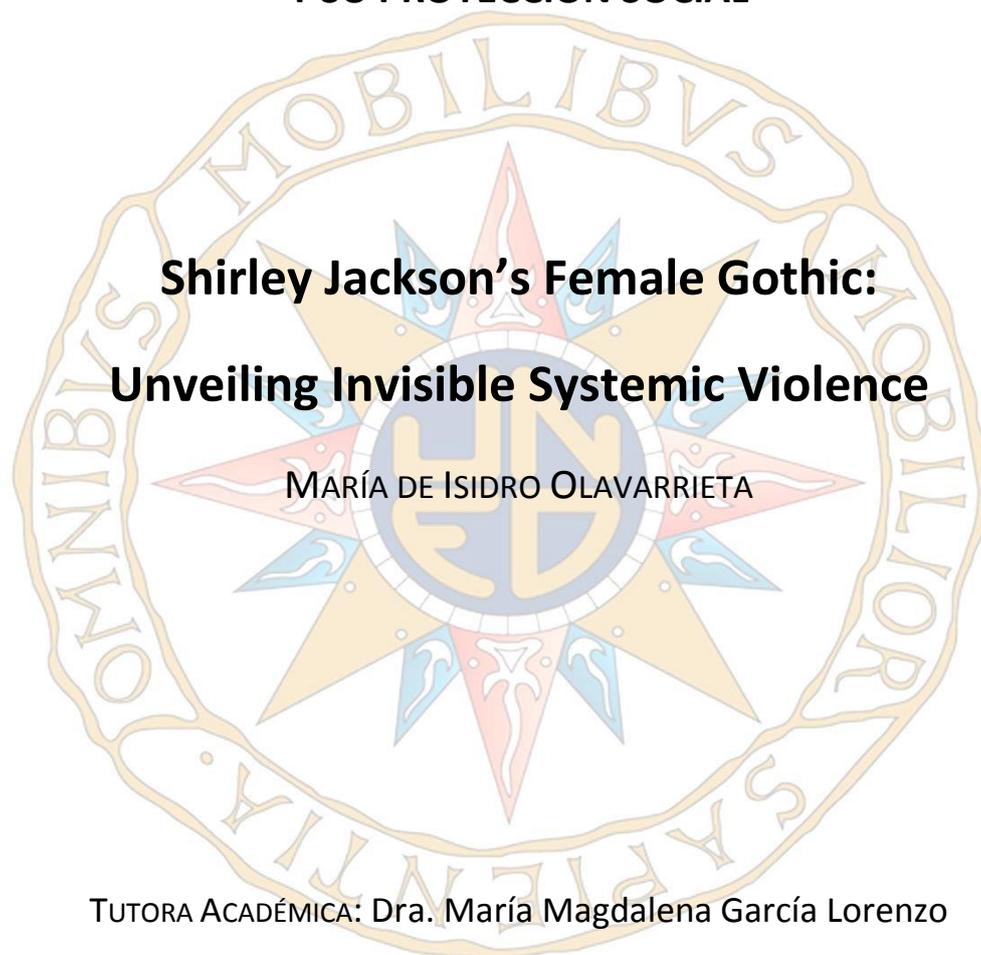




**TRABAJO FIN DE MÁSTER**

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**Y SU PROYECCIÓN SOCIAL**



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## ABSTRACT

This paper offers an analysis of eleven short stories by American writer Shirley Jackson through the concepts of symbolic and psychological violence and within the frame of the Female Gothic. The major purpose of the research is to uncover, explain and illustrate the type of violence which lies behind Jackson's Female Gothic, a violence suffered by women because of their female condition and invisible due to its naturalisation and its dissolution under the spell of the feminine mystique.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence as the kind of surreptitious violence exercised through everyday actions permeates Jackson's Female Gothic. This genre, which has been traditionally used to defy the hegemonic patriarchal discourse, is used by the author to highlight the terrifying about the ordinary and to expose the oppression felt by the middle-class woman of the 40s and 50s. With this aim, Jackson draws on classic conventions, which she adapts to the context of the post-war America, where women's fulfilment was defined by the feminine mystique which Betty Friedan exposed years later. However, she also creates new ones, such as the trope of the demon lover, recurrent in Jackson's fiction. This thesis analyses the use of the tropes and connects them to the notion of symbolic violence proposed by Bourdieu. In the works analysed, this violence has been recognised as mockery, belittling, disregard, denigration, silencing, complicity, condescension, value judgements, social pressure and even metaphorical killing through erasure. In addition to Bourdieu's principles, Marie-France Hirigoyen's paradigm about psychological violence have been employed to illustrate the inclusion of this type of violence in some of the tales.

Finally, all the female characters are divided according to their reactions to masculine domination. In one group, the protagonists accept their role and the consequent passivity and submission. The alternative response is to live outside the symbolic order in a permanent distressful state. However, whichever path they take, all of them are portrayed by Jackson in a final state of alienation and anxiety.

Keywords: Shirley Jackson, Female Gothic, symbolic violence, masculine domination, demon lover, feminine mystique

## RESUMEN

Este Trabajo de Fin de Máster ofrece un análisis de once relatos de la escritora estadounidense Shirley Jackson a través de los conceptos de violencia simbólica y psicológica y en el marco del gótico femenino. El objetivo principal de la investigación es desvelar, explicar e ilustrar el tipo de violencia que subyace en el gótico femenino de Jackson, una violencia sufrida por las mujeres por su condición femenina e invisibilizada por su naturalización y su disolución bajo el hechizo de la mística de la feminidad.

El concepto de violencia simbólica de Pierre Bourdieu como el tipo de violencia subrepticia ejercida a través de acciones cotidianas impregna el gótico femenino de Jackson. Este género, que tradicionalmente ha sido utilizado para desafiar el discurso patriarcal hegemónico, es utilizado por la autora para resaltar lo aterrador en lo ordinario y para exponer la opresión que sentía la mujer estadounidense de clase media de los años 40 y 50. Con este objetivo, Jackson recurre a convenciones góticas clásicas, que adapta al contexto de los Estados Unidos en la posguerra, donde la realización de la mujer estaba definida por la mística de la feminidad que Betty Friedan expone años después. Sin embargo, también crea otras convenciones nuevas, como el tropo del amante demonio, recurrente en la ficción de Jackson. Esta tesis analiza el uso de sus tropos y los relaciona con la noción de violencia simbólica propuesta por Bourdieu. En las obras analizadas, esta violencia ha sido reconocida como burla, desprecio, denigración, silenciamiento, complicidad, condescendencia, juicios de valor, presión social e incluso matanza metafórica por borrado de identidad. Además de los principios de Bourdieu, se ha empleado el paradigma de Marie-France Hirigoyen sobre la violencia psicológica para ilustrar la inclusión de este tipo de violencia en algunos de los relatos.

Finalmente, todos los personajes femeninos se han dividido según sus reacciones ante la dominación masculina. En un grupo, los protagonistas aceptan su papel y la consiguiente pasividad y sumisión. La respuesta alternativa, donde se sitúan otras protagonistas, es vivir fuera del orden simbólico en un estado de angustia permanente. Sin embargo, independientemente del camino elegido, todas son retratadas por Jackson en un estado final de alienación y ansiedad.

Palabras clave: Shirley Jackson, gótico femenino, violencia simbólica, dominación masculina, amante demonio, mística de la feminidad

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Justification and Objectives

The social dynamics within everyday actions are dominated by gendered schemes and power relations which, nurtured by a patriarchal cultural imaginary, lead to different forms of violence against women. Those patriarchal schemes have been maintained throughout history via institutions, tradition, norms and culture. Literature, as a cultural form, has played a part in that reproduction; however, literary recounts can either serve as expression and ratification of the patriarchal beliefs or undermine those arguments by giving voice to the dominated. In other words, literature has the power to cancel our critical judgement or awaken it. American writer Shirley Jackson, via the Female Gothic subgenre, subverted the patriarchal ideology of her time, consequently her work helps defy the status quo and activate our critical awareness.

This paper recognises the contribution of Jackson to the denunciation of different forms of violence which many white middle-class women of her time suffered. In addition, it is highlighted her particular use of the Female Gothic to represent the hidden menace contained in gender stereotypes, patriarchal thinking and everyday actions. This subgenre, through its conventions, tropes and language, has permitted women to defy the hegemonic patriarchal discourse since its birth in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Jackson reconfigured Gothic conventions and created new ones to portray that invisible malign force which acts as source of both oppression and repression against women. One of her most recognisable tropes is that of the demon lover, which can reveal its presence as a male punishing figure, a demon in the mind of the protagonist, as another female character who aligns herself with the patriarchal dispositions or even as a space with the imprint of the masculine domination.

This study analyses several of Jackson's short stories through the concepts of symbolic and psychological violence in order to showcase the author's portrayal of these kinds of surreptitious violence and their effect on women. In times where violence against women was not still conceptualised, Jackson's narratives offered precursory clear examples of what has eventually been categorised as structural, symbolic or psychological violence. The tenets developed by Pierre Bourdieu in his book *Masculine Domination* (2001) have been taken as basis to frame Jackson's portrayal of the ominous presence that chases her female protagonists. Added to this, Betty Friedan's illuminating work *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) has been used to provide sociocultural contextual reference for the stories

here analysed. Therefore, the study draws upon both sociological and historical sources to puzzle out the subtle criticism disclosed behind Jackson's intelligent narrative.

Finally, with this discussion, I want to underscore Jackson's visionary representation of this hidden violence and her role as a pioneer in opening the world of literature to a wide and complex range of women's issues which had, for the most part, been ignored. As Professor Ángeles de La Concha states in her paper "Cultura y violencia de género. Literatura y mito en la génesis de un conflicto secular" (2007), if we want to foster an effective cultural change, the symbolic universe is one of the key places to act on. It is, thereby, paramount to keep studying the mechanisms that create, normalise and perpetuate symbolic violence in order to be able to recognise and eventually fight it. The analysis of the stories here included provides further critical reflection on that symbolic universe and its effect on everyday life through literature.

## **1.2. State of the Art**

Shirley Jackson was a widely acclaimed writer in her time, however most literary criticism has been centred on just two of her works. As Professor Bernice M. Murphy puts it, "the vast majority of specific work on Jackson centres around just two specific works: the influential supernatural novel *The Haunting of Hill House* and the classic short story "The Lottery," both of which have invited more attention individually than the rest of her work combined" ("Introduction" 4). That was to change with the publication of *Let Me Tell You* in 2015, a collection of unpublished short stories, which, added to Ruth Franklin's award-winning biography, *Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life* (2016), led to a revival in interest about her actual diverse output. Since then, more and more critical work has been published with the focus on her short fiction, highlighting new and different perspectives. In this section, we will go through previous critical research which connects Jackson and the Gothic on the one hand and academic work about Jackson's treatment of women's oppression on the other. Despite the abundant literary criticism about the Gothic in her novels, there are few works which deal with it in relation to her short stories. For the purpose of this essay, we will revise now those studies which focus on her use of the genre either in general terms or related to her short fiction.

Shirley Jackson became a household name overnight with "The Lottery" but she is also mostly known for her two novels *The Haunting of Hill House*, her supernatural

masterpiece, and *We Have Always Lived in The Castle*, hence her denomination as the queen of American Horror. In addition, as Melanie R. Anderson and Lisa Kröger state, “she often is considered the godmother of the modern American Gothic haunted house” (3). In a 1984 essay, John G. Parks explored Jackson’s six novels and identified some main Gothic conventions she used in her long Narrative: the house, the flight, the reflection and the split personalities. He concluded that “Shirley Jackson's gothic fiction is an effective mode for her exploration of the violations of the human self — the aching loneliness, the unendurable guilt, the dissolution and disintegrations, the sinking into madness, the violence and lovelessness” (28). In turn, Darryl Hattenhauer, in his book *Shirley Jackson’s American Gothic* (2003), presented Jackson as a realist and Gothic writer. In the introduction, he listed the “nonrealists modes she reinscribes,” which are “the Gothic, fantastic, fabulist, allegorical, tragic, darkly comic, and grotesque” (5). For James Egan, her Gothic is a narrative pattern which she combines with other modes, namely, comic, satiric and fantastic, to create her most intricate stories. By using instances of her short story “The Bus” and *The Haunting of Hill House*, Egan illustrated the effects of the comic caricatures, the satiric diminution and the fantastic scenarios on her Gothic works. Added to these studies on her use of the Gothic, other critics have offered a classification of her writing within the Female Gothic and the Domestic Horror.

The association between Jackson and the Female Gothic was first proposed by Roberta Rubenstein in her 1996 essay “House Mothers and Haunted Daughters: Shirley Jackson and the Female Gothic.” She identified several recurrent Gothic themes in her narrative, such as the ambivalent mother-daughter relationship, concerns about food and nurturance and body image. She also elaborated on the house imagery, which is central to Jackson’s fiction. Houses “typically captivate their female occupants or seekers in both appealing and threatening senses” (317). In a later essay, “Children of the Night: Shirley Jackson’s Domestic Female Gothic”, Andrew Smith resolved to explore the contributions of Jackson’s work to the Female Gothic by analysing Jackson’s non-fiction writings, i.e., the two collections of articles first published in magazines of her time, *Life Among the Savages* and *Raising Demons*. According to him, Jackson’s Female Gothic deviates from previous schemes in several points. Unlike the absent mother which characterises the Female Gothic of the eighteenth century, these sketches speak of the “all-too present mother whose demands on the child pathologises motherhood” (159). Smith noticed in Jackson’s sketches what Friedan denounced in her book: the new role of the self-sacrificing mother dedicated

exclusively to their children and who is urged to give them “constant and watchful nurturing love” (161).

Bernice M. Murphy further investigated the Jacksonian use of the Gothic in her essay “Hideous Doughnuts and Haunted Housewives: Gothic Undercurrents in Shirley Jackson’s Domestic Humor.” She highlighted several recurrent themes which, either by means of sardonic, forced laughter or by the adherence of well-established Gothic conventions, feature Jackson’s domestic Gothic undercurrents. As in her Gothic novels, the house works as a metaphor for entrapment and is personified as a “kind of living, thinking entity” (9). The mother, however, differs from the kind of mother presented in her novels. In her long fiction, the mothers are ineffectual, dead or domineering, whereas the mothers starring in her short stories often feature women with small children. The dark side of mothering is clearly exposed by her characteristic maternal ambivalence since children are portrayed as having two facets, “simultaneously magical and frightening” (12). Another female habitual Gothic theme in Jackson’s domestic fiction is the repetitive and demeaning role of the housewife, which she exposes through dramatization, absurdity or by using an irritable tone. Thus, the narrator transmits the underlying frustration and deep-seated anger which imbue the recount of the anecdotes. Within the housewife facet, Murphy highlighted Jackson’s exposure of “a particular substratum of housewife,” that of the “faculty wife,” whose identity becomes second to that she must adopt when marrying a professor (15). Finally, like John G. Parks, Murphy focused on a conventional Gothic convention, the flight, which in Jackson’s stories appears as a recurrent wish that usually ends up in a panic attack or agoraphobia when women are confronting with the chaos of the city.

Having presented the most relevant studies on Jackson’s Female Gothic in connection with her short fiction, we will now focus on the academic works which have analysed the demon lover trope in relation with masculine domination and women’s oppression. The first critics to consider the trope were Joan Wyllie Hall and Darryl Hattenhauer. In their books, *Shirley Jackson: A Study of the Short Fiction* (1993) and *Shirley Jackson’s American Gothic* (2003), both included information about the presence of the trickster figure as a common theme in several works by Jackson. However, only two academic studies have dealt with this particular motif as a representation of evil forces that oppress or punish her female characters. Professor Wyatt Bonikowski, in his article “‘Only one antagonist’: The Demon Lover and the Feminine Experience in the Work of Shirley Jackson,” discusses the appearance of the figure as a seducer who subjects women and

dispossesses them of home and self. According to him, the demon lover might be a man, a father, a mother, a house or even “the representation of a part of the mind that has been split off and projected outwards” (70). Heather D. Strepke-Durgin’s thesis coincides on this last point. When analysing the story *The Daemon Lover*, she identifies different forms that the trickster figure can take. Thus, it may appear as a male character but also as the female character’s internalisation of patriarchy. The function of the demon is clear for her, as it works as “an enforcer of patriarchal standards of women’s roles by punishing those female characters who exist outside prescribed gender boundaries” (1).

