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**The Representation of Gender in the Modern British
Gothic Novel. The Case Study of *Rebecca* by Daphne du
Maurier (1938)**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER IN CIVILIZATION AND
LITERATURE.**

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Academic Year: 2022/2023

Abstract

The study contributes to the in-depth exploration of gender representation in British Gothic literature., focusing on *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier (1938). The study aims to discern how gender dynamics are portrayed in the novel within the context of late nineteenth and twentieth-century Britain. The research adopts a descriptive, analytical, and qualitative approach. The findings reveal the novel's reflection of prevailing societal norms and values, exemplified through the struggles and triumphs of its female protagonist.

Keywords: female protagonist; gender; Gothic; socio-cultural norm; stereotype.

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Dedication

To my family and my beloved friends, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been the driving force behind my academic journey.

Acknowledgements

Sincere appreciation is expressed to Supervisor Abdelkader Kourdourli for his expert guidance, unwavering support, and invaluable inspiration throughout the course of this academic endeavour.

General Introduction

In the introduction to 'Gender Represented in the Gothic Novel' (2017), Asmat Nabi writes:

The presence of female identity is essential to Gothic literature. Presenting women in a particular light can often have a profound effect upon a text, completely altering a reader's interpretation . . . women are presented as objects of desire, maternal figures . . . and are often defined by their biological roles. But it is the transition between typecasts that is particularly interesting. . . . There are two main female roles within Gothic literature; the 'predator' and the 'victim'. The first is dangerous yet powerfully attractive; she helps portray the pain/pleasure paradox that has come to be synonymous with Gothic literature. (73)

The problem that is addressed in this dissertation is the representation of gender in Daphne du Maurier's novel *Rebecca* (1938) and its reflection of British society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The study employs a descriptive, analytical, and qualitative approach. The dissertation examines the role of the main female character in the novel, Rebecca, in challenging traditional gender conventions and defying the established order. This research intends to add valuable insights to gender studies and literary analysis within the framework of British Gothic literature.

In this study, the phrase 'gender dynamics' refers to the interactions between individuals and their environments, as defined by Blackstone in *Gender Roles and Society* (335). The editors of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* define British Gothic literature as European Romantic pseudo-mediaeval fiction with a strong element of mystery and fear. As for 'gender

stereotypes', Ellemers claims that the phrase has an implicit impact on our expectations of specific men and women's qualities, priorities, and needs, as well as the standards to which we hold them (*Gender Stereotypes*, 279).

Motivated by a personal interest in the interaction of gender and literature, this study aims to shed light on the ageless and intriguing themes contained in *Rebecca* that are related to the issue of gender. This work contributes to the field of specialization by presenting a comprehensive investigation of the novel's socio-cultural reflections and its ongoing significance in modern discourse by methodically examining gender representation within British Gothic literature.

To conduct this research, three main questions are asked. First, how does *Rebecca* portray gender dynamics within the context of late nineteenth and twentieth-century Britain? Second, why do certain characters in the novel conform to or challenge societal norms and expectations? Third, how do progressive identities within *Rebecca* exemplify the complexities of gender representation in British Gothic literature?

Works such as Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black* (1983) provide a classic example of female Gothic horror. It successfully exploits well-known Gothic concepts and tropes that aficionados of the genre have already embraced, such as loneliness, gloominess, vengeance, death, the afterlife, the blending of reality and fantasy. Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) presents a fascinating contrast between the mother's use of her husband's gun to kill her daughter's husband and the presence of empowered female characters. While the story contains elements reinforcing traditional gender roles, the mother figure emerges as a strong and decisive protagonist. The unnamed girl, though seemingly resigned to her fate, subtly challenges her husband's restrictions. This portrayal of female agency within societal norms adds depth to the story's themes. The narrative blends themes of patriarchal conventions and female

empowerment, making it a captivating exploration of complex relationships and societal dynamics. Major feminist works, such as Ellen Moers' *Literary Women* (1976) develops the notion of female gothic, referring to Gothic novels authored by women. Sandra M. Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) investigate how women are portrayed in literature, particularly the Gothic, challenging traditional views of femininity and passivity. An influential Master's dissertation by Adel Bahloul and Rania Boudjabeur from the University of Tebessa, and which is entitled *Women's Agency and the Gothic Tradition: Subverting Staid Representations of Gender. A Case Study: Angela Carter's 'The Magic Toyshop'* (2021) provides vital insights regarding gender representation in Gothic novels. The study examines how the female heroine opposes patriarchal standards, highlighting women's agency in subverting typical gender depictions in the Gothic tradition. Another BA dissertation by Sarah Salman (2020) entitled *The Popularity of the Feminine Monster: The Malleability of the Female Gothic in Daphne Du Maurier's 'Rebecca', 'The Birds', and 'Don't Look Now'* from the University of Michigan remains important to the current study. Compared to the studies above-mentioned, the current study contributes to the corpora of literature by offering a unique and nuanced examination of gender portrayal in Gothic literature, using *Rebecca* as a relevant case study. The study situates *Rebecca* within the larger Gothic tradition, contributing to a better understanding of gender dynamics in the genre. The analysis underlines the relevance of the ever-evolving Gothic genre in challenging established gender standards, as well as the continuing value of this literary legacy in challenging societal concepts of masculinity and femininity. The analysis of the novel in this study goes into the complexities of gender representation within this specific novel, by reducing the scope to a single literary work, allowing for a more comprehensive and concentrated examination.

This dissertation will be divided into three chapters. each serving as a critical building block for our analysis. Chapter one establishes a critical foundation by exploring 19th-century

British gender inequality and the societal standards and constraints imposed on women. This chapter provides essential historical context for understanding gender portrayal in literature.

Chapter two emphasizes the importance of Gothic novels in British literature, analyzing gender dynamics through an interdisciplinary lens that combines literary criticism and sociology. We also delve into characters' psychological profiles to offer scholarly insights into literary gender dynamics.

Chapter three examines character complexities and their impact on gender portrayal, utilizing a psychoanalytic lens to uncover deep psychological nuances in character behavior and intentions. Our central focus here is on how the character of Rebecca challenges established gender norms within literature.

Chapter I

**The Status of British Women during the Late Nineteenth
and the Twentieth Centuries**

Introduction

In the nineteenth century, British women had very few opportunities in many areas, including education, work, and elections. Victorian women were seen as servants and their rights were limited. In light of this, this chapter will document the history of women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Britain. In addition, it will describe British women's condition, and how they overcame obstacles and achieved success. More specifically, this chapter will explain the radical change in women's condition, from the lowest class of human beings to an integral part of their society in the political, social, and economic fields. Equally, this chapter will emphasize how women influenced society by demonstrating that they were capable of developing their country in the same way that men did. It will also demonstrate that being a woman does not imply inferiority. Thus, the following section will explore the condition of women in twentieth-century Britain and the specific challenges they faced.

1. Women's Condition in Twentieth-Century Britain

The suffrage movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focused on women's rights. This resulted in an increase in interest in women's condition. In the 1930s, social historians' focus shifted away from military and political events to examining the lives of individuals. They were more interested in long-term developments that had more to do with social, economic, and intellectual life rather than public and political life. This, however, was

not a focus on the lives of women as women. It was not just women's history, but the history of ordinary people, including women.

In history, generally, women have had fewer legal and career rights than men. Wifehood and motherhood were regarded as women's most significant professions. However, in the twentieth century, women in most nations gained the right to vote and got more educational and employment opportunities. For instance, women qualified for the franchise and claimed citizenship before the right to vote was granted to some women in 1918. This illustrates how British women were able to realise their aspirations for citizenship. Without acknowledging the numerous civil disabilities women faced along the way, we cannot comprehend their participation in politics. To achieve full citizenship, women's rights over their own bodies were crucial. The first longstanding women's suffrage societies were founded in the late nineteenth century, and suffragists simultaneously campaigned for women's inalienable rights. The fight of British women for their right continued into the twentieth century.

It is critical to see the links between the socio-economic and political sectors of life to understand the roles and experiences of British women. Employment, for example, encompasses the world of paid work outside the house, but the specific challenges inside work and the position of women in society can only be completely comprehended in the context of family issues. These family difficulties include unpaid domestic work and views toward family earnings, which frequently explain why equal pay is not a reality for many women in Europe. Similarly, the absence of political representation for women in many European nations today can only be completely appreciated in the context of other aspects of women's lives, such as education, cultural role models, family life, and so on.

