

How do the Gothic novels *Rebecca* and *Jane Eyre* show that gender roles and expectations have turned human beings into monsters created by patriarchy?

When one thinks of Gothic monsters, “the supernatural realm of ghosts and spirits, of revenants and vampires” might come to mind, or the “animated Corse” of the Bleeding Nun from Lewis’ *The Monk*, or the “vile insect” of Victor Frankenstein’s creation.¹ However, human beings have the capacity to become as monstrous as their supernatural counterparts when certain restrictions such as patriarchy and gender roles are placed upon them. In both Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Daphne du Maurier’s *Rebecca* (1938), a lot of the characters struggle with the roles expected of them in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.² Jane repeatedly speaks out and stands up for herself in the faces of authority such as John Reed and Mr Brocklehurst, who both conform to patriarchal expectations, and Bertha is dehumanised because she rejects her marriage to Rochester, repeatedly trying to escape the attic that he has confined her to. Rochester and Maxim, the brooding Gothic hero-villains of the respective novels, have a lot in common in that as men, they are reinforcers of patriarchy, but also in the fact that they have both demonised their first wives. Maxim kills Rebecca as she becomes a threat to Manderley, and Rochester is deceptive and manipulative in his attempts to marry Jane. Patriarchy also restricts and cages Rebecca and her desires, and Mrs Danvers’, whose relationship with Rebecca bordered on the homoerotic, turning both of them monstrous in the eyes of the narrator. This essay will also examine how women, especially the second Mrs de Winter, conform to patriarchal expectations because it gives them power, as Maxim is the only way she can be powerful.

When analysing Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and Du Maurier’s *Rebecca* in terms of patriarchal restrictions, it is important to understand where women and women writers are situated within the Gothic genre. Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, “often called the first Gothic novel” struggled to explain the terrible experiences of women, especially Isabella, and it was Ann Radcliffe who first “sought to give voice” to women’s terror in her series of Gothic romances in the late 1780s.³ After this, women writers began to “redirect the Gothic’s lens to the figure of the persecuted heroine”, focussing on their space within the genre and using it “to engage in a variety of important cultural debates” such as “patriarchal authority and institutions”.⁴ It discussed and explored “women’s vexed experiences of love and romance, and the multifaceted ideology of femininity, [with a focus] particularly [on] the constraining roles advocated for women and the institutions of marriage and motherhood”.⁵ This relates to patriarchal expectations as women are expected to behave and live a certain way, a way that Bertha and Jane, despite Jane’s ultimate marriage to Rochester, vehemently reject. Rebecca also rejects the role of the married woman and suffers consequently, whereas the narrator of the novel does not and accepts it. In the context of *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*, the female

¹ Marie Mulvey-Roberts, *The Handbook to Gothic Literature* (Macmillan, 1998): 39; Matthew Lewis, *The Monk* (Oxford World’s Classics, 2016): 124; Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1993): 77.

² Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Penguin Classics, 2006); Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca* (Virago Press, 2015).

³ Michael Gamer, “Introduction”, in *The Castle of Otranto* (Penguin Group, 2001): xxiii; Carol Margaret Davison, “The Female Gothic”, in *History of the Gothic: Gothic Literature 1764—1824*, ed. Andrew Smith and Benjamin F. Fisher (University of Wales Press, 2009): 84.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 84; 85.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

Gothic is important in the way that it gave a voice to women authors and their anxieties, and how the pressure of conformity to patriarchy can turn them and men monstrous in the eyes of society.

