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Subverting the Patriarchy and its ties to Feminism: Du Maurier and her Adaptations

> *"It has been reported that one inspiration for 'Rebecca' was her own jealousy of a woman to whom [Du Maurier's husband] had been engaged. This helps explain the real passion with which her narrator welcomes the disclosure that the dead Rebecca had been 'evil and vicious and rotten'... 'Rebecca' is strictly a work of the imagination, one that, if it does not rank quite so high as "Jane Eyre," has pleased and mesmerized readers for more than six decades."* – Jonathan Yardley, *The Washington Post*

Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* is perhaps one of the most famous gothic novels of the 1930s, its haunting opening line "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again" (1) almost instantly recognizable. The novel tells the tale of the narrator attempting to come into her own as the new Mrs. de Winter at the sprawling gothic estate, Manderley; however, she is unable to do so because she cannot overcome the ghost of Rebecca, her husband Maxim's first wife. Intimidated by Rebecca's lingering presence and Mrs. Danvers, the housekeeper who is obsessed with Rebecca, the narrator slowly begins to lose herself in her failed attempts to live up to Rebecca's standards. It is clear that a common reading of *Rebecca* has developed over time, with several popular U.S. news magazines, including *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Washington Post*, depicting the novel as one that upholds the patriarchy even today. This reading occurs because Du Maurier depicts Mrs. de Winter as the ideal woman as mandated by

patriarchal standards, with Rebecca as the opposite of those standards; thus, because Mrs. de Winter escapes in the end of the novel, critics have a tendency to interpret the ending as an upholding of the patriarchy, even though it is Rebecca who has the last laugh as Manderley, the embodiment of the patriarchy, burns to the ground. However, this common reading is problematic, as it completely disregards the fact that Du Maurier wrote it as both a critique and subversion of patriarchal standards. An examination of Du Maurier's depiction of Mrs. de Winter (the narrator), Mrs. Danvers, and Rebecca herself in their original medium reveals that the novel does not uphold patriarchal standards like many reviews suggest. Moreover, an examination of film and stage adaptations reveal the role of feminism's growing influence on the cultural interpretations and depictions of the characters.

An Accurate Reading of the Common Misreading

Despite time and progress, modern reviews of Du Maurier's novel commonly depict *Rebecca* as upholding patriarchal standards seen in the 1930s. *The Washington Post* critic Jonathan Yardley's 2004 review explains that he became so "utterly caught up in the novel's plot when [he first] read it [that he] simply didn't understand that this isn't just a novel about a lovesick girl's obsessive jealousy of her husband's dead first wife, it is also a book about the interweaving of past and present." Because Yardley initially became so enthralled with the plot of the novel, he was not able to see past the overused stereotype of the obsessive, jealous new wife. Even when he reread it, he focused more on memories of Rebecca, rather than Du Maurier's attempt to subvert the patriarchy by invoking them. It is no surprise, then, that many who read Du Maurier's novel for the first time also become wrapped up in the plot, which causes them to miss the points that Du Maurier is trying to make by depicting the new Mrs. de Winter and Rebecca as opposites and burning Manderley at the end of the novel. Because readers see

that the new Mrs. de Winter survives at the end, they assume that she is the winner of the battle between her and Rebecca, and by extension, so is the patriarchy.

Parul Sehgal, *The New York Times* critic, claims in his 2017 article that "plot alone can't explain why we return to 'Rebecca,' which even its most fervent fans will admit is cribbed from 'Jane Eyre'…It is the charismatic, ruthless Rebecca herself — the vanished first wife, with her beautiful face and boyish body — who obsesses the narrator, and the reader." Like Yardley, Sehgal also indicates that the plot is a large reason why people enjoy the novel, demonstrating that while he acknowledges the novel's plot is not the most important aspect of Du Maurier's work, the plot is what most people focus on anyway. He then identifies Rebecca by her body characteristics and attractiveness, which is itself a patriarchal notion because it reduces Rebecca to nothing more than an object for people to enjoy. Sehgal also describes her as ruthless, which indicates that he fails to understand that Rebecca and her actions were produced by the patriarchal society in which she lived. Hence, Rebecca's actions and reputation are not unwarranted, despite the fact that many people derive the opposite from the novel via the common reading.

