

Shot with Crimson & Some Ravenous Shadow-Creature: Why do *Rebecca* & *The Little Stranger* end with the destruction of the Gothic castle?

At the end of Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) and Sarah Waters' *The Little Stranger* (2009), the manor houses central to each novel lie in different states of destruction. Manderley burns with an intensity that lights the horizon and Hundreds Hall is abandoned to decay like a "wounded, blighted beast."¹ As the Gothic has evolved since its inception in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, so have the elements that comprise the genre; Anne Williams states that the "imposing house with a terrible secret [...]" is a "central' category of 'Gothic' in its early years."² Even as the Gothic castle has shifted visually from a mediaeval structure to the stately home, it still holds the same inherent values within its walls. This is primarily why *Rebecca* and *The Little Stranger* end in the destruction of the literary trope of the Gothic castle, as well as the physical building. This assignment will endeavour to discuss and bring clarity to how these values apply to each novel. Additionally, it will explore how the Gothic castle is a monument to patriarchy and the class divide.

Dean Koontz in his book *Writing Popular Fiction* states how the notion of the house is a variation on a singular place. This can include a "steamboat," "archaeological diggings" or "a ship crossing the Atlantic Ocean."³ It is an inhabited place with definable edges that encompasses the proceedings and represents a range of themes. This idea is what places the stately homes in *Rebecca* and *The Little Stranger* as a direct extension of the Gothic Castle. Furthermore, within the Gothic genre, the castle is representative of patriarchal gendered structures and oppressive class systems. Tracing the idea of the castle back to its roots, it is a structure that displays fortitude, wealth and power. Eino Railo describes the "towers, vaulted portals, drawbridge," and "moat" as "the stern impress of ancient might and

¹ Sarah Waters, *The Little Stranger* (London: Virago Press, 2009), 497.

² Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 39.

³ Dean Kootz, *Writing Popular Fiction* (Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 1972), 126.

splendour,” compounding the original intention of power through impression.⁴ Considering two earlier works of the Gothic genre, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* and *The Castle of Otranto*, which both include traditional instances of castles, the buildings are effectively prisons under the dominion of tyrannical men. In *The Castle of Otranto*, Manfred chases his prospective daughter-in-law around the castle, from which she cannot escape, to force a marriage to sire a new male heir. Similarly, in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*, Dunbayne is to become the matrimonial prison of the daughter of the Earl of Athlin, who was killed by her would-be husband. Jean Roudaut exemplifies this, writing that “to enter into the castle is to elude all justice, to become vulnerable to the arbitrary wishes of one person;”⁵ That one person in the Gothic is typically a king, a lord or a man of higher class. The Gothic castle at the centre of the genre is consistently the domain of men and the entrapment of women.

These ideas have evolved along with the edifice of the Gothic to fit the 20th-century setting of *Rebecca* and *The Little Stranger*. In reflecting the shifting base of class divide in the period of both novels, the narrative voices are both lower-class individuals entering an upper-class space. Such perspectives help demonstrate the inescapable gender expectations in a patriarchal society and the crumbling idea of traditional aristocratic lifestyles. The Gothic castles of Hundreds Hall and Manderley are the physical confining embodiments of these notions.

Dr Faraday in *The Little Stranger* is enamoured by Hundreds Hall as a child, which carries through to his adult life. A sense of burgeoning nostalgia only intensifies as he attempts to become a part of what the house represents. His desire stems from two places, the patriarchal drive to fulfil societal expectation and the proliferation of ruin lust, the latter of which is demonstrated early in the novel. Ruin lust comes from the German word “Ruinlust” and describes “the allure of abandoned and decayed structures, buildings, and sites.”⁶ In recollecting his first interaction with Hundreds as a 10-year-old, Faraday notices the “lovely ageing details,” including “the worn red brick, the cockled window glass, the weathered

⁴ Eino Railo, *The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press), 9.

