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How to Identify a Bad Woman:

A Study of Charlotte Brontë's Bertha Mason and Daphne du Maurier's Rebecca de Winter

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Abstract

The Gothic genre deals with scenery, mansions, and subconscious fears and desires. *Jane Eyre* (1847), by Charlotte Brontë, has been said to contain Gothic elements, and as *Rebecca* (1938), by Daphne du Maurier, follows a similar plot pattern, shares people characteristics, and contains extensive setting description, it is possible to analyze it in a similar manner. This essay looks at how the female norm is reflected through the Gothic genre in the two novels mentioned, and the question asked is: "Does acting outside the female norm make Bertha Mason and Rebecca de Winter bad?" In each novel there are three different relationships that are considered; the one between the husband and his first wife, the husband and the second wife, and the one between two women. The conclusion supports the thesis and states that the two women may not be as bad as it first appears considering the norm and circumstances.

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1. Introduction

When reading Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) one realizes that the novels, albeit written almost a hundred years apart, are rather similar. The young, plain, and poor protagonists fall in love with older, wealthier men who try to conceal a darker part of their lives, namely the truth about their prior marriage. The reader of *Jane Eyre* learns that Mr. Rochester has locked up his first wife Bertha Mason in the attic for being mentally ill, whereas the first wife of Mr. de Winter, i.e. Rebecca, was killed by her husband for being pregnant with another man's child. I will assume that to most people Mr. Rochester's and Mr. de Winter's actions would be questionable. However, as a female reader of the 21st century I believe that there is more to these actions that is worth considering. Even though the husbands have acted in an immoral way, the novels paint Bertha Mason and Rebecca de Winter as villains due to their behavior, which breaks away from the female norm. The female norm of the 19th and early 20th century looked very different from today. Much of what is considered acceptable for a woman to do today was not acceptable when the novels were written. This essay will look at what the female norm looked like and how it was reflected in female literature by the involvement of the Gothic genre. It will also look at the behavior of Bertha and Rebecca to show that though questionable at times, it is not as bad as to justify their fates – to be locked up for life or killed by their husbands.

There are three different relationships that I will consider in each novel: the one between the husband and the first wife, the one between the husband and the second wife, and the one between the two women. These relationships are the ones that highlight and bring forth evidence of what the female norm looked like.

When reading the novels we see, in regards to the relationship between the husband and his first and second wife, that a key word in the relationship is control. Who is it that is really in control? Is the man able to take control, and to what extent does he allow his wife to be in control? Also, both Jane and the unnamed protagonist of *Rebecca* are given clear, albeit indirect, instructions from the man and the predecessor of how to behave, or what will happen if they act in a way that does not please the man.

As for the relationship between the two women in each novel we see envy. In the case of *Jane Eyre*, the envy seems to stem from Bertha wishing she were still in Jane's position, but in du Maurier's novel, the protagonist feels a strong attraction to the beautiful woman in general, and Rebecca in particular; it seems as if she wishes that she were Rebecca.

The essay will look at the significance of these three relationships and how they, in turn, relate to the female norm, the Gothic, and being bad. Therefore, this project will ask the question: "Does acting outside the female norm make Bertha Mason and Rebecca de Winter bad?" The thesis states that no, the two women are not bad for acting outside the female norm and their behavior is justified.

2. The Gothic Novel and the Female Situation

The term 'Gothic' is often associated with ghosts, haunted houses, and mystique in late 18th- as well as 19th-century literature. We read novels about women, more often than men, who hear or see things out of the ordinary while being in a massive mansion-like house. However, that is not what the term originally indicated. Samuel Kliger says that although the 'Gothic' often referred to a single Germanic tribe crossing the Danube in AD 376, Gothic was actually a name for all of the Germanic tribes that spread across Europe and Asia at the time (Sage 116-117). Gothic has, because of its origin, been used in a political sense. As the Goths were thought to have taken down the Roman Empire, the term Gothic has also signified "revolutionary mobs" and "enlightened radicals" due to their "fierce avowal of the values of freedom and democracy" (Botting 5). It is thought that the 18th-century preference for Gothic architecture, which later became known as the Gothic Revival, is a response to the previous tyranny of the Roman Empire (Sage 121) as well as a reaction to the dominant neo-classical style of building. The Gothic Revival refers to an architectural style that is influenced by medieval architecture, and which started in the 18th century. The home of Horace Walpole is said to be the first documented building using the revived Gothic architecture ("Gothic Revival"), but not only did Walpole live in a house that set the scene of the Gothic Revival, he also published what is said to be the first Gothic story: *The Castle of Otranto*, written in 1764.