The Guardian critic, Olivia Laing, has perhaps the most alarming review of the novel, especially since hers is the most recent. She claims in her 2018 article that "Rebecca… [is] lacquered and exquisite as the priceless china cupid her clumsy replacement [the new Mrs. de Winter] breaks. It was Rebecca who created Manderley, turning the lovely old house into the apotheosis of feminine talents and virtues. Of course, this paragon of beauty and kindness turns out to be a malevolent fake." The fact that Laing asserts that Rebecca created Manderley is a large indication that she too falls victim to the common reading and does not understand the symbolism behind the mansion. Rebecca did not 'create' Manderley, but instead did everything

she could to make it her own once Maxim married her and brought her there, or in other words, go against patriarchal ideals by taking control wherever she could in her marriage. Laing then goes on to note that "in the Du Maurier family slang a sexually attractive person was a 'menace', and Rebecca unites both the word's meanings. She is an animal, a devil, a snake, 'vicious, damnable, rotten through and through'. She's destroyed because of her poisonous sexuality, what the Daily Mail might euphemistically call her 'lifestyle'." Like Sehgal, Laing also discusses Rebecca and her 'evilness' in terms of her sexual status, further feeding into the patriarchal standards that defined Rebecca by her body and supporting the common (mis)reading. What Laing suggests is problematic, as Rebecca is never destroyed – she remains at Manderley tormenting Maxim, and with the help of Mrs. Danvers, makes sure that anyone who steps foot on the property remembers her influence. To further demonstrate that the common reading is indeed wrong, one must now examine Du Maurier's original depiction of her characters to demonstrate that they are written to subvert the patriarchy, rather than to uphold it.

The Novel in its Anti-Patriarchal Glory

Du Maurier structures her novel in such a manner that depicts Mrs. de Winter as the patriarchy's feminine ideal – chaste, quiet, submissive, unable to think for herself – and Rebecca as the opposite, with Mrs. Danvers championing Rebecca's actions and motives after her death. Although Mrs. de Winter is the first character to speak in the novel, she is never given a name of her own and is generally referred to as an extension (or property) of Maxim. Auba Llompart Pons, Professor of Education, Translation, and Human Sciences at the University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia, suggests that "the fact that the narrator's name is not revealed and that she is always referred to as 'Mrs. de Winter' suggests that she is no one but Mr. de Winter's wife; a young woman who is "desperate for the validation provided by a man's love'"

(72). The narrator's desperation for Maxim's love stems from the patriarchal idea that a woman needs a man to survive and fulfill her destined role as a wife and mother. This excessive need for validation is again apparent in her agreement to a less-than-stellar wedding because Maxim "had that sort of wedding before" (Du Maurier 55). The narrator listens to what Maxim wants and respects his wishes simply *because* that is what he wants, demonstrating the patriarchal ideal that a woman is supposed to feel in relation to her husband because her dreams and desires do not matter. The narrator does not try to make herself feel welcome at Manderley, instead preferring to leave everything as it is because Maxim tells her to do so: "you don't have to worry about the house, Mrs. Danvers does everything. Just leave it all to her" (Du Maurier 63). Respecting Maxim's wishes, the narrator tells Mrs. Danvers to keep things the same, regardless of how she feels about wanting to decorate her new home. Thus, because she changes nothing it is clear that she is upholding the quiet, submissive archetype that the patriarchy demanded from women, albeit to her own detriment.

The narrator's upholding of the patriarchy begins to drive her mad, though she consistently blames all of her problems and growing separation from Maxim on Rebecca. She claims, "I should never be rid of Rebecca," (Du Maurier 234) and laments that everything around her reminds both her and Maxim of his late wife, even though she could have asserted her dominance and changed the décor when she arrived. The narrator essentially becomes imprisoned at Manderley, isolated with her insecurities about both her marriage and her own existence as a woman, which Llompart Pons claims "make[s] her both hate and identify with Maxim's dead wife, Rebecca, whose ghostly presence represents the beauty, the intelligence and the knowledge that Mrs. de Winter would like to possess" (73). What Llompart Pons suggests is that the narrator hates herself for not being able to be like Rebecca and reject the patriarchy;

however, the narrator also identifies with Rebecca because the narrator, like Rebecca before her, recognizes that the only way out of Manderley (and the patriarchy) is death. So, it comes as no surprise that the narrator's slowly waning sanity caused by living in Manderley – the physical embodiment of the patriarchy – eventually leads Mrs. Danvers to suggest that the narrator jump out the window to her death; Danvers knows that even death would be better for the narrator than her imprisonment at Manderley.