⁵ Jean Roudaut, “Les demeures dans le roman noir,” *Critique: revue générale des publications françaises et étrangères* 15, no.147-148 (1959): 713.

⁶ Efstathios Boukouras, “The Age of Ruinlust: An Exploration of Tourism and Ruins in the Urban Context, in Rome, during the Grand Tour,” *History and Theory of Architecture* no. 11 (2023): 55.

sandstone edgings.”⁷ Each element he deems notable refers to elements of decay. His fascination is directly rooted in ruin lust, so in turn coming upon the house again as an adult, after an initial horror at its state, he once again becomes entranced. Rose Macauley observes that “classical Gothic” ruins appear “in every fashionable gentleman's grounds,” creating an association between decay and status.⁸ As a man of a lower class, Faraday’s sense of ruin lust is set within his desire for the power such a building has traditionally represented.

A desire to be a part of the patriarchal structure the Gothic castle encompasses can also be seen in *Rebecca* with the narrator, Mrs de Winter. Similarly to Dr Faraday, she is a person of a lower social class who, as a child, interacts with a manor house she ends up involved with as an adult. She recalls buying a postcard with a painting of Manderley on it and deems the instance a “premonition” when Maxim asks her to marry him.⁹ At the realisation she will live in the manor and join with a man of the upper class, she considers her “name, and the signature on cheques, to tradesmen, and in letters asking people to dinner.”¹⁰ Alison Light writes that Mrs De Winter sets up a series of fantastical expectations that “function as an imaginary commentary on her lack of a fixed identity.”¹¹ She cares less about establishing herself as an individual and more about what such a marriage can provide her, the ideal woman of a patriarchal society. Exaggerated by the fact that after Maxim confesses to killing Rebecca, Mrs De Winter internalises that “none of the things that he had told me mattered to me at all,” and is more concerned that “Maxim did not love Rebecca.”¹² Unbothered by the truth that her husband is a murderer, she is relieved that she is not competing for the affections or status of a dead woman. Her position within the patriarchy is assured.

Whilst Dr Faraday and Mrs De Winter represent different examples of the lower class entering an upper-class space, they both ultimately result in the same thing: the diminishment, or complete destabilising, of the classical class divide and the destructive nature of patriarchy.

⁷ Waters, *Stranger*, 1.

⁸ Rose Macauley, *Pleasure of Ruins* (New York: Walker and Company, 1984), 24.

⁹ Daphne Du Maurier, *Rebecca* (London: Virago Publishing, 2003), 59.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹¹ Alison Light, “‘Returning to Manderley’: Romance Fiction, Female Sexuality and Class,” *Feminist Review* no. 16 (1984): 12.

¹² *Ibid.*, 306.

Another dimension of the Gothic castle as a figurative and literal space is in its entrapment of women. Specifically, it entraps women in a society they cannot escape that limits their freedoms and agency. This plays further into the idea of the structure being representative of patriarchy and strict gender roles. Ownership of the Gothic castle in both novels is by that of a man. In *Rebecca* this is Maxim and in *The Little Stranger* the only thing that separates Roderick from ownership is his perceived insanity. And even then, Faraday attempts to bypass Caroline's power of attorney, not wanting Hundreds to be sold, stating her mental state is "affecting her judgement."¹³ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar write that women are "enclosed in the architecture of an overwhelmingly male-dominated society."¹⁴ Using the words 'enclosed' and 'architecture' as metaphor is additionally prevalent when speaking about the Gothic castle as it acts as a physical boundary to highlight the figurative ones. Auba Llompart Pons writes, in reference to *Rebecca*, that "the ultimate gothic villain in Daphne du Maurier's novel is the haunting presence of an old-fashioned, strict patriarchal system;"¹⁵ This is as prevalent in *The Little Stranger* where attempts to leave the house leads to the undoing of each member of the Ayres family. Railo discusses the word "Burgverliess" which is a word meaning "a spot from which there was not the remotest possibility of escape [...] a place without an exit."¹⁶ Hundreds Hall is Burgverliess, a place that represents the upper class in which the Ayres exist, adhering so stringently to patriarchal values that they cannot exist outside of its walls or expectations. Caroline is betrothed to a man of lower social standing before breaking off the arrangement, stating she "can't be anybody's wife," and "I'm tired of duties."¹⁷ Her declaration that she will not adhere to patriarchal ideas of a woman and to leave Hundreds is her attempt to step outside society's expectations of her. Similarly, Mrs Ayres fails as a mother in accordance with her position in upper class society. Her daughter is engaged to a man of lower class and displays unlady-like qualities, such as being noticeably plain with unshaven legs and her son is disabled

