result, Luke's presentation of character causes him to inhabit the masculine counterpart to Theodora's feminine demonstrations as they appear to conspire against Eleanor as her behavior becomes increasingly bizarre. Eleanor perceives that "[they] are still talking about me…she could hear the murmur of their voices, edged sometimes with malice, sometimes rising in mockery" (157). Both characters tease Eleanor by co-opting important and meaningful material objects and phrases. Eleanor's failed attempt to form a heterosexual attraction to Luke and growing homosexual desire demonstrates her otherness as, "Nell's awkward and failed flirtatious experiment with Luke, [as] Theo teases, "'Will you have him at your little apartment, Eleanor, and offer him to drink from your cup of stars?'" (161–62) …devastates Nell" (Vinci 69). Theodora targets Eleanor through the imagery of the cup of stars, an object which demonstrates strength, independence, and capital to Eleanor, scorning a closely held and intimate subject of the protagonist. Similarly, Theodora flippantly exposes Eleanor to Luke telling him, "She wants me to take her home with me after we leave Hill House, and I won't do it" (156). He responds in kind with laughter stating, "Poor silly Nell…Journey's end in lovers meeting" (156). Both characters work to infantilize her while mocking Eleanor's intrinsic motto, "Journey's end in lovers meeting," innately held as the integral mission of her expedition into and out of Hill House.

The characters' infantilization of Eleanor and presentation of her abnormality in contrast to their own socially acceptable identities mirrors Eleanor's relationship with the house; its metaphorical connection to hysteria grows as her nature becomes increasingly atypical. The house stands as "a masterpiece of architectural misdirection" (78). Hugh Crain, the historical and patriarchal originator and architect of Hill House, purposefully designed the home with a disorienting effect which physically represents the ambiguous and complex formation of hysteria. Jackson models Hill House as a sociological representation of "the broader contexts of national and patriarchal ideologies," using Crain to embody the domineering nature of masculine gender performativity over that of acceptable female gender expression (Junker 3). A bizarrely gruesome scrapbook signed in his daughter's blood demonstrates Crain's motives for building the home, demanding her to "hold apart from this world, that its lusts and ingratitudes corrupt thee not; Daughter, preserve thyself" (124). Jackson establishes the conditions of which "marriage and motherhood within a patriarchal society place profound limitations on women," throughout this passage (Junker 4). Virtue, virginity, and domesticity characterize cultural normativity for women in American society. Hugh Crain performs as an arbiter of discipline and patriarchal correction of wayward women.

With Hugh Crain established as the paternal force of Hill House, the house itself, then, acts as the matriarchal figure through the enforcement of domestic responsibilities on weak-willed women who enter its doors. The home inhabits aspects of desired domesticity of feminine gender performativity. Luke describes the house as "a mother house" (156). He earlier defines it as "all so motherly…everything so padded. Great embracing chairs and sofas which turn out to be hard and unwelcome when you sit down" (154). Lynne Evans argues these depictions as Jackson "[revealing] the failure of psychoanalytic discourse to fully 'obscure' its ideological

position… the exigencies of psychoanalytic discourse reveals that it is masculinist and heteronormative dictates relating to mothers…are truly horrifying" (105). Furthermore, "mothers provided a masculinist and heteronormative society a site onto which to displace blame for its perceived shortcomings;" thus, Jackson demonstrates women acting outside of maternal boundaries accrue cultural blame for societal failings and remain outside of cultural bounds, living without defined identities (105). Eleanor's gender expressions and homosexual desires lay outside these strict cultural perimeters which create an oppressive response to women who express them. The patriarchal hierarchy projects a psychological disorder on an individual suffering a sociological repression presented through neurosis.

Consequently, psychoanalysis failure to appropriately "analyze" womanhood created a societal failure in defining women, allowing only for women to perform in the roles of mothers and marriage. The lack of independent and definitional roles further institutes a marginalization on women who act outside culturally accepted gender performativity. Delchamps demonstrates hysteria as a product absent definitional roles in psychoanalysis as it contains a "wildness, randomness and…slippery diagnostic categorization" leaving women "trapped in systems of medical authority" to highlight its elusive traits and sexist utilizations (118). Hill House acts as both the definitional enforcer of womanhood and the patriarchal punishment for those who disavow their prescriptive roles. Eleanor states Dr. Montague "thinks, even, that Theodora shocked me out of hysteria" after the discovery of writing on the wall inside Hill House (Jackson 109). The doctor, who stands as the patriarchal figure of the group, diagnoses Eleanor in accordance with the separation from gender norms enforced by the house's "maternal" nature.