Mrs. Danvers, a character consistently recognized as evil due to her 'tormenting' of the narrator, only shows contempt for the new Mrs. de Winter *because* she upholds patriarchal standards. When the narrator relinquishes the house duties to Mrs. Danvers, the narrator notes that "into [Danvers's] face came… a look surely of derision, of definite contempt. [Danvers] knew that [the narrator] would never withstand her, and that [she] feared [Danvers] too" (Du Maurier 73). It is obvious that the narrator fears what Mrs. Danvers represents, just as Mrs. Danvers resents what the narrator represents. Mrs. Danvers' actions and reactions to the narrator's presence at Manderley suggest that Danvers would not have hated the narrator had the narrator been stronger, or subverted the patriarchy, like Rebecca. For example, when the narrator says that Mrs. Danvers "would have felt the same towards anyone who had taken Rebecca's place," (136) she means that Danvers would have loathed any woman who had married Maxim with the intention of upholding the patriarchy, rather than asserting her own dominance. This is why Mrs. Danvers says, "If you loved him you would never had married him," (Du Maurier 241) as Rebecca did not love Maxim when she married him, which is why she was able to subvert the patriarchy and do as she pleased. On the other hand, the narrator did love Maxim when she married him, but she is now trapped within the confines of the patriarchy trying to please him. Danvers's also notes that Rebecca "didn't care, she wasn't afraid. She had all the courage and the

spirit of a boy," (Du Maurier 243) meaning that Rebecca knew that she had to take on a more masculine role in order so subvert the patriarchy, which is a feat most ideal women would not consider by a long shot. Rebecca was willing to do anything and everything she could to eliminate Victorian ideas, which is why Mrs. Danvers admired her and was so against anyone other than Rebecca (or someone like her) coming to Manderley – because they wouldn't be able to take her place and continue her work for the sake of other women.

Essentially, Rebecca died not because she was evil, but because she subverted the gender roles set forth for her by the patriarchy; however, *because* she subverted these roles, Rebecca is commonly assumed to be evil. Rebecca and Mrs. Danvers thus destroy the physical embodiment of the patriarchy, Manderley, when they set it on fire to ensure that the subversion of gender roles will continue even though Rebecca cannot physically do so herself. By burning Manderley, Rebecca and Danvers solidify the narrator's inability to be the ideal woman. Llompart Pons argues, "Maxim's murder of Rebecca is predominantly motivated by Rebecca's challenging of the patriarchal rules," (74) and his expression of his hatred for her is can be likened to how many British men in the twentieth century hated feminism for empowering women because they were used to the patriarchal, ideal woman set by the Victorian era.

Although Maxim believes that he murdered Rebecca in a hatred-induced rage, Rebecca's death was not actually a murder. Rebecca knew she was slowly dying anyway due to cancer and actively chose to die faster for two reasons: one being that she knew death was a better option than continuing to live under Maxim's patriarchal rule, and the other being that she could not torment Maxim with an illegitimate child as a form of subverting the patriarchy because she had a deformed uterus. Rebecca's inability to have children was Du Maurier's guarantee that Rebecca could never abide by patriarchal standards, even if Maxim wanted her to; this idea is

also illuminated in Rebecca's guarantee that the patriarchy be destroyed by her own volition. So, even though Maxim shot her dead, Rebecca really orchestrated her own death by provoking him so severely because she knew that he would kill her. By quickly ending her life so that she did not have to suffer, he would subsequently ruin his own life and reputation in the process.