¹³ Waters, *Stranger*, 460.

¹⁴ Sandra Gilbert & Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman In The Attic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 11.

¹⁵ Auba Llompart Pons, "Patriarchal Hauntings: Re-reading Villainy and Gender in Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*," *Atlantis* 35, no. 1 (2013): 71.

¹⁶ Railo, *Haunted Castle*, 139.

¹⁷ Waters, *Stranger*, 447.

and sectioned by medical professionals. Additionally, she bears guilt of the death of her first child, an upper class folly as her grief is met with responses such as “don't you know that people of our sort don't make a fuss?”¹⁸ As with Caroline, Mrs Ayres is on the cusp of leaving the house, however, neither woman can exist outside of the boundary of the Gothic castle, dying tragically before gaining their freedom.

The confines of patriarchy are not only detrimental to women, but also to the men who are uncomfortable with those expectations. In *The Little Stranger*, Roderick, as the man, is expected to run the house and the estate, even when the expectation of his gender has already injured him in World War 1. It is suggested in the narrative that this is a position that he cannot handle and does not want. Constructing the house as the instigator of his deteriorating mental state demonstrates the negative implication of forcing a person into an ideal based on sex. If the house is representative of the Gothic castle, and the castle represents patriarchy and class structures, Roderick is driven to madness by expectation. As with his sister and mother, he does not escape intact.

Both novels display the futility of acting out against the Gothic castle and thus the notions they contain. The titular Rebecca demonstrates a woman who attempts to keep her agency but ultimately fails to avoid repercussions. Light observes that “Rebecca refused to obey the law whereby women exchange their bodies for social place.”¹⁹ Her freedom and individuality are a direct act against patriarchy, demonstrated as a violation of Manderley. Maxim states “Manderley was mine,” while discussing his and Rebecca’s tumultuous relationship.²⁰ He can tolerate Rebecca’s transgressions until it involves his domain, at which point she is punished by the taking of her life. Williams describes the Gothic castle as “a man-made thing, a cultural artefact linked with the name of a particular family,” which directly links to Maxim’s cultural belief for Manderley.²¹ He is ferociously protective of the house with its direct link to his heritage; a heritage built in the image of patriarchy and class systems, where he, the man of the manor, is the keeper of these principles and

¹⁸ Ibid., 220.

¹⁹ Light, “Returning to Manderley,” 15.

²⁰ Du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 308.

²¹ Williams, *Art Darkness*, 44.

physical space. When Rebecca's expression of sexual agency crosses the threshold to Manderley, it is perceived as an attack on the manor's identity. Her fate is that of Caroline and Mrs Ayres, women who will not or cannot adhere to the society of the Gothic castle have nowhere else to exist, so perish as a result.