The first novel of the Gothic genre may have been written by a man but the genre soon became known as a female genre where the majority of Gothic writers and Gothic readers were women (Berglund 26). One of the most successful writers of the genre was Ann Radcliffe; she published several novels, including *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). Below is a passage from this novel:

> As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper, as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while

> the battlements above were still tipped with splendor. From those, too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with solemn duskiness of evening. Silent, lonely and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all, who dared to invade its solitary reign. (227)

Udolpho is described in an elegant way, using light and colors to create a sense of serenity and magnificence. The lengthy way in which Radcliffe describes scenery has become a key factor in the characteristics of the Gothic novel (Berglund 24). Many novelists after Radcliffe, including Charlotte Brontë and Daphne du Maurier, have adopted this way of writing either fully or partially. The descriptive scenery often focuses on a specific building, for example the castle of Udolpho in Radcliffe's novel, because it is a fundamental part of the Gothic as it helps bring out fear in the characters of the novel, and, in many cases, the reader. The Gothic novel is a story of fright, and the fright is usually connected to the building. In many Gothic novels there is also an element of the supernatural; sometimes the central house of the story is indeed haunted, but other times the readers is left to wonder whether or not it really is. One example of such a Gothic story is Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), where the reader is presented with an unreliable narrator who makes it difficult to know for sure if the ghosts she sees are actually there or if it is all in her mind.

The Gothic novel can also be used in a political sense. The genre can be used to see what life was like for women in, primarily, the 19th century. As the Gothic is a genre that was dominated by female writers, it is interesting to look at how characters are portrayed and how they act. Donna Heiland defines the Gothic novel as "[a story] of transgression" where "the transgressive acts […] focus on corruption of, or resistance to, the patriarchal structure" and where fear is created through the involvement of the sublime (5). The sublime can be expressed through the use of scenery and setting; it can be argued that women writers used the Gothic novel to express feelings and opinions that were otherwise supposed to be suppressed, and, thereby, fighting the patriarchal structure. Jerrold E. Hogle writes:

> The longevity and power of the Gothic fiction unquestionably stem from the way it 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, throughout the history of western culture since the eighteenth century (4).

When reading Gothic novels it is, therefore, not only possible to see the individual struggles that female writers faced but also to identify patterns of opinions among the general female population by looking at what was written as well as how it was written. Although the female writers of the genre do not represent the entirety of women of the time, they provide a good sample of what their situation might have looked like. As previously stated, the majority of Gothic readers were women, which is something that could serve as an indication that the women related to what they chose to read, even if it was subconsciously. It was common for the protagonist of the Gothic novel to be portrayed as a woman who broke away from the Victorian stereotype. In Virginia Woolf's paper "Professions for Women" she gave the woman who conformed to the Victorian ideology a name: The Angel in the House. The Angel was described as someone who was sympathetic, charming, and unselfish, someone who put her family first, and someone who is beautiful and pure. Woolf talks about how this Angel would hover over her shoulders whenever she sat down to write; the Angel would tell her: "never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own" (150). Toward the end of the 19th century the woman who broke away from the stereotype was named the New Woman. She was an "outspoken, independent, and thoroughly modern woman" (Hogle 199). As the Gothic novel presents a female protagonist who breaks away from the norm it seems reasonable that women who could not live outside the norm would enjoy reading about women who could.

3. Bertha Mason

When reading *Jane Eyre* it is most definitely a surprise to most readers when Jane finds out about the first wife of her husband-to-be. Mr. Rochester is at first glance an interesting and, to some extent, a likeable man. Despite his rude behavior toward Jane there is something that makes us wish for their happy ending. Mr. Rochester looks past Jane's plain and ugly surface and appreciates her for her personality; he sees her for who she truly is. Then we find out about Mr. Rochester's existing marriage and the imprisonment of his wife, and although Jane's heart still longs for his love, she leaves him and Thornfield. The novel eventually comes to a happy end, at least for Jane and Mr. Rochester. For Bertha Mason, on the other hand, the story ends in tragedy. Reading the novel a second time provides a very different experience, and even though the first impression of Mr. Rochester was a pleasant one, it is difficult to look past some of his behavior – especially in regards to Bertha, but also to Jane.

Mental illness can certainly put a strain on a relationship, not to mention a marriage. Today there are means to help a person suffering and the general stigma about mental illness has decreased significantly over the last decade, which allows people to be more open about how they are feeling. This was not the case in the 19th century. As previously mentioned, the Angel in the House was the model woman. From what Mr. Rochester tells Jane, Bertha is anything but angelic; Bertha is a lunatic. Prior to her imprisonment she was wild, coarse, and ungovernable. She would talk back at him, and her temper is described as unreasonable. She simply does not conform to the standards of what a woman and particularly a wife should be like. It is very easy to blame Mr. Rochester for oppressing a mentally ill woman, but it is also important to acknowledge that in the same way that women were expected to play a certain role, men conformed to a role that had been formed by society. The man was the one in the relationship who was supposed to take control and be the dominating one, and it was easy for him to do so if the woman played her role as the Angel. So when Bertha breaks away from playing the Angel, it puts a strain on the marriage.

