

Unveiling the Unconscious: Projection and Displacement in Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to explore the famous literary work "Rebecca" by Daphne Du Maurier using the theoretical frameworks of projection and displacement from psychoanalysis in order to perform comprehensive analysis. In this study, the employment of projection is used to examine the manner in which the protagonist's doubts, fears, and desires are expressed through the idealized portrayal of Rebecca. This portrayal serves as an expression of the internal issues related to the protagonist. Additionally, this research uses displacement theory as a framework to have a closer look onto the defense mechanism of the protagonist in which she redirects her emotions linked to her personal issues towards the unknown character, Rebecca. The goal of the study is to analyze the complex psychological dynamics presented in "Rebecca" by examining the actions and thoughts that match projection and displacement. Through this analysis the study seeks to give a closer look into the internal conflicts the protagonist faces, and the influence of these defense mechanisms on her perception of both herself and other characters within the plot.

KEYWORDS: Rebecca, Daphne du Maurier, Internal Conflicts, Self-Perception, Emotional Redirection

1. INTRODUCTION

The author Daphne Du Maurier is a British novelist and playwright. She is considered to be one of the most famous writers in the 20th century. Gothic novels and historical romance are the best works she presented, in addition to that she wrote some plays, biographies short stories etc. The main source of Daphne's fame is her novels which are known for their suspense, excitement, romance, and true psychological examination of both gender men and women who are trapped in unhealthy relationships. Du Maurier was born in London in 1907 in a family which its roots are deep in art. She published her novel "Rebecca" in 1938. The novel won the award of being the favorite novel in the same year of publication and it was among the top 100 loved books of all time. Rebecca portrays a story that occurs in the huge palace of Manderley, presenting a gothic novel where the second wife is hunted by Rebecca the first wife that passed away long time ago. Through the ghost of Rebecca, the author reflects on projection and displacement as well as how psychological tensions are constructed and formed.

In this novel, Du Maurier chooses the Narrator to be unknown. She refers to her with the pronoun (I) but the real name of the Narrator remains mysterious till the end of the novel. The narrator represents the second wife of Maxim de Winter, the protagonist. In the beginning of the novel she went with Mrs. Van Hopper, who is portrayed as rich but arrogant American woman as a companion. She meets the widowed noble Maxim by chance while she is with Mrs. Van Hopper on their trip. Maxim who is according to Mrs. Van Hopper, the owner of the well known palace of Manderley. the Narrator falls in love with Maxim and accepts his proposal after romantic moments mixed with Courtship they spend with each other. They decided to move into the palace right after the honeymoon. It is here where the rising actions and occur, the Narrator starts to see and feel the ghost of Rebecca, de winter's first wife every where in the palace and that continuously reminds her of Rebecca and her inferiority to the first wife by people who are around her like Mrs. Danvers who is depicted as the faithful housekeeper and the maid of the first wife Rebecca. The climax happens at annual costume ball of Manderley. The housekeeper formulates the Narrator by motivating her to wear a costume that looks quite similar to the dress of Rebecca. this situation makes Maxim seriously angry when he sees the typical costume of his first wife on the Narrator. He calls on the Narrator to alter the outfit as soon as possible. He leaves the Narrator restless and alone at night. Later, when the body of Rebecca is discovered by coincidence in the nearby sea, the secret about her death is answered. Her husband Maxim who is guessed by the police confesses to the second wife, the Narrator that he killed Rebecca because he doesn't love her because she is cruel and promiscuous woman. by looking into Rebecca's death, Investigators discover that Rebecca has had cancer and she was close to pass away. Maxim is later exonerated of murder charges by the police because they think Rebecca killed herself. When they finally return to Manderley, they discover that Mrs. Danvers has set it on fire.

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The significance of this study lies in the attempts of examining and uncovering the layered psychological tensions of Du Maurier's Rebecca, especially the depiction of the unnamed narrator's sense of self. By analyzing Du Maurier's Rebecca through the lenses of projection and displacement, the novel discloses the way identity is constructed by external forces like society, gender roles, and hierarchies. In addition to that it reveals the contributions of internal psychological struggles, like the sense of inferiority of the Narrator, fear, and desire. It shows how these internal and external conflicts are not confronted and dealt with directly, on the contrary, they are displaced onto the others. This process contributes to an unstable and fragmented sense of self. The examination and interrogation of these defense mechanisms and applying them to this novel, offer a profound exploration about how female subjectivity, and the impact of the past on a person's identity, and trauma.