In twentieth-century Britain, women already controlled fertility, ensured equal access to education, and cemented their status as equal citizens. Opportunities for women have expanded

in many areas, but traditional gender stereotypes, which argue that women's primary role lies within the home, remain influential, and men maintain their dominant role in society. The history of women in the early twentieth century can be seen through this interplay of change and continuation. Finally, it is a matter of perspective whether to emphasise optimism and highlight the clear achievements of women across the century, or to be more sceptic and emphasize persistent bias and lack of true gender equality. (Noakes14)

For example, the introduction of modern contraceptives and the legalisation of abortion in 1968 facilitated control of fertility. Their commitment was associated with better education, better job opportunities, and a growing denunciation of women's autonomy. Young adults with higher qualifications were more likely to delay or avoid childbearing than women and men with fewer qualifications (Kneale and Joshi 1935-1968). This engendered the independence of British women, and affected their choices about having children. Consequently, it transformed their association with education and employment.

British Women and Work

In this section, the issues of a paid job, education, and training are addressed. The link to family life is especially significant because much of women's employment is 'hidden' and underpaid within the family. Work-family separation is also not a reality for many women, nor has it been at various moments in history. On the contrary, many women work for pay within their homes, such as childcare and domestic labour, which can be 'invisible'. Only by seeing women's work in the context of family life can we completely comprehend the double burden that many women bear (producing outside the home, caring, and reproducing within the home). Furthermore, only by comprehending the paradoxical positions that women frequently play can we comprehend and explain problematic attitudes toward topics such as equal pay and equal chances. (Rowbotham 3)

The income effect diminished as acceptance of women's work, especially by husbands, increased. At the same time, the substitution effect has increased significantly. Part-time work is one of the reasons why the substitution effect is high. Although the working week was greatly reduced between the 1900s and the 1930s, part-time jobs were not common (Goldin 741-756). Lack of hourly and daily flexibility limited the elasticity of substitution. As women's real wages rise, there is more room for adjustment in labour force participation than in hours worked. The result can be a lower percentage of both hours and employment than if working hours (and days) were more flexible. The substitution effect increased with the introduction of scheduled part-time work in the 1940s and its widespread use in the 1950s. The near-total uptake of modern household electrical technologies such as refrigerators and washing machines and the pre-deployment of basic amenities such as electricity, water, and flush toilets are all enhancing factors (Greenwood et al. 109). The low prices of these devices have helped reduce women's reserve wages while increasing the elasticity of the female aggregate labour supply function.

During the industrialization of most European countries, the image of the 'ideal' woman emerged as being inside the home, caring and devoted. This idea might lead to misunderstandings and fallacies regarding women's work. Despite the assumption that a woman's place is in the house, over one-third of the female population in Britain was in paid work around the turn of the century. (Brinley 34)

Working women in France, for example, never fell below one-third of the female population during the twentieth century (Offen 85). Evidence demonstrating the real volume and type of women's work, as well as existing attitudes, beliefs, and values must be used. The two are frequently contradictory. For example, during the postwar economic boom in Western Europe, women were urged to return home. At the time, the ideal woman was a caregiver, mother, and wife. At the same time, a labour shortage prompted campaigns to bring women,

particularly married women, into the world of paid work. Women were subjected to propaganda to get them to work while also being subjected to propaganda to keep them at home.

Women's work throughout history reveals society's attitudes, beliefs, and values toward women at different points in time. These assumptions about women's nature differ from those of men and are deeply rooted and unexamined. As a result, the majority of women's work is domestic, light industry, caring positions like nurse and teacher, and administration. This social attitude often hinders change and denies women equal opportunities to succeed in the workplace.

Moreover, it is necessary to identify and analyse the causes of changes in the workplace. In spite of the challenges women face when trying to organise political and industrial action, direct action and campaigning have achieved many gains for women at work. Women's job is frequently part-time, transitory, flexible, and of lesser rank. All of these factors make it more difficult for women to band together in pursuit of similar goals. Additionally, accomplishments in the workplace by and for women should be a source of encouragement and reason for celebration (Offen 90). Therefore, it is important to examine the broader economic and social contexts in which women's labour force participation evolved.

Women and Economy

The Industrial Revolution in Britain marked the beginning of a formalised division between 'work' and 'home'. Factories, mills, and mines expanded rapidly, resulting in low wages and imposed long working hours in often hazardous working conditions. Several pieces of legislation were enacted during the nineteenth century to exclude women from such occupations (e. g., the Mines and Collieries Act of 1842) or to limit the number of hours worked (e.g. the Factories Act of 1848). It is debatable whether the goal was the philanthropic

improvement of women's working conditions, increasing women's dependency on men, or a Victorian attempt to improve the morals of the working classes (Walby 27; Humphries 42).

In her book *Women and Economics*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman states that humans are the only animal in which the female must rely on the male for existence, which is why she urges women to change their cultural identities and become independent. Besides, women who make sacrifices to be nurturers and educators raise better children. Gilman believes that people can help with or perhaps complete these chores more efficiently. She is among the first to advocate for the professionalisation of housework, pushing women to engage housekeepers and cooks to relieve them of household responsibilities. This would enable women to enter the labour force and live a more global existence. (317)

In her work, Gilman contends that while women should have the option to pursue a home and family life, they should not be exclusively responsible for these areas. According to Gilman, such adjustments can lead to improved outcomes in motherhood, fatherhood, infant and childhood development, and nutrition (1970). Moreover, she asserts that these changes can result in better housing and, ultimately, a better society. Gilman's argument highlights the need to rethink gender roles and responsibilities, suggesting that a more equitable distribution of labour in the home can have positive social and economic implications.

During the Victorian era, Britain experienced significant economic and technological advancements that transformed it from a traditional culture to an industrialized nation. This period of growth and prosperity was driven by the use of iron, new sources of energy, and factory systems that produced machinery to increase output. The telecommunications sector, including railways and telegraph systems, facilitated business growth and reduced distances between cities, further contributing to Britain's economic success (Mitchell 45). These developments positioned Britain as the world's leading industrial power, with vast imports and

exports and a vast empire that granted it global influence and power. This period is widely regarded as the Gate of Wealth, marking a peak in Britain's economic and political power.

The result was a reduction in women's wage-earning capacity and reinforcement of occupational sex segregation. It also led to an increase in the number of women entering domestic service. Paid employment was not acceptable for married middle-class women whose husbands were expected to earn enough to support a family at the turn of the twentieth century. A woman's place, at least in the middle classes, was in the home, with only a few areas of paid work acceptable for women: teaching, nursing, and being a governess. These jobs, along with their unpaid charitable activities, can be viewed as a social version of homemaking and an extension of the 'Ideal of Domesticity'. (Law 249-399)

Many of the working classes also shared these aspirations for a single (male) breadwinner earning a 'family wage'. However, for most working-class women, the situation was very different, and there was frequently no way out of heavy domestic and paid labour. Debates raged about the impact of women's work on high infant mortality rates and the poor physical health of working-class children (Seccombe 53-76). During this time, the majority of non-manual occupations had a bar that required women to resign from their jobs upon marriage.

This was especially popular during the Depression of the 1930s and remained in use in the Civil Service until 1946 and in the Post Office until 1963 (Field 129-181). In both the 1914-18 and the 1939-45 world wars these restrictions on women's employment were removed. British women were encouraged to take on traditionally male-dominated jobs such as shipbuilding, munitions manufacturing, public transportation, and agriculture. Day nurseries were quickly established to care for the children of female workers (Dale and Joshi 27-46). The impact of women's participation in the workforce during the World Wars extended beyond the

economic sphere, and contributed to significant changes in societal attitudes towards women's roles in politics and in the home.

Women and Politics, and Sexual Roles

Historically, women have taken up low-paying jobs, but the nineteenth century seems to have created a different problem. In the United Kingdom, women's wage levels have fallen relative to men's (Feinstein). Women lost some employment opportunities in agriculture, and seasonal day labourers' wages fell from more than 30% of their men's wages to less than 10% of women's wages (Pinchbeck 37).

In the United Kingdom, women faced numerous challenges at the turn of the twentieth century. Women gained influence in social and political life as a result of their participation in suffrage and other women's movements, as well as their right to vote. Women achieved a large number of positions in local parties and committees, but female members were very scarce in positions of leadership in national committees or parliament. Therefore, they were mostly dependent on male support. The discussion about different recruitment practices began with the second wave of feminism, and some progress has been made since then. The legislation has been updated, and more women are participating in politics, but the process has been excruciatingly slow and laborious.

In the 1980s and 1990s, parties tried more actively to find different methods to facilitate women's participation in politics. Labour has been more successful in promoting women, and when the Labour Party took power in 1997, records were broken in terms of the number of women elected (18%), but it remains low in the European context. Women are better represented at the local level of Local Councils (26%) and in the European Parliament (24%), but their share is not excessive. Furthermore, the same situation can be observed in

administration, where women, despite all of this, generally work at the lowest levels of the hierarchy.