Ultimately, Du Maurier's novel is not an upholding of the patriarchy like the common reading suggests, as Mrs. de Winter and Maxim do not find happiness at the end. They instead live in a plain apartment and Maxim never fully recovers from the loss of Manderley, with the two of them opting to settle after the fire without trying to rebuild and seek happiness again. On the other hand, Rebecca and Mrs. Danvers remain victorious in their destruction of the patriarchy via the burning of Manderley. Hence, Du Maurier uses the novel to subvert the patriarchy, but because the narrator and Maxim make it out alive and remain together in the end, people commonly read the novel as a romance that upholds the patriarchy when it really does not. However, various portrayals of the narrator, Rebecca, and Mrs. Danvers over time begin to better show that the novel is feminist in its nature, especially in more modern adaptations. Of course, there are limitations to my analysis of these portrayals and feminism's effects on them, as each one is from a different country and is bound to be influenced specifically by cultural attitudes about the subject matter. However, I am certain that these portrayals are due to the rise of feminism in the last few decades, which shows that feminism affects the way readers view even classic characters.

The Film Adaptation

Similar to how the novel can be taken as an upholding of the patriarchy at first glance, Hitchcock's 1940 film *Rebecca* also appears to do the same. However, just like in Du Maurier's novel, there are deeper aspects at work that indicate that the film also doesn't uphold the

patriarchy. These aspects are much more overt than the devices Du Maurier employs in the novel, despite the short time between their publications, and can be attributed to the rise of feminism in England due to English women's desires to shed remaining patriarchal values associated with the Victorian era. While most women in the UK gained the right to vote in the Representation of the People Act of 1928, as did many other women throughout the world from 1918-1945, other acts concerning social reform and reproductive rights called women to action. One such group included the UK Townswomen's Guild, which encouraged women to partake in politics and further educate themselves. Many women were also entering the workforce at the time due to WWII, which also caused a shift in feminism because it required that sexual and marriage discrimination be eradicated. The effect these events had on the film, though subtle, are evident in the slight changes in the order of events and dialogue. The reason for these changes mainly stemmed from Rebecca "carr[ying] with it a large, predominantly female audience, a powerful demographic with the leisure time and discretionary income to visit the cinema to see the novel transcribed to the screen. Later findings…revealed that women composed 71 percent of the audience for Rebecca" (Edwards 35). Because women comprised most of the audience for the film, "it had to be an event that could invoke both "good feelings" from an audience and the desire to see current and future SIP releases again and again" (Edwards 36). Essentially, the changes in the film came from SIP's desire to please their female audience, and the best way for them to do so would be to examine the rising feminist climates and integrate what women wanted – rights and equality – into their characters while still preserving the original feel of the novel.

Some of the most obvious subtleties that suggest the film does not uphold the patriarchy occur in the beginning of the movie. One such difference occurs in the marriage conversation, as

Hitchcock’s Maxim tells Mrs. Hopper “we prefer to keep it quiet” (Hitchcock) after very briefly discussing the situation with the narrator, rather than insisting that he doesn’t want a big wedding because he’s already had one. Even though he has not discussed the wedding in-depth with the narrator, the use of “we” suggests that Hitchcock’s narrator has been a part of the decision and has more autonomy than her novel counterpart, as Maxim makes the choice for the novel’s narrator without discussing it with her at all. Another key difference that indicates feminism is at work occurs when Maxim and the narrator are driving to Manderley. In the film, the storm occurs as Maxim and the narrator get closer to Manderley, whereas in the novel they leave the storm behind in London. The storm is depicted so that the rain drips down the narrator’s face as they advance up the driveway, demonstrating that the rain in the film doubles as teardrops because the narrator, upon seeing Manderley, realizes the mistake she has made in marrying Maxim: trapping herself within the confines of the patriarchy.

The storm scene is backed by light, happy music that is generally associated with fairy tales, but also has hints of ominous tones interspersed throughout. This mix of tones implies that the fairy tale (read: patriarchal) idea of marrying and living happily ever after is not accurate. Instead, it is a rather dangerous feat for women because marriage is what causes them to lose the only (read: little) agency they have left. In contrast, the narrator in the novel leaves the storm in London, arriving to Manderley’s beautiful flowers and sunshine, which reinforces the patriarchal notion that living happily ever after is what is in store for the narrator since her marriage to Maxim. Thus, Hitchcock’s music choice acknowledges that marriage was not the only option women had in order to survive, an idea itself that eventually became prevalent throughout the rise of feminism.