Rebecca can be contrasted with Mrs De Winter as Jane Eyre is often contrasted with Bertha; Which helps to demonstrate the ideal and nonideal patriarchal woman. Gilbert and Gubar describe Bertha as "Jane's truest and darkest double [...] She is the angry aspect of the orphan child, the ferocious secret self,"²² suggesting that she is the unrepressed, exposed version of what Jane represents. While Jane exhibits disruptive character traits, she is restrained enough that she is rewarded by the patriarchy with a place within it as Rochester's wife. She is absent as Thornfield Hall burns, whereas Bertha dies as a consequence for her othered existence. Rebecca has a comparative dynamic with Mrs De Winter, in which Mrs De Winter's relief at Maxim's revelation comes from not having to worry about asserting herself in an upper-class patriarchal setting. She perceives Rebecca as filling a position she desires, even in death. The truth, however, removes this as an issue as she states, "I too had killed Rebecca," which is to say she has killed the idea of what she believed Rebecca to be.²³ And yet, even as Rebecca's antithesis, Mrs De Winter still experiences the repercussions of acting against the Gothic castle, an embodiment of patriarchal structures. Charles Perrault's tale of *Bluebeard* demonstrates a man who forbids his new wife from entering a specific room on threat of punishment, in which the new wife discovers the bodies of Bluebeard's former wives "murdered one after another."²⁴ The section in which Mrs De Winter and Mrs Danvers are in Rebecca's room can be shown as an example of similarity between *Bluebeard* and *Rebecca*. Maxim, deciding he and Mrs De Winter will inhabit the east wing, places the west wing under secrecy. Upon Mrs De Winter entering Rebecca, the dead wife's, room, exploring beyond her boundaries, she is almost driven to suicide as punishment. Jumping out the window would have her crossing the threshold from a patriarchal society in which she can exist, to her only alternative, death. As Llompart Pons writes, identifying "the novel as a reworking of the Bluebeard tale, in which the gentleman actually turns out to be a villain who

²² Gilbert & Gubar, *Madwoman*, 349.

²³ Du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 319.

²⁴ Charles Perrault, *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault*, (London: Harrup, 1922), 40.

unjustifiably murdered his wife,” demonstrates that the patriarchy-abiding wife is still susceptible to punishment for acting against the Gothic castle.²⁵

Placing the story of the Gothic heroine as “a journey of women coming into some power and property by their own and other feminine agency [...]” while facing a “male-dominated world full of terrors for every female,” plays into the futility of existing within the Gothic castle.²⁶ Mrs De Winter abides by the patriarchal ideal of a woman and yet, is almost convinced to kill herself. Mrs Ayres and Caroline are women of upper-class status who can never move past what is expected of their rank and sex. Rebecca rallies against the social bounds and is killed accordingly. The destruction of the Gothic castle in both novels is necessary to allow women to live more individual lives. As long as the confines exist that support oppressive societal structures, the consequences of death and loss of identity will continue.

Both *Manderley* and *Hundreds Hall* are haunted. *The Little Stranger* displays a haunt in a more literal sense, whilst *Rebecca* resides in a haunting presence. However, in the Gothic castle these two notions are one in the same when deriving meaning from the respective entities. Williams writes “the ghosts—whether real or imaginary—derive from the past passions, past deeds, past crimes of the family identified with this structure,” a sentiment that points towards hauntings as meaningful events and directly connects to the Gothic castle.²⁷ Rebecca haunts the narrative and imprints herself on *Manderley* through Maxim and her past actions. Rather than a physical entity she is the past reaching forward and leaving spectral impressions on the present. As mentioned previously, Mrs De Winter is haunted by an expectation she can never fill, socially or in Maxim's affections, feeling as if Rebecca is physically watching her within the house. Maxim is haunted not by guilt, but by the worry he will be discovered, stating that he “should go mad [...] waiting for something to happen.”²⁸ Mrs Danvers is haunted by grief and the reminders the house gives her, who best examples the idea that the past passions, past deeds, past crimes are

²⁵ Llompарт Pons, “Patriarchal Hauntings,” 70.

²⁶ Hogle, Jerrold E. “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, eds. J.E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 10.

²⁷ Williams, *Art Darkness*, 45.

