



An Expression of Complex Psychology in the Character of Aunt Patience: As a Gothic Component of *Jamaica Inn*

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Abstract— *Daphne Du Maurier builds a fairy tale narrative in Jamaica Inn, with a classic villain and a conflicted damsel-in-distress in gothic romances, brought together within a toxic marital bond. This paper aims on scrutinizing the character of 'Aunt Patience' as an inspiration behind 'marriage' motivating an exercise of patriarchal control, through invasion of female psychology. Recurring instances of terror, crime, incest and domestic violence, still celebrate the triumph of female strength and undying passion for freedom. 'Aunt Patience', in the face of psychological and bodily threat, falls prey to a classic tragedy, with 'supernatural' as an integral part of her life. Horror and unrest consume her psyche, manipulating important aspects of her life to a degree of becoming 'normal'. Home and family become synonymous to danger, compromising female sanity, with special focus on problematic social categorization of women. The aim here is to portray gothic events of Jamaica Inn, leading to mystery and social dilemma, considered as strong voices in Du Maurier classics, largely based on toxic marriages, consummation, desire and female intellectuality.*

Keywords— *Crime, Death and Decay, Gothic, Haunted House, Marriage*



I. INTRODUCTION

Female consciousness and behaviorism are the concepts largely controlled and developed on the factors of emotional stability and marital agency, which constitute a wide societal framework and haunts female imagination to great degrees. Du Maurier in her thriller *Jamaica Inn* reframes the overpowering emotions pertaining to women trapped in social obligations through Aunt Patience, the wife of a criminal with a sensational past. Her portrayal of family bonds apprises the reader of problematic psychological ties with representation of family in the novel, being far from the normal and healthy coexistence which results in the development of complex structures of hegemony and unrest. Du Maurier has not accepted a popular opinion about family and companionship, but she rigorously attacks various presumptions about human reaction to social structures in ghastly settings. Her

incorporation of a gothic perspective through Aunt Patience, thus becomes, not a gothic heroine, but a succumbing figure to a continuous trauma laced with horror and humiliation in a widely 'weird' domestic space. Her name is suggestive of her innate qualities throughout the development of the novel, and thus the 'gothic' in the novel is not only, a medium of her fear, but an instrument of representing her longings and aspirations, yearning to fulfil the dreaded desires of the abnormal household. Du Maurier depiction of post marriage trauma and the 'politics of housing' runs through the timeline of Aunt Patience's existence and assigns much more gravity to her troubles and tribulations in her marital home. The commercialization of Patience's marital territory 'leads to its loss of value and social objectivity, as the Inn is a medium of commercial gain and criminality, something which adds darker notes of coldness to Aunt Patience's

mannerisms. She appears cold and irresponsive to her inner voices and her gut feelings, and acts like a puppet. The absent protective value of the house cancels out the bright aspects of Aunt Patience's character. Aunt Patience deals with large cultural narratives and a firm dictatorship in the English society. The inn becomes a sight of intrigue and awe where the feeling of shelter and belonging fade away into the horrors of marital rape and exploitation. Du Maurier has an innovative, yet bizarre picture of home to display, where the unconventional norms shown through the ill-famed inn critiques the life quality of the middle-class families in far West, raising questions and suspicions concerned with romantic companionship and togetherness. The savage outlook depicted by Du Maurier by instrumenting the haunted house imagery not only focuses on a vital role in Patience's transformation into a submissive wife, but also introduces intense mystery to the novel, given her psychic mannerisms and fearful demeanor.

The supernatural element is introduced through the spirits of the dead, the ones who are real occupants of the Inn. The intervention of spirits in *Jamaica Inn* suggests that Patience is not alien to the supernatural. There lies a constant lack of social outlet or freedom to use her abilities or to facilitate her growth as an individual, although Patience never tries to outsmart the supernatural but learns to wear it on her skin. The passive ways in which Patience manages to maintain confidentiality regarding the killings and violence carried out by her husband is suggestive of her clear requirement of being tight-lipped to ensure an availability of a roof on her head. Despite her aversion for violence, she is unable to collect her disoriented self to fight back the atrocities and continuous attacks on her. Unknown to the details that the concept of home for her, fails to fulfill her sociological needs, she soon realizes that on critical grounds, Jamaica Inn is not suitable to be an accommodating home, as elements of social fulfillment and household are missing from its very fabric. Her limited space is highly controversial, visibly disturbing and painfully spontaneous. Her circumstances in the past, and post marriage have resulted in the loss of her brilliance, youth and beauty, and she appears like a ghost, completely aloof in a house frequently visited by ill-famed men indulging in crime and drug abuse.

