

## **Gender and The Gothic: Why are women that transgress in Gothic Literature**

### **punished?**

The concept of transgression within the Gothic genre is used to explore the lengths to which people will go, the lengths they can be pushed against societal norms/expectations to create the sense of horror, the macabre and eeriness that captivates readers. David Punter and Glennis Byron in *The Gothic*, argue there is a significant difference between how men in the Gothic transgress and how women transgress.<sup>1</sup> They suggest that the ‘male’s transgressions... involves the confrontation of... various social institutions, including the law’, stating that women in these types of novels, are often ‘objectified victims’, that their bodies are viewed as ‘Gothic structures... to be broached by the transgressive male’.<sup>2</sup> The female characters within the ‘Female Gothic’ transgress in a different way and ‘more typically represents a female protagonist’s attempts to escape from a confining interior’ such as marriage, the expectation to bare children and the exploration of their sexuality.<sup>3</sup> Daphne du Maurier’s *Rebecca* and Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* portray this exact depiction of female transgression that often results in a form of punishment or unhappy ending for their female protagonist and even side characters.<sup>4</sup> The aim of this essay is to identify how female characters within the Gothic genre of storytelling are punished for their transgressions and why.

*Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca* exhibit similarities, all of which depict feminine punishment that is often identified within Gothic novels. Within *Modern Women on Trial: Sexual Transgression in The Age Of The Flapper* by Lucy Bland, ‘one of the objectives’ of that book

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<sup>1</sup> Punter, David, and Byron, Glennis. 2005. *Gothic : The Gothic*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.. Accessed January 3, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central. P 278

<sup>2</sup> Punter, David, and Byron, Glennis. *Gothic : The Gothic*. P 278.

<sup>3</sup> Punter, David, and Byron, Glennis. *Gothic : The Gothic*. P 278

<sup>4</sup> Bronte, Charlotte. 1992. *Jane Eyre - Charlotte Bronte*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions.  
Du Maurier, Daphne. 2015. *Rebecca*. London: Virago Press.

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was to answer the ‘conundrum: why one woman, innocent of murder, was hanged... while during the same period another, who was probably guilty, walked free’, delving into discussions surrounding the inevitable punishment women experience, especially in literature, when partaking in events that result in their own enjoyment and liberation.<sup>5</sup> Bland further elaborates that these trials resulted in ‘a fascinating terrain of questions concerning the law... young women and issues of morality... because the protagonists were involved in... transgressive sex’, that these women were punished for exploring their sexuality and their desires.<sup>6</sup> This is identified in Gothic novels such as *Rebecca* and *Jane Eyre*, where the female characters (the unnamed narrator whom I shall refer to as Mrs de Winter and Rebecca in *Rebecca* and Jane Eyre, Bertha and Mrs Reed in *Jane Eyre*) transgress against societal expectations of a woman’s role by creating a life for themselves, doing as they desire, resulting in their downfall.<sup>7</sup> The male characters in both novels are the opposite, expecting the women to fix their issues, suffering in their stead which results in their happy ending. So, what is it that makes the characters of different genders outcome so unique, frightening and perfect for the Gothic genre?

Ellen Moers set out to define her term ‘Female Gothic’, looking to identify how horror is articulated through a woman’s life.<sup>8</sup> Moers defines ‘Female Gothic’ as the Gothic horrors that are uniquely feminine, particularly those relating to domestic issues such as marriage and birth.<sup>9</sup> Moers compares Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* to the ‘the drama of, guilt, dread, and flight. surrounding birth and its consequences’ through Dr Frankenstein’s creation of new life and the horrors of what he has created.<sup>10</sup> Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* also

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<sup>5</sup>Bland, Lucy. 2013. *Modern Women On Trial*. New York: Manchester University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Bland, Lucy. *Modern Women On Trial*.

<sup>7</sup> Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*.

Du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca*.