2. LITERARY THEORIES

This article relies on psychoanalysis as its primary framework to analyze Du Maurier's Rebecca, drawing on Freudian concepts displacement and projection to examine the narrative's layered psychological tensions. The behaviors and emotional responses of the Narrator are analyzed as expressing the unconscious fears and desires that are displaced and redirected because of the repression.

3. PROJECTION

Projection is considered as the most common concept in psychoanalysis. It exists in the history of philosophy a long period of time before Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, introduces it as a defense mechanism in psychoanalysis. Projection means an unconscious technique human uses in order to deal with anxiety or aching emotions. The human mind projects and attributes the mental state unconsciously, including thoughts and desires onto another mind, by using this defense mechanism, humans try to achieve relief. According to Freud, projection is significant for interpreting the psychology of coping with sore emotions and anxiety. Each individual develops a specific defense mechanism in his unconscious mind, trying to distort his inner unpleasant thoughts or insecurities. For example: a woman who is married to a man, but her marriage is unhappy, and she is not satisfied with it. So, instead of admitting her failure as a wife or a woman, she believes it is her husband's fault, blaming the man or marriage itself. By doing so, she doesn't have to cope with her discomfort and insecurities in her marriage. (Lacewing & Gipps, 2019).

At the end of the 19th century, the concept of projection and its function were explained by Sigmund Freud as a defense mechanism. The central cause of projection is the lack of trust that the person may suffer from. Projection leads to viewing other's motivation as suspect in different situations. Freud recognizes that the impact that is created by projection in normal and personal situations like the husband or the wife being jealous in their marriage, however, his focus and emphasis were on the dimensions of the defense that is characterized as abnormal in his writing. "In paranoia, the self-reproach is repressed in a manner which may be described as projection. It is repressed by erecting the defensive symptom of distrust of other people". (Clark, 1998, p.104).

According to Freud, (2014) projection occurs unconsciously to protect the ego from anxiety or guilt, helping to maintain a harmonized self-image by building internal conflicts on others. This concept is common in literature when characters assume others feel what they themselves feel (e.g., jealousy, hatred). "The mechanism of projection disturbs our human relations when we project our own jealousy and attribute to other people our own aggressive acts". (A. Freud, 1992, ch.10).

4. DISPLACEMENT

The second concept is displacement, according to Carducci (2009) is a psychological defense technique employed by the ego in order to redirect the manifestation of an impulse from a target that is seen unwanted or threatening, such as someone or something, to an alternative target that is perceived as more acceptable or less threatening. The classical illustration of displacement is a lady who, after receiving a severe warning from her superior, returns home and proceeds to express the anger against her partner, who in turn directs his frustration towards their child, ultimately resulting in the child screaming out at the family pet. Individuals tend to choose a safe object or person through which they may articulate their feelings of rage and dissatisfaction. The phenomenon of displacement has been noticed to occur when individuals, experiencing feelings of rage due to everyday issues or discomfort, engage in irrational thinking patterns. This may manifest as directing their anger towards individuals who are not necessarily responsible for the negative emotions being experienced.

Displacement refers to altering the target of an impulse. For example, an unacceptable violent impulse toward one's father might be transformed into a hostile attitude toward policemen or other authority figures. The targets of the actual aggression would be related by meaningful associations to the target of the original, inhibited impulse. (Baumeister et al., 1998, p.1093).

5. PROJECTION AND DISPLACEMENT IN REBECCA

In Daphne Du Maurier's Rebecca, there are numerous examples and psychological landscapes shaped by repression, anxiety, and the unconscious presented in the novel. By tackling this work through the lens of psychoanalysis, especially projection and displacement (defense mechanisms), this analysis demonstrates that the main character, the unnamed narrator's identity, is constructed and shaped by psychological defenses that exteriorize the inner problems and conflicts instead of solving and confronting these desires and

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insecurities. The unnamed narrator in this novel unconsciously externalizes and projects these insecurities onto Rebecca, a character that doesn't exist. Furthermore, she displaces her emotional hardships onto other characters in the palace and onto rigid objects.