Although Bertha's outbreaks did not start immediately, Mr. Rochester explains to Jane that Bertha was always incompetent and unable to carry out a proper conversation with him. "Her cast of mind", he says, was "common, low, narrow, and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher, expanded to anything larger" (Brontë 368). Her opinions did not agree with his; they were "coarse and trite, perverse and imbecile" (Brontë 369). It is worth mentioning that Bertha's mental status was not yet established at this point in their marriage. Mr. Rochester was merely displeased with Bertha not being the wife that she was supposed to be and this caused him strong feelings of annoyance. The strain on their relationship starts in the difference of taste and opinion, or rather, Bertha not adjusting her taste and repressing her opinions. There was already mental illness in Bertha's family, which could have made her more prone to becoming mentally ill herself, but the feelings of isolation caused by a marriage in which your husband grows cold and vexed, and where you are not allowed to express your feelings and opinions could also have been the cause of her declining mental health. Seeing Mr. Rochester growing more distant might have caused Bertha to seek attention in order to ease the feeling of isolation, which would explain the "continued outbreaks" and her "exacting orders" (Brontë 369).

It is clear that Bertha's actions at the time of the novel are bad. She leaves her room in the attic to set fire to Mr. Rochester's bed and to tear Jane's wedding veil, and she bites her brother when he visits her (Brontë 373). At first glance these acts seem vile, but looking at them in greater depth shows that they are not quite as atrocious as they first appear. One reason as to

why Bertha set fire to Mr. Rochester's bed may well be to punish him for having emotionally abused her and locked her up in the attic – it seems safe to say that Mr. Rochester has not treated his wife right. Furthermore, Mr. Rochester describes Bertha as a "madwoman" (Brontë 362), and it is understandable that she is mad, not just in terms of mental illness, but in terms of emotions. Bertha's behavior is, however, to some extent justified as she only harms the ones who have harmed her. Her "demoniac laugh" (Brontë 176) could serve as an indication that her actions were intentional, which does give reason for Mr. Rochester calling her a lunatic. Nonetheless, Bertha's first encounter with Jane, where there is no laughing, further strengthens that Bertha only wishes to harm people who have harmed her, as opposed to being a lunatic.

When Jane tells Mr. Rochester about the woman she has seen the night before their wedding, she describes the woman as frightful. However, Jane's recollection of the encounter does not seem to indicate that Bertha meant to hurt Jane. "[A] form emerged from the closet; it took the light, held it aloft, and surveyed the garments pendent from the portmanteau […] [She] took my veil from its place: she held it up, gazed at it long, and then she threw it over her own head, and turned to the mirror" (Brontë 340). Looking at the quotation, it can be argued that Bertha is merely reminiscing. After all, the novel suggests that Mr. Rochester did love Bertha once and that their marriage was decent prior to the news about the mental illness in Bertha's family (Brontë 368). Bertha putting on Jane's veil and looking at herself in the mirror seems to indicate that she is reminded of her own time as a bride, i.e. a happier time.

Jane telling Mr. Rochester about her visit from Bertha is another example that shows that Bertha did not intend to harm Jane.

> 'Just at my bedside, the figure stopped: the fiery eyes glared upon me – she thrust up her candle close to my face, and extinguished it under my eyes'
> […]
> 'Who was with you when you revived?'
> 'No one, sir, but the broad day. I rose, bathed my head and face in water, drank a long draught; felt that though enfeebled I was not ill […]'. (Brontë 341)

She tells Mr. Rochester that though she had been very frightened she was not ill, which means that when Bertha acknowledged Jane's presence in the room, she took a look at her and then left her in peace.

Biting her brother, who had married her off to Mr. Rochester, is another example of Bertha acting violently to somebody who has harmed her. It is worth pointing out that the night

when Jane is gathered to help the stabbed Mr. Mason, she, again, hears "a shout of laughter" (Brontë 249), but there is no mention of a laugh during the meeting between Jane and Bertha, which could further indicate that Bertha is not looking to hurt people who have not hurt her.