<sup>8</sup> Moers, Ellen. 1977. *Literary Women*. London: W.H. Allen. P 90-98

<sup>9</sup> Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women*. P 90-98

<sup>10</sup> Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women*. P 93

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embodies Moers' ideology through her lack of parentage and her strong spirit, not adhering to the stereotypical concept of a damsel in distress, instead she is a heroine who saves her metaphorical prince, Mr Rochester, when a fire is started in his room. The 'consequences' of birth is definitely prevalent in this novel, articulated in Mrs Reed's lack of maternal love towards Jane.<sup>11</sup> Having to look after Jane through no choice of her own and a promise made to her late husband Mr Reed on his death bed to raise her, the ways in which she inflicts torture upon Jane by locking her away in what young Jane believes to be a haunted room and purposefully hiding the letters from her other uncle John Eyre, who wished to raise her as his own and the reason for her large inheritance, certainly captures 'the very good horror... [of] the motif of revulsion against new-born life' that Moers uses to define the 'Female Gothic'.<sup>12</sup> I believe Brontë to be encapsulating the horror of the question: what could be more horrific than a mother with no maternal instinct in the eyes of a patriarchal society? Relating to how many women were forced to have children during the Victorian era due to lack of accessibility to birth control, how abortions were illegal and the lack of discussions surrounding sexuality, described by Moers as 'the Victorian taboo against writing about physical sexuality (including pregnancy and labour)' that left women in a constant state of the unknown, trapped by their lack of knowledge on these subjects through no fault of their own.<sup>13</sup> Jane comments that Mrs Reed 'shut[s] [her] up all day long and how [she] wishes [her] dead', to which Mrs Reed responds by physically assaulting Jane and shouting at her.<sup>14</sup> *The Madwoman in the Attic* by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar claim 'it is debilitating to be any woman in society where... if they do not behave like angels they must be monsters' which explains Mrs Reed's hatred towards Jane, borne from her 'passion' and confidence that

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<sup>11</sup> Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women*. P 93

<sup>12</sup> Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women*. P 93

<sup>13</sup> Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women*. P 92

<sup>14</sup> Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. P 21

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appear unnatural and unladylike to her.<sup>15</sup> It elevates the ‘very good horror’ elicited through ‘Female Gothic’ and the concept of horror being feminine that Moers discusses.<sup>16</sup>

Within *Jane Eyre* there are examples of not only one female character, but three that transgress against societal norms and are punished for it: Jane with her ‘passion’ that leads her to be physically assaulted by her family, locked away and sent off to a correcting school, Mrs Reed’s lack of maternal love towards Jane that leads to her bitterness and regret on her death bed, and Bertha with her transgression of sanity.<sup>17</sup> It portrays the fear that many female readers of the Victorian era would perhaps be feeling, trapped in the patriarchal dominated rule over a woman’s body. It answers the questions: what happens to a child left with a guardian of no maternal love or care? What happens to the woman forced to play the part of mother and wife? The ‘Female Gothic’ within *Jane Eyre* plays a very strong part of leaning into the Gothic concept of unsettling the reader through fear. Through these concepts explored within *Jane Eyre*, there is the sense of these ‘issues of morality’ that Lucy Bland discussed within *Modern Women on Trial: Sexual Transgression in The Age Of The Flapper* that I mentioned prior, causing readers to question whether Mrs Reed is an antagonist at all.<sup>18</sup> Evidently, Mrs Reed is forced into this parental, mothering role for Jane that she does not want. Fred Botting argues that the act of transgression from a woman within the Gothic ‘is not simply punish[ed] for breaking an injunction: desire is often heightened... due to the weight of the initial sanction’, which I am inclined to disagree with.<sup>19</sup> I do not think that Mrs Reed takes any particular joy in the transgression of her lack of maternal instinct towards Jane, nor in the ways in which she treats her, I believe she is punished in her own morality for

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<sup>15</sup> Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. P 7.

Gilbert, Sandra M, and Susan Gubar. 1979. *The Madwoman In The Attic*. 3rd ed. United States of America: Yale University Press. P 53

<sup>16</sup> Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women*. P 93

<sup>17</sup> Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. P 7.