With its punitive and parental characteristics, Hill House specifically examines and manifests the intrinsic features of its female subjects in accordance with their individual

autonomy, propriety, and social appearances. As Melanie R. Anderson states, "Hill House seeks living ghosts, in particular socially marginalized women, to control and to destroy" (199). Eleanor perceives the flawed House as "vile…diseased," and she should "get out of here at once," presenting a certain mental self-sufficiency which quickly decomposes as she inhabits the home (23). This decomposition happens as Eleanor "polices her own thoughts and behavior by patriarchal scripts" presented in the patriarchal fashion of the home, "making her the perfect addition to Hill House's pantheon of isolated and destroyed women" (Anderson 204). Eleanor's fate as a result of her performative abnormalities "is not remarkably different from her position in her family and in larger society" (204). The house works to separate Eleanor from equal relationship to infantilize her, causing an expulsion of neurotic hysteria.

This separation from community through the development of neurosis causes an "othering" of Eleanor which produces a sense of isolation causing Eleanor to become dependent on the parentage of Hill House. Eleanor expresses her aloneness as she states, "They are all carefully avoiding looking at me…I have been singled out again," after the house communicates with a group through a Ouija board repeating the word home (143). Hill house senses and exploits Eleanor's weakness and desire to belong. Eleanor states, "It knows my name," to demonstrate the level of familiarity the house works to create the character (147). Eventually Eleanor believes she's "broken the spell of Hill House," stating "I am home" (171), declaring "walled up alive…I want to stay here" (177). Jackson demonstrates the full extent of Eleanor's hysteria, as she is metaphorically absorbed into the house, caused by a separation through her fundamental lack of agency and misinterpretation of performativity.

Hill House exposes Eleanor's neurosis slowly, initially through writings on the wall, "HELP ELEANOR COME HOME," and eventually through the expulsion of her inner thoughts

through mental ramblings which come as the house progresses its assimilation of the woman (107). Eleanor's integration into Hill House begins as she accepts the authority of the home, progressing the developing neurosis as she "[hears] everything that goes on throughout the mansion from people's conversations to a cricket on the front lawn to supernatural noises like singing and laughter that the others cannot hear" (Anderson 203). Eleanor's growing social isolation cause neurotic expressions which act "as an outlet for her tumultuous inner emotional life" which remains detached from acceptable social performativity, conveyed physically through the house's manifestations of correcting ill-approved behavior (199). Eleanor dies on the property of Hill House, as several women had before her, becoming one with the estate. She "[disappears] inch by inch into this house…going apart a little bit at a time," showing the home as a cultural predator, consuming the weak agency of women who present atypical to social performativity (Jackson 149). Hill House fully absorbs Eleanor with its other victims of atypical female gender expression.

Shirley Jackson presents Eleanor as a casualty to sociological repression of atypical cultural gender performativity and sexuality. Eleanor forms a neurotic hysteria as a result of surplus repression formed in response to her reintroduction to society. Theodora, Luke, and Dr. Montague act as harbingers of social agency and models of appropriate behavior, even as they experience internal dissonance with outward presentations. Eleanor's lack of agency disengages her from the ability to repress external performance of gender and attraction, lowering her ability to unconsciously store cultural repression. Hill House metaphorically represents sociological institutions which enforce appropriate gender performativity through both the oppressive patriarchal expression and matriarchal domesticity. Jackson demonstrates Eleanor as prey to Hill House, to represent female subjugation through societal structures which enforce

heteronormative domesticity and facilitates hysterical neurosis to disparage victims in order to

maintain the performative cycle.