In the absence of any studies connecting Jackson’s oeuvre and violence, these two sources have provided useful theoretical basis to frame my study since they consider the trope in relation to women’s oppression. The use of this trope together with other Female Gothic conventions are here further studied and connected to the notion of symbolic violence. Thus, this thesis provides a new theoretical framework to approach and understand Jackson’s works.

### **1.3. Corpus and Methodology**

The corpus selected, as object of study, is here understood within the conception of literature as a reflection of the social dynamics at work in a precise time and society and therefore as a valid source for analysis similar to historical documents (Salisbury, et al. 15-16). As Virginia Woolf stated, “I prefer, where truth is important, to write fiction” (*The Pargiters* 9). Literature is similarly seen as a means for denunciation and criticism. Literary texts open up safe spaces where writers can denounce and expose societal malaises which are considered taboo by their society. By presenting alternative views and posing unresolved questions, Jackson defies the mainstream discourse and encourages reflection and reassessment of the status quo.

Shirley Jackson’s short narrative is especially relevant for this study because through her psychological horror she portrayed the terrifying about the ordinary and it is just there where symbolic violence lies, in everyday actions and messages. Moreover, her stories deal with realities which cannot be seen or named and yet exist and cause suffering in her characters. As professor Wyatt Bonikowski states, “Jackson’s work gives the impression of an ‘evil’ in her characters’ lives that is both actually existent and indeterminate” (67). In many of her stories, that indeterminate evil can be connected to those forms of violence

which are defined as invisible and soft, symbolic and psychological violence. Bourdieu defines symbolic violence as “a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims” (1) and Dr. Marie-France Hirigoyen says about psychological violence: “It seems as if our society couldn’t perceive this form of indirect violence” (7). The victim cannot recognise it because it is culturally considered as normal and based on a system which supports it and makes the victim overlook it. However, Jackson manages to identify it and expose it thanks to her portrayal of the psychological realm and her focus on anxiety and alienation. As she claimed, “Insecure, uncontrolled, I wrote of neuroses and fear and I think all my books laid end to end would be one long documentation of anxiety” (in Oppenheimer 258). Through the rendering of her female characters’ experiences and psychological perspectives, the causes of anxiety are unveiled. Not only does she expose them, but she also depicts them as relevant and harmful by pinpointing them as the cause of many women’s distress.

The stories which make up the corpus have been grouped into two main subsections. The first one comprises the stories “The Daemon Lover,” “Lovers Meeting,” “The Rock” and “A Visit” featuring unmarried women living outside the prescribed societal role for women due to their single status. In the second group, the protagonists are married women in despair, who suffer symbolic and psychological violence as a consequence of their role as wives. This group consists of the stories “Mrs. Spencer and the Oberons,” “Still Life with Teapot and Students,” “Gaudeamus Igitur,” “The Very Hot Sun in Bermuda,” “The Trouble with My Husband,” “The Good Wife” and “Of Course.” These titles are included in different collections. Four of them (“The Daemon Lover,” “The Rock,” “A Visit” and “Of Course”) belong to the compilation *Shirley Jackson: Novels and Stories*, edited by Joyce Carol Oates and published by the Library of America in 2010. The volume includes Jackson’s first collection of short fiction, *The Lottery; or, The Adventures of James Harris*, published in 1949, together with other uncollected and unpublished stories. A second anthology, *Just an Ordinary Day* (1996), contains the stories “Lovers Meeting,” “The Very Hot Sun in Bermuda” and “The Good Wife.” Finally, in *Let Me Tell You* (2015), the last collection to date, we find the stories “Mrs. Spencer and the Oberons,” “Gaudeamus Igitur,” “Still Life with Teapot and Students” and “The Trouble with My Husband.”

Regarding the method applied, the pieces of literature have been approached by means of a feminist sociological and psychological approach. The stories have been analysed to highlight and explain the mechanisms at work in Jackson’s narrative according to the

theories proposed by Pierre Bourdieu and Marie-France Hirigoyen on symbolic and psychological violence respectively, as explained in the theoretical framework of this paper. Bourdieu's conceptual apparatus has been applied to the short stories to illuminate the inclusion and treatment of symbolic violence and the literary strategies employed to represent it. Hirigoyen's work *Stalking the Soul: Emotional Abuse and the Erosion of Identity* (2000) has been used specifically for the analysis of two of the tales, where Jackson focuses on the manipulative techniques to subdue the wife. On the other hand, historical criticism has been applied with the purpose of considering the influences of the social, cultural and intellectual context and the author's milieu. All these perspectives will provide a compelling theoretical framework to analyse and contextualise the works in order to understand the actual implications of Jackson's criticism.

This paper opens up with an overview on the sociocultural context in the post-war United States and the suburban life of middle-class American women in the 1950s based on the devastating portrait presented by Betty Friedan in her 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*. A presentation to Jackson's Female Gothic in relation to the demon lover trope is then offered so as to introduce the Jacksonian trope which links all the stories under analysis. In the next sections, Jackson's stories have been grouped according to the protagonists' marital status, as explained above, but also by taking into account the different Bourdieusian paradigms explained. The conclusion addresses Jackson's unhappy endings and the characters' different reactions to masculine domination and oppression. The study's main ideas are summarised in a final recapitulation, which concludes with proposals for further research.

#### **1.4. Theoretical Framework**

The literary analysis undertaken in this paper has been framed within the subgenre named Female Gothic. Let us look at the origins and the definition of the term. It was Ellen Moers, in 1976, who first used "Female Gothic" to refer to "the work that women have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic" (90). But since then, the term has evolved to include new and more specific definitions<sup>1</sup>. In her chapter "American Female Gothic" (2017), Professor Diane Long Hoeveler refers to it as "Gothic

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<sup>1</sup> See the introductory chapter to *The Female Gothic: New Directions* by Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith to know more about the evolution of the term Female Gothic through time (1-12).

works written by women that use specific themes, tropes, and conventions to reflect and address female concerns such as marriage, childbirth, inheritance laws, and patriarchal disempowerment” (99). Other recurrent themes explored in this genre, possession, confinement and loss of identity, emerge as a consequence of lack of freedom, and the house, the alleged women’s place par excellence, has been a frequent metaphor for confinement and dissatisfaction. “The female gothic is about terrible things happening to women in domestic spaces. Haunted houses and various kinds of imprisonment within the home (the worst being live burial) are strong metaphors for a broader notion of danger and unhappiness within the vaunted ‘women's sphere’” (Nickerson 2).

Based on this idea, another subgenre was later envisaged, which aims at the subversion of the domestic ideology. In her 1983 essay, Joan Lidoff used the term “Domestic Gothic” to name the use of the genre as utilised by writer Christina Stead in her novel *The Man Who Loved Children* (Lidoff 1983: 109-22 in Wallace, “Woman’s Place” 76). Whereas the medieval castle was the metaphor for entrapment in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, “the mid-century domestic Gothic is distinguished by its focus on ordinary families in sub-urban houses” (Wallace, “Woman’s Place” 77). According to Diana Wallace, the terrors of the domestic space “were particularly intense for the post-war generation of mainly white and middle-class women in Great Britain, America and Australia who were expected to find their ultimate fulfilment, as Betty Friedan (1963) showed, through the ‘feminine mystique’” (“Woman’s Place” 75). Apart from Shirley Jackson, she identifies other mid-century writers who used Gothic tropes and devices to express the anxiety produced within the domestic realm. These authors are Norah Lofts, Barbara Comyns, Christina Stead, Penelope Mortimer and Sylvia Plath. Each of these writers developed this genre in different ways.

This section concludes by offering an overview on the concept of violence against women and developing the main ideas about symbolic violence as exposed by Bourdieu’s theories in *Masculine Domination* (2001). Violence against women is a societal phenomenon which stems from unequal power relations. This notion arose during the second wave of feminism which put the focus on violence:

It was not until the 1970s that feminists adopted the concern for violence against women. Domestic violence came to be understood as the domination of men over women in all spheres of a patriarchal society. In opposition to past liberal philosophy, feminists argued that the power and domination that was at the root of domestic violence required that society redefine this violence as a social problem instead of a private family affair. (Garcia 204)

Together with the denunciation of domestic violence, rape was defined as a political rather than a purely sexual assault, a crime not of lust but of violence and power (Susan Brownmiller 1975). Likewise, workplace sexual harassment was argued to be a form of gender discrimination in 1979 by Catharine Alice MacKinnon.

Concurrently, other types of violence were formulated in the sociological field. These new notions pointed at hidden forms of violence connected to direct violence. In 1969, Johan Galtung recognised institutionalised sexism within his notion of structural violence. Later, in 1990, he introduced the concept of cultural violence as those aspects of ideology, religion, art, language and science which are used to legitimise structural violence. In turn, Bourdieu proposes the concept of symbolic violence as the surreptitious imposition of the ideas and values of a ruling cultural group onto a dominated one in his article “Symbolic Power” (1979). Later, he incorporates notions of gender as a social construct embodying power relations in his masterpiece *Masculine Domination* (2001).

Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence has been chosen to frame this study for it provides a comprehensive theoretical paradigm to understand its functioning and manifestations. Bourdieu’s thought about symbolic violence, *habitus* and domination in the relations between the sexes is a useful tool for feminist criticism: “For a feminist, another great advantage of Bourdieu's microtheoretical approach is that it allows us to incorporate the most mundane details of everyday life in our analyses (Moi 1019).

Bourdieu is considered a major figure in the fields of anthropology, sociology and cultural studies worldwide. Furthermore, in the last decades, his social theory has been found fruitful for feminist theory. Toril Moi, Lois McNay, Terry Lovell, Lisa Adkins, Beverley Skeggs and Julie McLeod are some of the scholars contributing to this feminist re-engagement in Bourdieusian social theory. Also, Bourdieu’s theory has been applied to the field of feminist literary criticism, with scholars like Ángeles de La Concha, Anne Quéma and Laura Sloan Patterson offering revealing insights into the dynamics of patriarchal mechanisms inherent to texts.

Although the ideas of masculine domination and symbolic violence have also been theorised by Rita Segato, this paper draws on the thesis proposed by Bourdieu since his arguments focus mainly on women. He examines the functioning of symbolic violence and the creation and reproduction of women’s *habitus*. On the other hand, Segato elucidates the mechanisms that shape masculinity and men’s use of violence as a code to express and build

their manliness. Therefore, Bourdieu's book *Masculine Domination*, which also offers women's take on the issue, has been used as the main theoretical foundation for this research. In it, Bourdieu uncovers the hidden mechanisms of androcentrism and defines symbolic violence. Bourdieu's main contention is that our world is structured compliant with an array of dispositions that have been consciously elaborated and inculcated for the purpose of maintaining masculine power and dominance. These injunctions are embedded in the social order and immanent in everyone's *habitus* (33). *Habitus* refers to the system of dispositions within each of us which creates a propensity or tendency to think and act according to the status quo. This subjective incorporated individual experience has been gendered. In other words, we are socialised to accept the binary system whereby men are granted pre-eminence and considered as the non-marked or neutral sex while women are defined by default as the other and assigned the role of the subservient and pleaser complement to the man due to their ascribed inferiority. This division between the sexes (*nomos*) and the social roles imposed to each one, although arbitrarily assigned, as Bourdieu insists, have been legitimised and granted official recognition. These ideas are thereby hardly questioned and remain as unwritten inviolable laws within institutions, agents, dispositions, objects, words and bodies.

In this scenario, symbolic violence is the invisible medium whereby masculine domination is imposed and perpetuated. It "operates in face-to-face interactions, thus constructing and reproducing domination in direct interactions between people" (Krais 58). Damaging as it is, this violence is not recognised as such, it is a surreptitious mode of domination which might take the form of consent, complicity, condescension, value judgements, social pressure, oppression, possession, confinement, disregard and denigration among others. These acts merge into a powerful flow of directives which maintain women within the established role assigned to them in the gendered cultural taxonomy. Paradoxically, women do not only accept but also engage in this type of violence: "The dominated, often unwittingly, sometimes unwillingly, contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting the limits imposed" (38). Central to the understanding of the acceptance by the oppressed is the "paradox of *doxa*." The dominated view these unequal relations of power from the perspective of the dominant and, therefore, the oppressive system is not perceived as such because of its recognition as natural and objective.

Regarding the psychological reading of the stories "The Good Wife" and "Of Course," Hirigoyen's theory about domestic violence has been selected as the main source for her work contains well-grounded and detailed descriptions of its functioning and its

consequences on the victim. In her book, *Stalking the Soul: Emotional Abuse and the Erosion of Identity* (2000), Hirigoyen discloses the destructive latent phenomenon of psychological violence, also referred to as psychological abuse or emotional abuse, which she considers “a case of hidden but authentic violence” (10). It consists of words or gestures that aim to destabilise, subdue and control other people in order to maintain a position of superiority. Hence, the victim’s submission is closely correlated to the perpetrators’ necessity to enhance their self-esteem.

## 2. THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE AND JACKSON'S FEMALE GOTHIC

### 2.1. Sociocultural Context

As Bernice Murphy states, Jackson was successful in “reconfiguring the tropes and conventions of existing gothic and horror literature in order to skilfully dissect the mores and anxieties of the modern age” (*Suburban* 17). Before focusing on the analysis of the stories, this section offers an introduction to the sociocultural context of the writer so as to provide a general picture of the concerns of her times and the social impositions and expectations placed on women. Later, we will deal with her use of Female Gothic conventions in her narrative in connection with women’s anxieties and oppression.

Shirley Jackson (1916-1965) lived her adulthood in the post-war America remembered as the Happy Days, a time of prosperity where an apparent happy-go-lucky middle class lived safely in the suburbs. On the other hand, the American mid-century was also marked by the consequences of the war and the new era of political rivalry and nuclear stalemate between the United States and the Soviet Union. To the uncertainty provoked by the Cold War, the excessive fear of communist subversion added mistrust and led to the persecution of those who were believed to have subversive ideas. The Red Scare and McCarthyism advanced conformity since many Americans with left-wing views were forced to hide their ideology in favour of conservatism. Even Shirley Jackson herself and her husband, Stanley Hyman, were under investigation by the FBI for alleged Communist activity (Franklin 310). In this atmosphere of witch hunt, the nuclear family was strategically seen as a tool to avoid the spread of radical ideas in children and was presented as the model of righteousness.

In this scenario, women’s role as nurturing housewives was paramount. Middle-class white women with their idealised femininity and their key part in consumerism represented the supremacy and power of American capitalism. The nuclear family and capitalism became dependent on each other. Politics, science and culture furthered the idealised image of the suburban family and highlighted the traditional roles of the breadwinner father who left the house to go to work and the mother who stayed at home to raise children and do the house chores. Women were raised in a society which mystified the “happy housewife heroine,” as Betty Friedan explained in her landmark book *The Feminine Mystique*: “This image — created by the women’s magazines, by advertisements, television, movies, novels, columns

and books by experts on marriage and the family, child psychology, sexual adjustment and by the popularizers of sociology and psychoanalysis — shapes women's lives today and mirrors their dreams" (21). This powerful ideal became so popular and took such deep root that most college girls would readily decide to abandon the career path to devote themselves to the family: "The new feminine morality story is the exorcising of the forbidden career dream" (31). Thus, the career woman was no longer a successful model and her distance from the hegemonic femininity made her the target of criticism. She was depicted as frustrated and masculinised (41). The media would picture these professional women as lacking feminine traits because of their adjustment to the workplace outside the home, which was to be understood as an exclusively masculine environment. In sharp contrast, women who decided to follow their "natural path" devoted themselves to cherish their beauty and focused on their mission to bear and nurture children. In sum, any woman who remained outside the prescribed path, such as career, childless or single women, lived in a state of anxiety. In the absence of a job, the modern occupation for women became that of the housewife. If the problems of the past decades were the obstacles for women to access high education, the issues of the 50s were ironically those barriers which prevented them from becoming a housewife: education, career, political interests, the admission of women's intelligence and individuality and finally, "the problem that has no name," a vague undefined wish for something more than being a wife and mother (44). In Jackson's fiction, as explained in this essay, this undefined but haunting presence transforms the homely into an *unheimlich* or uncanny space, and allows for the use of Gothic conventions.