In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Jane is monstered because she continually reinstates her independence against patriarchy. As a child, she bravely defends herself against John Reed when he reprimands her, describing him as a "wicked and cruel boy [...] you are like a murderer [...] you are like the Roman emperors", with "murderer" and "Roman emperor" reflecting on how he controls her like an "emperor" and kills her freedom to read.⁶ The fact he is a man highlights Jane's resistance to male authority; Pell points out that John's "position as sole male heir gives him an absolute power to harass his dependent female cousin", and by Jane biting back, she is defying and challenging this power, making her monstrous as he is her male superior, and she is not supposed to talk back to him.⁷ She continues to challenge male power as an adult, as when Rochester's love begins to stifle her, she pushes back, telling him, "I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you".⁸ "Bird" insinuates that she will not be captured and kept as a pet to sing in a cage, and "net" alludes to Brontë's anxieties of marriage as a trap, especially with the verb "ensnares". Declaring herself a "free human" with "independent will" shows Jane wants to be in control of her own decisions, and the phrase "which I now exert" leaves no room for negotiation and indicates her mind is set. Wyatt refers to "readers like Rich and Lazarre, [who] report [...] becom[ing] attached to Jane Eyre because they found there something not provided by family and culture": "a girl continuously, defiantly asserting her right to be herself", which is why *Jane Eyre* can be read as a Female Gothic novel, as Brontë repeatedly gives Jane a voice in a world saturated with male dominance and patriarchal expectations.⁹ However, at the end of the novel, Jane declares, "Reader, I married him", insinuating that, unlike Rebecca and Bertha, Jane gave into patriarchy, and submitted herself to the married role expected of women.¹⁰ She becomes "[his] neighbour, [his nurse], his [housekeeper]", and these nouns indicate she has subdued her monstrous behaviour in order to become Rochester's servant, bringing into question whether marriage is a happy ending for Jane.¹¹ She has to leave behind her independence to serve her husband, and do what patriarchy expects of her.

Unlike Jane, Bertha refuses to be a submissive wife. She is monstered to such an extent that she internalises this and turns into one, becoming a victim of patriarchal control and expectation. Figs highlights that "in the Gothic novel, the house changes from being a symbol of male privilege and protection [...] to an image of male power in its [most] sinister aspect, threatening and oppressive", as Rochester imprisons Bertha for her madness and promiscuity, isolating her from society.¹² The house is no longer a safe place, but a prison, and Bertha has become crazed, regressing into such an animalistic state that Jane struggles to tell whether she is

⁶ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 13.

⁷ Nancy Pell, "Resistance, Rebellion, and Marriage: The Economics of Jane Eyre," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 31, no. 4 (March 1977): 400.

⁸ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 293.

⁹ Jean Wyatt, "A Patriarch of One's Own: Jane Eyre and Romantic Love," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 4, no. 2 (Autumn 1985): 201.

¹⁰ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 517.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 502.

¹² Eva Figs, *Sex and Subterfuge: Women Writers to 1850* (Macmillan Press, 1982): 74.

“beast or human”.¹³ In her room, “a figure ran backwards and forwards”, indicating the habit of a distressed, wild animal in a zoo trying to escape its confines.¹⁴ Small draws attention to the “wide range of zoological comparisons” Bertha is compared to, such as a “hyena” and “a tigress”, which Small continues to say is evident of “the madwoman’s reduction to bestiality”, indicating her monstrousness as she no longer resembles a human.¹⁵ What further emphasises this is her inability to speak, as Jane describes her “grovelling”, “bellow[ing]”, “laugh[ing]”, like she cannot form words anymore.¹⁶ However, the fire she sets in Rochester’s room, where “tongues of flame darted around the bed”, implies that this is her way of expressing herself.¹⁷ Beattie suggests “the fire [...] becomes her voice”, as the noun “tongues” implies language, and the flames are her way of showing her passion and anger at being contained, but also refusing to be controlled, as fire spreads rapidly.¹⁸ It reflects on Thornfield burning down at the end, Bertha’s final attempt to burst free from her confines, which she achieves; she “gave a spring, and the next minute she lay smashed on the pavement” below, “brains and blood [...] scattered”.¹⁹ Ellis explains that “the task of the Gothic heroine is to escape from the [house] that has become her prison”, which Bertha does; however, it is at the cost of her life.²⁰ Through this, Brontë is showing that only through death can women who refuse to conform to patriarchy escape its expectations, “smash[ing]” themselves brutally to pieces.