Du Maurier uses Gothicism as a medium to present a weird and overpowering concept working alongside factors of patriarchy and horror, challenging human thought and psycho-motor ability. As a threat for psychological functioning, manipulation of Aunt Patience, turns out to be hazardous, and distorts her psychological pattern of her own house. Daphne studies marital alliance as an androcentric tool to install terror in women, and as a

female writer, she helped gothic fiction to flourish by examining the real quality spaces provided for women representation in society. Maurier uses this novel to voice out the frustrations of women trapped in orthodox marriages with low compatibility and lesser outlets to channelize their emotional quotient.

A marital alliance is a twisted outcome of various sociological as well as psychological tools used by toxic partners to control their better halves. (Komter,1989)

Aunt Patience's husband Joss creates systematic gender differences to lower his wife's agency and power in their marriage. *Jamaica Inn*, a gothic novel becomes even more crucial to such interpretations because it was in the 20th century when the term gothic novel was actually coined, followed by progressive developments in the realm of feminist gothic, and fundamental changes coming in, of how commonfolk perceived gothic heroines and victims.

Aunt Patience is predominantly a noble woman, remaining central to the violence and bloodshed inside the Inn, serving as a space to many disguised criminals, even before Mary Yellen's entry in Cornwall. Aunt Patience is not only the sister of Mary's mother, an embodiment of calibre, whose brilliance is overpowered by the personality of her beast-like husband, Joss Merlyn. Joss Merlyn as a husband stands as a symbol of demonic thought and malignity. His autocratic ways constantly challenge the availability of basic human dignity for Patience and as a wife of a smuggler she loses her sanity and drives mad upon knowing the reality behind the isolated space, barely serving as an Inn, as nobody stops there. Therefore, to Mary Yellen, it becomes evident that Patience has gone through deep transformation over years, as her charming beauty faded away and she tries to escape the questions put up by Mary, falling completely in contrast with her character and choices in terms of adventure, companionship and romance.

The shaping of Patience, however, explores the unsuitability of domestic sphere as a medium to enhance female identity and authority, considering that 'home' is a patriarchal space, Aunt Patience's subjectivity is consistently dominated by Uncle Joss Merlyn, exaggerated villain of the novel, larger-than-life. His approach towards Aunt Patience solidifies the grounds for her cognitive fall, where she is required to be over-alert, and fearful. These demands and expectations result as a visible breakage in terms of her psyche. The shame attached to her marriage blocks ways for her overall welfare, offering her loneliness and trauma. Arising from such situation, greater risks haunt her in terms of mind and body, where her personality is absorbed by external factors of housing,

livelihood and basic recognition. Domestic violence happens to be a practice condemned since the 14th century where violation of marital code of conduct led to public prosecution of abusive partners within marital alliance, to protect the sanctity of this institution. Marriage was believed to be sacramental in nature, backed by intervention of both church and *supernatural*. Michael Goodich, describing about "Sexuality, Family, and the Supernatural in the Fourteenth Century" says that:

'One of the domestic woes that occasionally required intervention was concubinage, which could heap scandal upon the family and posed a threat to familial and social stab'. (Goodich,504)

He further states that 'violation of the code of conduct of marriage would result in severe public as well as divine punishment'. In *Jamaica Inn*, marital security, and its sacramental value seems to diminish and the divine justice is absent. Marital bliss becomes a myth, and in various senses in where Marriage comes as a gift to Mary after her struggles, Aunt Patience lives a different version of the same where her situation is equally regressive, unaffected and suffocating.

There is an urgent need to put forward some burning concerns on the symbolization of marriage as a 'gift' or 'blessing', keeping in mind the changing times and contemporary goals and aspirations of feminist men and women, looking at the adverse effect toxic marriage brought to Aunt Patience, summing to:

Specifically, how do feminist women and men practice marriage? Is there a sharing of the second shift? Does a feminist ideology of marital equality result in a marital "upgrade" for women? For feminist couples, does the ideology of marital equality translate into the practice of marital equality? (Blaisure K.R.& Allen K.R,1995)

Shifting social boundaries and socialization between people and the cultural ideas they share, and terminologies like marital equality and individuality are a new addition in modern marital arrangements, with a progressive outlook, promoting a feeling of healthy co-existence and sharing between man and wife. Modern marriages are primarily based out of division of economic labour and equal distribution of rights and duties, Where the sense of duty is a double-sided concept, in order to maintain a healthy marriage and sound lifestyle in the contemporary times.