Within this spell of mystification, *The Feminine Mystique* offered the flip side of the story. After a questionnaire carried on at a college reunion, Friedan found that most women of her age were dissatisfied with the limited role of the housewife. After five years of interviews with women across the United States and deep analysis of the culture and literature which glorified and perpetuated that ideal of femininity, she explained the radical change from the career-minded woman of the 20s and 30s to the devoted wife and mother exclusively dedicated to house chores and child rearing. In order to support her thesis, she included the key points after those extensive interviews with women as well as numerous extracts from the magazines of the time and theoretical discourse from the fields of sociology, psychology, psychoanalysis, anthropology and family-life education. After having extensively analysed the origins and effects of this feminine mystique, she concluded that women who adjusted to this ideal forfeited their own existence since they ended up

trapped in a role which limited their full development as human beings. In the last chapter of the book, she defines “the problem that has no name” as “simply the fact that American women are kept from growing to their full human capacities” (296).

## **2.2. Jackson’s Demystification: The Demon Lover**

As other American writers of her time, Jackson challenged the positive portrayal of the 1950s as a period of harmony and uniformity and dealt with themes of paranoia, anxiety, identity, alienation, superficiality ... Yet, her social criticism differed in her gendered outlook. She brought about the fears and frustrations felt by many middle-class American women, which were overlooked by other contemporaries. A decade before Friedan carried on the questionnaire which led her to write *The Feminine Mystique*, Shirley Jackson was already denouncing the oppression and dissatisfaction of middle-class women through her narratives. According to Ruth Franklin, “the stories she tells form a powerful counternarrative to the ‘feminine mystique,’ revealing the unhappiness and instability beneath the housewife’s sleek veneer of competence” (6). Her alternative view of the happy woman of the 50s contains a profound critique which deals with the invisible patterns and the symbolic order which leads to the use of violence against women and includes overt and covert forms of that violence.

To express her concerns, Jackson drew upon the Gothic genre, “the ideal vehicle with which to figure the way in which women have traditionally been required to ‘bury’ their creative energies in order to ‘marry houses’” (Wallace, “Woman’s Place” 75). The “problem that has no name” is, after all, a ghostly presence in her characters’ lives. An issue having no name, remaining undefined, systematically unaddressed, and haunting women was perfect material for the Gothic formula Jackson chose. Jackson redefined but also created Gothic tropes which she used as literary devices of denunciation. According to Jerrold E. Hogle, Gothic fiction “helps us address and disguise some of the most important desires, quandaries, and sources of anxiety, from the most internal and mental to the widely social and cultural” (4) and this is precisely what Jackson did. In her texts, if read consciously, we can uncover both the inner and outer anxieties affecting her but also many middle-class women of her time.

As shown above, recent studies have focused on Jackson’s particular use of the Female and Domestic Gothic in her short narrative and humorous sketches. As a result of

those discussions, new conventions have emerged, which add to her repertoire of Gothic tropes. Her long narrative, largely studied, discloses Gothic elements which clearly align with the classic conventions. *Hangsaman* and *The Bird's Nest* revolve about the split of the self and include the flight from confining forces. *The Sundial*, *The Haunting of Hill House* and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* are set in mansions which are reminiscent of the Gothic house. In addition, they include ghosts, dark woods, fleeing heroines, witchcraft, supernatural elements and the uncanny. Jackson's short narrative draws on some of those long-established Gothic conventions but it also contains original tropes and techniques. They portray what S. T. Joshi called "disturbing undercurrents" (187). There are subtle tensions which lurk behind apparently polite dialogues. Through their everyday actions and interior monologue, her characters unveil the quiet horror that lies behind their anxieties and concerns. The setting moves from the Gothic castle to the suburban family house or the urban apartment and the social pressures for the women of the 1950s come alive through new Gothic tropes such as the demon lover.

By drawing upon previous research, this study identifies and names the type of violence which lies behind Jackson's Female Gothic, a violence suffered by women because of their female condition and invisible due to its naturalisation and its dissolution under the spell of the feminine mystique. As previously introduced, the demon lover has been identified by several scholars as a recurring theme which permeates Jackson's narrative and portrays patriarchal oppression. This trope, we claim, equates to the concept of symbolic violence proposed by Bourdieu. We will now consider its symbolism and its different manifestations in Jackson's fiction as well as its presence as enforcer of the patriarchal order.

Jackson draws this figure from the ballad "James Harris, The Daemon Lover," included in Francis James Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*. In the only collection of short stories published during her lifetime, *The Lottery, or, The Adventures of James Harris* (1949), Jackson included an epilogue with the complete original ballad. The story features a man, the devil, who convinces a lover to abandon her husband and child with the promise of riches. They board a ship whose intended destination is Heaven. However, along the way, the ship sinks into the cold sea and the woman ends up living in Hell. By adapting the legend to her context, Jackson warns women about the perils of the deceptive idealisation of life in marriage brought about by the union with "a demon."

The stories selected for this master's thesis revolve around this male punishing figure, which can be identified by certain elements. The most recognisable reference is the name of

the trickster character, which usually derives from James Harris (Jim, Jamie, Harry). However, Bonikowski indicates other recurrent symbols, such as tallness, a blue suit and even the presence of gold. Tallness not only represents this demonic figure but also men's superiority and their divine status. In "The Trouble with My Husband", Harry's height is stated through his wife's description: "She was a small woman and had to look far up at him when he stood next to her" (145). In "The Beautiful Stranger," Margaret notices that the man she picked up at the train station is not her husband because of his tallness: "She wondered suddenly; is he taller? That is not my husband" (747). Laughter, we argue, can be added to the list of these revealing symbols which represent the trope, "And Jamie laughing down the hallway", the protagonist of "The Daemon Lover" recalls the previous day to her wedding (13). Likewise, coffee has arisen as a common element announcing the presence of the demon lover trope in the short stories analysed here. "The Daemon Lover" contains five references to coffee just on the first page. In "The Good Wife," the drink is mentioned five times: "Mr James Benjamin poured a second cup of coffee for himself," "he poured himself a third cup of coffee, and drank it peacefully," "There was the sound of her coffee cup being moved," "She hesitated, and then took up her coffee cup again with a gesture that made it clear that whatever she had intended to say, she was persuaded that there was no reason to say it again," and "it was not possible to communicate with her because she would not abandon her coffee cup" (150, 151, 152, 153, 154). Similarly, both victims of the demon lover drink coffee in "The Rock": "[Paula] poured herself a cup of coffee from the earthenware jug," "'Wonderful coffee,' said Virginia. 'I'm so hungry'" (760, 764).

Just as symbolic violence can take multiple forms, so too Jackson's representation of this latent violence is not circumscribed to the masculine embodiment of the demon lover. Jackson wrote the following consideration about the demon lover in a letter to a friend: "There is not a he or a she but the demon in the mind, and that demon finds guilts where it can and uses them and runs mad with laughing when it triumphs" (qtd. in Hattenhauer 26). In her stories, we frequently encounter a first-person female narrator who aligns herself with the dispositions that perpetuate her own oppression through complicity. As Bonikowski posits, "the complexity of the trope in Jackson's Female Gothic lies in the fact that the woman is not merely a victim or object of male power; something of her own subjectivity is involved that connects her intimately with the very force that attempts to destroy her" (68). In other cases, it is the social world who acts as enforcer. An illustrative case in point is the mockery and disdain that the female protagonist of "The Daemon Lover" encounters in the

street. Finally, the writer also employs the spaces as representative of the patriarchal symbolic order, as is the case in “The Trouble with My Husband.” In the following short stories all these elements of perpetuation of masculine domination will be analysed following Bourdieu’s tenets.

In conjunction with this Jacksonian Female Gothic trope, which constitutes the thread that links all the stories in this thesis, other more classic conventions arise. In “The Rock” and “A Visit,” Jackson employs Gothic elements which are more characteristic of her long narratives. In both, apart from the demon lover, we can identify a young heroine, an isolated enclave, entrapment and the force of nature. Added to this, “A Visit” includes a witch, ghosts, mirrors and doubles. All these elements are well-established Gothic tropes which Jackson recaptures to represent the violence and oppression inflicted on women.

Jackson also resorts to a variety of Gothic conventions and techniques which help represent the experience of chaos, fear, vulnerability and powerlessness in her female protagonists. The unreliable point of view inside the delusional character’s mind assists the readers in their understanding of the confusion and lack of objectivity felt by the victim of symbolic and psychological violence. The dreamlike narration that Jackson uses in some tales is also employed with the purpose of depicting an abstract and confusing framework. An illustrative case in point is the tale “Lovers Meeting” analysed here below. Another effect which leads to the atmosphere of paranoia and disturbing ambiguity is the absence of a real threat. The reader can hardly identify a concrete enemy, as usually happens with symbolic violence. In many tales, the threat seems to come from the ominous environment and the lack of support from the other characters usually adds tension and helps in the creation of the hostile atmosphere. Finally, there is the technique of the sudden twist of the plot which reveals the dark side of an evil character. As Franklin claims, “the domestic tales often need only the gentlest tap to slide into the dark” (5).

Having touched upon critical writing about Jackson’s Female Gothic and upon the significance of the demon lover trope in her work, it is time to analyse the representations of masculine domination and symbolic violence in her stories. The stories have been grouped according to their female characters’ marital status so as to focus on Jackson’s representation of violence in reference to women’s different positions in society. In the stories featuring women single women, that is to say, women not complying with the feminine mystique of the 50s, Jackson deals with the societal forces which push them towards marriage and the anxiety derived from living outside the prescribed roles of the wife. Jackson brings out the

themes of discontentment, vulnerability and loss of identity. Regarding married women, they are depicted as frustrated, overlooked, obsessive and devoid of a sense of selfhood. Symbolic violence helps put women “in their place” but also appears in the form of women’s complicity with their own oppression.

### 3. SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE IN JACKSON'S SHORT STORIES

#### 3.1. Single Women

In the four stories included in this section, the protagonists are being followed or in search of a demon lover to whom they feel attracted even though they can feel the uncanniness connected to him. The demon trope works here as a metaphor for societal prescriptions which lure single women into the trap of marriage or trick them with the promise of riches, as it occurs in the original ballad. Furthermore, the heroines' eventual disintegration is connected to romance. They fall prey to the lore which depicts love and marriage as the main life's goals for girls and the only possible path to happiness. Jackson brings up the risks of this restrictive unique way to women's fulfilment which was romanticised under the myth of love but she also connects it to the fragmentation of their self. As Friedan observes, "love has customarily been defined, at least for women, as a complete merging of egos and a loss of separateness — 'togetherness', a giving up of individuality rather than a strengthening of it" (261). Jackson highlights this negative consequence by establishing a link between the heroines' surrender to love and their loss of identity and entrapment.

In "The Daemon Lover," the unnamed protagonist walks the streets of the city on the lookout for her missing fiancé on the day of her wedding. After being following his trail, she ends up listening to his laughter inside an apartment but no one opens the door and she remains alone and befuddled. In the second story, "Lovers Meeting," Phyllis leaves her apartment seduced by a song linked to the demon lover and, once she is outside, she feels she is being chased. After trying to escape from her pursuer travelling by taxi, walking around a building and taking the bus, she goes back home and finds him waiting for her. He offers a vial of poison and she drinks it. Love is also the cause of Margaret's final entrapment in the beautiful mansion she is visiting. In "A Visit," a young woman spends the summer holiday with a college friend in her huge family house. Soon she meets her friend's brother, who brings a friend called Paul, the symbol of fatal love, and she ends up being trapped in the house forever. Unlike these three protagonists, Paula Ellison, in "The Rock" is not looking for the demon lover nor is she attracted to him. However, despite her elusiveness, she becomes ensnared. At the beginning of the tale, Paula, her brother, Charles, and her sister-in-law, Virginia, arrive on an island made up of a huge black rock where they will spend their holidays. They lodge in a guesthouse where Paula meets a mysterious guest, Mr.

Johnson. After a week on the island, she discovers that she has been talking to a man who Charles and Virginia cannot see. At that moment, she realises she is held captive by the devil.

The demon lover's captivation and entrapment in these tales can be understood, in connection with the historical context, as the deception posed by the feminine mystique or the myth of romantic love and the resulting confinement in marriage. Thus, the Female Gothic here is located in the uncanny threat of marriage and the disturbing patriarchal symbolic patterns, both internal and external, which oppress women. In "The Daemon Lover" and "Lovers Meeting," the reader understands that the male demonic presence is ominous and threatening, however both women yearn for their union with them. This paradoxical submission to their own oppressive system is what Bourdieu finds disconcerting about the masculine domination, "the most intolerable conditions of existence can so often be perceived as acceptable and even natural" (*Masculine Domination* 1). The single women's hunt for husband must be understood within the sociohistorical context of the 1950s and the one-way street for women's fulfilment as housewives: "Real life was when you married and lived in a suburban house with your husband and children" (Friedan 122). Thus, the protagonists of the aforementioned stories cannot see the threat posed by the demon because they so desperately wish to get societal normalisation through marriage. The wife-to-be in "The Daemon Lover" daydreams about her close fulfilment as wife while waiting for her fiancé:

[She] let her mind slip past today and tomorrow, into the farther future, when Jamie was established with his writing and she had given up her job, the golden house-in-the-country future they had been preparing for the last week. "I used to be a wonderful cook," she had promised Jamie, "with a little time and practice I could remember how to make angel-food cake. And fried chicken," she said, knowing how the words would stay in Jamie's mind, half-tenderly. "And Hollandaise sauce." (12)

She looks forward to entering the dream world that media, culture and the social environment have presented as fulfilling and she paradoxically depicts the change from employee to housewife as ideal and desirable. It is worth noting that this fairy-tale projection of the future portrays the husband as a successful writer and the wife as a wonderful cook. This postcard represents the unfair predefined paths attributed according to sex: "The boys, married or not, are there to stretch their minds, to find their own identity, to fill out their life plan; the girls are there only to fulfil their sexual function," that is, to become a "real woman" according to societal standards (Friedan 131).

Similarly, Phyllis, in “Lovers Meeting,” wishes to indulge in a romantic relationship. Yet, during the tale she expresses her ambivalence: “Am I walking toward something I should be running away from?” (176). Paradoxically, she is both escaping from it and looking forward to it. She tries to run away from something but, at the same time, that something was what she was pursuing when she left her apartment. When the story begins, she is at home and it is a song which enchants her and persuades her to leave. Jackson quotes Shakespeare’s poem “O Mistress mine where are you roaming?,” whose central theme is love and its fleeting nature: “What’s to come is still unsure, in delay there lies no plenty ...” (175). Jackson uses the trope to represent the deceptive face of romantic love, which was later explained by Kate Millett in her book *Sexual Politics* (1970) as a means for the emotional manipulation of the female by the male, tricking her into subservience.

