

## Theatrics of Sibling Bond in Jean Genet's *The Maids*

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### Abstract

Are we all 'homo sacers' entrapped in a social labyrinth? This article discusses the crisis of individuals whose agency is threatened by dominant social forces, by focusing on the intricacies of sibling bond (sibship) between the protagonists in the 1947 play, *The Maids (Les Bonnes)*, by the French dramatist Jean Genet. It attempts to examine a) shared trauma, birth order, confused identities, gender dynamics, lingering thoughts of revenge on society, and sibling rivalry, conflicted or toxic attachment, deeply rooted in aversion as well as protective mentality towards each other, as per Victor G. Ciciirelli's perceptions; b) the inculcation of mores, norms and social roles based on the theoretical views of 'sociology of morality' and the characters' 'habitus' (sociology) c) and their reactions towards dominant forces (through the lens of standpoint epistemology in social theory) by enacting their agency and d) how they become "outsiders within" (standpoint theory) like a "homo sacer" who are disposable (discard theory) in the eyes of society. In addition, the study upholds the need to discuss similar struggles of individuals and inspire further creative studies on sibling bond that might broaden the spectrum of knowledge, particularly through literary research, by building the gap between literature and critical points of view.

**Keywords:** Class Division, Clinical Psychology, Discard Studies, Sibling Bond, Sibship, Sociology.

### Introduction

Existentialists assert that life is inherently mundane, absurd, and meaningless, leading to existential angst and hopelessness (1). However, they propose that acknowledging one's biological existence entails accepting individual responsibility for one's actions, even as some evade such accountability (2). Inarguably, it can be said that the human race has been in the clutches of this obsession to transcend and dilemma while trying to fit within the social setup, triggering introspective experiences. Furthermore, societal double standards exacerbate the divide among individuals, undermining collective unity and fostering quests for identity and belonging. Additionally, class divisions and social roles erect barriers between people, a theme central to French dramatist Jean Genet's play, *The Maids* (3, 4). The play is said to have reflected the social background and experiences of the playwright, Jean Genet (1910-1986), akin to many of his other works. Notably, his diverse oeuvre-encompassing plays, novels, poetry, and political activism that established him as a leading figure in avant-garde theatre, particularly the Theatre of the Absurd in France (5). This article tries to read through the sibling bond and behavioral patterns of the two

protagonists (sisters) in the play, intriguing audiences and readers alike with these characters' individual struggles, turmoil, and dilemmas in finding their identities and voices within a divided society. The crucial factors affecting them are societal roles, class dynamics, and self-serving attitudes, particularly from their employer, the lady of the house where they work as maids, and themselves, despite being bound by sibling ties. The existing literature on sibship believes that sibling relationships, or sibship, must be explored further to gain deeper insights into the human condition due to the role it plays in an individual's life similar to any other familial bond. As one of the most enduring and influential relationships in human life, sibling bonds possess significant powers to positively or negatively alter, influence, manipulate, or support individuals, ultimately shaping their lives. Though such studies reveal that while sibling bonds form within biological relationships, similar connections can emerge in other social relationships, such as friendships. Consequently, individuals without biological siblings may also experience such bonds (6-12). The article aims to bridge a research gap by

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examining the complexities of the sibling bond between the two sisters in the play and their reactions to society. *The Maids* has been extensively discussed, with researchers exploring its multidimensional aspects, including phallogentrism (13), misogyny, feminism (14), power politics, othering, Theatre of the Absurd, metaphorical analysis, ritualistic and criminal elements, dualities, and sociological readings (15-22). Additionally, psychoanalytic perspectives have examined the sisters' schizophrenic traits (18). Notably, *The Maids* has been at the forefront for having dealt with homosexuality which is an intriguing factor in contemporary queer theory. However, this study adopts a socio-psychoanalytical approach to examine the problematic effects of the complex bond between the two sisters, particularly their behavioural patterns rooted in mutual contempt. This contempt may stem from their antisocial attitude, characterized by a deep-seated hatred towards others in their social circle, especially those belonging to the dominant power systems who are closely connected to the sisters through occupation or acquaintance, such as the family they work for. This perspective offers a novel approach, aligning with the study's objectives. This study undertakes a tripartite examination of: a) The moral dimensions of decision-making among lower socio-economic individuals, informed by sociology of morality and habitus theories; b) the responses to dominant forces, analyzed through standpoint epistemology to illuminate the question of agency and c) the identity of the sisters similar to an "outsiders within" status (standpoint theory), analogous to the figure of homo sacer. This research further investigates the complexities of sibship, with particular emphasis on the sibling bond within shared parental contexts.