²⁸ Du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 302.

reflected by the house itself. In stating “you'll never get the better of her [...] she's still mistress here, even if she is dead,” Mrs Danvers compounds the fears of Mrs De Winter and links Rebecca directly to the physical space of Manderley.²⁹ This is further exemplified by Maxim, who lists all the changes Rebecca made to the house in life. Daniel Defoe in his 1729 book about ghosts writes “should departed souls get to leave to come back to this world, to feel justice is done,” in reference to the motivation of spectral visitors.³⁰ Whilst there is no actual ghost in *Rebecca* the Gothic castle keeps her alive in its structure as the past stains its walls. If the house stands, a reminder of the deeds and crimes of the past will always persist. In the destruction of Manderley, the past is cleansed, and all parties can move on into the future.

The Little Stranger is haunted by “some ravenous shadow-creature,” a darker malevolent poltergeist, who's direct actions cause harm.³¹ There are two ways in which this entity can be perceived. Firstly, as with *Rebecca*, the embodiment of the past made actual, imparting justice upon the present. Williams notes how the “nightmarish haunted house as a Gothic setting puts into play the anxieties, tensions and imbalances inherent in family structures.”³² The Ayres' repressed internal issues are forced out by the haunting which in turn is a culmination of those anxieties, tensions and imbalances represented as a cruel punishing force. Caroline's dismissal of gender roles, whether an uncomfortableness or repressed sexuality demonstrated through her rejection of Faraday, and Rodrick's struggles with patriarchal expectations are in direct opposition with the house. Similarly, Mrs Ayres' perceptive failure of her role in the upper class is also an act against the house. If the Gothic castle is a structure of patriarchy and class divide and the entity only harms, or attempts to harm, those who have failed its system, it is possible that the entity is the retribution of the house itself. Imparting justice against the digressions of the present in response to the glories of the past. Hundreds Hall is falling into decay, and its inhabitants have responsibility for the physical and morale collapse.

Secondly, the ghost is Faraday's fault as he is the point of integration of the lower class into the upper class, destabilising the very idea of a class divide. Barbara Braid observes how “the enigmatic events in the house coincide with his growing

²⁹ Ibid., 275.

³⁰ Daniel Defoe, *A Universal History of Apparitions, Sacred and Profane, Whether Angelical, Diabolical, or Departed Souls* (London: Gale Ecco, 1735), 34.

³¹ Waters, *Stranger*, 498.

³² Williams, *Art Darkness*, 46.

attachment to the inhabitants of Hundreds Hall,” placing a correlation between his presence and the haunting.³³ His involvement with the family is often met with surprise by others, for example assuming he is at a party because someone is unwell. This also includes Mrs Ayres admitting that she wasn’t initially happy with Faraday and Caroline's relationship. His mere existence in the space creates an uncomfortable reality. Additionally, his increased interfering, in which he is engaged to Caroline and makes the decision to section both Roderick and Mrs Ayres, places him as a major influence. This subverts the expectation of a lower-class individual at the behest of the upper class, as is demonstrated traditionally in the novel with the maid Betty. Credence is lent to this idea within the narrative when Seeley and Faraday raise the theory of discontent made physical. Seeley posits a “dream-self” that could “break loose” and a “little stranger” or “shadow-self” made of “nasty impulses.”³⁴ On the night Caroline dies after reportedly seeing a familiar visage, Faraday dreams he can “pass like smoke through the Hundreds gate,” before growing panicked by “nothing but darkness.”³⁵ At this point he holds resentment, so if Faraday’s dream-self is who Caroline sees, her reaction would be in response to the perceived inescapable nature of the house and its values, such as the idea of marriage presented as Faraday's persisting form.

The joining factor between both perceptions of what is haunting Hundreds Hall is the role of the house and its values. As the Gothic castle is representative of power and status in patriarchy and class divide, the decaying structure acts as an insult to the past. Braid writes that “the decay of the house goes hand in hand with the destruction of the Ayres family;”³⁶ As the house physically deteriorates and the values are misrepresented by the inhabitants, the progressing world manifests in a malicious entity of their own guilt and Faraday’s presence. Conversing with Faraday, Seeley says “what's left for an old family like that in England nowadays?”³⁷ The Gothic castle is left abandoned as it must be for society to progress past aristocracy and its oppressive expectations to a closing class divide.