It appears strange that in such a developed country, the issue of equality remains a major concern. Women were granted the right to vote as early as 1918, but progress has been uneven since then. Although women's positions in society and politics have grown in recent years, there is still much work to be done to achieve true equality for women. In comparison to other European countries, the number of women in politics has been relatively low, and women are also severely under-represented in leadership positions in the private sector.

In the 1960s, women became aware of their oppression, social attitudes toward women changed, and this sense of injustice spread throughout society. This underpinned the most significant flowering of the British women's movement since the suffrage struggles before 1914. Women's Liberation Movement (WLM). Instead of seeking equality with men, the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) sought to transform the male-dominated social system which it saw as the root of women's oppression. The result was a somewhat persuasive reform movement that culminated in several social experiments and, most importantly, a wave of change affecting the status of women since the 1920s (Smith 14). This movement aimed to transform the patriarchal social system, rather than just achieve equality with men. As a result, the movement had a compelling influence on the status of women in Britain, leading to significant changes in their position and roles across different areas of British society.

Women in British Society

To become essential members of society, women had to overcome numerous issues, obstacles, and barriers. In the past, women had no rights. They were isolated, neglected, and mistreated by men. However, a woman's aspirations, dreams, and abilities transformed her

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position in society not simply as a daughter, wife, or mother, but as a regular citizen with regular rights and responsibilities over time.

The status of women in the nineteenth century is frequently viewed as a disparity between Britain's national power and wealth, considering its appalling social conditions. Women faced numerous challenges as a result of society's shared vision of the ideal woman. During the reign of Victoria, women were denied their rights, abused, and oppressed as a result of the policy that included discriminatory laws.

However, women played stereotypical roles in British society at the turn of the twentieth century. If they were married, they stayed at home to care for their children while their husbands worked and earned a weekly wage. If they were single, they worked in jobs that required some form of service, such as waitressing or cooking.

Women of strong character began to take up previously forbidden professions. They became writers, journalists, and nurses. As factory workers in industrial areas, they began to gain financial freedom at a low level: the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 and 1892 abolished the husband's authority over his wife's finances. But after World War I, political turmoil ensued when a 1918 law gave women over the age of 30 the right to vote. Women over 21 had to wait until 1939. (Dickens 3)

Changes in women's social roles occurred as important members, and they opened up professions that were previously unavailable. They worked as writers, journalists, nurses, and teachers in society. As factory workers in industrial areas, they also began to gain independence. Thus, the acts of 1882 and 1892 granted women the right to reclaim their property and allowed women over the age of 30 to vote (Dickens 3). In the political, economic, and social aspects of life that regimented life, women relocated their place in society

(www.historylearningsite.co.uk) In consequence, British women experienced a significant transformation in their historical role, marked by their growing participation and influence in shaping various aspects of the nation's development, and breaking away from the traditional gender roles that had previously confined them.

The Historical Role of British Women

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the women's rights movements focused on the right to vote and gain equal rights with men. This led to a new interest in women's history in the 1960s when historians began exploring their lives in a more in-depth way. This new way of thinking aimed to bring about change in political institutions that had historically been biased against women. (Wiesner [page missing](#))

During the 1960s, feminist historians began to study the history of women in different ways. This involved looking at women's experiences in the past, rather than just focusing on men's experiences. This led to more knowledge about the way women were different in the past. During the First World War, many women volunteered to become nurses or work in war-related jobs. However, it was during the Second World War that the turning point for women in warfare occurred, as the urgent need for nurses became paramount.

During the First World War, women played a crucial role in supporting the military effort, despite their contributions being initially undervalued in comparison to those of men. However, as the conflict progressed, women's exceptional efforts became increasingly recognized. Nursing was the main area of involvement for women, and many young single women volunteered for the Voluntary Aid Detachment or the British Red Cross. There were a few cases of women who enlisted to fight in the war, but most women did important work behind the scenes. Due to the large number of men enlisting in the war, more and more

important roles were given to women, including on the railways, as police officers, factory workers, and munitions operatives. (<https://www.thehistorypress.co.uk>)

Among the upper classes, women also worked to support the war effort by knitting uniforms, raising money for charities, and writing letters to soldiers in the trenches. This newfound freedom for many women was a sign of a larger change happening in society: the suffragette movement was growing and, by 1914, women were making significant progress in Britain. Women's lives would change for the better forever.

Since the Second World War, women have played a much bigger role in the military. In 1945, millions of women were working to supply the military with aircraft, ships, and ammunition. Some women even volunteered to join the military, and 75% of these women were volunteers. Women have different roles in the military, including pilots, codebreakers, and lumberjills. All of these roles are very important in helping the country win the war. 640,000 women served in the military during the Second World War (Bourne 38). Women played a big role in helping win World War II, but they were mostly relegated to administrative and non-combat roles. It was not until 2016 that they were allowed to serve in Ground Close Combat roles. In addition, feminist pressure on existing unions and the formation of separate women's unions threatened to destabilise the all-male unions. The female membership, which increased from 357,000 in 1914 to over one million in 1918, represented 60% increase in women joining the unions. (Fernandez 3)

Nevertheless, the conflict did not have an impact on women's salaries. During the wartime period, employers found ways to avoid complying with equal pay legislation by hiring several women to take the place of one man or by splitting skilled tasks into various less skilled categories. Therefore, women could be employed at lower rates without directly 'replacing'

men. By 1931, weekly wages for women in many industries had reverted to pre-conflict levels, and they were only half of what men earned.

Finally, some historians argue that the conflict played a crucial role in securing the right to vote for women over the age of 30 who owned property, which was granted in 1918. However, women over the age of 21 had to wait until 1928 before they were given the right to vote. In 1918, the right to vote was granted to 8.5 million women, accounting for 40% of the total female population. By 1928, this number had increased to 15 million, which constituted 53% of all women. This development also paved the way for other progressions in women's rights, such as the emergence of feminist writers who made significant contributions to literature. (<https://www.bl.uk>)

Feminist Writers' Impact on Literature

Women feminist writers in Britain during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries played a crucial role in shaping literature, particularly by challenging patriarchal norms prevalent at the time. These writers, predominantly women, used their writings as a tool to criticize the status quo, and advocate for women's rights. Their work, which included complex female characters and themes such as women's suffrage and gender inequality, reflected women's experiences, and paved the way for future generations of female writers. (Pankhurst 517)

During the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, British feminist writers made significant contributions to literature and society by addressing the social, political, and economic conditions faced by women. One of the most prominent feminist writers of the period was Virginia Woolf, whose works such as *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938) challenged the patriarchal structures of British society and advocated women's rights (Showalter 42). Another notable feminist writer was Doris Lessing, who explored issues related

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to gender, race, and class in her novels such as *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973) (Tickell 102). British feminist writers also used their works to shed light on the lived experiences of women during this period. For instance, Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) presented a subversive take on traditional fairy tales, examining issues related to female sexuality and desire (Mulvey-Roberts 147). Similarly, Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) explored the intersection of religion, sexuality, and gender identity through the lens of a young woman growing up in a conservative Christian community (Holmes 193). These British feminist writers and their works played a crucial role in raising awareness of the struggles faced by women in British society during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They also contributed to the ongoing struggle for gender equality and social justice. Their works continue to be studied and appreciated today for their exploration of important social and political issues, as well as their enduring themes of agency, identity, and resistance.

The impact of these feminist writers on literature was significant as they expanded the scope of literature by introducing new and previously taboo themes and ideas, challenging traditional gender roles, and redefining the concept of womanhood. As a result, these writers inspired future generations of feminist writers to continue exploring and challenging gender inequalities in literature and society as a whole.

Conclusion

Throughout the period of British history spanning the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the role of a woman in British society was to look after her home, children, and husband. Although women had been denied many rights, they had to keep silent. Men mistrusted women in doing serious work such as political activities because they were perceived to be less intelligent than men. Working-class women suffered greatly in their lives; however,

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middle-class women had better living conditions than other British women. Women wanted to be treated equally with men, so they began to fight for their rights. Notwithstanding the challenging conditions women faced in Britain, they were perceived to be freer when compared to women in other countries such as France and Germany. This chapter demonstrated the significance of women's roles and accomplishments in the political, social, and economic domains. It also depicted the status of women in decision-making. In addition, it highlighted the frequent difficulties that any woman may face when seeking her rights. After all of those troubles, pain, and sorrow, women in Britain began to look for ways to better themselves and transform their lives.