## Methodology

The multifariousness of their sibling bond is examined from five theoretical angles, by analyzing certain terminologies such as, 'sociology of morality' and "outsiders within" both of which are part of sociology of morality theory that comes under the broad category of sociology, habitus, standpoint epistemology, homo sacer, and discard theory. These frameworks question the characters' agency. Additionally, a psychoanalytical/psychological science perspective is applied, incorporating the insights of Victor G. Cicirelli, Professor

Emeritus at Purdue University's Department of Psychological Sciences, on sibling bonds.

## Results and Discussion

The play, *The Maids* by Jean Genet focuses on two sisters, Solange and Claire, who share a complicated sadomasochist relationship and engage in role plays throughout the play, relentlessly plotting the murder of the mistress of the house where they are working as maids. It can be called the story of two siblings who love and hate their Madame at the same time. It is regarded as Genet's masterpiece, which was translated into English by Bernard Frechtman. The original play was first performed in French on the 17th of April 1947 at the Theatre de l'Athenee in Paris, under the direction of Louis Jouvet. It is strikingly notable that, even though many critics assume that the play might have been inspired by the infamous sisters, Christine and Lea Papin who shocked the French society in 1933 with the brutal murder of their employer and her daughter, the playwright had never agreed with this popular claim. The play centres on the sisters' relationship and their struggles as domestic workers. Nevertheless, the play portrays the characters as bound by blood ties, and their shared occupation fosters a lasting bond, the elements integral to its narrative. However, aside from these aspects, the play does not provide details about their childhood or family experience beyond what is presented in its storyline. Although studies on sibship describe sibling relationships as "voluntary" (7), since such a bond also involves a shared "history of intimate family experiences" that are "enduring", potentially lifelong, and relatively "egalitarian" (7). Studying sibship, or the bond between siblings, can be called as one of the key focuses of psychology, psychiatry, and social work today. This is particularly important because understanding the role of sibling relationships in individuals' lives is crucial, especially regarding socialization dynamics, which has received relatively limited attention till now (23). In literature, given the rising influence of medical humanities, exploring this subject matter is crucial, as it can offer profound insights into individual psyches, how relationships shape individuals-particularly sibling bonds, and their subsequent impact on lives and actions. This observation applies broadly, spanning multiple cultures and literary styles or genres. Thus, attempts to study sibship suggest

that despite cultural and upbringing differences, the sibling bond significantly impacts individuals with siblings. This is evident in the play, where the sisters' relationship exemplifies a complex bond that can be either mutually beneficial, or sometimes commensalistic, or even mutually disastrous at times. However, individuals without siblings can be influenced by others who fill a sibling-like role, since modern understandings of 'siblings' and 'sibship' extend beyond biological ties to include multiple social connections, as individuals co-exist within a shared cultural system, driven by survival instincts or complexes. The binding factors may not always be genuine affection or love, but rather a pragmatic unity, where individuals come together to counter a common opponent or oppressor, forming a symbiotic relationship (6-12, 23). This dynamic is evident in the play's protagonists, who exhibit a love-hate relationship. This highlights that a blood bond does not inherently foster love between individuals. The sister characters in the play are portrayed as societal outcasts, rendered practically invisible and disposable like garbage. Waste, a by-product of systemic social processes, is explored through Discard Studies, a novel field examining the cultural, economic, and environmental impacts of waste. This field also prompts us to consider waste as a social and cultural construct, beyond its physical connotations. This construct reinforces power dynamics, sustaining control and monitoring mechanisms over vulnerable groups and communities through systemic categorization (24). Hence, the maids can be called as those characters who represent an expendable group of people, controlled by the interplay of class and dominant power politics. Furthermore, their mutual contempt, stemming from their own internalized disgust towards their social identity, intensifies the turmoil and crises in their lives, as portrayed in the play. Cicirelli's theoretical approach highlights the significance of sibling relationships, considering factors like bond dimensions, birth order effects, gender dynamics, sibling rivalry, conflict management, communication skills, and other influences. *The Maids* serves as a compelling example for exploring the dimensions of sibling bonds, as the play sheds light on the rivalry between the sisters through their conversations and role-plays. Additionally,