³³ Barbara Braid, “What Haunts Hundreds Hall? Transgression in Sarah Waters’ *The Little Stranger*,” in *Crossroads in Literature and Culture*, eds. J. Fabiszak (Berlin: Springer, 2013), 139.

³⁴ Waters, *Stranger*, 380.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 473.

³⁶ Braid, “Haunts Hundreds Hall,” 138.

³⁷ Waters, *Stranger*, 378.

In considering tropes and factors of the Gothic genre, the castle can be positioned as the Gothic monster in *Rebecca* and *The Little Stranger*, as another dimension to why they both end in destruction. David Punter points towards the etymological origins of the word monster as “the Latin word *monstrare*, which means ‘to show’” which thus makes the monster “something which is designed to be shown.”³⁸ Partnered with Railo’s notion that “the Castle is built with Gothic magnificence” to “frown defiance on the whole world,” the core ideas of display can be drawn together between the monster and Gothic castle.³⁹ Using this base idea, Hundreds Hall and Manderley take on the mantle of monster through their respective novels. In *Rebecca*, Manderley is lauded for its grandeur, described as “grace and beauty, exquisite and faultless”, with multiple mentions of parties, where everything was “so beautifully done.”⁴⁰ When Faraday first sees Hundreds Hall, he notes it as lovely and impressive, also with multiple mentions of parties having taken place in the past. Even though during the narratives they are at differing points in their relevance, there is a sense of spectacle to both. However, the individuals inhabiting or involved with each house suffer from what the structures represent. The values of the Gothic castle drive Maxim to kill Rebecca and create the conditions for repression and oppression that dismantles the Ayres family. In this, Manderley and Hundreds Hall become the perpetrators of horror and terror.

Another trope of the Gothic is a sense of justice prevailing against those who commit wrong. Fred Botting discusses how Gothic fiction exists as “a way of imagining an order” that is based on principles such as “conserving justice,” a justice that “is harsh and often violently retributive.”⁴¹ To retain “the solid realities of justice, morality and social order” of the society of the reader, the book must end with justice served to those committing wrong upon others.⁴² Manderley burns as retribution for its values causing harm and Maxim loses his domain as justice for enacting its will. Hundreds Hall decays for the wrong committed upon its inhabitants, brought upon

³⁸ David Punter, *The Gothic Condition: Terror, History and the Psyche* (Cardiff: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 2016), 72.

³⁹ Railo, *Haunted Castle*, 9.

⁴⁰ Du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 73.

⁴¹ Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), 47.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 7.

them by the expectations the Gothic castle holds. For the Gothic story to fulfil certain expectations that make it part of the genre, justice against the monster must be enacted.

The nature of how each house meets its demise is another indicator of why they are destroyed. Efstathios Boukouras writes that “ruins uniquely serve as physical embodiments of memory,” which serves as nostalgia to the lower class, such as Faraday, and a painful reminder to the upper class, such as Mrs Ayres.⁴³ As it is not only the collapse of a physical structure but also the systems that supported an aristocratic upper-class way of living. The decaying building represents the slow process of a way of life that gradually died overtime. Barbara Klonowska calls this “the revenge and retribution of the working class [...] for centuries of mistreatment, loathing and deprivation,” stating that Waters analyses the past “critically rather than nostalgically in a sharp contrast.”⁴⁴ The Gothic castle in its origin is a monument to the wealth and power of the King, which makes Punter’s question “does the Gothic castle belong to the present or to the past,” more pertinent.⁴⁵ It is a physical representation of an ancient idea of extreme class divide and oppression, that needs to be destroyed to progress past its ideas. Decay is indicative of a function of society taking time to become obsolete.