CHAPTER THREE: A PSYCHOPATH DISGUISED: ABSENCE REPRESSION

AND THE PSYCOPATH IN HORROR

Horror scholars often use German philosopher Herbert Marcuse's theory of surplus repression to define social otherization and formation of the monstrous. Typically, according to Marcuse's sociological understanding of repression, countercultural presentations in identity create an influx of surplus repression, leading to neurotic behavior which results in social otherization. However, horror scholars influenced by Marcuse's work have yet to define social otherization as it pertains to psychopathy often demonstrated in literature and film about serial killers, slashers, cannibals, and master manipulators. Authors and filmmakers depict psychopathic figures, like Dorothy Daniels, Patrick Bateman, and Annie Wilkes, capable of performing horrific acts for a desired purpose without focused self-reflection on the impact of their actions, at least in terms of developing guilt and shame as a result of their behavior. These fictional characters lack the internal conscious from which surplus repression forms due anxieties developing from self-conscious expressions and reactions. Thus, psychopathological figures in horror exhibit an absence repression, becoming otherized through social perceptions of their actions influenced by an absence of remorse, limited reciprocal empathy, and vacuous narcissism.

The discussion of absence repression must first begin by defining Herbert Marcuse's theory of surplus repression which presents a foundational understanding of repression and social otherization in relation to cultural constructs. Surplus repression is "the restrictions necessitated by social domination" which are "distinguished from (basic) repression: the "modifications of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization" (40). Marcuse demonstrates a delineation between repression, a cultural tool which allows social cohesion, and

surplus repression which develops in response to dominant power structures encroaching on the private life of individuals who exhibit countercultural identities. Marcuse states that "specific interests of domination introduce additional controls over and above those indispensable for civilized human association…public control over the individual's private existence" (42). These "additional controls" flow from an imbalance of power as the dominant social hierarchy desires to increasingly control, change, and destroy marginalized cultural groups who exist outside social norms.

Scholars considering the relational power imbalance between dominant social institutions and individual oppression use Marcuse's work to establish the effects caused by social ostracization. Academics, like Andrew Newman, Howard Johnson, and Robert Paul Wolff consider the marriage between Marxist influence on Marcuse and the theorist's criticism of Freud's psychoanalysis. Newman states that Marcuse views the "dichotomy between freedom and happiness…to be a close compatible relationship…between sexuality and civilization" (175). Johnson similarly poses Marcuse as creating "possible bridges between Freudian and Marxist theory…dealing with the relationship between civilization and repression" (20). Wolff expands on this relationship between civilization, repression, and sexuality stating, "The intractability of the material environment, and the inevitability of interpersonal conflicts…force us to regulate or deny entirely certain of our strongest desires" (473). According to these scholars, Marcuse considers the formation of surplus repression in relation to dominant power structures and the control of countercultural sexual expression and desire.

Scholarship continues to expand Marcuse's theory of surplus repression demonstrating the formation of neurosis as a result of cultural pressure on personal identity and desire. Mari Ruti presents Marcuse's theory as a "critique of the biopolitical fashioning of obedient subjects

under capitalism" and "the subject's ability to break its 'investment' in its own oppression" (300). The "break" of this "investment" from oppression demonstrates "man in continuous pursuit of happiness [and his] neuroses derive from his resultant frustrations" (Newman 174). Capitalist culture wages a war against expressions of individuality. This war becomes an antagonistic cycle as the dominant economic structure works to tame the individual pursuit of gratification and contentment. The cycle creates a self-conscious anxiety in those who express countercultural identities that eventually forms into a surplus repression that emerges in neurosis.

Neurosis stemming from surplus repression causes social otherization of the neurotic creating a cultural spectacle. Robin Wood extends Marcuse's theory by presenting the otherized as those who lie outside the "monogamous, heterosexual, bourgeois, patriarchal capitalists," norms becoming "neurotic or a revolutionary…[with] neurotics [accounting] for a very large" percent of outliers. (25). Thus, otherization occurs from a "bourgeois ideology [which] cannot recognize or accept but must deal…by rejecting and if possible annihilating [the other], or by rendering it safe and assimilating it, converting it as far as possible into a replica of itself" (27). This otherization creates the monstrous out of those who express surplus repression due to their neurotic expressions. Society considers the neurotic individual separate from normalized culture, further increasing their ostracization and their surplus repression (and neurosis) which, in turn, increases their monstrous otherization in public spaces.