their dual status as women and maids provides valuable insights into the complexities of gender dynamics and the related struggles, which impose a subordinate identity upon them. According to Cicirelli, the nature of the sibling bond depends on various factors, such as family environment, developmental changes, long-term effects, parental mediation, and supportive sibling dynamics (7). The siblings' ability to effectively address these issues determines whether they have a healthy bond, which can contribute to a sibling's mental well-being and peaceful life. Cicirelli also emphasizes that sibship is one of the longest-lasting relationships in an individual's life, playing a crucial role not only in early childhood development and socialization but also throughout adulthood, even after parental influence has waned (7). The maids' verbal abuse of each other and their mutual desire to harm or kill one another, juxtaposed with their collaborative plot to murder their mistress, expose unhealthy patterns in their sibling bond. Also, these sisters' dysfunctional bond hinders their ability to resolve or face conflicts effectively, preventing the peaceful life that Cicirelli associates with healthy sibling relationships. Sibling bonds are a recurring theme in global stories and myths, particularly those entangled in perpetual conflicts, shared experiences, and collective responses. These experiences include struggles to navigate societal expectations, conform to social norms, and uphold moral principles. Consequently, they yield profound effects and potential mental repercussions, which is evident in the case of the play's protagonists. Sociological and philosophical theories employed here offer novel insights into the play, illuminating toxic bonding and social responses. Siblings play a vital role in socialization and individual growth, being a crucial horizontal relationship often overshadowed by vertical child-parent relationships, peer influences, education, and societal factors (11). Furthermore, an examination of existing sibling literature reveals disparate research domains with minimal interconnectedness (7). *The Maids* is ceremonial in nature, symbolizing the ritualistic killing of the power divide and shattering society's "acceptable" standards, established by dominant forces. This resonates with the observations of Nietzsche, Foucault, Gramsci, Agamben, and others. Specifically, the maids, belonging to the lower

socio-economic stratum, are deemed disposable in society's eyes, being voiceless and invisible, and lacking the space to express their individual identities (24). The characters' behavioral patterns and treatment of each other during role-plays, which focus on power shifts and the subversive nature of power dynamics, reveal the nuances of their identity. This dynamic demonstrates how power can transform individuals, leading them to treat others as *homo sacer* (25), while simultaneously possessing an "othered" identity themselves. Furthermore, their *habitus* controls and determines their character, perceptions, and personal philosophies. The bond between Solange and Clare is seemingly rooted in sibling rivalry and conflicted attachment. It is being said that sibling relationship among adults can be "ambivalent, including both mutual support and conflicts. Interestingly, the same factors that tend to increase contact, emotional closeness and help are also often associated with conflict and quarrels" (26), which is reflected in the way these two sisters enact their roles and agency and subvert their roles during their role plays. Consequently, their social identity and background as individuals from a lower socio-economic stratum play a pivotal role in shaping their moral concepts, aligning with sociological perspectives such as: 'sociology of morality', 'habitus', 'standpoint epistemology' or 'standpoint theory' as these factors also ascribe to them an identity that renders them "outsiders within," akin to a 'homo sacer' (25) since they are mere "others" the social setup (27, 28) which also make them dispensable like garbage or waste as per the notions of discard theory (24). Hence, it is crucial to note that their agency is not exercised with complete autonomy, due to these factors. In the beginning of the play itself, a struggle to situate oneself within the social spectrum can be observed, along with a dream-like tone and an ambiance of aversion, hostility and tension. Even though the play might seem to fuse illusionary and absurd elements, the psychology of the two central characters (albeit having mostly villainous features, rather than the conventionally expected ideal or noble or virtuous characteristics), can be taken into account as an integral or distinguishable factor, which in turn can probably be called as the central or driving force of the storyline. Here, the line between the social roles they play and the moral values they carry are thin. They seem to not

have upheld humane considerations or social mores and norms, which are considered essential for the stability of society as it is discussed in 'sociology of morality' (29) as well as standpoint epistemology (30, 31). All these theories focus on the factor that the social standing of a person results in the formation of their social identity, perceptions, actions and reactions, even though they may suppress certain aspects.