Jackson features an ominous presence which chases the victim, however, as happened with the fiancé in “The Daemon Lover,” it does not materialise as a real character until the end. During the rest of the tale, the reader perceives this menace through the protagonist’s thoughts and the other characters’ comments. The first indicator which discloses the chasing force is the footsteps Phyllis feels when leaving her apartment:

If she heard the footsteps when she left the apartment, she did not notice them particularly, or perhaps they merged perfectly with the sharp sound of her own high-heeled shoes going down the corridor; at any rate, it was not until she stepped out into the lonely street, walking easily and consciously and proudly, that she heard the sound of steps behind her, coming as surely along the Street as she herself, and carrying with them the echo of the song... “What’s to come is still unsure...” (175)

During her flight, the people she encounters confirm there is a masculine malign presence who pursues her, “he’s still following you” (176), says the taxi driver who invites her to jump into his car. The other characters also acknowledge his existence, “You are being followed” (177), claims a footman, and an old lady tells her: ““He should be arrested, *I* think. People like that.’ She craned her neck to see out the window past the bundles, and clicked her tongue reprovably. ‘And there he is still,’ she said. ‘Following right alone’” (178).

Like the fiancée, Phyllis is under the spell of the myth of love and even though she is repeatedly told to escape by people in the street, she refuses to listen: ““Let them try,’ she muttered. It will be mine now. They know and they think am afraid. Let them try to get me away. When I get home and can sit still I’ll have it all to myself” (178). Her *habitus* contains such strong beliefs about the importance of love and marriage for women that she ignores the surrounding warnings in order to give in to the spell of love. As Friedan explains,

education stimulated in women the “fantasy of fulfilling all desire for achievement, status, and identity vicariously through a man” (131). In a world where all the influential means guide women to rely on the husband for prospective happiness, love, marriage and the house become the only entrance for personal development.

The idealisation of love and domesticity is also the main theme in “A Visit,” later reprinted as “The Lovely House.” This tale has been considered one of Jackson’s most Gothic short stories (Hattenhauer 53) and was referred to by the author herself as one of her favourites (Franklin 283). The Gothic heroin is called Margaret, a name that Jackson used for characters with whom she seemed particularly to identify, as Franklin claims (256). She is a girl who is invited by her school friend, Carla, to stay at her countryside mansion during the summer. Since the beginning, she is amazed at the impressive ornaments and the ideal surroundings of the house, but what really intrigues her is what she finds in the “the room of the tiles.” There the floor is made of a stone mosaic which represents a picture of the house but beyond this image there is an image of a girl with lettering underneath: “‘Here was Margaret,’ it said, ‘who died for love’” (633). Just after this episode, Margaret meets Carla’s brother and Paul, “a captain, small and dark and bitter, and smiling bleakly upon the family assembled” (634). A reader who is familiar with Jackson’s demon lover trope would immediately recognise this character as the trickster figure. From this point on, the reader is unsettled by Jackson’s deceptive narration. She uses the same references to allude to the two young men, the terms “brother,” “son,” “Paul” and “captain” can all refer both to Carla’s brother and his friend interchangeably. The dialogue is so well constructed that one might not realise that one of them is the product of Margaret’s imagination; however, with a close reading we can discern that Margaret follows and communicates with an inexistent figure. Carla’s statements in the dialogue reveal that Margaret is not in company when she is supposed to leave with Paul:

Margaret started across the lawn with him, and Carla called to her, “Where are you off to now, Margaret?”

“Why, to the rose Garden,” Margaret called back, and Carla said, staring, “You are really very odd, sometimes, Margaret. And it’s growing colder, far too cold to linger among the roses,” and so Margaret and Paul turned back. (635)

Apart from Paul, there is another key Gothic character, the great-aunt. She is again an imaginary character, it is Paul who tells Margaret about her existence, since no other member of the family talks about her. She lives in the tower of the mansion and is presented as a witch: “She has filled the tower with books, and a huge old cat, and she may practice

alchemy there, for all anyone knows” (637-38). After much hesitation, Margaret decides to go up the tower and meet her. Although the girl does not realise it, she is meeting her old self, the great-aunt confesses that her name is Margaret and talks mysteriously about an ominous episode that happened to her and which is about to happen to the young Margaret:

“He should have come and gone sooner,” the old lady went on, as though to herself. “Then we’d have it all behind us.”

“Have all *what* behind us? Margaret asked, . . . (641)

The old woman is talking about the encounter with the demon and her consequent submission, which she herself already experienced when she was young. In a different scene, the reader understands that old Margaret and Paul knew each other, “‘Margaret told me you were here,’ the old lady said to Paul, ‘and I came down to see you once more’” (644). In that same conversation, Jackson discloses a trait of the captain which reveals his dark side as a demon—he does not age:

“You look wonderfully well,” Paul said.

“Oh well,” said the old lady. “I’ve aged. I’ve aged, I know it.”

“So have I,” said Paul.

“Not noticeably,” said the old lady, shaking her head and regarding him soberly for a minute. “You never will, I suppose.” (644)

Just as the reader gradually notices the ominous context, Margaret does not understand the messages and is eventually seduced by the demon and left behind trapped in the mansion with the other women. The story concludes with the male characters, father and son, going away, the women resuming their unsubstantial menial housework and Margaret wondering about her leaving:

“And my visit?” said Margaret smiling. “Surely there will be an end to my visit?”

Mrs. Rhodes, with one last look at the door from which Mr. Rhodes and the captain had gone, dropped her hand from Margaret’s shoulder and said, “I must go to my embroidery. I have neglected it while my son was with us.” (649)

Although delivered as a fairy tale, Jackson conveys messages of social denunciation that oppose the ideal of cosy home and safe marriage. The dream manor and the gallant captain become synonyms with confinement and figurative death. Jackson uses classic conventions of the Female Gothic like ghosts, mirrors, a fantastical dwelling, live burial, the split of the self and the imprisoned heroine. The latter can be connected to other Gothic tropes, namely, the house as the self (Hattenhauer 54) and the characters as figures trapped in a picture. These two symbols of entrapment serve to frame the story since they occur at the beginning

and at the end respectively. At the outset of the tale, Margaret contemplates the impressive house and the narrator describes it with feminine traits, “the perfect grace of the house, showing so clearly the long-boned structure within” (627). On the other hand, the story concludes with Carla’s mother embroidering the two girls into her last tapestry:

“I have only to put the figures into the foreground,” Mrs. Rhodes said, hesitating on her way to the drawing room. “I shall have you exactly if you sit on the lawn near the river.”

“We shall be models of stillness,” said Carla, laughing. “Margaret, will you come and sit beside me on the lawn?” (650)

The fact that the girl and the house are the same body and the idea of entrapment within a tapestry serve to emphasise the theme of confinement. All the Gothic conventions used in the tale symbolise the living death endured by women under the yoke of the feminine mystique, who were tricked into devoting their lives to the house.

The powerful messages hidden in these Gothic tales represent the harsh reality that many women in the 40s and 50s were experiencing at the time Jackson wrote them. By falling in love and getting married, they became housewives and were prevented from developing their full potential as human beings. Their lives ended up being empty and meaningless, which led them to suffer from “the problem that has no name,” like Friedan called it: “The problem that has no name, from which so many women in America suffer today, is caused by adjustment to an image that does not permit them to become what they now can be” (251). In the stories, Jackson uses the trope of the demon lover to warn women against the perils of acquiescing in following the deceptive societal ideals of her times.

It is no coincidence that Jackson describes the victims of the deception as women who perfectly fit in the feminine ideal. Jackson draws on the characteristic attributes assigned to women so as to present them as the perfect victims since their adherence to the norms makes them more prone to fall under the spell of the devil. In “The Daemon Lover,” the future wife expresses her wish to live up to the expectations of womanhood: “It occurred to her that perhaps she ought not to wear the blue silk dress; it was too plain, almost severe, and she wanted to be soft, feminine” (10). This concept of “soft” as representative of femininity is connected to what Bourdieu views as one of the theoretical pillars that supports the idea of the inferiority of women, the “principle of division” or “*nomos*.” Exemplifications of symbolic violence include gender relations in which both sexes assume the cultural taxonomy whereby the man is considered strong, harsh, active and rational whereas the woman is inextricably linked to weakness, delicacy, passivity and irrationality and defined

by default as the other. This system of oppositions is the core on which the division of the sexes and the whole androcentric scheme are built and leads to the justified division between the male and female body, their activities and their access to spaces. This idealised femininity is also exposed in "The Rock." The demon lover is said to be initially interested in Virginia: "I was waiting for your sister-in-law, actually," he said" (762). This interest, we understand later, results from Virginia's adherence to the canon. He prefers her because she is, as he says, "such a *dependent* person," "So pretty, too, and so weak, and so fragile. Such a pretty girl" (766, 768). In Phyllis' words, she is also described as being "small and lovely" and "not strong" (762, 766). The preference for Virginia over Paula showcases the internalisation of those patriarchal ideals in the man's mind. He had chosen Virginia because of her "womanly" traits, i.e. the gendered understanding of what a "real woman" is. In contrast, Paula is said to be tall and represented as a stronger and more independent woman. The reference to her tallness is connected to disapproval by the landlady who receives them in the holiday inn, a woman who eventually is revealed as an accomplice of the devil.

"You know what she said to me, that funny old woman?" she demanded. "When I was just coming in the door, she whispered to me, was the tall woman with our party?" She laughed again. "Meaning you," she said to Paula.

"She didn't seem to like me," Paula said. (758, 759)

From this initial rejection for Paula, it can be inferred why she was not the main target of the devil. Her height and her adventurous personality dismiss her as the perfect victim, namely, as the woman devoted to incarnating the feminine mystique.

Jackson also alludes to this *nomos* in her portrayal of the division of the activities men a women carry out. In "A Visit," Carla and Margaret do indoor activities before Paul's appearance and outdoor activities after his arrival. Carla also makes clear that the atmosphere is better when her brother is around: "When my brother comes," Carla said, "you will see what this house can be like with life in it" (632). Even singing is incomplete without her brother: "That evening Carla and Margaret played and sang duets, although Carla said that their voices together were too thin to be appealing without a deeper voice accompanying, and that when her brother came should have some splendid trios" (632). Once more, Jackson includes the gender taxonomy strong/soft by alluding to the deep versus thin voices. As it can be noticed, Carla's interventions usually begin with "When my brother comes." Jackson uses repetition to highlight the importance of the man's presence for the household as the bearer of amusement: "When my brother comes again," Carla said, "we shall have a musical evening, and perhaps he will take us boating on the river." From Carla's interventions, we

can grasp Jackson's subtle critique to the division of the sexes, where men are entitled to make use of their free time for enjoyment while women must be full-time housewives and depend on a masculine figure for entertainment and to achieve a sense of completeness.

Following these gendered attributions, Jackson's female characters are portrayed as fearful, confused, and lacking self-confidence. These are visible manifestations of the submission to the dominant judgement, which sometimes leads to internal conflict and division of the self (Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* 39). The trope of the demon lover can also represent this inner malaise. According to Stempke-Durgin, in "The Daemon Lover," the trope can be understood either as a real person or as the fiancée's internalization of oppressive structures (30). At the beginning of the story, Jackson portrays the fiancée's inner struggle connected to patriarchal ideals and external judgement. Firstly, she expresses her preoccupation for the right outfit for the wedding: "Anxiously she pulled through the dresses in the closet, and hesitated over a print she had worn the summer before; it was too young for her, and it had a ruffled neck, and it was very early in the year for a print dress, but still..." (10). In connection with this source of anxiety, the issue of age is later revealed: "You're thirty-four years old, after all, she told herself cruelly in the bathroom mirror" (12).

The fiancée is portrayed as overly worried about her appearance and her age and it is made clear that this preoccupation is connected to the external judgement:

She could not try to disguise the sallowness of her skin, or the lines around her eyes, today, when it might look as though she were only doing it for her wedding, and yet she could not bear the thought of Jamie's bringing to marriage anyone who looked haggard and lined. (12)

Her harsh thoughts and self-deprecation represent a clear subjugation to male expectations. In the second chapter of his book, Bourdieu devotes one section to the idea of the objectification of women, which is entitled "Female being as being-perceived," and focuses on the schemes of perception and appreciation which eventually inscribe in the bodies of women and make them act according to the external gaze. He claims:

Masculine domination, which constitutes women as symbolic objects whose being (esse) is a being-perceived (percipi), has the effect of keeping them in a permanent state of bodily insecurity, or more precisely of symbolic dependence. They exist first through and for the gaze of others, that is, as welcoming, attractive and available objects . . . As a consequence, dependence on others (and not only men) tends to become constitutive of their being. (*Masculine Domination* 66)

The fiancée's existence is linked to her being-perceived, which translates into her insecurities and anxiety. Another case in point is Margaret's bodily insecurity portrayed in

“A Visit.” Jackson purposefully describes Margaret as timid and frightened every time she meets a new person:

“Come and meet my mama.” Carla said.

They went through doors at the right, and Margaret, before she could see the light room she went into, was stricken with fear at meeting the owners of the house and the park and the river, and as she went beside Carla she kept her eyes down. (628)

This infantilisation is emphasised when Margaret, while being introduced to others, systematically stands behind Carla or her mother in search of protection. “Margaret smiled back timidly at them both, and stood behind Carla” (634), recounts the narrator during Margaret’s introduction to the brother and his friend. In opposition to these naïve young victims of patriarchy, the old Margaret is depicted as a witch. Witches in Jackson’s fiction represent the women who remain outside the prescribed roles. They can be old women, like the great-aunt, or career women, such as Elizabeth Style in the short story “Elizabeth.” Whichever the case, they represent women outside the feminine mystique, female strength and agency. In her biography, Franklin recounts Jackson’s deep interest in this topic: “The witchcraft chronicles she treasures . . . are stories of powerful women: women who defy social norms, women who get what they desire, women who can channel the power of the devil himself” (261). Jackson herself was seen as a witch in her time and enjoyed performing tricks to guests (Franklin 260). The great-aunt who inhabits the tower in “A Visit” aligns with the trope of the madwoman in the attic which Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar identified as a recurrent trope when studying common themes in 19<sup>th</sup>-century women writers’ literature. They noticed that many female authors included fantasies in their novels and poems “in which maddened doubles functioned as asocial surrogates for docile selves” (XI). The witch figure in Jackson’s story is young Margaret’s subversive splintered self but could have also been used to represent the author’s double. According to Gilbert and Gubar, the trope of the madwoman in the attic was employed by several women writers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as Mary Shelley and Emily Dickinson, to represent themselves as split, as their own rebellious double:

Even the most apparently conservative and decorous women writers obsessively create fiercely independent characters who seek to destroy all the patriarchal structures which both their authors and their authors’ submissive heroines seem to accept as inevitable. Of course, by projecting their rebellious impulses not into their heroines but into mad or monstrous women (who are suitably punished in the course of the novel or poem), female authors dramatize their own self-division, their desire both to accept the strictures of patriarchal society and to reject them. What this means, however, is that the madwoman in literature by women is not merely, as she might be in male literature, an antagonist or foil to the heroine. Rather, she is usually in some sense the author’s double, an image of her own anxiety and

rage. Indeed, much of the poetry and fiction written by women conjures up this mad creature so that female authors can come to terms with their own uniquely female feelings of fragmentation, their own keen sense of the discrepancies between what they are and what they are supposed to be. (77-78)

Old Margaret clearly fits with the trope of the madwoman within the Female Gothic theme of fragmentation but it may also reflect Jackson's ambivalence towards her life as a housewife. As mentioned above, Jackson used to employ the name Margaret to represent her own persona and she was fond of witchcraft. As Hoeveler stated in her essay "Life Lessons in Shirley Jackson's Late Fiction: Ethics, Cosmology, Eschatology" (2005), "it seems clear that Jackson was a gothicist with a personal agenda. She wrote out of deep personal pain, but she presented that pain as universal, as the lot of all people who are born into a world where they are unwanted, imperfect, and condemned to rail at those facts" (280). The madwoman in the tower highlights once more the use of the Female Gothic as a means to reflect and address female concerns which were for a long time considered individual issues but which eventually emerged as structural patterns derived from the patriarchal system.