However, while surplus repression explains the social otherization of those expressing neurosis, it neglects to account for the social otherization of individuals who exhibit traits of anti-social personality disorder. Better known as psychopathy, those with anti-social personality disorder display traits of "callousness, deception and manipulation" (Crego and Widiger 676). Psychopaths also commonly display characteristics of "low vulnerability, low self-

consciousness, and low anxiousness (from neuroticism)…low altruism, low tender-mindedness, low compliance" (677). Due to a decreased formation of these interpersonal and introspective characteristics, those with psychopathy lack the capability of forming surplus repression, making them nonneurotic. Their relationship with society tends to result in the exhibited traits of "superficial charm, dishonesty, remorseless, shallow affects, and self-centeredness" (680). Nonneurotics with anti-social personality disorder commonly perform a self that identifies with cultural norms to manipulate their surroundings for personal gain. This construction of self drastically differs with neurotics who experience surplus repression because psychopaths organize a production of "self" in response to desire, a means to an end, while a neurotic "self" unconsciously forms in result of an excessively repressed desire. Accordingly, psychopathic individuals in literature often appear well adjusted, charismatic, intelligent, and charming with their intentions hidden behind façades that remained fixed until an external factor reveals the true nature behind the social costume. Social otherization forms in response to the revelation of violent behavior such nonneurotic characters enact, stemming from individual action, not individual identity.

Thus, psychopaths, due to their lack of self-consciousness and neuroticism, experience social otherization as a result of an absence repression. Horror demonstrates absence repression through monstrous social otherization of psychopaths in literature and films depicted as slashers, serial killers, master manipulators, cannibals, and psychological abusers. If otherization of the neurotic "zombie" in horror manifests as "the actual dramatization of the dual concept of the repressed/the Other, in the figure of the Monster," then the actualization of the psychopath, in real-world terms, presents the social conflict between perceived normalcy and the concealed monstrous "other" (Wood 28). The monstrous otherization of the psychopath lies in their

perceived normality. They appear as "normal" individuals completely integrated into society, shopping, walking, and talking alongside unaware, vulnerable, everyday people.

Female serial killers and cannibals in horror particularly demonstrate this false sense of security through perceived identity. They behave in similar fashion to zombies in horror as they "remain disconcertingly close to the habitual surfaces and mundane realities of everyday… threaten normality…the unity of the family; heterosexual norms, including the norms of masculinity and femininity" (Donaldson 26). Women murderers in horror (Pamela Voorhees, Asami Yamazaki, Rose Armitage, and Annie Wilkes) conceal their nature underneath a performance of identity to appear, on the offset, as models of compassion, safety, and vulnerability. They substantiate the presence of absence repression as their otherization exists through social interpretations of their revealed violent actions and heinous crimes which occur without the development of neurosis.

Chelsea Summers presents absence repression through serial killer protagonist Dorothy Daniels, in her novel, *A Certain Hunger*. Daniels conceals her psychopathy in society through a performance of gender to disguise her true nature as a serial killer and cannibal. Absence repression in Daniels becomes apparent as she becomes socially othered after police uncover her crimes, which she committed non-neurotically and in full command of herself. She portrays the culturally ideal and socially acceptable woman to disguise the psychopathic predator inside. Her internalized sense of self lacks the capability of self-reflection, in terms of guilt and anxiety, and interpersonal empathy. This shortage of guilt gives her freedom of conscious to commit multiple murders over several years undetected. The character experiences no cultural otherization until she faces criminal prosecution, and the justice system labels her a serial killer. Thus, absence repression exists between the revelation of her crimes and her nonneurotic personality.

Summer's depiction of Daniels demonstrates absence repression at the start of the novel as Daniels admits her psychopathy to the reader, in memoir fashion, relatively early in the story. She states, "as a woman psychopath, the white tiger of human psychological deviance, I am wonder, and I relish in your awe" (26). Daniels both defines her psychopathy outwardly and simultaneously establishes her overinflated ego. She directly asserts her psychopathy while revealing her demand for praise, "awe," in which she desires to "relish." This desire for worship extends into the realm of psychology as she considers herself an anomaly, "the white tiger," a "presence" to study. Daniels presents her megalomania and inability to self-reflect, focusing on the attention she receives in prison for her crimes.