### **Shared Experiences and Responses**

Society or the world in general always has multiple types of hierarchical structures and the concept of othering is relevant in any social setup under any circumstance, for the reason that it exists in practice in some form or the other. Accordingly, the central characters of the play, *The Maids* can also be called victims in one aspect as they are others as per the power politics by class definition as their social identity that creates a distasteful *habitus* (or set of perceptions, owing to their background) and makes them express their agency in their own unique manner (32) essentially drives them to hate everyone around including their sibling and themselves. The effects of class dominance or any kind of hierarchical or suppressive or systemic abuse can have serious effects on individuals, and it is no wonder that people who raise their voices possibly be subdued by the dominant forces, or they might even be labelled as abnormal or antisocial. When it comes to *The Maids*, which aspect is crucial, which can also be studied in the light of the class struggle? Jean-Paul Sartre in the introductory essay in an edition of *The Maids and Deathwatch* brings in the idea of otherness when he says, "But the maids are relative to everything and everyone; their being is defined by its absolute relativity. They are others." (3, 4). Although the maids do not do anything considerably to destroy, disrupt or subvert the dominant forces, they relentlessly plan to attack the power structure through their fierce delusional aspirations, by plotting to murder the mistress of the house. Since they cannot find the realistic gratification of their plan, they try to find fulfilment through their private ceremonial killing in sadomasochistic role plays where one acts as the maid and succeeds in killing the other enacting as the mistress. Here, their reaction to the class struggle is by fostering a criminalist mentality, which indeed is petrifying to the readers or the audience. In a broader sense, if individuals start

putting such violent plots into practice, it might have disastrous effects on communities or the world as a whole. During such role plays, the younger sister, Claire takes up the role of the mistress of the house and finds pleasure in insulting the elder one, Solange, considering the latter as a slave who has to be tortured. Claire puts on a red velvet dress and accessories of Madame while abusing Solange for being impure, untouchable or filthy and even as just a “bad smell” (3, 4). However, the uncovering and strangest irony is that Claire finds her own reflection in her sister, Solange, however hard she may try to fit into the role of the mistress. Thus, her contempt is towards herself too. The red velvet dress has much significance, for it can be seen in connection with the red curtain at the end of the play which indicates that the illusion masks reality momentarily only, since the curtain puts an end to the play but such social realities live on. Self-conscious theatricality is also a prominent feature, for instance, Solange always feels someone is watching over their actions, although here, it is the audience, which is a constant reminder that the play is being played which is at the same time further moved from the “realities”, but represents or re-presents those “realities”. These features might remind the viewer or the reader of the traits of Epic Theatre too. On the other hand, Solange despises Claire and her aristocratic appearance, which reveals their shared detestation towards the mistress as well as the aristocracy in general or perhaps in an all-encompassing manner, the sisters’ loathing of the wealthy or the upper strata of the society according to the hierarchical order. She even says, “Filth doesn’t love filth.” (3, 4). The names of these characters are also noteworthy when it comes to the overall theme of the play, since in French, ‘Claire’ and ‘Solange’ point to the meanings, ‘clear’ and ‘dirt’ respectively, indicative of their duality or ambiguous nature, which is a key focus of this study. Nonetheless, the ruthless attitude of the sisters is also relevant in this context, as their role plays are not just a representation of the power clash in a harmless pattern, since both of them, in addition to the passing of time, find intense pleasure in physical and verbal abuse. In their views, the only factor that binds them together is their collective hatred for Madame, who is a representational figure of the elite class. Solange’s words can be seen as its