Another aspect to consider is that Mr. Rochester is indirectly telling Jane how not to be by telling her how awful Bertha was in her role as his wife. As previously stated, Bertha deviates from the female norm of the time, in ways which, made clear by Mr. Rochester, were unacceptable. He disapproves of Bertha voicing her opinion, but what is interesting to notice is that he is intrigued by Jane partly because of her being opinionated (Brontë 155). Something that is worth drawing attention to is that Jane admits to not following Mr. Rochester's train of thought when discussing certain topics (Brontë 162), which, it will be argued, is one of the reasons why Mr. Rochester admires Jane. What Jane does is admitting that she is inferior to Mr. Rochester; she lets him know that she is not as well educated or intelligent as him. The reader is not given Bertha's side of her relationship to Mr. Rochester, and he does not tell Jane whether or not Bertha admitted her inferiority, but based on what is provided in the text I would like to argue that the difference in how the two women talk to Mr. Rochester, one in a coarse manner and the other by admitting weakness, might form his opinion of what is agreeable and what is not. What he is indirectly telling Jane is that as long as she talks in a calm, soft tone, which implies inferiority, she is allowed to express her opinion, because even when she tells him that she does not find him attractive (Brontë 155) he approves of her doing so due the way that she does it. Mr. Rochester also makes it clear to Jane that it is not possible to love a woman who is mad, something that Jane questions. "You speak of her with hate – with vindictive antipathy. It is cruel – she cannot help being mad" (Brontë 362). Mr. Rochester then proceeds to deny that he would hate Jane if she were ill, but Jane has good reason to doubt him. He admits to thinking that he loved Bertha (Brontë 368) and yet he incarcerated her because of disease. He may believe that he will still love Jane if she were to take ill, but he neglected to live by the marriage vows "in sickness and in health" in his marriage to Bertha. Hence, by his actions in his first marriage he has shown Jane that she has to live up to certain standards in order to be worthy of his love.

What is also interesting to notice is the fact that Mr. Rochester calls Jane an angel: "You are my sympathy – my better self – my good angel" (Brontë 379). However, Jane does not entirely conform to the role of the Angel either. Jane has an independent mind and she shows a strong will, both traits that break away from the ideal Victorian woman. Despite Jane doing so, Mr. Rochester praises her and expresses his love for her. So how does he determine which woman is allowed to deviate from the norm and to what extent? Bertha's background appears

to have been the major influencing factor which changed the way that Mr. Rochester viewed her, and we see this change after he tells Jane about him finding out about Bertha's mother being "shut up in a lunatic asylum" (Brontë 368). Prior to this he saw her as a beautiful woman whom he thought he loved, but then he proceeds to criticize her entire nature (Brontë 368). He now blamed her for a marriage he did not want; he felt tricked into it by his father and brother, and now there was the added strain of having been married into a family with mental illness. He was not in control of his life. As a result, Bertha voicing her opinion was considered disagreeable as he could not control her either, and, as argued previously, the isolation that Bertha likely felt pushed her over the edge. Jane, on the other hand, has not been forced upon Mr. Rochester and he wants to marry her out of love rather than obligation, which ultimately means that he approves of her acting outside the norm.

Bertha's sexuality is another aspect to consider. Gilbert and Gubar mention that what shocked the reviewers of the time was the "coarseness and sexuality" (338) in the novel; looking at the portrayal of Bertha it is rather easy to see why they reacted in this way. The words used to describe Bertha are straightforward in saying that she was too sexual; Mr. Rochester describes her as "coarse", "unchaste", and "impure" (Brontë 369) as well as saying that "no professed harlot ever had a fouler vocabulary than she" (Brontë 371). What we do not know though is whether or not she had lovers prior to their marriage. Mr. Rochester seem to imply that she did: "[she] flattered me, and lavishly displayed for my pleasure her charms and accomplishments. […]: my senses were excited; […]: she allured me" (Brontë 367-368). However, it is important to note that "above all […] [the Angel] was pure", "immensely charming" and that "her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty – her blushes, her great grace" (Woolf 150). I would, therefore, like to argue that prior to her marriage Bertha is merely conforming to the role of the Angel; she presents her charm and beauty as she is supposed to do. However, after they marry Bertha does take on lovers. Mr. Rochester says to Jane: "[that] woman, who has […] so sullied your name, so outraged your honour" (Brontë 372). In the 19th century 'honor' referred to a woman's infidelity (LDOCEOnline), so we know that Bertha has been unfaithful to Mr. Rochester. That Mr. Rochester feels that he is not in control has previously been established, and her infidelity is another part of Bertha that he cannot control; as she grows more ill and her vulgarity increases, her similarities to the Angel disappear and she becomes more and more difficult to control. Mr. Rochester was not in control when presented with a wife, and he lacks control in the marriage; locking up his wife in the attic is his final attempt to take back control.