Daniels incapacity to self-reflect decreases her ability to perform personal inventory and introspection. This lack of reflection demonstrates Daniel's vacuous nature where social repression usually assists in the construction of identity. She examples this internal hollowness as she states, "you may repress and deny all you want, but some of us were born with a howling void where our souls should sway" (27). Dorothy declares her own vacuity, declaring herself soulless. The absence of a personal soul allows Daniels to thwart off anxieties that stem from cultural repression and denials of desire. Her emptiness permits her to live outside social boundaries as determined by her psychopathy. Cultural pressures, beyond imprisonment, present no threat to Daniels formation of identity nor cause her to constrain her desires to maintain social cohesion.

While Daniels recognizes that society poses little impact on her internal sense of self through restriction and repression, she similarly understands the cultural demand for archetypical norms. She identifies "her delicious record of nonconformity" which allowed her to scale various occupational hierarchies and commit multiple murders and acts of cannibalism (25). However,

Daniels usually disguises this nonconformity as she has "developed workarounds that rely on one principle…people don't want to remember you…you have to make over yourself with the kind of body that makes strangers' eyes glaze over. In the service of being actively uninteresting" (214). She examples unassuming affectations in other passages where she "wore an expression of 'relatability'" (218) and developed a game of "playing innocent" where she "played innocent early and often" (184). These expressions demonstrate the character's ability to recede into multiple roles, hiding her psychopathy behind a curtain of banality. She exhibits an absence of repression without neurosis breaking through her veneer and exposing the person inside. Absence repression allows her to perform any identity, usually to blend in, camouflaging any unscrupulous behavior she commits according to her own desires to avoid consequence.

Daniels focuses on her crafted identities throughout the novel, particularly in the performance of gender which she primarily uses to hide her identity as a serial killer. She states, "I learned to approximate a female—how to talk, how to walk, how to dance…I learned that being female is prefab, thoughtless, soulless, and abjectly capitalist…It's not important that it's real" (35). The suggestion of unconscious imitation of gender constructs due to social pressure bears no influence on the character as she perceives identity as "making a show because propriety demanded it" (31). Dorothy's portrayal of gender performativity presents the acute blankness within herself. She "wears" various personalities that depict an archetypical American woman in the 80s, 90s, and early 2000s. She strictly mimics perceptions of gender performativity directly as "a copy, an imitation, a derivative example, a shadow of the real" which establishes "a compulsory performance in the sense that acting out of line with…norms brings with it ostracism, punishment and violence" (Butler 20, 24). Thus, Daniels enactment of identity, while

not influenced by social pressure, become pure performance to avoid detection and criminal

punishment that would remove her privilege in place of prison.

Daniels performs roles associated with femininity to avoid criminal prosecution as her

psychopathy eliminates the anxiety of social otherization. The character avoids otherization to

maintain her ability to kill and eat men. She, at first, considers her gender as an opportunistic

mode of function in society to conceal her murders as she understands that "culture refuses to see

violence in women" (226) as "a criminal woman is almost unimaginable" (Atwell 197). Dorothy

built her identity with the importance of "looking innocent in more than one language, and at

more than one stage in her life" (184) as she played the roles of "a girl, a daughter, a student, a

woman, a writer, a critic, a friend, a mistress, a lover, and a murderer" (138). All of these

identities she procures over time to effectually hide her killings. Daniels only "murmuration of

fear" of which she never could "recall ever feeling before this moment" comes in the revelation

of her true self which results in criminal prosecution (196). The murderess's fear stems solely

from "the net" of criminal prosecution "pressing [in], the flesh [of freedom] constricting under

its pressure" (200). The dread she experiences forms directly as a result of looming

imprisonment, not social otherization.

In fact, the character's demonstrated lack of neurosis and disregard for cultural alienation

allows her to revel in social otherization. Daniels response to her arrest and subsequent criminal

prosecution reveals the character's absence repression as she ignores social interpretations of her

behavior. She states, "kill one man and you're an oddity. Kill a few and you're a legend" (92).