More specifically, feminist writers played a significant role in challenging patriarchal norms and advocating women's rights. Their literature depicted complex female characters and themes such as women's suffrage and gender inequality. Consequently, they inspired future generations of feminist writers to continue exploring and challenging gender inequalities in literature and society as a whole.

Overall, this chapter has demonstrated the significant role of women in shaping British society and culture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly in the realms of politics, society, and literature. Afterwards, the researcher is particularly interested in exploring how women writers influenced the development of gothic novel during that period of time, and how the gothic novel impacted British literature as a whole. By delving deeper into these topics, a deeper understanding of the role of women in shaping literary trends and cultural movements in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be gained.

Chapter Two

Gender Dynamics in Gothic Literature and their Representation in *Rebecca*

Introduction

Within the realm of literature, various genres have emerged, each captivating readers through their distinct themes and evocative settings. Among these genres, the Gothic novel has garnered considerable attention for its exploration of darkness, mystery, and psychological intrigue. This chapter delves into the captivating world of the Gothic novel, examining its origins, its significance in British literature, and the profound impact of gender dynamics within its narratives. All of this will be done through the analysis of the Daphne du Maurier's novel *Rebecca* (1938). Additionally, insights from sociology, anthropology, and psychology will be integrated in this chapter to illuminate the intricate interplay between gender and the Gothic genre. Therefore, the study of the main characters' psychological profile will unravel the complexities of gender. In order to do all of this, a brief introduction of the Gothic novel will prove absolutely necessary.

1. What Is the Gothic Novel?

The Gothic novel, a form of European romantic pseudo-mediaeval fiction, is characterized by an atmosphere of mystery and horror. It gained popularity in the 1790s and saw many revivals in the following centuries. The term 'Gothic' refers to the inspiration for this genre taken from mediaeval architecture, including buildings and ruins. This type of novel often features castle or monastery settings with underground passages, dark battlefields, hidden cells, and trapdoors. The trend started in England with Horace Walpole's bestselling novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (1765). Besides, Ann Radcliffe followed with such notable works as *The Mysteries*

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of *Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797). Other important works of Gothic fiction include *Vathek* (1786) by William Beckford and the story of *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) by Charles Robert Maturin. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) are two famous Gothic novels that delve deeply into classical horror. These works incorporate the existential nature of humanity as a central theme, adding an element of mystery and horror to the Gothic tradition.¹ By delving into the representation of gender in *Rebecca*, we begin a journey that delves further into the complexities of the concept of gender, prompting a thorough examination of its construction, impact, and portrayal within the novel's narrative environment.

2. Exploring the Concept of Gender

The concept of 'gender' has attracted considerable attention in contemporary society, covering various aspects of identity, social roles and cultural structure. The word 'gender' is derived the Middle English word 'gendre'. This latter is a loanword from Anglo-Norman and Middle French 'gendre'. This latter was derived from the Latin word 'genus'. The term means 'kind', 'type', or 'sort'. The other words that belong to the lexical field of 'genre' are 'gene' and 'genesis'. *The Oxford Etymological Dictionary of English* of 1882 described 'gender' as 'kind', 'breed', and 'sex' (230). *The Cambridge Dictionary* defines 'gender' as a group of people in a society who share specific qualities or behaviours that society associates with being male, female, or another identity.

Gender is a common issue in British literature, and depictions of it have varied through time to reflect shifting cultural beliefs. Gender is represented in a variety of ways in British literature. For example, in the nineteenth century British literature tackled gender roles that

¹The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. *Gothic Novel*. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11 May 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/art/Gothic-novel>.

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were forced on women. The female characters in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance, navigate the societal expectations put on them, exposing the limited alternatives accessible to women in terms of marriage and social standing. Similarly, in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, Dorothea struggles with societal restraints and seeks fulfilment outside of established gender norms.

Nowadays, gender dynamics are still being investigated in literature expressed in English. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is a dystopian novel set in a future theocratic state. Atwood's novel illustrates tyranny and control of women's bodies and reproductive rights. In addition, Atwood's writing stresses women's vulnerability in a patriarchal system and addresses issues of power and agency. There has also been a surge in feminist fiction by British authors in recent years. Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is a coming-of-age novella that defies heteronormative norms and explores the complexity of sexuality and gender identity.

4. Gender in the Gothic Novel

The lens of gender assumes paramount significance in the analysis of literature as it furnishes a conceptual framework for comprehending the intricate ways in which gender roles, identities, and power dynamics shape literary texts (Smith, 43). By closely scrutinizing the representation, construction, and subversion of gender within literary works, scholars can unearth profound insights into the social, cultural, and historical milieus that underpin the creation of these texts.

Gender assumes a pivotal role within the Gothic novel, intricately interwoven with themes of power, agency, and societal expectations, thereby contributing to the multifaceted dynamics and atmospheric qualities of these narratives. Within Gothic literature, gender is

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recurrently portrayed as both a confining force and a catalyst for subversion, offering reflections of the prevailing social and cultural contexts of the period (57).

For example, the portrayal of female characters represents a salient dimension of gender significance within the Gothic novel. The genre frequently presents female protagonists who navigate patriarchal structures, societal constraints, and oppressive norms (Brown 82). These characters confront arduous struggles to attain autonomy, actively seeking agency within a world that systematically seeks to circumscribe their power. By illuminating the experiences of these female protagonists, the Gothic genre critically examines and challenges prevailing gender disparities and entrenched gender roles.

In addition, the Gothic genre frequently examines the shadowed facets of masculinity, presenting male characters who embody attributes such as aggression, dominance, or even monstrosity (Jones 68). Through such portrayals, the genre interrogates and disrupts societal norms pertaining to masculinity, illuminating the intricate interplay between power, vulnerability, and the construction of male identity. The role of gender in the Gothic novel also encompasses the exploration of sexuality and desire. Gothic narratives often plunge into the realm of repressed desires and forbidden passions harboured by their characters, challenging the confines imposed by societal norms and expectations (Wilson 95). This exploration of sexuality introduces an additional layer of intricacy to the gender dynamics within the genre, further underscoring the manifold intersections of gender and desire. Further understanding of the multifaceted nature of gender is reflected in the human sciences.

5. The Concept of ‘Gender’ in Sociology, Anthropology, and Psychology

Human sciences seek to comprehend the multifaceted nature of gender as a social construct and its effects on individuals and societies. These fields collectively investigate how

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gender profoundly influences identity formation, behaviour, and social interactions, as well as its intricate interplay with other social categories like race, class, and sexuality.

First, in sociology, the study of gender critically examines the social construction of gender and its far-reaching impact on social structures, institutions, and power dynamics (Smith 75). Sociologists closely analyse gender inequalities, the prescribed gender roles, and how gender shapes and reinforces societal norms and expectations. Important topics within this realm include the examination of gender socialization processes, the prevalence and consequences of gender-based violence, and the nuanced exploration of how gender intersects with other social identities. (80-95)

Second, anthropology contributes significantly to the study of gender through its comprehensive examination of how gender roles, norms, and expectations exhibit considerable variation across diverse cultures and historical periods (Jones 82). Anthropologists provide invaluable insights into the cultural construction of gender, the diverse range of gender systems, and the intricate role of gender in shaping kinship, marriage, and social organization. Through their ethnographic research, they illuminate the intricate ways in which gender is perceived, enacted, and experienced within specific societies. (90-105)

Third, psychology focuses on the psychological aspects of gender, including gender identity formation, gender development processes, and the impact of gender on mental health and overall well-being (Brown 92). For instance, psychologists examine gender-related cognitive processes, attitudes, and behaviours while exploring the influential role of societal and cultural factors. They also scrutinize the consequences of gender stereotypes, discrimination, and gendered socialization on individuals' self-concept and behaviour, providing insights into the intricate psychological dimensions of gender. (98-115)

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All these three disciplines employ diverse methodologies to examine and comprehend the complexities of gender dynamics in society, culture, and individual experiences. These interdisciplinary approaches collectively contribute to an understanding of the intricate interplay between social structures, cultural beliefs, and individual psychology in shaping gender dynamics.

This study reveals the varied nature of female identity and the various power dynamics at play by diving into the novel's sophisticated portrayal of gender representation. It strives to reveal the broader social and cultural implications inherent in the Gothic novel through an analysis of the characters and ideas present in *Rebecca*, providing a more profound understanding of the delicate link between gender and society.