The first proper introduction to Bertha is the night she sets fire to Mr. Rochester's bed. I would like to argue that the continuous sexual tension between Jane and Mr. Rochester is a use of the Gothic. The tension is, for example, represented by the fire that Bertha lights, and when Jane pours the cold water on the fire it can be seen as a representation of Brontë suppressing her own subconscious desires in regards to lust. Women's lust was not supposed to be shown which gives reason to believe that Brontë used the "unchaste" (369) Bertha Mason as a representation of how not to act even if the author is not aware of doing so. Gilbert and Gubar claim that "*Jane Eyre* parodies […] the nightmare confessional mode of the gothic genre […] to tell its distinctively female story of enclosure and escape, with a 'morbidly vivid' escape dream acted out by an apparently 'gothic' lunatic who functions as the more sedate heroine's double" (314). There are elements that make Bertha's appearances in the novel seem nightmare-like. For example, Bertha's "demoniac laugh – low, suppressed, and deep" coming from behind the panels" (Brontë 176). What is also interesting to note is that the relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester cannot evolve without Bertha's escape, i.e. her suicide. Brontë cannot allow Jane and Mr. Rochester to be together until she has eliminated the subconscious that acts by instinct.

As previously mentioned, the Gothic novel more often than not puts focus on the setting and on a specific building. In the case of *Jane Eyre* this building is Thornfield Hall. The following quotation shows Jane's first encounter with Thornfield. "About ten minutes after, the driver got down and opened a pair of gates; we passed through, and they clashed behind us. We now slowly ascended a drive, and came upon the long front of a house: candle-light gleamed from one curtained bow-window; all the rest were dark" (Brontë 111). There are a couple of things to acknowledge; the first one is the tension and sense of mystery that is created. There are several words that help convey this, for example 'clashed', 'slowly', and 'dark'. As the gates clash behind Jane, Thornfield is put in focus as it is the only thing in front of her, which makes it more intriguing. The slow drive builds up the suspense further, and the fact that there is barely any light makes Thornfield even more of a mystery.

The second thing to acknowledge is the resemblance to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. During the protagonist's first encounter with the castle of Udolpho the following descriptions are given: "[…] the gloom, that overspread it, allowed her to distinguish little more than a part of its outline", "[the] gateway before her, leading into the courts, was of gigantic size", "[as] the carriage-wheels rolled heavily under the portcullis, Emily's heart sunk, and she seems, as if she was going into her prison" (Radcliffe 227). Even though Brontë has not made Jane's first look at Thornfield frightful there are similarities to Radcliffe's novel, which, if one is familiar

with her novel, may influence one's feelings and interpretations of the first encounter with Thornfield. Not much later in the novel Jane passes the attic where Bertha is locked up and says, "the attic seemed black as a vault compared with that arch of blue air to which I had been looking up" (Brontë 125); the darkness is used to contrast the outside, and put further emphasis on the mystery of Thornfield.

What is interesting to note is that even though *Jane Eyre* can be interpreted as a Gothic novel, it sometimes puts a twist on things to make the reader wonder whether or not it actually is a Gothic novel. One example of this is that when Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper of Thornfield, shows Jane around at Thornfield, Jane acknowledges a laugh and is told that it is only Grace, one of the servants. "[…]; and, but that it was high noon, and that no circumstance of ghostliness accompanied the curious cachination; but that neither scene nor season favoured fear, I should have been superstitiously afraid. However, the event showed me I was a fool for entertaining a sense even of surprise" (Brontë 126). Jane tells the reader that she was in fact a bit frightened but makes note of the fact that it is mid-day and that since Grace actually appears, Jane should have no reason to be scared. Nonetheless, mystique is created. During Jane's time at Thornfield we are left to wonder why Grace is laughing and running around the halls at night, and this aspect of the novel is not resolved until we find out that it was, in fact, Bertha who was the 'ghost' of Thornfield.

4. Rebecca de Winter

One key aspect in *Rebecca* is control and the lack thereof. The novel was written almost a hundred years after *Jane Eyre* but the standards for women that have previously been discussed are applicable for *Rebecca* as well. One way in which Rebecca de Winter broke away from the female norm was by blatant infidelity. Mr. de Winter implies, when telling the protagonist about his first wife, that she had several sexual relations outside of their marriage. He accepted her behavior simply in order to avoid a scandal about Manderley (du Maurier 307-308), which indicates that he lacked control over his wife and the rules of their marriage. Rebecca knew that Manderley was what her husband cared most about, which means that she was able to set the rules; she knew that she could commit infidelity without consequences as long as she was discreet about it. This also allowed her to show off her devious side, as she seemed to get bored or, as Mr. de Winter calls it, "careless" (du Maurier 308) after a few years of marriage, so she started bringing her "friends" to Manderley, parading them around in front of her husband

during parties so that he would not know whom she had actually had sex with (du Maurier 308). This was a further way for Rebecca to show that she was the one in control. She got away with it, once again, because she knew that her husband would not do anything to jeopardize the reputation of Manderley.