In *Rebecca*, Manderley perishes by a violent cleansing fire. In reflecting the conventions of the Gothic, this comes as justice for Maxim committing murder and escaping punishment, mirroring the sudden nature of Rebecca’s death by gunshot. Comparison can be drawn with *Jane Eyre* and the burning down of Thornfield Hall as justice for the imprisonment of Bertha. Jerrold E. Holge describes how “the destructive rage of Bertha Rochester” is “emblematic of [...] female anger at patriarchal oppression.”⁴⁶ The ‘destructive rage’ manifests not only as Bertha’s tendency for physical violence but also in the fire that destroys Thornfield Hall. While not confined in the same manner, Rebecca finds herself confined by the patriarchal

⁴³ Boukouras, “Ruinenlust,” 56.

⁴⁴ Barbara Klonowska, “Haunting across the Class Divide: Sarah Waters’s Affinity and The Little Stranger,” *Avant* 8, no. 2 (2017): 177.

⁴⁵ David Punter & Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 261.

⁴⁶ Alison Milbank, “The Victorian Gothic in English novels and stories, 1830–1880” in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, eds. J.E. Holge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 152.

expectations of Manderley, a patriarchal oppression that when not upheld by her ends in her death. Her destructive rage is subdued and lies in the presence her personality left upon the Gothic castle. Whilst Mrs De Winter believes “Rebecca had lost,” she ultimately ends up victorious in punishing Maxim for not only his crime against her but in avoiding blame for her death.⁴⁷ As the gunshot was a sudden death for Rebecca, her retribution is a sudden destruction of the structure and system that wronged her.

It is no surprise that there is no traditional Gothic Hero or Heroine in either *Rebecca* or *The Little Stranger*. In discussing the conventions of the Gothic genre, H.P. Lovecraft denotes the hero as “valorous and immaculate [...] always of high birth but often in humble disguise.”⁴⁸ Additionally, he describes the heroine archetype as “generally insipid [...] and serves as a point of view and focus for the reader’s sympathies.”⁴⁹ Further contextualised by Ann Radcliffe as “a young woman who is simultaneously a persecuted victim and a courageous heroine.”⁵⁰ There is no hero, as the main male figures do not fulfil this role; Maxim is not valorous and immaculate as the murderer of his first wife and Faraday is not of high birth. By the definition of Lovecraft and Radcliffe, in *Rebecca* the heroine is not Mrs De Winter but Rebecca herself. Even though breaking social convention with her adulterous, unruly behaviour, the revelation of her illness and through the context of her death at the hands of patriarchal expectation, she is a sympathetic character. Additionally, Rebecca is a persecuted victim in the sense of her death and shaming but courageous in trying to refuse “to obey the law whereby women exchange their bodies for social place.”⁵¹ H.P Lovecraft’s description of the conventions of the Gothic genre was published in 1927, over 10 years before the publication of *Rebecca* and 80 years before *The Little Stranger*. It is an indicator of the Gothic adapting to better mirror the progressing society of the reader. As the class divide closes and people have more autonomy to decide their position, ideas of the high

⁴⁷ Du Maurier, *Rebecca*, 320.

⁴⁸ H.P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror In Literature* (North Chelmsford: Courier Corporation, 2012), 25.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁰ Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 91.

⁵¹ Light, “Returning to Manderley,” 15.

born being instantly noble and the heroine as a generally insipid victim become dated. There is no traditional hero or heroine in the two novels because those conventions no longer reflect society's expectations of what certain roles certain people must fill. No more are societal structures held than in the physical structure of the Gothic castle. This is ultimately why the Gothic castle is destroyed by the novel's ends. For society to progress and adapt, the systems that uphold oppressive and restrictive ideals must be dismantled. As physical representations of patriarchy and the class divide, Hundreds Hall and Manderley are reduced to ruin as remnants of a past that can no longer exist.

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