6. Gender Representation in *Rebecca*

As the story of *Rebecca* unfolds, the delicate intricacies of gender representation come to the fore, forcing a closer look at how the characters and their interactions create the larger narrative. The story unfolds against the enigmatic backdrop of Manderley, an imposing estate located in Cornwall, Britain. Centred around an unnamed protagonist who enters into marriage with the affluent widower Maxim de Winter, the novel delves into the emotional complexities that arise. As the newly anointed mistress of Manderley, the protagonist becomes entranced by the lingering presence of Maxim's deceased first wife, Rebecca. Throughout the narrative, *Rebecca* delves into profound themes such as love, obsession, identity, and the intricate dynamics of human relationships (Du Maurier 3).

A rich tapestry of female characters evolves inside *Rebecca*, each expressing various qualities, motives, and norms of society. They negotiate a world plagued with intricate power dynamics, psychological fears, and cultural pressures, from the enigmatic eponymous character

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to the timid narrator. The purpose of this analysis is to examine their psychology, conduct, and societal perception, revealing the numerous layers that shape their identities and impact their behaviours. We can gain essential insights into the depiction of women in the Gothic novel and the broader cultural context in which they live by analysing their individual journeys. Several examples emerge from an investigation of gender representation in *Rebecca*, providing support for the novel's portrayal of complicated gender interactions. They also cast light on the complexities of feminine identity and cultural expectations.

To begin, the nameless narrator's path of self-discovery represents a personal metamorphosis from shyness to self-assertion. This evolution demonstrates the potential for empowerment and growth, highlighting the fluidity of gender roles and the intricate interplay between cultural expectations and individual agency. Furthermore, the reactions of other characters to Rebecca's bravery reveal social perceptions of women who break traditional gender standards. These reactions highlight the power dynamics inherent in gender relationships as well as the tensions that develop when women break from established societal roles. Maxim de Winter's portrayal of male figures provides a lens through which to examine customary gender norms and expectations. Their interactions with the female characters reveal the power dynamics and societal standards that determine gender relations in the story. (Du Maurier 94).

Examining these examples allows us to acquire a better grasp of the gender portrayal in *Rebecca*. These personal interpretations, set in an academic setting, add to the scholarly discourse on gender dynamics by shedding light on the intricacies of societal expectations, personal agency, and the multiple characters of female identity as portrayed in the novel.

7. Psychology, Behaviour, and Societal Perception of Female Characters

In *Rebecca*, the psychological complexity of the female characters provides an engrossing lens through which to explore their experiences. Rebecca has a mysterious charm, an unyielding confidence, and a seductive demeanour that conceal both her desires and her darkest secrets. Her intriguing personality not only piques the interest of people around her, but it also embodies the allure of nonconformity, defying traditional ideals of femininity.

In contrast, the novel's unnamed narrator exudes a frail and introverted character. Her continual self-doubt and obsession with comparing herself to the powerful Rebecca highlight the cultural pressures imposed on women to conform to particular stereotypes. We see her transformation from timid to resilient as she wrestles with her own identity and deals with the complications of love, devotion, and betrayal.

Rebecca deftly weaves a web of gender expression, exploring the complex roles and expectations placed on characters based on their gender. Through the protagonist's perspective, we witness the complexities of femininity in a society deeply ingrained in patriarchal norms. The stark difference between Rebecca and the narrator is one characteristic that strikes out. Despite her absence, Rebecca exudes authority and defies typical feminine ideals. She is regarded as fiercely independent, tenacious, and ultimately a force to be reckoned with. For example, the narrator considers Rebecca's character: 'She had the advantage over me, the self-assured, clear-headed, lovely woman of the world, free to make her own plans, and carry them through without interference.' (Du Maurier 81)

From our vantage point, the main character's journey is riddled with ongoing battles against fears and a pervasive sense of inferiority, which are mostly centred in comparisons to the enigmatic Rebecca. Their dread of being eclipsed by Rebecca's beauty and attractiveness

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has a tremendous impact on their perceptions and interactions with others. Furthermore, their previous experiences, which were marked by lack of affection and a sense of belonging, contribute to their vulnerability and deep yearning for acceptance. Besides, their aspirations and fantasies, which diverge from conventional standards and conventions, add to the complexities of their psychological profile. Despite his mysterious character, their love to Maxim de Winter serves as a poignant expression of their yearning for passion and a life that exceeds their constricted existence. These interpretations highlight the nuances that influence the main character's journey throughout the story.

Through the individuals' complicated motivations and actions, Du Maurier's tale gently subverts accepted norms. As we progress through the novel, we see the narrator gradually gain self-awareness and confidence, confronting the originally passive character she plays. We see a defiance against the gendered expectations forced on Mrs de Winter through her eventual encounter with Rebecca's legacy and her desire to tell the truth. The narrator's assertion resonates within us at a time of extraordinary self-empowerment: 'I am Mrs. de Winter. I am Mrs. de Winter now!' (349). This declaration of individuality is a personal achievement, breaking and rejecting the patriarchal structures that had previously bound her.

We understand the narrator's journey throughout the work as a significant metamorphosis in which she manages the uncertainties, worries, and wants. The protagonist gets the courage to confront the reality about Rebecca through her personal growth, challenging the widely held perception of Rebecca as an admired figure. The narrator imagines Rebecca as follows:

She had beauty that endured, and a smile that was not forgotten. Somewhere her voice still lingered, and the memory of her words. There were places she had visited, and things that she had touched. Perhaps in cupboards there were clothes that she had worn,

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with the scent about them still. In my bedroom, under my pillow, I had a book that she had taken in her hands, and I could see her turning to that first white page, smiling as she wrote, and shaking the bent nib. (Du Maurier 47)

Therefore, this tremendous epiphany exemplifies that the narrator's development, bravery, and the enormous impact the protagonist's psychological journey has on her conduct and decision-making. Based on the interpretation presented, it can be observed that this turning point exemplifies their maturation, bravery, and the impact of her psychological journey on her conduct and decision-making.

The patriarchal traditions present throughout the novel's setting impact society's opinion of these female characters. Rebecca defies conventional norms of feminine docility and subordination with her boldness and unashamed pursuit of her own interests. This resistance intrigues and threatens people around her, adding to the mystery and devotion that encompass her legacy. Hence, Rebecca's ability to strike a deep chord with readers at a time when gender norms are shifting and feminist beliefs are emerging marks it as a vital addition to the continuing gender dialogue. The novel's continued popularity and study through a gender perspective speak to its continuing impact on literary research and feminist discourse. Readers are inspired to critically explore and reflect on the intricate aspects of gender in society by engaging with the nuances of gender portrayal in *Rebecca*.

The novel's persistent relevance and scholarly investigation attest to its long-term significance in increasing our awareness of gender dynamics and their broader implications within the sphere of feminist philosophy. Against the background, Rebecca's rejection of conventional gender standards, together with the accompanying intrigue and threatened response, offers an enthralling prism through which to examine how to think of *Rebecca* as a romantic or gothic novel.

7. Is *Rebecca* a Romantic or Gothic Novel?

Because of its evocative themes, atmospheric setting, and elements of desire, mystery, and the supernatural, *Rebecca* can be classified as both a romantic and a Gothic tale. The mixture of these aspects results in a tale that has parts of both genres, resulting in a rich and deep reading experience. Below is a romantic illustration. Maxim says:

You thought I loved Rebecca? You thought I killed her, loving her? I hated her, I tell you. Our marriage was a farce from the very first. She was vicious, damnable, rotten through and through. We never loved each other, never had one moment of happiness together. Rebecca was incapable of love, of tenderness, of decency. (Du Maurier 30)

Here, we take note of how brilliant this is. Maxim genuinely loves Rebecca, and he murders her because he is envious of her affairs. It would not be right to notify Mrs. de Winter. It is even better if he claims he killed Rebecca since he despised her and she tormented him. As usual, it is difficult to know whether Maxim is being deceitful, serious, or both. On the other hand, the Gothic aspect in the novel can be seen here: ‘I wondered how many people there were in the world who suffered, and continued to suffer, because they could not break out from their own web of shyness and reserve, and in their blindness and folly built up a great distorted wall in front of them that hid the truth.’ (309)

We reach the point where the narrator's introspection embodies the Gothic theme of inner pain and the haunting power of personal secrets. As a result, it may be claimed that these textual examples reflect the interplay of Romantic and Gothic aspects in *Rebecca*. The passionate love story, insightful thinking, eerie setting, secrets, and riddles all add to the novel's classification as both Romantic and Gothic, improving the reading journey and presenting an engrossing blend of genre.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have embarked on a captivating journey through the Gothic novel, examining its origins, its significance within literature, and the intricate interplay of gender dynamics within its narratives. This chapter has explored the defining characteristics of the Gothic genre, including its evocative settings, supernatural elements, and psychological suspense, establishing a foundational understanding of its enduring popularity. The exploration of the Gothic novel in British literature revealed its profound impact on the literary landscape.