reflection whilst she claims while addressing Claire in Madame’s disguise, “We’re merged, enveloped in our fumes, in our revels, in our hatred of you...” (3, 4). The audience may get confused with the inconsistent, frantic or fluctuating characteristics exhibited by the maids. However, it is a significant fact that Claire discloses the reason behind her aversion towards Solange is because of Solange’s hidden desire to kill Claire, even though the elder one expresses the yearning to kill Madame through such role plays. It points to their conflicted bond, moulded by their shared experiences and trauma of being the ‘other’ in society. Thus, it depicts not just the crisis of being the ‘other’ but the strong craving to treat others as the ‘other’. An exploration into the lives of people tagged under the title of ‘anti-socials’ or the ‘outcasts’ along with the darker realities concerning their miserable existence is revealed through *The Maids*. The play being an absurd one, exceptionally pictures the dimensions of this ‘otherness’ and its effect on the individual’s self. On the contrary, no matter the interpreters’ or the audience’s attempts to place the Madame out of this otherness equation, it may not that easily be possible, because, in one way or another, she also falls into the traps of society or the social institutions wherein she might also be an ‘other’ in some respect, like for instance, the way she craves to be another or an ‘other,’ due to the restrictions imposed upon her by the societal norms.

### **Duality or Confused Identities (?)**

*The Maids* is full of illusions as the siblings adhere to it as a means to fight their oppressive circumstances. It is set in the extravagant bedroom of their wealthy Madame and Monsieur where the latter has been sent to jail due to the secret and hideous intention that motivated the maid sisters to write an anonymous letter to the police department, thereby accusing the Monsieur to be a culprit. Many a time, each sister can be seen playing the role of the other sister, in doing so, fusing both of their identities or attributes which makes them confused about even their own identity. It is revealed when Claire calls Solange “Claire” during the sadomasochist role-play. Their individuality can be considered arbitrary because they can only be defined in relation to the other one, so it becomes impossible to separate the two of them. According to Sartre, the play can be seen in relation to a “whirligig” (3, 4) as the sisters keep

interchanging their identities (3, 4). In the play's final monologue by Solange, it becomes extremely challenging for the audience to figure out who she is addressing or identifying herself with, whereby being an 'other' to even herself. Apart from the momentous shifts in dominance and submission, they display these kinds of disparities when it comes to identifying their own self in the role plays they partake in. This work in one way or the other gives prominence to individuality, the crisis of attaining selfhood and self-realization, and the neglect which the characters face when they become the "others." It can be considered experimental for having dealt with such intense themes on the complexities of human existence in a hectic world where everyone strives hard to find an internal synchronization and identity in an attempt to fuse with the external world. A study of the two maid sisters is significant when talking about mental health and its aspects. Solange is the elder sister in the play who is portrayed as a submissive one in the initial parts. She has a parental affection towards the younger sister, and subjects herself to the will of Claire, all the while during the role play and later on, even by disagreeing to scorn Claire in Madame's role. Despite all these factors, she is the most aggressive and crooked among the two. She has a much more complicated and violent nature, for she plots the murder of Claire while planning to kill the mistress. Solange even tells Claire, "I want to help you. I want to comfort you, but I know I disgust you. I'm repulsive to you. And I know it because you disgust me. When slaves love one another, it's not love" (3, 4).

The affinity or *philia* towards the siblings is the by-product of the hatred towards their own selfhood as well as the opposing dominant force- while in Solange's case; it is the class division and the disdainful approach of Madame. Another major common factor between them is their affinity or fascination with an illusionary or fantasy-filled world. To escape from the harsh realities and memories of their tormenting mind, they prefer to seek the aid of their delusions or illusions. For Solange and others in the play, the illusion that gives them relief can be termed as a 'disorder of perception.' Sometimes, in an attempt to escape from the "realities," so as to maintain mental peace, individuals may resort to creating their own worlds of fantasies, but at times, their mental

sanity may get seriously affected too. It may be said that the world of fantasies and realities are entangled or overlap each other which might make it difficult for human beings to distinguish between the two, and confining into them can have adverse effects and create confused identities. However, escapism cannot be labelled as a form of cowardice. Perhaps, it may be one way to hold on to life or as a way of self-expression or even resistance. In *The Maids*, towards the final part, Solange delivers a monologue that is immensely significant and reflects her own craziest illusions, which is a feature of the theatre of the absurd. Solange is not a kind of straightforward person and she keeps all the evil thoughts within herself, and even her contempt towards the upper class is only visible when she and Claire get a private space. All the other times, she is engaged in pleasing Madame and others, even though she knows Madame loves Claire more.