<sup>18</sup> Bland, Lucy. *Modern Women On Trial*.

<sup>19</sup> Botting, Fred. 2014. *Gothic*. 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge.

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doing so. Mrs Reed states to Jane as she is dying that she was ‘born, I think, to be my torment: my last hour is racked by the recollection of a deed which, but for you, I should have never been tempted to commit’ proving that not only does Mrs Reed have regret for how she treated Jane, she almost suggests that she had no choice in her actions, just as she had no choice in being her guardian. Her choice and morality are taken away from her through the act of being forced into motherhood. Mrs Reed is not punished for her treatment of Jane, she is punished for her transgressive outlook on being a mother to Jane. She does not want it, therefore in the eyes of the patriarchal Victorian society that views that women’s purpose are to be mothers and wives, she is villainised. Charlotte Brontë successfully articulates Moers’ idea of feminine horror through Mrs Reed’s lack of choice, and with this outlook of the character Mrs Reed she is no longer an antagonist, she is both a villain of the patriarchy and a heroine in a world that is against her desires.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper* further explores Moers’ concept of ‘Female Gothic’ and horror that is purely feminine, through maternal transgression and pregnancy.<sup>20</sup> *The Yellow Wallpaper* follows a young woman’s mental health deteriorating while she is sent to rest, having faced severe post-natal depression after giving birth to her child.<sup>21</sup> She begins to fixate on the yellow wallpaper of her bedroom, articulating her descent into insanity through the incessant need to remove it from the wall. This woman transgresses through her struggle in becoming a functioning mother and wife, leaning into Freud’s theories on Hysteria in women. Looking at *Studies in Hysteria* by Sigmund Freud, he states that ‘marriage brings new sexual traumas’, claiming that ‘hysterias of young women, traceable to this experience, are not rare’, this is depicted within Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper* through the ‘hysterical tendency’ and illness of the mind that the narrator

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<sup>20</sup> Showalter, Elaine, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. 2016. *Daughters Of Decadence*. London: Virago Press. P 98-117

<sup>21</sup> Showalter, Elaine, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. *Daughters Of Decadence*. P 98-117

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experiences due to her post-natal depression, a direct cause of her sexual experiences with her husband.<sup>22</sup> Her illness is directly caused from her own want to be a mother, to be a wife, and she is blamed for it. Her turmoil is a direct cause of the separation from her child through birth, appearing as though she is suffering from a form of post-partum depression. Her husband claims that they have gone away ‘solely on [her] account’, even believing that ‘there is no reason to suffer’.<sup>23</sup> Instead of listening to his wife’s reason for her ‘nervous troubles’, he locks her away in her bedroom, leaving her to become a slave to her own mind.<sup>24</sup> Her punishment stems from her transgression of the mind. It seems that even when women in Gothic novels do actually want to be a good mother and wife, they are still condemned for it. They must suffer through physical pain in the act of childbirth, and also the mental turmoil that may come after it in the form of post-natal depression. The female horror in the Gothic that Moers discusses is borne from the real-life horrors in which women must endure in order to be a mother. Freud suggests that one case in which a woman named Elisabeth suffered from heart trouble, that her pregnancy had ‘aggravated’ it, causing her to endure a pain far more severe.<sup>25</sup> This proves that no matter the choices in which a woman desires to make, she will always suffer for it, perfectly captured within the ‘Female Gothic’.

The punishment of the transgression of sanity, is explicitly depicted within *Jane Eyre*, through the character Bertha who is locked away, just as the narrator in *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Both are hidden from society due to their inability to conform to the patriarchal concept of the perfect wife, or as *The Madwoman in the attic* states the ‘idealized, woman is the Virgin Mary, the nineteenth century angel of the house, keeper of morality... if she

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<sup>22</sup> Showalter, Elaine, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. *Daughters Of Decadence*. P 98

Freud, Sigmund, Joseph Breuer, and A. A Brill. 2013. *Studies In Hysteria*. Stilwell: Neeland Media LLC.