Through the novel, one notices that Aunt Patience is committed to high sense of duty, and marital sacrifice. Traditionally, Patience is a loyal wife keeping a step away from sins, ensuring the availability of her sexuality reserved for her husband irrespective of his toxicity.

Whereas Joss is a womanizer, and tries to lure Mary, which makes Aunt Patience largely nervous. Through her characteristics, it is maintained that Daphne wanted to present Aunt Patience as a fallen angel, and an epitome of forgiveness, reinforcing in all senses the principal motto of Christianity. Patience loves Joss and stands still through her frequent outbursts because she looked at him with an understanding eye and wanted to stay with him through thick and thin, fulfilling all her duties as a compassionate partner.

'The trope of the husband allows us to consider how and why the figure who was supposed to lay horror to rest has himself become the avatar of horror who strips voice, movement, property, and identity itself from the heroine.'(Massé,1990)

Her strong tendencies backing her counterpart despite the closest to know of his treachery, makes her one with nurturing concept of unconditional acceptance, while she is poles apart from her husband responsible for her absolute exploitation. This critiques the loyalty and purity of husbands in gothic romances. It is also shown in Du Maurier's other novel *Rebecca* as how Maxim proves to be the one at fault, while the popular opinion always suggested Rebecca to be the villain. A clear observation can be made on Maxim D Winters is an extension of the character of Joss in *Jamaica Inn*, where the basic difference in both the characters lie on the basis of the way they wear the male ego on their sleeves- Du Maurier seemingly criticizes marriage as she has been able to show what incompatibility in marriage extracts out from a woman's psyche, in the backdrop of violence. *Jamaica inn* and *Rebecca*, prudently show male ego and patriarchal insecurity in wide focus, where husbands, while being unable to accept the brilliance of the wives, choose to oppress them exercising male- chauvinism and generational hatred.

'The idea that marital quality is more important to women's mental health than to men's is based in part on theories of gender differences in socialization.' (Williams, 2003)

According to the above statement, due to variety of social norms and the presence of pre-defined gender roles, a dominant viewpoint of women within any society sums up to the maintenance of harmony and stability in married life, irrespective of the nature of treatment they'd receive from their counterparts. This becomes an issue of great satisfaction, and great length of emotional, physical and spiritual energy is devoted for the same.

The gender differences and the lack of social outlets promotes Aunt Patience to put forward more efforts into her already bitter and dead marriage and adds more to her

complex psychology. She is acting according to the social norms suggesting that a healthy and balanced family life could be the most celebrated achievement of her life and would provide fullness to her womanhood. Aspirations of being a good woman seem to have possessed the mind of Patience in the backdrop haunted by supernatural evil.

Du Maurier explores the natural, yet terrifying mental as well as, physical tension between the sexes within the traditionally gothic background, with a hauntingly deafening silence. This effect created by the writer is presented through the treachery lurking behind the shadows of vast wilderness, where every human relationship turns grey. The most obvious reason for the misery of Aunt Patience is her surrounding which smells of human blood, manipulation, greed and cruelty. The Inn is unwelcoming, lacking a hospitable and homely warmth, and hence, is a matter of distrust amongst the locals. Thus, the absence of liveliness forces Aunt Patience to channelize her energies in a productive way, something which is recurrent. Aunt Patience lives through serious mental health conditions and its gravity is never acknowledged by her husband.

The gothic architecture and the medieval edifice of the Inn, produces a chilling unrest, given its extraordinarily large and shady structure, is not subtle. The prodigious massiveness of the inn makes her presence depreciate in absolute capacity. The haunted house appears like a living, breathing demon, sealed with the unrequited desires and aspirations of the dead who lie there. Such a background to the novel gives larger base to Daphne Du Maurier's fascination with creepy and eerie surroundings, most probably home to ghosts and ghouls, the obvious occupants of such places.