Edward Rochester, Brontë’s mysterious Gothic hero-villain, is deceitful and manipulative, and becomes monstrous in his attempts to conceal his marriage to Bertha from Jane. Gilbert and Gubar point out that “his name, apparently, is an allusion to the dissolute Earl of Rochester”, a poet and member of Charles II’s court.²¹ Although Brontë’s Rochester is not a drunkard or brawler, it suggests that she is trying to give him a darker resonance, hinting that he is not as chivalrous as he seems. Hints of his monstrous character seep into Thornfield, as the passage where he has imprisoned Bertha reminds Jane of “a corridor in some Bluebeard’s castle”, “narrow, low, and dim”, with “Bluebeard” a direct allusion to Angela Carter’s tale, subtly hinting at his real personality and veiled monstrosity.²² He is a man of secrets, using his knowledge as a way to have power over Jane. He begins this at their first meeting when he asks, “whose house is it?” and “do you know Mr Rochester?”, revealing himself to be untruthful and dishonest as he chooses to keep his identity hidden, highlighting his position in patriarchy and power over women.²³ He has many layers to him, such as when he “take[s] off the red cloak” and “step[s] out of his disguise” as the fortune-teller, the noun “disguise” suggesting that it is hard to tell who is the real Rochester and

¹³ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 338.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 338.

¹⁵ Helen Small, *Love’s Madness: Medicine, the Novel, and Female Insanity* (Clarendon Press, 1996):159; Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 338, 245.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 338.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁸ Valerie Beattie, “The Mystery at Thornfield: Representations of Madness in ‘Jane Eyre’,” *Studies in the Novel* 28, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 501.

¹⁹ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 493.

²⁰ Kate Ferguson Ellis, “Can You Forgive Her? The Gothic Heroine and Her Critics,” in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Blackwell Publishers, 2000): 263.

²¹ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (Yale University Press, 2020): 354.

²² Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 126.

²³ *Ibid.*, 135.

who is not, making him incredibly untrustworthy.²⁴ His true monstrous self comes to light as the novel progresses; Zare argues that “with each new appearance, Rochester reveals that he is obsessed with proving his absolute power over women”, especially with how he deals with Bertha.²⁵ He blames it all on Grace Poole, content to let Jane believe that she is the “fearful and ghastly” “spectre” that tore her veil apart, telling her “that woman was—must have been—Grace Poole”, showing his monstrosity as he does not hesitate to lie and manipulate Jane to keep up pretences.²⁶ After his marriage to Bertha is revealed, the way Rochester says “*my wife*” seems to be spat out, the italics suggestive of contempt and disgust, as if it pains him to refer to Bertha in such a way.²⁷ It reaches a high point when he is explaining to Jane his marriage history, and he seems to briefly lose his polite behaviour, exclaiming “Jane! Will you hear reason? (He stooped and approached his lips to my ear); ‘because, if you won’t, I’ll try violence.’”²⁸ This horrifying declaration exposes Rochester for who he truly is, threatening to rape Jane if she does not hear “reason”, truly bringing forth the manipulative monster he tries to hide. Davies states that “men’s violence against women is treated by Charlotte Brontë with an unashamed openness”; she is not shying away from showing how patriarchy turns men monstrous, and how Rochester expects Jane to submit and obey.²⁹

Other male characters in *Jane Eyre* also expect women to submit and obey, such as Mr Brocklehurst at Lowood. Jane’s first meeting with the man at Gateshead introduces him as like “a black pillar”, his “sable-clad shape standing erect on the rug”.³⁰ Already, this man seems threatening and imposing, and Gilbert and Gubar point out how Brontë is “consistently describ[ing] [him] in phallic terms”, indicating how he is the epitome of patriarchal authority and control.³¹ The way Brocklehurst treats the girls at Lowood is cruel and oppressive, and highlights how he is a monster as he does not care about their health and wellbeing, providing them with “bitter cold” water to wash in and “burnt porridge” to eat.³² He uses religion as a way to exert control over the girls, and Figes comments how “Charlotte Brontë put strong emphasis on the way patriarchal church teaches women to bite the dust” and accept the oppression, leading them to not fight back as they believe it is God’s way.³³ Religion is often critiqued in Gothic novels, and Brontë portrays it to be a tool in oppressing the girls. By saying “I wish these girls to be the children of Grace”, Brocklehurst has complete control over their bodies, indicated when he orders that Julia Severn’s “red hair [...] curled all over” “must be cut off entirely”, reinforcing his patriarchal authority as the girls have to look a certain way.³⁴ The adverb “entirely” suggests all aspects of their personality must be “cut off”, showing Brocklehurst’s monstrosity. He has demonised the concept of girls having an identity and personality, making it seem as if it is bad and evil, as “red” has connotations of temper, the devil and danger. “Curled” insinuates unruliness, and that Julia is

