

# How rebecca reflects and subverts the conventions of the romance genre assignment...

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## How Rebecca Reflects and Subverts the Conventions of the Romance Genre

“ ‘ I’m invariably ill-tempered in the early morning. I repeat to you, the choice is open to you. Either you go to America with Mrs Van Hopper or you come home to Manderly with me. ‘ ‘ Do you mean you want a secretary or something? ‘ ‘ No, I’m asking you to marry me, you little fool. ‘ ” Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier is a fine example of the romantic genre as it reflects certain conventions such as the hero and heroine’s characteristics. It also subverts many romantic conventions for example, the journey to happy ever after.

Conventions of the gothic/horror genre are also found in the novel. The conventions that Rebecca reflects of the romantic genre are those of the characteristics of the hero and heroine (as mentioned above). The heroine is usually innocent and vulnerable with low confidence and low self-esteem. The narrator of the novel also holds these characteristics. The first impression of the hero seems rude, arrogant and insufferable but the heroine soon realises she was wrong and sees the hero differently. This is also a convention of the Romantic genre.

Rebecca also subverts certain aspects of the genre, such as the ‘ happily ever after’ ending to most romantic novels. The gothic genre is also found in the novel, with the spirit of Rebecca haunting Maxim and the narrator’s marriage. One major convention of the Romantic genre is the innocence, vulnerability and lack of confidence of the heroine. In Rebecca, the narrator constantly refers to herself as an un-educated, inexperienced and young schoolgirl; ‘ ...I was a youthful thing and unimportant...there was no need to include me in the conversation. Throughout the first six chapters, the <https://assignbuster.com/how-rebecca-reflects-and-subverts-the-conventions-of-the-romance-genre-assignment/>

narrator is depicted as very young with no experience. She admits this herself; ' It was a situation for which I was ill-trained. I wished I was older, different. ' Mrs Van Hopper persistently degrades her, supposedly training her to be a companion. ' I simply can't see you doing it. You haven't the experience. You know why he's marrying you don't you? You haven't flattered yourself he's in love with you? He admitted...he just cannot go on living there alone...' This makes her feel even more insignificant which is portrayed through her thoughts in the novel and her speech, especially towards Maxim.

The attitude of self-degrading belonging to the narrator accurately reflects the corresponding convention of the romantic genre. Furthermore, Rebecca reflects the conventions of the romantic genre by showing that the heroine's first impressions of the hero were incorrect. She had first viewed him as ' hard' and ' sardonic' due to his remarks at Mrs Van Hopper; " He got up at once, pushing back his chair. ' Don't let me keep you,' he said. ' Fashions change so quickly nowadays they may even have altered by the time you get upstairs. " However, following her first breakfast with Maxim, she realises that she was wrong and says; ' I had ill-judged him, he was neither hard nor sardonic, he was already my friend of many years. " The first impression of Maxim only lasts over one coffee with Mrs Van Hopper however is fixed soon after when he sends the heroine a note which reads, ' Forgive me. I was very rude this afternoon. " It is evident that as soon as she receives this note, her opinions of the hero change. She also elaborates on her feelings the next morning when Maxim invites her for breakfast at the hotel.

Conversely, the novel also subverts certain conventions of the romantic genre. One example of this is the 'happily ever after' ending. It is defined at the conclusion of the story that Maxim and the narrator will not live happily ever after, but many hints are given in the first six chapters of the book. The first two chapters of *Rebecca* take place at some undetermined time in the future. The narrator remembers the events that happened in the past at Manderly and it is said that, 'We can never go back again, that much is certain. The past is still too close to us. That sense of fear...might become a living companion. This suggests that their current relationship is not perfect, even though according to a typical romantic novel, it is supposed to be. Another implication that there was to be no 'happily ever after' is Maxim's abrasive manner of proposal. 'He said nothing about being glad, about being happy. He did not take my arm and go into the sitting room with me.' The heroine also feels the hurt of Maxim not saying anything about being in love. However, she keeps trying to make excuses for this. 'In love. He had not said anything about being in love. No time perhaps. It was all so hurried at the breakfast table. The quote above reflects the slight imperfections of Maxim's proposal, which depicts that there will be no happily ever after in their marriage. In addition, *Rebecca* also has many aspects of other genres. Gothic fiction is one of these. It combines both the elements of horror and romance. The horror aspect of *Rebecca* is that of Rebecca's spirit haunting the heroine. There are many incidences where the heroine remembers Rebecca when she is imagining her relationship with Maxim and therefore becomes haunted and disturbed by this memory, 'And they had laughed together as he tore off the paper and string.

She leant, perhaps, over his shoulder, while he read. Max. She called him Max... And I had to call him Maxim. ' Jealously of Rebecca is portrayed in the previous quote which therefore means that there will always be a memory of Rebecca haunting the couple's marriage as shown in, ' Original proposals were much better. More genuine. Not like other people. Not like him the first time, asking Rebecca... I must not think of that. Put it away. A thought forbidden, prompted by demons. ' She then goes on to talk about how she must never think about Rebecca, because she is dead.

The book of poems that Maxim lent the narrator lies on the table while she tries to stop herself from opening the title page that reads, " Max from Rebecca. " She has a conversation with her demon, "' Go on,' whispered the demon, ' open the title-page; that's what you want to do, isn't it? Open the title-page. ' Nonsense, I said, I'm only going to put the book with the rest of the things. " As if prompted by Rebecca's spirit, the book falls open on the title page. The heroine can feel the force of the writing as she thinks, ' How alive was her writing though, how full of force. The page is then torn out and burned, and the heroine's thought feel cleared. This section of the novel has a major gothic and horror feel to it. Conclusively, the novel Rebecca reads as a very intense and interesting novel reflecting as well as subverting the conventions of the romantic genre. It also includes many aspects of the gothic and horror genre which create a haunting theme for the storyline. The hero's way of treating the heroine is arrogant even though she refuses to accept it. They never reach happily ever after for their marriage is forever haunted by Rebecca.