Perhaps one of the biggest changes in the film that indicates that feminism affected Hitchcock's depiction of Du Maurier's characters lies within the language surrounding Rebecca. Rather than constantly focusing on her body and her beauty, as is what occurs in the novel, Hitchcock's Rebecca is instead represented primarily by the letter 'R' or 'R de W' inscribed on multiple items throughout the house (including stationary, napkins, blankets, pillowcases, etc.), as well as by various accounts of how much people loved her and her charm. The move away from Rebecca's body and fewer mentions of her beauty subtly suggest that the patriarchal view of the characters has slowly begun to fade with time. This fade is further suggested when Mrs. Danvers shows Rebecca's room to the narrator and says, "Why don't you stay here and rest?" (Hitchcock) rather than ushering the narrator out. Her willingness to let the narrator lie down in Rebecca's bed, in Rebecca's space (a place in which no one but Danvers was allowed up until now) suggests that Danvers does not hate the narrator as many like to suggest, but rather that Danvers pushes the narrator to realize that she must be like Rebecca in order to beat the patriarchy. Danvers even says, "She was beaten in the end, but it wasn't a man, wasn't a woman, it was the sea," (Hitchcock) which is a direct example of the film not upholding the patriarchy, as the sea is what Rebecca loved and willingly chose to spend her time there. Thus, the feminist alternative to the patriarchy appears to be much more heavily suggested in the film throughout the first half, whereas it is only subtly implied by Du Maurier in the novel.

The trip to Dr. Baker and the conversation about Rebecca's uterus is also slightly different in the film than in the novel, and this is because it has definitely been affected by the political climate surrounding reproductive rights during the 1930s. In the film, Rebecca only has cancer, whereas in the novel, Rebecca also has a deformed uterus, making her unable to have children. Her inability to have children is capitalized on in the novel to show that she could not

uphold the patriarchy and fulfill her role as a wife and mother; but, because women in the 1930s and 40s were fighting to have control over their own reproductive rights, Rebecca is only made out to have cancer because it indicates that she is not viewed in terms of her reproductive status. Another large difference that occurs in connection to the reveal of Rebecca's illness is how Maxim "kills" Rebecca. In the novel, Maxim shoots her, whereas in the film she falls, hits her head, and dies while she is trying to goad him into killing her. Edwards notes that this difference "was to make the death an apparent accident…[and] impl[y] a more sympathetic portrayal of De Winter's late wife, which falls in line with the image of Rebecca developed in the marketing campaign" (43). The film did not want to portray Rebecca as a nasty woman that needed to be punished by the patriarchy, but rather as a victim of the patriarchal circumstances (marriage) that put her in that position, a notion to which many women in the audience would most likely relate. Favell then calls and reveals the news about Rebecca and her cancer to Mrs. Danvers, ending the scene with him telling her that Maxim and the narrator will actually get to live "happily ever after," (Hitchcock) which brings back the patriarchal fairy tale image, only to destroy it along with Manderley in the end.

The ending of the film is entirely different than that of the novel and is a large indication that feminism influenced Hitchcock's depiction of Du Maurier's characters. In the film, the narrator does not go with Maxim to see Dr. Baker and find out the truth about Rebecca, whereas she does in the novel. The narrator going back to Manderley leads to her having to escape the fire set by Danvers. Danvers herself dies in the fire after being crushed by falling debris because "she'd rather destroy Manderley than see [Maxim and the narrator] happy here" (Hitchcock). The novel ends with Maxim and the narrator pulling up to Manderley to see it in flames together, with the fate of Mrs. Danvers being left unknown. Hitchcock's film, especially since it fades to

the credits on the image of the embroidered ‘R’ on Rebecca’s bed, is much more indicative that the patriarchy is toxic and can kill women (hence Danvers and the narrator narrowly getting out) before they have the chance to escape it, which is why it must be destroyed. Hitchcock does not expand on what happens to the narrator and Maxim after the fire, so there is no sense of closure like there is with the novel – just a lingering image of the presence of Rebecca at Manderley refusing to submit to the patriarchy even in the end.