²⁴ Ibid., 234.

²⁵ Bonnie Zare, “*Jane Eyre*’s Excruciating Ending,” *CLA Journal* 37, no. 2 (December 1993): 207.

²⁶ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 327, 328.

²⁷ Ibid., 337.

²⁸ Ibid., 349.

²⁹ Stevie Davies, “Introduction”, in *Jane Eyre* (Penguin Classics, 2006): xix.

³⁰ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 38.

³¹ Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 344.

³² Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 53, 55.

³³ Figes, *Sex and Subterfuge*, 131.

³⁴ Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 75, 76.

defying orders and going against what is expected. He also condemns Jane, humiliating her by forcing her to stand on a stool in front of the school, telling the girls “you must [...] avoid her company, exclude her from sports, and shut her out from your converse”.³⁵ His ability to shame Jane and strip her confidence down, making her feel weak and small, shows the extent of his monstrous behaviour, and the lengths that he will go to ensure he remains in power. Miss Temple is unable to help either; Figes says that “as a woman, she is devoid of power”, and only able to do small things to defy Brocklehurst’s regime, such as providing the girls a lunch of “bread and cheese” and giving them “two clean tuckers a week”.³⁶ Despite this, Brocklehurst maintains a firm grip on his position as a patriarch in Lowood, and uses it to his advantage to dominate over the girls, making him monstrous.

Daphne du Maurier’s character of Rebecca is monstered because she refuses to conform to patriarchal expectations of women, and as such comes across as unnatural and a villain. As a child, Rebecca was bold and assertive; Mrs Danvers says that “she ought to have been a boy” to begin with, as she had “all the courage and spirit” of one and would not let anyone tell her what to do.³⁷ “Courage and spirit” suggests she was not afraid of anything, even her father’s “big brute” of a horse that “the groom told her was too hot to ride.”³⁸ The way Mrs Danvers describes her “slashing at him, drawing blood, digging spurs into his side” is monstrous and cruel, as if she is manic and mad.³⁹ “Slashing” and “digging” are violent adverbs, and the horse can be seen as a metaphor for Rebecca fighting against the positions of women in society, where they were seen as “naturally domestic, maternal creatures”, and instead trying to assert her own place outside of that expectation.⁴⁰

She finally sets this desire properly in motion as an adult after marrying Maxim. He tells the narrator, the second Mrs de Winter, that “she made a bargain with [him]”, promising that “I’ll look after your precious Manderley for you” in return for her independence.⁴¹ Harbord highlights how we then “hear of a Rebecca who rebelled against the conventions of an aristocratic femininity; a woman who wore trousers and shirts, who travelled to London by herself, had her own set of friends separate from her husband and who on occasion slept away from [him]”, indicating that this was her way of trying to break free from societal expectations and the constraining role expected of a woman.⁴² Yet what makes her the most monstrous in the eyes of patriarchy and gender roles, is that “she was not in love with anyone”, and “lovemaking was a game to her.”⁴³ Light argues that this is “a key moment [related to] Rebecca’s unnaturalness, of her refusal to be a good girl and a proper wife”, because women are expected to provide children for their husbands.⁴⁴ If “lovemaking was a game” to her, it insinuates that she never had any intentions of meeting that

³⁵ Ibid., 79.