Furthermore, the intricate relationship between gender and the Gothic novel through a careful analysis of gender roles, power dynamics, and the portrayal of female characters has been another aspect of this chapter. By exploring themes of female agency, the Gothic novel exposes the anxieties and tensions surrounding gender identity, offering readers an opportunity to reflect on the intricate nuances of gender within their own lives. Additionally, to enrich understanding of gender dynamics in the Gothic novel, we drew upon insights from the fields of sociology, anthropology, and psychology. The analysis has enabled us to explore the social, cultural, and psychological factors that shape gender constructions within the genre. This interdisciplinary approach has provided a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of gender representation in Gothic literature.

Through an examination of the novel's themes, characters, and narrative techniques, we uncovered the complexities of the protagonist's journey and the underlying societal tensions of the early twentieth century. *Rebecca* serves as a testament to the enduring impact of the Gothic novel, captivating readers with its haunting exploration of power, identity, and desire. Moreover, a better grasp of the characters' complicated psyche has been obtained by carefully analysing their internal conflicts, fears, desires, and the impact of prior experiences on their actions. An insight into the main character's growth and development has been obtained

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throughout the narrative through analysing their psychological subtleties. The impact of their psychological journey on their behaviour and decision-making is demonstrated by their steady transformation as they address their doubts, fears, and desires.

In conclusion, the exploration of the Gothic novel and its intersections with gender has deepened our understanding of this genre. The enduring allure of the Gothic lies in its ability to provoke contemplation, challenge societal norms, and provide a space for the exploration of intricate gender identities. As we continue to engage with the Gothic novel, we recognize its significance as a powerful literary form that continues to captivate readers and offer valuable insights into the human experience. The following chapter examines the novel *Rebecca*, evaluating its rich themes, narrative techniques, and depiction of gender interactions within its engaging storyline.

Chapter Three

Unravelling Progressive Identities in *Rebecca*

Introduction

In this chapter, we will embark on an enthralling investigation of *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier, a gripping British Gothic novel that has had a lasting impact on the literary world. We enter the frightening realm of Manderley, where intriguing people and enthralling narratives collide, providing rich insights into gender representation. The voyage begins with a careful examination of the complexity of individuals such as the second Mrs. de Winter and the enigmatic Rebecca. We obtain a great knowledge of the novel's multifaceted representation of gender relations by diving deeply into their identities and the societal norms that shape them. In the middle of the Gothic genre's gloomy landscapes and suspenseful atmosphere, we investigate the symbiotic link between its aspects and the novel's depiction of gender roles. Our investigation goes to the psychological complexities of the female characters, such as Mrs. de Winter and Mrs. Danvers. We dive into their obsessions, fears, and aspirations through a psychoanalytic lens, giving light on the psychological components that contribute to the novel's representation of gender dynamics. *Rebecca* breaks new ground in its representation of gender, defying convention and redefining male tropes. We highlight the novel's ongoing impact on gender representation in literature by exploring its portrayal of gender roles. As we go through the interrelated layers of *Rebecca*, we recognize its transformative power in defying societal conventions and resonating as a pioneering work in feminist and Gothic literary traditions. We obtain a profound grasp of how *Rebecca* continues to captivate readers and researchers alike, leaving an everlasting mark on the investigation of gender representation within the world of British Gothic literature, thanks to this exhaustive analysis.

1. A Brief Analysis of *Rebecca*

Rebecca is an iconic example of modern gothic fiction, with a scenic setting, strange mood, brutality, and supernatural aspects. The plot takes place in the stately Manderley manor and focuses around a murder, a fire, and a nasty servant. The ghostly presence of Rebecca, who dies, haunts the entire story. The novel's weather reflects the characters' emotions, contributing to the unsettling atmosphere. The plot is comparable to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, with features such as a burning home, a romance between an elderly man and a younger woman, and the eerie presence of a first wife.

Rebecca dives into psychological depths in addition to its gothic elements. The nameless heroine, who is now married to Maxim de Winter, is haunted by the ghost of Maxim's deceased first wife, Rebecca. Mrs. Danvers, the evil servant, adds to the heroine's agony by clothing her in Rebecca's garments and encourages her to commit suicide. This conflict with the domineering first wife takes on an Oedipal/Electra dimension, with the heroine attempting to flee the shadow cast by Rebecca's memories. Rebecca's malevolent character is revealed, releasing the protagonist from this battle (www.sparknotes.com/lit/rebecca/plot-analysis). The novel expertly blends suspense, beginning with the unsettling ambiance of a burned Manderley and then changing back to its commencement. As the plot progresses, unexpected events reveal Rebecca's true nature and Maxim's role in her death. Readers root for Maxim and his current wife as they try to avoid arrest for Rebecca's murder. Another unexpected twist demonstrates that Rebecca was terminally ill and was not, as she claimed, pregnant with another man's child. The story culminates with the devastation of Manderley, bringing to a close the psychological and supernatural complexity that marked this enthralling gothic tale. In addition, as the novel traverses unexpected twists, exposing Rebecca's true nature, and culminating in the dramatic devastation of Manderley, it connects aspects of gothic narrative with its nuanced exploration of gender representation.

2. The Genre of the Novel and Gender Representation

Due to its investigation of complicated gender relations and the portrayal of women in the context of power and identity, Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* has great relevance to the study of gender representation. As the anonymous protagonist strives to fill the shoes of the powerful Rebecca, the story highlights traditional gender norms and expectations, reflecting the pressure on women to adhere to societal notions of femininity (Salman 14). It demonstrates the strength and impact of women even after death, as Rebecca's presence persists through Mrs. Danvers, her loyal servant, questioning stereotypes about women's authority. Female rivalry is investigated, putting the heroine against Rebecca and exposing light on social conventions that encourage female competition.

Furthermore, the novel challenges conceptions of intrinsic female goodness by revealing Rebecca's manipulative and malevolent nature. The development of the protagonist stresses the importance of women pursuing freedom and exercising agency outside of established norms. The work also explores features of patriarchal authority as symbolized by Maxim de Winter, illustrating how such structures influence the lives and choices of female characters. *Rebecca* dives into women's emotional problems in the face of societal expectations with psychological depth, providing unique insights into gender portrayal and its intricacies both in its period and in modern circumstances. Moreover, as *Rebecca* delves into the psychological depths of its female characters and questions conventional notions of intrinsic female goodness, it provides a compelling basis for a psychological analysis of female characters in the context of discovered obsessions and progressive gender representation.

3. Unravelling Obsessions: A Psychological Analysis of Female characters in *Rebecca*

Several conclusions can be reached from the analysis of the obsessions of the female characters in Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*. To begin, the work is centred on three

interconnected female characters with separate obsessions: Rebecca, Mrs. de Winter, and Danvers. Rebecca's obsession is gaining power, putting on a show, and pursuing a high-class lifestyle through her marriage to Maxim. Mrs de Winter is obsessed with gaining her husband's love, looking for a companion that resembles her father, and demonstrating an Electra complex¹ in her attraction to older men. Danvers' preoccupation stems around her deep affection for Rebecca, which drives her to be selfish and prioritize Rebecca's interests ahead of all else. As she remarks, the narrator almost seems to be jealous: 'Mrs. Danvers knew how she [Rebecca] walked and how she spoke. Mrs. Danvers knew the colour of her eyes, her smile, the texture of her hair. I knew none of these things, I had never asked about them, but sometimes I felt Rebecca was as real to me as she was to Mrs. Danvers.' (Du Maurier 153).

Second, the obsessions of the female characters have a considerable impact on their behaviour. Rebecca's drive for power emerges as narcissistic personality disorder², in which she attempts to control and manipulate others around her in order to maintain a perfect public image. Mrs. de Winter's desire for obtaining her husband's love breeds envy as she tries to copy Rebecca in the hopes of replacing her in Maxim's heart. Danvers' devotion to Rebecca is worship-like, causing her to depict and imagine about Rebecca long after her death. Danvers' character and her difficulties with reality are examined using the concept of repression. (Legiana and Hetami 38). To sum up, *Rebecca* depicts the intricacies of female characters and their diverse obsessions, which play an important role in forming the novel's conflicts and plot. The use of psychological theories helps to throw light on these characters' underlying motivations and behaviours, providing a greater understanding of their roles in the plot.

¹ Electra complex is a term used to describe the female version of the Oedipus complex.

² Narcissistic personality disorder is a mental health condition in which people have an unreasonably high sense of their own importance.