<sup>23</sup> Showalter, Elaine, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. *Daughters Of Decadence*. P 100-101

<sup>24</sup> Showalter, Elaine, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. *Daughters Of Decadence*. P 101

<sup>25</sup> Freud, Sigmund, Joseph Breuer, and A. A Brill. *Studies in Hysteria*.

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topples off her pedestal, she is... a monster'.<sup>26</sup> Bertha is not pitied by Mr Rochester, she is the reason for his anguish. Bertha is punished through her transgressions against normal behaviour or against being 'the keeper of morality' that a woman, especially a wife, is expected to adhere to.<sup>27</sup> Mr Rochester showers the past version of Bertha who still had sane mind with praise: 'like a dutiful child...pure... modest', yet, even when praising her, he still dehumanises her and compares her to a 'child', who follows their parents, or in this instance her master/husband, with wilful obedience.<sup>28</sup> When Bertha defies this by losing her sanity and thus, her willingness to comply with his every command, in the eyes of Mr Rochester she becomes a 'defrauded wretch' and she is no longer worth his time, or even his marriage: 'you shall see what being I was cheated into espousing... I had a right to break the compact... with something at least human'.<sup>29</sup> Botting comments that 'male power in the persecution of women, abuses like forced marriage...' -just as Bertha and Mr Rochester's marriage was arranged- '... sequestration of self and property...or imprisonment' articulated through Mr Rochester's ownership of Bertha's identity and freedom.<sup>30</sup> Mr Rochester dehumanises Bertha by taking her away from her familiarity of Jamaica, bringing her to Thornfield and trapping her away in a room designed to lock her in, so much so, Jane comments on how difficult it is to distinguish whether Bertha is 'beast or human', frequently referring to her as 'it' and mimicking Mr Rochester's reference to Bertha as no longer human.<sup>31</sup> Here, not only do we see Mr Rochester condemn Bertha, but also his condemnation or punishment of Jane. Jane's love for Mr Rochester blinds her to the horrors he has committed, only feeling upset for their inability to marry rather than the terrifying reality that he has locked away his previous wife for being mentally ill: 'where was the Jane Eyre of yesterday? Who had been an ardent,

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<sup>26</sup> Gilbert, Sandra M, and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman In The Attic*.

<sup>27</sup> Gilbert, Sandra M, and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman In The Attic*.

<sup>28</sup> Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. P 258

<sup>29</sup> Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. P 258

<sup>30</sup> Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. P 11

<sup>31</sup> Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. P 258

expectant woman – almost a bride, was a cold, solitary girl again: her life was pale...’ suggesting that her marriage to Rochester bought warmth into her ‘cold’ life; there is no ounce of remorse for Bertha.<sup>32</sup> Jane is punished through love, condemned to marry a man who imprisons his wives, not only physically but metaphorically through the expectation to behave as an obedient wife.

This corruption and thus, punishment through love for a woman who transgresses against societal norms, is further explored in Du Maurier’s *Rebecca*. The novel follows the recounting of the events that happen at the House of Manderley and all of its hidden secrets surrounding Maxim de Winter’s late wife Rebecca and her death, from the point of view of an unnamed young woman who marries de Winter and is continuously haunted by the presence of Rebecca.<sup>33</sup> The first instance we see Mrs de Winter transgress against expectations of others is the defiance against her employer Mrs Van Hopper: instead of doing as she is informed, she secretly meets Maxim de Winter for romantic liaisons.<sup>34</sup> This is the catalyst for Mrs de Winter’s punishment and manipulation through the oppression of her from both the house, which is a representation of the patriarchal society in the 1930s and by her husband, who arguably manipulates and tricks her into helping him be found innocent for the murder of his late wife Rebecca, despite having actually killed her. Even at the very beginning of the novel, the narrator is lured into secrets and lies which create this false sense of security built on fallacy. At the end of chapter three, it seems as though Mrs de Winter is aware of this falseness yet chooses to ignore it when receiving a note with the words: ‘Forgive me. I was very rude this afternoon’, which results in viewing her own drawing as unpleasing, ‘stiff and life-less, and the lace collar and the beard were like props in a

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<sup>32</sup> Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. P 261

<sup>33</sup> Du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca*.