What is also interesting in regards to Rebecca's sexuality is the impact it has had on Mr. de Winter in terms of his second marriage. Teresa Petersen writes in her essay "Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*: The Shadow and the Substance" that "[Mr. de Winter's] anxiety concerning [the protagonist's] adult female sexuality makes it necessary for him to keep her infantilised". The example Petersen provides is that Mr. de Winter frowns upon the protagonist dressing in black satin and wearing pearls around her neck, i.e. dressing like Rebecca. This demonstrates how he wants his second wife to be very different from his first wife; he wants her to be childlike in order to feel that he is the one in control. In order for him to feel this is the case he needs his wife to be innocent and, to some extent, clueless – both traits that Rebecca did not possess – because then there is no risk of his new wife creating a scandal about Manderley. However, the protagonist remarks on the fact that he treats her like a child:

> 'I wish you would not treat me as if I was six,' I said.
> 'How do you want to be treated?'
> 'Like other men treat their wives.' (du Maurier 227)

It is understandable that the protagonist wants to be treated like an adult but to Mr. de Winter, there is too much of a resemblance to Rebecca in a woman who has "a twist to [her] mouth and a flash of knowledge in [her] eyes" (du Maurier 226). Margaret Mitchell argues in her essay "'Beautiful creatures': The Ethics of Female Beauty in Daphne du Maurier's Fiction" that the knowledge that Mr. de Winter is referring to is likely sexual. He wants her to stay childlike and innocent, since Rebecca was neither, but in his eyes the protagonist's innocence is ruined when she is told the truth. He tells her: "It's gone forever, that funny, young, lost look that I loved. It won't come back again. I killed that too, when I told you about Rebecca… It's gone, in twenty-four hour. You are so much older…" (du Maurier 336). Mr. de Winter felt that he was lacking control in his marriage to Rebecca and attempts to regain control by infantilizing his second wife, but ultimately failing to do so.

It could be argued that Mr. de Winter finally gains the control he needs when he kills Rebecca. Killing someone seems to be the ultimate way of achieving power, as you take away their ability to live their life. However, I would argue that Rebecca was the one who decided to

end her life and, thus, took control of her fate. One indication of this is the fact that she insinuated, right before being killed, that she was pregnant and that Manderley's heir would be her illegitimate son, when she, in truth, was fatally ill (du Maurier 412). Rebecca was already aware that she was ill but instead of suffering she decided to end her life on her own terms, i.e. by manipulating her husband to the point where he shot her.

> She turned round and faced me, smiling, one hand in her pocket, the other holding her cigarette. When I killed her she was smiling still. I fired at her heart. The bullet passed right through. She did not fall at once. She stood there, looking at me, that slow smile on her face, her eyes wide open… (du Maurier 313)

The fact that Rebecca was still smiling when she was killed implies that she knew what to say in order to make her husband cross the line between anger and homicide. She was not surprised by his actions as she knew that he would go to extreme measures to keep his beloved Manderley safe and intact, and that is why she continued to smile. "Rebecca knew she would win in the end. I saw her smile, when she died" (du Maurier 316). Rebecca knew that she had limited time left and, therefore, she decided to play one last game to show her husband who was really in control. She let him kill her and, in turn, left him with debilitating feelings of guilt and possible murder charges.

Similar to what was seen in *Jane Eyre*, Mr. de Winter indirectly tells the protagonist how to act by telling her about the despicable predecessor. I would like to argue that in doing this he is attempting to take control of his relationship with the protagonist: "[Rebecca] was vicious, damnable, rotten through and through […] [She] was incapable of love, of tenderness, of decency" (du Maurier 304). Not only does he express his hatred toward his first wife in those words, but he is also, by saying what she was incapable of, suggesting what qualities the protagonist should possess. Even if Mr. de Winter does not actually tell her how she needs to act, she will know, by the ways in which he portrays Rebecca, that in order to avoid having a husband who hates her, she should aim at being Rebecca's opposite. We have seen above that Rebecca acted out her sexual desires; the protagonist will also, as well as possessing certain qualities, have to suppress her own sexual desires in order to avoid the fate that Rebecca suffered.

Another thing that I would like to point to in terms of Mr. de Winter indirectly telling the protagonist how to act is what he says next: "She was not even normal" (du Maurier 304). This statement is significant as it explicitly states that Rebecca's behavior was outside the

female norm. Rebecca enjoyed herself to an extent that was possible; publicly, she maintained her reputation as an elegant socialite and an impeccable hostess, but on the side, in her private life, she made sure to live her life to her own satisfaction. Even though she looked like the 20th century version of the Angel to everyone else, she refused to live like that and made sure her husband knew it. To him, it is not enough that she played charades when they were around other people, and, therefore, she was not normal. By saying that Rebecca was not normal, he clearly conveys his expectations of the protagonist.