The narrator "I" in this whole literary work whose name is not given intentionally by author. Name is essential for a person because it displays his identity to others, yet Maurier plans to depict the low position of the nameless narrator and the loss of identity. The protagonist's loss of identity appears in the beginning when she goes out with Mrs. Van Hopper as a companion, or at a later scene of her marriage. She is disliked and disrespected by individuals surrounding her all the time, she is discriminated and discomfited by her. The snobbish woman often implies the Narrator's humility in front of other people to hinder her nobility. The waiters in most cases show disinterest and disrespect to the Narrator too. they serve her with leftovers, and they never provide her bell or help her with (brought up... shoes, or early morning tea) facing impatience and dispassion, yet the Narrator never reveals her anger or uprising. She never thinks of acting like a noblewoman in order to be respected by others. She just shows her shyness, humbleness, and compliance. she doesn't show any signs that she has a persona. that leads the protagonist to failure in the society.

the other character Maxim is portrayed as a grieving widower who is deeply affected by the death of his wife. Others, such as Mrs. Van Hopper and Beatrice, express concern about Maxim's emotional condition, suggesting that he is not fully recovered from the loss of Rebecca. Even after his marriage with the Narrator, there are remaining suspicions that his suffering in the past still haunts him. Mrs. Danvers hints that Maxim is unhappy and still in emotional tempest. Libing Li (2021).

Starting by identifying and analyzing the situations when projection occurs in this novel and particularly with the Narrator (I). Due to the hard times and the misfit personality of The unnamed narrator being in the palace. She starts to project her insecurities, feeling inferior to Rebecca and her thoughts about her unpleasant marriage, onto her husband, Maxim. She believes that her husband is not satisfied with the marriage, and she is nothing to him because she thinks that he still loves Rebecca and prefers her. "I knew he was thinking of Rebecca, and I saw something in his eyes that I had never seen before, something that told me that this love for me, this feeling that filled my heart, was nothing compared to what he had felt for Rebecca."

Her concern and thoughts about Rebecca lead her to project these insecurities on Maxim and the dead first wife, by projecting these insecurities and feelings she tries to shift her own unwanted feelings and dissatisfaction onto her husband, and by doing so she tries to gain relief.

The guilt and recalls of Rebecca follow the husband, Maxim, that's why we can see an obvious projection in his behaviors. He reflects Rebecca's influence that she holds over him onto physical objects connected to Rebecca, such as the Narrator's dress that is similar to Rebecca's one, Maxim becomes angry when he sees the same dress on the Narrator, he starts to project the guilt and memories on the dress. "You can't wear that dress, you must get out of it at once. It belonged to Rebecca. You must change immediately." (Du Maurier, 2013, chapter 14).

The provided quote expresses the insecurities and burden the husband carries and how he projects them on anything associated with Rebecca. The philosopher Freud believes that the unconscious part of the mind operates inherently just like any other biological process. He believes that sometimes specific thoughts and ideas are repressed and kept inside the human without expression, which means these ideas and unwanted thoughts are taken out of our attention and awareness to the unconscious part of the mind. when these thoughts and ideas intimidate us. Freud compares this method with the immune system which protects us from harm. Threats retain anything that risks our self-esteem or corrupts feelings of comfort. When we carry thoughts or ideas that can be considered threatening, they are moved to the unconscious part of the mind to prevent anxiety and pain. (Sen, 2020).

by taking a closer look at the actions and behaviors of Maxim we can feel the burden and guilt he carries regarding his first wife Rebecca because in the end of the novel Maxim reveals the secret that is hidden since the beginning of the novel and admits that he is involved in his first wife's death that is why he project these thoughts of the dress the Narrator wears.

Maxim is portrayed as a widowed noble who is hurt greatly from his wife's death. In the beginning of the novel when the Narrator meets Mrs. Van Hopper, she describes Maxim to the Narrator. "It's Max de Winter... the man who owns Manderley. You've heard of it, of course. He looks ill, doesn't he? They say he can't get over with his wife's death..." (Du Maurier, 2013, chapter 2). On the other hand, Beatrice also describes the condition of Maxim saying: "you were a perfect wreck six months ago... I thought you were in for a breakdown... Didn't Maxim look perfectly ghastly last time we came over, and didn't I say he was heading for a breakdown?" (Du Maurier, 2013, chapter 9). People around the main characters still believe that Maxim is not ok with Rebecca's death even after his marriage to the Narrator and he still suffers. Even after Maxim and "I" got married, there were still people thought that Maxim had not yet fully recovered from the suffering, Mrs. Danvers was one of them. She tortured "I" by saying that "Mr. de Winter is not happy. Any fool can see that. You have only to look at his eyes. He's still in hell, and he's looked like that ever since she died." (Du Maurier, 2013, chapter 18).