Added to the portrayal of her heroines as fragile and timid, Jackson highlights another key element connected to the division of the sexes, their excessive preoccupation for neatness. The fiancée in "The Daemon Lover" is deeply distressed by the lack of tidiness: "With sudden horror she realized that she has forgotten to put clean sheets on the bed," "She took the old sheets and pillow cases into the bathroom and stuffed them down into the hamper, and put the bathroom towels in the hamper too, and clean towels on the bathroom racks" (11). This obsession is what Gustavo V. Cohen calls "the domestic theme of compulsive tidiness and cleanliness" (70), recurrent in Jackson's narratives. Another brilliant example of this neurosis will be shown below during the analysis of the story "Mrs. Spencer and the Oberons," where Jackson exposes the extent that this obsession can reach and its consequences.

These concerns for beauty and cleanliness, albeit apparently different, stem from a single foundational ideology in the patriarchal definition of femininity, the idea that women are destined to make the man's life comfortable, by displaying their beauty, by being submissive and by servicing and pleasing the husband. This "law of pleasing" (*la ley del agrado*), as Amelia Valcárcel named it, is based, as she herself described, on the fact that women are educated to satisfy the other (185). Another case which illustrates this pleasing role can be found in "The Rock." Jackson highlights the attentive attitude which is expected of women by presenting both Paula and Virginia as continuously worried about Charles,

who was recovering of an illness: “How do you feel, darling?,” “Charles, are you tired?,” “Charles, how do you feel?,” “Darling, are you hungry” (753, 755, 770). With this attentive attitude towards men and their concern about their pleasant appearance, these characters contribute to perpetuating their own oppression. Therefore, Jackson presents a circular Gothic structure where the victims feed the source of their victimisation.

In these last examples, we have looked at the imprint of the patriarchal schemes on the victims. Let us now focus on the external structures. Jackson also deals with the role that the external influences play in relation to the creation and perpetuation of the patriarchal dictates: “The demon lover trope in Jackson’s work reveals a vision of feminine subjectivity exposed to an anxiety borne out of her relation both to the ‘external’ structures of the patriarchal symbolic order and to her own ‘internal’ drives” (Bonikowski 68). In “The Daemon Lover,” we perceive the mounting anxiety that the fiancée experiences as a consequence of her vulnerable state as an unmarried woman in her 30s, but Jackson goes on to expose the harsh atmosphere she encounters once she leaves her apartment on the lookout for her missing fiancé. A disturbing undercurrent imbues the dialogues with the people she comes across. These arbitrary subjects, who represent society, clearly hold the idea that a woman’s value is contingent on her marital status and hence their mockery. Jackson uses the demon’s characteristic laughter as a recurrent symbol to represent society’s punishment for a woman who lives outside the norms. What the fiancée says to be “*terribly* important” (20), the fact of finding Jamie, the key to her social acceptance, is interpreted as trivial and even ridiculed by the people from whom she is trying to gather information. From the very beginning, the narrator mentions that Jamie was “laughing down the hallway” the previous evening. Later, when the protagonist leaves her apartment and starts to ask around, she constantly comes across rude people who do not take her seriously and usually smile. About the superintendent’s wife in Jamie’s block, the narrator says: “Her voice sounded amused” (15); when she leaves the newsstand “both men began to laugh” (19); the florist “smiled genially, showing all his teeth” when answering (20) but “his smile became deprecatory” after the protagonist’s insistent questions; the man in the shoeshine stand is also suspiciously smiley and the boy who finally reveals Jamie’s location is said to grin “insolently at her” (23). The story end is particularly revealing, as the narrator depicts a scene where the woman remains alone, listening to what seems Jamie’s laughter and other low voices behind a flat’s door.

This affinity between demon lover and society also occurs in “The Rock.” The landlady in the guesthouse where Paula is staying functions as an ally of the demon lover, as the go-between in the relationship. She urges Paula to meet him “as soon as possible”:

“You’ll see my other guest this morning.”

“Another guest?” said Paula.

“You’ll be wanting to meet him as soon as possible,” said the landlady. (761)

Later, she insists on her meeting him again: “you’ll be wanting to know where you can meet him next” (767). On the other hand, Jackson shows in “Lovers Meeting” just the opposite. Phyllis is helped by others to escape the demon lover. These helpers represent parental figures. The first person who helps her is a taxi driver who invites her to jump into his car. Phyllis mistakes him for her father: “She bent from the waist, stiffly. And looked at him. A familiar face, she thought. ‘Yes, fa—’ Then she touched the cab’s cold metal and the face changed” (176). Later she is helped by a footman, “‘Pardon, madam? the footman said, ... ‘Pardon, but you had better hurry. You are being followed. If you choose, you may leave by the side entrance” (177), and a bus driver: “She reached the corner just as a bus pulled up, and the bus driver opened the door for her, leaned forward to give her a hand as she stepped in” (178). Finally, once inside the bus, an old lady laments what she considers to be unstoppable, the woman’s subjection to the devil: “The old lady smiled at her over the bundles and said, ‘Poor dear. We all saw it.’ ‘I’m going home,’ Phyllis said, and the old lady said, ‘Of course you are, dear. I think it’s a shame’” (178). These characters represent parental figures who, because of their life experience and wisdom, know that her surrender to love means her submission and her confinement.

As in the previous stories, the heroine in “A Visit” is also warned. In a powerful episode during her encounter with the great-aunt in the tower, Margaret hears voices which announce her doomed destiny:

The cat stood up and spat, the rain came through the window in a great sweep, and Margaret, holding the old lady’s hands, heard through the sounds of the wind the equal sounds of all the voices in the world, and they called to her saying “Good-by, good-by,” and “All is lost,” and another voice saying “I will always remember you,” and still another called, “It is so dark.” And, far away from the others, she could hear a voice calling, “Come back, come back.” Then the old lady pulled her hands away from Margaret and the voices were gone. The cat shrank back and the old lady looked coldly at Margaret and said, “As I was saying, I would help you if I could.” (642)

As victim of the demon lover she is destined to remain trapped in the mansion. The great-aunt appears once more as an allied to the system, she does not prevent her young self from

submitting to the devil. Jackson presents this submission as a legacy which is passed between generations of women. When Paul tells Margaret about the woman in the tower he presents her as “an aunt, or a great-aunt, or perhaps even as a great-great-great-aunt” (637), namely, this story of entrapment has been happening over and over again. This cycle is also metaphorically represented through the tapestries which hang on the walls of the house:

“There is so much tapestry,” Margaret said, “In every room,” Carla agreed. “Mama has embroidered all the hangings for her own room, the room where she writes her letters. The other tapestries were done by my grandmamas and my great-grandmamas and my great-great-grandmamas.” (629)

In this revision of the Female Gothic convention of confinement, Jackson underlines the weight of tradition on the continuation of the patriarchal dictates. Women’s submission is kept through force of habit. Generations of women have been reproducing the same image on their tapestry, they have woven their destiny of entrapment and have remained slaves in domestic pictures made by themselves. Their lack of agency within the house is expressed by means of another Gothic convention, the mirror. While Carla was showing the house to Margaret, they entered a room where the mirrors reflected them endlessly smaller and smaller:

They passed then into a room where everything grew smaller as they looked at it: the mirrors on both sides of the room showed the door opening and Margaret and Carla coming through, and then, reflected, a smaller door opening and a small Margaret and a smaller Carla coming through, and then, reflected again, a still smaller door and Margaret and Carla, and so on, endlessly, Margaret and Carla diminishing and reflecting. (629)

The ornaments and the architecture are used as uncanny elements to represent the confinement, powerlessness and belittlement experienced by women in their suburban houses.

In sum, Jackson shows different faces of the external influence on the perpetuation of patriarchal codes. In “The Daemon Lover” and “The Rock,” the other characters act in coalition with the demon lover and therefore as enemies of the protagonists. In “Lovers Meeting,” they seem to be protective figures who try to warn her and yet they represent a patronising force which, through a child-like approach, infantilise her. These figures who appear during the dream-like journey are not in conversation with her but tell her what to do. Therefore, she is portrayed as a child who needs guidance rather than as an adult capable of making her own decisions. Finally, in “A Visit,” Margaret is portrayed as the victim of an inertia where other women just follow tradition and submit to the demon lover and therefore to their destiny as subservient selves devoted to the house.

In the four cases, the protagonists end up being tricked by the demonic figure. This unperturbed functioning of the patriarchal dictates is what Bourdieu calls “the paradox of doxa,”

the fact that the order of the world as we find it, with its one-way streets and its no-entry signs, whether literal or figurative, its obligations and its penalties, is broadly respected; that there are not more transgressions and subversions, contraventions and 'follies' ...; or, still more surprisingly, that the established order, with its relations of domination, its rights and prerogatives, privileges and injustices, ultimately perpetuates itself so easily. (*Masculine Domination* 1)

This is precisely what Jackson illustrates in her narratives, the uncritical obedience to the social mandates by so many women in her time and the social and psychological consequences they suffer. Yet, her denunciation of this blind adherence is accompanied by messages which reveal the symbolic patriarchal structures which urge women to play by the rules.

In these four stories, Jackson used the Female Gothic as a politically subversive genre to express women’s distress in relation to patriarchal structures. The demon lover appears as a trickster figure which deceives women and remind them of their limited roles in society. The tone of mystery which imbues the stories is achieved by incorporating Gothic elements such as the mirrors or the dream-like atmosphere. In addition, Jackson used her technique of gradually changing the third-person narrator’s point of view from a distanced neutral position to an unreliable viewpoint inside the protagonist’s mind. The account of the events reveals a state of mounting preoccupation and anxiety but does not describe an explicit threat. Added to this, the other characters, first introduced as trustworthy and credible, suddenly become participants in the women’s inescapable fatal ending. In this uncertain scenario, the existence of a real enemy or danger is ambiguous and that lack of certainty, which consumes her female protagonists, generates anxiety in the readership too. Thus, Jackson makes use of mystery, ambiguity and the uncanny to create Gothic landscapes which encapsulate the feelings of oppression of the women of her time.

### **3.2. Married Women**

In this section, Jackson’s selected stories have been grouped into three different subsections. The first part focuses on a sole tale, “Mrs. Spenser and The Oberons,” and revolves around the theme of the unfulfilled wife who strictly follows conventions and meets social expectations. In the second group, the stories depict the change from being a spirited college

student to becoming a professor's wife and the social burden brought about by the new role. The stories under analysis are "Gaudeamus Igitur," "The Very Hot Sun in Bermuda and "Still Life with Teapot and Students." Finally, in the last three stories, the protagonists are victims of psychological manipulation, therefore, they are studied by looking at examples of covert but also overt violence. "The Trouble with my Husband," "The Good Wife" and "Of Course" make up the corpus in this last section. In all these stories, Jackson twists around the myths of the fulfilled wife and the happy marriage by transforming domestic spaces into Gothic nightmares where women suffer in repression and silence.

### **3.2.1. Hampered Fulfilment**

These stories will be analysed by framing them within a broad Bourdieusian concept which is paramount to understanding the origins of the different roles assigned to the sexes, the economy of symbolic goods. In this system, the main aim is men's search for and accumulation of honour, which Bourdieu conceptualised as symbolic capital: "One cannot understand sexual practices and meanings (...) without taking into account the fact that masculine action is always oriented towards prestige" (*Masculine Domination Revisited* 200). This symbolic capital is attained by the recognition of their manliness and is used as a means of social distinction and symbolic dominion. Bourdieu's anthropological studies conclude that manliness is proved through the demonstration of both men's capacity to exert violence and men's sexual and reproductive capacity. In connection with the latter, the role of women in this system is understood as instrumental. They are seen as tools which guarantee men's sexual activity and which contribute to the acquisition of their prestige by providing them with marriage and kinship. In this race for honour pursuit, women "have been assigned with the management of the symbolic capital of the family" (*Masculine Domination* 100). They must take care of aesthetics in the family and confer prestige to the familial unit:

Thus, a very large part of the domestic work which falls to women is, in many milieux, aimed at conserving the solidarity and integration of the family by maintaining kin relationships and all the social capital through the organization of a whole series of social activities - ordinary ones, such as meals which bring together the whole family,<sup>30</sup> or extra-ordinary, such as the ceremonies and celebrations (birthdays, etc.) designed to ritually celebrate the bonds of kinship and to ensure the maintenance of social relations and the prestige of the family, the exchanges of gifts, visits, letters or postcards and telephone calls. (Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* 97)

These inculcated ideas are perfectly portrayed in “Mrs. Spencer and The Oberons.” In this story, the protagonist, Mrs. Spencer, is presented as the demon lover by means of her family name, “Margaret Spencer, it said on her stationery and her personal checks, Mrs. Harry Elliott Spencer” (33). She represents the 50s wife described by Friedan, devoted to her occupation as housewife and incarnates the ideal of femininity. The narrator describes her “as calm and lovely as always, gracious and elegant” (35) and portrays her dutiful execution of the daily psychical and mental tasks assigned to her as wife: “The phone rang at about eleven, when the lemon cream was safely in the refrigerator and the living room was dusted and the silver polished, and she answered it upstairs, where she was mending a tiny rip in her dinner dress” (32). She is the epitome of the woman as the prestige bestower within the economy of symbolic goods. As Bourdieu claims, women are socialised to “take charge of everything concerned with aesthetics, and more generally with the management of the public image and social appearances of the members of the domestic unit” (*Masculine Domination* 99). Margaret is aware of her gendered primary mission as a contributor to her husband’s accumulation of symbolic capital: “I feel it's important for you, and your position at the bank, to have a house and a family you can point to with pride” (31) and hence her insistence on being exemplary, diligent, pristine, contained and “ladylike.” Even when shopping, she pays attention to her movements and makes sure she buys the best for her family:

She walked slowly, pushing the shopping cart with the pride of one performing perfectly an exacting and delicate chore, and hesitated and debated and even, when the clerk was not looking, prodded at the melon with the tip of her gloved finger. It would not fit her positions as Harry’s wife to serve poor food to her family. (37)

The importance of appraisal is also well represented in the story. These actions would not achieve their primary purpose without external approval, which is a pivotal element within the functioning of the symbolic market. The prestige of the family would be useless without putting it on display. The external world must see and admire the symbolic capital produced in order to validate it. In the following excerpt, Jackson shows the significance of social recognition for the functioning of the system:

“How well Margaret always manages,” her guests told one another on their way home.

“Entertaining seems no effort to her, somehow, she’s done wonders for Harry’s position in town.” And one or two of the women reflected that Margaret Spencer might really be a very good choice for president of the Wednesday Club. (35)

However, Jackson’s depiction of this devoted wife gradually unveils her characteristic Gothic undercurrents. Far from representing a fulfilled and pleased woman,

Margaret is portrayed as snobbish, irritated and in a constant state of annoyance. She sees any diversion from her planned daily tasks as a burden. The story begins with her mental revision of the tasks for the day and an inconvenient letter she refuses to open because of the added work it might involve: "I have enough on my mind for one day" (30). Similarly, she avoids talking to people: "I am such a busy person, she thought, moving quickly down the street; why does everyone come to me with their problems?" (36), she wonders after a neighbour asks for references about some people she might know. Furthermore, the reader repeatedly perceives how every little new inconvenience she comes across means an added preoccupation which exasperates her:

Mrs. Spencer never allowed her clothes, which were expensive, to fall into disrepair, and the tiny rip infuriated her, since it had not been there before she sent the dress to the cleaner, and this meant that now she would have to remember to speak sharply to the cleaner's delivery man when he came on Monday. (32)

Jackson presents a woman who strictly plays by the rules of the patriarchal system, an ardent devotee to the societal precepts established for the women of the 50s. She is completely committed to her job as wife and mother, but, contrary to the fulfilment she was supposed to experience according to the beliefs of the time, she lives in constant annoyance and containment. Page after page, Jackson reveals Margaret's complicity with the very system which oppresses her and, as the story proceeds, we witness the consequences of such fanatical devotion to her societal role. Margaret's fervent wish to meet the expectations assigned to the middle-class wife leads her to a relentless pursuit of family perfection: "Her children must bear visibly on their faces the healthy evidence of the very best" (37). Her compulsion for order and cleanliness turns into mania, "Margaret . . . checked that the windows in the children's bedroom were open four inches from the top" (35), and she lives for her family in complete abnegation of herself: "I spend my whole life keeping things nice for them" (48).