As with the gothic landscape, the gothic mansion was also often home to the female abject. Much like the gothic landscape, the gothic house embodies Freud's theory of the uncanny, turning the domestic sphere into an unfamiliar and threatening place. Some critics have explored this theory on a psychological level, examining the idea that the house itself was often depicted as a physically female space; specifically, a house was a maternal space reflected in the use of secret chambers, mysterious labyrinths and locked doors to forbidden places. (Mitchell, 2018)

The above lines show how, for Aunt Patience, house was both a habitat, and a prison. The nature of an inn is represented as a nightmare in this novel. Daphne Du Maurier suggests that it is no less than a site of a tormented hell. The 'Land of the dead' situated on a moorland presents various grounds of similarities in terms of the

gothic architecture and designing, widely described in gothic novels. The atmosphere in which Aunt Patience is seated gives away impressions of a classic gothic relish:

'The place is 'zombie-like', having a 'cold, dead atmosphere (Ch.5) The horror in the life of Aunt Patience is not limited to endless violence and marital dissatisfaction, but the sources of deep, lingering fear around her make her even more breathless and helpless. The novel says: 'The clock ticks 'like a dying man who cannot catch his breath' (Ch. 4), the wooden sign creaks 'like an animal in pain' (Ch. 2) The weather is consistently bad and damp, with no sunlight and brightness, causing deep despair to the fragile, and feminine body of Aunt Patience where 'The landscape works against its inhabitants, with its perilous bogs, blinding fog and 'lashing, pitiless' rain (Ch. 1). The wind on the moors is 'a chorus from the dead' (Ch. 17) (Du Maurier,)

Societal discrimination and continuous dangers of identity crisis, life-threatening instances, and near-death encounters assure a woman of her existence and her marriage being based out of a highly intimidating and compromising environment with violent men all around. This is crucial in the context of Patience because in a way, she becomes a prisoner, and her condition as a captive, surprises Mary Yellen, the young and meritorious 23-year-old woman who believes in freedom of mind and body. Mary had only learned about fear after arriving in Jamaica inn, she never had come across such a suffocative environment before and felt sorry about Aunt Patience.

"He stood for everything she feared and hated and despised; but she knew she could love him. Nature cared nothing for prejudice. Men and women were like the animals on the farm at Helford, she supposed; there was a common law of attraction for all living things, some similarity of skin or touch, and they would go to one another. This was no choice made with the mind. Animals did not reason, neither did the birds in the air. Mary was no hypocrite; she was bred to the soil, and she had lived too long with birds and beasts, had watched them mate. and bear their young and die. There was precious little romance in nature, and she would not look for it in her own life." (Du Maurier, *Jamaica Inn*)

The above quote shows how in contrast to this unromantic character of Patience, Mary Yellen is individualistic and has progressive views about love, consummation and

marriage, in a certain way, Daphne Du Maurier has presented two exactly opposite characters in her work, where Mary symbolizes light of the day and Aunt Patience symbolizes darkness and sorrow with a deep-black night grappling her subconscious. Mary is free from prejudice and insecurity, unlike Patience, but with due course of the novel runs, Mary also loses track of her identity and conscious, for she is molested by someone she understood as a parent-figure.

Jamaica Inn as an abode of death, suggests prominently 'absence of a safe place for a woman in marriage', cutting parental support, and the amenities which could help to maintain a chord with the outer world, hence, there exists, only a world inside the Inn, and the connection with the outer world is lost. The subjugation is also relevant in the context of Mary Yellen, who sails through loss of home and identity post her mother's death. Above points maintain that *Jamaica Inn* is not only a gothic novel, but it is hugely political and sociological at the same time. Aunt Patience oscillates between life and death, and her marriage is not a guarantee of safety and purity, thus, violating principles associated with healthy marriage in Christianity, which is based on companionship and equality. The character of Aunt Patience is summed up in the novel with her death.

'Thinking about death provokes the pursuit of meaning, which in turn may privilege intuitive cognitive processes. (Routledge,2018)

The cognitive energy of Aunt Patience grew pale, resulting in her inability to act appropriately, as she continuously anticipated the beatings of her husband. Her reflex for situations in her life turned dysfunctional, given that she always fears death, and decay, which marks that though the source of her fear is linked with the supernatural, but it is largely scientific and curable. Fear of the uncanny becomes irresistible for Aunt Patience, yet there lies another argument which counters this line of thought. Fear is not limited to, merely supernatural or the unexplained, and what the general perspective exists, about uncanny, but there lies a hidden science behind this, something which affirmed with logic and reason, which was already given by Sigmund Freud's 1919 work *Uncanny*, talking lengths about human mind, psychology and its greater connection with fear and supernatural concepts. In this essay, he says that the sentiment of 'uncanny' is not a much-acknowledged concept in the literary canon, despite its beauty and aesthetic quotient.