<sup>34</sup> Du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca*.



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charade'.<sup>35</sup> Already, Mrs de Winter's environment is unsettled and described as a 'charade', it is false, through just the written words of Maxim de Winter. Yet, despite being aware of the 'charade' that Maxim de Winter is painting for the narrator – just as she painted her surroundings prior, which then become distorted having read his words, mimicking how her own world and how she views it is changed and distorted once she has married Maxim de Winter – she chooses to ignore it all, in lieu of romance and love, the things she desires and is then punished for pursuing them.<sup>36</sup> When arriving at Manderley, Mrs de Winter is haunted by Maxim de Winter's late wife's presence around the house and is treated with distaste, particularly from Mrs Danvers, who torments and continues to trick her. This articulates how women within Gothic novels that transgress against expectations, that pursue their wants and desires are chastised. Mrs de Winter only followed her desire to marry a man she loved and yet she still faced turmoil, particularly in instances such as the ball when she is tricked into wearing a dress that Rebecca had once worn. This causes pity from the reader as Maxim de Winter becomes angry with her, rather than adore her as she wishes: "what the hell do you think you are doing? He asked. Eyes blazed in anger".<sup>37</sup> It seems as though within Gothic novels no matter what a woman desires, she is punished. Botting comments that 'Gothic texts are not realistic', with which I disagree, especially with du Maurier's *Rebecca* in mind, particularly in the eyes of a woman reader.<sup>38</sup> *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft states 'that woman is naturally weak, or degraded by a concurrence of circumstances is, I think, clear' which is perfectly depicted in *Rebecca*.<sup>39</sup> When Mrs de Winter learns of the true circumstances surrounding Rebecca's death and Maxim de Winter's true hatred for her, not only is Mrs de Winter understanding, she aids her husband in his

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<sup>35</sup> Du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca*. P 21.

<sup>36</sup> Du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca*. P 21.

<sup>37</sup> Du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca*. P 239.

<sup>38</sup> Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. P 12.

<sup>39</sup> Wollstonecraft, Mary. 2009. *A Vindication Of The Rights Of Woman*. Digireads Publishing. P 40.

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mission to get away with her murder and blames Rebecca for it. She states 'Rebecca is dead. She can't speak, she can't bear witness. She can't harm you anymore'.<sup>40</sup> There is a clear corruption and punishment of Mrs de Winter through love and her obedience to her husband, she feels the desire to help her husband transgress against the law all because of her desire to be loved and to be a good wife. Mrs de Winter is 'degraded by a concurrence of circumstances', her circumstances being becoming a criminal herself and allowing her husband to be found innocent and for another woman to be punished through death.<sup>41</sup>

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, articulates the concept of female oppression through the medium of writing; she suggests that 'if constraints placed on women by society were to be lifted, female writers would... produce work comparable to that of Shakespeare'.<sup>42</sup> I feel that within *Rebecca* and how our unnamed narrator undergoes oppression, manipulation and trickery from Maxim de Winter about his true feelings towards his late wife, portrays Woolf's ideology in this statement. Prior to meeting Maxim de Winter, the narrator is making her own money and is employed as a Lady's Companion to Mrs Van Hopper, having the opportunity to travel with her. Perhaps, had the narrator never met Maxim de Winter, she would go on to see many more places, fall in love with a different man and continue to make her own money. The narrator herself states 'I wonder what my life would be today, if Mrs Van Hopper had not been a snob', it is evident that even Mrs de Winter 'wonder[s]' about the other opportunities she may have had if she had never met Maxim de Winter and faced the horrors of Manderley.<sup>43</sup> Through the 'constraints placed on women by society', the narrator loses her individual power and dominance of her own life through marrying Maxim de Winter, she is therefore constrained by her own future because of the patriarchal expectation

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<sup>40</sup> Du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca*. P 316.