In contrast, male characters hold positions of authority and influence, sticking more closely to established gender roles of the period. Maxim de Winter, who is the male protagonist and proprietor of Manderley, is a symbol of patriarchal rule. He is really a gothic character par excellence. He is a prudish, brooding figure with deep secrets and an explosive temper. He is both a tormented soul and a cunning arch-manipulator. He is 42 years old, attractive, affluent, and the proud owner of Manderley, a sprawling estate with a castle-like mansion. Other male characters, such as Jack Favell and Frank Crawley, exhibit various tropes of masculinity. In contrast to Maxim's feeling of responsibility and duty, Favell is presented as clever and opportunistic while Frank Crawley (Maxim's valued friend and estate manager) exemplifies commitment and dedication.

Rebecca provides an engrossing study of male and female stereotypes within the setting of the genre. The novel illuminates the complexity of gender roles, and challenges social expectations through its multifaceted characters, making it a timeless and thought-provoking work of literature. The novel emerges as a rich narrative that challenges traditional gender stereotypes and presents a progressive approach to gender depiction as the plot unfolds, and the interactions between people grow.

4. Progressive Gender Representation in *Rebecca*

Daphne du Maurier delivers a groundbreaking analysis of gender representation in *Rebecca*, particularly through the character of the second Mrs. de Winter. Unlike the typical passive female images of the day, the second Mrs. de Winter emerges as a symbol of agency and freedom. She violates traditional gender standards by speaking out, making decisions, and taking the lead despite her initial trepidation. Du Maurier's transformative journey aims to represent women as varied and competent individuals free of the confines of conventional roles.

Furthermore, in *Rebecca*, the powerful housekeeper Mrs. Danvers rises as yet another stunning example of progressive woman depiction. Her unshakable loyalty to the deceased Rebecca, along with her forceful and strong personality, contradicts the prevalent portrayal of female characters in literature during that era. Mrs. Danvers exemplifies a woman who has control and influence within the constraints of her position, breaking the cliché of the obedient housewife. This portrayal emphasizes the author's goal to present women as varied and formidable individuals, challenging old gender stereotypes. (*Status in Daphne Du Maurier's Rebecca* / ipl.org).

Finally, in Gothic literature, women who trespass in order to pursue their passions are punished. The reason for this is the concept of horror, which is central to the Gothic genre as a whole. The goal is to shock and enlighten readers to the idea that perhaps fiction is not simply fiction, and that it often spills into reality by playing on real-world household worries that women in real life are accustomed to. The punitive treatment of women who transgress is intricately woven within the Gothic literary tradition, echoing the genre's core element of horror. As we go on, a significant shift in gender representation emerges.

5. Empowered Identities

Daphne du Maurier expertly mixes Gothic ideas and motifs into *Rebecca*, creating an aura of mystery, suspense, and psychological depth. The interaction of gender representation and Gothic motifs complicates the dynamics of the characters and defies traditional gender conventions. The analysis has focused on gender portrayal in British Gothic literature throughout *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier as an enlightening case study. The examination of numerous works in the genre has produced important insights into the detailed depiction of gender roles and relationships. Throughout this investigation, the complexity of female characters has been revealed, typical masculine tropes have been challenged, and the

relationship between gender representation and the evocative themes Gothic literature has been clarified.

The core thesis of this study was to explore the world of gender portrayal in British Gothic novels, with *Rebecca* serving as a focus point of investigation. The investigation has revealed a narrative tapestry of female agency, the subversion of conventional masculinity, and identity that transcends the constraints of its era. *Rebecca* shines as a literary treasure, oozing assertiveness while remaining true to the Gothic heritage.

The complicated interplay between gender portrayal and Gothic elements in *Rebecca* acts as a foundation for thesis validation. The intriguing representation of female characters, shown by the enigmatic second Mrs. de Winter and the hauntingly evocative Rebecca, transcends stereotypes. These characters defy expectations by asserting their agency and depth, making an unforgettable impression on the world of Gothic fiction. Furthermore, the male protagonist, Maxim de Winter, deviates from the classic stoic figure prevalent in Gothic fiction. This paradigm shift deftly weaves gender representation into the novel's fundamental fabric, cementing its place as a pioneering work in the investigation of progressive values.

As seen in the analysis above, Daphne du Maurier has not only employed the Gothic genre in *Rebecca*, but has also expanded it with many innovations. It serves as a lens for analysing gender representation, underlining the obstacles, power dynamics, and cultural constraints that women faced at the time it was written. It sparks debates on gender roles, agency, and the complexities of female identity, making it relevant to current studies of gender representation as well.

Conclusion

This chapter has been an exploration of the complicated interplay between the characters' personalities and the cultural conventions that have created them as the spooky corridors of Manderley are traversed. A better understanding of the novel's multifaceted representation of gender dynamics has been gained as a result of a rigorous examination.

The gloomy allure of the Gothic genre has functioned as an intriguing backdrop, enhancing the scrutiny of gender-based societal expectations. The characters' struggles and transformations have been heightened by the stunning landscapes and suspenseful atmosphere, highlighting the intricacies of their identities and the societal constraints they faced.

The psychological analysis of the female characters, especially the second Mrs. de Winter and Mrs. Danvers, has revealed the psychological components that contribute to the novel's depiction of gender dynamics. We have seen the enormous impact of psychological intricacies on the portrayal of gender roles by diving inside their minds. So, *Rebecca* has become a trendsetter, defying stereotyped representations of male and female characters and questioning traditional gender standards. The novel's powerful portrayal of its female protagonists, as well as the inversion of male tropes, has highlighted its transformative potential in the literary world.

We have recognized the relevance of *Rebecca* in feminist and Gothic literary traditions as we have honoured its ongoing legacy. We have obtained a profound grasp of how *Rebecca* continues to attract readers and researchers alike, leaving an unforgettable effect on the examination of gender representation within the sphere of British Gothic novels. In addition, we have realized that *Rebecca* is a literary classic that not only tells a frightening story, but also questions societal standards and alters our notions of gender roles. Its intriguing attraction

entices us to explore further into the complexity of human nature and the ever-changing panorama of gender portrayal. As we close this chapter, we recognize *Rebecca's* long influence and its impact on the intriguing realm.

As we complete this chapter, we recognize *Rebecca's* everlasting influence and its impact on the interesting area of Gothic fiction. It intertwines gender representation and Gothic motifs to create a sophisticated analysis of identity, power, and relationships. Daphne du Maurier creates a captivating narrative that challenges standard gender representations popular in literature at the time, by inverting typical Gothic tropes and challenging gender norms. The link between gender depiction and the novel's Gothic features deepens and elevates *Rebecca* as a seminal work in British Gothic literature.

General Conclusion

This study was an investigation into gender portrayal in British Gothic fiction, with a special focus on Daphne du Maurier's novel *Rebecca* which had been published in 1938. This study explored the portrayal of gender relations in the novel while setting it in the socio-cultural context of late nineteenth and twentieth-century Britain, drawing on an intricate tapestry of historical and literary analysis. This study dug into the status of British women during the given historical eras, explored gender dynamics in Gothic literature with a special emphasis on *Rebecca*, and discerned the presence of progressive identities throughout the novel. This study demonstrated how *Rebecca* acts as a lens for understanding the various intricacies of gender depiction, and invites further study on this enthralling aspect of British Gothic literature.

In literature, gender representation has always piqued the interest of academics from numerous fields. Gothic literature stands out as an intriguing atmosphere that captures readers with its gloomy and enigmatic narratives among the diverse tapestry of genres. Daphne du Maurier's work *Rebecca* stands out as a classic, enthralling audiences for years with its riveting story. The primary goal of this study was to examine how the multifaceted gender representations in *Rebecca* resonate with the socio-cultural norms of late nineteenth and twentieth-century Britain, providing valuable insights into the portrayal of gender roles and identities within the larger context of British Gothic literature.

The major research challenge of this study was to perform a detailed investigation of the gender portrayal within *Rebecca* as a representative British Gothic novel. This study attempted to appreciate the intricacies of gender roles and identities as shown through the lives and actions of its characters by explaining the novel within its historical backdrop.

Furthermore, it aimed to determine the impact of prevalent cultural norms and expectations in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries on these depictions, offering light on the novel's reflection of the growing social fabric of its own time.

The examination of *Rebecca* revealed a tapestry of gender depiction that strikes a chord with its readers. The novel's female protagonist's challenges and successes against the backdrop of a patriarchal society caused her struggles to parallel the actual difficulties endured by women during the historical periods in question, acting as a painful reminder of the gendered restrictions that existed at the time. The male characters, like the female characters, have complexities that mirror social expectations, with their behaviours impacted by both empowerment and constraint. Thus, *Rebecca* emerged as an evocative mirror of the existing gender conventions and ideals at the time of its production.