'One such is the uncanny. There is no doubt that this belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread. It is equally beyond doubt that the word is not always used in a clearly

definable sense, and so it commonly merges with what arouses fear in general.'(Freud,2003)

Drawing parallels between uncanny, psychology and fear, it can be maintained that the faculty of horror, its effect and definition is blurry. Hence, *Uncanny* is multi-dimensional, and doesn't fit in a pre-set criterion. Being limited to, or summing up to merely highly dramatic, moving or supernatural occurrences is not uncanny, but it is backed with the psychological play of human mind, where human thought provokes the feeling of dread, even through subtle imageries. Hence, the reaction to uncanny, and the response to it is largely subjective based on human experiences and culture.

The above quote explains that there lies a variety of viewpoints and perceptions regarding horror, some and there lie different coping strategies to deal with uncanny, but Aunt Patience succumbs to it, therefore, not getting the centre-stage as a gothic heroine in the novel, Mary Yellen. Her inability to craft her fate suggests her character to be one with the women who internalize fear, letting it subdue their innate qualities and characteristics. It can be said that the 'uncanny' is not only familiar, but also familial. The demise of Aunt Patience towards the completion of the novel is not only the fruit of the supernatural, but also the output of the toxic family ties she was obliged to, despite the constant physical and mental attacks on her. The death of Aunt Patience is not only a saddening event in the novel, but it also gives room to arguments like:

"Man is always a whisker away from death and the thin barrier which divides life from death is likely to collapse at any time. However, if the ghostly images permeate the whole story, they usually appear only because of the characters' over stimulated mind and remain dreamlike creatures. So, what purpose do these ghosts serve other than other than to create a deep sense of the "Uncanny", so disturbing because situated at the edge of the supernatural? And mightn't the "Uncanny" finally be an ingenious representation of this otherness, this worrying presence which seems to disturb Mary's sense of her own identity, caught between the oppressive landscape and the supernatural? Indeed, the essential issue of *Jamaica Inn* seems to be the one raised by Delamotte "What distinguishes the "me" from the "not me? and "Where, if they exist at all, are the boundaries of the self?" (Delamotte, 1990)

The above quote not only focuses on Mary Yellen, but in a way, it is also a manifestation of the thought process of Aunt Patience. Her death depicted in this novel, is channelized by her insecurity and her grappled subconscious, allowing the 'supernatural' and the 'uncanny' to trouble her in a way more intensive manner,

something, which attacks the healthy abilities of mind and promotes mental dysfunctions like over thinking, closely linked to the concept of terror gothic. The stimulation in the psyche of Aunt Patience makes her feel more about the place in which she dwells. The ghosts and shadows of Jamaica Inn are dreamlike, and stay in the background, yet creating a passive sense of consistent fear.

Terror, as an emotion central to Aunt Patience, manifests the unknown, yet is passive. Terror has a different mode of presenting the sublime in comparison to horror, while horror and terror are two wings of the gothic school, terror is often closely associated to women, given the psychological aspect it holds, creating caution and anticipation in a person. Terror speaks of taboo and atrocity and creates deep mental disorder and discomfort. On the other hand, horror is central to the male domain, suggesting it as more profound, and crude, often used in comic situations, or in instances of grotesque, something which is bizarre and weird. *Jamaica Inn* presents horror through its gothic architecture, which is visually grotesque, while the reader can also locate terror through the figure of Patience, whose body and mind are home to the darkness collected through years, because of the marital pressures and the gendered suppression she has been subjected to,

II. CONCLUSION

Du Maurier's characterization of Aunt Patience in *Jamaica Inn* suggests the presence of various moral, and gender-based concerns in gothic fiction. Moreover, it also talks about the tug-of-war between the feminine masculine sensibilities, portraying a minor female character stuck between the gory encounters and violent actions of men.

But, as a feminist writer, Du Maurier designs the character of Mary entirely different from Patience, opening doors for other possible interpretations and connotations to the power of female existence using the available mediums of retaliation. The awful and ugly apprehension, or terror, alongside the horror created by an Inn situated in gothic settings brings more depth to the narrative and makes it even more frightening. This novel by Daphne Du Maurier questions the moral grounds of family and marriage, targeting the sanctity and purity of marriage in the Christian school of thought. The name 'Patience' given to the character aligns appropriately to her personality, and suggesting Du Maurier's attention to subtle detailing, and the calculations behind the act of 'naming' the protagonist, reflects an art of simple projection of Aunt Patience. Her suggestive attempt of naming this character 'Patience' brings out an absolute fullness to her. Her characterization of Patience is layered, despite appearing simple, and neat

on the surface, something which promotes the readers to draw parallels between fictional manifestation and real life, laced with a persistent after-taste of intrigue and pain.

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