<sup>41</sup> Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication Of The Rights Of Woman*. P 40.

<sup>42</sup> Woolf, Virginia. 2014. *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. London. HarperCollinsPublishers.

<sup>43</sup> Du Maurier. *Rebecca*. P 12.

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to adhere to her husband's every wishes.<sup>44</sup> Mrs de Winter is punished by losing her opportunities and choice all because she chooses to marry.

Auba Llompart Pons in 'Patriarchal Hauntings: Re-reading Villainy and Gender in Daphne du Maurier's "Rebecca"' makes a strong link from *Rebecca* to the classic fairy-tale story *Blue Beard*, stating that there is a divide in criticism between those who view it as a 'Gothic love story' and those who critique it as 'a reworking of the Bluebeard tale, in which the gentleman actually turns out to be a villain who unjustifiably murdered his wife'.<sup>45</sup> I, myself, shall be critiquing it as the latter, identifying not only ways in which Maxim de Winter embodies the 'Bluebeard tale' through the oppression of both of his wives: the late Rebecca and our unnamed narrator, known only as Mrs de Winter, but how Mr Rochester connotes this concept also, through his arguable condemnation of both of his wives, Bertha and Jane Eyre.<sup>46</sup> In order to do so, I will highlight the similarities between another reworking of the classic 'Bluebeard tale': Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*.<sup>47</sup> Carter's short story 'is a version of the story of Bluebeard' as stated by *The Connell Short Guide to Angela Carter's The Bloody Chamber*, it exemplifies the very argument I discuss in this essay, the Female Gothic and female punishment in Gothic literature.<sup>48</sup> The story follows a poor girl that is married off to a very rich man (The Marquis) that takes her to his estate in the north of France, it is here that the female protagonist discovers and unlocks a room or torture chamber and grave (the '*Bloody Chamber*' that earns the short story its title) for the Marquis' previous

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<sup>44</sup> Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*. P vii.

<sup>45</sup> Pons, Auba Llompart. "Patriarchal Hauntings: Re-Reading Villainy and Gender in Daphne Du Maurier's 'Rebecca' / Fantasma Del Patriarcado: Una Relectura de La Villanía y El Género En 'Rebecca', de Daphne Du Maurier." *Atlantis* 35, no. 1 (2013): 69–83. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43486040>.

<sup>46</sup> Pons, Auba Llompart. "Patriarchal Hauntings: Re-Reading Villainy and Gender in Daphne Du Maurier's 'Rebecca' / Fantasma Del Patriarcado: Una Relectura de La Villanía y El Género En 'Rebecca', de Daphne Du Maurier." P 70.

<sup>47</sup> Carter, Angela. 2006. *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. London. Vintage Books.

<sup>48</sup> Wagner, Erica. 2016. *The Connell Short Guide to Angela Carter's The Bloody Chamber*. London. Connell Guides. P 1.

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wives. Already there is strong similarities between *Jane Eyre* and *The Bloody Chamber*, as both the Marquis and Mr Rochester lock away their previous wives in a torture chamber of their own design. However, though the chamber that belongs to the Marquis' ex-wives is a physical torture, Bertha's torture is of the mind. There is also a link to *Rebecca*, where the entirety of Manderley becomes a torture chamber for Mrs de Winter as she is continuously haunted by the memory of Rebecca: 'unconsciously, I shivered as though someone had opened the door behind me... I was sitting in Rebecca's chair...' thus, torturing her with a sense of isolation in her own home, where she should feel comfortable.<sup>49</sup> The depiction of the torture chambers is representative of the patriarchy. The large houses and manors that all three of these male characters own, complete with secret locked rooms and the presences of their ex-wives that haunt them, depict the status and the power that they have over the women that are brought there. All three of the female protagonists in each story (Mrs de Winter, Jane Eyre and the unnamed girl from *The Bloody Chamber*) feel lost and small upon entering these grand houses that their newly wed owns. Within *Rebecca*, Mrs de Winter 'shrank back against [her] seat' upon seeing the imposing Manderley, Jane Eyre describes that in Thornfield during winter-time 'one feels deary quite alone in the best quarters' and finally, the girl in *The Bloody Chamber* is made aware of herself and just how small she is in comparison to this great Castle and her husband The Marquis, she states 'that luminous, murmurous castle of which I was the châtelaine, I, the little music student'.<sup>50</sup> The constant fear and haunting that embodies the walls of these grand houses, is representative of the male gaze and how women feel they must perform for men and look good for the desires of men, even in the absence of a male presence. *Mad, Bad And Sad: A History of Women and The Mind Doctors From 1800 to The Present* suggests 'women had taken in the feeling of being