Mrs. Danvers plays a significant psychological role in this novel, her treatment of the nameless narrator carries disrespect, complexity and manipulation. Mrs. Danvers always reminds the Narrator of Rebecca by comparing her to the first wife and by tackling the infertility of the Narrator. She has huge obsession with Rebecca, that's why she unconsciously projects her loyalty and fealty to the first wife on the second one (the Narrator) by doing so she tries to manipulate and dominate her By projection her feeling to Rebecca on the second wife, she doesn't have the ability to understand and accept the Narrator. We can clearly see her obsession with Rebecca through this quote: "You thought you could be Mrs. de Winter, live in her house, walk in her steps, take the

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things that were hers! But she's too strong for you. You can't fight her - no one ever got the better of her. Never, never. She was beaten in the end, but it wasn't a man, it wasn't a woman. It was the sea!" (Du Maurier, 2013, chapter 18).

Another example is embodied by Du Maurier that illustrates how the narrator exhibits merger of identity through her projection, where she transfers her inner longing and wishes to be admired and loved as a confident character to the first wife Rebecca. As Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) describe that projection often involves projecting disowned desires onto another person so she can avoid her inner conflicts. "I had so identified myself with Rebecca that my own dull self did not exist, had never come to Manderley." (du Maurier, 2013, chapter 16). When the narrator makes the first wife as an idol and perfect person, the narrator loses her identity and sense of self.

From the first days in the palace, the Narrator faces many problems in her relationship as well as with people around. She feels disrespected by the surroundings and neglected by the husband, in addition to that, she is the victim and the blank canvas where everyone projects their thoughts and expectations. Readers can clearly see and notice a sense of displacement in her words and actions because she can't confront the husband or the other characters such as Mrs. Danvers because of her shyness and weak personality, so she displaces the unwanted feelings she receives from others onto Rebecca, the first wife of Maxim. "There was an M. de Winter who was more important than I, whose place I took. I had not been married to Maxim, but to a ghost." (Du Maurier, 2013, chapter 20).

Another incidence where displacement is expressed by I, where she displaces her repressed displeasure and distress on a symbolic object that belongs to Rebecca. "I cut the page right out of the book... The flame had a lovely light... The letter R was the last to go... Then it crumpled too... I felt better, much better." (Du Maurier, 2013, chapter 20). The letter R which is the first letter of Rebecca's name is the object where the narrator's emotions are redirected to. As Freud (1926) states. That displacement occurs when a person redirects the feelings from a threatening source to a safer one. That is evident in this example due to the inability of the narrator to confront and challenge Rebecca or to voice her suppressed anger in a direct way. Therefore, she feels happy when the letter R is burned, I feels happy temporary.

6. CONCLUSION

Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* presents not only a gothic romance, however, it embodies a layered and complex psychological narration which shows how the unconscious mind operates subtly. This article examines how projection and displacement that are the Freudian defense mechanisms shape the narrative and emotional structure of the novel. By applying projection and displacement to the main character I, the article reveals how her insecurities, fear, and jealousy are not felt with and confronted directly, but they are redirected, projected and displaced on other characters and objects that remind her of Rebecca. The main character in this novel is the narrator who projects her insecurities, fear, and feelings of inferiority onto the first wife Rebecca, a woman that she never met, yet her presence and character dominate her psyche. The first wife Rebecca is depicted in the novel as the mirror for the repressed desires of the narrator such as sexual agency, confidence, and control. In this way, the narrator (I) avoids admitting and recognizing these characteristics as part of her unconscious. Therefore, she externalizes them on a competitor whose memory she simultaneously honors and despises. In this novel, projection allows the main character to be disassociated from her inner disturbing impulses but in the same time it lets her view Rebecca as a threat.

On the other hand, the narrator's psychological and inner tensions are often released through displacement. They were released through the interactions with objects and spaces tied to Rebecca's legacy. And these actions mirror the Freudian theory of displacement. In conclusion, by applying projection and displacement, the analysis deepens the understanding of the fragmented identity of the main character, and the exploration of the novel's implied themes. This article provides a new insight into How women could unwittingly absorb psychological and patriarchal pressures. Additionally, it shows unresolved conflict within the self shapes narrative voice and perception.

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