Margaret is a victim of the deceptive importance that was created about the role of the housewife. Women had to believe that their tasks and contribution to their husband's career were essential in order to choose that path and keep doing such menial and servile job for so long, despite their feelings of frustration or entrapment. As Friedan explains:

For the very able woman, who has the ability to create culturally as well as biologically, the only possible rationalization is to convince herself — as the new mystique tries so hard to convince her — that the minute physical details of child care are indeed mystically creative; that her children will be tragically deprived if she is not there every minute; that the dinner she gives the boss's wife is as crucial to her husband's career as the case he fights in court or the problem he solves in the laboratory. (201)

As the reader can appreciate, Margaret believes in this crucial role of the wife and therefore she devotes all of her time and intellect to fulfil it exemplarily. Margaret's thoughts disclose the endless and obsessive preoccupation for tidiness and neatness that was generated when adhering to the predicaments of the feminine mystique. This mental burden had negative consequences on women and became a generalised health issue which was known as "housewife fatigue." Thus, as Freidan stated, housewives ended up trapped by the enormous demands of their role, a job with no end, with no timetable, which required full-time and systematic involvement. Jackson detected the uncanniness of such situation —the entrapment, the uneasiness, the estrangement of the home— and provided a suitable Gothic framework.

Jackson discloses in this story the dark side of such compulsive dedication by narrating the disquieting behaviour of this Gothic heroine haunted by the social pressures assigned to her role as wife. As the story unfolds, we come to witness how her class-conscious behaviour and self-isolation lead to her social estrangement. Everybody in town, including her family, forsake her to attend a picnic at the Oberons', the new neighbours in town whose friendly and casual behaviour offends her.

The ending contains a hidden message that can be grasped through symbolism and double *entendre*. When she tries to reach their family at the picnic, she cannot find the driveway that leads to the Oberon's house even if she goes back and forth along the river road several times. During her frustrating pursuit, Jackson introduces the symbol of the waterfall: "She could hear the sound of a waterfall through the still night, even over the soft sound of the car" (44). Waterfalls stand for a shift in identity which arises as a result of great emotional experience or change. Added to this, she hears voices singing, laughter, children shouting and music in the distance over and over again. Still, she cannot reach the house. She ends up lost and ostracised in the dark. Then, Jackson discloses her view through Margaret's thinking by using a metaphor: "I've been going the wrong way, she thought, realizing that there were tears on her face" (46). And just after giving up and going back home, the metaphor is repeated: "It seemed to her that she had spent hours, perhaps years, searching up and down a dark end empty road, following the distant merriment, never able to find a way to get closer to it" (47). Due to her uncritical adherence to the patriarchal prescriptions and her class-consciousness she has ended up being a buttoned-up, unfulfilled woman.

In the 50s, women were presented with a unique model to follow, the happy housewife heroin, as Friedan called it, and in blind adherence to that ideal, women were later faced with “the role crisis.” According to Friedan, the feminine mystique encourages women to ignore the question of identity, “our culture does not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfil their potentialities as human beings” (58). By following the feminine mystique and ignoring her search for identity, in “Mrs. Spenser and The Oberons” Margaret has not been able to find a way to get close to that merriment she could see in the distance, that is, the sense of pleasure in self-development which would have allowed her to fulfil her potentialities and enjoy life in a more casual way.

### 3.2.2. From Muse to Servant

In this same line of symbolic violence as inhibitor of personal realisation and identity erasure, Jackson introduces the concept of the faculty wife. As Murphy explains, this figure was anticipated in her novel *Hangsaman* and used as the main theme in an article for the Benington College alumnae magazine (*Hideous* 17). The illustrations which accompanied the essay revealingly depicted women without faces (Franklin 197). The article was later incorporated to *Raising Demons* as a humorous sketch (1957). In “On Being a Faculty Wife” Jackson ironically describes this type of spouse:

She has frequently read at least one good book lately, she has one “nice” black dress to wear to student parties, and she is always just the teensiest bit in the way, particularly in a girls’ college such as the one where my husband taught. She is presumed to have pressing and wholly absorbing interests at home, to which, when out, she is always anxious to return and, when at home, reluctant to leave. It is considered probable that ten years or so ago she had a face and a personality of her own, but if she has it still, she is expected to keep it decently to herself. (124)

Added to these two appearances of the term, Jackson wrote three short stories which revolve around this figure. The thoughtful dialogues in these stories unveil strain dynamics in which the reader witnesses two different perspectives on the issue but both uncritical with a pattern which denigrates them. In “Gaudeamus Igitur” and “The Very Hot Sun in Bermuda,” we see the college girls’ side. In the former, Gloria is a student who visits her professor and his new wife, who was a sorority sister just the year before. She is received by a welcoming and nice man, “He was pleased to see her, he said, happy she had come” (79), who is interested in her writing. In contrast, Jackson presents a totally different approach to her wife. Thus, she manages to portray how quickly life changes for women from being a student to a married woman. The professor, named Mr Harrison after the demon lover,

constantly tries to expel his wife from the conversation by ordering her to bring tea and lemon: “‘Can’t we offer our guest some tea?’ he said abruptly” (79). Jackson makes clear he is patronising and controlling towards his wife, Barbara: “‘Barbara wrote you?’ he said. ‘She didn’t tell me.’ (...) ‘She should have told me’” (80). As for the novice wife, she behaves with insecurity and nervousness: “Barbara was coming into the room managing a large tray awkwardly through the doorway” (80). Added to this, she acts overly nice and desperate to receive visits. In fact, we know from her husband that she is already suffering her isolation, “‘I worry,’ he went on, ‘that Barbara is already afraid of being bored living as a faculty wife, out of touch with her old friends’” (82).

The scenes encapsulate the uneasiness of a girl who must now fit a role which has been forced on her and in which she is not free nor self-fulfilled anymore. In fact, the title of the story, “*Gaudeamus Igitur*,” refers to the graduation hymn which encourages students to enjoy life while they are young because the joys of youth don't last forever. In this case, Jackson uses this message to refer to the passage from the culturally enriching college life for girls to the stifling world of the housewife. This contrast is also emphasised in the dialogues. The student talks about her creative work with her professor, “‘I finished my long poem,’ she said, watching him to see if he remembered” (80), in the meantime, the wife must take care of the drinks and finds herself expelled from the important topics of conversation. “Being excluded from the universe of serious things, of public and especially economic affairs, women long remained confined to the domestic universe” (Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* 97). Barbara is now in charge of maintaining the social capital of the familial unit. The house arrangement is described as her duty, “‘I thought Barbara would have this whole room changed around by now,’ Gloria said” (80), and she is expected to see to their guests’ comfort by keeping the conversation on track and serving them: “She began to pour the tea, eagerly, and as though she were very conscious of being a hostess. ‘Sugar?’ she said, looking up at Gloria” (80). This passive role of the wife condemns her to monotony and excludes her from both the creative sphere and the world of the ideas. Jackson retakes the traditional Gothic trope of life burial by showing the stark contrast between college girls and married women in the college context.

“Still Life with Teapots and Students” also deals with this lack of stimulus in the role of the housewife. Louise receives two of her husband’s students in her house for tea, a task she must perform as part of her duty as responsible of the social capital of the family. The title sarcastically alludes to this life without movement, a routine which is compared with a

still life, a painting of inanimate objects where nothing happens. In fact, during the conversation, the students bring up this idea of inactivity, “you don’t have anything to do” (19). In response, Louise naively thinks about all the activities the other faculty wives carried out as if they were actually important things to do: “Ellen Thorndyke was making a patchwork quilt, Jean Crown was growing orchids, Roberta Ewen had gone back to the piano” (19).

If these stories portray the two sides of the coin, “The Very Hot Sun in Bermuda” focuses on the student’s version of the story. Katie, a senior student, is presented as joyful and beaming with pride when thinking of her perfect body and men’s appreciation of it. “Katie laughed, regarding her long legs approvingly” (37) or “Ought to have a black bathing suit this year, she was thinking, strapless, two-piece, make the men whistle when I go along the beach. Thinking of the men whistling made her smile while she walked” (36). As Bourdieu claims, women are “socially inclined to treat themselves as aesthetic objects” (2001: 99). This unconscious behaviour stems from the patriarchal scheme which sees women as symbolic objects, as mentioned above. This emphasis on women’s beauty results from the historical social organisation based on kinship systems, which, through marriage, consider the woman as a gift (Levi-Strauss) or symbolic instrument (Bourdieu). Katie’s *habitus* has naturally incorporated this idea of existing for the male gaze and, therefore, she paradoxically contributes to a system which objectifies her.

To this patriarchal involvement, Jackson adds another paradoxical complicity. These students criticise the type of woman they are about to become. “The way it is now, almost any girl is apt to find herself hardening slowly into a faculty wife when all she actually thought she was doing was just getting married,” wrote Jackson in her book *Raising Demons* (124). As Betty Friedan explains, although women of the 50s could attend college, most of them planned to marry and become a housewife as soon as they finished their degrees. However, oddly enough, in both “The Very Hot Sun in Bermuda” and “Still Life with Teapot and Students,” students are presented as haughty, unsympathetic and even disdainful of the faculty wife. “‘I wanted to walk right up to her and slap her face,’ (...) ‘What a worn-out old hag’” (39), said Katie about the wife while chatting with her professor and lover. On the other hand, Joan and Debbie ask their professor’s wife, Louise, during a visit, “Why don’t you and Mrs. Thorndyke and Mrs. Crown and all the others just overlook it? I mean, the students all graduate and go away and there’s no more to it” (18). The irony lies in their inability to see that this was just what the future held for them and this is precisely what

Louisa attempts to make them notice, “‘You may be married yourself someday,’ she said. ‘It’s just possible’” (19).

This blind approval of the system by the students can be understood as the outcome of the patriarchal imaginary which praises and exalts young women. A case in point can be found in the lyrics of the already mentioned hymn that Jackson chose as title of one of the stories:

Vivant omnes virgines,	Long live all maidens
faciles, formosae	easy and beautiful
vivant et mulieres	Long live mature women also,
tenerae, amabiles	Tender and loveable
bonae, laboriosae	And full of good labor. (Krus 145)

Due to their age, they fit the patriarchal standard for availability and beauty (“easy and beautiful”) and, as a consequence, they not only do not see the negative consequences but they even enjoy their role as young muses. Jackson includes in her portrayal of Katie the attributes associated with the muse, she is seductive and serves as reinforcement for the fragile masculine ego. As Virginia Woolf stated, “Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size” (*Room* 43). As soon as Katie enters her professor’s apartment, she begins the flattering ceremony: “Katie stood up leisurely and came over to look at the still life on the easel. ‘Gets prettier every day,’ she said, ‘and so do you’” (37). And afterwards, she repeats twice the following compliments regarding his work: “It looks swell”, “Just fine” (38) to cheer him up. Furthermore, she is sympathetic toward his problems with his wife: “‘Poor old Peter,’ Katie said. She came over and took his arm, leading him to the bench. ‘Poor old Peter,’ she said again. ‘She gives you a hell of a time’” (38). In sum, Jackson portrays the perfect symbiosis between genius and young muse and reflects, through the character of Katie, what Bourdieu defines as being feminine in the androcentric world, “that is to say, smiling, friendly, attentive, submissive, demure, restrained, self-effacing.” As he puts it, “what is called ‘femininity’ is often nothing other than a form of indulgence towards real or supposed male expectations, particularly as regards the aggrandizement of the ego” (66).

Both girls and faculty wife are shown as accomplices in a system designed for the perpetuation of masculine domination since they act according to their *habitus* and they do

not even question the husband's behaviour. Although "Still Life with Teapot and Students" shows the wife's anger, it is solely directed at the students: "'I could kill them,' Louise thought" (19). She deals with her frustration by addressing the issue with one of the students, "You still making passes at my husband?" (17), but then she feels "ashamed of herself and afraid of seeing Lionel," her husband. "There was still time for them to get to him before he came home" (20). The latent idea is that men are entitled to have affairs and that wives' frustration comes from the fact that they are jealous by nature: "We've decided, among the students, that none of you could see your husband go off to an office every day without worrying about his secretary. I mean, wives just *are* jealous, aren't they?" (19), said one of the students to Louise. Therefore, the blame lies on the wife because of her jealous instinct and the solution to the problem unfairly focuses on the wives' ability to control themselves and to accept it the way it is. The mechanism which keeps the system working relies on positive and negative reinforcement: "That is how social control generally works: via incentives and disincentives" (19), explains Professor Kate Manne in her book *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (2018). Jackson reflects this mechanism in Joan's words: "You've been very tolerant and sympathetic" (19). Apart from Louise's goodbye reprimand to the students, we realise she has not spoken for the whole year because she knows she will be faced with social admonishment. On the contrary, his husband enjoys the privilege of arousing what Kate Manne coined as *himpathy*, the sexist social tendency whereby sympathy flows away from women towards men.

In conclusion, Jackson uses the figure of the faculty wife to bring up certain patriarchal beliefs which paradoxically are reproduced and protected by the harmed party, women—however oppressive or diminishing to women these beliefs may be. This way, she critically speaks out about a hot topic which is not addressed by culture and kept conveniently taboo by the male-dominated society. No surprise that this story was considered as "too depressing" and consequently was rejected by her editor at the magazine *Good Housekeeping* (Franklin 314).

### **3.2.3. Trapped and Manipulated**

In the previous tales, the protagonists' *habitus* have led them to perceive their oppressive position as wife as acceptable and even natural, that is why even though they are frustrated and in constant annoyance, they just play by the rules. In contrast, Diana Smallwood, in "The Trouble with my Husband," verbalises her unfair position and exasperation. During the visit

of Mrs and Mr James (named anew after the demon lover), the drunken wife of a successful painter, Harry, makes those present feel uncomfortable due to her unexpected comments. As a result, she is silenced by different agents and in different ways. Once more, the demon lover is not incarnated by a single figure. Jackson brilliantly exposes how patriarchal thinking can be embodied by masculine and feminine characters alike as well as represented by the organisation of the space. We will first focus on this spatial representation of masculine domination.

According to Bonikowski, the trope of the trickster figure as enforcer of the androcentric precepts also takes the form of houses in Jackson's fiction (70). In fact, the name "Harry" means house ruler or protector. Harry is the short form for Henry, which in turn comes from the Old German name Haimrich, composed of the Germanic elements haim, "home," and ric, "power." Thus, Jackson tales also revolve around the expression of the masculine superiority through the houses and the organisation of the space. This conception of the space as reflexion and conveyor of the masculine privilege stems from the principle of division of the sexes. Following Bourdieu's tenets, this binary taxonomy is present in both cognitive structures and objective structures, such as the organisation of the social space. In "The Trouble with My Husband," Jackson illustrates the spatial expression of this dichotomy by alluding to the paintings in her house through the voice of Diana: "Every damn one of them is his, except the little one by the door" (143). Her husband's pictures occupy most of the space of the house and, even if there is one of hers, it is hanging in a hidden corner.

The microcosms of the house stands for the unbalanced position between male and female artists and the generalised invisibility of women's contribution to culture. The reason for this unequal reality was questioned and answered by Linda Nochlin in her article "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (1971). Her explanation includes women's lack of access to the artistic path but also a symbolic factor based on the nature/culture dichotomy. In this deep-rooted belief, women are assigned the role of the reproduction of life while men are considered as the only ones capable of cultural and artistic creation. Added to this, we must consider the prescriptive influence that the environment wields on our minds. Bourdieu elucidates the relation of circular causality which exists between the organisation of space and the dispositions assimilated by men and women:

The continuous, silent, invisible injunctions that the sexually hierarchized world into which they are thrown addresses to them prepare women, at least as much as explicit calls to order, to accept as self-evident, natural and 'going without saying' arbitrary prescriptions and

proscriptions which, inscribed in the order of things, insensibly imprint themselves in the order of bodies. (*Masculine Domination* 56)

Thus, the paintings have been arranged and selected according to patriarchal schemes to show male supremacy and, in turn, this arrangement serves as a prescriptive sign for the inhabitants of the house. Diana is well aware of her husband's privileges and superiority thanks to the ubiquitous presence of his pictures.