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<sup>49</sup> Du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca*. P 87

<sup>50</sup> Du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca*. P 70.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. P 83.

Carter, Angela. *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. P 9.

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the object of the male gaze and incorporated it into the structure of their inner lives', articulated in all three Gothic stories I have mentioned.<sup>51</sup> The metaphorical haunting of the late wives of their husbands all three protagonists experience, portray the sense of a looming presence and the fear of constantly being watched by a dominating force. The female protagonists are punished and tortured through the act of becoming a wife and adhering to the patriarchal society and thus, the male gaze through feeling small in comparison to their husband's large wealth, his dominating role over them, portrayed through the grandness of the houses that their husbands own.

*The Other as Another Other* by Karen Green discusses 'de Beauvoir's claim that women is The Other', stating that 'it was de Beauvoir who first claimed that the clue to woman's situation is that she is man's Other', they can never be the same due to the society that favours men and sees them as 'the subject, the absolute' whereas women 'The Other'.<sup>52</sup> All three stories depict women as 'The Other', isolating them and taking them away from familiarity and presenting them as if they were foreign, not only to their new environment, but to men themselves.<sup>53</sup> The women become decorative and small, made to fit into stereotypical patriarchal roles: the man/husband that has power and money and the woman/wife as feminine and delicate, even in such instances as the characters of Jane Eyre and Rebecca. Their personalities, their desire to create their own life and way in the world counteract this ideology of the perfect wife and woman that their husbands wish to create. It is almost as if Brontë and du Maurier wish to comment on this, on how women that do not adhere to the concept of an obedient wife are condemned and punished, even sometimes murdered, acting as a warning to the reader. This is seen very explicitly in *Rebecca*, through

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<sup>51</sup> Appignanesi, Lisa. 2010. *Mad, Bad And Sad*. London: Virago. P 440

<sup>52</sup> Green, Karen. "The Other as Another Other." *Hypatia* 17, no. 4 (2002): 1–15. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810906>.

<sup>53</sup> Green, Karen. "The Other as Another Other." *Hypatia* 17, no. 4 (2002): 1–15. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810906>.

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Rebecca, whom, instead of adhering to the monogamous relationship she is expected to have had with Maxim de Winter, instead takes multiple lovers and is murdered for it.<sup>54</sup> Rebecca uses the patriarchy to her own advantage, stating “if I had a child... neither you, nor anyone... would ever prove that it is not yours”, knowing that if she were to have a son, Maxim de Winter’s fortune would be left to him.<sup>55</sup> Appignanesi states ‘the focus on sexuality... particularly problematized women’ proving that because of Rebecca’s transgressive sexuality in not conforming to monogamy in marriage, she is villainised by Maxim de Winter: ‘I’ve stood enough... Rebecca, this is your last chance’, threatened and punished by death.<sup>56</sup>

In conclusion, women in Gothic literature who transgress in order to pursue their desires are punished for it. The reason why falls at the hands of the concept of horror that is crucial to the Gothic genre as a whole. Playing on real-life domestic fears that women in real life are accustomed to, the objective is to scare and to enlighten readers to the knowledge that perhaps fiction, isn’t just fiction, and often it bleeds into reality.

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<sup>54</sup> Du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca*. P 314.

<sup>55</sup> Du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca*. P 313.

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