The relationship between the protagonist and her predecessor is mainly built on the protagonist's envy of the concept of the perfect woman. Throughout the novel we see the protagonist comparing herself to Rebecca and all that she was as seen in this passage where some neighbors have paid a visit to the newly-weds:

> I could picture them saying to one another as they drove away, 'My dear, what a dull girl. She scarcely opened her mouth,' and then the sentence I had first heard upon Beatrice's lips, haunting me ever since, a sentence I read in every eye, on every tongue – 'She's so different from Rebecca'. (du Maurier 137)

To most people in the novel, the protagonist likely does seem dull as she is neither as beautiful nor as outgoing as Rebecca was, but in the case of Beatrice, her sister-in-law, her calling the protagonist different is a great compliment, as Beatrice abhorred Rebecca, something which the protagonist does not realize because of her envy toward the beautiful woman. She assumes that she has to act and look like Rebecca in order to be liked, since she has only heard positive things about her husband's first wife. It is not enough for her to be married to Mr. de Winter, but she continuously compares herself to Rebecca and sees herself as the lesser woman, the woman that does not belong. For example, when sitting by Rebecca's desk she "[feels] guilty suddenly and deceitful, as though [she is] staying in somebody else's house" and touching things "which [she has] no right to touch" (du Maurier 95).

Her feeling that she does not belong and her constant longing to be a beautiful woman make her both vulnerable and gullible. She is tricked by Mrs. Danvers, the housekeeper at Manderley, into dressing up as Rebecca did the year before (du Maurier 222-223), and when she does, it is clear that she feels more beautiful than she ever has: "I twisted and turned in front of the mirror, I frowned, I smiled. I felt different already, no longer hampered by my appearance. My own dull personality was submerged at last" (du Maurier 236). The protagonist only feels accomplished once she has gotten into costume, playing the beautiful woman, and

playing a character that she feels she needs to play in order for her husband to truly love and appreciate her.

Another question to ask is: who is truly in control in the marriage between the protagonist and Mr. de Winter? It is clear that Mr. de Winter is attempting to take back the control he did not have in his first marriage, but I would like to argue that it is the protagonist who actually has it. Although she is not in control at the beginning of the novel, her control grows as the novel progresses. One indication of this is that she eventually tells her husband that she is not pleased with his way of treating her as a child.

When the protagonist learns the truth about Rebecca's and Mr. de Winter's marriage she seems to reach a peak. A calm falls over her when she realizes that Rebecca was not as perfect as she initially believed. She takes control over the situation and asks the questions needed in order to come up with a plan for how to clear her husband of any charges (du Maurier 316-317). With the fact that she is the only one who knows for certain that her husband killed Rebecca, she also has the power to put him in jail if she wants to. Furthermore, as she is the one who is able to take away Rebecca's control over Mr. de Winter, she finally becomes the superior of the two women. She no longer yearns to be Rebecca and she has realized that the more different to Rebecca she is, the better. In fact, one could argue that the protagonist is more like Rebecca at the end of the novel, when she does not try to be, than when she is wearing the same dress as her predecessor. Nonetheless, Rebecca is no longer able to control either Mr. de Winter or the protagonist as they have left Rebecca in the past. "The devil does not ride [them] anymore" (du Maurier 5).

Daphne du Maurier has, like Charlotte Brontë, incorporated Gothic elements into her novel. "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again" (du Maurier 1). As previously mentioned, the building or house is often a significant part of the Gothic novel and in du Maurier's novel the very first sentence puts emphasis on the mansion, and the chapter continues with a thorough description of the building and its surroundings: "There was Manderley, our Manderley, secretive and silent as it had always been" (du Maurier 2). The description implies that there is something mysterious about the place. As the protagonist describes Manderley as "secretive and silent" we understand that something happened there, but we are left to wonder what. It is also interesting to look at her feelings about Manderley. She seems to respect the house greatly but there is also fear, something which she acknowledges when recalling her dream. "The house was a sepulchre, our fear and suffering lay buried in the ruins" (du Maurier 4). As the novel progresses, the mystique heightens. When the protagonist first goes to the boathouse, the descriptive scenery creates an uncanny feeling. "There was a queer musty smell

about the place. Cobwebs spun threads upon the ships' models, making their own ghostly rigging. […] It was damp in the cottage, damp and chill. Dark, and oppressive. I did not like it. I had no wish to stay there" (du Maurier 126). The boathouse makes her, as well as the reader, uneasy and one cannot help but wonder why and what the significance of this place is. She also contrasts Manderley with the outside.