### **Probe into the Psyche of the Characters**

The shared intimacy of the maid sisters though rooted in contempt or disgust towards each other is like an obsession. They seem to mirror each other's characteristic features throughout the play and as is understandable through their recollections of past events. The aspect of their psyche that can be studied in this context is the obsession towards fostering a violent criminal mentality and shared fantasies, which seem delusional in nature which is like a kind of shared-psychotic behavioural pattern. As per that view, it may be said that if one of the two sisters were by any chance affected by delusional behaviours, it could be viewed that the other might probably get affected by that consequently, wherein the former being the primary inducer and the latter, the secondary induced (whilst, among larger intimately woven groups, it may also lead to mass spread or mass formation of psychosis, somewhat similar to a mass hysteria) or maybe both could possess such conditions which they pass on to each other. Based on the play, it seems logical to say that sibling relationship is also affected by the time spent together, like Cicirelli says, "Sibling relationships have attributes in common with all interpersonal relationships, but they also have certain unique characteristics: First, the relationship with a sibling is usually the longest relationship that an individual will experience in

the total lifetime. This appears to be true even among half-, step-, and adoptive siblings, whose relationships usually begin early enough in life to have a longer time course than relationships with parents, spouses, offspring, or most other friends and relatives. Thus, duration itself can be an important factor in determining the impact of the relationship" (7). Furthermore, the play portrays the intricacies of sibling bond between two adults. In the case of distant adulthood bond, Cicirelli says, "the sibling relationship in childhood and adolescence is more one of intimate daily contact as siblings interact within the home, in contrast to sibling relationships in adulthood where intimacy is maintained at a distance by telephone communication, letters, and periodic visits. As a result, the sibling relationship in adulthood is more subject to change or disruption as a result of external forces and unexpected life events (7) that may affect their mental health as well. In accordance with the contemporary studies in the field of psychiatry, several causes can be linked to shared psychiatric disorders in individuals or for any disorder for that matter and based on the current assumptions and findings in the field, some of the multiple possible causes behind such aggressive behavioural or shared patterns of these two characters could be because of their experiences or traumatic events, cognitive and communication inefficiencies, the nature and type of their relationship (particularly, the closely knit bond which can be found between sisters) and the duration of such interactions or relationships, social isolation or lack of social interaction except exclusively with each other. It is being said that "An untreated individual with chronic mental conditions can be a social risk factor of influence to the other partner or family. Additionally, factors like age and gender might also be pertinent in this scenario, which are also attributed as some crucial possible causes behind psychotic or delusional behaviours. Although earlier studies in the field of psychiatry used to suggest that the older one in any relationship might have the capacity to be the inducer, wherein the younger one might most probably become the induced, the current studies dissect this view (33) and hopefully, further studies will keep emerging with regard to this psychiatry in the near future, throwing more light into the psyche of the protagonists similar to how the existing literature has explored the characters'

schizophrenic tendencies.