³⁶ Figes, *Sex and Subterfuge*, 131; Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 74.

³⁷ du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 272.

³⁸ Ibid., 273.

³⁹ Ibid., 273.

⁴⁰ Davison, “The Female Gothic”, 88.

⁴¹ du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 305.

⁴² Janet Harbord, “Between Identification and Desire: Rereading ‘Rebecca,’” *Feminist Review*, no. 53 (Summer 1996): 101.

⁴³ du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 382.

⁴⁴ Alison Light, “Returning to Manderley’—Romance Fiction, Female Sexuality and Class,” *Feminist Review*, no. 16 (Summer 1984): 14.

“primary goal [...] of get[ting] married and bear[ing] children” that was expected of women to begin with, and she used her marriage to Maxim as a way of attempting to assert her own way of life.⁴⁵ Nigro refers to Robin Wood, who argues that Rebecca’s “worst crime was simply that she resisted male definition, asserting her right to define herself and her sexual desires” in a society that tried to stifle it, linking to the Female Gothic genre as Rebecca constantly fights for her own autonomy.⁴⁶ Through this, Du Maurier shows how patriarchy villainises women for wanting control of their own lives, turning Rebecca into a monster.

Mrs Danvers, Manderley’s housekeeper, is monstered because of her grief surrounding Rebecca’s death, and her refusal to admit that she is dead. It is also possible Mrs Danvers had more than a mere friendship with the woman, and maybe even harboured repressed sexual desires for her that make her monstrous, as it strays from the expected and normalised heterosexual relationships within twentieth-century society. From the moment the second Mrs de Winter arrives at Manderley, Mrs Danvers is described in a sinister and ghostly way; with her “prominent cheekbones and great, hollow eyes”, it “gave her a skull’s face” on a “skeleton’s frame”, as if Rebecca’s death has sucked the life from her.⁴⁷ She is still desperately clinging on to the memory of her, so intensely in fact that she even keeps her room the same, as if she never left. Hallett argues that “Mrs Danvers’ portrayal and her relationship to Rebecca and the unnamed second wife [...] is rich in lesbian overtones”, as they conduct what appears to be reminiscent of a ritual in Rebecca’s room, touching all of her clothes and belongings.⁴⁸ When referring to her nightdress, she tells the narrator that “I put it out like this, and the dressing-gown and slippers, just as I put them out for her the night she never came back.”⁴⁹ It is as if Mrs Danvers is in denial that Rebecca is dead, and that some part of her still expects her to walk in through the door like she never left. It is a coping mechanism in order to deal with her grief. It leads her to be cruel to the second Mrs de Winter, telling her “[Rebecca’s] the real Mrs de Winter, not you”, with the adjective “real” insinuating that the narrator is a fake.⁵⁰ Mrs Danvers is so obsessed with Rebecca that she cannot handle the narrator taking her place.

Hallett points out that the “space is erotically charged by the lesbian presence, current and past, and by the touching of erogenous objects”, and through this it implies that Mrs Danvers had an infatuation with Rebecca that was more than heterosexual, as her life is devoted to her even after her death.⁵¹ She also seems to know an awful lot about Rebecca’s sexual identity, declaring that “she despised all men”, with the verb “despised” implying she felt a great disgust for them, and connotes she found love elsewhere, potentially with Mrs Danvers or women down in London.⁵² Perhaps both women’s sexualities could be a reflection on Du Maurier’s own sexual identity; Horner and Zlosnik speculate whether she was either “bisexual, [and] chose to conform

⁴⁵ Davison, “The Female Gothic”, 88.

⁴⁶ Kathleen Butterly Nigro, “Rebecca as Desdemona: ‘A Maid that Paragons Description and Wild Fame,’” *College Literature* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 145.

⁴⁷ du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 74.

⁴⁸ Nicky Hallett, “Did Mrs Danvers Warm Rebecca’s Pearls? Significant Exchanges and the Extension of Lesbian Space and Time in Literature,” *Feminist Review*, no. 74 (2003): 38.