Diana herself also embodies the stamp of patriarchy, as she has partly internalised these patriarchal dispositions, which "undermine even the inclination to perform acts that are not expected of women —without them even being denied to them" (Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* 34). As a woman she is expected to follow her biological role to become a mother and a housewife and to prioritise those roles over her artistic career. The reader initially believes that she has accepted motherhood in an act of free will, "I wanted to have children and Harry didn't. It was my idea to have children", but her true feelings are uncovered thanks to her continuous expression of strong dislike for children, "those little helpless things – so goddamn *helpless*" (146). Thanks to these contradictory comments, the reader is made aware of the clash between the protagonist's imposed advocacy for womanly duties and her real opinion on the role of mother and wife. Another case in point is her statement in favour of women's abandonment of professional prospects in order to devote themselves to housewifely duties and motherhood: "I think when a woman has a home and children she ought to give up art" (145). However, her frustration along the story and her insistence on her career as artist reveal just the opposite idea, for she profoundly regrets this supposedly instinctive choice and longs for her lost life as a painter. In clear outrage, Diana finally speaks out and asks her guest straightforwardly: "Would you think I ought to give up my painting just for a home and a couple of lousy children with running noses?" (145).

This dissatisfaction and resentment, which Friedan ironically calls "the devil inside the (happy housewife) heroine," was seen by the American society of the time as "the dream of independence, the discontent of spirit, and even the feeling of a separate identity that must be exorcised to win or keep the love of husband and child" (31). Through Diana's words, Jackson uncovers the internal battle between this forbidden wish of fulfilment and "the Angel of the House." In her 1931 essay, "Professions for Women," Virginia Woolf examined the subtle ways in which women artists censor themselves by alluding to the Angel of the House. This figure encapsulates the ideal of femininity and emerges every time women approach creation: "And when I came to write I encountered her with the very first words.

The shadow of her wings fell across my page; I heard the rustling of her skirts in the room” (*Killing* 3). Those wings are the same that Diana feels when offered an artistic assignment:

“Watkins in New York called me the other day. Offered me their whole advertising campaign, just like that. That’s two hundred a picture.”

“That sounds perfectly wonderful,” Mrs. James said.

“I’m not sure whether I want to do it,” Mrs. Smallwood said. (145)

According to Woolf, “Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer” (*Killing* 5). Obviously, our protagonist has not been successful in this task and is struggling against this inner form of symbolic violence.

Along with Diana, the other female character in the story also acts as an enforcer of patriarchal rules, “the dominated, often unwittingly, sometimes unwillingly, contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting the limits imposed” (Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* 38). Mrs. James listens uneasily to Diana’s complaints about her situation and constantly avoids answering by changing the subject or simply ignoring her discourse: “How are your children?” she asks after Diana highlights her husband’s egotism. Through this character, Jackson once more exemplifies complicity, the unaware contribution to the androcentric scheme by women. Mrs James’ neglect represents one of the most powerful mechanisms to perpetuate the schemata, silence. Silencing women constitutes a patriarchal strategy which has been present since the beginning of the Western tradition and has persisted until our times. “An integral part of growing up, as a man, is learning to take control of public utterance and to silence the female of the species,” claims Professor Mary Beard in her lecture “The Public Voice of Women.” As she explains, examples of silencing can be traced to the very foundational texts which began Western culture. She alludes to Homer’s *Odyssey*, when Penelope’s son, Telemachus, prevents her mother from speaking up in communal areas and orders her to return to her room. He closes his command by reminding her of the patriarchal postulate of the male exclusive access to public discourse: “speech will be the business of men, all men, and of me most of all; for mine is the power in this household” (qtd. in Beard). Bourdieu recognises silence as a negative virtue internalised by women via the social world: “women, subjected to a labour of socialization which tends to diminish and deny them, learn the negative virtues of self-denial, resignation and silence” (*Masculine Domination* 49). This mechanism is brought up by Jackson with the purpose of denunciation. The silencing of female voices is a central theme in her demon lover stories. The fiancée in “The Daemon Lover” is silenced and ridiculed by means of laughter. The

faculty wives “lose” their voice when they become spouses. Ironically, they were heard while being students and cultivated their creativity but are later seen just as servants. In this story, Diana is silenced both by her inner voice and by her guests and husband.

Finally, we deal with the most overt enforcer agent in the story, Harry, the husband and demon lover. As Nochlin claims, as female artist “you must at the same time wrestle with inner demons of self-doubt and guilt and outer monsters of ridicule” (233). Apart from her *Angel in the House*, Diana must face her husband’s objection to her development as painter: “You just can’t stand it if Watkins wants me to do a big contract. I might get more money than you do” (146). Furthermore, he acts controlling and domineering. He stops her from showing her sketches to their guests and treats her in a patronising manner:

“What in hell do you think you’re doing?” he said.

“Going through my stuff.”

Mrs. Smallwood put back the papers she was holding. “I was looking for the sketches I did for Watkins’ she said.”

Mr. Smallwood looked down at the drink in his wife’s hand and then gave her a soft tap on the shoulder. “You go back and sit down,” he said. (145)

Harry is metaphorically killing his wife, he erases her through his lack of recognition but he also uses psychological violence by gaslighting her, a theme which has become popular in modern Gothic. He questions Diana’s recounts about her success as a painter so as to make her look irrational or insane:

“He really did call me,” Mrs. Smallwood said. “He called me on the phone, long-distance from New York, and he said he wanted me to do their whole setup this year. He certainly did call me.”

“One day while I was out, probably,” Mr. Smallwood said. “Watkins never talked to you since that trash you sent him three years ago.” (146)

His manipulative act responds to what Paige L. Sweet defines as gaslighting: “a type of psychological abuse aimed at making victims seem or feel ‘crazy,’ creating a ‘surreal’ interpersonal environment” which is connected to “the association of femininity with irrationality” (851). Jackson relies in this deep-rooted gendered belief to evoke a feeling of *himpathy* from the readership. At the end of the story, the reader will end up questioning Diana’s version of the story due to Harry’s closing statement:

“I want to show you those pictures I did for Watkins. They’re really good, I promise you.”

“You won’t be able to find them,” Mr. Smallwood said.

“I’m afraid we haven’t time,” Mrs. James said.

“Where did you put them?” Mrs. Smallwood asked her husband, and then, to Mrs. James, “It’s so early yet. You only just got here. Where are they?” she said to her husband insistently.

“I’ll tell you where they are,” Mr. Smallwood said. He walked over to the table and picked up his drink, and went on, with his back to his wife. “You tore them up,” he said, “the last time we had company.” (147)

Jackson draws on our gendered *habitus*, which comprises the unconscious tendency to doubt the woman’s word and see her as “the mad woman in the attic,” as opposed to the consideration of the masculine word as universal truth. The reader’s own internalised patriarchal scheme will grant veracity to the male statement over the feminine or at least will question it. This men’s pre-eminence, according to Bourdieu, draws from their superior position in the principle of division of the sexes but it has also been directly granted and ratified by institutions and agencies over the course of history. On the one hand, the church inculcated “the dogma of the radical inferiority of women” (*Masculine Domination* 85), which justified the imposed hierarchy within the family, where the father or husband held almost divine power. On the other hand, the state’s part is also paramount because it has the power to promote the implementation of the patriarchal rules in the domestic unit by means of its executive arms, the legal system and the educational system (*Masculine Domination* 87). These institutions have historically granted the husband the power to pronounce verdicts out of his words as well as a god-like position.

Through Diana’s discourse, Jackson criticises this masculine common trait which results in male egotism. The wife constantly expresses her distress about this deification during the uneasy conversation with Mrs James. Jackson resorts to repetition to enhance Diana’s bitter frustration over her husband’s omnipresence and supremacy: “It’s his house, his paintings, his money, his every goddamn thing” (144). Another illustrative example is the reiteration of the sentence “He thinks he’s God almighty,” which appears four times just in the introductory paragraphs of the story. In addition, the physical description of the characters reinforces the idea of men’s superiority: “She was a small woman and had to look far up at him when he stood next to her” (145).

Associated with this idea of men’s deification, Bourdieu reflects upon the idea of masculinity as nobility. The same task will be noble and difficult when performed by men, but imperceptible, easy and futile when performed by women: “As is seen in the difference between the chef and the cook, the couturier and the seamstress, a reputedly female task only has to be taken over by a man and performed outside the private sphere in order for it to be thereby ennobled and transfigured” (Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* 60). This is another

key aspect that the story elucidates, even if both partners are described as competent artists only the husband attains success and recognition. Diana's career advancement is hindered while Harry is admitted to having achieved success. "I understand he's a very fine painter', Mrs. James said vaguely" (143). Those walls blocking Diana's development stem from the feminine mystique and its negative depiction of the career woman but also from the symbolic underestimation of women's creative work: "Not only is female experience often considered less broad, less representative, less important, than male experience, but the actual content of works can be distorted according to whether the author is believed to be of one sex or the other" (Russ 42). Thus, while James' achievements have been appreciated by society, Diana needs to strive for recognition: "You go over and look at that little picture I painted. You can't see it from here," she says to her guest (144). However, despite her insistence, at the end of the story her precious work remains unseen. Mrs James ignores her encouragement to stand up and see her small picture and her husband stops her from finding her sketches. This invisibility of the woman as creator symbolically erases her, buries her alive in a rewriting of one of the most terrifying tropes in Gothic fiction.

Aside from embodying the male-centred organisation, Jackson's houses "often function as places of entrapment and incarceration for the women who visit or live in them" (Hague 82). "The Good Wife" equates marriage and home with control and isolation in a tale which is a vivid depiction of domestic terror. After their marriage, Mr Benjamin keeps Helen, his wife, locked in a room in order to make her confess to an affair invented by himself. The trope of the demon lover is already revealed within the opening line of the story: "Mr. James Benjamin poured a second cup of coffee for himself" (150). James is clearly the main exponent of the trope, yet, as it occurred in the previous stories, Mrs Benjamin is also the bearer of the patriarchal imprint and Jackson announces it with references to blue clothing and coffee: "She sometimes wore a blue bed jacket" (153); "He came toward her, toward the bed and the coffee cup and toward her blue bed jacket" (155). Finally, the house, more specifically, the room, is used as a weapon for social isolation and repression: "Although, throughout the rest of the house, she existed as a presence made up half of recollection and half of intention, here in her room she was the same as always, and not influential at all" (152), explains the narrator to illustrate James' perception of her wife's disempowerment after her confinement.

The title is revealing about the latent patriarchal precept exposed by the story, wife domestication, a concept instilled by several institutions throughout history. In the Christian

doctrine the woman was considered “responsible for moral degradation and therefore deserving to suffer to expiate all the sins of the world” (Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* 85). Husbands, in contrast, were granted divine approbation to use violence as to correct and improve the members of the family’s morals. In the Middle Ages, as Salisbury et al. claim, “discipline and the notion of obedience, underwritten by scriptural archetypes, edicts, and proverbial wisdom, rendered the meting out of household justice by the reigning household authority an accepted feature of maintaining social order” (3). Domestic chastisement was later reinforced by the laws of coverture which granted the husband the prerogative to confine his wife to the house as a form of punishment when necessary (Pike 365). As for the role of education, Bourdieu states that:

the whole of learned culture, transmitted by the educational system, (...) has never ceased, until a recent period, to convey archaic modes of thought and models (...) and an official discourse on the second sex to which theologians, jurists, doctors and moralists have all contributed and which aims to restrict the autonomy of the wife, especially as regards work, on the grounds of her 'childish' and feeble nature. (*Masculine Domination* 86)

Therefore, a long and legitimised history of patriarchal preconceptions has justified masculine violence in the family and has described women as naturally punishable and amendable. Furthermore, we can also frame the story by taking up the concept of the economy of symbolic goods, where men are pushed to become tough and unemotional and women are conceived as symbolic objects of possession. In order to meet the expectations for their gender by means of demonstration of masculinity, through their socialisation process, men are “stripped of all the devirilizing tenderness and gentleness of love” (Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* 52) and trained to be prone to using violence and act without the interference of feelings. Mr Benjamin’s demeanour illustrates this lack of sensitivity and empathy when day after day he inflicts psychological violence against his wife.

In her narration, Jackson exposes the invisible mechanisms of control and psychological violence used by the husband to subdue her new possession granted by society through marriage. Early in the story, the reader is presented with the first unnerving act of manipulation, as Mr Benjamin manages his wife’s mail: “There were three personal letters – one to himself, (...), and two for Mrs. Benjamin. The first of these, which Mr. Benjamin opened without hesitation, was from her mother” (150). Not only does he read her letters but he also chooses the texts she can have access to: “she was sometimes reading the books he brought her from the library” (153). The restriction in access to information and

communication contributes to his control and her dependence on her husband. Helen receives the information contained in her letters through her husband's words and interpretation: "She said Smitty wasn't married yet. She said how wonderful that you were married and would you and your hubby visit her soon" (153). In just three sentences, James summarises a full letter written by a friend called Joan by conveniently selecting the information he wants to pass on or hide. The letter also serves Jackson to emphasise the contrast between Joan's joyful and naïve ideal of marriage and Helen's reality. "Helen, darling, just saw your name in the paper, being married, and how *marvelous*. Do we know the lucky man?" (151).

During her captivity, James employs some of the techniques described by Hirigoyen in *Stalking the Soul*, which lead to the instauration of the dominion system in the process of gender violence. In fact, we can find examples within each of the three types of techniques: behavioural, emotional and cognitive. The strategy of isolation, both physical, in the room, and social, from family and friends, is considered a behavioural technique. Within Hirigoyen's emotional techniques, we can include James hostile attitudes, such as the avoidance of eye contact when entering the room, "'Good morning', he said, avoiding looking at her and going instead to the window" (152), as well as the establishment of a punishment-reward system. As a prize for her resignation to her new situation, "he had become easier in his mind about her, and even allowed her books and magazines, and had once brought her a dozen roses for her room" (155). The final group of techniques is called cognitive and includes strategies to undermine communication and create confusion and lack of reliability in the victim's discourse. Once more, gaslighting is used by the author for the creation of suspense. James accuses Helen of having an affair and even if she denies it, she continues blaming her for her supposed infidelity:

"Has Mr. Ferguson forgotten you, do you suppose? Or perhaps given up a difficult job?"

"I don't know Mr. Ferguson."

"So easily discouraged ..." he said. "It could hardly have been a very ... *passionate* affair." (153)

In this case, we draw on a different definition of gaslighting, what Kate Manne has coined as moral gaslighting. Manne explains it is used "when someone uses the prospect of depicting someone as morally bad in order to manipulate her beliefs" ("What is Gaslighting?"). Mr Benjamin calls on her wife's evil acts of infidelity in order to confine her. Only with the characteristically Jacksonian final twist does the reader come to know

that it is the husband who writes all the lover's letters to incriminate his wife and have a pretext to make her captive. As Hirigoyen claims, "[t]o make the situation credible, the other must be forced to behave unacceptably so that she can then be invalidated" (22). Thus, Helen is made responsible for the problem and, consequently, he remains exonerated of all wrongdoing, guilt, and suffering.

However, his perversion does not end here, since he insists on obtaining a confession: "'Just tell me,' he said beggingly. 'All you have to do is to tell me — only a few words — tell me about Ferguson, and where you met him and what —' He stopped. 'Confess,' he said sternly" (155). Fundamentally, he is on the lookout for his wife's total submission since her self-incrimination would ultimately involve the acceptance of her guilt, her husband's statements as irrefutable truths, her blind obedience and total submission. These attitudes contribute to the bestowal of power to the violent subject and the reaffirmation of their superior position, which in turn serves to feed their ego: "A narcissistic abuser grows in stature at the expense of the other person" (Hirigoyen 5).