The Stage Adaptation

While there is a large time gap between the stage production of *Rebecca* the musical and Hitchcock’s film, there is still a large feminist influence with the same ideals in play during the turn of the 21st century. The 2006 production is situated amidst third-wave feminism in the 21st century; during this time, even though many people claimed that second-wave feminist concerns about equality in the workplace, political climate, and home life had already been addressed, third wave movements attempted to further expand upon them. Chansky notes in a 2006 study that “theatre [was] the place to see on display the remaining problems [from second-wave feminism’s failures] that exist… ‘because feminism wasn't radical enough: it changed the workplace, but it didn't change men, and, more importantly, it didn't fundamentally change how women related to men’” (357). Essentially, what was happening at the turn of the 21st century is that laws were being enacted and things were changing in the workplace and court systems (e.g. Hillary Clinton becoming part of the U.S. Senate in the 90s, among others). But, *because* these changes were being made, many male critics began to argue that women no longer needed to advocate for their rights and that they had already gained equality, even though that was not the case. The goal was to get these men to see that women had indeed not achieved equality, and women began to do so by pushing to sanction birth control as a right to combat pending abortion

bans, as well as using words like "bitch" to try and reclaim them so that men could not use them to hold power over them. In essence, "third-wave feminism reflect[ed] culture-wide contradictions… 'the most radical aspects of the Third Wave of American feminists have been in challenging social mores ('lifestyle feminism'), not political and economic structures'" (Chansky 363). Since the political and economic structures had begun to change, feminists in the early 2000s focused on social realms to begin further enacting these changes. So, in light of having to continue to push towards the equality they did not obtain from second-wave feminism, third-wave feminists became more inclusive and welcomed women of color and transgender women. They also expanded their reach into various movements concerning racial and gender politics, which would eventually blossom into movements that circulated in the 2010s, including body positivity, the Women's Empowerment Movement, and the Slut Walk.

In addition to affecting various movements and laws of the 2000s, feminism also affected the 2006 *Rebecca* musical, which is the strongest example of how it has influenced Du Maurier's characters over time; this is because the narrator is much less aligned with patriarchal ideals, the descriptions of Rebecca have moved almost completely away from her body and beauty, and even Maxim has become more progressive. If one were to apply Edwards's speculations about SIP's film being altered to meet audience expectations, it is then no surprise that the musical would have also been altered to reflect the growth of feminism over time and female audience members' expectations. The specific performance I examined was the October 5, 2007 performance, though the main cast members (Ich, Maxim, and Mrs. Danvers) and script did not change throughout the musical's three-year run. One of the first notable differences between the novel, the film, and the musical is the name of the narrator. The name of the character as it appears on the script is ICH, meaning "I" (Zambello). In the novel, the narrator is known only as

Mrs. De Winter, whereas in the film, Joan Fontaine is credited as “the second Mrs. De Winter.” So, the musical character’s official name being “I” indicates that she has more agency than her past counterparts, as she is not directly indicated as being solely an extension of Maxim. Her agency becomes much more prominent as the musical progresses, which was no doubt influenced by the rise in feminism.

The musical begins much like the novel with Mrs. Van Hopper bossing the narrator around; however, the difference here is that Mrs. Van Hopper, instead of insisting the narrator be a perfect lady to everyone, tells her “Don’t call [a bellhop] Monsieur. Don’t please him” (Zambello). Van Hopper’s insistence that the narrator not address all men with honorifics implies that the narrator should stand up for herself, beginning to break the image of the ideal woman as dictated by the patriarchy. This is image continues to break as the musical progresses, as the narrator is much more forward than her older counterparts. When she finds out that she is to leave Monte Carlo with Mrs. Van Hopper for New York, instead of crying, stalling, or trying frantically to find him to say goodbye before she leaves, she hangs up after she calls the first time and he isn’t in, then says that she’ll “be grateful for those memories… of that day on the coast” and that “it was clear from the beginning that [their relationship] wouldn’t last, yet there is nothing to regret” (Zambello). The narrator is clearly a much stronger and less dependent person in the musical, and even has a sort of female solidarity with Mrs. Van Hopper, who immediately says “You have betrayed me” (Zambello) upon finding out that the narrator is going back to Manderley with Maxim [before going into the same spiel that her novel and film counterparts do]. This scene is different from its counterparts in both the novel and film, which focus completely on how Mrs. Van Hopper cannot believe that the narrator was sneaking around and that she thinks the narrator will fail living at Manderley as wife and hostess. Thus, Mrs. Van