This study acknowledged a few limitations. To begin, the focus on a single work, i.e., *Rebecca*, may not have fully conveyed the variety of gender portrayals in British Gothic fiction. While the novel is an effective case study, it did not fully represent the vast variety of themes and depictions found in other works in the category. Second, while the historical study is instructive, it may not have covered the complete range of emerging gender dynamics within the chosen historical periods. Despite determined attempts, the study was inevitably constrained by the availability and interpretation of historical records. Moreover, the interpretations offered in this study were certain to be subjective, resulting in potential biases in the study that must be noted when interpreting the findings. Inviting reader-response studies would also allow for a more extensive investigation of the novel's different interpretations and receptions of gender representations, revealing the numerous ways in which readers connect with and interpret the gendered issues offered.

While acknowledging its own limitations, this study contributed to the understanding of how social conventions and standards shaped the portrayal of gender roles in *Rebecca*, offering fertile ground for further research in the enthralling area of gender representation in British Gothic literature. The combination between historical context and literary artistry in *Rebecca* highlights its ongoing importance in the broader debate on gender portrayal and urges further academic inquiry into this enthralling feature of British Gothic fiction.

Appendix A: A Biography of the Author



Daphne Du Maurier (1907–1989) was a well-known author of popular fiction of her generation.

Her atmospheric and melancholy books established her as a superb storyteller, but she also created plays, short stories, and biographies. Her works included the following: *I'll Never Be Young Again* (1932), *The Progress of Julius* (1933), *Jamaica Inn* (1936), *Rebecca* (1938), *Frenchman's Creek* (1941), *Mary Anne* (1954), *The Scapegoat* (1957), *The Glass-Blowers* (1963), and *Rule Britannia* (1972) are among Du Maurier's other

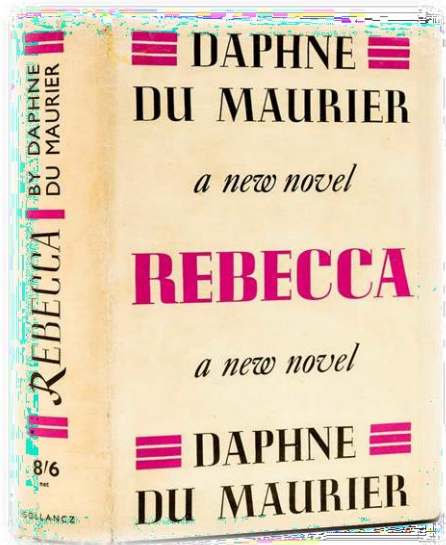
works. *Come Wind, Come Weather* (1940), *Early pieces* (1959), *The Breaking Point* (1959), *Not After Midnight* (1971), and *The Rendezvous and Other Stories* (1980) were among her many short pieces. In addition, she wrote three plays. The first was a film adaptation of her novel *Rebecca*, which was released in 1938. The drama premiered on March 5, 1940. The second play, *The Years Between*, premiered on January 10, 1945, and the third, *September Tide*, premiered on December 15, 1948.

Du Maurier wrote in a 'romantic' style, yet she disliked being labelled as a romance novelist.

She got the *Mystery Writers of America* Grand Master Awards. She died on April 19, 1989, at the age of 81, in Cornwall, England, UK.

Source: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/39829>.

Appendix B: A Summary of the Novel



Daphne du Maurier's Gothic suspense thriller *Rebecca* was released in 1938. It is a psychological thriller about a young woman who becomes infatuated with her husband's first wife. It is widely regarded as a masterpiece. The novel is set in the scenic wilds of Cornwall, and the first-person narrator is an anonymous young woman. She marries Maxim de Winter, a wealthy widower, and the couple lives in Manderley, a large country house. The novel begins with her remembrance of dreaming about Manderley, which is followed by a flashback. She meets Maxim while working for an elderly socialite in Monte-Carlo, and they instantly fall in love and marry. Despite accolades, the second Mrs. de Winter feels inadequate in comparison to Maxim's first wife, Rebecca, who died in a sailing accident. Rebecca represents charm and happiness in the narrator's eyes, and she thinks she cannot compete for Maxim's love. Mrs. Danvers, the foreboding housekeeper, continuously reminds her of Maxim's enduring love for Rebecca, exacerbating her nervousness and anxiety. The narrator becomes increasingly hooked on Maxim's beautiful first wife, Rebecca, as the novel progresses, while simultaneously feeling uneasy in her own marriage. During Manderley's annual costume ball, the second Mrs. de Winter accidentally wears a dress similar to one Rebecca wore before her death, which irritates Maxim. Mrs. Danvers' encouragement of the scenario adds to the narrator's unease. During a disagreement with Mrs. Danvers, the latter

proposes that the second Mrs. de Winter leap out a window because Maxim allegedly does not want her. However, their conversation is cut short by rockets fired as a result of a ship colliding with a reef in the neighbouring bay, drawing their attention. Divers later locate Rebecca's body in a sinking boat. Maxim then admits to his second wife that he never loved Rebecca. She was harsh and unfaithful, having many affairs early after their marriage. To prevent embarrassment, Maxim decided to let her continue her escapades as long as she maintained the appearance of a perfect wife. Rebecca disclosed on the night of her murder that she was pregnant by one of her partners, which enraged Maxim. In a fit of rage, he shot her and sank her body in a boat, later identifying another body as Rebecca's to cover the fact of her death. As the novel progresses, the heroine transforms, gaining strength and confidence, which changes the power dynamics in her marriage. Maxim appears to be relieved when the coroner rules Rebecca's death a suicide. Jack Favell, Rebecca's cousin and one of her lovers, accuses Maxim of murdering her. Mrs. Danvers appears to confirm Rebecca and Favell's affair, adding to the suspicion. The magistrate investigates Rebecca's possible motivation for suicide and discovers that she had visited a London doctor on the day of her death. Rebecca was infertile and dying of cancer, much to everyone's amazement. The revelation eliminates Maxim as a suspect by providing a possible reason for her suicide. Mrs. Danvers mysteriously vanishes, and when the de Winters return to Manderley from London, the house is engulfed in flames. This surprising and dramatic surprise concludes the story.

Source: Campbell, Carola and Mander, Gabrielle. *Rebecca* . Encyclopedia Britannica, 24 Feb. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Rebecca-novel>. Accessed 28 July 2023.

Glossary

Agency: the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power

Coming-of-age: the time when a person reaches the age at which they have an adult's legal rights and responsibilities

Electra(n) (complex): a young girl's unconscious sexual attraction to her father

Ethnographic: the scientific study of customs, habits, and behaviour of specified groups of people

Fantasy: the faculty or activity of imagining impossible or improbable things

Feminism/feminist: the advocacy of women's rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes

Gender: the culturally shaped expression of sexual difference: the masculine way in which men should behave and the feminine way in which women should behave

Genre: a grouping of texts related within the system of literature by their sharing features of form and content.

Gothic: something that is characterized by mystery, horror, and gloom

Horror: a genre of fiction that is intended to disturb, frighten or scare

Identity: a set of personal qualities by which a person is known as a member of a certain group

Intrigue: to arouse the interest, desire, or curiosity of.

Mystery: a story that centres around a crime, usually murder, which finally gets solved at the very end

Narrative: a story or account of events, experiences, or the like, whether true or fictitious

Oedipus (complex): a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex and a concomitant sense of rivalry with the parent of the same sex

Social: of or relating to human society, the interaction of the individual and the group, or the welfare of human beings as members of society

Socialization: the process of internalizing the norms and ideologies of society

Societal: of or relating to human society

Stereotype: clichéd or predictable characters or situations

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ملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة ني نمثيل الجنس بين ني الأدب القوطي البريطني، مع التركيز على ريبوكا من قبل دافني دو موريه (1938). تهدف الدراسة إلى نميز كينية نصوير ديناميكيات النوع الاجتماعي ني الرواية ني سياق أواخر القرن التاسع عشر والقرن العشرين ني بريطانيا. يبنى البحث نهجا وصفاً ونحلياً ونوعياً. تكشف النتائج عن انعكاس الرواية للمعابر والتأثير

المجتمعية السائدة، والتي تجسدت ني صراعات وانصارات بطلية الرواية. تساهم الدراسة ني الكشف عن عمق لتمثيل الجنس بين ني الأدب القوطي البريطني.

كلمات مفتاحية: نوع الجنس؛ قوطي؛ صور نمطية جنسانية؛ بطلية الرواية