> There were no dark trees here, no tangled undergrowth, but on either side of the narrow path stood azaleas and rhododendrons, not blood-coloured like the giants in the drive, but salmon, white, and gold, things of beauty and of grace, drooping their lively, delicate heads in the soft summer rain. (du Maurier 121)

The name of the place she describes is called "The Happy Valley", which, by contrast, adds to the feeling that Manderley is not as happy and peaceful as it is thought to be by the locals. The protagonist needs to leave the house in order to find serenity, but still she dreams of it after it is gone.

The Gothic is also visible in the way that the subconscious is present. It has been discussed above that the protagonist longs to be Rebecca and longs to be beautiful, but it is not explicitly said in the novel that this is what she wants. Nonetheless, she behaves in a way that indicates that her deepest desire is to be beautiful and, in her opinion, good enough for Mr. de Winter. An example of when this is implied is when she finds Rebecca's bedroom and looks at herself in the mirror: "[the] reflection stared back at me, sallow and plain" (du Maurier 187). It is important that she is standing in the room belonging to her predecessor as it contrasts the beauty of the two. It is possible that, similar to the analysis made on Brontë's subconscious desires, du Maurier wants to give her hidden anxieties a place to exist. She creates Rebecca, the beautiful and bad woman, and contrasts her with the plain and ugly protagonist. Through Rebecca she can deal with her possible insecurities as the lesser woman as well as her own lust. Then, by killing Rebecca, she lets the plain woman win.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of *Jane Eyre* suggests that Mr. Rochester's and Bertha's marriage is strained by several factors. One of the reasons is that Bertha, by being mentally ill, breaks away from the role as the Angel. Mr. Rochester treats Bertha unfairly but this is, to some extent, justified in

the text as he conformed to the male role of the time, which was shaped by the role of the Angel. Mr. Rochester feels that he is not in control when marrying Bertha and he battles with the lack of control when her mental health declines. We also see that Bertha certainly acts badly by hurting Mr. Rochester and Mr. Mason, but it could be argued that she does so as revenge. She does not hurt Jane even when she has the chance, which shows that Bertha, albeit mentally ill, angry, and aggressive, is perhaps not quite as bad as one may first assume; she only hurts people who, in her mind, deserve to be hurt. Bertha's and Mr. Rochester's relationship tells Jane how not to act and behave, but Jane and Bertha are not as different as it might seem at first glance. They are similar in terms of acting outside the female norm. Another aspect that was considered is Bertha's sexuality; Mr. Rochester suggests that Bertha had lovers prior to her marriage, but I offer a different analysis, namely that she was conforming to the role of the Angel. However, Bertha did have lovers outside of her marriage, which was another factor that Mr. Rochester could not control.

In the analysis of *Rebecca*, I have argued that Rebecca's infidelity caused strong insecurities in Mr. de Winter; he was not in control and because of the alleged pregnancy, he killed her. The lack of control also has an impact on his second marriage, where he feels the need to infantilize his wife in order to feel that he is in control. The protagonist wants to be treated as an adult, which her husband fails to do; the analysis suggests that the reason for this is that Mr. de Winter does not want the protagonist to resemble Rebecca. I then argued that the protagonist is the one who ends up being in control after all. Even though Mr. de Winter seems to prefer her to be childlike, she grows up and becomes the one in control after she realizes that Rebecca was not as perfect as she had initially thought. At the beginning of the novel the protagonist tries to be Rebecca – she constantly compares herself to her predecessor, and belittles herself – but she no longer feels the need to do so once she gains control over her husband's fate. She takes away the control from both Mr. de Winter and Rebecca. It is clear that Rebecca acted badly, but the essay suggests that she was only trying to live her life outside the female norm within her marriage but at the same time conforming to it to the public eye, which, in turn, does not necessarily make her as bad as it first seems.

Both Charlotte Brontë and Daphne du Maurier have used Gothic elements in their novels. They both create mystique by incorporating descriptions of the environment, which creates suspense in the reader. In *Jane Eyre* we see similarities to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, considered one of the first Gothic novels; Jane's first encounter of Thornfield shares a resemblance to Emily's drive to Udolpho. In *Rebecca*, Manderley is the source of fear in the protagonist, and this is contrasted with the places outside the house.

Another way in which the Gothic is used in the authors' novels is by the creation of a bad woman as an outlet for their own subconscious anxieties. The analysis suggests that Brontë has created Bertha as an outlet for her own sexual desires; Jane pouring out fire with cold water could be seen as a symbol for the suppression of lust. In the analysis of *Rebecca* it was suggested that du Maurier created the beautiful woman in order to kill her and let the plain woman win. To finalize, possible expansions of this essay could include a thorough biographical analysis to see to what extent the authors' own feelings of inadequacy are incorporated into the plain protagonists and to what extent the bad woman is a reflection of their insecurities.

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