Hopper's newfound sense of camaraderie between herself and the narrator indicate that the rising tides of feminism have stressed the importance of female bonds much more than in the past. This same sentiment is echoed in Maxim's sister, Bee, when she sings to the narrator about family ties (Zambello).

The addition of the ensemble chorus (in the form of onlookers in this scene in particular) commenting on Maxim's pending wedding to the narrator also heavily implies that feminism has influenced the character portrayals over time. They about how "that man idolized Rebecca" and about how it's "disgusting" that Maxim "only seeks company" (Zambello) of the young narrator to make up for Rebecca's absence. The ensemble's song calls out Maxim for preying on an obviously naive (though not as naive as in previous depictions) woman who is several years younger than him because he's lonely, rather than finding someone his own age or properly getting over Rebecca. This call-out indicates that feminism has definitely influenced the deconstruction of patriarchal ideals that made it socially acceptable for old men to marry quiet, submissive teenagers, as do the ensemble's other call-outs in later numbers. Later in the production, there is even a golf number that mocks Victorian patriarchal traditions, especially when it calls the narrator a "widower's ideal," (Zambello) as it indicates that men who uphold the patriarchy cannot land themselves a real woman because she will not stand for his sexist tendencies. Then, the audience finds out that it has begun to rain right as Maxim and the narrator pull up to Manderley from the ensemble chorus, who have now dressed as housekeepers. The chorus comments that "[Maxim and the narrator] passed through the gate as it started to rain, that must bring bad luck," (Zambello) further supporting the idea from their earlier number that that Maxim's marriage to the narrator was a horrible idea.

Before the narrator and Maxim arrive at Manderley, the musical depicts a marriage montage during which the narrator wears a white dress and veil in her honeymoon travels with Maxim. Even though Maxim and the narrator are still alone during the ceremony (just as they were in the novel and film adaptation), she wears the dress and veil the entire time. Her attire in the musical is contrary to her attire in both the novel and movie because in those adaptations Maxim and the narrator go in normal clothes to a courthouse and get married at a desk because that is what Maxim wants. The fact that the narrator wears a white dress indicates that she had much more control over her wedding to Maxim; even if it was not a full-on wedding with family attending, she still participated in other traditional wedding customs, unlike her older counterparts, because that is what *she* wanted.

Even before the narrator gets to Manderley, Mrs. Danvers is openly awful and full of contempt for her. During the ensemble's song, Danvers says, "Even if [the narrator] were a princess, what could she want here… for me there will only be one Mrs. de Winter" and "[Rebecca] died...but I know better. She won't surrender. They can't defeat her" (Zambello). Danvers's language about the narrator, especially her comment "if she were a princess," implies that she knows the narrator most likely has no power under the patriarchy's influence, unlike Rebecca; while Danvers is correct to an extent (most likely because the script writer wanted to pay some kind of homage to the novel), the narrator in the musical is much more outspoken than her other counterparts. Danvers's language throughout the musical concerning Rebecca is also different than those of her novel and film counterparts, as she mentions Rebecca's beauty much less frequently. One of the few times she *does* mention it, Danvers compares Rebecca to orchids, Rebecca's favorite flowers, and says, "mysterious was she with exotic beauty" (Zambello). But, then Danvers immediately shifts her focus to how many men loved Rebecca, but she did not love

them in return. Danvers also speaks of Rebecca in terms of royalty, she calls Rebecca's bedroom "Rebecca's Kingdom" and says that Rebecca "looked like a queen" (Zambello). Danvers also praises Rebecca's charm and sophistication on more than one occasion, implying that Rebecca's musical representation had much more influence with her words than she did in the earlier renditions of her character, where she had more power in terms of her physical appearance.