She perceives her murders as legendary actions, making her notorious and immortal. Dorothy

expands on her self-perceived status as a legendary icon in response to her cannibalism. She

believes the ability "to eat people is to get the taste of a Titan. It's infinite immortalization. It

makes a god out of a woman" (94). Accordioning to Daniels, cannibalism gives her the power of a "titan," a being of great strength, an unkillable god. She describes this power as "the ultimate aphrodisiac" (71). The attention, what Daniel's "relishes" in, immortalizes and pleasures her. This immortalization occurs because of social reactions to the character's personal behavior which perceives her identity as immoral, deviant, and evil, alienating her from the normative identity in American culture.

Thus, social otherization manifests only in reaction to Daniel crimes as police reveal them to mainstream society. As a serial killer and cannibal, Daniels becomes a spectacle to society, removing her status as an affluent food critic to a person who "upset the established gender patterns—a gun-toting, celebrity-seeking and power-hungry 'femme fatale'—a deadly woman who [exhibits] female dominance over men" (Atwell 198). Society establishes her as a "femme fatale" through, as Dorothy relates, "my episode of Snapped; you read the tweets and you liked them, stabbing that tiny red heart with your forefinger in a hot dopamine rush. What the tabloids named me: the 'MILF Killer,' 'The Butcher Food Critic,' the 'Blood Nympho'" (15). The "celebrity-seeking" Daniels becomes otherized as society morphs her violent actions into a sideshow of female horror. Society characterizes her through true-crime camp, social media interactions, and memorable, gendered nicknames that exploit cultural perceptions of her aberrative femininity. Culture defines her actions, names her person, and morphs her heinous crimes into a mass media spectacle. However, society bears no effect on Daniels' formation into a serial killer as she actively chooses to not repress the culturally taboo action. Therefore, Daniels's absence repression exists between the merger of social otherization and psychopathy which occurs outside the influence of surplus repression and the formation of neurosis.

Dorothy Daniels expresses absence repression which manifests when culture otherizes the nonneurotic. Many figures in horror stand beside Daniels, depicting socially otherized individuals who lack the formation of surplus repression. These characters appear as nonneurotics who commit forbidden behavior in society without internal expressions of anxiety, self-consciousness, or self-reflection. Instances of absence repression span beyond Chelsea Summer's *A Certain Hunger*, in literature and films that feature serial killers, slashers, cannibals, and master manipulators who express psychopathic personalities. Famous characters like Patrick Bateman, Hannibal Lecter, Jigsaw, Villanelle, and Annie Wilkes all demonstrate the psychopath blending into society behind a façade of a culturally acceptable identity. They mask the vacuous narcissism of their internal nature which desires to objectify, possess, and kill the unassuming and unsuspecting around them.

CONCLUSION: COLLECTIVE IMPACTS ON INDIVIDUAL BEINGS

Works of horror offer a plethora of insights into understanding cultural constructs, countercultural movements, and the otherization of marginalized groups who lie outside the boundaries of social normativity. My thesis works to decenter pure psychoanalysis in exploring horror through utilizing and forwarding Marcuse's theory of surplus repression in hopes to present the importance of legitimizing feminist struggles in western patriarchal societies. I demonstrate this implementation of sociological exploration first by examining the impacts of patriarchal violence on "final girls" in Grady Hendrix's *The Final Girl Support Group.* Hendrix presents the ostracization of survivors of masculine violence and demonstrates their resilience in combatting patriarchal retribution incurred by their survival. I similarly present a sociological cause in the development of "hysteria," a term largely associated with female psychology, resulting from social otherization in the display of countercultural expressions of female gender performativity. I then work to establish a new concept termed absence repression which presents the otherization of female characters who express characteristics of psychopathy and lack the ability to develop surplus repression due to limited emotional expressions.

These chapters express the importance in changing rhetoric surrounding fictional characters particular in horror as the genre allows for a fuller cultural critique due to its ability to transcend social taboos. We must move past the archaic, frankly sexist, Freudian understanding of psychoanalysis to discover the constraints places on marginalized people in a culture that promotes patriarchal, heterosexual, capitalistic Christian values. We must face the "monsters" in our communities to determine where we fail as a society. Applying sociological questions to individual expression in literature points the figure outward. It moves the insular, myopic blame

placed upon marginalized communities by hierarchal institutions use to obfuscate guilt upon the victimized.

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