⁴⁹ du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 189.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁵¹ Hallett, “Did Mrs Danvers Warm Rebecca’s Pearls?”, 44.

⁵² du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 382.

to a more conventional gender identity as she grew older”, or “a repressed lesbian”.⁵³ Though it is hard to categorise her identity, *Rebecca* could be Du Maurier’s attempt at trying to grapple with her sexual impulses and her inability to express herself due to patriarchal constraints. Mrs Danvers cannot express her homoerotic desires either; the mere fact of her identifying with Rebecca and being involved with her monsters Mrs Danvers even before Rebecca dies. Coupled with her grief, patriarchy paints her into a monster because she then treats the narrator, Rebecca’s successor, inhumanely and cruelly.

Maxim de Winter becomes monstrous due to the pressure of needing to conform to patriarchal expectations, and it is shown through his violent behaviour. Family is a very important trope within Gothic literature, and Maxim is absolutely obsessed with making sure that Manderley is looked after, and in turn, his family name and history. Even Manderley has “man” in its name, linking further to its patriarchal roots. Maxim tells the narrator that in his and Rebecca’s marriage, “[he] thought about Manderley too much [...] [he] put Manderley first, before anything else”, showing that it is at the forefront of his mind constantly.⁵⁴ When Rebecca gloats to him that “if I had a child [...] neither you, nor anyone in the world, would ever prove that it was not yours [...] and when you died, Manderley would be his”, it is Maxim’s worst fear, as Rebecca’s freedom and promiscuity has now become a threat to his name and family.⁵⁵ It makes him monstrous as it triggers him to kill her, not because, as Horner and Zlosnik point out, “her infidelity broke his heart, but because it threatened the integrity of the paternal line”; Maxim did not care what Rebecca did outside of Manderley as long as Manderley was left out of it, yet because the estate would have passed onto an illegitimate child, it threatened his position as the patriarch of the house.⁵⁶ But the great house is saturated with Rebecca’s influence, as “her blasted taste made Manderley the thing it is today”, constantly reminding Maxim of her.⁵⁷ It is her ornaments in the morning-room, her “blood-red” rhododendrons bordering the driveway, her signature “R” embroidered on handkerchiefs and bedsheets.⁵⁸ Smith argues that the initial “R” “might encompass the idea of a hanged person, as well as the sexual innuendo of a female body [...] with spread legs suggesting availability” and reminding Maxim of not only what will happen if his murder is discovered, but also of her promiscuity, as even though he eliminated the threat, Manderley still holds memory of her like she is a ghost.⁵⁹ Patriarchy also influences him into asking the narrator to marry him. He gives her the choice of following Mrs Van Hopper to New York, or going with him to Manderley, following up the suggestion with “I’m asking you to marry me, you little fool.”⁶⁰ The interaction is devoid completely of warmth or romance like usual marriage proposals, and the noun “fool” is condescending. It makes it seem more like a business proposal; with the narrator, Maxim is hoping that he will get legitimate children this time to pass Manderley onto. Pons highlights that “Manderley represents patriarchy and the rigidity of traditional patriarchal rules regarding [...]

⁵³ Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, *Daphne du Maurier: Writing, Identity and the Gothic Imagination* (Macmillan Press, 1998): 20.

⁵⁴ du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 306.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 313.

⁵⁶ Horner and Zlosnik, *Daphne du Maurier: Writing, Identity and the Gothic Imagination*, 106.

⁵⁷ du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 307.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 72; 187.

⁵⁹ Allan Lloyd Smith, “The Phantoms of *Drood* and *Rebecca*: The Uncanny Reencountered through Abraham and Torok’s ‘Cryptonymy’,” *Poetics Today* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 304.

⁶⁰ du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 57.

femininity and masculinity”, where a man and woman stick to their designated roles, and Maxim is “simply a puppet” controlled by its expectations.⁶¹ Du Maurier shows how patriarchy makes him a monster as he would go as far as killing someone to ensure his family and estate’s continuation.