The only other times Rebecca's beauty is mentioned involve men, who claim that she was beautiful, but not excessively so. Even then, they never refer to her in terms of her body, which implies that feminism has shifted the descriptions of her away from her physical beauty and more towards her wit, charm, and outspokenness, which could also be why the narrator herself is more exploratory in the musical. For example, the narrator spies on Favel and Danvers while they are in Rebecca's room, even after Danvers says that she wouldn't dare to do so, rather than hiding behind the door of the morning room or library like in the novel and film. The narrator also goes to the boat house unprompted to explore the property (because it's *hers*), whereas in the book and film she does so on a walk with Maxim while chasing after the dog. She is much more forward and powerful from the get-go than her novel and film counterparts; for example, she confirms with Mrs. Danvers that Maxim has "no desires" for the costume ball and that he "left it all to her," (Zambello) which she happily takes on, which occurs even before she (so to speak) 'gains her strength' after finding out the Maxim never loved Rebecca. Once the narrator of the play does gain her strength, she does something completely outlandish compared to both her film and novel counterparts: she re-breaks the cupid statue in front of Mrs. Danvers and says "Mrs. de Winter is me," (Zambello) signifying that Mrs. de Winter has completely taken control of her life and her body, no longer bothered by whether she can live up to patriarchal standards.

In comparison to both the novel and the film, the *Rebecca* musical also treats Maxim very differently, as it appears to emasculate him in a way that the other two mediums do not; this emasculation of the primary male character appears to be an effect of feminism's rise over time and its quest for equality. By emasculating Maxim and putting him in the role that the narrator would typically be in, it serves as a form of equality because it puts the man in the woman's shoes and shows him that she does not, in fact, have equality like people at the time argued. Several times throughout the production (thought usually when he is alone), he laments that he was too weak to defeat Rebecca, which goes against the patriarchal idea that men were the stronger of the two sexes. For example, when Rebecca was alive, she continually ensured that Maxim knew that she had the real power, as he notes that, "I agreed to [her] miserable compromise. Divorce would have been taboo for the de Winters" (Zambello). The narrator herself also speaks in terms of possession, noting that Maxim will "never truly belong to [her]" (Zambello). Of course, Maxim is emasculated when he admits that Rebecca has won, and then again when the narrator must hold him back from punching Favel (Zambello). Perhaps the most emasculating part is when he is made to stay at Manderley while the narrator is sent to investigate Rebecca's death, completely reversing their roles as opposed to the Hitchcock film.

The musical closes with a song that emphasizes the narrator's and Maxim's newfound freedom, as they are finally able to build the kind of life they want together without having to worry about the patriarchy. They "remain silent hand in hand," (Zambello) but the hand-in-hand and use of "we" in the song indicates that the two are now on equal footing since Manderley has been destroyed. The narrator does not have to take care of Maxim like she did in the past, and even though they live in a small hotel, they two of them seem genuinely happy because they are living the way they want to live without judgment. This ending being happier than the others,

along with Maxim's newfound progression and the narrator's confidence, implies that feminism's breakdown of the patriarchy and true equality is what will lead to happiness for all - not the upholding of outdated ideals that relegate women to the position of silent, beautiful objects.

The Conclusion

Feminism's continual push for equality has slowly but surely begun to affect the way characters of classic novels, especially novels with anti-patriarchal undertones, are portrayed in adaptations. Despite Hitchcock's film debuting only two years after the novel, the film itself attempted to incorporate feminist influence into Mrs. de Winter and Rebecca, as did the 2006 musical adaptation, which was much more overt with its feminism-inspired changes. This revelation is outstanding, as Du Maurier's original novel was meant to dismantle the patriarchy, rather than uphold it as some critics like to believe. However, even today there is a common reading of Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* that falsely interprets the novel as an upholding of patriarchal standards that were formed in the Victorian era; while this common reading is disappointing, it is also not surprising. Even though feminism has come a long way from the early 20th century, changing various adaptations of Du Maurier's characters through the years to reflect feminist tides and changing political climates and social sphere, it is clear that true equality still has not been attained in the common reader's inability to recognize Du Maurier's original intentions behind the novel.

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