The consequences for the victim are also covered in Jackson's story. By using hostility, sarcasm, cynicism, paradoxical messages and lies, James succeeds in silencing and paralysing his wife: "Her voice, when she spoke to him, was the one she had used for many years, although recently she had learned to keep it lower and without emotion" (153). As Hirigoyen states, the techniques for dominion eventually get the victim into a state of vulnerability, guilt, dependence and insecurity which affect her conduct and cognitive level. The demon lover in this story metaphorically kills his wife since he is successful in annihilating her identity. Her deterioration and her hopeless attitude are described in this excerpt:

Even if she had been allowed pencil and paper or had found it possible to scrawl with a lipstick upon a handkerchief, she was not capable anymore of expressions such as 'I am kept prisoner by my husband, help me' (...); there had been a period when she had tried to force her way out of the room when the door was opened, but that had been only at first. She had fallen into a sullen indifference. (154-55)

James' demeanour can be connected to the search for virility as prestige generator within the economy of symbolic goods. In order to meet the expectations for their gender, through their socialisation process, men are "stripped of all the devirilizing tenderness and gentleness of love" (Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* 52) and trained to be prone to using violence and act without the interference of feelings. Mr Benjamin's acts illustrate this lack

of sensitivity when day after day he inflicts psychological violence against his wife based on a false pretext.

Like Mr Smallwood and Mr Benjamin, Mr. Harris in “Of Course” is similarly described as manipulative. Although he is not present in the story, the dialogues eventually disclose his overbearing and forbidding attitude. His wife and son are outside their new house on moving day when a neighbour approaches them and starts a conversation. However, what the neighbour, Mr Tylor, initially sees as “*nice* people” ends up being a family who lives under the yoke of a domineering man. After an invitation to go to the cinema, Mrs Harris responds: “Mr. Harris . . . feels that movies are intellectually retarding. We do not go to movies” (180). And later, in conversation, we discover that “Mr. Harris cannot bear the radio” (181), consequently they do not own one, in fact, when he is at his mother’s, “they don’t turn the radio on while he’s there” (183). Besides, they do not read the newspaper either: “It isn’t as though we hadn’t ever seen a newspaper, not like the movies at all; Mr. Harris just feels that the newspapers are a mass degradation of taste”. As we can notice, the wife speaks through her husband’s words, the subject of her responses is not her but always Mr Harris. Jackson uses the husband as the grammatical subject in Mrs Harris’ statements to accentuate the woman’s erasure. Through this linguistic nullification, her persona is cancelled and her voice silenced.

In this tale, Jackson uses the demon lover to bring up once more the topic of the power imbalance in the family. As we have seen earlier, men’s discourse is considered more valid and truthful than women’s words. In the microcosm of the family, this applies to the father’s statements. As Bourdieu claims, “[t]he words of the father have a magical effect of constitution” (*Masculine Domination* 71). In this story, we learn that Mr Harris’ words are verdicts for her wife. She makes his opinions her own: “You really never need to read a newspaper, you know,” she said, looking around anxiously at Mrs. Tylor” (182). Yet, her anxiety reveals a disturbing reality. By describing her nervousness, Jackson lets us know that Mrs Harris is not completely convinced of her own words, she does not speak with determination. The reader understands that she and Mr Harris’ mother just accept his ideas and strict requirements because he is the man in the house, he has inherited that power through his gender.

As for the psychological reading of the tale, we will consider Hirigoyen’s explanation for the imposition of power:

Power is grasped with words: to give the impression of knowing better and possessing a truth: *the truth*. The abuser's conversation sums up declared assertions that seem universally true. The abuser "knows" he's right and tries to convert the other by forcing her to accept his statements. (111-12)

Although we do not witness the husband's strategies to impose his power, the wife's blind acceptance of his "truths" let us know that he fits in with Hirigoyen's description of the narcissistic abuser.

Added to this abusive dynamic, the tale unveils another disturbing social behaviour. Jackson shows that the neighbour eventually understands the gravity of the problem. After knowing about the husband's control on the access to external information, Mrs Tylor's realisation is described as follows: "Mrs. Tylor recognized immediately the faint nervous feeling that was tagging her; it was the way she felt when she was irrevocably connected with something dangerously out of control: her car, for instance, on an icy street, or the time on Virginia's roller skates..." (182). The irony contained in the story lies in the fact that the neighbour just keeps responding approvingly even though she clearly identifies the danger behind Mrs Harris' discourse:

"Where is Mr. Harris now?"

"At his mother's," Mrs. Harris said. "He always stays there when we move."

"Of course," Mrs. Tylor said, feeling as though she had been saying nothing else all morning. (183)

This lack of intervention stems from the prospect of considering the familial unit as an inviolable private space. Violence against women has been long viewed as a private matter whose resolution was the victim's responsibility. Not until recently has it been understood as a social phenomenon which must be institutionally addressed and fought by everyone: "Although the 1970s Battered Women's Movement worked to change domestic violence laws, practices of the 1980s still reflected the definition of domestic violence as a private issue" (Garcia 204). Jackson's "Of Course" illustrates that lack of intervention which has persisted over the centuries.

As we have seen, all the stories in this section are riddled with allusions to different forms of symbolic violence on married women. In "Mrs. Spenser and The Oberons," the demon lover trope, disclosed thorough the protagonist's family name, can be linked to complicity by means of two characteristic Jacksonian themes: compulsive dedication to household chores and self-isolation. The three stories about the faculty wife similarly revolve around women's complicity with the patriarchal social order in which married men's sexual

affairs with younger women are accepted as *doxa*. Whereas in the previous stories symbolic violence appears in the form of unaware blind complicity, Diana Smallwood, in “The Trouble with my Husband,” does identify signs of oppression and speaks out. However, she is silenced by different agents including herself. Those silencing agents represent symbolic violence as a mechanism for the maintenance of masculine domination. Finally, “The Good Wife” and “Of Course” expose one of the direct consequences prompted by the symbolic patriarchal order, the exertion of psychological violence on the wife, her manipulation, isolation, control and metaphorical killing.

As explained above, the tales about unmarried women portray identifiable Female Gothic conventions. Allusions to the devil were made explicit and characteristic elements of the Gothic, such as the mansion, the isolated enclave, the ghosts, the witch and mirrors are used to denounce female concerns. In contrast, the stories in this section show the type of disturbing undercurrents which Joshi and Murphy detected in Jackson’s domestic humorous sketches. The dialogues are laden with sinister irony and apparently innocuous statements reveal a connection to different forms of manipulation and control by the husbands. The narration provokes high doses of uneasiness and incertitude in the reader, which creates a Gothic atmosphere of suspense and fear. Through these Gothic undercurrents, Jackson artfully built family scenes which hide subtle messages of denunciation of the patriarchal schemes and the violence suffered by women via symbolic and psychological channels. Hence, she offers a counternarrative to the ideal of domesticity and the placid façade of middle-class life. The suburban house is not comforting anymore and the cult of femininity is undermined.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

### 4.1. Unhappy Endings

As we have seen in the stories analysed, all the protagonists lose out. Single women feel vulnerable for living outside the feminine mystique and married women struggle with the discrepancy that they have found between the ideal image they try to conform with and the reality of the housewife. Both positions hamper women's full personal development and lead to fragmentation, frustration and anxiety. In any event, they suffer in silence the consequences of violence. The endings picture women in distress, condemned to live in resignation regardless of their desires.

The protagonist of "The Daemon Lover," not by choice but due to her impossibility to marry, remains outside of the symbolic order, in a constant state of anxiety. Even though she hears the voice of her fiancé across the door of the apartment, the door is never opened: "She came back many times, every day for the first week. She came on her way to work, in the mornings; in the evenings, on her way to dinner alone, but no matter how often or how firmly she knocked, no one ever came to the door" (25). At the end of the story, she remains single and struggling through psychological damage living through societal punishment. For Phyllis, Paula and Margaret, the story ends differently. They create a union with a man, but this male figure is demonic and synonym with entrapment. By closing the stories with unhappy endings, Jackson separates from the Radcliffean Gothic where marriage was positively depicted and equates the drastic ending of the original ballad of the demon lover, where the spouse is destined to living in hell, to the housewife experience marked by disintegration of the self.

If we turn our gaze to the spouses, we can witness the consequences of the union with the trickster figure. The characters of Mrs Spencer, the faculty wives and Mrs Smallwood represent women who have adhered to the prescriptive roles of the feminine mystique. As a consequence they live for the others, their husband and children, and play the role of the guarantor of the family prestige. As readers, we understand that they suffer from the problem that has no name; nevertheless, their *habitus* is rooted in patriarchal precepts which dictate that they must persist in their job as housewives. Apart from that Angel in the House who asserts themselves in their role, the contexts play a key part in the perpetuation of the system. Thus, Jackson reveals the influence of both people and spaces in keeping the machine

working. As a consequence, they eventually resign themselves to different forms of symbolic and psychological violence.

If the previous wives were symbolically confined by the impositions of their role, Helen, in “The Good Wife,” has been literally imprisoned in her own house and refuses to yield to her husband’s petition. She prefers to stick to the truth and remain captive: “I don’t know anyone named Ferguson. I never loved anyone in my life. I never had any affairs. I have nothing to confess” (155). Helen and Mrs Harris, in “Of Course,” are the target of their husbands’ manipulation. In a world where wives have been historically depicted as their husband’s property, Mr Benjamin and Mr Harris do not settle for just owning their wives’ bodies, they want to seize their minds in a quest for complete control and domination. Hence, these women remain trapped in a relationship where their self-esteem is undermined and their identity shattered.

According to Bonikowski, in Jackson’s stories, the demon lover offers the choice between two blind alleys: “either conform to a passive position within rigidly defined gender roles or be abjected into a permanent state of anxiety, insecurity, and even madness outside of the symbolic order” (66). The stories analysed illustrate this stalemate that Jackson chose to reflect in her Female Gothic, a situation which captures the mood of a period where the outburst of feminism and the first emancipatory legislation was about to come. Therefore, this lack of victory over oppression must be interpreted as part of her social commentary on the dead-end-street lives which many women of her background confronted.

## **4.2. Final Conclusion and Further Research**

Jackson’s narrative, by means of her own Female Gothic, makes the reader wonder about the cause of anxiety of her heroines in distress and, by paying attention to the numerous messages she delivers through dialogues and narration, a whole picture of symbolic elements flourishes and makes us reflect about the functioning of the patriarchal symbolic order. Therefore, her literature is key not only because those ideas she whispers are illuminating but also because it helps us remove blindfolds and dissent from the hegemonic androcentric schemes which constitute our *habitus*.

Shirley Jackson was a pioneer in opening the world of literature to a wide and complex range of women’s issues. In her portrayal of wives’ daily routine, she contributed to representing a reality largely ignored. As Virginia Woolf explained in *A Room of One's*

*Own*, “For all the dinners are cooked; the plates and cups washed; the children sent to school and gone out into the world. Nothing remains of it all. All has vanished. No biography or history has a word to say about it. And the novels, without meaning to, inevitably lie.” As in response to Woolf’s lament, Jackson devoted much of her work to illustrating the American wives’ housework, mental workload and responsibilities as bearers of the familial prestige as well as expounding the preoccupations and malaise resulting from their role in society and their experience as women. As Franklin wrote, “her body of work constitutes nothing less than the secret history of American women of her era” (6).

She used her demon lover stories to condemn the nightmarish situation that women of the 40s and 50s were disciplined to embrace as ideal and even fulfilling. In doing so, she expanded the Gothic conventions to include that ubiquitous symbolic menace which her characters experience both in their entourage and within themselves. She rewrote the Gothic tropes by complicating the good/bad formula. The heroine in distress is now an accomplice in her own submission, marriage with the demon is not enforced but desired notwithstanding its ominous nature and what persecutes women is not older men but patriarchal impositions. Jackson used the Female Gothic as a symbolic mode to express those fears and frustrations that she could not articulate more rationally in a time where conceptual categorisations of violence against women had not been established. Thus, by drawing on the patriarchal symbolic system and the androcentric vision, she offered an anticipatory vision of what Freidan and Bourdieu later revealed and theorised in their works.

This research has applied the theoretical paradigm of symbolic and psychological violence to the analysis of Jackson’s short stories within the framework of the Female Gothic and provides a new perspective to approach the social critique of the patriarchal society of her times. Furthermore, it offers deeper commentary on the position of women in connection with the consequences of the patriarchal social order and the forms of symbolic violence which serve to maintain such system of oppression. In the previous stories, the diabolic presence has been linked to the deceptive nature of societal directives which push single women towards marriage but also as women’s internalisation of those mandates in their *habitus*. Thus, the novelty in Jackson’s exposure of the oppression is that women are not portrayed as mere victims of masculine domination but as contributors to their own submission. As for married women, James Harris and his other forms equate to different manifestations of symbolic and psychological violence which serve to keep the patriarchal wheels turning. Finally, the demon lover trope also portrays the way society functions as

enforcer of patriarchal dictates by means of mockery, belittling, disregard, denigration, silencing, complicity, condescension, value judgements, social pressure and even metaphorical killing or live burial through erasure. The demon lover trope has been framed within Jackson's particular use of the Female Gothic which deals with the uncanny threat of marriage, the undercurrents which lie behind marital relationships and the walls that circumscribe both single and married women's worlds in literal and metaphorical senses.

The invisible mechanisms of the patriarchal society and the dynamics of domestic violence are still difficult to recognise or denounce due to their internalisation and the idea of privacy that surrounds the household. This study has illustrated different forms of symbolic and psychological violence in a selection of short stories to render those concepts easier to understand and recognise, which might result in a gradual consciousness-raising process and eventual participation in the struggle against these forms of inequalities and injustice. Bourdieu, in his 1996 lecture entitled "Masculine Domination Revisited," called for a symbolic revolution and considered it the key to a genuine gender revolution for it would allow "to encompass not only an overthrow of order of things, of material structures, but also a mental upheaval, transformation of the categories of perception that lead us to collude with the perpetuation of the existing social order" (201). The work of Shirley Jackson contains an incisive social critique whose careful reading contributes to that mental upheaval that Bourdieu wished for.

With regard to further research, it may be fruitful to undertake further study on the representation of symbolic and psychological violence in the works of authors who have dealt with these issues, such as Alice Munro and Margaret Atwood. The same aim could be also applied to the comparative analysis of symbolic violence linked to the demon lover figure between Jackson's representations and its treatment in Elizabeth Bowen's tale "The Demon Lover," Sylvia Plath's poem "On Looking into the Eyes of a Demon Lover" or Carol Joyce's short story "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Finally, Shirley Jackson's uncanny domestic themes can also be compared with writers who have brought up the housewife's routine in their works. Cases in point are Virginia Woolf, Sue Kaufman, Clarice Lispector, Carmen Laforet and Annie Ernaux.

Shirley Jackson could also be studied in connection with the novel subgenre called Domestic Noir or even proposed as one of its forerunners. As the novelist Julia Crouch defines it:

Domestic Noir takes place primarily in homes and workplaces, concerns itself largely (but not exclusively) with the female experience, is based around relationships and takes as its base a broadly feminist view that the domestic sphere is a challenging and sometimes dangerous prospect for its inhabitants. (qtd. in Joyce 12)

The term Domestic Noir was coined by Crouch in 2013 and is mostly concerned with dark secrets lurking in modern young families, families who represent the farce of perfection according to social standards. Jackson's Gothic depiction of marriage and family as well as her subversion of the idea of the home as safe and cosy functions as antecedent of this new genre about ominous twisted relationships and troubled home lives. Therefore, Jackson's influence could be studied in connection with novels such as *Big Little Lies* (Liane Moriarty), *The Girl on the Train* (Paula Hawkins), *Gone Girl* (Gillian Flynn) and *Behind Closed Doors* (B A Paris), but also with series like *The Undoing*, *Angela Black* or *Deadwater Fell*.

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