Like Maxim, the narrator of *Rebecca* is monstrous because she is not only an unreliable narrator, but she uses patriarchy as a way to assert her authority and dominance. Du Maurier explicitly says at the beginning that the narrator will “keep the things that hurt to myself alone. They can be my secret indulgence”, implying that she is concealing things from those around her, and perhaps from the reader as well.⁶² Linkin argues that she “filters the details of her story, [...] engages in paralipsis, or omission” and “misreport[s] them as if they were not meant to be hurtful”; however, the narrator could be misreporting them to make herself seem like the victim of the story she is telling, instead of revealing that she uses Maxim, and therefore patriarchy, for her own gain, making her become monstrous.⁶³

It is chilling “how calm [she] is [...] how cool” when Maxim tells her he shot Rebecca, and horrifying still how easily she accepts the fact that her husband is a murderer.⁶⁴ Both of them feel no remorse, and that in itself makes them monstrous; the narrator describes that “my heart was light like a feather floating in the air”, “feather” suggesting that all the pressure has now been lifted off her shoulders, or the barrier that was Rebecca, preventing her from embracing her full monstrosity.⁶⁵ Whereas before she exclaims, “Mrs de Winter is dead,” she now declares, “I am Mrs de Winter now, you know”, and this shift highlights how the power and authority as changed.⁶⁶ She begins to control Maxim, telling him “you must say that the body in the crypt was a mistake [...] you must say”, and the imperative of “must” indicates that she is the one making decisions for him now, and in this way she becomes complicit in Rebecca’s murder. She also begins to exert this control over the staff, telling Maud “Don’t let it happen again” when the flowers in the morning-room have wilted, and when Mrs Danvers questions about Rebecca, she tells her “I haven’t the slightest idea” and withholds the information from her.⁶⁷ Pyrhönen suggests that “we are dealing with what [is called] *Bluebeard Gothic*” which “many women authors [such as Du Maurier] have used [...] in order to explore patriarchal power structures”, but instead of the narrator becoming a victim like Rebecca, she chooses to ally with Maxim, becoming the perfect wife and defending her husband.⁶⁸ Pons points out that “in order for her to exercise [her] power, she needs a man and she needs to be in a powerful position within patriarchy [...] This is why she has to become Bluebeard’s ally and protect him”, so she must conform to patriarchal restrictions in order to exert them, making her as monstrous as Maxim.⁶⁹ Her sense of being is built entirely

⁶¹ Auba Llompart Pons, “Patriarchal Hauntings: Re-reading Villainy and Gender in Daphne du Maurier’s ‘Rebecca,’” *Atlantis* 35, no. 1 (June 2013): 80-81.

⁶² du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 7.

⁶³ Harriet Kramer Linkin, “The Deceptively Strategic Narrator of ‘Rebecca,’” *Journal of Narrative Theory* 46, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 224, 226.

⁶⁴ du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 300.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 307.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 95, 326.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 324, 326.

⁶⁸ Heta Pyrhönen, “Bluebeard’s Accomplice: ‘Rebecca’ as a Masochistic Fantasy,” *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 38, no. 3 (September 2005): 149.

⁶⁹ Pons, “Patriarchal Hauntings”, 79.

on him, as the only way she can access this power is with “Mrs de Winter” as her surname, emphasising that without him, she is nobody.

In conclusion, there does not need to be the presence of a traditional monster such as a ghost, vampire, or corpse in Gothic novels when human beings themselves are the real monsters. Brontë and Du Maurier use the Female Gothic genre in their writings to put “patriarch[al] authority and [its] institutions [...] under intense scrutiny”, exposing the pressure of gender roles, and patriarchal constraints and expectations on society.⁷⁰ By pushing their characters to the extreme, they show how human beings can morph into monstrous versions of themselves to either combat its pressures, such as Maxim shooting Rebecca, and Bertha killing herself, or conform to it, like Jane and the second Mrs de Winter do. They also illuminate how patriarchy and gender roles demonise women, turning them into monsters because they break away from the grain of society, desiring the freedom and independence that men so easily have.

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