## Conclusion

The existential questions like 'what is normal and abnormal' or 'who is insane and sane' is thought-provoking, however, thinking outside such dichotomies seems not that easy. While in *The Maids*, there are no specifications about their childhood but only passing references to their experiences as maids at the household of the Madame, as it can be said that the play is set adhering to the unity of time. Based on the play, it seems logical to say that sibling relationship is also affected by the time spent together, like Cicirelli says, "Sibling relationships have attributes in common with all interpersonal relationships, but they also have certain unique characteristics: First, the relationship with a sibling is usually the longest relationship that an individual will experience in the total lifetime. This appears to be true even among half-, step-, and adoptive siblings, whose relationships usually begin early enough in life to have a longer time course than relationships with parents, spouses, offspring, or most other friends and relatives. Thus, duration it can be an important factor in determining the impact of the relationship" (7). Furthermore, the play portrays the intricacies of sibling bond between two adults too. In the case of distant adulthood bond, Cicirelli says, "the sibling relationship in childhood and adolescence is more one of intimate daily contact as siblings interact within the home, in contrast to sibling relationships in adulthood where intimacy is maintained at a distance by telephone communication, letters, and periodic visits. As a result, the sibling relationship in adulthood is more subject to change or disruption as a result of external forces and unexpected life events (7). The maid sisters in *The Maids*, although there is no reference to their childhood in the play, it is being understood that even in adulthood, they maintain an intimate bond based particularly on their proximity and shared time together as they share a close space or setting as adults unlike in most of the adult sibling relationship situations. Despite the roles played by the siblings based on external factors, shared upbringing may have impacts on their lives and every relationship and mutual bonding experiences and attitudes (34) as they might have a shared history which might be long, thereby resulting in shared experiences and the time spent apart leading to non-shared

experiences, where the latter might lead to their similarities whilst the latter may cause unique personal variations (7) which can be seen in the case of these four fictional characters who are the focus of this study. Sibling may have shared and non-shared experiences, while in the case of *The Maids*, only short-term based experiences are dealt with, however, from the subjective perspectives of both the characters. Therefore, these experiences that the audience comes to know of through their dialogues could be called both shared and non-shared-subjective experiences, as there is no clear indication as to whether the personal experiences each character talks of is experienced together or not. Whatever may be the context, the rational understanding is that even though individuals may have shared experiences, the effect or internal experiences could be different as each individual is unique and reactions and responses could be different. Although Cicirelli believes that even in adulthood, "For example, some siblings may have a relationship of long duration with much contact, closeness, and commitment, while others may have a purely formal relationship with little or no contact or interest in one another" (7). It does not seem necessarily so in the two contexts as the prolonged interaction in adulthood in the case of *The Maids* seems conflicted even though they seem to share an intense-obsessive love-hate relationship which is rather conflicted and is mostly sadistic in nature. Thus, it can be said that though these characters are fictional in their construction and manifestation, they can be called as the representatives of sibship or the sibling bond, which carries a universal significance that also has to be explored more, along with other forms of relationships so as to understand the human nature better or to figure out the nuances and complexities of being human. However, an investigation into the play, *The Maids* points to the fact that the longevity of the siblings' relationship cannot be tracked as there is a lack of discussion into their childhood or family background, the transitions that might have happened to them during the developmental stages, or the growing role of parents in their lives, since the play does not follow a bildungsroman pattern or structure. Also, the setting of the play makes it impossible to provide further insights into a diachronic analysis of their time or life, except for a few references about their past actions, like plotting the murder of

the Madame or events of the past involving the monsieur and the milkman. This is particularly because of the narrative technique of the play, as it kind of adheres to a unity of time and space style because it is set in a household where both the sisters work as maids and it does not explore any other period in their lives or distant past experiences. Hence, it can be said that even though Cicirelli's focus (2013) is also based in a longitudinal analysis of the sibling bond, due to the lack of description of the familial involvement or background, the analysis of *The Maids* has to be chiefly based on the adulthood bond between the said siblings, considering the social background and workspace as the only space shared between them.

### **Limitations and Further Scope**

To deepen understanding and address the limitations of this study, future research could employ a clinical psychological approach, utilizing case studies to explore sibship dynamics. Additionally, analyzing Jean Genet's broader oeuvre as well as other sibling-focused literature across various genres could reveal further insights into the themes examined here and related areas of inquiry.

### **Abbreviations**

Nil.

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### **Author Contributions**

Kavya Joseph is responsible for the idea, the design of the study, as well as the collection, coordination of data, and the compilation of the manuscript. Meanwhile, Laxmi Dhar Dwivedi contributed to the drafting of the manuscript, providing supervision.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

All authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

### **Ethics Approval**

Not Applicable.

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